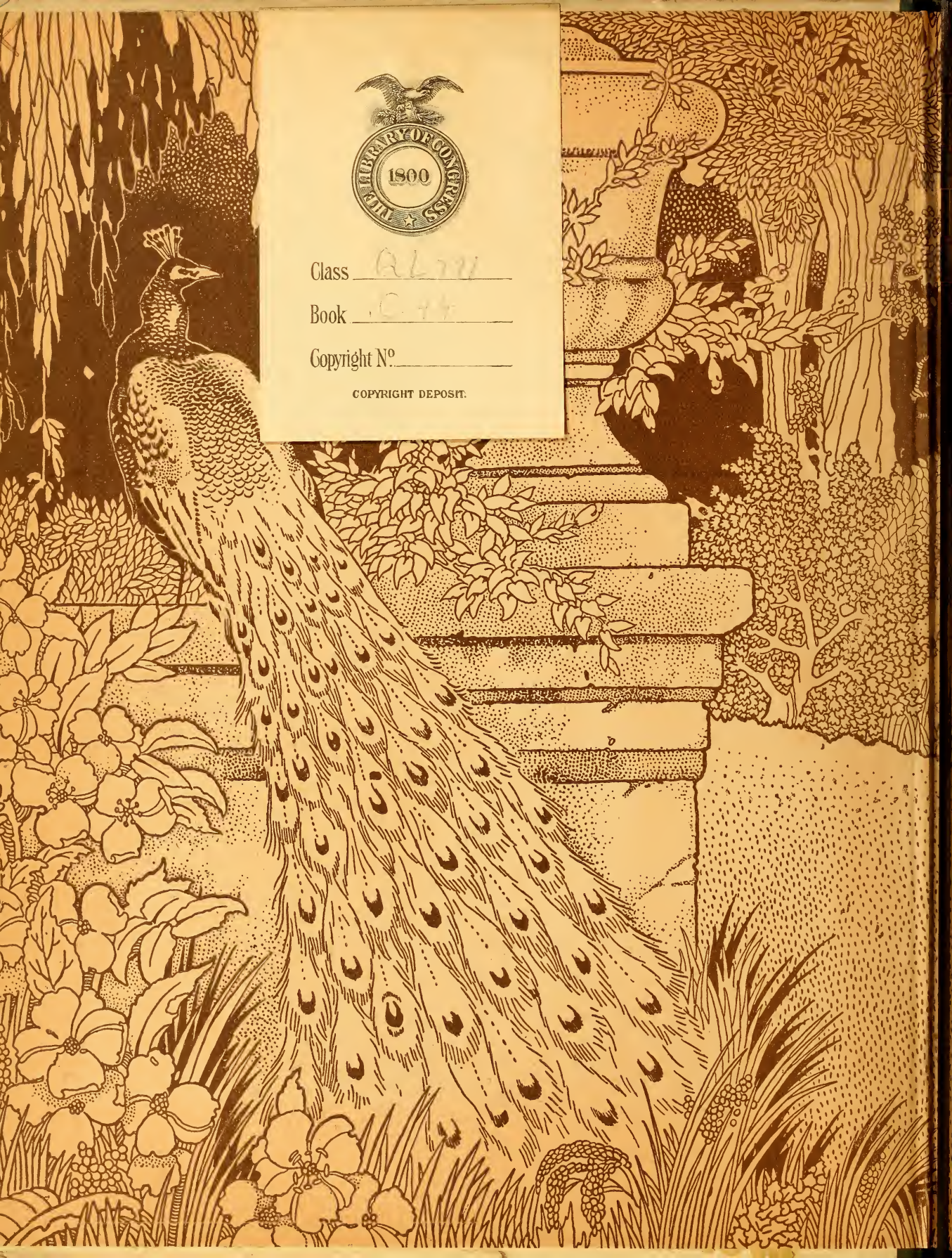
# GARDEN-LAND




HARRIS
CADY

# GARDEN-LAND


"'Good-night!' breathed the children, kissing their hands to the starry darkness."

[Page 128.]

# GARDEN-LAND

*By*

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*"Mountain-Land," "Outdoor-Land," "Orchard-Land"*
*"River-Land," and "Forest-Land"*

*With Illustrations in Color and*
*Decorations by*

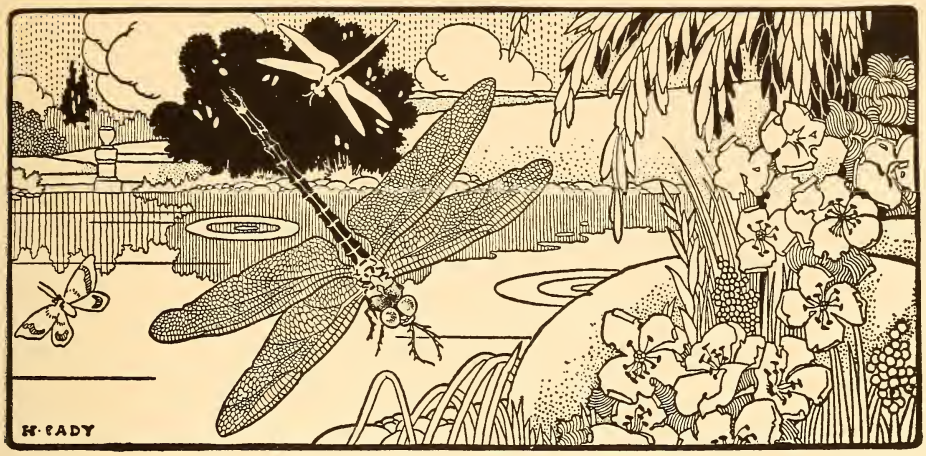
HARRISON CADY


NEW YORK
D. APPLETON AND COMPANY
1907

*Published October, 1907*

TO

FREDERIC CROMWELL 2nd

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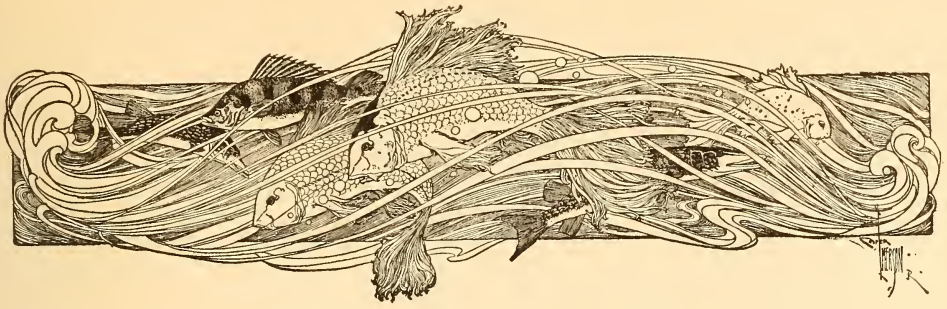
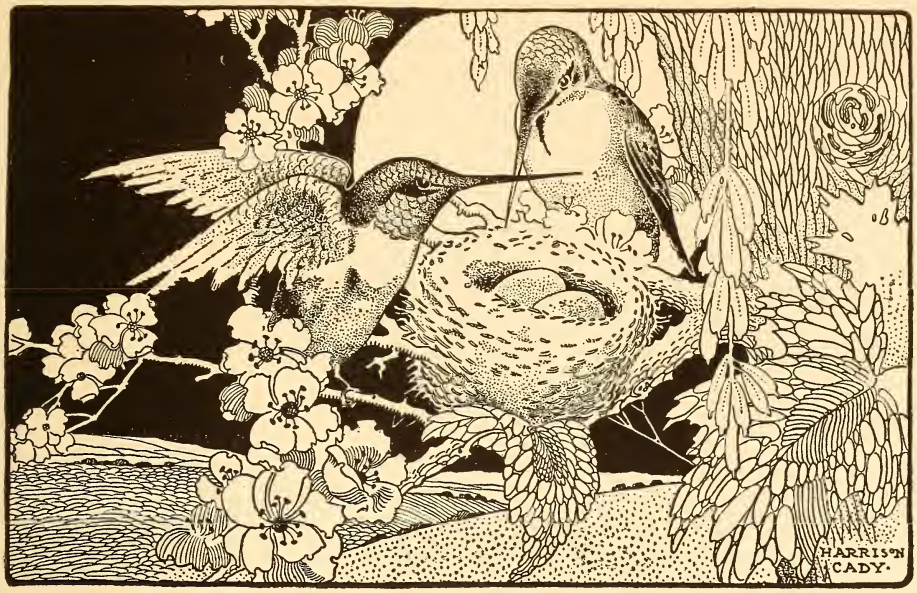


# LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS




# GARDEN-LAND

## CHAPTER I

### THE GARDEN

NOON sunshine lay warm across the garden. The flowers stood tall and slim in the calm golden light. No breeze stirred them; nothing moved in the garden except the red fins of goldfish in the

fountain pool. Sky and air and water were so still, so silent that it seemed as if this little corner of the world were waiting for the children to come back to their play-ground under the big syringa bushes.

After luncheon they came, slowly, hand clasping hand, strolling along the familiar paths. And, as they moved through the garden, the little summer breezes woke up and began to play among the water reeds; velvet-winged butterflies aroused themselves from honeyed torpor and began to explore the scented depths of heliotrope and larkspur; dragon flies, clinging to the water-lily pads, let go and drifted through the heated fragrance on glittering wings; and the biggest and oldest and goldest goldfish goggled his round eyes up at the children and began gently finning the water as though expecting a crumb.

So the children threw a handful of bread

crumbs to the goldfish and then lay down in the cool shadow of the big syringa bush.

A dozen little breezes immediately came and began to play with the tangled gold of Geraldine's hair. Three friendly ants crawled over Peter's bare knees. No doubt they believed themselves to be on a very high mountain, for they stood up on their hind legs and waved their fore legs as though cheering the view.

The syringa bush was in full blossom. Through sprays of white bloom the children could see blue sky and wooded ridges of low mountains, and far, far up a little silver cloud shaped like a canoe, sailing off into the magic East.

"I wish we were in it," sighed Peter. "I'd steer straight for some of those wonderful countries where there are nothing but palm trees and spices, and Birds of Paradise and butterflies as big as pigeons. Now it's your turn to wish something, Geraldine."

Geraldine brushed the bright curls from her eyes and looked up wistfully at the little white cloud which was shaped like a canoe built for children.

"I wish," she said, "that we were sailing through the sky above a strange and beautiful country where we could look down over the edge of our cloud boat and see very young princesses, all covered with jewels, walking around and feeding swans out of golden dishes. We could peep over the edge of our cloud boat and call down to them and wave our handkerchiefs, you know."

"I haven't a handkerchief," observed Peter; "I forget where I left it. Anyway, I wouldn't bother about the princesses; I'd be on the lookout for wild and dreadful animals. What fun to sail safely over whole forests full of tigers and snakes and savages! Don't you think so, Geraldine?"

Geraldine nodded doubtfully.

"However," she said, "I am rather glad that our garden is so perfectly safe. I'm glad it has a wall, too."

"What good is the wall? There is nothing dangerous outside, you know; there is nothing in all our Outdoor-land that can harm us."

"You say it as though you wished there were a few tigers outside," said Geraldine lazily.

"Well, I think it would be rather nice to sit safe inside your own garden and listen to the terrible roar of savages and tigers who couldn't get in. Don't you? I mean just for an hour or two?"

Geraldine shook her curly head and stared mutely up at the little cloud, which had now almost reached the mountain ridge on its voyage into the purple East.

"No," she said, "I would not care to live in any Outdoor-land where things sat

outside gardens and roared. But I would rather like to hear true stories about such a country.'

Peter rolled over in the sweet warm grass and rested his chin in the palm of his hand. "Such a perfect day for stories," he sighed, "stories of wonderful countries. Geraldine, I am just aching for a story about strange and distant lands."

"Shall I make up one for you?" inquired Geraldine generously. "I've eaten a lot and I'm sleepy, but I'll do it."

"Thank you, Geraldine," said Peter, settling comfortably upon his elbows, which brought his eyes very close to the grass. The next moment he exclaimed:

"Gracious!"

"What is it?" asked Geraldine, bending her head down beside Peter, who lay flat on his stomach, staring hard. "Oh," she added, catching sight of the object that held Peter's

attention, "it's a Katydid! a beautiful, gauzy, green Katydid. Oh! I do hope it will say 'Katy-did' for us; *will* you?" she pleaded in a whisper, her red lips very close to the delicate-winged insect.

"I would if I could, just to please you, Geraldine," said the Katydid in a sweet little voice, "but I can't."

"What! Can't say 'Katy-did'?" exclaimed Peter incredulously.

"No, I can't, Peter; I'm a lady Katydid. Only gentlemen Katydids can sit on grass stems and twigs and fiddle 'Katy-did—Katy-did—Katy-did'—about two hundred times every sixty seconds——"

"Oh, do they fiddle it? I thought they sang it!" said Geraldine, astonished.

"No, all our gentlemen fiddle. Every gentleman carries a musical instrument at the base of his green wing cover, but we young ladies don't. It is, I think, more becoming

for young ladies to listen to a gentleman's serenade than to serenade a gentleman by moonlight. Don't you think so, Geraldine?"

"I don't know very much about such things," said Geraldine frankly. "Would you mind telling us what to call you—if you are not a real Katy-did?"

"But I am a real lady Katydid," insisted the pretty insect, "and my real name is *Microcentrum retinervis*; but," she added graciously, "you may call me Katharine, if you like."

"You are a dear," said Geraldine, touching the delicate green, lacelike wings with the tip of her finger. "It doesn't seem very difficult to believe in fairies when I look at you with your gauzy, spangled, gold and green clothes. Tell me, Katharine, what do you eat?"

"Salad," replied the insect; "leaf salad, grass salad—that sort of thing. I never have

any trouble about eating; what worries me is planning how not to be eaten."

"Birds?" inquired Peter. "Do they chase you?"

"Yes, birds, ants, hornets, squirrels, dragon flies, fishes—oh, almost everybody wants to eat me. That's the reason I try to look as much like a green leaf as I can, and sit very still on a twig all day until night sends the birds to bed. If they'd only let me alone I'd have a good, long life to live."

"How long?" asked Peter.

"Oh, almost a year—sometimes longer. You see I was an egg last year. Mother laid about a hundred and fifty of us eggs last September, on the twigs of that big ash tree; and early this spring the egg that I was in split open and out I came, not green, and big, and beautiful, but small and fragile, and so pale that I was almost transparent. Now I'm full grown—quite grown up, you see, be-

cause last night—and this is a secret, children: last night while I was lazily hovering and drifting along over the tops of the moonlit clover, I heard, close by, a most unusually beautiful serenade. The music was delicious, the verses very noble. Shall I repeat them?"

"Please do," said Geraldine, smiling.

"Then this was the wonderful poem set to most entrancing music; but neither words nor music were sung; both were fiddled:

"Katy-*did!*
Katy-*did!*
Katy-*did!*
Katy!
Katy!
Katy-*did!*"

Isn't it beautiful?"

"Very," said Geraldine politely. "Is there more of it?"

"Oh, dear me, yes—yards and yards of it!—front yards, back yards, dooryards—all kinds of yards and yards of it."

"Are the other verses like the verse you recited?" asked Peter.

"Exactly. All the verses are exactly alike. That's the charm of it."

"And did you discover the serenader?" asked Geraldine softly.

"At first," said the Katydid modestly, "I pretended not to listen. I alighted upon a grass stalk and sat there waving my long feelers in the fragrant night breeze and trying to look as though I had not noticed a very handsome and dashing young gentleman Katydid perched high on a tuft of meadow-sweet and fiddling steadily away for my benefit."

"Don't you think it was rather impolite of you not to notice him?" said Geraldine, smoothing the dainty, gauzy wings with cautious fingers. "I'm afraid you are a coquette, Katharine."

"I suppose I am," admitted the insect—"but—but I am so young—and the strange

gentleman was so sudden. How would you like it if you were quietly flying along through the dusk, and a strange gentleman should suddenly sit up on a flower and begin to fiddle you a proposal the moment he saw you?"

"I—I don't know how I'd feel," murmured Geraldine dreamily.

The Katydid remained silent; a little cloud passed across the sun, and the sunshine faded for a moment. Suddenly a strident sound broke out from the bushes across the pool:

"Katy-*did!*
Katy-*did!*
Katy—"

breaking off abruptly as the sun came out from behind the cloud again, flooding the world with brightness.

"Why, Katharine, where are you going?" exclaimed Geraldine.

But the little Katydid rose into the air

on frail, green wings and went drifting off dreamily through the sunshine toward the leafy bower of her hidden lover, braving the dangers from bird and dragon fly, because her sweetheart, mistaking a cloud for the coming of evening, had called to her across the garden world.

"She isn't a coquette after all," said Geraldine slowly.

Peter made no comment; Geraldine gazed wistfully after the Katydid, then curled up in the warm grasses, resting her chin on her palms and staring into space.

"That was a mushy sort of story," observed Peter presently. "I—I wish somebody would tell me a decent story."

"I'll make one up for you, if you like," said Geraldine. "Shall I?"

"Oh, I mean a real story—and thank you just as much. You know what I mean, don't you?"

"Of course. You mean that it would be perfectly delightful if a mysterious stranger came walking into our garden and sat down on that marble seat by the fountain and began:

"'Once upon a time when I was lost in the dreadful and dangerous jungles of South America'—*that's* the sort of story you mean, don't you?"

"Exactly the sort. Oh, dear! if only it were possible for a mysterious traveler to suddenly appear here in our garden and tell us a story like that."

"If only it were possible!" sighed Geraldine softly.

"It *is* possible!" answered a sweet, happy little voice almost in their ears; and the children sat up astonished.

Whiz! Whir! Whir-r-r! Zip! Whir-r-r!

There in mid-air a tiny, winged creature hung in the sunshine, its wings whirring so

fast that they were mere misty blurs; a very little bird, balanced before a clump of tall Canterbury Bells, thrusting its slender bill into the honeyed heart of blossom after blossom.

"A humming bird," whispered Geraldine. "The dear little thing! Oh, Peter, its body is all glittering with green and gold, and its throat shines like a crimson jewel!"

"Did you hear what it said?" whispered Peter. "Do you suppose it knows anybody who would be kind enough to come into our garden and tell us the sort of story we want to hear? Ask it, Geraldine."

So Geraldine, leaning forward, began, "O beautiful Humming Bird, do you know any traveler who would be kind enough to come into our garden and tell us about strange and wonderful countries?"

"I certainly do," replied the bird in its sweet, happy little voice. "Are you children

in a hurry for your story? Because you see I have not quite finished my luncheon; the honey dew in these Canterbury Bells is delicious, and I expect to find several tiny and tender insects in that scarlet begonia—" The bird, hanging in the air on misty wings, drifted from blossom to blossom, thrusting its bill deep into each, then darted toward the scarlet begonia and carefully explored every flower.

"Now I'm ready!" it twittered cheerily. There was a whiz, a whir, a flash of green and ruby-red, and the smallest bird that ever visits the Eastern United States alighted on a spray of flowering syringa and, laying its brilliant head on one side, looked confidently at the children.

"You certainly are magnificent," said Peter, enraptured; "you are nothing but a beautiful, brilliant jewel set in greenish gold!"

"Oh, I'm rather handsome," said the hum-


"'A humming bird,' whispered Geraldine. 'The dear little thing!'"

ming bird modestly, "but, dear me! you should see some of the other sorts of humming birds. I've a cousin, for example, who wears a velvet black hood over glittering turquoise blue; another cousin who is all scarlet and gold; another who wears violet and copper color; another — but, goodness me! — my cousins are all rainbow-tinted, all sizes, all shapes, and I'd sit here for days if I were obliged to describe them. What was it that you said about a story, Peter?"

The splendidly tinted little bird looked at Peter with his head on one side, and Peter gazed back with his head on one side.

"We were wishing, Geraldine and I, that some traveler who had been to strange and distant lands, would suddenly appear in our garden and tell us about astounding adventures. Do you know of any traveler of that sort around here?"

"I do," said the humming bird.

"Do you think that traveler would be obliging enough to come here and tell us about the strange sights of the countries he has visited?" asked Geraldine.

"That traveler is already here," said the bird.

The children sat up straighter in the grass and looked carefully around.

"Where is he?" whispered Peter excitedly.

"In perfectly plain sight," said the humming bird.

Again the children looked all around the garden.

"But you don't look at *me*!" said the little bird, twittering with amusement.

"At *you*!" exclaimed the children, perplexed.

"Certainly. I am a stranger, am I not?"

"But — but you are not a traveler; I mean a traveler who has journeyed thousands of miles—" began Peter.

"Yes, I am," said the bird.

"Thousands of miles? Into strange and distant lands?"

"Of course. I have just come from South America."

"From *South* America!" exclaimed the children in amazement.

The bird nodded its lustrous little head: "Every autumn as soon as the weather begins to turn chilly here in the North, we Ruby-Throats start on our winter travels to South America. Every spring, as soon as I know the flowers are in bloom in the North, I start for North America. Didn't you know that American ruby-throated humming birds always did that?"

"No," said the children, astonished.

"But you know that almost all of the song-birds go south in cold weather, don't you?"

"Yes," said Peter, "we know that the

swallows go south. But you are so very small—"

"I can fly as fast as a railroad train," said the humming bird proudly. "I can keep up with the fastest swallows. Some of our swallows go to Mexico for the winter; some of our orioles and tanagers go to Central America. Many birds go no farther than Florida. But I keep straight on, high in the sky, speeding like a bullet. If I grow tired I drop to the earth in some warm, southern woodland and rest and feed for a little while. Ah, it is splendid!—this great autumn bird-flight into the south! I love it."

And the beautiful little bird ruffled up its plumage until every jeweled feather sparkled.

"Do you make that long journey all alone?" asked Geraldine in wonder.

"No," said the humming bird; "I go with one of the great, popular bird excursions

which leaves North America for all points south every day and evening during the autumn. It is most exciting. For days we feel restless; we all know it is time to begin thinking about going south. Birds of every sort begin to gather in flocks, blue-birds, robins, sparrows, finches, orioles, yellow-birds, all thronging the hedges and thickets.

"Then, suddenly, a cloud of birds will rise in the air, circle about for a few moments, turn southward—and the first excursion party is on the wing!"

"How perfectly charming!" cried Geraldine, "to have so many dear little companions! And do you travel all day and then rest at night?"

"Sometimes. Sometimes we start at night, a vast flock of us rising up in the moonlight and rushing through the darkness southward under the stars. And sometimes we

start by day, winging upward higher and higher until the noise of our wings and the twittering call of thousands of voices is too distant to be heard by earth people. Yet, on very still days in autumn, far up in the clouds, you may hear, if you listen, a faint sweet murmur of bird flocks winging southward. And on still, starry nights sometimes you may hear us passing high up in the darkness. Will you listen this autumn, children? I may be up there."

"Indeed we will!" said the children eagerly.

The bird sat very still, for a while, as though thinking. Then:

"Would you like to hear about my adventures in distant lands under the equator?"

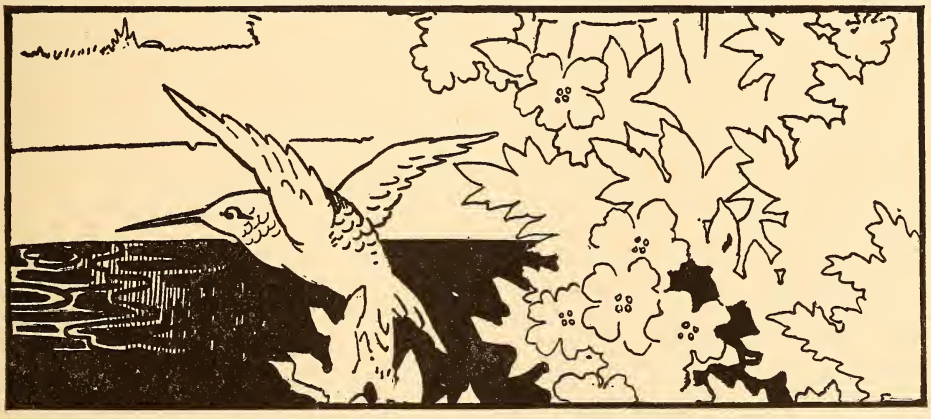
"Oh, please!" cried the children, delighted; and Geraldine sat straight up, crossing her legs and spreading her white kilts over her knees; and Peter lay out full length

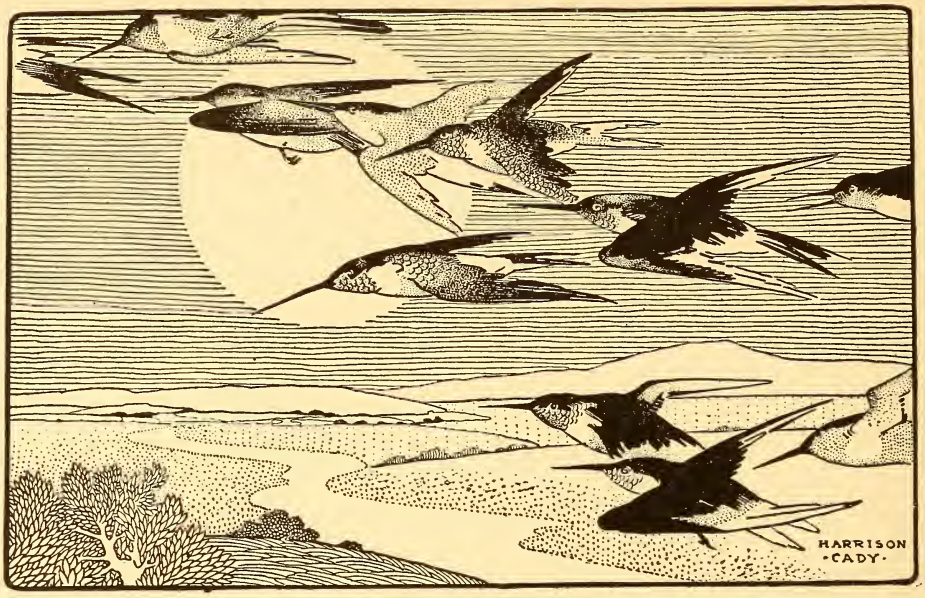
on the grass, his chin propped up on both closed fists.

"Is there anything about tigers in your story?" he asked.

"Tigers? Well, yes; that is, there may be a word or two about what the South American Indians call a tiger—*El Tigre* they call the great spotted jaguar. Yes—there is a word or two about that sort of tiger. Shall I begin?"

"We are all ready," said the children; and their eyes began to open wider and wider.






# CHAPTER II

## THE RUBY-THROAT

"I WAS born," began the bird, "in a tiny lichen-covered nest, which looked exactly like a little knob of bark on the limb where my parents had placed it.

"The egg out of which I hatched was only about the size of a pea; and in the beginning I was not as large as a June beetle."

"Were you born in South America?" asked Peter.

"Oh, no; I am a citizen of the United States," replied the bird proudly. "I was hatched in New York State, in the woods of Broadalbin. And when I was able to fly I often came into this garden; and often and often while humming around the tall white phlox I have seen you and Geraldine wading in the stone-edged pool of the fountain, chasing those stupid goldfish."

A big, fat goldfish flopped up out of the water with an angry splash.

"We're not stupid!" cried the goldfish; "we are Chinese and you Americans don't understand our oriental simplicity!"

"All right!" said the humming bird good-naturedly. "Keep cool, my celestial friend, and I'll leave you out of the conversation."

So the big, fat Chinese goldfish sank slowly into the fountain pool and lay still,

calmly waving its ribbon-like tail fin, and the humming bird nodded at the children and, laying its head on one side, continued its story.

"I had never been south; I was born only half a mile from this garden. So when it began to grow cool in the evenings, and a few leaves turned scarlet, and I saw birds of all kinds gathering together in the thickets, I asked another humming bird, who was older than I, what it all meant.

"Then, too, I heard the goldfinches and indigo birds talking about it, and very soon I saw the first excursion leave for the south: several thousand birds of all sorts—robins, swallows, bluebirds, wrens, orioles, all starting for southern resorts.

"Several birds said to me: 'Don't wait too long. Don't wait until you hear the wild geese and the snipe. They stay too late for you. You had better come with us.'"

"I don't suppose you could endure the snow, could you?" asked Peter.

"Snow! Mercy, no! I couldn't even endure a hard frost! It would be my finish. I require the hottest sunshine. So you see I began to think about starting; and, the very next day a dozen of us humming birds joined a big flock of assorted song birds and started just after sunrise."

"How did you know the way?" asked Peter curiously.

"To tell you the truth," confessed the humming bird, "I don't know how we birds know the way. It is something born in us that we can't explain. You know what the five senses are, don't you?"

"Yes," said Geraldine; and she began counting on her five slim fingers. "First comes *sight*; that makes one! Then *taste*; that makes two! Then *hearing*, three; *touch*, four, and *smell*, five! Those are the five senses."

"Exactly," said the bird; "but to that you must add a sixth sense, called *the sense of nearness to things*; and a seventh sense, *the sense of direction*."

"But *we* don't possess those senses," began Peter.

"No; but *we* do," rejoined the humming bird, twittering with laughter.

Amused, yet a trifle humbled, the children looked curiously at the bird.

"It is probably this seventh sense, the sense of direction, which guides us in our journey," resumed the bird thoughtfully. "We usually follow the same air line, too, which, in certain places, takes us out over the ocean. I don't know why we do this; it is not the shortest cut to our destination. Some birds think that our flight marks the ancient coast line of the continent, and that we inherit the instinct to follow it as did our ancestors many, many ages ago."

The bird scratched its jeweled head with one tiny claw. "But, to resume, we started several thousand strong on our excursion. Over Virginia and North Carolina the robins bade us good-by and dropped to earth; the bluebirds were the next to go; the chewinks left us in Florida; the orioles in Mexico; then the remaining orioles and tanagers dropped earthward over Central America, and we humming birds stopped over with them for a few days, then continued leisurely southward to Brazil."

"Where the tigers come from!" exclaimed Peter.

"Yes, El Tigre, the jaguar."

"Did you see him!" breathed Peter in raptures.

"I certainly did," replied the humming bird. "One hot morning I was humming around the edges of the jungle where a great river flows under clustered creepers and

masses of gorgeous flowers. I had been breakfasting among the wild gladiolus blossoms, and was looking around for a different kind of honey to end my breakfast, when, suddenly, right out of the tuft of flowers and creepers a huge paw shot up and made a lightning-like slap at me."

The children, rigid, stared at the bird.

"I dodged," said the bird, "but almost lost my balance in the swirling eddy of wind made by the swift stroke of that terrible paw."

"It was a jaguar's paw!" cried Peter excitedly. "Wasn't it?"

"It was," said the bird solemnly. "Hovering above the thicket I looked fearfully down. There, under the creepers, sprawling luxuriously on his back, lay a great spotted jaguar blinking up at me with eyes that glimmered like green jewels. I watched the fearsome beast with a dreadful

sort of fascination holding me to the spot; and twice I saw him strike again, once at a dragon fly, once at a big, shining butterfly. Then he rolled over and yawned and stretched his claws and lay switching his tail. It was all in play, I suppose; the jaguar was feeling good. But if that paw had hit me——!"

The bird shivered and his voice ceased.

"What a perfectly horrid adventure," said Geraldine with a shudder.

"But you probably had more of them," added Peter hopefully; "didn't you nearly lose your life several times?"

"I should think I did," said the humming bird. "Once when I was flying around a thicket of wild geraniums in company with a dozen other humming birds, a snake struck suddenly from among the thick leaves and caught the bird beside me. That was a danger to which we were always exposed.

But there was another danger worse than that."

"What could be worse than that?" asked Geraldine.

"Spiders!"

"Spiders! Why, spiders couldn't catch a bird—even such a little bird as you!" said Peter.

"Not these harmless spiders around here," said the bird, amused; "but there is one kind of spider in South America which spins a web strong enough to entangle and hold fast a bigger bird than I am. He's bad enough, but there is another spider, as big as Peter's fist, a furry, soft-stepping, sly creature who creeps after birds.

"One day I was sitting on a twig of a camphor bush, dozing in the heated shade, but opening one eye occasionally to see what the monkeys were about. You can never trust one of those South American monkeys.

He may think it funny to make a grab at you, or he may throw a green guava at you, or he may spring onto the limb where you are sitting and frighten you out of your wits."

Peter began to laugh.

"It sounds rather amusing, but it isn't really funny," said the humming bird. "I would rather take my chances with real dangers than be kept busy avoiding the practical jokes of a miserable monkey!

"Well, as I was saying, I sat there dozing, one eye opening at times to look out for the monkeys who were frisking about in a mahogany tree near by.

"One old monkey came out along a limb and shouted to me: 'Look out!'

"I paid little attention to him, but kept my eye open.

"'Didn't you hear me say, "look out"?' screamed the monkey.

"I shrugged my wings in contempt.

"'All right, then!' shouted the monkey; 'it's your own fault.'

"Almost at the same moment I saw something flying at me through the air. I thought he had thrown a big nut at me, and I whizzed up into the air just as something struck and stuck clinging to the very spot on which I had been perching—an enormous spider!—wicked little eyes glittering, great hairy jaws, and claws wide spread.

"Come, now, Peter, what do you think of that for an adventure?"

"Tremendous!" cried Peter with enthusiasm; "perfectly splendid! Did you immediately attack that spider and defeat him in a pitched battle?"

"No," said the humming bird, "I didn't. I was frightened and angry; I hovered above him in the sunshine, and my crest rose and I uttered some furious squeaks. Other birds heard me and came flying to see what was

the matter; and in a few moments there were dozens of birds of all sorts flying around the branch where that big bird-spider squatted, all scolding and shrieking and screaming for somebody to come and attack the spider."

"Oh, I hope somebody came!" exclaimed Geraldine, clasping her hands; "some brave champion who dared to engage that horrid creature in single combat!"

"It was rather singular," said the humming bird, "but nobody seemed to care to do battle with that great, hairy, hideous insect. The monkeys sat in rows on the branches of the mahogany tree and chattered and shivered, but they didn't even throw pods and nuts at the spider. A toucan with a big horny bill that could easily have crushed our enemy, hopped along the branches to look at him, and then went back to pick guavas and toss them into the air and swallow them. And dozens of parrots hung head

downward to look at the spider and squawk at him; and the flying squirrels peeped down at him; and an old ant-bear sat up on his haunches and wriggled his long fleshy snout at him, but nobody did anything, *until*——"

The bird paused.

"*Until*—" repeated the children expectantly, fairly wriggling with anticipation.

"Until, suddenly, with a deep, loud, angry buzz-z! an enormous hornet appeared. 'Buzz! z-z-z-r-r! buz-z! Where is he? where's that spider? Where is that big, fuzzy bird-killer, who is looking for a fight?'

"'There he is! There he is!' twittered the birds in high excitement. 'There he is, crouching on that old mossy branch!'

"The huge hornet saw him, swooped downward, and began circling above the spider, who raised himself on his heavy, hairy legs in a frightened attitude of defense. Then, all at once, the great spider turned and ran


"An enormous hornet appeared. . . . 'Where is he? Where's that spider?'"

for his life. But the hornet darted at him, and with a terrible thrust of her sting tumbled the bird-eater clean off the branch so that he fell, bouncing and sprawling, on the dead leaves below!"

"Three cheers!" cried the children excitedly. "Hurrah for that brave hornet! Was it all over with the terrible bird-spider?"

"All over," said the humming bird. "The hornet dragged him off and prepared him as a dinner for the young hornets which were soon to hatch out of the eggs laid by the old hornet."

Peter drew a deep contented breath.

"This," he said, "is far pleasanter than reading Nature Books. Nobody would dare call this humming bird a nature faker."

"What are Nature Books?" asked the humming bird.

"They are books," explained Geraldine, "written by invalids who are not well enough

to do other things. Some sell lead pencils, some play on accordions, and some write Nature Books. Father told us that."

"And, oh, goodness, how they do quarrel!" added Peter with a shrug. "I'd rather listen to you."

"Why do they quarrel?" asked the humming bird, surprised.

"I suppose it's because they are not very well," said Geraldine gently. "The feeble are often irritable, you know. Father says we must make allowance for those who rock in rocking chairs and knit nature stories about 'Ki-yi, the Poodle-pup' and 'Twilly-Wee, the Dicky-bird.'"

Peter nodded: "We children would like the stories if the people who wrote them wouldn't be so uncivil to one another. If they'd only let us alone we would be quite happy to believe the story of Puss-in-Boots and King Stork and the Lion and the Mouse.

But they won't let us alone," he added with a sigh; "will they, Geraldine?"

"No," sighed Geraldine, "and they won't let each other alone. Just now they're all very angry because one harmless old lady knitted a story about a pointer dog who, when out hunting with his master, would stop at intervals and call his master's attention to a particularly fine bit of scenery or an unusually pretty view, by pointing it out with his fore paw."

"I don't see anything in that story to arouse anger in anybody," observed the bird.

"We don't, either," said Peter; "but our Great President says that the old lady ought to be arrested for scattering untrustworthy information concerning animals."

"Why not ask some animal friend whether it is true or not?" suggested the bird.

"We did; we asked our cat, Ladysmith,

about it, but she only smiled and stretched and yawned, and walked off, gently waving her carefully groomed tail."

"The only way," said the humming bird, "is not to read Nature Books."

"But we like to read them," insisted the children. "If only celebrated people wouldn't quarrel about them we would be quite happy and contented with our nature stories. Because really it makes so little difference, and it is very easy to prove for yourself the truth of any statement about Outdoor Land."

"Yes," nodded Geraldine, "one can always investigate for one's self, you know. There was such a distressing scene on our lawn last week. A very, very old gentleman told father that after twenty years of research, hardship, peril, and reckless investigation, he had succeeded in ascertaining that there were exactly forty-seven thousand one hundred and three hairs on a clover-fed, Broadalbin wood-

chuck weighing three and three-quarters pounds.

"And no sooner did he make this statement than another old gentleman from Cranberry Creek flew into a frightful fury and said it wasn't true and that he intended to write to our Great President and complain."

"But—but what has our Great President to do with natural history?" exclaimed the poor little humming bird in amazement.

"We don't exactly know," confessed the children, "but somehow our Great President seems to be a part of everything that *ever was* and *now is*. Father says that we nearly had war because once, at an Official Garden Party, our Great President heard the Ambassador from Yucatan repeating a poem which, it appears, was not scientifically accurate."

"What poem?" asked the puzzled bird.

"Why, the Ambassador was only repeating:

"'Ladybug, Ladybug,
Fly away home!
Your house is afire!
Your children will burn!'

And our Great President became so incensed—because Ladybugs don't have houses, you know—that he made the proud Republic of Yucatan recall her Ambassador as a corrupter of the public mind; and we would certainly have had a terrible war with Yucatan if another diplomatic situation had not driven the Yucatan incident out of our Great President's mind."

"W-what happened?" asked the humming bird faintly.

"Why, you see," said Peter, "our Great President, observing one day that the Austrian flag was decorated with a two-headed eagle, became greatly worried, and wrote to John Burroughs about it, inquiring if, in Austria, there existed a species of eagle wearing two

heads. And our beloved John Burroughs telegraphed back one curt, trenchant, and laconic word: 'Fake!'"

"What is a 'fake'?" inquired the poor little humming bird.

"A fake," replied Peter, "is anything that our Great President does not approve of. So our Government very kindly but firmly addressed a note to the Austrian Government, calling attention to the unscientific aspect of that country's flag, and deploring the reckless dissemination of such inexcusable inaccuracy, and its unfortunate effect upon the children of the universe."

"What happened?" asked the humming bird fearfully.

"We had got as far as calling out the Seventh Regiment," said Peter, "and the inhabitants of Boston were fleeing inland, when the entire incident was forgotten in the excitement over our Government's demand that

China must substitute a dragon-fly for her dragon, or take the consequences, in the newspapers!"

"W-wouldn't our Great President allow China to have a dragon on her flags and lanterns?" inquired the bewildered bird.

"No, because there is no such thing as a dragon, and children were being deliberately deceived at every lawn party. So then we sent a fleet and the Empress Dowager became so frightened that she compromised by promising to have a Shanghai hen embroidered on every banner as the national ensign; and the Audubon Society, and the National Woman's Union, and the Oyster Bay Tatting Circle sent telegrams of congratulation to the Empress Dowager, and our Great President sent a fearless message of thanksgiving to Congress, and everybody became quite happy again, and nothing now threatens the peace of the world except——"

"Except?" repeated the dazed bird.

"Except the Polish question."

"And what is the P-Polish question?" faltered the tiny bird.

"Nothing—except that our Great President is determined that the new Republic of Poland shall adopt, as her coat of arms, a Polecat, militant, on a brush-field *vert*, and one Moujik *fuyant*, with the motto in dog-Latin:

"'*Finem Respice!*'"

The little bird nodded its brilliant head. "I've lived a good deal in Latin Republics," he said, "and so I naturally understand Republican Latin. It's an excellent motto, I think, and no doubt the Polish people will be grateful to our Great President for suggesting it. He is a very, very great man; isn't he, children?"

"Very, very great," said the children

earnestly. Then, gravely joining hands, they stood up and sang "Hail to the Chief"; and the tiny humming bird respectfully lifted his crest and kept it lifted until the song had ended.

"Now," said Peter more cheerfully, "let us talk about pleasanter things. Would you please tell us a few more interesting adventures of yours in South America?"

"Why, I just told you about my escape from the big bird-spider," said the little bird, ruffling and peering around with bright, restless eyes.

But Peter was politely insistent.

"That was a fine story," he said. "Would you be kind enough to tell us another?"

The humming bird broke into a twittering laugh.

"The truth is, Peter, that I have a sweetheart and children in a nest over the

hill by the windmill. Now you know that a fellow can't stay away too long under such circumstances. I'd like to stay here and tell you all about my wonderful adventures in Brazil, about those dreadful flowers that trap you if you attempt to feed on their honey, about that swift bird which chases you and, if it catches you, pins you to a tree with a big thorn through you. I'd love to tell you about those great butterflies with wings like sheets of tinted metal, and about— But I really *must* go, now."

"But please, *please* tell us your name first!" pleaded Geraldine.

"Why, my name is Ruby-Throat. You see this color I wear on my throat? That's the reason they call me Ruby-Throat."

"Does your sweetheart dress like you?" asked Geraldine softly.

"No; she is—in my eyes—much more beautiful. She wears a soft gray color, and

in certain lights a faint metallic green shimmer plays over her feathers. And now, I must go, children. Shall I see you often here in the garden before I go south?"

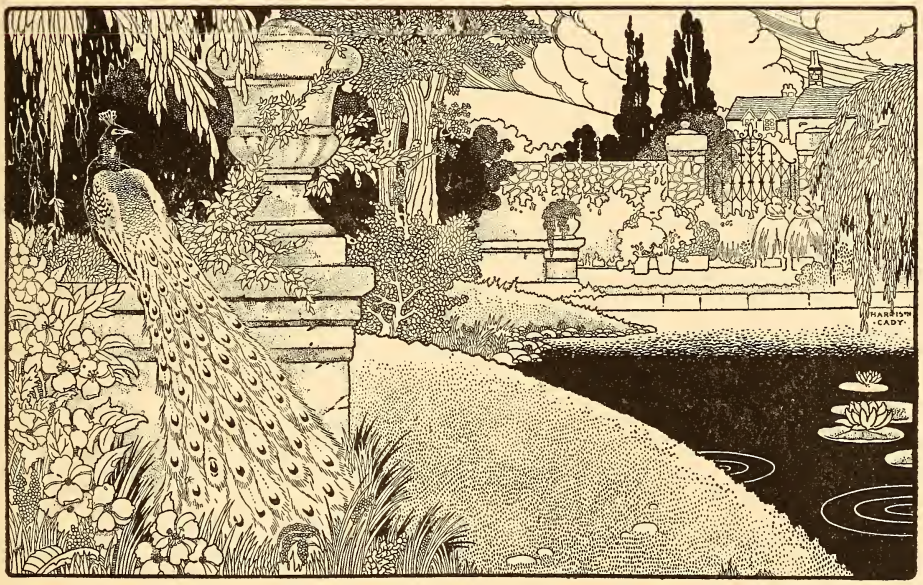
"Oh, often and often!" promised the children. "As soon as we hear the whirring, buzzing sound of your wings we will come running——"

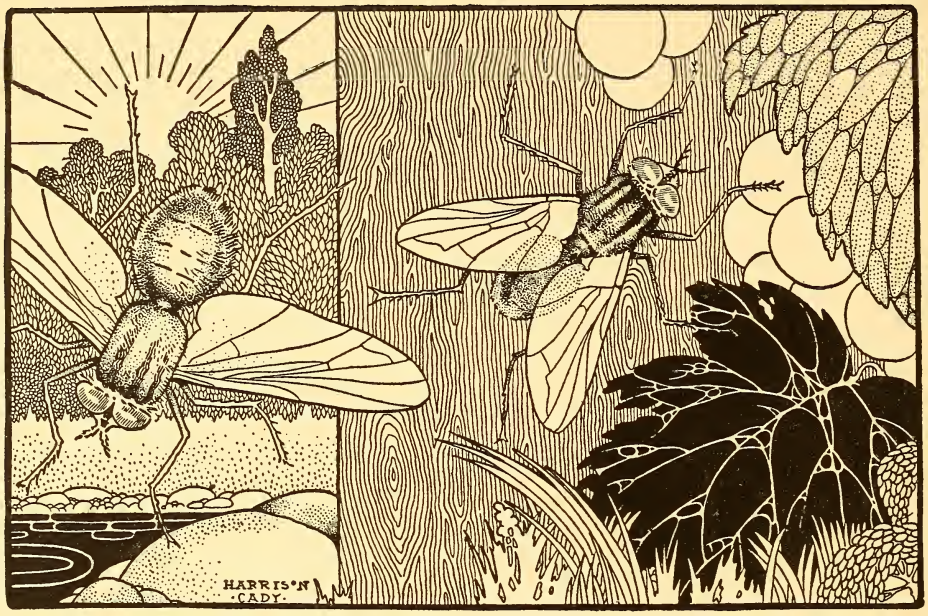
"Pooh!" exclaimed a thin, envious voice from the air somewhere close beside them, "that cheap, chromo-colored humming bird isn't the only thing that buzzes. If you want buzzing—real, persistent, maddening buzzing, the real article—I'll supply it for you at no expense. Z-z-z-zip! buz-z! buzzz!!"

"Whose voice is that?" demanded Peter, looking all about.

"Mine! Ho! Ho! I'm crawling on your ear! Ha! Didn't slap me *that* time, did you, smarty! Z-z-zip! Buzz-z! Now I'm on your nose! Ho! Ho! Missed me again! Buzz!"

"A *fly*!" exclaimed Peter in deep disgust, "a sticky, buzzy, unpleasantly moist-footed fly! Whack him, Geraldine! whack him gently—just to frighten him away, but not hard enough to hurt him!"






# CHAPTER III

## MUSCA, THE FLY

"WHACK whom?" inquired the fly.

"You!" said Peter. "Go away!"

"How rude, when I came here to be sociable!"

"But we don't wish to be sociable with flies," began Geraldine. "Ugh! There you are on my cheek. How dare you!"

"Missed me again!" cried the fly, delighted as Geraldine's little hand came slap! on her own rounded cheek. "Oh, my! That's a splendid game. Let's play it some more! Now, it's your turn, Peter!"

Peter, exasperated, slapped wildly at his own head; the fly settled on Geraldine's ear; she missed it; Peter missed again and rose wrathfully, swinging his cap at the persistent fly.

"I don't want to hurt you," he said; "Geraldine and I do not wish to harm any outdoor creatures; but if you don't stop crawling and buzzing about our ears, I shall declare war!"

The fly settled on a sun-warmed syringa leaf, and looked steadily at Peter.

"Do you mean it?" asked the fly.

"Certainly I do. As long as you stay peacefully on that leaf I won't whack you."

The fly rubbed its fore feet together

thoughtfully. "You don't care to play with me?"

"No, we don't."

"You're not very playful, are you?" asked the fly.

"Do you take us for kittens?" demanded Peter.

"Oh, something of the sort! You walk on two legs, kittens go about on four legs—that seems to be the principal difference," said the fly. "But really that difference is a very small matter to a fly, you know. We are not particular; we are willing to play with any creature no matter how many legs they walk on."

"It seems to me," said Peter, "that you are extremely stupid."

"Well, do you know we *are* rather stupid," admitted the fly, crawling to the edge of the leaf and looking over at Geraldine. "We never seem to know when we are not

wanted. It's a fatal failing in our family, and many of my relatives have lost their lives through it. Really I'm very much obliged to you for telling me that I'm not wanted here. It is very kind and very noble of you. You may have saved my life. Bless you, my noble preservers!"

"Do you mean *us*?" asked Peter, astonished.

"Certainly I do. Instead of slaying me, you very considerately tell me to go away. Why should I not thank you eloquently for thus nobly rescuing me from peril?"

Geraldine, much embarrassed, looked at Peter, who had turned red.

"We don't wish to be uncivil," said Peter, "but our parents have told us that flies cause illness."

"What kind of flies?" asked the house fly.

"Is there more than one kind of fly?" inquired Peter.

"*One* kind?" exclaimed the fly indignantly. "Why, the order of Hymenoptera, to which I have the honor to belong, probably contains three hundred thousand different kinds of insects! I wish you children to understand that we are of some importance in the world. And if it were not for our enemies, who make war on us every moment of our existence, we flies would rule the whole world!"

"Who are your enemies?" asked Peter, somewhat impressed.

"Do you mean mine?"

"Yes, yours, for example."

"Well, from the day I left my pupa in that heap of dead leaves there under the garden wall, about everybody in the world has been trying to murder me," said the fly. "This world is a terrible place for flies. Why, the awful adventures I have had would fill the fly leaf of a book!"

"Is *that* why they call that blank leaf in a book the fly leaf?" inquired Geraldine.

"I suppose so," said the fly. "I suppose it is placed in every book so that anybody can write on it the history of their experience with flies. What other reason of any importance could there be?"

"Nonsense!" said Peter. "Who wants to write about flies?"

"Let me inform you," said the fly with a sharp buzz, "that the greatest of scientific men have written volumes and volumes about flies. Think of it! Whole volumes full of nothing but fly leaves! And they are writing more and more all the time. One gentleman was kind enough to write a book about a cousin of mine who is charged with killing horses. My cousin's name is Tse-tse. Another kind gentleman wrote about another cousin of mine who kills people by giving them anthrax. And now other kind gentle-

men are writing about me, accusing me of giving typhoid fever to indoor people."

"*Do* you?" demanded Peter anxiously.

"I believe I do sometimes; but isn't it wonderful!" exclaimed the fly. "Just think how important we flies are becoming in the world! Relatives of mine give people yellow fever and malaria, other relatives bite, others drive people wild by crawling and buzzing. Really now, *isn't* it wonderful, children?"

"Wonderful!" exclaimed Peter angrily.

"Yes, wonderful, because we really don't mean to do all these curious things."

"That is no possible excuse," retorted Peter.

"Of course not. And the consequence is that our lives are filled with the most deliciously exciting adventures!" cried the fly gayly. "Take me, for example. I'm a house fly; my distinguished name is *Musca domestica*, and I am found all over the world, and

I probably do an enormous amount of harm without meaning to."

"You are," said Peter, "what my father calls a 'well-meaning idiot.'"

"Exactly. I mean all right. But, after all, you indoor people are idiots, too. Why do you run after something you don't want?"

"Run after what?"

"Why, typhoid fever."

"But nobody runs after typhoid fever!" said Peter, astonished.

"But if they catch it they must run after it," said Musca, the fly. "To catch anything you must chase it and seize it."

"You *are* an idiot," said Peter scornfully. "I wish you would go away."

The fly rubbed its fore feet reflectively, then began to polish its head and wings with another pair of feet.

"How do I look, Peter?" inquired Musca presently; "fit to make a call at your house?"

"We have fly screens," said Geraldine. "You can't get in."

"Fly screens! Oh, bother! I wanted to fly about the kitchen and be sociable. What on earth shall I do if you and Peter don't want to talk to me, and your house is screened? I'm dreadfully lonely."

"Are you really lonely?" asked Geraldine pitifully. "Because if you are, and if you will not attempt to alight on Peter or on me, but will promise to sit quietly on that leaf, we will talk to you a little while."

"Very well," said Musca, much pleased; "what shall we talk about? About strawberry jam? Is there any in your house?"

"Never mind!" said Peter hastily. "Tell us about some of those adventures of yours."

"Do you mean from the very beginning of my career?" asked Musca, much flattered.

"Yes, from the beginning. Where did you come from, anyway?"

"I was born," said the fly with an irresponsible buzz, "in a heap of decaying leaves under that big grapevine which covers the wall over yonder. Mother laid a hundred eggs there. She would have laid more but a dragon fly caught and ate her——"

"How unpleasant!" sighed Geraldine.

"Oh, no; dragon flies esteem us highly as an article of food," explained the fly proudly. "But to continue, I was a small, white, elongated egg. In six hours I turned into a white larva, and in the next five days I changed my skin twice because it became too tight for me. The sixth day my skin turned brown and hard and inside it another skin grew over me. I hid away inside my own skin for four days more, then I began to crawl out of my inside skin——"

"What!" exclaimed the children in amazement.

"Certainly! I crawled out of one skin,

then out of the other; and when at last I was free there I stood, a beautiful black and gray and gauzy winged fly, the most magnificent of created creatures!"

"Do you really think you are beautiful?" asked Peter seriously.

"I know I am. Look at the iridescent fuzz on me! Look at the four highly ornamental stripes on my neck! Look at the rainbow tints flashing on my delicate, gauzy wings! I am a model of symmetry; I have two enormous, compound eyes which cover my head; I have six legs with soft, spongy, sticky feet which enable me to walk on ceilings upside down; I have a nice long tongue which is soft and made for lapping up liquids——"

"Where is your biting machine?" asked Peter.

"Why, I don't bite."

"But flies bite in wet weather. Our gardener says so."


"'Ah!' sighed the fly, 'what a world of surprises this is to be sure!'"

"Oh, that's a different kind of fly!" said *Musca domestica;* "that's the stable fly. He's a cousin of mine and he looks so much like me that it is difficult to tell the difference, and so people say that we house flies bite in damp weather. But it isn't true; we have no beak for biting. It's my cousin who does that. In rainy weather he comes into the house, if you have no screens, and he bites like fury."

"Well," said Geraldine with a sigh, "I'm glad there is one wicked thing which you do not do."

"So am I," said the fly sincerely.

"But you do give sickness to people, don't you?"

"Yes, and I sometimes fall ill myself. There's a tiny red mite that gets on me and drives me nearly crazy. Then there's a miserable sort of plant—a fungus—that grows on me and covers me with a gray fuzz.

Whenever you see a poor dead fly sticking to window or wall you will usually see a gray fuzz covering him. That fuzz is a plant. Isn't it terrible?"

"I suppose I ought to be sorry," said Peter cheerfully.

"I suppose so," said the fly, "but I don't believe you can be. It is really almost impossible to be sorry for the misfortunes of a fly. I learned that when only a few hours old. You see about a hundred of us hatched out together, all brothers and sisters—and all orphans, for a dragon fly had lunched on mother and a tiger spider had pounced upon father, and there we were alone in the world. It was rather sad, wasn't it, Geraldine?"

"Rather," said Geraldine slowly.

"Ah!" sighed the fly, "what a world of surprises this is to be sure! As I sat there on the wall, sunning my wings in company with my brothers and sisters, a black and

white tiger spider, which we all had supposed was only a little stain on the stone wall, suddenly sprang at one of my brothers. My unfortunate relative gave one feeble and astonished buzz, and expired during the banquet which ensued.

"Amazed and alarmed, several of us children started to fly to safer quarters, but alas! three of us became entangled in spider webs and hung there whirling round and round, buzzing frantically, until the terrible spiders had rushed out to dinner. Inconvenient as it is to be on top of the table at dinner instead of sitting in a chair with bib neatly tied, wings brushed, and feet washed, yet we flies remember with pride that those who dine on us dine well. And I say with pardonable conceit that of all my hundred brothers and sisters scarcely half a dozen escaped making somebody happy at dinner. Dragon flies lunched and dined on us; hor-

nets pounced on us and bore us off to store up as food for their young; toads and frogs snapped at us, lizards seized us, fish leaped for us and caught us in the air above the pond; even our own relatives rushed joyfully to feed on us—I mean the robber flies who swooped on us and devoured us at every opportunity."

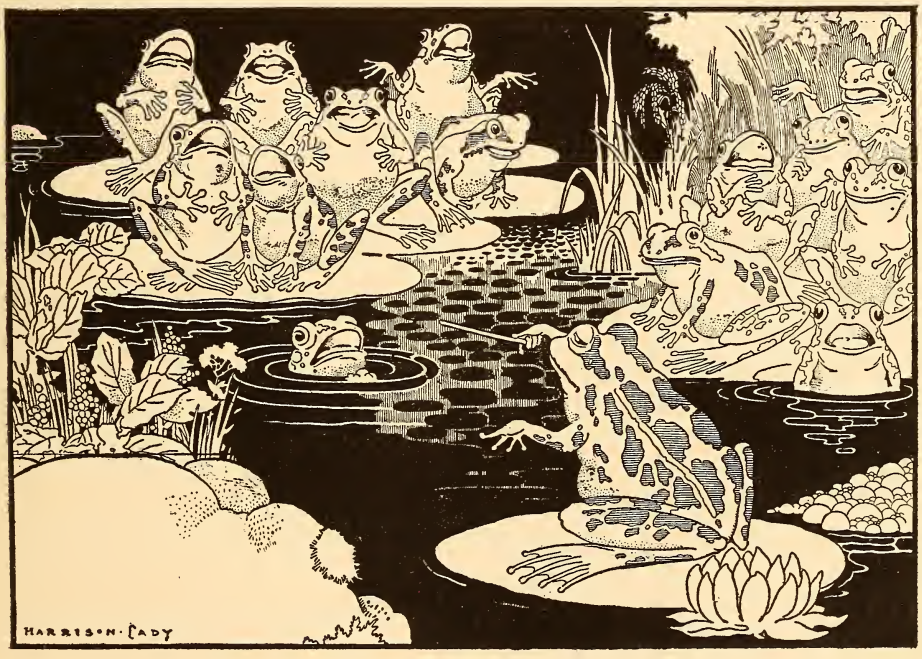
"It is perfectly wonderful," said Peter, "that any flies are left in the world."

"There wouldn't be unless we laid so many eggs and then hatched out so quickly. You see, every ten days the eggs hatch into flies; and we lay eggs all summer. So if thousands of flies around here lay hundreds of thousands of eggs, and in ten days the hundreds of thousands of flies that hatch out of these hundreds of thousands of eggs lay hundreds of hundreds of thousands of eggs, and these hundreds of hundreds of thou——"

"Oh, please stop!" cried Geraldine. "My head is buzzing!"

"Buzzing!" exclaimed the fly, running across the leaf with lively interest. "Are you really able to buzz? Then you, too, must be a sort of cousin of mine——"

But the fly never finished what he was saying, for right in the middle of his sentence something bulky and soft and mottled leaped into the air and snapped at him, and fell back into the thick grass, panting heavily.




# CHAPTER IV

## KING SPECKLES AND KING SPOTS

"A TOAD!" exclaimed Geraldine, shrinking back against Peter.

"He caught that unfortunate fly," echoed Peter.

"No, I didn't," gasped the toad. "Ugh! Whew! I'm all out of breath. I really must sit down and catch my royal breath."

"It's about all you seem to be able to catch," said Peter, laughing.

"Come, now! No impudence," panted the toad. "If you are going to remain in my royal garden you've got to be civil. Ugh! Whew! I'll have no nonsense from anybody in my garden, young man."

"*Your* garden!" repeated the children, amused.

"Well, whose is it then?" said the toad crossly. "It isn't yours, is it? You're not absurd enough to think it belongs to you, are you? And it doesn't belong to the goggle-eyed blue dragon fly, does it? Those big, floppy winged butterflies don't own it, do they? It's mine, I tell you; that is," continued the toad grandly, "I hold sway over the main part of it, including the flower beds, the lawns, the paths, and part of the water. The remainder of the water is controlled by my royal cousin, King Spotty. Together," added the speckled

toad, sitting up and waving his little short fore foot, "my cousin, King Spotty, and I, King Speckles, hold full sway and dominion over this fair realm which the toiling indoor folk have labored to lay out for us."

"Why, our great-grandfather had this garden laid out!" said Peter.

"I don't care whose great-grandfather laid it out," retorted the toad, "but my great-great-great-double and doubly double great-grandfather's father's grandfather's ancestor took possession of it as soon as the indoor hirelings had fashioned it to his satisfaction. In that year, also, King Spotty the First assumed control of all the navigable waters and ponds and streams and mud puddles and lily pads——"

"Who in the world is King Spotty?" asked Geraldine.

"King Spotty is the big and melodious bullfrog who sings motifs every evening.

He is the Lohengrin of the lily pads, the Siegfried of the sedges, the Tannhäuser of the tanks! He is the greatest vocalist on earth—the greatest monarch in the world except myself! I am greater. And now, children, as you have been graciously made aware of who is the real ruler of this royal realm, my royal highness will further permit myself to relate to you the astounding history of my regal life and dynasty."

"Are you really going to tell us a story?" asked the children, greatly interested.

"When you speak to me," said the toad gravely, "have the goodness to address me as 'sire.'"

"But after all," observed Peter, "how can you be a king? You haven't any subjects, have you?"

"Subjects! Plenty of them. My subjects support me as do the subjects of other

kings. Every fly, every worm, every beetle in this garden is my subject."

"Do they support you?" asked Peter.

"Certainly. I eat them. I live on them. Isn't that supporting royalty?"

Peter nodded, perplexed.

"Sire," said Geraldine, smiling, "are you really going to condescend to relate to us the history of your royal life?"

"There's a well-bred child for you!" said the toad, much gratified. "I'll make you a petty princess for that!"

"But I don't care to be a petty princess —sire," began Geraldine, laughing.

"Tut! Tut! I don't care what you want to be. When I say you are a thing, you are it! You're a petty princess now; you can't help it. The subject is closed! The royal lid is on. Silence! and obey!"

"What am I—sire?" asked Peter respectfully.


"'When you speak to me,' said the toad gravely, 'have the goodness to address me as "Sire."'"

"I'll reflect; I'll think about it. It all depends on your court manners," said the toad. "Keep quiet now. I'm about to relate to you some astounding legends of the utmost importance."

So the children sat up crosslegged on the grass, and the toad gathered himself into a squatty, saggy, humpy, dumpy lump; and, lifting his right fore foot, spread his soft pointed toes and waved them solemnly:

"The beginning of my family history is clouded in mystery. That is a royal rhyme. I do them from time to time. That is another! But, to resume: several millions of years ago there were toads. You indoor scientific folks have discovered our royal remains imbedded in ancient rock.

"Legend plays the principal part in our early history. We were once believed to be poisonous. We are, mildly. That is, when we are alarmed we exude a milky fluid from

some glands and pores, and in some sorts of toads this fluid will irritate the skin of indoor people; and if injected under the skin will become more or less poisonous."

"I'm perfectly sure that I should never wish to touch you—sire," said Geraldine hastily.

"Oh, even if you so far forgot yourself as to lay hands upon my royal person, no harm would come to you!" said the toad. "A few of my distant relatives are mildly poisonous, as I said, but I am not. And, as for that other legend which pretends that every toad carries a jewel in its head, of course that is absurd."

"We never believed that!" said Peter scornfully.

"In making that remark," observed the toad coldly, "you have forgotten something."

"Say 'sire,'" whispered Geraldine; "his royal highness is very particular."

"Excuse me, sire," said Peter politely; "I forgot to say 'your Majesty'!"

"That," said the toad, highly pleased, "is another well-bred child. I make you Baron of Broadalbin! Your principal duty will be to catch flies for me." And the toad waved his toes graciously at Peter and resumed his story:

"In the first place, toads are practically harmless. In the second, a toad in a garden eats the worms and flies and beetles and moths and caterpillars which might destroy the flowers and fruit and vegetables. Therefore it is money in your pocket to have toads in gardens. Therefore it is proven that a toad is a benefit to the human race. Please tell this to your gardener and warn him to be careful not to harm me when he uses his rake and his lawn mower."

"We will, sire," said the children earnestly.

"I bestow upon you my royal thanks," said the toad complacently. "I promote Peter to be lord overseer of the garden rake, and Geraldine to be superintendent of the lawn mower with the title of Lady of the Royal Lawns and principal and particular puddle-princess to his Spotted Majesty, my cousin. To resume," continued the toad, "I wish to correct the general impression that I am a reptile. I'm not; I resemble reptiles in some points, fishes in other particulars, but I am an amphibian. Will you be good enough to remember that?"

"We will try, sire," said the children earnestly.

"An amphibian," repeated the toad, "is not a reptile, not a fish, but an amphibian. Ahem! I like that name. It is sonorously important. It sounds exceedingly important, doesn't it?"

"Very, sire."

"It certainly does. But, to resume: the difference between toads and frogs is partly in the bony framework of the body, partly in their habits. We toads pass most of our lives on land; the frogs live for the greater part of their lives in the water.

"I am the ideal type of toad, children; I have a backbone, but no ribs; a smooth tongue which is sticky and which I dart out to catch any insect before I snap my jaws on him; the pupils of my eyes are not vertical like a cat's, or round like a bird's, but horizontal. My fore feet are not webbed, but my hind toes sometimes are. In winter I hide away in my Winter Palace under logs or stones or heaps of leaves; but as soon as warm weather comes again, I crawl out and come back to my royal summer garden. One thing more: no toad ever seizes an insect unless that insect is in motion. And now, children, you have a general description

of the most important of all living personages, the speckled garden toad."

"Thank you, sire," said Peter, "but Geraldine and I would very much like to know whether tadpoles turn into toads or into frogs."

"Your question is very sensible and properly put," said the toad graciously. "Tadpoles turn into both toads and frogs. The smaller and darker tadpoles are usually the royal infants of my own race."

"But, sire, how do they get into the water?" asked Geraldine.

"When her royal highness, my wife, is ready to lay her eggs," replied the toad solemnly, "we both repair to the nearest pond. The eggs are laid in the water under our royal supervision. In due time they hatch into tadpoles, just as the eggs of frogs and of water lizards do. The difference is this: in the toads' and frogs' tadpoles, the hind

legs first appear; in the tadpoles of lizards, the front legs come first."

"Sire," said Peter, "we have seen tadpoles with tails and hind legs, tails and hind and front legs. But we never saw a toad or a frog with a tail."

"The tail drops off after the four legs have budded and become perfect," said the toad. "There are no bones in the tail, you see. And as soon as it drops off the young toads leave the water and thereafter remain on land."

"But, sire, how do they breathe when in the water?"

"Through gills like fishes."

"And what happens to the gills when pollywogs turn into frogs and toads and come ashore?"

"The gills disappear, and frogs and toads breathe through lungs. We have perfectly good lungs—in fact we have everything of

importance that you have: eyes, ears, nose, tongue, lungs—and voices. But there is one thing," added the toad angrily, "that I will never forgive you indoor people. One of your scientific men says that our brain is of a very low order! Think of it! It is positively the most insulting opinion ever expressed by anybody about our royal family."

"But," began Geraldine timidly, "they say that about other kinds of kings sometimes."

"Do they?" said the toad, greatly interested. "Well, perhaps that is all right, then. It may be that a low order of intellect is exclusively a royal symptom. Perhaps we kings do not require——"

"Err-rrumph! Gerrumph! R-r-rumph!" came a loud, deep, sonorous croak from the lily pads in the frog pond.

"Hark!" exclaimed the toad, goggling his eyes in ecstasy, "my cousin is going to sing

German opera! That is the puddle motif from——"

"Gerrumph! Umph!" boomed the deep bass voice from the frog pond; and the toad, rolling his eyes, began to beat time with one mottled finger.

For ten minutes King Spotty sang and King Speckles, entranced, beat time for the children's benefit. Then the big bullfrog's voice ceased.

"Bravo! What a magnificent interpretation!" cried the toad. "He is practicing for this evening, you see. Our royal orchestra is to have a general rehearsal, tree frogs, locusts, katydids, crickets, the deer mouse, our new soprano, a pair of whip-poor-wills, and the big hoot owl from the grove.

"It will be superb, children, and you had better obtain permission from your parents to lie awake by the open window. You have my royal permission to listen, anyhow."

And the toad waved his spread toes at them with a gesture that was not very graceful.

"Do you also sing, sire?" inquired Geraldine, smiling.

"There is," said the toad with a fat shudder, "a peculiar squeak which I utter on a certain painful occasion."

"What occasion is that, sire?" asked Peter curiously.

"When a snake grabs me," replied the toad in a low, trembling voice.

"Why, are you afraid of a common little garden snake?" demanded Peter scornfully. "I didn't think kings could be afraid of anything except other kings!"

"He says he's King of this garden, too," muttered the toad sulkily.

"Who? The garter snake?"

"Yes, that what he says."

"Whom did he say it to?" asked Peter.

"To my wife—while he was swallowing

her. The dragon flies heard him, and came and told me."

"And did you rush to the rescue and fight bravely for your beloved wife?" exclaimed Geraldine excitedly, clasping her little hands.

"She wasn't much of a wife," said the toad. "I can easily get another at any time."

"You mean that you *didn't* rush to the rescue?" cried the children, horrified.

"Well, I rushed about, more or less," said the toad—"until I found what I was looking for."

"A weapon!" added Peter eagerly.

"No, a—ahem!—a chink in the wall. And I scrambled in. It was a terrible defeat for that snake, I can tell you!"

"A—a defeat!" faltered the children, astounded.

"Certainly. He couldn't find me, could

he? He was defeated in his intentions, wasn't he? He wanted to find me and swallow me, but I prevented him. Therefore, as I have explained to you, I inflicted upon him a disastrous defeat."

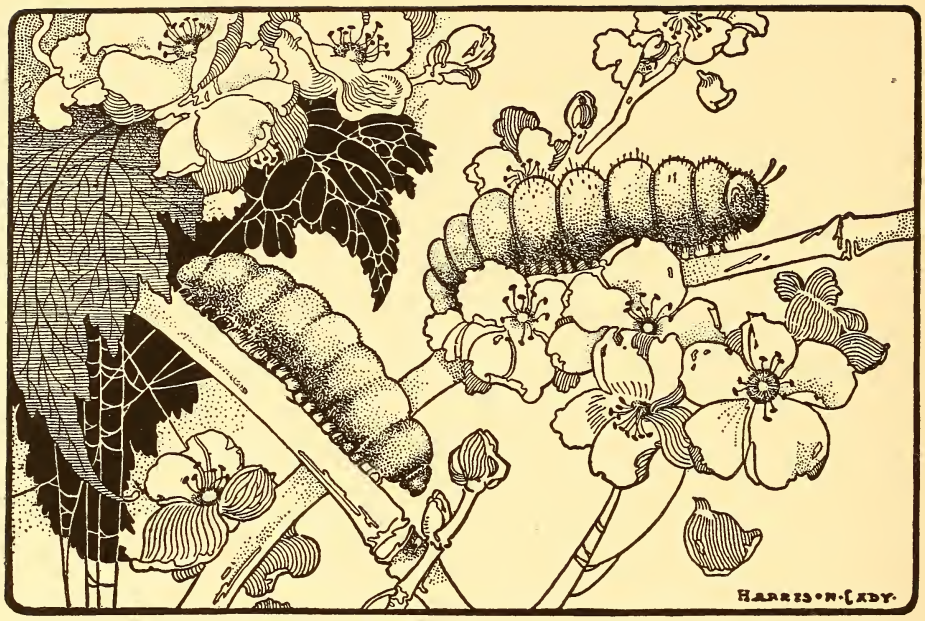
"You are not much of a warrior, are you?" said Peter in disgust.

"What's that? Not much of a warrior? Why not? Haven't I just told you of one magnificent victory? And when that big marsh hawk came sailing over the garden last year, didn't I inflict another terrible defeat on him by squatting motionless under a plantain leaf? If you talk about victories, you had better talk to me. I've won more victories than all your Washingtons and Farraguts and Napoleons and Nelsons and Wellingtons and Oyamas and Nogis rolled into one!"

"It is pleasant, sire, to look at it in that way," said Peter.

"Certainly, it is pleasant. It is my royal habit to look only on the pleasant side of life. That proves several things which you are too young to understand. Therefore, having amiably condescended to instruct you concerning my life history and the arts of war, I will now bestow upon you the freedom of the garden, and will continue my royal progress and hunt flies. Be respectful and you will be happy. Adieu!"

The toad once more rose to a half straddling position, waved his damp fore foot at the children, lost his balance, and fell over; then, scrambling to his feet, he moved off in the shadow of the wall, hopping, waddling, scuffling under the bushes until his speckled and mottled and unlovely form was lost in the cool gray shadows of leaves.



# CHAPTER V

## THE CATERPILLARS

"WHAT a king!" exclaimed Geraldine, looking at Peter.

"*What* a king!" repeated Peter.

"Supported by his subjects in such an extraordinary fashion!" added Geraldine. "Poor little subjects; it really does not pay them to support a king."

"You are mistaken," said a small, sticky voice from the foliage of the old grapevine overhead. "It's really great fun to have a king. It's simpler, too, than having a republic. In a monarchy, the king eats everybody; in a republic everybody eats everybody else, and you never know when your neighbor is going to bite you or when you are going to bite your neighbor. So you see it is much simpler and safer to be afraid of only one monarch in a monarchy, than to be eternally dodging a million hungry uncrowned kings in a republic!"

The children stood up, listening curiously to the small, sticky voice, and peering about among the broad grape leaves for a glimpse of the orator.

"I am perfectly right in my philosophy," continued the sticky voice. "I'll leave it to my fellow-subjects!"

And suddenly, all around them the chil-

dren heard hundreds of keen, dry, rasping and stuffy little voices chorusing from bush and vine and shrub and flower: "Certainly, you are right! The old Vine-Dresser is right. Hurrah! for a monarchy where the king lives on his subjects and the subjects don't live on one another!"

"That," said Peter in a firm and rather loud voice, and turning a trifle red, "is treason. When the battle of Bunker Hill——"

"Hush," smiled Geraldine, laying her hand on Peter's arm, which was beginning to wave like an orator's; "*they* don't know anything about the battle of Bunker Hill. They're only caterpillars."

"Did that sticky voice come from a caterpillar? Are all those tiny, clamoring voices the voices of caterpillars?" asked Peter, beginning to laugh.

Geraldine, bending forward, pointed at a large and rather pretty caterpillar resting on

the midrib of a big grape leaf. The creature was a tender green color, like the color and texture of a translucent, unripe grape. It had a curved horn on its tail and a whitish, dilated hood bordering its neck.

"Hello," said the caterpillar amiably; "you children have pretty sharp eyes to discover me, considering how perfectly I match all this green foliage and fruit."

"Where are all the others?" asked Peter.

"The other caterpillars whose voices you heard? Oh, they're all around us, hiding very cleverly! Some are formed and colored to resemble dead twigs, some look like bits of bark, some imitate pebbles or spots of lichen, some have sewed leaves together for a tent to hide in and a few—a very few—don't take any pains to hide, because neither King Speckles nor King Spotty of the Pond nor any of the outlaw birds would touch them on account of their sickening flavor."

"If I were a caterpillar," said Peter, "I should like to have a sickening flavor."

"Probably you have, anyway," observed the green Vine-Dresser caterpillar, "otherwise our King would doubtless have invited you to support him."

"You mean he would have attempted to swallow me?" asked Peter, laughing.

"Well, if you care to put it in such a crude and indelicate way—yes."

"But I am about seven thousand times larger than his majesty!"

"It is plain," observed the green caterpillar, wagging his hooded head in a jerky manner, "that you don't know much about the capacity of kings. Some of them can swallow millions and still feel hungry."

"Millions of what?"

But the green Vine-Dresser only jerked his hooded head from side to side and bit off an unripe bunch of grapes, muttering: "*We*

know what a king can swallow; we know how much he can manage to tuck away, don't we, fellow subjects?"

And a thousand acrid, crisp little voices answered: "We do!"

"The other king," said the green caterpillar—"the music-mad monarch of the pond—has set the royal menu to music. Would you like to have us sing it for you?"

And the Vinedresser, beating time with his jerky head, began in a thick and sticky voice; and thousands of unseen caterpillars took up the culinary chorus:

"The safest thing's a hungry King who eats his subjects, leg and wing—

Horse flies,
House flies,
Stable flies that sting;
Inch worms,
Loop worms,
Worms that crawl and cling;

Butterfly grubs and sleepy slugs
And cutworms curled in a ring—
Every brother respects the other
And all support the King!"

"What nonsense!" said Peter. "The idea of thousands of freeborn caterpillars all furnishing food for one King—and that King a speckled toad!"

The Vinedresser wagged his head slowly, saying: "We feed one King and then it's done; but if we were Republican, where every man's a freeborn King, then dinner'd be a dreadful thing!

"The rule is, when the freeborn dine, The One regales the Ninety-nine; and when the Ninety-nine must lunch, the Ninety-ninth regales the bunch; at breakfast, too, it's understood that Ninety-seven eat the food. But living in a monarchy is simpler as you both will see, for when a hundred subjects dine, his Majesty eats ninety-nine, and sends

the other for a bunch of subjects for to-morrow's lunch."

"Oh, *don't* go on like that!" exclaimed Geraldine, placing her hands over her ears. "It is perfectly maddening to hear you drone on and on and on, and rhyme every sentence with the next one, especially as nothing that you say means anything——"

"The meaning of it is hidden inside, like a chrysalis in a cocoon," said the Vinedresser; and he jerked his hooded head toward the edge of a tender young grape leaf, and began to munch with a crunching sound, his jaws working sideways like a tiny pair of scissors.

"I suppose," said Peter doubtfully, "that we ought to tell our gardener to come and spray you if you are going to eat up all our grape leaves."

"Now, Peter, don't be mean," said the Vinedresser earnestly; I do no particular

damage. Everybody can afford to let me have a few grape leaves during the summer —if only for the pleasure of seeing the beautiful moss-green and tan-colored moth which I shall turn into."

"Goodness! Is he going to tell the gardener to spray us with that horrid London Purple mixture?" cried hundreds of little anxious voices.

"I don't want to," said Peter, "but really it won't do to have you ruin the garden."

"We are not ruining the garden, really we are not!" came the earnest, anxious chorus. "The frogs and toads and mice and birds and hornets and ichneumon flies keep us so thinned out that we do no real damage! If you spray us and destroy us you will see no more beautiful butterflies and moths in your garden next summer!"

"But some of you caterpillars do dam-


"'We are not ruining the garden, really we are not!'"

age!" insisted Peter. "Look at that hollyhock all drooping and dying!"

"That's my work," came an impudent voice from the ground. "I hide in the earth and under stones by day, and at night I crawl out and nip off flower stalks."

"Why do you do it?" asked Geraldine sorrowfully.

"I'm a cutworm, and I like to damage things. You can make war on me if you like. I don't care. You can't find me, anyway!"

A beautiful green and black caterpillar on a fennel bush spoke up sharply: "We all have to suffer because those miserable cutworms do so much harm. They only turn into ugly little snuff-colored moths, anyhow——"

"Snuff-colored yourself!" cried the cutworm—"you cheap green chromo of a caterpillar."

The black and green caterpillar ignored the taunt, and continued:

"If you indoor folk would destroy only the cutworms, the currant slugs, the tent caterpillars, and the caterpillars of the gypsy moth and brown-tailed moth, we other respectable caterpillars would never do any harm to anything. We are too few, anyway, to harm foliage or flower. We are not poisonous, with the exception of the spiny green caterpillar of the beautiful Io moth—and his spines only sting like nettles if you handle him. Just think, children, what the world would miss if there were no lovely butterflies, no magnificent moths in the world! We harmless caterpillars turn into these handsome moths and butterflies, you know."

"What is the difference between the caterpillar of a moth and that of a butterfly?" asked Geraldine.

"I'll tell you," said green-and-black

fennel caterpillar. "The caterpillars of butterflies never are covered with hairs. They are either smooth or spiny. Some moth caterpillars are also smooth or spiny, but some, also, have long hairs or thick fuzz on them. Another difference—the caterpillars of butterflies never spin webs or cocoons to protect the chrysalis. Moth caterpillars usually do; or else they burrow into the ground when the time comes for them to turn into chrysalides. Butterfly caterpillars do not burrow. The chrysalides of moths are smooth and shiny; the chrysalides of butterflies are knobby and angular, as a rule."

"What sort of a chrysalis are you going to make?" asked Peter curiously.

"When I've eaten enough," replied the caterpillar, "I shall grow very restless, and crawl down to the earth from my fennel stalk and begin to wander about. And when I've selected a safe shelter under some

wall or fence I shall attach a button of silk for my hind feet to hook into, and then I'll spin a single silk thread like a belt around my shoulders and attach the two ends to the wall so I can be supported by it as though slung up in a hammock. Then I'll split open up the back and a brown chrysalis will appear; and there I'll hang in my chrysalis form until, in a couple of weeks, my back, breast, and head plates will split open and I'll crawl out."

"What will you be then?" inquired the children eagerly.

"At first only a moist little black creature, all legs and body and antennæ or feelers, with two tiny, baggy lumps for wings. Then I'll pump butterfly blood into my wet and baggy wings, and they will grow and grow until, in a few hours, I'll be a full-grown black swallow-tail butterfly, with delicate swallow-tailed, velvet black wings spotted

with golden yellow and powdered with a blue cloud, centered by a scarlet spot!"

"How perfectly beautiful!" cried Geraldine.

"And I," said a smothered voice from the folds of a nettle leaf growing on a tall stalk by the wall—"I am only a brown, spiny caterpillar now, but I shall be a Red Admiral and wear broad scarlet bands on my uniform and a few silvery white flecks and some purplish blue spots, too!"

"And I," said a spiny black caterpillar covered with brick-red spots, who was moving slowly up a willow twig, "I shall turn into the Camberwell Beauty, with rich velvet brown wings edged with cream color and bordered by violet spots."

"And I," observed a knobby, humpy, lumpy caterpillar on a thorn-apple shrub, "intend to turn into a magnificent, purple-blue butterfly with dusty bands of lighter blue on my lower wings!"

Then the air became filled with tiny, eager voices all explaining about what miracles of beauty they intended to turn into; and the children, bewildered by the tumult, sat down on the grass and strove to listen politely.

"If you're afraid that we are going to tell old Phelim, the gardener, to spray you with London Purple," said Geraldine, "you need not be. Peter and I would never dream of harming you. I don't think that either of us would have the heart even to punish those ill-natured, ill-mannered cutworms, either." And she brushed her curly hair from her eyes and stared very hard at the drooping hollyhock.

"Why don't you and Peter feed the cutworms to us?" broke in a thin, watery voice with a foreign accent. "We goldfish are all ready for a plump, juicy cutworm cutlet."

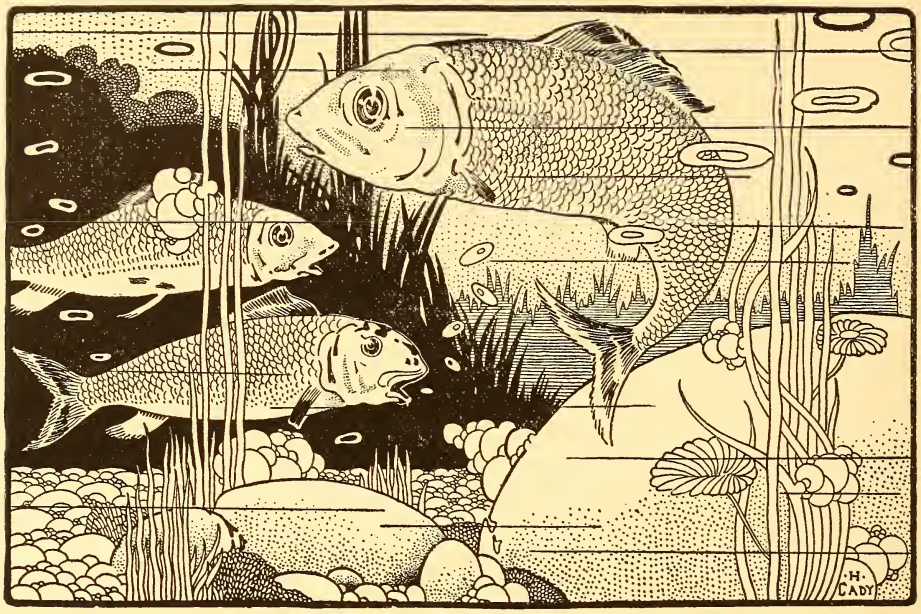
"Ha! Ha!" jeered the concealed cut-

worm; "nobody can ever find me. I'll give you leave to try, Peter; and if you do you can feed me to that idiot fish!"

"Do you think I'd bother about an ill-mannered cutworm?" said Peter.

"Don't you bother, brother," said a big black and white hornet who was walking rapidly over the garden path; "I'll attend to any cutworms in this vicinity if I find them." Then, addressing the concealed cutworm, he shouted in a tiny, taunting voice: "Where are you, you ugly brown little grub! Let's hear that voice once more!"

But the hidden cutworm said never a word, and the black-and-green fennel caterpillar laughed and thrust out of his head two unpleasantly scented red, fleshy horns which keep hornets and such prowlers at a distance.




# CHAPTER VI

## THE FISH POND

"DO you know," said Peter to Geraldine, "I had no idea that there are so many different kinds of outdoor creatures in our garden; had you, Geraldine?"

"No," she said; "I thought there were just a few ants and bees and a butterfly or

two and a wasp or two and several caterpillars."

"Pooh!" said a blue wasp, sunning her steely wings on the sundial, "this garden of ours has more inhabitants than any city ever built by indoor people!"

"The city of Pekin," began Peter, "which is in China, has millions of inhabitants."

"It's a village compared to our garden," said the blue wasp carelessly. "Count the number of kinds of creatures around here, for example. There is the ant—three or four kinds of him, and hundreds of thousands of each kind! Take the aphides! Myriads! Take the angleworms! The soil of this garden is riddled with them! There are a dozen species of wasps, a dozen of bees, half a dozen sorts of dragon flies, half a hundred kinds of moths, as many of beetles; dozens of species of birds and fish, and reptiles, and animals and amphibians. Do you

know, for instance, that there are thirty-one species of birds which enjoy the freedom of this garden? There are scores of different butterflies——"

"Do you mean scores?" asked Peter incredulously. "Scores means more than twenty, you know, and I can't believe that there are twenty different kinds of butterflies which visit our garden."

"Here's the list, then," said the blue wasp. "Count them on your fingers, children: first, there are five kinds of Swallow-tails—the Yellow, Black, Blue, Green, and Giant; that makes five. Then, in order, comes the White cabbage butterfly, the gray-veined white, four kinds of yellow butterflies, nine kinds of fritillaries, four kinds of crescent-spots, the Buckeye, the Red Admiral, two kinds of Painted Ladies, the Camberwell Beauty, the Tortoise-shell, the Violet-tip, the Green Comma, the Hop Merchant, the Gray

Comma, the Banded Purple, the Hybrid Purple, the Viceroy, the Monarch, the Vice-Reine, four kinds of Meadow Browns, the Metal Mark, two kinds of Coppers—that makes forty-six kinds already without counting the Blues and Hair-streaks, and Skippers and——"

"Oh, dear, oh, dear!" sighed Geraldine in dismay, "is it possible that all these kinds of butterflies live in our garden without our knowing it?"

"There are four times as many kinds of moths, too," observed the blue wasp.

A thick, watery voice from the pond broke in: "How many kinds of flies are there? I've eaten about a hundred kinds, but they don't compare in flavor with the kind of flies I ate in China."

"That must be the voice of our big Chinese goldfish," said Geraldine, walking across the grassy terrace and down the stone

steps to the pond. Peter followed and seated himself on the cemented border of the fish pond. The pond was really a great, symmetrical basin brimming with crystal clear water and bordered by a stone terrace on which grew a riotous confusion of brilliant scarlet and flame-colored flowers, which the water reflected until it took on a tint of fire.

Scores of goldfish, glowing like live coals, wiggled about in the transparent depths or floated near the surface, quietly finning the water where the fine dustlike spray of the fountain jet sprinkled the center of the pool with a rainbow haze.

Under this lived two dignified sunfish, a bullhead, and a very small chubb who seemed to be of no use except for the other fish to chase about.

But the biggest and reddest and handsomest fish in the pond was a Chinese goldfish. He was a deep, glowing scarlet in

color; his fins were long, waving, ribbon-like streamers, and he looked as though he had three tail fins.

The children, seated side by side on the edge of the pool, watched this beautiful fish, which had floated lazily to the surface of the water, his big staring eyes on the outlook for bread crumbs.

"We haven't any," said Peter politely. "We are very sorry."

"Perhaps you have a few flies in your pocket?" suggested the goldfish.

"We don't carry flies in our pockets," explained Geraldine.

"Why not? They're better than bread crumbs; better than worms. I don't know which *you* prefer," added the goldfish, "but I prefer flies."

"We prefer bread," said Geraldine hastily.

"Oh, bread is all right in its way," observed the goldfish with a yawn, "but there

is nothing like a fly diet to make you grow. Any fish will grow fatter on flies of different kinds than on bread crumbs or worms. Even that silly little chubb there knows that."

"But he doesn't seem to grow very fat," said Peter.

"Because whenever we see him start off after a fly which has tumbled into the water we all rush after him and take it away from him," explained the goldfish.

"You ought to be ashamed to be so fat and selfish!" said Peter indignantly.

"I'd be ashamed if I were thin," retorted the cynical goldfish, wiggling his tail.

"What kind of a fish are you, anyhow?" asked Peter.

"I'm a carp."

"A carp?"

"One kind of a carp. Real carp have whiskers; that is, they have thin, slender, fleshy threads hanging from their jaws which


"'Perhaps you have a few flies in your pocket?' suggested the goldfish."

look like whiskers. But we Golden Carp, or goldfish, have no whiskers. That is one difference between us."

"Are you named anything?" asked Geraldine.

"My name is Auratus."

"Are you married?" asked Geraldine.

"I was in China. They took me away from my wife," said the goldfish.

"Took you away? What a shame!" exclaimed the children.

"Oh, I didn't care much—only my wife, who was a Mirror Carp, used to lay about three quarters of a million eggs at a time and it was rather good fun to eat them up."

"You don't mean to say that you ate your own wife's eggs!" exclaimed Geraldine.

"Oh, anybody's wife's eggs—or my own wife's; it made no difference to me. That was the reason I was rather fond of my wife, who was not a goldfish but a big

mirror carp. She was a great egg layer. Oh, dear! Ah, me! I wish I had some now. But the eggs those spiny sunfish lay are not the kind that my wife used to lay. Besides, the sunfish chase me away if I try to get a few eggs for breakfast! It's a cold world, and everybody is most unreasonable."

"Are you good to eat?" asked Peter indignantly. "If you are I've half a mind to catch you."

"In my opinion you've only half a mind, anyhow," said the goldfish, "because if you had a whole mind you'd know that I am not worth eating."

"I wish you were!" repeated Peter, turning red.

"You're jealous of me; you're even turning red to resemble me in color," said the goldfish. "I suppose you think that if you came into the pool and swam around you'd grow fins like mine."

"And what," said Peter angrily, "do you suppose would happen to you if I dipped you out of the water in my fish net and laid you on the grass?"

"I wouldn't care as long as somebody kept my gills wet," replied the goldfish. "I could live very comfortably out of water for a while if my body and gills were kept wet. But"—and here the big, fat goldfish deliberately turned his tail toward the children—"I am tired of this conversation. Hereafter if you desire the honor of conversing with me you had better bring your pockets full of something for me to eat; otherwise I shall not bother about you."

And all the other little goldfish wiggled their tails in derision and swam off into the center of the pond, calling back to the children: "No bread crumbs, no stories: We Chinese know our business better than you do! And you may wave your hands at us and

pretend that they're fins like ours, and you may turn as red in the face as you please, but you are *not* goldfish and you can't be goldfish, and you'll never, never be able to turn into goldfish or anything else Chinese!"

"What unmannerly fish!" said Geraldine, greatly annoyed. "Splash in the water with that stick, Peter, and frighten the selfish things out of their senses."

So Peter and Geraldine splashed in the water with sticks, but the goldfish paid no attention to them, and presently the children tired of it and sat down on the grass, laughing and a little ashamed of their anger. "They're only fishes after all," observed Peter, "and Chinese fishes at that. Nobody does anything for anybody in China unless somebody gives them a present. So, you see, if we wish the goldfish to tell us stories we must bring them bread crumbs after this."

"Bring us a few, too!" cried a hundred

tiny voices from the grass; "we're very fond of bread crumbs."

"And who may you be?" asked Peter. "Oh, I see you now; you are ants!"

"Listen hard and you can hear us singing as we go about our work," answered the ants cheerily, running to and fro among the grass blades. "We are the working ants. Nancy, the queen ant, sings the latest popular songs to encourage us—like:

"Everybody works but Nancy,
And she sits around all day
Laying her eggs in thousands
Under the sand and clay,
The workers they bring insects
To feed the infant ants,
The soldiers guard the city
And likewise Nance.

"Isn't it inspiriting? And you ought to hear the soldiers marching off to some foreign ant city to make war and capture slaves, sing-

ing 'Soldiers of the Queen'! We are a wonderful people!—perfectly wonderful! Nobody can conquer us; nobody can lick us——"

Whiz-z! whirr! came the humming bird and hung hovering before the children.

"Did those ants say that nobody can lick them?" twittered the humming bird. "Well, just tell them that down in Brazil there is an old ant-bear who roots up their cities and rolls out his sticky tongue and licks up a couple of thousand ants at one gulp!"

"We don't believe it!" shrieked the ants in a fury.

"Go to South America and see," twittered the Ruby-Throat, darting about in the last rays of the sinking sun. "Good evening, children! Sundown is bedtime for me. It's only fair, you know, anyway, because the great, gray humming-bird moths ought to have the evening free to feed on the honeyed blossoms."

And the tiny bird darted away, seeming no bigger than a bee in his zipping, bullet-like flight.

"Gr-r-rumph! R-r-rumph! Er-r-rumph!" said the big bullfrog. "Howdy-do, children. Would you oblige me by hitting that old water snake over the head with a stick!"

"Snake!" exclaimed Geraldine; "what snake! Is there a snake in our garden?"

"I see him," said Peter in a low voice. "He's lying in the water under those lotus leaves, but I'm not going to hurt him because, you remember, we've been told that there are no poisonous snakes in our Outdoor Land."

"I don't care whether he's poisonous or not!" grunted the bullfrog; "he means to swallow me, that's what he means to do."

"Do you?" said Geraldine severely to the lazy water snake, who had turned his head

and was watching the children out of two very bright and unwinking eyes.

"Oh, I had some such sort of idea," drawled the water snake, "but if he's going to kick up such a row and make things unpleasant, I'd as soon go back to the big lake below the swinging bridge and make a fish dinner as usual."

"Certainly I'm going to kick up a fuss," said the frog sulkily. "I don't object to being grabbed by a garter snake or a blacksnake, but *you* have no business in this garden, and if I'm going to be swallowed I don't desire to fatten a foreigner."

"You'd better go, you see," nodded Geraldine. "You don't really belong in our garden." The snake slowly glided through the water with a bored expression. Its tongue flickered in and out as it moved toward the outlet to the pool which drained into the larger lake.

"There's nothing to dine on here, anyhow," hissed the snake—"only a few cheap goldfish and a half-witted minnow and a fossilized old frog——"

"Wretch!" shouted the goldfish and the frog and the little nervous minnow; "you've been hanging around here for days trying to catch us!"

"You're mistaken," retorted the water snake placidly. "I'd as soon swallow a chestnut burr as those spiny sunfish or that prickly finned old tabby fish——"

"*Cat*fish!" cried the bullhead in a fury; "don't you dare call me a tabby fish, you legless land eel, who pretends to be a snake!"

"Meow! Tabby! Tabby! Tabby!" sneered the water snake as it swam past the children and entered the outlet.

"*Are* you poisonous?" inquired Geraldine timidly.

"No. But some of my relatives are," said

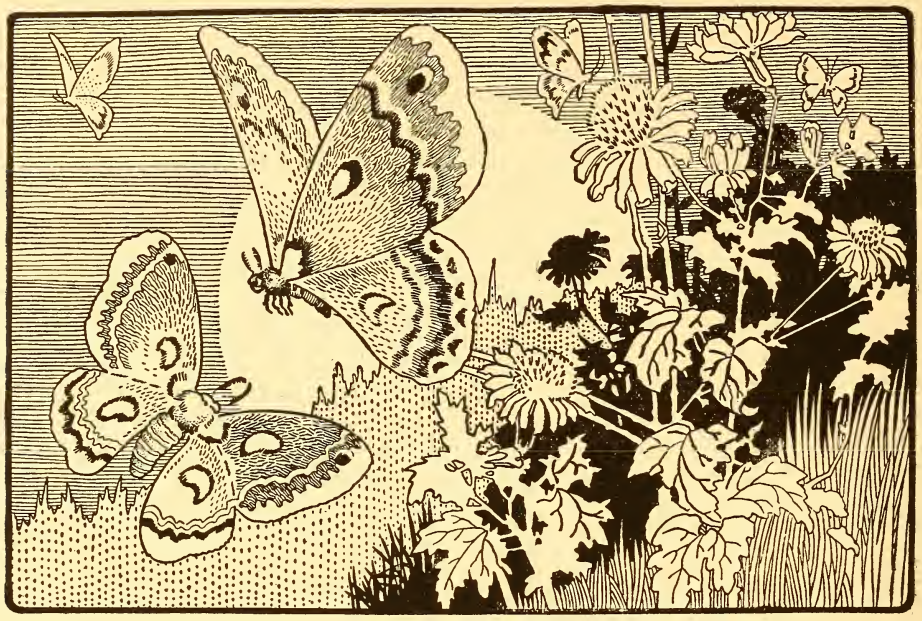
the water snake, "so it's best for indoor people to let us alone."

"We wouldn't harm you, anyway," said Peter.

"I don't exactly know whether or not I would harm you if I could," said the snake. "But I can't; I've no poison fangs, so let it go at that and credit me with benevolent intentions. However, children, remember one thing: if you are ever in a country where there are salt-water snakes, I mean sea snakes, keep away from them, for every species of sea snake is poisonous. Good night; by the time you're abed I'll have dined on a young pickerel or perhaps a mouse or"—and the snake turned its slender neck and leered back at the bullfrog—"or, perhaps, if I can't do any better I'll have to dine on a few tasteless frogs——"

"Villain!" shouted the frog from his throne on a lily pad, "my hind legs are deli-

cious! I'll have you know that I'm a delicacy and a—" But the water snake merely flourished its slender pointed tail derisively, and vanished into the swiftly flowing outlet.



# CHAPTER VII

## THE NIGHT PEOPLE

IT grew very still in the garden. Far in the eastern sky a little pile of snowy clouds began to turn pink. The Red Admiral butterfly on the zinnia blossoms flickered his scarlet-banded wings and nudged the gorgeous Painted Lady on the next flower to his, saying:

"Madam, it's growing rather late in Garden-Land and we'd better furl sail and come to anchor for the night."

"It's high time," said the Painted Lady irritably; "a big night moth came whizzing around a moment ago and almost jostled me off my six legs."

"Certainly it's time for decent day people to retire," observed the Idalia butterfly to the Painted Lady. "Would you believe it, my dear!—a great, clumsy green Katydid woke up a moment ago and began to walk on my gown until I was perfectly sure he had torn the blue skirt to ribbons!"

The Viceroy butterfly stretched his wings and turned round and round on the scented phlox, saying sleepily: "The California poppies closed up long ago; the water lilies are tight shut; the clover is curling up. Where do you sleep to-night, Admiral?"

"Upside down, wings furled, under a hollyhock leaf."

"A buckwheat stem for me," observed the lovely Idalia butterfly; and she invited the Painted Lady to remain overnight with her, offering a comfortable stalk of buckwheat beside her own, which the Painted Lady gracefully accepted.

"A maple tree for mine," said the Viceroy to the Monarch butterfly; "come on, your Majesty; there's no dew under the leaves."

So one after another the beautiful butterflies rose into the air and flew away to their bedrooms, the Painted Lady with her friend Idalia flying rapidly toward the buckwheat on the hill, the Red Admiral settling to sleep on his hollyhock; the Viceroy and the big, reddish-brown Monarch fluttering fussily around and around the darkening foliage of the silver-maple tree in search of the snuggest and driest leaf for a resting place.

A faint rosy glow still lingered in the garden and a pair of tiny humming creatures

still buzzed over the verbenas. They were pretty little creatures with clear, transparent, and gauzy wings like the wings of bumblebees, and golden-banded, fuzzy bodies which looked like the bodies of bumblebees.

"You look just exactly like bees!" called out Peter to the two little moths; "and sometimes you look like the tiniest of tiny humming birds with your white throats and fantails spread."

"We are not bees, we are bee moths," said the little things. "Some people call us the Clear-wing Sphinx; some, the Day-flying Humming-bird Moth. Take your choice, children."

"Are you going to fly all the evening?" asked Peter.

"Oh, no, we are day flyers," answered the cheerful little voices. "We are going to bed in a few moments to give the dusk flyers a chance at the Garden-Land honey. It's only

fair, you see. And then when the dusk flyers have had their fill, they will go to bed and give the night flyers a chance."

"And when the night flyers go to bed," ventured Geraldine, "the day flyers will wake and begin, I suppose."

"That's the way it is arranged," said the little gauzy-winged moths, humming cheerily from blossom to blossom.

"You *do* look like bees," said Peter, watching them.

"And you hum like bees," added Geraldine.

"Oh, that's to scare off birds and other creatures," giggled the little moths as they hummed in and out among the flowers. "Everybody thinks we are bees or hornets and that we wear stings in our tails. So everybody lets us alone, you see."

"And do you really come from ordinary caterpillars?" asked Peter.

"Of course we do. We are just plain, everyday moths that look like bees. There are other moths which look almost exactly like hornets; others which resemble wasps so closely that nobody dare touch them. We are protected, you see, because we are delicious to eat; and if we did not pretend to be wasps and bees every bird in Garden-Land would be dining on us; and after a while there would be no more bee moths and——"

A deep, whizzing hum filled the air and a great, gray-winged creature darted over the verbena bed and hung hovering above the flowers.

"Another humming bird!" exclaimed Peter. "I thought all the humming birds had gone to bed."

"That's a big dusk flyer," cried the little bee moths. "It's time we went to sleep."

And they soared up into the calm evening

air, the last sun rays sparkling on their glittering wings, and streaked away like two bees, only that bees fly steadily and straight, and the two bee moths flew in wavy lines like the flight of two thistle birds.

"Hum-m-m! Buzz-z! Hum!" droned the big gray dusk flyer, probing with long, slender tongue the sweet depths of every flower. "Ah! This is perfectly delicious, children. I recommend these petunias particularly. If you have good, long tongues to dart out you'd better begin before the crowd arrives."

"We don't dart out our tongues when we eat," explained Peter.

"Oh," said the dusk flyer pityingly, "I suppose you are a sort of Luna Moth then and were born without any tongue to feed with. What do you think of my orange-colored waist? Rather gay, isn't it?"

"You look all gray to us," said Geraldine.

"All misty and gray," said Peter. "We

can't see any color on you because your wings whiz so fast in the twilight."

"Can't you see colors by night?" demanded the big moth, astonished.

"Can you?"

"Of course. All night moths can. Wait a moment; I'll alight on Geraldine's wrist and give you children a glimpse of me."

Geraldine extended her hand; the big moth darted at it, hummed around it for a moment, as though exploring a half-opened lily, then softly settled on the slender wrist. And, bending over together, the children saw a splendid moth, with long, narrow, gray wings and a big, smooth, downy body brilliantly patched with ten orange-colored spots.

The eyes of the moth glowed like a pair of golden elfin lanterns set in silver.

"Oh, you beauty!" cried Geraldine impulsively.

"I'm not so homely considering that I

came from a great fat, green caterpillar—the sort that your gardener calls a 'tomato worm,'" said the handsome moth proudly.

It stood there a moment, wings quivering, eyes aglow, then whirred away across the flower beds where already a dozen other big dusk flyers were hovering—great, strong-winged moths darting like humming birds from flower to flower.

"Oh, *please* come and show us how beautiful you really are!" pleaded Geraldine, stretching out her hands toward the misty, gray creatures.

And one after another they came, resting proudly for an instant on her wrist—and one was velvety olive-green and rose color, and some wore salmon-tinted hind wings, and some had hind wings the color of crumpled rose petals set with great peacock eye spots or with violet and orange patches.

Through the gathering night, clouds of


"One after another they came, resting proudly for an instant on her wrist."

smaller moths came drifting into the garden; and all seemed to be only a sober gray color until, at the call of the children, they alighted to show their wings. Then they stood an instant revealed in lovely tints and hues—delicate greens and ivory and rose, splendid dyes from fiery scarlet and deepest flame color to silver grays and golden ochres wonderfully patterned and embroidered in intricate arabesques of paler tints.

In the stillness the King of the Puddle lifted up his voice: "Er-rumph! Ger-rumph! R-r-rumph!" And at the harmonious signal scores of tiny unseen creatures belonging to the Royal Orchestra began to strum and fiddle and hum and trill and scrape — katydids, crickets, grasshoppers, tree frogs — and the great Teutonic overture began.

Overhead under the stars the night hawks tossed and soared, filling the sky with strident cries; in the hedge the little deer mouse sang

his thin, silvery solo; a whip-poor-will's husky contralto broke out from the dim thickets by the lake; and in the hill pines an owl kept up a whistling, twittering, piccolo accompaniment.

Then a far, sweet voice floated out through the starlight: "Children! Children! Where are you?"

And they heard their young mother laughing as she came out into the dark garden; and they heard their father laugh in reply, and they saw the red spark of his cigar glimmering in the dusk.

"Good night, Peter! Good night, Geraldine!" whispered the little dusk moths, hovering about their lips with delicate, honey-sweet caresses.

"Good night!" breathed the children, kissing their hands to the starry darkness. "We will come again! Good night, you tiny little folk of Garden-Land!—you gorgeous butterflies

asleep! You wonderful moths, you curious caterpillars, you gauzy, green katydids, you crickets and ants and beetles and dragon flies, you toads and frogs and fishes, and softly feathered birds dreaming in the trees——"

"*What* on earth are those children talking to?" exclaimed their father, coming up out of the darkness and lifting Peter under one arm and Geraldine under the other.

But their mother only bent and kissed them with a sweet, wise smile.

"Dream time," she whispered in their ears. And the children, smiling up at her sleepily, thought that there was no flower in Garden-Land as lovely as the face that bent above them.

(1)

THE END


HARRIS
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