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AUNT CHARLOTTE'S
EVENINGS
AT HOME

A Collection
of POEMS
upon many subjects




CHARLES W. JOHNSON



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AUNT CHARLOTTE'S
EVENINGS AT HOME



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THE BUTTERFLY'S BALL

AUNT CHARLOTTE'S
EVENINGS AT HOME

WITH THE POETS

*A Collection of Poems for the Young, with Conversations,
arranged in Twenty-five Evenings*

BY

CHARLOTTE M. YONGE

AUTHOR OF "THE HEIR OF REDCLYFFE," "STORIES OF ENGLISH HISTORY,"
"STORIES OF BIBLE HISTORY," &c.

WITH EIGHT ILLUSTRATIONS, FROM DRAWINGS BY MRS. J. W. WHYMPER



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P R E F A C E .

AN endeavour has been made to render the ensuing selection of Poetry for Children somewhat unlike the numerous collections already in print, by in some degree classifying the subjects; and likewise, by adding such explanations, and, in some cases, criticisms and notices of the authors and occasions on which the verses were written, as may render them more interesting to young readers. The conversational form has been adopted as best suited to the variety of comments and elucidations that seemed to be called for.

Old favourites and new have been brought together, some very easy, others more advanced. Among English living authors who have kindly given permission for the use of their works, I have to thank the Archbishop of Dublin, Professors Morley and

Miller, Mrs. Alexander, Dr. Bennett, Mr. F. W. Bourdillon, Rev. Frederick Langbridge, Mr. Allingham, Mr. Sabine Baring-Gould; also the author and publishers of two charming poems in *Little Folks*, and of another from the *Magazine for the Young*, with other kind anonymous writers. Also the representatives of Mrs. Barrett Browning, Rev. J. Keble, and the Rev. H. Whitehead. Also Messrs. C. Kegan Paul & Co., for the two poems from the *Life of Mrs. Gilbert*—"The Song of the Tea-kettle" and "Crocuses," and the three poems—"Silent Bells of Bottreau," "Ringers of Lancell's Tower," "Baptism of the Peasant and the Prince," by Rev. R. Hawker; Messrs. Rivingtons, for the poem, "Baby to Daylight," by Rev. H. Lyte; Messrs. George Routledge & Sons, for the poem, "Hide and Seek in a Manor-House;" Messrs. F. Warne & Co., for "How the Bees Swarm," by Mrs. Gemmer; Messrs. Griffith & Farren, for "Kitten Gossip," by Mr. Westwood; Messrs. A. Strahan & Co., for "Where did you come from?" by Dr. George Macdonald.

C. M. YONGE.

October, 1880.



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Aunt Charlotte's Evenings at Home.

EVENING I.

THE GLOW-WORM.

AUNT CHARLOTTE, ALICE, GRACE, EDMUND.

Alice. Aunt Charlotte, we have a scheme.

Aunt C. Let me hear it.

Alice. You have a delightful portfolio of drawings of all sorts of things.

Grace. Cats and dogs, and crickets, and nautilus shells, and—

Aunt C. Well, we need not have the whole catalogue, Gracie. What of them?

Alice. I thought how nice it would be if we could put together all the verses about each of them. Suppose every evening we fixed on a picture, and

brought all the verses we could hunt up about it in the course of the day.

Edmund. What humbug!

Aunt C. I am not so sure of that, Edmund; I think you would find that we were much amused by the search.

Edmund. For instance, here's your first picture—a glow-worm. What can any one find to say about a glow-worm?

Alice. Oh, Aunt Charlotte, do let me repeat the verses you wrote for me when I was little.

DAME GLOW-WORM'S LAMP.

Oh! see that shining spark,
Bright gleaming in the dark;
Is it a tiny star,
Dropt from the heavens afar?
Gem of the summer night,
Of purest emerald light!
Within her mossy nest,
In grey and russet drest,
Dame Glow-worm trims her light,
To lure her wandering knight.
Sir Glow-worm, clad in mail,
Borne on the summer gale,
With tiny lamp beneath,
Flies over hill and heath.

Wherever he may roam,
Her lamp will call him home.
Pattern of household mirth,
Lighting our home and hearth ;
Pattern of homely love,
Caught from the Heaven above ;
Pattern of that true Light
That makes our pathway bright.

Edmund. There ! they show what nonsense it is.

Alice. Not a bit, Edmund. It is quite true, is it not, Aunt, that the male glow-worms fly about and don't shine, and the females shine, but have no wings ?

Aunt C. It is nearly true ; but I have lately seen it stated that male glow-worms have a very faint lamp on the under side of their bodies, though I am not sure that they always show them. At any rate, we are not likely to find them out, for we usually see the creatures as little beetles, which dash in on early autumn evenings, attracted by our lamps and candles.

Edmund. Then this male is neither worm nor glow !

Aunt C. A very little glow. The animal is really and truly classed as a beetle with a wingless female.

Alice. I am afraid that you are too scientific to enjoy the verses that I have here, since they make the

glow-worm both masculine and a reptile—neither of which it can be called.

THE GLOW-WORM.

Beneath the hedge, or near the stream,
A worm is known to stray ;
That shows by night a lucid beam,
Which disappears by day.

Disputes have been, and still prevail,
From whence his rays proceed ;
Some give that honour to his tail,
And others to his head.

But this is sure—the Hand of might,
That kindles up the skies,
Gives him a modicum of light
Proportioned to his size.

Perhaps indulgent Nature meant,
By such a lamp bestowed,
To bid the traveller as he went
Be careful where he trod.

Nor crush a worm, whose useful light
Might serve, however small,
To show a stumbling-stone by night,
And save him from a fall.

The Glow-worm.

13

Whate'er she meant, this truth divine
Is legible and plain,
'Tis power Almighty bids him shine,
Nor bids him shine in vain.

Ye proud and wealthy, let this theme
Teach humbler thoughts to you,
Since such a reptile has its gem,
And boasts its splendour too.

COWPER.

Aunt C. Cowper knew little of natural science, but that was not needed to convey the great thought in the last verses—the one thing in which all study results—the “Power that bids him shine.”

Alice. Is there not another poem of Cowper's about glow-worms?

Aunt C. The fable of the nightingale and glow-worm.

THE NIGHTINGALE AND GLOW-WORM.

A Nightingale that all day long
Had cheered the village with his song,
Nor yet at eve his note suspended,
Nor yet when eventide was ended,
Began to feel, as well he might,
The keen demands of appetite;

When, looking eagerly around,
He spied far off upon the ground
A something shining in the dark,
And knew the Glow-worm by his spark.
So, stooping down from hawthorn-top,
He thought to put him in his crop.
The Worm, aware of his intent,
Harangued him thus, quite eloquent—
“Did you admire my lamp,” quoth he,
“As much as I your minstrelsy,
You would abhor to do me wrong,
As much as I to spoil your song ;
For 'twas the self-same Power divine
Taught you to sing and me to shine ;
That you with music, I with light,
Might beautify and cheer the night.”

The songster heard his short oration,
And, warbling out his approbation,
Released him, as my story tells,
And found a supper somewhere else.

COWPER.

Edmund. I don't see much sense in that, by way of fable! Pray, does it profess to have a moral, as they call it?

Alice. I suppose the moral is that we should respect one another's endowments.

Aunt C. I believe there is thus much of fact in the

fable, that wise men believe that the Glow-worm's lovely green phosphorescent spark may have been given her to scare away the birds that feed by night. I cannot help thinking poor Cowper was a sort of Glow-worm in his own way, though he little enjoyed his own light. Do you know anything about him?

Edmund. Didn't he keep hares, and go out of his mind?

Alice. What an odd jumble.

Edmund. Can you mend it?

Alice. I know he was born in 1730, and died in 1800, for I learnt that in my book of dates. I am sure he wrote a great deal.

Grace. Something about his mother's picture.

Aunt C. It is a sad story. He lost both his father and mother when a very little child, and that poem describes his dim recollections of his happy childhood. He was sent to Westminster school, and being very timid and delicate, was terribly bullied, and made most miserable. He says that he was so much afraid of the boy to whom he was fag, that he never raised his eyes above his shoes, and did not know what his face was like.

Edmund. He must have been a horrid little coward!

Aunt C. Most likely he was of a nature quite unfit for school, and these were rough times; but who knows how much the thoughtless cruelty of that boy may have had to do with his broken spirits? He grew up and studied the law, and was very happy with some young cousins, with whom, he said, he spent his time in giggling and making giggle. But when an office was vacant, to which one of his relations was going to appoint him, after an examination, he worked himself up into such an agony that a terrible attack of disease came on; and though he lived for many years longer, he could never return to the business of life. He was boarded with a clergyman at Huntingdon, named Unwin; and when Mr. Unwin was killed by a fall from his horse, his widow continued to take care of Mr. Cowper. They lived first at Olney and then at Weston, and there Cowper gardened, played with his tame hares, wrote delightful letters, and, in especial, wrote verses in a much more simple, natural style than most of those who had gone before him. Properly speaking, that first poem on the Glow-worm is his

translation from a scholar named Vincent Bourne, who wrote Latin verses.

Alice. You call him a Glow-worm because his was a bright pure light in a dark place ?

Aunt C. Yes; in very evil times his voice was always raised to uphold whatever was good, and that in the midst of the utmost sadness of heart. Everything seemed dark and hopeless to himself, and yet, instead of grieving other people with his sorrows, he always showed himself playful and cheerful, as long as he had strength of mind or body to hold up against his depression. But we must not leave off sorrowful, and I have still another Glow-worm poem for you.

THE PILGRIM'S DREAM ;

OR, THE STAR AND THE GLOW-WORM.

A pilgrim, when the sunny day
Had closed upon his weary way,
A lodging begged beneath a castle's roof ;
But him the haughty warder spurned,
And from the gate the pilgrim turned,
To seek such covert as the field
Or heath-besprinkled copse might yield,
Or lofty wood, shower proof.

He paced along, and, pensively,
Halting beneath a shady tree,
Whose moss-grown root might serve for couch or
Fixed on a star his upward eye ; [seat,
Then, from the tenant of the sky,
He turned, and watched with kindred look
A Glow-worm, in a dusky nook,
Apparent at his feet.

The murmur of a neighbouring stream
Induced a soft and slumbrous dream—
A pregnant dream, within whose shadowy bounds
He recognised the earth-born Star,
And *that* which glittered from afar ;
And (strange to witness !) from the frame
Of the ethereal orb, there came
Intelligible sounds.

Much did it taunt the humbler light,
That now, when day was fled, and night
Hushed the dark earth—fast closing weary eyes,
A very reptile could presume
To show her taper in the gloom,
As if in rivalry with one
Who sate a ruler in his throne
Erected in the skies.

“ Exalted Star !” the Worm replied,
“ Abate this unbecoming pride,
Or with a less uneasy lustre shine.
Thou shrink’st as momentarily thy rays
Are mastered by the breaking haze ;
While neither mist, nor thickest cloud
That shapes in heaven its murky shroud,
Hath power to injure mine.

“ But not for this do I aspire
To match the spark of local fire,
That at my will burns on the dewy lawn,
With thy acknowledged glories—No !
Yet, thus upbraided, I may show
What favours do attend me here,
Till, like thyself, I disappear
Before the purple dawn.”

When this in modish guise was said,
Across the welkin seemed to spread
A boding sound—for aught but sleep unfit !
Hills quaked—the rivers backward ran—
That Star, so proud of late, looked wan,
And reeled with visionary stir
In the blue depth, like Lucifer
Cast headlong to the pit !

Fire raged, and when the spangled floor
 Of ancient ether was no more,
 New heavens succeeded, by the dream brought forth :
 And all the happy souls that rode
 Transfigured through that fresh abode,
 Had heretofore, in humble trust,
 Shone meekly 'mid their native dust,
 The Glow-worms of the earth !

This knowledge, from an angel's voice
 Proceeding, made the heart rejoice
 Of him who slept upon the open lea ;
 Waking at morn, he murmured not,
 And, till life's journey closed, the spot
 Was to the pilgrim's soul endeared,
 Where by that dream he had been cheered
 Beneath the shady tree.

WORDSWORTH.

Edmund. There's the reptile again.

Alice. I don't think I quite understand it.

Edmund. What's the welkin ?

Alice. The sky—*wolken* in German. That's not
 the difficulty to me. Was the star proud ?

Aunt C. I suppose so. The fable takes the star
 as a thing temporal—proud of its exaltation, and
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Glow-worm replies that at least her light is not liable to be obscured by vapour and mist; though she dares not compare herself to the star, still she will do her best, till both shall disappear in the perfect day. Then suddenly comes the end of all things, and the reward of humility, when all the happy souls

Had heretofore in humble trust
Shone meekly through their native dust,
The Glow-worms of the earth.

Alice. That is like my favourite text, "The path of the just is the shining light, that shineth more and more and more unto the perfect day."

Aunt C. The true lesson of the Glow-worm!

Alice. Please, Aunt Charlotte, set us some subject to find verses for to-morrow.

Aunt C. Very well. THE CAT.





EVENING II.

CATS AND KITTENS.

Ed. High diddle-diddle,
The cat and the fiddle——!

Alice. Hush, you horrible boy!

Ed. What! won't you have my poem?

Aunt C. We should have too many of them. Cats are too much the fashion in nursery rhymes to begin on the stock; so we must be excused having Pussy either in the well, or up the plum-tree, or even rebuking her three kittens for losing their mittens. Though we will hear Gracie's verses on the naughty kittens, from my old book of copies of favourite verses, the authors of which I cannot discover.

THE NAUGHTY KITTENS.

Two little kittens, one stormy night,
Began to quarrel and then to fight;

One had a mouse, and one had none—
This was the way the fight was begun.
“I’ll have that mouse,” said the bigger cat.
“You’ll have that mouse?—we’ll see about that.”
“I will have that mouse,” said the oldest one.
“You shan’t have that mouse,” said the little one.
I told you before ’twas a stormy night
When these two little kittens began to fight.
The old woman seized her sweeping broom,
And swept the two kittens right out of the room.
The ground was covered with frost and snow,
And the poor little kittens had nowhere to go.
So they laid themselves down on the mat at the door,
While the old woman finished her sweeping the floor;
And then they crept in, as quiet as mice,
All wet with the snow, and as cold as ice.
So they found it was better, that stormy night,
To lie down and sleep, than to quarrel and fight.

Alice. And don’t you know, in that delightful book
of Mr. Westwood’s, *Berries and Blossoms*—

KITTEN GOSSIP.

Kitten, kitten, two months old,
Woolly snowball, lying snug
Curled up in the warmest fold
Of the warm hearth-rug,
Turn your downy head this way—
What is life? Oh kitten, say.

Edmund. He must have been a horrid little coward!

Aunt C. Most likely he was of a nature quite unfit for school, and these were rough times; but who knows how much the thoughtless cruelty of that boy may have had to do with his broken spirits? He grew up and studied the law, and was very happy with some young cousins, with whom, he said, he spent his time in giggling and making giggle. But when an office was vacant, to which one of his relations was going to appoint him, after an examination, he worked himself up into such an agony that a terrible attack of disease came on; and though he lived for many years longer, he could never return to the business of life. He was boarded with a clergyman at Huntingdon, named Unwin; and when Mr. Unwin was killed by a fall from his horse, his widow continued to take care of Mr. Cowper. They lived first at Olney and then at Weston, and there Cowper gardened, played with his tame hares, wrote delightful letters, and, in especial, wrote verses in a much more simple, natural style than most of those who had gone before him. Properly speaking, that first poem on the Glow-worm is his

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 Proceeding, made the heart rejoice
 Of him who slept upon the open lea ;
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Edmund. What's the welkin ?

Alice. The sky—*wolken* in German. That's not the difficulty to me. Was the star proud ?

Aunt C. I suppose so. The fable takes the star as a thing temporal—proud of its exaltation, and displeased to see any light like its own on earth. The



THE GLOW-WORM.



Glow-worm replies that at least her light is not liable to be obscured by vapour and mist ; though she dares not compare herself to the star, still she will do her best, till both shall disappear in the perfect day. Then suddenly comes the end of all things, and the reward of humility, when all the happy souls

Had heretofore in humble trust
Shone meekly through their native dust,
The Glow-worms of the earth.

Alice. That is like my favourite text, "The path of the just is the shining light, that shineth more and more and more unto the perfect day."

Aunt C. The true lesson of the Glow-worm !

Alice. Please, Aunt Charlotte, set us some subject to find verses for to-morrow.

Aunt C. Very well. THE CAT.





EVENING II.
CATS AND KITTENS.

Ed. High diddle-diddle,
The cat and the fiddle——!

Alice. Hush, you horrible boy!

Ed. What! won't you have my poem?

Aunt C. We should have too many of them. Cats are too much the fashion in nursery rhymes to begin on the stock; so we must be excused having Pussy either in the well, or up the plum-tree, or even rebuking her three kittens for losing their mittens. Though we will hear Gracie's verses on the naughty kittens, from my old book of copies of favourite verses, the authors of which I cannot discover.

THE NAUGHTY KITTENS.

Two little kittens, one stormy night,
Began to quarrel and then to fight;

One had a mouse, and one had none—
This was the way the fight was begun.
“ I ’ll have that mouse,” said the bigger cat.
“ You ’ll have that mouse ?—we’ll see about that.”
“ I will have that mouse,” said the oldest one.
“ You shan’t have that mouse,” said the little one.
I told you before ’twas a stormy night
When these two little kittens began to fight.
The old woman seized her sweeping broom,
And swept the two kittens right out of the room.
The ground was covered with frost and snow,
And the poor little kittens had nowhere to go.
So they laid themselves down on the mat at the door,
While the old woman finished her sweeping the floor ;
And then they crept in, as quiet as mice,
All wet with the snow, and as cold as ice.
So they found it was better, that stormy night,
To lie down and sleep, than to quarrel and fight.

Alice. And don’t you know, in that delightful book
of Mr. Westwood’s, *Berries and Blossoms*—

KITTEN GOSSIP.

Kitten, kitten, two months old,
Woolly snowball, lying snug
Curled up in the warmest fold
Of the warm hearth-rug,
Turn your downy head this way—
What is life ? Oh kitten, say.

"Life," said the kitten, twitching her eyes,
And twitching her tail in a droll surprise—

"Life? Oh, it's racing over the floor,
Out of the window and in at the door,

Now on the chair-back, now on the table,
'Mid balls of cotton and skeins of silk,
And crumbs of sugar and jugs of milk,

All so cosy and comfortable.

It's patting the little dog's ears, and leaping
Round him and over him while he's sleeping,
Waking him up in a sore affright,
Then off and away like a flash of light,
Scouring and scampering out of sight.

Life? Oh, it's rolling over and over
On the summer green turf and budding clover,
Chasing the shadows, as fast they run
Down the garden paths in the mid-day sun,
Prancing and gambolling, brave and bold,
Climbing the tree-stems, scratching the mould—
That's life," said the kitten two months old.

Kitten, kitten, come sit on my knee,
And lithe and listen, kitten, to me.
One by one, oh, one by one,
The shy, swift shadows sweep over the sun,
Daylight dieth, and kittenhood's done,
And kitten, oh! the rain and the wind,
For cathood cometh with careful mind,

And grave cat duties follow behind.
Hark! there's a sound you cannot hear,
I'll whisper its meaning in your ear—

MICE

(The kitten stared with her great green eyes,
And twitched her tail in a queer surprise)—

MICE.

No more tit-bits, dainty and nice,
No more mischief and no more play,
But watching by night and sleeping by day,
Prowling wherever the foe doth lurk,
Very short commons and very sharp work ;
And kitten, oh! the hail and the thunder,
That's a black cloud, but a blacker's under.
Hark!—but you'll fall from my knee, I fear,
When I whisper that awful word in your ear—

R-R-R-RATS

(The kitten's heart beat with great pit-pats,
But her whiskers quivered, and from their sheath
Flashed out the sharp, white, pearly teeth)—

R-R-R-RATS—

The scorn of dogs, but the terror of cats,
The cruellest foes and the fiercest fighters,
The sauciest thieves and the sharpest biters ;
But, kitten, I see you've a stoutish heart,
So courage, and play an honest part.
Use well your paws, and strengthen your claws,
And sharpen your teeth, and stretch your jaws ;

Then woe to the tribe of pickers and stealers,
Nibblers and gnawers and evil dealers.
But now that you know life's not precisely
The thing your fancy pictured so nicely,
Off and away! race over the floor,
Out at the window and in at the door,
Roll on the turf and play in the sun,
Ere night-time cometh, and kittenhood's done.

T. WESTWOOD.

Alice. I suppose it is an allegory of growing up.

Aunt C. You can have it in another aspect in the "Kitten and Falling Leaves," at which you must fancy Mr. Wordsworth looking, with his baby-daughter Dora in his arms.

Alice. I know he was called a Lake poet, and lived between 1770 and 1850, but that's all.

Aunt C. The name of Lake poets was given to the three friends, William Wordsworth, Robert Southey, and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, because they lived in the Lake country in Westmoreland. Two of them married sisters, and the whole lives of Wordsworth and Southey were spent among those mountains. Wordsworth knew every rock and pass, loved every tree and flower, and saw deep meanings in everything. He

delighted, too, in the homely, friendly people, and talked and lived much with them. I told you that Cowper made a great step in making poetry simple and easy, and Wordsworth still more made it a principle that the poetry should be in the thought, and that the words had better be as plain and simple and untwisted as possible.

Ed. Sensible man!

Alice. I hope he was happier than poor Cowper.

Aunt C. He was as happy a man as ever lived, always thinking noble and sweet thoughts, and pouring them out in flowing words, feeling that he was doing his work in helping people to trace God's hand in everything, and loved and honoured by all. It was thought a great thing to see that fine venerable old man; so, though some of his verses are sometimes laughed at and thought childish, and others may be lengthy and tiresome, he has really done much for English taste in poetry. These verses were written when he was a comparatively young man. Let us have them, Alice.

Alice. Only, first, what is a parachute?

Aunt C. A thing somewhat like an umbrella,

unclosed but not fastened, open. It was taken up in balloons to descend in, opening as it fell, so as to break the shock.

THE KITTEN AND THE FALLING LEAVES.

See the kitten on the wall,
Sporting with the leaves that fall ;
Withered leaves—one—two—and three,
From the lofty elder tree.
Through the calm and frosty air
Of this morning, bright and fair,
Eddying round and round, they sink
Softly, lowly ; one might think,
From the motions that are made,
Every little leaf conveyed
Sylph or fairy hither tending,
To this lower world descending,
Each invisible and mute
In his wavering parachute.
But the kitten, how she starts,
Crouches, stretches, paws, and darts,
First at one, and then its fellow,
Just as light and just as yellow.
There are many now—now one,
Now they stop, and there are none.
What intenseness of desire
In her upturned eye of fire ;

With a tiger-leap half way,
Now she meets the coming prey,
Lets it go as fast, and then
Has it in her power again.
Now she works with three or four,
Like an Indian conjuror.
Quick as he in feats of art,
Far beyond in joy of heart ;
Were her antics played in th' eye
Of a thousand standers by,
Clapping hands, with shout and stare,
What would little Tabby care
For the plaudits of the crowd ?
Far too happy to be proud,
Over-wealthy in the treasure
Of her own exceeding pleasure.

WORDSWORTH.

Grace. How pretty ! How like the kitten !

Aunt C. This is only a portion of the poem. You would be less interested in the rest ; but I am going to read you the conclusion, where Wordsworth says he wishes ever to

“ Keep the sprightly soul awake,
And have faculties to take,
Even from things by sorrow taught,
Matter for a jocund thought ;

Spite of care, and spite of grief,
To gambol with life's falling leaf!"

Alice. He hopes to go on finding the way to be cheerful, even among what is sad, like the leaves in autumn.

Aunt C. The same thought was with his brother-in-law, Southey, much later in life. Here are a few verses I am very fond of, from a longer poem, supposed to be an answer to Mrs. Southey, when she thought her husband was writing verses livelier and more nonsensical than suited his years.

AUTUMN CHEERFULNESS.

Nay, mistress mine (I made reply),
The autumn hath its flowers,
Nor ever is the sky more gay
Than in its evening hours.

Our good old cat, Earl Tom le Magne,
Upon a warm spring day,
Even like a kitten at its sport,
Is sometimes seen to play.

That sense which held me back in youth
From all intemperate gladness,
That same good instinct bids me shun
Unprofitable sadness.

Nor marvel you, if I prefer
On playful themes to sing ;
The October grove hath brighter tints
Than summer or than spring.

For o'er the leaves, before they fall,
Such hues hath Nature thrown,
That the woods bear, in sunless days,
A sunshine of their own.

SOUTHEY.

Alice. Tom le Magne, Tom the Great, like Charlemagne. I like that.

Grace. But there's only one verse about a cat.

Aunt C. To console you, here is an account, written by Cowper, of an adventure of his cat. It is written in a sort of mock-heroic style—that is, playfully making a great deal of a very little.

THE RETIRED CAT.

A Poet's Cat, sedate and grave
As poet well could wish to have,
Was much addicted to enquire
For nooks to which she might retire,
And where, secure as mouse in chink,
She might repose, or sit and think.
Sometimes ascending, debonair,
An apple tree, or lofty pear,

Lodged with convenience in the fork,
She watched the gardener at his work :
Sometimes her ease and solace sought
In an old empty watering-pot ;
There, nothing wanting save a fan
To seem some nymph in her sedan,
Apparell'd in exactest sort,
And ready to be borne to court.

But love of change it seems has place
Not only in our wiser race ;
Cats also feel, as well as we,
That passion's force, and so did she.
Her climbing, she began to find,
Exposed her too much to the wind,
And the old utensil of tin
Was cold and comfortless within :
She therefore wished, instead of those,
Some place of more serene repose,
Where neither cold might come, nor air
Too rudely wanton with her hair,
And sought it in the likeliest mode
Within her master's snug abode.

A drawer, it chanced, at bottom lined
With linen of the softest kind,
A drawer impending o'er the rest,
Half open, in the topmost chest,
Of depth enough, and none to spare,
Invited her to slumber there.

Puss, with delight beyond expression,
Surveyed the scene and took possession.
Recumbent at her ease, ere long,
And lulled by her own hum-drum song,
She left the cares of life behind,
And slept as she would sleep her last ;
When in came, housewifely inclined,
The chambermaid, and shut it fast ;
By no malignity impelled,
But all unconscious whom it held.

Awakened by the shock, cried Puss,
" Was ever cat attended thus !
This open drawer was left, I see,
Merely to prove a nest for me ;
For soon as I was well composed,
Then came the maid, and it was closed.
How smooth these kerchiefs, and how sweet !
Oh, what a delicate retreat.
I will resign myself to rest
Till Sol, declining in the west,
Shall call to supper, when, no doubt,
Susan will come and let me out."

The evening came, the sun descended,
And Puss remained still unattended.
The night roll'd tardily away—
With her, indeed, 'twas never day—
The sprightly morn her course renewed,
The evening grey again ensued,

And Puss came into mind no more
Than if entombed the day before.
With hunger pinched, and pinched for room,
She now presaged approaching doom,
Nor slept a single wink, or purred,
Conscious of jeopardy incurred.

That night, by chance, the Poet, watching,
Heard an inexplicable scratching ;
His noble heart went pit-a-pat,
And to himself he said, " What 's that ?"
He drew the curtain at his side,
And forth he peep'd, but nothing spied ;
Yet by his ear directed, guessed
Something imprisoned in the chest,
And, doubtful what, with prudent care,
Resolved it should continue there.
At length a voice which well he knew—
A long and melancholy mew,
Saluting his poetic ears,
Consoled him and dispell'd his fears.
He left his bed, he trod the floor,
And 'gan in haste the drawers explore,
The lowest first, and without stop
The rest in order, to the top ;
For 'tis a truth well known to most,
That whatsoever thing is lost,
We seek it, ere it come to light,
In every cranny but the right.

—Forth skipp'd the Cat, not now replete,
As erst, with airy self-conceit,
Nor in her own fond apprehension
A theme for all the world's attention :
But modest, sober, cured of all
Her notions hyperbolical,
And wishing for a place of rest
Anything rather than a chest.
Then stepp'd the Poet into bed
With this reflection in his head :—
Beware of too sublime a sense
Of your own worth and consequence !
The man who dreams himself so great,
And his importance of such weight,
That all around, in all that 's done,
Must move and act for him alone,
Will learn, in school of tribulation,
The folly of his expectation.

COWPER.

Ed. You may well say it is a great deal of a *very* little.

Aunt C. But it is very gracefully told.

Grace. And Puss must have looked delightful in the watering-pot, though I can't think how she got in. But what does "debonair" mean ?

Aunt C. Divide it into three French words, *de bon air*. It means graceful.

Alice. Is there any other cat poem ?

Aunt C. Yes, an elegy on the death of a cat, who was drowned at least 150 years ago.

Ed. Some woman wrote it.

Aunt C. No, it was a great scholar, Fellow of Pembroke College at Cambridge, Mr. Thomas Gray. The cat belonged to Horace Walpole. He was the son of the great Sir Robert Walpole, and lived at Strawberry Hill, a place which he had filled with curiosities of all sorts ; so that it was a show and a wonder to his friends in London. He was fond of old and new books, and liked to have learned, clever, and amusing people about him. Gray was a very shy man, happier in his rooms at Cambridge, or at home with his old mother and aunt, than in the gay, talking world ; but he and Horace Walpole were old school and college friends, and Walpole made Gray's poetry known. So when the Persian cat at Strawberry Hill drowned herself by trying to catch some gold-fish, these verses were written by Gray.

ON THE DEATH OF A CAT.

'Twas on a lofty vase's side,
Where China's gayest art had dyed
The azure flowers that blow ;
Demurest of the tabby kind,
The pensive Selima, reclined,
Gazed on the gulf below.

Her conscious tail her joy declared :
Her fair round face, the snowy beard,
The velvet of her paws,
Her coat, that with the tortoise vies,
The ears of jet, and emerald eyes,
She saw ; and purred applause.

Still had she gazed ; but, 'midst the tide,
Two angel forms were seen to glide,
The Genii of the stream :
Their scaly armour's Tyrian hue
Through richest purple to the view
Betrayed a golden gleam.

The hapless nymph with wonder saw :
A whisker first, and then a claw,
With many an ardent wish,
She stretched in vain to reach the prize.
What female heart can gold despise ?
What Cat's averse to fish ?

Presumptuous maid! with looks intent
Again she stretched, again she bent,
Nor knew the gulf between.
(Malignant fate sat by and smiled.)
The slippery verge her feet beguiled,
She tumbled headlong in.

Eight times emerging from the flood
She mewed to every wat'ry god,
Some speedy aid to send.
No Dolphin came, no Nereid stirred,
Nor cruel Tom nor Susan heard.
A fav'rite has no friend!

From hence, ye beauties, undeceived,
Know, one false step is ne'er retrieved,
And be with caution bold.
Not all that tempts your wandering eyes
And heedless hearts is lawful prize,
Nor all, that glisters, gold.

GRAY.

Alice. I see what you mean; it is not nearly so simple as the verses by Cowper or Wordsworth.

Ed. He makes a very odd description of the fish. Angel forms indeed, and Tyrian hue! That is purple.

Alice. There are dark purple marks on the young

ones. Besides, he means that this is as the fish appeared to poor Selima.

Ed. I supposed she emerged eight times because she had nine lives ; but why should she mew to watery gods ?

Aunt C. Because classical allusions were the taste of the time.

Alice. Nereids are river nymphs.

Ed. Fancy a Nereid, or a Dolphin either, in a china bowl!

Aunt C. Oh, you must not be too critical on what was meant as a playful lamentation. You know the story of the Dolphin that carried Arion to shore when he was thrown overboard.

Alice. They are the prettiest, smoothest verses we have had.

Aunt C. Gray was remarkable for the exceeding polish he gave every line. We feel the habit even in this playful piece, and far more in his grand ones. Now, considering the moaning wind I hear, I am afraid A RAINY DAY will be our most suitable subject for to-morrow.



EVENING III.
WIND AND RAIN.

Ed. I've got something jolly for you this time.

Aunt C. What! Edmund has condescended.

Alice. Oh, Aunt, we have been so glad to have to hunt out our poems. It would have been such a long dull day without!

Aunt C. You would have had to sing, like the clown in "Twelfth Night"—

"When that I was, and a little tiny boy,
With heigh-ho, the wind and the rain ;
A foolish thing was but a toy,
For the rain it raineth every day.

"A great while ago the world begun,
With heigh-ho, the wind and the rain ;
But that's all one, our play is done,
For the rain it raineth every day."

SHAKSPERE.

Grace. What does it mean ?

Aunt C. I doubt whether the clown could tell you,
or Shakspeare either.

Ed. Well, I know what mine means.

THE WIND IN A FROLIC.

The wind one morning sprang up from sleep,
Saying, " Now for a frolic, now for a leap,
Now for a madcap galloping chace,
I'll make a commotion in every place."

So it swept with a bustle right through a big town,
Creaking the signs, and scattering down
Shutters, and whisking with merciless squalls
Old women's bonnets and gingerbread stalls.

There never was heard a much lustier shout
As the apples and oranges trundled about ;
And the urchins that stand, with their thievish eyes,
For ever on watch, ran off each with a prize.

Then away to the field it went, blustering and humming,
And the cattle all wondered whatever was coming ;
It plucked by the tails the grave matronly cows,
And toss'd the colts' manes all about their brows ;

Till, offended at such an unusual salute,
They all turned their backs, and stood silent and mute.

So on it went capering and playing its pranks,
Whistling with reeds on the broad river banks,

Puffing the birds as they sat on the spray,
Or the traveller grave on the king's highway ;
It was not too nice to hustle the bags
Of the beggar, and flutter his dirty rags.

'Twas so bold that it feared not to play its joke
With the doctor's wig or the gentleman's cloak.
Through the forest it roared, and cried gaily, " Now,
You sturdy old oaks, I'll make you bow."

And it made them bow without more ado,
As it crack'd their great branches through and through ;
Then it rushed like a monster o'er cottage and farm,
Striking the dwellers with sudden alarm,
And they ran out like bees in a midsummer swarm.

There were dames with their kerchiefs tied over their caps,
To see if their poultry were free from mishaps.
The turkeys they gabbled, the geese screamed aloud,
And the hens crept to roost in a terrified crowd.

There was rearing of ladders, and logs laying on
Where the thatch from the roof threatened soon to be gone ;
But the wind had swept on, and had met in a lane
With a schoolboy who panted and struggled in vain,
For it toss'd him and twirled him, then passed, and he stood
With his hat in a pool, and his shoes in the mud.

Then away went the wind in its holiday glee,
And now it was far on the billowy sea,
And the lordly ships felt its staggering blow,
And the little boats darted to and fro.

But lo! it was night, and it sank to rest
On the sea-bird's rock in the gleaming west,
Laughing to think, in its fearful fun,
How little of mischief it had done!

WM. HOWITT.

Aunt C. Thank you, Edmund. How much William Howitt must have enjoyed writing that!

Alice. Who was he?

Aunt C. A kindly Quaker gentleman, very fond of country life. I do not think there were many events in his history, and he died so recently that it has not been written; but if I remember the newspaper statement aright, he and his brother died the same day—one in England and one abroad. He wrote several books on country life, and one called *The Boy's Country Book* is most diverting, and professes to give his own adventures when a lad living on a large farm. But I have another set of verses here, for Gracie, showing what the wind can

do. They were written by Mr. Keble, when a young man.

Alice. The author of *The Christian Year*?

Aunt C. Yes. He was a great lover of children, though he never had any of his own, and was especially fond of his nephew and nieces. Now, before anyone knew of him as a great and good man and poet, he was with some of these children at his father's house at Fairford, in Gloucestershire. There is a rookery round the field, and the Wind in a frolic seems to have done much damage to the rooks' nests. He is himself the Uncle John of the poem, which he seems to have written to show the children that "'tis an ill wind that blows nobody good."

THE ROOK.

There was a young Rook, and he lodged in a nook
Of Grandpapa's tallest elm-tree ;
There came a strong wind, not at all to his mind,
All out of the north-west countree.

With a shrill piping sound this wind whistled round,
The boughs they all danced high and low ;
Rock, rock went the nest where the birds were at rest,
Till over and over they go.

Uncle John, walking round, saw the Rook on the ground,
And smooth'd it, and wished to revive ;
Ann, Robert, and Hill, they all tried their skill,
In vain—the poor Rook would not live.

And if, in your fun, round the orchard you run,
You really would wonder to see
How sticks, moss, and feather are strewn by the weather
Beneath each old racketting tree.

'Tis a very bad wind, as in proverbs we find,
The wind that blows nobody good ;
I have read it in books, yet sure the young Rooks
Would deny it to-day if they could.

They sure would deny, but they cannot well try ;
Their cawing they have not yet learned ;
And 'tis just as well not, for a fancy I've got
How the wind to some use may be turned.

Do you see Martha Hunt, how she bears all the brunt
Of the chilly, damp, blustering day ;
How gladly she picks all the littering sticks,
Her kettle will soon boil away.

How snug she will sit by the fire and knit,
While Daniel her fortune will praise ;
The wind roars away ; " Master Wind," they will say,
" We thank you for this pretty blaze."

Then, spite of the Rooks, what we read in the books
Is true, and the storm has done good ;
It seems hard, I own, when the nests get o'erthrown,
But Daniel and Martha get wood.

J. KEBLE.

Grace. The lady in the verses Alice found for me
did not think of that when she was cross with the rain.

THE PICNIC.

A lady a party of pleasure made,
And she planned her scheme full well ;
And early and late this party filled
The head of the demoiselle.

It rained all day, and it rained all night,
It rained when the morning broke,
It rained when the maiden went to sleep,
And it rained when she awoke.

Peevish and fretful the maiden grew
When the hour of noon was gone ;
But the merry clouds knew nothing of that,
And the rain went pouring on.

The weather has got no business with us,
And we have none with the weather ;
And temper and weather are different things,
But they always go together.

Oh, anger and beauty, my lady dear,
Will never agree to share
The little white forehead that lifts its arch
Through the parting of thy hair.

The mists are strewn all over the hills,
And the valleys are ringing with floods,
And the heavy drops on the flat, broad leaves
Are making strange sounds in the woods.

Angels are round thee, and Heaven above,
And thy soul is alive within ;
Shall a rainy day and a cloudy sky
Make a Christian heart to sin ?

Oh, wait for the sunset's dusky gold,
On the side of your mountain glen,
And seek the lone seat where the foxgloves grow,
And weep for thy folly then.

F. W. FABER.

Aunt C. I think she would catch a very bad cold
out on that wet seat. But it is a very wise lesson.

Alice. I hope I shall remember it the next wet day.

Aunt C. It is by Frederick William Faber, written
in his earlier days, long before the hymns by which he
is best known, the beautiful "Pilgrims of the Night,"
and "O Paradise."

Alice. Here is a very doleful one of Longfellow's.

THE RAINY DAY.

The day is cold, and dark, and dreary ;
It rains, and the wind is never weary ;
The vine still clings to the mouldering wall,
But at every gust the dead leaves fall,
And the day is dark and dreary.

My life is cold, and dark, and dreary ;
It rains, and the wind is never weary ;
My thoughts still cling to the mouldering Past,
But the hopes of youth fall thick in the blast,
And the days are dark and dreary.

Be still, sad heart ! and cease repining ;
Behind the clouds is the sun still shining ;
Thy fate is the common fate of all,
Into each life some rain must fall,
Some days must be dark and dreary.

LONGFELLOW.

Grace. He begins as if he needed a scolding as much as the other lady who could not have her picnic!

Ed. And he does not end much better !

Alice. No ; he does not make the best of it.

Aunt C. I cannot tell you much about Mr. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, as, happily, he is still alive. He is an American, as no doubt Alice knows, and all

he writes is thoughtful and earnest. You have another much more cheerful rainy day of his, Alice, decidedly making the best of it.

RAIN IN SUMMER.

How beautiful is the rain!
After the dust and heat,
In the broad and fiery street,
In the narrow lane,
How beautiful is the rain!

How it clatters along the roofs,
Like the tramp of hoofs!
How it gushes and struggles out
From the throat of the overflowing spout!
Across the window pane
It pours and pours;
And swift and wide,
With a muddy tide,
Like a river down the gutter roars
The rain, the welcome rain!

The sick man from his chamber looks
At the twisted brooks;
He can feel the cool
Breath of each little pool;
His fevered brain
Grows calm again,
And he breathes a blessing on the rain.

From the neighbouring school
Come the boys,
With more than their wonted noise
And commotion ;
And down the wet streets
Sail their mimic fleets,
Till the treacherous pool
Engulphs them in its whirling
And turbulent ocean.

In the country on every side,
Where far and wide,
Like a leopard's tawny and spotted hide,
Stretches the plain,
To the dry grass and the drier grain
How welcome is the rain !

In the furrowed land
The toilsome and patient oxen stand ;
Lifting the yoke-encumbered head,
With their dilated nostrils spread,
They silently inhale
The clover-scented gale,
And the vapours that arise
From the well-watered and smoking soil.
From this rest in the furrow after toil,
Their large and lustrous eyes
Seem to thank the Lord,
More than man's spoken word.

Near at hand,
From under the sheltering trees,
The farmer sees
His pastures and his fields of grain,
As they bend their tops
To the numberless beating drops
Of the incessant rain.
He counts it as no sin
That he sees therein
Only his own thrift and gain.
These, and far more than these,
The poet sees!
He can behold
Aquarius old
Walking the fenceless fields of air,
And from each ample fold
Of the clouds about him roll'd
Scattering everywhere
The showery rain,
As the farmer scatters his grain.
He can behold
Things manifold
That have not yet been wholly told—
Have not been wholly sung nor said.
For his thought, that never stops,
Follows the water-drops
Down to the graves of the dead,
Down through chasms and gulfs profound,

To the dreary fountain-head
Of lakes and rivers underground ;
And sees them when the rain is done,
On the bridge of colours seven,
Climbing up once more to heaven
Opposite the setting sun.

Thus the seer,
With vision clear,
Sees forms appear and disappear.
In the perpetual round of strange
Mysterious change
From birth to death, from death to birth,
From earth to heaven, from heaven to earth,
Till glimpses more sublime
Of things unseen before,
Unto his wondering eyes reveal
The Universe, as an immeasurable wheel
Turning for evermore
In the rapid and rushing river of Time.

LONGFELLOW.

Grace. Who is Aquarius ?

Aunt C. The Water-bearer—the constellation or cluster of stars where the sun is in the rainy spring months, so that he is the emblem of beneficent showers. Can my little Gracie tell what the bridge of colours seven means ?

Alice. Mounting up to heaven, Gracie, when the sun comes out after rain.

Grace. Oh! the Rainbow! How pretty that is!

Aunt C. Now you shall see what people get by straggling out on wet days. Here is Cowper's description of a walk he took, or tried to take, with Mrs. Unwin, in the winter of 1782.

THE DISTRESSED TRAVELLERS;

OR,

LABOUR IN VAIN.

I.

I sing of a journey to Clifton
We would have performed if we could,
Without cart or barrow to lift on
Poor Mary and me through the mud,
Slee-sla-slud,
Stuck in the mud,
Oh, it is pretty to wade through a flood.

II.

So away we went, slipping and sliding,
Hop, hop, *à la mode de deux* frogs ;
'Tis near as good walking as riding
When ladies are dress'd in their clogs.
Wheels, no doubt,
Go briskly about,
But they clatter and rattle, and make such a rout.

III.

She. Well, now, I protest it is charming,
How finely the weather improves!
That cloud, though, is rather alarming—
How slowly and stately it moves!

He. Pshaw! never mind,
'Tis not in the wind,
We are travelling south, and shall leave it behind.

IV.

She. I am glad we are come for an airing,
For folks may be pounded and penn'd
Until they grow rusty, not caring
To stir half-a-mile to an end.
The longer we stay,
The longer we may,
'Tis a folly to think about weather or way.

V.

But now I begin to be frighted ;
If I fall, what a way I should roll !
I am glad that the bridge was indicted—
Stop! stop! I am sunk in a hole.

He. Nay! never care,
'Tis a common affair,
You'll not be the first that has set a foot there.

VI.

She. Let me breathe now a little, and ponder
On what it were better to do ;

That terrible lane I see yonder
I think we shall never get through.

He. So think I,
But, by-the-bye,
We never shall know if we never shall try.

VII.

She. But should we get there, how shall we get home?
What a terrible deal of bad road we have past,
Slipping and sliding, and if we should come
To a difficult stile, I am ruined at last—
Oh, this lane!
Now it is plain
That struggling and striving is labour in vain.

VIII.

He. Stick fast there, while I go and look.
She. Don't go away, for fear I should fall!
He. I have examined it every nook,
And what you have here is a sample of all.
Come, wheel round,
The dirt we have found
Would be an estate at a farthing a pound!

W. COWPER.

Alice. Fun a hundred years old, or nearly so, and
quite fresh still!

Aunt C. Here, too, is a poem by Mr. Bourdillon,
defending the much-abused east wind, and showing
that it is by no means a wind that blows nobody good.

THE EAST WIND.

An Angel I come, at the bidding of God,
But I leave no bowers of the Blest,
With flowers that follow me strewing the sod,
As the bountiful winds of the west.

Rather a sword in my hand I bring,
And a blast in my terrible breath,
To slay the warm life of the infant Spring
With a chill from the presence of Death.

The bare trees shiver, the budded sigh
For their first-born, never to blow,
While they linger unclad, as the spring goes by,
Till a thin late greenery grow.

The primrose face, and the violet,
Hide from my cold keen kiss ;
And the butterfly droops, and would fain lie yet
In his late-left chrysalis.

Yet kindly the forward flowers I keep,
Lest untimely their day be done ;
And the blue bright heaven my broad wings sweep
Of the clouds that grudge them the sun.

And merrily, merrily, over the sea,
The sailor to port I bring ;
And cheerily, cheerily, over the lea,
In the ploughman's ears I sing.

And the earth's warm heart, that was softened with
And saddened with days of rain, [snows,
I rouse from her weeping and dreaming of woes,
And brace her to bearing again.

Yet little of favour I find of men,
Or love of the flowers I love,
For I linger not to drowse in the glen,
Nor to dream in the shadowy grove.

And in vain I woo in the flowery wood ;
Yet never I bow to despair ;
But I break away, as a brave heart should,
From the places that scorn my care.

And out and away to the bare bleak downs
I rush, and the open sky,
My only lover that never frowns,
As the wild winds whistle by.

F. W. BOURDILLON.





EVENING IV.

THE BUTTERFLY'S BALL, & THE PEACOCK AT HOME.

Alice. You never proposed any subject for to-night, Aunt Charlotte.

Aunt C. Let us look into the portfolio, and see what drawing comes first to hand.

Alice. "Guests assembling for the Butterfly's ball." Oh, I know that.

Grace. Please say it, Alice.

Alice. I will ; but first, Auntie, did anyone write it who is worth knowing about ?

Aunt C. Yes, certainly ; Mr. Roscoe was a distinguished writer some eighty years ago. He was a market-gardener's son at Liverpool, and, as a lad, used to work in the potato fields with his father, but he read as much as he could, and was very fond of poetry. He thought that if he were a bookseller he

should be able to read as much as he chose, and he served in a shop for a month ; but he found handling books did not mean reading them, so he became an attorney's clerk, and, while in that situation, he and some other youths managed, by getting up early in the morning, to find time to learn Greek, Latin, French, and Italian. He became a lawyer, but he was such an admirable and elegant scholar in modern languages, and wrote and thought so clearly, that he lived chiefly by authorship. His books on Italian history are especially noted, and he was also a great botanist. He died in the year 1831, at seventy-eight years old. I suppose he wrote these pretty fanciful verses to amuse his children.

THE BUTTERFLY'S BALL.

Come, take up your hats, and away let us haste
To the Butterfly's ball and the Grasshopper's feast ;
The trumpeter Gadfly has summon'd the crew,
And the revels are now only waiting for you.

On the smooth shaven grass, by the side of the wood,
Beneath a broad oak that for ages has stood,
See the children of earth, and the tenants of air,
For an evening's amusement together repair.

And there came the Beetle, so blind and so black,
Who carried the Emmet, his friend, on his back ;
And there was the Gnat, and the Dragon-fly too,
With all their relations, green, orange, and blue.

And there came the Moth in his plumage of down,
And the Hornet in jacket of yellow and brown,
Who with him the Wasp, his companion, did bring,
But they promised that evening to lay by their sting.

And the sly little Dormouse crept out of his hole,
And led to the feast his blind brother, the Mole ;
And the Snail, with his horns peeping out of his shell,
Came from a great distance, the length of an ell.

A mushroom their table, and on it was laid
A water-dock leaf, which a table-cloth made ;
The viands were various, to each of their taste,
And the Bee brought his honey to sweeten the feast.

There, close on his haunches, so solemn and wise,
The Frog from a corner looked up to the skies ;
And the Squirrel, well pleased such diversions to see,
Sat cracking his nuts overhead in a tree.

Then out came the Spider, with fingers so fine,
To show his dexterity on the tight line ;
From one branch to another his cobwebs he slung,
Then as quick as an arrow he darted along.

With step so majestic, the Snail did advance,
And promised the gazers a minuet to dance ;
But they all laugh'd so loud that he pull'd in his head,
And went in his own little chamber to bed.

Then as evening gave way to the shadows of night,
The watchman, the Glow-worm, came out with his light.
Then home let us hasten while yet we can see,
For no watchman is waiting for you and for me.

ROSCOE.

Ed. What business had the Frog and Snail and Dormouse there ?

Grace. And Moles aren't blind. Papa showed me two bright little eyes down under their fur.

Alice. I don't suppose Mr. Roscoe meant it for a lesson in natural history. And it *is* just the way a Spider does hang at the end of his thread, spreading out his legs, which have really little claws at the end.

Grace. But what is a minuet ?

Aunt C. A very grand and stately dance, which was performed by one couple before the whole assembly, the gentleman with his hat in his hand.

Alice. Did you ever see it, Aunt ?

Aunt C. Only so far as that I learnt a few steps of it. It was thought to give young ladies a good deportment. Here is a sort of rival poem to the Butterfly, written by a lady, Mrs. Dorset, not long after. She has been much more careful to let her Peacock only invite the bird community.

THE PEACOCK AT HOME.

The Butterfly's ball, and the Grasshopper's feasts,
Excited the spleen of the birds and the beasts.
For their mirth and good cheer, of the Bee was the theme,
And the Gnat blew his horn as he danced in the beam.
'Twas hummed by the Beetle, 'twas buzzed by the Fly,
And sung by the myriads that sport 'neath the sky.
The quadrupeds listen'd with sullen displeasure,
But the tenants of air were enraged beyond measure.
The Peacock displayed his bright plumes to the sun,
And, addressing his mates, thus indignant begun :—
" Shall we, like domestic, inelegant fowls,
As unpolished as Geese, and as stupid as Owls,
Sit tamely at home humdrum with our spouses,
While Crickets and Butterflies open their houses ?
Shall such mean little creatures pretend to the fashion ?
Cousin Turkey-cock, well may you be in a passion.
If I suffer such insolent airs to prevail,
May Juno pluck out all the eyes in my tail.
So a feast I will give, and my taste I'll display,
And send out my cards for Saint Valentine's day."

This determined, six fleet carrier Pigeons went out
To invite all the birds to Sir Argus's rout.
The nest-loving Turtle-dove sent an excuse,
Dame Partlet was sitting, and good Mrs. Goose ;
The Turkey, poor soul, was confined to the rip,
For all her young brood had just failed with the pip ;
And the Partridge was asked, but a neighbour hard by
Had engaged a snug party to meet in a pie ;
The Wheat-ear declined, recollecting her cousins
Last year to a feast were invited by dozens,
But alas ! they returned not, and she had no taste
To appear in a costume of vine leaves and paste.
The Woodcock preferred her lone haunt on the moor,
And the traveller Swallow was still on his tour.
The Cuckoo, who should have been one of the guests,
Was rambling on visits to other birds' nests.
But the rest all accepted the kind invitation,
And much bustle it caused in the plumèd creation.
Such ruffling of feathers, such preening of coats,
Such chirping, such whistling, such clearing of throats,
Such polishing bills, and such oiling of pinions,
Had never been known in the biped dominions.
The Tailor-bird offered to make up new clothes
For all the young birdlings who wished to be beaux.
He made for the Robin a doublet of red,
And a new velvet cap for the Goldfinch's head.
He added a plume to the Wren's golden crest,
And spangled with silver the Guinea-fowl's breast ;

While the Halcyon bent o'er the streamlet to view,
How pretty she looked in her boddice of blue !
Thus adorned, they set out for the Peacock's abode
With the Guide Indicator, who show'd them the road.
From all points of the compass came birds of all feather,
And the Parrot can tell who and who were together.
There came Lord Cassowary and General Flamingo,
And Don Paraquito, escaped from Domingo.
From his high rock-built eyrie the Eagle came forth,
And the Duchess of Ptarmigan flew from the north.
The Grebe and the Eider-duck came up by water
With the Swan, who brought out the young Cygnet, her
daughter.

From his woodland abode came the Pheasant to meet
Two kindred, arrived by the last India fleet.
The one like a Nabob, in habit most splendid,
Where gold with each hue of the rainbow was blended.
In silver and black, like a fair pensive maid
Who mourns for her love, was the other arrayed.
The Chough came from Cornwall, and brought up his wife ;
The Grouse travelled south from his lairdship in Fife ;
The Bunting forsook her soft nest in the reeds ;
And the Widow-bird came, though she still wore her weeds ;
Sir John Heron of the lakes strutted in a grand *pas* ;
But no card had been sent to the pilfering Daw,
As the Peacock kept up his progenitors' quarrel,
Which Æsop relates about cast-off apparel—
For birds are like men in their contests together,
And in questions of right will dispute for a feather.

The Butterfly's Ball.

65

The Peacock imperial, the pride of his race,
Received all his guests with an infinite grace—
Waved high his blue neck, and his train he displayed,
Embroidered with gold, and with emeralds inlaid.
Then, with all the gay troop, to the shrubbery repaired,
Where the musical birds had a concert prepared.
A holly-bush formed the orchestra, and in it
Sat the Blackbird, the Thrush, the Lark, and the Linnet.
A Bullfinch, a captive, enslaved from the nest,
Now escaped from his cage, and with liberty blest,
In a sweet mellow tone joined the lessons of art
With the accents of nature which flowed from his heart.
The Canary, a much-admired foreign musician,
Condescended to sing to the fowls of condition ;
While the Nightingale warbled and quavered so fine,
That they all clapp'd their wings and pronounced it divine.
The Skylark in ecstasy sang from a cloud,
And Chanticleer crow'd, and the Yaffil laughed loud.
The dancing began when the singing was over ;
A Dotterel opened the ball with the Plover ;
Baron Stork in a waltz was allowed to excel,
With his beautiful partner, the fair Demoiselle ;
And a newly-fledged Gosling, so spruce and genteel,
A minuet swam with young Mr. Teal ;
A London-bred Sparrow, a pert forward cit,
Danced a reel with Miss Wagtail and little Tom Tit ;
And the Sieur Guillemot next performed a *pas seul*,
While the elderly bipeds were playing a pool.

The Dowager Lady Toucan first cut in
With old Dr. Buzzard and Admiral Penguin.
From Ivy-bush Tower came Dame Owlet the wise,
And Counsellor Crossbill sat by to advise.
Some birds past their prime, o'er whose heads it was fated
Should St. Valentine's pass, and yet be unmated,
Look'd on, and remarked that the prudent and sage
Were quite overlook'd in this frivolous age ;
When birds scarce penfeathered were brought to a rout,
Forward chits from the egg-shell but newly come out—
That in their youthful days they ne'er witnessed such frisking,
And how wrong in the Goldfinch to flirt with the Siskin.
So thought Lady Macaw, and her friend, Cockatoo,
And the Raven foretold that no good would ensue.
They censur'd the Bantam for strutting and crowing
In those vile pantaloons, which he fancied looked knowing.
And a want of decorum caused many demurs
Against the Game Chicken for coming in spurs.
Old Alderman Corm'rant, for supper impatient,
At the eating-room door for an hour had been stationed ;
Till a Magpie at length, the banquet announcing,
Gave the signal at length for clamouring and pouncing.
At the well-furnished board all were eager to perch,
But the little Miss Creepers were left in the lurch.

Description must fail, and the pen is unable
To describe all the dainties that covered the table.
Each delicate viand that taste could denote,
Wasps à la sauce piquante, and flies *en compôte* ;

The Butterfly's Ball.

67

Worms and frogs *en friture* for the web-footed fowl,
And a barbecued mouse was prepared for the Owl.
Nuts, grain, fruit, and fish, to regale every palate,
And groundsel and chickweed served up in salad.
The Razor-bill carved for the famishing group,
And the Spoon-bill obligingly ladled the soup.
So they filled all their crops with the dainties before 'em,
And the tables were cleared with the utmost decorum.
When they gaily had caroll'd till peep of the dawn,
The Lark gently hinted 'twas time to begone ;
And his clarion, so shrill, gave the company warning
That Chanticleer scented the gales of the morning.
So they chirped in full chorus a friendly adieu,
And with hearts quite as light as the plumage that grew
On their merry-thought bosoms, away they all flew.
Then long live the Peacock, in splendour unmatched,
Whose ball shall be talked of by birds yet unhatched ;
His praise let the Trumpeter loudly proclaim,
And the Goose lend her quill to transmit it to fame.

MRS. DORSET.

Grace. Oh, do read it over again, Auntie ; there was so much that I did not understand.

Alice. Nor I.

Aunt C. Very well. Stop me when you are puzzled.

Grace. What does it mean about Juno pulling out his eyes.

Ed. Why, Argus was a fellow with a hundred eyes.

Grace. Edmund!

Ed. In mythology I mean. Juno—she was the Queen Goddess—set him to watch a cow, who was really a transformed lady. He let himself be beguiled, went to sleep, and the cow was lost, which put Juno in such a rage that she pulled out all his eyes, and put them in her peacock's tail.

Grace. That is why it calls him Sir Argus.

Aunt C. Pavo Argus is really his proper name.

Alice. What is the rip?

Aunt C. A local word for the basket-work coop.

Ed. And what's this about the Wheatear?

Aunt C. Poor little Wheatears! they are caught in traps on the Sussex downs, and eaten. They used to be a fashionable dish at Brighton, served up in vine leaves and paste.

Grace. The Tailor-bird does not really make any clothes.

Ed. No, you little goose! It only sews leaves together for its nest. I may as well tell you—for I am sure you do not know—that the Halcyon is the Kingfisher.

Aunt C. Remind me at the end, and I will read you a legend about the Halcyon.

Alice. Then the two Pheasants are the gorgeous Gold Pheasant—beautiful creature—and the still handsomer Silver one, with its pencilled feathers and scarlet patch to its eye.

Ed. Widow-birds ought to be Whydah birds, I believe, from Whydah in Africa. I have seen one in a cage. It grows a long black tail, and then loses it, and for a time looks like a sparrow, then like a magpie, in shape.

Alice. I am not sure who the Guide Indicator is.

Aunt C. The Indicator or Honey-bird of Africa. It cannot get at the honey in the wild bees' nests in hollow trees for itself, but it flies before any person it sees in the wood till it has brought them to the place. Then it flutters about while the nest is being taken, and it is sure to get dead bees, larvæ, and droppings of honey enough to make up for its trouble.

Alice. What a marvellous instinct! I see no difficulty now till we come to the Yaffil.

Ed. That's what the farming men call the great green Woodpecker. It is just like the noise it makes.

Alice. I am not sure of the Dotterel.

Aunt C. It is a wading bird, with a white crescent on its breast. It is well paired with the Plover; but it strikes me that Mrs. Dorset would not have meant our modern waltz, for in the old illustrations Baron Stork and the graceful Demoiselle Crane are standing far apart, each on one leg. *Sieur Guillemot* must have been put in for his French name, since he is a sea-bird with great web-feet, which he seldom uses.

Grace. "A barbecued mouse"—what is that?

Aunt C. Split down the middle, opened out, and broiled. It is said to come from the French *barbe à queue*.

Grace. Beard to tail! How droll.

Aunt C. But you have passed a curious little bit of costume marking the date. The Bantam's feathered legs are, you see, compared to pantaloons—trousers which were being brought in by smart young men—the regulation, sober-minded costume being what is only to be seen now in court dress or on footmen.

Alice. One more question; who is the Trumpeter?

Aunt C. A South American, with a wonderful

trumpet in his throat, which can be heard for miles.

Alice. It is very clever and amusing, and I remember now having heard many lines used as proverbs, such as—

For birds are like men in their contests together,
And in questions of right will dispute for a feather.

Grace. But were you not going to tell us the story of the Kingfisher ?

Aunt C. I was going to read you a fragment which Professor Anstice translated from the Latin poet Ovid. An old husband and wife, named Ceyx and Halcyone, had been, according to the old story, long wandering about in search of their children, till Ceyx fell into the river. Then we hear of his wife—

Tossed by the waves, the corpse drew nigh,
The well-known form that met her eye
Confirmed her wild alarms.
" 'Tis he," she cried ; she smote her breast,
She tore her tresses and her vest,
She spread her trembling arms.

" Thus has my love his promise kept,"
She cried. Upon a bank she leapt,
That there the waters checked.

'Twas built the stormy waves to tire,
And by sustaining all their ire,
The harbour to protect.

As frantic on the bank she springs,
Wondrous to tell, a pair of wings
From out her shoulders rise.
On novel pinions borne along,
With darting movement, plaintive song,
Above the wave she flies.

And when the lady tried to speak,
There issued from her slender beak
A melancholy strain.
And loth a last embrace to miss,
On Ceyx' lips to print a kiss,
That beak essayed in vain.

Some thought that Ceyx raised his head
To meet that kiss, while others said
'Twas but the waves in motion.
But time the infidels refuted,
For Ceyx, by the gods recruited,
Became a god of ocean.

Marked with his consort to a feather,
And these so linked in love together
Are still a wedded pair.

The billows where they hung their nest,
For seven long days of winter rest,
The Halcyons' home to spare.

Ovid, translated by Prof. ANSTICE.

Grace. Turned into Kingfishers!

Aunt C. So said and sung the ancients.

Alice. I knew Halcyon days were very fine ones,
but I did not know that it was supposed to be then
that the Kingfishers built their nests.

Ed. This has been a more amusing evening.
But I should like a good, spirited, jolly thing, with
some fun and life in it.

Aunt C. I will try to please you next time.





EVENING V.
THE FOX.

Grace. Aunt Charlotte, you never told us who was Dame Partlet, who could not come to the Peacock's feast.

Ed. Why, of course, an old hen.

Grace. Why is she called Partlet?

Aunt C. I cannot tell you why; but I know that her ancestresses have borne that name these five hundred years, at least.

Ed. How can you know, Aunt?

Aunt C. On the authority of a certain old gentleman, who amused great princes, knights, and warriors in the days of King Edward III.

Alice. Do you mean Chaucer?

Aunt C. Geoffrey Chaucer, the father of English poetry himself!

Ed. What can he have to say about cocks and hens ?

Aunt C. You shall hear, if you will bring me the volume of Chaucer from the lower shelf.

Ed. What funny-looking stuff it is.

Aunt C. It will sound less strange to you as I read it. I must tell you that Chaucer's chief poem is his "Canterbury Pilgrimage," where he describes a whole company of people of all kinds and ranks, who have met on the way to pay their devotions at the shrine of St. Thomas of Canterbury.

Grace. The Archbishop whom Henry II.'s men murdered ?

Aunt C. The same. His tomb was a great place of pilgrimage till the Reformation, and Chaucer describes a large number of people, who, having come together on the way, beguile the journey by telling one another stories. There was a Prioress among them, a very delicate and dainty person ; and her chaplain—or, as Chaucer calls him, the Nun's priest—tells the tale, of which I am going to read you some portions, leaving out what would not interest you, nor be easily understood.*

* The spelling and some words are modernised.

CHANTICLEAR AND PARTLET.

A poor widow, some deal stoopen in age,
Was whilom dwelling in narrow cottage
Beside a grove standing in a dale.
This widow which I tell of in my tale,
Since that day in which she was a wife,
In patience led a full simple life.

Alice. Are you really not changing the words?

Aunt C. So far not at all, except to alter *thilk* into *that*. Well, the live-stock of this widow and her daughters two were three large sows, three kine, and eke a sheep that hight Mace (*hight* means *named*, Grace), also

A yard she had enclosed all about
With stickès and a dry ditch without,
In which she had a cock named Chanticlear,
In all the land of crowing n'ar his peer.
His voice was merrier than the merry organ
On Mass days that is in the churches gone.
Well sickerer was his crowing in his lodge
Than is a clock, or any abbey orloge.

Alice. That means that he kept time better than any clock. How delightful!

Aunt C. Now for the description of him. I wonder how he would figure in a poultry show.

His comb was redder than the fine corall,
Embattled, as it were a castle wall ;
His bill was black, and as the jet it shone,
Like azure were his leggès and his toen ;
His nailès whiter than the lily flower,
And like the burnèd gold was his colour.
This gentil cock had in his governance
Seven hens for to do all his pleasance,
Of which the fairest huèd in the throat,
Was cleped faire Demoiselle Pertelote.

Fairest huèd—that is, “fairest coloured.” *Cleped* is
“is called.” Well, I must leave out Chanticlear’s
warning dream, and Pertelote’s very learned comment,
and go on to tell you how he flew into the yard,

And eke his hennes all,
And with a chuck he ’gan them for to call,
For he had found a corn lay in the yard ;
Right he was, he was no more afeared.
He looketh as it were a grim lion,
And on his toes he runneth up and down.
Him deigned not to set his feet to ground,
He chucketh when he hath a corn found,
And to him runnan then his wivès all.
Thus royal as a prince is in his hall,
Leave I this Chanticlear in his pasture,
And after with I tell his aventure.

An old col-fox full of sly iniquity,
That in the grove had wonnèd yeares three,
By high imagination forecast,
The same night throughout the hedges brast,
Into the yard where Chanticlear the fair
Was wont, and eke his wivès to repair,
And in a bed of wortès still he lay,
Till it was passed undern of the day.

Ed. Oh! there are some words there.

Aunt C. A col-fox is a dog-fox. You know a
Scottish sheep-dog is a collie.

Alice. The worts are vegetables, such as the poor
widow had. But what is undern of the day?

Aunt C. Three o'clock. Well—

Fair in the sand, to barthe her merrily,
Lieth Pertelot, and all her sisters lay
Against the sun, and Chanticlear, so free,
Sing merrier than the mermaid in the sea.
For Physiologus sayeth sickerly,
How that they singen well and merrily ;
And so befel that as he cast his eye,
Among the wortès, on a butterfly,
He was 'ware of this fox that lay full low.
Nothing ne list him then for to crow,
But cried, "Cok, cok," and up he start,
As man who was affrayed in his heart.
Then Chanticlear, when first he did him spy,

He would have fled, but that the Fox anon
Cried, "Gentle Sir, alas! what would ye done?
Be ye afraid of me that am your friend?
Now, certes, I were worse than any fiend
If I to you would harm or villanie.
I am not come your council to espy;
But trowely the cause of my coming
Was only for to hearken how ye sing.
Save you, I never heard man so sing
As did your father in the morwening;
Certes it was of heart all that he sung,
And for to make his noise the more strong,
He would so pain him that, with both his eyen,
He must wink so loud he would crien,
And stand upon his tip-toes therewithall,
And stretchen forth his neckè long and small.

* * * * *

Now sing then, Sire, for Saint Charity—
Let see, can ye your father counterfeit?"
Then Chanticlear his wingès 'gan to beat;
As man that could not his treason espy,
So was he ravished with his flattery.

Then Chanticlear stood high upon his toes,
Stretching his neck, and held his eyen close,
And 'gan to crowen loudè for the nonce;
And Dan Russel, the fox, start up at once,
And by the throat he seizèd Chanticlear,
And on his back toward the wood him bare!

Ed. Unhappy Chanticlear.

Alice. But that is not all.

Aunt C. By no means. The hens made an uproar which is compared to that of all the unfortunate ladies mentioned in ancient history, and this brought out the "sely widow and her daughters two, with their men, the maid Malkin, with distaff in her hand, the dogs, Col, Talbot, and Gerland, and even the hogs and cow and calf, making more noise than Jack Straw and all his company." The cock upon the fox's back heard them, and observed that if he were in the place of the fox, with such a prey, in spite of all these pursuers,

"I will him eat in faith, and that anon."

The Fox answered, "In faith it shall be done."

And as he spake the word, all suddenly

The cock flew from his mouth deliverly,

And high upon a tree he flew anon!

CHAUCER.

Ed. Ha! ha! Chanticlear had learnt his game, and made him open his mouth.

Aunt C. Yes; and though the Fox assured him that he had been carried out with no wicked intent, Chanticlear had grown too wise to be beguiled again.

Alice. Who is Phisiologus?

Aunt C. A general name for physiologists, or men learned in natural history, who seem to have answered for it that mermaids sing sweetly.

Ed. Why is the Fox called Dan Russel?

Aunt C. Russel, from his colour *rousse*; Dan, like the Spanish Don, short for *Dominus*, Lord.

Grace. How droll to think of those old knights and people in armour caring for stories of cocks and hens.

Alice. And it is exactly the same notion as in the old fable of the Fox and the Crow. Do let us have that next, Aunt.

THE FOX AND THE CROW.

The Fox and the Crow,
In prose, I well know,
Many good little girls can rehearse;
Perhaps it will tell
Pretty nearly as well
If we try the same fable in verse.

In a dairy a Crow,
Having ventured to go
Some food for her young ones to seek,
Flew up in the trees
With a fine piece of cheese,
Which she joyfully held in her beak.

A Fox, who lived by,
To the tree saw her fly,
And to share in the prize made a vow ;
For, having just dined,
He for cheese felt inclined,
So he went and sat under the bough.

She was cunning, he knew,
But so was he too,
And with flattery adopted his plan ;
For he knew if she'd speak
It must fall from her beak,
So he, bowing politely, began—

“'Tis a very fine day”
(Not a word did she say),
“The wind, I believe, ma'am, is south ;
A fine harvest for peas”—
He then looked at the cheese,
But the Crow did not open her mouth.

Sly Reynard, not tired,
Her plumage admired—
“How charming! how brilliant its hue!
The voice must be fine
Of a bird so divine—
Ah! let me just hear it, pray do?

“ Believe me, I long
To hear a sweet song”—
The silly crow foolishly tries.
She scarce gave one squall,
When the cheese she let fall,
And the Fox ran away with the prize.

ANN OR JANE TAYLOR.

Aunt C. Dear old Original Poems! My copy came down from a former generation. They have come fresh and fresh to one set of children after another, now, for seventy years—for the first edition was published in 1810. Before that, there was scarcely any poetry easy enough for children, except some of Cowper's pieces, and they were made to learn very beautiful passages which they could not understand.

Alice. We are very much obliged to whoever it was that wrote those charming old verses.

Aunt C. It was one of two sisters—Ann and Jane Taylor, who belonged to a large and happy family, the children of an engraver of prints, living at Ongar, in Essex. One of them, Ann, who lived to a great age, wrote her recollections, and a delightful picture she gives of the family habits. Some interesting book was

read aloud at meals, and then the daughters went to help their father at his work of line-engraving in a large airy room. They had time for their own pursuits too, and among them was this of writing verses for young people. Ann married a Mr. Gilbert, and spent the rest of her life at Nottingham, where she died at a great age in 1860. Jane died in 1822. You must read about them some day in Mrs. Gilbert's Memoirs, or in *The Family Pen*, where their nephew tells the full history.

Ed. There's a better story still in my Greek history book. The fox did some good there.

Aunt C. Ah! the ballad of Aristomenes in Dr. Neale's *Stories from Heathen Mythology*. Pray let us hear it, Edmund.

Ed. You must know that this fellow's people—the Messenians, weren't they?—had been beaten by the Spartans in a great battle, and all the dead men, fifty of them, had been thrown into a pit, and he among them. However, he really was not hurt a bit, only stunned.

ARISTOMENES AND THE FOX.

A health to all good comrades, now listen while I sing
A song of Aristomenes, Messene's hero king ; [distrest,
How Sparta far and wide he vexed, and Sparta's sons
Till mothers frightened with his name the infant at the breast.

To-day he was at Pylos—to Pylos went the foe, [low."
And fast and furious came the scouts with "Phaeræ is laid
To Phaeræ Lacedæmon's chiefs went hurrying as they might ;
At Eira Aristomenes is resting from the fight.

He marched to fair Amyclæ, and took the silent town ;
He marched to Stenyclarus, and won him great renown ;
How vainly then Tyrtæus sang, let that Boar's Pillar tell,
When Lacedæmon's cowards fled, and all her bravest fell.

Then out went Sparta's horse and foot, and out went Sparta's
kings
As craftily and cunningly as the wolf on the roebuck springs ;
They turned Messene's flank by night, and at the break of
day
They forced her Aristomenes to halt and stand at bay.

They have taken Aristomenes, their bravest bind him fast,
And him and all his comrades into Ceadas they cast ;
A dark and noisome pit was that, full fifty fathoms deep,
And all were dashed to pieces save their chieftain from the
steep.

Three days, three nights, expecting death, Messene's hero lay,
Till to the pit, the fourth grey morn, a fox hath found his
way.

"Oh ho," quoth Aristomenes, as he turned his head about,
"Where'er a fox can get him in, a man may get him out."

Fast hath he seized him by the tail, and followed where he
went,

As through many a rocky cranny his winding course he bent.
The kings of Sparta thought him dead, until there came a
scout—

"Aristomenes is leading Messene's thousands out!"

DR. NEALE.





EVENING VI.

ONE-SIDEDNESS.

Ed. (reads) The Elephant.

THE ELEPHANT.

It was six men of Indostan,
To learning much inclined,
Who went to see the Elephant
(Though all of them were blind),
That each by observation
Might satisfy his mind.

The *first* approached the Elephant,
And, happening to fall
Against his broad and sturdy side,
At once began to bawl—
“Bless me! it seems the Elephant
Is very like a wall!”

The *second*, feeling of the tusk,
Cried, "Ho! what have we here,
So very round and smooth and sharp?
To me 'tis mighty clear
This wonder of an Elephant
Is very like a spear!"

The *third* approached the animal,
And, happening to take
The squirming trunk within his hands,
Then boldly up and spake—
"I see," quoth he, "the Elephant
Is very like a snake!"

The *fourth* stretched out his eager hand,
And felt about the knee;
"What most this wondering beast is like,
Is mighty plain," quoth he—
"'Tis clear enough the Elephant
Is very like a tree!"

The *fifth*, who chanced to touch the ear,
Said, "E'en the blindest man
Can tell what this resembles most,
Deny the fact who can—
This marvel of an Elephant
Is very like a fan!"

The *sixth* no sooner had begun
About the beast to grope,
Than, seizing on the swinging tail
That fell within his scope—
“I see,” cried he, “the Elephant
Is very like a rope!”

And so these men of Indostan
Disputed loud and long,
Each in his own opinion
Exceeding stiff and strong ;
Though each was partly in the right,
And all were in the wrong!

JOHN GODFREY SAXE.

Now I call that fun!

Alice. Where did you get it from?

Ed. Out of a book of extracts. The name to it is
John Godfrey Saxe.

Aunt C. I believe he was an American writer; but
I know no more about him than about Merrick, the
author of a more old-fashioned fable, teaching the like
lesson.

THE CHAMELEON.

Oft has it been my lot to mark
A proud, conceited, talking spark,
Who begs you'd pay a due submission,
And acquiesce in his decision.

Two travellers, of such a cast—
As o'er Arabia's wilds they passed,
And on their way, in friendly chat,
Now talk'd of this, and then of that—
Discours'd awhile, 'mongst other matter,
Of the Chameleon's form and nature.
"A stranger animal," cries one,
"Sure never lived beneath the sun!
A lizard's body, lean and long,
A fish's head, a serpent's tongue,
Its tooth with triple claw disjointed;
And what a length of tail behind!
How slow its pace! and then its hue—
Who ever saw so fine a blue!"

"Hold there!" the other quick replies,
"'Tis green—I saw it with these eyes,
As late with open mouth it lay,
And warm'd it in the sunny ray;
Stretch'd at its ease, the beast I view'd,
And saw it eat the air for food."

"I've seen it, sir, as well as you,
And must again affirm it blue;
At leisure I the beast survey'd,
Extended in the cooling shade."

"'Tis green, 'tis green, sir, I assure ye."—
"Green!" cries the other in a fury;
"Why, sir—d'ye think I've lost my eyes?"
"Twere no great loss," the friend replies;

“For, if they always serve you thus,
You’ll find ’em but of little use!”

So high at last the contest rose,
From words they almost came to blows ;
When luckily came by a third :
To him the question they referr’d ;
And begg’d he ’d tell ’em if he knew
Whether the thing was green or blue.

“Sirs,” cries the umpire, “cease your pother ;
The creature’s neither one nor t’ other.
I caught the animal last night,
And view’d it o’er by candle-light ;
I marked it well—’twas black as jet—
You stare—but, sirs, I’ve got it yet,
And can produce it.”—“Pray, sir, do :
I’ll lay my life the thing is blue.”

“And I’ll be sworn, that when you’ve seen
The reptile, you’ll pronounce him green.”

“Well then, at once to end the doubt,”
Replies the man, “I’ll turn him out ;
And when before your eyes I’ve set him,
If you don’t find him black, I’ll eat him.”
He said ; then full before their sight
Produced the beast, and lo !—’twas white.

MERRICK.

Ed. But do Chameleons turn blue, and green, and
all manner of colours ?

Aunt C. In point of fact, I believe they only change

through different tints of olive, but the meaning is the same.

Alice. That it is absurd to be positive !

Aunt C. Rather that there are many aspects to everything, and that our being quite right does not prove everybody else to be wrong.

Alice. I see. We may only see a part, or else things may affect us quite differently from others.

Ed. One man's meat is another's poison.

Alice. Let Gracie say her fable from *Old Friends in a New Dress*, Aunt. Its moral is much the same.

THE OWL AND THE EAGLE.

An Owl from out a hollow tree
One afternoon was peeping ;
It was about half after three,
His usual time for sleeping.

'Twas summer, and the sun shone bright ;
Says he, " I can't help thinking
This is a most unpleasant sight,
I can't look up for winking.

" It spoils the beauty of the scene,
It dazzles all about it,
And certainly the world had been
Much prettier without it.

"No staring flowers would then be here,
All gaudy and perfumy,
But day would just like night appear
Quite beautiful and gloomy."

An Eagle cried, "You silly bird,
By selfish folly blinded!
Was e'er such wretched nonsense heard,
O dull and narrow-minded?"

"The sun bids millions daily rise
To pleasure, health, and duty;
While you have not the sense to prize
Its value or its beauty.

"If you, poor thoughtless thing! again
Should venture your opinion,
And dare of blessings to complain
In Nature's wide dominion,

"Make not your dulness a pretence
For wishing to destroy them,
But seek for gratitude and sense,
And power to enjoy them."

Old Friends in a New Dress.

Aunt C. Yes, the Owl has no notion of the ruin it would be to others if all the world accommodated itself to his tastes. Here is one of the famous fables by

John Gay—who was a wit in Queen Anne's time—showing in what a different point of view our performances may be taken. Southwark fair was, I should tell you, in the years shortly after 1700, a great place for tumblers, jugglers, rope-dancers, and so on.

THE TWO MONKEYS.

Two Monkeys went to Southwark fair,
No critics had a sourer air ;
They forced their way through draggled folks,
Who gaped to catch Jack Pudding's jokes,
Then took their tickets for the show,
And got, by chance, the foremost row.
To see their grave observing face
Provoked a laugh around the place.
"Brother," says Pug, and turned his head,
"The rabble's monstrously ill bred."

Now through the booth loud hisses ran,
Nor ended till the show began.
The tumbler whirls the flip-flap round,
With sommersets he shakes the ground ;
The cord beneath the dancer springs,
Aloft in air the vaulter swings,
Distorted now, now prone depends,
Now through his twisted arms ascends ;
The crowd, in wonder and delight,
With clapping hands, applaud the sight.

With smiles, quoth Pug, " If pranks like these
The giant apes of reason please,
How must they wonder at our arts—
They must adore us for our parts.
High on the twig I've seen you cling,
Play, twist, and turn in airy ring.
How can those clumsy things, like me,
Fly with a bound from tree to tree ?
But yet by this applause we find
These emulators of our kind
Discern our worth, our parts regard,
Who our mean mimicks thus reward."
" Brother," his grinning mate replies,
" In this I grant that man is wise :
While good example they pursue,
We must allow some praise is due ;
But when they strain beyond their guide,
I laugh to scorn the mimic pride ;
For how fantastic is the sight
To meet men *always* bolt upright,
Because *we sometimes* walk on two,
I hate the imitating crew !

GAY.

Alice. I see ; the Monkeys thought all the rope-dancing was a bad imitation of themselves.

Ed. And that people carried it too far when they walked upright always, because Monkeys do so sometimes. Well done, Monkeys !

Aunt C. When we inquire too closely what is thought of us, we sometimes make the same kind of startling discovery.

Alice. Please, Aunt Charlotte, let us have "The Little Fir-Tree," that you translated from the German, for I think that shows, not only how silly it is to wish for change, but also how one cannot think of all the inconveniences at once till we try.

THE LITTLE FIR-TREE.

Once on a time, in the depths of the wood,
A Fir-tree, both young and pretty, stood.
Now a Fir-tree has leaves long, sharp, and slender,
While other trees' leaves are broad and tender ;
And it put this little tree in a passion
To find that its dress was not in the fashion.
"Ah me !" it cried, "it is quite beyond bearing
That when all my comrades fine foliage are wearing,
Only needles and pins should ever be mine—
No wonder that my very name should be Pine.
Oh! would that a fairy would come in the night,
And alter my leaves to gold, shining bright."
In the morning, when woke the little tree,
Magnificent were its leaves to see.
"Hurrah !" it cried, "behold me—behold
What tree in the wood can show leaves of gold ?

King Oak himself for such glories may sigh."
Alas! late in the evening a pedlar came by ;
He gathered each one of the leaves so rare,
And the poor little tree found its branches quite bare.
Its condition would make your very heart bleed ;
"Alas!" it moaned, "this is cruel indeed.
If such covetous pedlars this way will pass,
I had rather my leaves were of glittering glass."
When the little tree awoke in the morning,
Leaves of crystal glass each bough were adorning.
"Hurrah!" cried the tree, "this is very good,
I am finer than all the trees in the wood."
But there came some rude and tempestuous weather,
Which knocked all the boughs and branches together,
Until all the brilliant foliage of glass
Lay in shattered fragments upon the grass.
"Ah!" it sighed, "I should have reflected a little
That leaves of glass are apt to be brittle.
On the morrow, I'll only wish to be seen
In the general fashion, with broad leaves of green."
It fell asleep, feeling both sad and forlorn,
But when it awoke on a sunshiny morn,
It tossed its boughs in triumph aloft,
Clad in handsome leaves, broad, smooth, and soft.
But that evening a goat, in want of a supper,
Brows'd off all the leaves both under and upper.
"What matters it then," said the poor little fellow,
"If the hue of my leaves be blue, scarlet, or yellow?"

Leaves that will not come off are all I require—
My poor old green needles would be my desire.”
So the little tree fell asleep in sorrow,
And sadly it awoke on the morrow ;
It looked at itself in the sunbeams bright,
And began to laugh with all its might ;
And the trees around were laughing too,
As the evergreen needles again they knew.
So the little tree of its folly repented,
Nor ever again was it discontented.

From the German.

Aunt C. Now we will finish the evening with a graver poem, from the *Silver Store*, by Mr. Sabine Baring Gould, showing how—since, as Alice says, we cannot take all consequences into consideration—it is better to trust all things to God's own will and wisdom.

THE OLIVE-TREE.

Said an ancient hermit, bending
Half in prayer upon his knee,
“Oil I need for midnight watching,
I desire an Olive-tree.”

Then he took a tender sapling,
Planted it before his cave,
Spread his trembling hands above it,
As his benison he gave.

But he thought, the rain it needeth,
That the root may drink and swell ;
“God, I pray Thee send Thy showers !”
So a gentle shower fell.

“Lord, I ask for beams of summer,
Cherishing this little child !”
Then the dripping clouds divided,
And the sun looked down and smiled.

“Send it frost to brace its tissues,
O my God !” the hermit cried ;
Then the plant was bright and hoary,
But at even-song it died.

Went the hermit to a brother
Sitting in his rocky cell ;
“Thou an Olive-tree possessest,
How is this, my brother—tell ?

“I have planted one, and prayed,
Now for sunshine, now for rain ;
God hath granted each petition,
Yet my Olive-tree hath slain !”

Said the other, “I entrusted
To its God my little tree ;
He who made, knew what it needed
Better than a man like me.

"Laid I on Him no condition,
Fixed not ways and means ; so I
Wonder not my Olive thriveth,
Whilst thy Olive-tree did die."

S. BARING GOULD.

Alice. Here's another way of looking at the two sides.

BLACK AND WHITE.

"A gloomy world," says Neighbour Black,
"Where clouds of dreary dun,
In masses rolled, the sky enfold,
And blot the noonday sun."
"Aye, so it is," says Neighbour White ;
"But haply you and I
Might shed a ray to cheer the way—
Come, Neighbour, let us try."

"A vale of tears," says Neighbour Black,
"A vale of weary breath,
Of soul-wrung sighs and hopeless eyes,
From birth to early death."
"Aye, so it is," says Neighbour White ;
"But haply you and I
Just there and here might dry a tear—
Come, Neighbour, let us try."

"A wilderness," says Neighbour Black,
"A desert waste and wide,
Where rank weeds choke, and ravens croak,
And noisome reptiles hide."
"Aye, so it is," says Neighbour White;
"But haply you and I
Might clear the ground our homes around—
Come, Neighbour, let us try."

FREDERICK LANGBRIDGE.





EVENING VII.

KING ROBERT'S BOWL.

Aunt C. I think I heard Edmund crying out for something spirited, and I hope I shall satisfy him with the ballad I have here.

KING ROBERT'S BOWL.

There's blude upon the banks of Urr,
Its bonny banks sae green,
An' mony a knight lies bleeding there,
O' mettle true, I ween.
An' twa, the fiercest o' them a',
Twa noble knights an' gude,
Fight han' to han' wi' visors down,
And swords fu' red wi' blude.

The swords they clash'd, and the fire it flash'd,
An' the blude ran out between,

An' out has come Mark Sprott's gudewife
To see what this may mean.
She's grasped the hair o' the English knight,
And twisted her fingers roun',
An' wi' ae lock o' that yellow hair
She's pu'd him to the groun'.

"Lie down, lie down, thou fause Southron,
Where better men hae lain,
And yield thee prisoner to this knight,
Or lie among the slain."

The English to the Scottish knight
Has owned him vanquished man,
And they hae washed their bluidy han's
In the stream that by them wan.

An' side by side they've sat them doun
In the house o' gude Mark Sprott ;
There wadna twa dear brithers there
Mair friendly been, I wot.

O then outspak the Scottish knight,
"Twa days nae food I've seen,
Or the bravest knight in a' England
Nae match for Bruce had been."

O then outspak the English knight,
"I did not think, I trow,
With the leader of the Scottish men
To answer blow for blow."

An' syne outspak Mark Sprott's gudewife,
Wi' muckle scorn spak she,
"Leader o' the Scottish men!
King is his degree.

"An' while this roof is owre your head
Ye, sir, shall hail him king,
Or in your comely English face
This scalding brose I'll fling."
Then smiling spake the gude De Bruce,
"Twere pity great, I ween,
To spoil a comely face wi' brose
Wad feed a hungry king.

"Then of thy stores draw forth, gude dame,
For this gude knight an' me,
For baith o' this thy tempting fare
Wad fain partakers be."
Then answer made Mark Sprott's gudewife,
"Brave king, that mayna be;
Shame fa' my hand 'gin it would feed
Our mortal enemy.

"Were I a man, hemp to his han's,
Thieve Castle for his hame,
Cauld bread and water for his food,
Should serve this knight o' fame."
"Fair fa' thy true Scots heart, gude dame,
Fair fa' thy loyaltie,

Now by my royal word, I swear,
Rewarded thou shalt be.

“ This bonny holm fu' fertile is,
Yon hill is fair and green,
A goodly heritage 'twould make
For kindly Scot, I ween.
Of all round which thy feet can rin,
While I thy brose do pree,
Thou, by my kingly word, I vow
Shalt be the fair ladie.

“ The bowl is deep, the brose is het,
As het as weel may be ;
King's hunger 'gainst a woman's speed !
Now kilt thy coats and flee !”
O, she has kilted up her coats,
An' bound her flying hair,
An' sic a race as she maun rin,
I trow ran woman ne'er.

She stinted not for briar-bush,
For stane, nor yet for thorn ;
But aye she wan, and aye she ran,
Wi' limbs and garments torn.
An' first she saw a wily fox
Was running roun' the hill,
Wi' fatted goose frae her ain store—
She liked the sight but ill.

“ May huntsman find ye, wily beast,
That comes at sic a time ;
But better 'twere fat goose to want
Than rood o' land to tyme.”
An' syne she saw a miller man,
Slept on the Sheeling Hill,
An' round him played the fiery flames
On rafter, roof, and kiln.

“ Now soundly sleep, thou miller man,
An' fire burn merrilie,
For an' I stop to wake an' quench,
Urr's dame I ne'er shall be.”
And when she gained the house again
She gave but ae peep in,
But that ae peep showed sight wad cheer
The heart o' living thing.

For side by side the twa knights sat,
An' smiling merrilie,
Wi' but ae spoon between them twa,
They supped right heartilie.
Four words she spak, she spak but four,
“ Fair play, my liege, fair play ;”
Ere wi' ae bound, by bank and stream,
Ance mair she was away.

Then spak the Southron to the king,
“ I like thy fare not ill,

And for the dame that made the food,
I like her better still.
Were hearts like hers within the breasts
Of half your Scottish men,
We Southrons might from this fair land
Turn bridles home again."

An' aye the sturdy dame ran on,
An' ere the brose was done,
Fu' many a mile o' bonny land
For heritage she won.
An' thus she said, "O' a' this land
I shall be called ladie,
An' Sprott of Urr in time to come
An honoured name shall be."

An' by this deed it shall be held
When passes Scottish king,
The laird of Urr gude butter brose
In lordly dish shall bring.

The king has heard her musing speech,
And ta'en her at her word ;
That race has made her Urr's ladie,
An' Mark its gallant lord.

M. E. NEIL.

Ed. Oh, that is fun !

Alice. Is it a real old ballad, Aunt ?

Aunt C. No, it is by a young lady, still alive, who wrote it for the magazine of a little essay society.

Alice. But of course it is a real tradition.

Aunt C. Yes, like that of the Hay of Luncarty, who, with his two sons and their ploughshares, kept the pass against the English army, and were rewarded with as much land as a falcon could fly over.

Grace. I don't know what brose means.

Aunt C. Oatmeal with boiling water poured on it. I suppose this was made rich with butter. It is not easy to say what can come after so capital a poem.

Alice. I marked one in the *Little Folks* for January, 1879, page 20, which is full of loyalty, though of a different kind—loyalty to one's word. It is supposed to happen soon after one of the Jacobite risings, and is called

HIDE AND SEEK IN A MANOR-HOUSE.

It happened many a year ago,
When the earth was waiting for the snow,
That a joyous company looked out
From a window wainscoted and low.
"The garden is dim and cold," they said,
"And the yew-tree nods its aged head,
As the snow-flake slowly strays about,

And the moonless sky looks stern and gray ;
But our hearts are blithe, and a game we 'll play—
Such a game as we never have played before—
Through chamber and hall and corridor.

Then off they ran in frolic and glee,
In truth 'twas a dainty sight to see ;
Four little maidens in high-heeled shoes,
And ribbons and kerchiefs of many hues ;
Three tall brothers, all bragging and bold,
And gentle Sir Christopher seven years old.

How they made the oaken floors to creak
With the hurry and skurry of hide and seek ;
How they shouted and bounded away
Through gallery long and dusty room,
Where rose leaves hid amongst the gloom,
Where mice danced up to their tripping feet,
And armour clashed at their passage fleet ;
Rattle of dagger and coat of mail,
Till the moon threw off her cloudy veil
To watch them at their play.

At first 'twas laughter and sport and fun,
But fancies strange came one by one ;
For thrice they thought, where the shadows spread,
That they saw the form of a tiny head,
And once where the moonlight broader shone,
They caught the gleam of a face unknown.

Said Lily to Roger (guests were they),
" 'Tis an odd and wildering game we play,
For eight were we, and now we are nine ;"
Said he, " 'Tis a trick of the white moonshine."
Then Dorothy too her thoughts must say,
But Launcelot laughed her fears away,
And Geoffrey vowed that the sport and race
Were wilder far for a phantom face.
To Alice, who towered right over his head,
" I too have seen," Sir Christopher said ;
" Yes, though we were eight and now we are nine,
Take courage and lay your hand in mine."
Then Muriel spoke with a touch of scorn,
" 'Tis here I have dwelt ever since I was born ;
I know each cupboard and cranny and nook,
And where to hide and where to look ;
By moonlit wall or flickering hearth,
No phantom-child may cross our path."
Then some for frolic and some for fear,
Till the moon was gone, sought far and near,
Till they met once more in the ruddy shine
Of the splintering fir and the fragrant pine ;
And they heard from the wide banquet-hall
Glad sound of voices rise and fall.
For friends long parted there were found
Who passed the toast and pledge around,
And prayed for tumult and strife to cease,
And cried, " Long live King George in peace !"

At dark, on the morrow, in joyous train
The playmates rushed through the house again;
They looked at the armour, they peered in each nook,
And curtains of 'broidery rare they shook,
Nor knew, so engrossing the quest had grown,
That a stranger had followed alone, alone.
Beside the bright hearth again they met
Save Christopher only, who lingered yet,
For far in the gloom did the maiden stand
With the shining eyes and the wee white hand.
Then a childish voice, in accents clear,
Asked, "What do you do, little maiden, here?"
Her eyes replied that she might not tell,
With a wave of her hand she said, "Farewell!"
And away she ran through the wildering place,
And he followed her steps; 'twas a fairy race,
For she taught him magic of tapestry,
And steps in the deep of earth to see.
At a low dark door she beckoned to him,
And they entered a chamber cold and dim.
A sorrowful man sat there asleep,
And his wife beside him watch did keep,
And she wrung her hands in wild despair,
At sight of the boy so young and fair.
"O child! what have you done?" she cried;
And the weeping maiden low replied,
"Away from the gloom, while my father slept,
Up winding stairs I groped and crept,

Till far in a gallery long I strayed,
And watched how a troop of children played.
In race so glad and free they came,
I could not choose but follow the game ;
One playmate lingered too behind,
But I fear no ill from one so kind.”
In wonder stood Sir Christopher there,
Till the lady pointed to the chair,
And said, “ Yon hapless fugitive,
By your grace alone may die or live,
For a price is set upon his head,
And our friends are all in prison or dead,
And the prince, our king we deem by right,
But three months since was saved by flight.
The squire, God bless him evermore,
To our urgent need hath opened his door,
And granted us here to wait in dread
While two long days and a night have sped,
For we are sorrowing outcasts all,
Who dare not walk where the sunbeams fall,
Yet still this night we hoped to flee
To a safer land beyond the sea.”
He knew that his father, brave in strife,
For the Stewart prince had given his life ;
But as he stood, no questioning
Perplexed his mind of rightful king.
The ready childish tears must rise
As he looked at her with his loyal eyes,

And he only said, "This night I'll pray
That you may softly flee away ;
And I will pray that the snow may fall
And hide your parting steps from all."
And then he bade them all good night,
And groped his way in the warmth and light.
In sleep his eyelids scarcely fell—
He feared in his dreams the tale to tell ;
But something said, when the night had past,
Those sorrowful ones were safe at last,
And full four hours o'er meadow and park
The kind soft snow had lain in the dark.
They talked in the manor-house many a year
Of their moonlit sport and their foolish fear ;
But the secret wrung from a game of play
Sir Christopher kept to his dying day.

H. P.





EVENING VIII.

THE FIRESIDE.

Aunt C. Here is a coloured picture for to-night, and Gracie has her contribution ready, from an old friend, Cowper's translation from Vincent Bourne.

THE CRICKET.

Little inmate, full of mirth,
Chirping on my kitchen hearth,
Wheresoe'er be thine abode,
Always harbinger of good ;
Pay me for thy snug retreat
With a song more soft and sweet,
In return thou shalt receive
Such a strain as I can give.

Thus thy praise shall be exprest,
Inoffensive, welcome guest!
While the rat is on the scout,
And the mouse with curious snout,



THE CRICKET.



With what vermin else infest
Every dish and spoil the best ;
Frisking thus before the fire,
Thou hast all thy heart's desire.

Though in voice and shape they be
Formed as if akin to thee,
Thou surpassest, happier far,
Happiest grasshoppers that are ;
Theirs is but a summer's song,
Thine endures the winter long,
Unimpaired and shrill and clear,
Melody throughout the year.

COWPER.

Aunt C. The poetical side of the Cricket, Mr.
Cowper.

Ed. What do you think of his comrade ?

THE COCKROACH.

A Cockroach crawled o'er a baker's shelf,
Waving his horns and looking for pelf ;
The baker on his broad board below
Was kneading and rolling about his dough.

The board received such terrible thumps
As the baker's rolling-pin struck the lumps ;
The shelf was shaken, the Cockroach fell,
And where, that baker he could not tell.

Down in the oven, deep in the dough,
Stern fate would have that Cockroach go ;
Dead and buried, his fate unknown,
Perished the Cockroach all alone.

A napkin lay where a feast was spread,
In its midst a bit of dainty bread ;
A lovely lady with hands most fair,
Unravelling the napkin lying there.

Many a beggar might live on the steams
That danced in the hall on the waxlight beams ;
But he must have a most delicate smell
Who by its strange odour that dish could tell.

A dreadful shriek rends the steam and air
That clustered around that lady fair ;
The guests all about the table rise,
And look towards her with dread surprise.

"Now sit, my good lords, I pray," quoth she,
"And kindly I beg don't question me."
And glad were they when the fright was o'er
To turn to the sumptuous feast once more.

In vain did the lady strive to eat
Delicate morsels of richest meat ;
A dreadful sight rends her constant view—
She had bitten the hateful Cockroach through !

Alice and Grace. Oh, you horrid boy! Where did you get that?

Ed. I opened this old magazine—the *Family Friend* is its name—and I knew you would be delighted!

Aunt C. You left out a great deal, for it goes on to preach vegetarianism—that is, eating no animal food.

Alice. We have had plenty, I am sure.

Grace. Aunt Charlotte, make haste and read us something nice instead.

Aunt C. Here are Adelaide Proctor's *Pictures in the Fire*. She was a gentle, pensive lady, the daughter of a poet of some note in his day. She died when she had scarcely reached middle age, leaving behind her a number of thoughtful verses, most of which are too grave and sad for these evenings of ours, but I am glad to give you one specimen.

PICTURES IN THE FIRE.

What is it you ask me, darling?
All my stories, child, you know;
I have no strange dreams to tell you,
Pictures I have none to show.

Tell you glorious scenes of travel ?
Nay, my child, that cannot be ;
I have seen no foreign country,
Marvels none on land or sea.

Yet strange sights, in truth, I witness,
And I gaze until I tire ;
Wondrous pictures, changing ever,
As I look into the fire.

There, last night, I saw a cavern,
Black as pitch ; within it lay
Coiled in many folds a dragon,
Glaring as if turned to bay.

And a knight in dismal armour,
On a wingèd eagle came
To do battle with this dragon,
And his crest was all of flame.

As I gazed, the dragon faded,
And, instead, sat Pluto crowned,
By a lake of burning fire
Spirits dark were crouching round.

That was gone, and lo ! before me
A cathedral vast and grim ;
I could almost hear the organ
Peal along the arches dim.

As I watched the wreathèd pillars,
Groves of stately palms arose,
And a group of swarthy Indians
Stealing on some sleeping foes.

Stay, a cataract, glancing brightly,
Dashed and sparkled ; and beside,
Lay a broken marble monster,
Mouth and eyes were staring wide.

Then I saw a maiden wreathing
Starry flowers in garlands sweet ;
Did she see the fiery serpent
That was wrappèd about her feet ?

That fell crashing all and vanished,
And I saw two armies close—
I could almost hear the clarions,
And the shouting of the foes.

They were gone ; and lo ! bright angels,
On a barren mountain wild,
Raised appealing arms to Heaven,
Bearing up a little child.

And I gazed and gazed, and slowly
Gathered in my eyes sad tears,
And the fiery pictures bore me
Back through distant dreams of years.

Once again I tasted sorrow,
With past joy was once more gay,
Till the shade had gathered round me,
And the fire had died away.

A. A. PROCTOR.

Alice. Yes, I like that very much. One may see all those things, if one looks with the kind of eyes that see.

Ed. What special eyes are those, pray ?

Aunt C. The eyes of fancy, critical sir, which we put on every evening over our poems.

Alice. Oh! I see you have Longfellow's dear "Children's Hour" for us, Aunt. I am so glad.

THE CHILDREN'S HOUR.

Between the dark and the daylight,
When the night is beginning to lower,
Comes a pause in the day's occupation
That is known as the children's hour.

I hear, in the chamber above me,
The patter of little feet,
The sound of a door that is opened,
And voices soft and sweet.

From my study I see in the lamplight,
Descending the broad hall-stair,
Grave Alice, and laughing Allegra,
And Edith with golden hair.

A whisper and then a silence,
Yet I know by their merry eyes
They are plotting and planning together
To take me by surprise.

A sudden rush from the stair-way,
A sudden raid from the hall,
By those doors left unguarded
They enter my castle wall.

They climb up into my turret
On the arms and back of my chair ;
If I try to escape, they surround me,
They seem to be everywhere.

They almost devour me with kisses,
Their arms about me entwine ;
And I think of the Bishop of Bingen
In his mouse-tower on the Rhine.

Do you think, O blue-eyed banditti,
Because you have scaled the wall,
Such an old moustache as I am
Is not a match for you all ?

I have you fast in my fortress,
And will not let you depart,
But put you down in the dungeons
In the round tower of my heart.

And there will I keep you for ever—
Yes, for ever and a day—
Till the walls shall crumble to ruin,
And moulder in dust away.

LONGFELLOW.

Grace. Who was the Bishop of Bingen ?

Ed. Bishop Hatto. Aunt Charlotte, let us have his ballad.

Aunt C. No, no; it is much too horrid and frightful for small ears.

Ed. He kept up all the corn, and would let no one have it—

Alice. Hush! Edmund—

Ed. And so the rats and mice—

Alice. Now, Edmund!

Ed. Swam across the Rhine to his castle on an island, and—

Grace. Oh, what—

Ed. (in spite of hushes) Gobbled him up, body and bones and all.

Grace. But is it true? Do rats and mice ever eat people?

Aunt C. Never fear, Gracie; the wise say the whole story rose out of the name of Mouse Tower, a term by which the old castles of robber-nobles in Germany used to be called.

Ed. Aunt Charlotte, you talk of the eyes of fancy, and then spoil the story.

Alice. The question is, whether it be a pretty fancy, which it is well to keep.

Aunt C. We will end the evening with a gentle little sad poem of William Blake, the engraver, of whom I will tell you more by-and-by. It is supposed to be a conversation between a boy and his father.

THE LAND OF DREAMS.

“Awake, awake, my little boy,
Thou wast thy mother’s only joy;
Why dost thou weep in thy gentle sleep?—
Awake, thy Father does thee keep.”

“Oh, what land is the Land of Dreams,
What are its mountains and what its streams?
O father! I saw my mother there,
Among the lilies by waters fair.

" Among the lambs clothèd in white,
She walked with her Thomas in sweet delight ;
I wept for joy, like a dove I mourn—
Oh, when shall I again return ?"

" Dear child, I also by pleasant streams
Have wandered all night in the Land of Dreams ;
But though calm and warm the waters wide,
I could not get to the other side."

" Father ! O father ! what do we here
In this land of unbelief and fear ?
The Land of Dreams is better far
Above the light of the morning star."

BLAKE.





EVENING IX.

STEAM.

Alice. Aunt Charlotte has given us Steam for this evening's subject. I cannot fancy anything more hopeless.

Ed. It's the most sensible thing we have had yet.

Alice. Then you are bound to find something about it.

Ed. I! Oh, I don't deal in your verses and trash.

Aunt C. I am bold enough to hope to satisfy both of you formidable people—to find something that Edmund will not call trash, and convince Alice that poetry consists in the way you look at a thing.

Alice. Vapours on mountain-tops may be poetical, but hardly a steam-engine.

Aunt C. Let us ask our old friend, Ann Taylor.

After she became Mrs. Gilbert, and lived at Nottingham in the midst of manufactures, she wrote

THE SONG OF THE TEA-KETTLE.

Since first began my ominous song,
Slowly have moved the ages along ;
There I hung or there I stood,
Giving what sign my nature could,
Content, till man the hint should catch
To purr to the lift of the cottage latch.

Fraught with the weal of kingdoms vast,
I sighed as the simpleton man went past ;
Vainly I gave significant proof
By thrusting high my prisoning roof ;
My lips uncouth their witness bore,
But, inarticulate, could no more.

At length the day in its glory rose,
And off in its speed the engine goes ;
Ponderous and blind, of rudest force,
A pin and a whisper guide its course ;
Around its sinews of iron play
The viewless hands of a mental sway ;
And triumphs the soul in its mighty dower
To *Knowledge*, the plighted boon to *Power*.

Hark ! to the din of a thousand wheels
At play with the fleeces of England's fields ;

From its bed upraised, 'tis the flood that roars
To fill little cisterns at cottage doors ;
'Tis the many-fingered, intricate, bright machine,
With its flowery film of lace, I ween.

And see how it rushes with silvery wrath
The span of yon archèd cave beneath ;
Stupendous, vital, fiery, bright,
Trailing its length in a country's sight ;
Riven are the rocks, the hills give way,
The dim valley rises to unfelt day.

In queenly pomp on the surf it treads,
Scarce waking the sea-things from their beds ;
A few bright suns, and at rest it lies,
Glittering to transatlantic skies.
Simpleton man, why, who would have thought
To this the Song of a Tea-kettle brought.

MRS. GILBERT.

Grace. Does the Tea-kettle say all that ?

Aunt C. And much more, but I left out the more difficult part.

Ed. I see. The steam tried to show its powers by lifting up the lid of the Tea-kettle, and pouring out of the lips of the spout. Then comes the great engine, managed by a pin and a whisper ! Oh yes——

Alice. Yes, knowledge is power there.

Ed. Then the spinning and weaving, the bringing water, the locomotives and steamers! It is capital, Aunt. The Tea-kettle's song may well rejoice and glorify itself.

Aunt C. Here is another poem on the powers of steam, but it is not so good as the Tea-kettle, for it does not keep so exactly to fact, though you see it makes Steam into

A MODERN GIANT.

'Twas long ago, in the good old days—
In the good old days of yore,
When man untamed would roam the earth
As his sires had done before ;
When everyone with his own strong arm
Performed his needful toil,
And each with his own rude implements
Turned up the loamy soil ;
When the sciences were all yet to come,
And no art but war was known ;
When the powerful man trod down the loam,
And night ruled the world alone.

A giant lived in those good old days,
A giant of power untold—
So strong that he could have mov'd the world
If he only got right hold.

And far he lived from the haunts of men,
On the lonely mountain heights,
And little reck'd he of mortal man,
Of his struggles, and wars, and fights.
Long had he lived on those mountains lone,
All hidden from mortal ken,
And long he knew he should still remain,
Should they rest as he saw them then.

But years rolled on, and men wiser grew,
And they learned the arts of peace,
And knowledge, when once 'tis roused in the heart,
Must the thirst for knowledge increase.
They plied the earth for its mines of wealth,
For its veins of glittering ore ;
They explored the fathomless depths of the sea
In quest of the pearly store ;
They searched all the spots of their island home,
The mountains, the woods, and glens ;
They hunted the fierce wild beasts of the wood
E'en into their very dens.

A man one day in his wanderings came
To the mountain bleak and bare,
And he climbed to the giant's lone abode,
And he reached it and entered there ;
And he saw his huge form stretched out in sleep
On the floor of his rocky cave,
And he marked his heaving breast, and heard
The thunder his snoring gave ;

And he marked with wondering eyes his strange
And his strong and sinewy frame,
Then he turned and descended the mountain side,
And returned from whence he came.

And mighty thoughts in his brain revolved,
And mighty schemes he plann'd,
And he told them all to his fellow-men,
And he told them to all the land.
They forged them bands of iron and brass,
And fetters to chain his might,
And they took their way to the giant's home
On the lonely mountain height.
And they saw his huge form stretched out in sleep
On the floor of his lofty cave,
And marked his mighty breast how it heaved,
And the thunder his snoring gave.

And they bound him fast with chains of brass
As oppressed with sleep he lay,
And they cared not a whit for his mighty strength,
But made him their will obey.
And they bound him down with iron bands,
Like a slave they bound him down,
And forced him to work for them night and day,
And to win for them renown.
He worked in their mines deep under the earth,
Far hid from the light of day ;
And he rowed their ships o'er the ocean wide
As they dashed through the foamy spray.

He worked their mills, and their weavers' looms,
And their manufactures all ;
And before the power of his wondrous might
The fiercest strength must fall.
He carried them over sea and land
With the speed of the wintry wind,
And even the swiftest of Nature's speed,
He left it far behind.
Now all the world knows well the sound
Of the engine's snort and scream ;
And man, puny man, where wouldst thou have been
Without the aid of Steam ?

A. J. W.

Ed. But they had him on their own hearths long
before they put him in bonds.

Aunt C. True ; that is the weak point of the verses,
which I found in the *Magazine for the Young*. Here
is another—"The Song of the Engine-drivers."

THE SONG OF THE ENGINE-DRIVERS.

Water and flame to agreement came,
And a solemn league they swore,
To work such speed and to do such deed
As never was done before ;
To be friends to Time, to be foes to space,
To mingle their rival powers,
And at giants' pace, in a giant's race,
To be slaves to us and ours.

The sign is made, the word is said,
And the boiler coughs and hoots,
And, taught to go at the first right slow,
The long line onward shoots.
Till with valves that rattle quick,
And with steam that volumes thick,
And with *buffers* each from other far apart,
While the sleepers quake below,
And the wheels like lightning go,
Through the tunnel and the bridge we dart.

Through the chalk-built hill, by the busy mill,
By the stream where the waters splash,
Through the Kentish hops, through the Sussex copse,
O'er the breezy heath we dash ;
Where the small birds sing, where the sweet bells ring,
Where the earliest flowers are plucked,
We thunder away the live-long day
O'er embankment and viaduct.

There 's a hill before, yet we give not o'er,
But with double speed we fly,
And we make no pause at the tunnel's jaws,
Though we enter with doleful cry ;
Both the darkness and rocks our engine mocks,
And mountains are tamed by skill ;
Though they fought right hard for their own at Box,
And harder at Clayton Hill.

The hour will be past if we pause at last,
So faster, if faster may be ;
The clouds that fly through the summer sky
Are not so swift as we ;
There's a whirr in the trees when we pass like the breeze,
As if all we had done were too slow ;
And for breath we must gasp as the tender rails we clasp,
As a mile in a minute we go.

We may hear the bell of our coming tell
A long, long league away ;
And the pleasant field to the town must yield
Ere we end our toil to-day ;
For life and for limb one thought to Him
Of thankfulness we give,
Who guides us aright in our whirlwind flight,
When we could not go wrong and live !

J. M. NEALE.

Ed. Oh, famous! It is like riding on an engine.
Did an engineer write it ?

Aunt C. By no means. It was written by Dr.
John Mason Neale, a clergyman, who died about ten
years ago. He was warden of Sackville College,
a little almshouse, and spent most of his time in study
and good works, and writing and translating many

beautiful hymns, and also many stories for children. Perhaps you have read some in his *Triumphs of the Cross*, and you have most likely sung his hymns—"The Strain Upraise," for instance, with many more. He wrote many songs of the trades, and here we have the Engineer's.





EVENING X.

ROBIN REDBREAST.

Grace. Aunt Charlotte said I might choose what our verses should be about to-night, so I have chosen a Robin, because I found some such pretty verses.

ROBIN REDBREAST.

Good-bye, good-bye to summer,
For summer's nearly done,
The garden smiling faintly,
Cool breezes in the sun;
Our thrushes now are silent,
Our swallows flown away,
But Robin's here in coat of brown
And scarlet breastknot gay.
Robin, Robin Redbreast,
O Robin dear,
Robin sings so sweetly
In the falling of the year.

Bright yellow, red, and orange,
The leaves come down in hosts,
The trees are Indian princes,
But soon they turn to ghosts.
The leathery pears and apples
Hang russet on the bough,
It's autumn, autumn, autumn late,
'Twill soon be winter now.
Robin, Robin Redbreast,
O Robin dear,
And what will this poor Robin do,
For pinching days are near.

The fireside for the cricket,
The wheatstack for the mouse,
When trembling night-winds whistle
And moan around the house.
The frosty way's like iron,
The branches plumed with snow;
Alas! in winter dead and dark
Where can poor Robin go?
Robin, Robin Redbreast,
O Robin dear,
And a crumb of bread for Robin,
His little heart to cheer.

W. ALLINGHAM.

Aunt C. Thank you, my dear, for Mr. Allingham's very pretty song.

Alice. And Robin, with his winter song and cheery ways, has done much to cheer other people. Here are some verses of Miss M. E. Shipley's that you will like. A poor woman is supposed to tell the story.

ROBIN'S CRUMBS.

One dark winter morning
I sat and sighed alone
In my little chamber,
My faith as cold as stone ;
On my table near me
Scanty food was spread,
And I questioned sadly
For to-morrow's bread.

On the garden pathway
Snow lay thick and white,
For a heavy mantle
Had fallen in the night.
In my aching bosom
Deeper chill was there,
For my trust in Heaven
Was shrouded in despair.

No kind friend was near me,
None to help me on,
And I knew my money,
Yes, the last was gone ;

Not a coin was left me
In my empty purse,
No one would employ me,
Things could not be worse.

And I nursed my sorrow,
Thanklessly and drear,
Not a thought of comfort
Came my soul to cheer ;
Till I rose up startled
From a dream of ill,
As a soft low cadence
Broke the silence still.

For a little Robin,
On the garden-wall,
Sang his Master's praises,
Thanking God for all.
Yet the gentle songster
Had no home nor bed,
And the flowers he lovèd,
Like my own, were dead.

Robin had not tasted
Any morning meal,
All the chilly weather
He, as I, could feel.

Yet the trembling feathers
Of his russet coat
Hindered not the music
Springing from his throat.

Oh! it was so joyous!
Not a thought of fear
Seemed to mar the gladness
Of his chorale clear;
And the brilliant glances
Of his bright dark eyes
Seemed to mock the dimness
Of the winter skies.

All around he cast them,
On the ground beneath,
On the roof above him,
With its snowy wreath.
Then to my own casement,
Where I took my stand,
With a breakfast for him
Held within my hand.

Then I oped the window,
And away he flew,
While upon the pathway
All the crumbs I threw.

Timid little fellow !
Would he spurn the good
Thus in kindness sent him,
Plenteousness of food ?

Back again he fluttered,
Hopped, and peeped around,
Then he grew emboldened,
Flew upon the ground ;
Ate his breakfast gladly,
Sang his thanks once more,
Perched upon the trellis
Of my cottage door.

Trustful little Robin,
My cold heart grew warm,
For I knew our Father,
Who had sent the storm,
Sent too what was needed
For the life He made,
And before my window
On my knees I prayed—

Prayed for strength and patience,
Hope and faith sublime—
Prayed that Robin's thankfulness
In spirit might be mine ;

Prayed I might no longer
Doubt His watchful love
Who His meanest creatures
Watcheth from above.

Then I rose refreshèd ;
Gently at the door
Footsteps were approaching,
And I crossed the floor.
Standing at the threshold
Was a stranger form,
And kind, loving accents
Gave me greeting warm.

Never had I seen her
That dark day before,
Angel's more than woman's
Was the smile she wore ;
Oh, the light it kindled
In my darkened breast !
All at once my longings
Were with plenty blest.

Work and help and comfort,
Those she gave to me,
With dear words of blessing
Bade my sorrow flee ;

When at length she left me,
Swift my needle flew,
No more sad and dreary,
I had work to do.

And outside the window
Robin's blithesome voice
Bade me in God's mercy
Evermore rejoice.
He had found his breakfast,
I my needs supplied,
Both by us unlooked for
In this winter-tide.

Christian, then right gladly
Loud thanksgiving raise,
Dreading not to-morrow's wants,
Contented with to-day's ;
For most unexpected
Help in trouble comes
From our Father's window,
Like poor Robin's crumbs.

M. E. SHIPLEY.

Aunt C. The lesson of the birds that grieve not about the morrow is very prettily and simply told. And here I have another legend from the *Silver Store*, with the bird in a fresh light.

ROBIN REDBREAST'S CORN.

In a quiet sheltered valley,
Underneath a furzy hill,
Where their light from rocky ledges
Silver threads of water spill.

Patient Benedictine brothers
Thatch their cot with russet fern,
Singing *Ave Maris Stella*
To the flowing of the burn.

They have come from southern regions
To the wastes of Finisterre,
Without scrip, or purse, or weapon,
Trusting in the might of prayer.

In a pleasant sunward hollow
Of the barren purple fell,
They have built a rustic chapel,
Hung a little tinkling bell.

There, alone in Christ believing,
Wait the brothers God's own time
When shall spread the Gospel tidings,
Like a flood, from clime to clime.

Yonder is a Druid circle,
Where priests dance upon the dew,
Singing of Ceridwen's kettle,
And the ploughing of old Hu.

Now the brothers cut the heather,
Stack the turf for winter fire,
Wall about with lichened moorstones
The enclosure of their byre.

Then next they drain a weedy marsh,
Praying in the midst of toil,
And with plough of rude construction
Draw light furrows through the soil.

They seek wheat. It was forgotten,
All their labour seems in vain,
The barbarian Kelts about them
Little know of golden grain.

Said the Prior, "God will help us
In the hour of bitter loss ;"
Then one spied a Robin Redbreast
Sitting on a wayside cross.

Doubtless came the bird in answer
To the words the Prior did speak,
For a heavy wheatear dangled
From the Robin's polished beak.

Then the brothers, as he dropped it,
Picked it up and careful sowed,
And abundantly, in autumn,
Reaped the harvest where they strowed.

Do you mark the waving glory
On the Breton hill-slopes flung?
All that wealth from Robin Redbreast's
Little ear of wheat has sprung.

Do you mark the many churches
Scattered o'er that pleasant land?
All results are of the preaching
Of that Benedictine band.

Therefore, Christian, small beginnings
Pass not by with lip of scorn;
God may prosper them as prospered
Robin Redbreast's ear of corn.

SABINE BARING GOULD.

Grace. Oh, good little Robin! But who was it, and when was it, and where was it, Aunt Charlotte?

Aunt C. Who, when, and where? Well, to begin with *who*. They were monks, in early times, who came to settle in the wild, empty places, and teach the natives to believe, work, and pray. The *when* was somewhere about the seventh century. The *where* was Finisterre, the Land's End of Brittany, a wild, rugged spot, where the inhabitants had remained heathen much later than in other parts of Gaul.

Grace. What were they singing ?

Aunt C. Ave Maris Stella—Hail Mary, Star of the Sea—though in point of fact I believe that was not sung in France till much later.

Ed. But there was a Druid circle. I thought Druids were British.

Aunt C. The so-called Druids belonged quite as much to Northern Gaul as to Britain, Edmund. Brittany is full of wonderful stones said to be connected with the Druids' worship.

Alice. And who were Ceridwen and Hu ?

Aunt C. According to those who have tried to make out from old Welsh and Breton poems what the ancient Britons believed, Hu Gadarn was the father of the Druids. The Britons had a tradition of the flood, but they said it was caused by a great beaver, who let the water in on the earth, and then kept it submerged, till Hu harnessed two gigantic oxen to the earth and drew it out. Ceridwen was his wife, and the kettle, or cauldron, contained a wonderful mixture of herbs, which were to be boiled for a year, and would then give all wisdom to whosoever touched the decoction.

Three drops flew out on the finger of a dwarf, and when he rubbed his eye with it, he saw the whole future before him! Have you any more notes to ask for, ladies and gentlemen?

Alice. The rest is all plain enough, and certainly, if Robin really did so much for Brittany, he has every right to crumbs.

Ed. After all, the Robin that people make all these fine verses about is not a bit like the bold, spiteful, saucy, fighting bird the true Cock Robin is.

Aunt C. No more than he is Jenny Wren's mate, as more people believe than you would suppose.

Alice. They don't think he is *really*, Aunt.

Aunt C. Yes, they do. I have found many people who absolutely thought that Robin and Wren were a pair. In point of fact, the nursery rhyme about Cock Robin's funeral is said to have been begun as a kind of rhyming parable of the murder of Lord Darnley.

Alice. How curious!

Aunt C. It is not the only one which is the remnant of some such song. But we will keep to our Redbreast, and, to satisfy Edmund, end with a poem of

Wordsworth's, which does not present him in the amiable light, but pleads with him for killing a butterfly. You see he goes through all the pet names that the Robin is called by in other countries.

THE REDBREAST AND THE BUTTERFLY.

Art thou the bird whom man loves best,
The pious bird with the scarlet breast,
Our little English Robin ;
The bird that comes about our doors
When autumn winds are sobbing ?
Art thou the Peter of Norway boors,
Their Thomas in Finland,
And Russia far inland ?
The bird whom, by some name or other,
All men who know thee call their brother,
The darling of child and men ?
Could father Adam open his eyes,
And see this sight beneath the skies,
He'd wish to close them again.

If the Butterfly knew but his friend,
Hither his flight he would bend ;
And find his way to me.
Under the branches of the tree,

In and out he darts about ;
Can this be the bird, to man so good,
That, after their bewildering,
Did cover with leaves the little children
So painfully in the wood ?

What ailed thee, Robin, that thou could'st pursue
A beautiful creature
That is gentle by nature ?
Beneath the summer sky
From flower to flower let him fly ;
'Tis all that he wishes to do.
The cheerer thou of our in-door sadness,
He is the friend of our summer gladness :
What hinders, then, that ye should be
Playmates in the summer weather,
And fly about in the air together ?
His beautiful wings in crimson are dress'd,
A crimson as bright as thine own !
If thou wouldst be happy in thy nest,
O pious bird, whom man loves best,
Love him, or leave him alone !

WORDSWORTH.

Ed. Catch the Robin loving the Butterfly for anything but to eat ! What has Adam to do with it ?

Grace. O Edmund, don't you see the creatures were at peace with one another, and did not hunt each other

in the garden of Eden, and Adam would grieve to see the Bird killing the Butterfly.

Aunt C. Right, Gracie. The passage to which Wordsworth refers is in *Paradise Lost*, where, the morning after the Fall, Eve is saddened by seeing how the Eagle

Stooped from his aery tour,
Two birds of gayest plume before him drove.





EVENING XI.

BELLS.

Ed. I declare Alice has got a paper. Have you been writing verses, Ally ?

Alice. Not writing, only translating. There is a funny little poem in my German extract book, that I thought I might try to put into English, though I know I have not done it well.

Aunt C. Goethe ! You have flown high, Alice.

Alice. Who was he, Aunt Charlotte ? I have heard his name many times, but I do not know anything about him. Was he not a great poet ?

Aunt C. He was the greatest and most original poet Germany has ever had ; but I do not think he was either a great or a good man. He was born in

1749, at Weimar, and spent all his life there in writing, thinking, and talking; but all through the terrible oppression of Germany, and all her brave struggle against it, he never seemed to care for more than going on with his own pursuits undisturbed. But his great powers, and the beautiful poems and plays that he wrote, caused him to be much sought after and admired, and he was a sort of prince of German literature for many years. He lived to a great age, and did not die till 1832. These verses of his must have been written in some playful mood, to amuse a child, or to versify an old nursery threat.

Alice. I have seen a print of the boy running away, and the great bell hopping after him, which made me wish to translate these verses, but I could not be quite literal without spoiling the English verse.

Aunt C. I see, my dear; but such translations are good practice, and you have rendered this very nicely.

THE WALKING BELL.

There was a child who never would
In church be grave and steady;
Each Sunday morn, a reason good
To seek the field was ready.

His mother said, "Hark! there's the bell
Into the church to ring thee,
And if thou dost not mind it well,
It will come out and bring thee."

Then thought the child, "The bell hangs there,
In its frame fastened tightly;"
The pathway to the fields is fair,
From school he runs off lightly.

"The bell, the bell no more I hear,
Mother spoke but in laughter;"
But lo! behold, for in the rear
The bell comes swinging after.

Swing, swang it comes; oh, what a sight!
So quickly doth it follow;
He runs lest he be covered quite,
Extinguished in the hollow.

At last he turns with wiser heed,
Through meadows, fields, and bushes;
Scampering along with nimble speed,
Into the church he rushes.

And every Sun- and holi-day,
That day's disaster heeding,
The first stroke finds him on his way,
No call in person needing.

From Goethe.

Grace. Please let us have "The German Watchman's Song" next. Alice once read it to me, and I liked it very much.

THE GERMAN WATCHMAN'S SONG.

Hark, ye neighbours, and hear me tell,
Eight now sounds on the belfry bell ;
Eight souls alone from death were kept
When God the earth with the deluge swept.
Human watch from harm can't ward us ;
God will watch and God will guard us ;
He through His Eternal might
Grant us all a happy night.

Hark, ye neighbours, and hear me tell,
Nine now sounds on the belfry bell ;
Nine lepers cleansed returned not—
Be not Thy blessings, O God, forgot.
Human watch, &c.

Hark, ye neighbours, and hear me tell,
Ten now sounds on the belfry bell ;
Ten are the holy Commandments given
To man on earth by God in Heaven.
Human watch, &c.

Hark, ye neighbours, and hear me tell,
Eleven now sounds on the belfry bell ;
Eleven Apostles of holy mind
Proclaimed the Gospel to mankind.
Human watch, &c.

Hark, ye neighbours, and hear me tell,
Twelve now sounds on the belfry bell ;
Twelve disciples to JESUS came,
Who suffered reproach for the Saviour's name.
Human watch, &c.

Hark, ye neighbours, and hear me tell,
One now sounds on the belfry bell ;
One God above, one Lord indeed,
Who ever protects in the hour of need.
Human watch, &c.

Hark, ye neighbours, and hear me tell,
Two now sounds on the belfry bell ;
Two paths before mankind are free—
Be sure and choose the best for thee.
Human watch, &c.

Hark, ye neighbours, and hear me tell,
Three now sounds on the belfry bell ;
Threefold praise from the Heavenly host
To Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.
Human watch, &c.

Hark, ye neighbours, and hear me tell,
Four now sounds from the belfry bell ;
Four seasons crown the farmer's care,
Thy heart with equal zeal prepare.

Up now, awake, nor slumber on,
The morn approaches, night is gone ;
Thank God, who, by His love and might,
Has watched us faithfully all night ;
Rise to the duties of the day,
And serve Him faithfully alway.

From the German.

Aunt C. Now we will come back to some English bells. This ballad is by Robert Southey.

Alice. One of the Lake poets.

Aunt C. Yes ; Coleridge's brother-in-law. He was not so original a poet, but he was most industrious as a scholar and writer, toiling for hours every day to maintain his family by his writings—histories, reviews, and poems—all full of curious research, and of fine, high-minded religious thought, though sometimes rather tedious. He died as recently as 1843, after an old age of weakened faculties, tenderly watched over by his second wife. The ballad I am going to read you is the real history of how John Brunskill gave the

peal of four bells to the fine old Westmoreland church of Brough, about the year 1500 or 1506. I should tell you that the word *crune*, here used, is the north-country word for the bellowing of cattle.

BROUGH BELLS.

One day in Helbeck I had strolled
Among the Crossfell hills,
And, resting in its rocky grove,
Sat listening to the rills ;

The while in their sweet undersong,
The birds sang blithe around,
And the soft west wind awoke the wood
To an intermitting sound.

Louder or fainter, as it rose
Or died away, was borne
The harmony of merry bells
From Brough, that merry morn.

“Why are the merry bells of Brough,
My friend, so few?” said I ;
“They disappoint the expectant ear
Which they should gratify.

“One, two, three, four ; one, two, three, four ;
’Tis still one, two, three, four,
Mellow and silvery are the tones,
But I wish the bells were more !”

"What! art thou critical?" quoth he ;
" Eschew that heart's disease
That seeketh for displeasure where
The intent hath been to please.

" By these four bells there hangs a tale,
Which, being told, I guess
Will make thee hear their scanty peal
With proper thankfulness.

" Not by the Cliffords were they given,
Nor by the Tuftons' line ;
Thou hearest in that peal the crune
Of old John Brunskill's kine.

" On Stanemore's side one summer eve,
John Brunskill sate to see
His herds in yonder Borrowdale
Come winding up the lea.

" Behind them, on the lowland's verge,
In the evening light serene,
Brough's silent tower, then newly built
By Blenkinsop, was seen.

" Slowly they came in long array,
With loitering pace at will ;
At times a low from them was heard
Far off, for all was still.

“The hills returned that lonely sound
Upon the tranquil air ;
The only sound it was, which then
Awoke the echoes there.

“ ‘Thou hear’st that lordly bull of mine,
Neighbour,’ quoth Brunskill then ;
‘How loudly to the hills he crunes,
They crune to him again.

“ ‘Thinkest thou if yon whole herd at once
Their voices should combine,
Were they at Brough, that we might not
Hear plainly from this upland spot
That cruning of the kine ?’

“ ‘That were a crune, indeed,’ replied
His comrade, ‘which I ween
Might at the Spital well be heard,
And in all dales between.

“ ‘Up Mallerstang to Eden’s springs,
The eastern wind upon its wings
The mighty voice would bear ;
And Appleby would hear the sound
Methinks, when skies are fair.’

“ ‘Then shall the herd,’ John Brunskill cried,
‘From yon dumb steeple crune,
And thou and I, on this hill-side,
Will listen to their tune.

“ ‘So while the merry bells of Brough
For many a year ring on,
John Brunskill will remembered be,
When he is dead and gone ;

“ ‘As one who, in his latter years,
Contented with enough,
Gave freely what he well could spare
To buy the bells of Brough.’

“ Thus hath it proved : three hundred years
Since then have past away,
And Brunskill's is a living name
Among us to this day.”

“ More pleasure,” I replied, “ shall I
From this time forth partake,
When I remember Helbeck woods,
For old John Brunskill's sake.

“ He knew how wholesome it would be,
Among these wild wide fells,
And upland vales, to catch, at times,
The sound of Christian bells.

“ What feelings and what impulses
Their cadence might convey
To herdsman or to shepherd boy
Whiling in indolent employ
The solitary day ;

“That when his brethren were convened
To meet for social prayer,
He too, admonished by the call,
In spirit might be there.

“Or when a glad thanksgiving sound
Upon the winds of Heaven,
Was sent to speak a Nation's joy
For some great blessing given—

“For victory by sea or land,
And happy peace at length ;
Peace by his country's valour won,
And 'stablished by her strength ;

“When such exultant peals were borne
Upon the mountain air,
The sound should stir his blood, and give
An English impulse there.”

Such thoughts were in the old man's mind,
When he that eve looked down
From Stanemore's side on Borrowdale,
And on the distant town.

And had I store of wealth, methinks,
Another herd of kine,
John Brunskill, I would freely give,
That they might crune with thine.

SOUTHEY.

Alice. Begging Mr. Southey's pardon, I should be sorry to disturb the one, two, three, four that have gone on so long.

Ed. Isn't there a story of some bells at the bottom of the sea?

Aunt C. There are many stories of cities swallowed up, with their church bells supposed to ring under the water; but perhaps you are thinking of the bells of Bottreau, in Cornwall, and I have their story in verse. It is told by the Rev. Robert Stephen Hawker, an old Cornish clergyman, who lived at Morwenstow, and delighted in collecting all old Cornish traditions and curious stories, and this one is just as the people have always told the story.

THE SILENT TOWER OF BOTTREAU.

Tintadgel* bells ring o'er the tide,
The boy leans on his vessel side;
He hears that sound, and dreams of home,
Soothe the wild orphan of the foam.

* The rugged heights that line the sea-shore in the neighbourhood of Tintadgel Castle and Church are crested with towers. Among these, that of Bottreau, or, as it is now written, Boscastle, is without bells. The silence of this wild and lonely churchyard on festive or solemn occasions is not a little striking. On inquiry, I was told that the bells were once shipped for this church, but that when the vessel was within sight of the tower, the blasphemy of her captain was punished in the manner related in the poem. The bells, they told me, still lie in the bay, and announce by strange sounds the approach of a storm.—*Note in the published edition of Hawker's Poetical Works.*

“Come to thy God in time!”
Thus saith their pealing chime :
Youth, manhood, old age past,
“Come to thy God at last.”

But why are Bottreau's echoes still ?
Her tower stands proudly on the hill ;
Yet the strange chough* that home hath found,
The lamb lies sleeping on the ground.

“Come to thy God in time!”
Should be her answering chime :
“Come to thy God at last!”
Should echo on the blast.

The ship rode down with courses free,
The daughter of a distant sea ;
Her sheet was loose, her anchor stored,
The merry Bottreau bells † on board.

“Come to thy God in time!”
Rung out Tintadgel's chime :
Youth, manhood, old age past,
“Come to thy God at last!”

* This wild bird chiefly haunts the coasts of Devon and Cornwall. The common people believe that the soul of King Arthur inhabits one of these birds, and no entreaty or bribe would induce an old Tintadgel quarry-man to kill me one.—*Note in the published edition of Hawker's Poetical Works.*

† The castle mound of the former residence of the Barons of Bottreau is the sole relic of their race.—*Ibid.*

The pilot heard his native bells
Hang on the breeze in fitful swells ;
" Thank God," with reverent brow he cried,
" We make the shore with evening's tide."
" Come to thy God in time !"
It was his marriage chime :
Youth, manhood, old age past,
His bell must ring at last.

" Thank God, thou whining knave, on land,
But thank, at sea, the steersman's hand,"
The captain's voice above the gale :
" Thank the good ship and ready sail."
" Come to thy God in time !"
Sad grew the boding chime :
" Come to thy God at last !"
Boomed heavy on the blast.

Uprose that sea ! as if it heard
The mighty Master's signal word :
What thrills the captain's whitening lip ?
The death-groans of his sinking ship !
" Come to thy God in time !"
Swung deep the funeral chime ;
" Grace, mercy, kindness past,
Come to thy God at last !"

Long did the rescued pilot tell—
When grey hairs o'er his forehead fell,
While those around would hear and weep—
That fearful judgment of the deep.
“Come to thy God in time!”
He read his native chime :
Youth, manhood, old age past,
His bell rung out at last.

Still, when the storm of Bottreau's waves
Is wakening in his weedy caves,
Those bells which sullen surges hide
Peal their deep notes beneath the tide :
“Come to thy God in time!”
Thus saith the ocean chime ;
Storm, billow, whirlwind past,
“Come to thy God at last!”

R. S. HAWKER.

Aunt C. A great lesson of thankfulness. I have still another Bell poem of Mr. Hawker's for you, on the ringers of Lancell's Tower, who all rang at the accession of George III., and all were able to ring fifty years after, when he kept his jubilee. Three rang for the coronation of George IV., and two were still able to pull the ropes for William IV.

THE RINGERS OF LANCELL'S TOWER.

They meet once more! that ancient band,
With furrowed cheek and failing hand ;
One peal to-day they fain would ring,
The jubilee of England's king.

They meet once more! but where are now
The sinewy arm, the laughing brow,
The strength that hailed, in happier times,
King George the Third with lusty chimes ?

Yet proudly gaze on that lone tower,
No goodlier sight hath hall or bower ;
Meekly they strive—and closing day
Gilds with soft light their locks of grey.

Hark! proudly hark! with that true tone
They welcomed him to land and throne ;
So ere they die they fain would ring
The jubilee of England's king.

Hearts of old Cornwall, fare ye well !
Fast fade such scenes from field and dell ;
How wilt thou lack, my own dear land,
Those trusty arms, that faithful band !

Aunt C. There! Now you may look over Retsch's beautiful outline drawings to the "Song of the Bell,"

and get Alice to explain them to you. It is interesting to know that the designs were taken from a party of friends at Munich, who performed a set of tableaux vivants from Schiller's "Song of the Bell," for the benefit of some poor people who had lost their property in a fire.





EVENING XII.

FROGS AND TOADS.

TURNCOATS.

Said a little black Tadpole to another,
That happened to be his elder brother,
"Pray, what strange creature is that I hear
Croaking so loud?" "A Frog, my dear,"
Said the brother, "and there he sits." "I ne'er
Saw an uglier monster, I declare,"
Said little Taddy, wriggling his tail
In an off-hand fashion that could not fail
To show his contempt. "It is really pleasure,
And satisfaction no words can measure,
To think that we are so smooth and slim,
So handsome, so—very unlike him."
"To be sure," said his brother, bobbing and blinking—
"To be sure, I am just of your way of thinking."
The air was mild, and the sun was strong,
The Tadpoles were turned to frogs ere long.

The little one croaked, the big one croaked ;
At last said the younger, "Of course we joked
That day in the ditch, for there's no denying—
And in fact it's truth past all replying—
That, whether in mere or marsh or bog,
The handsomest creature by far is a frog."
"To be sure," said his brother, bowing and blinking—
"To be sure, I am just of your way of thinking."

WESTWOOD'S *Berries and Blossoms.*

Alice. Well done, Tadpoles and Frogs! Your self-complacency never fails. Here is the picture.

Ed. Fat old Toad. What can you have to say for him?

Aunt C. Thanks to Jane Taylor, he is going to speak for himself.

THE TOAD'S JOURNAL

In a land for antiquities greatly renowned
A traveller had dug wide and deep under ground,
A temple for ages entombed, to disclose—
When lo! he disturbed in its secret repose
A Toad, from whose journal it plainly appears
It had lodged in that mansion some thousands of years.
The roll which this reptile's long history records,
A treat to the sage antiquarian affords :
The sense by obscure hieroglyphics concealed,
Deep learning, at length, with long labour revealed.

The first thousand years, as a specimen, take ;—
The dates are omitted for brevity's sake. [one eye ;
“Crawled forth from some rubbish, and winked with
Half opened the other, but could not tell why ;
Stretched out my left leg, as it felt rather queer,
Then drew all together, and slept for a year.
Awakened, felt chilly—crept under a stone ;
Was vastly contented with living alone.
One toe became wedged in the stone like a peg ;
Could not get it away—had the cramp in my leg ;
Began half to wish for a neighbour at hand
To loosen the stone, which was fast in the sand ;
Pulled harder—then dosed, as I found 'twas no use ;—
Awoke the next summer, and lo ! it was loose.
Crawled forth from the stone when completely awake ;
Crept into a corner, and grinned at a snake.
Retreated, and found that I needed repose ;
Curled up my damp limbs, and prepared for a dose :
Fell sounder to sleep than was usual before,
And did not awake for a century or more ;
But had a sweet dream, as I rather believe :—
Methought it was light, and a fine summer's eve ;
And I in some garden deliciously fed
In the pleasant moist shade of a strawberry bed.
There fine speckled creatures claimed kindred with me,
And others that hopped, most enchanting to see.
Here long I regaled with emotion extreme ;—
Awoke—disconcerted to find it a dream ;





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Grew pensive—discovered that life is a load ;
Began to get weary of being a Toad ;
Was fretful at first, and then shed a few tears.”—
Here ends the account of the first thousand years.

MORAL.

It seems that life is all a void,
On selfish thoughts alone employed :
That length of days is not a good,
Unless their use be understood ;
While if good deeds *one* year engage,
That may be longer than an age ;
But if a year in trifles go,
Perhaps you 'd spend a thousand so.
Time cannot stay to make us wise—
We must improve it as it flies.

JANE TAYLOR.

Grace. And here is

THE TOAD'S GOOD-BYE TO THE CHILDREN.

Good-bye, little children, I 'm going away
In my snug little home all winter to stay ;
I seldom get up, I 'm tucked in my bed,
And as it grows colder I cover my head.

I sleep very quietly all winter through,
And really enjoy it, there 's nothing to do ;
The flies are all gone, so there 's nothing to eat,
And I 'm glad of this time to take a good sleep.

My bed is a nice little hole in the ground,
Where, snug as a dormouse, in winter I'm found ;
You might think that long fasting would make me grow
But no, I stay plump as when I go in. [thin,

And now, little children, good-bye one and all,
Some warm day next spring I will give you a call ;
I am quite sure to know when to get out of bed,
When I feel the warm sun shining down on my head.

Aunt C. That is American, and nameless. Frogs and Toads have made a figure in fable and fairy tale, but scarcely in poetry. Still, I have one poem for Alice, out of the *Silver Store* ; but Grace will enter into it better if I give her the explanations before instead of after. I cannot tell who Bishop Benno was, unless he was a certain Benignus, Bishop of Autun, and there is no note about him. However, he, like all clergy of his Church, had to say his portion of the Breviary every day. This consists of many of the prayers and canticles which are used in our daily service still. When the bell called Angelus rang at sunset, he began saying his office, walking beside a marsh, where the croaking of the frogs disturbed him. Well, we are asked to believe that they stopped when

he bade them be silent ; but he was saying the Benedicite, which is, as you know, the Song of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the Fire—" O all ye works of the Lord, bless ye the Lord!" This is the way the hymn rebuked him.

BISHOP BENNO AND THE FROGS.

At the closing of the day
Bishop Benno took his way,
 With his book beneath his arm,
Through the meadows for a stroll,
The disturbance of his soul
 To reduce again to calm.

Walking by a marish bank,
Where the yellow iris lank
 Shot its bluish, bending sheath,
Whilst upon the surface, light
Floated chalices of white,
 Anchored to the slime beneath.

Where about the margin grew
Clusters of celestial blue,
 And the bog-bean speckled pink,
And the mare-tails with their spines,
Stood and shook in shadowy lines,
 Wavering along the brink.

Clearly from the minster tower,
Tolling at the twilight hour,
Salutation spoke the bell.*
Then the Bishop slowly took
And unclasped his office-book
To recite his canticle.

Walking in the meadow grass,
By the water still as glass,
He could lift his voice and pray ;
Reading in his Breviary,
Repeating Benedicite
As he wended on his way.

Perched on broken bulrush shaft,
Crouched on lily's leafy raft,
Sitting in a row on logs,
Squatted on each muddy ledge
Sentinelled along the edge
Of the water, were the frogs ;

With their voices very shrill,
In a loud prolonging thrill,
Half a chirrup, half a cry ;
Every little gullet shakes,
As its clamour from it breaks,
Deafening the passer-by.

* The Angelus rings at noon and sunset.

Bishop Benno halting stood,
Looking at them in a mood
Discontented ; he could find
Saying the "Three Children's Song,"
As he paced the bank along,
No tranquillity of mind.

"O ye Frogs ! when Bishops praise
God, ye should amend your ways,
And be quiet for a while."
Thus he spake, and at the word
They were silent, naught was heard ;
He continued, with a smile—

"All ye green things on the earth,
Bless the Lord who gave you birth,
And for ever magnify ;
All ye fountains that are poured
From your sources, praise the Lord,
And for ever magnify.

"All ye seas and floods that roll,
Praise the Lord from pole to pole,
And for ever magnify ;
All ye teeming things that dwell
In the waters, praise as well,
And for ever magnify."

Sudden Benno stopped. A flame
Started to his brow, in shame,
As he did within debate—
“What! doth the Creator love
Praises from the things that move,
And from things inanimate?”

“Fie upon me! Am I sure
My intent is half as pure,
Praises as acceptable,
As the strain, though loud and harsh,
Of these dwellers in the marsh?
What am I, that I can tell?”

Turning to the swamp, he cried,
“Sitters by the water-side,
Do not ye your hymns forego.
I release you from the ban,
Praise the God, Frog and Man—
Cantate fratres Domino.”*

S. BARING GOULD.

* Sing, brethren, to the Lord.



EVENING XIII.

THE BABY.

Aunt C. As Edmund does not favour us this evening, we are to treat ourselves to a collection of verses on the Baby!

Grace. Oh! that will be delightful.

Alice. Only we must have something he will like, if he comes to-morrow.

Aunt C. Never fear; I shall have a bear-garden that he cannot fail to appreciate. Let us begin with one in Scotch, said to be by Hugh Miller. I will tell you first that he was born in 1802, in Fife, son to a sailor who was lost at sea when his son was a little child. In a book you will some day enjoy, called *My Schools and Schoolmasters*, Hugh tells of his earnest love of picking up all kinds of knowledge, especially of natural objects, while he went to the village school. When he had to

begin life for himself, he became a stone-mason, and this led him to use his eyes and thoughts, so that he made great discoveries on the structure of the rocks, and also about the fossil creatures they contained. He had a great command of language, and expressed all that he had to say so well that his writings gained attention, and he was acknowledged as one of the greatest geologists of the day. He was a newspaper editor, and wrote much that was very useful and good, for he was a thoroughly earnest religious man, and never forgot that his work should be to the glory of God. His writings are full of beautiful descriptions, and his death in 1856 was a great loss. Now we will read these pretty lines. They bear his name in an American collection, so I hope they are his.

THE BABIE.

Nae shoon to hide her tiny toes,
Nae stockings on her feet ;
Her supple ankles white as snaw,
Or early blossoms sweet.

Her simple dress of sprinkled pink,
Her double dimpled chin,
Her puckered lip and bonnie mou',
Wi' nae, nae tooth within.

Her een sae like her mother's een—
Two gentle liquid things ;
Her face sae like an angel's face—
We're glad she hasna wings.

HUGH MILLER.

Aunt C. Do you understand the Scotch, Gracie ?

Grace. All except een.

Alice. They are eyes—"gentle liquid things."
Well, Edmund need not laugh at us, since that is a
man's poem.

Aunt C. So is this. It is written by a happy young
father, who looked so boy-like, that a stranger would
not believe that his pretty verses were about his own
baby, till he opened a parcel and showed a tiny pair of
blue shoes that he had been buying for her. I think
I have heard that *she* had wings, as Hugh Miller said,
and that he did not keep her long.

BABY MAY.

Cheeks as soft as July peaches,
Lips whose velvet scarlet teaches
Poppies paleness ; round, large eyes,
Ever great with new surprise ;
Minutes filled with shadeless gladness,
Minutes just as brimmed with sadness ;

Happy smiles and wailing cries,
Crows and laughs and tearful eyes,
Lights and shadows swifter born
Than on wind-swept autumn corn ;
Ever new some tiny notion,
Making every limb all motion ;
Catching up of legs and arms,
Throwings back and small alarms,
Clutching fingers, straightening jerks,
Twining feet whose each toe works,
Kickings up and straining risings,
Mother's ever new surprisings ;
Hands all wants, and looks all wonder
At all things the heavens under ;
Tiny scorns of mild reprovings,
That have more of love than lovings ;
Mischiefs done with such a winning
Archness that we prize such sinning ;
Breakings dire of plates and glasses,
Graspings small of all that passes ;
Pullings off of all that's able
To be caught from tray or table ;
Silences, small meditations,
Deep as thoughts or cares for nations ;
Breaking into wisest speeches,
In a tongue that nothing teaches,
All the thoughts of whose possessing
Must be wooed to light by guessing ;

Slumbers, such sweet angel seemings,
That we'd ever have such dreamings,
Till from sleep we see thee breaking,
And we'd always have thee waking ;
Wealth for which we know no measure,
Pleasure high above all pleasure,
Gladness brimming over gladness,
Joy in care, delight in sadness,
Loveliness beyond completeness,
Sweetness distancing all sweetness,
Beauty all that beauty may be—
That's May Bennett—that's my Baby.

W. C. BENNETT.

Alice. Oh! it is a sweet little poem, and it makes it sweeter perhaps, though sadder, to hear that such happiness lasted so short a time.

Aunt C. You will like another father's supposed dialogue with his little one. It is Dr. George Macdonald's, some of whose fairy tales, such as "The Light Princess," you know.

WHERE DID YOU COME FROM?

"Where did you come from, Baby dear?"

"Out of the everywhere into here."

"Where did you get your eyes so blue?"

"Out of the sky as I came through."

"What makes the light in them sparkle and spin?"

"Some of the starry spikes left in."

"Where did you get that little tear?"

"I found it waiting when I got here."

"What makes your forehead so smooth and high?"

"A soft hand stroked it as I went by."

"What makes your cheek like a warm white rose?"

"I saw something better than anyone knows."

"Whence that three-cornered smile of bliss?"

"Three angels gave me at once a kiss."

"Where did you get that pearly ear?"

"God spoke, and it came out to hear."

"Where did you get these arms and hands?"

"Love made them into hooks and bands."

"Feet, whence did you come, you darling things?"

"From the same box as the angels' wings."

"How did they all come just to be you?"

"God thought of me, and so I grew."

"But how did you come to us, you dear?"

"God thought of you, and so I am here."

GEORGE MACDONALD.

Grace. Oh! that is pretty!

Aunt C. I like those two last replies very much. They have all the truth in them. And here are some

more words put into a baby's mouth by the Rev. Henry Francis Lyte, the author of the hymn, "Abide with me." It is—

THE INFANT'S ADDRESS TO DEPARTING
DAYLIGHT.

Beautiful Daylight, stay, oh stay,
Nor fly from the world and me away,
To darken the skies so blue and bright,
And take the green fields from my lonely sight.
No birds will talk to me from the tall tree,
Nor flowers appear looking and laughing to me ;
Kind voices I hear, and kind faces I view,
But I can't talk with them, little birds, as with you ;
I know not their language, their ways, and their looks,
Nor care for their candles, pens, pencils, and books.
Then, beautiful Daylight, fly not yet,
Few suns have I seen yet rise or set ;
And when each day with its pleasures is o'er,
I fear they will never come back any more.
A stranger I am in this world below,
And have much of its wonders to mark and know.
I want to see more of each fairy scene,
To trace sounds and objects, and learn what they mean ;
To gaze on the features of her on whose breast
I am fed and folded and sung to rest—
Who kisses me softly, and calls me her dear—
And all the new friends who are kind to me here.

Then stay, sweet Daylight, mine eyes to bless,
I know Night little, and love it less.

And if upon one of those clouds I could lie,
That have run to the verge of the western sky,
And there, in rosy companionship seated,
Look down on the sun from the earth retreated.
If aloft in those bright fleecy clouds I could lay me,
And call on the winds through the skies to convey me,
I'd ride round the world, the perennial attendant
On Daylight, wherever it shone most resplendent.
Over hills, over fogs I would take my glad flight,
And bathe and revel in rivers of light ;
The moon and the stars I would leave behind,
Nor stop any object on earth to mind,
Unless for her baby dear mother should cry,
Then I'd glide down to tell her how happy was I ;
I'd kiss off her tears, and wish her good day,
And again on my travels, away, away.

Sweet bird, it is vain thy suit to press,
The Daylight heeds not thy fond address ;
On glittering pinion away he flies
To meet other wishes and light other skies.
The will of his God he goes to obey,
Nor at earthly bidding will haste to stay.
A child of light, sweet bird, art thou,
Nor needst a veil for thy conscious brow ;

No deeds thy tiny hands have done
Need fear the broad eye of the flaring sun ;
And the pleasant and pure of this world of woe
Is all that thy delicate spirit can know.
The bright Sun of Righteousness never declines,
The light of the Gospel eternally shines,
Adds zest to our joys, plucks the sting from our woes,
Sends peace to our life, and joy to its close ;
Come joy or come sorrow, the same it will stay,
And shine more and more to the perfect day,
Till grace is glory, and faith is sight,
And God, as at first, 'mid His sons of light,
Receives His homage of song and love,
And thou art with Him for ever above.

REV. H. F. LYTE (*slightly abridged*).

Aunt C. And we will finish our babies with some verses of Mr. Hawker's, suggested by his having been called to baptise a little cottage baby on the day and hour of the State christening of the Prince of Wales.

THE BAPTISM OF THE PEASANT AND THE
PRINCE.

I climbed a poor and narrow stair,
The Prince's christening day—
I sought a cottage bed, for there
A loving mother lay.

With covering thin, and scanty vest,
Her babe was on her arm :
It was the strong love in her breast
That kept that infant warm.

I came, a country minister,
A servant of the Lord ;
To bless that mother's child for her
With Water and the Word.

The dim light struggling o'er the room
Scarce reached the lowly bed :
And thus 'mid woe, and want, and gloom,
The Sacrament was shed.

Then said I—for the woman smiled
As she took back her son,—
“ Be glad ! for lo ! that little child
Is 'mong God's children one.

“ Henceforth it has a name on high,
Where blessèd angels shine :
Nay, one will leave his native sky
To watch this babe of thine.

“ Be glad ! this very day they meet
In a far loftier scene,
With blessing and with vow to greet
The offspring of a queen.

“Bright faces beam in bannered halls,
Around the noble boy :
And princes teach the echoing walls
The glory of their joy.

“Yet will the self-same words be said,
Our lips have uttered now ;
And water such as here we shed
Must bless that princely brow.

“One cross the twain shall seal and sign,
An equal grace be poured ;
One Faith, one Church, one Heaven will join
The labourer and his lord.”

“Thanks be to God !” in language mild
The humble woman said,
“Who sends such kindness to my child
Here in its mother’s bed.

“And bless our Queen with health and grace,
Hers is a happy reign :
Oh ! one smile of her baby’s face
Pays her for all her pain.”

R. S. HAWKER.



EVENING XIV.

BEARS.

Grace. Here's Edmund, Aunt Charlotte. I told him you had something he would care about this time.

Edmund. Why, you had nothing but babies last time!

Alice. Yes, and every one of the poems was by a man, and some by great men. Weren't they, Aunt?

Aunt C. So great, that they can afford to delight in what is small.

Edmund. But what have you to-night? Is it anything worth hearing?

Aunt C. You shall judge. It is a story, very old indeed, from the collection made by Baron Grimm.

Grace. *German Popular Tales*; the darling old book!

Aunt C. Even so, and put into verse by a very

clever gentleman, now dead, whose wife has kindly given it to me for you.

THE BEAR AND THE GOBLIN.

Spring up, my boy, to your father's knee,
And I'll tell you a tale Annie told me ;
She learned the story from Herr von Grimm,
And he says Gammer Grithel told it him ;
So my boy shall hear how we whiled away
The dark, the dreary wet audit day.

"A health," the Monarch of Norway cried,
As the revel grew warm, one Christmas-tide ;
"A health to my brother of Denmark, tell
What pledge shall we send that we greet him well ?
Up, Huntsman, and name the present meet
To be laid at my brother of Denmark's feet."

"If a worthy present my Liege prepares,"
Quoth he, "be it one of our lordly Bears,
So may they know at his royal court
The kittens that make our children's sport."

"Well spoke my stalwart huntsman there ;
But which of my wilds will give the Bear,
To carry him deftly before the King,
Or encounter the perilous journeying ?"

" My Liege, I chanced in my toils to get
A youngling Bear, and I have him yet ;
He grew in strength as he grew in years,
And has grown to be noblest of model Bears ;
The glorious fellow—as white as snow—
He will track my steps wherever I go ;
He can sport as blithe as my children can,
And abroad he behaves like a gentleman—
Myself and he our duty know—
Let your Grace but give us the word to go."

The eve is drear, dense gloom the sun enshrouds,
The rising gusts drive fast the gathering clouds,
A peasant through the cheerless forest goads
His slow team—scarce can keep the ill-tracked road.
He starts—what met his eye ?—a strange, strange pair—
On kindly terms they seemed—a man and Bear ;
The man arrayed in huntsman's draggled suit—
Wet—way-worn—cold alike—he and the brute.

The huntsman speaks—" A pretty affair
I am likely to make of this, my Bear,
With the storm for my lullaby—sheets of snow—
And thee for my supperless bed-fellow.
Ho, peasant, spare me, if you can,
Shelter for me and my countryman."
The peasant stared, and he bit his lip.
" I never was slow in good fellowship ;

To yourself I may open my cottage-door,
But your friend stays out—I can do no more,
For I never set eyes on such beast before.”

Again and again the huntsman craved :
“ He is shaggy and rough, but he ’s well-behaved ;
Though huge he is mild, and, upon my life,
Will do nothing at all to affront your wife.”
Again and again he shook his head :
“ It may all be true that you have said,
But my dog and my cat, and my ducks and geese,
Do you think them likely to rest in peace ?
I know them better, and off they ’ll go,
I shall see them no more, be he civil or no—
So come yourself if you think it good,
But your honest companion must keep the wood.
Yet stay—a thought comes across my brain,
For I wish you well through the hurricane ;
To be sure there is shelter that I can give,
Though I hold it a sorry alternative.
My own old house—you are welcome quite
To battle for that with the Golden Sprite.
I ’ll tell thee a tale as this path we tread,
We shall pass it, it may be, a league ahead.
’Twas a cheerful home to myself and my dame,
That house—till the terrible Goblin came.
I remember the storm began to blow,
Most like the storm that is rising now ;

The lights were out, and at twelve o'clock
Our door gave way to his thundering knock ;
Then all was clatter, no peace we knew
Till the stars were dim and our game cock crew ;
And since that time, from twelve till day,
Has he knocked and trampled and rattled away.
He draws the spigot, and wastes the ale ;
He turns the pigs all among the kale ;
He breaks the eggs, and he gallops the cows ;
And unlooses the team in the clover to browse ;
The plates and dishes he sets to dance,
With jugs, mugs, crockery, pots and pans.
We saw him not, but well I know
The sledge-like force of his murderous blow ;
And he left one morning, as he withdrew,
A queer little crooked, high-heeled shoe.
My wife is mild, and we bore our guest
As long as nature would bear such pest ;
But as nature such pest not long could bear,
We settled to move and to leave him there.
I built a cabin below the hill,
He stayed behind—and he stays there still—
But the saucy imp so wished us gone,
That he worked for a night to help us on ;
And the sun's first beam revealed to view
Our waggon packed, and the horses to ;
And a shrill sharp voice on our ears there fell—
' Bye—neighbours—bye—and I wish you well ;'

But—to the house—if you still intend
The venture, you and your ugly friend,
Decide at once, for you see the house.
St. Hubert speed your night's carouse,
And for aught I know of this noble sprite,
He may not be at home to-night."

Then the huntsman raised a troubled eye,
And he scanned the forest, and scanned the sky.
"The storm that is rising might drown a duck ;
Come what may come, we will try our luck.
To my mind, nothing comes more amiss
Than to tide the storm in a night like this—
Your troublesome neighbour may think so too.
Then comes a perilous deed to do—
But my sturdy Bruin is true and tough ;
He may find your Goblin in work enough.
Had your quarrelsome friend been north, he there
Might have learned his lesson, and been aware
Of the worth of a hug from a Norway Bear.
Then toss us a faggot, and come what may,
My comrade and I will abide the fray."
So they took the faggot, and in they hied,
And they kindled a blaze at the fireside.
"The warmth is good, but, my Bear, I guess
We must go to our couches supperless,
And no great matter," the huntsman spoke,
And wrapped his limbs in his ample cloak.

Bruin rolled him up in a huge white ball,
The fire burnt out, and 'twas silence all—
Till the clock struck twelve—then a wilder din
Uprose—and in skipped the mannikin—
In his high-heeled shoes he stood three spans high,
With a hump on his back, and a single eye,
And a nose like a very ripe mulberry ;
A high-peaked cap sat a-top of his head,
His locks were yellow, his cap was red,
And behind him a fine fat kid he trailed—
No wonder the heart of the huntsman quailed ;
He trembled and shrank as he heard the sprite
Begin to mutter—" A roughish night ;
But, thanks to the blockhead I hunted away,
I've a house of my own where I'll feast and play ;
Then roast kid be my dainty cheer,
With good ale, to the crowing of Chanticleer ;"
And, lo, no sooner said than done.
The fire was raised, and the kid put on,
And he merrily broached the ale (how came
The luckless huntsman to miss that same ?)—
And he skipped and danced before the hearth,
And he tossed his cap in his boisterous mirth,
Then he cleared his voice, and he pitched his key,
And he rubbed his hands, and thus sang he—
" Oh, 'tis weary enough abroad to bide
In the shivery midnight blast ;
'Tis dreary enough alone to ride

Hungry and cold on the wintry wold,
Where the drifting snow falls fast,
But 'tis cheery enough to revel by night
In the crackling faggot's light ;
'Tis merry enough to have and to hold
The savoury roast and the nut-brown toast,
With jolly good ale and old."
Then he stayed his song, for he cast his eye
To the corner where Bruin slept cosily ;
Then softly crept to the creature's lair,
And wonders what in the world was there—
" Oh, one of the family, I suppose."
Just then the Bear routed and showed his nose,
And gave his ears a sort of drowsy shake,
Neither quite asleep, nor at all awake.
" Oh ho," quoth the Imp, " is it nothing more ?
But I never saw one so large before !
Then how—and why—and whence came he ?
Shall I hunt him out or let him be ?
He may work some ill if he sleeps here twice ;
And I 'm not afraid of the rats and mice.
I have driven the rest of the stock away,
And this shall not be the one to stay—
" Here goes !"—and he reached him the iron spit,
Returned a-tiptoe, and measured his hit,
And swung the weapon above-end down.
It fell like a bolt on the poor brute's crown.

He raised him slowly, did that Bear,
And he shook his head, and he scratched his ear,
And he opened first one eye, and then
He opened the other, and gave a grin,
Moved on, while the sprite gave a little back,
And manned himself for a rough attack.
Bruin raised his paw, and he let it fall,
And the spit was jerked across the hall ;
Then short the pause—they rush, they close,
And the horrible din of the fray arose ;
Here flew tables, and there flew chairs,
With pots, pans, kettles, and earthen wares ;
And now the elf on the neck of the bear
Has wreathed one palm in his shaggy hair,
While the other has dealt a dozen knocks,
One such might have felled the sturdy ox.
And now the Bear screws him underneath
In his deathlike grasp till he pants for breath ;
He writhes, he slips—he's away, away ;
Then up to the beam, but short his stay,
And again and again they urge the fray.
See, see, they pause, each throws an angry glance
On each—they pause—now, Bruin, now advance.
The foeman waxes faint, fast sinks his fire,
The sturdy limbs were never made to tire.
On, Bruin, on, he moves too late, too late,
The wily imp no longer tempts his fate ;

His pointed cap he snatches from his brow,
Full in poor Bruin's face directs the blow,
And, ere his foe can clear his swimming eyes,
Over the hills and far away he flies.

“ Well done, my Bruin, stout and good,
You have done your work as I knew you would ;
You have trimmed his locks, and I think your ears
After all are as smooth as another Bear's.
As our friend is gone, let us make the most
Of the supper left by the runaway host.”
Then his kid they ate, and his ale they quaffed,
And they drank his health, and merrily laughed,
Till worn and tired, down they lay ;
Their dreams were sweet, and they slept till day.
The morning came, and on they sped,
And they met the peasant some league ahead.
So blythe they journeyed, the peasant stared,
And wanted to know how the Goblin fared.
Quoth the huntsman, “ I think your matters mend ;”
And he told him the tale from end to end.
“ We thrashed the sprite, and away he ran,
And I hope you are clear of the gentleman ;
He left behind him his ale and kid,
And it was lucky for us he did ;
The traveller famine ill endures,
And shelter was all we had of yours ;
And so farewell, we journey forth,
And I think we have left you shelter's worth.”

Then they hied them on once more full fain
To reach the court of the royal Dane ;
But what their course, or what their lot,
Or whether they found the King or not ;
I hope they did, but, upon my word,
I cannot tell, for I never heard.
Methinks it is well enough that I can
Recount the fate of the countryman.
He pondered long, and he pondered deep,
And he thought that at night his watch he 'd keep,
And eye his door, and ascertain
If his foe would come to the charge again.
Three nights he watched—and not one night
Did he see a vestige of the sprite ;
He began to think that the time was come
For a safe return to his cherished home.
Next morning, as his work he plied,
He heard a voice by the forest side—
A dismal voice, a hoarse, low croak,
Untunable, the silence broke,
And he marvelled how it might befall
Who sang so ill should sing at all ;
Half-frighted, half-amazed, did he
Indulge his curiosity.
Unearthly did that strain appear,
And thus it fell upon his ear—
“ Oh, 'tis weary enough abroad to bide
In the shivery midnight blast ;
'Tis dreary enough alone to ride

Hungry and cold on the wintry wold,
Where the drifting snow falls fast."
Cowering beneath the cold, wet bank,
In woeful plight the Goblin shrank ;
No covering on his matted head,
His jacket torn to many a shred ;
His legs were scratched and smeared with blood
By brambles of the underwood.
At once the peasant's courage woke,
He rallied, and must have his joke—
" Well sung, my mannikin, I crave,
Your worship, give us t' other stave."
The imp jumped up—his visage fell.
" Peasant, thy cat—where is she ?—tell."
" My cat ?—what cat ?" " *Thy great white cat*
That keeps thy empty house?" " Oh that !
Alive and well, and full of play,
She brought five kittens yesterday."
" Five kittens ?" screamed the elf. " Yes, five—
They make the cottage quite alive—
So white—such soft and gentle paws,
Such whiskers, such well-furnished jaws,
So sportive—they're as like the mother
As any pea is like another ;
The old one likes them to be seen—
Why don't you come ? Where *have* you been ?"
" *I* come?" quoth the Goblin, with a bounce ;
" Did I not see the mother once ?

Once is enough—or once too much—
I can't stand half-a-dozen such.
Five kittens and the old one—no—
The place is doomed, so off I go.
Six monster cats about thy table,
The land is uninhabitable!"
So said, so done, and off he springs,
Muttering unutterable things.
The peasant gave his hands a clap,
Flings after him his pointed cap,
Resumed his house, and from that morn
He slept in quiet to daylight's dawn ;
But he never forgot in his revelling
" A health to old Norway's Cat and King!"

REV. FRANCIS DAWSON.

Grace. The man said what was not true.

Aunt C. That can't be helped, my dear ; the story is an old one, and came down from ancient heathen times, when truth was not esteemed the same way.

Edmund. Besides, it was only a goblin.

Alice. I suppose truth is truth, whether concerned with a goblin or not.

Aunt C. Well, as we are not likely to meet with one, we need not stop to settle whether it is lawful to deceive him, but go on to a ballad that I hope is

true. It comes from a book of essays, named *Society and Solitude*, compiled by the great American author, Mr. Emerson.

GEORGE NIDIVER.

Men have done great deeds,
And bards have sung them well ;
I of good George Nidiver
Now the tale will tell.

In Californian mountains
A hunter bold was he,
Keen his eye and sure his aim
As any you might see.

A little Indian boy
Followed him everywhere,
Eager to share the hunter's joy,
The hunter's meal to share.

And when the bird or deer
Fell by the hunter's skill,
The boy was always near
To help with right good will.

One day as, through the cleft
Between two mountains steep,
Shut in both right and left,
Their questing way they keep,

They see two grisly bears,
With hunger fierce and fell,
Rush at them unawares
Right down the narrow dell.

The boy turned round with screams,
And ran with terror wild ;
One of the pair of savage beasts
Pursued the shrieking child.

The hunter raised his gun—
He knew *one* charge was all ;
And through the boy's pursuing foe
He sent his only ball.

The other on George Nidiver
Came on with dreadful pace ;
The hunter stood unarmed,
And met him face to face.

I say *unarmed* he stood
Against those dreadful paws ;
The rifle butt or club of wood
Could stand no more than straws.

George Nidiver stood still,
And looked him in the face ;
The wild beast stopped amazed,
Then came with slackening pace.

Still firm the hunter stood,
Although his heart beat high ;
Again the creature stopped,
And gazed with wondering eye.

The hunter met his gaze,
Nor yet an inch gave way ;
The bear turned slowly round,
And slowly moved away.

What thoughts were in his mind
It would be hard to spell ;
What thoughts were in George Nidiver's
I rather guess than tell.

But sure that rifle's aim,
Swift choice of generous part,
Showed in its passing gleam
The depths of a brave heart.

Edmund. That was a real brave man ! I suppose
his looks really awed the bear.

Grace. May I read you some verses in the *Magazine
for the Young* about a bear ?

LITTLE MAY.

A STORY OF NORWAY.

Little May, our tripping fairy,
Ever laughing, ever gay,
Tenderly we love our darling
Little May.

In the great green woods around us,
Free from care, she loves to play,
Never fear can touch our treasure,
Little May.

There she watches, lightly tripping,
Hunts the moth and lizard grey,
Nimble fingers, nimbler feet has
Little May.

Quick they must be to escape her,
Quick to speed their onward way,
Or her dimpled hands will clutch them,
Little May.

Sullen Norway looked its brightest,
On one lovely summer's day,
When she wooed the early sunning,
Little May.

All around the dewy flowers
Sparkling in the sunlight lay,
And she pulled them up by handfuls,
Little May.

Now a butterfly flits by her,
Decked with eyes and colours gay,
And she longs to catch the treasure,
Little May.

Swiftly through the tangled thicket,
Heedless from her home to stray,
She pursues the painted beauty,
Little May.

Deeper, deeper in the forest,
Further from her home away ;
Oh ! when wilt thou stay thy wand'ring,
Little May ?

Soon we missed her from our cottage,
Missed her where she loved to play,
Vainly called, and vainly sought for
Little May.

Lost amid that mighty forest,
Now with none to show the way ;
Can you find the home you fled from,
Little May ?

All that morn in vain we sought her,
Sought her all the livelong day,
Late into the evening sought her,
Little May.

When the pine tree summits glittered
With the evening's golden ray,
Still we sought, though nigh despairing,
Little May.

Then at length we stopped to listen—
Why we did it, who can say—
Heard the sound of childish laughter,
Little May.

Yes, we knew her gentle accents,
Hurried then our flagging way,
Pushed aside the boughs, and saw our
Little May.

On a verdant plot reclining,
At his length a brown bear lay,
Near him stood in mirthful pleasure
Little May.

Garlands she had wreathed about him,
Placing, in her childish way,
One upon his shaggy forehead,
Little May.

With her dimpled hand she stroked him,
Pulled his ears in gentle play,
Called him Pretty Bear, and kissed him,
Little May.

Then she saw us, cried, "O father,
I'm so glad you're come; but say,
Does not the poor bear look pretty?"
Little May.

Like a shadow, all our terror,
All our sorrow fled away;
You had tamed the savage monster,
Little May.

E. N. N.



EVENING XV.

DOGS.

Alice. Now, Edmund, we are to have dogs to-night.

Edmund. More shame for you not to have had them before.

Aunt C. Strange to say, much as dogs are loved, I do not find so many interesting verses about them as some other far less favourite animals; and those that exist are chiefly melancholy—either the faithful dog or his master dying.

Edmund. I shall go, if you read anything doleful.

Aunt C. Will you listen to this fearful tragedy, then, of a dog and a rabbit? It is from *Little Folks*, for February, 1880.

THE ADVENTURES OF A SKYE-TERRIER AND
A RABBIT.

It was a fluffy rabbit ;
It had a horrid stare ;
Cluas saw it on the table,
And said, " How came *you* there ?"

Young Cluas was a petted dog,
A petted dog was he ;
And he said, " No love shall come between
My master dear and me."

His master was a boy named Ned ;
And he went to the fair,
And bought a fine morocco ball
And the fluffy rabbit there.

Then Cluas pricked his ears and growled ;
His eyes were all aflame ;
He spied a string, the which he jerked,
And down the rabbit came.

And motionless poor Bunny sat
Upon the parlour floor,
And stared at Cluas, which enraged
Young Cluas more and more.

And Cluas howled and growled and barked ;
But silent Bunny sat.
Said Cluas, " You provoke me more
Than even Spot, the cat.

“What, won't you speak? I'll make you, soon;”
He seized the piece of string,
And up and down and round the room
Went roughly scampering.

The rabbit stood upon his head
Or tail—it did not matter;
The wheels went round, and cracked and creaked,
And made a dreadful clatter.

The rabbit's head was banged about,
'Gainst fender, fire-irons, chair,
'Gainst table-legs and sideboard doors;
But what did Cluas care?

So angry with his rival, he
But wishes to destroy him;
He doesn't know why Master Ned
Should bring him to annoy him.

Then Cluas, breathless, waits awhile,
The rabbit calmly eyes him;
But not a word does Bunny say,
Which somewhat doth surprise him.

“You stupid creature, won't you speak,
You fluffy, puffy Bunny?
I'm in a rage, I'm not in play,
Though you may think me funny.”

He shook the rabbit, tossed him up,
As he had been a ball ;
And still the rabbit bore it well,
And spoke no word at all.

Then Cluas seized him by the neck,
And tore his skin and bit him ;
He scratched and worried him, and 'gainst
The floor he banged and hit him.

He shook him all to pieces, till
There scarce was left a hair
To tell that once upon a time
A rabbit had been there.

To shreds poor Bunny's skin he tore,
To splinters, stand and wheels ;
And then young Cluas rests awhile,
And hot and thirsty feels.

And panting Cluas set him down,
The small remains to view ;
Said he, " I'd do the thing again,
If I had it to do.

" There shall no fluffy rabbit come
Between me and my master ;
And if he brings another home,
There 'll be the same disaster."

His master came, his master saw,
And loud did cry and roar,
To see his broken rabbit lie
In fragments on the floor.

His grief was great, and, what is more,
I think it was sincere ;
For though it neither ran nor talked,
He held that rabbit dear.

Then Cluas' heart was touched ; he came
And licked his master's hand,
And felt no naughtier dog than he
Was living in the land.

Edmund. That is funny ; but it is only fit for Grace.

Aunt C. I fear you will say the same of

THE TWO FRIENDS.

My dog and I are faithful friends,
We read and play together ;
We tramp across the hills and fields,
When it is pleasant weather.

And when from school, with eager haste,
I come along the street,
He hurries on with bounding steps
My glad return to meet.

Then how he frisks along the road,
And jumps up to my face ;
And if I let him steal a kiss,
I 'm sure it 's no disgrace.

Ah, had he but the gift of speech
But for a single day,
How dearly should I love to hear
The funny things he 'd say.

And what he knows and thinks and feels
Is written in his eye ;
My faithful dog cannot deceive,
And never told a lie.

Come here, good fellow, while I read
What other dogs can do ;
And if I live when you have gone,
I 'll write your history too.

SUSAN JEWETT.

Alice. I like the one I have here better than either of those you have read.

Aunt C. Elizabeth Barrett? Ah yes, there is a great charm in some of her poems, as well as great power in others. She was a young happy girl with one brother, to whom she was devoted, and her acquirements were wonderful. She translated a Greek

tragedy—yes, Edmund, so that scholars esteem her translation; but I am not sure whether she did so before or after her ill health began, and before she underwent her still greater trial of the loss of her brother. For several years she was very ill, and her life was despaired of, and many of her poems were written in a sick-room. Afterwards she partially recovered, married Mr. Browning—a poet himself—

Alice. Who wrote the “Pied Piper” and “How the News was brought to Aix.”

Aunt C. Yes, and much more besides that you have yet to read. They lived at Florence, for she could not bear the English climate; and their home is described as being like a dream of happiness until she died in 1861. Now you will like to hear her address to the good doggie who had been such a comfort to her in her illness and sorrow.

TO FLUSH, MY DOG.

Loving friend, the gift of one
Who her own true faith has run
Through thy lower nature;
Be my benediction said,
With my hand upon thy head,
Gentle fellow-creature.

Like a lady's ringlets brown
Flow thy silken ears adown
 Either side demurely
Of thy silver-tinted breast,
Shining out from all the rest
 Of thy body purely.

Darkly brown thy body is,
Till the sunshine striking this
 Alchemise its dulness ;
When the sleek curls manifold
Flash all over into gold
 With a burnished fulness.

Underneath my stroking hand
Startled eyes of hazel bland
 Kindling, growing larger ;
Up thou leapest with a spring,
Full of prank, and curvetting
 Like a charger.

Leap! thy broad tail waves a light,
Leap! thy slender feet are bright,
 Canopied in fringes ;
Leap! those tasselled ears of thine
Flicker strangely, fair and fine,
 Down their golden inches.

Yet, my pretty sportive friend,
Little is 't to such an end
That I praise thy rareness ;
Other dogs may be thy peers,
Haply, in these drooping ears
And this glossy fairness.

But of *thee* shall it be said,
This dog watched beside a bed
Day and night unwearied ;
Watched within a curtained room,
Where no sunbeam broke the gloom
Round the sick and dreary.

Roses, gathered for a vase,
In that chamber died apace,
Beam and breeze resigning ;
This dog only waited on,
Knowing that when light is gone,
Love remains for shining.

Other dogs in thymy dew
Tracked the hares, and followed through
Sunny moor or meadow ;
This dog only crept and crept
Next a languid cheek that slept,
Sharing in the shadow.

Other dogs of loyal cheer
Bounded at the whistle clear,
 Up the woodside hieing ;
This dog only watched in reach
Of a faintly-uttered speech,
 Or a louder sighing.

And if one or two quick tears
Dropped upon his glossy ears,
 Or a sigh came double,
Up he sprang in eager haste,
Fawning, fondling, breathing fast,
 In a tender trouble.

And this dog was satisfied
If a pale thin hand would glide
 Down his dewlaps sloping,—
Which he pushed his nose within,
After,—platforming his chin
 On the palm left open.

This dog, if a friendly voice
Call him now to blither choice
 Than such chamber-keeping,
“Come out!” praying from the door,—
Presseth backward as before,
 Up against me leaping.

Therefore to this dog will I
Tenderly, not scornfully,
 Render praise and favour :
With my hand upon his head,
Is my benediction said,
 Therefore, and for ever.

And because he loves me so,
Better than his kind will do
 Often man or woman,
Give I back more love again
Than dogs often take of men,
 Leaning from my Human.

Blessings on thee, dog of mine,
Pretty collars make thee fine,
 Sugared milk make fat thee !
Pleasure wag on in thy tail,
Hands of gentle motion fail
 Nevermore to pat thee !

Downy pillow take thy head,
Silken coverlet bestead,
 Sunshine help thy sleeping !
No fly's buzzing wake thee up,
No man break thy purple cup
 Set for drinking deep in.

Whiskered cats aointed flee,
Sturdy stoppers keep from thee
Cologne distillations ;
Nuts lie in thy path for stones,
And thy feast-day macaroons
Turn to daily rations !

Mock I thee, in wishing weal ?—
Tears are in my eyes to feel
Thou art made so straightly,
Blessing needs must straighten too,—
Little canst thou joy or do,
Thou who lovest *greatly*.

Yet be blessèd to the height
Of all good and all delight
Pervious to thy nature ;
Only *loved* beyond that line,
With a love that answers thine,
Loving fellow-creature !

E. B. BROWNING.

Grace. What are Cologne distillations ?

Edmund. Don't you know, nothing bullies a dog
more than to make him smell *Eau de Cologne* ?

Aunt C. As Mr. Hemerdon's clever paper on dogs
says, "Great as is the sympathy between us and dogs,

it is not in smell. What we enjoy is hateful to them, and they revel in what is most loathsome to us."

Edmund. And why does she talk of "my Human"?

Aunt C. She means it for human nature. Such a poetess may take liberties.

Alice. Do you observe that whereas all our baby poems were by men, all our dog poems have been by women?

Edmund. Is this the best you can find?

Aunt C. Even Sir Walter Scott, dog-lover as he was, has no whole poem about dogs, though he often brings them in. There is the song to Ban and Buscar, the two hounds—

Hie away, hie away,
Over bank and over brae;
Where the copsewood is the greenest,
Where the fountains glisten sheenest,
Where the lady fern grows strongest,
Where the morning dew lies longest,
Where the black-cock sweetest sips it,
Where the fairy latest trips it:
Hie to haunts right seldom seen,
Lovely, lonesome, cool, and green,
Over bank and over brae,
Hie away, hie away.

SCOTT.

Edmund. That's nothing about the dog.

Aunt C. Will you have the description in the lay of the dog who met the young Buccleuch when he was lost in the wood?—

And hark! and hark! the deep-mouthed bark

Comes nigher still, and nigher :

Bursts on the path a dark blood-hound,

His tawny muzzle tracked the ground,

And his red eye shot fire.

Soon as the wildered child saw he,

He flew at him right furiouslie.

I ween you would have seen with joy

The bearing of the gallant boy,

When, worthy of his noble sire,

His wet cheek glowed 'twixt fear and ire!

He faced the blood-hound manfully,

And held his little bat on high ;

So fierce he struck, the dog, afraid,

At cautious distance hoarsely bayed,

But still in act to spring ;

When dashed an archer through the glade,

And when he saw the hound was stayed,

He drew his tough bow-string ;

But a rough voice cried, " Shoot not, hoy!

Ho! shoot not, Edward—'Tis a boy!"

SCOTT.

Edmund. That's something like !

Grace. I don't like it. Poor little boy !

Edmund. How does it go on ?

Aunt C. Here is the book. See for yourself.

Alice. The boy is all safe, Gracie ; don't be afraid. I suppose, now Edmund is absorbed in the "Lay," we might read "Beth Gelert," or the two poems on the poor dog that watched by his dead master on Helvellyn.

Aunt C. Or of Argus dying at Ulysses' feet, the only creature that recognised him ; but, like Edmund, I had rather not. I cannot bear to dwell on the grief of a dumb creature ; so we will end cheerfully with our old friend Cowper's history of his spaniel's intelligence.

THE DOG AND WATER-LILY.

The moon was shady, and soft airs
Swept Ouse's silent tide,
When, 'scaped from literary cares,
I wandered by its side.

My dog, now lost in flags and reeds,
Now starting into sight,
Pursued the swallow o'er the meads
With scarce a slower flight.

It was the time when Ouse displayed
Its lilies newly blown ;
Their beauties I intent surveyed,
And one I wished my own.

With cane extended far, I sought
To steer it close to land ;
But still the prize, though nearly caught,
Escaped my eager hand.

Beau marked my unsuccessful pains
With fixed, considerate face,
And, puzzling, set his puppy brains
To comprehend the case.

But with a chirrup clear and strong,
Dispersing all his dream,
I thence withdrew, and followed long
The windings of the stream.

My ramble ended, I returned,
Beau, trotting on before,
The floating wreath again discerned,
And, plunging, left the shore.

I saw him, with that lily cropped,
Impatient swim to meet
My quick approach, and soon he dropped
The treasure at my feet.

Charmed with the sight, The world, I cried,
Shall hear of this thy deed ;
My dog shall mortify the pride
Of man's superior breed.

But chief myself I will enjoin,
Awake at duty's call,
To show a love as prompt as thine
To Him who gives us all.

COWPER.

Aunt C. And here is another true story of a little
doggie.

VICK'S JUSTIFICATION.

A TRUE STORY.

We had risen early that summer morn,
To bid farewell to our friend with the dawn—
Our friend who was going to realms afar,
To join his troop for the distant war.

We all felt dull, our spirits sank,
We hadn't the heart to play a prank ;
We were wand'ring about, now in, now out,
When our ears were assailed by a terrible rout.

Our little dog, Vick, now loud she barks !
It must be the baker's footsteps she marks.
Why does she bark with that savage yell ?
That is a mystery none can tell ;

She always barks when she hears him nigh.
Why *will* she bark at him ? why, oh, why ?
A beating she 'll have, I greatly fear.
I *wish* she would stop ! oh dear, oh dear !

My mother was sitting beside the fire ;
As she stirred it to make the flame rise higher ;
She hears a curious noise at the door—
A scraping of something dragged over the floor.

She rises up to see what comes there ;
“ Why, it 's only Vick, and I do declare
She has dragged a stone from the ferns' own bed,
A heavy stone almost as big as her head !

“ Why does she take all this trouble, my dear,
Bringing that heavy stone in here ?
Oh, Vick, I think you 're a sad little goose,
That stone to you can be of no use—

“ Too heavy to play with, to roll about,
To cut your teeth on when we are out,
To hide 'neath our dresses' flounces wide,
And pretend there is a rat inside !”

Then my father comes in with a heavy tread,
And my heart sinks down like a lump of lead ;
He 'll beat little Vick, I know he will ;
Oh, why, when the baker comes, can't she be still !

My father looks angry, a frown on his brow ;
“ That baker deserves all the barks, I trow ;
He might have killed Vick ; I saw him just now
From the rock-work seize a stone to throw.

“ That heavy stone put there by Ned,
Had it hit her, the poor little thing had been dead ;
I never will beat my doggie again
For barking at that cruel swain.”

So my father speaks, to our delight,
And we hasten to set the matter right.
“ Then *that* is the stone she is bringing in,
To show us why she makes such a din.”

She has dragged the stone from the gate alone,
All up the path, o'er the lawn fresh mown ;
She has dragged it in at the open door,
Over the carpet, and over the floor,

And laid it down at my mother's feet,
That she her husband might entreat
Never again his dog to beat,
When she barks for a reason good and meet !

K. F.



EVENING XVI.

BUTTERFLIES.

Alice. Edmund has deserted again; but here is Katie, who is very anxious to see some of your pictures, and hear the verses about them. ;

Aunt C. I am very glad to see her, and I think we have one of the prettiest of the coloured drawings for to-night. We will begin, however, with this dialogue, from a book by a brother and sister, Charles and Mary Lamb. They were great friends of the Lake poets, but were complete Londoners themselves. Charles had a clerkship, and gave up his whole life and all plans of personal happiness to take care of his sister Mary, whose mind was from time to time affected, but who was in general a very bright and amiable person.

Alice. Was not "Lamb's Tales," from Shakspeare, written by them?

Aunt C. Yes, and a book I used to delight in, called *Mrs. Leicester's School.*

Katie. Oh, I know that book ; there are beautiful stories in it.

Aunt C. Yes ; this brother and sister wrote prose better than poetry, and I think they rather mistook their powers when they tried to produce a book like Ann and Jane Taylor's. This "Butterfly" is one of the pieces I like best in it.

THE BUTTERFLY.

Sister. Do, my dearest brother John,
Let that Butterfly alone.

Brother. What harm now do I do ?
You're always making such a noise.

Sister. O fie, John, none but naughty boys
Say such rude words as you.

Brother. Because you're always speaking sharp,
On the same thing you always harp ;
A bird one may not catch,
Nor find a nest, nor angle neither,
Nor from the peacock pluck a feather,
But you are on the watch
To moralise and lecture still.

Sister. And ever lecture, John, I will
When such sad things I hear ;

But talk not now of what is past,
The moments fly away too fast,
Though endlessly they seem to last
To that poor soul in fear.

Brother. Well, soon (I say) I'll let it loose ;
But, sister, you talk like a goose—
There's no soul in a fly.

Sister. It has a form and fibres fine,
Were tempered by the Hand Divine
That dwells beyond the sky.
Look, brother, you have hurt its wing,
And plainly by its fluttering
You see it's in distress.
Gay, painted coxcomb, spangled beau,
A Butterfly is called, you know,
That's always in full dress.
The finest gentleman of all
Insects he is, he gave a ball,
You know, the poet wrote.
Let's fancy this the very same,
And then you'll own you've been to blame
To spoil his silken coat.

Brother. Your dancing, spangled, powdered beau,
Look, through the air I've let him go,
And now we're friends again.
And sure as he is in the air,
From this time, Anne, I will take care
And try to be humane.

LAMB.

Aunt C. Very like boy and girl, I must say.

Kate. I know a little verse about the Butterfly.

Aunt C. Then, pray, let us hear it, my dear.

BUTTERFLIES.

Butterflies are pretty things,
Prettier than you or I ;
See the colours on his wings,—
Who would hurt a Butterfly ?

Softly, softly, girls and boys ;
He'll come near us by-and-by ;
Here he is, don't make a noise,—
We'll not hurt you, Butterfly.

Not to hurt a living thing
Let all little children try ;
See, again he's on the wing ;
Good-bye, pretty Butterfly !

E. FOLLEN.

Aunt C. Thank you, Katie ; they are very pretty. Here are some rather more difficult verses by Samuel Rogers, of whom you will hear a great deal when you come to read memoirs of the society of the early half of this century. He was born in 1763, and died in 1855, having for many years kept a house in London, with a most choice collection of pictures and beautiful

things, and where he gave breakfasts, at which all the cleverest and wittiest people of the day met, and said clever things. He wrote a volume of poems, the most famous of which was "Pleasures of Memory."

TO THE BUTTERFLY.

Child of the Sun! pursue thy rapturous flight,
Mingling with her thou lov'st in fields of light ;
And, where the flowers of Paradise unfold,
Quaff fragrant nectar from their cups of gold.
There shall thy wings, rich as an evening sky,
Expand and shut with silent ecstasy !
Yet wert thou once a worm, a thing that crept
On the bare earth, then wrought a tomb and slept
And such is man ; soon from his cell of clay
To burst, a seraph, in the blaze of day.

S. ROGERS.

Alice. They are pretty lines, and I like their dwelling on the Butterfly's change being like the Resurrection.

Aunt C. I wish, however, that he had not said, "Burst, a seraph, in the blaze of day." The Seraphim are amongst the highest of angels, and there is no authority for thinking we shall be changed into angels.

Grace. Please, Aunt Charlotte, read us the verses our Grandmamma wrote when she saw the Butterfly upon a baby's grave, through the church door, during the singing.

Aunt C. Sept. 15th, 1838—forty-two years ago.

While on the ear the solemn note
Of prayers and praises heavenward float,
A Butterfly, with brilliant wings,
A lesson full of meaning brings,
A sermon to the eye.

There on an infant's grave it stands,
Lo, it hath burst its shroud's dull bands;
Its vile worm's body there is left,
Of gross earth's habits now bereft,
It soars into the sky.

Thus when the grave her dead shall give,
The little form below shall live;
It shall put on a robe of white,
And, decked in garments shining bright,
To realms above shall fly.

Alice. Katie looks as if we had brought her to very grave thoughts.

Grace. Not sad, but glad, *really*; are not they?

Aunt C. So glad, that they need not hinder us from

enjoying some playful lines written by a nameless author on the funeral of the very Butterfly who gave the ball. The drawing is made to suit them.

THE BUTTERFLY'S FUNERAL

Oh ye who so lately were blithesome and gay,
At the Butterfly's banquet carousing away,
Your feasts and your revels of pleasure are fled,
For the chief of the banquet, the Butterfly's dead.

No longer the Flies and the Emmets advance
To join with their friends in the Grasshopper's dance ;
For see his fine form o'er the favourite bend,
And the Grasshopper mourn for the loss of his friend.

And hark to the funeral dirge of the Bee,
And the Beetle, who follows as solemn as he ;
And see, where so mournful the green rushes wave,
The Mole is preparing the Butterfly's grave.

The Dormouse attended, but cold and forlorn,
And the Gnat slowly winded his shrill little horn,
And the Moth, being grieved at the loss of a sister,
Bent over her body and silently kissed her.

The corpse was embalmed at the set of the sun,
And enclosed in a case which the Silk-worm had spun ;
By the help of the Hornet the coffin was laid
On a bier out of myrtle and jessamine made.





In weepers and scarves came the Butterflies all,
And six of their number supported the pall ;
And the Spider came there in his mourning so black,
But the fire of the Glow-worm soon frightened him back.

The Grub left his nutshell to join the sad throng,
And slowly led with him the Bookworm along,
Who wept his poor neighbour's unfortunate doom,
And wrote these few lines to be placed on his tomb—

EPITAPH.

At this solemn spot, where the green rushes wave,
In sadness we bend o'er the Butterfly's grave ;
'Twas here the last tribute to beauty we paid,
And we wept o'er the mound where her ashes are laid.

And here shall the daisy and violet blow,
And the lily discover her bosom of snow ;
While under this leaf, in the evenings of spring,
Still mourning his friend, shall the Grasshopper sing.

Alice. May we not finish with the real history of
the Silk-worm, from Dr. Neale's *Songs of the Trades* ?

THE SILK THROWSTERS.

A song for the Mulberry-tree so fair,
And its leaves so fresh and gay,
And a song for the worm that feasteth there
In the pleasant month of May.

But talk not now of what is past,
The moments fly away too fast,
Though endlessly they seem to last
To that poor soul in fear.

Brother. Well, soon (I say) I 'll let it loose ;
But, sister, you talk like a goose—
There 's no soul in a fly.

Sister. It has a form and fibres fine,
Were tempered by the Hand Divine
That dwells beyond the sky.
Look, brother, you have hurt its wing,
And plainly by its fluttering
You see it 's in distress.

Gay, painted coxcomb, spangled beau,
A Butterfly is called, you know,
That 's always in full dress.
The finest gentleman of all
Insects he is, he gave a ball,
You know, the poet wrote.

Let 's fancy this the very same,
And then you 'll own you 've been to blame
To spoil his silken coat.

Brother. Your dancing, spangled, powdered beau,
Look, through the air I 've let him go,
And now we 're friends again.
And sure as he is in the air,
From this time, Anne, I will take care
And try to be humane.

LAMB.

Aunt C. Very like boy and girl, I must say.

Kate. I know a little verse about the Butterfly.

Aunt C. Then, pray, let us hear it, my dear.

BUTTERFLIES.

Butterflies are pretty things,
Prettier than you or I ;
See the colours on his wings,—
Who would hurt a Butterfly ?

Softly, softly, girls and boys ;
He'll come near us by-and-by ;
Here he is, don't make a noise,—
We'll not hurt you, Butterfly.

Not to hurt a living thing
Let all little children try ;
See; again he's on the wing ;
Good-bye, pretty Butterfly !

E. FOLLEN.

Aunt C. Thank you, Katie; they are very pretty. Here are some rather more difficult verses by Samuel Rogers, of whom you will hear a great deal when you come to read memoirs of the society of the early half of this century. He was born in 1763, and died in 1855, having for many years kept a house in London, with a most choice collection of pictures and beautiful



EVENING XVII.

LITTLE THINGS.

Alice. Small things are best—grief and unrest
To pride and wealth are given ;
But little things on little wings
Bear little souls to Heaven.

F. W. FABER.

Aunt C. That was written in a little girl's album,
and it makes a good beginning to our subject to-night.

Grace. I know "Little by Little."

LITTLE BY LITTLE.

"Little by little," an acorn said,
As it slowly sank in its mossy bed,
"I am improving every day,
Hidden deep in the earth away."
Little by little each day it grew ;
Little by little it sipped the dew ;

Downward it sent a thread-like root ;
Up in the air sprang a tiny shoot ;
Little by little the leaves appeared,
Little by little the trunk upreared,
And the slender branches spread far and wide,
Till the mighty oak is the forest's pride.

Far down in the depths of the deep blue sea,
An insect train work unceasingly ;
Grain by grain they are building well,
Each one alone in its little cell.
Moment by moment, day by day,
Never stopping to rest or play,
Rocks upon rocks they are rearing high,
Till the top looks up to the sunny sky ;
The gentle wind and the balmy air
Little by little bring verdure there,
Till the summer sunbeams gaily smile
On the buds and flowers of the coral isle.

" Little by little," thus said a young boy,
" Moment by moment I 'll well employ ;
Learning a little every day,
And not spending all my time in play ;
And still this rule in my mind shall dwell,
Whatever I do, I 'll do it well.
Little by little I 'll learn to know
The treasured wisdom of long ago ;

And one of these days perhaps we'll see
That the world will be the better for me."
And do you not think that this simple plan
Made him a wise and useful man?

Anon.

Katie. And there is one like that in my book of
Moral Songs. May I read it?

Aunt C. Mrs. Alexander's? She has been a good
friend to all you young ones.

THE OAK TREE.

Long ago, in changeful autumn,
When the leaves were waxing brown,
From the tall oak's topmost branches
Came a little acorn down;

And it tumbled in the pathway,
And a chance foot trod it deep
In the ground, where all the winter
In its shell it lay asleep,

With the white snow lying over,
And the frost to hold it fast,
Till there came the mild spring weather,
When it burst its shell at last.

First shot up a sapling tender,
Scarcely seen above the ground;
Then a mimic little oak tree
Spread its tiny arms around.

Many years the night dews nursed it,
Summers hot and winters long ;
The sweet sun looked bright upon it,
While it grew up tall and strong.

Now it standeth like a giant,
Casting shadows broad and high ;
With huge trunk and leafy branches
Spreading up into the sky.

There the squirrel loves to frolic,
There the wild birds rest at night ;
There the cattle come for shelter,
In the noontide hot and bright.

Child, when, haply, thou art resting
'Neath the great oak's monster shade,
Think how little was the acorn
Whence that mighty tree was made ;

Think how simple things and lowly
Have a place in Nature's plan ;
How the great hath small beginnings,
And the child will be a man.

Little efforts work great actions ;
Lessons in our childhood taught,
Mould the spirit of that temper
Wherein mighty deeds are wrought.

Cherish, then, the gifts of childhood,
Use them gently, guard them well,
For their future growth and greatness
Who can measure, who can tell?

MRS. ALEXANDER.

Aunt C. Very pretty and wise indeed, and I think we must follow it up with an example taken from little things by Dr. Isaac Watts, who lived between 1674 and 1746, and was, I suppose, really the first writer of hymns on purpose for little children. Here is his Ant.

THE ANT.

These emmets, how little they are in our eyes!
We tread them to dust, and a troop of them dies,
Without our regard or concern;
Yet as wise as we are, if we went to their school,
There's many a sluggard and many a fool
Some lessons of wisdom might learn.

They wear not their time out in sleeping or play,
But gather up corn on a sunshiny day,
And for winter they lay up their stores;
They manage their work in such regular forms,
One would think they foresaw all the frosts and the storms,
And so brought their food within doors.

But I have less sense than a poor creeping ant,
If I take not good care of the things I shall want,
Nor provide against dangers in time ;
When death or old age shall stare in my face,
What a wretch shall I be in the end of my days,
If I trifle away all their prime.

DR. WATTS.

Alice. I met with some more verses the other day
in Mr. Langbridge's pretty book, *Gaslight and Stars*,
that show how small beginnings may grow to evil or
to good. It is called

SNOWFLAKE AND AVALANCHE.

One winter morning, bleak and cold,
A seed is buried in the mould ;
And now from out the heart of earth
A slender emerald shoot hath birth.
It sucks the sun, it drinks the dew,
It ripens to the russet hue ;
Then comes the reaper, blithe and fain,
And gathers in the blessed grain.
Then sow, my lads, ay, sow, my lads ;
The gentle thought will grow, my lads ;
Small at first, and little worth,
Sunned by heaven, and fed by earth,
Downward root, and upward shoot,
Lo ! it ripens into fruit !

Sow the seed, and let it lie—
Not a single grain shall die ;
Fair and yellow, full and mellow,
Waves the harvest by-and-by !

Behold, on some chill Alpine height,
A little snowflake soft and white,
Slides downward in its silent course,
And, sliding, ever gathers force ;
It gathers force, it takes a form,
And now, a voice of wreck and storm,
It rushes, crushes, thunders down
In earthquake on the doomèd town.
E'en so, my lads, e'en so, my lads,
The little fault will grow, my lads ;
Slight at first, and soft and white,
Lo ! it gathers day and night,
Gathers, hardens, shapes, and grows ;
Solid ice, not pliant snows,
Massy, dread, beyond control,
With mountain-weight and thunder-roll.
Shaking, quaking, bursting, breaking,
It crushes down the hapless soul.

FREDERICK LANGBRIDGE.

Aunt C. Snowflakes are good things, too, in their right place ; but the simile is excellent. We will finish, though, with a more cheerful poem, one by

the American Bishop of California, Dr. Cleveland Coxe, showing how the child's love of little earthly things may go step by step to the highest and best.

A BALLAD.

The first dear thing that ever I loved
Was a mother's gentle eye,
That smiled as I woke on the dreamy couch
That cradled my infancy.
I never forget the joyous thrill
That smile in my bosom stirred,
Nor how it could charm me against my will,
Till I laughed like a joyous bird.

And the next fair thing that ever I loved
Was a bunch of summer flowers,
With odours, and hues, and loveliness,
Fresh as from Eden's bowers.
I never can find such hues again,
Nor smell such a sweet perfume ;
And if there be odours as sweet as those,
'Tis I that have lost my bloom.

And the next dear thing that ever I loved
Was a favourite little maid,
Half-pleased, half-awed by the frolic boy
That tortured her doll and played.

I never can see the gossamer
Which rude, rough zephyrs tease,
But I think how I tossed her flossy locks
With my whirling bonnet's breeze.

And the next good thing that ever I loved
Was a bowkite in the sky,
And a little boat on the brooklet's surf,
And my dog for company ;
And a jingling hoop, with many a bound,
To my measured strike and true,
And a rocket sent up to the firmament,
When Even was out so blue.

And the next fair thing I was fond to love
Was a field of wavy grain,
Where a reaper mowed, as a ship in sail,
On the billowy, billowy main ;
And the next was a fiery prancing horse
That I felt like a man to stride ;
And the next was a beautiful sailing boat,
With a helm it was hard to guide.

And the next dear thing I was fond to love
Is tenderer far to tell—
'Twas a voice, and a hand, and a gentle eye
That dazzled me with its spell ;

And the loveliest things I had loved before
Were only the landscape now,
On the canvas bright, where I pictured her
In the glow of my early vow.

And the last dear thing I was fond to love
Was the holy service high,
That lifted my soul to joys above,
And pleasures that do not die ;
And I felt in my spirit drear and strange,
To think of the race I ran,
That I loved the sole thing that knew no change
In the soul of boy or man.

And then I said, " One thing there is
That I of the Lord desire—
That ever while I on the earth shall live,
I will of the Lord require
That I may dwell in His temple blest
As long as my life shall be,
And the beauty fair of the Lord of Hosts
In the home of His glory see.

Bp. CLEVELAND COXE.



EVENING XVIII.

FAIRY LORE.

Alice. Gracie is begging for some fairy verses.

Aunt C. We must go to our greatest poet for them, Shakspeare. Here is his description of Queen Mab—

She comes

In shape no bigger than an agate-stone
On the fore-finger of an alderman,
Drawn with a team of little atomies
Athwart men's noses as they lie asleep :
Her waggon-spokes made of long-spinners' legs ;
The cover, of the wings of grasshoppers ;
The traces, of the smallest spider's web ;
The collars, of the moonshine's watery beams :
Her whip, of cricket's bone ; the lash, of film :
Her waggoner, a small grey-coated gnat
Not half so big as a round little worm
Prick'd from the lazy finger of a maid :
Her chariot is an empty hazel-nut,

Made by the joiner squirrel, or old grub,
Time out of mind the fairies' coachmakers.
And in this state she gallops night by night
Through lovers' brains, and then they dream of love!

Alice. Why is she called Mab?

Aunt C. I believe it is from an old Celtic word, meaning mirth. There were two Queens of the Fairies in Ireland—Ainè and Mab.

Alice. The Fairy Queen is Titania in "Midsummer Night's Dream."

Aunt C. Titania is a name of Diana, and is there used because Athens is the scene, and Shakspeare supposed our English fairies to act the part of the Greek nymphs of the forest and glade. We must not pass without the "Song of Titania's Fairies."

Ye spotted snakes with double tongue,
Thorny hedgehogs, be not seen;
Newts and blindworms, do no wrong,
Come not near our Fairy Queen.
Philomel, with melody
Sing in our sweet lullaby,
Lulla, lulla, lullaby, lulla, lulla, lullaby.
Never harm nor spell nor charm,
Come our lovely lady nigh;
So good-night with lullaby.

Weaving spiders come not near,
Hence, ye long-legged spinners, hence ;
Beetles black approach not near,
Worms nor snails do no offence.

Here are two old songs again—from an old collection of English ballads.

THE ELVES' DANCE.

Dare ye haunt our hallowed green ?
None but Fairies here are seen ;
Down and sleep,
Wake and weep,
Pinch him black and pinch him blue
That seeks to steal a lover true.
When you come to hear us sing,
Or to tread our Fairy ring,
Pinch him black and pinch him blue,
Oh, thus our nails shall handle you.

Alice. For meddling with the Fairy ring ?

Aunt C. I suppose so. The urchins—another name for elves—are more good-natured.

THE URCHINS' SONG.

By the moon we sport and play,
With the night begins our day.
As we frisk, the dew doth fall,
Trip it, little urchins all ;

Lightly as the little bee,
Two by two, and three by three,
And about go we, go we.

Grace. Oh, how pretty !

Aunt C. Here is another Fairies' song, written, I believe, for one of the masques that were the fashion under Elizabeth and James.

A FAIRY'S SONG.

Come, follow, follow me,
Ye Fairy elves that be ;
Light tripping on the green,
Come follow Mab, your Queen ;
Hand-in-hand we 'll dance around,
For this place is Fairy ground.

When mortals are at rest,
And snoring in their nest,
Unheard and unespied,
Through keyholes we do glide,
Over tables, stools, and shelves,
We trip it with our Fairy elves.

And if the house is swept,
And from uncleanness kept,
We praise the household maid,
And duly she is paid ;
Every night before we go
We drop a tester in her shoe.

Then o'er a mushroom's head
Our table-cloth we spread ;
A grain of rye or wheat,
The diet that we eat ;
Pearly drops of dew we drink
In acorn cups filled to the brink.

The brains of nightingales,
With unctuous fat of snails,
Between two cockles stewed,
Is meat that's eas'ly chewed ;
Tails of worms and marrow of mice
Do make a dish that's wondrous nice.

The grasshopper, gnat, and fly
Serve for our minstrelsy ;
Grace said, we dance awhile,
And thus the time beguile ;
And if the moon doth hide her head,
The Glow-worm lights us home to bed.

O'er tops of dewy grass
So nimbly do we pass,
The young and tender stalk
Ne'er bends where we do walk ;
Yet in the morning may be seen
Where we the night before have been.

Alice. Unctuous fat of snails! Pah! I don't
admire the Fairies' taste!

Katie. And brains of nightingales are worse.

Alice. How much is a tester worth ?

Aunt C. It was a coin in value between sixpence and ninepence.

Alice. Diligent maids must have grown rich if the Fairies came every night. But, Aunt, I am sure you have another Fairy poem, in a large book, by another poet of Queen Elizabeth's time.

Aunt C. Michael Drayton's "Nymphidia." The whole will not suit you ; but since you belong to those whom the poet thus describes—

Another sort there be that will
Be talking of the Fairies still,
Nor never can they have their fill,
As they are wedded to them ;
No tales of them their thirst can slake,
So much delight therein they take,
And some strange thing they fain would make,
Knew they the way to do them—

I will read you some extracts. First, here is the description of the Fairy palace :—

This palace standeth in the air,
By necromancy placèd there ;
That it no tempests needs to fear,
Which way soe'er it blow it.

And somewhat southward tow'rd the noon,
Whence lies a way up to the moon,
And thence the Fairy can as soon
Pass to the earth below it.

The walls of spiders' legs are made
Well morticed and finely laid ;
He was the master of his trade,
It curiously that builded.
The windows of the eyes of cats,
And for the roof, instead of slats,
Is covered with the skins of bats,
With moonshine that are gilded.

Hence Oberon, him sport to make
(These rest when weary mortals bake,
And none but only Fairies wake),
Descendeth for his pleasure.
And Mab, his merry queen, by night
Bestrides young folk that lie upright
(In olden times the mare what hight),
Which plagues them out of measure.

Alice. He means that Queen Mab gives the nightmare.

Katie. And Oberon is King of the Fairies.

Aunt C. Yes; though you might not guess it, his name has come from our old English ancestors. First

it was Elfrik, Elf-king, then Elberick, Auberon, Oberon. Thus he has been known ever since our forefathers came into the west, though it is only here in England that he is married to the Celtic Mab.

Hence shadows, seeming idle shapes
Of little frisking elves or apes,
To earth do make their wanton scapes,
 As hope of pastime hastes them.
Which maids think on the hearth they see,
When fires well near consumed be,
There dancing heyes by two and three,
 Just as their fancy casts them.

These make our girls their sluttry rue,
By pinching them both black and blue,
And put a penny in their shoe,
 The house for cleanly keeping.
And so their courses make that round
In meadows and in marshes found,
Of man so called the Fairy ground,
 Of which they have the keeping.

Alice. Only a penny! They are not so liberal as in the song.

Aunt C. I will not read the description of Mab's chariot, as Shakspeare has given it to us already; but this is the way in which her ladies hurried after her:—

Hop and Mop and Drap so clear,
Pip and Trip and Skip that were
To Mab, their sovereign dear,
 The special maids of honour.
Fib and Tib and Pinck and Pim,
Tick and Quick and Jill and Jim,
Tip and Nip and Wap and Win,
 The train that wait upon her.

Upon a grasshopper they got,
And what with amble and with trot,
For hedge nor ditch they sparèd not,
 But after her they hie them.
A cobweb over them they throw,
To shield the wind if it should blow,
Themselves they wisely could bestow,
 Lest any should espy them.

Grace. What odd little names!

Aunt C. Showing that they came from homely
English fancies. Now you shall hear of the armour of
a Fairy knight, called Pigwiggin, who had a great
quarrel with Oberon.

He quickly armed him for the field,
A little cockle-shell his shield,
Which he could very bravely wield,
 Yet could it not be piercèd.

His spear, a bent both stiff and strong,
And well near of two inches long ;
The pile* was of a horsefly's tongue,
Whose sharpness nought reversèd.

And puts him on a coat of mail,
Which was of a fish's scale,
That when his foe should him assail,
No point should be prevailing.
His rapier was a hornet's sting ;
It was a very dangerous thing,
For if it chanced to hurt the king,
It would be long in healing.

His helmet was a beetle's head,
Most horrible and full of dread,
That able was to strike one dead ;
Yet it did well become him.
And for a plume a horse's hair,
Which, being tossèd by the air,
Had force to strike his foe with fear,
And turn his weapon from him.

Himself he on an earwig set,
Yet scarce upon his back could get,
So oft and high he did curvet,
Ere he himself could settle.

* Point, Lat. *pilum*, a dart.

He made him turn and stop and bound,
 To gallop and to trot the round ;
 He scarce could stand on any ground,
 He was so full of mettle.

DRAYTON.

Katie. Was there a fight ?

Aunt C. Yes, but it is not very interesting, and the warriors were parted by a cloud of smoke.

Grace. Oh ! I wish you would read us more.

Aunt C. You must read for yourself some day of Titania's Fairies, Cobweb Moth, Mustard Seed, and Pease Blossom in Midsummer Night's Dream ; and, above all, of Puck, or Robin Goodfellow, the mischievous fellow who says—

“ I'll follow them, I'll lead them round about,
 Through bog, through brook, through brake, through mire ;
 Sometimes a horse I'll be, sometimes a hound,
 A hog, a headless bear, sometimes a fire ;
 And neigh, and bark, and grunt, and roar, and burn,
 Like horse, hound, hog, bear, fire at every turn.

Grace. I am so sorry there are no more Fairies.

Aunt C. So was a learned Bishop.

Grace. A Bishop !

Aunt C. Yes ; Dr. Corbet, Bishop of Norwich in the time of King James I. He wrote a ballad called

THE FAIRIES' FAREWELL.

Farewell, rewards and Fairies,
Good housewives now may say,
For now foul sluts in dairies
Do fare as well as they.
And though they sweep their hearths no less
Than maids were wont to do,
Yet who of late for cleanliness
Finds sixpence in her shoe ?

At morning and at evening both
Ye merry were and glad,
So little care of sleep or sloth
These merry ladies had.
When Tom came home from labour,
Or Cis to milking goes,
How merrily went the tabor,
How merrily went their toes.

Witness those rings and roundelays
Of theirs which yet remain
Were footed in Queen Mary's days
On many a grassy plain.
But since of late Elizabeth,
And, later, James came in,
They never danced on any heath
As when the time had been.

A tell-tale in their company
They never could endure,
And whoso kept not secretly
Their pranks was punished sure.
It was a just and Christian deed
To pinch such black and blue ;
Oh, how the commonwealth doth need
Such justices as you !

BISHOP CORBET.

Alice. Well done, Bishop !

Grace. They all tell of fairy rings, and I have really seen fairy rings on the down.

Aunt C. So have we all ; but alas, they are only circles where mushrooms grow, looking, I allow, like fairy tables.

Grace. And it would be of no use to go to sleep in one, if nurse would let me ?

Aunt C. Alas ! no ; but here is a charming poem, telling how near we can still get to Fairyland.

OBERON'S HORN.

On the way to a school that stood
By the side of a murmuring stream,
There sat alone in a wintry wood
A child in a waking dream.

The mire was under the snow,
The rock was under the mire ;
A lesson he did not know,
Of which he began to tire,
Fluttering open lay on his knee,
The wearisome, troublesome verb "To be."

From the top of the upright pine
The snow lump falls with a thud,
Coming from where the sunbeams shine
To lie in the heart of the mud.
The child knows grammar as grief ;
The wind wails over the land ;
It stirs in his thumb-worn leaf
With a cold dry skeleton hand.
Where in the winter is music born ?
What does the child hear ?—Oberon's Horn.

The pulse of the Fairy strain
Throbs in the pulse of the child ;
"Oh, well is me that I hear thee again,
Oberon undefiled !"
Well is it for all who can share
The pulse of the Fairy strain ;
Content is the burden of care,
And pleasure the flower of pain.
Nothing is barren, and none forlorn,
Within sound of the music of Oberon's Horn.

The skeleton touch of the wind
Grows soft as the warm caress
Of a sleeping mother whose fingers find
Their way to a nursling's tress.
The wood, too, replies with a smile ;
Lilies are here for snow,
And birds in the blossoming aisle
Are choir to the flowers below.
But the verb has leapt from the leaf thumb-worn,
To dance to the music of Oberon's Horn.

Odd stories "To be" can tell
When Oberon winds his horn ;
The verb we all conjugate ill or well,
For whose tenses and mood we were born.
Of the little we learn by rote,
Little we fairly know,
If we hear not the Fairy note
When Oberon's horn shall blow,
Melting the rusty fetters of wit,
Quickening life and the sense of it.

Three notes—Fair, Kind, and True—
Are all the Fairy plays ;
Three colours alone are in every hue
Of the many-tinted days.

But what is a child to care
For earnest under its jest?
And how is a man to share
The toy that a man likes best?
Tickle with straws that are empty of corn,
Let the music ring hollow from Oberon's Horn?

I know that it does in France,
And for us there is rare delight
In a wit that on nothing can tumble and dance,
And dazzle without giving light.
But English wit rings best,
With an earnest undertone;
'Tis when reason lies under the jest
That an Englishman's laugh is his own.
We wish to hear nothing, but, English born,
We hear with our hearts even Oberon's Horn.

By a child of the age of a man,
Whom Fairies had always in thrall,
These stories are told you without any plan
But a wish to mean nothing at all.
Yet fancy must play over truth,
Let us labour out life as we may;
And we all, man, woman, and youth,
In England mean more than we say.
Then why should the North go the way of the South,
Or a French tongue speak with an English mouth?

Through the busy English land
 These notes of the Fairy Horn
 Sound for the boy who can understand
 That in him a man was born ;
 For the woman and girl who can feed
 On other talk than wooing,
 Where thought belongs to deed,
 And life consists in doing ;
 For the wholesome man that can play with a child,
 And for all honest fancy that dares run wild.

PROFESSOR MORLEY.

Katie. I have seen a Fairy.

Alice. Oh! in a pantomime.

Katie. They were—oh, so delicious !

Grace. If I could but see one !

Alice. I had rather not. I would rather think of a Fairy as a thing of fancy in the woods and fields.

Aunt C. I do not know whether it will disenchant Katie to hear this perfectly true story of a modern Fairy.

THE CHILD WHO WOULD NOT BE A FAIRY.

Another story wanted, children? Well,
 It seems to me, somehow, the more we tell,
 The more you come and ask us for. This time
 I'll try if I can turn you into rhyme
 A tale I heard myself not long ago.

Last winter, in the time of frost and snow,
Once in the hospital, by chance, I espied
A widow, all in black and tearful-eyed,
Close sitting by a bed wherein was laid
Her poor sick sister. All the while she stayed
She held the poor thin hand, and now and then
Kissed it and stroked it. When I looked again,
I noticed what I had not seen at first
(There were so many others to be nursed),
Beside the bed a little girl of five ;
They called her Lucy. How one *could* contrive
To keep her still a moment, I can't guess.
Her fingers twitched her mother's mournful dress ;
Her feet seemed made to dance ; her quick bright eyes
Glanced all about the room (how great its size !)—
The beds in long white lines, the fireplace tall,
The glistening tin utensils on the wall,
The nurse who to and fro so softly went,
And now and then beside a pillow bent,
And whispered words of comfort, soothing, kind—
All this the child recorded in her mind.

I questioned with the mother, and I found
Her story out. Her husband had been drowned
Three years ago ; since then, "Hard times," she said,
"Have scarce given work enough for daily bread.
My sister and three children live with me ;
And she is ill and helpless, as you see ;

But then by great good luck this Christmas-time,
They want some dancers for the Pantomime ;
And little Lucy there—you never saw
A child can dance like *her!* She's like a straw
Or feather in the wind ; her little foot
Springs like a Fairy's. In that muddy boot
You can't half see it, ma'am ; but then at night,
When all the play-house lamps are burning bright,
And she's dressed up in satin and in gauze,
Myself I scarcely know her. Such applause
Runs through the house whenever she appears ;
And (here she sobbed, and scarce could speak for tears)
I saw her there one night, and while the rest
Clapped hands and laughed, and said she was the best
Of all the Fairies on the stage, I said,
'Thank God, this year we shall not want for bread.'"
"But that must make her vain." She answered "No.
If she were older, ma'am, it might be so ;
So tiny and so young, they never guess
But 'tis for *their* amusement all the dress,
Dancing, and music too. The play's a play,
Though grown-up people come or stop away."
Then up she rose. "Come, Lucy, we must go ;
Make your best curtsy to the lady—so.
Sister, good-night. Next week I come again,
I hope to find you better, poor dear Jane.
See, ma'am, how thin her hand is. But my time
Is up—at seven comes on the Pantomime."

.

About a week went by. One holiday
I took my little nieces to the play.
We wrapped them up in shawls (their frocks were thin),
And called a cab, and packed them safely in.
Perhaps you've seen a pantomime. If not,
Fancy a place all lighted up and hot,
And crowded full of people turned one way,
And others dressed up—some like fairies gay,
And some like giants, witches, sailors, kings,
Going and coming, saying funny things,
Dancing or laughing, singing, by-and-by
Pretending (for 'tis all pretence) to cry.
And in a moment light is turned to dark,
A cottage to a palace or a park ;
The moon begins to shine, the waves to roar,
And every change seems stranger than before.
I said to little Clara at my right
(My youngest niece), "Now look with all your might,
You'll see a great black bottle soon appear,
Corked tightly up. And by-and-by, my dear,
Whizz ! off the cork will fly, and from inside
A little tiny fairy girl will glide,
With blue gauze winglets, and a golden crown,
And dance before you with that red-cheek'd clown."
I said so, for I'd heard the other day
This was the part that Lucy used to play.
And all the little girls, with all their eyes,
Watched for the bottle and the great surprise.

But time went on, and many a wondrous sight
We saw, and many a fairy tripping light ;
But Lucy ne'er appeared. Who was to blame ?
The bottle and the fairy never came.
And when 'twas time to go, the children said,
" 'Twas very pretty, Aunt "—then shook the head ;
And Clara sighed, while pinning up her shawl,
" We never saw that fairy, though, at all !"
But home they went, and straight to bed ; perchance
In dreams they still beheld the fairies dance.

Next morning came. The foggy streets were damp,
And London all alight with torch and lamp ;
And coughing women, cloaked and veiled, whose feet
Slipped in the mire, went shivering down the street ;
And cabmen shook their dripping overcoats,
And wound their comforters around their throats—
The only cheerful sight the steaming tins
Of hot potatoes roasted in their skins.
" That poor sick Jane in hospital," I said ;
" I wonder how she is ? 'Tis dark o'erhead,
But I must see her." So that afternoon
(The sun above me like a copper moon)
I went and found her out. Beside her bed
The widowed sister sat—her eyes were red ;
And when I talked a while to Sister Jane,
And heard her tale of sleepless nights and pain,
I turned to *her*, and asked if all was well.
" And how's your little Lucy ?" Then she fell

To weeping sorely. "Oh, that child," she cried,
"Has brought sad trouble on me, though I tried
To teach her better. 'Twas three nights ago
My sister here was worse. They let me know,
And I was forced to come. I stayed with her,
And sent the children to the Theatre
Without me. Every night I used to dress
My little Lucy like a gay princess,
Put on her satin shoes, her gauzy wings
And fleshings, and a score of other things.
That night I said, 'Now, Lucy, mind you stay
With this kind lady' (for my friend, Miss Gray,
One of the other actors in the play,
Had come to fetch her); 'and be sure that you
Give her no trouble. What she bids you, do ;
She 'll help you just like me, and dress you right,
And says she 'll bring you safely home at night.
Good-bye ; now don't forget.' So off they went,
And Lucy seemed quite cheerful and content.
But, ma'am, would you believe it? When the time
Was come to dress her for the Pantomime,
That kind Miss Gray good-naturedly begins
To try and help her—brings a box of pins,
Scissors, and tarletan, ribbons, and the rest,
And says, 'Come hither, Lucy, and be drest ;
To-night I 'll help you, for your mother can't,
Because she's gone to nurse your poor sick aunt.'
'Twas kindly meant, 'twas very kind of her,
But that provoking Lucy would not stir,

Stood pouting by the doorway—if they tried
To touch her dress or shoes, she only cried.
Then came the carpenter (they call him Dick);
'Come, little lass,' says he, 'unless you're quick,
'Twill all go wrong together. *Won't* she move?
Come, let the lady dress you, there's a love.'
But still she stood as stiffly as before,
And hid her little face behind the door.
Then our head lady came in such a rage—
"What *can* that child be at? Behind the stage
They're calling out for her. You idle thing!
If you were mine, I'd whip you. Let them bring
Her up directly. What a shame is this!"
One tries the scolding plan, and one the kiss;
But Lucy will not move—she still rebels—
'Mother may d'ess me; mother—no one else.'
And so the play went on without her. She
Came home at night in sad disgrace to me.
Next morning" (here the tears again flowed faster)
"I went, as I was sent for, to the master,
And found him sitting there in such a rage;
He said, instead of paying me her wage
(That which I counted on, and reckoned mine),
That he should claim of me a heavy fine *
For Lucy's misdemeanour. Ah! he spoke
So harshly that I felt my heart was broke.

How *can* I get the money? Day by day
I seem to grow still poorer. Rent to pay,
Food, clothes, and fire, and now this heavy fine,
And all because this little girl of mine
Was wilful, disobedient, uncontrolled,
Rebelled, and would not do as she was told."

And now, dear children, here my story ends,
But not the moral. You, perhaps, have friends
Who tell you of your duty, and, what's more,
Would help you do it. Think what sorrow sore
Some trifling act of disobedience brings!
For right and wrong oft lie in *little* things,
And what *you* think is nothing, oft may prove
No little matter to the friends you love.
Remember Lucy, though so young, could do
Both harm and good; and so, much more, can you.
Take warning from the child of five years old,
And, first and last, still do as you are told.

Veritas.





EVENING XIX.
SNAKES AND CROCODILES.

Alice. I have brought a curious true story of a
Snake, put in verse by Charles Lamb.

THE BOY AND THE SNAKE.

Henry was every morning fed
With a full mess of milk and bread.
One day the boy his breakfast took,
And ate it by a purling brook,
Which through his mother's orchard ran.
From that time ever, when he can
Escape his mother's eye, he there
Takes his food in the open air.
Finding the child delight to eat
Abroad, and make the grass his seat,
His mother lets him have his way.
With free leave, Henry every day
Thither repairs, until she heard
Him talking of a fine grey bird.

This pretty bird he said, indeed,
Came every day with him to feed,
And it loved him and loved his milk,
And it was smooth and soft like silk.
His mother thought she'd go and see
What sort of bird this same might be ;
So the next morn she follows Harry,
And carefully she sees him carry
Through the long grass his heaped-up mess.
What was her terror and distress,
When she saw the infant take
His bread and milk close to a snake !
Upon the grass he spread his feast,
And sits down by his frightful guest,
Who had waited for the treat ;
And now they both begin to eat.
Fond mother ! shriek not, O beware
The least small noise, O have a care—
The least small noise that may be made
The wily snake will be afraid—
If he hear the lightest sound,
He will inflict the envenomed wound.
She speaks not, moves not, scarce does breathe,
As she stands the trees beneath ;
No sound she utters ; and she soon
Sees the child lift up its spoon
And tap the snake upon the head,
Fearless of harm ; and then he said,

As speaking to familiar mate,
 "Keep on your own side, do, Grey Pate."
 The snake then to the other side,
 As one rebukèd, seems to glide ;
 And now, again advancing nigh,
 Again she hears the infant cry,
 Tapping the snake, "Keep further, do ;
 Mind, Grey Pate, what I say to you."
 The danger's o'er—she sees the boy
 (Oh, what a change from fear to joy!)
 Rise and bid the snake "good-bye ;"
 Says he ; "Our breakfast's done, and I
 Will come again to-morrow day ;"
 Then, lightly tripping, ran away.

CHARLES LAMB.

Edmund. Of course it was a harmless snake ?

Aunt C. I should suppose so. And I confess that Charles Lamb does not shine in poetry, though it is a curious story, worth preserving. Here is another, more fatal to the Snake, by our old friend, Cowper.

THE COLUBRIAD.

Close by the threshold of a door nailed fast,
 Three kittens sat ; each kitten looked aghast ;
 I, passing swift and inattentive by,
 At the three kittens cast a careless eye,
 Not much concerned to know what they did there,
 Not deeming kittens worth a poet's care.

But presently a loud and furious hiss
Caused me to stop, and to exclaim, "What's this?"
When lo! upon the threshold met my view,
With head erect, and eyes of fiery hue,
A viper, long as Count de Grasse's queue.
Forth from his head his forkèd tongue he throws,
Darting it full against a kitten's nose,
Who, never having seen in field or house
The like, sat still and silent as a mouse ;
Only, projecting with attention due
Her whiskered face, she asked him, "Who are you?"
On to the hall went I with pace not slow,
But swift as lightning, for a long Dutch hoe,
With which, well armed, I hastened to the spot
To find the viper,—but I found him not ;
And turning up the leaves and shrubs around,
Found only that he was not to be found.
"I hope," said I, "the villain I would kill
Has slipped between the door and the door-sill,
And if I make despatch and follow hard,
No doubt but I shall find him in the yard."
For long ere now it should have been rehearsed,
'Twas in the garden that I found him first.
Even there I found him, there the full-grown cat
His head, with velvet paw did gently pat,
As curious as the kittens erst had been
To learn what this phenomenon might mean.
Filled with heroic ardour at the sight,
And fearing every moment he would bite,

And rob our household of our only cat
That was of age to combat with a rat,
With outstretched hoe I slew him at the door,
And taught him NEVER TO COME THERE NO MORE.

COWPER.

Grace. Why does he call it by such an odd name?

Aunt C. Edmund will tell you that *coluber* means a Snake. It is what is called a mock-heroic poem, telling about a trifle in a very grand style; so it is called the Colubriad, because it is about a Snake—just as the *Æneid* was about *Æneas*.

Edmund. And what was Count de Grasse's queue?

Aunt C. Count de Grasse was a French admiral, who was beaten and made prisoner in the West Indies by Lord Rodney, in 1782; but I am afraid I cannot tell you how long his queue, or pigtail, was.

Alice. Do you think the Snake really could have been a viper?

Aunt C. I cannot tell; but I believe that cats can play with venomous snakes without being bitten. I suppose their fur is too close for the fangs to penetrate. A friend of mine in Natal saw her white kitten playing with a wicked-looking little green snake without receiving any damage.

Edmund. Have you any more about Snakes ?

Aunt C. I am afraid not ; but I will read you instead a comical poem which Southey wrote, on reading in a book of travels that the Egyptian peasants believe that far down the Nile there lives a King of the Crocodiles, with ears, but without a tail, and quite harmless.

THE KING OF THE CROCODILES.

PART I.

“ Now, woman, why without your veil,
And wherefore do you look so pale ?
And, woman, why do you groan so sadly,
And wherefore beat your bosom madly ?”

“ Oh ! I have lost my darling boy
In whom my soul had all its joy ;
And I for sorrow have torn my veil,
And sorrow hath made my very heart pale.

“ Oh ! I have lost my darling child,
And that’s the loss that makes me wild ;
He stooped to the river down to drink,
And there was a Crocodile at the brink.

“ He did not venture in to swim,
He only stooped to drink at the brim ;
But under the reeds the Crocodile lay,
And struck with his tail and swept him away.

"Now take me in your boat, I pray,
For down the river lies my way ;
And me to the Reed-Island bring,
For I will go to the Crocodile King.

"He reigns not now in Crocodilople,
Proud as the Turk in Constantinople ;
No ruins of his great city remain,
The Island of Reeds is his whole domain.

"Like a Dervise, there he passes his days,
Turns up his eyes, and fasts and prays ;
And, being grown pious and meek and mild,
He now never eats man, woman, or child.

"The King of the Crocodiles never does wrong,
He has no tail so stiff and strong ;
He has no tail to strike and slay,
But he has ears to hear what I say.

"And to the King I will complain
How my poor child was wickedly slain ;
The King of the Crocodiles he is good,
And I shall have the murderer's blood."

The man replied, "No, woman, no,
To the Island of Reeds I will not go ;
I would not for any worldly thing
See the face of the Crocodile King."

“Then lend me now your little boat,
And I will down the river float.
I tell thee that no worldly thing
Shall keep me from the Crocodile King.

“The King of the Crocodiles he is good,
And therefore will give me blood for blood ;
Being so mighty and so just,
He can revenge me, he will, and he must.”

The woman she leapt into the boat,
And down the river alone did she float,
And fast with the stream the boat proceeds,
And now she is come to the Island of Reeds.

The King of the Crocodiles there was seen ;
He sat upon the eggs of the Queen,
And all around, a numerous rout,
The young Prince Crocodiles crawled about.

The woman shook every limb with fear,
As she to the Crocodile King came near ;
For never man without fear and awe
The face of his Crocodile majesty saw.

She fell upon her bended knee,
And said, “O King, have pity on me,
For I have lost my darling child,
And that’s the loss that makes me wild.

"A Crocodile ate him for his food,
Now let me have the murderer's blood—
Let me have vengeance for my boy,
The only thing that can give me joy.

"I know that you, Sire! never do wrong,
You have no tail so stiff and strong—
You have no tail to strike and slay,
But you have ears to hear what I say."

"You have done well," the King replies,
And fixed on her his little eyes;
"Good woman, yes, you have done right,
But you have not described me quite.

"I have no tail to strike and slay,
And I have ears to hear what you say;
I have teeth, moreover, as you may see,
And I will make a meal of thee!"

PART II.

Wicked the word and bootless the boast,
As cruel King Crocodile found to his cost;
And, proper reward of tyrannical might,
He showed his teeth, but he missed his bite.

"A meal of me!" the woman cried,
Taking wit in her anger and courage beside;
She took him his fore-legs and hind between,
And trundled him off the eggs of the Queen.

To revenge herself then she did not fail,
He was slow in his motions for want of a tail ;
But well for the woman was it the while,
That the Queen was gadding abroad in the Nile.

Two Crocodile Princes, as they played on the sand,
She caught, and, grasping them one in each hand,
Thrust the head of the one into the throat of the other,
And made each Prince Crocodile choke his brother.

And when she had trussed three couple this way,
She carried them off and hastened away ;
And plying her oars with might and main,
Crossed the river and got to the shore again.

When the Crocodile Queen came home, she found
That her eggs were broken and scattered around,
And that six young Princes, darlings all,
Were missing, for none of them answered her call.

Then many a not very pleasant thing
Passed between her and the Crocodile King ;
"Is this your care of the nest ?" cried she ;
"It comes of your gadding abroad," said he.

The Queen had the better in this dispute,
And the Crocodile King found it best to be mute,
While a terrible peal in his ears she rung,
For the Queen had a tail as well as a tongue.

In woful patience he let her rail,
Standing less in fear of her tongue than her tail,
And knowing that all the words which were spoken,
Could not mend one of the eggs that were broken.

The woman, meantime, was very well pleased,
She had saved her life, and her heart was eased ;
The justice she asked in vain for her son
She had taken herself, and six for one.

" Mash-Allah !" her neighbours exclaimed in delight ;
She gave them a funeral supper that night,
Where they all agreed that revenge was sweet,
And young Prince Crocodiles delicate meat.

SOUTHEY.





EVENING XX.

THE SPIDER.

Alice. You are really going to bring out the drawing of the Spider!

Grace. Horrid creature! I know what I have to say to it.

Aunt C. Oh yes, I know that Mary Howitt has armed you with plenty of abuse of the poor Spider, but I have something to say for her. Don't you like to see her beautiful regular nets gemmed all over with pearls and diamonds on a frosty morning?

Grace. They are very pretty, but then one knows what they are for.

Edmund. And yet I have seen Miss Grace go out fishing!

Grace. Oh, but I never caught anything.

Edmund. No, and you screamed if you did but-think you felt a bite! But when you eat beef and mutton, ma'am, you've no right to abuse Spiders.

Grace. Nobody can bear them in the house.

Aunt C. No, but the untidiness of the cobwebs of the house Spider is a more sensible reason for that than any dislike to the wonderful creature itself. I am going to read you its defence, by the Rev. Thomas Whytehead, a young clergyman who went out with Bishop Selwyn as one of the first missionaries to New Zealand, and died there of decline soon after his arrival.

TO THE SPIDER.

Patient creature, sitting there,
Fisher of the deep-blue air,
With thy web of filmy twine
Stretched upon my cottage vine,
Sure a quiet heart is thine.

I have watched thee there this hour,
In thy secret leafy bower ;
All the while, a single fly
Has not flown thy meshes by,
They are empty, night is nigh.

Yet, thou lonesome thing, for thee
Few have thought or sympathy,
Where, thy scanty food to get,
Thou that weary watch dost set
By thy solitary net.

Thou, as God has given thee skill,
Dost thy humble task fulfil ;
Busy at thy lines outspread,
Mending up each broken thread,
Thus thy little life is led.

Yet, belike, some idler's hand,
Who Nature cannot understand,
As in pity for thy prey,
All thy toil for many a day
At one stroke will sweep away.

Shame upon the delicate sense
That at thee would take offence !
Thus, some passing qualm to smother,
Oft will man thus treat his brother,
Wronging one to right another.

Oh, how selfish and unsound,
Such sensibility is found ;
Few there are of them, I trow,
Who such tender hearts avow,
Half as innocent as thou.

REV. T. WHYTEHEAD.

Alice. Grace is puzzled.

Grace. Does he mean that one ought not to knock down a cobweb?

Aunt C. He does not enter on the housemaid's side of the question. All he means to say is that it is false humanity to knock down a Spider's web out of pity for the flies.

Edmund. It would be like throwing away lobster-pots in pity to the lobsters.

Grace. Fairies and good children always do let out the flies.

Aunt C. Fairies may perhaps succeed; but when children do, it seldom turns out well for the flies. They are so entangled in the delicate cordage, and often so poisoned by the Spider, that they die very soon, and it is probably more merciful to let them hang undisturbed than meddle with our clumsy fingers. Besides, as Mr. Whytehead says, we have no right to do so. God ordained this as the means by which the Spider should win his food, and it is not a bit more treacherous than any other kind of snare or trap.

Alice. Why should we talk, then, of animals as having characters?

Aunt C. Because some of their instincts are so developed as to make them a kind of living emblem of certain vices and virtues ; and the Spider's snares are always accepted as a pattern of temptation.

Edmund. Ah ! Grace is burning to say her dear old

SPIDER AND FLY.

"Will you walk into my parlour ?"

Said the Spider to the Fly ;

"'Tis the prettiest little parlour

That ever you did spy.

The way into my parlour

Is up a winding stair,

And I've many pretty things

To show you when you're there."

"Oh no, no," said the little Fly,

"To ask me is in vain,

For who goes up your winding stair

Will ne'er come down again."

"I'm sure you must be weary

With soaring up so high ;

Will you rest upon my little bed ?"

Said the Spider to the Fly ;

"There are pretty curtains drawn around,

The sheets are fine and thin,

And if you like to rest awhile,

I'll snugly tuck you in."

"Oh no, no," said the little Fly,
"For I've often heard it said
They never, never wake again
Who rest upon your bed."

Said the cunning Spider to the Fly,
"Dear friend, what can I do
To prove the warm affection
That I've always felt for you?
I have within my pantry
Good store of all that's nice;
I'm sure you're very welcome—
Will you please to take a slice?"
"Oh no, no," said the little Fly,
"Kind sir, that cannot be;
I've heard what's in your pantry,
And I do not wish to see."

"Sweet creature," said the Spider,
"You're witty and you're wise;
How handsome are your gauzy wings,
How brilliant are your eyes.
I have a little looking-glass
Upon my parlour shelf;
If you look in one moment, dear,
You will behold yourself."
"I thank you, gentle sir," she said,
"For what you're pleased to say,
And, wishing you good-morning now,
I'll call another day."



THE SPIDER



The Spider turned him round about,
And went into his den,
For well he knew the silly Fly
Would soon come back again.
So he wove a subtle web
In a little corner sly,
And set his table ready
To dine upon the Fly.
Then he went out to his door again,
And merrily did sing,
“Come hither, hither, pretty Fly,
With the pearl and silver wing;
Your robes are green and purple,
There’s a crest upon your head,
Your eyes are like the diamond bright,
But mine are dull as lead.”

Alas! alas! how very soon
This silly little Fly,
Hearing his wily flattering words,
Came gaily flitting by;
With buzzing wings she hung aloft,
Then near and nearer drew,
Thinking only of her brilliant eyes
And green and purple hue—
Thinking only of her crested head,
Poor foolish thing! At last
Up jumped the cruel Spider,
And tightly held her fast.

He dragged her up the winding stair,
Into his dismal den,
Within his little parlour, but
She ne'er came out again.

And now, dear little children,
Who may this story read,
To idle, foolish, flattering words,
I pray you ne'er give heed ;
Unto an evil counsellor
Close heart and ear and eye,
And take a lesson from the tale
Of the Spider and the Fly.

MARY HOWITT.

Aunt C. Yes, it is a capital parable against flattery and temptation.

Edmund. Here is grim old Web-spinner. Don't let me forget him.

THE TRUE STORY OF WEB-SPINNER.

Web-Spinner was a miser old,
Who came of low degree ;
His body was large, his legs were thin,
And he kept bad company ;
And his visage had the evil look
Of a black felon grim ;
To all the country he was known,
But none spoke well of him.

The Spider.

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His house was seven stories high,
In a corner of the street,
And it always had a dirty look,
When other homes were neat ;
Up in his garret dark he lived,
And from the windows high,
Looked out in the dusky evening
Upon the passers by.

Most people thought he lived alone,
Yet many have averred
That dismal cries from out his house
Were often loudly heard ;
And that none living left his gate,
Although a few went in ;
For he seized the very beggar old,
And stripped him to the skin.

And though he prayed for mercy,
Yet mercy ne'er was shown—
The miser cut his body up,
And picked him bone from bone.
Thus people said, and all believed
The dismal story true ;
As it was told to me, in truth,
I tell it so to you.

There was an ancient widow—
One Madgy de la Moth,
A stranger to the man, or she
Had ne'er gone there in troth :
But she was poor, and wandered out
At night-fall in the street,
To beg from rich men's tables
Dry scraps of broken meat.

So she knocked at old Web-Spinner's door,
With a modest tap, and low,
And down stairs came he speedily
Like an arrow from a bow.
"Walk in, walk in, mother," said he,
And shut the door behind—
She thought, for such a gentleman,
That he was wondrous kind.

But ere the midnight clock had tolled,
Like a tiger of the wood,
He had eaten the flesh from off her bones,
And drunk of her heart's blood !
Now after this fell deed was done,
A little season's space,
The burly Baron of Bluebottle
Was riding from the chase.

The sport was dull, the day was hot,
The sun was sinking down,
When wearily the Baron rode
Into the dusty town.
Says he, "I'll ask a lodging,
At the first house I come to;"
With that, the gate of Web-Spinner
Came suddenly in view.

Loud was the knock the Baron gave—
Down came the churl with glee;
Says Bluebottle, "Good Sir, to-night
I ask your courtesy;
I am wearied with a long day's chase—
My friends are far behind."
"You may need them all," said Web-Spinner,
"It runneth in my mind."

"A Baron am I," said Bluebottle;
"From a foreign land I come."
"I thought as much," said Web-Spinner,
"Fools never stay at home!"
Says the Baron, "Churl, what meaneth this?
I defy you, villain base!"
And he wished the while, in his inmost heart,
He was safely from the place.

Web-Spinner ran and locked the door,
And a loud laugh laughed he,
With that, each one on the other sprang,
And they wrestled furiously.
The Baron was a man of might,
A swordsman of renown ;
But the Miser had the stronger arm,
And kept the Baron down.

Then out he took a little cord,
From a pocket at his side,
And with many a crafty, cruel knot,
His hands and feet he tied ;
And bound him down unto the floor,
And said, in savage jest,
" There is heavy work for you in store ;—
So, Baron, take your rest !"

Then up and down his house he went,
Arranging dish and platter,
With a dull and heavy countenance,
As if nothing were the matter.
At length he seized on Bluebottle,
That strong and burly man,
And with many and many a desperate tug,
To hoist him up began.

And step by step, and step by step,
He went with heavy tread ;
But ere he reached the garret door,
Poor Bluebottle was dead !
Now all this while, a magistrate,
Who lived in a house hard by,
Had watched Web-Spinner's cruelty
Through a window privily :

So in he bursts, through bolts and bars,
With a loud and thundering sound,
And vowed to burn the house with fire,
And level it with the ground ;
But the wicked churl, who all his life
Had looked for such a day,
Passed through a trap-door in the wall,
And took himself away.

But where he went, no man could tell ;
'Twas said that under ground
He died a miserable death—
But his body ne'er was found.
They pulled his house down, stick and stone,
" For a caitiff vile as he,"
Said they, " within our quiet town
Shall not a dweller be !"

MARY HOWITT.

Aunt C. I am going to say something more for my friend the Spider—for one who, I believe, never spins webs, but only throws bridges—suspension—across for himself wherever he goes.

THE GOSSAMER SPIDER.

Creature no bigger than a pin,
Most wonderful of all that spin,
An acrobatic fairy.
Nay, what rope dancer from himself
Can draw his lines, like this small elf,
Marking his progress airy.

O'er breezy downs, from bent to bent,
That slender, viewless pathway went,
Traced in some moment's shimmer ;
But far too fine for common sight
Until the sunset's sinking light
Makes the whole network glimmer.

Now here, now there, a rainbow gleam
Floats o'er the turf in silvery stream
Of strange mysterious lightness.
Then early autumn's frosts will strew
Each thread with glancing beads of dew,
Jewels of flashing brightness.

Or when the winds the grasses shake,
They blend the films in snowy flake ;
 So, said some ancient rhymers,
The lovely lady of the sky,
In twilight floating, green earth nigh,
 There dropped her silvery cymar.

C. M. YONGE.

Grace. A cymar—what's that ?

Aunt C. A scarf. The name is really said to be *gottes-sammar*, the goddess's cymar ; and as the flowers, wells, insects, and whatever else had been named after the old goddess Freya, were transferred in Christian times to the Blessed Virgin, the Gossamer is called in France "*Les fils de la Vierge*," and in Italy "*I filamenti de la Madonna*."

Grace. How very pretty ! I have one Spider poem more.

THE SPIDER.

Little Spider, 'tis not meet
Thou should'st climb my grassy seat ;
Turn thy course another way,
Nor o'er my spreading garments stray.

Fragile creature, touch of mine
Could end this little life of thine ;
Shall I press thee to the earth,
And check thy tiny insect mirth ?

No, pass on ; to thee and me
The churchyard sods alike are free ;
I seek the sun, and gentle breeze
That whispers 'mid yon aspen trees.

And He who makes all things His care,
Of joys gives thee thy little share ;
Go, speed thy way among the grass,
Busy struggler, thou shalt pass.

Children's Friend.





EVENING XXI.

TEMPTATION AND FAITHFULNESS.

Alice. You made the Spider stand for the tempter last night. Now Grace and I have been finding another fable for you.

THE YOUNG TROUT.

In a stream bright and clear,
A young Trout cried, "O dear,
What a beautiful fly, mother; only look here."

"It may be a fly,"
Was the mother's reply;
"But be sure that it is ere to seize it you try."

Said the young one, "Do look,
'Tis like what you took,
Except that its tail is turned up like a hook.

"But my eyes are so strong,
And I've watched it so long,
I am sure it's a fly, and I cannot be wrong.

"Its eyes are so bright,
And its wings are so light,
Pish! mother dear, don't put yourself in a fright."

Said her mother, "O pray
Do not talk in that way;
'Tis affection that warns you, so mind what I say.

"'Tis quite rude to say, Pish!
When your safety I wish;
So be cautious, pray do, like a good little fish."

Said the young one, "I will,
Dear mother, be still;
I know by your side I shall come to no ill.

"Though the fly looks so nice,
Yet it shall not entice;
Look there! oh, how lucky I took your advice!

"A young fish has come by,
And has seized the mock fly,
And is dragg'd out of water! Poor thing! she will die.

"Dear mother, let me
Then constantly be
Protected and governed and guided by thee."

Grace. That was a good little fish. I like it better than the one in *Original Poems*, where the Trout would not mind her mother, and was caught.

Edmund. Those fables all tell the same story—Spider and Fly, Fox and Crow, all sing the same note—all tell how foolish it is to let oneself be humbugged!

Grace. My fish was not.

Alice. No, because she was obedient.

Aunt C. Exactly. Obedience and industry are good safeguards. And here is a bright little poem on that head, by Tom Moore.

Alice. The man who wrote the *Irish Melodies*?

Aunt C. The same. He was a clever Irishman, born in 1779, with a musical ear, a sweet voice, and great ease in composing flowing, harmonious poetry, not of a very high order. Some of it was, however, much admired, and he was a very agreeable, lively man, welcome in society; so he spent most of his life in the neighbourhood of London, continually going to parties, and staying at country houses, where his music, singing, and wit made him welcome. But his poor wife, Bessie, at home must have had a hard life, for his tastes were too expensive for his gains, and he was

constantly absent, though he was very fond of her. She lost all her children, one after the other; but she seems to have been a patient, cheerful wife. Tom Moore died in 1853. In these verses he gives advice better than the counsels he always followed.

YOUNG JESSICA.

Young Jessica sat all the day,
In love dreams languishingly pining,
Her needle bright neglected lay
Like truant genius idly shining.
Ah! Jessy, 'tis in idle hearts
That love and mischief are most nimble;
The safest shield against the darts
Of Cupid is Minerva's thimble.

A child who with a magnet played,
And knew its winning ways so wily,
The magnet near the needle laid,
And, laughing, said, "We'll steal it slyly."
The needle, having nought to do,
Was pleased to let the magnet wheedle,
Till closer still the tempter drew,
And off at length eloped the needle.

Now had that needle turned its eye
To some gay reticule's construction,
It ne'er had strayed from duty's tie,
Nor felt the magnet's sly seduction.

Girls, if you would keep tranquil hearts,
Your snowy fingers must be nimble ;
The safest shield against the darts
Of Cupid is Minerva's thimble.

T. MOORE.

Edmund. You don't know what all that means,
Grace.

Grace. Yes, I do! I know Cupid was the little
god of love, and Minerva was the goddess of wisdom,
and of women's needlework too.

Alice. Ask him if he knows what a reticule is ?

Edmund. Not I. Some woman's nonsense, of
course.

Alice. Didn't it mean a bag ?

Aunt C. Yes. In those days it was the fashion to
wear very scanty dresses, and, instead of a pocket, to
carry the handkerchief in a bag, generally black silk,
which was called a *reticule*, or, by the malicious, a
ridicule. Let us follow this up with some pretty
verses, translated from the Italian by Professor
Anstice, showing how vain and empty it is to run
after pleasure, away from duty.

THE UNSUCCESSFUL CHASE.

"Come back, come back, my wand'ring child,"
Anxious called the mother mild,
Beckoning, as the little maid
With ready step the call obeyed.
Disappointed of her game,
Panting, up the hill she came ;
But her story was begun
Ere the summit quite she won.
"Mother, mother, I have been
Such a chase across the green,
By a cruel bird outwitted,
Still from bush to bush it flitted ;
Rising oft, but soon alighting,
Still avoiding, still inviting ;
Now I thought it all my own,
In a moment it was gone.
Onward still my steps it drew,
Then it spread its wing and flew ;
What a world of pains it cost,
Now the pretty treasure 's lost !"
While the maid her tale repeated,
Angry to be thus defeated,
First the patient mother smiled,
Then bespoke her pouting child,
"Let thy chase, my darling, give
Lesson to thee how to live.

From thine own pursuit and sorrow,
From that bird, a warning borrow ;
Rash and headlong, child, like thee
Man pursues felicity ;
Still illusive prospects cheer him,
Still he thinks the treasure near him ;
When he on the prize would spring,
Bliss is ever on the wing.
Thus his weary life he spends
In a chase that never ends,
Hopes conceived and baffled ever,
Bootless quest and vain endeavour.

From the Italian of ROSSI, by Prof. ANSTICE.

Aunt C. We will refresh ourselves with two poems upon Faithfulness. The first is by Dr. Richard Trench, now Archbishop of Dublin, and is about the Caliph Haroun Al Raschid, whom you all know very well.

Grace. Who used to go about in disguise, and found the three Calendars with one eye ?

Alice. Yes, the man in the *Arabian Nights*. Let us hear, pray.

Aunt C. I am afraid you will be disappointed, for this is not a wonderful adventure.

THE SPILT PEARLS.

His courtiers all the Caliph crave,
"Oh, say how this may be,
That of thy slaves this Ethiop slave
Is best beloved by thee.

"For he is hideous as the night;
And when has ever chose
A nightingale, for its delight,
A dull and scentless rose?"

The Caliph then—"No features fair
Nor comely mien are his;
Love is the beauty he doth wear,
And Love his glory is.

"Once when a camel of my train
Fell in a narrow street,
From broken casket rolled amain
Rich pearls before my feet.

"I nodding to my slaves that I
Would freely give them these,
At once upon the spoils they fly,
The costly boon to seize.

"One only at my side remained,
Beside this Ethiop, none;
He, moveless as the steed he reined,
Behind me sat alone.

“‘What will thy gain, good fellow, be,
Thus lingering by my side?’
‘My King, that I shall faithfully
Have guarded thee,’ he cried.”

True servant's title he may wear,
He only who has not
For his lord's gifts, how rich soe'er,
His lord himself forgot.

So thou alone dost walk before
Thy God with perfect aim,
From Him desiring nothing more
Beside Himself to claim.

For if thou not to Him aspire,
But to His gifts alone,
Not love, but covetous desire,
Has brought thee to His Throne.

While such thy prayer, it mounts above
In vain; the golden key
Of God's rich treasure-house of love
Thine own will never be.

ARCHBISHOP TRENCH.

Alice. Oh! I like that.

Aunt C. I think you will like still better the verses
that Mr. Sabine Baring Gould has written on a little

legend he found in an old book printed in 1652. I must tell you that the persons in it are supposed to be a Priest, whose duty it was to sing the morning Psalms, at the service called Prime, at six o'clock, with a little server, or choir-boy, to help him.

THE THREE CROWNS.

"When the morning breaketh,
Summon me for Prime ;
When the white light waketh,
Boy, the church-bell chime."

Said the Priest, and wended,
Weary, to his bed ;
Low upon his pillow
Laid his heavy head.

Sideways set Orion,
Louting on one knee,
Holding up his cudgel,
Dipping in the sea.

Slowly o'er the pine tops
Wheeled about the Bear ;
All night long the water
Whispered on the weir.

As the eyelid fluttered
Of arousing dawn,
O'er the jagg'd horizon
Threads of light were drawn.

Peering 'twixt the firboles,
Plastered with the snow,
Wan and white, uncoloured,
Eastward, lying low.

Harshly from the tower
Clamoured forth the bell,
Making morning slumbers
Chequered where it fell.

Then the Priest, awaking,
Turned upon his side,
"Keenly cold is biting,"
Muttered he, and sighed.

"There is scarce a glimmer
Through the frosted pane ;
Church is like a cellar,
I will sleep again."

Stood the little server,
Waiting at the door,
Noting robin redbreasts
Hopping in the straw.

"Had I but a riddle,
Stick, and crumbs of bread,
I could catch these robins,"
Eagerly he said.

But with sudden impulse,
Turned and sought the choir ;
Touched the altar tapers
With a flake of fire.

Opened wide a Psalter,
And, in church alone,
Sang the Psalms of David
To their ancient tone.

Once again Orion,
With a halting knee,
Brandishing his cudgel,
Dived into the sea.

And above the fir tops
Wheeled again the Bear,
While the water fretted
Hoarsely o'er the weir.

Once again the jangle
Of the bell for Prime,
Told at dusk of morning
Of awaking time.

By the mindful server
Rung as he was bid,
Once again the Friar
Raised his heavy lid.

“How the wind is wailing
On the window pane ;
Sweet are second slumbers,
I must sleep again.”

But the little server,
Looking forth, descried
Pools of water frozen,
Offering a slide.

For a winter morning
Better no device
Than with tingling pulses
Whirling on the ice.

But, abruptly turning,
Hied he to the choir,
Touched the altar tapers
With a flake of fire.

Oped the great Church Psalter,
Straining up on toe,
Sang the Psalms of David
Solemnly and slow.

Once again Orion,
Seaward with his flail,
Set, and Ursus Major
Whisked about his tail.

But the tempest raging,
Hid the stars from sight,
And the falling snowflakes
Blotted out the light.

At the time for stirring
Woke the little lad,
Cuddled in his blankets,
Shivering and sad.

“Must I on this morning
Leave my bed so warm,
To struggle to the churchyard,
Through the snow and storm?”

“Father John, I'll warrant,
Lapped in slumber lies,
Twice hath failed already—
Wherefore should I rise?”

Yet from bed he started,
And the church-bell rung,
Oped the Psalms of David,
And the office sung.

All the while in vision
Lay the Priest, and saw,
Robed in light, the Saviour,
In the heavenly store,

Whence He had extracted
That He now did hold
In His hand, three jewelled
Burnished crowns of gold.

"These for me, my Master?"
Cried the Priest, with joy;
"No, my son," He answered,
"For the serving boy.

"Thrice he hath been tried,
Thrice has he prevailed;
Crowns become the victor,
But not him who failed."

S. BARING GOULD.

Alice. Some of the lines don't rhyme rightly.

Aunt C. No; but we cannot take liberties with Mr. Baring Gould's poem.

Grace. What was the riddle?

Edmund. A sieve. This excellent choir-boy liked trapping little birds, you see.

Aunt C. He was a boy like other boys, except that he knew how to conquer his wishes.

Grace. What was that about Orion and Ursa Major?

Alice. They are constellations of stars. Come to the window, Gracie. Don't you see those seven stars, like four legs and a tail? They are Ursa Major, the Great Bear. And there—look at these. There are three for a sword-belt, another three for the sword; then, further off, two bright stars for shoulders, two more for heels, and a circle of little stars for a shield. Those make up Orion, the hunter, who comes out on a winter night, and sets in the morning; while the Bear is so high, as only to turn round the Pole, and never set.





EVENING XXII.

A FEW FLOWERS.

Grace. Think of one never having had any verses about flowers yet!

Alice. Edmund would not have cared about them.

Aunt C. Well, as he has not favoured us to-night, we will take a few choice bits, old and new, beginning with the little May-day song that Mr. Keble put into the mouths of his village children.

MAY-DAY SONG.

April's gone, the king of showers;
May is come, the queen of flowers;
Give me something, gentles dear,
For a blessing on the year.
For my garland give, I pray,
Words and smiles of cheerful May;
Birds of spring, to you we come,
Let us pick a little crumb.

J. KEBLE.

Aunt C. Next I will read you a pretty dream which Miss Shipley has kindly given me for you.

LITTLE MABEL'S DREAM OF THE FLOWERS.

Where the April flowers were fairest,
Little Mabel wandered free,
Laughing, skipping, shouting, dancing,
With a heart so full of glee,
That before the sweet spring morning
Half its hours had smiled away,
Little Mabel stopped her sporting,
Tired with her happy play.

Where the daffodils were tallest,
And the violets most sweet,
On the moss sank little Mabel,
Glad to rest her weary feet ;
And the perfume of the flowers,
And the stock-dove's murmur deep,
Lulled the little tired maiden,
Till, at last, she fell asleep.

Slept, and, dreaming, thought of arches—
Churches' arches, high and tall ;
Dreamt she knelt on purple cushions—
Saw a blue roof over all ;

And, like daffodils, all yellow
Seemed the arches tall and high,
And the roof, so wide and splendid,
Had a look of the blue sky.

Then upon her ear fell music—
Music as of Sabbath bells,
When, on summer breezes floating,
Soft the sweet low cadence swells.
So she rose ; and, looking upward,
Saw the purple orchis tall—
Saw sweet cowslip flowers all golden,
Bent in answer to her call.

“Cowslips, did I hear you singing,
Soft and sweet, and sweet and low ?
Tell me why you made such music—
Tell me why I felt it so !”
With her tiny hands behind her,
Clasped in grave, attentive thought,
Little Mabel, looking upwards,
Thus the cowslip's answer caught,

As the sweet air stirred the flowers,
And their perfume moved abroad—
“Darling, we our bells were ringing,
Calling you to worship God !

In this great and wondrous temple
He is listening for your songs ;
Sing to Him, then, little Mabel,
To whose Name your praise belongs."

Then she turned ; and, singing, wondered
Why the cowslips grew so tall,
Till a butterfly that passed her
Whispered, "You are very small—
Very small, my little maiden ;
Don't you wish to fly like me,
Flitting round the tallest flowers,
Fluttering past the hawthorn tree ?"

Mabel shook her head, and, smiling,
Sat down where ground-ivy grew,
With its blossoms peeping round her,
And its tiny buds of blue.
Buttercups rose tall above her,
And one golden flower bent down,
Saying soft in gentle accents,
"Mabel, mark my shining crown !

"Not a king can boast one rounder,
Nor more purely wrought than mine ;
No grand coronet could ever
In the sun more brightly shine.

"Tis your Father, little Mabel,
Who has made my crown so gay ;
Think of this when weaving garlands
In your merry, joyous play."

Presently, she reached the woodland
Where the moss grew damp and green,
And the stately "lords and ladies"
Made a cool and leafy screen.
On her knees sank little Mabel
Where the fair wood-sorrel grew ;
Oh ! how purely gleamed the blossoms,
Lilac-streaked and pale of hue.

" I must gather for my garland
Some of you, you darling flowers !
Shall you fade, sweet fair wood-sorrel,
In these sunny, gladsome hours ?"
And the sweet wood-sorrel answered,
With a voice most soft and clear—
" Darling, I grow best in shadow ;
Leave my tiny flowerets here !

" In the sun they droop and wither,
And my little leaves shut up ;
Gather for your garland flowers
Hardy as the buttercup.

Lucy Coleridge's Poetry Book.

God gives all the flowers their places
Where they may most fitly dwell ;
And His will we must not alter,
For He knoweth all things well."

"Blue-bells," said the little maiden,
"Are you strong, or are you weak?
May I put you with my cowslips
And my orchis? Blue-bells, speak."
Then the blue-bells answered gaily,
"We are strong, and do not fade
Shall so late as the wood-sorrel,
Growing lowly in the shade."

"Gather us and we will blossom
By your buttercups of gold,
With your cowslips and your orchis,
All the flowers your fingers hold ;
Put our fair companion, standing
Pale and graceful by our side,
It will group its graceful flowers
In your garden tied."

Then said little Madel, gravely,
"As you grow so faintly,
Shall I leave, or shall I take you,
Gentle wood-anemone?"

“Take me, if you will, sweet Mabel,
I shall live till eventide,
And if thus I give you pleasure,
I shall not in vain have died !”

Primrose stars now rose before her,
Periwinkles brightly blue ;
“Oh, sweet flowers !” she said in rapture,
For my wreath I must have you !”
As she stood on tip-toe, reaching
To the primrose-star above,
Thus the sweet flower whispered softly,
“Little Mabel, God is Love !

“Every flower speaks of His goodness,
And a story sweetly tells”—
Here it stopped, and Mabel, listening,
Heard once more the cowslip bells ;
Saw the daffodils above her,
And the roof so grand and blue,
While the bells changed in their music,
Chiming, “Mabel, where are you ?”

With a start she woke, and, looking,
Saw her mother at the gate ;
Then she ran, and, laughing, answered,
“Mother, am I very late ?

I have spent my time in Dreamland
All these sweet and sunny hours,
Hearing music, learning lessons,
And my teachers were the Flowers."

M. E. SHIPLEY.

Alice. And let us have these verses on the Daisy,
though I do not know who John Mason Good was.

Aunt C. He was a physician, who lived between the
years 1784 and 1827, and wrote several works, the
principal of which is called *The Book of Nature.*

THE DAISY.

For who but He who arched the skies,
And pours the dayspring's living flood,
Wondrous alike in all He tries,
Could raise the Daisy's purple bud,
Mould its green cup, its wiry stem,
Its fringed border nicely spin,
And cut the gold embossed gem
That, set in silver, gleams within ;
And fling it, unrestrained and free,
O'er hill and dale and desert sod,
That man, where'er he walks, may see
At every step the stamp of God ?

JOHN MASON GOOD.

Aunt C. Very beautiful. Suppose we turn now to the Daffodils, which Wordsworth wrote from a description written in a letter by his sister Dorothy.

THE DAFFODILS.

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host of golden Daffodils,
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle in the milky way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay :
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beneath them danced, but they
Outdid the sparkling waves in glee :
A poet could not but be gay
In such a jocund company ;
I gazed and gazed, but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought.

For oft when on my couch I lie,
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude ;

And then my heart with pleasure thrills,
And dances with the Daffodils.

WORDSWORTH.

Aunt C. Gracie, you look thoughtful. What do you think it means ?

Grace. I see how beautiful the Daffodils were, clustering about as they do in our meadow, and dancing in the breeze ; but what was the bay. I did not know they grew by the sea.

Aunt C. This must have been a bay in one of the Lakes—Rydal Mere, most likely.

Edmund. And what was the wealth ? Was it that they are like gold ?

Alice. Oh, base comparison ! No ; but the recollection made him—or her—rich for ever in a happy remembrance of the dancing Daffodils. Some day, perhaps, you may know better what is the inward eye that is the bliss of solitude.

Grace. May I say "The Rose" ?

T H E R O S E .

How fair is the Rose, what a beautiful flower,
The glory of April and May ;
But its leaves they are ready to fade in an hour,
And they wither and die in a day.

Yet the Rose has one powerful virtue to boast
Above all the flowers of the field—
When its leaves are all dead, and fine colours are lost,
Still how sweet a perfume it will yield.

So frail is the youth and the beauty of men,
Though they bloom and look gay like the Rose ;
But all our fond care to preserve them is lost—
Time kills them as fast as he goes.

Then I'll not be proud of my youth or my beauty,
Since both of them wither and fade,
But gain a good name by doing my duty,
That will scent like a Rose when I'm dead.

ISAAC WATTS.

Aunt C. Here are some verses of Mrs. Gilbert's, that I think you will enjoy, though they are sad. Her husband's birthday was the 20th of March, and it was the regular custom to celebrate the day by their going together to some meadows just beyond Nottingham, to gather a handful of the purple crocuses that grew wild there. Even when both had grown so feeble that they could not walk so far, they still kept up the custom ; but alas ! the meadows were being fast destroyed by the spread of the great city, and here is

THE LAST DYING SPEECH OF THE CROCUSES.

Ye tender-hearted gentlefolk of Nottingham's fair town,
And you who long have loved us, from the poet to the clown,
Attend our sore complainings, while with one accord we weep,
From mossy beds uprising, where we sought our summer sleep.

How many a pleasant springtide ere a blossom peeped of May,
Nor yet a stealthy violet its presence did betray,
And scarce the winter flood had left the lowlands to the sky,
We came in thronging multitudes to gladden every eye.

We came, a simple people, in our little hoods of blue,
And a blush of living purple o'er earth's green bosom threw;
Our faces smiled a welcome, as they gaily passed along,
And "Have you seen the Crocuses?" was everybody's song.

Forth came the happy children to their revel in the flowers,
Forth came the weary working man to that sweet show of ours,
Forth came the lace-girl cheerily, the common joy to share,
And e'en the stately gentlefolks were pleased to see us there.

But ah! 'twas dreary midnight when we heard the winds bewail,
Deep, strange Æolian whisperings came sighing on the gale;
Anon with hammer, wheel, and blast the welkin rang around,
And each a deadly shiver felt beneath us in the ground.

One gentle shriek the silence broke, one quiver of despair,
Our fatherland, farewell, we cried, farewell ye meadows fair.
Dear children born of yester spring, dear children yet to be,
Ye shall but read of Crocuses, no more, alas! to see.

MRS. GILBERT.

Grace. Oh! I wish they could have left the Crocuses. But what is the welkin?

Aunt C. The skies, or firmament. Alice knows the word in German as *wolken*, clouds.

Grace. And Æolian?

Aunt C. Æolus was in Greek mythology lord of the winds; so Æolian means windy. It is generally applied to music made by the wind, because there is an instrument called Æolian harp, arranged to be played upon by the winds.

Grace. Like the telegraph wires, where the wind makes such pretty tones.

Alice. I am sure we have not found half enough verses about flowers.

Grace. Alice found me these pretty verses to say to you.

Alice. They are in the *Youth's Companion*, that nice paper we get from America.

OUR FLOWERS.

Oh, Maggie loves the lily fair,
And Annie loves the rose;
But John and I, and Willie too,
Love every flower that blows.

We love the golden buttercup,
We love the daisy white,
The violet blossoming in the shade,
And the roses in the light.

The wall-flower and the marigold,
And the pretty London pride,
And the blue-bell hanging down its head,
Its laughing eye to hide.

And the hollyhock that turns about
Its head to chase the sun ;
Oh, dearly do we love the flowers—
We love them every one.

Far better than our painted toys,
Though gilded bright and gay,
We love the gentle flowers that bloom
In the sunny summer day.

For it is God who made the flowers,
And careth for them all,
And for our Heavenly Father's love
There is not one too small.

He fans them with His gentle wind,
He feeds them with His dew ;
And the God who loves the little flowers,
Loves little children too.

Alice. Is it not pretty ? I must find a tune for it,
and let the Infant School children sing it.



EVENING XXIII.

THE POULTRY-YARD.

Alice. We had Partlet and Chanticleer, but I am sure there are plenty of delightful verses about Chickens and Ducks besides. I found one to-day called "The Motherless Turkeys."

Edmund. Are they Chickens or Ducks ?

Alice. Turkey-chicks, you objector ; besides, there is plenty about the other creatures in the verses.

THE MOTHERLESS TURKEYS.

The white Turkey was dead, the white Turkey was dead,
How the news through the barnyard went flying ;
Of a mother bereft, four small Turkeys were left,
And their case for assistance was crying.

E'en the Peacock respectfully folded his tail,
As a suitable symbol of sorrow,
And his plainer wife said, "Now the old bird is dead,
Who will tend her poor chicks on the morrow ?

"And when evening around them comes dreary and chill,
Who above them will watchfully hover?"

"Two each night I will tuck 'neath my wings," said the Duck,
"Though I've eight of my own I must cover."

"I have so much to do! for the grubs and the worms
In the garden 'tis tiresome pickin';
I have nothing to spare—for my own I must care,"
Said the Hen with one chicken.

"How I wish," said the Goose, "I could be of some use,
For my heart is with love overbrimming;
The next morning that's fine they shall go with my nine
Little yellow-backed goslings out swimming."

"I will do what I can," the old Dorking began,
"And for help they may call on me too,
Though I've ten of my own, that are only half grown,
And a great deal of trouble to see to."

But those poor little things that are all legs and wings,
And their bones through their feathers are stickin';
"Very hard it must be; but oh! don't come to me,"
Said the Hen with one chicken.

"Half my care, I suppose, there is nobody knows,
I'm the most overburdened of mothers;
They must learn, little elves, to scratch for themselves,
And not seek to depend upon others."

She went by with a cluck, and the Goose and the Duck
Exclaimed in surprise, "Well, I never!"
Said the Duck, "I declare those who have the least care
You will find are complaining for ever."

And when all things appear to look threatening and drear,
And when troubles your pathway are thick in,
For aid in your woe, oh! beware how you go
To a Hen with one chicken.

MARIAN DOUGLAS.

Aunt C. It reminds me of a sentence I read the other day—"You have not enough to do to have any leisure."

Edmund. I don't see any sense in it at all.

Grace. I see she was a cross old selfish thing; and I hope she lost her one chicken!

Alice. It is very droll; but I do not see the point of it, nor of what you said just now, Aunt Charlotte.

Aunt C. Did you never hear it said that it is the really busy people who will always find time and means to help others? A narrow, selfish, indolent heart attends to nothing but its one small charge, and makes it an excuse for offering no kindness.

Alice. I see; it is the man with the one talent again—doing nothing, yet fancying he is overloaded.

Edmund. Do you know what the hens in Scotland say when they have laid an egg? They say to the old farmer—

Buy tobacco,
Buy tobacco,
I'll pay a'!!

Grace. Exactly what they *do* say when they cackle.

Grace. Please let us come home to Ann and Jane Taylor, and have the verses I have known all my life about the greedy Duck and the naughty Chicken.

Aunt C. Both rather tragical, though the unfortunates richly deserved their fate.

THE NOTORIOUS GLUTTON.

A Duck who had got such a habit of stuffing,
That all the day long she was panting and puffing,
And by every creature who did her great crop see,
Was thought to be galloping fast for a dropsy,

One day, after eating a plentiful dinner,
With full twice as much as there should have been in her,
While up to her forehead still greedily toking,
Was greatly alarmed by the symptoms of choking.

Now there was an old fellow much famed for discerning
(A Drake who had taken a liking for learning),
And high in repute with his feathery friends,
Was called Dr. Drake; for this doctor she sends.

In a hole of the dunghill was Dr. Drake's shop,
Where he kept a few simples for curing the crop—
Small pebbles, and two or three different gravels,
With certain famed plants he had found on his travels.

So taking a handful of suitable things,
And brushing his topple and pluming his wings,
And putting his feathers in apple-pie order,
He went to prescribe for the lady's disorder.

"Dear Sir," said the Duck, with a delicate quack,
Just turning a little way round on her back,
And leaning her head on a stone in the yard,
"My case, Dr. Drake, is exceedingly hard.

"I feel so distended with wind, and oppressed,
So squeamish and faint, such a load at my chest ;
And, day after day, I assure you it *is* hard
To suffer with patience these pains in my gizzard."

"Give me leave," said the Doctor, with medical look,
And her cold flabby paw in his fingers he took ;
"By the feel of your pulse, your complaint, I've been
Must surely be owing to eating and drinking." [thinking,

"Oh, no, Sir! believe me," the lady replied
(Alarmed for her stomach as well as her pride);
I am sure it arises from nothing I eat,
But I rather suspect I've got wet in my feet.

"I've only been raking a bit in the gutter,
Where cook has been pouring some cold melted butter,
And a slice of green cabbage, and scraps of cold meat,
Just a trifle or two that I thought I could eat."

The Doctor was just to his business proceeding,
By gentle emetics, a blister and bleeding,
When all on a sudden she rolled on her side,
Gave a terrible quack, and a struggle, and died!

Her remains were interred in a neighbouring swamp,
By her friends, with a great deal of funeral pomp ;
But I've heard this inscription her tombstone displayed,
"Here poor Mrs. Duck, the great glutton, is laid ;"
And all the young ducklings are brought by their friends
There to learn the disgrace in which gluttony ends.

MRS. GILBERT.

THE POND.

There was a round pond, and a pretty pond too,
About it white daisies and violets grew,
And dark weeping willows that stoop to the ground,
Dipped in their long branches, and shaded it round.

A party of ducks to this pond would repair,
To sport 'mid the green water-weeds that grew there :
Indeed, the assembly would frequently meet,
To discuss their affairs, in this pleasant retreat.

Now the subjects on which they were wont to converse,
I am sorry I cannot exactly rehearse ;
For though I 've oft listened in hopes of discerning,
I own 'tis a matter that baffles my learning.

One day a young chicken that lived thereabout,
Stood watching to see the ducks pop in and out,
Now turning tail upward, now diving below ;
She thought, of all things, she should like to do so.

So the poor silly chick was determined to try ;
She thought 'twas as easy to swim as to fly : [near,
Though her mother had taught her she must not go
She foolishly thought there was nothing to fear.

"My feet, wings, and feathers, for aught I can see,
As good as the ducks' are for swimming," said she ;
"Though *my* beak is pointed, and *their* beaks are round,
Is that any reason why I should be drowned ?

"Why should not I swim, then, as well as a duck ?
I think I shall venture, and e'en try my luck !
For," said she (spite of all that her mother had taught
"I'm really remarkably fond of the water." [her),

So in this poor ignorant animal flew,
But soon found her dear mother's cautions were true ;
She splashed, and she dashed, and she turned herself
And heartily wished herself safe on the ground. [round,

But now 'twas too late to begin to repent ;
The harder she struggled, the deeper she went ;
And when every effort she vainly had tried,
She slowly sunk down to the bottom and died !

The ducks, I perceived, began loudly to quack
When they saw the poor fowl floating dead on its back ;
And by their grave gestures and looks in discoursing,
Obedience to parents were plainly enforcing.

MRS GILBERT.

Alice. Before we leave the Chicken, let me read
Mr. Keble's verses on the "Hen and Chicken."

Look how the Hen invites her brood
Beneath her wing to lie,
Look how she calls them to their food,
How eyes, in eager, dauntless mood,
The wheeling hawk on high.

So would thy Lord His pinions spread
Around thee night and day,
So lead thee where is Heavenly Bread,
So by the Cross whereon He bled,
The spoiler scare away.

But be thou gathered, one and all,
These simple nestlings see,
Now hurrying at their mother's call
To their one home, whate'er befall,
In faith entire they flee.

J. KEBLE.



EVENING XXIV.

THE MAY-FLY.

Grace. What a lovely fly!

Edmund. A May-fly; I wish I had him to fish with.

Alice. Ah! that's what all you boys think of—how to kill something.

Edmund. Why, what else is he good for?

Aunt C. Ah, Edmund! that is a deeper and more puzzling question than you suppose. This creature spends a full year, if not two, in its larva and pupa states, among reeds and mud.

Edmund. Like all insects; of course I know that.

Aunt C. Listen. Do you know that after it has become what we call the perfect insect, with wings and three tails, it goes on to a further state of greater beauty?

Edmund. No; what does it turn into?

Aunt C. It does not exactly turn into anything; but, standing on a rough-edged blade of grass, or reed, it takes off its outer skin, like a glove, and comes out refined, more transparent, more beautiful, the three whisks of its tail much longer and more delicate, a more ethereal creature, and with nothing to do but to dance and enjoy itself, for it has not even to eat. Its animal organs are gone with its old body; it has only to dart and float in the sunshine till night, when it drops into the river and perishes.

Alice. How very wonderful! Why, do you suppose it is so?

Aunt C. I cannot tell, except that I think there must be some deeper reason for its being brought to such perfection than merely to make bait for Edmund, or food for trout.

Alice (in a low voice). Can it be to show us in a sort of way what our resurrection bodies will be? Only it does not last; and, besides, hardly anyone knows of it.

Aunt C. We cannot guess, my dear, except that we may own it as one of the wonderful emblems of truth



THE MAYFLY



we see in all Nature, like the broken pieces of a mirror.

Edmund. Have you any verses about them ?

Aunt C. None equal to the wonderfulness of the insect. These only dwell on its short life.

THE MAY-FLY.

The sun of the eve was warm and bright
When the May-fly burst from his shell,
And he wantoned awhile in that fair light
O'er the river's gentle swell ;
And the deepening tints of the crimson sky
Still gleam'd on the wing of the glad May-fly.

The colours of sunset passed away,
The crimson and yellow green,
And the evening star's first twinkling ray
In the waveless stream was seen ;
Till the deep repose of the stillest night
Was hushing about his giddy flight.

The noon of the night is nearly come—
There's a crescent in the sky ;
The silence still hears the myriad hum
Of the insect revelry ;
The hum has ceased—the quiet wave
Is now the sportive May-fly's grave.

Oh! thine was a brilliant life to spring
 In thy perfect form to air,
 And sail about, on untiring wing,
 Through a world most rich and fair;
 To droop at once in thy watery bed,
 Like the leaf that the willow branch has shed.

Anon.

Alice. Are there not some pretty lines of the poet
 Gray, about Flies dancing in the sunshine?

Aunt C. I know; what you mean is part of his
 "Ode to the Spring," describing the noon-day rest by
 the water-side.

Still is the toiling hand of Care;
 The panting herds repose:
 Yet hark how, through the peopled air
 The busy murmur glows!
 The insect-youth are on the wing,
 Eager to taste the honied spring,
 And float amid the liquid noon:
 Some lightly o'er the current skim,
 Some show their gaily-gilded trim
 Quick glancing to the sun.

Alice. There is music in the very sound of that!
 Everything else seems unfinished by its side.

Aunt C. And we must descend now to a much less

beautiful animal than the May-fly; though indeed it is beautiful in its own way, and Gracie has some verses here to show that it is not to be despised.

ONLY A FLY.

It is only a Fly, so you think at your will
You may frighten and worry, or torture and kill;
Does it never occur to your mind that the eye
Of God watches over both you and the Fly?

It is—only a Fly—but examine its wings,
What curious, delicate, beautiful things;
You will not find the workman, howe'er he may try,
Can match the light wing of that poor little Fly.

There, look at him now as he climbs up the wall—
If lifted, and left there, how soon we should fall;
But fearlessly, firmly, securely he clings—
He has marvellous feet, with his beautiful wings.

'Tis a strange tiny body a life to contain,
With instincts and feelings of pleasure and pain;
As perfectly formed as 'tis handsomely planned,
And showing the work of the Almighty Hand,—

Of that God who, Lord, Maker, and Master of all,
Leaves not e'en a sparrow unheeded to fall;
And has said—oh, we surely should bear it in mind—
“That the merciful, mercy hereafter shall find.”

The live thing that serious damage can do,
Or is wanted for food, may be killed, it is true ;
But the quickest, the easiest death let it die,
Nor feel needless pangs, if 'tis only a Fly.

Oh, the warm, thankful heart would give pleasure to all,
And be glad that God's creature, though helpless and
Should enjoy the short time He allots to it here, [small,
And live out its brief span free from pain and from fear.

Then go, little Fly, flit uninjured away,
And gambol once more in the sun's cheering ray ;
We will find something pleasanter, better to do,
Than harming a poor little insect like you.

You appear to be idle and useless, no doubt,
And we cannot quite tell what you're busy about ;
But we know, like all formed by God's sovereign will,
Some purpose in life you were meant to fulfil :

A purpose deemed fitting and good in the eyes
Of your Ruler and ours, the All-seeing and Wise ;
Unharm'd spread your wing, then, and mount up on high,
We will honour God's work, though 'tis only a Fly.

E. S. H. G., in *Children's Friend*.

THE FLY.

Baby Bye,
Here's a Fly,
Let us watch him, you and I;
How he crawls
On the walls,
Yet he never falls.
I believe, with six such legs,
You and I could walk on eggs;
There he goes
On his toes,
Tickling baby's nose.

Spots of red
Dot his head,
Rainbows on his back are spread;
That small speck
Is his neck,
See him nod and beck.
I can show you, if you choose,
Where to look to find his shoes;
Three small pairs
Made of hairs,
These he always wears.

Black and brown
Is his gown,
He can wear it upside down;

It is laced
Round his waist,
I admire his taste.
Yet though tight his clothes are made,
He will lose them, I'm afraid
If to-night
He gets a sight
Of the candle-light.

In the sun
Webs are spun,
What if he gets into one?
When it rains,
He complains
On the window panes.
Tongues to talk have you and I;
God has given the little Fly
No such things,
So he sings
With his buzzing wings.

He can eat
Bread and meat,
There's a mouth between his feet;
On his back
Is a sack
Like a pedlar's pack.
Does the baby understand?
Then the Fly shall kiss her hand,

Put a crumb
On her thumb—
Maybe he will come.

Catch him? No;
Let him go,
Never hurt an insect so;
But, no doubt,
He flies out
Just to gad about.
Now you see his wings of silk
Dabbled in the baby's milk;
Fie! oh fie!
Foolish Fly,
How will he get dry?

All wet Flies
Twist their thighs,
Then they wipe their heads and eyes;
Cats, you know,
Wash just so.
Then their whiskers grow.
Flies have hair too short to comb,
So they fly bareheaded home;
But the Gnat
Wears a hat—
Do you believe that?

Flies can see
More than we,
So how bright their eyes must be ;
Little Fly,
Ope your eye,
Spiders are near by ;
For a secret I can tell,
Spiders never treat Flies well ;
Then away,
Do not stay,
Little Fly, good day.

THEODORE TAYLOR.

Aunt C. Before we leave the Flies, I will read you a comical chapter on them, which was written and given to me by a very clever old lady, with whom I used to correspond. She has long been dead, and I hope her relations will forgive me for putting it here without their formal consent, as I do not know where to write to them.

A CHAPTER OF FLIES.

"Fly, a small winged insect of many species."

JOHNSON.

There's a Fly you may eat on your bread,
And a Fly that prognosticates rain ;
There's a Fly ladies wear on their head,
And another that goes thro' the brain.

There's a Fly which has wheels like a mill,
With sounds that are death to repose ;
There's a Fly, let you do what you will,
That is constantly tickling your nose.

There's a Fly when you please you can mount,
Whether bent upon business or pleasure ;
Do not meddle on any account
With the Fly placed to guard some rich treasure.

There's a Fly will supply you with fish,
Provided you're skilful at hooking ;
There is also a Fly—if you wish
It—will greatly assist you in *cooking*.

And, talking of that, there's a Fly
More shunn'd than the worst bug-a-boo—
Who not only takes the *supply*,
But takes off the *appetite* too.

There's a Fly you may seize with your hand,
And a Fly you may mount with your foot ;
There's a Fly that delights in sea-sand,
And another that revels in soot.

There's a Fly that keeps always in-doors,
And one that's the greatest of gadders ;
There's a Fly that will fill you with sores,
Whose bite is as bad as an adder's.

And—suppose you were going to bed
In the dark—near the Straits Babelmandel,
There's a Fly that would serve you instead—
Though hardly so *well* as a candle.

Edmund. Oh, how good! I see the fly-wheel, and
the fishing-fly.

Alice. And the carriage—

Grace. And the firefly.

Aunt C. I think the fly that assists in cooking was
the name of some arrangement for turning the spit.

Edmund. I think several parts of machines are
called flies.

Aunt C. You must make out the kinds of flies at
your leisure.

Alice. Oh! let me read these verses by Gerda Fay,
about the swarming of the Bees.

HOW THE BEES SWARM

A baby-queen in the old queen's hive
Was fed for many a day
On whitish honey; kept alive,
And tended carefully

By old bee-nurses, singing old
Bee-songs with drear intoning,
Who many dark bee-histories told
In voices cracked and droning.

They told of queens who had lost their lives
Before they gained the throne ;
Of banished queens, who had no hives,
But reigned in woods alone ;

Of baby queens, who, at their birth,
Were murdered in the cell ;
Of queens of most surpassing worth,
Waxed up alive and well !

And the song came to the baby queen,
Like the wind through the ivy humming,
And she smiled in her sleep, unweeting of
The ills that might be coming.

For the old queen loved not the royal babe ;
And if she had had her way,
She had flown to the cell of the infant queen,
And stung her to death as she lay !

But a guard from the royal nursery kept
The envious queen at bay ;
One half the guard kept watch by night,
And the other half by day.

The youthful queen awoke one morn,
In her full-grown strength complete,
With her wonderful eyes, and her sting half-drawn,
A queen from head to feet.

And she hummed to her guards, and they answered low,
As she flew from her enemy's hive ;
For she knew if the old queen happened to know,
She might never get out alive.

Oh! what a crowd of loyal bees
Followed their queenly lady ;
Murmuring round her, under the trees
Of the orchard, sunny and shady ;

Clustering thick in the sunshine warm,
On the woodbine-covered briar,
With a noise like the rush of a sudden storm,
Or the roar of a furnace fire.

A sugary hive turned upside down,
Invites the bees within ;
And a small bell rings in a tinkling tone,
With dreamy, drowsy din.

And they hum to the music of the bell,
And the ring of the old tin kettle,
And the empty hive with its sugary smell,
Inviting them down to settle.

So her majesty flies from the woodbine bower,
And into the hive she dips,
And they bicker and buzz in and out for an hour,
When the gardener suddenly slips

A thick cloth over the hiving bees,
Imprisoning the angry band,
Then sets a new company under the trees,
With a steady and careful hand.

And now on the bowery bench behold,
Close under the jasmine wall,
The new swarm humming in peace with the old,
And blossoms enough for them all.

GERDA FAY.

Edmund. It is not right after all. It is the old queen who bounces out in a rage when she is not allowed to kill the young one.

Aunt C. So I have always been told, and I believe it is so.

Grace. But the other way is much the prettiest.

Alice. How do they know the queens apart?

Aunt C. That I cannot tell; but I am afraid the fact does not agree with the poetry.





EVENING XXV.
SHELLS.

Grace. May I find your lovely picture of the Paper Nautilus, Aunt ?

Alice. That we may

Learn of the little Nautilus to sail,
Use the light oar, and catch the driving gale.

Edmund. I don't fancy that anyone did.

Aunt C. Any more than they learnt of the bee to build, which no one ever did.

Edmund. It would be as awkward to put to sea in a boat like that, as to live in a six-sided cell without doors or windows.

Aunt C. And now we must give the Nautilus his poem, written by Charlotte Smith, a married lady of the end of the last century, who wrote novels and verses.



THE NAUTILUS



THE NAUTILUS.

Where southern suns and winds prevail,
And undulate the summer seas,
The Nautilus expands his sail,
And scuds before the freshening breeze.

Oft is a little squadron seen
Of mimic ships, all rigged complete ;
Fancy might think the fairy-queen
Was sailing with her elfin fleet.

With how much beauty is designed
Each channelled bark of purest white ;
With orient pearl each cabin lined,
Varying with every change of light ;

While with his little slender oars,
His silken sail and tapering mast,
The dauntless mariner explores
The dangers of the watery waste.

Prepared, should tempests rend the sky,
From harm his fragile bark to keep,
He furls his sail, his oars lays by,
And seeks his safety in the deep.

Then, safe on ocean's shelly bed,
He hears the storm above him roar,
'Mid groves of coral glowing red,
And rocks o'erhung with madrepore.

So let us catch life's favouring gale ;
But, if Fate's adverse winds be rude,
Take calmly in the adventurous sail,
And find repose in solitude.

CHARLOTTE SMITH.

Alice. Is the natural history there quite right ?

Aunt C. Far from it. Much more has since been discovered about the Argonaut, or Paper Nautilus. A French lady who watched it found that the beautiful light papery shell is really a cradle, which contains eggs, over which the mother sits as you see, the sails being broader tentacles. The male is an octopus, an eight-armed sepia or cuttle-fish, without a shell.

Edmund. I knew it would be humbug.

Grace. I like it.

Edmund. Just like a girl !

Aunt C. Hush, Edmund. The verses are pretty, though they are confused between the Paper Nautilus, or Argonaut, which has no cells, and the Chamber Nautilus, a large, heavy, pearl-lined shell full of cells, with no power of sailing. Lastly, we will read of a land shell, one of Cowper's translations again.

THE SNAIL.

To grass, or leaf, or fruit, or wall,
The Snail sticks close, nor fears to fall,
As if he grew there, house and all
Together.

Within that house, secure he hides
When danger imminent betides
Of storm, or other harm besides
Of weather.

Give but his horns the slightest touch,
His self-collecting power is such,
He shrinks into his house with much
Displeasure.

Where'er he dwells, he dwells alone,
Except himself, has chattels none,
Well satisfied to be his own
Whole treasure.

Thus, hermit-like, his life he leads,
No partner of his banquet needs,
And if he meets one, only feeds
The faster.

Who seeks him must be worse than blind,
He and his house are so combined,
If finding it, he fails to find
Its master.

WILLIAM COWPER.

Edmund. I should not say so. If a thrush had been at its master, he might find the house alone.

Grace. I could find plenty of empty shells in the old quarry.

Aunt C. I suppose that was Vincent Bourne's fault. I have found out that he was a master at Westminster school when Cowper was there, so that perhaps he was not very learned in snail shells.

Alice. And now we are going back to our schools, and our pleasant holiday evenings are over.

Edmund. They have not been so very—very——

Alice. Hush, you ungrateful boy, don't be so uncivil. You know you have enjoyed them very much, though you have been so contemptuous.

Aunt C. Never mind, Alice, if he does choose to think it grand.

Edmund. Well, I think I shall get a lot of marks for literature this time.

Grace. And I am sure I should like to begin all our evenings over again!

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