

Woodside eBook

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I.

GRANDPAPA'S HOUSE.

"Now for the dear, dear country,
Its trees and meadows fair,
Its roses, cowslips, violets,
Whose sweetness fills the air.

"'Tis there we hear the music
Of lark's and blackbird's song,
And merry little finches,
Singing the whole day long."—C. H.

One bright spring day, not so very long ago, three little children arrived at their grandfather's house. They had come to pay a long visit, as their parents were travelling abroad for two or three months.

Now grandpapa lived less than twenty miles from London, yet his house was quite in the country,—indeed you might have thought that it was a hundred miles away from any town,—and it was called Woodside.

You may be sure that Jack, Mary, and Annie—for those were the names of the children—thought the change from London most delightful.

Jack was the eldest—that is why I have put his name before those of his sisters—and he was ten years old. Mary was the next in age, and she was nearly nine; while Annie, the youngest, was seven.

On the day they arrived they felt very quiet, all was so strange after London; besides, they were busy unpacking their toys and picture-books, and in finding places for all their treasures in the rooms grandmamma had set apart for them.

They went to bed early too, and never once woke till their nurse called them in the morning. At first they felt sorry it was time to get up, but when Jane drew up the blinds, and they saw the bright sunshine and the clear blue sky, they made haste to dress, so that after breakfast was over they might go out of doors.

Each of them had visited at Woodside several times before, but they had not been all together there at the same time. They knew very well how many interesting things there were to see out of doors, and they hoped that there would be something new. There was sure to be a difference among the animals and flowers.



The old house looked the same as they drove up to it, with its twenty oak trees in a semi-circle and the gates in the middle. There was the same watch-dog, Lion; and on the parlour hearth-rug, lying curled up in the sunshine, lay Smut, grandmamma's large black cat.

A very respectable old gentleman was Smut, with his sleek, glossy coat; but he stood too much on his dignity ever to play. The children coaxed him and patted him; yet he took no notice, he just curled himself round and went to sleep again.

A proud old cat was Smut; he would never touch food or milk in the kitchen. His food was put on a plate for him out of doors, and he had his milk in a saucer in the parlour. When he was out of doors, he always came in again by the front door, never at the back.

The children soon spied something new in the shape of a long-haired kitten, whose fur was gray and soft. She was bright and lively, and was very pleased to play with the children; for Smut would never take any notice of her, or play with her one bit: so she and the children became very good friends, and had many a game together.

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After breakfast was over, grandmamma told the children they might put on their hats and go out of doors. They did not need to be spoken to twice.

First of all they had a run round the garden, peeped into the greenhouse, and said “How do you do?” to the gardener. But they did not stop long among the lovely spring flowers, for they were in such haste to see the animals.

[Illustration: *The visit to the pony. Page 13.*]

Jack said, “We must pay our first visit to the pony;” so away they went to the stable.

The pony was very sober and steady, and, I am sorry to add, rather lazy; so the children did not get much fun out of him. He lifted up his head and gave a little neigh to Jack, for he seemed to remember him; and then he went on eating his hay in the most unconcerned manner.

They then went to see the large dog in the yard. Lion was very glad to see them. He harked with delight, wagged his tail, rattled his chain; in fact he seemed as if he would break away from it, in his eagerness to meet the children.

“Lion is ever so much nicer than the pony,” they said.

The fact was, the pony had not much work to do, and his chief thoughts were about his hay and his corn and his nice warm stable. Now Lion, although he was generally chained to his kennel, had to watch for others. He was always listening to hear if any one came upon the premises who had no business there; and he barked so loudly that tramps and idle people thought it best to go away. He always welcomed the gardener and the servants, and especially his master, whenever they came to see him; so that every one about the place would give a pat or a word to the friendly dog whenever they passed that way.

“Now let us go and see the fowls,” said Mary.

On the right hand side of the drive up to the house was a wide strip of grass planted with shrubs. Here, standing back, were some wire enclosures inside of which were some choice broods of chickens.

The girls could have stopped here “for hours,” they said, watching the little chickens, that looked like balls of white or yellow or gray down running about or hiding under their mothers’ wings.

However, most of the fowls were in the orchard, close by which was the hen-house. Fancy what a pretty sight that orchard was this sunshiny spring morning! How alive with different sorts of fowls running hither and thither—black, and gray, and speckled; old motherly hens, and pert, lively young ones; while the cocks strutted about and crowed

one against another. Then a hen would come out of the hen-house, where the nests were, telling all the world, by her loud, proud cackling, that she had laid an egg. What noise there was then, for cocks and hens would all join in chorus. Some of the hens seemed to get together to have a quiet chat, as if they were talking over their family affairs; about which they did not always seem to agree, if you might judge by their noise.

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By this time grandpapa had finished reading his newspaper and came to the children. He took them to the cow-house to see the new calf, and he lifted Annie up to let her stroke it; but the mother looked so fierce that they did not care to stay long there. Then they went into the yard to see the pigs. The little pigs looked so funny running about the large, clean sty, as if they loved the bright sunshine and liked to play about in it. But when they fed they would put their feet in the trough, and this was not very mannerly of them.

By the time the children had paid a visit to all the old places they were getting rather tired, and then they went back to the house.

II.

LISTENING IN THE WOODS.

"I hear the blackbird telling
His love-tale to his mate;
And the merry skylark swelling
The choir at 'heaven's gate.'
The cuckoo away in the thicket
Is giving his two old notes;
And the pet doves hung by the wicket
Are talking with ruffled throats.
The honey-bee hums as he lingers
Where shadows on clover heads fall;
And the wind with leaf-tipped fingers,
Is playing in concert with all."

Eliza cook.

Now grandpapa's house, Woodside, stood on the side of a wood; in fact there was only a grassy road between the gates and the wood itself.

Such a wood! with large old elms and oaks and other trees. In the more open spaces were trees and bushes of hawthorn, now completely covered with white blossom, the pretty May-bloom. There too grew primroses, violets, wild hyacinths, besides a long list of other wild flowers, ferns, and feathery green moss.

One fine day grandmamma took the children herself across the road into the wood. She sat down in one of the open spaces upon the trunk of a fallen tree, while the children played at hide-and-seek among the bushes or picked the wild flowers.

By-and-by they came back to grandmamma, who was reading while they were playing about, and said, "Grandmamma, will you tell us about papa when he was a little boy?"

Grandmamma took off her spectacles, shut her book, and the children sat down quite close to her, on the grass at her feet.

Then she began:—"When your father and your uncle and aunts, were about as old as you are now, they came with me into this very place one summer day.

"After they had played awhile they came to me, and I said to them, 'Children, what do you hear?'

"Hear, mother?' they said; 'why, nothing in particular. What *is* there to hear?'

"Well,' I said, 'now all of you shut your eyes and listen, and don't speak till I tell you.'

"After a short time I told them to open their eyes; and I asked John, who was the eldest, what he had heard.

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“First of all I heard the birds singing, then I noticed that there were different sorts of birds singing: I heard the blackbird, the thrush, the little finches, and the warblers—I could not tell you how many; some of them singing as if they could not make sound enough, and others sung a low song, with twitterings and chatterings all to themselves. Some seemed calling to birds a long way off; then I heard those other birds answer, but the sound was so faint that I should not have heard it at all if we had not been so still. I was trying to catch a faint sound of a bird some distance down the wood, which sounded like the coo of the wood-pigeon, when you said, “Open your eyes.”

“Then I turned to Harry—your father, children—and he said, ‘Of course I heard the birds, but I thought, I can hear them any day; I shall listen for all sorts of odd sounds. I heard the distant rumble of a farmer’s waggon, and the cows lowing at Brown’s farm; every now and again I heard the sound of the village blacksmith’s hammer, the faint puffing of a train, a man’s footsteps coming through the wood, and the voices of boys—after birds’ nests, I suppose.’

“Well, Lizzie, what did you hear?’ I asked, turning to one of the girls.

“I heard the wind moving very gently among the trees, making a soft rustling noise. I could scarcely believe in the difference there is between this quiet sound and the roaring of the wind in a storm. Then I heard the wild bee’s hum, and the little tiny noises made by the small creatures that live in the wood. I heard our gardener sharpening his scythe, and the trickling of the brook in the hollow.’

“Now, little Fanny, tell us what you heard.’

“I heard the hens cackling and calling to their chickens. I thought I heard our dog bark; but all was so warm, and still, and sleepy, that I felt as if I should go to sleep too if I kept my eyes shut much longer. I heard the birds though, and a great bumble-bee that flew by when our eyes were shut.’

“Now, children,’ I said, ‘you have all heard something, and yet a little while ago you told me there was nothing particular to hear; nor is there, if you hear without listening.’”

Here grandmamma stopped awhile, then, looking at the grandchildren at her feet, said there was a poet once who wrote about a little girl called Lucy. She lived among all the beautiful things that are to be seen in the country, and she loved them dearly. The poet thought how, as she grew up, she would be yet more and more charmed by them, and that loving all grand and beautiful natural objects would make her charming. Among other things he said,—

“She shall lean her ear
In many a secret place,

And beauty born of murmuring sound
Shall pass into her face.”

“How can sound show itself in a face, grandmamma?” asked Jack.

“Supposing you heard a loud, sudden scream, you would be startled and frightened by the cry; if you heard a tremendous clap of thunder, you might look a little frightened too, but you would also look solemn and still as you heard the grand sound; but you would have quite another look if you were lying on your back under a shady tree some calm summer evening, listening to the low song of the birds, and to the many sounds that are almost silence.”

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“Cuckoo! cuckoo!”

“O grandmamma, there’s the cuckoo!” cried all the children at once.

“Yes; there are a great many cuckoos about here. They say it is only the male bird that calls ‘Cuckoo,’ that the female simply makes a chattering sound.”

“Did you ever see a cuckoo, grandma?”

“No, never a live bird, only one stuffed. I will tell you a story of how I heard one once. It was about five-and-twenty years ago. I wanted some primroses for a nosegay. I used to pick the long feathery moss that grows in these woods and put the primroses among it. I ran across the road outside of our gates—for I could run in those days—and soon filled my basket with as many primroses as I wanted. As I was standing under a large tree, I heard all at once, exactly over my head, a loud, gruff cry of ‘Cuckoo.’ I was so startled, the cry was so near, that I thought it must be a rude man, and I dropped all my primroses and ran back to the gates.

“Then I thought, ‘How foolish of me to be frightened; it is the 18th of April, the right time for the cuckoo to come back to England from the warm country where he has been all the winter,—of course it is a real cuckoo.’ So I went back and picked up my primroses, but I heard no more of that cuckoo.

“I told my children when I came indoors about my adventure; and how they did laugh at their mother for being frightened at a bird.

“I shall always think, though, that that particular cuckoo must have caught a bad cold on his long journey to England, or soon after his arrival, for his voice sounded as if he had a sore throat.”

“Now children,” said grandmamma, rising from her seat, “it is time we walked homewards.”

As they came near to the house they saw Smut sitting on the door-step, waiting patiently to be let in at the front door.

Within a short distance of the house was a brook, almost hidden in places by overhanging bushes and long reedy grass. Then it flowed into more open ground; but it was very quiet in its flow, for the bed was soft and not stony.

Of course the next day the children set off for this brook, to listen to its “murmuring sound.” Jack lay down upon the ground and leaned his head over the brook, thinking he could hear better in that fashion. Mary said she should sit down by a bend in the stream and be comfortable, for she was sure she could not listen well if she were afraid

of rolling into the water; while little Annie sat by her sister's side, holding her hand and shutting her eyes.

If you had seen those children then, you would have wondered what they were doing, they were so serious and intent; but by the quiet look upon their faces they seemed to enjoy the music of the softly-flowing stream. So low was the sound, that you would hardly have noticed it if you had not been thinking about it.

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Often during this visit they would have games at “harking,” as they called it; for they said, “We may as well hear as much as we can, as our father and uncle and aunts did when they were children.” They would shut their eyes for some minutes, and then they would tell each other what they had heard. I can tell you their ears grew very sharp with all this practice; for, like other children, they had their quiet moods, when under the lofty forest trees or in the garden nooks they would listen, not for fun but for enjoyment.

III.

TOM’S BIRDS’ EGGS.

“The goldfinch, and blackbird, and thrush,
Are brimful of music and glee;
They have each got a nest in some bush,
And the rook has built his on a tree.”

BERNARD BARTON.

About a mile off, at the other end of the wood, was a village, which joined an old town so closely that they seemed to be only one place.

The old town was quiet now; but it had been a very busy place many years ago, in the old coach days. I cannot tell you how many coaches daily ran through it, or changed horses at the different inns, on their way from London to towns in distant parts of England.

Now the railway had stopped every coach, and in the valley, through these very woods, the trains rushed along, panting and puffing as if they were running a race with Time.

Fortunately, the trains ran through a tunnel at this spot, so the beauty of the woods was not disturbed.

There was a large green belonging to the village, on the edge of which lived the children’s aunt Lizzie, who had married a doctor. She had two children—Tom, who was eleven years old, and Katey, who was nine. They went to school daily in the adjoining town, so they were unable to see much of their cousins, excepting upon half-holidays, as it was now school time.

But you must not suppose that Jack and his sisters did nothing but play during this long visit. As soon as they had settled down, grandmamma engaged a young lady to come to teach them for about two hours every morning. Woodside was too far from the town for the children to go to school with their cousins. When they were at home they went to a kindergarten school, where they learned in the wisest and pleasantest fashion.

[Illustration: TOM SHOWING THE REDBREAST'S EGGS. *Page 29.*]

The children always looked forward to the half-holidays, when they either went up to their cousins' home, or Tom and Katey came down to them.

One Saturday afternoon, when they went to the green, Tom showed them his collection of birds' eggs. He kept them in shallow boxes full of bran, so that they should not get broken, for he was very careful over them.

Tom's mother told him never to take more than one egg from each nest, unless there were a great many, as there are in wrens' nests, so that the mother bird might not grieve.

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“Please show us a robin redbreast’s egg,” said little Annie.

Tom took two or three from under the bran, and showed her the eggs, which were yellowish-gray mottled with red-brown.

“Mrs. Redbreast has not nearly so red a breast as Robin,” he said.

“I suppose you have plenty of sparrows’ eggs,” said Mary, “they are such common birds.”

“Yes; here they are. They are rather large for the size of the bird; they are spotted and streaked all over with gray and brown.”

“What a lovely pale greenish-blue egg that is!” exclaimed Mary.

“Yes, that it is,” said Tom; “and it belongs to a dear little brown bird—the hedge-sparrow. It is not at all the same kind of bird as the house-sparrow, for it is one of the warblers. It is a prettier bird, and has prettier eggs than the common sparrow. He builds his nest very early, before the hedges are covered with leaves; so his nest often gets stolen. He is one of the birds that stay in England all through the winter.—These speckled eggs of a bluish-gray belong to the linnet, which has a very sweet song, although not very powerful.—These belong to the chaffinch; they, you see, are greenish-purple spotted with brown. See here! I have a nest made by this bird.”

“It is perfectly lovely,” said Mary.

“It is, indeed; it is one of the most beautiful of all the birds’ nests—such a nice round shape, and so firm that it does not easily fall to pieces. Inside it is lined with hair and feathers, and downy things, which make it ever so soft. Just put your finger inside, Annie, and feel it. Outside it is made of moss, fine dry grass, and wool, all matted together, and covered all over with the lichen which grows on the trunks and branches of trees. It is often very difficult to find this bird’s nest, it looks so exactly like the part of a tree.”

“Have you a blackbird’s egg?” asked Jack. “I know his note, for it is clear and louder than that of most of the other birds.”

“Yes, here are some. You see they are of a bluish-green colour, with dark blotches; and very pretty they are too.—Those blue eggs with a few black spots on them belong to the thrush. You must have heard the thrushes singing about grandpa’s garden; there are plenty of them there.”

“I’m afraid you haven’t a cuckoo’s egg, Tom,” said Annie.



“I am so lucky as to have one, Annie. It is very small for the size of the bird, and not particularly pretty. You see it is a dull-looking egg, whitish, with pale-brown markings. This particular egg was taken from the nest of a hedge-sparrow; but cuckoos' eggs have been found in the nests of many other birds—robin's, and skylark's, and chaffinch's, linnet's, blackbird's, and wren's, and many more besides.”

“Why does not the cuckoo build a nest for herself?” asked Annie.

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"Nobody seems to know why she doesn't; but there's the fact. When the cuckoo has laid an egg, she carries it in her wide, gaping mouth, and puts it into the nest of another bird that she has chosen for it. When the egg is hatched, the young cuckoo grows so fast that he wants all the nest to himself. He turns the other young birds that have been hatched with him out of the nest, and the true parents of these little birds have to spend all their time in feeding the cuckoo. It takes a great deal to feed him, because he grows so fast, and is so much larger than they are. They don't seem to mind it though.—

Those pale-green eggs with dark-brown spots belonged to a rook's nest in the elm-tree at the bottom of the garden. There's a curious story about those rooks down there, for they have not been there long. There is an old rookery belonging to the Rectory close by our house; and one day the rooks from there came to our elm-tree. It was in the spring. At last they came frequently, and chattered, and cawed, and flew round and round, as if they did not know what to do about building their nests in it. By-and-by their visits ceased, and they built their nests as usual in the Rectory trees. That very summer, during one still night, a large branch, almost a third of the elm-tree, fell to the ground. The rooks seemed to know that the tree was not safe, and so they would not build in it. That was two years ago; and this spring they have begun to build, and there are several nests now in our elm-tree. It is most interesting to watch the ways of rooks; they seem to have a lot of business on hand. There is another rookery in the town, in the garden of Mrs. Cross, a friend of my mother's. Rooks always leave the town rookeries for the country as soon as their young ones are able to fly. Now Mrs. Cross noticed that her rooks, after they had gone to the fields, always came back each morning quite early to look after their nests. They stayed a little while to talk over matters; then they flew back again to the fields. One very stormy morning she noticed that instead of the whole flock coming and alighting, one solitary rook ventured through the wind and rain, flying round and round the trees without settling, and then flew back again to the others to give his report that all was right in the old home."

"What clever birds they must be!" said Mary.

"They are," said Tom. "There are lots of stories about rooks, but what I have told you happened under our very eyes.—I have a sparrow-hawk's egg here, white, spotted with brown. It was given to my father by a man for me. There are not many of these birds about here."

"Oh," said Jack, "I wish I could get a collection of birds' eggs!"

"It is almost too late in the season now," said Tom. "Still, you might get some from late nests. I can spare you some from mine, to make a beginning. I know a young fellow, who lives about a half-mile off, who has a large collection of eggs. We'll go and see him one Saturday afternoon. He is sure to have some to give away, for he is always adding to his store, and he is very good-natured."

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IV.

JACK AND THE GARDENER.

“Oh! fie upon you, little birds,
To eat up *all* our cherries!
Why don't you go into the woods
And dine upon the berries?”—C. H.

A few days after Tom had shown his cousins his collection of birds' eggs, Jack, as he was coming away from a visit to Lion, passed by the end of the potting-shed. The gardener was in there, and he called out, “Master Jack, I've got something for you in here.”

Jack went into the shed, and the gardener fumbled about on a shelf till he found what he was looking for.

“There,” he said, “is a thrush's nest; I thought you'd like it. I took it out of one of the trees in the orchard. It has got four pretty eggs in it.”

[Illustration: JACK AND THE THRUSH'S NEST. *Page 36.*]

“Oh,” said Jack, “how splendid! What a treasure! It does seem a shame, though, to take it from the birds.”

His delight soon got the better of his scruples, especially when he heard the gardener say,—

“There are too many birds about here already. Missus does encourage them so, that they are as bold as possible. I can tell you, Master Jack, who gets most of the cherries. It is not us that does; it's them birds, especially the thrushes and blackbirds. I'm up early, and I see; and I hear 'em too before I'm up. There they are, at the fruit as soon as 'tis light. They have their breakfasts hours before you get yours. One wouldn't grudge them a few cherries now and again; but to clear the trees as they do is downright greediness, I say. And I wouldn't be hard on them for taking a few currants, for we have plenty of them; but they just go and strip off the largest and reddest of them, and leave the stalk hanging, and that's all that's left of a fine bunch. Then as to the pease—you like pease, don't you, Master Jack? your grandpa's uncommon fond of 'em—well, I have to sow the pease pretty thick, or, I'll warrant ye, we shouldn't have a tidy row come up at all. I have to dodge about with netting and scarecrows to keep what we do get; for I hate a patchy row, I do. Last winter was a very cold season. I don't know how you found it in London, Master Jack, but here there was a long hard frost for three weeks. We'd had a good deal of rain; then it turned to snow, and froze and snowed again till the snow lay pretty thick all over the ground. Then it cleared up, and the sun shone; but the



sun hasn't much power at that time of the year, so it did not melt the snow. It was bitter cold by day, and worse at night. The birds that eat grubs and insects could not get any food at all. So your grandma had a big lump of fat put into a piece of coarse netting, and it was hung up in a likely place—the long branch of a tree—where the birds could get well at it. You should have seen the poor creatures pecking away! It was soon gone, and we had to

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put more lumps into the net before the frost went. I thought to myself it was almost a pity to try to save their lives; it was just a natural way of getting rid of a lot of them. They do say that dying by cold is an easy way—it's like going to sleep; so I'm not wishing any great harm to the little things. And now, Master Jack, how do you think these birds paid back your grandma for all her kindness? Why, as soon as ever the frost was gone, and the weather became warmer, and the yellow crocuses came into bloom, if these very birds, or some of them at least, did not slit the flowers all to pieces with their bills—that's what *they* did. The ground was covered with bits of flowers.—Do you know Mrs. Jones who lives on the green, Master Jack?"

"No," he said; "I don't."

"Well, she's a great friend of your grandma's; but she is not over-strong, and doesn't get out in the winter. She likes to have the birds about her, and she fed them on her lawn with crumbs and pieces; and her fine bed of crocuses in front of her windows was just spoiled. It was mostly the yellow ones that they tore to shreds; and the primroses too—there was hardly one fit to pick. The starlings and the sparrows were the worst; they did a lot of mischief."

"Oh," said Jack, "perhaps they were after insects, or something they wanted to eat. I don't believe they *meant* to do any harm."

"Perhaps not," said the gardener; "but the crocuses were spoiled all the same. You know, Master Jack, I'm about the place summer and winter, and I see a lot. Now, if there's one thing more than another that I hate about a garden, it's cats. They do trample down things and spoil the beds. As this house is lonesome rather, we don't get much of that pest, I'm glad to say; and then Smut is not a sociable cat. But I'll tell you of a curious thing that happened to him one day. There was a pair of thrushes who had built their nest in the laurel hedge at the bottom of the garden next to the field. You know, Master Jack, there's a broad gravel path along the garden side of the hedge. One day, just as the young birds were able to get out of the nest, the young cat at my cottage close by walked into this garden, where, of course, she'd no business; but there she was in that gravel path, and she saw one of the birds and caught it. I saw her with it. The thrushes scolded her, flew at her with a sharp, angry cry, and puss was soon off the premises. The next day, Mr. Smut was walking along this gravel path, enjoying the sunshine in a quiet way, never thinking of birds, for he's a deal too lazy to put himself out of the way to catch anything. I've tried him with a mouse, but he never put out a paw to touch it. He blinked at it in the most unconcerned way, and didn't show the least bit of interest in it. Well, as I said, Smut was walking along, when out flew the thrushes from the hedge, swooped down upon him, pounced on his back, pecked his head,

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and screeched at him, till poor Smut was quite dazed. They fairly chased him out of that part of the garden. You would have laughed to have seen sober old Smut take to his legs as fast as he could run. The robins, too, soon afterwards began the same game, and would stand and scold within two or three yards of the cat, if he was asleep in the garden. I have often seen them sit just over him, and scold him till he woke up and came indoors. As to the gravel path by the thrushes' nest, Smut never came into that path again all the summer through. Smut's a deal too particular," added the gardener; "but I have heard of another cat that was almost as bad. The house-maid told me that in one of her places there was a fine tabby cat, or rather a good-sized kitten, which would never eat anything in the kitchen, and was so particular in his ways that he was called 'Sir Thomas.' At dinner time he had a trick of jumping up as quick as lightning just when any one was going to put his food into his mouth with his fork. He would give the fork a knock with his paw, so that the meat tumbled off; which he ate before one could see what had happened! Such behaviour was not to be borne; so Sir Thomas was always turned out of the room at dinner time. He was a good mouser, and foraged well for himself out of doors. One day he ate some poisoned meat, at least it was supposed he did so. He became so thin, and his fur came off; so he had to be killed, and that was the end of Sir Thomas."

"I hope poor Smut won't come to any harm," said Jack. "I should have liked to see the birds chasing him, though. I wonder the thrush wasn't afraid of getting on to a cat's back."

"Why, the bird was safe enough; Smut couldn't reach it, and he was almost frightened out of his senses. You know animals, when they have their young to take care of or their lives to defend, can do things which seem contrary to their nature. Birds don't make their perches on cats' backs, except for very good reasons.

"I heard of a dreadful thing that happened once," said the gardener, lowering his tone. "There was a cat—it was a half-wild one—and some boys had a dog that was very fond of worrying cats. They set this dog on to the poor cat, expecting to see a fight. But puss made a clean jump on to the dog's back, and fixed herself there. Lifting up first one front paw, then the other, she beat and scratched the dog's head terribly. The boys then wanted to get the dog away, but they durst not touch either of them—the cat would have flown at them; besides, they were cowards, as cruel people always are. Then a gentleman came up, and he got a pitchfork, and secured the poor beasts, and they were both killed. At least the dog was, for certain. Now that's a fact," said the gardener.

[Illustration: REYNARD HARD PUSHED. *Page 45.*]



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"I can tell you another curious thing," added he; "it's about a fox this time. It didn't happen anywhere about here, but in a part of the country where there's a deal of hunting going on. This poor fox was being hunted, and away he went through woods, over ploughed land and meadows, the pack of hounds and the huntsmen in full cry after him, when they came to a small village. Up the street ran the fox, the dogs at his heels, when he saw the open door of a house and ran inside, up the stairs, and crouched under a cot where a little child lay fast asleep! The mistress of the house saw the fox rush in, and she instantly shut the front door, as she knew she would have the whole pack of hounds in her house. As it was, two dogs, a little in front of the others, rushed past her through the hall into the kitchen, then into the yard; so they at once shut the kitchen door, and the dogs just missed the fox. There was a sight all round the house; the dogs were just mad to get in, and trampled down the flower-beds—for there was no keeping them out of the front garden—making such a yelling and barking as you never heard. At last one of the huntsmen came into the house, caught the fox, and carried him away in a bag. The next day a gentleman sent his gardener to put the garden straight again, after the dogs; but the crocuses, which were just showing nicely for bloom, were quite spoiled. They sent the fox's brush—that's his tail, you know—to the mistress. I've been inside this very house, and seen where the fox went to hide himself. It's not the way of the creatures that live in the woods to come into houses, but the poor fox was hard drove; he was.

"But now, Master Jack, I've finished my job in this shed, and I must go."

V.

HIVING THE BEES.

"Busy bee, busy bee, where do you go?"—
"To meadows and gardens whose sweets I know;
Filling my baskets with spoils from the flowers,
Working hard for the hive in sunny hours."—C. H.

In a sunny corner of the kitchen garden stood a row of bee-hives. Many a time did the children stand to watch the busy workers, flying out of the hive to gather honey from the flowers, either to feed the bees or to store it into cells for future use.

They would watch them returning laden, not only with honey, but with pollen, the yellow dust found in the inside of flowers.

Bees get covered with this powder while they are sucking the honey out of the flowers; and they carefully brush it off their bodies with their hairy legs, make it into lumps, and then place it in a curious kind of basket or pocket which every bee has in the middle of each of its hind legs. The children often saw the bees with these yellow lumps piled up

so high that it seemed a wonder they did not fall off. And so they might have done, had it not been for the fringe of long hairs at the edge of the basket, which, by making a kind of lid, kept the precious load safe. They watched the bees fly into the hive, but they could not see what happened next and what became of their treasure.

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Shall I tell you?

First of all, other bees come to help them to unload; then those that are hungry eat the honey; and what is not wanted is stored away in the cells which those that stay at home are making.

But how do they get the wax for their cells? It does not grow in flowers.

No; they make it out of honey which they retain instead of storing. It comes while the bees are quiet; and many bees hang together for a long time while the wax is forming. It then oozes out in thin flakes on their bodies; and this they knead till it is soft enough to build with.

They bring home from the fields something besides pollen and honey; it is a gummy substance which they get from the buds of trees. They use it with the wax, partly as a varnish and partly to make it stronger. They mend up broken places with it, and it answers the purpose of cement.

They use their cells for three things: to store honey, to store bee bread, and others are used to rear the young bees,—nurseries, in fact.

Bees have a great deal to do besides getting honey and building their cells. They have their young ones to take care of. As soon as an egg is hatched they feed the grub with great care; and in about ten days it wants no more food, but spins a kind of web round itself, and lies quite still for about ten days more, when it comes out a bee, ready for work.

Only one bee lays eggs. She is the queen and the mother of all the others. She is a good deal larger than they are, and they all obey her.

One day about the end of May, just as the children's lessons for the morning were over, they heard the gardener come into the hall to tell their grandpapa that one of the hives had swarmed.

"Oh! what is that?" they cried. "Do tell us; do let us go and see."

"Wait a little, wait a little," said grandpapa. "It means that the hive won't hold all the bees any longer; there are too many of them in it, and the old queen bee has left it, with some thousands of her subjects, to a young queen that will now reign in her stead."

"We must see about a new hive for her, gardener."

"Yes, sir; we have it all ready. Bob is waiting with it in the garden now."

Bob was the young man who milked the cow, and minded the pony and the pigs and fowls.

“Oh, do let us go too,” cried all the children.

“I must hear what grandmamma says,” said grandpapa. “It won’t do for any of you to get stung, you know.”

Just then grandmamma came into the hall to see what all the commotion was about.

The three children turned to her and said, “Do let us go to see the bees put into their new hive.”

“Where have they swarmed?” asked grandmamma.

“On to a plum-tree, ma’am, quite close to the hives,” said the gardener.—“I don’t think the little ones will come to any harm if you will let them go,” he added, when he saw their eager looks.

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"Well," said grandmamma, "there really is no danger, if you will all keep perfectly still. It is easy to hive them from a branch, but needs a great deal more care if they swarm upon the ground. If any bees should settle on you, you must let them stay till they fly off of their own accord. If you try to brush them off, they will be nearly sure to sting you."

"I am almost afraid to let little Annie go, lest she should be frightened."

"I will take care of Annie," said grandpapa.—"You won't be afraid in my arms, will you, my little pet, even if some bees do settle on you? Yes, yes, you shall come," he said; for he could not bear to have her disappointed.

"If they cover me," said Jack, "I won't touch one of them!"

So all but grandmamma started off for the garden; and sure enough there was hanging from one of the lower branches of the plum-tree a huge bunch of bees; it was wonderful how they managed to keep together.

"They'll hive easy," said the gardener.

Bob held the new hive directly under the cluster of bees, and the gardener gently shook the bough on which it was hanging, when the bees fell into it. Numbers, however, flew about hither and thither in a state of great commotion.

"Don't be frightened, Annie dear," said grandpapa; "they won't hurt you—keep quite still."

A few bees settled on Jack and Mary, many more on the gardener and Bob, but only two or three on grandpapa and Annie, for he was a little farther off than the others.

By-and-by all the bees flew away into the hive after their queen, and no one was stung. The hive was then placed upon a board on the ground and left there.

In the evening, when all was quiet, the gardener took up the hive and set it by the side of the other bees.

After the children had gone back to the house, Mary asked grandmamma why she did not come to see the bees hived.

"My dear, it is no new sight to me. Why, I hived the very first swarm we ever had myself."

"*You* hived them, grandmamma? Do tell us about it."

"It was a year or two after we were married, and a friend had given us a hive of bees in the spring. They swarmed one sunny day when your grandpapa had gone to London,

and the only man handy was the gardener. He had not been with us long, and he stayed but a very short time, as he did not suit us.

“I saw the swarm myself hanging on to a red-currant bush, and I asked the gardener if he could hive the swarm. He said he didn’t know anything about bees, and he didn’t care to meddle with them.

“I didn’t care to ask for any help from him, so I went into the kitchen and said to one of the servants, ‘Ann, would you be afraid to help me hive the bees, for they have swarmed?’

“‘Not at all, ma’am,’ she said.

“So I told her to draw a pair of stockings over her hands and arms, and to tie a thin shawl over her head and neck; then, when she was ready, we went into the garden.”

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“What did you put on, grandma?”

“Nothing special. I was vexed at the gardener’s cowardice, and I really did not feel afraid, so I went just as I was. I well remember the dress: it was muslin, with large open sleeves, so that my arms were bare. I did not even wear a hat!

“Ann held the hive, and I shook the bees into it. We were both of us covered with bees that settled on us, as they did on the gardener and Bob this morning. We let them take their own time to fly off from us, and neither of us was stung.

“Bees are very curious creatures; they seem to have their likes and dislikes as well as other beings.

“My grandfather kept bees; but he was obliged to get rid of them, for they would sting my grandmother whenever she went into the part of the garden where they were kept. No one ever knew the reason of this.”

Bees keep the inside of their hives very clean. If a bee dies, they turn it out; or if anything like a snail, for instance, crawled in, which would be too large for them to push out, they would completely cover it over with wax.

Here grandpapa came into the room and said, “That was a strong swarm of bees that we have just hived; first swarms generally are.”

“How many bees do you think there were, grandpapa?” asked Jack.

“I should say about five thousand. A well-stocked hive will hold from fifteen to twenty thousand bees. We may expect another swarm from that same hive in a week or ten days; but it won’t be worth so much as this one.”

“Did you ever hear the old rhyme, children?”

“A swarm of bees in May
Is worth a load of hay;
A swarm of bees in June
Is worth a silver spoon;
But a swarm in July
Is not worth a fly.”

“Why not?” asked Annie.

“Because it is smaller and weaker, and it is later in the year, so they have not such a long time to get honey to keep them through the winter. They will generally die off, if they are not fed.”



“Suppose the queen dies, what do the bees do then, grandpapa?”

“They are greatly concerned; they run about the hive touching every bee they meet with their little horns or feelers. Then, when all the bees know of their loss, they set to work to feed one of the grubs in the royal cells with a particular kind of food, and a young queen after due time makes her appearance. They take great care of her, and obey her as they did the old queen.”

VI.

WASPS AND THEIR WAYS.

“An elegant shape is yours, Sir Wasp,
And delicate is your wing;
Your armour is brave, in black and gold;
But we do not like your sting.”—C. H.

The next morning Jack went to see how the new hive had settled, and he found everything going on as usual. The bees were very busy, flying in and out, and working hard to build the cells of their new home.

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The gardener was working near, and he said, "Master Jack, did you ever see a wasp's nest?"

Jack shook his head.

"Well, now, if you come into my cottage, I'll show you one this evening. It's not a very good one, for it got broken digging it out of the ground in one of the garden paths. We'd been terribly plagued with wasps for weeks, and it was some time before we could find the nest. We watched them go into a hole in the ground; so one evening when they'd all gone to bed we got some pitch and brimstone, and laid them with some lighted sticks on the top of the hole. The wasps woke up, and came out to see what was going on; but they were smothered by the brimstone smoke, and were soon done for. The next day we dug out the nest.

"Wasps are great pests, Master Jack, I can tell you. They are very fond of honey, and they go into the bee-hives to steal it, especially when the mornings and evenings get cool, and the bees are not watching at the holes of their hives, because they've gone inside to keep themselves warm.

"The wasps spoil a lot of fruit. If there's one peach finer than another, they know it; and as for the plums, green-gages in particular, why, they are as mad after them as the birds are for the cherries. What with the caterpillars and slugs being after the vegetables, and the birds and the wasps making such havoc with the fruit, I wonder sometimes how we ever get any for ourselves."

"There always seems plenty of fruit and vegetables, though," said Jack.

"Well, yes," said the gardener, "maybe. The birds do help us with caterpillars and slugs, I'm bound to own; and then we are always on the look-out to destroy wasps: and as to the birds, I dodge them with netting; and sometimes we take the nests out of the fruit-trees, as much as to tell them to go elsewhere."

That evening Jack went into the gardener's cottage and saw the wasp's nest. It looked like the cells of bees made in whity-brown paper.

"What is it made of?" asked Jack; "it isn't wax."

"Well, I've heard that the wasp, which has very strong jaws, bites bits of wood off posts and rails, and moistens them by chewing them into a kind of paper, and then makes a comb of it like what you see here."

"I wish I had seen this wasp's nest taken."

"No, Master Jack; why, you'd be in bed at that time: besides, I don't suppose your grandmamma would have let you go, even if you had been here, for you might have

been stung. It's rather a touchy job, is taking a wasp's nest,—very different from hiving bees; we give them a home, but we take one from the wasps.

“If the queen bee falls into the new hive, the bees are right enough—they are sure to go where she is; but the wasps are naturally angered and frightened at being suffocated out of their home. So, I say, keep clear of wasps' nests; those jobs are best done on the quiet.”

“Was anybody stung when this nest was taken?”

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"Yes, your grandma was. She's naturally curious about such things, and came with your grandpa to see the sight. One half-stupified wasp settled on her hair, and she didn't know it; but after she got back to the house it revived a bit and moved, and she, not knowing what it was, touched it, and it stung her badly on the top of her head. I don't think wasps will sting unless they are touched; but they are such creepy things that you don't always know where they are, and you are apt to touch them without meaning to do so."

The next morning at breakfast Jack was talking about the wasp's nest that he had seen on the evening before at the gardener's cottage. Grandma remarked, "There is a kind of wasp called the mason wasp, which bores holes several inches deep in sand-banks. The inside of this long narrow passage is covered with a gummy paste which the wasp makes with her mouth. Here she lays her eggs, and then brings some green caterpillars into the holes, ready for the young wasps to eat when they come out of the egg. Then she closes the holes by a ball of sand, so that nothing can get in to eat the young grub. Sometimes these wasps choose a brick wall instead of a sand-bank for their eggs."

"A friend of mine watched one of these wasps in a wall in her garden. She saw the wasp go into a small round hole in the mortar between the bricks. After a few minutes she walked out of the hole, turned round, and went in again backwards. There she stayed, her little horns and bright eyes being all that could be seen of the wasp. My friend tried to make the wasp come out of the hole, but nothing could move her; so then she had to go away, but not before she had put a mark by the spot."

"The next morning she went back to the wall and found the wasp had gone, and had carefully and cleverly covered up her hole with what looked like mortar."

"The lady then took a pen-knife and scraped away this door to the hole. She then put in a fine crochet-hook, and out tumbled no fewer than fifteen small green living caterpillars. At last, quite at the back of the hole, she found a small oval thing, something like an ant's egg, only more transparent. That was the wasp's egg; and the caterpillars were for its food when it was hatched, which would be in about three weeks."

"Don't wasps make honey?" asked Annie.

"No; the common wasp feeds her very young grubs upon the sweet juice of ripe fruit; in fact they like fruit over-ripe, and that is why they choose plums and pears and peaches that have fallen down to the ground. It is dangerous to eat any ripe fruit that has fallen, without first looking to see if there is a wasp inside it."

"But the young wasps soon want green caterpillars and flies to eat, and many a blue-bottle fly is killed by wasps."

“If wasps don’t store up honey for the winter, what do they live upon when there are no insects about?” asked Mary.

“When the fruit is all gone, and the nights get cold, about the beginning of October, then some instinct tells them what to do, for only a few of them live through the winter.

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"The wasps cease to bring in any more food for the young. They tear open the cells and expose the young grubs to the weather, when they die, or the birds eat them. Generally they pinch them to death, for they will not let them live to die of starvation; and while they are in this state they do not feel pain. So what looks like cruelty is really kindness.

"The full-grown wasps soon become sleepy with cold and die off, all but the few which live to be the mothers of the wasps next year."

VII.

CHARLEY FOSTER'S PETS.

"Sweet is the love which Nature brings."—WORDSWORTH.

On the following Saturday afternoon the children went to see their cousins.

As soon as they arrived, Tom said to Jack, "I saw Charley Foster yesterday, and told him we would go to see him this afternoon. I asked him that, if he had any birds' eggs to spare, would he give them to you, that you might take them back with you to London. He said he should be most happy to do so; and that we had better stop till after tea, and go home in the cool of the evening. So," continued Tom, "as soon as you're ready we'll be off."

"I'm ready now," said Jack; so the boys started for Charley Foster's house, which was about half a mile off, along the upper edge of the wood, so the walk was a pleasant one.

Presently they saw two men come out of the wood with large, square-looking packages, covered over with black linen.

"What are those men doing?" asked Jack; "and what have they got in those packages?"

"They are bird-catchers, and those are the traps and cages for the birds. It's a downright shame to keep a thing with wings in a cage. I can't see what pleasure it can be to listen to their song when they are shut up like that. I like plenty of room myself, and so do birds," said Tom.

"What birds have those men been catching?"

"Linnets and goldfinches chiefly. They get nightingales, too, out of these woods: they are very easy birds to trap, as they are not shy; but it is now rather too late to catch them. The bird-catchers are after them about the middle of April, when they first come back to England."

“Do nightingales sing only at night, Tom?”

“No; they sing pretty nearly all day long, only you don’t notice them because other birds are singing too. They begin their night song between ten and eleven o’clock, when other birds are quiet, and that’s the time to hear them if you happen to be awake. There’s Charley Foster’s house, that low white house on the left hand side of the road. There’s Charley, too, looking out for us.”

Charley was two or three years older than Tom, but having the same tastes they were often together.

Charley took them at once to his “den,” as he called it, a small room at one end of the straggling house, reached by a long passage.

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"Here," said Charley, "I can do what I like, and make my litters without disturbing anybody."

Not but that the room was orderly, otherwise Charley would never have been able to find his things when he wanted them.

He told Jack that he had already put up a box of birds' eggs for him, with a list and description of the eggs in it.

[Illustration: CHARLEY FOSTER'S COLLECTION. *Page 68.*]

"I'm tremendously obliged to you, I'm sure," said Jack.

"Not at all," said Charley; "I like to give to any one who really cares for such things: besides, I've not been very generous, as I have only put in those eggs of which I have other specimens. There are some very good sorts, though, in your box; for, you see, I've been collecting for some time. Tom, I've got an owl's egg for you, that white one, and two jay's eggs—dull green, speckled with olive brown. Look here, too! I've got a jay itself, which a farmer who lives near here shot and gave to me. I'm going to try and stuff it."

"What pretty blue and black wings it has!" said Jack.

"Yes; it's a handsome but a very thievish bird. It's very clever, too, in imitating all kinds of sounds that it hears. It will bleat like a lamb, mew like a cat, neigh like a horse, and imitate the sawing of wood exactly."

"How are the red starts getting on?" asked Tom.

"All right," said Charley; "the young birds are hatched now."

Charley turned to Jack, and explained that there was a pair of red starts that had a nest just outside of the window of the room,—“as you can see.”

Jack went to the window and saw in a hole of the low roof a little bluish-gray bird with a white crown sitting on a nest; and presently her mate came with his red tail wagging, bringing an insect in his beak.

Now Jack could see several little red starts poking out their heads from under their mother's wings, all looking as if they wanted to be fed first.

"This is the third year that these red starts have built their nest in that hole," said Charley. "Before that, it seemed as if a pair of sparrows had looked upon the hole as belonging to them, for when the red starts first came there were a good many fights between them and the sparrows."

“One day when the hen red start was sitting, two sparrows made a dead set at her; and although she behaved in a very plucky manner, she was getting the worst of it. She then uttered a peculiar cry, and her mate came to her help directly; and between them they drove off the sparrows.

“That seemed to be the final battle, for there were only a few trifling skirmishes after that, and the red starts have considered that hole their own private property ever since.”

Charley next showed Jack his collection of butterflies, moths, and beetles; and after the boys had finished looking at these beautiful and curious creatures, it was time for tea, so they went downstairs.

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When they had finished tea, Charley said, "We will go out of doors and see our old raven, Grip."

There were all sorts of odd places outside of this rambling old house which Charley said "just suited him."

In a little enclosure by the side of the kitchen garden was Grip's home. He was kept at night, for safety, in a large wooden cage with open bars, something like a hen-coop; but in the day he had his liberty—although he did not wander far away, for he was very tame.

"He knows all the sounds of the poultry-yard," said Charley, "only I expect he won't show off when we want him to do so. One morning, he had not been let out of his cage, and he wanted his breakfast. He called 'Cluck, cluck, cluck,' just as a hen calls her chickens. In fact some chickens really thought it was their mother calling them, and they ran to Grip! I am sorry to say he helped himself to one of them; the others were frightened and made their escape. Ever since then Grip has been in his present quarters; he was too near the poultry-yard before. Many a time has he cackled like a hen that has laid an egg, so that the maids have gone out to look for the egg. He will get up into that elm-tree there and crow so exactly like a cock that he will set off all the cocks in the poultry-yard; and, in fact, all the cocks in the neighborhood that are within hearing will start crowing."

"He knows we are talking about him—Don't you, old Grip?"

Grip gave a croak, as much as to say "Yes," and turned his wise-looking old head, first on one side then on the other, in a very knowing fashion.

The boys were just going, when there was a long loud crow from Grip, exactly like a cock's, which made them all turn round.

"Before we had Grip we had a jackdaw," said Charley. "He was a very clever bird. He used to go round to the kitchen window every day at a certain hour, for a potato that the cook used to give him. If it was not ready she would tell him so, and he would go away for a while, but he always came back for it.

"One evening he was shut out of his roosting-place by accident, so he went to the glass doors of the dining-room, which lead into the garden, and tapped on them loudly with his beak till some one went to let him in. He hopped about the room, and looked as much as to say,—'I want to be shown to my bedroom.'

"Poor Jacky! he was killed by an accident; and then we had Grip in his stead.

"You know we have a pair of hedgehogs, Tom," said Charley. "Well, they've got some young ones; suppose we go and see them."

The boys went into the kitchen garden, and in a thick hedge at the bottom they came to the nest which the hedgehogs had made on the ground. It had a sort of roof to keep the rain off, and inside it was lined with moss and leaves.

“I never saw a hedgehog,” said Jack.

“Well, now, that is one there,” said Tom.

Jack saw a little creature rather more than nine inches long, with a thick body, a long snout, short legs, and no tail to speak of. It was covered with spines, and could make itself into a ball whenever it pleased or when it was frightened, and then no dog or beast could touch the little spiky ball.

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"The mother is inside the nest with her young ones," said Charley. "They are about a fortnight old. These hedgehogs are very tame and know me well. I'll try to get her to come out of the nest."

Charley went to the cabbage bed and found some slugs, which he put on to a leaf, and called to the hedgehog. She soon made her appearance, and the little ones with her, so the boys had a good look at the funny little things.

"I say, Charley, you won't want six hedgehogs," said Tom. "Can't you spare me a pair, when these little ones have grown bigger?"

"I daresay I can," said Charley, "I suppose your mother wouldn't mind having them in the garden: they are apt to make little holes in the paths, but then they eat slugs and insects. They are quiet, too, in the day time, but get lively towards evening."

"They are useful little creatures, and soon get tame. I have heard of their being kept in kitchens to eat up the crickets and beetles there, sleeping all day and awake at night when these creatures are about. They eat vegetables and soaked bread, and are easy little things to keep."

"I wish I could see one roll itself into a ball," said Jack.

"Oh, that's soon done," said Charley. He took a stick and gently poked the hedgehog they saw first. "There, see now! he is bending his head, and drawing his skin over it like a hood, and closing himself up. See how stiffly his spikes stick out all over the round ball that he is."

"Well, that is funny," said Jack. "I wonder how he manages to do it?"

"He knows the trick of it," said Tom; "for you can't possibly open him against his will."

The boys left the hedgehog to uncurl himself when he pleased, and next went to a cucumber frame where Charley kept a pet toad.

"Don't toads spit poison?" asked Jack.

"No; that's all nonsense. Their skins secrete something unpleasant, which they can make come out of it when they are frightened or in danger. Dogs don't like catching hold of a toad with their mouths; but they are perfectly harmless, in fact they are very useful in a garden, as they eat slugs, beetles, caterpillars, and earwigs. See, this one will eat out of my hand; but I must find something for him first."

Charley soon found a fat little slug, which he brought to the toad; and he at once ate it from his hand.

"I'll find you something else, old boy;" and Charley soon found a fly, which was snapped up by the toad in a twinkling.

"What beautiful bright eyes he has!" said Jack.

"Yes; and he makes good use of them, too. Didn't you notice how quickly he darted out his tongue after the fly?—I say, Mr. Toad, I believe you are growing out of your skin."

"What do you mean, Charley?"

"Don't you see he has grown so much lately that his skin is very tight, and it is looking dull. He'll soon cast it off. It will split down his back, and then he will draw his legs out of it.—And you'll have a nice new suit complete, won't you, old Toady?"



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"I think frogs are very interesting creatures too," said Tom.

"So they are," said Charley. "I often stand by our pond down there and watch them. The pond is in a damp part of the garden; just what frogs like. In the spring there's a lot of that spotted, jelly-looking stuff, which is the frogs' spawn, or eggs, about the pond.

"By-and-by, in about a month or so, a tadpole comes out of the egg. There are swarms of them wriggling about the water, with heads and bodies and tails, but no legs. In about six weeks more the legs begin to grow, and gradually the tadpole changes into a frog. See what a number of young frogs there are hopping about here on the edge of the pond! They are just out of their tadpole stage. They'll eat just what toads eat, so they do no harm in a garden."

"I think I'll take some home with me and put them into the little pond in grandpapa's garden," said Jack; "for I shall like to watch them growing."

So Jack caught a few carefully, and tied them loosely in his pocket handkerchief.

"Well," said Tom, "I think we must say good-bye, Charley; it's about time for us to go home."

"We must not forget the box of birds' eggs; and thank you," said Jack.

"No," said Charley; "I'll fetch the box and go home part of the way with you. It's a very fine evening for a walk."

VIII.

A TALK WITH AUNT LIZZIE.

"I can show you the spot where the hyacinth wild
Hangs out her bell blossoms of blue,
And tell where the celandine's bright-eyed child
Fills her chalice with honey-dew,—
The purple-dyed violet, the hawthorn and sloe,
The creepers that trail in the lane,
The dragon, the daisy, and clover-rose, too,
And buttercups gilding the plain."

EDWARD CAPERN.

After the boys had started for Charley Foster's, the little girls went upstairs into what was once the nursery, where Tom and Katey kept all their toys and books and learned their lessons; in fact it was still the children's room.



Katey showed her cousins her various belongings, and said, "I'm afraid I have not anything so pretty to show you as Tom's birds' eggs. I thought I would make a collection of wild flowers and leaves, and press them and fasten them on to paper. So I began with the leaves of the forest trees, and here they are."

The children looked through the sheets, on which were pressed the leaves of the oak, the elm, the birch, the willow, and many others besides, all so different in shape.

"The *leaves* are very well," said Katey, "but not the *flowers*. I soon left off pressing them, for the poor flowers looked so wretched, so unlike the living ones, that I did not care to go on."

"I have felt just the same about some of the things in the museums in London," said Mary. "They may interest grown-up people, but not us. They are so dried and withered, that they don't give you much of an idea of what they were in life. Who would ever guess what a man was like by seeing a mummy? and some of the things are no better than mummies."

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"I am very fond of flowers," said Katey: "they look lovely in their own places where they grow, but just like mummies, as you say, dried up and stuck upon paper."

"I'll tell you what: we are going to have tea on the lawn, and after tea we'll ask mother to show us some sketches she has made of wild flowers. Now they do give you a real notion of the flowers themselves."

Katey went to the window, and said, "Oh! there is Sarah bringing out the table for tea already. Let us go downstairs into the garden."

So they all went down to watch Sarah lay the cloth, and put the bread and butter and cake on the table, then the milk and sugar, and last of all she brought the teapot.

"Here comes Aunt Lizzie," said Annie; and all the children joined in the request that when tea was over she would show them her paintings of flowers.

"To be sure I will," she said; "and we will look at them out of doors as soon as the tea-table is cleared."

"I *do* like having tea out of doors," said Annie; "we can never have it in London, however hot it is."

[Illustration: THE TEA ON THE LAWN. *Page 82.*]

"We cannot have it for very long in the country either," said Aunt Lizzie, "because our weather is so changeable. Sometimes we have cold winds with bright sunshine, or it rains, or the grass is damp. Still, during the long summer days we can frequently manage it; but it is not always summer even in the country."

"Do the woods seem very dreary to you in the winter, aunt?"

"No; I have known and loved them all my life, and they have a very different look in winter from what they have in summer."

"But they look so bare when the leaves are gone," said Annie.

"Yes; but you can see the shapes of the trunks and branches, down to the little twigs. You can tell the name of the tree from its skeleton, for each has its own form—the sturdy oak, the stiff poplar, the drooping willow, and the elegant silver birch. You should see them after a fall of snow. Each tree bears the weight of snow after a different fashion—like itself.

"In fact the woods during a bright hard frost are as good as Fairyland. The brown dead oak leaves lying on the ground are fringed all round the edges with what looks like small

diamonds sparkling in the sun. The frost takes every blade of grass, every twig and straw, and covers them with glittering crystal, and the whole air is clear and bright.”

“We have some very beautiful days in winter,” said Katey.

“Yes,” said her mother; “calm, still, cloudless days—like midsummer, only of course colder. Not very often, it is true, but occasionally.

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"I was walking on one such day till I came to what had been the private road leading to a gentleman's house. The house itself was old and uninhabited, and the way to it was open. I walked along, and the trees on either side of it were bare, sparkling with frost and looking like other trees outside. Presently I came to a bend in the road, and saw that on both sides the space was planted with evergreen shrubs and trees, and some of the trees were very tall. There were evergreen oaks, and pines, and firs, and plenty of the large-leaved ivy. It seemed as if I had walked from midwinter into midsummer. The bright sun was shining, the air was still, the sky a cloudless blue, and all the trees were green! I stood still to enjoy the sight, then I walked on for a very short way, when another sharp turn of the road brought me back to the wintry landscape of bare trees and more open country. That sight can be seen any winter now."

"I thought the country was dull in winter," said Mary.

"We have dull days, rainy days, and dark days; but then, although Nature is so quiet, she is still alive, and there are always changes going on.

"I knew a gentleman, who is dead now, but he lived to be very old. For a very great many years he always took one walk, at a certain hour every Sunday morning, all the year through. It was a very ordinary country walk—through the little town, up by the side of a fir plantation, along hedge-rows and scattered houses, over a stile into a long ploughed field generally planted with turnips for cattle, then over another stile, through winding lanes that led to farm-houses and at last came out into the public road.

"It interested him to watch the changes week after week—the first appearing of buds in the spring time, their growth during the week, then the bursting of the leaves. Then there was the white blossom of the black-thorn, which comes before the leaves; then that of the white-thorn or 'May;' the silvery blossom of the willow tree; and the yellow catkins of the hazel, called by country children 'lamb-tails.' Then came the wild flowers of very early spring, till, as the weeks went on, their bloom was over with summer and autumn. Now the hedges were red with hips and haws. At last the leaves fell, and winter came once more.

"Besides all these changes there were the birds to notice—when they first came back to England after their winter absence, when the cuckoo was first heard, and many other things as well.

"You may take the same walk fifty-two times a year, year after year, as he did, and yet no two walks will be alike.

"Now Sarah shall clear the table and I will fetch my portfolio of sketches."

When Aunt Lizzie returned she said, "These are all wild flowers here.—You know that one?"

“Why, yes, it is a primrose. We should know what a primrose was like better by this than by the dried ones. Why, aunt! you have painted a whole lot of them growing just as they do grow.”



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"Yes; I like, if I can, to paint the flowers in their natural places, besides taking a single flower and painting it the size of life. Look at that wild rose-bush mixed with bramble in that piece of hedge; underneath it I have painted a small spray of roses and buds."

"What is that pretty little flower?" asked Annie; "I don't remember ever having seen one like it."

"It is the wood-sorrel; a very lovely little thing it is too. It is common in woods and shady places; but the flowers are almost over now."

"We have some roots of it in the shrubbery, and I saw one flower in bloom there this morning," said Katey.

"Well, you may all go and look at it, if you like." So the children scampered away to look at the small pale, drooping flower.

"What pretty leaves it has!" said Mary. "I have brought one with me; it looks like a cluster of leaves in one."

"Yes; the bright, transparent leaves and stems are very delicate. These leaves will frequently fold up, if knocked, like the leaves of a sensitive plant. You can look for a plant in the woods and try it. The leaves, too, have a very acid taste."

"I see a violet root. I like violets because of their sweet smell," said Annie.

"I like what are called dog-violets too," said her aunt. "They have no smell at all, but they grow all the summer through, in hedges and in grass, in such large quantities that the turf often looks like an embroidered carpet."

"The flower is very similar to the scented violet, only it is of a pale grayish blue. I have painted two roots side by side, one of the scented, one of the dog-violet; also a specimen of the white violet, which is not so common as that of the dark kind, but its smell is quite as delicious."

The children were delighted to recognize, among others, sketches of daisies, cowslips, buttercups, wood-anemones, wild hyacinths, forget-me-nots, eyebright, red and white clover, and many kinds of flowering grasses and graceful fern leaves.

"What is that?" they said, as they saw something that looked curious but not pretty.

"That is one of the sketches I took in Cornwall two or three miles from the Land's End. It is a poor, unhappy furze-bush, covered with dodder. The dodder is what is called a parasitical plant; that is, a plant that lives entirely on another. There are several kinds of dodders: some live entirely on flax, some on nettles, but those that stick to clover and furze-bushes are the most common in this country."

“When the seed of a dodder dropped into the ground begins to grow, it feels about for the kind of plant it wants to live upon: if it cannot find it, it dies.

“This furze dodder, you see, has found what it wanted, and, having done so, began at once to coil its pink thread-like stem on that of the furze. Now it had gained its footing, and threw out a great many more fine stems in all directions, after the fashion of strawberry runners, rooting as it grew. There are thousands of little dodder plants sucking the life out of the furze. I have seen many of the bushes quite smothered, and even killed, by this unpleasant and greedy plant.

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“When you are older, if you study the ways of plants, you will find them quite as interesting as those of animals. They have to get their living; and some, like the dodder, prefer to get it at the expense of another; and others resort to all kinds of plans to keep themselves and their kinds alive.

“The acid of the pretty wood-sorrel is a poison, so nothing will eat it; and the buttercups growing in meadows are untouched by cattle, because of the poison in their leaves and stems.

“I might tell you of many other plants that live in safety because they are defended by poison, or thorns, or prickles, or some peculiar shape. The leaves of the common holly are only prickly on the lower branches, where it needs protection from browsing cattle.

“Then there are wonderful contrivances for keeping not only the single plant but its kind alive, which you will learn one day.

“There are plants which bear seeds in very great numbers, like the field-poppy, so that some of them are sure to survive. The winds carry other seeds to great distances, because they have beautiful feathery down attached to them, which causes them to be easily blown about—such as thistle and dandelion seeds.

“Birds, too, are great seed-sowers: they eat the wild fruits which contain the seed. These fruits are generally red or black, so as to attract birds to them. Among the red ones are hips, the fruit of the wild rose; and haws, which contain the seed of the white-thorn. Among the black are blackberries, the fruit of the bramble; and sloes, which are like a very small hard plum. The birds eat these, and drop the seed which is inside of the fruit on to the ground.”

Then Sarah came into the room to say that Jane had come from Woodside to take the children back.

“We must wait for Jack,” said Mary.

“Yes,” said Aunt Lizzie. “I daresay the boys will be home directly. Why, here they are. —How hot you look, Jack!”

“It is so warm to night, aunt, and we have walked fast. We’ve had a splendid time of it at Charley Foster’s, and we stayed till the last minute, so we hurried home at last.” Where-upon Jack drew out his pocket-handkerchief to wipe his hot face, forgetting all about the little frogs. The loose knot slipped, and you may guess what happened. The frogs, delighted to get out of Jack’s warm pocket, were soon hopping about the room.

“What have you there, Jack? what does this mean?” asked Aunt Lizzie. But she could not help laughing, for she knew what odd things boys will do.

Jack explained to her how he had caught the young frogs to put into the Woodside pond, that he might watch them there.

“Well, you must catch them again,” said his aunt, “and I will give you a paper bag to carry them in, only you need not suppose that there are no frogs in grandpapa’s pond. Charley’s pond is large and shaded, while the Woodside pond is small and open; and the weather has been very dry lately, so the frogs have kept in the soft mud at the bottom. You will see plenty of young frogs after the next shower of rain hopping about the edges of that pond.”

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IX.

AFTER THE RAIN.

"The very earth, the steamy air,
Are all with fragrance rife;
And grace and beauty everywhere
Are bursting into life.
Down, down they come, those fruitful stores,
Those earth-rejoicing drops;
A momentary deluge pours,
Then thins, decreases, stops."

ANON.

"There seems likely to be a change in the weather," said grandpapa one morning at breakfast. "The wind has got round to the west, and there are clouds about."

"I am so glad," said Mary.

"So am I," added Annie. "It has been too hot for the last two or three weeks."

"We shall all be glad to see a little rain," said grandpapa; "the garden wants it badly enough, and so do the newly-mown fields."

Grandpapa was right, for sure enough during the day there were many cooling showers, which made everything out of doors look bright and fresh.

In the evening grandmamma sat at work in the drawing-room by the open doors which led straight into the garden, and the children were with her.

Jack was lying on the floor with his face to the garden, and supposed to be reading a book; while the little girls were busy with some easy fancy-work, making something to take home to their mother when they left Woodside.

Jack seemed to be more interested in something out of doors than he was in his book. At last he exclaimed, "Grandmamma, do look; isn't that a beautiful white fleecy cloud?"

"Yes, it is indeed, Jack. Clouds *are* beautiful and well worth looking at."

The girls put down their work and went to the doors to look out, or rather up, at the deep blue sky, covered with patches of downy white.



“That cloud looks as if it were made of snow mountains and caves,” said Mary. “See how it changes its shape: now there is another cloud coming to it: now they have melted into one.”

“The sky is one beautiful thing that you can watch anywhere, in town or country, in summer or winter,” said grandmamma. “It is like a picture-book that is always open; and the pictures are always changing.”

The children stood and watched the clouds as they sailed about like majestic swans. Some moved faster than others, and came in front of them. They mingled and they parted, and took all sorts of shapes. The colour changed from pure white to delicate gray; and again a stormy cloud appeared, dark with rain that would fall somewhere before long.

“O grandmamma, look!” they all exclaimed, as the evening sun shone from behind a cloud, gilding its edges with gold.

At last, when they had been for some time feasting their eyes with the beauty of cloudland, something else struck Jack, and he said, “How sweet everything smells after the rain!”

“Yes, it does, Jack. The very gravel paths and garden mould smell fresh; and as to the flowers, they are sweeter than ever.”

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"I can smell mignonnette," said Mary.

"I can smell the stocks," said Jack.

"And I can smell the honeysuckle," said Annie.

"Do, grandmamma, let us walk round the garden, to smell the flowers," said all the children; "the gravel is almost dry."

"Very well, you may go; but don't go on the grass—keep to the path."

Jack was off at a bound, and his sisters were not much behind; and they visited flower after flower, sniffing their sweet perfumes. The tall white lilies gave out so strong a scent that, sweet as it was, they did not care to bend them down to their faces; but the roses, after the rain, were so delicious that they did not want to let them go. They found, however, that it was not the large showy roses which had the sweetest smell.

They went to the arch along which the honeysuckle was growing, and then they smelled the rich carnations and the fragrant mignonnette.

Grandmamma called to them not to stay out too long; but they said, "May we pick you a little nosegay first? the flowers are just lovely."

"Very well," grandmamma said; "but don't let it be too large."

It really was difficult to know what to leave out when all was so sweet; but they thought mignonnette, a half-blown moss rose, some sweet-peas, a piece of honeysuckle and of white jasmine, some pinks, and a little stock, could not fail to be agreeable. They thought more of what would smell sweet than of bright colour; and grandmamma was well pleased with her nosegay.

"Grandmamma," said Jack, "there is a poor-looking flower like a small stock in the garden; it smells so sweet."

"It is a stock—the night-flowering stock. The flower is dull-coloured and insignificant; but it has a powerful odour. You must not suppose that the sweet scent of flowers is for our pleasure alone. The perfumes are of great use to the plants themselves, and to the insects that live on honey."

"Of what use can they be to the plants?" asked Mary.

"The perfume is chiefly due to a kind of oil found in the blossoms of plants, and sometimes in the leaves as well. Lavender, rosemary, thyme, and herbs used in cooking, are examples of plants whose leaves as well as flowers possess this ethereal oil, as it is called. Caterpillars do not like the taste of these oils, and leave these highly-

scented plants alone. It is, however, generally the flowers only that smell; and now you can guess why they are protected by their fragrance. What is the most important part of the flower?"

"Its seed," replied Mary.

"Yes; and as the cattle will not eat the flowers, the seed is safe from them."

"But they eat flowers in hay," said Jack.

"True; but by the time the grass is cut many seeds have ripened and have dropped out of their husks; and when flowers are dry, as they are in hay, they lose their particular scent and the oil with it. But the very perfume which keeps away the enemies of the flower attracts its friends the insects, whose sense of smell is very keen."

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“Why do flowers want insects?” asked Annie.

“Because they want their yellow dust taken from one flower to another, to ripen their seeds, or to fertilize them, as it is called. The seeds are far better if they are ripened by the pollen or dust of another blossom than by the pollen of their own flower. The bees, as you know, get covered with this dust as they visit one flower after another; some of it sticks to the bees, but a great deal of it drops off as they rub against the flowers.”

“It’s give and take,” said Jack. “The flowers give the honey for the insects to eat, and the insects carry their pollen away for them.”

“Yes, that’s something like it,” said grandmamma. “And now you can see why flowers which bloom at night need to have a strong odour. There are some plants which

‘Keep their odours to themselves all day’

but towards evening they

‘Let the delicious secret out;’

and it is that moths and insects that fly about at night may know whereabouts the flowers are. The bees are busy in the day-time; but there are a great many kinds of moths, in fact there are more moths than there are butterflies, and they only fly about at night, and the honey of flowers is their sole food. So you see the scent of flowers has a great use.”

“I never thought of that before,” said Mary.

“If the flowers which keep open late in the evening have not a very strong perfume, they are generally white or pale yellow, so as to be seen easily. There is one of these plants called the evening primrose—not that it is like a primrose except in colour—at the bottom of the garden walk.”

“Do let us go and see if there is a moth on it, grandmamma.”

Grandmamma smiled and said, “Jack might go and look, and then he could tell his sisters what he saw.”

Jack scampered away, and after a minute or two he was back with the report that he had counted seven winged flies and moths all busy feeding upon the honey of the different blossoms of the plant!

“Insects can smell things at a far greater distance than we can,” said grandmamma. “The sense of smell seems to be their strongest sense.”

“Do you think it is a good thing to be able to smell so very much, grandmamma?”

“Certainly I do. I know a keen sense of smell is sometimes disagreeable for its owner; but as a rule, when a smell is unpleasant it is unwholesome, and the nose is like a sentinel that gives warning of danger, so that we may either get out of the way or remove the cause. Some people really seem to have no noses, considering what they will endure in the way of bad smells, and how careless they are about keeping windows shut that ought to be opened to let in the fresh air and sunshine.

“You must remember, children, that your five senses are but doors which the mind must keep open. It is the mind that perceives. We say, ‘I perceive this apple is sour;’ ‘I perceive this cloth is rough;’ ‘I perceive a smell of roses;’ ‘I perceive this flower is white;’ ‘I perceive the birds are singing.’ So the word ‘perceive’ will do for tasting, feeling, smelling, seeing, and hearing.”

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X.

THE SIX CLOSED DOORS.

“Say what is it, Eyes, ye see?
Shade and sunshine, flower and tree;
Running waters swift and clear,
And the harvests of the year.—
Tell me, Ears, what ye have heard?
Many and many a singing bird;
Winds within the tree-tops going,
Rapid rivers strongly flowing;
Awful thunder, ocean strong,
And the kindly human tongue.—
These and more an entrance find
To the chambers of the mind.”

ANON.

The end of the visit had come at last. Tom and Katey were at Woodside spending the last day with their cousins. It was evening: the long shadows were falling over the lawn, and the summer air was still.

Grandmamma was sitting under a tree on the lawn knitting, when the children clustered around with the old request, “Please, grandmamma, tell us a story.”

Grandmamma looked a little gravely upon the dear, eager faces, and began:—

“A little boy found himself one day, he could not tell how, in a cell, or rather a small room, which was very comfortable. He could not remember anything that had happened before he came there, nor did he feel frightened although he was quite alone.

“For some time he was content to pass the time without taking any particular notice of anything. At last he saw that there were several doors—five—in the walls of his room. He noticed that two were high and wide, the rest seemed smaller; and he thought, ‘I will open one of these first. Doors must be meant to lead somewhere, and I am rather tired of this little room, although it is comfortable.’

“He opened the door very easily, and he found himself in a large room. In the middle of it was a table covered with things that seemed good to eat.

“He did not see any one, but he heard a voice say, ‘Come in and *taste*.’



“So he took up one nice thing after another, according to his will; and after awhile he heard the voice say, ‘This is enough for once; you may come again.’

“He turned to go back to his room, but the door was gone. The way to his cell was open, and this beautiful room was added to his smaller one.

“Now he had plenty of amusement. He learned how different were the tastes of the objects before him;—some sweet, some sour; others were bitter, or salt, or spicy; some with flavours that cannot be put into words, they were so delicate and varied. As soon as he had had enough he could taste no longer; so he always knew when to leave off.

“He was satisfied for a long time with this room, for fresh objects were daily added. At last he looked longingly at the door by the side of the opening where the late door was.

“He opened it and walked out, not into a room, but into a lovely garden. The walls were high, but the garden was very broad and long.

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“There were the fruits whose delicious flavour he knew: now he found that some of them at least had a fragrant *smell*. However, he scarcely noticed them; for a strange, sweet odour of flowers greeted his newly-found sense. After awhile he felt almost overpowered by this fresh pleasure, and turned to go back for awhile into his little room, when he found that this door had also vanished. He was glad of this, for the delicate perfume of the garden freely came into his cell.

“What a growing pleasure was this garden! Every flower had its own special odour—the rich rose, the tall, queenly lily, and the lowly violet—each in its way the sweetest.

“At first he thought that only the flowers had perfume, but he soon found this was a mistake. By taking more careful notice he perceived that leaves as well as flowers were sometimes scented, as in the musk plant, the geranium, and even those of black-currant bushes.

“As he walked down an avenue of lime trees, he noticed a most delicious scent, which he found came from the small blossoms of the trees high above his head. He turned into a shrubbery, and was greeted by the fresh fragrance of the pine trees, and found that even the resinous buds of other trees had a pleasant scent. The very earth too, after a shower of rain, had a refreshing smell.

“By-and-by he looked at the high walls of the garden, for there seemed to float over them a blended sweetness of something, he knew not what; but in after days he knew it as that of new-mown hay.

“Again, the wind would bring him a smell of something that certainly did not belong to flowers or fruit. It seemed to make him strong, and long to know what was over the wall. It was the sea-breeze that came to him from the vast ocean, and made him feel that his lovely garden was, after all, too bounded.

“He turned the handle of another door. It was that of *touch*, and he found himself in a passage. He walked along a little way, and saw an open archway on his right, through which he went, and there he was in the room of taste. He took up a cherry, and it felt smooth; a peach, and it felt soft and downy; a pine-apple, and it was rough. He looked toward the archway through which he had come, when, behold! the whole passage wall had vanished, making the old room larger.

“He went into his garden: the gravel path felt hard and firm, the lawn felt soft and springy under his tread. He touched a rose-stalk and he felt its prickles, while the leaves of the flowers were soft. Some flower-stalks felt sticky, others smooth, and the bark of the oak tree was rough.

“The bright sunshine felt warm to his cheek, and the marble of the fountain felt cold.

“There were now two large doors left, and he resolved to open that of *hearing*.

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“All was dark as he stepped into a room or passage, he knew not which. He walked on a little way, then he stopped, for he faintly heard the sound of music. The sweet strains grew longer and louder, drawing him along till he came to a large hall where an organ was being played by a master. Here he stayed to listen and to wonder, spell-bound by the strange high music;—now swelling to a triumph, now sinking to a soft echo; now it told of gladness, and again of sorrow. Then it changed to a solemn, stately march; then there was a sound of rippling sweetness, ending in a lullaby so soothing that he fell fast asleep.

“When he awoke he was in his cell; the door was gone and the mystic hall had vanished. He went into his garden, and heard for the first time the sweet song of birds, the hum of insects, and the soft sound of flowing water from the marble fountain. He heard the swaying of the wind among the leaves and branches of the trees, and the sound of his own footsteps on the path.

“‘Now for the last door,’ he said, as he opened it, and was dazzled by a flood of light which nearly blinded him. *Sight*, which had been before but faint and dim, now became clear and open. He found himself in his old room of taste; but instead of the walls were crystal windows, and his table of fruits and food looked small in the midst of the vast space. He turned into his garden: what a change was there! He saw that the roses were a deep, deep red, and pink, and yellow, and white; that the flowers were of every hue and shade of colour, and the trees of varying green.

“Now he saw the birds whose sweet songs he had often heard, some in bright plumage, and others of graver colours.

“He saw the insects flying about with whose soft hum he was familiar; some too of whose existence he knew nothing before—the noiseless butterflies of brown and gold, of deep orange or pale yellow, of azure blue or cream and brown and crimson.

“He saw the darting dragon-fly, shining in black and blue, with gauzy wings of pearly tints; and other insects brilliant with many colours, shining or dusky, flitting by or crawling along the ground.

“Tired out at last with all these wonders, he went back to his cell and slept.

“He awoke thinking, ‘There are now no new doors to open;’ but when he turned to the wall on the opposite side, he saw a door that he had not noticed before.

“He went up to it, but it was bolted and barred from without, and the key was in the lock on the outside. ‘That door is not meant for me to open,’ he said; and he went once more into his garden. The high walls were gone, the room with the crystal windows had vanished, but the senses of taste, of smell, of touch, of hearing, and of sight remained.



“He could now go where he liked. He saw the meadows whose sweet smell of newly-mown grass had delighted him in his garden; and he wandered down to the shore, where he felt again the strength of the sea-breeze. He heard with awe the sound of many waters as myriad waves dashed against the rocky coast—those same waves which farther along, as the shore became sandy, rippled out in the lowest murmurs. In the caves, too, he saw new forms of life—the many-coloured sea-anemones, seaweeds, shells; and in the sea itself fishes shining like mother-of pearl.

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“There were some mountains in the distance, and he went towards them. While climbing up their sides, the sky, which had been bright blue, now became overcast. Black, thick clouds quickly gathered, till day seemed turned into night. Then there shot through the darkness a swift, bright flash, lighting everything up for a moment, then leaving all darker than before. He had not recovered from his astonishment when he heard a sudden crash, as if the mountain were splitting into pieces, followed by a long deep roll of boundless sound. Again and again he saw the lightning's flash and heard the thunder's roar. Then the raging ceased, the blue sky began to re-appear, the sun shone through the rain-drops, and on the departing clouds he saw an arch of many colours, beautiful in form and brilliancy—the lovely rainbow. He gazed at it with strange new feelings till it all melted away.

“At night he always returned to his cell. This night, however, he was so full of the wondrous scene he had witnessed on the mountain that he stayed out of doors, walking up and down his familiar garden path with downcast eyes. He was deep in thought, when at last he raised his eyes, and instead of a clear sky he saw tiny points of light shining through the gray twilight. As the darkness deepened he saw myriads and myriads of these bright points—the stars. He wondered at the mystery.

“He now began to meet with beings like himself, at first one or two, then many more. He found the difference in human beings was very great indeed. Some of them kindly came to him, and told him many things about the world in which he now daily lived. They taught him how to read books in which was written the wisdom of men who had lived long ago. Here was a new, wide opening, as he looked back into the past, into the times so very far away. But the books were not all old; some were written by living men, into which they had put their choicest thoughts, and they gave him an insight into the best part of a man—his soul and mind. Others told him of the wonderful discoveries made by clever men. They brought him a telescope, to look through to the stars at night; which stars, they told him, were other worlds, and that this little world where he lived was but a speck compared with the rest of creation. In looking through the telescope he saw into great depths—stars beyond stars, in number far exceeding his powers of thought. They showed him a microscope; and in looking through it he saw undreamt-of beauty in familiar flowers and insects, and in all natural objects. They told him of the useful and beautiful things that men had found under the ground—coal, metals, and precious stones. Some of these they showed him when polished;—the diamond, which seemed to have taken the rainbow to itself and given it back in a flash, now of pure, now of many-coloured light; the delicate opal, which looked like a rainbow vanishing; the red ruby, the green emerald, the violet amethyst, the clear crystal, and

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many more besides. They showed him lovely forms, that men had sculptured in white marble; and paintings representing many things—now a stormy sea with waves lashed into fury against the rocks—again a summer evening landscape whose calm soothed his spirit. Scenes from the old books were made to live again; and then, again, were painted familiar objects. Wherever he looked, he saw more to see; whenever he listened, he found there was more to hear. What surprised him most of all was, that there were some men who did not care to find out and learn more about the wonders in them and around them; and then he noticed that those who would not use their eyes, and ears, and other senses, became dim of sight and hard of hearing, gradually shrinking back into the state they were before they had opened the doors of their cells.

“He thought of the barred door, and sometimes through its chinks he felt something steal as once the sea-breeze stole over his garden wall. The thought of that something followed him more and more.

“By this time he knew that all sights were not fair to look upon, nor all sounds delightful; and whenever he saw and heard the sad and wrong, he seemed to be most conscious of the something beyond his cell. He felt that he was in the world not alone to learn its wonders, but also to teach the ignorant, to help the weak, to be kind, and true, and brave, and patient to all.

“Knowledge was a good thing, but goodness was better. The longer he lived, he felt the less he knew; and the reason was, that he saw more and more clearly the vast extent of creation.

“Then some one came to him and spoke of an old Book which told of the great Creator of the world, and that all its wonderful beauty was the work of His hand; that the sorrow and the wrong which he had seen around him were but for a time, for the Creator was also the Father of the universe, and had sent His Son into the world as its Saviour, and to die for its deliverance.

“Afterwards he read in this Book the story of the life and death of this Son of God, who was also the Son of man; and he learned that a fuller and truer life lay beyond the things that are now seen. So with reverent feeling he waited, thinking much of the closed door.

“At last, the bars were undone, the key was turned in the lock, the door was opened, the walls of his cell fell down, and he stood young and strong on the outside! Then he saw and heard things I cannot tell you about, so like the old, and yet so different. But he felt no fear; for he knew he was under the same wise, kind, righteous laws, under the Ruler of the universe, and that the kingdoms of the seen and the unseen are but one.”

THE END.