

EFFIE

AND HER

STRANGE ACQUAINTANCES

BY THE

AUTHOR OF

"FLOWERS WITH ROOTS"





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“Oh! Mr. Froggy, we have come to this Island in search of a Carpenter.” P. 80.

# EFFIE

AND HER

STRANGE ACQUAINTANCES;

A VERY CURIOUS STORY,

ALMOST TRUE;

BY THE

REV. JOHN CROFTS, M.A.,

*Author of "Flowers with Roots."*

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*“Jeems, what kind of weaver are you?”*

*“I’m in the fancical line, Maister John,” said he somewhat gruffly : “I like its leecence.”*

—*“John Leech and other Papers.”*



## P R E F A C E .

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“AND so you are thinking of growing a tail, are you?” said the old Ape to her son. “Well, I am glad to hear it:—not because I think the better of those who have grown tails generally, for oftentimes it is a mark of pure conceit, and not unfrequently the tail betrays a very shallow mind. You must remember, my dear, that, as you have no tail to start with, and as it will have to be grown out of your inner self, so to speak, it will show to the world what that inner self is like. I want you to understand me. As you now are, that little bud that occupies the place of a tail tells the world nothing. It may be capable of extension into the most attractive of appendages, or it may be of a nature that, if fostered into growth, would only render you ridiculous in the

eyes of your fellows. And it is a thing to be remembered—if once your tail is grown—it must remain a part of you to the end ; for there has been, as yet, no method discovered of successful amputation. So I say it behoves you to consider well all these points before you proceed further in the matter.

“ However, I confess I have very much confidence in you, and am far from wishing to discourage you. Indeed—whether I am blinded by the natural pride of a mother in her offspring I cannot say—all I know is that, in my eyes, your bud of a tail is so full of promise, and I believe your purpose in growing it is so high and laudable, that I say with all my heart—proceed and prosper. Only bear in mind one or two things :—

“ First, take care that your tail be red. I put this point first, because it is a matter of prime importance. I would not myself give one fig for a tail, if it be not red—whatever its other features or qualities may be. All its graces, without this, will be just thrown away. Indeed, I would go so far as to say that a tail cannot be attractive if it is not red ; and that, if it is red, it must be attractive.

“ Then, secondly, do not let your tail be too long—

especially to start with. It is in the nature of tails to grow with the years of their wearer, but the extra length seldom proves to be an advantage—often the reverse. As a rule, if a tail is long, its increased length seems to sap the vigour and strength from its marrow, so that it loses its colour and is no longer red ; and then the critics sit upon it, and the young people laugh at it.

“And, lastly, let your tail have a distinct and definite point. I need not urge this, for I know it is your intention to cherish this feature above all. I know that you do not want your tail merely as an ornament or plaything, but for use ; and so you will take care that, from beginning to end, it is shaped throughout towards that end and point. Well, then, my dear son, all prosperity to your undertaking. May your tail assume a comely shape, and be red on every side. May it be kept within such proportions as not to be unduly exposed to rough usage,—though it would certainly be well to provide yourself with a thick skin for its protection, seeing it may be made so very free with behind your back. And lastly, may it be so shaped to its end that its point may never be lost sight of. Go, my dear son, go ! and may success attend you.”

So saying, the mother Ape waved her hand by way of dismissal, and then proceeded to her hidden hoard of nuts, which she preferred discussing alone.

What the sequel was to all this I have never been able to learn, nor do I know that the young Ape ever managed to grow a tail at all ; but the advice struck me as so remarkable that I have never forgotten it, and I have ventured to mention it to my reader before commencing my story.





## CHAPTER I.

---

“Oh! what a lovely lot of flowers!”  
she said. P. 5.

*Effie makes Strange Acquaintances.*

EFFIE is a friend of mine, and a very great friend, too. I do not introduce her to everybody, because I love her so much I am inclined to be rather jealous of others knowing her. However, as I happen to be in a generous mood just now, I will introduce her to *you*, my dear reader, and then you will soon find out why I love her so.

There she goes tripping along, on a warm May afternoon, towards the Ash Wood, carrying something that looks like an enormous sandwich, only with pieces of board instead of bread, and between them, in the place of meat, a number of sheets of white blotting paper; with straps fastened round the whole, to keep the sandwich from falling to pieces.

What can she be going to do? It looks as if she is setting off in search of wild flowers, for this big sandwich is just the kind of thing collectors generally carry about with them when

they go searching for flowers, and they use it to put the flowers in and press them as soon as they get them.

Yes, we are quite right. She is very fond of flowers, and is on her way to the wood to search for them, and she is taking her press with her, so as to be able to preserve those she gathers before they begin to fade.

But what is the small tin box she has in her hand? Oh! that is to put any strange caterpillar in she may find; for her brother Charley is as fond of insects as she is of flowers, and he has told her to be sure and always take a box with her for caterpillars whenever she goes out flower-gathering.

Little Effie tripped along the lane humming a tune, and then turned into a field and made her way rather cautiously towards the gate opening into the wood. She stopped singing as she got into the field, for—although if she had *known* that it was wrong, she would not have

gone there—yet she was not *quite* sure whether or not she was trespassing.

“ Oh ! what a lovely lot of flowers ! ” she said to herself as she reached the wood, and looked round over the bright carpets of yellow and blue and white. And then she began running here and there, eagerly plucking—now a tender little Wood Sorrel, and now a Primrose, and now a Blue-bell, placing each, as she gathered it, carefully between the sheets of blotting-paper.

“ I had no idea there were so many different kinds until I read the little book Uncle George gave me. Let me see how many more I shall have to gather before I have got all the kinds that grow in the wood. ” And she sat down on a grassy bank, in the middle of a perfect carpet of Blue-bells and Cowslips, and opened her book—which she had brought with her—to see.

“ The Primrose, and the Wood Anemone, and the Cowslip. Yes ! I have got those. The little purple-tinted Wood Sorrel ; Yes ! and the

Blue-bell, and the Wood Pimpernel; Yes! I have got all those; but then there is the Wood Sanicle!—what is Wood Sanicle, I wonder?—and Dog Mercury, and the Moschatel,—I wish flowers had not such hard names! And what does it say? The Moschatel has *green* flowers? Well, I never heard of a *green* flower before. What a funny-looking thing it must be!” and little Effie took off her hat (for she was very hot) and lay back amongst the flowers to think about it.

“I wonder why leaves should always be green, and flowers should almost always be some other colour! I wonder how it would look if the flowers were always green, and the leaves coloured instead! Ah! you dear little Cowslips, it is you, is it, who have been tickling my face all the while? I wonder why you are always yellow, you dear little things! whilst your neighbours, the Blue-bells, are always blue. I wonder—but what was that? It sounded like somebody

singing. There it is again!"——She listened, and then she heard, distinctly, a small, but clear and ringing voice, with a tone of warning in it, singing the following words:—

“Ye Cowslips, give ear ;  
An enemy 's near !

Ye Blue-bells, ring out an alarm !  
A gawky thing comes,  
All fingers and thumbs,  
With a sandwich under her arm !

“She's searching for you—

I declare it is true !

I know very well what she 's at :  
In that frightful machine—  
The sandwich, I mean—

She intends to squeeze you all flat.

“Fall into your rank

On the Hyacinth bank,

But beware of the way as you pass ;—  
E'en if she 's asleep,  
One eye open she 'll keep,  
As she lies like a snake in the grass.

“Thistles! nettles! and ants!  
And all poisonous plants!  
Ye hornets! and earwigs! and snakes!  
Trim your fangs and your wings,  
Prickles, nippers and stings,  
And attack her before she awakes!”

“That is a very odd song,” said Effie to herself; “I wonder what it can mean?” and she looked in the direction from which it seemed to come. And then she saw, coming towards her, two objects so very curious-looking that she could make of them literally neither top nor tail.

“Here she is!” cried the taller of the two, catching sight of Effie. “Now, Madam,” he continued, coming up, cudgel in hand, “pray what do you want here? Be kind enough to speak up and answer me at once.”

“Well, really,” thought Effie, “he seems very cross; if he were not so small, and if his face were not so much like a flower, I should be



afraid it was the game-keeper," for Effie had a notion that game-keepers and gardeners are always cross.

"I am sorry if I have done anything to offend either of you," she said, looking from one to the other, "but I only came here to spend this beautiful afternoon amongst the flowers, and I assure you I did not mean any harm to anyone. Will you be so very kind as to tell me your name, and what I have done to vex you; and also"—she added more timidly, glancing at the individual who had not yet spoken—"may I also ask who the other"—she did not know what to call him, so she said "gentleman,"—"who the other gentleman is?"

She had been glancing at this second creature again and again, for it was queerer-looking even than the other, and she thought that never in her life had she seen so odd and comical a figure. It seemed to have almost any number of legs, some longer, some shorter, some to use

for one thing and some for another; and as it held itself bolt upright, and clasped its cudgel in a threatening manner, if it had not been so ridiculously small—it was only about one inch high—it really would have looked quite dreadful, for it seemed to have a grin on its black, ugly face, and it was bristling with horrid-looking hairs all over its body from head to foot.

“Oh, yes,” answered the taller stranger, “I will tell you who we are, certainly: my name is Ragged Robin—Mr. Ragged Robin, if you please,—and my friend there is Mr. Woolly Bear.”

“Then you *are* a flower,” broke in little Effie, feeling very much relieved; “I thought you were when I first saw you, only you looked so very”——Effie stopped, for she *was* going to say “queer,” but luckily remembered, just in time, that he might not like it; and so she went on——“and, if you please, is your friend, Mr. Woolly Bear, a caterpillar?”

Woolly Bear, who had been munching vegetables of different kinds ever since Effie first saw him, and whose mouth was at present too full to allow him to speak, stiffly bowed his head in assent.

“And now,” said Ragged Robin, “instead of asking any more questions, perhaps you will be good enough to answer mine. Look us in the face, and tell us what you mean by saying that you never meant anybody any harm.”

As he spoke, Ragged Robin kept his eye steadily fixed upon the sandwich, and Woolly Bear was staring with all his might at the tin box.

It suddenly occurred to Effie now what it all meant, and why they looked so angry.

“Oh, my dear little Ragged Robin,” she began——

“*Mister* Ragged Robin,” he put in, “if you please, and you need not trouble yourself about my size; I am quite tall enough.”

“Oh, my dear Mr. Ragged Robin, don't be angry with me. It is because you do not know me, if you think I could do anything to hurt anyone in the world, and least of all could I hurt my sweet little friends, the flowers. This case of mine, that you keep looking at so, is only to put my little friends in, and press them flat, so as to preserve their colour.”

Ragged Robin was trembling from head to foot.

“They don't mind it, indeed they don't,” Effie explained, noticing his alarm.

“Don't they indeed?” said Ragged Robin.

“And I suppose caterpillars don't mind being shut up in that horrible coffin you have got there,” said Woolly Bear, bristling more than before.

Little Effie at once pointed out that she had had some holes bored in the lid, to let in the air, and that there was a nice bit of soft moss at the bottom, for the caterpillars to lie on. However,

she promised that, as he seemed to have taken a strong dislike to it, she would not put *him* in; which I am sure does her great credit, for she had just been thinking to herself "What a prize he will be! a *talking caterpillar* I am sure *must* be very rare; and how pleased Charley will be to have him!"

"Do you know what Martha told me?" she said presently, still speaking to Woolly Bear.

"Who is Martha?" they both asked in a breath.

"Why nurse, of course," said Effie: "I should have thought anybody would know that."

Ragged Robin tossed his head, and Woolly Bear turned up his nose.

"Martha says," continued Effie, "that this wood is haunted, and that it is not safe for anyone to come here alone. And Mamma was very angry about it, and said it was all a story, and that Martha ought to have known better. I suppose there *is* no truth in it, is there?"

Woolly Bear hereupon went off into such a violent fit of laughter, that Effie was afraid he would break a blood-vessel, till she reflected that he probably had not one to break.

“What are you laughing at?” she asked him at length.

Woolly Bear, who was just recovering, went off into another fit more violent than before, writhing about in such an extraordinary way that Effie again became afraid he would do himself some harm.

“You have no blood-vessel to break, I dare say,” she said, “and you seem to have no backbone to injure, either; but really, unless you stop laughing, you will do yourself *some* harm, even if you *are* made up, as Charley says, of only ‘skin and squash.’”

Upon this, Woolly Bear instantly ceased to laugh, and looked as grave as if a smile had never crossed his face.

“But really, I want to know,” Effie began

again, "what Martha could mean."

Woolly Bear seemed in danger of going off into another fit.

"I wonder," said Ragged Robin, imitating the way in which Effie was lying, and talking, as if to himself; "I wonder why little girls are always green, and the clothes they wear are generally some other colour; I wonder how it would look if their clothes were always green, and the little girls themselves some other colour instead."

"Do you mean to say that there is no truth in the story at all?" asked Effie.

"Are you such a simpleton as to believe everything you hear?" returned Ragged Robin.

"I should be very sorry to *disbelieve* everything I hear," said Effie, getting a little vexed.

"Ah, well, I suppose that would be the worse fault of the two," Ragged Robin replied. "But now I think I know who invented that story, and I know why it was invented."

“ Oh, do tell me !” exclaimed Effie, getting very much interested.

“ It was not any of us who live here, and ought to know most about it. In fact it was not a wild flower at all.”

“ But *do* wild flowers tell stories ?” Effie interrupted him to ask.

“ Of course they do. Everyone has got a little story of its own, which they will tell you, I dare say, when you know them better. However, as I was saying, it was not a wild flower that invented that story, but it may have been a garden flower.”

“ But why ?” asked Effie.

“ To spite us.”

“ Oh, but why ?” asked Effie again.

“ Because garden flowers are so jealous of us.”

“ But why are they jealous ?”

“ More ‘ why’s ’ than wisdom,” grunted Woolly Bear, with his mouth full of stinging-nettle.



“Quite right, Woolly Bear,” said Robin, “I should have thought no one need ask the last question. However, there is a special reason which I have not time to talk of just now. And if you hate anybody, and do not know what to say against them, at all events you can always shie a stone at their windows, you know.”

“I don’t think I quite understand you,” said Effie.

“I dare say not,” said Ragged Robin, yawning, “but I cannot help that. And now I must be off!”——and he began buttoning up his coat and looking towards Woolly Bear.

“I am quite ready,” said the latter, cramming in a last enormous mouthful of green, and then wiping his lips on the back of a Dock-leaf. “I suppose the dancing will have begun,” he added, in great danger of choking.

“Dancing!” Effie exclaimed, “you are surely not going to a ball?”

“And pray why not?” said they both at

once, turning sharply round upon her.

“Oh! nothing; only I am so very fond of music and dancing, and seeing beautiful sights, that I thought—if they are flowers that are going to dance, and the ball is public, I might, you know,—just look on”—

“Come along,” said Ragged Robin, “I suppose you are a good walker?” And then, lowering his voice to a whisper, and pointing over his shoulder at Woolly Bear, he added in Effie’s ear, “Our friend here has no idea of the distance, and I quite expect he will knock up long before we get there. *He eats sadly too much.* However, we shall see. And now let us on with all speed to the masquerade.”

## CHAPTER II.

---

### *Woolly Bear and the Tomtit.*

CREEP! creep! creep! Effie found it dreadfully trying work travelling at her friends' pace,—they were so slow. Woolly Bear was the most provoking. He had the shortest legs for one thing; but I need hardly say that if it had been only that, Effie would not have said one word in the way of complaint, she was far too kind-hearted. But Woolly Bear was always going out of his way after something to eat. As for passing a fresh green leaf of dead-nettle or dandelion, he would as soon have thought of flying. "I beg your pardon, ladies and gentlemen," he kept saying every minute or two, (he always said "ladies and gentlemen," though

there was no one present but Effie and Ragged Robin,) "I beg your pardon, just one moment if *you* please,"—and then his friends knew that he had spied a dainty bit of green that could not be reached from the path. Effie was amused at first, but it soon got past a joke, for day by day came and went, and still the same thing went on; and as to progress in their journey—they seemed to make next to none.

At last Effie gravely consulted with Ragged Robin as to what was to be done: Effie wondered whether it would not be best to leave him behind, and hurry on to the ball by themselves; but this Ragged Robin would not listen to for a moment.

"I quite agree with you," said Robin, "that it is very tiresome, and, I must say, a little disgusting too of Woolly Bear, to stop dawdling and stuffing as he does; but he is an old friend of mine, and so I could not think of turning my back upon him."

However, they determined to try what they could do in the way of frightening him as to the effects of over-eating.

“Woolly Bear, dear,” Effie began, very quietly, as he came waddling back to the path again for the fiftieth time that day, puffing and panting from the mingled effects of walking and over-eating,—“Woolly Bear, dear, don’t you think it would be better for you if you ate rather less, and walked more?”

“Better for me?” exclaimed Woolly Bear, with his hands on his sides and his arms akimbo, very glad of an excuse for standing still, whilst he stared at Effie with eyes very wide open with astonishment.

“Yes,” said Effie, “I really mean what I say. Do you know, both Ragged Robin and I have been much concerned of late to notice how ill you are looking, and how short your breath has grown; and I must tell you we are both convinced that, unless you turn over a new leaf

and eat less, you will be having a fit of apoplexy, or some other dreadful thing will happen to you.

“ Well,” said Woolly Bear, at length, after very carefully surveying his waistcoat—or at least the part of his person where his waistcoat would have been if he had worn one—and appearing well satisfied with the result of his examination.—“ Well, as to turning over a new leaf; as you are so very pressing, it would be very ungrateful of me to say ‘ No; ’” and as he spoke he helped himself—much to Effie’s disgust—to another leaf of dandelion. “ And then, as to the remainder of your excellent remarks—pardon me, I forget now your exact words, but your sentiment I heartily agree with: —‘ a fresh leaf ’——very good; ‘ turn it over, ’——capital idea!——Thank you, thank you; equally good on both sides.”——And his eyes, that peeped at Effie over the edge of the leaf, which he had already begun to munch, sparkled with satisfaction.

“Nobody so stupid as those who *won't* understand,” now put in Ragged Robin. “The young lady means——and I must say that I heartily agree with her——that for any creature to eat to the extent that you do is simply disgraceful: and, believe me, that is not all;—it is a practice as dangerous to your health as it is degrading to your character.”

“Dangerous?” repeated Woolly Bear, his eyes twinkling with amusement, “pray what is there in it of danger? I know, however, what you mean,” he added, “and you will, I dare say, be surprised to hear that I am eating *in the hope of bursting!* Yes,” he continued, noticing their looks of blank amazement, “you think I am taking leave of my senses, but I can assure you I mean just what I say. I have already burst twice, and I wish with all my heart I could burst again at this moment. Fancy the delicious sensation! You see me at present, how tight my skin is, and how easily upset I consequently

am by the least exertion ;—well, presently crack ! goes my skin ;—say at the back of my neck :—I wriggle and writhe for a few minutes, and then out I scramble, with the nicest, softest, loosest kind of skin you ever saw, hanging about one all in pleats and folds, and giving one the most delightful, dressing-gown-and-slippers kind of feeling, with plenty of room to ”——

What more he was going to say I do not know, for just at the moment the three friends caught sight of a Tomtit sharpening his beak on a bough of the nearest tree, and eyeing Woolly Bear with a very wolfish look ; and in an instant——quicker than Effie would have imagined it possible——Woolly Bear was gone !!

Effie looked round and round, up and down the path, amongst the stinging nettles, behind the dock leaf—*everywhere*, in fact, as it seemed to her—but he was nowhere to be seen.

“ Very singular, this ; ” said she to Ragged Robin ; “ what can have become of him ? He



seems to have vanished into the air.—Perhaps he has learnt the art of vanishing as well as that of bursting.”

Meanwhile the Tomtit had gone away. He seemed, at first, as much perplexed as Effie at Woolly Bear's disappearance; but it did not last long. He merely gave a little twitter of disappointment, and then flew away out of sight.

Effie and Ragged Robin searched and searched till they were tired; but just as they were on the point of giving up in despair, they heard a very faint whisper, coming, as it seemed, from the bowels of the earth:—

“Is he gone?” said the voice—but so faintly and huskily that Effie did not in the least recognise it.

“Gone away, do you say? Yes, he is indeed,” said Effie, “and we cannot find him high or low. But pray who are *you*? Do come and show yourself, and tell us if you have seen anything of our lost friend.”

“I mean the Tomtit,” said the husky voice again. “Where is he? Is he gone?”—And as he spoke there peeped out, very cautiously, from beneath a bramble-leaf at Effie’s feet, a little black head, with eyes (Effie thought she saw at least a dozen of them) starting from their sockets, and rolling round and round in all directions, as if searching the country above, below, and on all sides.

“Oh! my dear Woolly Bear,” said Effie, as she recognised her stout friend, “how very glad I am to see you! Oh, yes, *do* come out. There is nothing at all to be afraid of. The Tomtit has flown away this half-hour.”

“*Afraid?*” said Woolly Bear, recovering his breath, as he crept out from his hiding-place, and once more drew himself upright, “I should like to know who’s afraid? Don’t be in too great a hurry, young lady, in jumping to conclusions. It may have looked to *you* like fear, perhaps, but the fact is merely this:—there has

been a little feud between the Tomtit family and my own for several generations (a very old family, young lady, is the Woolly Bear family, —came in with the Conqueror, as I believe,) and so I always make a point of cutting any of the Tomtits I meet.”

“Perhaps, Mr. Ragged Robin,” he added presently, “as there appears to be a party of these gentlemen in the neighbourhood, you would not mind walking on a little in front, so as to give me timely notice of their approach, for I do not wish to hurt their feelings more than is necessary, and so I should be glad to avoid snubbing them so pointedly as I did our worthy friend who is gone.”

Effie nearly laughed outright at the ridiculous mixture of cowardice and vanity the caterpillar displayed, but she was at the same time shocked at his want of candour and truthfulness.

“Well,” she said, “we won’t talk any more of Tomtits; but do please tell me, Woolly Bear,

now, about your eyes. How many do you really possess? I thought just now I saw at least a dozen."

"There are a dozen," said Woolly Bear, proudly, "but what of that? It is nothing to what members of my family usually have. My mother, for instance, had *seventeen thousand eyes!* A wonderfully far-seeing race is the Woolly Bear race, young lady."

Effie could not help feeling a little spiteful this time, for she thought "here is another instance of his untruthfulness;" \* and so she asked, rather wickedly, "And was it from your mother that you learnt to cut Tomtits by creeping under bramble-leaves? Ah, well, I suppose as she saw seventeen thousand sharp beaks every time a Tomtit appeared, it was but natural for her to think that the best way of cutting them was by cutting away."

Effie was very sorry the moment the words

\* See Notes.

had escaped her lips, for she saw that Woolly Bear was grievously offended. It was all very well to say to herself that "thin-skinned people should not be conceited, and should not tell untruths;" and that "it would, perhaps, do Woolly Bear good," and so forth; she was, nevertheless, very sorry for what she had said, and sincerely anxious to make it up to the caterpillar again. Besides, as Ragged Robin, acting upon his friend's suggestion, had gone on in front, Woolly Bear was now Effie's only companion, so that it was the more desirable that they should be on friendly terms.

"Woolly Bear, dear," she began presently, wishing to change the subject, so that he might forget what had passed, "have you ever been to a masquerade before?"

But Woolly Bear was in his very grumpiest mood, and would not answer her a word.

"I want you to tell me something about it, if you will, please, for I *am* so much interested.

Do the flowers who go to the ball *really dance*? It seems so odd to think of flowers dancing. Do they, Woolly Bear?"

No answer.

"How much further have we to go before we get there, Woolly Bear, dear?"

Still no answer.

"Oh, do speak to me," she burst out, "it is so dull and miserable going on in this way, and I like to hear you talk so much."

Woolly Bear's heart relented a good deal at this, but he determined not to show it, for he thought to himself, "This is a good opportunity of teaching the young lady a lesson;" and so he remained silent as before.

Effie now gave it up, and they walked side by side without another word. However, as there was to be no talking, there was the more time for thought; and Effie began thinking over all that had happened since she came to the Ash Wood to search for flowers; and the more

she thought, the more and more strange it seemed to her. "Can it be all real?" she asked herself; "it seems more like a fairy story. Can I be really little Effie—the old little Effie? And is this really the Ash Wood, I wonder?"

"Woolly Bear, dear, do tell me," she said aloud: "Am I really Effie? And are you really a caterpillar? And is that funny little fellow in front a real Ragged Robin? I am so dreadfully puzzled about everything."

Woolly Bear did not answer, but struck up a little wheezy song instead:—

"Little Bo-Peep

Fell fast asleep,

And her mother could nowhere find her!

Where the cowslips grew,

And the violets blue,

She lay, with her hat behind her.

“ Oh, little Peep-Bo,

It's naughty, you know,

To hide where your mother can't find you ;

And you are still more to blame

For forgetting your name

And asking a Bear to remind you.”

Effie listened to the end of the song, but could not for the life of her make up her mind whether or not it was intended as an answer to her question, so she repeated her enquiries in an altered form.

“ I *think* I am Effie,” she said, “ and I *think* I came to the Ash Wood on a May afternoon to search for flowers ; but things have happened so strangely since then, I really feel certain of nothing. Will you then be so very kind as to tell me, in the first place, if this is still the month of May ?”

“ May or may not,” grunted Woolly Bear, “ it



depends upon circumstances."

"I suppose he intends that as a kind of joke," thought Effie to herself, "but I am sure it is neither witty nor civil."

"Indeed, I am very much in earnest," she said aloud, "and want to know. Do answer me seriously, Woolly Bear, dear. *Is it the month of May? and is this really the Ash Wood?*"

"Would or wouldn't, as the case may be," he growled again.

"Oh, you simpleton!" thought Effie. "If only people could see themselves as other people see them! Fancy Woolly Bear looking upon himself as a wit! If he only knew how ill it becomes him!"

But now they came up with Ragged Robin, who had stopped to point out to Effie a curious little trailing plant growing on a sandy bank, and that looked very much like a small vetch.

"That is the plant Woolly Bear was talking of the other day," he said.

“What! the Hairy Tine-tare,” exclaimed Effie, “that I have been looking for so long? Oh, how delightful!”—and she left Woolly Bear’s side, and flew in the direction of the bank.

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### CHAPTER III.



“Open a pod,” said Woolly Bear, “examine the two seeds carefully and *swallow the other!*” P. 38.

*Effie finds a Treasure and loses a Friend.*

EFFIE had, from the very first, been thinking how much pleasanter it would be for her if she could become quite tiny, as people always did in the fairy stories she had read. "I shall feel so stupid at the ball," she thought, "amongst all those beautiful flowers, if I am such a giant; and besides, I am sure the journey would not seem half so tiresome and slow, if I had little short legs like Ragged Robin's;" and so she asked her friends, on the second day of their acquaintance, if they could give her any assistance in the matter; and Woolly Bear then said that it all depended upon finding a plant of Hairy Tine-tare; "For," said he, "in that case all is simple enough: you have only to take one of the pods, which always contain two seeds—neither more nor less,—open it, and *swallow the other*; and you will at once become as small as you wish." From that day Effie had been ever

on the look-out, but, until now, had met with no trace of the much-coveted plant. Imagine, then, how her heart beat, and her hand trembled with excitement, as she plucked the only three pods the plant bore—it was early for seed yet,—and hastened back to Woolly Bear with her treasures in her hand.

“Now, Woolly Bear,” she said, “tell me the rules once more, for here are the Tine-tare pods at last. Yes,” she added, as she held them up to the light, and examined them; “and there are the two seeds in each of them I declare;—neither more nor less—just as you said. Now for the rules.”

“Open a pod,” said Woolly Bear, very slowly, and with the gravity of an undertaker, “Open a pod; examine the two seeds carefully, and *swallow the other.*”

“Well, here they are then,” said Effie in a fever of excitement, “but which do you call *the other*?”

Woolly Bear did not answer.

“Tell me quickly, do,” she said impatiently, “I am almost dying with excitement.”

But Woolly Bear was busy with his feeding now, and not another word could be got from him.

“Oh, dear! oh, dear!” said Effie. “Well, let me see for myself, then. This is *one* seed, anyhow,”—and she placed her finger on the seed nearest the stalk,—“this, then, must be *the other*.” And she swallowed down the one at the opposite end. But, alas! alas! there was no change. She looked down at her feet, and they were as far off as ever. She stretched out her arm, and it was as long and as plump as before. Then she looked to Woolly Bear for an explanation.

“You have swallowed the wrong one, of course,” he said. “I told you distinctly it was to be *the other*, and you have swallowed *one* and left *the other*. Look, there it is!”——and he

motioned towards the solitary seed that was left.

A bright thought now occurred to Effie, and she tossed down her throat the remaining seed, with a smile of satisfaction at her own cleverness. "At all events, I have got *the other* this time," she remarked. But there was no change. She was just as much of a giantess as before. What was the meaning of this ?

"Won't you understand?" said Woolly Bear again. "It was to be *the other*, and *the other only*; and now you have swallowed them *both*."

Effie saw at once how silly she had been, and determined not to make such an absurd mistake again. "How very fortunate, though," she said to herself, "that that was not the only pod; or else what in the world should I do now?" She saw, however, that it was not all plain sailing even yet, and so, as she burst pod number two, she sat down to examine and consider. She took the pod first in one hand and then in the other. She held it stalk



upwards and stalk downwards: examined it inside and outside, upside down and downside up, and turned it round and round in all directions, lengthwise and crosswise, and cornerwise, in the hope of being able to make out the puzzle. But do what she might, a puzzle it still remained, for there was nothing at all to show, so far as she could see, which was *one* and which was *the other*: all seemed to depend upon the end she began to count from. Of course it occurred to her that as she had begun to count last time from the stalk end, and got wrong, she *ought* to get right if she began this time from the opposite end. But she had begun to discover that things, unfortunately, do not turn out just as they *ought*, and she wanted to make sure this time.

At last it all seemed plain to her, and her face beamed with satisfaction.

“I will begin to count from the opposite end this time,” she said, “and that will be *almost*

sure to make it right ; but, to make *quite* sure, I will throw number one seed away, and then there *can* be no doubt." And she instantly acted upon the idea, and stood up to see the effect in her size. But imagine her consternation when she discovered that there was no change whatever, any more than before.

"How is it?" she exclaimed. "O Woolly Bear, I am afraid you have deceived me. I don't believe there is any good at all in these stupid seeds, for I am sure I did just as you told me this time."

"Well," said Woolly Bear, "which did you swallow?"

"Why the one at the st—I mean the other after"——

"Ah," said Woolly Bear, interrupting her, "I see who is trying to deceive. Confess that you have again swallowed *one*, and—this time—thrown *the other* away."

There was one more chance for Effie, for she

had still one pod left. She did not take long to consider what to do this time, for she had already a plan in her mind; and so, without letting Woolly Bear see what she was doing, she opened her remaining pod, and secretly wrapped up one of the seeds in a corner of the leaf Woolly Bear was eating; and Woolly Bear, without in the least being conscious of the fact, gobbled it down with the rest.

When Effie had watched it safely down the caterpillar's throat, and saw that it made no difference to his size, she broke out into a laugh.

"*Now*, Woolly Bear, at all events," she said, "I shall find out the truth,"—and she showed him the one remaining seed, at the same time telling him what she had done. "So that you see," she laughingly said, "you have eaten *the one* this time—and it must have been *the one* and not *the other*, because it made no difference to your size—and therefore *this must be the other*. If not, I shall know you have deceived me." So

saying, she made her last venture, and swallowed the precious seed that alone was left.

The effect was instantaneous! Almost before she was aware of it, she found her eyes within two or three inches of her boots; and, oh! what dear little boots they were! And her hand, as she held it out to look at it—oh! what a hand!—just the very picture of what she had always fancied a fairy's hand must be. And she found she had the power, too, of becoming as much less as she liked—as had also Ragged Robin, though neither of them could grow any bigger. “Ah, now, at last,” said Effie, “I really *am* in Fairy Land, without any doubt at all. This is happiness indeed.”

It was shortly after this, however, that a very melancholy event took place. Woolly Bear fell dangerously ill, and though at first he thought it was only one of his bursting attacks coming on, his illness so increased that he soon

changed his opinion, and told Effie and Robin that he should soon have to say goodbye to them, for he was going to leave them altogether. "And yet," he added, "I cannot help hoping that we shall meet again sometime and somewhere, for something within tells me that there is a higher and better life for me beyond the present; and I am so confident that the voice does not deceive me, that I really feel quite anxious for the time to come for me to die, so that I may find out what the new life is to be like."


It was a strange way of dying, Effie thought, altogether, for Woolly Bear spent the last few hours of his life in making for himself a winding sheet and a little coffin. He climbed up a blade of grass, tied several bents together, and then proceeded to make a little silk hammock, to serve the double purpose of a bed to die in, and a winding-sheet to wrap round his body: and he hung this little swinging bed, as he made it,

to the bents of grass that he had tied together. It was a most odd arrangement, and Effie felt that she did not in the least understand how it was done, though she watched the performance very carefully from beginning to end ; but the funniest thing about it was that Woolly Bear hung up his bed *with himself in it* ;—he did not hang it up first and then *get* into it, but he was in it already from the very first. And then, when all was quite finished, and the time was really come, Woolly Bear stretched himself out at full length, drew down his legs by his side, and turned himself over to die.

Effie was standing on tip-toe watching, with tears in her eyes, the little black face of her dying friend through the thin silky curtain ; and she was now just about to turn away to cry outright, thinking that all was over and that Woolly Bear was dead, when—kick ! kick ! kick !—a great wriggling and struggling began again inside. What could it be ?—Only that

Woolly Bear was getting into his coffin!— Yes, where in the world he got it from Effie could not tell, but there it was—a little brown coffin that fitted him exactly ; and Woolly Bear had wriggled into it now, and there he lay at last, quite still.

Poor little Effie! We will pass over the next few hours, they were so sad. But before she continued her journey she set up, to mark the spot where the sad event took place, a little grave-stone, made with the utmost pains out of a piece of broken slate that she found. And on this she wrote, in a small unsteady hand— her eyes all the while streaming with tears— “ In loving Memory of Effie’s *dear* little Friend, W.B.”



IN LOVING MEMORY  
OF  
EFFIE'S DEAR LITTLE  
FRIEND,  
W.B.



## CHAPTER IV.

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### *Effie tries Island Life.*

“OH,” said Effie, turning to Ragged Robin, “I don’t care a bit about the ball now, and I would much rather not go. I had no idea that I loved Woolly Bear so much. He was a *dear!*”——and she choked again at the thought of his many charms.

“Oh, come,” said Robin, “this is really absurd. It was only yesterday you were saying how rude and vulgar you thought him, and how very tiresome it was to have to stop so constantly for his never-ending meals; and now that he has been kind enough to die, and leave us free to travel at our own pace, you can do nothing but sob. If you think you have not said enough on his grave-stone, say a little more

by all means. You might put something of this sort:—

STRANGER, WEEP !!

THE LITTLE BODY THAT HANGETH HEREBY  
CAN GIVE YOU NO IDEA OF THE

NOBLE BEING

TO WHOM IT BELONGED.

OF MAJESTIC FORM! OF HIGH COURAGE!  
OF SINGULAR WIT! OF SWEET AND GENTLE TEMPER!  
OF SELF-DENYING HABITS!  
OF A MOST LOVING DISPOSITION!

HE WON ALL HEARTS!

HE WAS AT THE SAME TIME TRUE AND TENDER!  
BRAVE AND PRUDENT!

HIGH-MINDED AND LOWLY! WINNING AND OBLIGING!  
BUT HIS WONDERFUL UNSELFISHNESS WAS  
HIS CROWNING VIRTUE!

HE SHOWED HIS CONTEMPT FOR THE PLEASURES OF LIFE  
BY LIVING CHIEFLY UPON STINGING-NETTLES!

HE DIED TO OBLIGE HIS NEIGHBOURS!

AND

HE EVEN PERFORMED HIS OWN FUNERAL  
TO SAVE HIS FRIENDS TROUBLE!!!

“ There ! what do you say to that ?—Or if that is not enough, say some more. *Write* as much as ever you like, but let us have no crying. You ought to be ashamed at your age, not to

know better. Grown-up people never cry when they have put up a tomb-stone. What do you suppose the stone is for, I wonder."

Now Ragged Robin was not at all hard-hearted in reality. He knew something about Woolly Bear that Effie did not know, and he did not tell her because he wished her to have a pleasant surprise later on.

He now came up and took her kindly by the hand, and led her away.

They slept that night in a lovely spot. They came, about evening, to the banks of a stream which was so beautiful that it nearly took away Effie's breath with delight. The water was one mass of flowers. There were both white and yellow Water-lilies floating about, with great fleshy leaves so large and green and smooth, and spread out so flat on the surface of the water, that Effie said she should like nothing better than to have a house on one of them, and live there all her life as Queen of the River.

There were also forests of yellow Iris—"Flags," as Effie called them—and long wax-like flowers of the Bog-bean, growing up out of the water; and the banks of the stream were bright with blossoms of every colour—silver and crimson, purple and gold, rose colour and lemon, blue and scarlet, white and lavender, and all the most delicate shades and tints between these colours. There was the blue Forget-me-not, and purple Vetch, and pink Geranium, and yellow Loosestrife, and white Campion, and scarlet Poppy, mixing with Ox-eye Daisies, and Fox-gloves, and crimson Clover, and Willow-herb, and Dog-roses, and I do not know how many other sweet flowers.

Effie did not know very much about flowers yet, or she would have been able to tell at once from these that it could no longer be the month of May. She did, however, notice that the May-blossoms seemed to be over, and that there were no Cowslips, or Anemones, or Violets

to be seen.

“Let us stay here always,” she cried. “There cannot be a lovelier place in all the world, I am sure.”

Ragged Robin consented to stay for the night, but said they must be pushing forward in the morning. And now they set about choosing a spot for their night's abode. It was at last agreed that it should be as Effie desired, and they would pitch their tent upon one of the leaves of the large white Water-lily in the very middle of the stream. These leaves looked like floating green islands, and Effie said for once they should be inhabited. So having collected materials for their tent, and some berries to serve for food in case of accident, they tripped down the bank, and began skipping from island to island towards the middle. There was a perfect cluster of white lilies in the centre, and it was a large leaf amongst these they wanted to reach; but the difficulty was that there was a

space of clear water about a yard wide separating the outermost leaf where they were now standing, from those in the middle. They noticed, however, that one leaf was swayed backwards and forwards in a remarkable way by the stream——now it floated this way, and now that——one minute it came to within a few inches of where Effie and Robin were standing, and the next it floated off again towards the middle. Effie at once determined to use this leaf as their ferry-boat: and they succeeded. By watching their opportunity they managed to jump upon it just as it came to the side, and by a second desperate leap they safely reached the Lily cluster in the centre.

They soon got their tent pitched, for they had become quite used to the work, and could make it now quite as neatly as a bird makes its nest, and in a hundredth part of the time. It was made of leaves, and indeed was not at all unlike the upper half of a wren's nest, with a

small opening at the side, of course, for entrance, and a feather bed inside to sleep on.

Ragged Robin retired at once to rest. But Effie sat down at the tent-door to enjoy the sweet evening. It was, indeed, delicious. In all her life she had never read or fancied anything like it. One thing struck her very much : —nothing now seemed to be afraid of her. A water-rat came out of its hole in the bank and swam across the stream close to her, bowing and smiling as he passed. The little fishes swam round and round her island, waving their tails, and nibbling at the edge of the leaf to attract her notice, and when Effie kneeled down and put her hand in the stream, they crowded round, and one little silver-sided fellow swam boldly up and touched her with his nose, and then darted back to tell the others his impression ; and then they all came up and rubbed their silver and purple sides against her hand, and said as plainly as any words could that they

were delighted to see her, and were ready to trust her to any degree.

It was now twilight. It could not grow dark, for a full moon was rising, and the light was only changing from gold to silver. It was very warm, and the air was still. Most of the birds had gone to rest, but not all:—the cuckoo, of course, had not quite finished her song;—but then she never has, until she has ruined her voice. “You see,” she explained one day to a friend, “my song has so many variations, it is only fair to the world to let it hear as many of them as I have time for.”

There was a blackbird, too, still undecided as to the best spot in which to spend the night, and with his “chink, chink, chink,” was still expressing the many difficulties he found in making a choice. And as to birds of the rollicking sort, such as the nightingale and reed sparrow and corn-crake, who are always ready to turn night into day,—it was not to be



expected that *they* should be willing to retire so early on such an evening as this. On the contrary they were just beginning to sing in chorus their determination not to go home till morning.

Still Effie sat at her tent-door! Glow-worms came out of their hiding-places, and she could see them here and there shining out like stars in the shadow of the wood on either hand. Beetles came humming by, and moths clothed in the richest velvets and satins flitted here and there about the flowers, purring softly, and dipping their long tongues into the tubes of honey. Curious objects, such as Effie had never seen before, crawled up leaves out of the water, crawled up flowers from the bank, gambolled about in the stream, on the bank, in the air. There were scores of them! hundreds! thousands!

Presently the moon rose clear above the trees and she could see its reflection deep down

in the water. It was getting far on into the night. But she still sat motionless; she could not tear herself away. “*If there are* such things as Fairies,” she said to herself, “I am sure they must come to such a spot as this, and perhaps they will be here presently.”

A Water Spider, who lived in a pleasant little house some distance down under Effie’s island, and who had just come to the top for a bucket of fresh air, heard her.

“Haven’t you seen them yet?” she enquired.

“No,” said Effie; “is this their time for coming?”

“Yes, very nearly,” said the Spider, “but you would just have time to step down home with me first, and I should be so delighted if you would, and let me introduce you to my family.”

Effie gladly accepted the invitation, and was just stepping into the bucket so as to have the benefit of the fresh air on the journey, when she

suddenly remembered something she had heard about spiders.

“What sort of house is it?” she asked, withdrawing her foot from the bucket.

“Oh, it’s a very pretty one,” replied her new acquaintance, “but I want you to see it, and then you can judge for yourself.”

“Is it a PARLOUR?” Effie asked, laying great stress upon the word, and looking at the Spider very searchingly—

“Well, yes, I suppose so;—parlour, kitchen, larder and nursery, all in one, for I have not divided it into rooms. But why do you ask? and why do you look so suddenly suspicious?”

“Because I know there was *once* a spider who lived in a *parlour*, who was a regular Blue-beard, and nobody ever came out of—but I don’t think his parlour was under the water. Do you mind telling me what you live upon?”

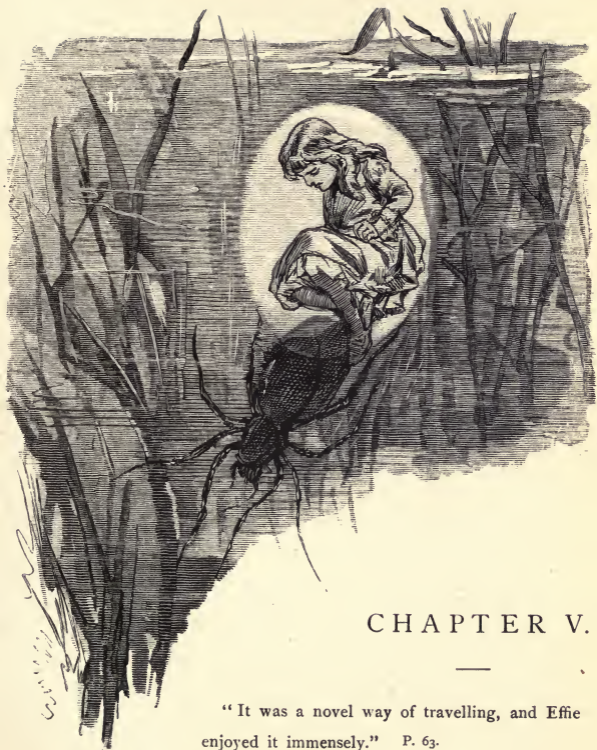
“Well, I’m not particular. Sometimes one

thing, and sometimes another. Anything, in fact, that's going."

"Well then, *I'm* not going," said Effie, with sudden determination.

"Why you surely don't think I would do you any harm?" said the Spider, with a queer smile,—"Oh, it's a faithless world! Well, then, good-bye, for my young people will be expecting me."

"Stop," said Effie, "I don't distrust you at all, and I should like to come with you very much, please, if I may."—And without more ado she nestled herself down comfortably in the bucket, and the Spider, harnessing herself to it, shot down with Effie through the water.



## CHAPTER V.

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“It was a novel way of travelling, and Effie enjoyed it immensely.” P. 63.

*The Water Spider's Home.*

IT was a novel way of travelling, and Effie enjoyed it immensely ; the only drawback being that the journey was too short ; for it seemed to Effie they had no sooner started than they reached the Spider's abode. They did not drive up to the door, as Effie expected ; but there was a reason for that——there was no door. Neither did she see any of the young people at the windows——for there were no windows. No—that is rather a misleading statement. There were no windows only because it was *all window*. It was, in fact, a sort of Crystal Palace ; but to tell the truth Effie did not see the outside of the house at all, for her attention was taken up with something on the other side of her bucket.

This was a Stickleback's nest. She did not know that fishes built nests, but this was, of

course, pure ignorance. There it was! and she was just craning her neck to have a good look at it and its owner—a very queer fish, in a magnificent suit of crimson and gold and purple, who was darting backwards and forwards in great pomp outside—when the bucket gave a lurch, and she found that her steed had dived underneath the foundations of her house, and so up into it through *what should have been the floor*,—but there was none!

“No floor?” thought Effie, “that is rather a pity;” and she glanced around. “And nothing but window, I declare! And no door!” She felt a little bewildered. “May I sit down, please?” she asked the Spider, who had not had the civility to ask her. “Certainly, my dear, by all means,” said the other, grandly. But when Effie turned to look for a chair she found there was no seat in the place, nor table, nor furniture of any kind. This was a very serious drawback in Effie’s opinion, until she remembered that



there was no floor : then she saw the wisdom of the arrangement. "What a perplexing business it would be," she said to herself ; "just fancy having a lot of things about, and nothing in the world to set them on."

The house itself was all that could be desired. Effie thought it was delightful,—so small and snug,—that is to say it would have been snug with the two or three additions already hinted at. It was shaped like an egg, and was of such a material that it could be made bigger or smaller, according to the owner's fancy, by mere stretching.

"What do you think of it ?" said the Spider, when Effie had looked about her.

"I think it charming," said Effie—"that is—I hope you won't mind my saying so—it *would* be charming, with one or two small changes and additions."

"What, for example ?"

"Well, do you know, I almost think, if I

were you, I should have a floor, for one thing. You see it would be so handy to catch anything you might drop ; whereas now it must be lost altogether."

" Yes," said the Spider, " I thought of that, and there is only one thing that prevented my making a floor, and that is that I have got nothing to drop."

" But you *might* have," urged Effie, " you might get some things when the floor is finished."

" It would be scarcely worth while getting things for the sake of dropping them," said the Spider, rather curtly.

Effie thought she had better say no more upon the subject.

" Oh, your children!" she exclaimed, " I understood you to say that you have a family."

As she said these words she heard a suppressed giggle overhead which made her look up. She had heard a similar sound once or twice before, but had scarcely noticed it.

As she raised her eyes, an extraordinary sight presented itself. There was a shelf, in shape like a saucer, fastened into the wall, near the ceiling, and on this, peering over the edge, and clustered together as close as herrings in a barrel,—clambering on each other's backs, and staring at her over each other's shoulders, Effie beheld her friend's babies! Babies they were, indeed, in size, *but only in size*, for she could tell from their looks that they were already old in cunning; and as for impudence, even a Skunk Beetle would have looked meek beside them. Most of them were making faces at Effie as they peered at her from the shelf, and not a few were putting out their tongues. Effie almost shuddered, they were such utterly *vulgar* little barbarians. But I am afraid she herself was rather a hypocrite, for she said to her friend—  
“So that is the nursery! How pleasant to have such a large family! And what nice, merry little people they are.—And, dear me,

what a strong family likeness between them."

"Are you speaking of the Spinners or Spinsters?" enquired the parent.

Effie was obliged to confess she could not tell them apart.

"Come down, children," cried out the old lady. "You shall see them closer," she added to Effie. "The Spinners, you will find, are not the least bit like their sisters, though they may bear some faint resemblance to each other. Arrange yourselves round the room, dears," she said to the little Hottentots who came pell-mell, racing and tumbling headlong down from their garret.

"Now, my little darlings,

    "Row above row,

    You know how to go,

    Spinners above and Spinsters below.

And when our young friend has had a look at

you I dare say she would like to hear you sing. They have some very pretty little songs they can sing, if you would like to hear them," she said to Effie. "They generally sing a verse by turns, Spinners one verse and Spinsters the next."

"Us Spinsters begin, Ma," put in half-a-dozen of the young ladies.

Effie watched the little imps getting into their places with considerable uneasiness, and when all the scrambling and kicking and pinching that accompanied it was over, and they were at last all seated round the room, "row above row," she found, to her disgust, that they were almost touching her. In fact the room was so small that though she stood in the very middle, she was within reach of every one of them. She thought it prudent, however, to conceal her feelings.

As regards telling Spinners from Spinsters it seemed impossible. They were all *exactly alike*, so far as she could see, except that each face

seemed more impudent than that of its neighbour. As, however, she was evidently expected to say something, she remarked,—remembering “Spinners above,”—“Ah, I see now; those are the Spinners on the top row.”

“Yes, the two top rows you mean. The rest are all girls, as you see.”

“And how do they all spend their time during the day?” Effie asked.

“What, the Spinners? With their sisters.”

“And do they live up there on the shelf till they get quite big?”

“What, the Spinsters? Yes, to be sure; sometimes you may find Spinsters ‘on the shelf,’ when they are *very old*.”

“Indeed,” said Effie, innocently; “I should think they must get very tired of it. But now, if you please, may we have a song, if these little people don’t mind?”

“Sing the one you learned last,” said the proud mother. “Spinsters begin, I think.”

Accordingly, after a little preparatory giggling, the two lower rows of imps struck up with the first verse of—

## THE WATER SPIDER.

## I.

[*Spinsters sing.*]

“ Oh, we're a 'appy party,  
And we couldn't be more hearty,  
For a free and jolly life it is, I guess,  
To be a Water Spider,  
With a net \* spread out beside 'er,  
And the Simple Simons getting in a mess.  
Yes! yes! yes!  
While we spin, spin, spin,  
As you see us now begin,  
And weave a silken trap for to catch the boobies in.”

Effie still thought a floor might be useful, if it were only to catch the “ h's.”

\* See Notes.

But there was a much more serious matter. The song was a spirited one, and it was a pretty sight to see them suiting the action to the words as they sang "Spin, spin, spin;" but Effie's great objection was that, in stretching out their arms, they brought them so very near to her as almost, if not quite, to touch her; and the little impish faces all wore so wicked a grin, that Effie did not think it was altogether accidental.

However, the Spinners now struck up with verse No. 2.

## II.

[*Spinners sing.*]

“Some people call us Spinners,  
 A pack of wicked sinners,  
 'Cos we do not choose to let our prizes go.  
 But is it only Spinners  
 That don't choose to lose their dinners  
 For the sake of pleasing Mr. So and So?”



No! No! No!

While we spin, spin, spin,

We should think the greatest sin

Would be to take a prize, and then let it go again."

Effie did not know why, but she was getting now seriously alarmed.

III.

[*Spinsters sing.*]

"We must make the parlour bright,

Keep the poison out of sight,

With our faces full of smiling tenderness.

For it is the spinster's art

So to play a double part

As to dupe the simple-minded, we confess.

Yes! yes! yes!

While we spin, spin, spin,

Let the smoothest weaver win,

She can show her real nature when the fly is bottled in."

Effie resolved to escape the moment the song was finished.

## IV.

[*Spinners sing.*]

“ Our song is at an end,  
And I think you may depend  
We have now a sample specimen to show  
Of a Water Spider’s skill ;  
For, struggle as she will,  
We should like to see our little captive go.  
No ! No ! No !  
While we spin, spin, spin,  
We have made a silken gin,  
And eke a little shroud for to wrap her body in.”

It was too true ! Effie found herself bound hand and foot so fast that she could not even move ! She was indignant at first, but when she realized the position she was in, she fairly broke down, and began to cry.

## CHAPTER VI.

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### *Loss of the Ferry Boat.*

THE Mother Spider, however, came to her rescue.

“O, children, children, what is this?” she said, with pretended displeasure, as she proceeded to set Effie loose again. “The little rogues meant no harm,” she explained, “they have only been having a little fun at your expense. You see they are very young; and children will be children.” She was evidently delighted beyond measure, in her heart, at their performance.

Effie was deeply thankful to be once more free. She had her own opinion as to the “fun” of the treatment she had received. When she remarked the sullen looks of disappointment and

rage with which the little imps watched their work being undone, she was fully persuaded that they one and all considered, that, in setting her free, their mother was committing what the Spinners had called in their song "the greatest sin."

After thanking her hostess warmly for her kindness, she at once prepared to return to her tent. She declined the offer of the bucket, preferring to ascend alone, so that she might take her time, and go at her own pace. There were a thousand things to interest her on the way, and she was glad, too, of an opportunity to inspect more closely the Stickleback's nest that had so interested her on the way down. But she did not stay long, as she was anxious, if possible, to see the Fairies. When she reached her tent, however, she found, to her disappointment, that she was too late. They had been, and had only just left as she reached the island. So, as it was now long past midnight, and she

was tired, she turned in to bed.

Just as she was dropping off to sleep she was a little disturbed by hearing a noise, as of sawing, outside, which she could not account for ; but it did not trouble her long, and she was soon fast asleep.

When she awoke it was broad daylight, and the sun was shining bright and warm. It was not the sun, however, that woke her, but the shrill, anxious voice of her friend Ragged Robin, who had been up some time.

“Effie, Effie,” he exclaimed, “do get up. Here’s a pretty fix to be in ! *Our Ferry Boat is gone !*”

Effie was not long before she joined her friend outside. Sure enough, the leaf by which they had managed to reach their present position was gone, and they were now completely cut off from the land on either side. Nevertheless she did not regard matters at all in the same serious light as her friend seemed to, and

the first thing she did was to burst out into a merry peal of laughter that resounded through the woods.

“ You seem very gay about it,” said Robin ; “ but are you aware that this means that we shall have to live here always ? ”

The prospect did not seem to Effie terrible.

“ And of course we must give up the ball,” he added.

This last consideration rather changed the aspect of things : still Effie felt by no means crushed. She was always very ingenious, and she had little doubt that some plan of escape from their position would be found before long, and meanwhile the prospect of another day or so on the island was by no means unpleasant. It must be confessed, however, that the prospect of living there did not seem to her to-day quite so bright as it had done yesterday. It was one thing to stay of her own free will and pleasure, and a very different thing to do so because she

could not get away. She told Robin of the sound she had heard in the night, and they both agreed that it was, without doubt, to be accounted for by the destruction of their Boat. But who could the carpenter be? That was the puzzle! And Effie, for more reasons than one, was anxious to find out.

They first made a careful inspection of the spot where the Boat had been moored, but they could find nothing to help them there. They then set out on a journey of inspection round the whole group of islands, leaping from one to another, as they could manage to do pretty well, and lying down, from time to time, to rest in the cool shade of an overhanging tree. They met many strange creatures, and made many enquiries, but to no purpose. At last, on one of the islands,—lying stretched out in the shade, and partly concealed by a large Lily,—they came upon a Frog who looked so preternaturally wise that Effie hoped great things.

“Froggy,” said she, resolved to proceed very cautiously, “can you tell us how the people in these parts manage for carpenters?”

The Frog took no sort of notice of the question, nor did he even alter his position, or look at her, but kept, as before, one eye apparently fixed on the North Star and the other on the South Pole, and Effie felt sure he was studying Astronomy. She therefore felt great hesitation in disturbing him further. However, she proceeded again presently:—

“Mr. Froggy, we have come to this island in search of a carpenter. Do you happen to know of any of the trade that you could recommend us to? We should feel very grateful if you could help us at all.”

“I have always had a notion,” said the Frog——“and the more I consider the matter the firmer becomes my conviction——that the more you study other people’s business the less likely you are to understand your own.”



“But has that anything to do with what I asked about a carpenter?” said Effie.

“Carpentering is not my business,” said the Frog.

“But I only want to find out where a carpenter lives,” said Effie.

“Well, then, that is *your business*,” said the Frog.

“And pray what may *your business* be?” asked Effie—who began to feel a little nettled at the Frog’s manner and answers.

“Nay, now you are meddling again with other people’s business—the very thing I wished to caution you against. It was only last evening almost the same thing occurred. My friend—who lives in yonder bank—came to me in a great fuss, wanting, like you, a little job of carpentering done, and asking my advice. The advice I gave him was precisely similar to that I have given you. And what was the result? Why, this morning he calls to tell me

that he managed the work entirely by himself. Now if I had directed him to one of the professional carpenters——

“Oh, come,” said Effie, aside, to Ragged Robin, “let us get away from this prosy old gentleman and his lectures.”

“Well, Mr. Froggy,” she said aloud, “as you are getting into matters which do not concern us, I suppose we ought to be going, so ‘Good-bye,’ and thank you very much for your good advice.” So saying, she linked her arm in Robin’s, and withdrew; her friend being greatly tickled at the way in which she had turned the Frog’s advice upon himself.

Effie had now obtained the information she wanted so far. Plainly, from the Frog’s remarks, it was the Water Rat who had cut their Boat adrift; and it was equally certain he had done it deliberately, and of set purpose—— Could it have been through spite? Effie did not think so for a moment. She was much

more inclined to believe it was because he had taken a fancy to her. Anyhow, it was clear that he had done it for the purpose of keeping her there ; and that being so, she saw that she must proceed very cautiously ; for the only means of escape she could think of depended upon obtaining his help ; and, of course, under the circumstances, she must now try and get it, as it were, on the sly, and without letting him know her object.

Her plan, a very simple one, was this:—to set one of the islands free by separating the Lily leaf from its stem ; and then, using this island as a Raft, to float gaily down the stream, and land when and where they should see fit. This, they both agreed——if only they could succeed in getting the stalk separated——would be delightful ; for, as the stream flowed in the direction they wished to take ; there would be no hurry about landing, and whilst they enjoyed the delicious pleasure of sailing softly along amidst

new scenes of beauty, seeing all sorts of new and strange creatures and flowers at every turn, they would have the satisfaction of feeling that they were going all the while in the right direction. The question now was whether the Rat could be got to play the carpenter again, and set them free against his will. This remained to be seen: and meanwhile, since nothing could be done till the Rat made his appearance, the two friends stretched themselves out in the shade, and Effie took this opportunity of telling Robin of the wonderful adventure she had had the night before in visiting the Water Spider's home.

“But if you were able to return to the island alone through the water,” said Robin when Effie had finished her story, “it must be a very simple matter for you to swim ashore now. So why not do so at once? and you might easily pass across a plank for me to land by.”

Effie had to explain:—“I forgot to tell

you that before I set out on my return the kind old lady sprinkled me over with silver beads which she said she had invented herself, and which I am sure must have been full of magic, for they did all sorts of strange things:—they helped me to rise to the top of the water, and at the same time gave me air to breathe on my journey, and even kept my clothes from getting wet. And besides all this they were so beautiful, that I am sure I must have looked almost as lovely as the silver-spangled lady at the Pantomime. But the worst of it was that they would only last for one journey, and as soon as I got back to the island they were all gone.”

CHAPTER VII.



*The Water Hen and her Family.*



“Jump down,  
and follow me, and you  
shall see what the world is like.” P. 90.

*The Water Hen and her Family.*



WHILE they were chatting together, Effie had been glancing from time to time with some curiosity towards the forest of Flags that fringed the stream, and which she fancied she saw at times swaying backwards and forwards as if something alive was moving about amongst them. The two friends accordingly ceased talking and listened, when they overheard the following conversation :—

“ Now, my dears, it is not often any of these cruel hunters and their horrid dogs come down to this stream, and I do hope and trust they will at least keep away until my little darlings are older, and better able to take care of themselves : but they *do* come, alas ! sometimes ; and if by any chance they should do so this afternoon, I want you to be very careful and do exactly as you see me. Will you all promise ? ”

There was a general chorus of "Yes, mother," and one very small piping voice continued, "but I am sure a dog could not catch me."

"Ah, Peter," said the mother, rather sadly, "you don't know what dogs are. But come, all of you, for it is getting time for you to try your skill in swimming, so jump down and follow me, and you shall see what the world is like."

This speech was instantly followed by a series of tiny splashes, accompanied in each case by a sort of gasp—either of pleasure or surprise—as the jumper felt the water for the first time.

"I was in first, mother," said the squeaky voice of the little gentleman whom a dog could not catch.

Then the Flags began to tremble and shake again, and presently the proud mother, followed by a large fluffy family, made her appearance.

She proved to be a Water Hen who had only a few hours since hatched the last of a brood of nine, who now followed her out in single file from amongst the Flags into the clear water,—the one at their head, who seemed to act as leader, keeping up a continual chatter, and making a hundred observations to the others upon the various things they saw. This little fellow, whom Effie at once recognised from his squeaky voice as the one his mother had addressed as “Peter,” proved to be the smallest of the family, and was, in fact, the one last hatched; and he still carried a portion of the shell from which he had sprung, upon his back, as he led the others into the stream.

“O, mother, what a strange world!” said one.

“And what a beautiful one!” said another.

“And what a big one!” said a third.

“Oh, as for that,” said Peter, “I don’t think so much of its size; but it will do very well, and

it's a capital world to hunt in,"—and he began chasing a fly that was skimming along the surface of the water.

"Ah, my dear, other people besides ourselves think it a good world for hunting," said his mother, with a tender look at her little one.

Effie felt sure she had a special love for little Peter, although he was so forward and saucy. But perhaps it was really a special fear for his future she felt.

"Now, little ones," she went on, "I want to see what you would do in case of danger. Suppose a dog should dash out at us from those reeds this very moment, let me see how you would act."

Helter skelter they all scampered in a moment, half swimming, half flying along the surface, if, indeed, flapping a pair of stumpy little pinions that had not a feather on them could be called flying.

"Very good! bravo!" cried their mother:

“With a little time and practice you will manage that mode of escape, I have no doubt, very well. I see there is a good deal of difference between you in speed, but, of course, the little ones cannot be expected to go so fast.”

“I did not try, mother,” said our young friend with the shell on his back, who was a long way behind all the others, and who was not a little mortified to find himself quite unable to keep up.

“But then you must know,” continued the parent, “that, though that plan is a good one under some circumstances, it will not always answer, even when you are grown up; and it will not do at all for you at present. Why, a dog would catch you all with the greatest ease. Now watch me!—We will fancy a dog has just appeared.—Now!”—

She was instantly gone! They looked all round, but she was nowhere to be seen. They

waited half-a-minute—a whole minute—and then they grew anxious, and exclaimed “Where can she be?”—Presently there came a voice from amongst the Water-Lilies near to Effie’s island:—“Cannot you see me, children? Here I am, perfectly comfortable.” They swam up in a body. They were all agreed as to the spot the sound came from, but they could see nothing of her. At last Peter observed something just showing out of the water, which he took at first for a small leaf-bud, but which rather puzzled him by a curious movement of opening and shutting; so, being of an enquiring turn of mind, he sailed up, touched it with his beak, and demanded bluntly, “Who are you?”

“It’s me,”—whispered his mother, excitedly, and regardless of grammar.—Peter shrieked with laughter.

“Look here!” he cried, “do look here, all of you; *this* is mother!” and he fondled her

beak—which was the only part of her visible—with his own, and declared again and again, with much feeling and emphasis, that it was, without exception, the best trick he had ever seen performed. And as it was, unquestionably, the *first*, there is no sufficient reason to doubt his assertion.

The mother now came to the surface, and explained how the trick was done, and impressed upon them the importance of mastering it at once. So they all began to practice, and some of them, after a time, really succeeded with it fairly well. Master Peter, however, was not one of these. Not that he was less quick than the others, but he was less persevering, and had rather too high an opinion of himself. He had not tried more than a minute when he declared that he had mastered the trick completely. Of course he had not—indeed, as yet, he had no notion of the way of doing it—or next to none—and what he really did was to hold his head

under water for a few seconds, whilst his body was all the while exposed to view; and when this was pointed out to him by the others, I am sorry to say, he contradicted them all round, and stoutly maintained that his trick was precisely like his mother's, and if *his* body was exposed—then *her's* was, too!

“At this point he caught sight of the two friends on their island, and swam up to make a few enquiries.

“Who may you be?” he asked of Effie, “and have you permission from our family to live here? This is your friend, I suppose? Or are you both of one hatch?—Oh, and I see you have got a nest,”—and he paddled round the leaf to examine the tent more closely. “Not badly made, either, on the whole,” he went on, after trying its stability by pulling at two or three of the leaves, “except that it is made of leaves instead of Flags, and is placed the wrong way up. How came you



to make it bottom upwards?"

"Which question do you want answered?" asked Effie, "for you have asked me so many, I do not know which I am to consider the most important."

"Then answer them all," said the Water Chick.

"Well, then, I am Effie, and this is Ragged Robin, and we are not of one hatch, but only friends; and I do not think it necessary to ask anybody's permission to be here; and this is not a nest but a tent, and it is *not* bottom upwards. But here comes your mother, and I want to have a word with her."

"Your little son has just put me in mind of something that has often puzzled me," she said to the Water Hen, "and I wonder whether you can explain the matter:—I mean as to why birds build their nests so differently;—some making them of sticks, and some of straws, and some of moss and wool."

“Only the woolly brains, though,” said Peter, interrupting; “nests should always be made of *Flags*.”

“Some leaving their nests open at the top,” continued Effie—without noticing the interruption—“and some covering them over.”

“Stuff and nonsense,” said Peter, “nests should never be covered.”

“Some lining them with feathers, and some with grass or hair, and some with mud.”

“You may find *fools* to do *anything*,” Peter put in again. “Nests require no lining at all.”

“I do not think you need use such strong language,” said Effie, “the nests I speak of are all very beautiful and wonderful in their way. —Then, again, some birds place them where nobody can help seeing them, and others where nobody can find them. Some build in trees, and some in bushes, some near the water, and others on the ground; while not a few build their nests in holes.”

“Oh, as to *building* in holes,” said Peter, “take my word for it, no bird does that. They may *pretend* to do it. They may leave a straw dangling outside to make believe what a lot of upholstering is going on. But it’s all ‘gammon.’ They don’t deceive *us*. We know very well why they get into the dark to lay their eggs and bring up their family. It is because their nests won’t bear daylight. Look at a Starling, or a Woodpecker, or even a Tomtit: do you call *them* builders? Why they have just about as much idea of making a nest as a cow has. No; they lay their eggs in a hole to hide their shame, and because they know they are the dunces who could never learn their lesson.”

“There is some truth in Peter’s remarks,” said his mother, “but I do wish that, instead of gossiping about his neighbours, he would go and learn *his* lesson, as his brothers and sisters are doing. I will be back again presently,” she said to Effie, “and we will talk the matter over, and

I will give you my opinion." Then, turning to Peter, with a look and tone of voice *he dared not disregard*, she insisted upon his returning at once to the open water, and recommencing his diving practice.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

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*Which is a very painful Chapter.*

RAGGED ROBIN now called Effie's attention to the fact that the Water Rat had appeared, and was sitting outside his hole watching them: so she proceeded at once, though not without some qualms of conscience, to her work of attempted deception.

Her plan was—without appearing to see the Rat—to make him think, by the movements of herself and Robin, that they were preparing to use one of the outermost Lily-leaves as a Ferry Boat in place of the one that was gone. They stood upon it—pushed it far out into the stream—swayed it backwards and forwards

—and again and again made a pretence of gathering themselves together as if for a leap to one of the opposite islands (which, in reality, was at an impossible distance,) and then—finally—they decided aloud (hoping the Rat might hear) that, as it was getting towards evening, it might be better to put off their departure until the morning.

They then returned to the tent; Effie, on the way, observing, as if for the first time, the Rat, whom she greeted quite affectionately, telling him of their misfortune, and how they had been prevented by it from leaving in the morning, and so had been detained on the islands a whole day longer than they had intended.

How far the Rat was taken in by all this we shall see presently.

But, meanwhile, there is something very painful to record of our friend the Water Chick. How shall I tell it? I am afraid if I write it in

plain prose it will be too sad a story: both Peter's fault, and the punishment it received, will make such painful reading. I almost think I will try to tell it in verse, in the hope that, somehow, the fault will not look quite so black, and that we may be able in this way, to partly draw a veil over the poor little fellow's sufferings.

Well, then,—to commence the story:—

Just at first the Water Chicken  
Really tried to please his mother,  
Tried to learn the little lesson  
She so anxious was to teach him.  
So he held his breath in tightly,  
Plunged his head beneath the water,  
Plunged it deeper than beforetime,  
Kicking wildly out behind him.  
But, in spite of all exertion,  
From what cause I cannot gather,  
Whether Peter's fluffy body  
Was more lightsome than the others,

Or, for want of longer practice,  
Or because he was ungainly,  
Certain 'tis he made no progress.  
Still his dusky little *corpus*,  
With the egg-shell still adhering,  
(Glued on at the anal angle  
Where the tail would soon be budding),  
Floated light above the water.  
Though he called the process diving,  
Never moistened was the egg-shell,  
Always gleaming in the sunshine,  
Never wholly disappearing.

Now the other Water Chickens,  
Having mastered well their lesson,  
Leisure had to look about them ;  
So they watched their little brother  
At his diving operations ;  
And, though fully sympathizing,  
(For the youngster was their darling),  
Though lamenting all his failures,  
Fondly hoping each endeavour  
With success might be attended ;



Yet the figure he presented  
So much struck their sense of humour,  
That they found themselves unable  
Their amusement to dissemble.  
So when, after one such effort  
As has been before recorded,  
Peter raised his head in triumph,  
And demanded, glancing round him,  
Whether *that* they called a failure.  
He observed, with great displeasure,—  
Though they did their best to hide it,—  
All his brethren and his mother  
*At the exhibition smiling!*

Now, when he was doing his best,  
It *was*, unquestionably, riling,  
To be the subject of a jest,  
And see his comrades quietly smiling.

And so he arched his fluffy back,  
Glared at the rest with flashing eye,  
And, in his native clutter clack,  
Declared he never more would try.

“O, brother, dear, you must not mind,”

The others said. “If you could see  
How ail your body’s left behind,  
Indeed you’d laugh as well as we.

“We all have learnt the art but you ;

Oh, try again ! and do beware !  
Suppose a dog appeared in view !”  
But Peter said he shouldn’t care.

“Fie, Peter,” cried a Water Chick,

“I’m sure you’ll try to please your mother,  
You easily can learn the trick.”

But all he answered was, “Don’t bother !”

“My darling,” said the Water Hen,

“We can’t do everything at once :  
Now plunge in quick, and try again ;  
And do not be the only dunce.

“Dive deeper in, and hold on tight

With both feet to the Lily-plant.”  
Alas ! He lost his temper quite,  
And impudently said “*I shan’t.*”

"*You won't?* You dare to say me Nay?

I'll be obeyed, you may rely;

Dive in, this instant, Sir, I say!"

But no! he simply wouldn't try.

But just in the midst of this painful scene,

Where nothing but harmony ought to have been—

As if every word

Of that cocky young bird,

When he bragg'd of "not caring," had been overheard

By the four-footed foe to whom they referred—

An event of a very sad nature occurred.

Scarce some one cried "Hark!"

When, with a loud bark,

A Puppy-Dog, bent upon having a lark,

Appeared on the scenes, and—I need not remark—

Made Peter's horizon grow suddenly dark!

As he burst through the rushes, and came into sight—

With his tail in the air, and his eyes very bright,

And two rows of teeth of an ivory white—

I'm not much surprised at the Water Hen's fright.

Though not for herself did she feel much alarm ;  
 And eight of her children could keep out of harm.  
 If in swimming they found the Puppy-Dog fleeter—  
 Why then they could dive. *But what about Peter?*

In an instant the Puppy caught sight of the brood,  
 And his eyes filled with wonder, as silent he stood.  
 He first looked at one, and then at another,—  
 Now at the children, and now at their mother,  
 Apparently finding it hard to decide  
 By what sort of kinship they might be allied.

And here, by the way,  
 I think, if I may,  
 I'll pause for a moment in order to say  
 How very far  
 From the type of mamma  
 A Water Hen's little ones usually are.

I need not repeat,—I've said it enough,—  
 That a Water Chick's body is covered with fluff ;  
 But, while I'm about it, I may as well tell  
 In what other points he differs as well :—

His legs are not yellow, with garters of red,  
But a uniform blackish or slaty, instead.  
A bright bit of blue he has over the eye,  
And the quaint little beast is remarkably shy,  
With long greyish whiskers adorning his cheek,  
He's ready to chatter before he can speak ;  
I mean (for this statement sounds rather absurd)  
Before he has wisdom to use the right word,—  
And you often may hear him express his surprise  
At the state of the weather ; or colour and size,  
And mode of proceeding, of one of the flies—  
By a form of expression that's very unwise ;—  
For, if anything strikes him as novel or queer,  
He cries out "*Cheap! cheap!*" instead of "*O dear!*"  
And so, gentle reader, should ever you spy,  
In one of your rambles, an odd-looking fry  
That suits this description—you'll know him thereby.  
But now, to return to my story again,—  
And my readers no more shall have cause to complain.  
We left the small Dog standing agog,—  
His feet far asunder, and eyes full of wonder,  
As if puzzled in mind such diff'rence to find

'Twixt the young and the old in birds of a kind :

And I think I might dare

To gravely declare

For more than a minute—with head in the air—

He moved not a limb, and did nothing but stare,

And wonder however they all had got there,

And why one a garment of feathers should wear,

Whilst all the young people were covered with hair,

And whether fur garments were common or rare.

Till, tired of such points, he gave up in despair,

And said to himself " It's a trifling affair :

I can't say I know, and I really don't care."

But a woeful mistake you are labouring under,

If you think that the Puppy did nothing but wonder,

He was out for a spree, and bent upon plunder.

So, as the surprise died out of his face,

A look of great gravity came in its place.

With the solemn expression

Of a judge at a session,

He singled out one of the fluffy procession,

And his mind, I am grieved to say, bent upon slaughter,

He jumped from the bank and plunged into the water.

“How! How! How!

Which way now?

What are you after, Mister Bow-Wow?”

The Water Hen cried, in a terrible stew,

As her temper arose, and at him she flew.

She cuffed him, and beat him, and pecked at his face,

And pulled at his tail to slacken his pace:

She fluttered in front of him, shrieking and crying,

She spread out her wings, and seemed to be dying;—

In short, in her language, said—plain as could be—

“Don’t bother with little ones: try to catch me.”

But whether he saw through her plan all along,

Or whether his will was unusually strong,

Or whether, from both these two causes combined,—

Or attracted by what the Chick carried behind,—

Or how it befell

I really can’t tell,

But he made for the urchin adorned with the shell—

The one he had singled out first from the batch,—

The youngest and tiniest bird of the hatch—

In fact our young friend who was wearing the patch.

Faster and faster, alas! and alack!

The blood-thirsty ruffian swam in the track,

In spite of the bawling !  
 And yelling and calling !

And storming, and scolding, most truly appalling !  
 Our friends on the isle,  
 In lunatic style

Were making, to frighten the monster ; meanwhile  
 Closer and closer,—Ah, me ! lack-a-day !—  
 In spite of their efforts, he drew to his prey :

And I do not suppose  
 The Water Chick's toes

Were more than a span from the tip of his nose,  
 When a fresh apparition appeared from the wood,—  
 And there stood on the bank where the Puppy had stood  
 As lovely a maiden, I'll venture to say,  
 As any you'd meet in the march of a day.  
 She looked like a Sylph or an overgrown Fay ;  
 But when she observed her lost Puppy, I ween  
 She changed from a Sylph to a tragedy queen.  
 "O, Toby !" she screamed ; "how dreadful !—O, dear !  
 Come back, sir ! How dare you ? Come back ! Do  
 you hear ?"—

Yes, he heard ; and the voice made him shudder with  
 fear.



But, seeing the Chicken so temptingly near,  
He would not give up ;  
For this wilful young Pup  
Would let nobody come 'twixt his lip and the cup :  
For he said to himself " If one *is* to be hung,  
Let's have the full measure, right up to the bung ;  
One may as well die for a sheep as it's young.  
As I am to suffer,  
I should be a duffer  
To catch it for naught, and lose this little buffer."

And so it befell—  
Grievous to tell—

He made a last effort, and—grabbed at the shell.

O, Puppy Dog, Puppy Dog, what have you done ?  
You've not only injured a Chicken, in fun,  
But you've wounded the mother, in wounding the  
son :

By that cruel deed,  
Without any need,

You've made the Chick's *back* and the mother's *heart*  
bleed !

Sheepishly—now that his frolic was o'er,  
 And he came to realize more than before  
 That he might have a rather warm welcome in  
 store—

He made for the bank,  
 Where, dripping and dank  
 Flat down on his belly he instantly sank ;

And, at a snail's pace,  
 Looking up in her face,  
 As, trying some hope-giving symptom to trace,  
 He dragged himself up to his mistress' feet :

Then rolled on his back and began to entreat,  
 With paws in the air,  
 In pitiful prayer,  
 That she his defenceless condition would spare :  
 And seeming to say, as he lay on the ground,

“ Dear Mistress, have mercy ! I'm your little hound—  
 Your poor little Doggie you've only just found !  
 And I've been in the water, and might have been  
 drowned ! ”

But gravely—most gravely—his mistress so kind—  
Half crying with sorrow and pity combined—  
Proceeded to give him a bit of her mind :—  
“And so, Mr. Toby, *at last* you are come !  
Well, you’re a nice person to have for a chum !  
It’s all very well to plead you are dumb,  
And waggle your tail so submissive and glum,  
But I fear in your heart that you don’t care a crumb.  
I could not believe it, if I hadn’t seen,  
How wickedly cruel my Toby has been.

I don’t want to flog

My dear little Dog,

But I *must* give you something your mem’ry to jog ;  
And teach you in future, in playing your jokes,  
To have some regard for the feelings of folks.”

Hereon she proceeded her words to impress  
By arguments which——I will leave you to guess !

\* \* \* \* \*

And as to the Chicken, I’m glad to assert  
It was found he was really more frightened than hurt ;

A Dock leaf for plaster  
Soon cured the disaster ;  
And experience painful,  
Less baneful than gainful,

Quite cured him of showing that spirit disdainful  
That kept him from learning to dive, and swim faster,  
And made him so wickedly try to be master.

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# CHAPTER IX.

—  
Effie and Robin  
floating pleasantly  
down the  
stream.

P. 119.



C.B.

*A Stranger from the North Country.*

THE next morning saw Effie and Robin floating softly and pleasantly down the stream, on the Raft the Water Rat had been kind enough to set loose for them. He had been quite deceived by Effie's little plot, and hoped, by setting adrift this second Ferry Boat, to keep Effie safe, to live amongst them always as their Queen. It was with much sorrow and vexation, therefore, that he discovered, too late, his mistake, and saw the two friends sail away, after first removing to the Raft their tent and all their provisions. (Of course they had taken care over night to secure the Boat by a few threads from floating away in case the Rat should fall into the snare, and set it adrift; and they also took care to show themselves at their tent-door as soon as the work was done, and

before the Rat could discover what prevented the Boat from being carried away by the current.)

Oh! the sweet feeling of gliding on, on, on, down the water! And how shall I describe Effie's delight at all the new and beautiful things they saw and heard at every fresh bend of the stream?

She was sorry not to have seen anything of either Peter or his mother, to say "Good-bye" to them before leaving. She would have liked to have the promised chat with the Water Hen, but specially was she anxious to know how the little one's wound was progressing; and many a time during the first day or two did her heart ache at the thought of his misfortune, which she fancied to be a much more serious business than it really was.

The friends found no such difficulty in steering their Boat as they anticipated, for, with a piece of reed for their rudder, it proved



perfectly manageable, and they could have guided it to the shore at any time if they had felt so disposed. They were, however, only too glad to continue their course in their present fashion as long as they could.

Sometimes the passage for their boat grew narrow, and they were surrounded by immense forests of reeds towering up to a great height, amongst which large colonies of Sedge Warblers kept holiday. Very boisterous in their mirth these were, and disreputable hours they kept; and I grieve to say their merriment was not quite so innocent as it might have been, for it was chiefly at the expense of their neighbours, whom they mocked unmercifully. Now it was the Sky Lark that one of them chose to mimic; and instantly another and another took up the joke, until there was such a babel of Sky Larks' songs as you never heard. Then they would stop as suddenly as they began, and some wag would chirp out an exact imitation of the House

Sparrow, whilst another twittered like a Swallow, and a third piped out the "twink, twink," of the Chaffinch, and another and another added his joke, and joined in the laughter, till matters were soon as bad as ever, or worse. It was not, perhaps, very kind, but it was amusing to listen to.

Sometimes the stream widened, and became broad as a river; and once, as it flowed along a valley in a gentleman's park, it opened out into a large lake. This, however, was after they had been travelling for some days. Oh, and what curious things they saw! When they reached the lake, which was half covered over with the Fringed Water Lily—a lovely flower, as large as an ordinary Water Lily, but of a lemon yellow, very soft and delicate—Effie and Robin were startled to see a herd of Deer come bounding down the hillside towards the lake; and still more surprised when, without a moment's hesitation, their leader—a great,

handsome fellow, with immense horns,—dashed headlong into the water, and, followed by the whole herd, battled his way across to the other side.

Later on, a poor terrified Hare plunged in and swam across, to escape the pursuit of a large Dog, who certainly could not have been a straightforward, fair-minded, country *Gentledog*, or he would not have been breaking the game laws by hunting in the month of June—if *it were the month of June*.

These were only passing events, but they so interested Effie, and seemed to tell of such a wealth of life and adventure in the neighbourhood, that the friends decided to break their journey, and stay here for an hour or two: and they were the more glad to do this because the sun's searching heat made them long for shade. They therefore steered for shore, and cast anchor under the shelter of an overhanging bank, on which bunches of the great purple

Cranesbill were growing.

They had not remained here long when they heard, overhead, a sound of hard-breathing, as of someone toiling with a heavy burden, and now and then the breathing was caught and almost stifled, as with sobs.

“Oh,” whispered Effie to her friend, “there is someone in distress, I am sure. Let us get out at once and see if we can be of any help.”

“Sit still,” whispered Robin, “and listen. Don’t be rash.”

Puffing and fuming and sighing, some object was moving backwards and forwards on the overhanging bank, but just out of sight: so Effie quickly and noiselessly loosed the Boat, and pushed out a few inches to get a better view.

“Why,” said Robin, “it’s a funeral party, and I am inclined to think they have missed the way to the cemetery. Look! they are evidently in doubt as to what road to take.”

Effie followed the direction of her friend’s

eyes, and soon discovered the mournful procession:—that is to say she saw *one object* racing backwards and forwards in great perplexity, and she knew at once that this must be one of the “funeral party” Robin spoke of; but she could see nothing nor anybody besides. She was going to ask Robin about it, but her friend motioned to her to be silent, so she sat still and watched. The object she saw was nothing but a common Red Ant, but it looked to Effie—as did most other creatures now that she was herself so small—large, and muscular, and formidable. She noticed at once that he was heavily laden, and when she came to observe the object he was carrying she was shocked to see that it was the body of another Ant, dead, and without a scrap of covering either by way of coffin or shroud. The body was flung, stark naked, across the back of the live Ant, who kept it from slipping off by gripping it tightly by the horns with his jaws. The horns, indeed, had

been cut off nearly to the base, but there was just sufficient stump left for the Ant to take hold of.

“The undertaker, of course”! thought Effie.—“And bearer too!—Only one bearer!—And no mourners!—Oh, *he* is mourner as well, I suppose!—What a shabby funeral!—From the workhouse, I’m sure.”

“Oh, is it not a shame?” she whispered to Robin. “Fancy burying his poor little naked body, without so much as a rag round it! I think workhouses ought to be—PILLAGED” (she did not know the meaning of “pillaged,” but she intended it to be very severe).

Meanwhile the Ant was tearing away at full speed, now in one direction, and now in the opposite, clambering over some obstacles and tumbling over others, but never losing hold of his burden. Once or twice he stopped for a moment to wipe the perspiration from his brow and the tears from his eyes, and then on again

with fresh vigour. He had evidently lost his way, and Effie could not be sure whether his tears were on this account, or from grief at his friend's death. His face was so rough and hard she doubted whether he *could* be crying for sorrow.

At last he came to the very edge of the bank overhanging the water, where the Raft was moored. Having reached this spot, and having carefully satisfied himself as to the nature of the locality by testing it with his antennæ (or horns), he heaved a sigh of relief, placed his head on the ground close to the precipice, gave a hitch up behind with exactly the action of a kicking mule, and shot his burden clear over his head into the stream below.

“So,” he said, as he watched his burden fall towards the water, “Fare thee weel, lad, fare th’ weel! Thou wert allus a right down coomfortable sort of a chap, and a bonny mate to bide wi’. I canna help but greet (weep) when

I bethink me as I shall ne'er see thy face no more."—And hot tears rolled down the hard face of the Ant, and fell into the stream.

Just at this moment, however, he caught sight of Effie and Robin on their Raft, and instantly his whole manner changed. The tears were hurriedly wiped away, and he enquired, in a loud, harsh voice, "Hilloa! you theer; who may you be? Ah," he said, looking at Robin, "thou favours t' Sexton, and I suppose yon's t' Registrar" (pointing to Effie); "I hope you hanna' been waiting long, han ye?"

Effie did not understand what he had said, and just as Robin was about to explain to him that neither Effie nor he had anything whatever to do with the cemetery, Effie interrupted with a question of her own. What she had just seen had given her a much kindlier feeling towards him than she was disposed to have at first sight, but she had not yet got over the shock she felt in witnessing a dead body treated with so



little care or ceremony as the dead Ant had received.

“Do you come from the Workhouse, Mr. Ant?” she enquired.

“Yah, I guess I do,” he replied.

“I thought so,” said Effie. “Well, then, will you please tell the Workhouse people from me—I mean those that have to do with the funerals—that it is a wicked shame—yes, *very wicked*—to send out a poor little body like that stark naked, and without a coffin, or a pall, or anything, all along the public streets. I know they are very cruel in Workhouses—they always are—and not at all kind to the poor old people; but I never thought they could be as bad as this.”

“Ye dunna seem to ha’ much opinion o’ Workhouses?” said the Ant.

“No, I have not,” said Effie.

“Maybe you liken Playhouses better?” he said.

Effie began to think the Ant was making fun of her, so she changed her ground.

“What did the poor dear fellow die of?” she asked.

“Well, ye see, as to disaises and such loike, I never moiders wi’ nowt o’ t’ sort. I’m t’ undertacker, and only does business wi’ ’em as corpses. But they did tell me as ’twas Imposity as took off yon’ chap. May be ’twas—may be ’twasn’t,—canna reetly say. But see th’!—if *’twas* Imposity, then all I’n got to say is, Imposity tak’s ’em off i’ full feather; for a firmer, squarer, brawnier corpse, till yon’, I ne’er had the pleasure o’ hondlin’?”

“For shame!” said Effie. “How can you talk so?”

“Well, ye see,” he explained, “we’re roughish kind o’ chaps, us Lancashire chaps, but then we’n got roughish kind o’ work to do, and it dunna do to be soft. If ye want a bit o’ downright good solid work doin’, or if ye’n got a

bit o' stiffish fechtin to do, ah dunno as you could do better nor come to us, for we're not frickened of a bit o' work, and as to fechtin, we rather loikes a bout now and again. But as to fancy-work, it ain't much in our way. And yet we'n got a little bit o' feelin' too, I'll tell yer, though us don't wear it allus o' th' outside. And while I was carrying yon' chap, and thought o' the monny bits o' does we'd had together, and then thought o' his body, lusty and full-fleshed as when I saw him last, now lying so helpless loike o' my back, I just looked round to mak' sure as none o' my mates were about, and then I fairly siked to mysen, ah did; and when I come to pitch him o'er th' bonk into the cemetery I welly broke down intirely, like the great softy I was—I did for sure.

“ Well, you'll look arter him a bit,” he added presently, when he had secretly brushed away some tears that came, unbidden, as he spoke,—  
“ You'll just look arter him a bit, ah expect, and

bury him decent, for he was a goodish sort, and ah would like him to have a gradely, decent burial."

So saying, he turned away suddenly, as if anxious to end the conversation. But he presently reappeared for a moment, and called out "I'd a'most forgot the certificate. Ye'll be wanting the certificate, ah reckon; and that'll tell you, belike, better nor me, what the poor lad died on."—And, as he spoke, he pitched from the bank a little white packet, so tiny that had it not fortunately fallen upon the raft, it would almost certainly have been lost altogether.

Effie picked up the tiny parcel, and, holding it aloft in her hand, was just about to assure the Ant that it could not be for her, for that she and her friend had nothing to do with burials, when she discovered that the Ant had vanished out of sight, and though she called him at the top of her voice, she could not make him hear.

"What *shall* we do with it?" she asked

her friend: "and why did you not tell him, Robin, that we have nothing to do with the cemetery?"

"Why didn't you?" returned her friend.

"I was just going to," said Effie, "but"—

"So was I, for that matter," said Robin.

"However, we must now see what the certificate says, and perhaps then we shall know better what to do with it."

It was really ridiculous talking so much about *burying* the dead Ant, for the moment his friend had pitched him over the bank, and his body touched the water, a little Fish, that had been playing about in the shade, rose to the surface and made a hurried meal of it. And this both Effie and Robin had distinctly seen, as anybody might have done who was not very blind. But then I suppose Ants *are* very blind, and we need not be surprised that the undertaker did not see the Fish, when he even mistook the water for the cemetery.

As, therefore, nothing more could be done for the dead body, and as it was now time for the friends to be continuing their journey, they decided to push out at once into the stream, and read the certificate as they proceeded.

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## CHAPTER X.

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### *At Close Quarters with a Pirate.*

WHEN they had got their Boat fairly launched, and were once more sailing on their way, Effie proceeded to open the Register, to examine it. Pleat after pleat and fold after fold she undid, and still there were other folds to open out, for it had been wrapped together as neatly and close as a Butterfly's wings in the chrysalis case. It was made of rice paper of the thinnest and most delicate kind, and when at last it was spread out, with the last pleat unfolded, it had grown from a tiny packet, such as an Ant might carry in his waistcoat pocket, into a sheet of snow-white substance, light as air, measuring three or four inches each way,

—quite big enough, indeed, to make little Effie a travelling rug, or a counterpane for her bed.

“Now,” said Effie, at last, as she gave it a final smoothing-out with her soft little palm, “let us see what the Register says.”

It was really a most unusual kind of Register, in every way; for, in the first place, it began with the words “Here lies,” which, as you and I, my dear reader, know very well, a proper Register never does, and never should. But I had better give the whole of the writing, word for word, and let it speak for itself.

Here it is, then:—

“Here lies F. Fusca, whose end and *antecedents* are remarkable. The race itself is of *antediluvian antiquity*, and is distributed over the whole earth, as far as the *antarctic* regions, and even to the *antipodes*. The great grandfather of the deceased *Ant* was *Anthony*



of County *Antrim*, anteriorly of *Antwerp*, whilst his maternal *aunt* lived at *Antioch*. The end of the deceased was touching and romantic. His rival, a gigantic *Ant*, with muscles of adamant, made an unanticipated attack upon him, and a frantic struggle between the combatants ensued. His rampant antagonist, however, proved too powerful for the smaller disputant, who, notwithstanding all his efforts and antics to escape the other's jaws, lost in the struggle both his *antennæ*, or *antlers*, which the other *Ant*—the old miscreant—cruelly bit off, leaving only a scant remnant at the base. Blood-poisoning ensuing, *antimony* was tried as an *antidote*; but as the sufferer betrayed a violent *antipathy* to this, and declared it was an *antiquated* remedy, and repugnant to his taste, *antibilious* pills were tried instead. Death, however, anticipated their effect, and Fusca breathed his last ere the puissant pills could barely have reached the *antechamber* of his stomach."

Effie by no means understood every word of this rigmarole, but the general sense was plain enough.

“Then,” she said, “the Ant did not die of Imposity after all, I suppose, did he, Robin?”

“Evidently not,” said Robin.

“What *is* Imposity? Do you know, Robin?” asked Effie.

“Oh, it is a fearfully common disease in the North Country,” he replied, “and very fatal. Hundreds and thousands of people die of it every year. Indeed, with the exception of the ‘COLD SHAKE,’ it is the most dreaded of all known diseases, I believe.”

Effie sat folding and refolding the rice paper upon which the Register was written, thinking of what Robin had said, and hoping she had no trace of Imposity about her, when presently her thoughts flew off to another point.

“Is it not very curious,” she said, “about

this paper? How beautifully white and soft and delicate it is! Do you suppose the Ants made it themselves?"

"Well," said Robin, "I cannot say. I never heard of rice being grown in this country, and I do not think the American Ants grow more than they require for their own food. As for the Ants to which the undertaker belongs, they are Miners, and have nothing to do with either farming or manufactures; whilst the Yellow Jackets, who are Farmers, and are to be met with in this neighbourhood, do not I know grow rice—for they only keep a dairy farm; nor do they trouble themselves with manufactures—beyond just a little home-spun for the babies."

Effie opened her eyes very wide, and looked at Robin, half expecting to see him laugh. But as he was quite grave, she said,

"But not really, Robin? You don't mean really that some Ants sow rice, and take care of

it, and cut it when it is ripe, and put it into barns, just like farmers?"

"Of course! Why not? As they *are* Farmers, I do not think it is very extraordinary that they should be *like* Farmers."

"Then according to that, these Dairymen ought to keep cows, and have cow-sheds, and go milking and all that."

"So they do," said Robin.

Effie said no more. She was satisfied now that there was something amiss with Robin's mind, and she feared he had had a kind of sun-stroke. Anyhow, it was useless questioning him further. How could Ants keep cows without her having heard of it before? In England too! It was absurd, and not worth thinking about any more. She confessed to herself, however, that she would like to see a little more of Ants, and find out, *for certain*, whether there was any foundation at all for these extraordinary tales.

As it turned out, her wish was, before very

long, more than fulfilled, and in a way that was anything but pleasant. But I must not spoil my story by even hinting events beforehand and out of their proper order.

As Effie still sat folding and refolding the paper, now doubling it cornerwise, as a shawl, and trying it over her shoulders, and now as a rug over her knees, she was suddenly startled out of her quiet thoughts by Robin exclaiming—  
“Ship, ahoy! Look ahead, by the port bow! All hands aft. Stop her.”

“What is the matter, Robin?” asked Effie; and what do you want me to do?”

“Hush!” whispered Robin. “It’s a Pirate, as I live! Woe betide us if the captain sees us! He has not caught sight of us yet. Steer hard to leeward, and don’t utter a sound.”

Effie now saw all too clearly the cause of Robin’s excitement.—A few yards ahead, and almost directly in their course, was a Raft of leaves, about as big as a cricket-ball, upon

which squatted a huge Wolf Spider, watching an object he had marked for his prey. I say a Wolf Spider, for he did belong to that family, though this individual, like his father before him, had taken to a Pirate's life, and had rigged out for himself the Raft upon which he was now seated. He had his back towards our friends, and, as Robin said, had not yet caught sight of them, for his interest was centred upon the efforts of a Caddis Fly to make its way out of the little house of sticks in which it had passed its life as a larva. The Raft Spider had made up his mind that the unfortunate Fly should never try her wings in the air, and he was only waiting till she was fairly out of the pupa case in order to spring upon her, and carry her off to his Raft for his evening meal.

Effie, you may be sure, did as Robin suggested, and steered as much to the right as possible, in order to escape the ferocious

beast; but it unfortunately happened that, in her anxiety to give the creature a wide berth, she did not notice that she was making straight for patches of weeds that were growing up out of the water; and so, before she was aware of it, her Raft had become hopelessly entangled, and brought entirely to a standstill within two or three yards of the bloodthirsty Pirate; and, to her increased horror, she noticed that the Pirate Raft was drifting slowly in their direction.

Oh, what a monster the creature was! He looked like the great-grandfather of the biggest Spider Effie had ever seen. His bright colours (for he was really very handsome) made Effie shudder. His rich brown body with the orange band and white spots, but, above all, his *pink legs*—ugh! how fearful and horrible! Effie and Robin sat spell-bound and afraid to move.

Meanwhile the poor Fly was quite un-

conscious of the enemy that was eyeing her. She had lived a long time imprisoned in the little house of sticks under the water, anxiously looking forward to the moment when she might leave it, and soar up with wings into the air, to bask in the sunshine. And now the time had come! In a few moments she would be able to spread her wings and rise!—She little dreamed of the fate that was threatening her.

She had got her head and shoulders well out of the case, and with her feet pressing it back, was drawing out her body! The Spider was crouching for his spring! But now Effie—forgetting her own danger—cried aloud “Oh, you poor dear little Fly! Take care! Take care! He is coming!”

It was very sweet and kind of Effie, I know, but it was certainly a rather rash thing to do; and perhaps it was lucky for her that the Spider did not look round, and see how small a person



had ventured to interfere in his affairs; but the fact was he was so utterly startled and alarmed to hear a voice close at his back calling out so sharply, that, without waiting a single instant, he took a header from his raft into the water, and disappeared from sight, hiding, I think, somewhere underneath his vessel: nor did he venture to show his face again until Effie and Robin, having managed to free their Boat from the entanglement of weeds, had proceeded a considerable distance on their journey.

The silly Fly never said a word of thanks to Effie, for, from first to last, she never caught sight of the Spider, and does not know to the present day, and probably never will (unless by any chance she should read this story) how much she owes to her deliverer.

Just as they were turning a bend of the stream Effie looked back and saw the Spider again upon his Raft, sitting upright, and glaring

after them with a very perplexed and angry look. So she called out to him "Good bye, Mr. Spider, I am sorry if you will have to go to bed without your supper, but why do you not take to eating berries and fruit like so many other people, and leave the poor Flies alone? It would do you just as much good." But the Spider made no reply: and the last Effie saw of him he was still sitting upright, and gazing after them in utter astonishment, with an expression of disgust stealing over his face at Effie's parting words of advice.



## CHAPTER XI.

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“Come with me, as my prisoner. I have been looking for you all the morning.” P. 156.

*Taken Captive by the Blood-red.*

FOR a considerable time after the events recorded in the last chapter nothing of a very exciting character occurred. Not that the journey, therefore, became in any degree commonplace, or that Effie ceased to find fresh objects to interest her;—far from that. But the pleasure of beholding the wonders around her was not interfered with by anything so disturbing as a further appearance of Pirates, or horrors of like character. I need not say she had much talk with Robin, as they sailed along, upon the scenes through which they were passing, and the friends they had left behind, which would be well worth recording if only I had space. One thing, which I am not altogether surprised Effie was puzzled at, was the way in which things seemed to have been

brought together that are generally found in quite different parts of the country.

For instance, we know they had seen an Ant, that hailed from Lancashire, close by a clump of the Great Purple Cranesbill, that is generally to be found in the Midland Counties; and directly after had met with the Raft Spider, who makes his home for the most part in Cambridgeshire. This was certainly odd, but, as Robin reminded Effie, not more odd than many other things that one meets with every day.—Ants, like other people, change their residence sometimes. The Cranesbill is by no means confined to the Midland Counties, nor the Raft Spider to Cambridgeshire. And then, moreover, we must remember that we live in an age of cheap excursions, when the most unlooked for people are met with in the most unlikely places.

Well, as I said, time passed by quietly and pleasantly until one day—it may have been

three weeks after the adventure with the Pirate, though it is difficult to say for certain, since Effie kept no record of how the days went—Robin announced that he thought they would now have to disembark from their Boat, and proceed the remainder of the distance on foot, for they were near their journey's end, and the stream at this point began to branch off in a contrary direction from that they would have to take. As, however, he wished to be quite certain as to their whereabouts before taking any definite step, it was agreed that he should go by himself a short distance inland, and take a general survey of the country, whilst Effie remained in charge of the Raft; and after he had carefully taken his bearings they would be able to finally decide upon their course. They, therefore, drew to shore, and Robin, skipping up the bank, was soon lost to view over the hill.

Now after he had been gone about a couple of hours, Effie became rather impatient for his

return. It was not that she was growing alarmed at being left alone, nor was it that she feared harm might have happened to her friend. Such thoughts never occurred to her—though it would not have been very surprising if they had—but, having been used to Robin's society so long, she found it almost intolerably wearisome being left by herself. She tried singing when she could keep silence no longer, and silence when she was tired of singing, and when she was tired of both, she really did not know *what* to do. At last, when her songs, and her voice, and her patience, were all quite exhausted, she stretched herself out at full length on the deck, and, drawing over her the rice paper—which she had come to use regularly as a summer counterpane—she fell asleep.

How long she slept I do not know, but, after what appeared to her only a few minutes, she was aroused by feeling, as she thought, someone fingering her face over with a stealthy,



delicate touch, very much as a blind man fingers objects, to find out their nature and shape. She did not start up, nor make any noise, but——instantly wide awake as she had become——without moving a limb she cautiously half opened her eyes to see what the cause of disturbance could be.

Judge of her feelings when she saw, standing over her, a large—a *very large*—Ant, with blood-red legs and head, who seemed to be most carefully examining her counterpane, and glancing occasionally from it to her face. He was muttering to himself; and——holding her breath, though her heart beat fast——Effie overheard a good deal of what he was saying:—  
“Very remarkable indeed! I can’t quite get to the bottom of it——utterly unlike any of the family *I* ever saw! Yet the writing is plain enough:—‘Here lies F. Fusca,’—no mistake about the words—‘lost in the struggle both antennæ’ . . . ‘blood poisoning’ . . . ‘breathed

his last!—I suppose it *must* be, then. And yet” (as he again fingered, or rather *antennæd* Effie’s face), “there is *something* wrong—I question very much whether he *has* ‘breathed his last.’ Wonder if it can be a trap!”

Now the real state of the case was this. The Ant who was then examining Effie, and puzzling over the Register, was one of a slave-making tribe, called the Blood-reds, who were too lazy to do their own work, or even nurse their own babies, and so were in the constant habit of going out in companies into the country of their neighbours, and carrying away captive all the young people they could lay their claws on,\* to make them into slaves. And the Ant now standing over Effie had come out this very morning, with a number of his companions, expressly on a kidnapping expedition. They were making their way to one of the Workhouses where members of the Fusca family were known

\* See Notes.

to reside, for the Fuscas had a great reputation as workers, and the Blood-reds preferred them for slaves before all other Ants in the kingdom.

So it was that when the Blood-red, who was acting as scout for the marauding party, caught sight of Effie lying asleep, and stepped aboard the Raft to see what sort of creature she was, he was naturally not a little excited to see at once—in unmistakable characters upon her bed-quilt—the words

“HERE LIES F. FUSCA.”

Well, here was a nice predicament again for poor little Effie to be in! If she had known all the dangers before her, I question very much whether she would have ventured on her journey with Ragged Robin at all. But now what was she to do? And what did this creature want with her?—she knew as yet nothing of his kidnapping character.—Well, she would be outspoken and truthful, come

what might, for she hated deception, and she had never forgiven herself for the part she had taken in the matter of the lost Ferry Boat, and her treatment of the Water Rat. Often and often had she referred to it with shame and self-reproach in her talks with Robin. So now she lifted her head and said—looking the Ant in the face—“Mr. Ant, I am not asleep, and can I tell you anything you want to know?”

“Ah! ah!” said the Blood-red, with a stony laugh, “it is as I thought then: so you have not ‘breathed your last’ after all! You will get up, if you please, instantly, and come with me as my prisoner,—and you had better not try to escape. I have been looking for you all the morning.”

It instantly occurred to Effie that perhaps this Ant was the master of the Workhouse in which Fusca died, and that he had recognized her bed-quilt as Workhouse property, and was taking her into custody for theft. So she

proceeded to explain all the circumstances which led to her possession of it, and laid great stress upon the fact that she and Robin had only kept the Register because they did not know what else to do with it, nor how to restore it to its owners.

The Blood-red, who had listened to the long explanation with evident unbelief, asked, when she had finished, how far they now were from the spot where she had seen the undertaker; and when Effie told him that it must be many miles, for it was some weeks since it happened, and they had been sailing down stream ever since, he mockingly assured her that he "was not born yesterday," and that in his kidnapping business he was too accustomed to stories of that kind to be taken in by them, and, finally, that she must go with him without delay, and undergo a court-martial. So saying, he coolly stripped off from her the counterpane, and, having folded it up as only soldiers know how

to fold such things, and deposited it in his pocket, he made as if he were going to carry her off in his arms. So Effie yielded, and promised, if he would keep his claws off her, that she would accompany him quietly, without attempting to escape. Side by side, therefore, the slaver and his captive quitted the Raft.

When they had climbed the bank, other Ants, similar to the one who had captured Effie, were to be seen pacing backwards and forwards on duty; and two of these, observing Effie in custody, ran up to her captor and enquired what sort of prize he had got, and where he met with her. The reply, which was given in an undertone, she did not catch, but it seemed to interest the questioners immensely, for they hurried up to her to make their own observations by feeling all over her head and shoulders with their antennæ; and then the three withdrew to a short distance, and her captor took out the Register, and spread it on the ground.

They then put their heads together and coned it over, running up occasionally to renew their examination of the prisoner, and looking as much puzzled as if they were studying the fifth proposition of Euclid, and could not make out how the words had anything to do with the figure. Effie did overhear a word now and then, such as—"No!" . . . "cannot be Fusca" . . . "no use as slave," . . . "looks idle," . . . "might do for larder," . . . "queer object to look at," . . . "quite an addition to the Menagerie."

At last the discussion came to an end, and Effie's captor returned to her side, whilst the other two scampered off in hot haste.

"Well," said Effie, "your friends have stared at me pretty well, and examined all my bumps,—what do they think of me? Do *they* think I am a thief and a story-teller, as you seem to?"

"No," said the Blood-red, "we are inclined

to think, after all, there may be some truth in your story, and they are gone to head-quarters to ask for your discharge ; so, unless anything unforeseen should happen, you will probably soon be at liberty——unless, indeed, it should be decided to keep you for the Menagerie.”

“For the Menagerie ?” said Effie, indignantly, “what do you mean ?”

“Only what I say,” said the Blood-red. “We have a very good Menagerie, which we add to from time to time, as new creatures come in our way ; and, as we have not in it any of your kind at present, it is possible that you will be kept, and added to the collection. This, however, we shall know presently, and meanwhile we may as well take it comfortably.” So saying, he stretched himself out in the sun, and Effie, withdrawing under the shadow of some herbage close by, also settled herself down to wait.



## CHAPTER XII.

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### *The Yellow Jackets' Homestead.*

As they thus reclined, awaiting in silence the return of the messenger, they heard someone—a ploughman, Effie at first thought it must be—coming, apparently, in their direction, whistling a popular air, as plough-boys often do. Presently, however, the whistling ceased and a song was commenced in its stead, the words of which declared the singer to be a milkman rather than a ploughboy. They were as follows:—

“As I went a-milking, a-milking, a-milking,  
Happy were the Kine as they brows'd upon the spray,  
And they numbered twenty-three  
With the little Alderney,  
And were happy as could be  
All the day;  
As I went a-milking, I whistled on my way.

“As I went a-milking, a-milking, a-milking,  
 Anxious were the Cows as they huddled on the tree !  
     For the one who acted Scout  
     Had declared, without a doubt,  
     There were enemies about,  
         She could see ;  
 As I went a-milking, she said the same to me.

“As I went a-milking, a-milking, a-milking,  
 Precious were my Cows as they sat upon the bough,  
     And I said ‘ It will not pay  
     For to lose them in this way ;’  
     So I made a house of clay  
         For each Cow ;  
 As I went a-milking, I had them safer now.

“As I went a-milking, a-milking, a-milking,  
 Sober looked the Cows as they cluster’d on the thorn,  
     For they seemed to all agree,—  
     By next morning, probably,  
     Calves to all the twenty-three  
         Would be born ;  
 As I went a-milking, I longed for the dawn.

“As I went a-milking, a-milking, a-milking,  
Foolish looked the Cows, as each hover'd o'er a nest,—  
They had chosen to increase,  
Like a flock of silly geese,  
And with twenty eggs apiece  
They were blest.

As I went a milking, I thought them all 'possest.'

As I went a-milking, a-milking, a-milking,  
Sadly gazed the Kine, as their treasures I removed ;  
But I carried them below,  
And within a month or so,"—

Unfortunately—most unfortunately—at this point the singer caught sight of the Blood-red ; when down went his milk-pails instantly, as if they had been knocked from his hands, and he fled back homewards as Effie had never in her life seen anyone flee before !

“Ha ! ha !” laughed the Blood-red. “Well run, Yellow Jacket ! I thought it must be you,” he cried. But the Yellow Jacket neither

stopped nor looked behind, but ran, if anything, faster than before, and in a few seconds disappeared from sight under cover of a furze bush.

“I am afraid,” said Effie to her soldier companion, “you do not bear a very good character in this neighbourhood: I believe that Ant” (for Ant, sure enough, the Yellow Jacket was) “knows something very much to your discredit. Have you met him before?”

“Not that I am aware of,” said the Blood-red.

“What a thousand pities he did not finish his song!” said Effie. “I was getting *so* interested, and do so wish I knew the end, and what happened to the eggs after the ‘month or so?’ Do you suppose they hatched into *Calves*, Mr. Ant? But *of course* they could not.”

“Why not?” said the Blood-red. “I do not suppose they could have been *all* addled.”

“But hatching into *Calves!*” said Effie, “it is so absurd. Besides, now I think of it, the whole thing seems nonsense, for I never heard before of Cows living up a tree! and then fancy cow-sheds in a tree, and the Cows laying eggs!\* Indeed, I never knew that Ants kept Cows at all till Ragged Robin told me the other day, and then I did not believe him.”

“You appear to know very little, and to fancy you know a great deal,” said the Ant. “The Yellow Jackets keep a Dairy Farm and if you like you can see over their Farm-yard, and buildings, for yourself, and then you will not be quite so ignorant.”

Everybody called her ignorant:—it was not this creature or that one—but all seemed to agree in this particular. Effie, however, pocketed the affront, and declared that nothing would please her better; so off they set towards the furze-bush where the Yellow Jacket

\* See Notes.

disappeared. On their way, they turned aside to inspect the pasture land and the outbuildings; for which purpose they actually had to climb a shrub, and Effie saw with her own eyes what she had so persistently disbelieved. Some of the cattle were still grazing in the open, but it was under sheds that the greater number of them were to be seen; and as Effie entered the buildings, and tried to count them, she was convinced that very few indeed of the eggs could have been addled, for the herd was so large, that counting them was out of the question.

The Yellow Jackets' Home and Farmstead, which proved to be for the most part underground (Effie wondered if it were for the sake of keeping the milk cool and sweet) was situated only just beyond the gorse, its chief entrance being guarded by two or three sentries; but as Effie and her companion approached, these disappeared, and the Blood-red told Effie she was at liberty to enter and look round.

He declined to do so himself, on the ground that—judging from the behaviour of the milkman they had seen outside—his visit amongst them might not be well received. “But they won’t mind you,” he said. “On the contrary, they will be very glad to see you I have no doubt, for they are a very hospitable people, and you will find amongst them many strangers like yourself, whom they treat most kindly, and are most happy to entertain. Besides, Yellow Jackets are harmless, and could not very well injure you if they wished, for they have no stings as you know.”

Effie did *not* know even this, but she did not care to expose her ignorance unnecessarily. As to entering the Ants’ domains by herself alone, she did not altogether relish the undertaking; but so keen was her desire to see within, that she determined to venture, and, having obtained assurance from the Blood-red that he would come to her assistance if anything

unpleasant *should* happen, and she should call out for help, she armed herself with courage, and boldly walked up to the doorway, and entered, unbidden. She encountered no one in the Entrance Hall, so she proceeded cautiously down one of the very numerous passages which led from it to the various parts of the establishment. Do not suppose, however, that her entrance had been unobserved;—a hundred pairs of eyes had been watching her from the moment she put foot inside; for, besides the passages leading downwards, there were galleries, and watch-towers, and attics, with well-staircases, surrounding and overlooking the Entrance Hall, and in each of these sentinels and watchers were stationed, who—unseen by her—had been eyeing her every movement from the first; and no sooner had they noticed which corridor she had selected, than word was passed to those within, whilst they themselves trooped down from the galleries, and gathered



in a dense column to cut off her retreat, some of their party following her stealthily down the passage. So when Effie, after tiptoeing it along for some distance, presently turned a corner, she found herself met by an army of some two hundred Yellow Jackets in an extraordinary state of excitement; and, looking round, she found her retreat was cut off by those behind. She was going to explain who she was, and for what purpose she had ventured to intrude, but her voice was drowned in the hubbub that arose. "What is she?" cried some of the new arrivals at the rear. "A Solenopsis! a Solenopsis!"\* shouted those in front; and at the mention of the name a thrill of fresh horror ran through the army, and some hundreds of voices took up the cry and fairly shrieked the hated name. "At her!" they cried. "Hold her fast!" "Tear her to pieces!" "The Cannibal!" "The Baby-stealer!" "Don't let her escape!"

\* See Notes.

Effie found they were closing in upon her, and, in great terror, stepped aside into a closet that opened upon the corridor, and shouted with all her might to the Blood-red for help: she feared, however, that he would be unable to hear her from her present position.

No sooner had Effie retired into this recess than the Yellow Jackets clustered round it, and she presently found that they were blocking up the entrance with a thick wall of clay, with the intention of smothering her, or starving her to death! Oh, how she shouted and cried for help! How earnestly she assured the mob of Ants under her window that she was a perfectly harmless little girl, who had no desire whatever to do them an injury, but had merely ventured in from curiosity, and would *never, never*, do so again.—I say “under *her window*,” for what had been a doorway was no longer so; quickly had it been walled up to the dimensions of a window, and the window was already little

more than a tiny loop-hole, and would soon disappear altogether, so that poor little Effie's voice grew fainter and fainter, and smaller and smaller, in the following manner: and there was every moment less and less chance of the Blood-red hearing her cries:—

“HELP! HELP!!” she cried. “OH, I MEANT NO HARM! DO BELIEVE ME! PLEASE LET ME OUT! I WILL NEVER COME AGAIN. I ONLY WANTED TO SEE inside. I thought you would not mind. Help! help!! help!!! . . . .”

Nothing but the merest chink was now left, and in another minute the last spark of hope would be gone. Effie stood with her eye close to the crack, now almost in despair, when she observed a fresh commotion amongst the little people. The building operation suddenly ceased, and the last lumps of clay she was expecting to finally block out the light were not forthcoming. She could not see what was taking place immediately outside her prison—the outskirts of the crowd being alone visible

now—but she saw from the movements of those at a distance that *something* had happened or was going to happen, for nurses were hurrying here and there with children in their arms, carrying them, apparently, to places of safety; and consternation was on every face. Evidently some word had been passed to them which changed their late triumph to renewed fear. In another minute there was a regular stampede, and the army of Yellow Jackets were flying in abject terror: not one atom of courage did the bravest of them now display, but only sought safety, each for himself.

“Oh!” thought Effie, “can it be the Blood-red, I wonder?” and she placed her lips to the chink, and cried again for help as loud as she could.

“Where are you?” she heard someone calling in response.

“Here! Here!” she cried. “The Yellow Jackets have blocked me in this prison, and

were going to starve me to death.”

It was some time before the Blood-red could make out where the voice came from, although he was standing just outside the prison all the time, or else he probably would not have heard her at all. At last, however, he saw and understood what had happened, and in a very short space of time had torn down the newly made wall, and set Effie once more at liberty. Oh, what a joyous relief to breathe free air again! Effie hardly knew how to sufficiently thank her deliverer, and quite forgot for the time that it was through him that she had been brought into her late unhappy position.

She no longer cared to explore the Yellow Jackets' Farmstead—feeling she had seen enough to last her a long time,—so she made her way out again a great deal faster than she had entered. This was a pity, for there was very much that would have interested her if she had only had the courage to go on, for the Yellow

Jackets kept a number of Cows down in these regions as well as on the trees outside ; and they had, besides, a very good menagerie, and a number of domestic animals and pets, of kinds quite different from any Effie had ever seen ; and, moreover, she would have found the house itself well worth looking over, for it was a very large establishment, with everything kept in the most beautiful apple-pie order ; and as for the nurseries—they were excellent, with such lots of nice little babies, kept spotlessly clean, and each one wrapped in a garment of softest silk. But, after all, it is not to be much wondered at that Effie was glad to hurry away from the place after what she had gone through ; nor could she feel quite happy till she was fairly outside, and in the bright sunshine again.

The Blood-red chuckled to himself a good deal over Effie's adventure, and said he never dreamed of their playing her such a trick, and could not understand how they had ventured to

do it; whilst Effie, on the other hand, was wondering more and more what could be the secret of the Yellow Jackets' abject terror at the sight of her companion. That a whole army should run away from a single individual showed, she felt sure, that there must be something very monstrous in his character, and she began to feel more uncomfortable than she had hitherto done at being in his power. It was, therefore, a great relief to her when they presently met the two messengers, who had now returned, and she obtained her discharge from custody.

She was just bidding them "good bye," and renewing her thanks to her companion for delivering her from her dreadful dungeon, when she saw a long string of Blood-reds appearing over the ridge of the neighbouring bank, following each other in single file, and each carrying in his arms some object wrapped in white, the possession of which seemed to cause

him a fever of excitement, and which he hurried along with very much as you may have seen a dog hurry away from the butcher's shop with his Sunday dinner (which he has forgotten to pay for).

“Look!” said Effie, “there are some more of your friends coming—hundreds of them, I declare! What a hurry they are in! And what are they carrying in their arms?”

“Bravo!” cried the Blood-red. “Bravo! They have found! They have found!”

“Found what?” said Effie. “What are they carrying, Mr. Ant?”

“Babies, of course,” said the Blood-red, “I should have thought you might have seen that.”

“BABIES!!” exclaimed Effie, aghast, “Where did they get them? Have they STOLEN them?”

“Yes, of course,—from the Workhouse. They are jolly little Fuscas, too, I can see, all



the lot of them. Bravo!" he cried again.

"Oh!" said Effie—her face growing pale—  
"What are they going to do with them?"

"Do with them? What a question! Make slaves of them, of course; what do you suppose?"

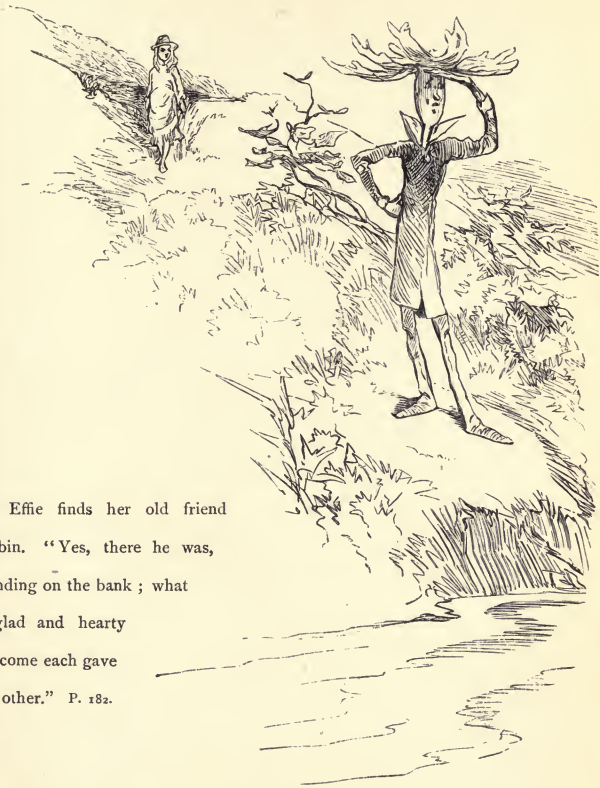
"*Slaves!*" repeated Effie—the tears now brimming in her large, earnest eyes—"Oh! poor little darlings! And what will the mothers of the little Babies do?"

"Do without them, I suppose;—but now I must be off,"—and so saying, the Blood-red hurried in the direction from which the others were coming, and Effie had no doubt that he was going to see if he could find a Baby for himself.

CHAPTER XIII.



*Arrival at the Ball.*



Effie finds her old friend  
Robin. "Yes, there he was,  
standing on the bank ; what  
a glad and hearty  
welcome each gave  
the other." P. 182.

*Arrival at the Ball.*

EFFIE turned away from the sad sight, her heart feeling very sore. She knew now why the Yellow Jackets had shown such alarm at the appearance of her late companion, and she was grieved to think that she should have caused them anxiety by appearing in his company,—for she suspected that the guards outside had seen her and the Blood-red approaching together, and that the treatment she received had arisen from this circumstance.

She wished—oh! she wished she could see her lost friend Robin again; and she climbed a hill commanding a good view of the neighbourhood, and cast her eye over all the surrounding country in search of him, but,

alas! no trace of him was visible. Then she wondered if by any chance he had returned to the Raft during the adventure at the Farm, so made her way down to the water again to see.

Yes! There he was, standing on the bank, looking as perplexed and anxious at *her* disappearance as she had been at *his*. Imagine, then, what a glad and hearty welcome each gave the other!

Robin had returned with good news. They were nearer their journey's end than he had at all anticipated:—only a matter of half-a-mile or so, he said, and they would be there!

They resolved to stay where they were for the night (as it was already towards evening) and complete their journey early in the morning. So they went aboard the Raft, and—taking care this time to anchor at some little distance from the shore, so as to be secure from the intrusion

of Blood-reds and all other monsters—they told each other their adventures, and at last fell asleep.

Very early they rose next morning, and set off. Effie could not believe they were actually this very day to reach their journey's end, and be present at the long-looked-for ball; and she almost forgot the painful occurrences of yesterday in anticipation of the event.

What an age it was since she set out on her journey! That lovely May afternoon when she went flower-gathering to the Ash Wood—what a distant event it was now to look back upon! It seemed to her that she had had half a lifetime of experiences since then.

The spring flowers had long, long disappeared, and now the Cuckoo was gone, or at least was no longer heard: from which she judged that the month of June must

have passed away as well as May, and that it must now be July. This supposition was confirmed when she reached the ball, and obtained her first sight of the assembled company.

Their journey was not long. Having taken final leave of their Raft, they climbed a hill; descended again into a valley; crept along the dry bed of an old water-course for some distance; then skirted a lovely wood; went down some old stone steps, with a waterfall on one side and some great damp rocks on the other, to a little path by the side of a clear stream, in which spotted trout were darting here and there. Then across the stream by some slippery stepping-stones; round a shoulder of rocks with trees overhanging; presently round a second rock—and lo! *their journey was ended!*

Yes, they had reached the ball, and the gay company were before their eyes. A brilliant



scene indeed it was, though whether it came quite up to Effie's anticipations I cannot tell. It is said that if you look forward to a thing very much and for a long time, as Effie had done to this ball, you are *certain* to be disappointed. However this may be, Effie gave no signs of any such feeling—very much the reverse.

I am afraid I can give but little idea of the scene—much as I should like to describe it well—and I only wish my readers could have seen it for themselves.

After rounding the last mass of rocks, Effie and Robin found themselves in a small valley, or rather dell, shut in upon three sides by steep cliffs, down one of the sides of which a considerable stream of water came leaping and tumbling from the heights above, and fell at last into a large deep basin which it had hollowed out for itself in the rock below; and from this it flowed murmuring on close

to the cliffs, amidst ferns, and mosses, and overhanging trees, and perfect carpets of flowers—till at last it lost itself in a lake some two miles off.

Out of the sides of the cliff also grew trees of a hundred kinds; whilst great drooping masses of ivy, and white-blossomed festoons of Brambles and Wild Raspberries tumbled and hung from its crags, forming most delightful and safe retreats for the birds, which literally swarmed in the neighbourhood.

Then there were bright patches of yellow, where the beautiful Rock-rose completely covered whole yards of rock with its sunny blossoms; and spots of purple, where clumps of Foxgloves lifted high their stately heads; and with these mingled pink and white Campions, and purple Vetch, and cream-coloured clusters of the sweet-scented Woodbine, and scarlet Poppies, and blue Harebells, and crimson Geraniums, and pink Mallows,

and bright blue Scabious, and a host of other flowers too numerous even to mention. These were all on the sides of the rocky cliff, which looked as you may suppose, remarkably gay with their combined colours.

But bright as were the surrounding rocks, it was down below—scattered over the soft green plain—that the greatest splendour was to be seen, for *there* were gathered most of the youth and beauty of the neighbourhood.

Effie felt sure she had seen many of those up above—quite a month since—by the side of the stream, and she had thought them then much prettier than they were at present, for old age had, alas, now begun to make its appearance upon their pretty faces, and Effie wondered if this were the reason they preferred going into the galleries and looking down upon the ball, instead of taking a more active part in it.

Anyhow, it was a very pleasant thing

to see how gracefully they were all content to grow old. There was no attempt to appear younger than they were:—no patching and painting and giving themselves youthful airs—nothing of the kind was anywhere to be seen, but, as I said, all took leave of the past cheerfully, and grew old *gracefully*—which is by no means so common a thing to witness as could be wished.

But oh! down below, what a delightful scene! How bright and joyous everything looked! for everywhere were youth, and beauty, and smiling faces, and happy voices, and silvery laughter.

There was an open space of velvet-like turf in the centre, and seated all around, many rows deep, or strolling here and there under the shade of trees, or lying stretched out on the turf, basking in the sunshine, were the gay company.

But I shall be telling my story very badly if

I do not give an account of Effie's reception, before running on any further with particulars of the scene.

This was peculiar.—No sooner had she rounded the last rock than a merry chime of bells rang out in the gallery, which she afterwards discovered the Harebells were responsible for; and this was instantly followed by a peal of trumpets from the Honeysuckles, whereupon all the gay company below rose from their seats and advanced to meet the two friends. “Bravo! Here she comes at last!” she heard several exclaim, as they all pressed forward to receive her; and at the same time they began to form a kind of avenue in their ranks for her to pass along towards a small tent, which Effie now perceived had been erected upon one side of the lawn, and towards which she slowly proceeded—acknowledging, as she went, the stately bows and curtsies with which she was greeted on all sides.

As she approached the tent, she saw written up over it, in letters of gold, the words,

“JUDGE’S TENT;”

and in front of the entrance she noticed there was placed upon the grass a dainty little table, covered with a crimson cloth, upon which stood a tiny golden cup of exquisite workmanship, and jewelled all round its base with the choicest and most costly jewels and diamonds. There were also some letters engraved upon it which she did not at first observe.

Shortly before reaching the tent she was met by Colonel Greenweed and Major Spearwort—two of the Stewards of the ball—each dressed in uniform, who gave her a most hearty and courteous welcome, and expressed the very great pleasure it gave them to see her.

“We have been expecting you quite a week,” said Major Spearwort—who was over six

feet in height, and who consequently had to bend himself nearly double in talking to her—"and we were just beginning to fear some accident had happened to prevent your coming."

"Yes," added the colonel, "I assure you we have all been feeling very uneasy about you, and I cannot tell you what a relief it was to us all when you appeared. Besides, we were wondering what in the world we should do about the prize-giving if the Judge did not arrive in time."

"But how did you know anything about me?" said Effie. "I never sent word I was coming. Indeed I never got any proper invitation to the ball, and was not sure that I should be welcome."

"Why the Master told us," said the Major. "He knows you and your friend very well, and said you were both coming; and as to your being welcome, there is not a single one of the

whole company who is not *delighted*. This is your ladyship's Pavilion."

He said this as they reached the "JUDGE'S TENT" before-mentioned, with its fluttering flags, and he and the Colonel stepped aside with a bow for her to enter. "The Master cannot know you have arrived, or he would be here to receive you. He will be with you presently." So saying, the Stewards retired.



## CHAPTER XIV.

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### *An Old Friend in a New Dress.*

EFFIE took her friend Robin by the hand, and entered the tent. But Robin, who had found leisure during the past few minutes to look around him at the company, bowing to one and another of his acquaintances, and nodding and smiling at old friends, had just caught sight of his two favourite cousins, Blanche and Rose Champion, in the gallery, and wanted very much to join them. So after Effie and he had tried and tried in vain for some minutes to guess who the Master of the Ceremonies could be who knew them, and had spoken of them, Effie noticed Robin casting certain tender, wistful glances towards the

gallery, which caused her to look up in that direction, when, seeing the two pretty sisters smiling down in return, and observing the shy blushes upon Rose Champion's cheek, she quickly understood how matters were, and almost insisted upon Robin going up at once to join his cousins, declaring that it was only right and proper—a most natural thing—only civil—in short nothing less than a duty. And Robin, after a show of reluctance at leaving Effie alone, of course allowed himself to be persuaded; and, bidding her good bye for the present, was about to retire—when a gaily-dressed gentleman appeared at the tent entrance.

“Ah, Robin!” he said, “come at last, are you? Well done, old fellow! But what a time you have taken. Don't know me, eh?—I wonder if she will.—Where is she?—Ah, there, I see. Well, Miss Effie, I've got here first after all you see. I told you we should

meet again some day. Don't *you* know me either? Well now, fancy that!—What?—Have you forgotten your old friend Woolly Bear?"

"But *you* are not Woolly Bear," said Effie,—"at least you are not the Woolly Bear I used to know. You are not the least bit like him. Besides, he died long ago; for I saw him lying in his coffin with my very own eyes."

"Quite right, so you did;" said the Master—for he it was—"and you put up a little tombstone to his memory, with an inscription—very nicely written and very kindly worded:—it was the first thing I noticed when I got out of my coffin again. Oh, yes! I *am* Woolly Bear, my dear,—at least I was—they call me Tiger now—but I am the very same person that you once called your '*dear* little Friend, W. B.' May not I be your dear friend now?"

"How very strange!" said Effie. "Oh,

yes! indeed you may—you are. But I never saw anyone so much changed in my life.”

Effie might well say so, for a more elegant, richly-dressed, handsome individual than her old stout friend now appeared it would be hard to find. He had wings, too! Not that he made Effie think of an Angel, or anything of that kind. Neither did he look like a Cupid, or even a Fairy. No; he was more like a Moth than anything else. Very much like a Moth. Indeed if he had not been the Master of the Ceremonies Effie would have thought he *was* one. But anyhow he was very beautiful. His two pairs of wings were superb, but very different:—the upper ones creamy white, with markings of the richest velvet-brown; the others reddish-orange, with blue-black spots: and these various colours were repeated, with slight variations, in other parts of his dress in the most tasteful, though fanciful way; as, for example, his coat was velvet-brown, with crimson

collar and facings; his waistcoat crimson with blue-black facings, and so on.

“Ah! odd times those were,” said he, “when you and Robin were always lecturing me about the effects of over-eating. Ha! ha! I often think of them. But I am *very* glad you are come in time. Of course you know to-morrow is the Prize Day.”

“Prize Day!” repeated Effie, “Colonel Greenweed said something about it, but I did not understand him. What are the prizes to be for?”

“Oh! there is only one. That is it!” (pointing to the tiny golden cup) “and it is to be given to the Belle of the Ball. We were growing dreadfully afraid you would not be in time to act as Judge.”

“*I* act as Judge!” exclaimed Effie. “indeed I would much rather not. I could not upon any account. In the first place I do not think it is right to give prizes for beauty. The

Flowers did not make themselves, and it is no credit to them if they are beautiful. It seems to me that giving a prize will do a great deal of harm. I have heard somewhere of a gentleman—a man—oh! I think he was a shepherd—who once went to a party, and he had to give a golden apple to the most beautiful lady—yes, lady I think it was—present; and when he had done his very best, and given it to the one he thought the prettiest, the others were all very, very angry, and——and——I forget what they did to him, but I know he got into very hot water. And it will be just the same now. If you give a prize to one, it will make her vain, and all the other Flowers jealous.”

“My dear Miss Effie,” said the Master, “you are quite wrong. Excuse me, but you are quite wrong. That might be the effect of giving a young *lady*, such as yourself, a prize for beauty—I do not know whether it would be or not—but it certainly is not so with the

Flowers. Jealous! Why when did you ever hear of such a thing as jealousy amongst the Wild Flowers? No! no! I am sorry you do not know them better. They are all desirous of gaining the prize, it is true, and they all set themselves off to the very best advantage to try for it, but this is done without a shade of jealousy; and as soon as the prize is awarded you will find that everyone is perfectly satisfied and happy, and that all the others will rejoice most heartily in the success of the favoured one. By the bye, have you ever been to a Flower Show?"

"Yes, I have," said Effie. "Oh! I know what you are going to say. I had quite forgotten that prizes are given at Flower Shows for beauty. But really I do not feel that *I* can act as Judge. Amongst so much Beauty as I see before me outside there, I shall feel quite bewildered: it will be almost impossible to pick out one, and say 'this is

prettier than any of the others.’ ”

“ You can only do your best,” said the Master, “ *and that you must do*, for the Flowers are all determined that you, and no one else, shall act as Judge ; so that matter is settled. Now just step this way a moment, I want you to examine the Cup. You will observe it has a Latin motto :

‘ *Qualis Salix,  
Talis Calix.* ’

Is not that capital ? ”

“ I don’t know what it means,” said Effie, “ so I cannot say.”

“ ‘ *Salix* ’ is a Willow, ‘ *Calix* ’ a Cup, ‘ *qualis* ’ as, ‘ *talis* ’ such :—

‘ As the Willow,  
Such the Calix, or Cup.’

Is not that short and pithy, and to the point ? ”

“ It is short, certainly,” said Effie ; “ but I do not see much point in it. What is the meaning of it ? ”



“Meaning of it? Well, to tell you the truth, I am sure I don’t know,” said the Master. “You see, the difficulty is that a Willow is one of the few plants that have no *Calyx*. But I take it as I find it. Hardly anybody ever does know the meaning of Latin inscriptions, so far as I can make out. But then, scarcely anybody ever asks the meaning, so it does not matter. It looks well, you know:—

‘*Qualis Salix,  
Talis Calix.*’

“Yes! yes! it looks well: and English would never do. Now, you know, most of the present company have already been presented with a Cup—some have a *Calyx* of gold, some of silver, some of pearl, many of emerald, some of ruby, and so on; but I want you to understand that the having one already is not to prevent a Flower receiving this one, if you think her deserving of it. You are to award this to the prettiest one of the company,

without any other consideration.

“And now I think we ought to be going outside, for you should by all means make your selection, if possible, to-day: though you will not be called upon to declare it until the morning.”

Robin had already retired from the tent. He had watched his opportunity, and withdrawn (with a word of apology) almost immediately after the Master's greeting, and there he was at this moment seated between his two pretty cousins in the gallery, waving his hand to Effie and the Master, as they appeared outside their tent.

## CHAPTER XV.



“ We shall have the best possible view of the company from here,” said the Master. P. 205.

*Sitting in Judgment.*

EFFIE was now conducted to a couple of seats, so deliciously screened from the sun by the masses of Ivy and Perriwinkle and Convolvulus, that clambered over the back of each, and arched over the top, that they were cool as arbours: and at the same time in appearance—with the trumpet-shaped Convolvulus Flowers flecking them all over with pink and white, and with their many turfey steps leading up to them—stately as thrones.

“We shall have the best possible view of the company from here,” said the Master, as they seated themselves side by side—“you see their promenade is just in front of us—and I shall be able to tell you who people are. You see the first couple coming this way—the gentleman in a red jacket with white stripes, and the lady in pale purple—those are Herb Robert and his little cousin Molle—perhaps you

know them: nice little thing she is. Then you see behind them a gentleman in uniform with gold facings, just stopping to speak to a lady? That is one of our Stewards."

"Oh! yes," said Effie, "Colonel Greenweed: I have already made his acquaintance. He and Major Spearwort came up and introduced themselves when I arrived."

"Ah! yes; of course! Nice fellows both of them. The Colonel is of a very good family too; descended in almost a direct line from the first Plantagenet. Not that they think much of these things though here. That fine-looking gentleman joining the group in the corner is Dr. Tutsan, of the St. John's Wort family, but he changed his name; and those are all cousins of his he is talking to;—there are almost any number of them, and all dressed in some shade of yellow. No; one is dressed in yellow trimmed with red; notice her:—she is called the Pretty One."

“And who is that delicate-looking little person coming this way?” asked Effie. “The one I mean so fancifully dressed in white, with red and yellow spots. I seem to know her face.”

“Oh! that is Nancy Pretty:—the gentlemen all declare her real name is ‘None so Pretty,’ but that is, of course, flattery. She comes of a family of Stone-breakers; I believe her father and forefathers for many generations have all followed the same business.”

“It is not the lady I thought it was, then,” said Effie, “if that is her name. She is very much like a little friend of mine who is called ‘London Pride.’”

“It is the same person,” said the Master: “some people do call her ‘London Pride,’ and I have heard her called ‘Prattling Parnell,’ but Nancy Pretty is her real name. The sleepy-looking individual behind her in the flaming scarlet coat I need not tell you is Mr. Poppy. By the bye I do not know if you have ever

noticed what a very unpopular colour scarlet is amongst the Flowers. I cannot think why. There is one little lady here somewhere—oh! yonder she is, look!—dressed in scarlet; but she and Poppy are the only two Wild Flowers in the whole of the country who ever wear it. *Her* name is Miss Pimpernell.”

Such a talker! oh! such a talker the Master was! He seemed to know everything, and his tongue went nineteen to the dozen. He was fond of gossip, there was no question about it, and Effie had already begun to find it out. He had something to say about everybody;—their appearance, their history, their dress, their name, and their connections—who their cousins were, and their aunts, and their grandfathers. He was not content with answering a question simply, but must always go on to tell a great deal that was not asked, and that was not wanted. Effie, poor child! felt that she had a very serious business before her which required



her best attention, and it rather bothered her to have to listen to his perpetual chatter, even though it was in itself sometimes interesting enough. I say "sometimes," for it was not always by any means. Of course she could not have done without him—she felt that—but it would have been a great relief to her if he had been content to talk less. It seemed as if he were trying to make up—as Tiger—for his want of conversation as Woolly Bear.

"Here comes another friend of mine, I declare," said Effie; "and how well she looks!"

"The one in pale pink, do you mean—Lady Circeæ?"

"She is in pale pink," said Effie; "but I have always heard her called 'Enchanter's Nightshade!'"

"Yes! yes! exactly! same lady.—Do you know how she got the name?"

"What, 'Enchanter's Nightshade'? No, I do not."

“Well, as to the first word, ‘Enchanter,’ you see her proper name is, as I said, ‘Cirœa,’ which was given her after a goddess named Circe, who used to bewitch people. That accounts for ‘Enchanter.’” And as to ‘Nightshade,’ she was called this by mistake. The name really belongs to another Flower, who got it from the Latin word, ‘*Solatrum*.’ I ought to say there is really no such word in Latin as ‘*Solatrum*,’ properly, but it was made for the Flower from another word meaning ‘to soothe.’ However, after it was made, people soon forgot what it meant, and thought it was made up of ‘*solem*’ and ‘*atrum*,’ two Latin words meaning ‘a black sun,’ and so the Flower was called ‘Nightshade.” And this little friend of yours, borrowing the title from the other Flower, is called ‘Enchanter’s Nightshade.’ I hope I make myself clear?”

“Clear as mud,” thought Effie, “and about as interesting.” But she did not say so aloud.

However she did feel it was time to do something, for the Master was growing worse and worse.

“If you please, Woolly Bear, dear,” she began,—“I mean Mr. Tiger—I hope you won’t think me unkind or rude in mentioning it, but I should be so much obliged if you would not tell me quite so many things one after another. You see I am not a bit clever, and my head won’t take it all in; and then it bothers me. I don’t know, I am sure, how I shall ever manage to decide about the Prize, but I want to do my best, and it makes me quite confused and stupid when you tell me so much about Latin names and things. You know, I am very much obliged to you, and could not do at all without you; only I want you, please, to remember that my head will only take in a little bit at a time.”

The Master having promised to bear the matter in mind, Effie went on to ask

a few questions:—

“Can you tell me who the lady is who has just passed us—not the very young one—but the one in white plush tipped with pink, and with the white silk fringe? Is it Miss Bogbean?”

“Yes, my dear, ‘Miss Bogbean,’ as people often call her, but her name is really ‘Buckbean.’ The mistake, no doubt, arose from her being called in France ‘*Mdlle. Trèfle des Marais* ;’ but if you think of her German name, you will see—oh! Beg pardon.”

“And this sweet little dear, in a sort of pinkish red, with trimmings of purple and yellow? How lovely she looks! And yet what extraordinary colours to put together! Who is she?”

“That is Lady Cranberry. She is still very young, but all her brothers and sisters are quite middle-aged people, and have lost all their good looks.”

“And the little lady in pale pink, sitting out there in the glaring sun, without anything to shade her?”

“That is Lady Tenella, first cousin of the little girl in scarlet.”

“And the one near her, with exceedingly frail figure, and in straw-coloured dress?”

“Is Blanche Corydalis.”

“And this one in pure white—just passing—very much like ‘Lily of the Valley?’”

“That is Miss Winter-Green. She has only just come out, and is considered a great Beauty.”

Effie kept on asking question after question about one and other of those that struck her as specially beautiful, and she also got the Master to introduce not a few of them to her, so that she might become better acquainted with them, and have better opportunity of judging of their charms.

At last, after long hesitation, and many

misgivings,—after comparing one with another again and again as they walked past, and observing them each and individually from every point of view, she turned to the Master and said,

“Well, I cannot fix upon *one*, but I have brought the number down to three, I think, at last. It lies between them now. You know I do not feel sure that I have got *really* the prettiest amongst my three, because I may not be a good Judge; but I have decided which are the three *I* like best.”

“And which are they?”

“Lady Cranberry, Miss Winter-Green, and Lady Tenella.”

“And you cannot decide between them?”

“No, I really cannot.”

“But what is to be done? You really must. Have them up again—just those three by themselves—and try once more.”

“No,” said Effie decisively, “it is of no use at all. It has been work enough getting

them down to three. It went to my heart dreadfully to shut out Miss Buckbean, for example, and she could certainly have been one of the three if only she had been just a little younger. But I cannot and will not go any further now."

"I will tell you what I have been thinking," she added, presently. "Suppose we let these three sing a song of their own composing, and give the prize to the one whose song we like best."

"Not a bad idea," said the Master, "if you are sure you can get no further in your choice."

"And suppose we choose the subject for their song?" said Effie. "No, I will tell you what.—Suppose we ask them this question:—'What do you think is the most beautiful thing in the world?'—and let them each give their answer in a song to-morrow morning?"

"Capital! capital!" said the Master. "Nothing could be better. It shall be done."

And we had better tell them at once and give them their question, so that they may have plenty of time to think over their answer."

And so a Trumpeter having sounded a little flourish and obtained silence, the Master rose from his seat, and, amidst breathless excitement, made the following proclamation:—

"Ladies and Gentlemen, my worthy friend—the most honourable and learned Judge at my side—has, after the most careful and anxious consideration, selected from amongst the present company three candidates, whose charms appear to her irresistible, and superior even to those of all the rest. But she declares herself to be quite unable to decide between the merits of these three, and she wishes to make a suggestion to you upon the subject. The three candidates are Lady Cranberry, Miss Winter-Green, and Lady Tenella; perhaps those ladies will be good enough to advance to the centre."

All eyes were turned upon the three sweet



little beings who presently moved to the middle of the ring, in obedience to the summons, amidst the ringing cheers which resounded on every side. Certainly three lovelier little Beauties were never seen in Fairyland.

Effie now rose from her seat, and said :—

“ My dear friends, ladies and gentlemen : what Woolly Bear—I mean the Master——has said is quite true ; I have found it a very, very difficult thing to do as much as I have done, and make any choice at all amongst you. There are twenty, at least——oh ! more !——a hundred, I am sure——that I should like to give a prize to, and that richly deserve one ; but you see there is only one to give. Well, I have done my best. I have picked out these three :—Lady Cranberry, Miss Winter-Green, and Lady Tenella ; and, as I look at them now, I feel—and I think you will all agree with me—that I cannot have done *wrong* in choosing them, even if I have not done right.—I mean——well, it does

not matter what I mean——these are my choice, and I cannot tell which of the three I like best. But I have a plan. And it is for you three, my dears, to say whether you agree to it. It is this:—I want each of you three to sing us a song to-morrow morning, and the prize is to be given to the one whose song we like best. Do you agree?”

“Oh! yes;” they all replied, “but *you* must decide which is best. You said ‘*we*.’”

Well then—the one *I* like best. But I have not done yet:—Your song must be an answer to a question I am going to put you. The question is this:—‘What do you think is the most beautiful thing in the world?’ Do you agree to it now?”

They thought it would be rather difficult to answer such a question in a song, but, as it would be equally difficult for all three, they laughingly consented; and so the matter was settled, and the meeting immediately broke up.

## CHAPTER XVI.

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### *Prize Day.*

EVERYBODY was astir very early next morning making preparations for the Great Event. There would have been, in any case, great excitement on the Prize Day, naturally; but the novelty that Effie had introduced more than doubled public interest in the proceedings.

Nine o'clock was the hour fixed for the contest, but the company were abroad hours before then—indeed from the earliest dawn. They had so many things to arrange, they said, it was necessary to be up early: but I think the real truth was they were all so eagerly looking forward to the contest they found it

impossible to lie in bed; and, as the hour for commencement of proceedings approached, excitement reached almost fever heat.—Which of the little Beauties would win the Cup?

What could they answer to the Judge's question? What should *you* say is the most beautiful thing in the world?

At last the hour arrived, and Effie made her appearance from her tent, accompanied by her two old friends, Robin and the Master, who had breakfasted with her, and who were to sit by her side during the trial.

A flourish of trumpets announced to the company that the Judge had appeared, and instantly everybody was in his appointed place as by magic.

An extra seat had been prepared for Robin by the side of the other two, the only difference between the three being that Effie's, in the centre, was raised a little above the others, and was more richly decorated with flowers,

which clustered over it like snowflakes.

As Effie and her friends took their seats, there was an outburst of cheering, during which Effie had time to look around her. All had been arranged to perfection, and the result was such a scene which has, perhaps, never been witnessed before or since. Immediately in front of the throne was the circle of velvet-like turf, kept clear for the competitors; and around this, row above row, and tier above tier—like the seats of a circus—the company was grouped in splendid array: whilst surrounding all, of course, were the galleries—now quite ablaze with colour.

Effie had invited some of her prime favourites to act as Maids of Honour, and surround her throne, but she would not allow them to stand all the time—as Maids of Honour, poor things! are always supposed to do—but told them to seat themselves on the grassy steps of the throne, which they

accordingly did, and I need not say in doing so beautified them to an extraordinary degree. Miss Buckbean, Nancy Pretty, Blanche Corydalis, and the young lady with the borrowed name you would naturally expect to find amongst these, and so they were; and you might have recognized also one or two Miss Speedwells (in blue), Lady Moorwort (in pink), Birdseye Primrose (in lilac), as also Lady Water Lily, the pretty Miss St. John's Wort and two of her cousins, and last—not least—her old friend sweet little Forget-me-not.

It seemed as if the tidings of the expected event had reached even to the Butterfly World, for great numbers of them were present, flitting here and there, apparently in almost as great excitement as the Flowers themselves.

Effie had read in her English History of the "Field of the Cloth of Gold," and here, thought she to herself, it was; only much more beautiful than Henry VIII. ever saw, she

felt sure. Of course she remembered that the one in her history was a military display; but so was this too, for that matter; for Effie saw that underneath the gallery, and ranged all round the dell, to serve as a protection, were two or three lines of soldiers fully armed;—there were the Thorns with their spears, and Grasses with their two-edged blades, and a little crack regiment of sharpshooters called “The Balsams,” with their spring guns all at full cock; whilst over all floated and waved the gorgeous standards of a company of the Pea Tribe.

Lots having been drawn to settle the order in which the competitors were to appear, it fell to Miss Winter-Green to sing her song first; and the Master having therefore called upon her to appear, that sweet little maiden stepped forward to the centre of the green. At the same time Effie rose from her seat and said,

“I think you understand, my dear, do you

not, the terms upon which the prize will be awarded? It is to be given for the *best song altogether*; and by the best I mean the *prettiest and the truest*. Singing will count, and poetry will count; but a *true answer* to the question will count most of all. You agree to this?"

The little Fairy bowed her head in consent.

"Well, then," said Effie, "we are now quite ready, if you please. The question is 'What do you think is the most beautiful thing in the world?'"

Without more ado, therefore, the little pale Beauty, in a voice soft as an Æolian harp, sang the following:—

" I saw one day,  
       'Midst a display  
 Of graceful Lilies tall,  
       A little Maid,  
       Who put in shade  
 The fairest of them all.



“The Flowers, amazed,  
In rapture gazed,  
And open'd wide, I ween,  
Their wond'ring eyes,  
In glad surprise,  
And claimed her for their Queen.

“They felt 'twould be  
But vanity,  
And courting sure disgrace,  
If they should dare  
Their own compare  
With *her* sweet little face.

“For Beauty, then,  
In eyes of men,  
Of all things, you will find  
*A Maiden fair,*  
I dare declare,  
To leave the rest behind.”

The Flowers so loudly applauded the conclusion of the song, it seemed as if they would have been willing for Effie to award the prize

to the singer at once, without waiting to hear the others, Effie, however, had no such intention herself.

“Thank you, my dear,” she said, “for your very nice little song, which I am sure you have sung with much feeling and taste.” With which words, and a pleasant smile, she dismissed the little lady for the present to her seat. To say the truth, pretty as the song was, Effie thought in her heart it was quite possible she might like one of the others quite as well, or even better, for it had taken her completely by surprise to hear that “a Maiden fair” was the most beautiful thing in the world, and she was not quite prepared as yet to believe it could be true. Anyhow, she would wait and hear what the other competitors had to say.

“Lady Tenella comes next,” said the Master. “Let Lady Tenella come forward at once, please.”

Whereupon that lovely little member of the

Pimpernel family shyly rose from her seat, and took Miss Winter-Green's place in the centre, —everybody acknowledging, as she advanced with her smiling face, and her delicate silk dress of shaded pink, that she looked most bewitchingly pretty. She sang in a voice more joyous and merry than that of her predecessor, and to a trilling, running melody, the following words :—

“ What prompts the Birds, in Spring, with spirits gay,  
To pour forth music all the livelong day?

What makes the new-born Lambkins frisk and play—  
But Sunshine?

“ What tempts each little Flower to show its head,  
And studs with Beauty all the path we tread?

What gives its fragrance to the Lily-bed—  
But Sunshine?

“ What brings the Cuckoo back across the Seas,  
And clothes in Summer dress the naked Trees?

What fills the moorland with the hum of Bees—  
But Sunshine?

“What paints the colours in the sky at dawn?  
What makes the dew-drops sparkle on the lawn?  
What tints the Flowers, and gilds the waving Corn—  
But Sunshine?”

“What enters, laughing, at the cottage door,  
And pours its golden wealth upon the floor,  
Till all the cot is radiant with the store—  
But Sunshine?”

“What does its best to banish grief and pain?  
Dispels the darkness, and dries up the rain,  
Till all the world is full of smiles again—  
But Sunshine?”

“Oh, surely then, this thing of priceless worth—  
The source from which all Beauty takes its birth—  
Must be itself the loveliest thing on earth—  
The Sunshine!”

Effie could not resist clapping her hands as the song finished. She had no doubt whatever as to which she liked best. The last was, in her opinion, the superior, almost beyond

comparison, both in poetry and as an answer to her question. Yes, as an answer above all, for she felt it was truer. "Sunshine is the most beautiful thing in the world," she said to herself, "I have not a doubt."

It was well that it *was* to herself, and not aloud, that she made this remark, or it would scarcely have been fair to little Lady Cranberry, who had not yet had an opportunity of expressing her opinion. As it was, Effie said aloud quite enough to make it appear that there was not much chance for the third candidate.

"Bravo! Bravo!" she cried. "A sweetly pretty song! The Sunshine seems to have got into the song itself, and made *it* beautiful, as it does everything else. I do so love a cheerful song! But there is Lady Cranberry yet to sing, so I must not say more till we have heard her. Now, dear," she added encouragingly to that modest little Beauty, who was sitting

almost out of sight in a back row, "come along out here where we can all see you ; it is your turn to give us a song now."

"If you will please allow me to withdraw my name," said Lady Cranberry, rising, "I shall feel very much obliged, for I would much rather not sing. I have not a voice to be compared with my dear friend Tenella's ; and her poetry, too, is better than mine. I really mean what I say, and I shall feel very grateful if you will please award her the Prize without my singing."

"No ! no ! said Effie, "that will not do. We *must* hear you. And as to the singing and poetry, *you* are not to be the Judge, remember ; —it is for *me* to decide which is the best. So now come along."

"But my song is not at all cheerful, and it is very long besides."

"Come along," said Effie, "we all want to hear you ; and sing you must and shall."

So saying, she actually descended from her

Throne, and ran and took the sweet little lady by the hand, and led her forth to the centre, where all might see her.

Without further protest, therefore,—in a voice that trembled much at first, but which grew stronger as she went on, and thrilled the heart of everyone that heard it, with its sweetness and pathos—Lady Cranberry sang the following :—

“ I saw, amongst the Flowers, a Maiden small,  
With Cherub face and rippling golden hair,  
Who seemed to me the sweetest Flower of all—  
Most softly graceful, most divinely fair.

“ But as I knew her better, I perceived  
She was not—as I thought her—sweet and mild ;—  
Sometimes with bitter rage her bosom heaved,  
And then she grew a most unlovely child.

“ ‘ Ah ! ’ then said I, ‘ true loveliness must dwell  
In something better than the *form* one sees ;  
Since, when hot passions in the bosom swell,  
The fairest features lose all power to please.’

“ What *is* it, then, deserving most of praise  
 For perfect Beauty, and for highest worth ?  
 Shall we declare the Sun’s resplendent rays  
 Most glorious of all the things in earth ?

“ Last Spring, a pair of Robins, newly wed,  
 Chose for their nest a spot ’neath yonder tree,  
 Well sheltered by thick brambles overhead ;—  
 Ah me ! they meant it for a Nursery !

“ And all day long, in perfect happiness,  
 They plann’d and toil’d with loving care and skill ;—  
 But silently :—for how could words express  
 The sweet, sweet thoughts that did their bosoms fill ?

“ And when their work was finish’d, and there lay  
 Within the nest, before their wond’ring eyes,  
 Five spotted eggs ;—again, no words can say  
 What bounding joy within their hearts did rise.

“ Then patiently, through many a day and night,  
 The little wifie sat upon her nest,  
 Expecting that event of strange delight  
 When *life should stir* beneath her feather’d breast.



“ And he (her lord) sat near her. Happy pair !

In rain or sunshine glad without alloy :

No cloud could make the world to them less fair ;—

The rain might damp their feathers—not their joy.

“ But, ah ! one day, just as their hopes were crown'd,

And five small Birdies look'd to them for food,

A cruel boy, their treasure having found,

Tore out the nest, and kill'd the tender brood !

“ Poor stricken hearts ! I saw them sit alone—

Sunshine became to them a joyless glare—

From their small world *all* happiness was gone,

And desolation met them everywhere.

“ Ah, yes ! 'tis *Love* that makes the Birds to sing !

'Tis *Love* that lends its sweetness to the Flowers !

'Tis *Love*, and not the Sunshine, that can bring

Brightness and Beauty to this world of ours.

“ *Love* is the fount from which true joy must flow,

Whilst sin itself, and all that comes of sin,—

Sorrow and death, and every ill we know—

To *want of Love* all trace their origin.

“ And if this world were wholly full of *Love*,  
 From sighs and tears it would be wholly free,—  
 As beautiful as that sweet world above,  
 Where all is gladness, peace, and harmony.

“ And so, though Beauty everywhere I trace  
 In things around me, whether great or small,  
 Yet LOVE, I think, has most of Beauty’s grace ;  
 And LOVE—ah ! LOVE it was that made us all.”

Effie was unable to speak at first, and for a few seconds kept her face covered with her hands. Then she ran down the steps of her Throne, and threw her arms round Lady Cranberry’s neck, and kissed her.

“ Yours is the best, Lady Cranberry ! ” she cried ; “ Oh, yes ! yours is the best and truest, and you have most fairly won the Prize. Love is the most beautiful thing, I can see. And if there were nothing but love in the world, why there would be—let me see !—why there would not be any slavery, for one thing, and the poor

little Fuscas would not have their Babies stolen away from them. And then the nasty old Wolf Spider would give up killing flies, and live on something that cannot feel, and that does not mind being eaten. And that little Dog, Toby,——oh! I am sure he would not have been so cruel to the fluffy little Water Chicken. And as for me——let me see!——what should I do? Oh! I suppose I should never get angry with Martha again—no, never!—and never say another unkind word!—and——

“*What was that?*”——It sounded exactly like Martha’s voice calling!”

*It was something!* for the alarm bells began ringing out in the gallery with all their might; and, at the same time, the soldiers down below prepared for action:—the Grasses drew their blades, and the Thorns their spears; whilst the regiment of Sharpshooters actually fired a volley straight off!

“Hark! There it is again!! And again!!!”

Effie gave a great start, and opened her eyes very wide,——and——

### WHAT SHOULD YOU THINK?

*It was Martha calling!* And she herself had not been to any ball whatever, but was in the Ash Wood all the while! Yes, and it was still the month of May! for there were the Cowslips, and Bluebells, and Primroses, all in full blossom! And there, too, were her flower-press, and the tin box for Caterpillars, and the little box Uncle George had given her, lying beside her on the grass.

“O, Miss Effie! Miss Effie!” cried kind-hearted Martha, as she now caught sight of her young mistress, and came up, very much out of breath. “Wherever have you been? and what *have* you been doing all this long time? Oh, dear! dear! how you have frightened me, to be sure! It’s tea-time, child, and you ought to have been home an hour ago. Why! Gracious

me! if she has not been lying asleep on that damp grass! Enough to catch your death of cold! Whatever will your mamma say, I wonder? She will never, never consent to your going anywhere by yourself again, I am sure."

So saying, she gathered up all Effie's treasures, and taking her by the hand—which she was most thankful to have in her own again once more—she hurried away home with her as fast as she could.

And so, "Good-bye" to our little friend! I am quite sorry—as I always am—to say the word, but I suppose the time has now come. Let us only hope, in conclusion—as I am sure I do, for my part, with all my heart—that the dear little woman has not taken cold.



## N O T E S .

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### *Chapter II, page 28.*

Effie, however, does Woolly Bear an injustice. It is a fact that Caterpillars have twelve eyes, though too small to be seen without a microscope; and the two very large eyes of a Butterfly are really made up of more than 17,000 lenses, each of which is supposed to be a distinct eye.

### *Chapter V, page 71.*

A very singular case, this, of "*reversion.*" As is well-known, the adult Water Spider never weaves a net for its prey, but trusts to other means of capture. That these young Spinsters, therefore, should thus speak of "a net spread out" for the "Simple Simons" is remarkable, and worthy of serious attention. Scientific readers had better, by all means, make a note of it.

### *Chapter XI, page 154.*

What a pity that Effie was not old enough to have read Sir John Lubbock's books! for not only would she have known all this, but have been half prepared, perhaps, for much that afterwards occurred.

### *Chapter XII, page 165.*

Here, for example, if Effie had read her Lubbock, she would have known that some Ants *do* keep Cows up in trees, and build sheds for them; and that the Cows *do* lay eggs, &c.

### *Chapter XII, page 169.*

*Solenopsis fugax* is a small species of Ant which makes incursions into the nurseries of the larger Ants, and carries off their young ones for food!





## “FLOWERS WITH ROOTS:”

*Being Short Allegories and Sermons for Children.*

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*Extracts from some of the Notices of this book:—*

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