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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE SUN'S BABIES ***



[Frontispiece: "Why has your tree no flowers while ours are pink?" (missing from book)]

The
Sun's Babies

By Edith Howes

Author of "Fairy Rings,"
"Rainbow Children," etc.

With Four Illustrations in Colour by
FRANK WATKINS

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"IN THE WOOD THE LEAF FAIRIES WERE BUSY MAKING THEIR LEAVES"

"SHE WENT TO THE AFTERNOON CLOUDS AND ASKED THEM TO PLAY WITH HER"

THE SUN-MAN'S BABIES

*The Moon-Man sent his stars to bed,
And turned a pitying eye
To where the Sun-Man sailed alone,
Across the eastern sky.*

*"Poor thing!" he said. "How sad to have
No children round your knee.
A thousand thousand stars are mine
How lonely you must be!"*

*The Sun-Man laughed a jolly laugh.
He pointed far below,
To where the shining busy earth
Swung golden in his glow.*

*"A million million babes are mine,"
He said, "on yonder earth;
My sunbeams wrap them all the day,
To me they owe their birth.*

*"A million million babes smile up
From dawn till day is done.
And when I say my last good-night
I kiss them every one."*

THE SUN'S BABIES

THE SNOWDROP BABY

The Snowdrop Baby lay in her little cradle under the ground. Do you know how white and smooth the Snowdrop cradle is, and how snugly the silky sheets are tucked round the baby?

Above the ground it was summer. The birds sang, the bees hummed, the roses and pinks talked to one another across the beds. "What a number of flowers are out this year!" they said. "The garden is full of blossom." Do you know that the flowers talk?

The Snowdrop Baby listened to it all. "I am not needed yet," she said. She turned over and went to sleep.

Summer passed, and autumn came. Asters and dahlias talked to one another now, and tiger lilies bloomed in the garden.

The Snowdrop Baby woke and listened. "My time is not yet come," she said. She slept again.

Winter came. Frost following frost killed all the flowers; storm after storm blew the dead leaves away, leaving the brown stalks bare. Snow fell, and melted. A tiny drop crept down to where the Snowdrop Baby lay. Do you know how the water-drops creep down?

"Your time has come," it said.

"Yes," said the Baby joyfully; "I am making my white frock. Soon I shall go up."

Next day she was ready. She pushed her way through the soft wet earth, and reached the top. Up yet, and up, till she hung on her green stalk high above the ground.

How beautiful she looked in her snowy frock! Pure white it was, except for here and there a splash of softest green. Do you know how lovely Snowdrop Babies are?

She turned her face to the ground, for the sun dazzled her, and made her shy; but a bird saw her. "A Snowdrop! A Snowdrop!" he sang. "Spring is coming, sweet spring is coming!" Do you know how sweet spring is?

LITTLE GOLDEN HEART

A field-daisy opened her golden heart, and looked up at the blue sky. The warm sun shone on her, and the morning wind blew softly over her; but the daisy was afraid. "The world is so wide, and I am so small," she sighed. "I cannot be of any use. Perhaps it would be better to fold my petals and hide my head."

A bee flew down and settled on the daisy. "Dear little Golden Heart, how sweet you are!" she whispered. "How your white petals shine! Their tips are pink, as if the wind had kissed them. Will you give me honey and pollen to make bee bread for the babies in the hive?"

The daisy shook with joy. "Take all I have," she said. "How glad I am to find that I am loved and needed!"

A lark dropped from the sky, singing a glorious song that told about the beauty of the clouds. He saw the daisy.

"Dear little Golden Heart, how sweet you are!" he sang, as he came down. "How your white petals shine! Their tips are pink, as if the wind had kissed them. Will you stay there and bloom so that my babies peeping from their nest may watch you all the day? They love to look at pretty, shining things."

"Gladly, gladly!" cried the daisy. "How sweet it is to think that they should like to look at me!"

A little girl came tripping over the short grass. When she saw the daisy she ran to it and knelt beside it. She touched it lovingly.

"Dear little Golden Heart, how sweet you are!" she said. "How your white petals shine! Their tips are pink, as if the wind had kissed them. Will you stay here and bloom till I may bring the baby out to see you?"

"Oh, how willingly!" whispered the daisy. Now her golden heart was full of joy.

"What a happy, happy world!" she thought. "Although it is so wide, there is a place for me. I can be useful and give pleasure. What could be better than that?"

Thankfully she spread her shining petals to the sun. When night came she folded their tips together, and hung her head, to rest till morning light again brought happiness.

DICKIE CODLIN

The spring winds rocked Dickie Codlin to and fro as he lay in his scented cradle, and the happy bees buzzed their honey song over him. For he lay wrapped in his tiny egg-skin in the heart of an apple blossom. Mrs. Moth had gently laid him there only a day or two before.

The pink apple-petals loosened their hold and dropped to the ground, and the flower closed up and grew into an apple. And Dickie Codlin hatched himself out of his egg-skin and grew into a little caterpillar, with a pink and white skin and ever so many fat, short legs. He still lived on in the heart of the apple.

It was a delightful place to have for a home, for the walls were made of the food he liked best, and all he had to do was to turn himself round and nibble. So he stayed there, eating and growing, till he could not grow any bigger. Then he ate his way out to the skin.

He stood in the entrance of the opening he had made, and looked down. "Dear me!" he said, "it seems a long way to the ground. But I must reach it somehow."

He sat down on the apple and spun a silk thread, fixed it to the hole through which he had come, and dropped by it. "Good-bye, apple-home," he called as he went; but the apple said nothing, for its heart was eaten out.

When he reached the ground he hurried to the trunk of the tree, crawled up it till he found a loose scrap of bark, and crept under this safe hiding-place.

"Now I am going to make my new clothes for my wedding," he said; so he spun a little silk workroom for himself. Into this he crept, and here he made his new clothes for his wedding. He made a brown velvet suit and beautiful bronze-tipped wings trimmed with gold-dust.

By and by he came out looking wonderfully neat and handsome. Off he flew into the warm, scented air to be married to pretty Miss Codlin. It was a splendid wedding. Everybody wore new clothes and danced in the maze dance, and after that they had a honey feast.

THE APPLE FAIRY

She was usually a busy little fairy, but one year she grew lazy. "I am going to take a rest," she said; "I don't see why I should work so hard. I shall sleep all the winter and play all the summer, and the apple-tree can take care of itself."

She curled herself up in her snug little bed, down amongst the roots of the apple-tree, and there she slept through the winter, creeping out only now and again to peep and shiver at the cold, wet world outside. No work was done in the workroom, where in other winters she had been so busy, and so, when the spring came, and all the other apple-trees were wreathed in sweet pink flowers, hers alone stood bare and brown.

The bees came round the tree, buzzing their surprise and disappointment. "Wake up, Apple Fairy!" they called. "The spring has come, and your tree is bare. Where are our honey-cups and pollen-bags?" The moths and early butterflies came fluttering round the bees, for they too were anxious about the honey-cups. But the Apple Fairy gave them no satisfaction. "Go away," she called from her bed; "I don't care about your old honey-cups; I am going to rest." So they had to fly away to other trees.

The birds came next. "Why, Apple Fairy, where are your flowers?" they chirped. "At this rate there will be no apples, and that will be a sad loss to us, for yours were the sweetest in the garden."

"Go away," called the Apple Fairy. "I don't care about your old apples; I am going to rest."

"How very strange!" said the birds to one another. "This is not like our little Apple Fairy of other springs." They flew away to the flowered trees to sing.

The sun shone brightly, the air was clear and warm, and the apple fairies came up from their workrooms for their spring dance on the young clover-leaves. "But where is our little sister?" they asked. They ran to her tree, only to find it bare and empty.

"Where are you, little sister?" they called.

She came up and stood on a branch to look at them.

"What is the matter?" they asked. "Why has your tree no flowers, while ours are pink? Where are your petals? Perhaps you have not yet had time to unroll them all. Shall we help you?"

"No, thank you," she said; "I am having a rest; there will be no apples this year on my tree, for I have slept all the winter and am going to play all the summer."

The fairies looked shocked. "You mustn't do that!" they cried. "Why, if we all did that there would be no apples at all!"

"I don't care about the old apples," she said sulkily, and down she went again.

She came up a few minutes later to peep at the happy fairies dancing on the clover, while the birds sang their gayest songs, and the crickets played their little banjos; but she did not join them, for she felt that they did not approve of her laziness. "Ah, well, my leaves will soon be out, for I put the buds on last summer," she said to herself. "When they come I shall make a swing, and swing all through the long sunny days."

Soon the leaves opened out. She made the swing, hung it on a branch, and sat in it in the

pleasant shade, while the other fairies polished up the growing apples and formed the buds for the next year's leaves. She was not really happy, but she tried to think she was. She was rather lonely, and, somehow, it was dull when there was nothing to do. But she did not go down to her work; she swung herself to and fro, to and fro, till the autumn came, and the apples on the other trees were ripe.

One day a merry, childish voice floated through the garden: "Oh, grandpa! it's my birthday, so I have come for an apple off your best tree."

Then at last the Apple Fairy hung her head, and was sorry, for her punishment had come. Every year, on her birthday, pretty little Elsie had been given the best apple in the garden, and every year until now the Apple Fairy had been proud to know that it had been picked from her tree. Now, alas! she had no apples. Elsie would be disappointed; and she was very fond of Elsie.

Elsie was indeed disappointed. She listened to her grandfather as he told her how his best apple-tree had failed this year, and how he thought he must cut it down if it did not do better next year. Then Elsie came and stood under the tree and looked up anxiously into the branches. "I am so sorry!" she said aloud. "I wonder if it will have apples on next year? I do hope it will."

"It shall! Indeed it shall!" cried the Apple Fairy. She sprang to the end of a branch so that Elsie could see her. "I have been lazy," she said. "I have slept all the winter and have played all the summer, but now I shall work. You shall have apples next year. Good-bye, little Elsie! Here is my swing."

She took down her swing, put it into Elsie's hands, and went down to her workroom. Elsie was so astonished at the sight of a real fairy and a real fairy swing that she could find nothing to say; but, when she came again the next year, the apples on her favourite tree were again the finest in the garden, and the Apple Fairy was again busy and happy.

JOHNNY CROCUS

"Wake up! Wake up, little Johnny Crocus! Sit on my knee and begin to grow."

Johnny woke up, sat on his mother's knee, and began to grow. His mother fed him on rich white food, and wrapped him warmly in soft blankets, so he grew big and strong. They lived together under the ground, in a little round house with brown walls.

One day Johnny said: "Now, I should like to go up and see what the world is like. May I go up to-day?"

"Not yet," said his mother. "You must make your flower first."

So Johnny set to work to make his flower. In the middle he set the pistil with its fans. Round the pistil he put the orange-coloured stamens with their long narrow sacks on their heads, ready to be filled with pollen. Outside the stamens he made a row of petals, small and closely folded now, but soon to grow big and wide. Then he wrapped a fine white silk cloak round the whole flower to keep it from harm.

"My flower is made," he said to his mother. "May I go up now to see what the world is like?"

"Not yet," said the mother. "Make your leaves first."

So he made his leaves and set them closely round the flower. They were long and thin and pale yellow, for they could not turn green till they reached the sunlight.

"My leaves are made," he said to his mother. "May I go up now to see what the world is like?"

"Not yet," said his mother. "Make your pollen first."

So he made his pollen, and filled the long sacks with it. Then his flower was quite ready. He wrapped one white silk cloak after another over flower and leaves together, till they were so snugly covered that no greedy insect could reach them.

"My pollen is made," he said to his mother. "May I go up now to see what the world is like?"

"Yes," said his mother. Johnny jumped for joy. He pushed and pushed through the brown earth above him; at last out popped his little head into the light.

The winter had not yet gone; snow still lay in shaded places. But the sun was shining, and he shone now full on Johnny Crocus. The silken cloaks fell away, the leaves sprang out and turned green, and slowly the flower opened its beautiful golden heart to the warmth of the sunshine.

"Why, there is Johnny Crocus!" called the sun. He shone more brightly than ever on the gleaming petals.

"If Johnny is up we must be stirring too," said the other crocuses. They sprang up and nodded and laughed to Johnny across the ground. Then the snowdrops peeped out, and soon the whole garden woke up, and the spring came.

THE DAFFODIL BABY

It was winter time, and the Daffodil Baby lay wrapped in her warm brown blankets under the ground. But she was not a contented Baby; she wanted to be up above the ground to see what the great world was like. "It is very dull down here," she said to her little friend, the Earth-worm. "Do please go up and see if it is time for me to rise."

The Earth-worm wriggled his way to the top of the ground, but he soon came back, shivering with cold. "Don't think of going up yet," he said; "lie down and sleep again in your warm blankets. On the earth there is nothing to be seen but snow and ice. You would be frozen if you went up now."

So the Daffodil Baby lay down and went to sleep, and slept for many days and nights. By and by, however, she woke and grew restless again. "Please see if I may go up yet," she said. The kind Earth-worm went up again, but came back as quickly as before. "Stay where you are," he cried. "It has rained so much that all the garden is flooded. You would be drowned if you went up now."

The Daffodil Baby had to lie down again. She tried to sleep, but she only grew more restless day by day. At last she begged the little Earth-worm to go up once more and see what the world was like. This time he came back smiling. "You may safely go up now," he said. "The snow and floods are all away, and the sunbeams are there. They are looking for you."

The Daffodil Baby jumped for joy. She sprang out of her blankets and began to push her way up as fast as she could, wrapping herself as she went in a warm, thick cloak of green. When she reached the top she felt the little sunbeams lay their warm hands on her, and she heard her tall leaf-brothers say to one another: "Here comes Baby." But she did not look out from her cloak, for she said to herself: "I must make my frock and grow bigger before I shall be ready to play with the sunbeams."

She worked away busily under her green cloak, and grew taller and taller every day. The little Earth-worm often came out to look at her, but all he could see was the green cloak. "Why don't you come out and see the world?" he would shout from his lowly place on the ground. She always answered: "Wait a little longer. I am making my frock."

At last, one beautiful spring morning, the frock was finished. "I am coming out now," cried the Daffodil Baby. The Earth-worm wriggled up to the top, and the sunbeams flew down to help. They tugged at the thick green cloak with their warm hands till it flew open. Out sprang the Daffodil Baby—a Daffodil Baby no longer, but grown into the loveliest little Daffodil Lady. Her frock was all yellow and frilled, and she wore the daintiest little green shoes. She was very beautiful. The Earth-worm heard everybody say that.

"What a glorious world!" cried the little yellow lady. "Now I am going to be very happy." And so she was. She played with the sunbeams, danced with the winds, and talked merrily to her green-leaf brothers. The bees and the moths came to see her every day; one warm day the first butterfly of the season came to visit her.

But with all her good times she did not grow proud. She was just as friendly with the Earth-worm, now when she stood so far above him, as she had been when under the ground. She often had long talks with him in the early mornings before the bees were awake. "Why don't you climb up here?" she asked him one day. "It is much nicer swaying in the wind, and I could talk to you so much more easily."

"I should grow giddy up there," answered the Earth-worm. "It is not the place for me at all. Besides, I shall be able to talk to you all through the long winter, when you are in your blankets again."

DAFFODILS

Oh the golden daffodils,

That open in the spring,
When gorse blooms out on all the hills,
And birds begin to sing!

They nod their heads, their yellow heads,
All down the garden walk;
As if they wish to leave their beds,
And run about, and talk.

Suppose they could! What jolly fun
To see them run and play!
Like golden children from the sun,
Come down to spend the day.

WILLY WALLFLOWER

The sun shone gaily, for it was the middle of summer. The flowers in the garden made love to the bees and tossed their pretty heads at one another. Only Willy Wallflower stood green and straight, for his flowers had not yet come.

"Wake up, Willy Wallflower!" called the Roses. "It is time you showed us your flowers."

"Not yet," said Willy Wallflower. "They are not ready."

"How slow you are!" cried the White Lily. "If you do not hurry, the summer will be over and the bees gone. Then what will be the use of your flowers?"

"I cannot help it," said Willy. "I was planted late, and am now busy making my wood. I will bloom when my time comes."

The summer passed and the autumn came, but still Willy Wallflower had no flowers, though he grew taller and stouter every day. Then the cold winter came. The flowers shivered themselves away to nothing, the bees took to staying in the hive all day.

The snow and ice passed, and the keen spring winds began to blow. Now Willy Wallflower was ready to make his flowers. He wrapped the little buds in their warm round tunics and set them in clusters amongst their sheltering leaves. "Grow high and open out," he said.

Slowly they grew high, and at last one mild day they pushed aside their tunics and opened out. They were very beautiful; four red velvety petals spread widely out on each side; in the middle there were six pale yellow stamens and a fluffy double pistil-head. Below the fluffy head was the long, slender seed-case, where the tiny baby seedlings waited for the pollen grains that were to make them grow.

"Where is our pollen?" the babies cried eagerly.

"Be patient," said Willy Wallflower. "Soon the bees will bring it."

But the bees were long in coming. Day after day Willy Wallflower and the babies waited, listening anxiously for the busy wings that did not come. The honey-cups were filled with sweetest honey, the petals poured out their delicious scent into the surrounding air, but no bees appeared.

"Wait a little longer," said Willy Wallflower. "They will surely come soon."

In the hive the bees hung in a mass on their comb to keep warm. In the centre was the Queen; round her clung her people, row after row, all quiet and orderly, and doing their best to help one another. As the outer ones grew cold they passed into the centre; at meal-times the inside ones passed out the honey to the others. From mouth to mouth it was passed till it reached the other row, everybody waiting his turn and showing no greediness. Every now and again they beat their wings to keep warm, but otherwise they were still, as they had been all the winter.

One day a warm breath of air floated in through the door. "That feels like spring!" cried the bees. "Perhaps the flowers are waking." Scouts were sent out to see.

Soon they came back. "The crocuses and primroses are opening," they reported, "and Willy Wallflower is all in bloom waiting for us."

"Then let us go!" said the bees. They flew straight out to Willy Wallflower.

"At last! at last!" cried the wee green babies joyfully. The bees dipped deep into the sweet honey-cups, carrying the pollen from the stamens of one flower to the fluffy pistil-heads of others.

Then the pollen grains ran down into the seed-cases and helped the babies to grow into seeds.

SWEET VIOLET

A little girl brought a violet plant and a pansy plant to her teacher.

"See!" said she. "These were given to me. May I grow them in school?"

"Certainly," said the teacher. "Here are two little pots. We will plant them both, and set them on the broad window-sill. You can water them each day, and we shall see how well they will grow."

"This is dreadful," said the Pansy to the Violet, as they stood side by side on the window-sill. "How shall we bear the dust and heat of this room after the fresh sweet air of the garden? I am sure I shall die."

"Oh! it is not quite so bad as that," said the Violet. "It certainly is not so pleasant as the garden, but when the window is opened one feels better."

"My leaves are covered with dust already. How is one to breathe?" grumbled the Pansy.

"So are mine," said the Violet; "but never mind. Don't think about it. Let us turn our attention to making our flowers."

"You don't mean to say that you think of making a flower here!" cried the Pansy. "What would be the use? You would never be able to make good seed, for no bee or butterfly will ever find its way in amongst these close buildings."

"One never knows what may happen," said the Violet; "and it is better to be busy than to mope."

She set to work to make her flower, and took just as much care over it as if she had been out in the garden. She covered the slender stalk and pointed sepals with soft white fur, and filled her seed-box with tiny green balls. Then she drew honey guides down her blue silk petals, made her pollen, and filled her quaint honey-bag with honey, just as if she expected a bee or a butterfly at any moment.

"You are wasting your time," said the Pansy, who was doing nothing.

"I am busy, and that keeps me happy," said the Violet. She scented her petals and set their brushes on them.

"My violet has a flower on it!" cried the little girl. "Oh, how sweet it smells!" She watched the sun shining through the blue petals as the flower hung over the pot, and her eyes shone with pleasure. All through the day she turned to look at the Violet as soon as each little task was done, and at night she told her mother what had happened.

"I shall not mind if no bee finds me now," said the Violet. "My flower has given so much happiness that I am content, even if I never make good seed." The Pansy had nothing to say.

A few days later a wonderful thing happened. A bee came buzzing in at the open window and flew straight to the Violet.

"Sweet Violet," he said, "I have found you at last. Your scent came out to me as I was passing, and I have sought for you in all the windows. Have you any honey for me?"

"Plenty!" cried the Violet joyfully. "Dip deep and take all I have, dear friend."

"Thank you," said the Bee. "I will give you some pollen from your cousins in return. They are blooming in a window-box in the next street."

He brushed tiny pollen grains off his head and gave them to the Violet.

"Thank you," said the Violet. "Please take some of mine back to my cousins." She laid some of hers on his head, and he flew off.

Filled with joy, the Violet set to work to make her little green balls into seeds.

"Well, if I had thought a bee really would come, I would have made a flower too," said the Pansy.

THE CHERRY CHILDREN

It was early spring. The Cherry Children woke up and called: "Mother, may we go to play now?"

"Wait till I have made your fairy boats," said the Cherry Mother.

They lay still and waited, and she made their fairy boats, with white silk sails. Then they sprang up and played in the sunshine, sailing to and fro on the spring winds, and throwing tiny scent-balls out into the air. The bees and butterflies and silver moths came to visit them; everybody laughed and chattered and was happy.

After a while the Cherry Children grew tired.

"Mother," they called, "we have played enough. We should like to rest now."

"Creep into your little green cradles," said the Cherry Mother. "Rest there and grow while I make your cradles big."

They crept into their cradles. The mother gently loosened the white sails and dropped them on the ground, where they lay like scented snowflakes. Then she made the cradles bigger as the children grew. She lined the wooden walls with softest satin, and covered them with a thick green covering. The winds blew and rocked the little cradles to and fro; from the neighbouring trees the birds sang soft lullabies, and watched and waited.

The green cradle coverings turned deep red. Once more the Cherry Children woke up.

"Mother, we wish to grow," they called.

"The birds are coming. They will carry you away to grow," replied the mother.

The birds came in flocks and carried the Cherry Children away in their beaks. They pecked off the sweet red coverings and ate them, dropping the hard wooden cradles on the ground. There the autumn leaves covered them when they fell, and the rain showers washed them farther and farther into the soft earth.

One day the wooden cradles split open at the sides, and out peeped the Cherry Children. They grew down and up, and soon wherever a cradle had fallen there stood a young cherry tree, slender and green.

THE DAISY FAIRY

She was a dainty little fairy, and all her work was daintily done. The river bank was so gay with her sweet, pink-tipped daisies that everybody admired it. The bees loved the spot.

One day she noticed that a hill standing near had no flowers on it.

"I must make that beautiful too," she thought, so she flew across and planted a daisy-seed near the top.

"That is absurd," said the Hill. "How can a thing so tiny be of any use to me?"

"Wait and see," said the Fairy. To the seed she said: "Swell and sprout and grow up and down."

The seed swelled and sprouted, and grew up and down; when the Fairy came again it had a root and a stem.

"Now make your leaves," she said; when next she came the leaves were made. "Very well done," she said. "Now I will help you to make your flowers, for they are most important."

So she and the daisy worked together at the flowers. First they made a stem, slender and green, with a knob at the top. On this they seated the flowers like tiny golden bells round and round in rings. In each flower they put a store of honey for the bees and of pollen for the neighbour flowers. Then they set a row of fine large white petals round the edge to catch the eyes of the bees, and the Fairy tipped them with pink. Last they made the green leaf coverings for the outside to keep away unfriendly insects.

"Fold yourselves over the flowers till the morning," the Fairy said to these leaves, "and then

open widely to let the bees come in."

From her river bank the next morning the Fairy saw the daisy shining in the sunlight. She pointed it out to a bee. "There is a fresh daisy full of honey-cups," she said. The bee flew to it at once. He stood in the middle of the flower, unrolled his long tongue, and supped up the sweet honey from flower after flower, turning himself round and round till he had dipped into every one.

"Thank you, tiny daisies," said the Bee. "That was delicious honey."

"Thank you, Mr. Bee," said the Daisies, "for you have mixed our pollen, and now our seed will grow well."

The Daisy Fairy came again and said: "Drop your petals, close your green leaf coverings, and make your seed."

She came again when the seeds were ripe.

"Now scatter your seeds," she said to the daisy, and to each little seed as it fell she said as before: "Swell and sprout and grow up and down." The seeds did as they were told, and soon there was a ring of strong young daisy plants growing round the first one. Again the flowers were made and the seeds scattered; in a short time the hill was starred with pink and white.

"It is wonderful!" said the Hill. "I should never have believed it if I had not seen it."

"It was a tiny seed," said the Fairy, "but it has made you beautiful."

MY GARDEN

I have a garden of sweetest flowers,
Beside the orchard wall.
The sun sends sunbeams, the clouds send showers,
To make them gay and tall.

Marigolds, wallflowers, cowslips, pinks,
Pansies, and mignonette!
Forget-me-not blue its star-eye winks;
Roses their buds have set.

But dearest of all, in their border low,
Bloom the daisies so wee.
Pink and crimson, or as white as the snow;
Daisies, daisies for me!

BED-TIME

Ticketty Tacketty, tick, tack, tock!
Now then, young man, just look at that clock!
Off with your shoe, and off with your sock.
Ticketty Tacketty, tick, tack, tock.

PANSY

Pansy so velvety, pansy so wide,
Pansy with heart of gold,
How I wish I could stay outside
Till I saw your petals unfold!

When do you open them, pansy so blue?
I watch, but never see.
One day there's a bud; the next, there's—you!

You are *such* a puzzle to me.

Do you open them softly in the dark,
While stars watch overhead?
Or fling them wide with the morning lark,
Before I am out of my bed?

MAY FAIRIES

"Come out and dance," called the Snow Fairies to the May Fairies.

The May Fairies peeped out of their homes in the hawthorn trees and shivered.

"No, thank you," they said. "It is too cold out there. Besides, we are busy making our buds."

They made tiny red-tipped buds and set them on the branches of the trees, two at the foot of each thorn. Then they crept down into their warm homes again to wait for the spring.

With the spring came the merry Sunbeams.

"Come out and dance," they called.

"Oh! are you there?" called back the May Fairies. "Then we must open our buds, so we have no time to dance."

They worked hard, blowing out the buds with their dainty breath, till at last the leaves opened and the trees were dressed in fluttering green.

The Spring Fairies came tripping past, waving tasselled catkins in their hands.

"Come out and dance," they called.

"We have no time. We must make our flower-buds," replied the May Fairies.

They made their wee round flower-buds and set them on the trees, and blew into them and puffed them out till they looked like tiny snowballs. Harder and harder they blew, until at last the flowers flew open. Then the trees looked as if showers of white stars had fallen on them from the sky in snow-time. How lovely they were! The little flies came from far and near to feast, buzzing out their thankfulness to the fairies for the sweet honey.

The Summer Fairies came with roses and forget-me-nots. "Come out and dance," they called.

"We have no time," called back the May Fairies. "We have to make our berries."

They gently loosened the white petals of the flowers and set them floating on the wind. Then they made the little green seed-balls into berries, blowing them big and round so that the seeds should have room to grow, and polishing the outsides till they turned red and glowed like garnets in the sunshine. What a feast the birds had!

When the fairies had finished it was autumn.

"Come and dance," called the Leaf Fairies as they fluttered past in their brown and crimson robes.

"We are coming," called back the May Fairies, "for now our work is done." They flew down from their tree-homes, free at last to dance through all the golden autumn days.

THE DRAGON

He was not a pretty fellow by any means when he lived in the water. Indeed, the mosquito babies thought him the ugliest and fiercest-looking creature in the world; but as he ate them up whenever he could catch them their bad opinion of him was hardly to be wondered at.

They all lived in the pool. The mosquito babies felt that it would have been a happy life if it had not been for the Dragon. He would lie so still and grey in the water that they would think he was only a stick, but as they came near his horrid mask would open, and out would shoot his cruel jaws; they would be swallowed before they had time to think any more. What an appetite he

had! It seemed as if all the mosquito babies in the pool would never satisfy him.

But one day his appetite failed. "I feel very queer," he said. "I will go up into the air." He crawled slowly up a reed and hung on to it above the water, and there he seemed to sleep for days and weeks, neither moving nor eating. The mosquito babies could have a good time now—if there were any left.

As he hung there his skin grew strangely hard and dry and shrunken, as if it were becoming a lifeless case. And that is just what was happening. Inside it the Dragon was growing into something quite different from what he had been.

One morning he stirred. "How close and dark it is in here!" he said. "I must go out."

He put his head against the end of the case and pushed hard. Crack! went the dry skin, and out popped his head. "This is tiring work," he said; he stopped to rest and to grow used to the strong light.

Soon he began again. He pushed and pushed till the opening grew wide enough for his body; then he crawled slowly out and stood on top of his old skin. He felt strange and damp and chilly at first, but the sun was delightfully warm, so he stood still, to be dried and comforted.

"How changed I am!" he thought. Indeed, the change was wonderful. The flabby grey body and the ugly mask and claws were gone. In their places he had a long, slender body barred with black and gold, a shapely head with two big bronze-green eyes and delicate feelers, and six supple finely-jointed legs.

And he had wings! Yes, four beautiful, beautiful wings. He raised them one by one to dry them. He quivered with joy as he looked at their delicate lacework and lovely colours. "How fine they are! And how glorious it will be to fly!" he thought.

Soon he was dried and warmed. He spread his glittering wings, rose into the air, and sailed away to play with his cousins and catch moths—a Pool Dragon no longer, but a shining Dragon-fly.

GOLD BROOM AND WHITE BROOM

On a piece of waste land lived the Broom cousins.

"My leaves are bigger than yours," said Gold Broom to White Broom.

"Size is not everything," said White Broom to Gold Broom; they were always sparring at one another.

Buds came on the branches. Then the flowers sprang out and danced in the sunshine.

"How pale and small your children are!" said Gold Broom to White Broom. "Mine are golden and well grown. See how strong and happy they look."

"Yellow is such a common colour," said White Broom to Gold Broom. "White is much more refined. My children are not overgrown, but they are dainty. And how sweetly they are scented!"

The bees and moths came flying amongst the flowers, unrolling their long tongues and sipping up the honey.

"Are not my children the best?" asked Gold Broom of the bees.

"Are not mine?" asked White Broom.

"That is hard to decide," said the Bees. "We love them all alike. Gold Broom's children have more honey, but White Broom's honey is sweeter to the taste." They flew away to their hive, leaving the mothers to argue it out.

The children took no part in the discussion. They were too happy to quarrel. They played and danced every day, till at last they grew tired. Then they dropped their bright wings and shut themselves away in their little green houses.

Here they sat in rows on round stools and grew fat. The walls were lined with wool, so that the cold could not come in; every day Gold Broom and White Broom sent food up the stalk-passages to them. Thus they were comfortable and happy.

But outside the mothers were still quarrelling.

"My houses are bigger than yours," said Gold Broom.

"As I told you before, size is nothing," replied White Broom. "Anyway, mine are much finer in shape."

The houses turned brown and black, and the children turned brown and black. They were big and strong now, and they wished to come out. One by one Gold Broom and White Broom twisted the walls of the houses. Out sprang the children into the world. Pop! pop! pop! Such a splitting and twisting of little house-walls curling back upon each other! Such a jumping of brown and black children far out over the ground!

"Mine jump the farthest," said Gold Broom.

"Mine jump much more gracefully," said White Broom.

The children lay on the ground. The sun shone on them, the rain softened their hard coats. They swelled and burst, tiny shoots came out, and in a little while the ground was green with hundreds of young broom plants.

"Mine are growing the best," said Gold Broom.

"What nonsense you talk!" said White Broom.

KITTY CRAYFISH'S HOUSEKEEPING

Kitty Crayfish passed the first part of her life clinging under her mother's bent tail. But one day her mother said: "You are old enough to take care of yourself now, little Kitty. Make a house in the bank, and always creep into it while you change your shell."

She swam to the bank at the side of the stream, gently placed Kitty on a flat stone, and left her there. Kitty was not at all afraid. She was very tiny, but she was exactly like her mother in shape, and had the same strong claws and jaws. She set to work at once to burrow in the bank, and soon had a neat little house made. Tired with her hard work, she threw herself down and slept.

When she woke she felt hungry; so she went out to look for food. She walked forwards, creeping on eight of her queer jointed legs; but when she reached the water she turned round and swam backwards, using the blades of her wide tail as front paddles, and bringing all her swimming legs and swimmerets into play.

She made a good meal, for there were plenty of worms and grubs and tiny fish on the mud-floor of the stream, and her nippers were long and strong. While she was feeding, Old Man Crayfish came striding along the mud-floor. He would have eaten her for dinner if he could have caught her, for he was very fond of tender babies now and again. But she saw him coming, and was off before he could reach her. She swam back to her new home, well pleased with herself. Her housekeeping had begun well; she felt that she was able to take care of herself.

A few days later her mother peeped in at the door.

"You seem very comfortable," she said; "but are you not coming out to-day?"

"No," said Kitty; "I don't feel very well. My shell feels far too tight."

"Ah! it is going to split," said her mother. "I can see it looks very thin. You are quite right to stay in. Don't show yourself till the new one is hard, or somebody will devour you."

Kitty stayed in her house, lying still and feeling very queer. By and by her shell split across the back, just beneath her shield. She pushed her head out through the slit. Then she slowly drew the rest of her body out, till she stood quite outside her old shell, shivering and cold, and a little afraid. Her old covering lay there, legs and feelers and shield and tail; even the skins of the eyes on their little stalks. She herself stood in a new shell, exactly the same in shape, but quite soft.

Afterwards Kitty became accustomed to these wonderful changes; for she grew so fast that she had to have a new shell eight times during the first year of her life, five times the second year, and once every year after that till she stopped growing. Each time she had to hide in her house till the new shell became hard enough to protect her; then she swam out again, hungrier and stronger than ever.

She has been living in her burrowed house for years, making it bigger as she herself grew bigger. She is there to-day. She is a mother-crayfish now, and carries her little ones under her tail until they, too, are big enough to keep house for themselves.

THE GARDEN PARTY

It was a lovely summer morning. Everybody in the garden was busy, for in the afternoon the flowers were to give their great garden-party. The bees and flies and moths and butterflies and little beetles were all invited.

In the pansy plot the pansies put on their best velvet frocks, and brushed their little green shoes. The lilies dressed themselves in white, and hung bags of golden dust around their necks. The sweet-peas and roses and larkspurs were gay in many-coloured silks. They sprinkled scent over themselves, and filled their honey-jars full of sweetest honey for their visitors. All was cheerfulness and hustle.

At last the afternoon came and the visitors arrived. What excitement! Such a buzzing and chattering! Such a bowing and smiling and polite shaking of wings and feelers! The bees and moths and flies and butterflies and little beetles flew about, singing with pleasure and drinking the delicious honey provided for them. They told the smiling flowers how lovely they were, and the flowers in return dusted them with their golden dust. As the visitors flew from flower to flower they carried the golden pollen dust with them, leaving a little here and there; thus the flowers were able to exchange.

At last the party was over. The guests flew home well pleased, and the garden was quiet again. Night came; the flowers dropped their heads, and many slept.

But in the darkness some were awake, and they began to whisper to their neighbours: "Did you exchange?" The answers came: "Yes." "We did too." "So did we." "I shall not open tomorrow," said a pansy. "My exchanges are all made, and my seeds are beginning to grow. The bees found my honey easily, because my honey-guides helped them; so they carried all my pollen away, and brought plenty from my cousins."

"That is so with us," said many of the others. But some said: "We must keep open a little longer. Our seeds are not all growing." So they opened again next day, and gave little parties of their own, till all the exchanges were made and all the seeds were growing.

The sunny days passed, and now where the flowers had been were little seed-cases; some round, some pointed, some oval, but all filled to the brim with healthy young seeds. The sun shone on them, and they grew and grew till the cases would hold them no longer. Then there was a splitting and a bursting and a popping everywhere, and out sprang the little seeds, to begin a new life for themselves. As the young seedlings sprang up on every side, the older plants looked at them with pride. "We have very fine children," they said. "Next year we must give another garden-party."

BLUEBELLS

Bluebells, bluebells, did the fairies make you?
Do they fly to you at night and ring you and shake you,
And dance on your slender stalks?
Do they stroke you and love you,
And whisper above you,
And take you for fairy walks?

COWSLIPS

O sweet the smell of the cowslip bell!
Was ever flower so sweet?
I picked it where its soft leaves fell
Around its dainty feet.

How slender is its golden throat!
How soft its scented face!
It hangs from out its green pale coat
With pretty drooping grace.

OF ROYAL BLOOD

She was certainly a very grand princess. From the first the nurse-bees fed her with rich golden honey instead of the bee-bread that the common children received. She had a royal bedroom, too, very much larger than the others. At meal-times the nurses were always waiting with her honey; all day long they guarded and watched her, and fanned fresh air with their wings into her bedroom. So she grew big and strong.

One day she said: "I have finished growing, and shall put on my royal robes. Close the door so that nobody can see me while I dress."

The nurses closed the door, and she put on her royal robes. When she was ready they rushed to open the door again. She came out beautiful and shining.

"Now I am going to be Queen," she said to the bee-people who had gathered round her.

"Yes," they said. "The old Queen has gone to a new home and left this one to you. Hail! Queen of the hive!" They bowed before her with great respect, and walked backwards when they left the room.

Guards and honey-bearers were appointed for her, and maids of honour to keep her robes in order. So the new Queen entered into her royal state.

"I am going to be married," she said. She flew out of the hive and rose high in the air, and there she was married to Prince Drone.

"I must be busy," said the Queen, "or there will be no young bees for next season."

Up and down the hive passages she went, placing a little egg in each bedroom, and leaving it there to be hatched by the warmth of the hive. Up and down she went till thousands of eggs were laid.

All were busy and happy in the hive and everything went well. Then one sad day word went round that the Queen was missing. In a moment everybody left their work and rushed wildly through the hive, looking for her in every room and buzzing out their fear and sorrow. She was not in the hive!

Her guards were questioned. They reported that she had gone for a short flight in the fresh air, saying that she did not need their attendance. Scouts were sent out in all directions to look for her, while the bees stood about in groups, too anxious to do anything but wait for news.

One by one the scouts returned, reporting no success in their search. Others were sent out, and still others, but they too returned with no news. Then the buzzing died down to a sorrowful silence, for the bee-people felt that their Queen was lost. "She must have met with her death out there," they whispered.

Suddenly a joyful call came from a returning scout; next moment the Queen came flying in, tired and ruffled and shaking with fear. How her people crowded about her in their joy! They caressed her, stroked her trembling wings, and begged her to tell them what had happened.

"I flew rather far from the hive," she said, "and a huge monster called a boy threw his cap over me and then picked me up in his hand. I would not sting him as you might have done, so I was helpless. He carried me round the garden to another boy-monster, and they agreed to pull off my wings. Think of my terror! I struggled hard to escape, and at last managed to slip through the clumsy fingers of the monster, and flew home. Oh dear, it was terrible! I shall never again go out by myself."

"No, you must not," said her people. "We could not bear to lose our dear Queen."

They comforted her, and fed her, and soon the hive was going on again in its old, happy way.

BILLYBUZZ THE DRONE

"You are lazy," said the boy who watched the bees. "Why don't you work like the others?"

Billybuzz the Drone helped himself to a little more honey from the best pantry; then he

turned his big brown head slowly towards the boy who watched the bees.

"You people will never take the trouble to understand us," he said. "You call us lazy, but we cannot work. We are not made like the workers."

"How is that?" asked the boy. "Surely you can fly about and gather honey? That is easy enough."

"Not if one's tongue is too short," replied the Drone. "The Worker Bees have long, hairy tongues to lick the honey out of the deep flower-cups, but my tongue is too short, and would not reach far enough down."

"But you could gather pollen to make bee-bread for the baby bees," said the boy.

"I have no pollen-basket," said the Drone.

"Can you not make wax?"

"No. I have no wax pockets in my coat."

"Then you could be a soldier-bee, and help to guard the Queen and hive."

"I should be useless. I have no sting."

"Oh, well, at any rate you could be a nurse and give the babies their meals, like those nurses over there."

"Why should I? Why should I work at all when I am the King?"

The boy stared. "You a King!" he cried

"Yes. Did you not know that we have a King and Queen?" asked the Drone.

"I knew that you have a Queen; we often hear about her. But I didn't think about a King."

"Well, I am the King—at least, I intend to be soon. At present I am a Prince. When my Queen comes out we shall be married, and then I shall be King. There are other drones waiting, but they shall not have her. Listen—she is singing in her golden room now. That means that she is coming out soon. I must be ready for the beautiful Queen."

He walked out of the hive into the sunshine. Here he brushed himself and spread his shining wings and looked very big and handsome. There was a stir in the hive, and the young Queen flew out and mounted into the air. With a rush Billybuzz flew swiftly after her, followed by the other drones who had been waiting. Whoever could catch the Queen first was to marry her, so they all did their best. Higher and higher they flew, till they were all out of sight.

The boy waited below, and presently the disappointed drones came back, bringing the news that Billybuzz had won the race. So Billybuzz the Drone married the Queen, and became King.

A few days later the boy again came to watch the bees.

"Where is Billybuzz the King?" he asked a drone who sat at the front door in the sunshine.

"Dead!" said the drone.

"Dear me!" said the boy. "How did that happen?"

"Oh, he just died," said the drone. "We all die very soon after we become kings. We are not made to live as long as the workers or the queens."

"Is that so? Then I would rather be born a worker than a king," said the boy.

"Everyone to his taste," said the drone. "A short life and a merry one for me."

HONEY

A little golden flower-cup,
A little golden bee.
A little store of honey made
For Nell, and Jack, and me.

A little crystal honey-jar,
A little pantry shelf.

A naughty little Nelly-girl
Falls down, and hurts herself.

ON THE HILLSIDE

The sun shone gaily, the skylark sang her morning song, and the crickets chirped their merriest; but the things that usually lived so peacefully on the hillside were quarrelling.

It was the wind who began it. As he lifted the pollen from one patch of grass-flowers and carried it to the next he cried boastingly: "What a friend I am to you tiny creatures! If it were not for me you could bear no seed. I am indeed useful. I am sure nobody does so much good."

"How absurd!" cried the bees. "Anyone would think you did all the work of the world. You certainly carry the grass pollen, but think of the flowers whose pollen we carry. What would the clover here do without us? And the wild flowers, and the flowers in the gardens and orchards all over the world. We are certainly the most useful."

At this thousands of earth-worms popped their heads above the ground. "If you are talking about usefulness, don't forget us," they said. "You see very little of us, for we come out at night when most of you are asleep. But think of all the work we do. We burrow and burrow here in our millions, ploughing the ground day after day till every inch is opened up to let in the sweet air and drain away the water from the surface. How could the flowers and grasses live if we did not do this? Think how fine we keep the soil, powdering it as we do in our burrowings! And how rich we make it by dragging down decaying leaves into our holes every night. The world would be a sorry place for everything that grows and lives if we did not work so hard. We are surely more useful than anybody."

The grasses waved their flowered heads. "All that is true enough," they said; "but nobody can possibly be more useful than we are. Think how we clothe the land and give food to hundreds of animals and shelter to millions of insects."

A little cloud sailed softly down on to the hill-top to listen. "What could any of you do without the clouds?" she asked. "You all depend on our rain for your lives; you must confess you are less useful than we are."

"Ho! ho! ho!" laughed the merry sun. "Fancy quarrelling this fine morning! Now I will tell you, and this will settle it once for all. You are all useful, and not one of you could be spared, and not one of you could do well without the other. Everything helps everything else. The worms help the grass, and the grass feeds the worms; the bees help the flowers, and the flowers feed the bees; the wind helps the clouds, and the clouds become rain and help the wind in its work. And I am here over you all, and if it were not for me nothing could live, so, after all, I am the most useful. If I did not shine there would be no grass, no worms, no flowers, no bees, no wind, and no clouds. Now go on with your work."

THE SUN'S NEST

Winnie and I went sailing fast
Out to the golden West.
We wished to see the Sun drop down
Into his shining nest.

Our ship was soft and pearly white—
A dear little cloud up high.
We sailed along at sunset time,
Across the flaming sky.

Winnie stood up and laughed with joy;
Her curls blew round her head.
The golden clouds raced past our ship,
To see the Sun to bed.

The nest was made of red, red cloud,
Hung like a rosy swing:
An angel stood on either side—
We heard them softly sing.

The tired Sun came dropping down,
And cuddled in his nest.
The angels spread their snow-white wings
To guard him through his rest.

The soft wee clouds went home with us,
The sky grew grey and blue;
The stars peeped out and laughed and winked,
And said: "Good-night, you two!"

CRICKITY-CRIK

Mrs. Cricket flew busily round, looking for a good place for her eggs. "This will do," she said at last. "Here is plenty of food for them when they hatch." She flew down close to the roots of a soft green plant, pierced a hole in the ground with her piercer, placed the eggs in it with her egg placer, and flew off.

"Just the very dinner I like best," said Mr. Beetle to himself; he ran to the hole, dug out the eggs, and ate them up.

He thought he had them all, so he went away; but there was one left, hidden under a grain of earth. After a while it hatched out into Crikitty-Crik.

Crikitty-Crik could not fly, or sing, or lay eggs, for he was only a tiny cricket-baby. All he could do was eat, but that he did thoroughly. He gobbled up every scrap of soft vegetable food he could find in the earth, and as his mother had chosen a good place for him he found plenty and soon grew fat. His front legs were specially made for burrowing, and his jaws were made for nibbling.

One day he stopped eating and said: "I should like to fly." So he let his skin grow hard, and he shut himself up in it, and made his wings. He altered the shape of his mouth, too. "For I am going to suck leaves when I am a grown-up cricket," he said.

When everything was ready he pushed himself out through the top of his old skin and left it lying on the ground. Then up he flew to suck the juices of the leaves.

Such a handsome fellow he was—all green and gold and fine lace-work. And he could make music, for under his body he had grown two little flat sounding boards. When he moved his hind-legs quickly over these they made the cricket-song: "Crikitty-Crik! Crikitty-Crik! What a fine world it is!"

THE DISCONTENTED ROOT

The Root was grumbling again, and everybody felt unhappy. "It's not fair," she said. "Why should I have to stay down here in the dark while you can all live in the sunshine? It is work, work, work all day down here, finding water and food for you all; while you do nothing but enjoy yourselves."

"Oh, you must not say that," cried the stems. "We are as busy as you are. Your work would be useless if we did not spend our time carrying water and food from you to the leaves and flowers. And think of the weight we are bearing. You cannot say your work is harder than ours."

"It certainly is not harder than ours," said the leaves. "Think of all that goes on in our workshops. We supply as much food from the air as you from the earth. You must not say we are not busy."

The flowers bent their heads and spoke. "Dear little Root-sister," they said, "do not make us unhappy with your discontent. Life is very full of work for all of us. You must give us food or we cannot live, and we flowers must make our seed or the family would die out, so we help each other. Your work lies in the dark earth, certainly, while ours is in the sunshine; but the life up here would not suit you. I am sure you would die if you tried to live above the ground."

But the Root would not understand. "Fine words," she said, "but no comfort to me! Oh! I wish I could go up into the sunshine."

One day she had her wish, for a slip of the gardener's spade turned her above the ground.

She was delighted, but the others were in despair. "Oh, dear, whatever will become of us now?" they cried. "If only the gardener would see you and put you in again!" But the gardener did not notice; it lay there all day.

"The sunshine is delightful," said the Root, though really its glare and heat were making her feel quite dizzy.

"How hot the sun is! And how parched we are!" sighed the drooping flowers. "Now we must die, and our poor little half-formed seeds will never grow into beautiful plants." And they laid their tender faces on the hot earth and died.

The afternoon wore on. The gasping leaves and soft stems almost died too, but the coolness of evening and the night dew revived them a little; when the morning came they tried to lift themselves and live on in spite of the hot sunshine that came again.

As for the Root, she was longing now for the gardener to come and put her in the earth. She had been dried and withered by the heat, then half frozen by the cold night dew; now here was another day to face in this glare of light and cruel sunshine. She knew now that the flowers were right in saying that the life above ground would not suit her. "If the gardener does not come soon I shall die, too," she thought.

The gardener came, saw the upturned Root, and set it in its old place. "I will never grumble at my life again," said the Root as the soft cool earth closed in around her.

"How thankful we are!" whispered the leaves faintly. "Now we shall live again."

But the flowers said nothing, for they were dead.

CREEPY-CRAWLY

At first Creepy-Crawly was nothing but a tiny egg on a blade of grass; but when he hatched out into a caterpillar he was Creepy-Crawly indeed, for though he had about sixteen pairs of legs, they were all so tiny that he could not be said to walk on them. But he crawled about quite happily, and was well content with life as he found it.

"Why don't you grow long legs like me?" said the Spider. "It must be terribly slow work crawling about like that."

Creepy-Crawly did not stay to answer. Out of his body he drew two threads as fine as the spider's own, glued them together with his mouth into a rope, and dropped by the rope from the branch to the ground. He did not like Mrs. Spider.

"Well, I wouldn't wear a green coat if I were you," said an Earth-worm whom he met. "Brown is a much nicer colour."

"Brown may be best for you who live in the ground," said Creepy-Crawly, "but green is better for me. The birds would like me for dinner, you know, but they cannot see me so well if I look like the leaves I feed on."

"You should wear a hard shell on your back." said a Beetle. "You are absurdly soft."

Creepy-Crawly wriggled quickly out of the beetle's sight, and a Butterfly who saw him laughed. She said: "Better grow wings, Creepy-Crawly. They are the best means of escape from your enemies."

Creepy-Crawly looked wistfully at her as she flew off. "Yes," he said to himself, "that is what I should like—to fly through the air in that grand, free way. That would be glorious! Ah, well! I have no wings, but I may as well be as happy as I can."

Creepy-Crawly had been eating hard for weeks, but now he began to feel less and less hungry and more and more drowsy. One day he curled himself up under a dead leaf and went to sleep; there he slept on and on for week after week without waking once to eat.

As he slept his skin turned brown like the worm's, and hard like the beetle's; but inside the skin a still more wonderful change was taking place. From his body six slender jointed legs with clawed toes grew slowly out, followed by four wings, which promised to be broad and beautiful when they had room to open. From the head grew two long feelers with little knobs at their ends. Over body, head, and wings a coat of tiny, many-coloured scales spread itself, softer than down, and as beautiful as the rainbow.

Creepy-Crawly woke up at last, but he was Creepy-Crawly no longer. He pushed his way out of his hard shell and stood on the dead leaf to dry himself. He spread his wings in the sun; he

shook his six jointed legs one after the other; he turned and twisted himself this way and that in his delight.

"Who would have thought I should have come to this?" he said to himself. "Now I am a Butterfly. I am like the one that spoke to me that day. I will fly through the air as she did, and find her, and show her how I have changed."

He spread his beautiful wings and rose up into the warm air, and flew away to drink honey from the flowers and to dance with his butterfly cousins.

BLACKIE

At first Blackie was only a tiny speck in an egg, but he grew so fast that he soon filled the shell. Mrs. Blackbird covered him with her warm feathered body, and turned him over every day so that he should grow evenly; and Mr. Blackbird sat on a branch and sang: "How the sun shines! How bright is the world!"

It was delightfully warm and cosy in the little shell-house, so Blackie was content for a long time. But when he had grown as big as the shell would let him, and had used up all the food that had been stored for him, he wished to come out. He pecked at the shell, and his mother heard him.

"That is well," she said; "so you are ready to come out into the world. Peck hard till you make a hole. Then poke out your head."

He pecked hard, and Mrs. Blackbird helped gently from her side. Presently a hole was made, and out popped the little head.

"Cheep!" he said. "Cheep! Cheep!"

"Push with your shoulders till you crack the shell," said his mother. He pushed and pushed, and soon the shell split, and he stepped out.

"Well, you are not very handsome," said his father, looking in over the edge of the nest, "but you will be much better looking when your feathers come."

He certainly was not handsome, for he was bald all over, and his mouth looked too big for his body. But he did not know that, so he was quite happy. "Cheep!" he said. "What a brown world it is!" For all he could see was the inside of the nest, and he thought that was the world.

"Here is a worm," said Mrs. Blackbird. How that big mouth of his opened! In the weeks that followed both father and mother had to work hard to keep it filled. But they had their reward, for Blackie grew big and strong, and his feathers came.

He could look over the top of the nest now. "Cheep! What a green world it is!" he said; for all he could see was the tree, and he thought that was the world. The wind blew, and the branches swayed to and fro and rocked the nest till he fell asleep.

"Come out and learn to fly," said his mother one day. "Stand on the edge of the nest and fly down to the branch below."

She showed him how to do it, and he peeped over the edge of the nest and watched her. But it looked such a long way to the branch that he was afraid. He crept down into the nest again and would not come out. "What nonsense!" said Mrs. Blackbird; and she tumbled him out with her beak. He landed safely on the branch, as she knew he would. Then she and Mr. Blackbird sat beside him and showed him how to grasp with his toes, and how to spread out his wings. With the greatest patience they taught him step by step to fly, leading him first from twig to twig, then from big branch to big branch, and last from tree to tree.

Then he was taught how to find his food—taught how to pull a worm out of its hole, where to look for caterpillars and grubs, and how to catch a fly on the wing. At last he knew it all, and he could earn his own living.

Then he, too, sat on a branch and sang like his father: "How the sun shines! How bright is the world!"

LITTLE BIRDS

"Pretty Dearie! Pretty Dearie!"

Hear the gay father-bird sing to his wife.

"Pretty Dearie! Pretty Dearie!"

Ours is a beautiful life.

"Sweetest Birdie! Sweetest Birdie!"

Hark how he calls while she sits on her nest!

"Sweetest Birdie! Sweetest Birdie!"

Of all the world I love you best."

THE BROWNIES

Amongst the roots of the grass in the lawn lay hundreds of tiny eggs. One by one they hatched out as the sun warmed the earth and the soft showers moistened it, and soon the grass roots were alive with tiny grubs. They crawled about, cutting the poor grass roots and stems with their hard little jaws, and at once beginning to grow fat on the pieces they bit out and swallowed. All day and every day they ate, for their one aim in life was to be big and strong. "Then by and by our wings will grow and we shall fly," they thought. They were not as brown now as they would be when their wings had grown. Only their heads and jaws were brown as yet; their soft ringed bodies and curled-up tails and six jointed legs were all grey-green.

They had a lazy time under the ground, for they had nothing to do but to burrow and eat; but that just suited them. They made such good use of their time that the master of the garden looked with despair at the brown patches in his lawn. "Those dreadful grubs!" he said. "They are spoiling my beautiful lawn."

They lived there for three or four years. Then one by one they all stopped eating. They were so fat that they could hardly move, and so drowsy that they didn't want to. So they curled themselves up and went to sleep, and did not wake for many a day.

As they slept their skins grew hard and transparent, and new ones grew underneath. Two wings grew along their sides, though there was not yet room for them to open out, and two brown shields grew to cover them.

One by one the Brownies woke up. "Our wings have come! We must go out and fly!" they said.

They stretched their dried outside skins till they cracked open down the middle of the back. Then they pushed themselves out of the opening, and crawled out under the grass blades to dry themselves in the sun. Slowly and carefully they stretched out their fine new wings, tried their feelers, and lifted their strong brown shields till they hardened in the air.

They were brown beetles now, and they felt proud of themselves. They crept about to show themselves and to look at one another, and they chattered together and made plans for flying off when they were ready.

Just as evening came they were all ready to go. They lifted their wings again and again to let the air into their bodies, then up they flew, out into the wide garden-world.

Away at the back of the house there was a patch of growing potatoes. They soon found it out. They alighted on the leaves and began at once to eat them, for they were hungry after their long sleep.

They feasted all night, but when the daylight came they slipped under the leaves and hung there out of sight. They had been so long used to the darkness under the earth that now they preferred shady corners to open daylight.

"Those dreadful brown beetles have been here and spoilt my potato plants," said the master of the garden. "I wish I could catch them." He did not know that they were hiding under the leaves quite close to him.

BRAVE ROSE-PINK

Autumn was passing, and Jack Frost was frightening all the flowers away. Even the seeds

could not bear to stay above the ground, but crept underneath out of the cold. The tiny underground elves gathered them and carried them away to the Earth-mother's warm nurseries, and tucked them into soft cradles till it should be time to return them to the garden for the spring growth.

But a sweet-pea seed refused to come down. "No," she said; "I do not wish to lie in a cradle all the winter. I wish to stay here and grow. I am already sprouting, and I intend to go on." She would not be moved.

The elves went to the Earth-mother.

"There is a sweet-pea seed above the ground, Rose-Pink by name, who refuses to come below," they said. "What shall we do with her?"

"Tell her that Jack Frost will nip her with his cruel fingers if she stays there," said the Earth-mother.

The elves took the message, but soon returned.

"She says she is strong and hardy, and will laugh at Jack Frost," they reported.

"Tell her the Storm-king will beat her down with his great winds, and break her back," said the Earth-mother.

They went again, but returned and said: "She says she will grow little tendrils with which to hold tightly to the fence, so that the great winds cannot tear her down."

"Tell her that the Snow-queen will bury her in her cold white snowflakes," said the Earth-mother.

"She says she will not die, but will push her head through the cold white snowflakes," they said when they came back.

"Then leave her alone," said the Earth-mother. "She is brave, and perhaps her courage will carry her safely through the winter. If it does her reward will come in the summer."

So Rose-Pink was left alone, and went on growing quietly by the fence, taking advantage of every little bit of sunshine that came her way. Jack Frost nipped her with his cruel fingers, but she only laughed at him; the Storm-king tried to beat her down with his great winds, but she clung to the fence with her little tendrils; the Snow-queen buried her in her cold white snowflakes, but she pushed her head through and lived on.

At last the winter passed, and the soft spring air blew over the garden. The elves brought back the seeds and set them in their places. "Rose-Pink must be dead," they said, and they ran to look.

"I am alive and well, and very happy," sang Rose-Pink from half-way up the fence.

She grew fast now, and soon reached the top of the fence. Then came her reward; for while the other sweet-peas were only half grown, her little buds came and her flowers opened out. Such glorious flowers they were, flushed like the sunrise sky. Rose-Pink sang for joy, and breathed out scented happiness on every breeze.

"You have come long before your sisters," said the Bees. "Nothing in all the garden is so sweet and beautiful as you."

SWEET-PEA LAND

Oh, have you been to Sweet-pea Land,
Where little brown seeds once lay?
And have you seen the tall green swings
That cover that Land to-day?

And have you seen in Sweet-pea Land
The dear wee ladies who swing?
They've blowing frocks of blue and pink
As light as a silken wing.

And have you smelt in Sweet-pea Land
The scent the wee ladies throw
From each to each, as up and down
The wonderful green swings go?

And have you heard in Sweet-pea Land
The question-song of the bee?
"Dear Lady Pink, Dear Lady Blue,
Have you some honey for me?"

Oh, come with me to Sweet-pea Land,
Where little brown seeds once lay;
Where green swings rock in the summer wind.
And pretty wee ladies play.

MRS. FROG, MR. FROG, AND THE LITTLE FROG

"Do you mean to say I was ever like that?" asked Mrs. Frog.

"Of course you were. We all were," said Mr. Frog.

"I don't believe you," said Mrs. Frog. "Why, it is nothing but a little ball of jelly with a spot in it. How can it grow into a frog?"

"Well, I don't know exactly how it does it," said Mr. Frog, "but you can see it is an egg, and eggs grow into the most wonderful things."

"I am not going to believe this one will grow into a frog till I see it," said Mrs. Frog; and she swam away.

The egg lay in the water under a lily leaf. It certainly did not look in the least like a frog; indeed, it did not at first seem alive at all. But the spot began to spread, and day by day it grew till at last a tiny tadpole came out of the jelly and hung on to the lily leaf.

Mrs. Frog saw it, and called Mr. Frog to come and look.

"You were wrong," she said. "It is not a frog. It is only a kind of wormy thing."

"Give it time," said Mr. Frog. "We all began like that."

"What nonsense you talk, Mr. Frog! If it's a frog, where is its head? Where is its mouth? Where are its legs? The thing is nothing but a jelly-worm stuck on a leaf. And you tell me I was once like that! I have no patience with you. I shall not stay to hear another word."

Left to herself, the little tadpole dropped from the lily leaf and swam about in the water. In a day or two the head and mouth appeared, and funny, frilly breathing gills grew out from her sides. Then these went away and inside gills grew. A hard little beak grew on her mouth, just the thing for nibbling leaves and stalks. Now she spent all the day eating vegetable dinners and growing. How fast she grew, to be sure!

Mrs. Frog came one day to see how she looked. "Do you call that a frog?" she asked Mr. Frog scornfully. "Whoever saw a frog with a tail? Or eating leaves? Or breathing like a fish?"

"My dear, think back," said Mr. Frog. "Have you no memory of a time in your youth when we all swam together in the water, never wishing to go up on the land? You had a lovely long tail in those days. And do you not remember how sweet those green things tasted to us?"

A puzzled look came into Mrs. Frog's eyes, and a dim remembrance flashed across her brain.

"Oh, well, I shall watch," she said.

So every day Mrs. Frog jumped into the pool and swam round the little tadpole, watching the changes that took place. Soon she saw the hind-legs begin to grow. Then one day the tadpole left off eating, and startling changes began to take place. The tail dwindled away, giving up its strength to feed the body; the horny beak dropped off; the mouth widened and widened, till it went nearly round the head; the tongue grew big; the eyes and the front legs came out through the skin. Day by day the changes went on, and Mrs. Frog was at last convinced that the little tadpole was really a frog.

When she saw the little creature rise up to the surface and swim to the shore, breathing as frogs breathe, and when she saw her jump up on the land and catch a fly and eat it, she went home.

"You were right, after all," she said to Mr. Frog.

"Of course I was," said Mr. Frog.

BUTTERCUPS

It was not at all a pretty spot, this swampy bit of roadside. A coarse grass was the only thing that grew on it, for its soil was always wet and spongy.

Its neighbours despised it. "If you grew pink-tipped daisies and pretty white bells like mine," said the Hill, "the children would love you." "Or if you grew red and white clover like mine," said the Field, "they would love you." "Or if you grew wild roses like mine," said the Hedge, "they would love you."

But the swampy ground could grow neither daisies nor bells nor clover nor wild roses. It lay there, ugly and useless and sad.

One day a bird dropped a clinging seed from its feet as it passed; that was the beginning of the wonderful change that came to the despised piece of ground. The tiny seed sank into the soft wet earth, sprouted, and grew. Soon it was a well-grown plant, with beautiful broad leaves. It stretched its soft green stems over the ground, rooted afresh on this side and on that, and spread and spread and spread. How quickly the white roots grew! The damp soil suited them perfectly.

"This is a splendid growing place," they said.

"You dear things!" said the Ground. "How pleased I am that you have come! I will do my very best for you."

The summer and the winter passed, and spring came. From the new plants little round buds pushed up their heads. They grew fast, and opened out into golden flowers. "Buttercups! Buttercups!" shouted the children. They ran down the hill to where the new flowers shone in the morning sun. How lovely these golden flowers were! How their polished petals glittered! They looked like fairy-cups in the children's hands.

The swampy ground has never been sad since, for now it is always beautiful, and the children love it. Year after year they watch the little buds unfold; then they fill their hands and pinafores with the golden buttercups, and carry them home as treasures to be loved and prized above all other flowers.

SPINNY SPIDER

"Why don't you grow wings?" asked the Red Butterfly. "And whatever is the good of having all those legs? Eight! Why, I am sure six are enough for anybody. You are not at all handsome."

Spinny Spider turned herself round and round, and looked her velvety body all over with her six eyes.

"We seem to look at things from different standpoints," she said. "I have no fault to find with my shape. I don't admire wings at all, and I certainly need all my legs. But I have no time to argue. I have my web to make."

She ran to the top of the hedge and found a nice space between several twigs. Then she sat still, and from a little spinneret on each side of her body she drew hundreds of fine threads of silk, so soft and gummy that they looked like honey. With the tiny combs she carried on each hind foot she combed the threads in the air till they dried and hardened; then she twisted them into a single silken rope.

She worked hard, and soon had made enough of the rope to reach to the opposite twig, so she put a drop of gum on it and let it float in the air till it caught the twig and stuck there. "This is a good start," she said. Now she climbed a higher twig and made another rope, and dropped it across the first one at right angles. Then she made several more, fastening them all together in the middle and gumming them tightly to twigs at the ends, until at last the foundation of the web was made. It looked like the spokes of a wheel without the rim.

She began to spin a finer rope. As she spun she moved slowly from spoke to spoke, drawing the new rope with her and gumming it firmly to each spoke. Round and round she went in ever-widening circles, till the web was complete.

Then she stood for a moment to admire her finished work. And well she might admire, for a moonshine wheel in a fairy coach could not be more beautiful than this. The delicate white silk

glistered and shone in the sunlight, and here and there on every circle were set tiny drops of gum that gleamed like golden balls.

In the centre there was no gum, for that was to be Spinny's waiting place. She curled herself up to rest after her work and to wait for her tea. And her tea soon came. A gnat came flying past in a hurry, caught one of his wings in the web, and in a moment was struggling for his life. "The gum will hold him," thought Spinny to herself. "I need not move." The gum did hold him, and his struggles only tightened the web about him. In a few minutes he was dead; Spinny went over to him, and had him for tea. Then she rolled herself up again.

Presently a big blue-bottle fly came noisily buzzing along, and blundered into the net.

"Goodness gracious! what's all this?" he shouted; and he banged and kicked with all his wings and legs. Such a commotion! "He will smash my web and get away, after all," cried Spinny, and she was out to him in a moment. Quickly she spun a few threads and bound them round him to hold him. Then she unsheathed two sharp claws in her feelers. She drove these into the fly, holding them still for a second while a drop of poison from her poison bag ran down each claw into the wound. Very soon Blue-bottle was dead.

"This is a splendid tea!" said Spinny. "The wings are too hard and dry, but the body is just what I like."

"You savage creature!" cried the Red Butterfly, who had seen the death of the fly. "How can you bear to be so cruel?"

"Again we look at things from different standpoints," said Spinny. "I cannot eat honey like you, but am made to live on flesh and blood. What seems cruelty to you is only my nature, and I cannot help my nature. I must get my food in this way, or I should die."

SPINNY SPIDER'S CHILDREN

"What are you making now?" asked the Red Butterfly of Spinny Spider.

"A round cradle for my babies," said Spinny Spider.

"Really! And where are the babies?"

"They are not here yet. Don't talk to me. I am busy."

She went on working, spinning fine silk threads and weaving them carefully into a ball-shaped cradle.

Then she put her little white eggs in it, and picked it up and carried it about with her.

"Well, you are a silly!" cried the Butterfly. "Fancy carrying that weight about with you wherever you go. Why don't you do as I do?"

"What do you do?" asked Spinny Spider.

"I leave my eggs on a stalk or a leaf," said the Butterfly. "The sun hatches them, and I have no further trouble."

"And do you mean to say you do nothing more for them?"

"Nothing at all."

"Don't you even go to see how they are? Why, something might eat them!"

"I lay them as far out of sight as I can," said the Butterfly. "That is all I can do."

"That way would never suit me," said Spinny Spider. "You call me cruel, but I say you are heartless."

"It is my nature. I cannot help it," said the Butterfly. "As you yourself said, we look at things from different standpoints."

Spinny Spider said nothing, but hugged her precious burden more closely to her. By and by, however, a wasp was caught in her nest, so she hid the cradle for safety in the darkest corner of her little house near by, while she attended to Mr. Wasp.

After a few days the children came out of their shells. What a crowd! They ran all over the little house and peeped into everything. "Come out and see the world," said Spinny Spider. She led them out into the sunshine.

Wicked Mr. Striped Spider was passing the door. "Good day, Spinny Spider!" he said. "That is a fine family of yours. May I look at the little dears?"

"No, indeed!" cried Spinny Spider, for she knew he only wanted to eat them.

She placed herself in front of them, and a great fight began. Mr. Striped Spider was hungry, and if he could only kill Spinny Spider he might have the whole family for dinner. But Spinny Spider was fighting for the lives of her children, and her love for them gave her strength and fierceness. Mr. Striped Spider soon lay dead at her feet. Then the family had him for dinner.

The Red Butterfly had seen it all. "How you fight!" she said. "What are you going to do next?"

"Come in and see," said Spinny Spider.

"No, thank you," said the Butterfly. She flew off. She knew Spinny Spider's ways too well.

The children began at once to make dainty little webs for themselves, and to catch their own food. Spinny Spider saw with pride that without any teaching they were able to make their webs as perfectly as she could. They soon started out in life on their own account, each one looking after himself.

TINYBOY

Tinyboy lived in a big red poppy. It was a pretty house. The walls were red silk, and the floor was black velvet, and there were plenty of soft velvet balls to play with. In the day-time the bees and butterflies came to see him; at night, when the poppy shut its petals, he crept down into the seed-box and slept in his warm blankets.

But Tinyboy grew very lonely, for he had no one to play with. The bees and butterflies were always in such a hurry that they had no time for a game, and he had no one else to talk to. He was really a merry little fellow, but just now he was so lonely that he grew quite cross.

He sat on his doorstep and kicked his heels, and said: "Oh, dear! I wish I had somebody to play with. I'm tired of this big, lonely house, and those silly bees and butterflies that are always in such a hurry. I do wish somebody would come and play with me."

"How cross you are to-day," said a Red Butterfly who heard what he said. "If you are so rude we won't come to see you at all," she went on. "Fancy calling us silly!"

"Oh, well," said Tinyboy, "you know I didn't mean it. Only I'm so lonely, and you never will stop to play with me."

"I should think not," said the Butterfly. "I have my work to do, and I can't stop to play. Why don't you go out and look for a playmate?"

"How can I?" asked Tinyboy. "You know I can't get out of this house. It's so high up that I should fall and hurt myself if I stepped out. I can't fly like you, for I have no wings."

"No, neither you have! I forgot about that," said the Butterfly. "Well, I feel sorry for you, so I'll tell you what I shall do. I shall give you a ride round the garden on my back, and we'll look for a playmate for you."

"Oh, that will be grand," said Tinyboy. "I'm ready now."

"Jump on, then," said the Butterfly, "and hold tight."

Tinyboy jumped on and held tight, and off they started.

It was a wonderful ride. Tinyboy had never been out of his house before, so he knew nothing about the other flowers in the garden. When he saw the roses and lilies and pansies and bluebells he thought this must be the great world he had heard the bees talking about.

"Is this the world?" he asked.

The Butterfly laughed.

"No," she said; "this is only a garden. Over the hedge there is another garden, and past that there is another, and many more after that. It takes more gardens than one to make a world."

"Ah, well. I'm sure it is pretty enough to be a world," said Tinyboy; and so it was. The sun shone, the birds sang, the bees and butterflies flew gaily about their work, and the flowers laughed and nodded to one another across the garden. It was all lovely; Tinyboy would have liked to ride all day on the Butterfly's back. But he knew the Butterfly must soon go on with her work,

so he began to look about for a playmate.

"Let us see if anyone is at home here," said the Butterfly, stopping at a large pink rose.

"Come out, Rose-lady!" she called, and out came the prettiest little lady you ever saw. She was dressed in soft pink silk, and her hair was yellow and fluffy. She came out smiling at the Butterfly, who was her friend, but as soon as she saw Tinyboy she hid her face shyly in her curls and ran back into her house. The Butterfly called and Tinyboy called, but she was too shy to come out again, so they had at last to fly away to another flower.



"When she saw Tinyboy she hid her face shyly in her curls"

The Butterfly stopped next at a bluebell's door. He had no need to call out there, for a little lady dressed all in blue sat on the doorstep.

"Good day, Red Butterfly," she called as they came near. "Who is this on your back?"

"This is Tinyboy," said the Butterfly. "He is looking for a playmate. Will you come?"

The blue lady looked at Tinyboy and shook her head. "I don't like red," she said, pointing to Tinyboy's red clothes. "I like boys in blue suits."

"That's right," called a merry voice from the next bluebell. Tinyboy looked and saw a little fellow in a bright blue suit laughing up at him. "The blue lady is my playmate," he said, "and you are not to take her away."

So Tinyboy and the Butterfly went on. By and by they came to a big red poppy with a black velvet floor. "Why, that is just like my house," Tinyboy said when he saw it. "Is it my house?"

"No," said the Butterfly. "Your house is at the other side of the garden. Tinygirl lives here."

The Butterfly stood on the edge of the poppy, and Tinyboy looked in. There sat a dear little Tinygirl on the doorstep, swinging her feet just as Tinyboy had done in his house, and looking just as lonely as he had been. She was dressed all in red silk, and her wee cap of black velvet was just like his.

She smiled at Tinyboy and Tinyboy smiled at her, and said: "Will you play with me?"

"Of course I will," she said at once. "Come into my house and play ball."

THE MOSQUITO BABIES

On the top of the pool floated a dainty raft of mosquito eggs, glued together by their careful mother to keep them from sinking. In a day or two tiny wrigglers came out of the eggs, and began to dart about in every direction to find their food.

They were the queerest little water-babies! Their bodies were long and jointed, and from every jointed bit little bundles of swimming hairs stuck out on both sides. They had feelers on their heads, and they breathed through their tails—of all strange places! When they wanted a fresh supply of air they stood head downwards in the water, with tails stuck up to breathe.

How those babies did wriggle about, to be sure! They seemed never to be still for a moment. They would take in air, then sink to the bottom of the pool and draw in tinier creatures than themselves with their mouth hairs, then, having made their meal, wriggle up again to the top. And every movement was so wonderfully quick! It had to be so, indeed, for young dragon-flies and water-spiders and many other enemies were always waiting to swallow them if the chance came.

After a few days the wrigglers changed their shapes in the strangest ways. Funny round shields grew over their heads, and two little tubes grew up from the top of each shield. These tubes stood above the water when the babies were at the top, and now the tail curled round, and was not used for breathing any more, for the babies breathed through the two little tubes.

Under the shield the babies were busily making their wings and growing into mother and father mosquitoes. But though they were so busy, they did not rest; they moved about almost as much as ever, but now their heads were so heavy that they tumbled and bobbed up and down instead of wriggling. So everybody in the pond called them tumblers.

Now came their last days in the pond. One by one they pushed themselves out of their old skins, and stood on top of them to dry their wings. Then they left their old home, flying off to the nearest bushes for their first rest, and from there seeking out their food. "We want only juices," said the father mosquitoes; "juices of fruit or sweet green things."

But the mother mosquitoes said: "We want blood. Nothing but blood. Where is it? Where is it?"

THE SCRAMBLER

He was a young blackberry plant; but he was so tiny that he could scarcely be seen. Indeed, there was such a crush of growing things round him that it was a wonder he was not choked. He had started life under a hedge where the tangled weeds grew so thickly that even air was scarce; it looked for a time as if the little Scrambler must die.

But his heart was bold; he did not give up. He pushed and pushed till he rose a little higher and could breathe a little more freely; then he grew a number of strong curved hooks on his arms.

"Kindly allow me to hold on to you," he said to the nearest weeds. He held on to them with his hooks and rose yet higher in the crowd.

"Take your hooks out. You are hurting us!" cried the weeds. They tried to grow above him and to crush him down, but he had the start now, and he made the most of it. Higher and higher he grew, holding on to the taller plants, and sending out new hooked branches on every side to help in his support. At last his head rose above all the surrounding plants. He could breathe freely in the sweet air. "Ah! this is delightful!" he cried. He grew fast, spreading himself out widely on both sides.

Next he turned his attention to the hedge. "I must climb to the top," he said, "so as to escape its shadow and get all the sunshine there is." Hook by hook and branch by branch he climbed up the side of the hedge until he could look over the top.

"Why don't you grow thick stems of your own instead of hanging on to other people?" grumbled the hedge. But the Scrambler took no notice; he was busy making his flowers. "Now that I have been so successful, I must do my duty and bear seeds," he said to himself.

When the buds opened he was started with pretty white blossoms tinged here and there with pink. He put plenty of honey in the honey-cups, so the insects came in crowds and carried his pollen from flower to flower. "That is well," he said. "Now my seeds will set."

Soon the petals fell and the seeds set. "I must make a sweet berry, so that the birds will carry my seeds away to grow," he said. So he set his seeds in berries that turned black and sweet and juicy. The birds came and picked them, and carried the seeds away to grow.

"I wonder you like to see your children going so far away from you," said the Hedge.

"It is the best thing for them," replied the Scrambler. "There is no room for them here. They would be choked if they fell beneath my branches."

There was indeed no room for them there. The Scrambler had not only covered the top of the hedge, but had grown over the other side too, down to the ground.

WOOLLYMOOLLY

Woollymoolly blamed the sweet-peas and sunflowers and gold and purple pansies; but I blame Woollymoolly for not doing as he was told. He never would do what he was told, and that caused all the trouble. When he was only a few weeks old he jumped down from the railway truck, away from his mother; and though she called him and called him and called him, he just ran and ran and ran till he was lost. Then a big kind lady found him and took him home and fed him; and he became a Pet Lamb.

At first she gave him milk, but as soon as he could eat grass he was tethered to a peg in the back garden and allowed to nibble for yards and yards and yards all round. That should have been enough, for there was plenty of grass; and if he tired of grass there was clover; and if he tired of clover there were soft sow-thistles and milky chickweed. But after the first week he never was content with the back, for through a hole in the fence he could see in the front the sweet-peas and sunflowers and gold and purple pansies.

His peg was moved from day to day, to give him fresh choice of the grass and clover and soft sow-thistles and the milky chickweed, but he would not be content. He raced round and round and tugged at his rope, until one day the peg came out. Then with a rush he was on his way to the front garden, dragging rope and peg behind him. But his mistress heard the patter, patter, patter of his naughty little hoofs, and she ran fast and caught him, and hammered the peg in again. Then she told him plainly what to do. "Stay where you are tied," she said. "This is your garden, all amongst the grass and the clover and the soft sow-thistles and the milky chickweed. You must never, never go into the front to eat my sweet-peas and sunflowers and gold and purple pansies."

She was good to him. She brought him juicy turnips, and he grew big and fat and strong. One day she let him wander in the road, and at once he thought of the forbidden front. The little gate was shut and latched, but through the picket fence he could see the shining of the flowers, the sweet-peas and sunflowers and gold and purple pansies. So he waited and he waited and he waited, till at last that careless, lazy, good-for-nothing butcher boy forgot to shut and latch the little gate. Then in crept Woollymoolly, and all the sunny day, while his mistress forgot him in her household work, he gobbled up the sweet-peas and the sunflowers and the gold and purple pansies.

At last his mistress thought of him, and went to bring him in. She searched up the road and down the road and back and forth across the road, and at last she found him gobbling in her garden. "Oh, you wicked, wicked lamb!" she cried. "You have eaten all my flowers. You have pulled and smashed and trampled all my pretty garden. You have greedily gobbled up my sweet-peas and sunflowers and gold and purple pansies."

The next day came the careless, lazy, good-for-nothing butcher boy again, but this time when he went he carried with him in his cart the lamb who would not do as he was told. "I have done with him!" his mistress cried.

What happened to him afterwards I will not say, though maybe you can guess. At any rate, he never disobeyed again, nor walked amongst the sweet-peas and the sunflowers and the gold and purple pansies.

THISTLE-MOTHER

Thistle-mother looked up and saw that the winter was over, for the sun was creeping higher and higher in the sky, and the birds were practising their spring songs. So, unfolding her arms, she spread them over the ground, and began to push herself up into the warm air.

Her home was on the roadside, where grasses and weeds grew so closely together that it was hard to find room. As she grew, they began to complain. "Don't push so," they cried. "And oh! how horribly prickly you are! You are scratching us dreadfully."

"I am very sorry," she said, "but I really cannot help it. I seem to grow like this without knowing it."

"Well, you might at least go somewhere else to live, where you will not disturb so many people," they grumbled. But this was just what she could not do. She went on growing; as the others shrank back from her prickly arms she could look over their heads.

One day she saw a cow eating the grasses near her. She shuddered as its long tongue twisted itself round their poor helpless stems, and forced them into its great mouth. When it passed her by untouched she felt thankful that she had so many thorns on her arms. "At last I know why I grow like this," she thought. "The prickles are very useful, after all."

When the summer came she began to make her children's cots. She wove the overlapping sides of brightest cot-green, strong and fine. Then, remembering the cow, she put a sharp prickle at each point, and closed the points together. She made warm fluffy beds, and in them she placed her children.

They were tiny, helpless things, white and soft. They looked up at the shining walls as she gently put them in their cots, and asked: "Mother, must we always stay in here?"

"No, dear ones," said the mother; "when you are strong and brown you shall fly out over the world. But rest now while I make your wings."

Nothing daintier or more beautiful than their wings had ever been seen. They were snow-white and glistening, and long and fine, and softer than the softest silk. She tied them firmly to the little shoulders, and in the middle of each wing she placed a long lilac-coloured plume. Then she gently opened the cots a little, and the plume-ends floated out into the sunshine. The children sang for joy.

"We have the most beautiful wings in the world," they sang. "Now we can fly away."

"Not yet," said Thistle-Mother. "Wait a little longer. You must grow brown and strong first."

The lilac plumes glowed in the sunshine, and the cots swung in the summer winds. "Now your time is coming, for your plumes are turning brown," said Thistle-Mother; the children looked at one another, and saw that they themselves had turned from white to lilac.

"Shall we be brown next?" they asked.

"Yes," she answered, "when your plumes are curled and twisted. Rest again."

Soon the plumes were curled and twisted, and Thistle-Mother opened the cots widely at the top. Now the children were brown and strong. When they saw the blue sky they sprang to meet it; but, instead of flying up, they tumbled in a heap on their mother's arms.

Thistle-Mother laughed tenderly at them. "You were in too great a hurry," she said. "Lie here till the wind comes. He will lift your wings and give you a start, and then you can fly away. And, children, when you have seen the world, and feel ready to settle down, be sure to choose a good growing-place. Then in time you too will become Thistle-Mothers. Ah! here comes the wind. Good-bye, my little ones."

"Good-bye, mother dear," they called gaily, for the wind was lifting them and spreading their wings. They floated up into the air, and flew off, their beautiful white feathers glistening like silver in the sunlight. "What a glorious place the world is!" they called to one another as they flew over the land. They went everywhere and saw everything. Those who remembered Thistle-Mother's words chose a good growing-place and settled down and became Thistle-Mothers themselves; but the careless ones, who forgot—well, nobody knows what became of them.

Left alone, Thistle-Mother folded her tired arms and sank into the ground, to sleep till summer and cot-making time should come again.

"I smell strawberries," said Sally Snail. "They are somewhere across the road. I shall go and find them."

"Nonsense!" said the others. "It is too dangerous a journey. There are always boys and carts and birds, and all sorts of monsters on the road. You will never reach the other side alive."

"I am going," said Sally. She started off on her strong, creeping foot, leaving a shining wet trail behind her.

Her curly shell covered her back, but her head was thrust well out, so that the eyes on her two long horns could see the roadway and give warning if danger were near. With her shorter horns she followed the scent of the strawberries.

Half-way across the road a starling saw her. He flew down at once, thinking he had found an easy tea. But Sally Snail was too quick for him. In an instant she drew her head and foot into her shell, and sat down so firmly on the ground that the starling could not move her. He pulled at the shell, but he could not pull it off the ground. He pecked at it, but he could not pierce it with his beak.

"I will wait till you come out," he cried. "You can't stay here always!" But a boy came running down the road, and threw a stone at the starling. The frightened bird flew off, and Sally Snail continued her journey. The boy did not notice her, so she reached the hedge in safety, crawled through, and found the strawberries.

What a feast she had! She cut pieces out of the sweet fruit with the files in her mouth, sucked them in, and swallowed them. "If the others knew how good these are, I am sure they would all come too," she thought.

She stayed there till all the strawberries were gone; then she had to go back to eating leaves again.

"There is a cabbage garden through that next fence, I am sure," she said one day. "I shall go and see." So she travelled next into the cabbage garden. Here she found her cousins, the Slug family.

"Dear me, how strange you all look!" she said. "Why don't you grow shells on your backs?"

"Don't give yourself airs. We have as blue blood as you," said the Slugs. They were touchy about their soft backs.

"How cross you are! I shall go and visit my cousins in the pond," said Sally.

However, the cabbages were very good, so she stayed till they were all cut and taken away. Then she crossed the garden, slipped through the fence, and came to the pond. Here her cousins, the Water Snails, were gliding across the top of the water, shell downwards, like a boat, and foot up like a sail.

"Oh! how lovely to be able to do that!" said Sally as she watched them.

"I have found you again!" said the Starling coming down with a swoop and a sharp peck.

Sally slipped into her shell, but this time she was not quite quick enough. The starling had caught one of her long horns, and now flew off with the eye from the end of it.

"It doesn't matter," said Sally. "I can easily grow another."

She crept under a bush and lived there for a time, and when she came out again another eye had grown at the end of the horn.

"I shall go home now," said Sally. She went home and told the others all about her travels. "We must certainly cross to the strawberry garden next year," said the Snails, "but now winter is coming fast—we must bury ourselves."

They crept into the ground, sealed up the mouths of their shells with lime so that no enemies could enter, and went to sleep for the winter.

MILLY MUSHROOM

She was very tiny at first, and quite brown. Her mother laid her gently on the ground and said: "Creep down into the warmth and grow." So Milly crept down into the warmth, and grew into a little white girl as thin as a thread. For a year she stayed under the ground with her brothers and sisters; then they all put on their best velvet hoods and puffed themselves out to go

up into the world.

Billy Button sprang up first. He called down to Milly: "Come up, little sister. The sun is shining through a silver mist and everything is glorious."

"I am not quite ready," said Milly Mushroom. "I must grow bigger first."

She puffed herself out as fast as she could, and at last was ready to go up. She tied her hood over her face to keep the wind off her soft cheeks. Then she too sprang up.

"Oh, dear," she said, "how strange it feels up here!"

"You will soon grow used to it," said Billy Button. "Hurry up and grow, and turn pink like me."

Milly grew and grew and turned pink like Billy Button. Then she untied her hood and peeped out, showing her soft cheeks and pretty white collar.

"What a great world it is!" she said. "It is all so wide and high. I am a little afraid."

"This is only a bit of the world," said Billy Button. "I know, for the Flying Beetle told me. He has travelled far, and has seen wonderful sights. Ah! how I should like to travel!"

"I would rather stay at home," said Milly. She was trembling a little; everything seemed strange up here in the strong light.

"Grow close to me," said a friendly Thistle. "I will shelter you with my long arms." She stretched out one of her arms, and Milly nestled beneath it and was comforted.

All that day and night she and Billy Button grew so fast that when the next morning came they hardly knew one another.

"How big you are, Billy!" said Milly.

"So are you," said Billy. "You are quite a mushroom lady now. But goodness gracious! Whatever is that? What a monster! And how it shakes the ground!"

A boy was walking over the field with a basket in his hand. He was gathering mushrooms. He stooped and pulled Billy Button from the ground.

"Oh, the cruel monster! Oh, poor, poor Billy!" sobbed Milly Mushroom.

But Billy was not at all frightened. "Hurrah! I am going to travel at last!" he cried. "Good-bye, Milly. I shall see the world now."

He was popped into the basket and carried off, while Milly was left shivering under the thistle's arm.

She soon forgot her fright, however, though she often wondered what happened to Billy Button, and whether he enjoyed his travels. She grew taller and bigger every day, and changed her hood for a big flat hat so wide and shady that the little field-mouse could sit under it and talk to her. And the thistle covered her from sight with its friendly arms, so no monster ever found her to put her in his basket and carry her off.

WIGGLE-WAGGLE

Mrs. Earth-worm made a hole under the ground and put an egg in it. Round the egg she wrapped clear jelly to serve as food for the little one when it should hatch. Then she went back to her burrow.

Soon Wiggle-Waggle came out of the egg. He was the tiniest worm you could imagine, but he had a fine appetite; he ate all the jelly his mother had left for him. Then he began to nibble at the earth, and he liked it so much that he went on nibbling. There were all sorts of nice things in it—scraps of leaf and stalk and root and seed—just the things he liked best. The more he ate the bigger he grew; soon you would hardly have known him.

One day he thought: "I wonder what it is like above the ground? I will go up and see."

He began to burrow in an upward, slanting direction, breaking down the earth with his hard little mouth, and swallowing it out of the way. At last he reached the surface of the ground and poked his head through into the daylight. But he drew back quickly into his burrow again, for the strong light hurt him. He could not see it, for he had no eyes, but he could feel it on the skin of his head, and he did not like it. "It makes me feel quite ill," he said. He pulled some loose earth into the mouth of his burrow, and coiled himself round till night fell.

Then he came out once more. Ah! things were very different now! The air was cool and moist, and delightfully dark; hundreds of neighbour worms were crawling over the ground, feasting and talking and visiting one another.

"Oh! there you are at last," said his mother from the next-door burrow. "I have been listening for you. Fix your tail into the top of your burrow, and sway yourself round and feel for your food. Then you can slip back easily if an enemy comes near. There are many enemies about, so listen carefully. And never stay up till daylight comes, or a bird will catch you."

So Wiggle-Waggle entered into the busy night-life of the garden. At first he followed his mother's advice, keeping his tail in his hole while he felt for green leaves, dragging them into his burrow. Later, he grew more venturesome, and crawled out over the ground to make the acquaintance of his neighbours. He lined his burrow with soft leaves and gathered tiny stones together to hide the entrance from the eyes of his enemies. Life was busy and pleasant, and he grew big and strong.

But one night he stayed up too long; when the red light of morning sprang up in the eastern sky he was quite three feet from his home. He hurried, darting his head as far forward as he could reach, sticking his front bristles in the ground, drawing his body up in a loop, dropping it, and then darting his head forward again. He went swiftly, but not quite swiftly enough. An early blackbird saw him, and swooped down upon him. His head and half his body were already in his burrow, but the blackbird's beak closed on his tail.

He stuck all four rows of sharp bristles like tiny pins in the ground, and held on for his life, while the blackbird pulled hard for its breakfast. Snap! crunch! tear! It was dreadful. Poor Wiggle-Waggle parted in the middle, and the blackbird flew off with half of him.

Wiggle-Waggle was not dead, but he felt very unwell. He wriggled down to the bottom of his burrow, and kept very quiet for a long time. And a wonderful thing happened. New rings of body, and then a new tail, grew on the broken end, and soon he was a whole worm again, with only a join-mark to show that an accident had happened.

When he goes up at night now to feed and visit his neighbours, he is very careful not to stay too late. He is still living in his old home, unless the last heavy rain has flooded his burrow and washed him out.

THE LEAF FAIRIES

In the wood the Leaf Fairies were busy making their leaves. They made them of every shape and size, for each fairy had her own idea of what looked prettiest. Some made them long and narrow, like tall and graceful ladies; some made them round and dumpy, like fat little men; some made them heart-shaped, and some cut up the edges till they were all dainty points and curves. Some placed them sitting down on the branches, while others set them on slender stalks. There was no set rule for anything. Each fairy followed her own pretty fancy.



"In the wood the Leaf Fairies were busy making their leaves"

—THE LEAF FAIRIES.—(See page 119)

"In the wood the Leaf Fairies were busy making their leaves"

Most of the leaves were green, but a few were splashed with yellow or veined with red or lined with silver. Everywhere they covered trees and bushes and low-growing ground plants, growing here in clusters, and there singly or in pairs. The fairies swung themselves far out on the branches to admire their handiwork.

"Now you must be busy," they said to the leaves. "In the daytime you must help the roots to gather food for yourselves and all the family—roots and stems and flowers and seeds; and at night when we have swept the passages you must throw out the rubbish."

"Shall we never have time to play?" asked the leaves anxiously.

"Yes," said the fairies. "When the family is fed each day you may dance with the winds and play hide-and-peek with the sunbeams, and when the autumn is here and all your work is done, we ourselves will take you for a pleasure trip."

The leaves were content, and at once set to work. The fairies made tiny kitchens for them, and here they gathered the food for the family and prepared it for their use. The fairies carried it to roots and stems and flowers and seeds, so they all grew strong and well. At night the fairies swept the passages so clean that not a grain of dirt was left anywhere; the leaves threw out the rubbish from their kitchen doors.

Summer passed and autumn came. "You have worked well," said the fairies to the leaves. "Now you shall have your pleasure-trip."

They dressed the leaves in gay frocks, all gold and crimson and bright brown; they loosened them from the trees and set them floating on the wind. "Now follow us," they said; and the fluttering leaves followed them. First they whirled and danced on the ground beneath the trees, then they rose in the air and flew away, away—nobody knows where. You could not have seen the fairies leading if you had been there, for they are not visible to mortal eyes; but you would have seen the leaves following them. Where they went to I can't tell you. They never came back, though it is said that the fairies did.

BUNNY-BOY

"Now, Bunny-Boy," said his mother, "look after the house while I am away, and mind you do not go outside, for there are boys about to-day."

"What nonsense!" thought Bunny-Boy to himself. "As if I could not run faster than any boy. And I have been waiting for a chance to go and see the world, so I shall go to-day."

As soon as the Bunny-Mother was out of sight, he slipped out and ran away, this naughty Bunny-Boy, with his little white tail bobbing, and his eyes shining with delight. "Now, I shall see what the great world is like," he thought.

He came to a skylark sitting on her nest.

"Good-day, Lady Skylark!" he said. "I am going to see the world. Would you like to come with me?"

"Oh dear no, indeed," said the Skylark. "I have to sit on my eggs. Does your mother know you are going?" Bunny-Boy ran off at once. He did not want to answer that.

He came next to a little hill, where other Bunny-Boys and Bunny-Girls lived. They all came running out to see him, and said: "Stay and play with us."

"No," he said; "I am going to see the world."

"Where is that?" they asked.

"Somewhere over that big fence," said Bunny-Boy. "You may come with me if you like."

"We do not want to come," they said. "You stay here with us." But Bunny-Boy would not stay. He ran off again. The others called out: "We will tell your mother of you." But he only ran the faster.

He went through the big fence, and came into a field of oats. Here men were busy cutting the oats, and Bunny-Boy was so frightened by the noise they made that he scampered out of that field into the next. This was a field of grass, and Bunny-Boy thought: "Now I can begin to enjoy myself."

Just then he heard a bark, and a big dog rushed over the grass after him. A boy came with the dog, and now poor Bunny-Boy had to run for his life. How he did run! But the dog could run too, and he nearly caught Bunny-Boy. His mouth, with its sharp teeth, was just open ready to snap on Bunny-Boy's back, when Bunny-Boy saw a hole in front of him, jumped into it, and was saved.

At the bottom of the hole he found a Bunny-house, and some kind Bunnies, who let him stay there till the dog and its master had gone away. Then he crept out, and went sadly home.

"I will always do what you tell me," he said to his mother that night. "It was dreadful out in the world. I would much rather stay at home and mind the house."

LOVE-MOTHER

A potato and a rusty nail lay side by side in an old shed. Through the winter they found very little to say to one another, but when the spring came the potato grew restless and talkative.

"This is a poor life for us," she said. "Do you not feel that it is a waste of time lying here like this?"

"Not at all," said the rusty nail. "If you had been knocked about as much as I have you would be glad to lie still." He was bent in the back and had lost half his head, so he had a right to talk.

"But I want to grow!" cried the potato. "I want to go down into the dark warm earth, where it is so easy to grow. Then I should send up white stalks that turn green when they reach the sunlight, and bear broad leaves and beautiful flowers. My children would grow on my white, stalks under the ground. Ah! that would be life indeed!"

"You seem to me to be talking nonsense," said the nail. "I once lived in a kitchen, where a great many potatoes were cooked every day, but none of them had the beautiful leaves and flowers you talk about."

But the potato was not listening now, for something seemed to be moving inside her. "I feel so strange!" she cried. "I am sure something is going to happen."

The next moment something did happen. The skin was pushed open, and a little white shoot poked its head out. "I am growing!" cried the potato joyfully. "Oh, I wish somebody would put me in the ground." But, alas! nobody understood potato-language, so she lay there for several days longer. Then a little boy who was playing saw her and picked her up.

"Here is a potato growing without any ground," he said. "I shall plant it in my garden."

He carried her to his garden, made a hole, and planted her. She nestled thankfully down into the warm earth as he covered her up. "At last I am put into my right place and can really grow," she said. And grow she did. Shoot after shoot ran up from her sides, spreading out in the sunlight into broad green leaves and beautiful lavender coloured flowers. And the little potatoes came, all along the white underground stems. Bigger and bigger they grew, till they were as big and fine as their mother had been. How proud she was of them!

But as they grew she dwindled and lost her strength, for she was giving all the substance of her body to feed her children. "What is the matter, little Love-Mother?" they asked tenderly. "Why do you grow so weak and thin?" They did not understand where their food came from, but she knew and was well content. "It is my life, but they need it, and I am happy in giving it," she said softly to herself.

So day by day she grew less and less, till with a loving sigh she died. "I am happy," was her last thought, "for I have done my part in the world, and now, like the rusty nail, I am glad to rest."

THE HILL PRINCESS

It was when Roy and Charlie were out rabbiting that they met the Hill Princess. They had gone much farther than they usually did, and that is how they found her. It was in a long gully at the foot of the tallest hill of all, and she had come down the side of the hill to meet them. She was tall and beautiful, and her robes were as green as the grass in the gully, while her crown was all of starry white clematis flowers.

"Have you had a good time?" she asked. The boys were too shy to speak at first—she was so grand and wonderful. But they knew it was polite to answer when you are spoken to, so Charlie plucked up courage and said: "Yes, thank you."

"That is right," she said kindly. Then she stood and looked at them for quite a long time, while the boys grew shyer and shyer under her searching eyes. At last she spoke. "I am trying to feel your hearts," she said. "I can feel those of my own people at once, but yours are hard to understand."

The boys did not know what she meant, but they were too shy to ask. She went on: "I should like to show you my Palace, but I must first know whether it is safe to trust you. Can you keep your word?"

"I can!" cried both boys at once. The thought of seeing the Palace took away their shyness.

"Well," said the Princess, "if I take you to the Palace, you must first promise not to tell anybody about it—not even your mothers. No mortal has ever before seen it, and I do not wish others to come to look for it; so you must not tell them about it. Do you promise?" The boys promised at once, and the Princess said: "I shall always hold you to that. See that you keep your word. Now come."

They followed her a few steps up the side of the hill. Here she stopped, and tapped with her foot on the ground. Instantly a door flew open in the hillside, and they entered. The door swung to behind them, and they found themselves in the Princess's throne-room.

It was a magnificent room, wide and lofty. The walls and roof and floor were all of glittering limestone, lit up by magic star-shaped lights of brilliant colours. In the centre stood a throne of solid gold, with a rug made of crimson flower-petals thrown half over it. "Don't the petals fade?" asked Roy as they admired the beautiful rug.

"Nothing fades in my Palace," answered the Princess.

She led them from room to room, talking kindly to them, and showing them quite proudly all the beauties of her home. It was indeed a wonderful Palace. Each room was different from all the others. In one the walls were made of gold, in another of silver, in another of opal, and in others of emerald or ruby or diamond, until one's eyes almost tired of the brilliance.

The furniture was as beautiful as the walls, but the boys noticed that the chairs and tables and sofas and beds were all made very low, except those for the Princess herself. Indeed, so close to the ground were they that Charlie asked the Princess: "Are your people very little, Hill

Princess?"

The Princess laughed. "Come and see them," she said, and she led the way out to the back of the hill. Here they found themselves in an open space covered with grass and flowers and little bushes. On every side rose a high straight bank, covered with bush creepers, and behind the bank rose tall bush trees to hide the place from view. "This is our playground," said the Princess, "and here are my people."

The boys looked round eagerly. All they could see were rabbits and hares and birds and insects—rabbits and hares and birds and insects everywhere—hundreds of them playing on the grass, amongst the flowers, in the bushes. The boys were puzzled.

"Where are the people?" asked Charlie.

The Princess laughed again. "The hill creatures are my people," she said. "There, the animals can talk and work and play just as you can. The hares and rabbits do the work of the Palace; the birds fly in with our food from the surrounding country; and the insects take our messages. So work is provided for all. For their play they come here, and here they are so much at peace with one another that everyone is safe. To hurt anything is impossible here."

Now all this time Charlie had been thinking: "What a grand place for rabbiting!" So he looked up with rather a red face at the Princess's words. She knew what he was thinking, for she said: "See if you can touch Little Hoppy." She pointed, as she spoke, to a wise-looking rabbit who sat close to her feet, looking up at her with loving eyes.

Roy and Charlie both bent down to catch Little Hoppy, but they found to their astonishment that, although he sat quite still, they could not touch him. Again and again they tried, but every time something seemed to push away their hands. It was not the rabbit—he never moved. Neither was it the Princess. She stood smiling beside them. "It's magic," said the Princess.

"Come and play marbles," said Little Hoppy. The boys jumped. So the rabbits could talk in this strange place, could they? And play marbles, too? Why, yes, there were several marble rings in the playground, with bunnies and birds all playing together and chattering as fast as any crowd of boys. And hares were playing leap-frog. And groups of bush-robins were nursing tiny dolls.

"Well, this is a comical place," said Roy. "May we go and have a game?" he asked the Princess.

The Princess shook her head. "It is too late to-day," she said. "You must leave us now, or it will be dark before you reach your homes. But keep your promise to me, and I will give you a stone that will guide you to the Palace another time. Then you may come earlier and so have time for a game."

The boys were overjoyed. "That will be first-rate," they said. "When may we come again?"

"The moon was full last night," answered the Princess. "Come always on the day after the full moon. See—these will guide you." She picked two small stones off the ground and gave them one each. As she touched them they gleamed and shone like opals; but when the boys took them they lost their light. "Do not lose these," she said. "If you keep your promise these stones will guide you to the Palace and open the door for you." She took them back through the Palace and out on to the hillside again. The boys thanked her and said good-bye, and she went in, shutting the door behind her with a word. When it was shut, you could not tell it was there, for the grass and tussocks grew over it.

Roy and Charlie went straight home, talking all the way about the wonderful things they had seen and heard. "We must watch carefully for the next full moon," said Roy at his gate, as they stood for a moment to say good-night. "Yes, indeed," said Charlie, "what a time we shall have!" Then he hurried home.

"Have you had a good time, Charlie?" asked his mother at tea-time.

"Rather!" said Charlie. "I don't believe anybody ever saw so many wonderful things as we saw to-day." And then he grew so excited at the thought of it all that he forgot about his promise, and told his mother and father about the Princess and the Palace. He knew before he had finished that he had done wrong, but that did not stop him. And the worst of it was that neither his father nor his mother believed him. His mother at first looked very grave, and asked him if he had been in the sun without his hat, but his father said: "Nonsense! the sun was not hot to-day. See that he doesn't read too much, Mary. We don't want him to learn to spin yarns like this." Then he was sent to bed.

Roy did not break his promise. He told his father and mother about his rabbiting, and about things he saw on the hills and in the gullies, but he said nothing at all about the Princess and the Palace. It was hard to keep silent when it was such a wonderful secret, but he remembered his promise.

And that is how Roy found the Palace again and Charlie did not. When the day after the full

moon came, they both started out, but Roy's stone led him straight to the Palace, while Charlie's led him all the afternoon away from it. They were magic stones, and had power to punish and reward. So Roy was led to the Princess, and had all sorts of wonderful games with Little Hoppy, while Charlie, because he had not kept his word, was led astray and not allowed to follow Roy or find the Palace for himself. And he has never found it yet.

URCHINS IN THE SEA

Baby Urchin was vexed. "The grown-ups have all the fun," he said to his brothers and sisters. "Every day they play on the beach, while we are told to stay here amongst these stupid rocks and seaweeds. On the beach they have glorious times. I have often heard them talk about it. Why shouldn't we go?"

"Yes, indeed," said the others. "Let us all go."

They swam eagerly from their playground between the rocks—the queerest babies you ever saw. They looked as if they were made of chalk and glass; and each had about twelve long arms, sticking straight out in every direction from the funny white body.

They were fast swimmers; they went gaily on, never thinking of possible dangers. But a hungry fish saw them, and came straight at them with wide-open mouth. Snap! The cruel jaws closed together, and a hundred Baby Urchins fell down the great throat. Then those who were left turned and swam for home as fast as their terrified arms could take them.

"You were very disobedient, and you all deserved to be eaten up," said the grown-up Urchins when they heard what had happened. "And besides, it is no use coming to the beach yet. You can't possibly roll on the beach with those long arms of yours."

"It seems to take such a long time to grow up," said Baby Urchin.

"Eat plenty," said the grown-ups, "then you will soon be like us."

Time passed. The little Urchins did not again try to reach the beach, but they ate plenty and they grew big. Then they began to change. Their funny arms grew shorter and shorter till they disappeared altogether; their bodies grew thicker; and then at last their shells began to come.

"Now we are growing up!" cried Baby Urchin joyfully.

Their shells grew fast, and so did the babies inside, changing their shape altogether. Up and down the round shells ran rows of tiny holes, and in between the rows of holes scores of little white balls grew out. On the balls movable spines grew, and through each hole peeped a new leg ready to stretch far out when it was needed for swimming or walking. Under the shell was the mouth; from it five strong white teeth hung down to crush the seaweed and break it up for food. On top of the shell were tiny eye specks.

At last they were ready. "Come on," cried Baby Urchin. "Nobody can hurt us now." He led the way to the beach. They all followed, swimming with their legs and spines, and looking like hedgehogs in the sea.

What a time they had when they reached the beach! They swam in with a wave, rolled over and over on the beach, burrowed with their tiny spines in the soft sand, and then swam out with the next wave. "It is splendid to be grown up," they said.

WHERE WHITE WAVES PLAY

I.—RED-BILL

In a sand-strewn hollow of a rock ledge on a tiny island lay a seagull's egg, yellow and grey and brown, to match the yellow and grey and brown of the sand and rocks. White waves played beneath it, dancing each day to the foot of the ledge, and throwing handfuls of spray up its rocky side, but never breaking over the top. Sea winds whisked above it, but never blew it from its sandy bed. No hungry hawk spied it from his vigilant soaring place; no hunting dog found it. Safe from harm, and quickened by the genial sun and the warmth of the mother's tender breast, the speck of life inside the egg grew slowly to a seagull baby.

When the baby first peeped out from the soft darkness of his mother's sheltering wings the

world looked very wide and dazzling. Overhead the big blue sky shone brightly, sunshine flooded all the air; nearer home gleaming points of light, like little stars, flashed on all sides amidst the sand. He drew in his head.

"The light is too bright, mother," he said. "It hurts my eyes. But what is that sweet sound I hear?"

"Dear one, those are the white waves at play. They are the kind friends who carry your meals to shore. See—here is your father with a sea-worm for your breakfast. Open your bill and swallow."

He was the fluffy darling of his parents, their sole care and joy. Day after day, week after week, they waited on him, by turns guarding him and fishing for him, bringing him soft delicious morsels of crab and pipi and tender fish. Under such faithful feeding he grew fast. Each day he looked over his ledge.

"The waves, mother!" he said. "The white, white waves! They are always calling. May I not go yet to the sea?"

"Not yet," his mother would reply. "Baby gulls must wait till feathers grow in place of down."

Feathers grew in place of down. Baby wings broadened and grew strong, and at last he could fly.

"The waves still call, mother," he pleaded.

"Come, then," said his mother at last, and down they all went to the sea, and the joy of life began.

He was as yet only a mottled brown baby, not nearly so handsome as his dove-backed parents with their breasts of snow. But his pink webbed toes oared their way gleefully through the clear water, and his little brown bill learned to snap the fleeing fish as cunningly as the crimson beaks of the older birds.

What a life that was! They soared over restless waves on scarcely-moving wings, swooping low and dropping where the flash of fins proclaimed a feast. They circled tiny bays whose seaweed carpets clothed the floors in rainbow hues; or rode like fairy craft upon the ever-rolling breakers on the shelving shores. When fierce winds blew, they wheeled and screamed like spirits of the storm, laughing to see the surface of the sea torn up and flung against the high coast rocks.

Slowly, as the months rolled by, the little Red-bill's feathers changed from mottled brown to pearly grey and shining white; scarlet flamed on bill and feet. The full bright beauty of his kind was on him.

Mating season came. "Little love," he said to his chosen one, "I know an island where our egg will be safe and our baby sheltered. There, where white waves sing and dance all day, he shall be loved and tended as I was loved and tended."

II.—THE SEA-SQUIRT WHO STOOD ON HIS HEAD

Far out into the waters of a quiet bay stretched a wooden jetty, old and rotting and scarcely ever used. The browned and blackened timbers that showed above the water-line were by no means beautiful, but at their feet was fairyland. Here, in pale green clearness, forests of delicate seaweeds bent their gold and amber beads to the gentle movement of the water; swift-finned fishes, gay in scarlet and silver and bronze, swam the forest pathways and chased each other in and out cool shaded bowers beneath the filmy branches; most beautiful of all, myriads of long-tubed sea-squirts waved their pink and crimson balls from the jetty piles, like great closed poppies in the sea.

How they waved! Up and down, backwards and forwards. Not moved by the water, but moving in the water, though never freed from the jetty piles. After all, these were not flowers, but animals.

Continually they opened their pink, round mouths to let the water pass through their bodies, in the hope that each fresh mouthful might contain a meal. Again and again, squirt! They were forced to throw out some fragment of shell or rock which had floated in and caused annoyance.

At the foot of one pile there was some excitement, for a baby sea-squirt was setting out to see the world. He was impatient to be off, but his mother was giving him a great deal of advice. If you had seen him lying in the water you would never have recognised him as the sea-squirt's son. No mother and son were ever more unlike. She was big, with a thick-skinned tube half a yard long,

and a ball at the top shaped like a quince; he was tiny and soft, and looked like a baby tadpole. She was gaily coloured; he was colourless and jelly-like. She was fixed to the jetty pile; he could swim. Yet, in spite of these great differences, mother and son they were.

"Dear child," she said, "whatever you do, never stand on your head."

"Of course not," he replied; "I shall never wish to."

"But you will wish to," cried his mother. "You won't be able to help it. It runs in the family. Listen, son. Once I was like you; I could swim and move about to find my food. Before me, all our grandfathers and grandmothers for millions of years back were for a part of their lives like you. If they had never stood on their heads they might have grown eyes and backbones and fins, and become as great and clever as the fishes. But because those old grandparents became lazy and stood on their heads till they grew to the rocks, we in turn have all grown lazy, and we in turn have been punished by the loss of our swimming powers. If you could only break loose from the family's bad habit, you might start a glorious free race of sea-squirts. All the most successful creatures in the sea are those that have backbones and eyes. You have the beginnings of these two things in you, but if you stand on your head you will lose them, as I have done. You will become fixed and helpless like the seaweeds. Promise me never to stand on your head. Promise me that you will keep moving."

"Yes, mother. Oh, yes. Good-bye. Good-bye." The impatient little fellow could wait no longer.

"How grown-ups talk!" he thought. "As if I should ever wish to stand on my head!"

He swam about for several hours, enjoying himself exceedingly in this great wet world. At last he came to the end pile of the jetty. Here, to his great astonishment, there suddenly came upon him the most overpowering desire to stand on his head. To stand on his head! The very thing his mother had foretold. Well, she was right, after all, so perhaps she was right in advising him to keep moving. "I will swim on," he said.

He swam on bravely. But before him was the wide open sea, with no comfortable piles to rest against. And oh! how he longed to rest. Just to put that heavy head of his down against something firm—how delightful that would be! That was a splendid pile, that last one! So strong and wide. It could not matter if he rested just a few minutes. He really would not stay long.

So, forgetting his promise, this foolish baby swam back. Down went his head against the comfortable pile, and alas! there he has stayed ever since. His mother's wise words faded from his mind. He was too lazy to stir. From his head tiny tubes grew on to the wood, holding him there for life.

What a change has come over him! Tail and little growing eye and backbone, all have died away; in their place has grown the long tube with the gaily-coloured fleshy ball at its end, through which the water runs with every wave, bringing sometimes food, sometimes nothing but sand and stones. Gone are the old swimming powers, the old free life. Gone is all chance of growing into something strong and grand and successful. He is beautiful, but he is helpless.

I wonder does he ever think of what might have been? Does he ever say, sadly: "If I had but kept moving on!"

III.—BOBBY BARNACLE'S WANDERINGS

The Barnacles lived on the rocks with the Mussels and Limpets and red Anemones. There were hundreds and thousands and millions of little shell-houses, set so closely together that scarcely any room was left for pathways. Twice a day the friendly waves, like busy white-capped waiters, hurried up the shore with a feast of tiny sea creatures in their soft, wet hands. Then, one by one, doors were carefully opened while the waiting shell-people took in their food, but were soon shut again, for fear of lurking enemies.

It was a quiet life, but so safe that the rocks became overcrowded. When Bobby Barnacle and his brothers and sisters and cousins were hatched out of their little egg-cases and swam from their mother's acorn-shell houses, the old Barnacles were alarmed.

"Dear me!" said the very oldest. "What a swarm of you! For goodness sake don't come back here to settle after your swim. We are crowded already."

"Plenty of room in the sea!" laughed Bobby. "Come on everybody. We are not thinking of settling down yet. We are going to have a grand time first. I am sure I shall never wish to spend all my time in one place. A roving life for me!"

Headed by Bobby, the shoal of Barnacle babies set off on their travels. They certainly did not look in the least like settling down. They swam and dived and frolicked and tumbled and whisked

about in the dancing waves as if possessed by the very spirit of movement. To such atoms of energy, sitting still on a rock was plainly an impossibility. They were queer, tiny, soft-bodied creatures. Thin, delicate shields on their backs were their only shells. They each had three pairs of legs, one eye, and a funny, spiky tail. As they went they ate hungrily, swallowing sea animals so tiny that scores of them would go into a small girl's thimble.

"Look out!" Bobby shouted suddenly. As he spoke he turned to the right and swam for dear life, hiding at last under a tangle of ferny seaweed. The others were too late to save themselves. A great fish had swallowed them all in three snaps of its cruel jaws, and Bobby was left alone in the wide sea. He was badly frightened, but presently he swam out from his hiding-place and continued his travels. It was somewhat lonely, but he soon grew accustomed to that. Indeed, he began to like it. He swam and ate and whisked about in the water as cheerfully as ever, keeping his one eye well opened for possible enemies. A shoal of cousins from a sea rock met him.

"Come and play with us," they said.

"No," said Bobby; "I'm going to travel."

Out to sea he went, amongst all the wonders of the white-crested water. Below him lay great colonies of bright corals and sponges and sea-anemones, living their simple quiet lives. Around him rushed and darted eager, busy fishes, keeping him ever on the move to evade their hungry jaws. Many a narrow escape he had, but he was so nimble that he never was caught.

As he grew, his skin and shield became too small for him. "This is most uncomfortable," he thought. Split! Skin and shield dropped off. New ones had been growing underneath, but these at first were soft, and he had to shelter under seaweed till they hardened. To his great comfort they were soon firmer than the old ones. Several times he moulted in this way, and each time the new skin and shield came harder and stronger, making him safer from his enemies.

One day a strange thing happened. He lost his appetite. "Whatever is the matter with me?" he wondered. He soon discovered. He was changing his shape. Another eye grew, and three more pairs of legs, and a shield on the front as well as the back.

"Well, I am a fine, strong fellow now," he thought. "I feel as if I could do wonders."

He swam on faster than ever. Indeed, his activity was marvellous. He seemed to shoot through the water. But, strangely enough, he still could not eat, so it is no wonder that at last he grew tired.

"I think I must settle down on something," he said. "This life is really most exhausting. And yet I don't want to sit down on a rock and stay in one place all my life. I wish I could find something moving."

Something moving came through the water, something so huge that to the tiny Barnacle its side was like the side of a world. It was a whale, but Bobby was not afraid. As it slowly lifted its great body through the waves he made his way to it and clung on with all his strength. The whale plunged on his mighty way to colder seas, bearing his little unfelt rider with him.

"Hurrah!" said Bobby. "Now I shall still travel on, without being obliged to do my own swimming."

A more wonderful change than ever before came over him. A tiny bag of cement opened from his head and glued him to the whale's skin. Six strong shells grew round him in an acorn ring, exactly like those of his mother's shell-house on the rock. Four more grew into a door. When he opened the door he could shoot out his twelve curled legs and kick his food down into his mouth in the shell-house. So there he was, living head down and toes up on the whale, and glued so tightly that he could never fall off.

He was grown-up now. All his changes were over. His appetite came back, and he went travelling easily and comfortably with the whale. For all you or I know to the contrary, his roving life may be still going on.

IV.—LITTLE STARFISH

He floated in the depths of the cool salt sea, an egg so small as to remain unnoticed and undevoured. Later, he hatched into a queer-shaped creature, not at all like a starfish, rather like a lump of jelly, with a thick end pushed out here and there. He swam and ate, and grew larger every day. From the sea-food he ate his wonderful little body had power to draw minute particles of lime and build them into a star-shaped framework within itself. Slowly the firm star grew, spreading its rays on every side, and absorbing into itself the soft walls of his earlier body, until at last he was a starfish.

He was strangely made. His mouth was underneath the middle of his body, a small red eye lay at the tip of each ray-arm. His legs, scores of them, were small and white, and could be pushed out or drawn in at will from his ray-arms. Drawing in sea water through narrow passages in his body, he could fill these legs and make them firm, and so crawl up the steepest rocks or creep slowly over the smooth sea-floor. When he did not wish to walk he drew the water from his legs and tucked them up inside his arms. The last foot of each ray-arm was at once his nose and finger, for by it he smelt and felt. On his back were spines, some of them snapping in the sea like scissor-blades, to keep his skin clean and free from parasites.

He roamed slowly here and there in search of food. Companies of brother starfishes went with him. They were a hungry crowd, and so numerous that soon there was very little left to eat in their valley of the sea.

"I shall travel," said Little Starfish. "Perhaps I shall find a better feeding-place."

He set off. Sometimes he swam, sometimes he floated with the waves, sometimes he dropped to the bottom and crawled over the sand or rocks. After several days he came to land. The tide was going in; the waves were dancing gaily up the stony beach.

"Carry me, please," said Little Starfish.

He laid himself in the arms of a wave and was carried merrily up the beach and left in a pool amongst the rocks.

"This is a good feeding-place," said the wave, as she set him down.

It was indeed a good feeding-place. All the rock creatures had opened their shells to feast on the myriads of tiny things brought in by the tide. The pool was awl with life. Shrimps darted to and fro, barnacles and limpets raised themselves from their rocks, furry-legged hermit crabs ran about under their borrowed shells. Best of all, tempting rock oysters, fat and juicy, sat with their shells agape, to catch their daily meal. Little Starfish's mouth fairly watered at the sweet smell of them. Pushing out his scores of white sucker-feet, he pulled himself up inch by inch to where the first one sat. As soon as the oyster felt him near, snap went the shell. But Little Starfish was too quick for him. One strong ray-arm was in the shell before the edges met, and hope was over for the oyster. Little Starfish swallowed him, and then crawled on to find another as delicious.

"So glad to find you at home," he joked, as he poked his arm into the next open shell.

"We'll see about that," remarked the oyster. He snapped his shell hard, hard. How it hurt! He was a powerful oyster, and the edges of the shell caught the arm in a tender spot. Crunch! went the oyster viciously, and off broke the arm in the middle. Little Starfish swam painfully away from that terrible oyster, leaving half an arm in the shell.

"How tiresome!" he said. "Now I shall have to give up travelling while I grow again."

He crept away into a safe hiding-place under the sea. There he grew a new half-arm, coming out again as strong as ever, but far more cautious. Many another feast he had on the oyster rocks, but never again did he hunt so recklessly.

V.—KELP

A tiny sea-weed spore loosened itself from its place in a forked branch of the mother sea-weed, whirled itself round and round in the water, and began to sink towards the sea-floor. A passing current caught it, lifted it, and carried it far past its old home to where a cluster of bare rocks guarded the shore. Here, broken up by the rocks, the current weakened. The spore, carried into the calmer waters of a sheltered pool, eddied, trembled, and slowly sank. From the spore sprang amber-coloured rootlets, fixing it firmly to a rock. A little amber-coloured stem grew upwards through the sea, growing ever thicker and stronger as the weeks went on, till at last it reached the top. Drawing its daily food from the nourishing sea, the plant went on from strength to strength. Amber branches grew; amber leaves, veined and thin and long, swayed with every movement of the water. Spores formed and loosed themselves, and whirled and slowly sank, to grow in turn to neighbour plants amongst the rocks.

Year after year passed by, through winter's rains and summer's gentle, sun-kissed days, till many years had flown. From the tiny spore, which in that earlier day was borne so helplessly, had grown a mighty forest. Great lifting, drifting trees of kelp, their roots like iron bands about the rocks, their heavy limbs upheld by rows of air-filled floats, swayed back and forth with every rolling wave. Hidden, protected by the giant boughs, what life was here! What a wonder-scene of beauty! Delicate sea-plants, red and purple and green, waved their slender fronds beneath the shelter of their stronger forest brothers. Bright-scaled fishes darted through the trees. Shell-fish, safe in spiral, fluted homes, climbed their trunks and cut with saw-edged tongues sweet daily

meals of amber leaf and stem. Sea-urchins and starfishes crawled over their roots; anemones spread their lovely cruel arms to catch their prey; shell-less sea-snails, crystal clear, hid between the branches, peering out with bright black eyes at all that passed in this gay water-world. At night, a million tiny phosphorescent creatures shone and glowed from every leaf and branch and stone, as if a million fairy lanterns had been lit beneath the sea.

A great storm came. Far out to sea the black clouds lowered; they loosed their lightning sheets. The leaden rollers rose and fell and muttered to the thunder's crash. Sea-birds screamed and fled to land. From the line where sea met sky came the hoarse, roaring wind, lashing little waves into foaming billows, tearing them up and flinging them far through the maddened air. Below the surface of the sea the swimming, crawling creatures sank like startled shadows to the floor for safety till the storm was past. Only the great kelp trees were left to bear its brunt. Wave after wave crashed against the branches, tossed them this way and that, whipped off their floats and leaves, tore the slighter stems away and strewed them high upon the rocks.

When the storm was over, and sunny days had come again, and children played and paddled on the beach, the sand was strewn with little floats. The children stamped on them, and laughed to hear them pop as the pent-up air escaped. One toddler wondered loudly what they were and where they grew. Down among the rocks the wearied seaweed raised its torn and battered branches through the sea, and set to work again to grow its slender stems, its ridge-veined leaves, its scores of pointed amber floats. Slowly its full beauty returned, till once again the fairy lights shone on the old gay life of wonderland.

VI.—BLACK SHAG

Black Shag was a lonely bird, but she liked her loneliness, and drove away intruders. Her special haunt was a narrow inlet of the sea, winding between peaceful bush that overlooked the little lapping waves. Here she would swim for hours, her graceful head sometimes erect, sometimes bent beneath the sea to watch for prey. A silvery gleam, a movement of a fin, and like a hurled stone she would dive and pursue, hunting the fleeing fish until she overtook it. Seizing it in her long, hooked bill, she bore it up to the air, there to gulp it whole down her capacious throat. Then below she would go again to hunt for further feasts. Her appetite was marvellous; she was no delicate lady in her feeding. Fortunately, fish were plentiful and varied in her inlet of the sea.

Tired of swimming, she would fly up to her favourite perching place—a great bare rock that overhung the water. Here she spread her long black wings to dry them in the sun, and preened her bronzy back and white throat band and glossy breast. She could not, like a duck, shake herself but once and then be dry, for so little oil have her kind for their feathers that "as wet as a shag" has become a world-wide saying. But sun and winds helped in her drying, and time made no calls on her. For long hours she sat there at her ease, silent, solitary, satisfied.

Winter passed. With the first warm breath of early spring, when fresh life woke in bush and shore and sea, her last year's mate came up the inlet seeking her. "Come with me," he said. At the words mother-longings stirred in Black Shag's heart. Into her thoughts came memories of nest and shining eggs, of helpless babies, and her love for them. She left her rock. With her mate she flew along the coast to where her people built their rookery year by year. Here were friends and busy life. High cliffs faced the sea. On the top, where strong, coarse grasses grew, nests were built beside each other. Sticks were gathered and twisted in and out, grass blades were pulled and laid amongst the sticks; then the nest was ready for the eggs.

Three handsome green-white eggs soon lay in Black Shag's nest. Then followed the long sitting, the mother's patient sacrifice of food and freedom; till at last the eggs were hatched, and three half-fluffed, half-naked babies lay beneath the sheltering breast. They showed no beauty to a casual eye, but their mother thought them perfect. In her fond eyes no baby birds could be more sweet and lovable. Gone was now the old life for Black Shag, with its leisureliness and ease. With three children to feed and guard, the days became a rush of work. "You must help, father," she said to her mate. In turns they fished, swallowing enough for the babies as well as themselves, then returning to the nest and drawing up from their long food-bags the delicious oily fish that the children loved.

The babies grew fat. Fluffy down grew so thickly over them that they began to look like brown and white balls of wool. Nestling together, they kept one another warm; gradually Black Shag found herself able to leave them for longer and longer periods. They fished together now, she and the father Shag. As the children grew bigger still, and more and more able to take care of themselves, the parents stayed away all day. They flew off in the morning to their favourite fishing waters, satisfied their own hunger, and loaded themselves with extra fish, then returned at nightfall to feed the clamouring little ones.

The summer months passed by. In the nest the children grew full-sized and feathered. "Learn

to swim and fish for yourselves," cried Black Shag, and she tumbled them one by one into the water below. There they floundered about till they learned to paddle with their black webbed feet. Then the mother left them, knowing that her work for them was done.

Back to her old haunt she went, to live again, till spring returned, her life of leisured ease. In her narrow inlet, where peaceful bush overlooks the little lapping waves, she hunts her daily feasts, or sits for hours upon her bare brown rock, silent, satisfied, alone.

VII.—THROUGH DAYS OF GROWTH

On a grassy tableland a pair of albatrosses made their nest. They dug a ring of earth and pushed it into a central mound, then hollowed out the top and lined it with grass. Here the mother laid her one white egg. Father and mother took turns in sitting on the egg. When the little one was hatched they again took turns in feeding him and sheltering him from cold sea winds. All through the summer days and nights they tended him with utmost love and care, until, when autumn came, they could safely leave him in the nest. Then back to their old sea life they went, skimming the rolling waves throughout the day, but winging their patient way at each fresh dawn to feed their little one.

Where they had left him, there the baby albatross sat in his nest, day after day, week after week, month after month. His thick brown coat of down kept him warm, his rich morning meals supplied his growth, his stillness fattened him. Motionless he sat, hour by hour. Above him sea birds wheeled against the bright blue sky and golden sun. Winds danced among the grasses; storms drove over the hills. Half a mile away the racing waves boomed loudly up the beach. At night the quiet stars looked down on his contented sleep.

A wild duck came and looked at him.

"How slow you are!" she cried. "Why don't you move? My babies learned to fly and swim long months ago, yet they are not so old as you."

He turned untroubled eyes towards the sea.

"Some day," he said, "I shall follow where the white waves lead. My time has not yet come."

The wild duck flapped impatiently.

"Slow!" she said. "If you were mine I'd turn you off that nest before another day had passed."

She flew away. The baby albatross still sat and watched the sky and sun, and listened to the waves.

Summer came again. One afternoon the parent birds returned. They stroked their little one and fondled him with loving beaks.

"Dear one, you must leave the nest," his mother said. "We need it for this season's egg."

The baby was dismayed. "But I do not wish to go! The nest is mine," he said.

"It is not good that you should stay too long in it," his mother said. "You are nearly twelve months old. It is time for you to learn to fly and swim. Come off, and exercise yourself."

But the baby was afraid. "I don't know where to go," he said. "I must stay here." He would not move.

Between the mother and the father passed an understanding look. With their strong bills they gently turned him off the nest and rolled him on the ground. "Pick yourself up and go down to the sea," laughed the mother. She sat on the nest to keep him off.

The baby picked himself up and looked at them. It was hard to understand this treatment, after all their loving care of him. However, he had rather liked his feelings when he flapped his wings to right himself, so he flapped them once again. He raised himself and tried to fly; he waddled several steps on his wide webbed feet. But he was fat and heavy, and his limbs were soft and quite unused to exercise; he was soon glad to rest.

"Keep at it," said his mother. "Power will come with use."

For several days he stayed about the nest, encouraged by the parent birds to exercise his wings till he could fly. Then very slowly he made his journey to the sea, walking, flying, resting, sleeping on the way, for many days and nights, till at last that long half-mile was passed, and the welcome beach was won.

Here he learned to swim and catch his food, the juicy cuttle-fish that floated on the sea. He grew and gathered strength, but his flights from land were short—his power was not yet at its full.

Another year passed by. Again with autumn days the parents left the nest to go to sea. From the waves a noble bird rose up to accompany them. His snowy plumage glistened in the sun, his wide-spread wings cut through the air with a majestic grace. It was the baby albatross, grown at last to his full strength. Sailing, gliding, rising high above the shining waves, dipping low on downward curve, he followed to the far-off shoreless tracts, there to live his life of tireless flight, the splendid marvel of the sea.

VIII.—FANNY FLATFACE

Where the waters of an estuary entered the sea were many wide and sunny shallows. Here the flounders fed, and here in early summer their little eggs, laid in the quiet water, rose up and floated at the top. Rocked on the gentle waves, warmed daily by the golden sun, the eggs hatched into flounder babies. Hundreds and thousands of them there were, crystal clear except for two black eyes, and so very small that they could only just be seen. The tide came in and swept them to and fro, and somehow Fanny lost the shoal and was carried out to sea. There the big waves jostled her about, the great sea creatures frightened her. She was lonely and sad and terrified. "Whatever will become of me?" she thought.

On the third day she fell in with a shoal of tiny whitebait, all about her own age and size. "I am lost; please let me swim with you," she begged.

"You poor little thing! Of course you may," they said. So for several days she swam with them towards the shore, playing and feeding in happy forgetfulness of all past misery. At this time she was so like the whitebait that no stranger could tell the difference. She had the same long slender body, the same round head and pointed tail. A week passed by. One day she said: "I must go down to the sand. Good-bye."

Before they had time to speak she had dropped from their midst. "How very extraordinary!" said the whitebait to each other. For a day or two they played about as usual, but by-and-by one said: "The thought of Fanny worries me. Suppose we go down to see what has happened to her?"

"A good idea," said the others.

They found her lying aslant near the bottom of the sea.

"Are you sick? Why don't you come up?" they asked. "You look very queer, lying on your side like that."

"I feel very queer," she said. "Can you see what is the matter with my left eye?"

The whitebait crowded round to look.

"Why, it has moved!" cried one. "It seems to be coming round the corner of your head."

"I thought it felt strange," said Fanny.

"What a comical shape you are!" said another little fish. "You seem to be growing flat."

"Oh, dear! I wonder whatever is the matter with me? I don't think I shall ever come up to the top again," sighed Fanny.

The others tried to cheer her. "Don't be downhearted," they said. "Perhaps you will feel better to-morrow. Maybe you have eaten something that disagrees with you."

"But what a pity! She is certainly losing her beautiful shape," they remarked to one another as they swam away. "And that eye is a most mysterious business."

They came back again a day or two later. Fanny—could it be Fanny?—was on the sand. She wriggled up to meet them, and they stared more and more. She was not now long and slim, but flat and wide. And her eye! It had gone quite round the corner, and was now on the same side of her head as her right eye. Strange to say, she looked perfectly happy.

"I am well again," she said. "See, my eye has gone round out of the way, and I am so flat that I can lie comfortably on this nice sea-floor. Isn't it splendid?"

"It is a very ugly change," said one.

"Oh, dear, do you think so?" asked poor Fanny. "At any rate, the change is most convenient,"

she went on, brightening. "See—one lies on the sand, so. One's flatness allows one to wriggle partly under the sand, so as to escape one's enemies; and one's eyes are both on top, where they are most needed. You had better come down and grow flat, too."

"Not for the world!" cried the others in chorus. "What a life, lying in the sand! And what an ugly shape! Are you going to stay here always?"

"Yes," said Fanny. "The food here suits me."

"Good-bye, then. We are off to the top," they said.

As they swam away one impudent little creature turned round and called: "Good-bye, Fanny Flatface!" That is how poor Fanny got the name.

"How are you to-day, Fanny Flatface?" the thoughtless little fishes would call as they swam over her head. They thought it a clever thing to say.

She would bury herself in the sand and pretend not to hear, but it made her most unhappy. She thought of all the other fishes she had seen. "None of them are flat," she said, "and none of them have two eyes on one side of the head. How dreadful I must look!" Lonely and miserable, she lay there for months, keeping herself well hidden from sight.

One day she left the spot, hardly knowing why, and floated with the tide into the estuary mouth. A sunny shallow seemed to draw her with the memory of early days. She swam boldly in. Yes, this was her old first home. What had become of her brothers and sisters? Would they receive her, now that she had changed so terribly?

The mud floor moved, and scores of flounders raised themselves and looked at her. Flat! As flat as herself! And each with two eyes on one side of the head. What comfort! She was no monstrosity, after all.

"Who are you?" they asked.

"Fanny," she replied.

They all came out to look at her.

"Why, it really is Fanny!" they exclaimed. "But how you have grown! How bright your red spots are! And how softly silvered is your under-side! How white and strong your teeth! You are certainly the beauty of the family. Have you come to live with us?"

"Yes, oh yes," she answered joyfully. What happiness was hers, after the long months of shame and loneliness!

It was a pleasant life they led. By day, while the warm sun shone, they basked below the mud. At night they feasted on the shoals of shrimps and jointed darting creatures that filled the water over them. As they slowly moved from bank to bank their upper skins changed colour with the colour of the floor on which they fed, and thus securely hid them from their enemies.

One day the whitebait, grown now to little herrings, came up the estuary. "Why, there is Fanny Flatface," said one.

Her sister flounders rose beside her. The herrings gaped in wonder. "So that was just your way of growing up!" they said at last.

"Just my way of growing up," said Fanny cheerfully.

IX.—THE OYSTER BABIES

The Oyster-Mother was talking to her babies. "You are leaving me to make your own way in the sea," she said. "Keep in mind what I have so often told you, that everybody bigger than yourself is an enemy to be avoided. Here is something else to remember. When you are tired of swimming about, and wish to settle down to grow your shells, choose a clean gravelly bank or a firm rock floor. Sand or mud, if you choose those, would sift into your shells with every tide, and you would soon be choked. And when your shells are made, never forget that an oyster's chief concern in life is to know when to shut up. A moment too late in that, and life is over for you."

The babies swam out of the shell. This was not their first expedition, but in former times they had stayed near their mother, ready to slip in at the first scent of danger. Now they were to take care of themselves. No babies could have looked less fitted to do it. So tiny were they that the whole three hundred of them, placed head to tail in a line, would not have measured longer than one's middle finger. Boneless, shell-less, weaponless, their only safeguard was their water-like

transparency. It seemed impossible that creatures so tender could live in the savage sea, where hungry monsters roamed incessantly in search of prey. Yet they were not afraid. Perhaps they were too young to think. Up they went. Near the surface of the sea they met a shoal of cousin babies.

"We are going to travel before we settle down," said the cousins. "Will you join our party?"

"We shall be delighted," said the babies.

The shoal set off. There were millions now, darting here and there, their tiny round bodies flashing like crystal globules through the water, their belts of swimming hairs wafting the microscopic creatures of the sea into their ever-ready mouths. For days they travelled, growing every hour a little larger, but still defenceless in the savage sea. Sometimes lurking enemies dragged off stragglers from the edges of the shoal; sometimes a great fish drove through their millions with his mouth wide open, swallowing all that came within his path. Then the ranks closed up again and went onward as before; but the shoal was smaller than at first, and the babies grew more watchful. At last they were tired, and a little frightened too.

"Let us find a settling-place and grow our shells," said one.

They sank to the sea-floor. It was sand. That would not do. They drifted on. The sand gave place to mud. That would not do, either. They drifted on again. At last a stretch of gravel, clean and firm, lay beneath them. "A splendid place," said the babies, joyfully, remembering their mother's words. Down they dropped, each one settling on a stone and there fixing himself for life.

Now came the marvellous making of those strong shells which were to be their safe retreat from every enemy. Furnished by the rich seafood, a limy fluid formed in each soft baby's body, to ooze through tiny pores in his outer skin, and there to harden into shell. Day by day, week by week, the beautiful growth went on, till a two-walled house was made, with lustrous pearly lining and a powerful hinge to pull the edges of the walls together.

At first the shells were thin. Hungry whelks, finding them, could bore round holes in them with their sharp-pointed shells and so reach the juicy babies; wandering starfishes could clasp them in their long ray-arms and swallow shell and baby whole. But as the months and years passed by, and the surviving babies grew to greater size, layer after layer was added to the shells, until at last, rock-hard and strong, they kept out all intruders.

Now the oysters were secure. From helpless, shell-less, reckless babies they had grown to cautious, well-defended dwellers in the sea, living quiet lives in peace within their firm shell walls. When no enemy was near their shells lay open; their fringed, delicate gills were hung out and waved to and fro to catch their food. But at the first alarm there was a quick withdrawing of the gills, an instantaneous closing of the shelly walls. To the enemy all was firm-locked, silent, hidden. The babies had grown into full knowledge; they had learned when to shut up.

FANNY FLY

Rover the dog left a bone only half cleaned under the fence, and forgot to go for it again, so Mrs. Fly laid her eggs on it. In a day or two the eggs hatched out into tiny white creatures with no legs. They ate hard for a few days at the meat left on the bone, and then settled down and kept still while they changed into flies. When they broke their way out of their old skins you would hardly believe they had once been white and helpless, for now they were dark in colour, with wings that gleamed as they moved, and wonderful eyes and feelers and legs.

Fanny Fly was one of them. She was a beauty. Her eyes were big and red-brown in colour, and so wonderfully made that she could see behind her just as well as in front. From each side of her chest two fine wings sprang out, gleaming with green and red; under them were her two balancers. On her back she wore a shining purple cloak. She had six legs, all jointed so that she could bend them in any direction, and all furnished with the most wonderful things, claws and suckers for holding on to the roof, and tiny combs and brushes for keeping herself neat and clean.

She flew first to the garden and sucked honey with her short tongue from any flowers that were not too deep. Then through an open window she flew into the house. "Here I shall have a good time," she said; and a good time she certainly did have.

She melted sugar in the basin with the juice from her mouth, so that she could suck it up; she sipped honey and treacle from the jars in the pantry that were left uncovered for even a moment; she stood on the meat and sucked juices out of that. Nothing came amiss to her. Whatever was there became food to her, so she was always fat and happy.

She played with the other flies on the window-panes and across the ceiling; they all danced in

the air and buzzed till they were tired. She had many narrow escapes—from spiders in dark corners, from dusters, and from small boys who wished to catch her. Once she was nearly drowned in a dish of jam. On the whole, however, she had a very good time.

But the summer drew to an end, and the winter came. "I must find a snug corner, or I shall die of cold," said Fanny Fly.

She looked for a hiding place in the house, but the best corners had all been taken by other flies; so she slipped out through the window and crawled into a clump of grass roots and stalks under the hedge. There she went to sleep till the warm days came again.

AT SUNSET

A tiny pool lay looking up at the cloud-flecked sky. His water-spiders and insect-babies went about their eager businesses beneath his surface, but he took very little notice of them. His thoughts were busy with the clouds so far above him; all day he was longing to be with them. The evening came and the clouds flocked round the setting sun, turning gold and crimson in the wonderful light; then the little pool longed more than ever to be with them. "If that could only be my life!" he sighed. "To live in the blue sky and to be made beautiful!"

A passing wind heard his words and repeated them to the clouds. They told the kindly sun, and he sent a message by his sunbeams to comfort the little pool. "You shall come up here some day," he bade them say; "but you have many duties to perform before you can be a sunset cloud. Do well your present work, and wait with patience."

Then the pool rejoiced. Day after day he did his lowly work with infinite care, nourishing his flowers and rushes and tiny water-creatures, and turning a bright and patient face to the sky and his loved clouds.

One hot day the wonderful change came. The sun looked down, saw the work so well done, and gently lifted him through the air to the sky.

This was glorious. He was now a fluffy white cloud, sailing over the sky and joining the other clouds in their games and dances. In the morning they played shadow-flight across the hills of the earth; in the afternoon they danced slow dances high above the sea.

The time of sunset came, and the new cloud wished to go with the others to be made beautiful. But they said: "No, little brother; that is not possible till you have done cloud work." So he was left lonely and white in the east, untouched by the sun's lovely light.

In the night came his old friend the wind. "You are to go down again to the earth," was the message it brought. It blew coldly on the little cloud till he shivered and fell in a thousand drops of rain upon the earth. There the drops lay till morning amongst the grateful flowers and grasses, giving them fresh life, and bearing bravely the disappointment of being sent to earth again. The sun looked down in the afternoon and raised him up, and once more he floated joyfully across the sky.

Then the fierce storm wind came and froze him with its icy breath. Down he fell again upon the earth, this time as clattering hailstones. "This is all very trying," he said; "but it seems to be my work, so I must not grumble."

Again he was drawn up. Then the snow-wind came and silently froze him into feathery snowflakes, and drove him down upon a mountain side. Here he lay for many days, till at last he was drawn up once more. And now the sun said: "You have done well and waited patiently, little cloud. To-night you shall have your reward."

So when the time of sunset came the little cloud sailed into the west with the others. There the sun smiled at him and shone so gloriously on him that he turned golden and red, and glowed more brightly than any there.

SUMMER TEARS

The little clouds ran off to play
Across the summer sky;
Their sunshine mother called them back—
They all began to cry.

Their tears fell down as drops of rain
On dusty garden beds;
The flowers opened wide their cups,
The leaves held up their heads.

And "Thank you, gentle clouds," they said,
"For drops so big and wet;
We were so thirsty. Did you know?
Don't leave off crying yet."

THE WHEAT PEOPLE

It was spring. The winter storms were over, the sun was beginning to warm up the earth, and everything was stirring. Under the ground the Wheat Babies were pushing off their warm blankets and struggling out of their cradles. "We wish to go up now and see what the world is like," they said. They pushed and pushed until at last their heads were above the ground, and they could see what the world was like. "What a beautiful place!" they said. "How blue the sky is! And how golden the sun! All around the birds are singing." They grew tall and graceful, and waved and nodded to one another across the field.

Now it was early summer. The wheat boys and girls had grown up, and were busily building their little houses. Such dainty little houses they were, with shining walls and polished floors and delicate green silk hangings. Then the wheat people stood on their doorsteps and waved feathery flowers out of the doorways as a signal to the wind.

"We are ready to be married," they called. "Come and marry us, please."

The wind came blowing gently out of the West, took them on its broad wings, and carried them to one another's houses to be married. The birds sang, the sun shone, the crickets played the wedding tune on their little banjos, and the wee wheat people were as happy as could be.

The later summer came, and in each house the door was shut to keep the draught from the dear wee baby that had come. There was no time to stand on the doorstep now, for everybody was busy, feeding the baby and making a store of food for it when father and mother should be gone.

Autumn came. The Wheat People turned golden, for they were growing old; and gold, not grey, is the sign of age amongst the Wheat People. In each house the baby lay in its cradle wrapped in snow-white blankets, and surrounded by rich white food for the winter.

The reaper thundered into the field, and the tired Wheat People fell gratefully before the sharp knives, for they were glad to rest. "Our children are provided for, and that is all that is necessary," they thought as they lay dying in the sheaves.

Winter came. The field was ploughed and bare, but in the barn the new Wheat Babies slept in their snug cradles till they should be placed in the warm moist earth and the time of spring and growth should come again.

CHICK-A-PICK

Chick-a-pick lived in a round white house with shining walls. All about him was white soft food; he floated at the end of a ball of yellow food. He himself was only a speck. Have you found out yet that his house was an egg?

He grew bigger, for Hen-Mother sat over him day and night, cuddling him under her warm breast. Every day she turned his egg-house over so that he should grow evenly. Each time she did that he floated from the bottom of the egg-house to the top, to be near the warm Hen-Mother. This kept him moving, and made him grow strong. As he grew he used up the white food and the yellow food, till by-and-by there was no food left in the house, but only Chick-a-pick. Have you found out yet that Chick-a-pick was a chicken?

One day he wished to come out. He tapped on the inside wall. "Peck hard," called his mother. "I will help you from the outside."

Chick-a-pick pecked hard with his little new beak. Hen-Mother pecked softly with her big strong beak, and presently a hole was made. Out popped Chick-a-pick's head. "Cheep!" he said.

"Well done, little son," said his mother. "Now push with your shoulders and break the shell."

He pushed and pushed with his little new shoulders, till crack! went the shell in halves. Out he stepped. Have you found out yet that Chick-a-pick was strong?

"You are the first. Cuddle under my wings till your brothers and sisters come out," said the Hen-Mother.

"Cheep! cheep! cheep!" went the brothers and sisters one after the other. Chick-a-pick listened and watched from his snug corner.

"Now we are all here," said the Hen-Mother at last. "Cluck! cluck! cluck! What a fine brood you are! Yellow and black and white, and all covered with the softest, prettiest down I ever saw. How dainty your toes are! How bright are your eyes!"

She led them out for a little walk. "Cluck! cluck! cluck!" she said. "See—here is soft food spread for you. Cluck! cluck! You may have it all. I shall not eat till you are satisfied. I could not bear my chickens to go hungry. Cluck! cluck! Eat plenty. Eat plenty."

Have you found out yet how kind Hen-Mother was?

CHICK-A-PICK'S CROW

The chickens ate fast and grew fast, and feathers came where down had been. Chick-a-pick was the strongest of the whole family. He certainly ate the most.

One day Hen-Mother said: "You are old enough now to take care of yourselves. I am going to lay eggs. Chick-a-pick, you are the biggest. Look after the others, and always remember that the strongest should help the weaker ones."

At first the chickens could not understand the change. They followed Hen-Mother as they had always done, and ran to be fed whenever they saw her eating. "This will not do," she said. "You must learn to find your own food, or you will never be ready to take your places in the big world." At last she pecked them and drove them away from her, for she was wise.

"Come with me," said Chick-a-pick to the others. "I will take care of you."

He found food for them, and called them to it as he had heard the Big Rooster call to the hens. At night they huddled together for warmth in their coop. It was then that they missed their mother most.

"Cock-a-doodle-doo!" sang the Big Rooster from the top of the fence. How Chick-a-pick wished he could do that! It was such a beautiful song. The notes rang out so far that he felt sure they must be heard all over the world. If only he could make a song like that!

"I will try," he thought.

He jumped on a tub. The others crowded round to look at him.

"What are you going to do?" they asked.

"I am going to sing like the Big Rooster," he said.

He flapped his wings and tried, but no sound came. Again he flapped and tried. This time a sound came, but such a sound! He nearly jumped off the tub with surprise at the queer noise. His brothers and sisters ran away in a fright.

"Don't do that," they begged. "It is terrible. It sounds like a dog barking."

"Perhaps it will be better next time," said Chick-a-pick. "I'll try again."

He tried again, whilst the others stood against the fence to watch. Flap, flap, flap! "Adoo! Adoo!" he shouted. Oh dear! why wouldn't it come right? It was really a very ugly noise.

"It is dreadful," said the others. "You will never be able to sing like the Big Rooster, so you may as well give up trying."

"I shall go on trying," said Chick-a-pick, "for that is the only way to learn. Go away if you don't like the noise. I am going to practise."

He practised. Presently the sound grew a little better. He practised again the next day; the sound grew better still. He practised again the third day, and at last, hurrah! out came a real "Cock-a-doodle-doo!"

He did it again and again. Yes, there was no mistake. The song was not so loud and clear as the Big Rooster's, but it was the real song for all that. Some day it would grow more powerful.

The brothers and sisters heard him, and came to listen.

"Well done, big brother," said the sisters. "Now we see what comes of trying."

"If you can do it, so can we," said the brothers. They jumped on the tub and practised as he had done, and by-and-by they could all crow.

THE GORSE-MOTHER

The Gorse-Mother lived hidden away in the middle of a big gorse bush on a hill. She was an extremely busy person, for, like the old woman who lived in a shoe, she had so many children she scarcely knew what to do. She had not whipped them all soundly, for she had a tender heart, for all her thorny looks; but she had put them to bed. Wrapped in their little brown blankets, they lay in hundreds all round her. You would have called them buds, but they were little Gorse Babies.

The Gorse-Mother was tired, for the making of all those blankets had been a great work. But she knew there was no rest for her yet. "The sunshine grows hotter every day," she said. "The children will soon find the blankets too warm. I must make their satin-tents."

She set to work at the satin-tents. After several weeks of labour she had them ready. How beautiful they were! They were yellow and scented, with fluted sides, and a peaked top, and the daintiest green velvet mats for the floor. The children sprang out of bed and danced with pleasure at finding their tents all ready for them. And the Gorse-Mother's heart was glad, for now for a while she could rest. The sun shone, the birds sang, the golden satin-tents swayed in the wind, and everybody was happy.

In the afternoon a bee came. "May we ask him in, mother?" asked one of the children.

"Certainly. He is your best friend," said the Gorse-Mother.

They asked him in, giving him nectar from their little cups, and making him very welcome. As he left the Gorse-Mother said: "Tell the other bees that we invite them to a nectar-feast to-morrow."

The bee flew off. He told the other bees of the Gorse-Mother's kind invitation, and next day they came in scores to the nectar-feast.

What a day that was! Nectar cups were filled to the brim, and the bees were feasted royally. They stored the sweet juice in their bags for the hive, and filled their little hair-baskets with pollen. They flew from tent to tent, and became most friendly with the children.

Weeks passed by, and the Gorse-Mother roused herself to work again. "The children are growing fast," she said. "I must make their elastic-houses."

She unfastened the walls of the satin-tents and let them fall away. Where each tent had stood she built a green elastic-house. Strong and tightly shut were these little green houses; on each floor stood a row of tiny stools.

The children were tired after their weeks of pleasure. They were quite content to do nothing all day but sit on their stools and grow.

"Sit still and be good," said the Gorse-Mother, "and remember to grow big. Your houses will grow with you. As you turn brown they will turn brown, and as you turn black they will turn black. After that you may go out into the world."

Things happened exactly as the Gorse-Mother said they would. As the children grew, their elastic-houses stretched so that there was always room for them. When the children turned brown the houses turned brown; and when the children turned black the houses turned black.

"Now remember what I tell you," said the Gorse-Mother. "When your houses pop open, jump as far out into the world as you can, for if you fall close to me you will have no room to grow and spread. When you reach the ground, the first thing to do is to find a soft place, and the next thing is to grow. And don't forget to grow plenty of thorns. Now good-bye. Make big bushes all round me, and I shall be proud of you."

One by one, with a noise like tiny pistols, the houses popped open. The children remembered their mother's advice. They jumped far out into the world, found a soft place, and grew. In a few years they were big bushes all round the Gorse-Mother, and she was proud of them.

THE PROUD PALING FENCE

"Such common-looking little things! Whatever are you?" asked the Paling Fence.

He was new and very proud. He stood up so straight that he could see all over the garden. Indeed, he thought himself the master of it. The seeds had been planted close to his feet, so he felt he had the right to question them.

The biggest seed spoke up from her place in the ground. "Just now we are only seeds," she said; "but we think we shall be something bigger and finer some day. We have a feeling inside us."

"Feeling, indeed!" snapped the Fence. "Ugly little black things that you are, what feelings can you have? I can't think why the gardener put you near me." He stood straighter than ever, and would not look down again.

The little seeds felt shy and rather sad, but they said nothing. Day after day they lay quietly in the ground, waiting for something to happen.

And something did happen, for by-and-by they all began to swell. Bigger they grew, and rounder and softer. One fine day several of them cracked open, and the next day several more. From every crack a little white shoot pushed itself out. It pushed and it grew, and it turned down and burrowed into the earth, for all it wanted was water and darkness.

From the top of each little shoot another shoot peeped out. It pushed and it grew, and it turned up and peeped through the top of the ground, for all it wanted was fresh air and sunshine. At last a long row of white little shoots looked out through their holes in the ground.

The Sun looked down and saw them. "Dear me!" he said. "This won't do. Go down, Sunbeams, and tell those shoots to change their colour."

The Sunbeams came flying down. "You must change your colour, little shoots," they said. "Hurry up and turn green. The great Sun cannot bear to see white shoots above the ground."

The shoots turned green at once.

The Paling Fence was angry. "The idea of the Sun taking notice of such common things!" he grumbled. "He has never yet sent a message to me, though I have been here quite two months. I hope those shoots are not going to grow tall. They will hide me if they do."

Now that is just what the little shoots did. They grew taller every day; they sent out leaves and branches on every side; soon they stretched out waving hands towards the Fence.

"Please allow us to hold to you," they begged. "We are not strong enough to grow so tall alone."

The Fence stood more stiffly than ever. "No! don't you dare to touch me!" he cried.

They turned themselves this way and that, they tried to cling to him; but he would not help them. "This is dreadful," they sighed. "Whatever shall we do?"

Next day the gardener came. He brought a hammer and nails and cord. He drove the nails into the fence and tied the cord up and down and across. Now the waving hands had something to cling to.

The Fence was so angry that it really could not speak. "Then I am to be hidden," he thought. "So new and handsome as I am, too! The gardener must be mad."

The sun shone, the birds sang, the green plants grew; only the Fence was unhappy and cross. At last he was almost hidden from sight. "Oh, well, it is everybody's loss!" he said loudly—only nobody was listening.

Buds formed on the plants. They burst open. Out sprang bright flowers like fairy boats to sail on the summer winds. Rose and blue and purple and lilac, how their soft colours glowed in the sunshine! Tiny yellow-hatted ladies sat in each boat to spread the sails. They scattered scent about, and invited the bees to afternoon tea. The tea was delicious, and the bees went away, buzzing their thanks. "Such beautiful boats! Such dainty little ladies!" they said.

The Paling Fence could hardly bear it. "Stupid things!" he muttered. "But wait till the gardener comes. He will surely cut them down when he sees how I am hidden."

The gardener came. A friend walked with him. "How beautiful your sweet-peas are!" he said.

"They make a splendid covering for the Fence."

"Yes," the gardener said. "The Fence was necessary, but it was very ugly. Now the sweet-peas have made it beautiful."

The Fence heard the words. At last it understood, and its foolish pride was broken. For a long time it stood thoughtful and silent. "Well, well," it said slowly; "I have been very much mistaken. But if I can't be beautiful I can at least be kind and friendly to those who are beautiful." And from that day the Paling Fence and the sweet-peas stood happily together.

TAIL-UP

Tail-up was the queerest-looking caterpillar in the garden. He would persist in walking on his front three pairs of legs and sticking all the rest of his long body into the air. Nobody could help laughing at him. He had several pairs of legs at the back, but after one look at them he refused to use them.

"Nobody could call them legs," he said scornfully. "They are only suckers." So he walked on the front legs, with his tail stuck high in the air. No wonder everybody called him Tail-up.

Before he was a day old he started off to see the world. His mother had never left the little basket-house in her life, but Tail-up was different. He wanted to see everything there was to be seen, and also to eat everything there was to be eaten.

What an appetite he had! Nothing came amiss to him. He had no teeth, but his strong jaws could do quite enough damage to the plants in the garden.

"What a greedy fellow you are!" said a woolly brown caterpillar one day. "I have a good appetite, I know, but your life is one long meal."

"Let him alone," said a passing bee. "Let him eat all he can. The time will come when he will live quite without food."

Both caterpillars stared. "Whatever do you mean?" asked Tail-up.

"Wait and see," said the Bee.

"I believe you are talking nonsense," said Tail-up. He hurried away to find another meal.

He was never at a loss for food, for when he had devoured all the choicest bits off one tree, he dropped to the ground by a silk rope and made his way to a fresh one.

This silk rope was another of his oddities. He kept whole coils of it in his body. When he wanted to reach the ground he brought the end of one of the coils out of his mouth and gummed it on to the branch where he sat. He then slid off the branch, hanging by the rope. Slowly and carefully he came down, letting out more rope as he needed it, until he reached the ground. There he broke the rope and hurried away to climb the next tree.

After a day or two he thought: "I will make a house. It shall be just like mother's, smooth and cosy inside, but so strong that nothing can break its way in."

He set to work to weave a basket-house, doing a little each day between his many meals. He drew the silk thread out of his own body, and wove the house round and round his upreared tail. "It would be tiresome to have to go back to it each night," he said, so he carried it with him. He looked more comical than ever now, going about with his partly-built house on his tail.

He fastened tiny twigs here and there on the outside, to deceive the birds. "They will think it is a stick," he said, "and thus I shall be safe." He put a strong silk thread round the wide end as a draw-cord. Now the little house was finished. He could crawl in, pull the cord to shut the door, and safely go to sleep.

Just about this time he began to lose his appetite. "Dear me! this is very remarkable," he thought. "I wonder if that bee was right, after all? I certainly feel queer. I think I'll have a good long sleep."

He hung his house to a branch of a tree, crept into it, tied the front door securely, and went to sleep. And there he slept on and on, day after day, night after night, without ever waking to eat.

While he slept, skin and little legs shrivelled up and fell away from him, and a new skin, hard and thick and scaly, took their place.

"This is a queer state of affairs," he said, waking for a moment. "I feel quite different."

He slept again. Another change came. Six long, thin legs grew, tightly packed away under him; softly feathered wings and feelers slowly came.

He woke again. "I must go out into the world," he said.

Wriggling and pushing, he worked himself half out through the back door of his house. Wriggling and pushing still, he cracked the hard chrysalis skin and sprang on to the top of his house.

He unrolled his feathery wings and waved them fast in the air to dry them. What a fine fellow he was now! How the sun shone, after the long darkness of his house! How beautiful was the day!

"Good-bye, old house," he said. "I shall never need you again, for now I can fly from my enemies." He darted swiftly through the air to lead his new life—a new life indeed, for he never again needed to eat.

THE RAIN-FAIRY

A rain-fairy sat up from her sleep in a pink poppy, stretched herself, and yawned. "Oh, dear!" she said. "It is morning again, and I have to work. The same old work, day after day, on the same old earth. How tired I am of it! I think I will go up to the blue sky and play with the sunbeams and clouds. It must be lovely up there."

She flew up to the sky. For some time she wandered about admiring the strange and beautiful things in this new land. When she grew tired of that she went to the Sunbeams and said: "May I play with you?"

"We are not playing," said one of the Sunbeams politely. "We all have our day's work to do. I am just going to ripen the early strawberries, and my little sisters are coming to help me. Our cousins over there have to look after the roses. Indeed, we are all too busy to play."

She flew off.

The Fairy went to the white morning clouds. "Play with me, please," she begged.

"We really have no time just now," said the Little Clouds. "We have a shower and a rainbow to prepare before noon."

"Dear me! Everybody seems to be as busy here as we are down on the earth," thought the Fairy. She wandered about again till the afternoon. Then she went to the Afternoon Clouds and asked them to play with her.



"She went to the Afternoon Clouds and asked them to play with her"

—THE RAIN FAIRY.—(See page 205)

"She went to the Afternoon Clouds and asked them to play with her"

"We are far too busy," said the Afternoon Clouds. "We have to shade two hills and a valley from the heat of the Sun, and make a crown for the mountains you see below you."

The Rain-Fairy could not find anyone who had time to play, so she had to spend the day by herself. It was dull and lonely, but she would not go down to the earth. "They surely must play some time. I will wait and see," she thought.

Sunset came, and the Clouds and Sunbeams all passed in turn before the great Sun to report to him on their day's work. The Rain-Fairy went with them, for she saw that each one passed on from the Sun to a great cloud-hall, where a star-dance was to be held that night. Soon she herself stood before the Sun.

"A Rain-Fairy in the sky!" said the Sun in surprise. "What have you done to-day, little Rain-Fairy?"

The Rain-Fairy hung her head. "I have done no work," she said. "I was tired of working on the earth, so I came up here to play."

The Sun's kindly smile changed to a frown, "Then you may not go to the star-dance," he said. "Go back to your work on the earth. We have no time for play here till our day's work is done."

The Fairy returned sadly to the earth, but she had learned her lesson; she took up her work again and did everything well. She closed the dainty flower-cups that the rain might not wash their colours out, and dried the soft petals again when the shower had passed. She hid the butterflies and moths in dry hiding places when it rained hard, and she covered the wee birds in their nests. Day after day she worked patiently, remembering how the Sunbeams and Clouds found no time for play.

One day the Sunbeams came to her with a message. "The great Sun has watched your work," they said, "and he is well pleased. He bids us say that as a reward you are invited to the star-dance to-night."

THE DISOBEDIENT SUNBEAMS

The story ended only to-day, but it began thousands and thousands of years ago. In those days the sun shone as he shines now, and the Sunbeam Children had their work to do before they were free to play, just as they have now. Some had to coax the flower-buds out of their cosy blankets; some had to stroke the round cheeks of the berries till they turned red; some had to slip through the clear water to nurse and comfort the fish babies. But in those days there were five little Sunbeam Brothers who liked play much better than work. Day after day they played at hide-and-seek between the leaves of a tall tree, instead of doing the tasks that were set for them. Time after time they were warned, but they would not reform; at last the Sun in his anger punished them with a terrible punishment.

"Enter into the trunk of the tree," he commanded. "Now," he said, when they had tremblingly obeyed him, "you shall remain there as long as the tree remains. When it falls you shall be free, but not till then."

This was a dreadful sentence to the Sunbeams. To be shut away from the light and the air and the other Sunbeams was bad enough, but to have to endure it all through the life of the tree was worse. They dared not rebel, however; they had to submit quietly to their imprisonment; the years went by and the tree lived on.

But a worse fate came. Just when the tree was growing old and their freedom seemed near, the whole forest sank, and the sea flowed over it. Tons and tons of sand and gravel were brought by the waves and flung upon the forest, choking it up till the tops of the great trees were covered. The five crouched in despair at the foot of their tree. They could not die, for death is impossible to Sunbeams; but how were they to be delivered now? Under this great weight of earth and water they might be imprisoned for thousands of years before anything happened to release them.

And that is just what happened. For thousands of years the forest lay under the sea, not decaying, but slowly changing from wood to coal. Then a change came. The land was pushed up again by heat from below; by and by it rose high above the sea. But now the trees were hidden by the earth above them, over which grass and plants soon grew. The Sunbeams were still imprisoned.

Then one day men opened the earth and dug out the coal, and the piece containing the Sunbeams was placed on the fire and burnt. At last freedom had come. Quivering with joy, the five Sunbeam Children sprang out and danced on top of their prison house.

"How bright those flames are, and how they jump!" said the children sitting round the fire.

The coal burned to red embers and fell to the bottom of the grate. Spark! spark! Up flew the five Sunbeam Children out through the tall chimney to live again their life of work and play.

"It was a dreadful punishment, but it has taught us a lesson," they said.

"I am glad to hear it," said the Sun.

WHITE-BRIER

She grew at the very end of the rose-garden, next the road—that is what vexed the other trees.

"You are only a common Brier," they said, "and yet you are placed in the most prominent position. Everybody who passes can see you, while we are half-hidden by your spreading branches."

"Look at us!" cried the Red Roses. "Are we not worthy to be seen? Our petals are like rich velvet, not pale and colourless like yours. In the morning light we glow like massed rubies, but you cannot glow at all."

"We are like bits of the sun brought down from the sky," said the Cloth-of-Gold Roses, "and yet you have the presumption to stand between us and the passers-by."

"If you were even a Sweet-Brier it would not be so bad," sighed the Tea-Roses; "but you have no scent, so what is the use of you?"

Then the biggest of the Pink Roses spoke. "You have only one row of petals," she said severely. "That stamps you at once as of low birth. We others are all of higher growth than that. Look at my petals, set so closely one above another that you cannot see between them! You are a nobody, and yet you are allowed to retain the best position. It is most unfair."

White-Brier had listened to it all in a sorrowful silence, but now she spoke: "I am sorry, indeed, to be in the way," she said. "I should be glad to be at the back of the garden, for I know you are all much more beautiful than I am. But I was placed here, and here I am bound to grow. I cannot help having only one row of petals and no scent. It is my nature."

The other roses only turned their backs on her at this, but the bees crowded into her flower-cups to comfort her. "Don't take any notice of their jealousy," they said. "If you have only one row of petals, still they are so white and delicate that they can compare with any in the garden; if you have but little scent, you have a sweeter heart than any rose here. We love you best of all, and will do our best to carry your pollen well, so that your seed-balls may be well filled."

The summer passed; one by one the roses faded and showered their petals on the earth. Autumn came, and the green leaves turned red and yellow and then brown; and they, too, dropped upon the earth. Winter came; the proud rose-trees stood bare and thorny, shivering in the winter storms.

But White-Brier was not bare. Her roses and leaves had indeed faded, but the little seed-cases below the flowers had grown into green balls that swelled and turned red, and now the whole bush was hung with scarlet berries. How they glowed as they swung in the wind! The passers-by stopped to look at the bush. "What a beautiful rose-tree!" one of them said to the master of the garden. "What a glorious bit of colour in this gloomy winter weather!"

"Yes," he said; "that is why I planted the tree in the front of the garden. In the summer there are many beautiful flowers everywhere, but in the winter there are so few, that it is good to have a tree like that where everyone can see it."

Then the proud roses were ashamed, and begged White-Brier's pardon. "You are more beautiful than we are now," they said.

But White-Brier did not grow conceited. "It is nothing," she said. "I must grow according to my nature—that is all. But my heart is singing for joy that I am beautiful at last."

A TRIP INTO THE COUNTRY

"Always do what I tell you, and you are sure to be right," said Mr. Bantam. "Chukitty-chuk; Biddy Bantam, don't make eyes at me. Chukitty-chukitty-chuk. I see a fine new perch across the yard. Let us all go and stand on it."

"I would rather stay here," said Biddy Bantam. "Besides, I don't think that new perch is safe."

"Nonsense! It's as strong as strong," said Mr. Bantam. "Come on. Bessy Bantam too." He strutted round the two little hens and hustled them across the yard.

"I don't like the look of it," said Biddy crossly. "It came in on these two big wheels this morning, and a horse was pulling it. How do we know it won't go out again?"

"You can easily jump off if it does, can't you?" cried Mr. Bantam. "Chukitty-chukitty-chuk! What a fuss you make! Follow me and you will be quite safe." He flew up and settled himself on the perch.

"It is certainly cool in the shade of that big box on top," said Bessy. She flew up beside Mr. Bantam.

"Oh, well, since you are both up, I suppose I may as well come," said Biddy, and she too flew up.

It was very hot and still in the yard. The bantams put their heads under their wings and went to sleep. They slept on, not knowing how time was passing, till dark.

Now the perch they were on was the axle of a farmer's cart, and the "big box," as Bessy called it, was the cart itself. After dark the farmer put his horse in again and drove away home, not knowing that there were three little bantams fast asleep on his axle. It was a drive of four miles, but the bantams never woke till the glare of a lantern made them open their eyes and blink.

The farmer was taking his things out of the back of the cart. When he saw the bantams he whistled with surprise. "Well, of all the funny things!" he cried. "These must be Nellie White's bantams. They have evidently perched on my axle and ridden home with me. I must take them back to-morrow, or Nellie will think they are lost."

He took them gently off the perch and put them in a box. "What did I tell you, Mr. Bantam?" said Biddy. "Here we are, shut up in a horrid dark box; nobody knows what will happen to us

next. And all because we followed your advice."

"Never mind," said Bessy. "It is snug and warm in here, and we can sleep comfortably till morning, anyway." Mr. Bantam had nothing to say.

The next day the farmer took them back to Nellie White. She was delighted to see them again, and they were delighted to be back in their own yard.

"I really thought we were going to be killed and eaten," said Mr. Bantam.

"Never talk to me about new perches again," said Bidy. "The fright I have had!"

"Well, after all, no harm has come to us," said Bessy, "and we can all say we have had a trip into the country, even if we were asleep when we went."

GREY-KING

The Pigeons left their house and flew out for their morning exercise. Up and down, and round and round, they went in a flock. "Follow me," called the leader. "Fly fast and swoop!" The white of their under-wings flashed as they passed, and they made a soft, silken rustle as they skimmed lightly through the air. It was beautiful to watch them.

But Grey-King sat on top of the house, and would not exercise. He was the swiftest flyer amongst them, and had won so many races that he had grown conceited. "No," he said, "I am going to rest. I can easily beat you all without any practice."

"But the great race of the year is to come off in a fortnight," said the others. "Pigeons from all the country-side will be flying. Think what a disappointment it would be to everyone if a stranger won! We look to you to uphold the honour of our house."

Grey-King only laughed. "Haven't I won every race for years?" he asked. "The honour of our house is safe, for no stranger can beat me."

He turned himself round and round in the sunshine, fluffed out his grey feathers proudly, and sat down on the housetop again. Every day while the others exercised he sat there, watching their movements and giving them plenty of good advice, but feeling quite certain that he had no need to join them.

The day before the great race the pigeons were all put into their boxes and sent away by train to their starting-point. "Grey-King is sure to win, I suppose," said a friend to the master as he helped him place the pigeons in their boxes.

"I thought so till a fortnight ago," said the master; "but he has not been exercising lately. I cannot understand what is the matter with him, but I am afraid he has no chance of winning." He did not know that Grey-King's only ailment was conceit.

Grey-King was angry. "How absurd to say I have no chance!" he thought. "I'll show him how superior I am when I start. I feel quite upset."

He fussed and fumed for a long time in his box before he could settle down to the train journey; when they were set free the next day he started off for home with a great sweep of wings to show how well he could fly. He was soon ahead of all the rest.

But there was a head wind, and he had grown fatter and heavier with sitting about so much; his muscles were soft from want of exercise. Soon he began to tire and to fly more and more slowly. One by one the others passed him; and the race was won by a stranger. Grey-King came home last, tired out and utterly ashamed. "I will never again be too proud to exercise," he thought. "It serves me right."

THE SEASON FAIRIES

In the days of long ago four fairies stood before the Sun. "You shall be the Season Fairies," he said; for he was the King of the Year.

To the first he gave a robe of green and a silver wand. "Take these," he said, "and fly slowly up and down above the earth from pole to pole. As you pass, each land shall clothe itself in green

to match the colour of your robe; as you wave your silver wand, all baby-things shall spring from their winter cradles and begin to grow. Take with you rousing winds and showers, to wake the babies from their sleep, and a million warm and golden sunbeams in which to fold the tender growing things when they have risen."

The Spring Fairy went forth in her robe of green, waving her silver wand. As she flew from land to land the earth clothed itself in green to match the colour of her robe, and all baby-things sprang from their winter cradles and began to grow.

To the next fairy he gave a rosy robe and a wand wreathed in flowers. "Take these," he said, "and follow Spring, for you are Summer. As you pass from land to land the earth shall blossom out, and a million million flowers shall shine above the green of Spring. The baby-things shall grow to their full size and beauty, and shall proudly wave their flowered heads. Take with you bright cloudless heat and long fine days and soft night dews."

The Summer Fairy followed her sister Spring. As she went a million million flowers blossomed out above the green, and the baby-things grew up to their full size and beauty.

To the third fairy he gave a robe of red and a wand of gold. "Follow Summer," he said, "for you are Autumn. As you pass from land to land the blossoms of the earth shall change to fruit; the grown-up babies shall make cradles for the babies of next year. Red and brown shall turn the leaves, red and purple shall hang the berries, and as you wave your wand the corn that covers half the land shall change to gold. Take with you still hot days and little creeping evening winds."

The Autumn Fairy went forth in her crimson robe. As she passed the blossoms changed to fruit, the grown-up things made cradles for the babies of next year.

To the last fairy he gave a robe of white and a sparkling wand of diamonds. "You are Winter," he said. "As you pass, you shall lull all growing things to their season's sleep and rest, that they may wake refreshed when Spring returns. Take with you rain and hail and ice and frost, and the white snow-covering for the sleeping earth."

The Winter Fairy followed her sister Autumn up and down the earth from pole to pole. As she went all growing things folded themselves away for their season's rest.

SPRING STORY

Elsie lay on a couch by an open window, trying to grow strong again. She had been hurt, and had to lie here for a year. As she had always been an outdoor girl she found it hard to stay so long indoors. But the sunbeams and the little winds came in to play with her, her favourite tree outside the window made funny leaf shapes to amuse her, and, best of all, the Season Fairies came to tell her the doings of the outdoor world.

This is what the Spring Fairy said: "Each day the sun shines more brightly, and everything is waking from its winter sleep. The spring wind knocks at the close-shut doors of the winter houses, and calls again and again till they are opened. Buds burst, leaves and flowers dance out, and everything is gay.

"In the garden plots crocuses and snowdrops and golden daffodils nod to one another across the ground, primroses and violets scent the air, and hyacinths ring their merry chimes. Pink-tipped daisies open their golden eyes here and there on the lawn; the grass-blades shoot up straight and green.

"I flew through the kitchen garden on my way here. The radishes have already sent up two thick leaves, and the young cabbages stand in stiff rows like soldiers, each trying to grow a heart. I peeped under the ground. There everything is sprouting. The peas and beans have burst open at the sides, and strong white shoots have come out. The potatoes are growing stems out of their eyes, and are sending down white roots to search for water. Under the ground, too, the young grubs are waking up and moving fast, ready to devour all that they can find.

"Down in the fruit garden, the trees are a glorious mass of white and pink; for cherry-trees and plum-trees, apple-trees and pear-trees, are all decked out in their sweet spring dresses. The air is filled with their fragrance, and snowy petals soon begin to float on every little wind.

"The bees are busy there, gathering honey and pollen to take home to the newly-hatched bee-grubs. The gooseberry and currant bushes have opened their queer little flowers to the bees, and, low on the ground, the strawberry spreads its white petals, inviting them to its honey feast.

"In the pool below the fruit garden queer swimming creatures rush eagerly about in search of food, for the warmth of the spring has reached them. One day they are to grow into gnats or mosquitoes or dragon-flies, but they are not thinking about that just now, all their thoughts are

on their meals.

"From grass-blades and leaves everywhere the tiny eggs are hatching that were laid by moths and butterflies; caterpillars creep out from them to wander off in search of food.

"In the wheat-field millions of green blades are shooting up; on the roadside grasses and thistles, dandelions and ragwort, and a hundred little weeds, are pushing and jostling each other for their summer places. The hedges are shining with the gold of gorse and broom; in the trees dainty nests are being made for eggs as dainty.

"A tender bleating rises all day from the meadow at the foot of the hill, for there the mother sheep watch over their snowy lambs. The lambs frisk and gambol on the soft grass, and the mothers call to them with the mother-note that has come with the spring."

SPRING TIME

Spring time is a merry time,
A merry time is Spring!
The little birds come out for straws;
They build, and hop, and sing.

The daffodils and crocuses
Spread out their golden heads;
Sweet cowslips hang their scented bells
Above the garden beds.

The cherry-trees are white with flowers,
The apple-trees are pink.
The green leaves wrapped in woolly buds
Peep out at you and wink.

The winds rock lightly in the trees:
The sunbeams dance and play.
Come out! Come out! The sky is blue,
The world is fresh and gay.

SUMMER STORY

With the summer came the Summer Fairy. She said: "The sun is high in the sky; at noon-day the air shimmers with the heat. The flower garden is gay with roses and poppies and Canterbury bells, the lawns and clipped hedges are like green velvet.

"Down in the vegetable garden the peas and beans are filling their pods, and the cabbage soldiers have all grown hearts. The mother potatoes are feeding their little ones with their own white bodies; the turnips and carrots are swelling as fast as they can. Under the ground some of the caterpillars have coiled themselves up and gone to sleep; others have finished their sleep and have flown out on many-hued wings as butterflies or moths.

"In the fruit garden the trees are green. The flowers have long ago dropped their petals and shut their doors while they made their seeds. The strawberries and cherries are nearly over, the gooseberries and currants and raspberries are ripe, but the apples and pears and plums are green and hard on the trees. The bees have left the orchard and betaken themselves to the flower garden, but the birds are feasting royally in the gooseberry and currant bushes.

"I peeped into the pool below the fruit garden. The young gnats and dragon-flies have crept up the bushes for their great change, and from there have flown away, when this was over, to earn their living like the rest of the world.

"In the wheatfield the green corn stands high, and waves its tasselled flowers in the summer breezes. The grasses and weeds on the roadside are all in flower. In the meadows the lambs have grown big, and the sheep are gladly being shorn of their hot woolly coats. The young birds are leaving their nests in the trees and learning to fly, the fathers and mothers teach them with infinite love and care.

"There was a great commotion in the bee-hive this morning, for a young queen had wakened from her chrysalis sleep, and the old queen in her jealousy would have stung her to death. There

was much running about and loud buzzing. Everybody was too excited to think of going out to look for honey; but at last they came to an agreement, and some of the bees went with the old queen to look for a new home while the rest stayed in the hive with the new queen. The old queen flew to an apple-tree in the orchard; her people surrounded her in a dense mass to protect her till a hive was brought and they were safely housed. To-morrow they will be as busy as can be, making their new honeycomb. Already they have started."

SUMMER TIME

Roses red, roses white,
Up the hedges climb.
Gardens are a lovely sight!
This is summer time.

Clover red, clover white,
Bloom among the grass.
All the world is filled with light;
Skies are clear as glass.

Cherries red, cherries white,
Show with each new breeze.
Linnets sing in sweet delight
High on rocking trees.

AUTUMN STORY

The Autumn Fairy said: "The sun is a little lower in the heavens now, but at morning and evening the land flames with the gold and red of his royal robes. Gold and red! These are the autumn colours, the colours of the fruitage that fulfils the promise of the spring.

"Asters and dahlias and tiger-lilies are blooming in the flower plots, and seeds ripen in the places of the flowers that were there in summer. Pop, pop! What a constant noise the pods keep up as they burst and scatter their seeds. It is so loud that it almost drowns the buzzing of the bees. Out jump the seeds as far as they can, to find a new home for themselves.

"I watched a beetle as he walked under a larkspur. A pod burst above him and scattered its seeds on his head. 'How those great nuts hurt,' he cried. 'It is not safe to remain under this tree,' and he hurried off to a safer place. To him the larkspur seemed a giant tree, and its seeds huge nuts.

"In the fruit garden there is rich harvest, for plums and pears, apples and peaches and apricots gleam with red and gold amidst their tinted leaves. The chestnuts are ripe in their prickly nests, and the walnuts fall with a thud and split open to show their fine shells.

"In the wheatfield the golden corn falls before the sharp knives of the reaper, and the sheaves are set in stooks ready for the carrying. There is dismay amongst the larks and field-mice, for their shelter is taken from them; but the heart of the farmer is glad at the richness of the crop.

"On the roadside the grasses bow their heavily seeded heads, begging the wind to carry their children to a good growing place; the thistle seeds rise up on their own shining wings, and float away to find a place for themselves.

"The nests in the trees are deserted, for the little birds have grown up and now perch on the branches with the older ones. From some of the trees the tired leaves are dropping one by one. They have done their work well, so the tree-mother gently loosens them from the branches and gives them leave to rest."

AUTUMN TIME

Autumn time is apple time!

Time for pears and plums.
Corn is golden in the fields.
How the reaper hums!

Lilies shine in garden plots,
Berries in the bush.
Brown pods burst along the hedge,
Where the ripe seeds push.

Come with me to Orchard-land;
Grass will do for chairs.
Leaves fall off and tumble fast—
So do juicy pears!

WINTER STORY

The Winter Fairy said: "The sun is so busy on the other side of the world that he has not time to climb high in our sky. The Storm King, the Snow Queen, and Jack Frost have their way now, turn and turn about, with no powerful sun to check them. To-day it is Jack Frost's turn. He has drawn fairy pictures on your windows, frozen the little pool below the fruit garden, and flung glittering lace-work over all the land.

"In the garden plots all the flowers have fled except the hardy winter roses; the fallen seeds have hidden themselves as far down under the warm earth as they could creep.

"Everything is resting. The fruit-trees stand bare and brown and still, and you might think their life was gone. But on every branch sit the little buds which the tree-mother made in the long days of the busy summer. They are snugly wrapped in thick woolly blankets till the sun returns and the air is warm again. Then they will fling aside their coverings and dance out in the wind.

"Everything is waiting for the spring. The flies have hidden themselves away under the grass and in the hedges, and have gone to sleep till the cold dark days are done. Butterflies and moths have laid their last eggs and have hidden themselves away, to die, most of them. Bees keep close within their hives; the hum of insect life is stilled.

"The snails have buried themselves in the ground, sinking into their shells and fastening their little doors so tightly that no enemy can come in. Round the pond, too, the frogs have buried themselves in the soft mud to sleep till winter is over, leaving only openings enough for air.

"The wheatfield is being ploughed, that Jack Frost may break the earth for next year's crop. On the roadside the empty grass-heads stand, white and beautiful with fine frost-work, but dead beneath their beauty.

"Of the birds who sang their joyous way through the other seasons only the braver ones are left. The rest have flown to find a warmer land till spring returns. So ends the tale."

WINTER TIME

Snow, snow! How the winds blow.
Across the sky the white flakes go.
Their steps are fast—their steps are slow—
They mean some mischief, that I know.

Cold, cold! Jack Frost is bold.
He nips the toes of young and old.
But better laugh than cry and scold.
Come for a slide with me. Take hold!

Run, run! The slide is done.
We'll warm ourselves without the sun.
Now snow is here and frost's begun,
The Winter will be splendid fun.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE SUN'S BABIES ***

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