FORTY FABLES

FOR

FIRESIDE REFLECTION

NEMO MORTALIUM
OMNIBUS HORIS SAPIT

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FIRESIDE REFLECTION

SELECTED, ADAPTED
AND COMPOSED
BY

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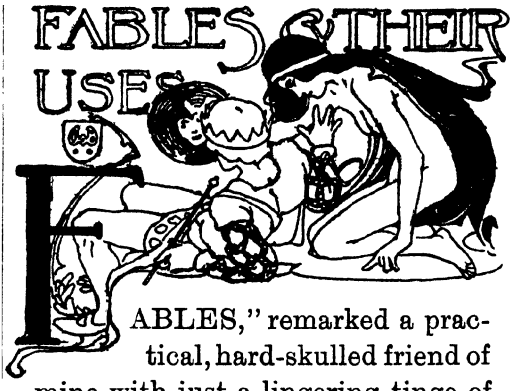


ABLES," remarked a practical, hard-skulled friend of mine with just a lingering tinge of contempt in the tone of his voice, "were popular enough in byegone days but ought now to be relegated without mercy to the waste-paper basket. All lies of that sort," he continued, "are stumbling blocks in the pathway of truth. They would not even be acceptable to the abject intellect of open-mouthed rusticity. Scientific education is now so lavishly supplied, and the stream of knowledge so ably augmented by the public treasury, that there is no reason for the revival of such a childish old-

world form of instruction and amusement." "All lies of that sort!" Alas, poor Æsop, how thou hast wasted thy wits and thy time, and after thee thine imitator La Fontaine, whose ponderous volume stands forth, not unlike many of the specimens of Anglo-Saxon sculpture that adorn our streets, an undying monument of misapplied genius. And thou, poor John Gay, whose fables formed wholesome nutriment for the hungry minds of children, art thou to be consigned in no brief period to the uttermost darkness of oblivion? Is the literary epicure, whose palate leads him to search out the hidden dainty, alone to relish thee in future?

Strange are the vicissitudes of families; stranger the vicissitudes of authors; mysterious are the veerings of the mental weather-

cock. The glory of the classical period is gradually fading under an eclipse. Were our forefathers mostly fools, that they could find in old Greek and Latin writings such an endless theme for praise? Books over which our parents hung in breathless ecstasy are now rejected by their offspring as scarcely worthy of a place in the library. Before many years have flown, Mr. Pickwick, I doubt not, will find a resting-place in some undusted corner of a bookshelf and, with an aureole of cobwebs close encircling him, will dwell apart in godlike serenity, looking down on the apathetic sons of men.

Without affecting to unravel this psychological tangle, or having any intention to plunge into the boiling crater of mental and moral philosophy, I may suggest that one

reason for this versatile tendency of the mind lies in that universal motive of human action called Utility. The fable was in vogue so long as it was useful. The boot-jack and spit had their days of popularity, but now that they are no longer wanted have been promptly cashiered. So, too, the hour will inevitably strike when the fable, Cinderellawise, will have to leave the ball, and no prince will seek to discover her whereabouts. She will leave no tiny slipper behind her to mark her former presence. But in what way could such an idle good-for-nothing will-o'-the-wisp of the imagination ever have had any use except that of leading the understanding into some perplexing quagmire?

There was a time, not so very many years ago, when duelling was the fashionable mode of settling

verbal disputes. The plain language of truth, the "unvarnished tale," was often not appreciated at its proper value, or accepted in the spirit it was spoken. A hasty word, or an ill-timed expression, was answered by an appeal to arms. A challenge was sent, a secluded spot in Hyde Park chosen, and in a few minutes the whole difference was made smooth. Had the sentiment originally expressed, and so mortally resented, taken a more poetical shape, the rapier might never have been unsheathed and the blood of the speaker not incarnadined the grass plot.

The man of modern ethics stands on different ground. No longer does the sword of Damocles hang over every word he utters. There is no longer such need for metaphorical subtlety of expression.

The hand of his neighbour is not laid significantly on the hilt of his sword. The peaceful umbrella has taken its place. There is no racking of brains for some sweet similitude drawn from animal life. The law that deigns not to stoop to trifles, to a certain extent aids and abets the rude freedom of language. So long as an individual of strong views restrains his appellations to such explanatory words as "rogue," "scoundrel," or "blackguard," he is fairly secure against an action for slander. But wise was it of the Dean of St. Patrick in his day to veil his stinging satires under the fanciful names of "The Tale of a Tub" and "Gulliver's Travels." The author of "Robinson Crusoe," poor Defoe, ventured to publish a pamphlet on the "shortest way with dissenters," written in a cheerful ironical vein.

The High Church party took umbrage at it, the House of Commons voted it a libel, and the unlucky writer had to take his stand on the pillory and "to feel sensibly the effect of solitude in a crowd."

The parable, cousin german of the derogate fable, had its business use among the heroes of Bible history. By its powerful appeal to the oriental imagination private revenge might be slaked, the walls of the proudest cities might totter and the seraglios and palaces of Kings become the haunt of the Vulture and Jackal. It was the firebrand that rekindled the dying embers of a family feud; it was the javelin flung by the sturdy arm of an irresponsible reformer, to rouse the broken spirit of a down-trodden or a captive people.

But what use can a candidate for Parliamentary honours, be he

progressive politician, or mouthing speechmonger, find in parable, allegory, or fable? The hustings are not the place for the exhibition of Phantasmagoria. The magic lantern requires a white sheet for the reflection of its wonders. Were he to try this mode of inculcating his views it would doubtless prove very effective for the other side.

To return once more to the fable, another question bubbles lightly to the surface of our inquiry. Were it not wise even in these days of high civilisation and cordial understanding to resuscitate its use on those occasions when touchy persons might feel the smart of a homethrust too keenly? When advice is tendered unasked, the fable offers itself as an admirable vehicle for the conveyance of so loathsome a commodity. If some gentle hint as to a trifling breach

of good manners is to be given, what more soothing opiate to arrest the uneasiness caused by the reproof than an allegory? If some gross absurdity or flagrant vice needs the cautery and the knife, what can deaden the patient's torture more completely than the hypnotic device of suggesting that the disease is only manifested in the animal kingdom. Self-respect no longer feels the pang of incision, and rapidly heals under the somniferous treatment of the moral mesmerist.

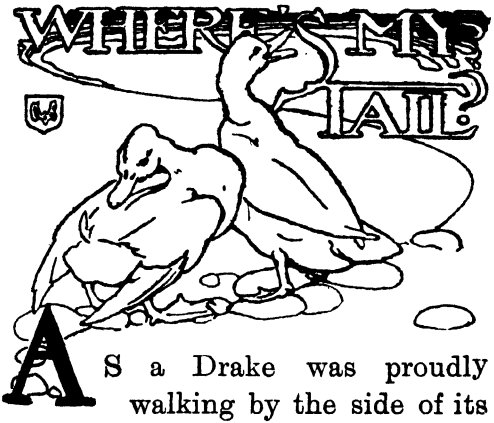
The history of certain incidents in the life of Sir Roger de Coverley lays bare many anomalies in the conduct of country gentlemen in the time of Queen Anne. Nothing could be more graceful and judicious than the manner in which the "Spectator" plays his victim. The strange vagaries of a bene-

volent heart are depicted with a full brush and delicate manipulation. The nobler qualities of the good-natured knight are subtly blended with the quaint imbecility of his ideas.

But if the fable had been used, instead of sketching from the life, there would have been no necessity for setting a worthy man and county magistrate (beetle-headed though he be) on a pedestal in order to call attention to his little foibles. Nowadays when animal characteristics form a topic of such absorbing interest to so many of our intelligent fellow-creatures, there can be but little difficulty in tracing some likeness between the habits of beasts and our own, so that henceforward there will be no crying need for a satirist to place an honest country squire (even if he be *custos rotulorum*) on

the stool of penance, and to pillory his eccentricities amid the scornful laughter of future generations.

In consideration therefore of the small repute of the fallen fable, it is with some hesitation that I venture to lay this slender collection before the public. At times the reappearance of an old friend clad in ancient garb may afford some amusement, even if it does not awaken any tender recollections.



AS a Drake was proudly walking by the side of its mate on the edge of a pond, a Dog rushed at it and seizing it by the tail, tore all the feathers out. The Master, seeing what mischief his Dog had done, soundly thrashed it.

"Serve him right," exclaimed the Duck, glancing with heart-felt joy at her spouse, "are you not delighted at seeing that ugly brute so properly punished?"

"That is all very well and good," replied the Drake, as he gloomily eyed the scattered remains of his plumage. "But, where's my tail?"

A COCK and Hen were sitting complacently on a dust-heap within a farmyard. The Cock was complimenting his spouse on her good looks and the successful manner in which she had brought up a numerous offspring, when a Fox peeped over the wall.

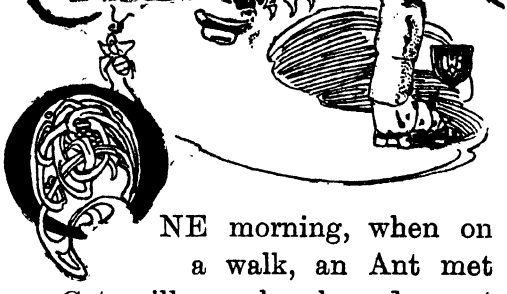
"How can you sit on that dirty dust-heap," he exclaimed, "when you may wander at will through these lovely meadows? Don't you know that by sitting there you are inhaling miasmal vapours and morbific germs?"

"We do not understand in the least what you mean," replied the

Cock. "We are perfectly healthy and contented, and have no intention of moving."

"What is the use," said the Fox, with a shrug, "of offering free luxuries to common folk? They want the capacity of enjoying them," then turning tail went away in sorrow.

THE ANT & THE CATERPILLAR.



ONE morning, when on a walk, an Ant met a Caterpillar, who bowed most politely to her.

She coldly returned his salutation and said, "Mr. Caterpillar, your appearance is very much against you. Your clothes are so plain and unbecoming, and your gait is slow and ungainly. Please, for the future, not to trouble yourself to recognise me."

The Caterpillar made no reply, but wrapped himself up in his chrysalis, and dreamt of other things. On awaking he was sur-

prised to find himself in a very splendid suit of clothes with large dangling sleeves, and by waving them to and fro he flitted from flower to flower.

Soon afterwards the Ant met him again in the same place, and nodded to him in the most friendly, almost affectionate, manner.

"What can she mean?" thought the Caterpillar, amazed at her condescension. "The other day she would have nothing to say to me! Does friendship depend on clothes?"

A LION'S whelp of weak intellect used to frequent the society of animals of much lower social rank than his own, and was especially devoted to the members of the Ass family.

He was soon quite familiar with their modes of expression, their manners and customs. Every act, every word of his was greeted by them with applause. Very well pleased with himself he returned once more to his father's court, and fancying he was saying something very clever spoke a few words in the Ass language.

"Can this be a son of mine?" roared the King of Beasts, as he lashed his tail. "To use in his father's presence words only fit for the stable!"

"Father," replied the Whelp, much amazed at this outburst of wrath, "the society I have been accustomed to embraces other interests than its own."

"Aye, aye, Whelp," retorted the Lion. "The fool praises the fool that mimics him. A Lion thou wast among Asses, but a Lion among Lions wilt thou never be."

HOW industrious is the Silkworm! How toilsome her task! How skilfully spun! Such were the praises some animals were uttering in honour of the world-renowned Spinster.

"But," interposed a Caterpillar, who had previously held her peace, "there are knots in her skein! Her silk is carelessly wound and frequently the threads are broken! I must admit I have seen better work."

The animals turned their heads

and gazed with surprise at the captious insect.

"I am informed," remarked a Fox, "that our fair Critic has tried her hand at something of the same sort herself."

A SNAPPISH cur of a Mastiff was so charmed with the sound of his own voice that he never left off barking. He used to run at horses passing down the street, and accompany them yelping until they were out of the village.

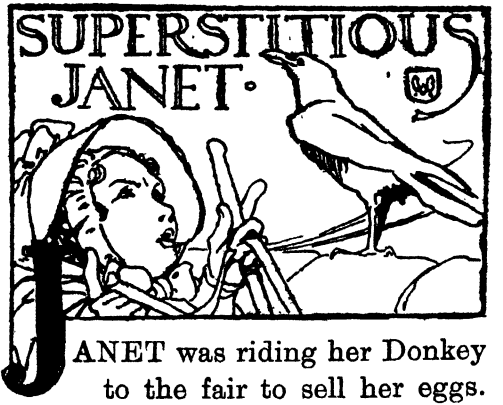
One day, getting too close to a horse's heels, his jaw was broken by a kick.

"Very unlucky," he whined. "I shall never be able to bark again."

"Thank goodness," retorted a

Shepherd's Dog, "something has at last stopped your row."

"It is all very well for you to make those remarks," snarled the Mastiff, "you never had a voice."

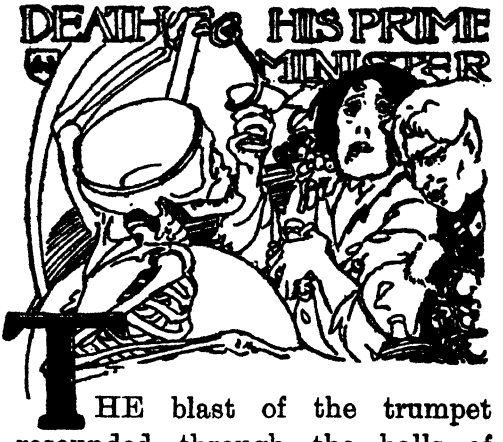


JANET was riding her Donkey to the fair to sell her eggs. A Raven croaked. "That's bad luck for me," she thought, as her cheek grew pale. A moment after the Donkey stumbled, and flung Janet and her eggs into the middle of the lane.

"O thou naughty, naughty bird," she cried, as soon as she had picked herself and her eggs up. "I knew what would happen. All this comes from your croaking."

"Good lady," replied the Raven, humbly, "if you would only sit a

little firmer on your saddle, and fasten your egg-basket a little tighter, all the ravens in the world might croak without causing you any disaster."



THE blast of the trumpet resounded through the halls of Death, and the spirits of the dead flocked to the Council Chamber.

"A new Prime Minister must we elect," cried Death from his throne. "Our realms grow empty; our revenue is low."

Fever stepped forward shivering with ague, Gout followed puffed up with a limping foot. After him came War bedizened in his blood-stained armour. All were welcomed gladly. Then entered

the Plague, with livid spots on his face and bloodless skin. He received a still warmer welcome.

As Death was hesitating between the Plague and a Doctor who had put his name down on the list of candidates, the Vices mounted the dais.

"You are the very man for us," exclaimed Death with an approving smile, as he led Intemperance to the front. "You shall be my Prime Minister."

All the spirits rent the air with loud applause, for they knew they would meet many of their old acquaintances ere long.

WRATH and Truth were strolling home together after a Council Meeting of the Gods.

"Where are you going now?" asked Truth, just as they were parting.

"To thrash a naughty, obstinate boy," replied Wrath. And off he went to the home of the young culprit and gave him a sound thrashing with a birch rod.

This treatment only hardened the boy's heart, and he became more naughty and perverse.

As Wrath was just going to give

him another beating Truth entered, and taking a mirror, held it before the boy.

"Look in that," she said. "Are you not ashamed of your red eyes and sulky face?"

The boy blushed. "I will repent of my wilful ways," he cried.

He did so, and was soon trotting down the paths of wisdom by the side of Truth. As she bent her head to kiss him on saying good-bye, he whispered in her ear: "Dear Truth, thou hast taught the world one lesson. The easiest way to manage me is to touch my vanity."

POODLE and a Bulldog were put up for sale, and it fell out that Young Pimpernel and Old Buckram, who live together at the Hall, were walking down the street and saw them.

"That Poodle is a nice dog, Buckram," said Young Pimpernel. "What a fine muzzle and strong loins! He is much handsomer than that sulky old brute of a Bulldog."

"Give me the ugly old brute," replied Buckram. "He and I would go well together. We are something of a pair as regards looks."

So Pimpernel bought the Poodle

and Buckram the Bulldog, and both returned home pleased with their bargain.

About midnight Old Buckram was roused from his first sleep by hearing cries of murder. Calling his dog, who was growling significantly, he rushed to Pimpernel's room and found him struggling with a burglar. The Bulldog immediately flew to the rescue, and would have seized the burglar had he not made a hasty escape through the window.

"Where is your handsome Poodle?" asked Old Buckram. "Why did he not tackle the blackguard?"

"Why, the beast," replied Pimpernel, "did nothing but sit on his haunches and beg!"

"Handsome is that handsome does," growled Old Buckram as he closed his friend's bedroom door.

A WOLF had been badly mauled by a shepherd's dog, and had only just managed to drag himself back to his den. An old brown Bear, who was known to possess a fair knowledge of medicine, happened to pass. So the Wolf howled out to him to come and prescribe for him.

"Thy case, friend Wolf," said the Bear as he carefully examined his wounds, "is nearly hopeless. There is but little chance of your recovery unless some nurse will bestow on you the most devoted attention. Your reputation is not

a good one, and I fancy there will be some difficulty in obtaining the services of such a nurse."

"Tell the Magpie, dear Bear," answered the Wolf, "to advertise the fact that I have taken a vow never again to taste of blood."

The Bear did so, and the Magpie published the information.

A Doe, a gentle, kindly soul, took the place, and by her tender, unremitting care restored the Wolf to his former health. With health came appetite, and the self-denying Doe was the first to satisfy it.

A TULIP more fair than all the flowers in a garden raised her proud head, and all paid willing homage to their Queen.

"Gentle wind of the West," she sighed, "breathe softly on my petals, for I would be Queen of the Summer."

The west wind but fanned her cheek.

"Which of all you flowers of Summer," cried the Tulip, "can compare with me?"

The Roses only smiled, for the

delicate tints of the Tulip's bloom had begun to fade.

"Let not thy rays, great Sun, scorch me," implored the Tulip, "for I must be Queen of the Autumn."

The Sun heard her, and cooled his rays so that the Tulip was not quite withered. Yet her colour had faded and her leaves were wrinkled.

"I am your Queen too, ye children of Autumn," cried the Tulip, but the Chrysanthemums tossed their golden curls and sneered, "Thou art sere."

The Mists rose from the river-bed and puffed their icy breath on her shrunken cheek.

"Touch me not!" screamed the Tulip. "You may not rob the flowers of their Queen."

"You are old," jeered the Mists, but she was deaf to them. "Your

beauty has flown," but she paid no heed. One withered petal after the other drooped and died until but one remained.

"This world is too cold for me," she sighed. The last petal fell, and the Tulip was dead.

ROVER, a retriever, was ill, and lay helpless in the kennel. Jenny, a little terrier, and the pet of her master, heard Rover's groans, and ran to see what could be the matter.

"Are you ill, dear Rover? then will I nurse you," she said tenderly.

"I wish you would," said Rover, "then I shall soon grow strong."

So Jenny began her duties at once by carefully examining Rover's food and diligently picking out all the tit-bits.

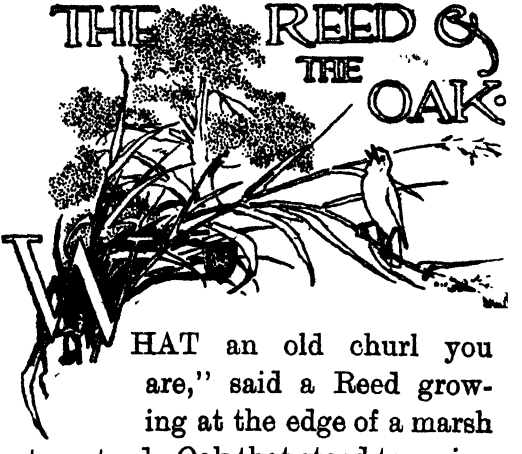
"What are you doing that for?" inquired Rover anxiously.

"You are feverish, dear," re-

plied Jenny gravely. "Rich food of any kind cannot possibly be good for you."

Rover therefore had the broth, and Jenny ate the rest. Jenny grew visibly fatter every day, and Rover thinner, until one morning Jenny was found dead of a surfeit.

THE REED & THE OAK.



"WHAT an old churl you are," said a Reed growing at the edge of a marsh to a sturdy Oak that stood towering hard by.

"What do you mean by saying that?" inquired the Oak good-humouredly.

"There you stand, stuck up with pride. You never take the trouble to be the least civil to a living soul," retorted the Reed. "As for me, when any one comes my way I bow. If a Butterfly lights on me I gently bend. If the west wind blows me a kiss I

curtsey. If the Robin stops with me I gracefully droop my head. But when anything comes near you, you preserve that stolid demeanour you fancy is suited to your lofty position in life."

Just at that moment a Plough-boy rushed along in chase of a Butterfly. In his pursuit he ran point-blank against the Oak, but the sturdy old tree would not budge an inch. Continuing the chase he ran down to the edge of the marsh and put one of his hob-nailed boots on the Reed.

"How are you feeling now?" asked the Oak.

"Rather crushed," replied the Reed faintly.

"Take my advice," said the Oak, "and in future do not be so proud of cringing to everybody, but stand up for yourself."

THE GRASSHOPPER & THE SOLDIER-CRAB

THE Grasshopper, a careless creature, after enjoying a very cheerful summer holiday, went to the Ant to ask for the loan of a little food for the coming winter. The Ant indignantly refused to give any, as the Grasshopper was quite strong enough to have provided for herself, had she chosen so to do.

So the Grasshopper went away sorrowing by the seashore, and as she limped along, feeling cold and hungry, she met a queer-looking stranger called the "Soldier-crab." As he looked benevolent and idle

the Grasshopper appealed to him to help her out of her difficulties.

"Do as I do, my sweet girl," said he. "If you have no house of your own, enter the first door you find open and stay there."

The Soldier-crab then twisted his body round and showed the Grasshopper the whelk's shell he had appropriated.

"It is cosy and comfortable," he remarked as he gazed with admiring eyes at his residence. "And the best of the business is that some one else had all the trouble of building it."

"Why did he give it to you?" eagerly asked the Grasshopper. "Generous people are not plentiful."

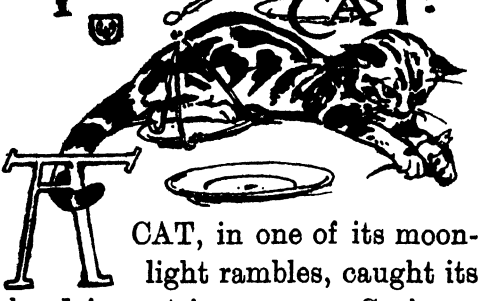
"Give it," laughed the Soldier-crab. "What an idea! I took it."

"But it was not yours to take," replied the Grasshopper meekly.

"What you have is your own," retorted the Soldier-crab. "If you begin worrying about honesty and property and such like, you are not fit to enjoy this world's blessings when they come in your way."

The Grasshopper continued her journey somewhat comforted, and as there are grasshoppers still chirping in the summer, they must have profited by the Soldier-crab's advice.

THE CASUISTIC CAT.



THE CAT, in one of its moonlight rambles, caught its head in a string noose. Seeing a Mouse pass she cried, "O, Mousey dear, do for goodness' sake bite this string, it is choking me. If you would be so good I promise never to eat another of your kind."

The Mouse, hearing the promise, bit the string and set the Cat at liberty. The Cat kept her promise faithfully, but one day she chanced to catch a white Mouse.

"Dear me," thought the Cat, "this cannot be a Mouse. All the

mice I have ever seen have been dark coated. As there is just a doubt, I cannot do better than taste it." So the Cat swallowed it.

A LION and a Hare had struck up an intimate acquaintance, and many an hour they spent in chatting together.

"Is it a fact," asked the Hare rather timidly one day, "that lions tremble at the sound of a cock crowing?"

"I am sorry to say it is so," replied the Lion, "but we are not the only animals that have a weak point. The elephant, for instance, shudders at the grunt of a wild boar."

"Ah!" said the Hare, sympathetically, "that accounts for my feeling so very shaky at the bark of a dog."

"JUST look at that Cock!" exclaimed a Peacock to a Hen standing close by, "how he struts, and yet men never say 'Proud as a cock,' but 'Proud as a peacock.'"

"Men make a distinction," replied the Hen gravely, "between pride that is empty and pride that is justifiable. The Cock is proud of his vigilance and courage. You are only proud of your tail."

"If by vigilance," returned the Peacock, "you mean having an eye on something to eat, and by courage the constant endeavour

to push everybody else aside to obtain it, I begin to understand why the Cock is not considered proud."

THE CREDULOUS SHEEP-HERD

A MURRAIN had seized his sheep, and a Shepherd had lost his entire flock.

"Alack-a-day, poor Shepherd," whined a Wolf. "I do indeed sympathise with you. I can scarcely get over the bitter disappointment myself. To lose such sheep so fine, so gentle, and so fat."

"Ah," said the Shepherd to his Dog, "how consoling to find even an enemy so compassionate."

"Compassionate," repeated the Dog with a contemptuous snarl. "Compassionate for his own inside."

THE DISILLUSIONED STAG

"WHAT a lucky fellow I am," ejaculated a Stag, as panting he reached a covert, after a narrow escape from the hounds. "But if I only had wings what a chase I would lead them."

At that moment a Dove dropped

dead at its feet, pierced through the heart by an arrow.

"Who would have thought it?" exclaimed the Stag. "If it is not one thing it is another."

THE STONES & THE SAND

THERE lies to this day in Arabia Petræa a vast wilderness, so parched and stony that no man ventures on it.

"Hear me, and give ear to my words," howled the Simoon, blast of the desert. "The time of thy solitude is past. A caravan is hard by. Get thee up and make thee ready for thy defence."

The Stones assembled themselves together and took counsel on the best means of barring the travellers' path. The Sand of the desert came and said, "Small though we

be, yet will we do our best to help."

"But the Stones laughed them to scorn and tauntingly replied, "Surely if we, who are a thousand times stronger and bigger than you, cannot drive the stranger back, what good will you be?" And they would not let them speak.

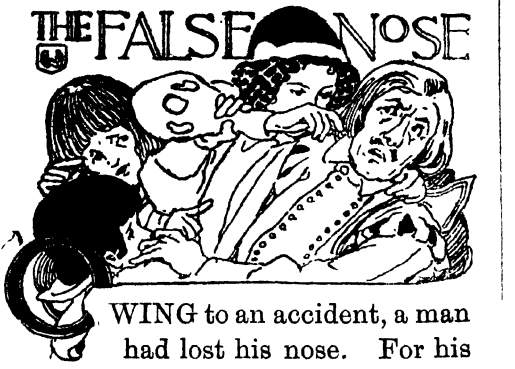
The Stones piled themselves one on the top of the other to form, as they thought, an impregnable barrier.

"Let the strangers come," they cried. "Who can overthrow us?"

Slowly the long line of the caravan came winding onward until it drew nigh the wall. The travellers armed themselves with pick and shovel. Before many hours the wall was levelled to the ground.

Then rose the countless hosts

of Sand, whirling in clouds of thick darkness round the enemy, blinding their eyes so that they could not see, and they turned and fled back to the place whence they came.



OWING to an accident, a man had lost his nose. For his own comfort as well as for the sake of his general appearance he was obliged to buy a false one. After trying several he selected one which in his opinion best suited the rest of his features.

"Father," said his eldest son, "I think it is a splendid fit, but it is not quite straight. It has a slight twist to the right."

"Put it straight, then," replied the father.

"Father," chimed in the youngest, "if you were to ask me I should say brother John had

twisted it rather too much to the left. Let me just give it the slightest turn to the right."

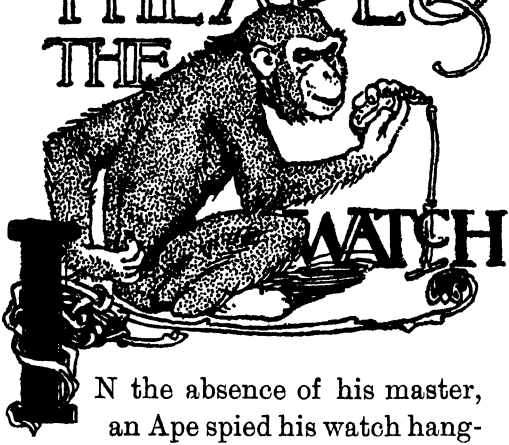
"Do so, my son," exclaimed the father, "but take care not to break it."

"O, papa, papa, those clumsy boys!" cried his only daughter. "Let me put it quite straight."

She at once proceeded to twist the nose first to one side then to the other, never quite satisfied, until at last the nose broke in her fingers.

"Dear me, papa," she said, "that is just what I thought the silly thing would do, at the very moment I had got it quite right."

THE APE & THE WATCH



IN the absence of his master, an Ape spied his watch hanging on a nail from the wall. He at once seized it and, flinging the chain round his neck, took the key and began to wind the watch up as he had seen his master do. He then looked gravely at its face.

"Tut! Tut! much too fast," he muttered, as he opened the glass and put the hands back. "O, bother!" he added with a sigh, "it is now much too slow." He then pushed the hands forward.

"Come! Come! Mr. Watch, this won't do!" he cried, placing his ear close to the case. "You are lazy. If you do not move a bit faster, I will see what is to be done." So he opened the case and examined the works, then put in his finger and broke the main-spring.

Whirr! Whirr! went the watch, and then stopped.

"Out of breath," said the Ape reprovingly. "Too fast to last. Some people have no moderation."

THE YOUNG ROEBUCK & THE TIGER

"DON'T be so giddy," remarked an old Roebuck to his son. "Don't tear through the forest in the thoughtless way you do. At your age you ought to know there are such things in the world as Tigers."

"I never heard of them," replied Master Roebuck. "What sort of beast or bird is a Tiger? Just tell me all about him, and if he is a disagreeable sort of customer, I promise you to keep clear of him."

"He is a very frightful brute," said the father solemnly. "His features are as hideous as you can

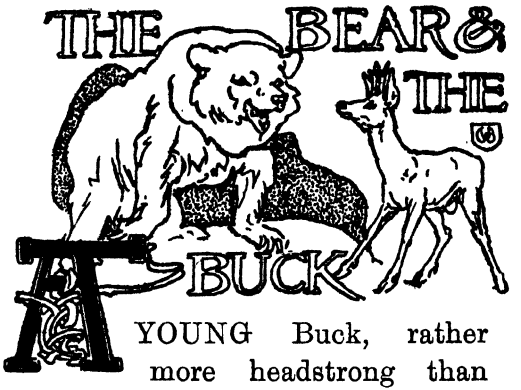
well imagine. The Lion and the Bear do not touch him for pure ugliness."

"Thank you, father, for your information," dutifully answered young Roebuck. "I shall be sure to know him when I see him."

Leaving his father, he rushed away in the same heedless manner as before, and by chance took a path that led straight to a Tiger's lair.

The Tiger was rather hungry, and was lying apparently asleep, yet still keenly alive to anything like a good meal.

When the young Roebuck caught sight of him, he thought he had never seen an animal with so beautiful a skin. He went a little nearer to satisfy his curiosity and admiration. The result was entirely in the Tiger's favour.



A YOUNG Buck, rather more headstrong than his comrades, strayed from the herd and wandered until he found himself at the mouth of a dark cavern.

"As I have come so far, why not enter, and see all that is to be seen," thought the Buck with praiseworthy curiosity.

Scarcely had he taken two steps before a huge brown Bear faced him.

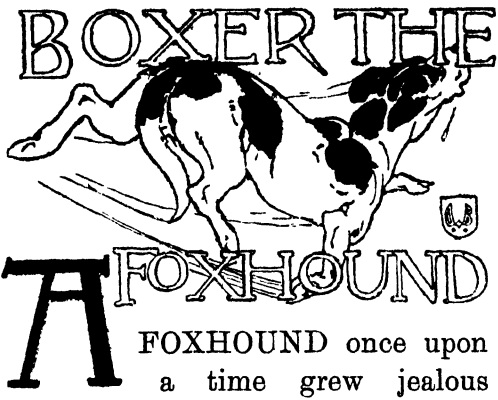
"What may be your business here?" growled he.

"I am flying, Mr. Bear," stammered the Buck. "I am seeking some hiding place from

a Lion close at my heels. He is so hungry, I feel sure that if he catches us together, he will devour both."

"Both at one meal?" said the Bear, and immediately withdrew.

The young Buck ran the other way, and was not long in rejoining the rest of the herd.



A FOXHOUND once upon a time grew jealous because his companion, a Mastiff, when ill was much pampered.

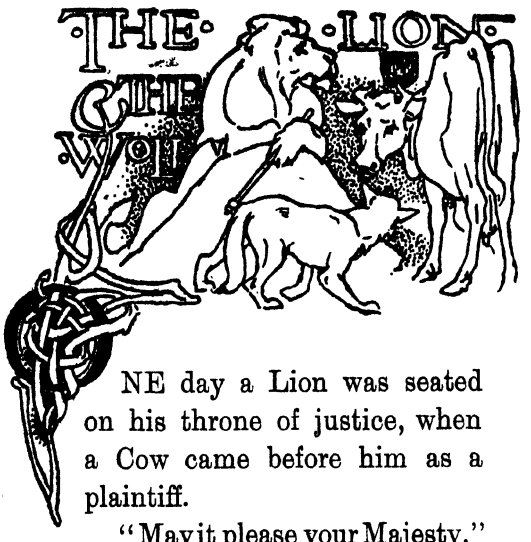
"Just look at him," whined the Hound bitterly. "There he lies tucked up in warm straw. Why is he made so much of? He can only bark when some one knocks at the backdoor, while I am kept on the trot from dawn till dusk, and all I get is a bit of horseflesh. Oh, how I should like to be ill."

His wish was granted, for as the Mastiff grew strong, he fell sick and was kept in the kennel.

"Huntsman!" said the master

of the pack, "at the end of the season make away with that dog. He is of no use."

Boxer heard these words, and struggling to his feet, exclaimed, "Ungrateful wretch, I still have power to make away with myself." He did so without deigning to cast a glance behind.



ONE day a Lion was seated on his throne of justice, when a Cow came before him as a plaintiff.

"May it please your Majesty," said she, "I have lost my Calf. Some robber has stolen it last night."

The Lion listened in silence, then looked all round the court, as if he expected to detect the culprit there.

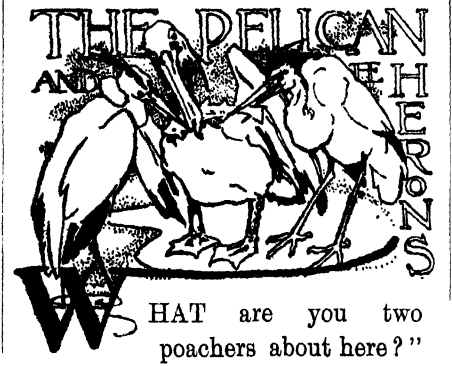
"I am quite sure," whined a Wolf, "that I never did it."

"Pray, Sir Wolf," asked the Lion, "who charged you?"

"No one—no one, your Majesty," replied the Wolf, "but though I have been fasting of late, it would not surprise me in the least if some of my friends tried to shift the blame on my shoulders."

"Constable Bear," roared the Lion, "just have Sir Wolf drawn and quartered."

"Certainly, your Majesty," answered the Constable, and immediately carried the order into execution, and on coming into Court again, stated that he had found several pieces of the Calf in the Wolf's maw.



"WHAT are you two poachers about here?" inquired a Pelican of two Herons that had been fishing in a pond, and had just caught a large fish. "You know, you rascals, you are trespassing and thieving."

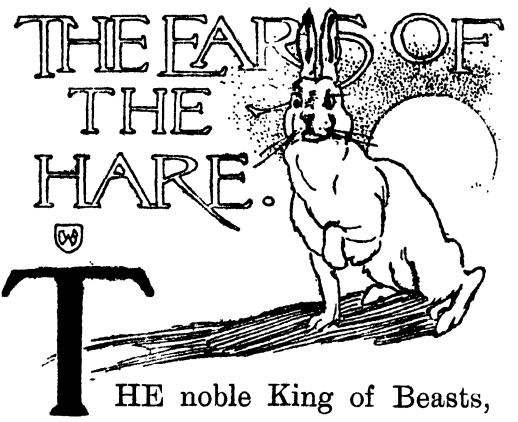
The Pelican then laid claim to the fish; but the Herons were very sulky, and replied, "It is all very fine for you to talk of honesty, and take our fish."

"Do you suppose for one moment," sneered the Pelican,

"that I should give the spoil to the spoiler."

So to save further argument the Pelican bolted the fish.

THE EARS OF THE HARE.



THE noble King of Beasts, the Lion, had been gored by a Bull, and had commanded that all animals, small and great, that happened to have horns should be forthwith banished from the realm.

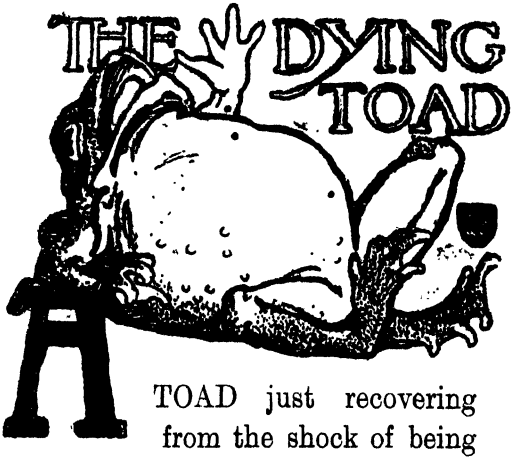
"Bless me," said a Hare, catching sight of the shadow of his ears as he shuffled down the road with the moon at his back. "The King's officers will be certain to swear my ears are horns."

At this moment a cousin of his nobbled up. "Cousin," whispered he as he pointed to the shadow of

his ears, "we shall have to leave the country."

"What nonsense," replied the Cousin, "we have no horns."

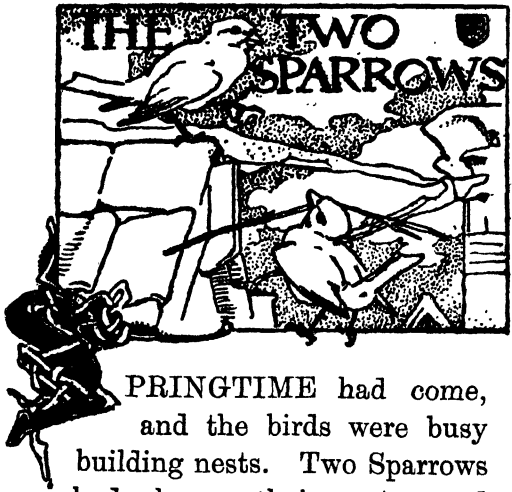
"No matter," continued the Hare. "Should one of his Majesty's officers drop on us, there would be no use for us to talk in that way. He would not listen, nor would anybody else."



A TOAD just recovering from the shock of being under the harrow was spied by a plough-boy.

Seeing the poor creature panting, the good-natured fellow gave it a blow with a heavy stone to put it out of its misery.

"Ah me," gasped the Toad with his last breath, "what must the world suffer if all are like me!"



PRINGTIME had come, and the birds were busy building nests. Two Sparrows had chosen their mates and were very anxious to find a secure resting-place for themselves and future families.

"I shall build my nest in yonder sculptured pillar," said one Sparrow. "It is a lofty position, well out of any one's way, and will be fairly dry and comfortable for me and my wife."

"It is rather high up," remarked the other, "and very dangerous for

fledglings. This trough that runs round this roof seems to me more cosy. Besides, the children can hop along it, without fear of tumbling into the street."

So either chose what seemed best to him. One night a heavy shower filled the trough, and washed nest and sparrows and younglings all away, while the Sparrow in the sculptured pillar slept all night long undisturbed by the storm. Next day, going to gossip with his friend, he could find no trace of him or his nest. "If," he remarked to his mate— "he had been more anxious about himself and less about his children, he would have been alive now."

"FATHER," asked a young man, languidly, "how am I to make a fortune?"

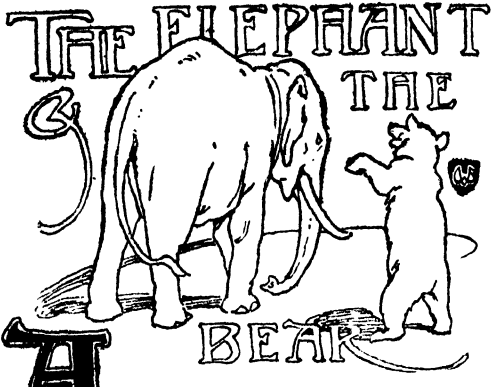
"Work, my boy, work."

"If that's the only way, then there will be no fortune for me," replied the son.

"Then knavery, my boy, try knavery."

"'Tis just as bad, my father."

"Well, well, my son, 'tis better you remained as Nature made you —an utter fool. Such an one has often made his fortune where others have failed."



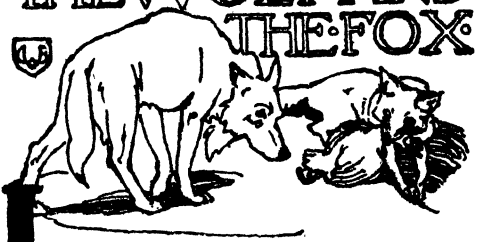
"AS for those men!" exclaimed the Bear, sulkily, to an Elephant standing by his side, "there is no limit to their rudeness. They make me dance to the grinding of their hurdy-gurdies only to laugh at my movements. The dignity of my person is not well suited to such stupid pranks."

"I, too, dance occasionally," said the Elephant patronisingly, "just to gratify their whims, and I do not think I have less dignity of person than you. Yet no one ever dreams of laughing at me. On the

contrary, they greet me with smiles of admiration."

"Fool that I am," muttered the Bear as he rolled back to his den. "Their laughter after all was the smile of admiration. This comes from thinking too meanly of oneself."

THE WOLF AND THE FOX



IN the early hours of a summer morning a Wolf met a Fox running along the meadows with a fowl in his mouth.

"How cheerful you are this morning," remarked the Wolf with just a touch of envy in his voice. "You must have had a good night of it."

"Splendid! Never did better in my life. Such fine sport!" answered the Fox gaily, as he stopped for a minute's chat with his old friend. "A whole hen-house to myself, and I warrant you not one of the lot did I leave alive."

"Why is it," asked the Wolf,

"that when you go hunting you kill every living thing you can? I only kill what I want and leave the rest."

"O, you are no sportsman," returned the Fox, and picking up his fowl he trotted off homeward.

A HART, chased by a Hunter, took refuge in a farm.

The Farmer hid him beneath some hay, and promised not to disclose his hiding-place.

Presently the Hunter arrived.

"Farmer," shouted he, "hast seen a Hart pass this way?"

"No sir, no!" replied the Farmer, at the same time pointing to the rick of hay.

"All right," said the Hunter, misunderstanding the Farmer's hint, and rode off in the direction he had indicated.

"Thank you for nothing," cried the Hart, as he rushed through the gate.

"Ungrateful beast," exclaimed the Farmer, "did I not save your life?"

"You lied to both," said the Hart. "You deceived the Hunter with your lips, and betrayed me with your hand."

THE ORATOR & THE LION

A LION for some days had been suffering hunger and was crawling round the city walls, seeking wherewithal to satisfy his voracious maw It was, therefore, not without feelings of pleasure and gratitude that he perceived from his lurking place a human creature slowly making his way towards him. This unwary being was the Public Orator who, after a wearisome but successful harangue, was taking a quiet walk to restore his spirits. Suddenly the Lion sprang forward and placed himself in his path. Though terrified, the

Public Orator remembered that he had frequently stilled a popular tumult by his eloquence. "If," thought he, "I have such influence over men possessed of reason, how much more shall I prevail over this poor untutored beast?" So he began to address him as "Royal King, Lord of the Wilderness."

The Lion remarked that if he had anything to say he had better say it quickly.

Taking the hint the Orator saw that flattery was out of the question, and declared boldly that he was willing to die. He then bared his breast and said, "Strike, if I must die." To the speaker's astonishment and dismay, contrary to all established custom, the Lion struck. No further time, it was painfully evident, could be fooled away in making similar suggestions, so the

speaker plainly put it to him that his body, emaciated by study, was no fit morsel for his kingly palate.

"Unselfish at least," said the Lion, and wagged his tail as if pleased that the Orator thought so much about him, but still kept his paw on the man's breast.

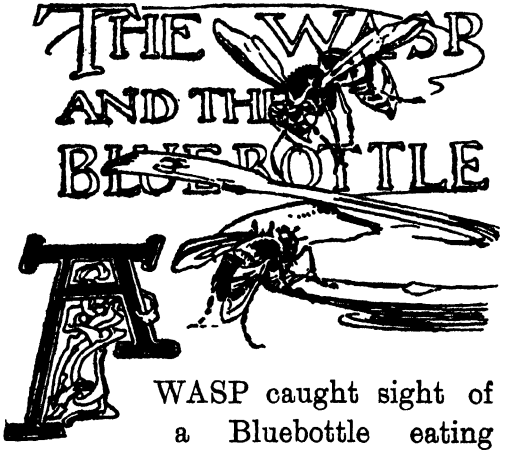
Again the Orator poured forth arguments such as that they were of the same country; that were the Lion to slay him he would encounter the wrath of his fellow citizens.

The Lion only smiled.

Once more the speaker told him in breathless accents of his wife and children, and was going to wind up with a magnificent appeal to the Lion's feelings as a father, when the Lion roared, "Enough! An ounce of blood is worth a pound of talk."

Next morning a citizen, as he

strolled round the city walls, beheld the jawbones of a man, a book and a few scattered garments, and made for the city gate as fast as his legs could carry him.



A WASP caught sight of a Bluebottle eating honey, and was very angry.

"Mr. Bluebottle," he buzzed, "I am very much ashamed to see you greedily devouring the store that the bees have laid up with so much toil. Surely you cannot but know that you are stealing, and that you are no better than a common thief."

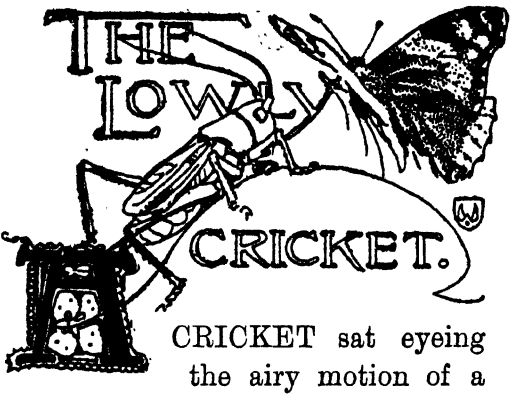
The Bluebottle at these words felt much disconcerted, and apologised to the Wasp, saying that he had found the honey on the table

and did not know he was doing any harm in helping himself.

A few hours after, when flying past the same spot, he was astonished to find the Wasp busy in committing the same crime that he had been accused of.

"Mr. Wasp," he said humbly, "it was only an hour or two ago that you reprimanded me so bitterly for doing the same thing that you are doing at the present moment. Pray, how can you excuse such conduct?"

"Don't you know," was the haughty reply of the Wasp, "that I am a relation of theirs?"



CRICKET sat eyeing the airy motion of a Butterfly's wings as it fluttered from blossom to blossom.

"Alack-a-day," he sighed. "Nature made me very plain. I can only hop and jump. My dress is as dowdy as it well could be. I am compelled to live in darkness, a sort of scullion by the kitchen grate."

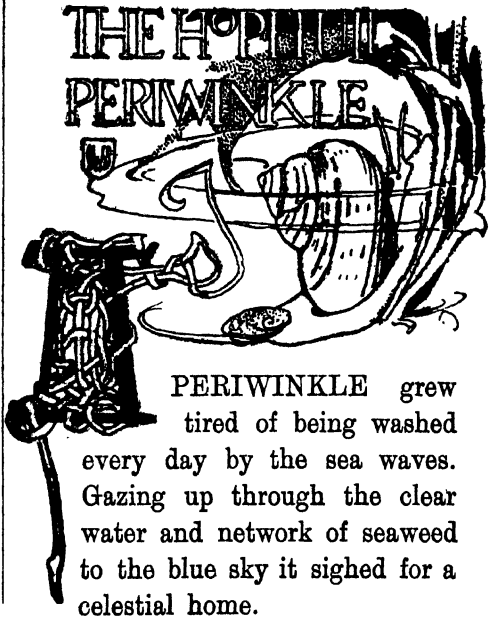
As the Cricket was dwelling on these doleful thoughts a troop of village children came running down the road.

"Oh, what a lovely Butterfly," cried the leader of the band. "Let

us catch it and show it to teacher; he collects Butterflies and will tell us all about it."

So one more skilful than the rest flung his cap at it with such force as to stun it. The glittering wings drooped and the Butterfly fell to the ground.

"After all," thought the Cricket, "there is some advantage in not being so finely dressed as other folk."



PERIWINKLE grew tired of being washed every day by the sea waves. Gazing up through the clear water and network of seaweed to the blue sky it sighed for a celestial home.

"If I had wings like the gull then I could fly away to those beautiful realms of light," thought the Periwinkle, "instead of being cooped within these rocky walls, and always doomed to carry my house on my back."

At this moment it felt itself

raised from the pool with dizzy speed. At last the wish of its heart was granted. Too frightened to peep out of its shell, it remained inside until it found itself among a number of its friends and relations all lying comfortably together in a wicker basket.

"How delightful," exclaimed the Periwinkle to a fat one that lay next to it. "What ecstasy to be raised from earth to heaven! Why do you not look upwards, dear friend, and gaze your fill on that illimitable blue?"

"Don't talk rubbish," replied the neighbour savagely. "I wish I was well out of this. I was once before in the same fix and did not much like it."

"Do tell me all about it!" cried the enthusiastic Periwinkle, somewhat disconcerted at the reply of its neighbour. "Please do tell me,

for when I look at that lovely sky and feel the sun's warmth I fancy that there must be something up there more beautiful than anything here."

"Fool," said the other somewhat ungraciously. "Do not think too much of those places till you get there. Then it will be quite time enough to rejoice, and, if you will believe me, you won't have long to wait for a complete change of scenery."

The Periwinkle then felt itself hurried through space at a terrible rate. But it was not afraid, for it was lifted up nearer those realms of bliss.

Suddenly the air grew dark and faces of enormous size gazed over the edge of the basket. Then great fingers seized it, turned it upside down and dropped it with a heavy thud amid its companions.

"This is worse," sighed the Periwinkle, "than the rolling waves. It is becoming hotter and hotter. But I shall soon get accustomed to it." And the Periwinkle laughed when it heard the others complaining, and thought of the sun and the sky.

But the laughter soon died away. Then came intolerable heat and sudden darkness.

"Are these the realms of light?" exclaimed the Periwinkle with a scream, and died.

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