

CHILDREN'S BOOK  
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The Olive Percival  
Collection of  
Children's Books



GARDEN AMUSEMENTS,  
FOR  
IMPROVING THE MINDS  
OF  
*LITTLE CHILDREN.*



LONDON:  
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1803.

GARDEN AMUSEMENTS

THE

IMPROVED THE MINDS

LITTLE CHILDREN

REVISED EDITION BY JAMES AND HARRIS

LONDON: W. B. BAKER & CO. 1853

## TO PARENTS.



*THE* questions which children, and even very little children too, put to those about them, by way of gathering knowledge of what they see or hear, fully prove that the youthful mind is open, at a very early age, to receive instruction. Parents should avail themselves of this desire in their children, in order to bring them to be acquainted, by little and little, with every thing that it is proper for them to know.



## GARDEN AMUSEMENTS.

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————— Eve  
Rose and went forth among her fruits and flow'rs,  
To visit how they prosper'd, bud and bloom,  
Her nursery; they at her coming sprung,  
And touch'd by her fair tendance gladlier grew.

MILTON.

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**H**ENRY was a fine, engaging boy,  
of about ten years of age; and  
Jane and Ann, two lovely little crea-  
tures, were his younger sisters.

We walked together into the gar-  
den, and as, when in the company  
of children, it is my wish to say or  
do somewhat which may help to ex-  
pand their ideas and improve their

minds, I directed their attention to the several objects around us.

“ You have never known,” I said to Henry, “ that every thing you behold here, in the garden, is full of life; though it is not conscious of feeling, as you and I are. This plant, this herb, this bush, this flower, this tree, they all contain a living principle. The earth is the common parent of them all, and the roots of each, growing out of it, prove the stock from whence they spring. Every one of them hath a distinct seed, to mark its nature from another; so that they must always produce one and the same, according to their kind. The sun, and air, and water, are the food by which they



live. These different powers convey to the seed or plant of each their life-giving strength, which being nourished at the same time within the bosom of the earth, produce all that we behold of the different degrees in the life, and strength, and health, and fruitfulness of each.

“This, according to the best writers on the subject, is the truest account of vegetable life. And this explains to us how it is that every plant, and shrub, and flower, hath, and must have, its own particular shape, and form, and property.

“You, know Henry, very well, the difference in colour, form, and taste, between the cherry and the apple. Well, then, this difference is

made from the distinct properties of each; cast into the common earth, in which each lives, and is alike nourished, from one and the same principle, according to the respective class assigned to each by the great Author of Nature. Hence it is, that though the mother earth receives all into her bosom, and is, indeed, the common mother of all; and though one and the same sun, the same air, the same water, alike contribute to give life and support to all; yet, by the Almighty Maker's first appointment, each preserves its own distinct nature and properties. One plant hath an oily nature, another is watery; one flower is of a red colour, another is green or yellow; and

some of both. One fruit is sweet, another is bitter; one shrub is prickly, another smooth; one root is wholesome, another poisonous; one tree lofty, another low. And thus is proved to us both the wisdom and goodness of God the Almighty Author; so that we may truly say; *O Lord! how manifold are thy works, in wisdom hast thou made them all; the earth is full of thy riches."*

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Little Ann seemed tired with what I was saying, and, by her looks towards the grape vine, gave me to understand what she wished. I love to please children, and to be before-

hand, if possible, with them, in gratifying their innocent desires. I have seen sometimes very good effects from it.

Without letting her know that I noticed what I saw, I told the children, that they should have some grapes. They all ran towards the vine, and I soon gathered for them a bunch each.

There certainly is a great pleasure of the mind in giving pleasure to others. I enjoyed greater happiness, by far, in beholding the children's countenances, on receiving the fruit, than perhaps they did in the taste of it. But while they were thus happy in the enjoyment, I thought it a proper time to mix instruction with it.

“You see, dear Ann, what a poor

dry stick this is, on which those grapes grow; should you have thought, my dear, had you looked upon it in the winter season, when no leaves or fruit appear, that it would be ever capable of affording such delicious fruit?" Ann said, "No, sir." "Well then, my dear child, let you and I learn never to judge of things by appearances alone. Many a man, like this vine, may look poor and unpromising, and yet be capable of doing us very great acts of kindness. A poor man once by his wisdom saved a city."

"Henry, is there nothing, my sweet boy, is there nothing which strikes your observation?" "Yes, sir," cries Henry, "the vine itself looks

not only like a dry stick, but seems to lie low, towards the ground, as if it were of a very humble nature."

"I love you for that, my dear boy, your observation is right; for in hot countries vines run along upon the ground, and never presume to rise themselves upward. And this is the character of all good men; they all lie low in their own esteem, however fruitful and precious in the eyes of others.

"Is there nothing else, my dear boy, that strikes your observation, in looking at the vine."—The child paused.—Sweet Jane and Ann both looked expecting, as much as to say, *What is it?*—"See, my dear children, how the vine throws its branch-



es upon any substance that is near it, by way of support; as if conscious of its own weakness. So should you and I be very willing to lean upon any kind friend, that may be helpful to us in the hour of need; and how much more upon a kind God, who is the protector and support of all who put their trust in him! The vine, you see, not only



gives us fruit but affords instruction, and by and by, as you grow bigger, you will learn, I hope, many other lessons from it. The great pattern of our Nature hath thought proper to send us to the vine, by way of similitude, in order to receive instruction, when he called himself the vine and his people the branches; and there are many things which serve to recommend the vine to our notice, which, in your riper years, it will be well if you are taught.

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“Take care, dear little Jane, where you tread!—See! what a lovely creature is lying basking itself in the



fun, near your feet. How beautiful its colours! How golden its hue! What shining rings it hath about it, as if put on by a goldsmith! It is the *Earth Worm*. And not less curious is its form. Look at those rings again, and you may discover, that every one of them is so contrived, as to enable those little creatures either to contract themselves into a less compass, or to extend themselves to a greater, as occasion may require.

Take notice also how it appears to be armed, in every part, with a number of small, stiff, and sharp prickles; which serve at once to defend it from many enemies, and to answer many useful purposes for its convenience.



“ But what I would wish you to take most notice of is, that soft, delicate, and oily substance, which is thrown out between those rings of its body, which moistens its joints, to enable it to go where its instinct leads it.

“ Don't catch that *Butterfly*, Ann! for even the slightest touch of your

finger will foil it, and rob it of some of its beautiful clothing. But, while it rests itself upon the leaf, let you and I look at it, and admire its form and beauty.

“ Were we behold this beautiful insect through a glass, formed for the purpose, we should discover that the different colours are like so many feathers, set, with as great exactness and order, as if placed there by human art. And no art can come up to the vast variety of green, vermilion, gold, silver, diamonds, fringe, and plumage, that ornament their wings, their heads, their robes, their bodies. And then, for the particular form in which it is made, had we the power of discernment, we should

find that it is possessed of limbs, as fully calculated to answer the purpose of its being, as the same are in man.

“ Look at its double row of wings. See! how these are capable of being spread for flight, or folded up again, and put into the cover, when not required for flying. And observe, how all its parts are so exactly formed, that, when it moves, or flies, or crawls, there is an equal balance in the whole body.

“ If dear little Ann were so unkind as to pluck off one of its wings or legs, the poor creature would fall to the ground, or at the best but move like a cripple; halting on one side.

“ Henry! what say you, my sweet child would you not rather see this pretty creature, moving about, with the freedom that God has given it, than make it a prisoner, and put it to pain?—“ O yes!” cries Henry. “ And so would I,” said Ann, “ I will never try to catch one more.”

I was extremely pleased to observe the tenderness expressed by my little companions; and I hope that all my young readers will feel a like disposition towards all helpless creatures; for it is among the highest ornaments of our nature to be humane and kind.

Little Jane was getting too near, as I thought, towards the bee-hive; and I called to her, and charged them all never to approach, within a certain distance, that busy race of beings; lest they should resent it. But I thought it a favourable opportunity to give them a short account of that insect.

“ You see, my dear children, how very active those bees are, in going in and out of that hive yonder! And this busy life never ceases during the season in which it is proper for them to lay in food, and to store their cells for the winter. If we may believe what writers say of them, they all have their separate offices and labours, as if they were under the



nicest discipline. When the season arrives in which they begin to build their comb, they divide themselves into distinct bands for service. One party, like servants in a family, is wholly taken up in providing food for those who are employed in the work. Another is engaged in flying abroad, into the fields and gardens, to cull the sweets of flowers, from



which they make their wax and honey. A third is employed in the hive, to receive what the former bring home, and to work it up into the different cells. And what is remarkable, though all are thus engaged, and every one so busy, yet none of them breaks in upon another's province, or interrupts him in his work, so as to make disorder in the hive.

“One thing more I would beg you to take notice of concerning those little creatures, because we may learn from it a very useful lesson; and that is, their *cleanliness*. For if, by accident, any thing offensive gets into their hive, they have no rest until it be removed. For this



purpose, if one bee hath not power to do it, others assist; and if it should prove too big, or too heavy, for their united efforts altogether to accomplish, they then contrive to get it into one corner, and there cover it over with a kind of glue, somewhat like their honey, which they make for this purpose; so that no smell, or offence, may arise from it to hurt them.”



The account which I gave of the bees, to my young companions, brought to my recollection the following charming hymn, and I desired Jane to repeat it to me, which she readily complied with, and began—

HOW doth the little busy bee,  
Improve each shining hour;  
And gather honey all the day,  
From ev'ry op'ning flower.

How skilfully she builds her cell!  
How neat she spreads her wax;  
And labours hard to store it well,  
With the sweet food she makes.

In works of labour or of skill,  
I would be busy too;  
For Satan finds some mischief still,  
For idle hands to do.

In books, or work, or healthful play,  
Let my first years be past;  
That I may give for ev'ry day,  
Some good account at last.

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While I was talking to the children on the subject of the *Bees*, Henry was looking at an *Ant's nest*, in the bottom of an old tree.

“Henry,” said I, “that little family which you are looking at, forms as curious a history as what I have been speaking of the bee-hive.

“Let us come closer to them, for we need not fear their sting; only take care not to tread upon the little creatures.—See there! how curious the inside of their house is! The hill

which they occupy seems to be so well laid out, as if divided into various streets. Take notice of those little sticks; these are the rafters of their houses. And observe;— don't you perceive little parcels of straw and leaves hanging over them; these prevent the rain from coming in upon them, by turning the current of water another way.

“Look at that large one. See! how he is loaded. That is their food, which, I suppose, he is trudging home with.—Look there! Look there! See! what numbers there are together in the same spot; what are they about? Oh! I see, they have a dead fly. That is a fine prize. It is likely they have killed him, for a



multitude of them together is very capable of so doing.

“ There is one property in the ant, with respect to their food, which is really astonishing but very true; that is, in summer they provide a store of corn for winter provision; but, as the grains would shoot out and grow when hid under the earth, they rub off the buds before they

lay them up; place them in sand, to prevent the moisture of the earth from making them rot or swell; and, in a very dry day, if the sun shines, they bring their corn, &c. out of their holes, to dry and harden it.

“As they have but one interest, they are always united in attacking their enemies, or in defending each other. Those who go out in quest of food, go all in the same path, and you may see, (look here,) how, from their frequent marches, they have worn a path. When they have discovered any prey, such as a ripe apple, or any other fruit or seed, some of the party return to call others to the feast; and when they have

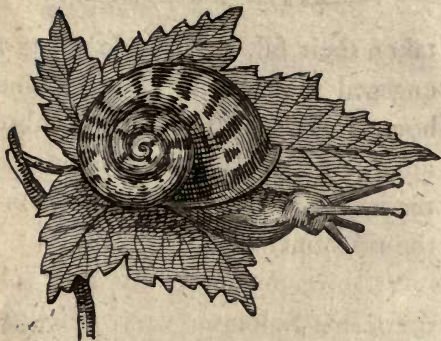
taken their fill, the whole party are engaged in bringing the remainder home. If, in this honest labour, any foe makes an attack upon them, the whole party are sure to join in the resentment of it.

“ Don't you think, my dear children, that Solomon very wisely observed, when he said; *Go to the ant thou sluggard, consider her ways and be wise; which, having no guide, overseer, or ruler, yet provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest.*”

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“ See there! see there!” says little Ann, “ what a large *Snail* is upon that leaf.” “ Yes, my dear,”





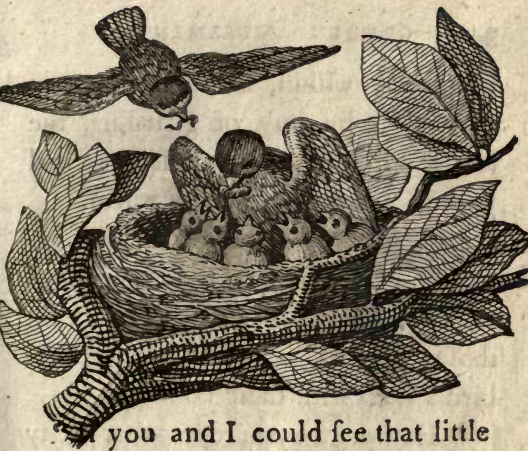
and there let him be; for his great Maker designed leaves for his food. I would not have you kill a snail, while he confines himself to leaves and flowers for his support: for a snail is higher in the rank of creation than both. And even if he were to attempt to taste my peaches, I should only sentence him to transportation into the fields, to learn better manners.”



Just at this instant a bird flew across, towards a high tree. Henry first saw it, and cried out, "there is a nest in that tree, I dare say." Whether the poor bird was hurried, by seeing us, I know not; but it soon fled away again, and seemingly in great haste. It was a *Robin*. I have a great liking to those little tame birds; and indeed, had it been any other, I should have felt a like affection for it. So, taking Harry by the hand, little Jane and Ann following, we went towards the tree. In looking up we could plainly perceive the nest, and I thought it a proper opportunity to give my little companions some account of the curious contrivance of a nest.

“There is nothing more striking, when we consider every thing in the shape and construction of a nest, than the wonderful instinct of the feathered tribe.

“Their skill in placing their little habitations; the materials which they get together for the purpose; the curious construction; the rough outside, so opposed to the soft lining within; and the method, which is sometimes observed, to place them on such parts of the twigs or trees, as shall keep them out of the reach of animals that might destroy them. These prove the instinct of birds to be very great, and at the same time shew the great kindness of their Maker, in furnishing them with such a principle.



And you and I could see that little nest, in all its parts, we should behold the most inimitable art displayed in placing together a parcel of rude, ugly sticks and straws, and moss and dirt, by which that little untaught creature hath formed it into what it is. And then, its inward part is equally curious. You would find hair, or feathers, or wool

so placed within, as to line every part of it; by way of guarding, the tender bodies of themselves and young; and keeping them warm.

“Would it not be cruel, Henry, to rob a bird of all its labour? and how much more cruel must it be in those wicked children who steal bird’s nests with their young?”

“Henry, can you repeat that pretty song about the *Jackdaw* which you promised to learn the other day?”

“Yes,” replied Henry, “I will endeavour to repeat it, if you will engage to put me right if I am not perfectly correct.” He then went on as in the following page.

## THE JACKDAW.

THERE is a bird who by his coat,  
And by the hoarseness of his note,  
Might be suppos'd a Crow ;  
A great frequenter of the church,  
Where, bishop-like, he finds a perch  
And dormitory too.

Above the steeple shines a plate,  
That turns and turns to indicate,  
From what point blows the weather.  
Look up—your brains begin to swim,  
'Tis in the clouds that pleases him,  
He chooses it the rather.

Fond of the speculative height,  
Thither he wings his airy flight,  
And thence securely sees  
The bustle and the raree show  
That occupy mankind below,  
Secure and at his ease.

You think, no doubt, he sits and muses  
On future broken bones and bruises,  
    If he should chance to fall.  
No; not a single thought like that,  
Employs his philosophic pate,  
    Or troubles it at all.

He sees, that this great roundabout,  
The world, with all its motley rout,  
    Church, army, physic, law;  
Its customs and its bus'nesses,  
Is no concern at all of his,  
    And says—what says he? Caw.

Thrice happy bird! I too have seen,  
Much of the vanities of men;  
    And, sick of having seen 'em,  
Would cheerfully these limbs resign,  
For such a pair of wings as thine,  
    And such a head between 'em.

COWPER.

FINIS.

1807

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