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THE BROWNIE'S QUEST



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The
Brownies' Quest

A Day *with the* Brownies

Φ

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"UNDER THE PLANTAIN LEAF," ETC.

Φ

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The Brownies Quest

CHAPTER I

THE HOLLOW IN THE STUMP

THE King of the Brownies rose from his toad-stool throne, and waved his wand, which was the vein of an oak-leaf.

“Now, remember,” he said, “it is only for this day that my promise holds good; so scatter, all of you, and see what you can find.”

Thereupon there was such a pattering of little feet, that had you been there you would have said, “Listen to the hail storm!”

There was one Brownie who, for some reason, could not run so fast as the others, and, after tumbling along a few minutes, trying to keep up with the procession, he dropped down on a dandelion blossom and caught his breath. After a while he said aloud:

“There is no use for me to try. The others are so much more clever than I, they will find all the strange and curious things before I even get started. I might just as well curl up somewhere, and sleep the day away as usual. But, then, what is it our king is always saying—‘You do not know what you can do until you try!’ And, oh, what a prize to try for!

“Let me see,” he went on, “how did the king’s promise run? This was it,

—‘You are all to come here at the close of the day and tell of the strange and curious things that you have seen, and the one who brings in the best account shall be given the power of understanding human speech.’

“Oh, dear! if I could gain that prize, and learn to understand humans when they talk, I might grow wise, and some day, when I am old and staid, may be made king!”

The Brownie gave a sigh that made the dandelion blossom rock back and forth, and went on talking to himself:

“But, now, the other Brownies are all out of sight. I dare say that even while I have been sitting here, mourning and moping, they have seen more things than I shall find in the whole day.



“So it is you, Miss Formica. How glad I am!”

How I do wish I were clever like the others! But I am always behind in everything," and he sighed again.

"Oh, come, now," said a soft voice near him, "what sort of a chap are you, to be sighing like that on this beautiful summer day?"

The Brownie looked all about him—up at the big trees and down at the soft earth—yet saw not a living creature. But, presently, from under the dandelion blossom, a little brown ant darted quickly.

"Ho! ho!" laughed the Brownie in great glee, "so it is you, Miss Formica. How glad I am! I must confess I was really frightened at first. I could not imagine who was hanging around here watching me. Since it is a friend and

not a foe, I'll say, 'good-morning' and 'welcome' both at once."

"Well," Miss Formica answered, "I am a friend to more creatures than are friendly to me, I fear. But, now, do explain why you were sighing so pit-eously. I did not suppose that things ever went wrong in the Brownie world."

"That shows how little you know about us," the Brownie said, "I believe living is a troublesome piece of business to every one. You see, even a Brownie cannot make everything go his way."

He then went on to tell of the royal promise.

"Why, that is a very easy matter," cried the ant, "the world is full of

strange and interesting things. All you have to do is to keep your eyes and ears open."

"That sounds all right, Miss Formica," retorted the Brownie, a little impatiently, "but I have been sitting here on this dandelion for a long, long time; and not a living creature spoke to me until you happened along. To be sure, the birds are flying all around, but they are too far away and too busy singing to help me out. A chipmunk and a gopher passed by, too, but you know they are always in such a hurry that one never gets any good out of them. Besides, I do not believe there is anything so very wonderful in this dull wood, and I do not know where else to look."

“Do you know,” the ant observed mildly, “as you sit up there on the dandelion you remind me of some humans that I have seen.”

“Oh!” exclaimed the Brownie jumping to the ground, and in his delight dancing around the little ant, “do you really mean that? That is the nicest thing I have ever had said to me. It is so fine to be a human.”

“Is it?” asked the ant sharply. “Well, that depends. There are many kinds of humans, you must know, and I would rather be a little brown ant than to be like some kinds.”

“Oh, dear, are they not all alike—great, splendid, wonderful creatures?” asked the Brownie in a trembling voice.

“Indeed they are not! and the ones

that you remind me of are those who sit down and whine all the time about their hard luck, just as you sat on the dandelion and thought there was nothing in the world but birds, and gophers, and chipmunks, because nothing else came your way! What you must do, is to start out and find something interesting.”

“How wise you are!” murmured the Brownie, who was beginning to feel ashamed of himself.

“Yes, I once heard a human say that a very wise man had put into a book —”

“What is a book?” interrupted the Brownie quickly.

“Books are things that humans carry about with them a great deal. They

will often sit for hours looking at them."

"What for?"

"They call it 'reading,' I believe. Well, this wise man put into a book, though I am sure I don't know how he did it, some words running like this: 'Go to the ant, thou sluggard, consider her ways, and be wise.'"

"That sounds all right. I don't know whether I am a sluggard or not, for I have never heard of one before, but I have certainly come to the ant; and now you must tell me where to find something interesting. I must confess, Miss Formica, I should not mind seeing a great deal of you, for I long to be wise."

"No matter about that, now, but if

you really wish to see something curious and interesting, come with me."

The ant darted away, and the Brownie's fat little legs easily kept up with her, although he had but two, while she had six. Soon they came to a big oak stump.

"Now," said the ant, "that stump has been there ever since I can remember. Climb to the top of it, and tell me what you see."

"Aren't you coming, too?" asked the Brownie, as he pulled himself quickly to the top of the stump.

"Oh, no," was the answer, "I have been up there more times than I can count, and I have a great deal to do this morning."

"Well," declared the Brownie, im-

patiently, "I don't understand why you should wish to come up here; there is nothing to see, nothing at all."

"Are you sure? Now, be careful," cautioned the ant.

"Of course I am sure. What are my eyes for? I don't see why you made me climb up a rough stump like this. Of course, if there were anything up here, it would not be so bad, but, I have torn my handsome new cobweb stockings just for the sake of looking at a stump with a hollow in it."

"Oh, then, you do see something, after all. Well, if there is a hollow in the stump, what is in the hollow?"

"Nothing, nothing at all," answered the Brownie, in a disgusted tone.

“If there is nothing there, then, suppose you sit down in the hollow.”

“Not much!” retorted the Brownie, “there is some dirty water in it.”

“Oh, I thought you said there was nothing in it. Well, you sit there on the edge of the stump and watch the dirty water. If you stay there long enough, you will have something pretty fine to tell your king to-night. So now, good-bye, I cannot spend any more time with you,” and away Miss Formica ran.

The Brownie called after her with all his might. She paid no attention to him, but ran on faster and faster until her six nimble legs had carried her completely out of sight.

The Brownie gave another sigh, and

this time it was so heavy that it ruffled the water in the hollow of the stump. He then amused himself by watching it closely, to see it grow calm again. When, at last, it was perfectly still, without a ripple on its surface, he was surprised to see something moving about in its clouded depths. A closer look then showed him that on the surface of the water also were a number of queer looking slim brown things.

“Well,” he said aloud, and at the same time he went nearer to the edge of the water, “I have never seen anything like you. What are you, anyway?”

“Have you ever seen any thing like me?” he heard a low, humming voice ask.

The Brownie looked around at the creature which stood near him.

“I should say I have!” he replied crossly. “Why, you are nothing but a plain every-day mosquito that can be seen and heard anywhere,” and he moved to the edge of the stump as though about to jump down.

“I am Madam Culex, if you please,” said the mosquito with much dignity. “You know every one likes to be called by his or her proper name.”

“Certainly, certainly,” admitted the Brownie in a little less disagreeable tone, “I am not in the least particular as to what I call you, but I am interested in the little creatures in the water there. They are decidedly uncommon, while you are quite too common to

awaken even a passing interest in my mind."

"Now, don't get saucy, Mr. Brownie," retorted the mosquito sharply, "for I must tell you that those same little beings in the water are my very near relatives."

"How can that be?" asked the Brownie, "they don't resemble you in the least."

"That is true, and yet I was once just as they are. In fact, many of those creatures are my own offspring, my babies, you may say."

"Now, that really is interesting," said the Brownie, moving closer to the mosquito, and looking her over very carefully. "Miss Formica said that I should find something here worth tell-

ing to the king, and she certainly was right. But, if you don't mind my asking questions, how many of those tiny creatures are your offspring?"

"Well, I only laid about three hundred eggs here."

"Three hundred!" cried the Brownie with a gasp, "why, that seems almost impossible, and yet you speak of it as though it were not much of a thing to do."

"It is not, for many female mosquitoes lay four hundred eggs at a sitting."

"Dear me!" exclaimed the Brownie, "no wonder there are so many of you."

"Yes, and if it were not for the fact that our lives are short there would soon be no room in the world for anything but mosquitoes."

“And did you lay your eggs here in the hollow of the stump when there was water in it?”

“Yes; we always lay our eggs in stagnant water.”

“I should think they would sink into the water and be lost.”

“Oh, no. We do not lay one little egg by itself; quite the contrary. We fasten all the eggs together with a sticky stuff that we have, and they float around on the water like a tiny boat, until they hatch out into larvæ.”

“Yes, yes,” said the Brownie quickly, “I have heard of those things. So, you have larvæ, too?”

“Yes, those funny brown squirming things are the mosquito larvæ. Humans call them ‘wigglers.’”

“That is a good name for them,” said the Brownie, looking down at the water, “and if you should lay your eggs in the dry ground, I suppose these wigglers would die as soon as hatched.”

“That is exactly what would happen. They cannot live out of water, any more than can one of those things called fish; you have heard of them, I suppose?”

“Oh, yes. But why don't you put your eggs in running water?”

“It would not be so warm. Besides, the eggs would not hatch, if carried along on a current.”

“Then, I suppose if you should lay some eggs late in the autumn, and the water should freeze, that would spoil the eggs?”

“No, indeed; they would be perfectly safe in their frozen state, and they would hatch on the first warm spring day. You may always know, when you see or hear mosquitoes early in the spring, that they are from the eggs that were laid the autumn before.”

CHAPTER II

“WIGGLERS” AND “TUMBLERS”

You may be sure the Brownie was all interest now. He had quite forgotten how dull he had thought the world.

“How very strange!” he exclaimed when Madam Culex had finished telling him about spring mosquitoes. “I have always supposed that freezing killed everything. I am very sure it would kill me, and I have heard that it kills humans.”

“Humans!” cried the mosquito scornfully, “it does not take much to kill one of them, I can tell you! Why, they are hurt as easily as can be. If one or two of my family get after them,

they will do everything in their power to kill us, and half a dozen of us can drive them away from almost any place, no matter how fine a time they are otherwise having."

"That is strange, isn't it?" said the Brownie, thoughtfully, "if I were as big as a human, I don't believe I should mind a little creature like you."

"Well, they do mind us," said the mosquito, buzzing proudly. "They will run from us very quickly. Oh, it is such fun to see them scamper out of our way! Of course, they are always trying to kill us, but they have a hard time catching us. The male mosquito is not so quick as the female, but as he never makes any noise, and also never stings as the female does, he is not often killed."

“But, please tell me, Madam Culex, how long ago you laid your eggs in this stagnant water.”

“That is a question that I cannot answer, for I do not know whether the wigglers or the other creatures that are swimming about are my offspring. You can see a difference in them, can you not?”

“Why, yes. I thought those others were only bits of wood. What do you call them?”

“They are sometimes called ‘tumblers,’ but they are the pupæ of the mosquito.”

“You are very wonderful creatures, certainly,” the Brownie observed, “but what makes the wigglers put their heads down under the water and their tails out of it?”

“The tubes with which they breathe are in their tails, so they put their tails out of the water to get the air.”

“Do they eat anything?”

“Of course they do. Come close to the water's edge. Now perhaps you can see their round, flat heads with the two brown eyes. Then, too, you can see the mouth with its tufts of hair on each side of it. Is all this plain to you?”

“Quite so, now that you have told me it is there; but I must confess that I did not see it before.”

“So you see what it is to have good eyes. If you hadn't any better ones than the poor, miserable humans have, you could not see all those things at all.”

“Dear me! you make me feel almost glad that I am not a human.”

“But, now,” Madam Culex went on, “watch the two tufts of hair. You will notice that they move quickly, and as they do so they cause small currents of water to flow into their mouths.”

“Yes, but that is only water. They cannot live without food, can they?”

“Of course not. But there are tiny creatures in the water, and bits of plants, too small for even your eyes to discover, and all of these give them plenty of food.”

The Brownie stood for several minutes watching the water, and suddenly he exclaimed:

“Oh, look! what is happening to that wiggler?” He pointed to one that seemed to be turning itself wrong side out.

“He is changing his skin,” Madam Culex answered quietly, “just as you go to the Brownie factory and buy a new coat. The larvæ could not be expected to wear the same skin all the time; he outgrows the one he has, and so he throws it off and there is a nice new one underneath.”

“How often does he do that?”

“About once a week.”

“That is a good deal oftener than I get a new coat. I think Mr. Wiggler is very extravagant about his clothes.”

“No matter,” said the old mosquito, “since they neither make them nor buy them.”

The Brownie now turned his attention to the pupæ and began to make remarks about them.

“ Why, see it swim ! ” he exclaimed, as one of the pupæ, by bending its body and then straightening it again, moved itself through the water. “ But do tell me how the larvæ got to this state, and how long they will stay so ? ” the Brownie begged.

“ After the larva had changed its skin three times, the fourth change brought it to the pupa stage, and when it changes again, which will be in about a week from the time it became a pupa, it will come out a beautiful insect like myself.” Madam Culex hummed proudly.

“ I cannot see that any of the pupæ are eating,” the Brownie said now.

“ No, they don’t eat in this stage ; they just live and breathe and swim.”

“What fun!” exclaimed the Brownie. “If I were a mosquito I should want to be a pupa always.”

“Indeed, you would not; you would be longing for something else all the while, just as you are now. You are not satisfied with talking to and understanding the speech of every living creature, except the humans, but you want to understand them too, and should you be lucky enough to get that gift you would immediately wish for something more.”

“There will be nothing left to long for, if that wish is granted,” said the Brownie. “But to come back to the poor pupa that doesn't eat—what does he do with his stomach?”

He has none yet; the stomach and

all the other organs for the perfect mosquito are slowly growing while it is in this quiet state.”

“But what is that strange thing over there?” exclaimed the Brownie. “It looks like a pupa, but—oh, Madam Culex, what can be the matter? The top of the skin is opening!”

“Yes, yes!” returned the mosquito, also growing much excited; “watch closely, now, it is coming out; there will soon be another mosquito.”

“Oh,” cried the Brownie, jumping up and down in his delight, “Now I can see the body of the little creature is a different color from the outside shell.”

“Of course,” said Madam Culex, “for it is casting off its old skin. It will not need it much longer. Now, watch; do you see its head coming out?”

“Yes, and what a wonderful thing to see! I don't believe any other Brownie will find anything half so strange as this.”

By this time the head and forepart of the pupa were well out of the case, and were held erect like the mast of a ship.

“Now the poor little being has to move very carefully,” said Madam Culex, “because if it should happen to upset the skin, which looks just like a boat with a tall mast, it would be drowned in the water. For, you see, the tiny creature at this stage is neither a pupa, carefully enwrapped, nor a mosquito, with wings with which to fly.”

“Yes, I see,” said the Brownie. “I

have heard that it is not wise to try to be two things at once. There was a Brownie who wanted to be a fairy and a Brownie too, and when—”

“Look, look,” Madam Culex interrupted. “Never mind your sermon. Watch this wonderful little creature. Do you see it is drawing the rest of its body slowly out of its shell? See how careful it is not to upset its little boat. Now, wasn’t that pretty well done?” she exclaimed, as the young insect stood upright in the big end of the case or boat.

“If a big breeze should blow against it now, it would fall over and be drowned,” the mosquito went on, “for, you see, it has not found either its wings or its legs yet.”

“But, look, Madam Culex!” cried the Brownie. “It has found its fore-legs; there they come,—yes, yes, and now there are the others,” he added.

“Yes, poor little new mosquito,” said Madam Culex; “it will soon be safe from all danger.”

They watched breathlessly while the new mosquito planted its fore-feet carefully on the water, then brought its other feet out of the case, and daintily balanced itself.

“Its wings will dry off presently,” said Madam Culex, and almost as she spoke the new creature spread its beautiful gauzy wings, waved them a few times as though trying them, then soared above the water and was soon out of sight. The old mosquito hummed away to herself softly.



The new mosquito planted its fore-feet carefully
on the water

"Another mosquito made happy," she said after a while.

"Yes, and a few more humans made unhappy," said the Brownie.

"They can stand it," said the mosquito sharply, "they don't have any mercy on us, I tell you."

"How glad I shall be when I can be around among them and know just what they are saying!"

"You will not be any happier; that is, if they say as mean things about you as they do about me."

"But I will not annoy them," persisted the Brownie; "you know I cannot sting."

"No, but you will find that there will be something about you that they do not like, they are so unreasonable.

They even object to my low singing, and I am sure there is no sound more beautiful.”

“ Perhaps they would not mind your song if they did not know that you intend to get their blood.”

“ What is the use of their being so stingy with their blood? Goodness knows they have more than they need. But you will find out what cruel creatures they are.”

“ But since they cannot see me or hear me, they cannot blame me even for the things that I do.”

“ But they will blame you for things you have never thought of doing. Take my advice and stay away from them; you don't need them as I do, and as many others of the *Diptera* do.”

“And who are the Diptera?” asked the Brownie.

“They are the great race to which I belong; the word means two-winged, and all the insects with two wings belong to this race. There are many different families in it, and each family has ways and habits of its own. The common house fly belongs to the same family. As they love the society of the humans, you might learn a great deal by talking to one of them, they could tell you something about the cruelty of the human race. But, now, I must go. I am glad that we met, but, remember, my parting advise to you is, keep away from the humans.”

“Well,” said the Brownie, “I cannot help feeling sorry for them, after

all, when I remember what a hard time they will have when all the wigglers and tumblers in this water are changed into mosquitoes, so if I can help them I will.”

The mosquito gave a happy buzz. “Much you can do!” she laughed. “Why, just think of it, every female in that pool of water will lay about four hundred eggs, and in three weeks’ time the eggs will all be hatched out and that many more mosquitoes ready to lay more eggs. I am afraid you will be rather busy, looking after the poor humans!”

And singing her merry song, away she went, leaving the Brownie alone beside the pool of water. He looked after her a moment and then exclaimed:

“But I know what I can do. I shall get the rest of the Brownies to help me, and we can throw away all the stagnant water. Then, I should like to know where the mosquitoes will be!”

CHAPTER III

MADAM PAPILIO

THE Brownie jumped off the stump, intending to hunt up his friends at once and carry out his plans. He ran on a long way, until he came out of the woods, without seeing a single Brownie. Suddenly, he remembered that they were all far off looking for strange and curious things. He threw himself down on a piece of velvety grass and said aloud:

“It’s no use. I couldn’t get one of them to help me to-day. It is a pretty big task to dip up and pour away all the stagnant water; I could never, never do it alone. I shall just have to

wait, I suppose. How I do wish I were not so small!"

At this moment a huge butterfly with bright spots on its wings alighted on a showy blossom near him.

"How do you do Madam Butterfly," he exclaimed. "I am so glad to see you!"

"But I heard you wishing you were not so small, and I am sure I cannot make you any larger. What a discontented creature you must be. Now, I never wish to be anything except what I am."

"How happy you must be!"

"So I am, and there is no reason why you should not be just as happy."

"But wait till you hear my troubles," said the Brownie. He then

told about the king's promise, and about his own wish to help the humans, and the impossibility of carrying out his kind plans.

"I thought the king's promise was so grand, but, now, it is the very thing that keeps me from carrying out my plans," he said mournfully.

"See here, little fellow," the butterfly said kindly, "you must learn to do the things that you can do. If you cannot find the Brownies to-day, you can hunt up curious things just as you have been doing, then get your Brownies together to-morrow and go to work on the stagnant water."

"Well, I declare, Madam Butterfly," exclaimed the Brownie joyfully, "that is good advice. You are almost as wise as the ant."

“Thank you,” the butterfly said, “but I wish you would call me by my right name, Madam Papilio.”

“‘Madam Papilio’! Is that your name? Why, I am sure I have heard a very different name for the butterflies; something about ‘Lepi,’ if I remember correctly.”

“Yes,” replied the butterfly, slowly opening and shutting her wings, “you have the first part correct. We are called Lepidoptera, but that is only our race name. There are many different families of us, more than I could possibly name. My family name is Papilio, or the swallow-tailed butterfly.”

“Well, I must say you are very handsome.”

“Yes, our family is one of the most beautiful of all the Lepidoptera.”

“I never happened to see one just like you before. In fact, I have always seen the members of your family at night, when your beautiful colors did not show so plainly.”

“Oh, but you are wrong there, my wise Brownie. You have never seen one of the Papilio family at night. You are thinking of our first cousins, the moths. They fly at night, and should you happen to see one of them in the daytime, he would be settled quietly somewhere, with his wings folded down flat. They cannot hold their wings up as I am holding mine.”

“Oh, is that the only difference between you? I suppose as the moth flies at night they are not so handsome as the butterflies.”

“On the contrary, there are some beautiful moths, although they are not so generally showy as the butterflies.”

“Are there any other differences between you?”

“Yes, their antennæ are shaped very differently from those of the butterfly.”

“Well, I must confess, I should like to have my clothes painted as brightly as yours.”

“It is not paint at all that makes my clothes so beautiful. The coloring that you admire so much is caused by the tiniest scales of different forms overlapping one another. I was told once by a wise old owl, though I am sure I don't know how she found it out, that we are called *Lepidoptera* because that

means a scale and a wing. Sometimes, you know, those wicked things called boys, catch us, and when they have touched us with their great clumsy fingers the scales or colors rub off and our beauty is gone."

"I have heard," said the Brownie slowly, "that boys are very troublesome creatures. I have seen a few at a distance, but have never been very near one."

"Take my advice and don't get near one. The more you know of them, the less you will like them."

"I have heard a good deal of that sort of talk to-day, but, after all, if I get this prize for which I am trying I shall probably see a good deal of boys."

"See to it, then," said the butterfly fluttering her wings angrily, "that they

don't get their hands on you. If they do, it will be all over with you in a second. They catch the members of my race and put some sort of stuff on them that ends their lives in the whisk of a wing."

"But you must remember that they cannot catch me, for they cannot see me," persisted the Brownie.

"The trouble is, you never can tell what humans will do, they are so big and strong and know so much. Some day they will make something that they will throw over you and make you just as plain to their eyes as they are to yours. Then it will go hard with you. Oh, they are good things to keep away from, for they seem to think that the lives of little creatures like us are worth

nothing. It is true a butterfly's life is short, but it is none the less sweet and precious."

"Well, my life is long, but I should be willing to shorten it a good deal for the sake of owning your beautiful wings. I suppose I could not make a trade of any kind with you?" asked the Brownie, as he looked with shining eyes at the butterfly.

"I could not trade with you. I did not plan my wings, you see. When I came out of my pupa stage I found them on me, and they were soon ready for use."

"Dear me! were you, also, a pupa?" asked the Brownie eagerly.

"Yes, indeed, and a caterpillar before that."

“Is it possible! I know what caterpillars are; they are those big yellow, hairy things that go jerking along on six legs.”

“Well, I suppose I did jerk along on six legs, but I was neither hairy nor yellow. I was smooth and of a beautiful light green color.”

“Then I suppose caterpillars are the larvæ of the butterflies.”

“Exactly.”

“And you must have been very handsome, even as a caterpillar.”

“Yes, I suppose I was,” said the butterfly, “but as a caterpillar I was exposed to constant danger. Now, having these helpful wings, I can take pretty good care of myself.”

“It is true you have wings, but birds have them also, and as they are so much

larger and stronger than you, I should not suppose your life could be any safer now than it was before. As a caterpillar you could hide under leaves and things, but, now, you are always flying about where the whole world can see you."

"Yes, but caterpillars have foes that find them no matter where they hide. Have you ever heard of the ichneumon wasp?"

"No, I never have."

"Well, it is a small insect that hunts out the caterpillars of my family, and lays an egg in the body of each. The egg hatches and the insect lives on the caterpillar without in any way keeping back the caterpillar's growth, although I dare say it makes the poor creature

uncomfortable. When the caterpillar goes into the cocoon the little thief goes too. In a short while it eats up the poor thing that is waiting to be changed into a butterfly, and in due course of time, instead of a beautiful butterfly coming out of the cocoon, out comes the full-grown ichneumon wasp."

The Brownie shivered as he said: "Dear me, I don't believe I should like to be a *Papilio* butterfly after all."

"I suppose I ought to tell you that it is only on the family known as the *Asterias* that this mischievous wasp preys. I belong to that branch of the *Papilio*, but you see I had the good luck, when in my caterpillar form, not to be discovered by a female ichneu-

mon wasp, when she was looking for a place to lay an egg.”

“And now that you have lived through all these dangers, I hope no bird will catch you and eat you.”

“Have you ever watched a bird trying to catch a butterfly?”

“I cannot say that I have. I didn't suppose there was much 'trying' about it. I thought the bird just swooped down on the butterfly, when he got his eye on one, and gobbled it up.”

“After this, my dear little fellow, just keep your eyes open, and see how a butterfly can get away from a bird by the cunning use of its wings. You will find that size does not always count. But now, I must leave you;

my life is too short to be spent in idle chat."

"Why, have you really anything to do? I supposed you just lived to eat honey and delight the eyes of the humans."

"Quite the contrary, I assure you. Like every other living thing, I was created for a purpose."

"But why go away? This is a pleasant spot, and if you have any particular work to do, why not do it here?"

"That is impossible. My work is to lay eggs, and they must be laid on the sort of plant that my larvæ will eat when they come to life. There are none of these plants right around here, so I must go where I can find some celery, carrot, parsnip, coriander, fen-

nel, parsley, or something of that kind. Should I lay my eggs on the leaves of this pretty plant, the larvæ could not eat it and would starve.”

CHAPTER IV

A PARTING

STILL the Brownie tried to keep the butterfly to stay with him, for he found her as interesting to talk to as Miss Formica had been. When she insisted that she must go, he said :

“But why can you not fly back to me when you have laid your eggs? I do not like to part with you.”

“I shall not live long after I have laid my eggs, so you may as well make up your mind that you will never see me again.”

“But does it not make you sad to think that your happy life is so near its end?”

“No, indeed; why should it? Everything is born to die, and who knows that there is not another life in store for me, somewhere? But even if there is not, I shall have done my duty in this life, when I have laid my eggs in the proper place.”

“How many eggs will you lay?”

“Perhaps two hundred, perhaps less.”

“How fine it is that your larvæ, as soon as they are hatched, are ready to take care of themselves!”

“Yes, we Lepidoptera are a very independent race. As caterpillars we eat as soon as we are born, and, except at certain times, we eat as long as we are caterpillars. I have heard of a certain kind of caterpillar that is a

great eater. It is called the silkworm. It is of the moth family, and its right name is Bombyx. It will eat in one day, it is said, its weight in mulberry leaves. There is also a caterpillar that lives on cabbage, which will eat in one day twice its own weight."

"It is a good thing that humans and cows and horses do not do that, is it not?" said the Brownie with a laugh.

"So it is. I do not believe the world could stand it if big things like those ate as heartily as caterpillars do."

"But I remember you said that there are times when caterpillars do not eat. Please tell me something about those times."

"It is when they are about to change their skins."

“Dear me! do they have to do that too, poor things?”

“You may well say ‘poor things,’ for, although the task is over in less than a minute it is by no means an easy one. For a day or two before the change takes place, the poor caterpillar fasts. It lies quiet, while the skin that is to come off grows dark and dry. By and by the skin splits on the back and then the little creature works away until he has cast off the old skin completely, and comes out in a new, bright dress. Sometimes these changes are made many times before the caterpillar is ready to enter the chrysalis.”

“Do tell me something about this change.”

“Each family forms its chrysalis in

its own way, but all families are alike in one thing, they cease to eat when ready for this great change. They all, also, fasten themselves to something, and then, inside the chrysalis, wait for their slow and final transformation into the winged creature. The caterpillar of the Bombyx family, of which I told you a few moments ago, winds a fine cocoon of silk about itself."

"Yes, yes," said the Brownie quickly; "I have heard about this little fellow before you spoke of him a moment ago. They use his cocoon to make silk for the humans, do they not?"

"Yes, there is a country on the other side of the world called China, I believe, where the usefulness of these worms was first discovered. There the

humans made a law that any one who carried the worms out of the country should die. But a long time afterward, some wily monks — whatever monks may be! — from a city called Constantinople visited this land of China and managed to get some of the eggs.

“The monks hid the eggs in their walking sticks. They had learned, during their stay in China, all about the care of the worms, and, as they arrived safely in their own country, they soon began to make silk there, and from this point the raising of the silkworms spread over the world.

“I have also heard,” Madam Papilio went on, “that the moth of this worm is not like the rest of the Lepidoptera: it does not fly like those of other fami-

lies; it has been shut up so long with the humans that it has almost lost the use of its wings."

"What a pity! But I am surprised to find that a butterfly has so much knowledge. You seem to know almost as much as a human. You understand their talk, I suppose."

"Yes, and I have learned a great deal from them; but have you ever heard of something called the book of Nature?"

"Miss Formica was telling me to-day about a thing called a book, which is carried around by the humans."

"That sort of a book," said the butterfly, fluttering her wings, "is not worth speaking of; it is a thing that those foolish humans make up in some

way. But the book of Nature is a very different affair. When I was a caterpillar and crawled around on the ground, the leaves and grasses told me wonderful stories.”

“Was that where you heard about the silkworms?”

“The mulberry tree told me some of it. It said its leaves were taken off every year to feed those dreadful worms, and here is a funny little story I heard one day: One of the leaves fell off the rack where it had been put for the worms to eat. A man picked it up, and instead of putting it back again, he carried it out of doors and threw it on the ground. The wind took it up and bore it back under the tree from which it had been plucked.

It told the old tree how glad it was to get away from that terrible place. It said that when the worms were all eating, the noise they made sounded like a heavy shower of rain. Of course, the poor leaf had to die, after all, but it was glad to die there near its old home, instead of being eaten up by a great white worm."

"I should think so," exclaimed the Brownie, giving himself a little shake, "sometimes I feel so discontented because I am nothing but a Brownie, when there are so many other things that I would rather be, but after all I suppose I might be worse off."

"Indeed you might. I am glad to say that I am quite content to be what the dear Father of all made me. I get

all the good I can out of the life that he fitted me for. By the way, have you ever heard Jack in the pulpit preach?"

"Well, no," answered the Brownie with some hesitation, "I cannot say that I have. I have often seen him, of course, but I have never stayed around him long enough to hear him say anything."

"Well, take my advice, and the next time you come across him, sit right down and listen to him. He will tell you all about God, his goodness and his love, and that the only thing to live for is to do his will."

"I never supposed," said the Brownie, rising and looking more carefully at the butterfly, "that

one of your kind had so many serious thoughts."

"I suppose not. Humans say, 'as careless as a butterfly,' but we are not so careless as we seem. Besides, they forget that there is a family of the Lepidoptera called Psyche. This word means a soul, and if one of us is like a soul, why may we not all have moments when we are soul-like? But now I really must be going; I have been with you a long time," and she spread her beautiful wings.

"Oh, not yet, please don't go yet!" the Brownie cried, throwing out his tiny hands as though to catch the butterfly.

"Don't touch me, don't dare to touch me!" exclaimed the butterfly

angrily. "Why, you are almost as bad as a boy! If you touch me I shall leave you instantly."

"Oh, I won't touch you, since you object to it so much," said the Brownie. "I only ——"

"Object to being touched!" interrupted the butterfly, as she excitedly fluttered her wings, "Indeed I do object to it. To be touched by anything but one of my own race is agony to me; and yet a boy, and I am sorry to say sometimes a girl, will chase one of us for the mere pleasure of holding it for a few minutes. How I wish humans could be made to understand what it means to us!"

"But, I have one more question to ask you before you go," said the

Brownie, "How long before the pupa becomes the butterfly?"

"Well, now, my dear little fellow, you have asked a question that I cannot answer. Each family has ways of its own. Besides, so much depends on the weather. I have heard about a human who was so much interested in studying the Lepidoptera, that he put some cocoons in a hot-house, and in the middle of winter brought out beautiful butterflies which, if left to themselves, would not have appeared until the middle of May. Then in the spring he put some cocoons in an ice-box, and so kept the poor things from hatching for a long time."

"Well, I declare, they play all sorts of pranks with you, do they not? How

glad I am that they cannot see me! I can do what I like to them, but they don't even know what it is that is bothering them."

"Don't brag, don't brag. You may depend upon it they will get you some day. They have learned how to increase the power of their eyes, and one of these days they will get them so strong that they will be able to see even you.

"But I have always been pretty good to the humans; I never do anything worse than play funny tricks on them. So perhaps they won't hurt me very much."

"Do not depend too much on that," said the butterfly.

"But please tell me one thing more;

is it hard for the pupa to leave its shell?"

"No, that is one of the pleasures of the Lepidoptera's life. It comes out of its case easily and quickly, and stands forth a beautiful, bright-winged creature of the air. At first the wings are weak and small, but they very quickly grow stronger and larger."

"It seems to me I have heard something of your race going into the ground during the pupa stage."

"Yes, there is a family of moths called the Sphinxes or hawk-moths, or the humming-bird hawk-moths. The larvæ of these moths go into the ground in the autumn and come out in May or June. They are very beautiful, and may often be seen at twilight,

hovering over the flowers, when they might easily be taken for humming-birds. But now you must really let me say good-bye. I think I have told you everything that I know about myself and my family, but if you will keep your eyes and ears open and watch caterpillars, moths and butterflies for the rest of the summer, you will learn much more, I am sure, than will come to you if you stay near the humans and listen to their talk, which is often mere idle chatter.”

“Well, I shall surely watch these wonderful Lepidoptera, as you suggest, but at the same time I know I shall never be quite happy until I can understand what the humans are saying to one another.”

“Very well, think so if you please, but when you are disappointed, remember me.”

“That I will, Madam Papilio, and now good-bye. You have given me much pleasure, and I hope not only that you will find a good place in which to lay your eggs, but also that every one of them will hatch into a beautiful green caterpillar and that the ichneumon wasp will not find a single one of them.”

“That is the best that you can wish me,” said the butterfly, and the next moment it soared into the air and went swiftly over the green meadow.

CHAPTER V

CRICKETS AND GRASSHOPPERS

THE Brownie was very thoughtful after the butterfly left him.

“I am beginning to wonder,” he said to himself, “whether or not I want that prize, after all. Then, there was my other wish, to pour out all the stagnant water so that the poor humans might not be plagued any more by the mosquitoes. But what if the humans are as bad and cruel as they are said to be? Ought I to help them or should these things be allowed to annoy them? That is a good way to punish them, I suppose. But then, we Brownies are pledged to do all the

good we can, and I don't know that it is our business to ask whether people deserve help or not."

Just at this moment he heard steps behind him, and, turning around, he saw another Brownie coming out of the world.

"What a dull place the world is in the daytime," said the Brownie, "I did not suppose the sunshine could make so much difference."

"Dull?" repeated the first Brownie, "how can you say such a thing? I have found so much that is new and interesting that I fear it will take me until morning to tell what I have seen already, and there are several hours of the day still left."

“Where in the world did you find your interesting things?” his friend asked peevishly. “There weren’t any where I have been, and now I am going off to some quiet place to have a good nap. It isn’t fair, anyway, to make us keep our eyes and ears open all day long, when we are expected to be wide awake and busy all night too.”

“But think of the prize we are trying to win! Surely that is worth some effort.”

“Do you think so? I don’t. It is not so wonderful, I am sure, to be able to hear a lot of silly humans talk.”

“They are not silly,” the first Brownie cried. “You don’t know what you are talking about. They are very wise.”

“Well, think so if you want to,”

said the second Brownie, "but I have heard of a great many things that they cannot do."

"That is very likely, for I suppose there is no creature that can do everything. I know that there are many, many things they can do. I should be proud to be like a human."

"That is where you are not like me. Why, I have heard our king say that they forget things, think of it!"

"Forget? What in the world is that? I have never heard of such a thing. Is it some new way they fix things to eat?"

"No, indeed," answered the second Brownie, "it's—it's—well, I am not sure that I can make you understand. You said you had so many things to tell the king; now just suppose that



“Ho! Ho!” laughed the first Brownie till his fat sides shook

when you stood up to tell him about them they should all pass right out of your mind—that is forgetting.”

“Ho, ho!” laughed the first Brownie till his fat sides shook, “who ever heard of anything so silly? Why, that couldn’t be. If a thing is once in your mind it must stay there; how could it ever get out? You must know that is impossible.”

“Of course it is impossible to a Brownie mind, but it is not to a human one, you see. That is where the difference is, and that is just why I should not care to be a human.”

“But how can they be so clever, and know so many things, if all the time they are doing this *forgetting* that you tell about?”

“I am sure I don’t know,” said the second Brownie, “but I have told you the truth about them. That is the way they are made. So, now, go on and be one if you want to.”

“I don’t want to be one,” said the first Brownie crossly, “I want to understand them, and I should not mind being like them in some things, that is all. But I could not be one if I wanted to be, and would not if I could.”

“Well,” retorted the second Brownie, “I don’t even want to understand them or be like them, so I am going back into the woods, to have a good, long nap, while you prowl around and try to find something worth looking at,” and off he ran as fast as his legs could carry him.

“There,” said the first Brownie aloud, “how foolish I have been! I have stood here quarreling with the Brownie about the humans, instead of asking him to help me pour out all the stagnant water and so rid the world of mosquitoes. But, then, I dare say he would have refused. Well, I will wait until tonight, and bring it up at the council.”

Just at this moment he heard a sound near him that made him jump for joy.

“Oh,” he called aloud, “where are you, Mr. Cricket? I hear your merry *zid, zid, zidder, zee*, but I don’t see you anywhere. Come, hop out here where I can get my eye on you. I shall be so glad to talk with you and learn something.”

In another moment a small black creature hopped out of a hole near the roots of an oak tree.

“How are you, my good little Brownie?” it asked. “I should not have come out of my hole for anyone but you. You know I am, like you, a child of the night. When I saw you I was so surprised that I began to chirp in spite of myself. But what are you doing here in broad daylight?”

“Just strolling around and finding out how the world looks with the sun shining on it. I am so glad you were surprised into chirping, for I do want to talk with you, more than I can tell. What a cosy little house you have here,” continued the Brownie coming close to the opening and peeping in.



“ What a cozy little house you have here ”

“So I have, a very fine house, indeed, I think, and I must be going into it, too. I don’t like the sunlight, Mr. Brownie.”

“But, wait, wait, Mr. Cricket,” exclaimed the Brownie, “do stay here and talk to me; if you run away I shall be all alone?”

“No, I must go in; and, while I think of it, I wish you would call me by my right name,” said the cricket, and as he said that he backed into the house quickly and was lost to view.

“Oh, dear,” wailed the Brownie, “now I have lost him. What shall I do to bring him back?”

Then a bright thought came to him. “I know how to manage him.” He went close to the cricket’s house and called very coaxingly:

“What is your right name, Mr. Cricket? I have never heard you called by any name but Cricket, but if you will tell it to me I will gladly use it.”

Then the cricket stuck his antennæ clear out of the hole and said in a friendly tone:

“My race name is Orthoptera and my family name is Gryllus. I suppose you have never heard either of them before?”

“No, never, they are rather hard names to say, too. Would you mind telling me just what they mean?”

“Certainly not. Orthoptera means straight winged, and Gryllus means belonging to the ground, because, as you know, I neither fly nor climb.”

“Yes, that is true, but I know you are a good hopper.”

At this piece of flattery the cricket came out of his hole and gave a prodigious jump that carried him out of the Brownie's sight.

"Do come back, Mr. Gryllus," called the Brownie. "Show me more of your hopping, but turn your head this way before you begin."

At this the cricket bounced down in front of the Brownie, who said:

"Now, give me some of your music; you know I am very fond of it."

"No person of taste," said the cricket proudly, "can help being fond of it. I have heard that in a far-off country called Africa the people catch us and put us into little cages so that they can have us with them and hear our music all the time."

“That would be fine. I should like that myself.”

“Do you mean you would like it if you were a cricket?”

“Well, no, hardly,” said the Brownie doubtfully. “I mean I should like to have a cricket near me all the time in a little cage.”

“But you shan’t have me,” said the cricket, running toward its hole.

“Come, don’t be afraid,” coaxed the Brownie, “I won’t catch you. Besides, I have no cage, so I should not know what to do with you if I should catch you. So chirp away for me, and have no fear.”

“I am glad you like to hear me chirp. Some humans do, too, and some do not. Some declare I bring good

luck, and others, when they hear one of us chirping, hunt it out and kill it, because they believe it will bring bad luck."

"And which story is true?"

"Neither. How could a little creature like me know what is about to happen to a human?"

"You couldn't, of course, but I think you would bring good luck in this way: your cheerful song should make every one that hears it happier, and that would be good luck, surely."

"Yes, but what foolishness to think that we can bring bad luck. But, then, humans are foolish creatures, anyway."

"Are they really?" asked the Brownie in a sad tone. "I have heard all kinds of things about them. Some-

times I hear how clever they are, then, how silly they are. I do wonder which is true."

"I think the truth is that they are a great deal of both. Sometimes they seem wonderful in their wisdom, and again shocking in their foolishness."

"But they are certainly very foolish in being afraid of a cricket's song."

"But I must tell you, my friend, that you are wrong in calling my chirping a song. Don't you know that we don't make our chirping with our throats, as birds and humans make their songs?"

"Well, what do you call it then, and how do you make the sound, and what do you do it for?"

"Dear me, so many questions at

once! Well, let me see. First, the noise we make is a chirp or a call. You must remember that no insects have voices, their only way of making sounds is with the thin wings, or with the wings and legs. My call is made by rubbing the thighs over the hard ridges of the wings.

“You ask why we “chirp,” the cricket went on. “The male crickets make the sound because we are lonely. It is a call for the female. She cannot make the sound herself, but will come to the male when she hears it.”

“And do you, like so many other little creatures that I have met, go through many changes before you become perfect insects?”

“I don't know what you mean by

changes. The only change I know anything about is when I run out of my hole for something to eat."

"What do you eat?"

"Herbs of all kinds, and very small insects."

"But do you live here alone?"

"Yes, we crickets are not sociable, we do not travel in great armies, like our first cousins the grasshoppers."

"Where does your female lay her eggs?"

"Safe in the ground. She will lay from fifty to one hundred. When the young crickets are hatched they are just like ourselves, except that they have no wings. They live in the ground, or burrow under stones and sticks during the summer, and come

out in the autumn the full-fledged cricket with wings.”

“I suppose there are several kinds of crickets?” the Brownie observed.

“Yes, there are the wood cricket, the house cricket, the field cricket, to which family I belong, and the tree cricket, that lives in trees and is much smaller than the rest of us. There is another kind, that is not found about here, called the mole-cricket. The front legs of this cricket are made for digging, and it is said that they do much harm to all sorts of growing things, but of course I don't know much about that, never having seen one myself.

“I have also heard,” Mr. Gryllus went on, “that the females of this kind

watch over and feed their larvæ, which seems to me a very troublesome, as well as useless thing to do. The larvæ of our family manage to care for themselves, and I dare say the others could if they had to. But, now, Mr. Brownie, I hope you will not try to keep me here any longer, I am sure I have told you all I know about the family of Gryllus. I see my first cousin the grasshopper is hopping along this way. Perhaps he will talk to you; he is a more sociable fellow than I am," and without another word the cricket backed into his nest, and the Brownie saw him no more.

But by this time the grasshopper was within speaking distance and before the Brownie had uttered a word, it called out to him:

“Good-day, Mr. Brownie. Have you been talking to that quarrelsome cricket?”

“Quarrelsome,” exclaimed the Brownie, “why, how can he be that, when he lives here all alone and troubles no one?”

“That is just the reason he lives all alone, because he cannot live in peace with any one. If you don’t believe he is quarrelsome, just get another cricket to go near his nest and see what happens. I tell you, crickets fight and kill each other just like humans.”

“How is it with you grasshoppers? Do you fight too?”

“No, indeed. If we did, living together as we do in great numbers, we should be wiped off the earth in a short time.”

“There don't seem to be very many of you about here, any way.”

“That is simply because there are a large lake and a river just beyond this meadow and all this water brings many lizards, snakes and toads, and they are all enemies to our race. So many of us have been destroyed this summer that the few of us that are left are preparing to march to some other part of the world.

“Then, too,” he went on, “we want to get where there are no birds. You know there are some foolish humans who destroy the birds. If we can find a place where such people live, we can have a merry time. We will eat up everything green that we can find, and chirp our days away in happiness. You

see, both our males and females know how to fiddle, and in this way we can have a fine chorus.”

“But that is a poor return to make the humans, after they have killed off your enemies the birds—to eat up the stuff that they are raising for food.”

“Much we care for the humans! They must look out for themselves, just as we have to. If they are not clever enough to see what they are doing for us, when they kill the birds, we cannot help it. We could not tell them if we would, and we would not if we could. But, now, good-bye, Mr. Brownie; there come the rest of my company, and I don't want to be left behind.”

With a chirp and a hop he was

gone, and the Brownie stood for a few moments gazing after the noisy company, as they made their way across the meadow.

“They are going in the opposite direction from the water,” said the Brownie to himself. “How I wish I had some way of telling the humans that the grasshoppers are coming, and that they would better hunt up a lot of birds to welcome them and eat them up.”

The sun was now setting, and the Brownie was tired. He had seen and heard a great deal, and had also asked many questions, all of which were unusual things for him to do, so now he decided that he would lie down under a big plantain leaf that grew near by, and have a short nap.

“I shall be sure to awaken before dark,” he said to himself, “and then I can get to court in time to tell my story.”

But the poor little fellow was so tired that his sleep was long and sound, and when he awoke the moon was riding high in the sky.

Now, the moon, when it shone, was the Brownie's clock, and he knew in a moment that he had slept until long past midnight. This would have filled his heart with despair had it not been for one wise law of the Brownie world, which is that after midnight a Brownie may wish himself in any place that is not across the water. So, as the court was not across any water, he made the wish and appeared among the Brownies

just as the last little fellow had finished his story.

How glad he was to be just in time—not a minute to wait or a minute too late! He stepped into the center of the magic ring and began his wonderful story.

He had so much to tell that it took him until nearly daybreak to speak of everything, and as his story was more than ten times as long and as interesting as any of the others, he was given the prize as soon as he had finished.

How proud he was! “Now,” he said, “I shall soon be very wise.”

The next night he called all the Brownies together and told them about the stagnant water and all the trouble and suffering that it caused the poor



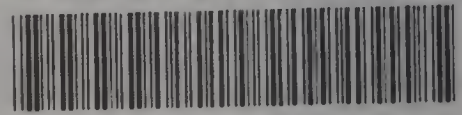
He stepped into the center of the magic ring and began his story

humans by breeding the dreadful mosquitoes. As the Brownies live only to do good, they gladly set about the work and it did not take them long, you may be sure, to finish it.

But, now, what sorely grieves our poor little Brownie's heart is, that, he hears the humans talk about the disappearance of the stagnant water, and they take all the credit for it to themselves. Isn't that a pity ?

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