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A Child's Primer  
of Natural History



# A Child's Primer of Natural History



By Oliver Herford

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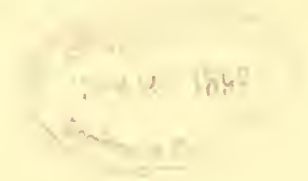
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# A Seal.



# A Seal.

SEE, chil-dren, the Fur-bear-ing Seal;  
Ob-serve his mis-di-rect-ed zeal:  
He dines with most ab-ste-mi-ous care  
On Fish, Ice Water and Fresh Air  
A-void-ing cond-i-ments or spice,  
For fear his fur should not be nice  
And fine and smooth and soft and meet  
For Broad-way or for Re-gent Street  
And yet some-how I of-ten feel  
(Though for the kind Fur-bear-ing Seal  
I har-bor a Re-spect Pro-found)  
He runs Fur-bear-ance in the ground.





# The Giraffe.



# The Giraffe.

SEE the Gi-raffe; he is so tall  
There is not room to get him all  
U-pon the page. His head is high-er—  
The pic-ture proves it—than the Spire.  
That 's why the na-tives, when they race  
To catch him, call it stee-ple-chase.  
His chief de-light it is to set  
A good example: shine or wet  
He rises ere the break of day,  
And starts his break-fast right away.  
His food has such a way to go,—  
His throat 's so very long,—and so

An early





An early break-fast he must munch  
To get it down ere time for lunch.

# The Yak.



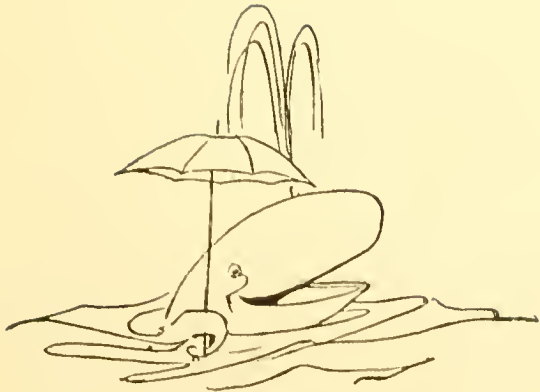
# The Yak.

THIS is the Yak, so neg-li-gée:  
His coif-fure 's like a stack of hay ;  
He lives so far from Any-where,  
I fear the Yak neg-lects his hair,  
And thinks, since there is none to see,  
What mat-ter how un-kempt he be.  
How would he feel if he but knew  
That in this Pic-ture-book I drew  
His Phys-i-og-no-my un-shorn,  
For chil-dren to de-ride and scorn?





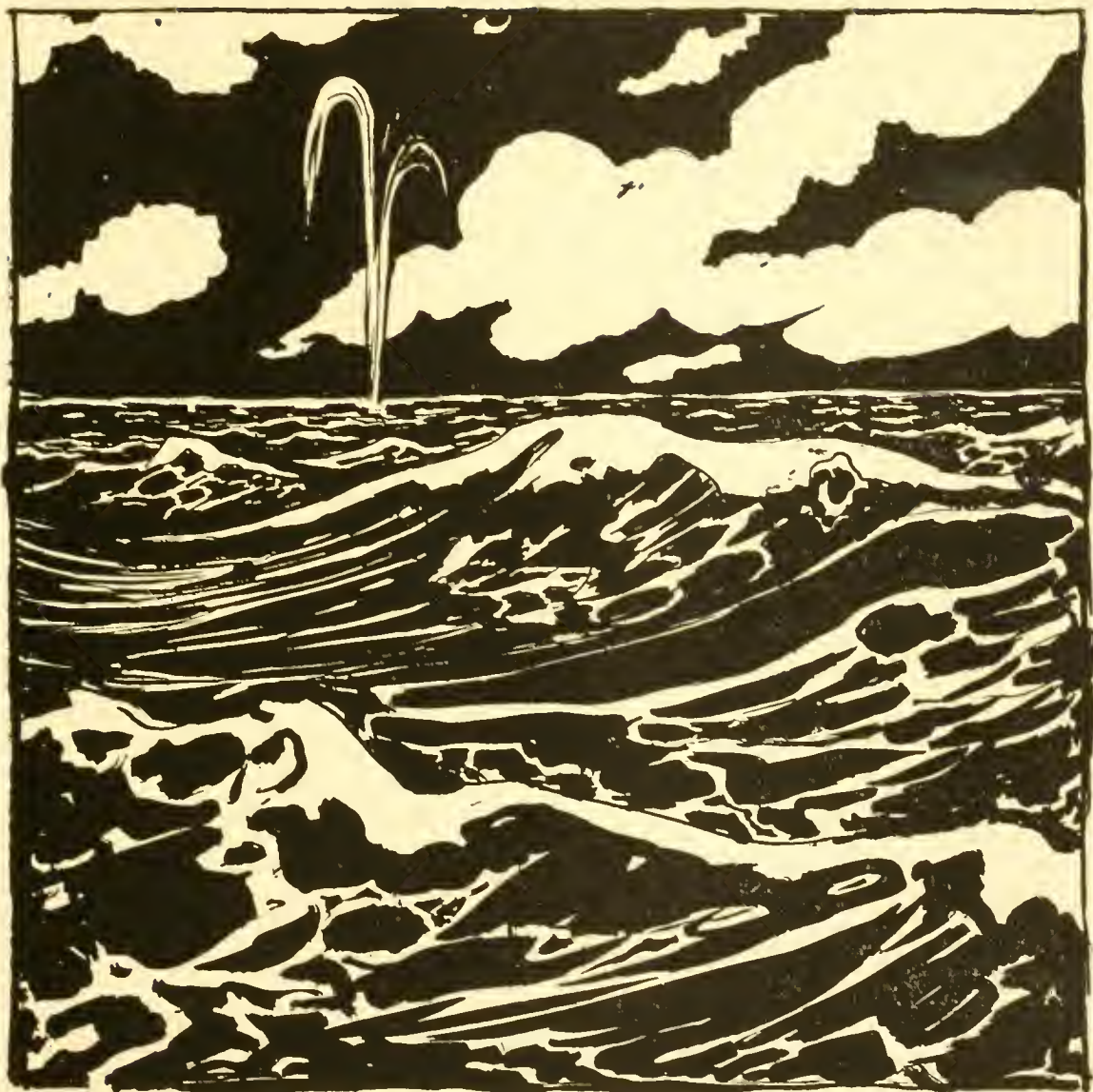
# A Whale.



# A Whale.

THE con-sci-en-tious art-ist tries  
On-ly to draw what meets his eyes.  
This is the Whale; he seems to be  
A spout of wa-ter in the sea.  
Now, Hux-ley from one bone could make  
An un-known beast; so if I take  
This spout of wa-ter, and from thence  
Con-struct a Whale by in-fer-ence,  
A Whale, I ven-ture to as-sert,  
Must be an an-i-mat-ed squirt!  
Thus, chil-dren, we the truth may sift  
By use of Log-ic's Price-less Gift.







# The Leopard.



# The Leopard.

THIS is the Le-o-pard, my child;  
His tem-per 's any-thing but mild.  
The Le-o-pard can 't change his spots,  
And that—so say the Hot-ten-tots—  
Is why he is so wild.  
Year in, year out, he may not change,  
No mat-ter how the wea-ther range,  
From cold to hot. No won-der, child,  
We hear the Le-o-pard is wild.







# The Sloth.



# The Sloth.

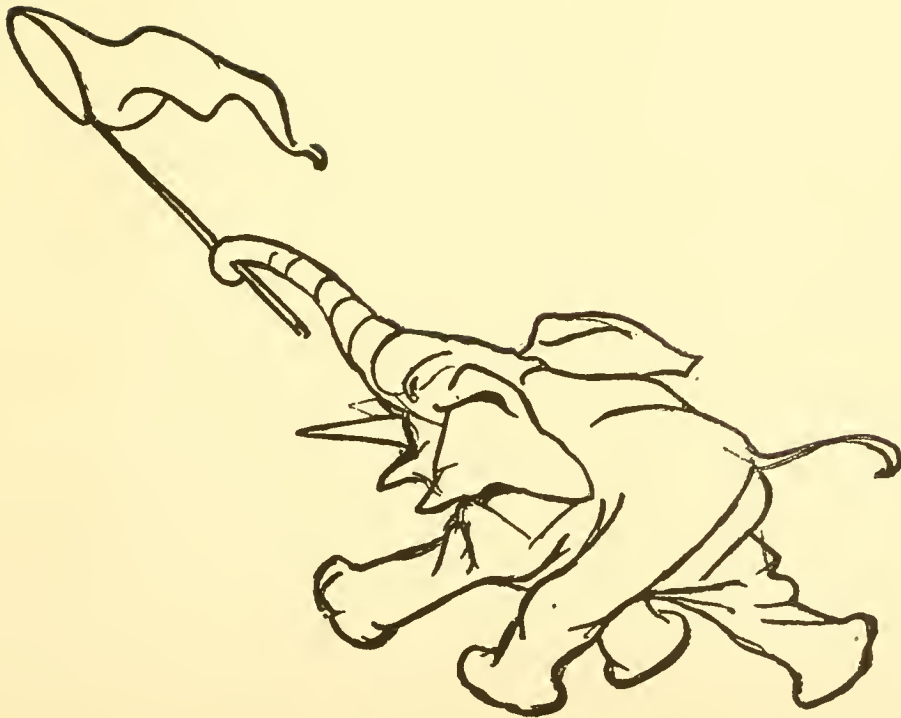
THE Sloth en-joys a life of Ease;  
He hangs in-vert-ed from the trees,  
    And views life up-side down.  
If you, my child, are noth-ing loath  
To live in In-dol-ence and Sloth,  
    Un-heed-ing the World's frown,  
You, too, un-vexed by Toil and Strife,  
May take a hu-mor-ous view of life.







# The Elephant.



RD

# The Elephant.

THIS is the El-e-phant, who lives  
With but one aim—to please.  
His i-vo-ry tusk he free-ly gives  
To make pi-a-no keys.  
One grief he has—how-e'er he tries,  
He nev-er can for-get  
That one of his e-nor-mous size  
Can't be a house-hold pet.  
Then does he to his grief give way,  
Or sink 'neath sor-row's ban?  
Oh, no; in-stead he spends each day  
Con-tri-ving some un-sel-fish way  
To be of use to Man.







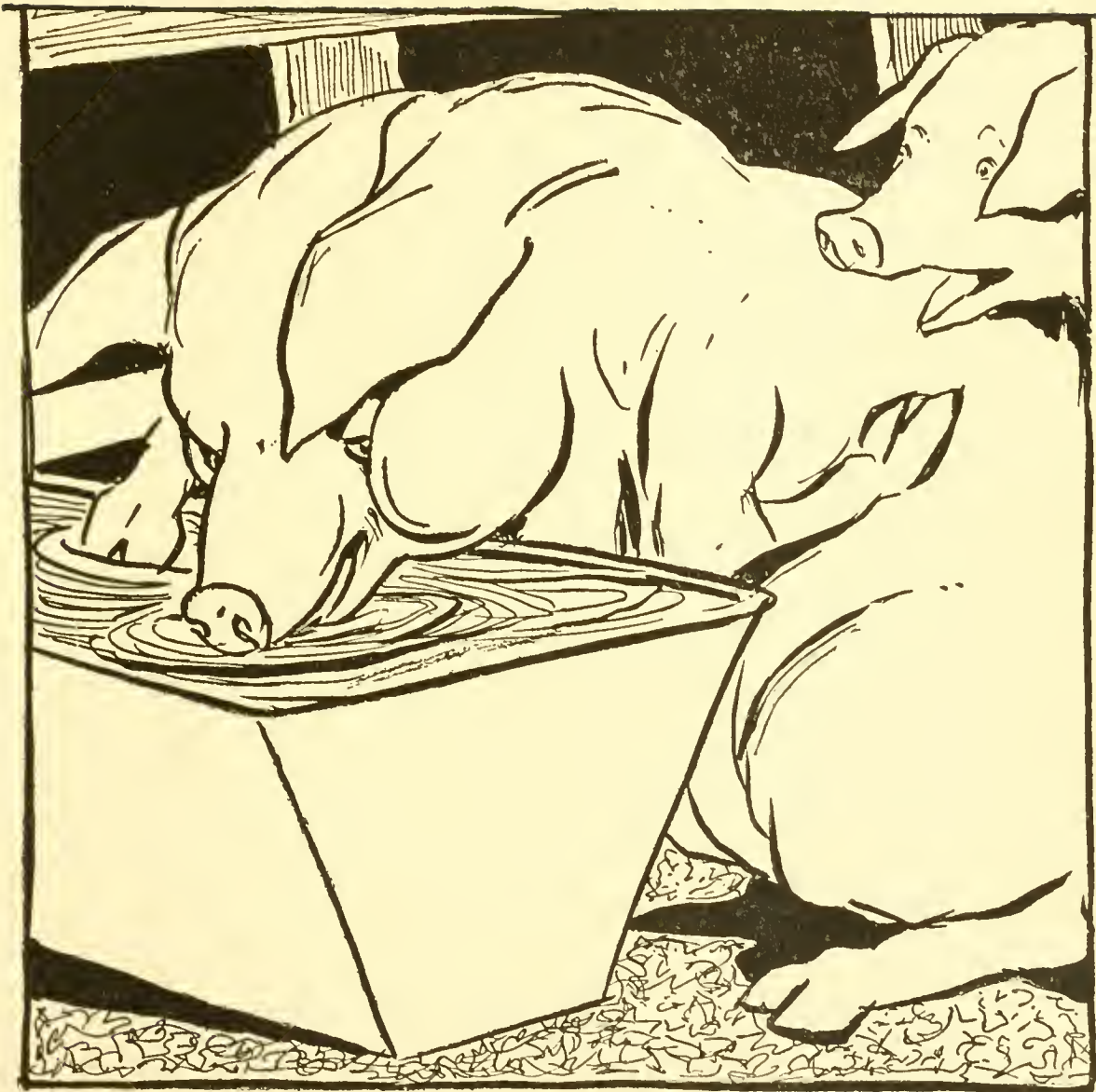
# The Pig-Pen.



# The Pig-Pen.

OH, turn not from the hum-ble Pig,  
My child, or think him in-fra dig.  
We oft hear lit-er-a-ry men  
Boast of the in-flu-ence of the Pen ;  
Yet when we read in His-to-ry's Page  
Of Hu-man Pigs in ev-er-y age,  
From Crœ-sus to the pres-ent day,  
Is it, my child, so hard to say  
(De-spite the Scribes' vain-glo-ri-ous boast)  
What Pen has in-flu-enced Man the most?







# Some Geese.



# Some Geese.

EV-ER-Y child who has the use  
Of his sen-ses knows a goose.  
See them un-der-neath the tree  
Gath-er round the goose-girl's knee,  
While she reads them by the hour  
From the works of Scho-pen-hau-er.  
How pa-tient-ly the geese at-tend!  
But do they re-al-ly com-pre-hend  
What Scho-pen-hau-er 's driv-ing at?  
Oh, not at all; but what of that?  
Nei-ther do I; nei-ther does she;  
And, for that mat-ter, nor does he.





# The Ant.



# The Ant.

My child, ob-serve the use-ful Ant,

How hard she works each day.

She works as hard as ad-a-mant

(That 's very hard, they say).

She has no time to gal-li-vant;

She has no time to play.

Let Fido chase his tail all day;

Let Kitty play at tag:

She has no time to throw a-way,

She has no tail to wag.

She scurries round from morn till night;

She ne-ver, ne-ver sleeps;

She seiz-es





She seiz-es ev-ery-thing in sight,  
And drags it home with all her might,  
And all she takes she keeps.

# An Arctic Hare.



# An Arctic Hare.

AN Arc-tic Hare we now be-hold.

The hair, you will ob-serve, is white;  
But if you think the Hare is old,

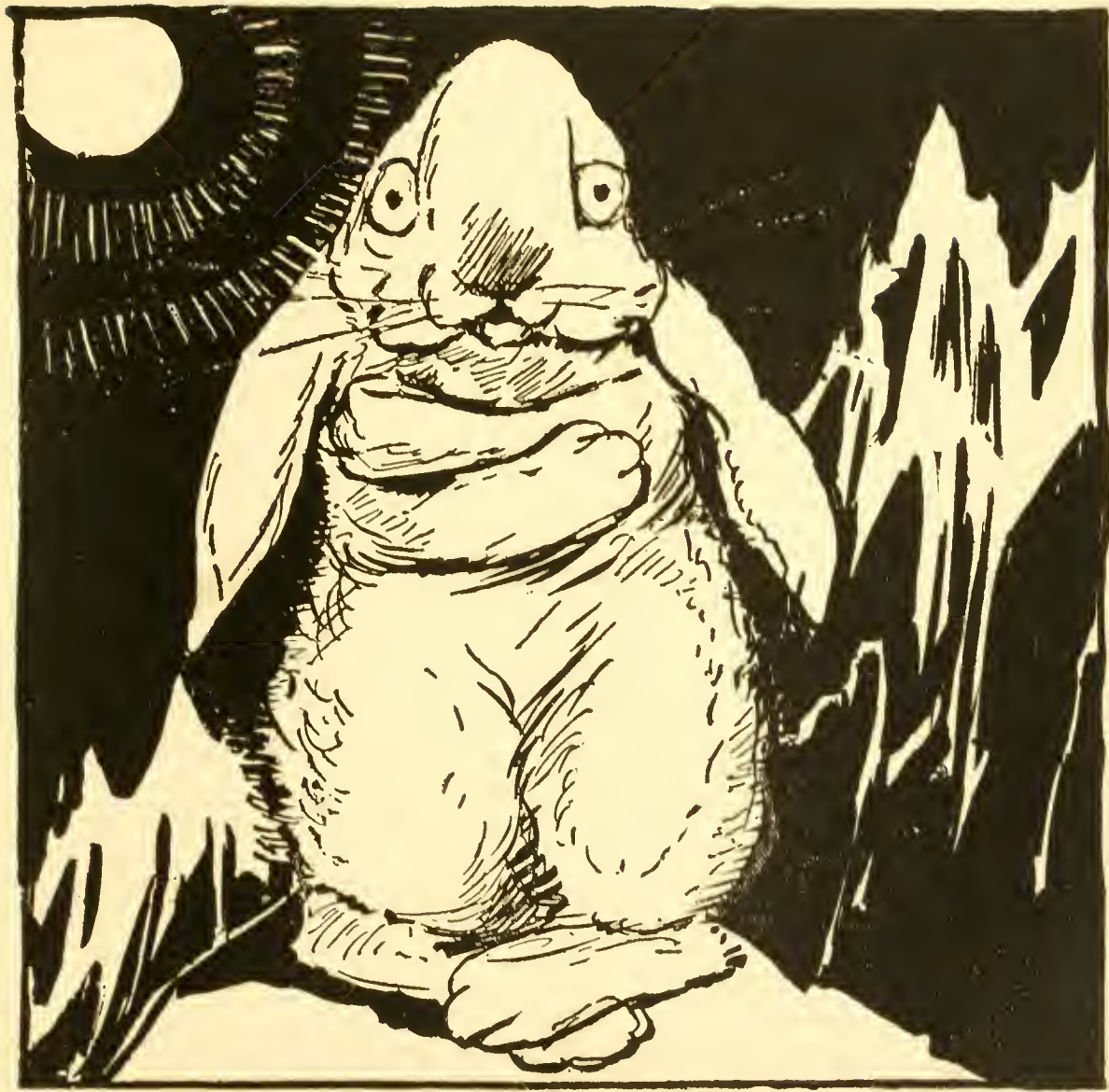
You will be ver-y far from right.

The Hare is young, and yet the hair  
Grew white in but a sin-gle night.

Why, then it must have been a scare

That turned this Hare. No; 't was not fright  
(Al-though such cases are well known);

I fear that once a-gain you 're wrong.  
Know then, that in the Arc-tic Zone  
A sin-gle night is six months long.







# The Wolf.



# The Wolf.

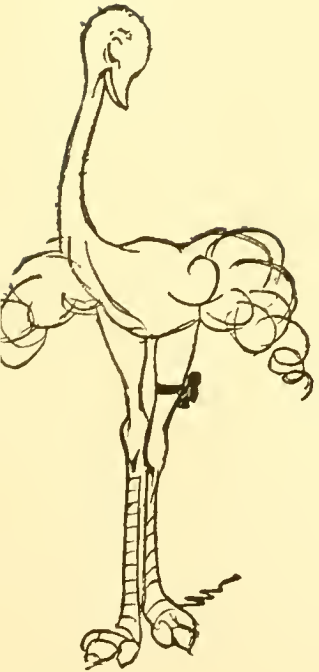
OH, yes, the Wolf is bad, it 's true;  
But how with-out him could we do?  
If there were not a wolf, what good  
Would be the tale of RID-ING-HOOD?  
The Lit-tle Child from sin will fly  
When told the wick-ed Wolf is nigh;  
And when, ar-rived at Man's es-tate,  
He hears the Wolf out-side his gate,  
He knows it 's time to put a-way  
I-dle fri-vol-i-ty and play.  
That 's how (but do not men-tion it)  
This prim-er hap-pened to be writ.







# An Ostrich.



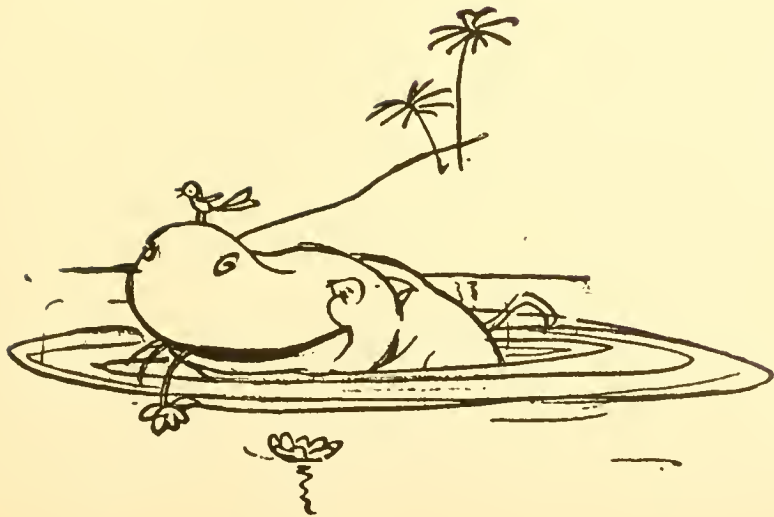
# An Ostrich.

THIS is an Os-trich. See him stand:  
His head is bur-ied in the sand.  
It is not that he seeks for food,  
Nor is he shy, nor is he rude;  
But he is sen-si-tive, and shrinks  
And hides his head when-e'er he thinks  
How, on the Gains-bor-ough hat some day  
Of some fine la-dy at the play,  
His fea-thers may ob-struct the view  
Of all the stage from me or you.





# The Hippopotamus.





# The Hippopotamus.

“OH, say, what is this fearful, wild  
In-cor-ri-gible cuss?”

“This *crea-ture* (don't say ‘cuss,’ my child;  
'T is slang)—this *crea-ture* fierce is styled  
The Hip-po-pot-am-us.

His curious name de-rives its source  
From two Greek words: *hippos*—a horse,  
*Potamos*—river. See?

The river's plain e-nough, of course;  
But why they called *that* thing a *horse*,  
That's what is Greek to me.”







# The Fly.



# The Fly.

OB-SERVE, my child, the House-hold Fly,  
With his ex-traor-di-na-ry eye:  
What-ev-er thing he may be-hold  
Is mul-ti-plied a thou-sand-fold.

*We* do not need a com-plex eye  
When we ob-serve the Household Fly:  
He is so vol-a-tile that he  
In *ev-er-y* place at once can be;  
He is the buzz-ing in-car-na-tion  
Of an-i-mate mul-ti-pli-ca-tion.

Ah! chil-dren, who can tell the Why  
And Where-fore of the House-hold Fly?





# The Mongoos.





# The Mongoos.

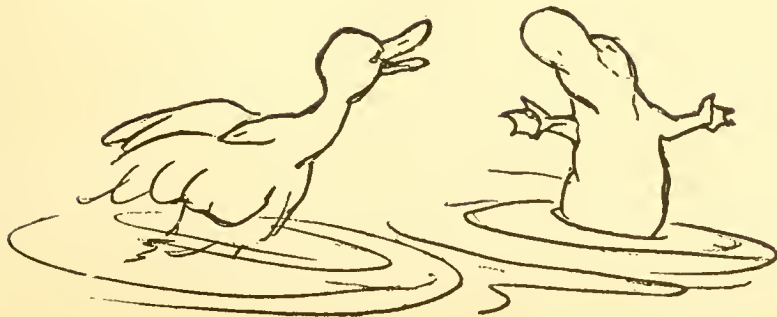
THIS, Chil-dren, is the famed Mon-goos.  
He has an ap-pe-tite ab-struse;  
Strange to re-late, this crea-ture takes  
A cu-ri-ous joy in eat-ing snakes—  
All kinds, though, it must be con-fessed,  
He likes the poi-son-ous ones the best.  
From him we learn how ve-ry small  
A thing can bring a-bout a Fall.  
Oh, Mon-goos, where were you that day  
When Mis-tress Eve was led a-stray?  
If you 'd but seen the ser-pent first,  
Our Parents would not have been cursed,  
And so





And so there would be no ex-cuse  
For MIL-TON, but for you—Mon-goos!

# The Platypus.



# The Platypus.

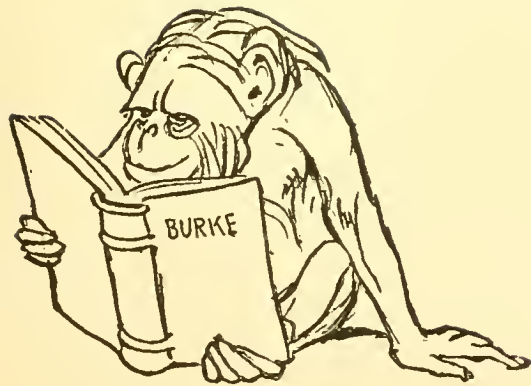
My child, the Duck-billed Plat-y-pus  
A sad ex-am-ple sets for us :  
From him we learn how In-de-ci-sion  
Of char-ac-ter pro-vokes De-ri-sion.  
This vac-il-lat-ing Thing, you see,  
Could not de-cide which he would be,  
Fish, Flesh, or Fowl, and chose all three.  
The sci-en-tists were sore-ly vexed  
To clas-si-fy him; so per-plexed  
Their brains that they, with Rage at bay,  
Called him a hor-rid name one day,—  
A name that baf-fles, frights, and shocks us,—  
Or-ni-tho-rhyn-chus Par-a-dox-us.







# The Chimpanzee.



# The Chimpanzee.

CHIL-DREN, be-hold the Chim-pan-zee:  
He sits on the an-ces-tral tree  
From which we sprang in ag-es gone.  
I 'm glad we sprang: had we held on,  
We might, for aught that I can say,  
Be hor-rid Chim-pan-zees to-day.







# A Mole.



# A Mole.

SEE, chil-dren, the mis-guid-ed Mole.  
He lives down in a deep, dark hole;  
Sweet-ness, and Light, and good Fresh Air  
Are things for which he does not care.  
He has not e-ven that make-shift  
Of fee-ble minds—the *so-cial gift*.  
But say not that he has no soul,  
Lest hap-ly we mis-judge the Mole;  
Nay, if we mea-sure him by Men,  
No doubt he sits in his dark den  
In-struct-ing oth-ers blind as he  
Ex-act-ly how the world *should* be.







# The Rhinoceros.



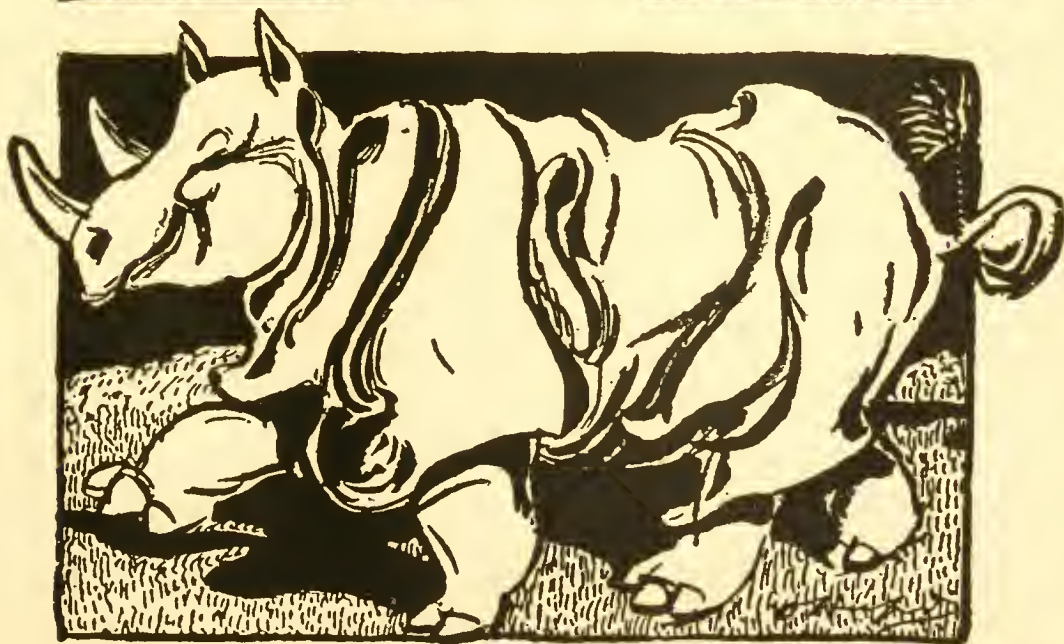
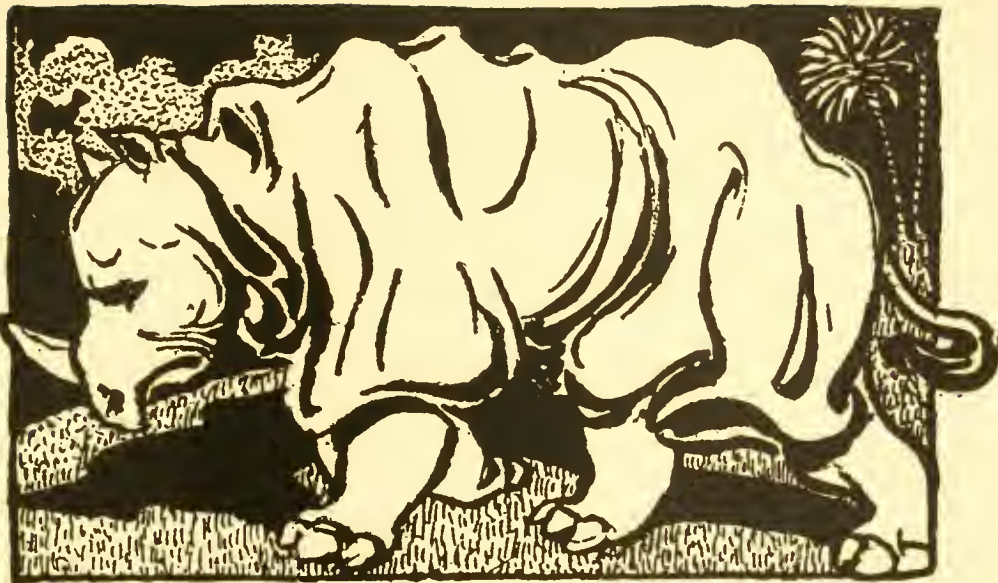
# The Rhinoceros.

So this is the Rhi-no-ce-ros!  
I won-der why he looks so cross.  
Per-haps he is an-noyed a bit  
Be-cause his cloth-ing does not fit.  
(They say he got it read-y made!)  
It is not that, I am a-fraid.  
He looks so cross be-cause I drew  
Him with one horn in-stead of two.

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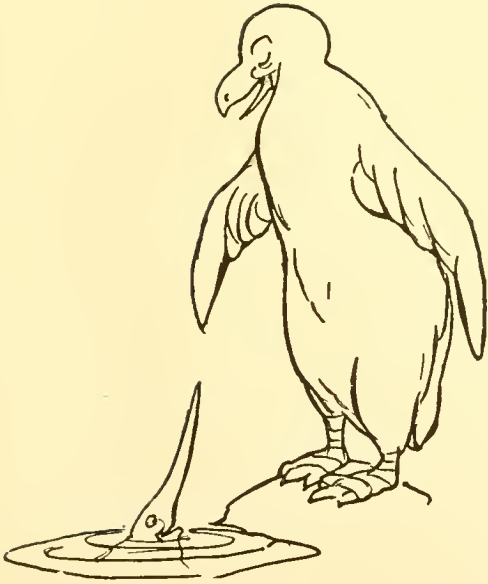
Well, since he cares so much for style,  
Let 's give him two and see him smile.







# A Penguin.



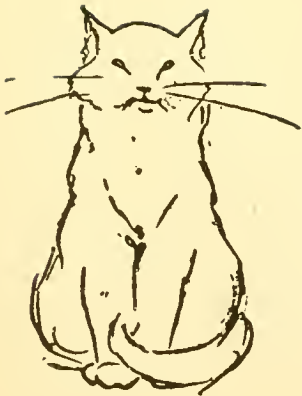
# A Penguin.

THE Pen-guin sits up-on the shore  
And loves the lit-tle fish to bore;  
He has one en-er-vat-ing joke  
That would a very Saint pro-voke:  
“The *Pen-guin* ’s might-i-er than the *Sword-fish*”  
He tells this dai-ly to the bored fish,  
Un-til they are so weak, they float  
With-out re-sis-tance down his throat.





# The Cat.



# The Cat.

OB-SERVE the Cat up-on this page.  
Phil-os-o-phers in ev-er-y age,  
The ver-y *wis-est* of the wise,  
Have tried her mind to an-a-lyze  
In vain, for noth-ing can they learn.  
She baf-fles them at ev-er-y turn  
Like Mis-ter Ham-let in the play.  
She leads their rea-son-ing a-stray;  
She feigns an in-ter-est in string  
Or yarn or any roll-ing thing.  
Un-like the Dog, she does not care  
With com-mon Man her thoughts to share.  
She teach-es





She teach-es us that in life's walk  
'T is bet-ter to let oth-ers talk,  
And lis-ten while *they* say in-stead  
The fool-ish things *we* might have said.



# The Dog.



# The Dog.

HERE is the Dog. Since time be-gan,  
The Dog has been the friend of M<sub>AN</sub>,  
The Dog loves M<sub>AN</sub> be-cause he shears  
His coat and clips his tail and ears.  
M<sub>AN</sub> loves the Dog be-cause he 'll stay  
And lis-ten to his talk all day,  
And wag his tail and show de-light  
At all his jokes, how-ev-er trite.  
His bark is far worse than his bite,  
So peo-ple say. They may be right;  
Yet if to make a choice I had,  
I 'd choose his bark, how-ev-er bad.





# A Chameleon.



# A Chameleon.

A USE-FUL les-son you may con,  
My Child, from the Cha-me-le-on :  
He has the gift, ex-treme-ly rare  
In an-i-mals, of sav-oir-faire.  
And if the se-cret you would guess  
Of the Cha-me-le-on's suc-cess,  
A-dapt your-self with great-est care  
To your sur-round-ings ev-er-y-where ;  
And then, un-less your sex pre-vent,  
Some day you may be Pres-i-dent.





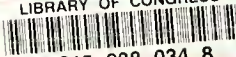
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