STORIES & NOTES TO ENID BLYTON NATURE PLATES

ENID BLYTON

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STORIES AND NOTES TO

ENID BLYTON NATURE PLATES

BY

ENID BLYTON

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FOREWORD

This book is for the teacher's use, and can be used to great effect with the big wall pictures that illustrate the stories. It contains all the sixty Nature stories that are given in the thirty Readers which have been prepared for the children's own use. There are two stories, well and accurately illustrated, in each of the thirty Readers. Here the stories are printed all together, and I have written teaching notes for each one.

If the teacher is telling or reading the story, she should first of all read to herself the short teaching notes so that she may know the point of each story. It may be germination, it may be the difference between evergreens and trees that shed their leaves, it may be the many ways that plants disperse their seeds. The teacher must know the central idea before she tells the story.

The notes also tell her various points for discussion with the children afterwards. These are arranged so that the teacher may bring out of the children the ideas that should have sunk in. Every teacher will have her own ways of discussing things with the children—the notes are merely a guide to the essential ideas in the stories.

There are various activities suggested in the notes. Teachers will, of course, think of many themselves, perhaps more suitable for their own children, Little plays, some modelling, drawing or crayoning, going out to look for things—these are all good for young children to do, when certain ideas have been implanted in them which we want to make sure will take root.

All teachers will want to know more about the subjects contained in these little stories, and they should read other Nature books when they can, and get reference books to help them. They do not need to add anything at all to the *stories*, which contain as much information as it is desirable for a young child to know—but very often children like to discuss the story and ask further questions, and these the teacher should be able to answer. For use with this series, therefore, a fuller and well-illustrated Teacher's Reference Book, giving more detailed background to the biological and other principles presented in each story has been written by Mr. L. J. F. Brimble.

Use the pictures as much as possible. They are so drawn that they are excellent complements to the stories, and the teachers will find that practically every point mentioned in the stories can be found illustrated in the pictures. Leave each picture on the wall from one story to another. Let the children examine every detail carefully, and let them talk to you about every fresh picture.

Although the tales may seem to be "merely" interesting stories, each one contains an important Nature fact—so that by the end of the course children should have learnt the basic facts of Nature, for example, germination, dispersal of seeds, life-histories of many creatures, nutrition, growth and so on, in a simple and understandable way. These facts can be easily built on later. They are the foundation for future knowledge.

Always stress the beauty and ingenuity of Nature when possible. This is important. To create a feeling of wonder and awe is the first step in giving the child a real love of Nature that will enrich his life and give him a great deal of real happiness as he grows older. Learn all you can yourself, because as a rule you can only give to others what you know yourself; but

whether you know little or much you can at least open the doors wide to the unformed and developing minds in your care.

ENID BLYTON

CONTENTS

1 (Book 1)
THE BROWNIE'S MAGIC

One night the snow came. It fell quietly all night through, and in the morning, what a surprise for everyone! The hills were covered with snow. The trees were white. The bushes were hidden, and the whole world looked strange and magical.

Bobbo the brownie looked out of his cave in the hillside. The path down to the little village was hidden now. The path that ran over the top of the hill was gone too.

"Snow everywhere," said Bobbo. "Beautiful white snow! How I love it! I wish I had watched it falling last night, like big white goose feathers."

He saw someone coming up the hill, and he waved to him.

"Ah!" he said, "there is my clever cousin, Brownie Bright-Eyes. I wonder what he has brought to show me to-day. He is always bringing me wonderful things."

Brownie Bright-Eyes walked up the hill in the snow, making deep footprints as he came, for he carried something large and heavy.

"What have you got there?" said Bobbo, when Bright-Eyes at last came to his cave. "You are always bringing me something strange and wonderful to see, Bright-Eyes."

"I have made a marvellous mirror," panted Bright-Eyes, bringing the shining glass into the cave. "I do think I am clever, Bobbo. I made this magic mirror myself. I think I must be the cleverest brownie in the world."

"Don't boast," said Bobbo. "I don't like you when you boast."

"I am not boasting!" cried Bright-Eyes crossly. "Wait till you do something clever yourself, and then scold me for boasting. It's a pity you don't use your own brains."

"I do," said Bobbo. "But you are always so full of your own wonderful doings that you never listen to me when *I* want to tell you something."

"I don't expect you would have anything half so wonderful to tell me as I have to tell you," said Bright-Eyes. "Now—just look at this mirror."

Bobbo looked at it. It was a strange mirror, because it didn't reflect what was in front of it. It was just dark, with a kind of mist moving in the glass. Bobbo could see that it was very magic.

"I can't see anything," said Bobbo.

"No, you can't—but if you want to know where anyone is—Tippy the brownie, for instance—the mirror will show you!"

"What do you mean?" asked Bobbo, astonished.

"Now look," said Bright-Eyes. He stroked the shining mirror softly. "Mirror, mirror, show me where Tippy the brownie is!"

And at once a strange thing happened. The mists in the glass slowly cleared away—and there was Tippy the brownie, sitting in a bus. The mirror showed him quite clearly.

"Isn't that wonderful?" said Bright-Eyes. "You couldn't possibly have told me where Tippy was, without the help of the mirror, could you?"

"Yes, I could," said Bobbo. "I knew he was in the bus."

"You didn't!" said Bright-Eyes.

"I did," said Bobbo.

"Then you must have seen Tippy this morning," said Bright-Eyes.

"I haven't," said Bobbo. "*You* found out where he was by using your magic mirror, but *I*, Bright-Eyes, *I* found out by using my brains! So I am cleverer than you."

Bright-Eyes didn't like that. He always wanted to be the cleverest person anywhere. He frowned at Bobbo.

"I expect it was just a guess on your part that Tippy was in the bus," he said. "Now—can you tell me where Jinky is—you know, the pixie who lives down the hill?"

"Yes," said Bobbo at once. "He's gone up the hill to see his aunt, who lives over the top."

Bright-Eyes rubbed the mirror softly. "Mirror, mirror, show me where Jinky is!" he said. And at once the mirror showed him a pixie, sitting in a chair, talking to a plump old lady. It was Jinky, talking to his aunt!

"There you are, you see—I was right," said Bobbo, pleased. "I am cleverer than your mirror. It uses magic—but I use my brains. I can tell you lots of things that *you* could only get to know through your magic mirror—but which *I* know by using my very good brains. Ha, ha!"

"What can you tell me?" asked Bright-Eyes.

"I can tell you that Red-Coat the fox passed by here in the night, although I did not see or hear him," said Bobbo. "I can tell you that six rabbits played in the snow down the hill this morning. I can tell you that Mother Jane's ducks left the frozen pond to-day and went to her garden to be fed."

"You must have seen them all. That's easy," said Bright-Eyes.

"I tell you, I have not seen anything or anyone to-day, except you," said Bobbo. "I know all this by using my brains."

"What else do you know?" asked Bright-Eyes, thinking that Bobbo must really be cleverer than he thought.

"I know that the sparrows flew down to peck crumbs that Mother Jane scattered for them," said Bobbo. "I know that Crek-Crek the moorhen took a walk by the side of the pond. I know that Mother Jane's cat ran away from Tippy's dog this morning. And I know that Tippy's cow wandered from its shed, and then went back to it."

Bright-Eyes stared at Bobbo in wonder. "You are very clever to know all this, if you did not see anyone," he said. "I shall ask my magic mirror if what you say is true!"

He stroked the glass and asked it many things—and each time the glass showed him that what Bobbo said was true! There was the cat chasing the dog. There was the moorhen walking over the snow. There was Tippy's cow wandering all about!

"Please tell me your magic," said Bright-Eyes to Bobbo. "It must be very good magic to tell you all these things."

"Well—come outside and I will show you how I know them all," said Bobbo, beginning to laugh. They went outside, and Bobbo pointed to the crisp white snow. There were many marks and prints in it, as clear as could be.

"Look," said Bobbo, pointing to some small footprints that showed little pointed toes. "Tippy always wears pointed shoes—and do you see how deep his footprints are? That shows he was running. Why was he running? To catch the bus! That's how I knew where he was, without having seen him."

"How did you know about Jinky going to see his aunt?" asked Bright-Eyes.

Bobbo pointed to some very big footprints. "Those are Jinky's marks," he said. "He has enormous feet. The footprints are going up the hill, and the only person Jinky goes to see over the top is his aunt. So I knew where Jinky was!"

"Very clever," said Bright-Eyes.

"And I knew that Red-Coat the fox had passed in the night because there are *his* footprints," said Bobbo, pointing to a set of rather dog-like marks that showed the print of claws very clearly. "I knew it was Red-Coat because I saw the mark his tail made here and there behind his hind feet—see it?"

Bright-Eyes saw the mark of the fox's tail in the snow, and the line of footprints too.

Bobbo took Bright-Eyes farther down the hill. He showed him the rabbit-prints—little marks for the front feet, and longer, bigger ones for the strong hind feet. He showed him where Mother Jane's ducks had walked from the pond to her garden.

"You can see they were ducks because they have left behind them the mark of their webbed feet," he said. "And you can see where the sparrows fed because they have left little prints in pairs—they hop, you see, they don't walk or run—so their prints are always in pairs."

"And there are the moorhen's marks," said Bright-Eyes. "He has big feet rather like the old hen at home although he is a water-bird. But he runs on land as well as swims on water, so he doesn't have webbed feet. Look how he puts them one in front of the other, Bobbo, so that his footprints are in a straight line!"

"And there are the marks made by Tippy's cow," said Bobbo. "You can tell each hoof-mark quite well. And Mother Jane's cat ran *here*—look at the neat little marks. And Tippy's dog ran *here*—you can tell the difference, because the cat puts her claws *in* when she runs, so they don't show in her footprints, but the dog doesn't—so his *do* show!"

"Bobbo, you are very, very clever," said Bright-Eyes. "You are cleverer than I am. It is better to use your eyes and your brains, than to use a magic mirror! I think you are the cleverest brownie in the world!"

Would you like to be as clever as Bobbo? Well, go out into the snow, when it comes, and read the footprints you find there! You will soon know quite a lot.

Teaching Notes. Points for Discussion.

1. The story tells of the different prints that animals and birds make in the snow.

2. Ask the children how they would know the print of a horse (hoof-mark), dog (showing claw-marks), cat (no claw-marks), and their own prints coming to school.

3. How could they tell the difference between the prints of a hopping bird and a walking bird?

4. On a snowy or muddy day, let them look for different prints, and make some themselves.

2 (Book 1)
THE FRIENDLY ROBIN

Billy and Susan had a bird-table. They put food on it in the winter, and many birds came to eat it. The one they liked the best was the little red robin.

"He's so friendly," said Billy. "He sits on the edge of the table, and puts his head on one side and looks at us as if he really liked us."

"I love his rich little song," said Susan.

Sometimes the robin flew to the window-sill and looked in at the window, as if to say, "Hurry up and put the food out! I'm hungry!" Once he even pecked at the window.

When the spring came, the birds found plenty of food in the bushes, hedges and ditches, and they did not need the bird-table any more.

Billy and Susan saw the robin sometimes, and he sang to them. They wondered where he would build his nest.

"We'll go and look for it soon," said Billy. "He hasn't built it yet, because he hasn't chosen a little wife."

But before they could go and look for it, both children got measles! They had to go to bed, and they were very sad about it.

"Just as the nice days are coming!" said Billy. "It really is bad luck!"

The children were not allowed to read because their eyes were rather bad. They grew tired of playing with their toys in bed. Mother was busy and could not read to them very much.

"I'm bored," said Susan, and she began to cry. "I want to go out of doors. I'm tired of being in bed."

"Look! There's the robin come to see us!" said Billy suddenly. On the window-sill stood their little red robin. His red breast glowed brightly, and his big black eyes looked at both children in surprise.

He had missed them in the garden. He had come to look for his little friends. The window was open at the top, and the robin flew in. He sat on the end of Billy's bed-rail and sang a few notes.

Then he went to Susan's bed-rail and sang to her too.

"You darling!" said Susan, pleased. "Oh, it is lovely to see you again! Come every day, please."

The robin flew round the room, and looked at everything. He saw himself in the mirror and sang very fiercely, for he quite thought it was another robin there. Then he flew out.

Next day he was back again, and this time he stayed quite a long time. The children were full of delight. They lay and watched him flit round the room. He flew to the top of the cupboard and stayed there quite a long time.

Then he sang a little song and flew out of the window.

Next day—what a surprise! He was back again—but this time he brought another robin with him. She was very like him, and her red breast shone brightly. She was not at all shy, and sang a little song from the top of the mirror. Then the cock-robin took her to the top of the cupboard.

"Susan!" said Billy in excitement. "I believe—I do believe—that the robins are going to build their nest on the top of the cupboard!"

He was right. They began to build that very day. They flew in with all kinds of things in their little beaks! Sometimes they brought bits of grass and sometimes they brought dead leaves.

"They must have brought scores of dead leaves!" said Susan, with a laugh. "Billy, don't let's tell anyone about our robins. Do let's keep it a secret—our very own secret."

"Well, it's really the robins' secret," said Billy. "So we couldn't possibly give it away. Oh, Susan—isn't it fun lying here and watching the two robins fly in and out with their leaves and grass and moss?"

Mother was pleased to see the two children looking so happy. When the robins heard anyone coming to the room, they flew out quickly, so nobody but the children saw them.

The nest was soon built. The children got out of bed, climbed on a chair and saw it. It was a big nest. The robins had lined it with hairs and some little feathers. Susan put her hand inside. It was very soft and warm.

"The hen-robin got into the nest and worked herself round and round in it to make it that pretty cup-shape," said Billy. "I saw her. She didn't mind me looking at her at all. She's pretty, with her big black eyes and her bright red breast."

Soon the children were well enough to get up and go downstairs. They hoped that no one would discover the robins.

"They have laid five eggs now," said Susan one day. "I stood on a chair and looked. Five eggs!"

"What are they like?" asked Billy.

"They are white, speckled with light red," said Susan. "They are very pretty. Stand on a chair and look at them, Billy."

Billy did. The hen-robin was sitting on her nest. She must have known that Billy wanted to see her eggs, because she flew off, and he saw the five pretty eggs. She flew back to her nest again, and settled down on the eggs to keep them warm. She was very proud of them.

The cock-robin brought all kinds of food to his little mate. He brought worms, grubs, flies and spiders, and the hen-robin opened her mouth, quivered her wings prettily, and ate them all.

Then one day the eggs hatched out! What an excitement there was, for the children were just as pleased as the robins! There was a child standing on a chair peeping at the top of the cupboard nearly every hour of the day!

"Whatever do you keep running up to your bedroom so often for?" asked Mother in surprise.

The baby robins soon grew. They were very sweet. They had no red breasts, but their chests were speckled instead.

"I suppose red would be too dangerous a colour to give to young birds who don't know how to look after themselves," said Susan wisely.

The two robins had a very busy time feeding their young ones. The five babies were always hungry, and as soon as they heard one of their parents coming, they would shoot up in the nest, open their brightly coloured mouths, and wait for a packet of food to be dropped inside.

"I suppose when one is fully fed, he doesn't pop his head up for a time, and the others get a turn," said Susan. "How busy the big robins are, aren't they?"

Then the children had a shock.

"I am going to have your bedroom spring-cleaned to-morrow," said Mother. "There seem to be a lot of dead leaves and bits of moss there—I can't think where it all comes from."

“Oh!” said Billy and Susan in dismay. Now their secret would be found out, and perhaps the birds would be turned out of the bedroom. That would be dreadful.

But that very day the old robins thought that it was time for the young ones to learn to fly. So, much to the children’s delight, they saw the babies trying to flutter round their bedroom.

It was surprising how soon they learnt to use their wings. Then out of the window they went, one after another, into the sunny garden.

“Now they will learn to fly properly, to feed themselves, and to look out for danger,” said Billy. “Well, we *have* had fun, Susan, watching our robin family grow up, haven’t we? We *are* lucky?”

Mother was most astonished when she found the robins’ nest on the cupboard. She laughed when the children told her all about it.

“You should have told me before, and let me share such a lovely secret,” she said.

Teaching Notes. Points for Discussion.

1. The story tells of the life and nesting habits of robins.

2. Ask what the robins make their nest of. Does any child know other nests and what they are made of? How does the bird make its nest without hands?

3. Food of the robin. Food of other birds such as the chaffinch, which is different. (Seeds, etc.)

4. Tell the children to look in the garden to see if they can find dead leaves, moss, twigs, etc. and make a little nest themselves, big enough for a small bird.

1 (Book 2)
THE SQUIRREL WHO FORGOT

There was once a squirrel who had a very bad memory.

"You haven't a memory at all," said Bobtail the rabbit. "You have a forgettery."

"I know," said poor Bushy the squirrel. "I do try to remember things. But I always seem to forget."

He was a very pretty creature. He was red-brown, and his tail was very thick and long and bushy. He looked at Bobtail out of large black eyes, and listened to him with long pointed ears.

Bushy had forgotten where his resting-place was. He had built himself such a nice one in a tree. Bobtail had watched him.

Bushy had taken twigs to make it, and strips of thin bark that he had pulled from trees. He had made it cosy with moss and leaves. It was his own home, his own resting-place, where he could sleep if he wanted to.

And now he had forgotten where he had built it! Bobtail had met him whilst he was looking for it.

"I can tell you where it is," said Bobtail. "It's in a tree not far from my cousin's burrow. I'll take you."

So he ran to a big tree not far off. Bushy bounded from bough to bough above, following Bobtail. He gave a tiny bark of delight.

"Yes—it's here! Oh, thank you, Bobtail. I really will try to remember things in future."

The summer went by. Bushy had a lovely time. He scampered up and down trees, his big claws helping him to hold on tightly. He played with the other red squirrels. He talked to the rabbits and the birds. He didn't forget where his resting-place was, and he liked curling up there when he was tired.

Autumn came. The nights were cold, and Bushy took some more moss into his home. He didn't like the wind blowing into cracks, so he stuffed them up. It was very clever of him.

Bobtail spoke to him one day. "Bushy, the winter is coming soon. Are you going to sleep the cold days away? The frog does, and the snake, and so does the toad. Will you?"

"I think I will sleep when it is very, *very* cold," said Bushy. "But I don't want to miss any warm sunny weather. I think the frogs and snakes are silly not to wake up as soon as a warm spell comes."

"So do I," said Bobtail. "I am awake all the winter, you know, Bushy. I don't like sleeping the time away. Sometimes it is hard for me to get food if the snow is on the ground. I suppose you will not want any food if you sleep most of the time?"

"Oh yes, I shall," said Bushy at once. "I shall be very hungry when I wake up, if the sun comes out in the middle of winter. I must have some food then."

"But there won't be any," said Bobtail. "What will you do?"

"I shall store some up for myself," said Bushy. "Squirrels always do that, you know. We are clever at that."

"What will you store away?" asked Bobtail.

"Watch me and see," said Bushy, and he began to get very busy. His food was the seeds out of pine-cones, the nuts from the hazel trees, the beech-mast from the beech trees, and

things like that.

He took many hazel nuts, which were now ripe and had fallen to the ground. He hid them in a hole in the hollow tree. He found plenty of beech-mast, and he hid that in a hole in a bank. It was fun.

"I shall have plenty of food when I wake up," he told Bobtail. "More than enough! Look, I am putting a heap of nuts under this stone."

"I hope you will remember where you are putting everything," said Bobtail. "You know what a funny sort of memory you have."

"Of course I shall remember," said Bushy.

That night the first hard frost came. How cold it was! Bushy curled himself up in his tail, and slept soundly in his big nest. He did not wake the next day. It was too cold for squirrels to wake! Rabbits were about, and hares, but not a squirrel was to be seen!

The frost grew bitter. Bushy slept even more soundly. His tail kept him warm. He was cosy and snug in his moss-lined nest.

And then the frost went away, and the rain came. After that the sun came out and put warm fingers on Bushy's nest. It was not spring. It was the middle of winter, but still, for a few days, it would be quite warm.

Bushy woke up. He put his nose out of his resting-place, and his big tufted ears listened. It was a nice day. The sun was beautiful in the bare wood.

"I am hungry," said Bushy. "I shall go to find the food I hid away. There will be plenty."

Off he went, scampering and bounding lightly down the tree, into the next one, across the branches, and then down the trunk to the ground.

He began to hunt for the nuts he had hidden away. But he couldn't remember where he had put them! It was no good, he just—couldn't—remember!

He sat in the wood and scratched himself just behind his tufted ears. "Where did I put those nuts? I do want to get my sharp teeth into the shell, and gnaw a hole, and get at the sweet kernel inside. I am so hungry."

He gritted his teeth together, wishing he had a nut to gnaw. He set off again, hunting here, there and everywhere. But not one hiding-place could he remember.

Bobtail didn't come, or he could have asked him. It was very sad. Bushy had never been so hungry in all his life.

And then he saw another red squirrel. He didn't know this squirrel. She came bounding up a tree, looking very frightened.

"A woodman has cut down the tree in which I had my home," she said to Bushy. "I am afraid. I have no nest now, nowhere to sleep on a cold night."

"And I have no food," said Bushy sadly. "I have forgotten where I put my nuts and my beech-mast."

"I know where I put mine," said Frisky, for that was her name. "Come, and I will show you. There is enough for us both."

Frisky had a good memory. She remembered where her stored-up food was, and soon she and Bushy were sharing it hungrily.

"Thank you very much," said Bushy. "That was lovely. I really did feel very hungry. Now, would you like to share my resting-place with me? I think there is room. We could curl up together, wrap our tails round each other, and keep nice and warm."

"Oh, thank you!" said little red Frisky, her big black eyes shining. "I was wondering where I could sleep to-night. Are you sure there is room?"

There was plenty of room. The two red squirrels curled up together in Bushy's nest, wrapped their big warm tails round each other, and fell fast asleep. It was nice to be together. It was nice to know that there was plenty of food waiting, if they woke up, and that Frisky knew exactly where it was.

In the spring the two squirrels talked lovingly together. "Let us make a great big nest and have some squirrel babies of our own."

Bushy was delighted. The two squirrels found a big hole in a tree, and they built their large nest there. "The hole is our door," said Frisky, peeping out.

In the summer-time Frisky had three little babies. They were blind at first, and had no pretty fur, but they soon grew, opened their eyes, and grew pretty furry coats.

Frisky and Bushy were very proud of them. "Now we are a lovely little family," said Frisky. "Oh, Bushy, what a good thing my tree was cut down last winter, and I came along and met you!"

"And what a good thing I forgot where my nuts were, and you gave me yours," said Bushy. "It was a good thing I had a bad memory that day!"

"Helping one another and loving one another are the nicest things in the world," said Frisky, cuddling down into her cosy nest with the furry babies.

And she was quite right, wasn't she?

Teaching Notes. Points for Discussion.

1. This is the story of squirrels and their ways.

2. Who has seen squirrels? Where do they live? Can anyone tell us about a squirrel he has seen?

3. The food of the squirrel. What does he eat?

4. Why does he hide it away in the autumn? Who would like to eat it if he found it? (Mouse.)

5. The squirrel does not go to sleep *all* the winter—he wakes up in a warm spell. What does he look for then?

6. Make up a little play about two squirrels nesting in a tree-hole.

2 (Book 2)
JACK FROST IS ABOUT!

Jack Frost stood on a bare, windy hillside one night and slapped himself hard on his chest.

"Ha!" he said, "how strong I am! See what I have done, I and the wind together! We have stripped all the leaves from the trees. There they stand, bare and brown, and dead!"

"Dead?" said the big brown owl, flying softly by his head. "Did you say dead? Oh no, surely the trees are not dead!"

"Well, look at them," said Jack Frost. "Not a leaf to be seen anywhere! See how bare they are. I have killed them all!"

"You haven't killed *those* trees," said the owl, hooting as he flew round Jack Frost again.

Jack Frost looked to where the owl nodded his big round head. He saw holly trees, standing upright, bearing glossy, prickly leaves and many scarlet berries.

"I can't kill those trees," he said gloomily. "I have tried. But their leaves will not fall like the leaves of other trees. I can take away the beech leaves and the birch leaves, I can pull off the poplar leaves and the hazel leaves, for the wind to blow into ditches—but I cannot take away the leaves of the holly or the yew, the pines or the firs! They are tough leaves. The trees will not let them go."

"And a good thing too!" hooted the owl. "I am sorry to hear you have killed the other trees. I hope you are wrong, Jack Frost. I *think* you are wrong!"

The owl flew away. Jack Frost went down the hill, and his icy breath froze everything before him. His cold fingers nipped the noses and feet of any animal he met. The birds hidden in the ivy, and in the evergreen trees, shivered when he passed by, tucking their little heads under their wings as closely as they could.

All that winter Jack Frost walked out, strong and cold and fierce. The trees stood bare and brown. "I certainly have killed them all," said Jack Frost. "Soon the woodmen will say, 'They are dead. We will chop them down.' "

But the woodmen didn't say that. Instead, the brown owl came to find Jack Frost, and hooted with laughter at him.

"You were wrong after all, Jack Frost. You have not killed a single tree! They are all alive!"

"How do you know that?" asked Jack Frost. "They have not shown a single leaf, not a tiny flower!"

"Put your ear to the trunks of the trees," said the owl. "Listen well. You will hear the sap rising in the trees, life welling up in every one of them! They are not dead."

Jack Frost put his ear to the trunk of a chestnut tree and listened. His sharp ear heard the sound of sap slowly rising in the tree—rising to every twig, every bud—life that would swell out the buds and bring strength to the tiny leaves folded there.

Jack Frost frowned. So the trees were not dead. There was life inside them. He looked at the chestnut tree, and saw its buds. Already it seemed as if they were bigger.

"There are leaves inside the buds," said Jack Frost to himself. "I must kill the buds, so that the leaves will not unfold. No tree can live without leaves. I will pinch the buds with my cold fingers and kill them."

He breathed his cold breath over the big chestnut tree. He felt the buds gently with his icy fingers that could kill whatever they touched.

And then he went away. But the next night when he came back, the chestnut buds were just a little bigger! Jack Frost was astonished.

"Now why did they not die when I nipped them?" he thought. He touched them again, roughly—and lo and behold, they stuck tightly to his fingers. They were covered with glue!

"They are sticky!" said Jack Frost. "The tree has covered its buds with gum to keep me out!"

He tore a bud from a twig, broke it open, and looked at the tiny leaves inside.

"They are wrapped in cotton-wool to keep them warm! The brown bud-scales are covered with gum to stop my icy breath from killing the leaves beneath. I can do nothing with this tree!"

He was right. The chestnut buds were too well protected for Jack Frost to harm them. They grew and swelled, full of life.

Jack Frost went to the ash tree, and looked at the black buds there. He felt them. They were hard and tough. He could not kill the little leaves inside.

He went to other trees and felt along the twigs for the buds. Life was swelling in each one of them. But how well the trees had looked after their buds!

Some baby leaves were wrapped in cotton-wool, as were the chestnut's. Some had furry down on them, and others had silky hairs that kept them warm. Some had lined the insides of the bud-scales with gum, so that Jack Frost could not possibly get through.

The owl saw him fingering the buds of the trees, and hooted with laughter again. "Are you trying to kill the trees once more?" he asked. "Are you stronger than life itself? You cannot stop the buds from leafing, you cannot stop the flowers from blossoming, nor the plants from fruiting!"

"Sometimes I can," said Jack Frost.

"Now and again, now and again," said the owl. "But that is all. The trees will beat you nearly every time, Jack Frost. They will look after their precious buds, so that when the warm spring-time comes, and you are gone, every tree will be covered with thousands of tender green leaves, waving in the sun."

Jack Frost was very angry. He came to another tree, and looked at it in astonishment. It was a plane tree.

"What's the matter?" said the owl. "You look surprised."

"I am!" said Jack Frost. "Do you see this tree? Well, I knew that its buds were very tender, and could easily be killed by my cold fingers. I came to pinch them just before the leaves fell—and although I looked up the tree and down, there was not a bud to be seen, not one—only the big leaves, changing their colour because it was autumn."

"Did you say it had no buds?" said the owl, also looking at the plane tree. "Why, it is covered in buds from top to toe!"

"I know," said Jack Frost. "That is what puzzles me. Where were these buds when I last came to find them?"

"Aha! Don't you know?" said the owl. "Well, I will tell you, for I know the secret!"

The owl told Jack Frost, and now I will tell you! It is a strange little secret, and you must see it for yourself when you can.

"The plane tree knows that you will come to look for its buds and nip them," said the owl. "So it plays a trick on you, Jack Frost! It hides them all—but they are on the tree just the

same! When you came to look for them in the autumn, when the big plane leaves were changing colour, those buds were there—and you couldn't see them!"

"Where were they?" said Jack Frost. "I don't believe you, brown owl!"

"I'll tell you where they were," said the owl. "It won't matter my telling you, because you will never be able to get at the buds in the autumn-time, when they are weak and tender. Now they are strong, and you cannot hurt them."

"Tell me quickly where they were!" said Jack Frost impatiently. So the owl told him.

"Do you remember the big plane leaves?" he said. "They each had long stalks, that were very fat at the bottom. Well, Jack Frost, they were fat because each stalk fitted very neatly over—a bud!"

"Well, well, well!" said Jack Frost. "So that's why I couldn't find any plane buds last autumn. They were all hiding at the bottom of the leaf-stalks. A very clever idea. Too clever for me. I shall go away. I am tired of looking for buds to pinch!"

So he went away, and all the trees were glad. They are opening their buds now, unafraid. Go and look at them. They are sweet to see.

Teaching Notes. Points for Discussion.

1. This is the story of how trees protect their buds.
2. Where do the trees hide their new leaves? In the buds. We will go and pick some.
3. Horse-chestnut buds. How sticky they are! Why is there this gum all over them?
4. In what other ways do trees protect their leaves? (Toughness, cotton-wool lining, silky hairs, etc.)
5. Put plenty of buds in water and let the children watch them open, in particular the chestnut buds.

1 (Book 3)
THE DOG WHO WANTED A HOME

There was once a dog who wanted a home. He had had a bad master, who whipped him every day, and he had run away because he was so unhappy.

"I shall find a new master, or perhaps a mistress," said the dog to himself. "I want someone who will love me. I want someone to love and to care for."

But nobody seemed to want a dog, nobody at all. It was very sad. The dog ran here and he ran there, but either there was already a dog in the houses he went to, or the people there didn't want a dog.

He talked to his friend, the cat, about it. "What am I to do?" he said. "I must have a home. I cannot run about wild, with no food, and only the puddles to drink from."

"Dogs and cats need homes," said the cat, licking herself as she sat on top of the wall. "I don't know of anyone who wants a dog. It's a pity you are not a cat."

"Why?" asked the dog.

"Because I know a poor, blind old lady who badly wants a cat," said the cat. "She is lonely, and she wants a nice, cosy cat she can have in her lap."

"Perhaps she would have a dog instead," said the dog. "If she is blind, I could help her, couldn't I? I could take her safely across the roads, and guard her house at night. A cat couldn't do that."

"Well, she says she wants a cat, not a dog," said the cat. Then she stopped licking herself and looked closely at the dog.

"I have an idea!" she said. "You have a very silky coat for a dog, and a very long tail. I wonder whether you could *pretend* to be a cat! The poor old lady is blind and she wouldn't know."

"I shouldn't like to deceive anyone," said the dog.

"No, that wouldn't be nice," said the cat. "But after all, a dog *would* be better for the old lady, and when she got used to you, you could tell her you were a dog, and ask her to forgive you for pretending."

"And by that time she might be so fond of me that she wouldn't mind keeping me!" said the dog joyfully. "Yes—that is quite a good idea of yours, cat."

"I will give you a few hints about cats," said the cat. "Don't bark, whatever you do, because, as you know, cats mew. If you bark you will give yourself away. And do try and purr a little."

The dog tried—but what came from his throat was more of a growl than a purr. The cat laughed.

"That's really enough to make a cat laugh!" she said. "Well, perhaps with a little practice you may get better. And another thing to remember is—put your claws in when you walk, so that you walk softly, like me, and don't make a clattering sound."

The dog looked at his paws. The big, blunt claws stuck out, and he could not move them back into his paws, as the cat could. "I must try to practise that too," he said.

"Good-bye," said the cat. "I wish you luck. She is a dear old lady and will be very kind to you."

The dog ran off to the old lady's house. She was sitting in her kitchen, knitting. The dog ran up to her, and pressed against her, as he had seen cats do. The old lady put down her hand and stroked him.

"So someone has sent me a cat!" she said. "How kind! Puss, puss, puss, do you want some milk?"

She got up and put down a saucer of milk. The dog was pleased. He lapped it up noisily.

"Dear me, what a noise you make!" said the old lady in surprise. "You must be a very hungry cat! Come on to my knee."

The dog jumped up on to the old lady's knee. She stroked his silky coat, and felt his long tail. He tried his very best to purr. He made a very funny noise.

"You must have got a cold, Puss," said the old lady. "That's a funny purr you have! Now, go to sleep."

The dog fell asleep. He liked being in the old lady's warm lap. He felt loved and happy. If only she went on thinking that he was a cat!

When he woke up, the old lady spoke to him. "Puss, I want you to lie in the kitchen to-night and catch the mice that come. You will be very useful to me if you can do that."

The dog was not good at catching mice. He was not quiet and sly like the cat. But he made up his mind to try. He did try, very hard, but as soon as he jumped up when he saw a mouse, the little animal heard his claws clattering on the floor, and fled away.

So in the morning there were no dead mice for the old lady to find. She was quite nice about it and stroked the dog gently.

"Never mind, Puss," she said. "You can try again to-night."

The old lady was so kind and gentle that the dog longed with all his heart to catch mice for her, or to do anything to please her. He trotted after her all day long, as she went about her work. It was wonderful what she could do without being able to see.

"The only thing I can't do with safety is to go out and see my grand-children," she told the dog. "You see, I have to cross two roads to get to their house, and I am always afraid of being knocked over by something I can't see."

The dog nearly said "Woof, woof, I will help you," and just remembered in time that cats never bark.

The old lady was puzzled that day. Every time the dog ran across the floor she put her head on one side and listened.

"Your paws make such a noise," she said. "Surely you put your sharp claws in as you run, Puss? It sounds as if you are making quite a noise with them."

So the dog was, because he couldn't help it. He couldn't put his claws in, like the cat. No dog can.

Then another thing puzzled the old lady. She put some milk on her finger for the dog to lick. The dog put out his pink tongue and licked the milk away.

"Well!" said the old lady, surprised. "What a queer tongue you have, Puss! All the other cats I have had had very rough, scraping tongues—but you have a very smooth one!"

"Oh dear!" thought the dog. "This is quite true. Dogs have smooth tongues, and cats have rough ones. I remember an old cat licking me once, and I noticed how rough her tongue was —almost as if it was covered with tiny hooks!"

"I'll give you a nice meaty bone, Puss," said the old lady at tea-time. "You can scrape the meat off it with your tongue, and when you have taken away the meat, we will give the bone to the next-door dog to crunch. Cats cannot crunch bones, but dogs can!"

The dog was delighted to see the lovely, meaty bone. He lay down and began to lick it with his tongue, as cats do. But his tongue was not rough, and he could not get the meat off the bone, any more than you could with *your* tongue!

It was sad. He was hungry and longed to crunch up the bone. He sniffed at it. He licked it again. Then he got it into his mouth and gave it a bite with his hard, strong dog's teeth, that were so different from the teeth of cats!

The bone made a noise as he crunched it up. The old lady was surprised. "Well, I never heard a cat crunch up a big bone before!" she said. "You must have strong teeth, Puss!"

She put on her hat and coat. "I am going out," she said. "I shall try to get to the house where my grand-children live. Maybe someone will help me across the road. Keep house for me whilst I am gone, Puss."

The dog did not like to see the blind old lady going out alone. He ran after her. When she came to the road she had to cross, he stood in front of her, making her wait until a bicycle had gone by. Then he gently tugged at her dress to show her that it was safe to go across.

The old lady was delighted. She bent down to stroke the dog. "Puss, you are the cleverest cat in the world!" she said.

But dear me, when the old lady reached her grand-children safely, what a surprise for her! They ran out to greet her, all shouting the same thing.

"Granny! You've got a dog! Oh, what a nice one!"

And so at last the secret was out. "No wonder I was so puzzled!" said the old lady, stooping to pat the dog. He barked a little, and licked her hand, wagging his tail hard.

"That's right!" said the old lady. "Don't pretend to be a cat any more! Bark, and lick my hand and wag your tail! I'll have you instead of a cat. You're a kind little animal, and you'll help me across the road, won't you?"

"Woof, woof, woof!" said the dog joyfully, and ran off to tell the cat that he had found a home at last.

Teaching Notes. Points for Discussion.

1. The story tells the differences between cats and dogs.

2. Discuss the characteristics of each—bark, purr, whine, mew—cat with claws that she can pull in, dog with claws that cannot be pulled in, cat with rough tongue, dog with smooth tongue, etc.

3. Why are cats' claws sharp, and dogs' claws blunt?

4. Make the story into a little play, and let children act it in their own way.

2 (Book 3)
WHERE SHALL WE NEST?

Once upon a time all the birds had a meeting. The big rook took the topmost bough, and began the talking.

"Caw-caw! This meeting is held to find out which would be the best places for us to nest in this year. Last year so many boys and girls found our nests and eggs, and alas! some of them took the eggs."

"So we must try to find safer places to build in," said the freckled thrush. "Safer places, safer places!"

"Tirry-lee," said the red robin, his bold black eye looking all round. "The very best places to build in are old kettles, or saucepans, or old boots in a ditch. Anything that has belonged to man is nice to build in."

"I don't think so," said the blue-tit. "But you are so friendly to man, aren't you, Robin? You are not afraid of him as we are. No kettles for me! I always think some sort of a hole is the safest place."

"Well, you built in somebody's letter-box last year," said the thrush. "That belonged to man, didn't it?"

"Well, it was a nice *hole*," said the blue-tit. "I chose it because it was a hole, not because it had anything to do with man."

"Holes in trees are best," said the great-tit. The woodpecker nodded his red-splashed head.

"Yes, holes are good," he said.

"There aren't enough holes," said the starling. "It's all very well for the woodpecker to talk—he can always *make* holes by drumming with his beak into the wood. We can't!"

"I think that the very best place is just under the eaves of a house," said the little house-martin. "It's cosy there, and the eaves protect the nest."

"What! Build a nest so near to people!" said the rook. "Caw-caw! You must be mad. Don't the rough boys come and tear down your nests? *I* like to build in the topmost branches of high trees, right away from man."

"Well, you sometimes spoil his corn for him," said the robin. "So he likes to shoot you, and you have to get far away from him when you build."

"If the summer is going to be fine, with few storms, we like to build our big nests high in the topmost boughs," said the rook. "But if the summer is going to be stormy, we build in the lower ones. We are very clever."

"Yes, that *is* clever," said the blackbird. "High-built nests would be torn away by the wind during a storm. You are wise, rook. But all the same, I say that the best place for a nest is somewhere close-hidden in a tree like the oak or the chestnut, or in a close-set hedge."

"Too easily found," said a big gull, soaring round. "If you take *my* advice, you will build somewhere on high cliffs where it is difficult for people to get to your nests."

"We don't all live by the sea," said the moorhen. "If you will let me say a word, I advise everyone to find a nice quiet pond, go to some rushes and build a nest there. You can so easily bend down the rushes, and make a sort of platform nest. Then, when you leave your nest, you can bend rushes over it to hide it."

"A good idea," said the jackdaw. "But I should be afraid of my little ones falling into the water. It's all right for *you*, moorhen, because you can swim. But jackdaws can't."

"You build in queer places," said the kingfisher, looking at the big jackdaw. "Who else would choose a church tower! Why, it must take you ages and ages to build a nest there, because you have to fill it up with sticks!"

"Well, who would want to build a nest like you, tucked into a long hole in a bank!" said the jackdaw. "Nasty and dark and smelly!"

"The sand-martin builds in holes in banks too," said the kingfisher. "And it's a very good idea, isn't it, sand-martin?"

"Very good," said the little brown sand-martin. "We sand-martins like to build our nests all together, you know. I build mine in the sandy bank of an old quarry. I make a hole in it, and lay my eggs at the end of it."

"Supposing rain came, and soaked down into the sand-bank, and into your hole," said the starling. "Your babies would be drowned."

"No, they wouldn't," said the sand-martin at once. "I make my hole slant *up*wards—so any water always runs down and out!"

"That is a good idea," said the starling. "Well—has anyone any more to say? We still haven't decided what is the best place to nest."

Everyone said what he thought, but they couldn't agree. Those that built in holes meant to go on building in holes. Those that built in trees would not change. So they began to talk about what were the best things to use in the building of a nest.

"Maybe we can choose something that no one will notice," said the rook. "*I* think big twigs are the best."

"Oh *no*," said the blue-tit. "I should hate a nest made of big twigs. Moss and root fibres and feathers—that is the sort of thing you want."

"I prefer a mud nest," said the house-martin firmly, and the barn-swallow nodded too. "Mud makes a fine firm nest."

"It must be difficult to make," said the lark in surprise. "I don't bother much about making a wonderful nest. The print of a horse's foot in a field is a good enough place for me to nest in, and just a few bits of grass."

"Mud makes a wonderful nest," said the house-martin. "You fly down to a puddle—and take some mud in your beak like this—and mix a bit of straw with it——"

But nobody wanted to hear. The kingfisher began to talk loudly. "Kee, kee, kee! Listen to me! *I* make a very fine nest, and all I use is—fish-bones!"

"*Fish*-bones!" said the birds in surprise. "How queer! Don't they smell horrid?"

"Yes, they do, but we don't notice it," said the kingfisher. "You see, my mate and I catch plenty of fish, and we use the old bones for a nest, putting them in a pile. They make a fine nest, really they do."

"Well, we don't all want to catch fish in order to make a nasty, smelly nest of fish-bones," said the thrush rather rudely. "I like a nice firm nest made of small twigs, roots, moss, and things like that. And I like a mud lining."

"So do I," said the blackbird, "but I do like a nice soft lining on top of the mud. I can never understand why you don't put one, thrush."

"No need to," said the thrush, "no need to, no need to, no need to!"

"I always think it is best to make my nest of something near at hand," said the robin. "For instance, I usually build my nest somewhere near the ground, where there are plenty of dead

leaves lying about. Very well—if I use dead leaves, my nest can hardly be seen; it is just a mass of dead leaves, among other dead leaves!"

"Quite good," said the chaffinch, thinking of her own neat and pretty little nest. "Linings are very important too, I always think. I like a soft, warm lining for my eggs. Warmth is a good thing for eggs."

"Oh, I think so too!" said the long-tailed tit eagerly. "You should feel how warm *my* nest is, when it's finished. I use feathers inside it—hundreds of them, really hundreds!"

"Well, it isn't everyone that can spare the time to go hunting for as many feathers as *you* use!" said the robin. "I shouldn't be surprised if you put over a thousand feathers inside your ball of a nest. It must be so hot inside that I wonder your eggs aren't cooked!"

There was a silence. All the birds looked at one another, for they were longing to fly off and begin to make their nests. But nothing had been decided!

"Well," said the rook at last, "shall we all build high up in tall trees, as I do?"

"No, in *holes*!" cried the tits, the starlings, the woodpeckers, the kingfishers, and the sand-martins.

"No, on the ground," called the larks, the plovers, and the robins.

"No, in barns!" cried the barn-swallows. "*We* always build in barns."

"No, under the eaves!" cried the house-martins. There was a great noise of twittering and singing, and no one could really make out what was being said. A big bird suddenly flew down, cocked his head to one side, and said, "Cuckoo! Cuckoo!"

"Oh, you didn't come to the meeting!" cried the birds. "You haven't said what *you* think! What is the best place to nest, cuckoo, and what are the best things to use for a nest?"

"The best place to nest is nowhere!" cried the cuckoo, "and the best things to use are nothing! *I* never make a nest—I use *yours*! Cuckoo! Cuckoo! Fancy asking *me*!"

He flew off—and so did everyone else. And if you look and see this year, you will find that each bird has chosen the place *he* thinks the best, and is using what *he* likes most for his nest. It's really fun to watch them so busily at work!

Teaching Notes. Points for Discussion.

1. The story tells of the different kinds of nests built by birds.

2. See how many the children can remember.

3. Press home the marvel of the workmanship in the nests, and from that go on to the unkindness of pulling a nest to pieces, or taking eggs.

4. Discuss the cuckoo, and what a lot of fun he misses through being lazy (nesting, egg-laying, bringing up baby birds).

5. Each child can choose to be a bird, and can say what place he will build in, so that the others may guess what he is.

1 (Book 4)
THE LITTLE HIDDEN SPELL

Once upon a time Jinky came running into Tiptoe's cottage in great excitement.

"What's the matter?" asked Tiptoe. "You do look pleased."

"Well, I am," said Jinky. "What do you think? I have made a most wonderful spell! It is a spell that will make sad people smile—and, as you know, anyone who can be made to smile does not feel so sad! Isn't that marvellous?"

"Yes, it is," said Tiptoe. "Where is the spell? Show it to me."

Jinky took it out of his pocket. It was so small that it looked no bigger than a poppy seed. It was bright blue, and twinkled as Jinky held it in his hand.

"That's all it is," he said. "Just that. But if any sad person holds it in his hand for just one second, he will smile at once."

"Be careful that Tangle the goblin doesn't hear of it," said Tiptoe. "He would take it away from you and sell it to Tail-Hat the enchanter for a lot of money."

"I'm afraid Tangle does know about it," said Jinky. "You see, Tiptoe, I was so pleased that I couldn't help making up a little song about my new spell—and I sang it on the way here."

"Oh dear—and I suppose Tangle heard it," said Tiptoe sadly. "Oh, Jinky—quick—here comes Tangle now! I am sure he is after your new spell. Hide it, quickly!"

"Where? Where?" cried Jinky. "It's no good putting it into my pocket, no good at all. He'd find it there!"

Tiptoe picked up a bag from the table. In it were a good many little brown things. She picked one out and gave it to Jinky.

"Stuff the spell in one of these tiny bulbs," she said. "Go on, hurry! Stuff it right down at the top end. That's right."

"I am sure Tangle would never think of looking there," said Jinky. "I'll put the little bulb in my pocket, and I'll bury it deep in my garden, Tiptoe. Then no one will know where it is but me. I can dig it up when Tangle has forgotten about it, can't I?"

"Yes," said Tiptoe. "Ah—here he is!"

Tangle walked into Tiptoe's kitchen. He was called Tangle because his hair always wanted brushing and combing. He was a very untidy goblin.

"Where's this spell I heard you singing about?" he said to Jinky.

"Spell? What spell?" said Jinky, opening his eyes very wide.

"It's no good pretending to me that you don't know about the smiling-spell," said Tangle angrily. "I know you brought it to show Tiptoe."

He caught hold of poor Jinky and put his hand into every one of Jinky's pockets. He found a red handkerchief, an old bit of toffee, a piece of string, two stones with little holes in them—and the tiny bulb.

"What's this?" said Tangle, holding it up.

"That's one of my snowdrop bulbs," said Tiptoe, showing Tangle the bag of them. "I'm going to plant them under my lilac tree. I gave Jinky one for himself."

Tangle gave Jinky back all the things he had taken from his pocket. Then he searched Tiptoe's kitchen well, even looking into her two teapots. She was very cross.

"You've no right to do this!" she said to Tangle. "No right at all. I shall never, never ask you to come to any of my parties."

"Pooh! I don't like parties," said Tangle. He went off in a temper, and banged the kitchen door so hard that a plate fell off the dresser and broke.

"Horrid thing!" said Tiptoe, almost in tears. "Look—now he's peeping in at the window! Jinky, don't take the spell out of the bulb, whatever you do, or he'll see it. Hurry home, and bury it in your garden to-night, when it's dark and Tangle won't see you."

Jinky waited until Tangle had gone away. Then he hurried home as fast as he could. He didn't sing any song about his smiling-spell as he went. He ran indoors and shut and bolted his door.

Tangle came along, but Jinky wouldn't open his door, so Tangle had to go away. That night, when it was dark, Jinky opened his door and crept softly outside.

He went to his big garden, and found a trowel. He dug a little hole, popped the snowdrop bulb into it, and covered it with soil.

"Now I've hidden my spell, and no one will know where it is!" thought Jinky to himself.

Now, soon after that, Tangle went away to live somewhere else. Jinky was delighted.

"Now I can dig up my smiling-spell again, and use it!" he said. So out he went and got his trowel.

But dear me, he couldn't think where he had put the little bulb! He stood there in the middle of his big garden and frowned hard.

"Did I put it by the wall over there? Or did I put it under the hedge? Or could I have put it into the rose-bed?"

He didn't know. He began to dig here and there, but he couldn't find it. It was no good trying to hunt for it. He might have to dig up the whole garden before he found it!

"Oh dear!" said Jinky, very sad. "Now I've lost it. I shall never find it again. My wonderful, marvellous smiling-spell is gone, quite gone!"

He went to tell Tiptoe. But she didn't seem at all sad. She smiled so widely that Jinky wondered if someone had given *her* a smiling-spell to hold in her hand for a second.

"Don't worry, Jinky dear," she said. "You will find your spell again in the early spring-time. It's only just past Christmas now—you wait for a few weeks, and you will find your spell. I promise you that!"

"But how can I find it?" asked Jinky. Tiptoe wouldn't tell him.

"I've always told you that you are very, very stupid about things like seeds and flowers and bulbs and trees," she said. "You don't know anything about them at all, and it is very wrong of you. You have a lovely big garden, Jinky, and yet you don't grow anything in it but grass and weeds!"

"Well, but just tell me how I can find my wonderful spell again," said Jinky. "Please do, Tiptoe."

"If you knew anything at all about plants, I wouldn't need to tell you!" laughed Tiptoe. "Now go away, Jinky, and watch your garden well this spring-time. If you see anything strange in it, come and tell me."

Jinky watched his garden, as Tiptoe had told him. It was bare and brown in January. At the beginning of February there came a little snowfall. It made the garden look very pretty. Jinky went out to look at it.

And then he saw two straight green leaves growing up from the earth beneath the snow. He saw a tight little bud pushing up between the two leaves. He was astonished.

“A flower so early in the year!” he said. “How sweet! I must watch it.”

So he watched it each day. He saw the flower-stalk grow long. He watched the bud shake itself free of its covering and droop its pretty head. He saw the flower open into a pure-white bell, its three outer petals as white as the snow itself.

He went to tell Tiptoe. She smiled. “I thought you would soon be coming to tell me about the snowdrop,” she said. She put on her hat and went back to Jinky’s garden with him.

“Yes—that’s the snowdrop which is growing from the tiny brown bulb you buried,” she said. “You buried your spell—but you planted a snowdrop, Jinky! And it grew, as you see!”

“How can it grow in such cold weather?” said Jinky, amazed. “Where have the leaves come from, and the beautiful flower?”

“Out of the bulb!” said Tiptoe. “The bulb is a little store-house of food, Jinky. It can send up leaves and flowers very early in the year. When the flower has faded, dig up the old bulb—and you will find your spell still there in safety!”

So Jinky waited till the pretty flower had died, and then he carefully dug up the old bulb, which by now was dried up, because the growing leaves and flowers had used up the food it had held. In it was still his wonderful spell. He took it out, twinkling blue, and ran off to Tiptoe with it.

“I shall sell my spell to a doctor for a lot of money!” he cried. “And, Tiptoe, with some of the money I shall buy hundreds and hundreds of bulbs! I shall plant them in my garden—and then, early in the year, I shall have the joy of seeing them grow!”

“Get daffodils and hyacinths too,” said Tiptoe, smiling. “They all store up food in their bulbs, and send up leaves and flowers early in the year.”

“I think a bulb is just as much a magic thing as my smiling-spell,” said Jinky.

And I really think he was right! Can you plant a bulb and watch it send up leaves and flowers? You will think it is like magic too.

(If you would like to see how a bulb is made, get an onion, cut it in half, and have a look at it.)

Teaching Notes. Points for Discussion.

1. The story tells of the growth of a bulb early in the year.
2. Get an onion and cut it longitudinally to show the children how a bulb is made. (An onion is a very good example of a bulb.)
3. Discuss why bulbs can come out so early in the year—because they have a store of food in the fleshy scale leaves.
4. Other bulbs—for example, hyacinth, tulip, bluebell. (Not crocus, which is a corm.)
5. Plant bulbs in a bowl in autumn for children to watch growing.

2 (Book 4)
BETTY AND THE LAMBS' TAILS

All the children liked nature lessons. It was fun to hear about the animals and birds and flowers. They liked hunting for things in the hedges and trees, in the fields and woods.

Miss Wills, the teacher, had made a big nature chart, which she put on the wall. There was a space left for every day.

"Now," she said, "I want *some*one to fill in every space!"

"How can we?" asked Jack.

"Well," said Miss Wills, "any boy or girl who finds something new or strange or lovely in their walks, can draw it or write a piece about it in the space for that day. And they must put their name in the space too, so that we shall know who gave us that nice piece of nature news."

"That's a fine idea," said Betty. "It will be fun to fill up the spaces, Miss Wills. I hope I get my name there heaps of times."

"Well, you will have to use your eyes a little more than you do, Betty, if you want your name on the chart," said Miss Wills. "You are not very good at noticing things yet!"

"I shall try," said Betty.

"I know one thing we can look for now, before the leaves grow on the trees," said Joan. "We can look for old birds' nests. We shan't be able to find them easily when the trees begin to leaf."

"And we can look for new flowers, and listen to the birds beginning to sing their spring songs," said Pat.

It was Pat who filled up the first space on the chart. He found a yellow coltsfoot, a *very* early one! He proudly drew it on the chart, and then signed his name.

Ellen filled the next space. She saw a lark fly up from the ground, high into the sky, and heard him singing his loud, sweet song. She found a picture, copied it, and then signed her name in the space for that day.

"A flower and a bird already," said Miss Wills. "How gay our chart will look when it is finished!"

Harry found a butterfly sleeping in the loft. It was a lovely yellow. "It is a brimstone," said Miss Wills. "Well done, Harry. You can make it a fine bright yellow on the chart. Sign your name—that's right."

"Betty hasn't put anything on the chart yet," said Pat. "She said she was going to find heaps of things. But she never does. Where are your eyes, Betty? You never seem to see *any*thing!"

"Oh dear!" said Betty. "I really will look hard." So she did. And, on the way to school that morning, as she went down the long lane, she did see something! She was looking in the hedges for an old nest—and she found a new one!

It was a blackbird's nest, and the blackbird was still making it. It was almost finished, and the blackbird was putting a soft lining of grass on to the mud he had placed at the bottom of his nest.

"Oh—he's actually *mak*ing it!" cried Betty, and she peeped at it to make sure it really was a new one. There it was, set firmly in the fork of a little tree. The tree grew higher than the

hedge, and was covered with long catkins that shook in the breeze. The wind blew, and yellow pollen-powder flew from the catkins all over Betty's head.

"I shall have my name on the chart! I shall draw the nest!" cried Betty. She rushed off to school and told Miss Wills.

"I must go and see if it really *is* a blackbird's nest," said Miss Wills. "If it is a new one, we mustn't disturb the bird too much or it will fly away and not lay its eggs there."

Miss Wills, Betty and Jack all went to see if the nest was really a blackbird's. And will you believe it, Betty couldn't find the nest! They hunted up the hedge and down the hedge, but they couldn't find the nest.

"It was well hidden," said Betty. "Oh, Miss Wills, can't I count it? Can't I put it on the chart?"

"I'm afraid I must see it," said Miss Wills. "Now we really must go back, Betty. It's late."

Betty was sad. They went back to school, and on the way there Jack kept looking at Betty's dark hair. He wondered what the yellow powder was, scattered all over it.

And he suddenly knew. "Of course! It's from the lambs' tails catkins growing in the hedge! Betty must have leaned over to look at the nest, and the hazel tree shook its pollen-powder all over her. Now—if I can find a hazel tree with catkins in the lane, all I have to do is to look in the lower branches for the nest!"

On the way home Jack looked for a hazel tree with catkins. There were two or three growing out of the hedge beside the lane. He looked carefully into the hedge below the trees for a nest.

And he found the blackbird's nest under one of the trees! Above his head the wind shook the lambs' tails, and yellow pollen-powder blew all over Jack's head, just as it had blown over Betty's.

That afternoon Jack took Miss Wills to the nest. "How did you know where to look for it this time?" asked Miss Wills. Jack told her.

"The nut tree told me! The yellow pollen from the hazel tree's catkins was all over Betty's hair—so I knew she must have found a nest just below a hazel!"

"Clever boy," said Miss Wills. "I think you will have to count the nest as yours, but Betty can sign her name in the space too. A little share of it must be hers, as she first found the nest."

Betty was sad when she heard that she could not count the nest as hers. "I am silly not to have noticed where it was," she said. "I do think you are clever, Jack, to have seen the yellow stuff on my hair. I wonder why the hazel tree sends out such a lot of powder."

She went to have a look at the hazel tree on the way home. "How queer that you should make such a lot of pollen-powder in your long catkins!" she said to the tree. The wind blew and the catkins shook and danced like long tails. Clouds of yellow powder flew out.

"What a waste!" said Betty. "I wonder why you make that yellow pollen-powder? Is it to help to make nuts for us, I wonder?"

The little girl began to look carefully at the bare brown hazel twigs. She saw some tiny buds growing on them—and then, much to her surprise, she saw that some of the buds had tiny red spikes hanging out of the middle of them.

"That's queer!" said Betty to herself. "That's very queer! Why do some of these little buds have red spikes? Are they a kind of flower-bud?"

She picked two or three twigs with buds on. She took them to school with her, and showed them to Miss Wills.

“Look, Miss Wills,” she said. “I went to have a peep at the blackbird’s nest under the boughs of the hazel tree, and I noticed that some of the hazel buds have these funny red spikes hanging out. What are they?”

“Dear me, Betty *has* begun to use her eyes well!” said Miss Wills, pleased. “Betty, the hazel tree grows two kinds of flowers—the pollen flowers, which are the lambs’ tails we love so much—and these funny little red-spike flowers.”

“What are they for?” asked Betty.

“They make the nuts that we like to pick in the autumn,” said Miss Wills. “As soon as some of the yellow pollen-powder flies to these red spikes, they can begin to make nuts. I *am* glad you saw them, Betty.”

“Can I draw the catkins and the red-spike buds on the chart, and sign my name there?” asked Betty.

“Of course!” said Miss Wills. “It is one of the best things we shall have down for this month, Betty. Well done!”

Betty was very proud. She drew the catkins on the chart, and she drew and coloured some of the little buds that had red spikes. She drew a few that hadn’t too.

“They are leaf-buds,” said Miss Wills. “You have three things there, Betty, haven’t you—the pollen-catkins—the nut-flowers—and the leaf-buds? That is really very good.”

“I shall watch the nut-buds and see how the nuts grow,” said Betty. “Isn’t it funny, Miss Wills? The blackbird’s nest made me see something else! It’s fun to find something all by myself.”

Betty is watching the nut-buds of the hazel tree. Can *you* find the catkins and the red-spike buds, and watch the nuts growing too?

Teaching Notes. Points for Discussion.

1. This story tells of the male hazel flowers, the catkins, and the female flowers, the little bud-like knobs on the twig, set with red spikes.

2. Get some hazel catkins and shake the pollen out. Explain very simply that the red spike-flowers are waiting for some in order to make nuts.

3. Many trees grow long catkins in order that the wind may shake out the pollen.

4. Other trees ask the bees to help them. Explain this simply.

1 (Book 5)
THE CROSS LITTLE TADPOLE

Once upon a time a big mass of jelly lay on the top of a pond. In it were tiny black specks, like little black commas.

The sun shone down and warmed the jelly. A fish tried to nibble a bit, but it was too slippery. A big black beetle tried a little too, but he didn't like it. The rain came and pattered down on the jelly.

Every day the tiny black specks grew bigger. They were eggs. Soon it would be time for them to hatch, and swim about as tadpoles in the pond.

The day came when the black eggs had become wriggling tadpoles, and then the jelly began to disappear. It was no longer needed. It had saved the eggs from being eaten, because it was too slippery for any creature to gobble up for its dinner. It had helped to hold the eggs up to the sunshine too. But now it was of no more use.

The little black wrigglers swam to a water-weed and held on to it. They were very tiny. When they were hungry they nibbled the weed. It tasted nice to them.

They grew bigger each day in the pond, and soon the other creatures began to know them. "There go two tadpoles!" said the stickleback, all his spines standing up along his back.

"Funny creatures, aren't they?" said the big black beetle. "All head and tail—nothing much else to them!"

"Hundreds of them!" said the water-snail. "The whole pond is full of them."

"I like them for my dinner," said the dragonfly grub. "Look—I hide down here in the mud, and when I see a nice fat tadpole swimming by, out I pounce and catch one in my jaw."

A good many of the tadpoles were eaten by enemies, because they were not sharp enough or fast enough to escape. Those that were left grew big, and raced about the pond, wriggling their long tails swiftly.

One little tadpole had some narrow escapes. One of the black beetles nearly caught him—in fact, a tiny piece was bitten off his tail. Another time he scraped himself badly on the spines of the stickleback.

And twice the dragonfly grub darted at him and almost caught him. Each time the little tadpole was very cross.

"Leave me alone! What harm am I doing to you? I don't want to be your dinner!"

The pond had other things in it besides the fish, the grubs, and the beetles. It had some frogs, and the little tadpole was always in a temper about these.

"Those big fat frogs are so rude and bad-mannered," he said to the other tadpoles. "How I hate them with their gaping mouths and great big eyes!"

The frogs didn't like the cross little tadpole because he called rude names after them. Sometimes they chased him, swimming fast with their strong hind legs.

"If once we catch you, we shall spank you hard!" they croaked. The tadpole swam behind a stone and called back to them:

"Old croakers! Old greedy-mouths! Old stick-out eyes!"

The frogs tried to overturn the stone and get at the rude tadpole. But he burrowed down in the mud, and came up far behind them.

"Old croakers!" he cried. "Here I am—peep-bo! Old croakers!"

The frogs lay in wait for the rude tadpole. He never knew when a fat green frog would jump into the water from the bank, almost on top of him. He never knew when one would scramble out of the mud just below him.

"I'm tired of these frogs," he told the other tadpoles. "I wish somebody would eat them. I wish those ducks would come back and gobble them up!"

The tadpole had never forgotten one day when some wild ducks had flown down to the pond, and had frightened all the frogs and other creatures very much indeed.

The ducks had caught and eaten three frogs, and at least twenty tadpoles. It had been a dreadful day. None of the tadpoles ever forgot it.

"You shouldn't wish for those ducks to come back!" said the stickleback. "*You* might be eaten yourself!"

"I'm getting too big to be eaten," said the cross tadpole. "Stickleback, what else eats frogs?"

"The grass-snake eats frogs," said the pretty little stickleback. "I once saw him come sliding down into the water. He swam beautifully. He ate four frogs when he came."

"I've a good mind to go and tell him to come to this pond and eat some more frogs," said the tadpole. "He might be glad to know there was a good meal here for him."

"Well, he is lying in the sun on the bank of the pond, over there," said the stickleback. "Go and tell him now! But, tadpole—listen to me—I don't think I have ever met anyone quite so silly as you in all my life!"

"Pooh!" said the tadpole rudely, and swam off towards the bank on which the long grass-snake was lying, curled up in a heap.

The tadpole poked his black head out of the water and called to the snake: "Hi, grass-snake! Can you hear me?"

The snake woke up in surprise. He looked at the tadpole. "What do you want?" he said.

"I've come to tell you that there are a lot of horrid, nasty frogs in this pond, that would make a very good dinner for you," said the tadpole. "If you slide into the water now I'll show you where to look for them. I'd be glad if you would eat every frog you can see, because they lie in wait for me and try to catch me and spank me."

The snake put out his quivering tongue and then drew it in again. "I would come to-day, but I have just had a very good meal," he said. "I will come back some day when I am hungry, and you shall show me where to find the frogs then."

He glided off through the grass. The tadpole swam back to his friends in excitement.

"What do you think?" he cried. "I've told the grass-snake about those horrid frogs that want to spank me! He is coming back to eat them one day soon!"

The days went on, warm, sunny days. The tadpole grew and grew. One day he noticed that he had two back legs, and he was most astonished.

"Hallo!" he said. "I've got legs! So have all the other tadpoles. Rather nice!"

Then he noticed that he had front legs as well. His tail became shorter. He wanted to breathe up in the air, instead of breathing down in the water.

He and the other tadpoles found a little bit of wood on the surface of the water, and they climbed up on to it. It was nice to sit there in the sunshine, breathing the warm air. It was fun to flick out a little tongue to see if any fly could be caught by it.

"This is a nice life!" said the cross tadpole. "A very nice life. I like living in this warm pond. Most of those horrid frogs have gone now, so life is very pleasant."

“There’s your friend, the grass-snake,” said the stickleback, poking his head up suddenly. “Why don’t you go and tell him to come and gobble up all the frogs in this pond, as you said you would?”

The tadpole was just about to leap off his bit of wood, when he caught sight of himself in the water. The pond was calm that day, like a mirror, and the tadpole could see himself well.

He stared down at himself in horror and amazement for he did not see a tadpole, but a small frog!

“I’ve turned into a frog!” he croaked. “I have, I have! And all the other tadpoles are little frogs too! Why didn’t I notice that before?”

“Tadpoles always turn into frogs. I could have told you that before, but you never would listen to anyone,” said the stickleback. “Well—are you going to find the grass-snake and tell him to come and eat you and all your friends too? You said you would tell him where the frogs were in this pond.”

But the tiny frog did not go to tell the snake anything. He felt quite certain that he would be eaten at once. He jumped into the pond with a splash, and swam as fast as he could to the other side of the water.

Wasn’t he a silly fellow? He is five years old now, and quite grown-up—but you have only to say “Snake!” to him to send him leaping away in fright!

Teaching Notes. Points for Discussion.

1. The story tells the life-history of the frog, from egg to full-grown frog.

2. The tadpole has many enemies. Most of the tadpoles are eaten and do not grow into frogs. Discuss the pond-life creatures—the beetle, dragon-fly grub, fish, frog, snail. Discuss the pond-visitors—snake, duck, moorhen, ourselves. Enemies or friends?

3. Frog does not live all his life in a pond. He leaves it for a land-life later.

4. Make up a little play from the story, using tadpoles, frogs, beetle, dragon-fly grub and snake as characters.

2 (Book 5)
SILKY AND THE SNAIL

Silky was a pixie. She lived under a hawthorn hedge, and often talked to the birds and animals that passed by her house.

One day a big snail came crawling slowly by. Silky had never seen a snail, and at first she was quite afraid. Then she ran up to the snail, and touched his hard shell.

"How clever you are!" she said. "You carry your house about with you! Why do you do that?"

"Well, you see," said the snail, "I have a very soft body that many birds and other creatures like to eat—so I grow a shell to protect it."

"What a good idea," said the pixie. "Can you put your body right inside your shell, snail?"

"Watch me!" said the snail, and he curled his soft body up quickly into his shell. There was nothing of him to be seen except his spiral shell.

"Very clever," said the pixie. "Come out again, please, snail. I want to talk to you."

The snail put his head out and then more of his body. He had four feelers on his head, and the pixie looked at them.

"Haven't you any eyes?" she said. "I can't see your eyes, snail."

"Oh, I keep them at the top of my longer pair of feelers," said the snail. "Can't you see them? Right at the top, pixie—little black things."

"Oh yes, I can see them now," said the pixie. "What a funny place to keep your eyes, snail! Why do you keep them there?"

"Well, it's rather nice to have my eyes high up on feelers I can move about here and there," said the snail. "Wouldn't you like eyes on the ends of movable feelers, pixie? Think what a lot you could see!"

"I should be afraid that they would get hurt, if I had them at the end of feelers," said Silky.

"Oh no!" said the snail, and he did such a funny thing. He rolled his eyes down inside his feelers, and the pixie stared in surprise.

"Oh, you can roll your eyes down your feelers, just as I pull the toe of my stocking inside out!" she said. "Sometimes I put my hand inside my stocking, catch hold of the toe, and pull it down inside the stocking, to turn it inside out—and you do the same with your eyes!"

"Yes, I do," said the snail. "It's rather a good idea, don't you think so?"

"Oh, *very* good," said Silky. "Where's your mouth? Is that it, under your feelers?"

"Yes," said the snail, and he opened it to show the pixie. She looked at it closely.

"Have you any teeth?" she said. "I have a lot."

"So have I," said the snail. "I have about fourteen thousand."

Silky stared. "You shouldn't tell silly stories like that," she said.

"I'm not telling silly stories," said the snail. "I'll show you my teeth."

He put out a long, narrow tongue, and Silky laughed. "Don't tell me that you grow teeth on your *tongue*," she said.

"Well, I do," said the snail. "Just look at my tongue, pixie. Can't you see the tiny teeth there, hundreds and hundreds of them?"

"Oh *yes*," said the pixie in surprise. "I can. They are so tiny, snail, and they all point backwards. It's like a tooth-ribbon, your tongue. How do you eat with your teeth?"

"I use my tongue like a file," said the snail. "I'll show you."

He went to a lettuce, put out his tongue, and began to rasp away at a leaf. In a moment he had eaten quite a big piece.

"Well, you really *are* a queer creature," said Silky. She looked closely at the snail, and noticed a queer little hole opening and shutting in the top of his neck.

"What's that slit for, in your neck?" she asked. "And why does it keep opening and shutting?"

"Oh, that's my breathing-hole," said the snail. "Didn't you guess that? Every time that hole opens and shuts, I breathe."

"Why don't you breathe with your mouth, as I do?" asked Silky.

"All soft-bodied creatures like myself, that have no bones at all, breathe through our bodies," said the snail. "Now, if you will excuse me, I must get into my shell. I can see the big thrush coming."

He put his body back into his shell and stayed quite still. The thrush passed by without noticing him. The pixie went into her house, and came out with a tin of polish and a duster.

"Snail, I am going to polish up your shell for you," she said. "I shall make you look so nice. Everyone will say how beautiful you are!"

"Oh, thank you," said the snail, and he stayed quite still whilst Silky put polish on her cloth and then rubbed his shell hard.

"I rather like that," he said.

"Well, come every day and I'll give you a good rubbing with my duster," promised the pixie.

So, very soon, the two became good friends, and the snail always came by the pixie's house for a chat whenever he was near.

One day Silky was sad. She showed the snail a necklace of bright-blue beads—but it was broken, for the clasp was lost.

"I wanted to wear this at a party to-morrow," said Silky. "But I can't get anyone to mend it for me."

"I know someone who will," said the snail. "He is a great friend of mine. He lives in a tiny house, the fifth stone to the left of the old stone wall, and the fifteenth up. There's a hole there, and Mendy lives in it, doing all kinds of jobs for everyone."

"I would never find the way," said Silky. "I know I'd get lost."

"Well, I will take the necklace for you to-night," said the snail. "But I know Mendy will take a little time to do it, so you would have to fetch it yourself some time to-morrow."

"But I should get lost!" said Silky.

"I will see that you don't," said the snail. "I will take the necklace to Mendy, give it to him, and come straight back here. And behind me I will leave a silvery trail, quite easy for you to follow!"

"Oh, snail, you *are* kind and clever!" said Silky, delighted. She hung the beads over the snail's feelers, and he set off towards the old wall he knew so well. It was a long way for him to go, because he travelled very slowly.

It was a dry evening and the soft body of the snail did not get along as easily as on a wet night. So he set out some slime to help his body along, and then he glided forwards more easily.

The slimy trail dried behind him, and left a beautiful silvery path, easy to see. The snail went up the wall to the hole where old Mendy the brownie lived, and gave him the broken

necklace.

"It will be ready at noon to-morrow," said Mendy. "Thank you," said the snail, and went home again, very slowly, leaving behind him a second silvery trail, running by the first.

Silky was asleep, so he didn't wake her, but he told her next morning that her necklace would be ready at noon.

"And you *can't* get lost," he said, "because I have left two silvery paths for you to follow. It doesn't matter which you walk on—either of them will lead you to Mendy."

So Silky set off on one of the silvery paths, and it led her to the old wall, up it, and into Mendy's little house. Her necklace was mended, so she put it on ready for the party. She was very pleased indeed.

"Thank you," she said. "Now I know the way to your house, I'll bring some other things for you to mend, Mendy!"

She went to find her friend, the snail. "Thank you for leaving me such a lovely silvery path," she said. "I do think you are clever!"

I expect you would like to see the snail's silvery path too, wouldn't you? Well, go round your garden any summer's morning—you are sure to see the snail's night-time trail of silver gleaming in the sunshine here and there.

Teaching Notes. Points for Discussion.

1. This story tells the characteristics of the garden snail.
2. Have one or two snails for the children to examine.
3. Let them notice the shell, the soft body, the eyes at the tip of the horns, the breathing hole.
4. Tell them to look out for silvery snail-trails each morning.
5. Who knows what happens to the snail in winter?

1 (Book 6)
THE CLEVER WEATHER-COCK

There was once a cock who lived in a farmyard with hens and ducks and turkeys. He was a very clever cock, because he could always tell the other birds and animals what the weather was going to be.

"Ducks! You'll be happy to-morrow!" he would say. "It will rain to-night!"

And sure enough it would rain, and the next day the ducks would go splashing happily through the puddles, and the hens would look miserable.

Then another time he would say, "Ah, you'll want to keep in your houses to-morrow, hens! It will be icy-cold! I shouldn't be surprised if we have some snow!"

He would be quite right. Snow would come in the night, and all the birds and animals would look out in surprise at it. Snow! White snow over everything. How strange and queer the farmyard looked.

"Dear Mr. Cock, how can you tell the weather so cleverly?" asked one of the ducks.

"The wind tells me," said the cock.

"The wind!" said the duck. "But how can it tell you that, dear Mr. Cock?"

"Well, if the wind comes from the north, I know it will be cold," said the cock. "Icy-cold. So cold that we may have snow if it is winter-time."

"Why is the north wind so cold?" asked the duck in surprise.

"Because it blows over icy-cold lands, I suppose," said the cock. He was quite right. "I suppose if a wind is warm, it comes from warmer lands than ours; and if it's cold, it comes from colder lands. You could have thought of that yourself, duck, couldn't you?"

"No, I couldn't, dear Mr. Cock," said the duck. "I am not clever like you. Can you tell me this? Why do some winds bring rain?"

"Because they blow over the sea and get wet, I suppose," said the clever cock. And again he was quite right.

"What a wonderful bird you are!" said the duck. "It is a pity you have to live in a farmyard like this, dear Mr. Cock, a very great pity."

"I suppose it is," said the cock, and he fluffed out his beautiful tail-feathers, and made himself big. "I know every wind that blows, and I can tell you which one will bring good weather, and which one will bring bad weather."

"What wind is blowing now?" asked the duck. A big drop of rain fell on his beak as he spoke.

"The wind is warm and wet," said the cock wisely, "so it comes from the west, and it comes from the south. It is a little bit of both. It is a south-westerly wind. The south wind is always warm, and the west wind is wet."

"Certainly you are very clever," said the duck, and waddled off on her webbed feet to tell the other ducks to come out and splash in the puddles that would soon be everywhere.

Now, on the church tower there was another kind of cock—a weather-cock. It swung round in the wind and pointed to the west, or the east, or the south, or the north, to show everyone which way the wind was blowing.

"If his beak points to N for north, then the wind is blowing from the north," said the boys and girls. "And if it points to S for south, the wind is blowing from the south."

One day there came a tremendous gale. The wind blew from the north-west, and the weather-cock could hardly keep his balance, up there on the church tower. He was old and a bit rusty. He creaked as he went round.

The wind blew harder still—and the old weather-cock was blown right off the spire! He flew through the air, high over the trees, and fell flat into the pond in the farmyard. He lay there at the bottom of the water. All the ducks were very much afraid.

"What is it, what is it?" they quacked to one another. "Let us go and fetch the clever cock. He will be able to tell us."

The cock came. "Cock-a-doodle-doo!" he said in great surprise. "Why, that is the weather-cock from the church steeple. The wind has blown him away. Good afternoon, weather-cock."

The weather cock said "good afternoon" from the bottom of the pond—but it sounded like "booble, booble, booble, booble", because the water made him gurgle.

"There's no weather-cock on the church spire!" cried the hens. "No one will know which way the wind is blowing. The boys and girls will be very upset."

"*I* will go," said the clever cock, ruffling his wings. "I always know which way the wind is blowing. I can always point my beak in the right direction. I will be the weather-cock until the real one is taken from the pond and put back."

He flew to the top of the church spire, and perched on the bars that said N, S, E and W for north, south, east and west. The wind was dying down now, but it still came from the north-west. So the cock firmly set his beak towards the north-west, half-way between the N and the W.

"Cock-a-doodle-doo! North-west wind for you!" he crowed to the children.

"I say! Isn't the weather-cock fat to-day?" said the boys and girls in surprise. "And did you hear him crow?"

Next day the wind changed to south, and the boys and girls took off their coats and scarves, for the day was warm.

"Cock-a-doodle-doo! Wind from the south for you!" crowed the cock. He was enjoying himself. He could see so many, many things from such a high place. He could see the whole town. He could see the river curling along like a blue snake in the distance. He could see his own farmyard, and the little pond in the middle of it.

He could see the fields and the sheep in them. He could see the hens and the ducks, looking very small, like toys. Oh, he could see a wonderful lot of things, could the clever old cock!

The winds came to him and talked in his ear. "We do a lot of good," said the winds. "We dry the clothes on the line. We blow the sailing-ships along. We take the big arms of the windmills and twist them round and round to help the farmers."

"So you do, so you do, cock-a-doodle-doo!" said the cock, ruffling his wings. He swung round a little as another wind spoke to him.

"I bring the rain," it said. "I fill up the ponds and the rivers. I water the flowers, and help the farmers' crops to grow."

"Well, don't blow too much just at present, west wind," said the cock. "I can't run to shelter myself up here, you know, and I have no umbrella."

"Ho, ho! a weather-cock with an umbrella would be a funny sight!" said the west wind, and he brought a few drops of rain along and wetted the cock's red comb.

The cock was really very clever indeed. He always pointed his beak in the right direction, no matter where the wind came from. And he always knew if it was going to be cold or hot,

snowy or rainy. He called out the news.

"Here's a sunny day for you, cock-a-doodle-doo!" he would cry, when the south wind blew gently.

"Here's a snowy day for you, cock-a-doodle-doodle-doo!" he would crow, when the north wind blew strongly, and big snow-flakes began to fall from the sky.

The south wind told him how it blew the pollen out of the hazel catkins on to the red-spiked buds along the twigs, so that nuts could be made. The east wind told him how it shook the green flowers of the nettles in the summer, so that pollen might be blown out of them too.

The north-west wind told him how it blew all kinds of seeds away in the autumn, so that they flew off in the air to find new homes.

"I puff and I blow, and off go the dandelion seeds, and the thistle-down clocks, and the ash keys and the seeds from the poppy-heads!" said the wind.

"And you blow the acorns and conkers down for the children too!" said the weather-cock. For now he *was* the weather-cock. Yes, he really was! No one had found the other old weather-cock in the pond. He was still there, settling deep in the mud.

The new weather-cock was very thin now, but as weather-cocks always *are* thin, that was a very good thing. He always tells what wind is blowing, and he never, never makes a mistake.

Have you ever noticed him blowing this way and that? Look at him and see. You will think he is really very clever.

Teaching Notes. Points for Discussion.

1. This story tells of the work of the wind.
2. What weather-cocks have the children seen?
3. The points of the compass.
4. Characteristics of the four winds, for example, west wind often brings rain, and so on.
4. The things the wind does. Each child can tell one thing.
5. Draw the points of the compass on the floor, set a child in the middle, and let him pretend to be the weather-cock, calling out what wind is blowing as he turns himself round.

2 (Book 6)
THE VERY QUEER CHICKS

Once there was a hen who wanted to sit on eggs. The farmer's wife was pleased.

"Here is a hen who wants to sit on eggs every day and night!" she said. "We will give her some duck's eggs to sit on. The duck is a bad mother. She will not sit long enough on her eggs!"

So the farmer's wife took twelve duck's eggs, and put them in a nest of straw. She set the old brown hen on the greeny-blue eggs, and the big bird settled down at once. She was happy.

"This is what I wanted!" she said to her friend, the white hen. "I wanted to feel a lot of eggs under me. I wanted to cover them, and keep them warm. I am happy now."

Her friend was sitting on eggs too, but they were hen's eggs, not duck's. Both the birds were happy. They loved sitting on the big clutches of eggs.

They sat on them for many days. Sometimes they left them for a little while to pick up some grain, or to have a drink of water. But they soon went back, fluffed themselves out well, and covered the eggs with their feathers and moist warm bodies.

"We must not let them get cold or too dry," said the white hen.

"If we do, they will not hatch out into little chicks," said the brown hen. "Cluck-cluck. We will keep them very warm."

One day the white hen was excited. She bent her head down and listened.

"What is the matter?" said the brown hen.

"My eggs are going to hatch!" said the white hen. "I can hear one little chick tapping with his beak inside the egg. Soon it will break—and I shall see a dear little fluffy chick!"

The white hen was right. Before the next morning, all her eggs were hatched. She had twelve dear little chicks. Six of them were bright yellow, and six of them were a mixture of brown and yellow. They ran about, and cheeped in little high voices. It was sweet to hear them.

Then the eggs of the brown hen hatched too. Out came, not chicks, but twelve little ducklings. They were all bright yellow. The hen was very pleased with them. She thought they were chicks and she clucked to them lovingly.

"Dear little chicks of mine! I will take care of you! When you hear me call sharply, like this—CLUCK-CLUCK—you must run to me at once, and hide under my wings."

The chicks and the ducklings knew their own mother hens. The chicks always ran to the white hen when she called them, and the ducklings always ran to the brown hen.

Sometimes the cat came into the farmyard, and the hens would cluck loudly. "An enemy is near! CLUCK-CLUCK! Come here, come here, an enemy is near!"

Then the little chicks would run to the white hen and hide under her feathers, and the little ducklings would run to the brown hen.

It was funny to see their heads peeping out from the feathers of the hens. First one little head would pop out and then another and another, until it seemed as if each hen had one big head and many little ones!

The hens tried to teach their little ones all the things they should know. "This is the way to scratch in the ground, to see if any grain of corn is buried there," the white hen would say to

her chicks. And she would scratch hard at the earth with her short, strong legs, and big, blunt claws.

Then she would peck up a grain of corn with her strong beak. She was very good at scratching with her feet, and pecking with her beak.

Sometimes, when a chick was naughty, she would give him a sharp peck. Then he would be good again for quite a long while.

It was a happy time in the farmyard for the little chicks and ducks. The sun was warm. There were many things to see and hear. There was the old sow, grunting in her sty. There were the great big cows that came to the milking-shed. There were the white ducks that waddled to the round pond.

The ducklings grew fast, and so did the chicks. They ran with one another, and cheeped in their high voices. It was fun in the farmyard, and there were always their mothers to run to if they were afraid of anything.

One day the ducklings saw the pond. One duckling had gone after the ducks, when they had waddled to the pond, and he had suddenly seen the big stretch of water.

"What is it? What is it?" he cheeped. He ran to the other chicks and ducklings, and made them come with him to see this wonderful new thing.

"Pooh!" said the chicks. "What a thing to bring us here to see! Just water!"

"Is that what it is? Water!" said the ducklings, who were most excited to see the pond.

"Yes," said the biggest chick. "You had better come away from it. Our mothers say it is not good for us."

"But it looks lovely! It looks very, very good! We love it!" said all the little yellow ducklings, and one of them took a step nearer.

The brown hen saw him. "CLUCK-CLUCK-CLUCK!" she cried. "Bad little duckling! Come here at once. How dare you go near that dreadful pond!"

She ran at the ducklings, and chased them away from the water. But they did not forget it. They kept thinking of it, and talking about it.

One morning it rained so hard that a big puddle was made in the farmyard. The ducklings found it and waddled into it joyfully. Oh, how lovely it felt!

The brown hen saw them, and she was very angry indeed. "How dare you get your feet wet?" she said. "You bad little ducklings! How dare you get wet? Don't you know that chicks never get wet if they can help it?"

But the ducklings loved the puddle, and they were very sorry when it dried up.

"Let's go and find that pond again," said the biggest duckling. "I want to get my feet wet. I want to get right into the water. I want to paddle in it."

All the ducklings felt the same. The chicks would not come with them. "What! Go into that horrid wet, cold water! Get our feet wet and our feathers damp?" they cheeped. "Of course not!"

So the ducklings went alone. They came to the pond. They stood by the edge. They put their little feet into the water, and it felt lovely.

The brown hen came rushing up. "Come away at once, at once, at once! Come away! CLUCK-CLUCK-CLUCK!"

But this time the ducklings did not listen to her. One duckling jumped straight into the pond—splash! And then another and another went in—splash, splash, splash! They were all in, and swimming beautifully, their little webbed feet paddling along, pushing themselves forward! It was sweet to see them.

The old mother hen was afraid for them. She ran up and down the bank of the pond, squawking so loudly that the farmer's wife came out to see what was the matter.

"Oh!" she said. "Poor old mother hen—your babies have gone into the pond. But don't worry—they are not chicks, but ducklings!"

"Cluck, cluck!" said the hen, in great surprise. She had always thought they were chicks.

"They are made for swimming in the water," said the farmer's wife. She called one of her big white ducks to her. "See," she said to the anxious hen, "the duck's feet are made for swimming—they have webbed skin between the toes. Yours are not webbed, but they are strong to help you to scratch for grain. You have strong claws too, to help you."

"Cluck-cluck!" said the hen, beginning to understand.

"Look at the duck's beak," said the farmer's wife. "It is quite different from yours, henny-penny! It is flat and hollow; and do you see these holes? They let out the water and the mud when the duck dives into the mud to hunt for water-insects. The insects are left behind in the duck's beak, and she eats them—but the water and the mud drain out!"

"Cluck-cluck!" said the hen.

"Chicks will be hens and ducklings will be ducks," said the farmer's wife, letting the duck waddle away. "Ducks will always waddle, because their legs are put so far back to help them to swim well. Hens will always run and scratch."

"Cluck-cluck!" said the hen, listening.

"Hens will always peck up their grain, and ducks will always shovel their beaks in the mud," said the farmer's wife. "That is why you have such different beaks. Don't scold your babies, henny-penny. It is I you should scold, for it was I who gave you duck's eggs to sit on, instead of hen's eggs!"

"Cluck-cluck!" said the hen, and stared at her little babies swimming on the pond. She didn't scold them when they came out. She looked at their spoon-shaped beaks, and at their webbed feet, and knew that they were ducklings.

"What a mistake I made!" she said. "I brought them up to be good chicks—but they will all grow into ducks!"

Teaching Notes. Points for Discussion.

1. The story tells of the difference between ducks and hens.
2. Discuss the differences—what are they? Feet, legs, beaks, like and dislike of water, etc.
3. Webbed feet for swimming a very good idea.
4. Strong, clawed feet for scratching also a good idea.
5. Birds and animals are all provided with the things most suitable for them—e.g. webbed feet for water-birds, etc.
6. Take the children to feed ducks or hens if possible.

1 (Book 7)
THE FISH THAT BUILT A NEST

Once there was a little stickleback who lived in a pond. It was a nice pond, well warmed by the sun, and with plenty of other creatures there that the stickleback knew very well.

There were the tadpoles, always wriggling this way and that. There were the black beetles, some very large, some not so large. There were the dragonfly grubs who liked to hide in the mud.

There were many other water creatures. The stickleback was not afraid of any of them. He was very quick and he was well armed too, for on his back he had three sharp spines. He would rip any enemy with these if he could—so most creatures kept out of his way if he did not like them.

One day he talked to a big frog swimming in the pond.

"Have you laid your eggs?" he asked.

"Yes," said the frog. "There they are, in that big mass of white jelly at the top of the water."

"Why do you lay them in jelly?" asked the stickleback.

"So that enemies shall not eat my eggs," said the frog. "It is very slippery jelly, almost impossible to eat. And if the jelly is not eaten, then my eggs have a chance to hatch."

"It is a very good idea to lay eggs in jelly, then," said the stickleback. "I cannot lay eggs, because I am a father-fish. But perhaps I could ask a mother-fish to lay eggs for me in jelly."

But no mother-stickleback knew how to lay eggs in jelly. They laughed at him, and swam away fast. He went quite red with rage.

A bird came down to drink from the pond. The stickleback swam up and spoke to her.

"Have you any eggs?"

"Yes," said the bird in surprise. "I have three. They are pretty ones, as blue as the sky."

"Have you put them in jelly, to be safe?" asked the fish.

The bird did not understand. "In jelly! You are very silly. I put my eggs in a nest, which I made myself."

"In a nest?" said the stickleback. "What is that?"

The bird told him what a nest was, and the little fish listened.

"It sounds a very good thing to make," he said. "The eggs lie in the nest, and you can guard them easily. I think *I* shall make a nest!"

"*You* make a nest!" trilled the bird in surprise. "How foolish you are! Don't you know that fishes don't make nests? I have never heard of one that did."

"Well, *I* shall make a nest," said the stickleback. "It may not be a usual thing for fishes to do, but I will be unusual. It is such a good idea."

He swam away, red with excitement. A nest! That would be a lovely thing to make. He was sure he could make one. Then he would find a nice little mother-fish to lay some eggs in his nest, and he would keep guard over them until they hatched out into dear little baby fish.

He swam about looking for something to use for his nest. He found some loose water-weed and caught it in his mouth. That would do for a beginning!

He swam with it to the place he had chosen. He tucked it well down, and then went to look for something else. He found a bit of straw floating at the top of the water. He found a few bits

of grass there too. He took them all to his nest. He was really very clever about making it.

He stuck together all the things he found. He went hunting for more and more bits, and everything he brought back to his nest he glued together carefully.

He made a nest like a muff, with an opening at each end. All the tadpoles, the beetles and the grubs came to look at it in wonder.

"What is it?" they said. "Is it a home for yourself? Are you going to live there?"

"No," said the fish. "It is a nest for my eggs. I am not going to leave my eggs or baby fish to look after themselves. I have built them a nest and I shall take great care of them."

"I never heard of a fish doing that before!" said a big water-snail.

Soon the nest was finished. It was nicely made of bits of grass, straw and water-weed. The stickleback swam through it many times. He was proud of it.

"Now I will find a mother-fish and get her to put some eggs in my nest for me," he said. So he swam off to look for one.

He met one and asked her to lay some eggs for him. "I don't want to!" she said. But he chased her angrily, and made her go near the nest. When she saw what a dear little nest it was, she felt that she really must go inside and look at it.

So in she went. When she was there she laid a few eggs, and then swam out again. "It is a nice nest," she said. "I have put some eggs there for you."

The stickleback was very pleased. But when he went to look at the eggs, he felt sure there were not nearly enough. What was the good of building a nest for so few eggs? He swam at once after the mother-fish.

"Lay some more eggs for me!" he called. But she wouldn't. He chased after her, going scarlet with rage, but it was no good, she would not lay any more.

So the stickleback had to look for another mother-fish. He soon found one, and begged her to lay some eggs for him. She swam into the nest and laid some more. The fish was very pleased and excited. Now he had enough!

He looked after his eggs so well. He would not let even the tiniest tadpole come near the nest. He would not let the water-snail peep at the eggs. He chased away everyone who came near.

Sometimes he turned the little eggs over with his nose. Sometimes he fanned them with his tail and fins, sending a current of water gently through the nest. He was as careful of them as any bird is of her eggs.

Then one day the eggs hatched out into tiny fish. How excited the stickleback was! He told the news to everyone.

"My eggs have hatched out! They are in my nest—not eggs any more, but the tiniest fish you ever saw! They are lying in my nest!"

"I want to see them," said the dragonfly grub. But as soon as the big ugly grub came near the little nest, the stickleback swam at him, red with anger, and tried to rip him with his three sharp spines.

"Go away!" he cried. "I know what a greedy creature you are! Go away! You would eat my fish if you could."

This was quite true. The dragonfly grub was always as hungry as could be.

The baby fish lay quietly in the nest at first. The stickleback wondered if they had enough room. He began to pull away the top part of the muff-like nest, so that only the bottom was left. It was like a little cradle for them.

The father-fish guarded them well. He was excited when they began to wriggle about, for he knew that soon they would try to swim.

They did swim—tiny little specks in the pond. The stickleback would not let them go far away from the nest at first, and if he thought that any enemy was near, he would drive them back at once.

"I can look after all of you at once, if you lie in the nest," he said, "but if you are swimming about in the water, I cannot guard you well. So, whilst you are tiny, keep with me, and swim back to our nest if there is any danger."

The nest fell slowly to pieces as the little fishes grew bigger. Soon they were big enough to look after themselves, and there was no longer any nest to go back to. The little family split up, and went to different parts of the pond.

But the little stickleback was very happy, for now he had many children to talk to in the pond.

"When you are old enough, you will build a nest as I did," he would say to them. And they will. Don't you wish you could see them?

Teaching Notes. Points for Discussion.

1. The story tells of the ways of a stickleback.
2. If possible, have a stickleback in a jar.
3. Was it a good idea for the fish to build a nest? Why?
4. What other creatures build nests? Why do creatures build nests? (For young ones and for shelter.)
5. What other creatures would the stickleback see in the pond?
6. Take the children to a pond if possible.

2 (Book 7)
THE LAMB WITHOUT A MOTHER

Ellen was staying at her uncle's farm. She liked being there, because there were so many nice things to do. She could feed the hens. She could take milk in a pail to the new calf. She could ride on Blackie, the old farm-horse.

It was winter-time, so it was not such fun as in the summer-time. But there was one great excitement—and that was the coming of the new lambs!

Ellen loved the baby lambs. The old shepherd lived in his hut on the hillside near the sheep, so that he might look after them when their lambs were born. Ellen often used to go and talk to him.

"Ah, it's a busy time with me," said the old shepherd. "Sometimes many lambs are born the same night, missy, and there are many babies to see to. You come and look at these two—a sweet pair they are!"

Ellen peeped into a little fold and saw a big mother-sheep there, with two tiny lambs beside her. Each of them had black noses, and they were butting them against their mother.

"I love them," said Ellen, "What do you feed them on, shepherd?"

"Oh, the mother feeds them," said the shepherd with a laugh. "Didn't you know, missy? Ah, yes, the lambs suck their mother's milk, and that's what makes them frisky and strong."

"What a good idea," said Ellen, and she watched the tiny lambs drinking their mother's milk. "Aren't they hungry, shepherd!"

"Little creatures always are," said the shepherd. "They have to grow big, you see, so they want a lot of food to build up their growing bodies. Birds bring grubs to their little ones, caterpillars eat the leaves of plants, young fish find their own food—and lambs drink their mother's milk."

One day, when Ellen went to see the old shepherd, she found him looking sad. "One of the mother-sheep has died," he said. "And she has left this little lamb behind her."

"Oh dear—and it has no mother to get milk from!" said Ellen sadly. "Will it die too?"

"I am going to see if another mother-sheep will take it," said the shepherd. "Maybe she will. She has only one lamb."

So he gave the tiny lamb to another sheep. But she butted it away angrily.

"Isn't she unkind?" said Ellen, almost in tears. "She's got one lamb of her own, and surely she wouldn't mind having another. Most of the sheep have two."

"She isn't really unkind," said the shepherd. "She doesn't know the strange smell of this little lamb, so she doesn't like it. Well, well—she won't have it, that's plain!"

"What will you do?" asked Ellen.

"It will have to be fed from a baby's bottle," said the shepherd. "I shall put milk into a bottle, put a teat on it, and let the lamb suck. Then it will live."

Ellen stared at him in surprise. "Can you really feed a lamb out of a baby's bottle?" she said. "Oh, shepherd, please may I see you?"

"Of course," said the shepherd. He took out a glass bottle from his shed. He washed it, and then put some warm milk into it. He fitted a large teat on the end, and went to where he had left the tiny lamb.

He smeared the teat with milk and pushed it against the lamb's black nose. The tiny creature sniffed at it, and then put out its tongue and licked it.

"It likes the taste!" said Ellen in excitement. "Oh, lamb, do drink the milk!"

The lamb opened his mouth and took hold of the milky teat. He sucked—for that is a thing that all lambs, all calves, all babies know how to do. He sucked hard.

The milk came through the teat and went into his mouth. The lamb sucked and sucked. He was hungry. The milk was nice. He sucked until he had nearly finished the bottle.

Ellen watched him in delight. "Please, please do let me hold the bottle whilst he finishes the few last drops," she begged the shepherd. So he gave her the bottle to hold.

Ellen loved feeding the tiny lamb. She liked feeling him pulling hard at the bottle. He finished every drop of the milk, and licked the teat. Then he gave a sigh of happiness, as if to say, "That was really nice!"

"He'll do all right," said the shepherd, taking the empty bottle. "The pity is—I've no time to bottle-feed lambs just now."

"Shepherd—let me do it, then!" cried Ellen. "I know Uncle will let me. Can I go and ask him?"

The shepherd nodded, and Ellen sped off down the hill to where her uncle was working in the fields.

"Uncle! There's a lamb without a mother, so it hasn't any mother's milk to drink! The shepherd says it must be fed from a baby's bottle. Can I feed it for him every day, please, Uncle?"

"If you like," said her uncle. "It will need to be fed many times a day, Ellen, so you mustn't forget. You had better let the shepherd bring it down into the farmhouse garden for you. It can live there, and you can easily feed it from a bottle then, without climbing the hill every time."

Ellen ran to tell the shepherd. "You needn't carry it down for me," she said. "I can carry the little darling thing myself."

So she carried the little warm creature down to the garden. She shut the gate carefully so that it could not get out. It seemed to like being there, and frisked round happily.

Ellen fed it when it was hungry. Her aunt put milk into the baby's bottle, and Ellen went to take it to the lamb. He soon knew her and ran to meet her. How he sucked the milk from the bottle! He almost pulled it out of Ellen's hand sometimes!

He grew well. He had a tight, woolly coat to keep him warm, and a long wriggling tail. He could jump and spring about cleverly. Ellen often played with him in the garden, and they loved one another very much.

He grew quite fat and tubby. Ellen looked at him one day and said, "You are almost like a little sheep. Don't grow into a sheep, little lamb. Sheep never play. They just eat grass all day long, and say 'baa-baa-baa'."

The lamb could bleat in his little high voice. Sometimes he would bleat for Ellen to bring him a bottle of milk. "Maa-maaa-maa!" he would say.

But soon there came a time when he did not need to drink milk any more. He could eat grass. He nibbled at it and liked it. Ellen watched him eating it, and was afraid that soon he would have to leave the garden and go into the big field with the others.

"Then you will forget about me, and won't come running to meet me any more," she said sadly.

One day the big sheep were sheared. The farmyard was full of their bleating, for they did not like their warm, thick woolly coats being cut away from them.

Ellen watched the shearing. “What a lot of wool!” she said. “I suppose that will be washed, and woven, and made into warm clothes. How useful the sheep are to us.”

The lamb was not sheared. He was allowed to keep his coat that year. “It is not thick enough for shearing,” said the shepherd. “The lambs keep their coats. They will be very thick next year. And now, missy, I think your lamb must come and live in the field. He is old enough to be with the others, now that you have quite finished feeding him by bottle.”

Ellen was sad. She took the little lamb from the farmhouse garden to the field. She opened the gate and let him through. He stood quite still and stared at all the sheep and lambs there.

Then a small lamb came up to him. “Come and play ‘Jump-high, jump-low’ with us,” he said. “It’s such fun.”

The little lamb frisked off in delight. “He has forgotten me already,” said Ellen.

But he hadn’t. Whenever the little girl goes by the field, the lamb comes running up to the hedge, bleating. He pushes his nose through and Ellen pats him. And I expect that he will always remember his little friend, and run happily to greet her, don’t you?

Teaching Notes. Points for Discussion.

1. The story tells of sheep and lambs.

2. Who has seen lambs? Discuss them—their wriggly tails, their “skippety legs,” their soft coats, their amusing ways.

3. What happens to the sheep’s woolly coat? She wears it first—then it is sheared off—then it is made into woollen cloth and *we* wear it.

4. Sheep will always follow one another. That is because they think they are safe when they are all together.

5. Take the children to see lambs if possible.

1 (Book 8)
THE DANDELION CLOCKS

Once there was a dandelion plant. It grew in a very sheltered corner, where the sun was hot, and the wind hardly ever came. It had a rosette of dark-green leaves.

"Why do you grow your leaves like that, in a round bunch?" said the grass near by. "You keep off all the blades of grass that try to grow near you."

"Well, that is why I grow my leaves in a round rosette!" said the dandelion. "To keep you from growing too close, and taking away light and air from me, and to keep away any other plants too!"

"The daisy does that as well," said a butterfly. "She grows her leaves in a tight rosette, and won't let anyone else take her little bit of ground. It's a good idea, really."

"I have a fine big root, as well as a rosette of leaves," said the dandelion. "It is a much bigger root than any flower has, in this little corner. It goes right down into the ground."

"I suppose it holds you tightly in your place," said the butterfly. "Well, well—all I can say is that I am very glad *I* haven't a deep root like you, dandelion. I should hate to be tied down in one place. I like to fly about the world, and see all there is to see."

The dandelion sent up some nice green buds. The butterfly came back again one day to see what sort of flowers the dandelion would have.

"Oh! You are really beautiful!" said the butterfly. "Yes, you really are. I love your bright yellow head, dandelion—it is prettier even than the daisy's head."

The dandelion flowers shone brightly on their green stalks. They were very bright in the sun.

"Aren't you afraid of some animal coming along and eating you?" asked the butterfly. "You are so bright, with your yellow heads of flowers, that I am sure a cow or horse would see you at once, and nibble you to bits!"

"I taste nasty," said the dandelion. "I have a milky juice in my stalks that tastes bitter. No animal will go on nibbling me, once it has tasted my nasty juice."

"It seems to me that you are rather a clever plant," said the butterfly. "With your leaf-rosette, your long, deep root, and your nasty milky juice! I shall come back again and see you another day. Perhaps you will have another clever idea to tell me."

She flew off, and the dandelion opened another golden bud in the sun. Soon the whole plant was yellow with brilliant golden blossoms, and was beautiful in the summer sunshine. Nobody ate it. Nobody harmed it. It flowered in peace and safety.

One by one the yellow flowers faded and died. Soon there was not one left. When the butterfly came back one day, it was surprised to see the plant without its golden blossoms.

"You are growing old, dandelion," said the butterfly. "I can see your golden hairs turning to grey, and you are hiding your head!"

All the flower-stalks had drooped, and all the golden heads were, as the butterfly said, turning grey. They lay among the grass, looking faded and sad.

"Yes, your hair is going grey," said the butterfly, looking at the old flower-heads. "What a pity! Can't you raise your heads up any more? Do you feel so tired and old?"

"No," said the dandelion. "I don't feel at all tired. All I am doing is resting my flower-heads whilst they make seed for me."

“Make seed!” said the butterfly. “What is seed?”

“Ah, seed is the most important thing of all to a plant,” said the dandelion. “Without seed we cannot go on and on growing new plants each year. I want to send out my seeds so that I may know that there will be hundreds of new little dandelion plants growing everywhere!”

“Oh,” said the butterfly. “I know how you feel about it, dandelion. It is the same as I feel about eggs. I want to lay many eggs, so that they will hatch into caterpillars that will grow into butterflies like me. You want children like yourself, and I want children like *my*self. That is a rule of life, isn’t it?”

“I don’t know what a rule of life is,” said the dandelion. “All I know is that I must make seed, and send it out into the world to grow.”

“And I must lay eggs,” said the butterfly. “I know where I shall lay my eggs too. I am a cabbage butterfly and I shall lay my eggs on the underside of a cabbage leaf, so that when they hatch out, there will be plenty of good food for my caterpillars to feed on.”

The dandelion was not listening. She was slowly lifting up one of her flower-stalks. She raised it high—and higher—and the butterfly stared in surprise.

“Dandelion! Did you know that your flower-stalk had grown very, very long whilst it has lain in the grass? It is so tall that now you will be able to see much farther!”

“I haven’t eyes like you,” said the dandelion, beginning to lift another stalk. “Yes—I know that my stalks have grown tall. There is a reason for that.”

“Is there?” said the butterfly. “Do tell me.”

“Well,” said the dandelion, “look at my old flower-heads, on the top of their long stalks. As you said, they have turned grey—but the grey is the plumes that belong to my seeds. Look carefully, and you will see what I mean.”

The butterfly flew down close beside a grey-plumed head, and looked at it carefully.

“Dandelion,” she said, “your old flower-heads have all grown tiny seeds, each with its own parachute of silky hairs. How wonderful! I have never seen such a marvellous change in my life. You are the cleverest plant I know.”

“There are many cleverer than I am,” said the dandelion. “We all have our own tricks and ways, butterfly. Now you see why I have grown my stalks so long—I want to take my seeds high up into the air, where the sun can warm them, and the wind can blow them.”

“Why do you want the wind to blow them?” said the butterfly in surprise.

“I want the wind to take each of my seeds far away from me,” said the dandelion. “As far away as it can! I do not want dozens of tiny dandelions growing near me, all choking one another. I want the wind to blow them far away.”

“And so you have given each tiny seed a parachute of silky hairs to carry it away!” said the butterfly. “Well, what a marvellous idea, to be sure. May I blow one?”

“Your breath won’t move a seed!” said the dandelion.

The butterfly blew—but the dandelion was right. Not one seed moved away from the stalk-head. The seeds stood on a kind of cushion, and they made a most beautiful globe of grey-white.

One by one the stalks raised themselves up into the air, and soon there were about twelve lovely dandelion “clocks” standing in the little sheltered corner. The butterfly thought she had never seen anything so beautiful.

“When will the wind come and blow your seeds away for you?” she asked. “I want to see them fly in the air.”

“Soon, I hope,” said the dandelion, and the plant and the butterfly waited patiently for the wind to come.

But it didn’t come. The corner that the dandelion grew in was very, very sheltered. Hardly any wind ever came to it. The tall clocks stood there, not moving. No seed blew away at all.

The dandelion grew anxious. “Oh, I do hope the wind comes soon!” it said. “I don’t want seeds to fall off to the ground. They must not grow too near to me. Oh, how I wish the wind would come!”

After a while, there came the sound of children’s voices, and a boy and two girls came into the sheltered corner. They stopped in delight.

“Harry! Look! What lovely dandelion clocks!” cried a girl’s voice. “Let’s pick them and blow them to tell the time!”

Then, in a trice, all the dandelion clocks were picked, and the children danced away with them. They blew hard at the clocks. “Puff! One o’clock. Puff! Two o’clock. Puff! Three o’clock.”

The seeds flew off, each with their tiny parachute of hairs. They flew far away, and then fell gently to the ground. The butterfly flew round the children’s heads and watched the seeds flying away.

She flew back to the dandelion plant. “Your seeds have all gone to their new homes,” she said. “There will be hundreds of tiny new dandelions next year, so you can be happy. The children made little winds with their mouths and blew the seeds away!”

“Good,” said the dandelion. “Now I am happy, and I can take a rest. Go and lay your eggs, butterfly, and be happy too!”

Teaching Notes. Points for Discussion.

1. The story tells of the dandelion, its characteristics and life-history.

2. The dandelion has a good many clever ideas. What are they? (Rosette of leaves, long root, bitter juice, etc.)

3. Act the way a dandelion sends up bud, opens out, dies, falls back to ground, and then, when the seed is ripe, stands upright on taller stalk again, waiting for wind to come. Let a child be the wind and come round puffing to blow away seeds.

4. Have some dandelions and clocks for children to see, or take them where there are some. Let them puff the clocks and “tell the time”.

2 (Book 8)
THE STRANGE BIRD

There was once a hedge-sparrow who built a dear little nest in a hawthorn hedge. She laid some sky-blue eggs in it, and she and her mate thought they were lovely.

"Now I must sit on them to warm them," said the little hedge-sparrow happily. "You fly off and find me some grubs and flies to eat, because I shall stay here for many days."

A loud voice came from somewhere near by. "Cuckoo! Cuckoo!" A big bird with a barred chest perched clumsily on a tree, and looked all round. The hedge-sparrows took no notice. They were used to the call of the cuckoo by now. He sang all day.

Later on in the day the cock hedge-sparrow came back to the nest in great excitement.

"Leave your eggs for a minute! I have found a place where there are many caterpillars, all fat and tasty. Come with me and we will have a feast before the other birds get them."

The little hen hedge-sparrow left her eggs and flew off for a few minutes with her mate. Surely her eggs would not get cold in such a short time!

When they had gone, and the nest was empty except for the blue eggs, a big cuckoo flew to the hedge. She squatted on the hedge-sparrow's nest, and laid an egg in it. Then she flew off again, for she knew that the two little birds would soon come back.

And now, in the nest, lay an extra egg, not so blue as the others, but much the same size and shape. There it lay, a cuckoo's egg.

The cuckoo never made any nest for her eggs. She was a lazy bird, and did not want the trouble of nest-building or of bringing up young birds. This was a little trick she had, each summer—she put her eggs into other birds' nests.

Soon the little hedge-sparrows came back, well fed with the fat caterpillars. The hen hopped to her nest, took a look at her eggs, and then sat comfortably down on them. She did not seem to notice that there was a strange egg there.

Sunny warm days followed. There were plenty of grubs to find, plenty of flies to catch. The cock-bird fed the hen well, and sometimes sang her a shrill little song.

One day she was excited. "My eggs are going to hatch," she said. "I can feel one of them moving."

The first egg that hatched was a tiny hedge-sparrow. The egg broke and the baby bird came out.

The next egg that hatched was the cuckoo's egg. Out came a very ugly baby indeed. It was bare and black, and its eyes were tight shut. It seemed stronger than the first baby bird.

No more eggs hatched that day. Both the baby birds were hungry for food, and they opened their beaks wide, and cheeped a little. The cuckoo baby had a loud voice.

"I will help you to feed the two babies," said the hedge-sparrow to her mate. "The other eggs are almost ready to hatch. It will not hurt to leave them for a while with the two warm babies."

So she flew off with her mate. Then the baby cuckoo began to do strange things. He couldn't bear to feel the other eggs near him. He moved about to get away from them, but he couldn't.

He was angry. He wriggled about until one of the eggs fell on to his back. He had a little hollow there, and the egg stayed there. The baby cuckoo shook with rage. He began to climb

backwards up the side of the nest.

It was like a steep wall to the bare, blind baby. He went up and up, and at last came to the top. He stopped—and then sent the egg rolling, from his back, over the edge of the nest, through the hawthorn branches and down to the ground.

The baby cuckoo fell down into the nest, tired out. But he soon felt the other egg pressing against him, and once more he became angry. He wanted the whole nest to himself. He could not bear to share it with anyone else.

Once again he managed to get the egg on to his back, and once more he climbed painfully up the side of the nest. The egg rolled from his back—down to the ground it went, and broke. The baby bird inside, almost ready to hatch, rolled out and lay feebly on the ground.

Then there was only the baby hedge-sparrow in the nest with the cuckoo. But the baby cuckoo was now too tired to do anything but lie quite still.

Soon the hen hedge-sparrow came back. She had brought food with her for the babies. She missed the other eggs, and looked round the nest for them.

She fed the baby birds, and hopped out of the nest into the hedge. She caught sight of the broken eggs below, and the feeble little bird that had rolled out of one of them. But she did not seem to know that they were hers.

As she stared at them, her head to one side, a rat came by. In a trice he had snapped up the baby birds, sniffed round the egg-shells, and then went on his way.

"Our babies in the nest are very hungry," said the hen to her mate, when he came with some grubs. "This one makes such a noise. I wish he would be quieter. I am so afraid he will bring enemies to the nest."

Now, the next day, when the parents had gone food-hunting, the baby cuckoo felt the little hedge-sparrow pushing against him. Again he fell into a rage, and stiffened all over.

"I will throw this thing out of the nest too," he thought, and somehow he managed to get the baby hedge-sparrow on to his back. It was heavy, but the little cuckoo was getting stronger.

He climbed slowly up the side of the nest. He stood on the rim. He gave himself a shake—and the little hedge-sparrow rolled off his back, down through the hedge, and on to the ground. There the big rat found him a little later, and snapped him up greedily.

Now only the cuckoo was left in the nest. He was glad. He liked having the nest all to himself. He liked having the food all to himself.

The little hedge-sparrows did not seem to notice anything except that they had a wonderful baby.

"He is so big and strong," they told the robin.

"Better to have four little birds than one enormous one," said the robin.

"He has such a loud voice," said the hedge-sparrows proudly. "And you should see him eat! Do you know, he even eats the hairy caterpillars that no other bird can eat!"

The baby cuckoo grew very fast indeed. He soon filled the nest. He looked funny there, for his tail and head stuck out far over the edge of the nest.

"The nest soon won't hold him," said the cock. "Isn't he a marvellous child? No other bird has such a wonderful baby as we have."

"I wish you would tell him not to make such a noise," said the thrush, who had a nest near by. "He makes such a terrible noise that I am always afraid he will bring the rat here, and I don't want my young ones eaten!"

“You see, he’s so hungry,” said the hen hedge-sparrow proudly. “He has such a big appetite. We can’t bring him enough to eat!”

The cuckoo called so loudly that all the other birds began to bring him grubs too, to try and make him quiet. He grew and he grew. He was really enormous.

He had to leave the nest, for it would no longer hold him. He flew into the trees, still calling loudly, in his piercing voice. “Cheez, cheez, cheez!” he cried.

Soon the little hedge-sparrows had to sit on his shoulder to feed him, for that was the only way in which they could reach his beak. But still he cried loudly.

“Cheez, cheez, cheez!” The robin brought him a fat hairy caterpillar. The thrush brought him two. How they wished the noisy bird would be quiet.

“Isn’t he a wonderful child?” cried the two hedge-sparrows. “Did you ever see such a marvel? He must be the biggest hedge-sparrow that was ever hatched! We are so proud of him.”

“*Hedge-sparrow!*” said the little owl, flying up to look. “What do you mean—*hedge-sparrow*? That’s not a hedge-sparrow. That’s a cuckoo!”

“A cuckoo!” said the two hedge-sparrows in dismay, and they looked at their enormous baby. And they saw that he was indeed a cuckoo. What a dreadful shock for them!

“What sillies we are!” they said. “Oh, what sillies we are!”

Poor little hedge-sparrows. The cuckoo played a very cunning trick on them, didn’t she, when she laid her egg in their nest?

Teaching Notes. Points for Discussion.

1. This is the story of the cuckoo and its ways.
2. The cuckoo makes no nest, so what does she do for her eggs?
3. What does the baby cuckoo do when he hatches out and finds eggs or baby birds with him in the nest?
4. Why don’t we see the cuckoo in the winter? Who knows?
5. If it is spring-time, let children listen for the cuckoo’s call.

1 (Book 9)
HATS FOR SALE! HATS FOR SALE!

There was once an elf who kept a tiny hat-shop in Cuckoo Wood. You should have seen the hats she sold! They were really lovely.

She used to beg pink-tipped petals from the daisies, and sew them together into dear little hats. She sometimes made bluebell-caps, when the bluebells were out, and she was very clever at using red poppy petals for broad-brimmed summer hats.

But there was one kind of hat that she was always asked for in the winter-time, and never could make—and that was fur hats.

Everyone wanted a fur hat when the cold weather came. Hatty the elf could have sold dozens if only she had had some fur. But she couldn't seem to buy any fur anywhere that would be fine enough and light enough for fairies' hats.

Still, she made quite a lot of pennies by making flower hats, and sewing them with spider thread. There was one kind spider who let out thread for her from her spinnerets, and Hatty wound the thread round a tiny cotton-reel.

One day Hatty was running through the wood, singing a little song to herself, when she heard a loud squeaking noise. She stopped to listen.

"It isn't a mouse," she said. "It's not loud enough. It isn't a bat, because they are all fast asleep, hanging upside down in the old hollow tree. They won't wake until it is night. What can it be?"

The squeaking came again, and Hatty peeped round a big clump of dead-nettles to see what was making the noise.

"It's too tight!" said a high, squeaking voice. "It's much too tight! I shall never get it off. I know I shan't. It's got stuck just under my tummy."

Hatty saw that it was a big caterpillar talking to himself. He was a woolly-bear caterpillar, with a very hairy coat. Near by were two or three more, watching the first one.

Hatty stared at him in surprise. He seemed to be trying to take off his coat, and he couldn't. He had split it down the back, and he was wriggling hard to get out of it. The elf ran up to him.

"What are you doing? Don't take off your coat, because the wind is cold to-day."

The hairy caterpillars looked at Hatty. "You don't know what you are talking about," said the first caterpillar. "I've GOT to take my coat off. I shall burst if I don't."

"You *are* very fat," said Hatty. "I think you must have eaten too much."

"Caterpillars always do," said a snail crawling near by. "They eat all day long—yes, and sometimes at night too. Eat, eat, eat, gobble, gobble, gobble, that's all they do! I never knew such greedy creatures."

"*You'd* eat as much if you were as hungry as we are," said the caterpillar crossly. "Oh dear—I shall *never* get my skin off!"

"It's the first time I've ever seen anyone burst their skin," said Hatty. "Oh, my goodness—there's another caterpillar splitting his coat too!"

So there was. A hairy woolly-bear suddenly split his skin down the middle of his back, and began to wriggle hard to get his coat off.

"Do you often do this sort of thing?" said Hatty.

"Oh yes," said the caterpillar. "We eat so much that we're always splitting our skins. But it doesn't matter. We always have fine new skins underneath."

"Do you really?" said Hatty. "Well, that's lucky for you! *I* shouldn't have a new skin underneath if I split the one I'm wearing."

She felt sorry for the wriggling caterpillar. "I'd like to help you," she said. "I think your skin is stuck tight just under your tummy. If I give it a pull, I expect it would get loose, then you'd be all right."

"Thank you," said the caterpillar gratefully. "That's right—pull just there."

The elf pulled at the furry coat. It gave way, and the caterpillar gave a squeak of joy. "Thank you! Now I can easily wriggle out."

He was soon out of his hairy skin—and it was just as he had said, he had a fine new one underneath!

"Ah! Now I feel better!" he said, stretching himself out until he was very long indeed. "This skin fits nicely."

He began to eat a dead-nettle leaf very quickly. Hatty could hear his jaws crunching loudly. "You really are greedy," she said. "You'll soon split that nice new skin."

"I shan't mind," said the caterpillar. "There'll be another one underneath again!"

"Could you help *me* now?" asked another caterpillar, crawling up to Hatty. "Just give my split skin a little tug *here*, will you?"

"I'll help you all," said Hatty. "Hurry up now, anybody that wants to split, and I'll help you out of your skins."

She helped five woolly-bear caterpillars out of their skins. They at once began to gobble leaves again. They left their skins in a heap on the grass.

"The mouse comes to get them," said the first caterpillar. Hatty stared at the furry coats, and a wonderful idea came into her mind.

"Caterpillars!" she said suddenly. "Could *I* have your old furry skins, please? I make hats, you know, and I could make lovely fur hats out of these. I would clean them, and brush them, and then sew them into the dearest little fur caps you ever saw!"

"What a good idea!" said the caterpillars. "Better than having them eaten up! The mouse won't mind. Yes, you take them, elf, and do what you like with them."

"I'll show you the hats next winter," said Hatty, picking up the skins.

"We shan't be here," said the caterpillars. "We are going to be tiger moths, you know—those lovely, bright-coloured moths that come to the fairy dances sometimes. And before we are moths, we shall turn into silken cocoons and sleep. When we wake up we shall be moths."

"You must use very powerful magic to change yourselves like that," said Hatty, astonished. "What queer creatures you are, eating so greedily, splitting your skins, turning into cocoons and sleeping—and waking up as beautiful moths."

"We may be queer, but we don't *feel* queer, except when we have finished eating, and are going to sleep in our cocoons," said the caterpillars.

"Well, thank you for the fur skins," said Hatty. "I'll always come and help you at any time, if you want a tug or a pull when your skins are splitting again."

"Thank you," said the caterpillars. "We *would* like your help. You see, when our skins are splitting, and we are wriggling out of them, we are rather helpless—we can't crawl away quickly and hide if enemies come."

"We are afraid of the cuckoos in this wood," said the first caterpillar. "They eat furry caterpillars like us, though the other birds don't like us."

“Squeak loudly when you want my help and I’ll come,” said Hatty. “And tell any other hairy caterpillars you know, and I’ll help them too, if they will give me their old furry skins.”

She ran off with the skins. She was very excited. She was longing to begin making fur caps.

“I shall work hard all the summer at making fur caps,” she thought. “Then, when the winter comes, I shall have dozens to sell. Won’t everyone be pleased!”

The caterpillar skins made the dearest little fur caps you ever saw! Hatty couldn’t help feeling very proud of them. She tried one on, and it looked beautiful.

“They are very little trouble to make,” she said to herself. “First I clean the skins, then I brush the hairs well, then I take my scissors and shape the skin, and then I sew the cap with my strong, silken spider thread. Lovely!”

Each day when she heard caterpillars squeaking loudly, Hatty went to help them. She didn’t only help the tiger-moth caterpillars, but other kinds, too, that grew hairy coats. She soon had a wonderful collection of furry skins, and knew a great many caterpillars.

She watched them split their skins many times, and then she watched them turn into cocoons and go to sleep. What a surprise she will get when they creep out of their cocoons as beautiful, big-winged moths! I expect she will take a ride on their backs.

She has made thirty-three fur caps now. Would you like to see them? Well, here are some of them, and you can’t think how sweet the elves and pixies look in them! I wish my head was small enough for one—don’t you wish yours was too?

Teaching Notes. Points for Discussion.

1. This story tells the life-history of the tiger-moth.
2. Have some caterpillars, any kind, for the children to see. Let them watch them eating.
3. What will happen to caterpillars when they have eaten for some time? (Split skins.)
4. What will happen to them later? (Turn into chrysalids.) What will they be when they wake up? (Moths or butterflies.)
5. Discuss the wonder of this “magic” that turns an ugly caterpillar into a beautiful butterfly.

2 (Book 9)
DOWN WILLOWY WAY

One night Jack had a queer dream. He told it to his mother the next day.

"Mother, I suppose it *was* a dream!" he said. "But it did seem so real."

"Tell me about it," said Mother.

"Well," said Jack, "I was in Cuckoo Wood, Mother, and I came to where the little stream runs. I sat down with my back to a tree, to look at the water. And I saw a queer little man coming along."

"A fairy, or a brownie, do you mean?" asked his mother.

"A brownie," said Jack. "He had a long beard, so long, Mother, that he had to tie it round his waist to keep it from getting under his feet."

"How queer!" said his mother. "Go on with your porridge, Jack."

"Well, as I watched that brownie, what you do think he did?" said Jack. "Mother, you will never believe it! He stood by some small trees near the stream, and he took out a funny little flute, that he blew."

"What did he play?" asked his mother.

"He played a funny tune that made me think of milk and cream and mice," said Jack. "I know it sounds funny, Mother, but it *did* make me think of those things. And then a very strange thing happened."

"What?" said Mother.

"There were some furry, silky buds on a tree near by," said Jack, "the sort we call pussy-willow buds, Mother, because they are so soft and furry. Well, all the furry buds began to move about—and they suddenly ran down the stems to the ground—and they were little grey kittens with yellow eyes!"

"Oh, Jack—how queer!" said his mother.

"Yes, wasn't it?" said Jack. "They danced round the little brownie, and he played that tune all the time—the tune that made me think of milk and cream and mice. I expect the pussy-buds heard it too, you see, and wanted to get to the milk and cream and mice—so they jumped down the stem!"

Mother laughed. "It was the queerest dream," she said. "If you like, Jack, we'll take a walk to the stream to-day, and see if there are any pussy-buds on the willows there."

So, after breakfast, they put on their things and set off to the stream in Cuckoo Wood. Sure enough, the goat-willows there were covered with the softest, silkiest grey buds—just like real fur, as Jack said, stroking them.

"Mother, I *wish* these pussy-buds would turn into grey kittens and come running down the stem, as they did in my dream," said Jack. "They had yellow eyes, very bright indeed."

"We will come back here later on in the year and see if the pussy-buds have grown yellow eyes!" said Mother. "I think you will find plenty of yellow eyes springing out from some of these pussy-buds then."

So, later on, Jack and his mother went again to the stream—and this time, what a change there was in the pussy-buds! They had grown fat and big—and one tree had its furry buds sprinkled full of "yellow eyes".

“Mother! These yellow dots are just the colour of the eyes of the kittens I saw in my dream,” said Jack in delight. “What *are* these eyes?”

“The yellow heads of stamens,” said his mother. “These furry buds are really catkins, Jack, full of golden-headed stamens.”

“The hazel-tree has catkins too, full of stamens that send out yellow pollen,” said Jack. “We have some at school, Mother, and they send out so much pollen-powder that our desks get yellow with it.”

“The hazel tree has hanging catkins. These are sitting ones,” said his mother.

“Does the wind blow the pollen out? Does the pussy-willow make the wind take the pollen to the seed-flower on the same tree, like the hazel does?” asked Jack. “Mother, did you know that we get nuts because the hazel tree makes the wind take its catkin pollen-powder to the seed-flowers?”

“Yes, I know that,” said his mother. “But you won’t find any seed-flowers on this pussy-willow, Jack. It isn’t like the hazel—it doesn’t grow catkins and seed-flowers on the same tree.”

“Oh!” said Jack, surprised. “There is a Mr. Tree and a Mrs. Tree, then—how queer! Where’s the Mrs. Tree, Mother?”

“Here is one,” said his mother, and she went to another willow tree, on which were other catkins. But they were not golden yellow with stamen-heads. They were green, and not nearly so pretty.

“That’s the Mrs. Catkin, as you call it,” said his mother. “Waiting patiently for yellow pollen-powder to come to her, so that she may make seed to fly away on the wind.”

“Mother, I can see bees in the pussy-willows,” said Jack in surprise. “Why are they there?”

“They take the yellow pollen-powder from the Mr. Catkins to the Mrs. Catkins,” said his mother. “If you were a bee, you would be very pleased when willow-time came each year, Jack.”

“Why?” asked Jack, in surprise.

“Well, you would come flying along Willowy Way one sunny morning,” said his mother, “and you would smell a delicious smell. ‘Honey!’ you would say. ‘Sweet nectar. Where is it? Where is it?’.”

A bee hummed by and went to a yellow pussy-catkin.

“Then,” said Jack’s mother, “you would go to where the smell came from—look, to that golden catkin, where the bee is now—and there you would find plenty of sweet nectar hidden away for you. Look at that bee, Jack—do you see how his body is getting yellow with pollen? It falls on him whilst he is busy sucking the honey.”

Jack looked and saw that the big bumble-bee’s body was covered with pollen. The bee went to another golden catkin and yet more yellow powder fell on him. Then he flew to the next tree, which was one that Jack had called a Mrs. Tree, because it had the green seed-catkins, not the pollen ones.

“Watch!” said his mother, as the bee landed on a green seed-catkin. “Do you see how the yellow points on the seed-catkin are rubbing against the bee? He cannot help leaving some of the pollen behind him, on the seed-catkin—and that is just what it wants, to make seed!”

“Mother, it’s very clever, isn’t it?” said Jack in wonder. “I think it’s marvellous! Mr. Pussy-Willow has pollen-powder to send to Mrs. Pussy-Willow—and he uses the bee as his postman! But he gives him a fine reward by making sweet nectar for him, honey that the bee loves!”

"Yes, it *is* marvellous!" said Mother. "The bee, of course, doesn't know that he is acting as postman, taking pollen-powder from Mr. Pussy-Willow to Mrs. Pussy-Willow—all he knows is that there is nectar waiting for him on both trees, and he fetches it."

"I think it's all more wonderful than my dream," said Jack, as they went home. "I dreamt of furry kittens jumping from the pussy-willow buds—but now I've seen the bee really and truly acting as postman to the willows—and that's even stranger and more marvellous, Mother."

It is, really, isn't it? Will you try and find some Mr. Pussy-Willow catkins, and some Mrs. Pussy-Willow ones, and see if *you* can spy a bee acting as postman, taking the pollen-powder on his back from one to the other?

Teaching Notes. Points for Discussion.

1. This is the story of the "pussy-willow" catkins, and the way the bees help them.

2. Have some silver-grey pussy-buds for the children to see. Let them watch them turn yellow later on, when the stamens come through.

3. Have some female catkins of the pussy-willow to show them, so that they can see the difference between these and the male catkins.

4. The bee as a "postman" for pollen. Who else acts as postman sometimes? (Wind)

1 (Book 10)
MOOO-OOO-OOO!

Once upon a time there was a little girl called Lucy. She lived in a big town, and every year she went to the seaside.

But one year she went to stay in the country instead. Her mother sent her to stay with her Aunt Mary on a big farm.

"You will have such a lovely time, Lucy," said her mother. "You will have chickens and ducks round you, big sheep in the fields, and perhaps Aunt Mary will let you ride on one of the big horses."

"Will there be cows?" asked Lucy.

"Oh yes," said her mother. "Lovely big red and white cows that say 'Mooo-ooo-ooo!' You will like them, Lucy."

"I shan't," said Lucy. "I'm afraid of cows."

"Silly girl," said her mother. "You have only once seen cows, and that was last year down at the seaside. You need not be afraid of them. They won't hurt you."

"They might toss me with their big horns," said Lucy.

"Of course they won't," said her mother. "Cows are gentle animals. You will like them."

But Lucy didn't like them. As soon as she was down at the farm, she began to look out for cows. She saw some in a field—and, oh dear, as she walked by the field, one of the cows put its head over the hedge and mooed loudly.

"Mooo-ooo-ooo!" it said. It did make poor Lucy jump. She ran home crying, and her aunt was sorry.

"Darling, the cows won't hurt you," she said. "They are our friends. They give us lots of nice things, really they do."

"They don't give *me* anything," sobbed Lucy. "At least, they only give me nasty things. That cow gave me a horrid fright."

"Well, come with me and feed the hens," said Aunt Mary. Lucy dried her eyes and went with her aunt.

When she came back again it was eleven o'clock. Her aunt went to the larder and brought out a bun. Then she poured some rich yellow milk into a blue cup, and set it down beside Lucy.

"A present from the cow," she said to Lucy. "Drink it up and see how nice it is. The cow gave it to me this morning, and I put it in a jug for you."

Lucy tasted the milk. It was simply lovely. "It's much nicer than my milk at home," she said. "Did the cow really give it to me?"

"Yes, it came from the cow," said Aunt Mary. "As soon as you stop being afraid of my dear old cows, I want you to come with me and see me milk them. You will like to hear the milk splashing into the pail. It is a lovely sound."

When dinner-time came, there was an apple pie for pudding. Lucy was glad.

"It's one of my favourite puddings," she said. "Is there any custard, Auntie?"

"No," said her aunt. "But the cow sent you this instead. You will like it."

Aunt Mary put a little blue jug of cream down beside Lucy's plate. "Pour it out over your pie yourself," she said. "It is all for you. Have it all and enjoy it. Isn't the cow kind?"

Lucy poured out the cream over her pie. It was thick and yellow and tasted very good. She liked it.

In the afternoon she went out to play, but she didn't go near the field where the cows were. "If I do they will shout 'Mooo-ooo-ooo' at me again," she said to herself.

When tea-time came Lucy was hungry. She was glad to hear the tea-bell. She ran indoors and washed her hands. She brushed her hair, and went down to tea.

There was a loaf of crusty new bread on the table, and beside it was a white dish full of golden-yellow butter. There was a pot of strawberry jam, and some buns. Lucy thought it was a lovely tea.

"What lovely golden butter!" she said. "Can I spread it on my piece of bread myself, Auntie? Mother lets me at home."

"Yes, you can," said Aunt Mary. "It's a present from the cow again."

"*Is* it?" said Lucy, surprised. "I didn't know butter came from the cow."

"Well, we make it from the cream that we get from the milk that the cow gives us," said Aunt Mary. "So it is really a present from the cow too, you see."

"Oh," said Lucy, spreading her bread with the rich yellow butter. "The cow *does* give us a lot of things, doesn't it? This is really lovely butter."

Lucy met the cows that evening as they walked to their milking-place. One mooed rather loudly and she ran away again. She told her aunt about it at supper-time.

"That nasty horrid cow mooed loudly at me again," she said. "I don't like cows. They are horrid things."

"Dear me, I'm sorry," said Aunt Mary, as she set down Lucy's supper in front of her. "I suppose you won't want to eat another present from the cow, then?"

"Does this lovely cheese come from the cow too?" cried Lucy, in great surprise. "Oh, Aunt Mary—I didn't know that! Milk—and cream—and butter—and cheese! Well, really, what a nice animal!"

Lucy ate her bread and butter and cheese. She had some stewed apple and cream, and she drank a glass of milk. What a number of things came from the cow! She thought about it quite a lot.

"Auntie," she said the next day, "I think I am wrong to be silly about cows. But I can't help it. Do you think if I got used to baby cows first, I would grow to like grown-up cows?"

"I am sure you would," said Aunt Mary. "That is a very good idea! We have some calves, and you shall help me to feed them to-day. You shall see me feed a little new-born calf. You will like that."

"Do calves grow into cows?" asked Lucy, trotting after her aunt.

"Oh yes, always," said Aunt Mary. "Now look, here is our very youngest baby. We must teach her to suck milk. We cannot let her suck her mother's milk—that big cow over there—because we want all *her* milk to sell; so we must feed her out of a pail."

The baby calf was very sweet. She was rather wobbly on her long legs, and she had the softest brown eyes that Lucy had ever seen. She sniffed at Lucy's hand and then began to suck it.

"Oh—she's very hungry, Auntie," said Lucy. "She's trying to suck my hand."

It wasn't long before Aunt Mary had a pail of milk ready for the calf. "Now watch me teach her to drink," she said.

She dipped her fingers in the milk and held them out to the calf. The calf sniffed the milk and then licked it eagerly, trying to take Aunt Mary's hand into her mouth. She dipped her

fingers in the pail of milk again, and once more the calf licked the milk off.

The next time Aunt Mary did not hold her fingers out so far. She held them in the pail. The calf put her head in the pail, and followed her fingers down. Aunt Mary put them right into the milk as soon as the calf began to suck them.

Then the little creature found that she was sucking up a great deal of milk! She still nuzzled round Aunt Mary's fingers, but she couldn't help taking in some of the milk in the pail, for her mouth was in it!

"That's a clever way of teaching her to drink milk," said Lucy, delighted. "Let me put *my* fingers in, Aunt Mary. I want to do it too."

So Aunt Mary held the pail whilst Lucy dipped her fingers in, and let the calf suck them. Then slowly the little girl put them nearer to the milk, until once again the calf was drinking in the pail!

"She will soon learn," said Aunt Mary. "You can help me to feed the little thing three times a day, if you like, dear."

So for the next week or two, Lucy helped to feed the little calf. She loved her, and then one day she found that she was no longer afraid of cows!

"I can't be afraid of you when I love your little calf so much," she told the big red and white cow. "The little calf will grow up to be just like you, and she will give me presents like you do—milk and cream and butter and cheese. Thank you, cow. I'm sorry I ever said you were horrid. I like you now, big red cow, and one day I'll help to milk you!"

"Mooo-ooo-ooo!" said the cow, pleased. "Mooo-ooo-oooo!"

Teaching Notes. Points for Discussion.

1. The story tells many simple facts about the cow.

2. Discuss the various things we get from the milk of the cow—cream, butter, cheese. It is a real friend of ours.

3. The cow feeds on grass. What other animals do the same. Who knows why the cow has such a long, whisk-about tail?

4. Act a little play, in which a child pretends to be afraid of a cow, and the cow tells of all the gifts she brings to the child's table. (It is best not to dwell on the meat side with young children.)

2 (Book 10)
OLD UGLY, THE WATER-GRUB

Once upon a time there was an ugly grub that lived in a little pond.

At first it was only small, but as time went on it grew. It had a long body, with many joints, and six legs on which it could crawl about in the mud.

The other creatures in the pond thought it was very ugly indeed. "Look at it!" said the pretty little stickleback. "I'd be ashamed of myself if I was as ugly as that!"

"I don't like its face," said a water-snail with a nicely-curved shell. "There's something wrong with its face."

"Let's call it Ugly," said a cheeky tadpole. "Old Ugly! There goes Old Ugly! Hi, Old Ugly! What's wrong with your face?"

The grub did not like being called names. It could not help being ugly. Nor could it help its enormous appetite. It was always hungry.

The water-snail sometimes crawled near to where Old Ugly lay in the mud. "Hallo, Old Ugly!" it would say. "Would you like me for your dinner? Well, you can't have me, because I can always pop back into my shell-house if you come too near. What's the matter with your face, Old Ugly?"

Certainly the grub had a curious face. The water-snail used to watch him, and see it change.

Sometimes the grub would lie quietly in the water—and then perhaps a cheeky tadpole would swim too near him.

At once a queer thing happened to his face. The lower part of it seemed to fall away—and out would shoot a kind of claw that caught hold of the tadpole. The claw put the little creature to the grub's mouth—and that was the end of him.

Then the grub would fold up this curious claw, and put it by his face, so that it seemed part of it. The water-snail was very curious about it.

"Show me how it works," he asked the grub. "No—I'm not coming too near you—and I'm only going to put my head out just a little, in case you think of taking hold of it. Now—show me how that funny claw-thing works."

The grub showed him. It was very clever the way he could fold it up below his face, so that it looked like part of it. It was on a hinge, and could be folded or unfolded just as he liked.

"It's a good idea," said the water-snail. "You are really rather a lazy creature, aren't you, Old Ugly—you like to lie about in the mud, and wait for your dinner to come to you. You don't like rushing about after it, like the water-beetle does. So that claw-thing is useful to you."

"Very useful," said the grub. "I can just lie here and wait—and then shoot out my claw—like this!"

The water-snail shot his head in just in time. "Don't play any tricks with *me*, Old Ugly," he said. "I tell you, I've got a hard shell. You could never eat me."

The other creatures in the pond were very careful not to go too near the grub. When they saw his face looking up out of the mud, they swam away quickly.

"That dreadful face!" said a gnat grub. "It is horrid the way it seems to fall to pieces when that lower part, the claw, shoots out. It really gives me a fright. There he is—look! Hallo, Old

Ugly!"

"Don't call me that," said the grub. "It hurts me. I can't help being what I am. It is not my fault that I am ugly."

But nobody called him anything else. Nobody liked him. The snails teased him. The stickleback said that he would tear him to bits with his three spines if he went near his little nest of eggs. The tadpoles gathered round him at a safe distance and called him all the rude names they knew. And they knew a good many, for they were cheeky little things.

Even the frogs hated the grub. "He snapped at my leg to-day," said one. "I didn't see him in the mud down there, and I swam too near. Out shot that claw of his and gave my leg quite a nip."

"Let's turn him out of the pond," said the stickleback. "We don't want him here. He is ugly and greedy and fierce. If we all get together, we can turn him out."

So the stickleback, the frog, the two big black water-beetles, the tadpoles, the water-spider, the gnat grub and the water-snails all swam or crawled to where Old Ugly was hiding in the mud, and called to him:

"We don't want you in the pond!"

"Go away from here or I will tear you with my spines!"

"Leave our pond, or we will chase you round and round it till you are tired out!"

Old Ugly's face fell apart, and he shot out his long claw in anger. "How can I go away? There is nowhere for me to go to. I can't leave this pond. It is my home."

"You must leave it by to-morrow or we will bite you," said one of the water-beetles, the very fierce one.

"Yes, you must, or I shall rip you with my spines," said the stickleback, and he went scarlet with rage.

Well, of course, there was nowhere that the ugly grub could go. He could not breathe out of the water. He could not catch his dinner except in the pond.

He was sad and frightened. Next day the other creatures came to him again. The stickleback rushed at him and nearly pricked him with his spines. The fierce water-beetle tried to bite his tail.

"Go away!" cried the water-creatures. "Go away, Old Ugly." Old Ugly felt ill. There was the stem of a water-plant near by and he began to crawl up it.

"Leave me alone," he said. "I feel ill."

The water-snail crawled after him. The stickleback tried to spear him with his spines. The grub went on up the stem, and at last came to the top of the water. He crawled right out of the water, and stayed there on the stem, still feeling queer.

"Has he gone?" cried the tadpoles. "Has he gone?"

"He's out of the water," said the water-snail. Then he stared hard at the grub. "I don't think he feels very well," he said. "He looks a bit strange."

The grub stood still on the stem, and waited. He didn't know what he was waiting for, but he knew that something was going to happen. He felt very strange.

Then, quite suddenly, the skin began to split across his head. The water-snail saw it and called down to the creatures below:

"His skin has split! He really is ill! Something queer is happening to Old Ugly."

Something queer certainly *was* happening to the ugly grub. The skin split down his back too. Out from the top part came a head—a new head—a head with big brilliant eyes! The water-snail nearly fell from his leaf with astonishment.

“He’s got a new head,” he said. “And my goodness, he’s got a new body too! His skin is splitting down his back. I can see his new body beneath.”

“Is it as ugly as his old one?” asked a tadpole.

“No—it’s beautiful—it’s wonderful!” said the snail, watching patiently. And, indeed, it *was* wonderful. As time went on, the grub was able to wriggle completely out of his old skin.

He was no longer an ugly grub. He was a most beautiful dragonfly! His body gleamed bright green and blue—and what a long body it was! He had four wings, big, shining ones that quivered in the sun. He had wonderful eyes. He had six rather weak legs and a strong jaw.

“The ugly grub has changed into a dragonfly!” said the water-snail. “Oh, what a strange thing to see! Dragonfly, what has happened?”

“I don’t know!” said the dragonfly, glad to feel his wings drying in the sun. “I don’t know! I only know that for a long, long time I was an ugly grub in the pond—but that now I have wings, and I shall live in the air! Oh, what a wonderful time I shall have!”

When his wings were ready, the dragonfly darted high in the air on them, his blue and green body almost as bright as the kingfisher’s feathers. He flew off, looking for insects to catch in his strong jaws. Snap—he caught a fly!

“What a beautiful creature!” said a little mouse in surprise, as the dragonfly whizzed past. “Hi, Beauty, Beauty, Beautiful! Where are you going?”

“Are you talking to *me*?” said the dragonfly in surprise. “I’ve always been called Old Ugly before!”

“You are lovely, lovely, *lovely*!” said the mouse. “Stay and talk to me, do!”

But the dragonfly was off again, darting through the air on strong wings, as happy as a swallow.

“What a strange life I have had!” he hummed to himself. “This is the nicest part. How happy I am, how happy I am!”

Maybe you will see him darting down the lane or over the pond. Look out for him, won’t you, for he is one of our loveliest insects.

Teaching Notes. Points for Discussion.

1. This is the story of the life of the dragon-fly.

2. Many creatures spend the first part of their lives in the water, and the second part in the air or on land. (Frog, toad, dragonfly, gnat, caddis, etc.)

3. What other creatures would dragonfly grub see in the pond—and in the air when he became winged insect?

4. The dragonfly lays its eggs in the stem of a water-plant—and so the life-cycle begins all over again.

1 (Book 11)
MUDDLE'S MISTAKE

There was once a brownie called Muddle. I expect you can guess why he had that name. He was always making muddles! He did make silly ones.

Once his mistress, the Princess of Toadstool Town, asked him to take a note to someone who lived in a fir tree. But Muddle came back saying that he couldn't find a tree with fur on at all!

Another time she asked him to get her a snapdragon—and he said he didn't mind fetching a dragon, but he didn't want to get one that snapped.

So, you see, he was always making muddles. And one day he made a very big muddle. The Princess always said he would.

"You just don't use your eyes, Muddle," she would say. "You go through the world without looking hard at things, without listening well with your ears, without using your brains. You are a real muddler!"

Now once the Princess was asked to a party given by the Prince of Midnight Town. She was very excited.

"I shall go," she told Muddle. "You see, this prince gives really wonderful midnight parties, and he lights them by hanging glow-worms all over the place. It's really lovely!"

"Shall I go with you?" asked Muddle. "I expect you will need someone to look after you on your way to the party, because it will be dark."

"I think I shall fly there on a moth," said the Princess. "That will be nice. You get me a nice big moth, and you shall drive me."

"Very well, Your Highness," said Muddle, and he went off to get a moth. He hunted here and he hunted there, and at last he found a beautiful white-winged creature.

"Ah!" he said, "just the right moth for the Princess. I must get it to come with me. I will put it into a beautiful cage, and feed it on sugar and honey, so that it will stay with me until the night of the party."

So he spoke to the lovely creature. "Will you come home with me, White-Wings? I will give you sugar and honey. You shall stay with me until next week, when you may take the Princess of Toadstool Town to a party."

"I should like that," said White-Wings. "I love parties. Get on my back, brownie, and tell me which way to go to your home."

Muddle was pleased. He got on to White-Wing's back, and they rose high in the air. It was fun. They were soon at Muddle's house, which was a sturdy little toadstool, with a little green door in the stalk, and windows in the head.

"Shall I put you in a cage, or just tie you up, White-Wings?" asked Muddle. White-Wings didn't want to be put into a cage. So Muddle took a length of spider thread and tied her up to his toadstool. He brought her honey, and she put out her long tongue and sucked it up. Muddle watched her.

"What a wonderful tongue you have!" he said. "It is a bit like an elephant's trunk. I like the way you coil it up neatly when you have finished your meal."

"It is long because I like to put it deep down into flowers, and suck up the hidden nectar," said White-Wings. "Sometimes the flowers hide their nectar so deep that only a very long

tongue like mine can reach it."

Muddle told the Princess that he had found a very beautiful moth to take her to the midnight party. The Princess was pleased. "Well, I am glad you haven't made a muddle about *that*!" she said. "Bring White-Wings to me at twenty minutes to midnight, and we will fly off. Make some reins of spider thread, and you shall drive."

Muddle was so pleased to be going to the party too. It was a great treat for him. He had a new blue suit made, with silver buttons, and a blue cap with a silver knob at the top. He looked very grand.

When the night came, Muddle went out to White-Wings. The lovely insect was fast asleep.

"Wake up," said Muddle. "It is time to go to the party."

White-Wings opened her eyes. She saw that it was quite dark. She shut her eyes again. "Don't be silly, Muddle," she said. "It is night-time. I am not going to fly in the dark."

"Whatever do you mean?" asked Muddle in surprise. "It is a midnight party! You *must* fly in the dark!"

"I never fly at night, never, never, never," said White-Wings. "Go away and let me sleep."

"But moths always fly at night!" cried Muddle. "I know a few fly in the day-time as well —but most of them fly at night. Come along, White-Wings. The Princess is waiting."

"Muddle, what is all this talk about moths?" asked White-Wings in surprise. "I am not a moth. I am a BUTTERFLY!"

Muddle lifted up his lantern and stared in the greatest surprise at White-Wings. "A b-b-b-butterfly!" he stammered. "Oh no—don't say that! No, no, say you are a moth!"

"Muddle, sometimes I think you are a very silly person," said the butterfly crossly. "Don't you know a butterfly from a moth? Have you lived all this time in the world, and seen hundreds of butterflies and moths, and never once noticed how different they are?"

"I thought you were a moth," said Muddle, and he began to cry, because he knew that the Princess would be very angry with him. "Please be a moth just for to-night and let me drive you to the midnight party."

"No," said White-Wings. "I am a butterfly and I don't fly at night. If I were you, I'd go and find a moth now, and see if you can get one that will take you."

"But how shall I know if I am talking to a moth or a butterfly?" said Muddle, still crying. "I might make a mistake again."

"Now listen," said the butterfly. "It is quite easy to tell which is which. Do you see the way I hold my wings? I put them neatly back to back, like this, so that I show only the underparts."

The white butterfly put her wings back to back. "Now," she said, "a moth never holds her wings like that. She puts them flat on her back—like this; or she wraps her body round with them—like this; or she just lets them droop—like this. But she certainly doesn't put them back to back."

"I'll remember that," said poor Muddle.

"Then," said the butterfly, "have a look at my body, will you, Muddle? Do you see how it is nipped in, in the middle? Well, you must have a look at the bodies of moths, and you will see that they are not nipped in, like mine. They are usually fat and thick."

"I will be sure to look," promised Muddle.

"And now here is a very important thing," said the butterfly, waving her two feelers under Muddle's nose. "A *most* important thing! Look at my feelers. What do you notice about them?"

“I see that they are thickened at the end,” said Muddle. “They have a sort of knob there, butterfly.”

“Quite right,” said White-Wings. “Now, Muddle, just remember this—a moth *never* has a knob or a club at the end of his feelers, never! He may have feelers that are feathery, or feelers that are just threads—but he will never have knobs on them like mine. You can always tell a butterfly or moth at once, by just looking at their feelers.”

“Thank you, White-Wings,” said Muddle, feeling very small. “All I knew was that butterflies flew in the day-time, and moths mostly flew at night. I didn’t think of anything else.”

“Now go off at once and see if you can find a moth to take you and the Princess to the party,” said White-Wings. “I’m sleepy.”

Well, off went poor Muddle. He looked here and he looked there. He came across a beautiful peacock butterfly, but he saw that it held its wings back to back as it rested, and that its feelers had thick ends. So he knew it wasn’t a moth.

He found another white butterfly like White-Wings. He found a little blue butterfly, but its feelers had knobs on the end, so he knew that wasn’t a moth, either.

Then he saw a pretty moth that shone yellow in the light of his lantern. It spread its wings flat. Its feelers were like threads, and had no knob at the tips. It *must* be a moth. It left the leaf it was resting on and fluttered round Muddle’s head.

“Are you a moth?” asked Muddle.

“Of course!” said the moth. “My name is Brimmy, and I am a brimstone moth. Do you want me?”

“Oh *yes*!” said Muddle. “Will you come with me at once, please, and let me drive you to the midnight party, with the Princess of Toadstool Town on your back?”

“Oh, I’d love that,” said the moth, and flew off with Muddle at once. The Princess was cross because they were late, and Muddle did not like to tell her why.

They went to the party and they had a lovely time. Muddle set White-Wings free the next day, and gave her a little pot of honey to take away.

“You have taught me a lot,” he said. “I shall use my eyes in future, White-Wings!”

Now let’s have a game of Pretend! I am the Princess of Toadstool Town and you are just your self. Please go out and see if you can find a moth to take me to a party! If you point out a butterfly to me instead, do you know what I shall call you?

I shall call you “Muddle” of course!

Teaching Notes. Points for Discussion.

1. The story tells of the differences between moths and butterflies.
2. If possible, have both to show the children. If not, show clear pictures.
3. Discuss the differences—for example, ways of holding wings, feelers, night-flying, day-flying.
4. What butterflies do we know? What moths?
5. What do we know about a butterfly’s early life?

2 (Book 11)
THE BIRDS GO TO SCHOOL

There were hundreds of nests in the trees and hedges around. Some of them still had eggs in, but most of them had baby birds. How busy the fathers and mothers were!

You should have seen them flying to and fro, looking for grubs and flies to give them. The baby birds put up their heads and opened their beaks wide for their food.

"We do have to work hard now," said a blackbird to a thrush. "We have four little ones, and they are so hungry. I really don't know how many times a day I go out to look for grubs and flies for them, and fly back to the nest. My wings are really getting tired!"

"It will be a good thing when they are out of the nest and can learn to look after themselves," said the thrush.

"Well, that is a very anxious time for us," said the blackbird. "We have to teach our little ones so many things! Some of them learn easily and are obedient—but some are lazy or disobedient, and I am always afraid the cat will get them."

"Boys and girls go to school to learn things they need to know, and our babies go to school too—but only with their parents," said the thrush. "Mine are almost ready to go to school. I have four children—Freckles, Speckles, Brownie and Fluff."

"I have four too," said the blackbird. "I must go. I believe I can hear them squeaking for me. How hungry they always are!"

She flew off, and the thrush went back to her own nest too. She looked at her youngsters, and cocked her head on one side.

"Time for you to learn to fly," she said. "You are too big for the nest now. Come along. You shall go to school with me to-day, and learn a lot of things! You get out of the nest first, Freckles. You are the biggest."

Freckles got out of the nest, a dear little fat brown baby thrush. He sat on the bough beside his mother.

"Now, spread your wings like this and fly down to the ground," said his mother. But Freckles wouldn't. The ground looked so far away. He was afraid. He half-opened his wings and then closed them again.

"Come along, Freckles," said his mother. "It is easy." She flew down to the ground and back again. But still little Freckles wouldn't try.

Then Fluff climbed out of the nest. She was the smallest. "*I'll* try!" she said. She spread her little wings, tipped herself off the bough—and fluttered clumsily down to the ground. She landed with a little bump—and wasn't she proud of herself!

"I've done it, I've done it!" she cried. "Oh, I do feel grand. I can fly, I can fly!"

"Keep under that bush for a moment," said her mother. "And don't make a noise in case the cat comes by. Now, Freckles, you try."

But no, Freckles wouldn't. In the end both Brownie and Speckles flew before Freckles did. All three were down on the ground, and still Freckles stayed on the bough.

The mother-thrush was cross. She suddenly gave Freckles a push with one of her wings. He toppled off the bough, opened his wings, and fluttered in fright down to the ground. How the others laughed.

"If you won't learn your lessons, you must be made to," said the big thrush to silly little Freckles. "Now come along. I'll take you to the smooth grass, where we can perhaps find a worm or two, and some flies or grubs. Keep close to me, all of you—and if I make a loud call, like this—luck-aluck-aluck-aluck—follow me at once, because that will mean that danger is near."

The little family was soon on the smooth lawn. The big thrush saw a worm coming out of a hole. She ran to it, pecked it, and gave a hard tug. Up came the worm, and the thrush divided it among her children.

"Now," she said, "look around for another worm. Who will be the first one to get one?"

Brownie saw one and ran to it—but she wasn't quick enough and the worm disappeared into its hole. Freckles saw one, but he missed it when he tried to tug at it, and it slid back.

It was Fluff who got the first worm, but she almost lost it by not pulling hard enough. "You want to tug sharply," said the big thrush. "That's the secret of getting a worm right out of its hole."

She saw a caterpillar swinging from a long thread hanging from a twig. She called her children round her. "Try to catch that swinging caterpillar," she said. So they all had a try, but it was very difficult. Fluff caught it at last, and her mother was pleased with her.

It was Freckles who gave her the most trouble. He was lazy and didn't seem to want to bother to learn how to get food for himself. He kept running away from his mother too, and he sometimes didn't run to hide when she sounded her alarm-note. She was cross with him.

"If you don't obey me at once, an enemy will catch you, and then you will be eaten," she scolded him. "You see, any stupid or disobedient bird will always be caught, Freckles. So just learn your lessons properly, and do as you are told."

"Mother, Mother, I have found a fly, such a big one!" cried Speckles in excitement. "Come and see."

Speckles had found a wasp crawling over the grass. The mother thrush spoke to her little family sharply. "Never eat any insect striped with yellow. They can hurt you. Now remember that, please! And never eat the little red beetles called ladybirds. They taste very nasty indeed!"

"Very well, Mother," said Fluff. But soon she saw a real fly, and rushed happily after it. She managed to catch it and swallowed it proudly. "I caught a fly," she told the others. "It was really quite easy. It did taste nice."

When the babies had all learnt how to find a little food for themselves, and were not quite so hungry, the big thrush made them practise flying again. "It is easy to fly *down*," she said. "But not so easy to fly *up*. Now—up we go to the top of the fence."

The little birds were clumsy at first. Freckles was very stupid. He wouldn't even try until his mother gave him a sharp peck.

Soon the little birds were all hungry again and down to the grass they flew. But they hadn't been there very long before the sharp eyes of the mother-bird saw the big black cat slinking along under the hedge. She sounded the alarm at once.

Now Freckles had just seen a worm! He heard his mother calling out that danger was near, and that they must all fly into the trees to hide—but he did want that worm!

So he didn't fly up into the bushes as the others did. He stayed on the lawn, pulling at the worm.

The cat saw him. The cat came padding softly round the grass. He crouched low, ready to spring. The mother-bird cried out in fright: "Come up to the trees, come up to the trees! Cat,

cat, cat! Beware of the cat!"

The cat sprang—and the mother-thrush flew down, trying to peck at his head. But it was no use. The silly little thrush was caught and eaten. That was the end of him. The mother-thrush was very sad. She flew back to the others, and took them away to another garden.

"I was afraid that Freckles would come to a bad end," she said. "Every year the foolish, silly, disobedient bird-babies get caught by their enemies. Only the wise, obedient ones live to grow up. Poor Freckles! He would never learn his lessons well."

They flew to the edge of a pond. A mother-duck was there, teaching her young ones to swim. The little thrushes watched. The duck showed her children how to dive and how to hunt in the mud for water-insects.

And then the thrushes had another treat. The kingfisher brought her four pretty children to a branch of a tree that overhung the water, and taught them how to dive in to catch fish. It was lovely to see them.

They were clumsy at first and they missed the fish—but how excited the kingfisher family were when one of the babies really did manage to catch a minnow! "Tee-tee-tee!" said the mother-bird. "Very good, little one, very good!"

"All baby-birds seem to be going to school now," said Fluff. "Lessons are fun. What a lot birds have to learn! We have to learn how to catch flies and pull worms from their holes. We have to learn how to fly well."

"And *we* have to learn how to swim and dive properly," said the ducklings. "We have to learn not to dive into water-weeds, or we might get tangled up, and not be able to get out. Then we should drown."

"And *we* have to learn how to dive," said the little kingfishers, "and how to catch fish in our beaks."

"And the baby sea-birds have to learn how to swim on the rough sea," said the big kingfisher. "I was talking to a sea-gull yesterday, and she was saying that her babies had to be taught to paddle first, and not to go too near the very big waves or they would be knocked over. You all have to go to school and learn different lessons!"

The three little thrushes did their lessons well. Now they are all grown-up and I hear them singing sweetly in the spring-time. They have built nests in my hedges—but isn't this a strange thing?—nobody taught them how to build their nests! They didn't have any lessons in nest-building at all.

How do you suppose they know how to build their nests so well?

Teaching Notes. Points for Discussion.

1. The story tells of the training of young birds.
2. All young things have to learn many lessons, whether taught by their parents or not.
3. What do children have to learn?
4. Would you rather be a thrush baby or a kingfisher baby? Why?
5. Act a little play in which there is a mother-bird with four baby birds and a cat.

1 (Book 12)
THE FRIENDLY LADYBIRD

Hop and Skip were always at work in the garden of the Queen. The roses were their special care, and how hard they worked so that the Queen might have lovely roses to wear or to put on her tables!

In the early spring they cut back the rose-twigs so that they might send out strong buds that would hold big and beautiful roses.

In the summer they watched for caterpillars or grubs that might eat their roses. They loved taking in big bunches of perfect red, pink, yellow, and white roses for their Queen.

Hop and Skip had a great friend, and that was a handsome ladybird. All the little folk know the insects well, and talk and play with them—but Hop and Skip really loved the bright-red ladybird.

She had got caught in a spider's web one day, and she couldn't get out. The spider did not run out to catch her and tie her up in spider-thread. She knew that ladybirds tasted horrid. So she stayed hidden under her leaf and watched the little insect struggling hard to get out.

The web was strong and the threads were sticky. The ladybird's legs were tangled up. Even her short feelers were caught in the web. She was very frightened.

"Even if the spider doesn't catch me and eat me, I shall die if I don't get out!" she thought. "Oh, if only someone would come by and rescue me."

Not very long after that, Hop and Skip came by on their way to the rose-garden. "Look," said Hop, stopping. "There's a pretty ladybird in that web. It can't get out."

"We'll help it out," said Skip. So very carefully, he untangled the ladybird's legs and feelers, and she dropped to the ground. She landed in some mud, on her back. She rocked to and fro, trying to turn herself over.

Hop helped her. "My goodness, how muddy you are!" said Hop. "Wait a minute—let me rub you hard with my handkerchief, Ladybird. There—now the mud is off, and your red back, with its seven black spots, is all bright and shining again."

"How pretty you are!" said Skip. "Let *me* give your back a good rub too."

The ladybird cleaned her legs and feelers, for they still felt sticky with the spider's web. Hop and Skip gave her some more rubs with their hankies, and soon she felt and looked quite all right.

"How good you are!" she said. "I shall come and see you each morning now. I want to be friends with you. Perhaps one day I shall be able to repay you for the good turn you did me."

"Perhaps you will," said Hop politely, but he and Skip smiled at one another. How could a small ladybird be of any help to pixie gardeners! It was quite impossible!

Each morning the ladybird came to call at their small cottage. She was very polite and good-mannered.

"How do you do?" she would say. "I hope you are quite well. Is there anything I can do for you to-day?"

"No, thank you," Hop and Skip would say, with a smile. Then they would talk. Sometimes the ladybird sat on the breakfast-table, if she was very early. They thought she was very, very pretty.

When she went, she always said the same thing to them: “Promise me that if ever you are in trouble, you will come to me for help?”

And Hop and Skip would always promise very gravely: “Yes, we promise to come to you for help, Ladybird.”

It was spring-time when they saved the ladybird from the spider’s web. The days went by, sunny and warm, and Hop and Skip were very, very happy in their rose-garden. They had cut back the rose-tree twigs, and now they were watching the strong shoots grow, in which were the leaves and the flower-buds.

May-time came, and the rose-trees had never looked so well. Hop said he could see a rose-bud coming already.

“We shall be able to take the dear Queen a lovely red rose-bud very early this year,” he said. “She can wear it in her hair when she goes to a party. Then she will look more beautiful than ever.”

One morning Hop and Skip had a dreadful shock. They went to look at their rose-trees, and they saw that one of them had something black on the shoots. They bent to see what it was.

“Oooh! How horrid! It is whole lot of tiny little black insects!” said Hop.

“Are they eating the new leaves?” said Skip angrily. “Yes, they are! Hop, what are they?”

“It must be what is called *blight*,” said Hop. “We’ve never had it before. We must get it all off, Skip, or it will spoil this tree.”

But dear me, before many days had passed, every single rose-tree had the black blight. Hundreds of tiny black insects crawled on the rose-plants, eating leaves and buds. They would all be spoilt. There would be no roses to give to the Queen.

Hop and Skip cried bitterly, for they loved their roses. “Shall we go and tell the ladybird?” asked Hop. “We did promise to tell her when we were in any trouble.”

“Well, she can’t possibly help us, but it would be a comfort to tell somebody about it,” said Skip.

So off they went to the ladybird. She was surprised to see the tears running down their cheeks.

“Ladybird, we haven’t come to you for help but just to tell you our trouble,” said Hop. “Our rose-trees are covered with hundreds of horrid little black insects that are eating all the new shoots. We shall have no roses. We may even lose our jobs.”

“Don’t cry,” said the ladybird. “I can help you. I will soon get rid of that rose-blight for you.”

“What! You can *really* help us!” cried Hop in astonishment. “How? How can a little ladybird like you help us? It is impossible.”

“Oh no, it is quite easy,” said the ladybird. “I am a very good friend to gardeners and to farmers too. I will just go and get some of my friends, and then we will all fly to your rose-garden. Meet me there.”

She unfolded her wings from beneath her red back, and flew off. Hop and Skip ran back to their roses. Before very long there came quite a cloud of ladybirds flying into the garden.

They settled on the rose-bushes. They began to lay eggs. What a lot they laid! They were yellowish eggs, and the little red beetles laid them on the leaves. Hop and Skip watched in surprise.

“Why do you do that?” said Hop. “Eggs won’t help us!”

“No—but the grubs that come out will help you,” said the ladybird. “You wait and see!”

The ladybirds flew away. Hop and Skip did not feel very comforted—but dear me, how exciting it was when the eggs hatched out! They hatched into dark grubs, which had enormous appetites.

And what do you think they liked eating better than anything else? The rose-blight—the hundreds of tiny black insects that were spoiling the rose-trees!

"Look at that now!" said Hop in delight. "Did you ever see such a thing? These little dark nigger-grubs are gobbling up all this horrid blight. There soon won't be any left!"

The little dark grubs cleaned up one tree after another, for the ladybirds had laid eggs on every tree. Soon the trees were clean, and not one black blight was left.

Then the nigger-grubs hung themselves head downwards from a leaf, changed into hard little cases, and slept soundly. Hop and Skip found them there, and were most astonished.

"They ate all the blight—and then they turned into these little cases—and now they've gone to sleep!" said Hop. "Most extraordinary! What will come out of the cases?"

Well, you can guess what did come out of the cases one day—some lovely little ladybirds! Yes, those dark nigger-grubs had changed into ladybirds, every one of them. They sat in the sunshine, and then they flew away to enjoy a different sort of life.

The ladybird that Hop and Skip had made friends with came to see the two very soon after that. They stroked her shiny back, and told her all that had happened.

"All the eggs hatched into dark grubs that ate the blight," said Hop and Skip. "It was wonderful. You have saved all our roses, Ladybird. We shall always be grateful to you."

"I told you I would pay back your good turn one day," said the ladybird, pleased. "I am very glad I've been able to help you."

The two gardeners were able to give the Queen some beautiful roses after all. They told her how the ladybird had helped them.

"You had better tell all gardeners that," said the Queen. "I think it is wonderful!"

And so, boys and girls, I hope when you find a ladybird, you will let her run on your hand, and then take her carefully into the garden.

"Lay your eggs there," tell her. "You are a great friend of mine!"

And she will help you, just as she helped Hop and Skip so many, many years ago!

Teaching Notes. Points for Discussion.

1. This is the story of the life of the ladybird and of the good she does through her grubs.
2. Some things do harm to our plants and crops, some things do good. Who are our friends and who are our enemies? Name as many as you can, with the children's help.
3. If possible, have one or two ladybirds for the children to see.
4. Ladybirds are really little beetles. Where do they keep their wings?
5. Ladybirds are easy to draw and colour. Let the children draw big ones.

2 (Book 12)
THE SPELL THAT WENT WRONG

There was once a very clever brownie called Big-Head, who could make wonderful magic spells.

He had a little goblin servant called Heyho. Heyho had to run about and get Big-Head the things he needed for his spells.

One day Little-One the red imp came to see Big-Head. Little-One was not a nice imp at all. He was spiteful and mean, and nobody liked him. But he was very, very rich. No one knew how many sacks of gold he had, for he kept them locked up in a cave, deep in the heart of a hill.

"What do you want, Little-One?" asked the clever goblin. "Is there anything you want me to sell you? I have some marvellous spells."

"Big-Head, I want to be strong and big," said Little-One the imp. "I am tired of being small. I want to grow as big as a hill, as strong as an oak tree, as mighty as the wind that roars in winter-time. I will pay you well if you can get me a spell that will make me big."

"Little-One, I don't think you are good enough to be made strong and powerful," said Big-Head. "You see, only really good and wise people should be given strength and power, for if wicked people are strong, then they can make others very unhappy."

"I shall be very, very good and wise when I am big and powerful," said Little-One. "I am only mean and spiteful because I am small and people laugh at me. But as soon as I am tall and strong, you will see what good things I do! I shall be the finest imp that ever lived."

"Will you really?" said Big-Head. "Well, it would be worth making you big, then. But you are quite sure, Little-One, that you will use your strength and power well, and not ill, if I give you a spell to make you big?"

"I promise," said Little-One. But he did not mean it. He only wanted to be big and strong so that he might get richer still, so that he might punish the people he did not like, and make everyone fear him.

But Big-Head the goblin believed him. He called his servant Heyho to him and told him about the imp.

"Little-One wants to be made big and strong and powerful," he said. "He will give me as much gold as I like if I give him the spell he wants."

"What things do you want for your spell?" asked Heyho. Big-Head had to think about that. It would be a difficult spell to make, he knew. But at last, by thinking and dreaming hard, he knew how to make the spell for Little-One.

"Fruit of the oak, keys of the ash,
Rumble of thunder, and lightning-flash,
Thread of a spider, wing of a bee,
Breath from the gale blowing over the sea,
Tooth of a lion, a limpet's shell—
There are the things that I need for my spell!"

This was the spell-song that Heyho heard his master singing. He sighed. What a lot of things to find for the spell! Well, Big-Head would have to wait for some of them. It was only

spring-time now, and the oak and the ash were hardly in leaf, and the fruit would not be ready till the autumn.

Big-Head knew what Heyho was thinking.

"You can find me nearly all the things quickly, but I must wait for the fruit of the oak and the ash," he said. "Choose a big oak tree, the biggest you can find, Heyho, and a big ash tree, and watch the flower carefully, so that you may choose me the finest, strongest fruit from the trees in the autumn. Get me the other things as soon as you can, and store them in the big blue pan for me."

So Heyho got all the other things, and he was really very clever at getting them, for it is not easy to get a rumble of thunder, and a flash of lightning.

Still he managed it, and put them into the big blue pan. The thunder kept rumbling round the pan and made a noise, but nobody minded.

It was easy to get a strong silken thread from a spider's web, and the strong little wing from a dead bee. Heyho got the tooth of a lion quite easily, because he looked for a lion with toothache, and took out the bad tooth. It was enormous.

"Now, a limpet's shell," said Heyho. "I must go to the sea for that, and for the breath of a gale too. Let me see now—the limpet has a shell like a pointed hat—and it is very, very strong."

He found an empty limpet shell, and then he caught a breath from the rough gale, and put it into a bottle to take home and empty into the blue pan.

Now he had only the fruit of the oak and the ash to take, and then Big-Head could stir everything up together, and say the magic words to make the spell.

"All the same, I wish he wasn't going to give the spell to that nasty Little-One," said Heyho. "I know he will use his power badly."

Heyho went out to find an oak tree and an ash tree. He knew them both. They were immensely strong trees, tall and beautiful. They were just beginning to leaf.

Heyho chose a great oak tree. It was putting out tender reddish-green leaves. Among the leaves Heyho found the flowers. There were two kinds, both catkins.

One was a small, thin catkin with bunches of yellow-headed stamens growing on it. The other was a stouter, upright catkin, set with two or three tiny cups. In the middle of each cup was a seed-vessel.

"I'll watch you carefully," said Heyho. "I'll choose your finest fruit, oak tree."

Then he went to the ash tree, whose black buds had broken out into thousands of queer little flowers, that opened before the leaves unfolded. There were bunches of purple stamens in the midst of which stood little bottle-shaped seed-vessels of green.

Heyho looked at the flowers. "I shall watch you changing into ash-keys," he said. "Ash-keys are your fruit, ash tree. I shall pick them when they are green, before the 'spinners' come whirling down to the ground!"

The ash tree put out its leaves when the flowers had faded and were already beginning to form into ash-keys. They were beautiful feathery leaves, light and strong, cut into pale-green leaflets.

Soon the oak, too, was covered in feather-shaped leaves, and its stamen catkins had faded and withered. But the little cup-like seed-vessels were growing well.

Heyho forgot to watch the oak and the ash trees. He didn't notice how the fruits were growing. He just didn't bother. But Big-Head gave him a shock one day.

"Heyho! I want to make that spell for Little-One to-morrow. He is coming to me with twenty sacks of gold. Have you everything I need for the spell?"

"Oh, good gracious!" said Heyho. "Yes—no—yes—er—I mean no, not quite. There's everything there except the fruit of the ash or oak."

"Go and get them at once," said Big-Head crossly. "It is autumn, and they should be ready."

Heyho rushed off. He plucked some of the ash-keys, which were now big and well formed. Then he ran to the oak. He saw a good many little round brown balls growing on the twigs, and he picked some quickly. Then he hurried back and put the ash-keys and the round brown balls into the blue pan.

"Ready, master, ready," he cried. Big-Head came up with his magic spoon. He stirred the curious mixture, and he sang a magic song. Everything grew quiet and small and green in the pan. At last, at the bottom, there were two or three drops of a curious shining green liquid. Big-Head tipped it out into a golden cup.

"Here is the strongest spell in the world!" he said. "It will make Little-One as tall as a hill, as strong as the sea, as powerful as the wind!"

Little-One drank the spell the next day and everyone waited to see him grow enormous. But he didn't. He stayed small—but he went a curious green colour. Yes, his face and hands, and even his hair, turned a pale green!

"Something went wrong with the spell!" groaned Big-Head. "What could it have been?"

And suddenly Heyho knew. "Oh, Master, do forgive me!" he cried. "I know what I did wrong. I took the wrong thing from the oak tree. I took oak apples instead of acorns! I forgot they were not the real fruit of the oak tree!"

"You stupid fellow!" said Big-Head angrily. "Oak apples are made by insects! They pierce an oak twig, lay eggs there, and cause a round ball to grow, in which their eggs hatch! The grub eats the soft juicy ball that has formed."

"I know, I know," wept poor Heyho. "And those balls grow hard and woody and brown, don't they, master? Look—here is one I didn't put into the pan."

He showed Big-Head a hard round ball. Big-Head pointed to a hole in it. "That is where the insect came out," he said. "Now you have spoilt my spell, and turned Little-One green, instead of making him big and powerful!"

"It's a good thing, master, it's a good thing!" cried Heyho suddenly. "I know Little-One is bad. He would never be good. He would have used his power to make people unhappy, not happy! It's a good thing the spell went wrong!"

And, indeed, it was. If Heyho hadn't made that mistake, and put oak apples into the spell, instead of acorns, the red imp would have become big and strong enough to rule all the little folk! Then goodness knows what might have happened!

Teaching Notes. Points for Discussion.

1. This is a story bringing in the real and false fruit of the oak-tree—acorn and oak-apple.

2. Have some acorns to show the children, and a twig with oak-apples on it. Have also some ash-keys if possible, as they come into the story.

3. Has anyone seen the flowers of oak or ash?

4. Most trees bear flowers, though some of them are not very noticeable. We will look for them in the spring.

5. Draw acorns and oak-apples.

1 (Book 13)
TICK-TOCK AND THE BUTTERCUP

Tick-Tock was a mender of watches and clocks. He was always very busy, because he was clever at his work. He took hundreds of clocks and watches to pieces, cleaned them, mended them and put them neatly together again.

He polished necklaces and brooches till they shone. He mended all kinds of silver and gold dishes, and sent them home shining like new.

Now one day the little Princess Marigold brought a beautiful golden buttercup to Tick-Tock.

"Tick-Tock," she said, "do you see this buttercup? It grew in my very own field—but, Tick-Tock, it hasn't got shiny petals like all the other buttercups."

"How queer!" said Tick-Tock, taking the buttercup. "Do you want me to polish them for you, little Princess, so that they gleam and shine brightly?"

"Yes, please," said Marigold. "You see, I want to play that game of 'Do you like butter?' and hold the buttercup under the chins of my friends. If there is a yellow glow there, I know they like butter. But a buttercup with petals that are not shiny is no use for that game."

"I'll polish them well for you to-night," said Tick-Tock. "Call for your buttercup to-morrow at twelve o'clock, little Princess, and it will be ready for you. Then you can take it home and play your butter-game."

"Thank you," said Marigold, and ran off. Tick-Tock smiled to himself. He had done many things in his life, but he had never had to polish a buttercup before!

That night he took the buttercup out of water and looked at it. It was a beautiful thing. The golden flower grew on a tall green stalk, from which leaves, cut up into thin fingers, grew.

Now Tick-Tock was used to taking things to pieces when he mended them, or cleaned them. So what did he do but take that buttercup to pieces too!

I hope you have got a buttercup beside you, so that you can see exactly what Tick-Tock did. First he pulled away the little turned-down sepals underneath the flower. They were a greenish-yellow, and there were five of them. (Count yours and see.)

Then he pulled off the pretty yellow petals. There were five of those too, rounded at the top, and curving down to a point where they joined the stalk. Sometimes there are more than five petals and sometimes less. Tick-Tock laid them beside the greenish-yellow sepals.

Then he had left only a green knobbed head, set round with many little yellow-headed stamens.

Tick-Tock pulled all those off too, one by one. He had such a lot! Each stamen had a stalk, and a yellow head. He pulled each yellow head off the stalk, so that every stamen lay in two parts.

Then there was only the green knob left. Tick-Tock thought he wouldn't pull that to pieces. He would leave it as it was.

"I hope it doesn't matter, my pulling this buttercup to pieces!" thought the little watch-maker. "But it is so much easier to clean and polish things when they are taken to pieces."

He took up the sepals that had grown below the flower, and cleaned them well. Then he took the yellow petals that had made the cup of the flower, and rubbed some polish on the inside of them, and on the outside too.

He took up his little duster and rubbed the polish gently over the petals. Rub—rub—rub—soon the petals looked as bright as gold, and shone beautifully.

Tick-Tock was pleased. “This buttercup will look lovely,” he said. “Now I’ll just give the stamens a little polish too—the heads, anyway—and clean the stalks of them.”

It took him a long time to clean the stamen-heads, for there were so many! Some of them spilt a little yellow pollen on the table.

Then he cleaned the stalks of the stamens, and that took him a long time too. He picked up the green, knobby head that was left, and rubbed it clean with his duster. It was not at all easy to clean.

“There—that is every bit of the buttercup flower cleaned and polished for the Princess Marigold,” said Tick-Tock to himself. “Now I’ll just put it together again, stand it in water, and it will be ready for the Princess to-morrow when she comes out of school.”

But do you know, when Tick-Tock began to put the buttercup flower together again, he couldn’t remember how to do it!

“Good gracious!” he said, looking down at all the greenish-yellow sepals, the golden petals, the heads and stalks of the stamens, and the little green knob in the middle. “Good gracious! I don’t remember how to put it together! Now where did those stamens grow? Outside the petals; or inside?”

He tried to remember. Then he wondered if the sepals were fixed this way on the stalk, or that. Did they come inside the petals, or out?

He simply could NOT remember.

“This is dreadful,” he said. “What am I to do? Why did I take this flower to pieces? I do wish I hadn’t.”

He ran out to ask his friend, Tickles, to help him. Tickles was very fond of flowers. She always had big vases about her rooms, full of all kinds of flowers.

“She will be sure to help me,” said Tick-Tock. “I am sure she knows exactly how flowers are made.”

He knocked at Tickles’ door. She opened it.

“Tickles, will you come and help me?” said Tick-Tock. “I’ve taken a buttercup to pieces, and I don’t know how to put it together again!”

“Of course I’ll help you—but really, Tick-Tock, fancy not knowing how to do a little thing like that!” said Tickles. She slipped her hand in his and went to his shop.

She picked up the green stalk, on which the green seed-knob grew. Then she picked up the stamens. “Dear me!” she said, “you have pulled the stamens to bits too—taken the yellow heads from the stalks. We must put these together first, Tick-Tock. Get a brush for you and a brush for me, and a little pot of glue.”

Soon the two were sitting together, busily sticking the yellow heads of the stamens on to their stalks. Then Tickles carefully stuck each stamen in its place, putting them round the green seed-knob in a ring. One by one they went into their places.

“Now that’s all the stamens done,” said Tickles. “Now we will do the five petals, Tick-Tock. They come next.”

“I wasn’t sure if the little turned-down things came next,” said Tick-Tock.

“Oh no,” said Tickles, “petals are always inside sepals, silly. You can easily remember that, because the sepals protect the petals when they are in bud. They wrap them up, you know. Haven’t you ever seen a buttercup bud? You should look at one and then you would see

that the sepals wrap them up like a coat. The sepals are the coat, the petals are the pretty dress inside."

Tickles dabbed glue on to the pointed tip of each golden petal, and then carefully stuck it into place below the stamens. Soon the yellow cup was exactly as it had been before Tick-Tock had taken it to pieces.

"Now for the sepals," said Tickles. "They are always underneath the petals. Don't put them on upside-down, silly. Look—this is the way they go. Like this. You see, when the buttercup has opened, the sepals turn a greeny-yellow and turn themselves neatly downwards into pretty points."

Tickles and Tick-Tock put the five sepals on very neatly, all nicely turned down. "Now the buttercup is finished," said Tickles. "And Tick-Tock, do try and look a little harder at flowers and see how they are made. I think you are very stupid not to know how to put a buttercup together, when you had taken it to pieces."

"I think so too," said Tick-Tock. "I can put any clock together for I know exactly where the wheels and things go. I don't know very much about flowers. I was surprised to find how many different parts this buttercup had."

"Well, most flowers have sepals to cover the bud, petals to look pretty, stamens full of pollen to send out to seed-vessels, and seed-vessels to welcome the pollen so that they may make seed," said Tickles. "The important parts are the stamens and the seed-vessels. The sepals are just the coat, the petals are the pretty dress."

"I will remember that," said Tick-Tock. "And now I shall always look at flowers and see how they are made. I shall look for the sepals, I shall count the petals, I shall peep at the stamens, and find the seed-vessels—yes, in every new flower I find I shall look for all those things. It will be fun."

"Yes, it will," said Tickles. "Now, good-night. The buttercup will look lovely when the Princess comes for it to-morrow. You will be able to tell her how you took it to pieces and put it together again!"

Marigold was pleased with her polished buttercup, and she liked hearing Tick-Tock's little story about it.

"Oh, Tick-Tock," she said, "you have polished the petals outside as well as in! Didn't you know that buttercups are only polished on the inside?"

"Dear me, is that so?" said Tick-Tock. "I never knew *that* before!"

Did you know it? What, you didn't! Well, do have a look, and you'll see that Marigold is right!

Teaching Notes. Points for Discussion.

1. This is a story that tells very simply and clearly the parts of a flower.
2. It is essential to have buttercups in a vase to show the children the point of the story.
3. Take a buttercup to pieces afterwards, and arrange the parts separately in rows, saying the names of the parts.
4. What part does the yellow pollen come from?
5. If possible, take children to see the beauty of a buttercup field.

2 (Book 13)
THE WONDERFUL CARPET

Once upon a time there was a queen who loved beautiful things.

She paid a great deal of money for many lovely things in her palace. She went about looking for lovely chairs, and beautiful curtains, for well-carved chests, and splendid pictures. She hunted for gleaming glasses, and for shining candle-sticks.

At last it seemed as if she could find no more things of beauty. There was nowhere else to look, no other shop to go to.

"Well, I will send out a notice to say that I will pay well for any lovely thing that is brought to me," said the queen. "Then maybe I shall get some wonderful treasures."

So she sent out a notice.

"A large reward in gold will be paid to anyone who brings me something lovely."

Then there came crowds of men and women, and even children, to her palace.

One man brought a necklace of carved green beads. Each one was carved in the shape of a flower.

But the queen was tired of necklaces. "I already have one hundred and fifty-three different necklaces," she told the man. "I do not want any more."

Another man brought a silken cushion, on which had been painted a peacock so life-like that it really seemed to move.

But the queen did not like that either. "I have too many cushions already," she said. "The peacock is nicely done, but I do not want another cushion."

A woman brought a set of tiny animals, all carved out of black wood. They were perfect, and the queen could see every hair on the backs of the animals.

"I have animals carved in ivory that are as beautiful as these," she said. "I want no more."

A child brought her a bubble-pipe, and she blew her some bubbles. They bounced into the air from her pipe, and the queen saw that they were all the colours of the rainbow.

"See," said the little girl, "I have caught a rainbow in my bubbles. Would you not like to buy my pipe, Your Majesty, and then you could catch rainbows for yourself? It is a beautiful thing to do."

"It is only a game for children," said the queen. "I have a bubble-pipe that is made of glass so fine it looks like a bubble itself. I do not want your pipe, little girl."

Day after day the queen saw beautiful things, and she wanted none of them. She grew tired of looking at them, and she even grew tired of looking at the lovely things that she herself had bought.

"I did not think I would ever get tired of loveliness," she said. "Is there something the matter with me, that I can no longer find anything I think is beautiful enough to buy and keep?"

One day a little man came to see the queen. He had a sack on his back, which he put down when he bowed himself very low before her.

"Have you brought me something beautiful?" asked the queen. "I hope it is not a chair, or beads, or something painted or carved. I am tired of those things."

"I have brought you something so beautiful that no one has ever tired of it," said the little man. He opened his sack, and shook out hundreds of little round things all over the floor. The

queen stared at them in surprise.

"Do you call those beautiful?" she asked. "I think they are ugly. This is a stupid joke, little man. I will put you in prison!"

"Your Majesty, these things I have brought you hold more beauty than any treasure you have in your great palace," said the little man.

"More beauty than there is in that wonderful carpet you are standing on?" asked the queen.

The little man looked down at the marvellous carpet. He saw the beautiful pattern, and the glowing colours. He nodded his head.

"I bring you more beauty than there is in a hundred carpets like this," he said.

"You could not bring me anything more beautiful than this carpet," said the queen. "Why, it cost three thousand pounds!"

"I bring you something that will make you a carpet for nothing," said the little man. "A carpet more beautiful than anything you have ever dreamed of. Your Majesty, you think that money can buy all the beauty there is. But I tell you that the most lovely things in the world cost nothing. And one of these I bring you."

"Show me the beauty in it, then," said the queen, growing cross. "I see no beauty in these little brown things on my carpet."

"Your Majesty, you know the wood that lies to the east of your palace?" said the little man. "There are trees there, but little grows beneath them. Bury these things I have brought you, bury them in that wood, a few inches below the ground—and I promise you that when May-time comes, you will have a carpet more beautiful than any you have ever seen!"

The queen was puzzled, and a little excited. Perhaps the little man was talking about a Magic Carpet. The queen had never bought anything magic. She hoped the little man's carpet would be enchanted, full of magic.

"I will do as you say," she said. "I will bury these little brown things in the ground, and I will wait until May-time—then I will go to see this wonderful carpet you have promised me. But, little man, if I do not think it is wonderful, if I do not find it more beautiful than the carpet you are now standing on, I shall put you into prison for the rest of your life."

"Your Majesty, if you do not tell me that the beauty I bring you is worth more than all the treasures in your palace, then I will gladly spend the rest of my life in prison," said the little man.

He went away. The queen called her servants, and gave them the queer little round things. "Put them back into the sack, and take them to the bare wood that lies to the east of my palace," she said. "Bury them a few inches below the ground and leave them."

The servants did what the queen commanded them. It was autumn then. The winter came later, with snow and frost. Then came the spring, and the queen remembered what the little man had told her.

"It is April now," she thought to herself. "Soon it will be time to go and see this wonderful carpet that the little man promised me."

Now, the little brown things that the man had brought to the queen were bluebell bulbs. When they were buried in the wood, they sent out small roots to hold themselves down firmly. They lay quietly there all the winter.

When the spring-time came, the bulbs sent up long leaves that looked as if they had been folded in two, for there was a crease all the way down the middle. Then the sun shone warmly, and the spikes of flowers began to push up.

Up and up they grew, and one day hundreds of them began to open out into blue bells—bells that hung down the green stalk, looking as if they might ring at any moment!

The flowers were a most wonderful colour. More and more of them opened until the wood looked as if a carpet of shimmering, gleaming blue had been laid there. They swung gently in the wind, and sent out a delicious scent.

The queen came walking to the wood to see the carpet that the little man had promised her. She saw the sheets of bluebells in the distance, beautiful to see. She smelt their sweet scent. She saw how the flowers changed their colour as they swung a little in the wind and the sun.

"So this is the carpet!" she said. "A carpet of bluebells! It looks like a blue lake, a blue, shimmering lake—and it is made of flowers!"

She stood and looked for a long, long time. Then she heard a voice, and she saw the little man standing beside her.

"Well, Your Majesty," he said, "do you not think I was right? Is not this carpet more beautiful than the one you have in your palace? It costs nothing—and it is a beauty that everyone can share. It is not put into a palace, and kept for a few to see."

"Little man, you are right," said the queen. "I love beautiful things—but I have always thought that those I paid much gold for must be worth the most—but this carpet of bluebells is the loveliest thing I ever saw. Give me some more beauty like this, little man, and I shall be happier than I have ever been before!"

The little man was pleased. He took the queen to a nearby field, and showed her the golden sheets of buttercups, stretching as far as the eye could see.

He took her to the hills, and showed her the dancing cowslips, nodding their pretty heads in the wind. He took her to the lanes, and showed her where the hawthorn lay like drifting snow across the hedges.

"Lovely, lovely, lovely!" said the queen. "Anyone can have my palace treasures now! These are more beautiful than anything I can buy. Oh, little man, tell everyone to find these things and be happy!"

Well, we will, won't we? We won't buy treasures and store them away for ourselves—but we will find buttercup-fields and daisy-banks, cowslip-meadows and bluebell-woods—and we will store them away in our minds so that we can always see them there whenever we want to!

Teaching Notes. Points for Discussion.

1. This story tells of bluebell bulbs, their growth into flowers, and the beauty of the carpet they make.
2. Have bluebells in a vase. Give each child a bluebell to hold and smell when you tell the story.
3. If possible, have some bluebell bulbs.
4. Draw and colour a bluebell. Let each child take his drawing and his bluebell home.
5. If possible, take children to see bluebells in a wood.

1 (Book 14)
A VERY QUEER HOME

When Betty and Peter walked through the fields in the summer, they saw a strange thing.

"Look, Peter," said Betty. "Something has been spitting on the grass. There are little balls of spit everywhere. I don't like it."

"Nor do I," said Peter. "Some has got on to my bare legs. It's called cuckoo-spit—but do you think the cuckoo really does spit like this, Betty?"

"No, I don't, or we should have seen it," said Betty. "It would have to spend all day doing it, to make as many cuckoo-spits as there are in this field!"

"Perhaps the cows spit them," said Peter, looking at the peaceful red and white cows in the field.

"No, they don't," said Betty. "I'm sure they don't. I do wish I knew what made all these horrid spits. I'm going to trample down every grass and flower I see with a spit on it—there's one—and there's another—and another."

The little girl was trampling down the flowers when a small high voice, rather like a swallow's, called to her from a nearby hedge:

"Little girl! What are you doing? Leave the frog-hoppers alone!"

Betty stopped in astonishment. She looked at the hedge, and saw a very small elf there, sitting under a daisy.

"Hallo!" said Betty. "What do you mean—leave the frog-hoppers alone? I can't see any—and I don't know what they are."

"Shall I show them to you?" said the elf, getting up. "Would you like to see them? They are nice little creatures."

"Oh yes, I'd love to see them, and so would Peter," said Betty.

"Then I'd better make you small, like me," said the elf. "Take this tiny pill, will you? Suck it slowly, and I'll say a few magic words. Don't be afraid when you grow small. I'll look after you."

This was very exciting. The children sucked the tiny blue pills. The elf gave them each one. She chanted a few strange-sounding magic words as they sucked the pills—and then, very slowly and smoothly, they became small!

It was a queer feeling. It didn't feel as if they were getting small—it just felt as if everything around them was suddenly getting big.

The trees seemed enormous. The hawthorn hedge near by seemed as high as a mountain. The buttercups nodded high above the children's heads, and the daisies seemed as big as dinner-plates!

"This is very queer," said Betty. "I feel a bit afraid."

The elf took her hand. She was taller than Betty and Peter now! "Don't worry," she said. "I'll make you your own size again soon. Now—do you want to see the little frog-hopper?"

"Yes, please," said Peter, looking all round as if he expected to see a frog come hopping up.

"Well, come with me to the nearest cuckoo-spit," said the elf. "Of course, as you have guessed, the cuckoo doesn't make these spits. They are made by the frog-hoppers."

This was very surprising to the children. They had never heard of frog-hoppers before. The elf took them to a blade of grass that grew above their heads. On it, about level with their eyes, was a big ball of white spit.

"Frog-hopper!" called the elf. "I know you're at home, because you always are! Come and talk to these children, will you?"

A green nose poked out of the froth, and big eyes looked at the children. They were quite startled.

"Do you live in the spit?" asked Betty.

"Of course I do," said the frog-hopper. "I make it."

"Oh—so it's *you* who makes it," said Betty. "Well—what a funny idea! Do you like living in the middle of a frothy ball of spit, frog-hopper?"

"Of course—or I shouldn't do it," said the strange insect. "It's a nice place to live."

"But why do you like living there?" said Peter. "I'd hate it!"

"Well, you see, I don't much like the hot rays of the sun," said the insect. "This froth protects me from it. And, of course, it hides me from my enemies. Birds like to eat me, you know."

"What are you like?" asked Betty. "Could you crawl out and show us what you look like? Please do. There are no birds about at the moment."

The insect looked all round, and then began to crawl out of the ball of spit. It was a pretty, pale-green creature.

"Oh, you're a sort of grub, a lovely green colour," said Betty in surprise. "Quick—crawl back again, because I can see a robin near by."

The frog-hopper disappeared at once into its ball of froth. It made a little more, for the ball became bigger.

"Has the bird gone?" it asked, poking its green head out again.

"Yes—you are quite safe," said the elf. "Well, children—now you see why I stopped you from trampling down all the balls of spit you saw. They are the homes of the little frog-hoppers. It wasn't a kind thing to do."

"Do they live in their balls of spit all the year round?" asked Betty. "I only remember seeing them in the summer."

A voice came from the ball of froth.

"I only live here until I turn into a proper frog-hopper. I'm a frog-hopper grub at present—I shan't be a little brown frog-hopper for a while. Shall I come and see you when I am?"

"Oh *yes*," said the children, pleased. "But how shall we know you?"

"Well, my name will tell you what I shall be like," said the grub. "I hop like a frog, high in the air—but I shall be very small, of course. Now good-bye—I can hear more birds about, and I think I shall make a little more spit, and settle down to have a sleep. It's a very hot day."

"Well, that was exciting," said the children to the elf. "We'll watch out for the little frog-hopper when he comes. Fancy making himself a home out of frothy spit like that! What queer things some creatures do!"

"Well, so do children," said the elf. "I thought it was a very queer thing to do, to trample down the flowers just because you didn't like the spit!"

"We won't do things like that again," said Betty. "Now you'd better make us our right size, because we must go home to dinner."

The elf gave them yellow pills to suck and once more chanted some magic words. They shot up to their right size so quickly that they gasped for breath.

“It was like going up in a lift!” said Betty. “Now come along—we must go home. What an exciting time we have had!”

Later on in the summer, Betty was sitting on the grass reading, when a curious little insect jumped on to her book. She looked at it and it seemed to be looking up at her.

“Peter! Peter, come and look! The frog-hopper has come to see us!” cried Betty. The little brown insect hopped on to her hand. Peter came running up.

The children stared at the funny little brown creature.

“He’s nice,” said Betty. “I like him. He does look rather like a tiny little frog, doesn’t he, Peter?”

“Let’s see him hop,” said Peter, and he touched the tiny insect. At once it leapt high into the air and fell back on Betty’s book with a little thud.

“Isn’t he clever, the way he hops?” said Betty. “I suppose he does that to get away from his enemies, or to scare them. I know a frog leaps high to give his enemies a fright. Oh—there he goes again!”

“It’s a good name for him—frog-hopper,” said Peter. “Isn’t he a funny little thing, Betty—making his home in frothy spit out of his own body, and living there—and turning into this queer little hopper! I like him.”

“So do I,” said Betty. And you do too, I hope! Go and see him in his home of frothy spit, and then look out for him when he comes hopping along on your hand!

Teaching Notes. Points for Discussion.

1. This is the tale of the frog-hopper grub.

2. Have a piece of grass or plant with a ball of cuckoo-spit on it.

3. What a lot of good ideas there are in the plant and animal world! Discuss some with the children—feathers to keep birds warm, wings and down on seeds to help them to fly, web between the toes of ducks, etc.

4. How does the frog-hopper’s froth keep him safe from his enemies—and the hot sun?

5. We will look out for the little brown frog-like insects later on in the summer, and see how high they leap.

2 (Book 14)
GLOVES FOR THE PARTY

"I am going to give a party for the King and Queen of Stardust," said the Queen of the Pixies. "It will be fun."

"Oh *yes*," said all her servants. "We will ask all the pixies and brownies and elves, Your Majesty. They must make themselves new dresses, and look really nice. The King and Queen of Stardust are very grand, you know."

The little folk were most excited when they heard about the party. What a fuss there was about new dresses and new suits! How busy the dressmakers were! What a lot of spiders were asked to give their silken thread to sew the new clothes!

"I think we had all better wear gloves at this party," said the Queen. "It is more polite to wear gloves, and as we want to give a really marvellous party, with everyone in their best dresses, and on their best behaviour, I think we should wear gloves."

Now there were no gloves to be had in Pixie-land, because none of the pixies, brownies or elves ever wore them. They were quite out of fashion. So there was a great to-do when the Queen sent this message round.

"Gloves!" said Jinky. "What are gloves?"

"Things we wear on our hands and fingers," said Gobbo. "Goodness—where shall we get any?"

"Better ask Nimble-fingers the dressmaker," said Pippy. So they asked Nimble, and she frowned a little, and wondered how she could manage to make gloves.

"I haven't anything to make them from," she said. "Oh dear! It's going to be very difficult to make hundreds of gloves for all of you. I shall never have time!"

"Well, Nimble dear, you are very clever," said Pippy. "Can't you go round the woods and fields and see if there is anything you can use for gloves?"

"Yes, I will," said Nimble-fingers. She took her basket and set off to look.

She looked at the daisies. No good for gloves at all. She looked at the pink clover. No—that wouldn't make gloves! She found the scarlet poppy, and she shook her head. The silken petals would make a sweet frock, but they would not be strong enough for gloves.

She went into the wood. On a bank there grew many foxgloves, their purple-red spires of flowers glowing in the sunshine. Nimble looked at them and felt excited.

"Oh!" she said. "Oh, how lovely! Those purple-red flowers are exactly what I want. Why, each flower is like the finger of a glove!" She went up to a tall, dreaming foxglove and looked carefully at the flowers. "Yes," she said, "I could make some beautiful gloves from these flowers. Five of them would make a glove that would fit fairy fingers nicely. I could get some pink silk for the back of the glove and the palm—but there are the fingers all ready made!"

Nimble-fingers was so pleased. She picked a purple-red flower from the bottom of a tall foxglove.

Then she jumped in fright, for a big, booming voice spoke in her ear, and she felt a wind round her curly head.

"What are you doing? Leave my flowers alone, please!"

Nimble looked round and saw a fat bumble-bee, dressed in a beautiful velvety fur coat of brown and yellow. He looked nice enough to stroke. He was buzzing and booming round her.

"Oh," said Nimble in fright, "I'm sorry if I've offended you! I didn't know they were *your* flowers."

"This flower is made to fit me, so that I can go in and out for sweet nectar," said the bee. He sat down on a leaf, and Nimble longed to stroke his furry body.

"Yes—the flowers would fit your big body nicely," said Nimble. "Do let me see you go in, Bumble-bee. I'd like to see you walk up the flower-bell."

The bee zoomed into the air. He flew to a foxglove flower, and landed on the lower part. He made his way right up the bell, and disappeared from sight, lost in the heart of the flower. Then he backed out again, fell off the end, and flew into the air. He landed on the leaf again.

"Did you watch me?" he said. "I just fit in nicely, don't I?"

"Where is the honey kept?" asked Nimble.

"At the end of the flower," said the bee. "It's put there for me. The flower doesn't want anyone else but me to visit it."

"How do you know?" asked Nimble.

"Well, didn't you see the thick mat of hairs at the entrance?" asked the bee. "*I* can walk over it easily—but smaller insects get caught in it. It is like a forest to them! It keeps them out."

"Let *me* see," said Nimble. She peeped in at one of the foxglove bells, and saw the thick mat of hairs there. How clever! She also saw a good many coloured spots inside the bell.

"What are those spots for?" she asked.

"Those are to guide us bees to the nectar," said the bumble. "A good many flowers have honey-guides—spots and splashes and rays of colour. After all, a young bumble-bee might not know the way, you see—and those spots are like signposts to him."

"I didn't know that before," said Nimble, peeping in again. "I can see some stamens lying flat against the top of the bell, Bumble. I suppose when the pollen in them is ripe, it will cover your back, and you will take it away to another flower, to give it to the seed-vessel there."

"Of course," said the bee. "Then seed can be made. I must do *some*thing in return for the honey, mustn't I?"

"Yes, you must," said Nimble. Then she looked rather sad. "I do wish you could spare me some of the flowers," she said, and she told him about the Queen's party, and how everyone had to wear gloves.

"I could make such wonderful gloves from these flowers," she said. "They are shaped just like the fingers of gloves."

"Well, I've never worn gloves," said the bee. "But if the Queen has ordered you to wear them, and you would like the flower-bells to make them, I can arrange that for you, I think."

"I don't see how you can," said Nimble. "You see, if I mustn't pick the flowers off, and may only have them when they fade and fall, they won't be any use. You know how flowers wither up and fade, when the petals are no longer fresh."

"Now listen," said the bee. "I will tell the foxglove to drop its flowers unfaded. I will ask it not to let its bells wither and droop. I am sure it will drop them on the ground for you, whilst they are still fresh and perfect. Then you can take them for gloves."

"Oh, that would be lovely!" said Nimble, pleased. "I will come back to-morrow, Bumble, and see if the flower has dropped any fresh bells for me."

The bumble-bee went into a bell, and Nimble heard him talking in his booming voice. She ran home, hoping that he would be able to arrange everything for her.

Next day she went back again—and on the ground below the foxglove lay about twelve lovely bells, purple-red and fresh, not at all faded or withered. Nimble picked them up and looked round in delight for the bee. He soon came zooming along.

"Good-morning!" he said. "I have arranged things nicely for you. As soon as I have taken the flower's honey, as soon as the stamens have shed their pollen on my back, and as soon as the seed-vessel inside has pollen to make seed, the foxglove will drop its bell for you. It will not hold on to it until it is withered and old. I have told all the foxgloves this, so you will be able to pick up as many bells as you like, and make gloves for everyone!"

Well, that really was good news! Nimble filled her basket with the purple-red bells, and hurried home. It didn't take her long to make many pairs of gloves—and how sweet they were! The pixies, brownies and elves loved them.

"Now we shall look very grand and polite at the party!" they said. "Thank you, Nimble. Where did you get the fingers from? They are lovely!"

Nimble showed them the tall foxgloves. Bees crawled into them, big velvety bumble-bees, and now and then, when pollen had been rubbed on to the seed-vessels, and the flower could make seed, purple-red bells dropped lightly to the ground.

That day the little folk gave the tall, purple-red flower its name. They called it Folk's Glove, because it gave its bells to make gloves for the little folk.

Folk's Glove—that is its right name, though now we call it foxglove. Look inside and see the spots that are the sign-posts for the bee. Look at the mat of hairs. Gather up some bells from the ground, and see how fresh and unfaded they are, as perfect as when they grew on the plant.

It is said that if you put a foxglove bell on your thumb and wish, your wish may come true, if the wish is a good one. It would be fun to try, wouldn't it?

Teaching Notes. Points for Discussion.

1. This is the story of how the foxglove has adapted itself in order to make use of the help of the bumble-bee.
2. Have one or two foxglove spikes for the children to see.
3. Let them examine a bell and see the mat of hairs and the spots and stamens.
4. Let them take a bell, slip it on their thumb and wish.
5. If possible, take them to where foxgloves grow and let them see the fallen bells around the feet of the foxgloves, and also watch for a bumble-bee to crawl inside a pendant bell.

1 (Book 15)
THE UNHAPPY GRASS-SNAKE

It was a hot, sunny day. A great many animals and insects were about, enjoying the golden sun. On the hillside the rabbits came out of their burrows. A hare ran down into the field. A hedgehog ran along quickly, looking for a dinner of beetles.

Suddenly he stopped, curled himself up into a prickly ball, and lay quite still. He had seen something gliding through the grass near by.

It was a snake. Its gold-rimmed eyes stared hard at the hedgehog. Then it spoke in a hissing voice.

"Ss-ss-ss! Don't be afraid of me! I am more afraid of you! I have heard of hedgehogs eating snakes."

The hedgehog uncurled himself. "Oh, it's you," he said. "You're the grass-snake, aren't you? I'm not afraid of you. I'm not afraid of anyone! Who would dare to eat me, set around with prickles as I am!"

The snake coiled himself up near the hedgehog. It flickered its tongue in and out. The hedgehog watched it in wonder.

"Is that a sting you are putting in and out of your mouth?" he said. "It's forked at the end. You can't sting me with it, can you?"

"No!" said the snake. "Of course not. That is only my tongue. Don't you know a tongue when you see one? It's very useful to me because I can feel things with it. I run my tongue over my dinner to see just how big it is. Like this!"

The snake went to a stone. "Pretend this is a frog," he said. "Now look—I would run my tongue over it like this—and then I would know just how big it is."

"You use your tongue like fingers, or like a feeler," said the hedgehog. "I say, haven't you got a long body! It must feel funny to have to drag such a long tail about with you."

"Yes, I am very long," said the snake. "Don't you think it is marvellous, the way I get along without feet? I could easily race *you*, hedgehog."

"Yes, I think you could," said the hedgehog. "Yet I can run quite fast. Snake, don't stare at me so. It makes me feel uncomfortable."

"I can't help staring," said the snake. "You see, I have no eyelids, so I can't shut my eyes. I have to stare always."

Now it was the hedgehog's turn to stare. It was quite true—the snake had no eyelids at all. How strange!

"You can always tell a snake from a lizard if you look at the eyes," said the snake. "Lizards blink—but snakes can't!"

"I think you are very pretty," said the hedgehog, looking closely at the long, graceful snake. "I like those orange patches on your neck—they make a kind of collar for you."

"Yes—that is one way you will always know *me*," said the grass-snake. "And do you like the pretty pattern of bars and spots all the way down my greeny-brown back?"

The hedgehog went closer. Now he knew the snake could not harm him, he liked him. He saw the pretty pattern of spots, and he saw, too, the curious scales that covered the snake's long body.

"You are covered with scales!" he said. "How queer!"

"And you are covered with prickles. Queerer still!" said the snake. "I think you are a lucky creature, hedgehog, for although you are covered with nasty, prickly spines, people like you. I have even heard of boys and girls keeping you for a pet, and feeding you on bread and milk."

"Yes. Bread and milk is nice," said the hedgehog. "But surely, snake, boys and girls like *you*, because you are very pretty, and you would not hurt anyone."

"Oh, I am very much afraid of boys and girls and grown-ups," said the snake sadly. "They hate me. They are afraid of me. They hit me with sticks and stones whenever they see me."

"But why?" cried the hedgehog in astonishment. "You don't bite or sting. You would even make a pet, I should think."

"Yes, I make a good pet," said the grass-snake. "I'll tell you why people are afraid of me. They are afraid of me because they mix me up with the viper, who can give a poisonous bite."

"I've never met a viper," said the hedgehog.

"His other name is adder," said the snake. "If you like, I'll get him here to talk to you. Then you can tell me if you think I really am like him. I must be, I suppose, or people wouldn't kill me in mistake for him."

The grass-snake glided away softly through the grass. He came back in a few minutes with another snake.

But this snake was quite different! Even the hedgehog could see the difference at once.

"Good-morning, viper or adder," said the hedgehog politely. "I don't think you will bite me, but don't come too near me, please."

"I don't bite anyone unless I am disturbed, or frightened, or unless I am catching my dinner and want to bite a frog or mouse," said the viper, hissing loudly.

"Show him your teeth—the two big fangs you have," said the grass-snake.

The viper suddenly opened his mouth, and the hedgehog saw two big fangs at the top, sharp and powerful. He curled himself up at once.

"Don't be afraid," said the viper, closing his mouth again. "I shan't hurt you. I am not foolish enough to bite a prickly hedgehog. Did you see my fangs? I can give a poisonous bite with them."

"Where do you keep the poison?" asked the hedgehog, slowly uncurling himself again.

"At the top of my fangs I keep a bag of poison," said the viper. "When I bite anything, my fangs press against the bag of poison, and some of it runs down through a hole in the fang, and goes into the wound I have made."

"I see," said the hedgehog. "You never sting—but you bite, and poison runs down into the bite! No wonder people are afraid of you."

"I never bite unless I am disturbed by being trodden on," said the viper.

"Do you think we are alike?" asked the grass-snake. "Look at us, please, hedgehog, and tell me why people kill me instead of the viper. Are we so alike?"

The hedgehog looked closely at the two snakes. "Good gracious, no!" he said. "You are not a bit alike! For one thing, grass-snake, you are much longer and more graceful. The viper has a shorter, thicker body."

"Yes, that's true," said the grass-snake. "And look at the mark on the viper's head—it is not on mine!"

The hedgehog looked, and saw that the viper had a V-shaped mark on its head, quite clearly to be seen. The grass-snake did not have this mark.

"Well, I should never make a mistake between you," said the hedgehog! "Never! You are quite different. *You* are a pretty, graceful, long snake, grass-snake, and I like your orange

collar. The viper is not nearly so long or graceful, and I can see the mark on his head that tells me what he is."

The viper flickered his forked tongue in and out. He was hungry. "I want to go and find some dinner," he said. But before he could glide away, there came the noise of footsteps on the hillside.

"Man! Man!" hissed the viper, and glided away into some long grass at once. The hedgehog curled himself up quickly and lay quite still. The grass-snake tried to creep away too.

But he was too late. The man saw him. He gave a shout. "A snake! Look, here's a snake! Kill it, quick! Bring a stick, someone, and kill it."

The pretty, harmless grass-snake could not escape quickly enough. A big stick gave it a hard whack, and the snake trembled. It glided away a little, and tried to hide in the grass. The man threw a big stone at it, and hit it on the back.

"Kill it!" he cried. "It will bite us if we don't!"

The hedgehog spoke in his grunting voice. "It can't bite. It's harmless! Use your eyes and you will see that it is only a pretty grass-snake!"

But the man did not hear. He threw his stick at the snake, and it slid away in pain, trying to hide.

The hedgehog looked for the grass-snake after the man and his friends had gone. It was lying in the long grass, hissing softly in pain, its poor, pretty body bruised and cut.

"Why do they do it?" said the snake. "If only they would leave me alone! I do no harm to anyone."

"Somebody ought to tell them!" said the hedgehog fiercely. "Somebody ought to tell them!"

Yes, the hedgehog is right. Somebody ought to tell you. Well, I have told you, haven't I? And maybe you, too, will be able to tell somebody as well!

Teaching Notes. Points for Discussion.

1. This is the story of the difference in appearance between the harmless grass-snake and the poisonous adder.

2. It is essential to dwell on these points in the picture, where the differences are clearly shown.

3. Choose three children as the characters in the story—hedgehog, adder and grass-snake —and let them talk together, as in the tale.

4. Model a shake or adder in "Plasticene", or draw one. Give the grass-snake his orange collar.

2 (Book 15)
WHO-WHO-WHO-WHO?

Old Mother Twinkle kept six fine brown hens. She was a poor old woman, and she was very glad to have the nice big eggs from her hens.

She ate some and some she sold. Although she was poor she gave away a few too.

"What I should do without my dear old hens I don't know!" she said. "They give me breakfast, dinner and tea, and they bring me in money to buy myself bread and sugar and tea."

Old Mother Twinkle knew all the birds and animals around. She fed the red robin in winter, and put out a bone for the tits to swing on. She liked the little prickly hedgehog that sometimes came into her garden, and she gave him a bowl of bread and milk to eat.

She kept titbits for all the dogs and cats that visited her, and if ever an animal or bird was in trouble she would help it.

She put young birds back into their nests when they fell out. She took a young rabbit from a trap in the woods, and nursed it until its poor hurt paw was better. She helped a robin with a broken leg, and fed him till he could hop again. A boy had thrown a stone at him, and hurt him, poor thing!

One day she heard a hissing noise in a tree, and she peeped inside to see what made it.

A little brown owl was there, all alone. The old woman was surprised.

"Why are you here?" she asked. "There is no one here with you. Your brothers and sister are gone, baby owl. Your mother and father are gone too. Why did you not go with them? You are old enough to fly."

The owl made a funny snoring noise. "One of my feet is caught, and I cannot get it free. I could not follow my family. They left me here alone, and I am half starved!"

"Poor little creature!" said Mother Twinkle. "I will help you to get out. Don't drive your sharp claws into me, or you will hurt me. Let me put my hand down and set your foot free."

The owl understood that she wanted to help him, and he lay quite still. He did not strike at her with his sharp, curved beak, or with his one free foot, with its strong claws.

The old lady set him free. He climbed up to the edge of the hole and looked out. He was weak because he had had no food for two or three days.

"Come with me," said the old woman. "Step on to my shoulder, owl, and I will take you home. I will feed you and nurse you till you are strong enough to fly, and hunt for yourself."

The owl stepped on to her shoulder. He held on to her dress with his curving claws, but he did not touch her soft skin. He was very glad and grateful.

He stayed with Mother Twinkle for a few days, and she fed him well. He was soon quite all right again, and wanted to go and find his family.

"I must leave you," he said. "I must go and join my brothers and sisters, and learn to catch beetles, and mice, and all kinds of other food. I will come back and tell you how I get on."

He flew away at night, very softly, on his big brown wings. His great big eyes could see very clearly in the darkness. Mother Twinkle missed him when he went.

But he was back again early the next morning. "I had a lovely time," he said. "I caught sixteen beetles, and I even managed to catch a mouse."

"How did you catch it?" asked the old woman. "Did you peck it?"

“Oh no,” said the owl. “I was flying quietly over a field—like this—looking downward, and my big eyes caught sight of something moving. I felt sure it was a mouse. So I pounced down at once, feet first—like this.”

“Why did you pounce with your feet first?” asked the old woman.

“Look at my feet,” said the owl, and he held out a foot for the old woman to see. “Do you see those strong curved claws? Well, when they catch hold of a mouse or rat, they meet and make a kind of trap. No animal can get out of it!”

“I see,” said the old woman. “Yes, brown owl, you have strange feet. The eagle has feet like you too. But wouldn’t a mouse or rat try to bite your legs? You might get a very nasty bite.”

“I know,” said the owl. “But look at my legs, Dame Twinkle. Do you see how thickly they are feathered—right down to the toes? A rat or mouse would only get a mouthful of feathers if it tried to bite me—it could not get through all these soft feathers to my leg.”

“That is a very good idea,” said the old woman. “Now, owl, hadn’t you better sit quietly in a corner? You had a lot to eat last night, you know. I don’t know how you manage all those hard beetle-shells, and the skin and bones of a mouse. You really must sit quiet after such a meal!”

“You needn’t worry about that,” said the owl. “Although I swallow the beetles and mice whole, I spit out their shells and skins and bones afterwards.”

“Well, really!” said Mother Twinkle. “If you are going to do that, brown owl, I think you had better sit in the shed, not in my kitchen.”

So the brown owl went and sat all day in the shed. He spat up the shells of the beetles, and the skin and bones of the mouse. It was not a rude thing to do, because all owls do that. Mother Twinkle popped her head in the shed once or twice, and he watched her through slits in his eyelids, half asleep. When she went to the back of the shed for something, he turned his head right round on his neck to watch her. It was queer to see.

“Goodness! It looks as if you can put your head back to front!” said Mother Twinkle. “Now I’m going to collect my hens’ eggs, brown owl. I shan’t disturb you any more.”

But she did disturb him, for she came in crying. “Someone has stolen my eggs,” she said. “Oh, how unkind! Someone has stolen my eggs!”

The owl opened his eyes wide. “Who?” he asked.

“I don’t know,” wept the poor old woman. “If my eggs are stolen like this, I shall have no breakfast and no dinner and no tea. Who can it be?”

“I will find out to-night,” said the owl. So that night, when it was dark, the owl swept softly out of the shed on his silent wings, and went to find his family again. He told them about the old woman’s stolen eggs. “Who stole them, I wonder?” he said.

“Who—Who—Who—Who!” hooted the two biggest owls. “We’ll find out! Who—Who—Who—Who!”

And that night, over the countryside, the old woman heard the owls looking for the robber who took her eggs.

“Who—Who—Who—Who!” they cried. “Who—Who—Who—Who!”

“Listen to the owls hooting!” said everyone.

It was the rat who had stolen the eggs. He had been to the hen-run that night, and had taken another egg. He had eaten it, and was just going back home, when he heard the owls hooting above him. He crouched down at once, close to the grass.

The father-owl saw him crouch. “Who—Who—Who—Who!” he hooted, and pounced downwards. His strong claws caught hold of the fierce rat. The rat squealed.

“Here is the robber!” cried the owl to his family. “Come and see! He has egg-yellow on his nose!”

“Let me go!” squealed the bad rat, and he tried to snap at the owl’s legs with his sharp teeth. But the legs were thickly feathered, and the rat only got feathers in his mouth. He snapped again. It was no use. He could not bite the owl.

“You won’t steal eggs from old Mother Twinkle any more!” said the little brown owl, as the big owl flew up into the air with the rat. That was the end of him. He was eaten, and the little brown owl flew back to Mother Twinkle to tell her, the very next day.

“The rat was the robber,” he said, settling down in the shed. “It’s a good thing we owls eat rats and mice, and not just seeds and fruits, Mother Twinkle, or we could not have caught and eaten your robber for you!”

“Do you know who is a very, very good friend to me?” said Mother Twinkle, stroking the owl’s soft feathers.

“Who—Who—Who—Who?” asked the owl sleepily.

“You—You—You—You!” said Mother Twinkle. And that made them both laugh!

Teaching Notes. Points for Discussion.

1. This is the tale of a brown owl and its ways.

2. How does the owl catch his food? Is he afraid of being bitten on his legs by rats or mice? Why not?

3. What does he catch besides rats and mice? Do you think the farmer likes having owls about? Why?

4. What noise does the owl make? Has anyone heard one? We will listen at night for him to say “Who-who-who-who” as the one in the story did.

1 (Book 16)
THE ELF AND THE POPPY

There was once an elf who lived in a tiny home under a hedge. Near by her house grew a poppy-plant. The elf liked it, and often talked to it.

"You are growing tall," she said to the little plant. "What kind of a flower will you be?"

"A scarlet poppy, with silken petals," said the poppy. "I shall be very pretty. I shall dance in the wind, and everyone will like me."

"I like you now," said the elf. "Would you like me to water your roots? I have a tiny teapot I could use for a watering-can."

"No, thank you," said the poppy. "I don't mind growing on a dry bank. I don't like wet places. The rain is quite enough for me."

One day the elf noticed that the poppy was sending up a stem, with a green flower-bud at the top. The bud drooped its head. It was not ready to open.

"You will soon have a flower," the elf told the plant.

"I know," said the poppy. "Do you see what a nice little green cap my flower-bud wears? You see, my petals are so thin and fine that I don't want them to be spoilt before they unfold."

"It is fun watching you grow and flower," said the elf. "I shall be glad when I see your red petals waving high over my head."

One morning when the elf went out to do her shopping, she passed by the poppy as usual —and she stopped in surprise. The plant looked queer. It was drooping, and all its leaves hung downwards.

"What is the matter with you?" asked the elf. "Are you ill?"

"I feel very ill," said the poppy. "Very ill indeed. I have a pain in my roots. Something is eating them."

"Do you need your roots, then?" asked the elf. "Will you die if they are eaten?"

"Of course," said the poppy. "They not only hold me firmly in the ground, but they draw water from it, and help me to get food for myself."

"Poor little poppy!" said the elf, putting down her basket. "I will help you. I won't let you die. I will see what is eating your roots."

She fetched a tiny spade, and began to dig carefully down beside the poppy plant. Down she dug, and down. At last she came to the roots—and there, nibbling at them, was an ugly grub.

"Oh—so it's you!" said the elf. "Horrid little grub, go away from my poppy. You are not to eat its roots. I won't let you!"

The grub went on nibbling. The elf began to poke him with her tiny spade.

"Don't," said the grub. "You hurt me."

"Well, go away, then," said the elf. "You are hurting my poppy. Go away. The poppy cannot live without its roots. I want to see it flower, and I want to climb up and sit inside its scarlet petals. Go away, ugly grub!"

She poked the grub again with her spade, and it squeaked. It slid away from the poppy-roots, and crawled down a hole. The elf was very glad to see it go.

She put back the earth she had dug out. Then she fetched her tiny teapot and watered the poppy carefully round the bottom. "I am sure a drink would do you good now," she said.

It did. The poppy felt much better. Its leaves stretched out firmly again. It held up its bud-head. It looked well and strong.

"Little elf, you are very, very kind," said the poppy, nodding its bud-head. "I don't know how I can pay you back for your kindness, I really don't. If there is anything I can do for you, please ask me. Anything that I have is yours!"

"Really!" said the elf in delight. "That *is* nice of you! I expect I shall ask you for a good many things, poppy, as the days go by!"

"Ask me all you want," said the poppy. "I shall always love you for saving my life. Without your help I should have died. I should not be able to blossom or make any seed."

The flower-bud grew taller on its stem, and the elf looked longingly at the little green cap it wore.

"Do you think I could have that cap to wear, when your bud is ready to open?" she asked. "It would suit me very well."

"Take it now!" said the poppy at once. "I will push it off and let it fall to the ground for you. Then you can wear it and look pretty!"

The little green cap fell off the red bud. The elf picked it up and wore it. She looked really sweet in it. All her friends wanted to know where she had bought it.

"I didn't buy it," she said. "My friend the poppy gave it to me."

The poppy unfolded its crinkled red petals. They were very wrinkled and crumpled at first, but they soon shook out and became smooth and silky. The elf climbed up the stalk and sat inside the poppy flower.

"I am in a swing!" she cried. "The wind blows you to and fro, poppy, and I am swung about. What a lovely game!"

"Mind you don't dirty your frock on my black stamens," said the poppy.

"Are these your stamens—the black-headed things that sit round the little green knob you have in the middle?"

"Yes, those are my stamens," said the poppy. "They are full of black pollen. Now do be careful of your nice dress, or the pollen will mark it."

"What is the green knob for?" asked the elf.

"That is where I keep my seeds," said the poppy. "My seeds are already forming in there, little elf. When they are ripe, and the green knob has turned brown and hard, you will hear the little seeds rattling about."

"How will they get out?" asked the elf.

"You wait and see!" said the poppy. "I have a very clever idea for sending them away."

"Oh! Oh!" suddenly wailed the elf, looking at her dress. "Your black stamens have spoilt my dress! It's all black! It's just as if I'd been rolling in soot. Oh, poppy, my dress is quite spoilt."

"Oh, what a pity!" said the poppy. "I did warn you about my black stamens. Children get their noses black if they try to smell me! Now—what can I do for you?"

The poppy rocked a little in the wind. Then it spoke again. "Listen, elf. To-morrow my petals will fall off. They do not last very long. They are so fine and silky, and such a lovely colour, that I am sure you would like to have them for a new frock. So, when they fall, pick them up, and use them for a frock. Would you like that?"

"Oh yes!" said the elf. So when the scarlet petals fell, she picked them up from the ground and made them into a beautiful new frock. She sewed it with spider thread, and then tried it on.

“I am as beautiful as you were!” she said to the poppy, dancing round the stem, and holding out the skirts of her scarlet silken dress.

The black stamens soon fell off the poppy. Then only the green knob was left. It slowly turned brown, and became hard. The elf felt it. Then she listened for the seeds to rattle inside.

“They are not yet ripe,” said the poppy-plant. “They will not shake about until they are black and hard and ripe. Then, little elf, you must watch for holes to come just under the top part of the knob. I shall open little windows there so that when the wind blows me, my seeds will pop out!”

“How clever!” said the elf. “Why do you want your seeds to pop out, poppy?”

“So that they may make new plants!” said the poppy. “They will fly off, fall to the ground, and grow into new poppies next year!”

The elf climbed up the poppy-stem one day later on—and sure enough, there were tiny windows opened all round the poppy-head, at the top. The wind blew—and out flew a crowd of tiny black seeds!

“Yes, you really are clever!” said the elf to the poppy. “What a good friend you have been to me! You have given me a nice cap to wear, and a beautiful scarlet frock!”

“Well, if you like, when all my seeds are gone, you can break off my seed-head, and use it for a pepper-pot,” said the poppy. “It will make quite a good one, little elf. Fill it with pepper, and then shake it hard—and out will come the pepper, in the same way that my seeds came out!”

“Oh, thank you!” said the elf. When the time came, she took the old poppy-head, which was then empty. She filled it with pepper—and uses it every day.

“It will always remind me of my friend the scarlet poppy,” she says. I’d like to see her using her new pepper-pot, wouldn’t you?

Teaching Notes. Points for Discussion.

1. This is the story of the poppy, its characteristics and ways.

2. What did the poppy give the little elf? Have you seen the green caps that fit over the buds? Produce some if possible for the children to see.

3. Have some poppies and let the children put their noses into them to see how black they get. What makes them black?

4. Poppy-pepper-pots. If possible, have some ripe poppy-heads and let the children shake them. Note the “windows” to let out seed.

5. Draw red poppies.

2 (Book 16)
THE TAIL THAT BROKE OFF

"I am a very pretty little lizard," said Blinky, looking at himself in a tiny puddle. "I have bright eyes, and a lovely orange patch underneath my brown body, and a nice long tail."

"Don't be vain," said Runabout, his sister. "You are always thinking about yourself, Blinky. You will be sorry one day!"

Then the slow-worm slid up and spoke to the vain little lizard. "Pride comes before a fall," he said. "Nasty things happen to people who think too much of themselves!"

"Who is going to take any notice of a stupid creature like *you*?" said Blinky rudely. "You're only a worm, a slow-worm!"

"I'm *not* a worm," said the slow-worm crossly. "I have a silly name, I know. But I'm not a worm, and I'm not slow, and I'm not blind or deaf either!"

"Well, if you're not a worm, what are you?" asked Blinky, surprised. "Are you a snake?"

"Of course not!" said the slow-worm getting crosser. "Can't you see that I can blink my eyes just as you can? You know quite well that a snake has no eyelids and can't shut its eyes. And look at my tongue. It isn't forked in two, as a snake's tongue is."

The slow-worm put out his tongue, and the lizard saw that it was just notched at the end, not forked. Blinky knew that he and his brothers and sisters had a tongue like that too, and he stared in surprise at the slow-worm.

"Well, surely you are not a lizard like *us*, are you?" he cried. "You haven't any legs."

"I know," said the slow-worm. "But I belong to the lizard family, all the same, not to the snakes or the worms! So just you be polite to me, Blinky, or something horrid will happen to you!"

"Pooh!" said Blinky. "That's what everyone says, but nothing *does* happen!"

"Blinky! Run to your hole, quickly!" suddenly cried Runabout, his sister. "I am sure there is danger near!"

Blinky raised himself up on his pretty little fingers, and listened, his head up in the air. He could hear nothing.

Runabout ran away. The slow-worm began to slide away too. "You'd better go, Blinky," he said. "There is danger about. I can smell it!"

"They all think they know so much better than I do!" said Blinky. "I can't hear anything! I can't see or smell any danger at all."

But there *was* danger, all the same. The big grey rat was about that morning. He was hungry. He was fierce. He didn't mind whether he ate a baby bird, a lizard, a mouse, or even one of the flies that the lizards liked. He came slinking between the heather, stopping to listen every now and again.

He heard the rustle of Blinky's body against the heather, and he listened again. Then he ran out to where the vain little lizard still stood, and pounced on him.

Blinky tried to dart away—but the rat had him by the tail. "Let me go!" squealed poor Blinky. "Let me go!"

But the rat was not going to let him go. Here was a nice dinner, and he was going to eat it.

Blinky was stiff with fear. His whole body went tight and hard, and suddenly a dreadful thing happened. He pulled hard, trying to get away from the rat—and his beautiful tail broke

right off!

Yes, it really did. It broke off, and Blinky ran away into his hole, a poor, tailless lizard, ugly and queer.

He left his tail behind him. The rat let it go in surprise, when it broke off, and made as if to go after the running lizard. But the broken-off tail began to act in such a queer way that the rat stopped to watch.

It jumped about as if it was alive! The rat watched in surprise. Then he pounced on the funny, jerking tail, and ate it in two or three bites.

Then he looked for Blinky. But by that time the little lizard had gone. He was lying in his hole, trembling and shaking.

"The slow-worm said something would happen to me," he said to himself. "He did, he did! And now something *has* happened! I've lost my tail. It broke itself off. Oh, how queer I shall look without my beautiful tail! How all the other lizards will laugh at me! And so will the slow-worm!"

Poor little Blinky. He was very unhappy. He didn't go out into the sunshine he loved, but he stayed in his hole all day. A fly crawled in, and he ate it. But that was all the food he had.

Runabout, his sister, came to find him. "What is the matter, Blinky?" she asked. "Did the rat frighten you? He is gone now. Come out and play."

"No," said Blinky. "I can't. I have lost my tail. I look dreadful—so short and ugly."

"Blinky! Lost your tail! How did you do that?" asked Runabout in surprise.

"The rat caught me by the tail, and when I pulled away from him, my body went stiff, and my tail broke off," said Blinky. "The rat ate it. I heard him gobbling it up. Oh, Runabout, I am so sad. I shall never come out and play again. Never, never! I wish it was cold weather, time to go and sleep all day and night, then nobody would know about my tail."

"But, Blinky, you must feed yourself, or you will die," said Runabout. "Come along out. We will all be kind to you."

"No, I feel too much ashamed of myself," said Blinky. "I was so vain. I thought such a lot of myself, and everyone said something would happen to me! And now it has."

"Well, if you won't come out and play, and catch flies for your dinner, I will look after you," said kind little Runabout. "I will catch as many flies as I can, Blinky, and give them to you for your food."

"Thank you," said Blinky. So Runabout went out into the sunshine, running here and there on her tiny little fingers and toes, catching any fly she saw.

Some she ate herself, some she took to Blinky in his hole. She did not take him as many as he would have caught for himself, so he grew a little thin.

He would not come out of his hole. He stayed there day after day, lonely and unhappy. He had asked Runabout not to tell anyone about his lost tail. He was so ashamed.

"If only I hadn't been so silly and vain," he thought. "I know everyone will laugh at me, and the slow-worm would say that it served me right. I couldn't bear it. It is bad enough to be without a tail."

The lizards soon forgot about Blinky. Runabout was the only one who remembered him, and she took him flies twenty times a day. The little lizard gobbled them up, for he was always hungry.

One day the slow-worm came again to the lizards' sunny playground in the heather. He looked round for Blinky, but he could not see him. "Where is Blinky?" he asked Runabout.

"He's in his hole, and he has been there for a very long time," said Runabout.

"Why?" asked the slow-worm.

"Well," said Runabout, "the rat pounced on him, and his tail broke off. He was so ashamed of his short, ugly body that he hid himself away. I can't get him out of his hole."

"Silly fellow!" said the slow-worm, and glided away to find Blinky. He went into the hole and spoke to him.

"Come along into the sunshine. It is bad for you to lie here alone like that. It would be better for you to come out and be laughed at, than lie here, sad and lonely."

"I have no tail," said poor Blinky. The slow-worm slid to the back of the hole to look at Blinky's short body. He gave a squeak.

"But you *have* a tail! Yes, you have, Blinky! It's not so fine as your first tail, but still, it's a tail! Come into the sun and let us all see it."

In great excitement Blinky ran into the sunshine and the slow-worm called all the other lizards to him.

"Look! Look! Blinky has grown a new tail! Isn't it marvellous?"

"It's not so fine as his first one," said Runabout. "And it doesn't seem to join on very well —it's not a tail that fits you properly, Blinky. But still, it *is* a tail and you look quite all right. You'll never look as beautiful as you did, Blinky, but perhaps you will be nicer now."

Blinky was full of joy. He had a new tail! It wasn't so long or so nice as the other one, but still, he had a tail of his own. He had grown it and, how queer, he hadn't known it. How marvellous!

"All lizards can grow new tails if their old ones break off," said the slow-worm wisely. "I could grow one, too, if I broke mine. Snakes can't, but lizards can. I'm glad I'm a lizard. If an enemy comes after me, I shall break off my tail and escape, like Blinky did. It was clever of you, Blinky."

"No, it wasn't," said Blinky. "I am not going to let you say it was. My tail broke off by itself. *I* was too slow to escape the rat—but my tail was quick enough to snap and let me run away! It's my tail that is clever, not I!"

Blinky was nicer after that. He wasn't vain any more. He still has his new tail. You'll know him if you see him because you can see where it grew on to his body. Wasn't it a good thing he got another?

Teaching Notes. Points for Discussion.

1. This is the story of the lizard, and his ways.
2. How do we know that the lizard and the slow-worm (which is also a lizard) are not snakes?
3. Tell what you know about the lizard's tail. How would it surprise a pouncing rat?
4. Where do lizards live? Has anyone seen them?
5. In winter they go to sleep, so we cannot see them then. We must look for them in spring.
6. Make up a little play about a lizard and a rat.

1 (Book 17)
PEGGY VISITS THE BEES

Peggy was reading a book in the garden. The sun was warm on her head, and her bright cotton frock looked like a blue flower.

A bee thought it *was* a blue flower, and flew down to it. He buzzed round Peggy, and then flew down to her frock and settled on it.

"Oh! Oh!" squealed Peggy in fright. "Go away, horrid little bee! You'll sting me! Go away, or I'll hit you with my book and kill you!"

A small voice spoke crossly to Peggy, and the little girl, looking down, saw that an elf was peeping at her from behind a dandelion.

"What! Kill a bee! Don't you know that the honey you eat at tea-time is made by bees?" said the elf in a little high voice. "Ungrateful little girl!"

Peggy was astonished. She put down her book and stared first at the angry elf, then at the frightened bee, which was flying up from her frock.

"I thought your frock was a flower," buzzed the bee. "I didn't know. It was such a pretty blue I felt sure it was a flower. Please forgive me."

Peggy felt ashamed of herself. "I thought you would sting me," she said.

"I only sting if people hurt me," said the bee. "I am a good friend to you, really, little girl. I am a good friend to the flowers too. I do no harm to anyone, only good, for I work hard all day long."

"You live in Mrs. Brown's hive next door, don't you?" asked Peggy. "I don't go near that hive. I'm afraid of being stung. All the same, I wish I could see inside it."

"Bee! Bee! If I make Peggy small, will you let her look inside your hive?" cried the elf, who was still listening behind the dandelion. "Then she would never be afraid of bees again, and wouldn't call them horrid."

"All right," said the bee, humming round Peggy on fast-whirring wings. "Make her small, and I'll take her."

Before Peggy could say no or yes, the elf had run out, and had rubbed her hand with some yellow ointment. In a trice the little girl had become so small that the bee seemed as big as a dog!

"Oooh!" said Peggy in surprise. "I *have* gone small, haven't I! Bee, I don't want to go to your hive. I really should be afraid."

"I'll come with you," said the elf, and she took Peggy's hand. "Now, this is a great treat, little girl. Don't spoil it by being silly."

The elf took her through the hedge and into Mrs. Brown's garden. It was a queer walk, because everything now looked so big to her. It was funny to have to walk right round a daisy, instead of stepping over it! It was very queer, too, to get out of a beetle's way, and to be afraid of a little green frog that suddenly hopped by.

They came to the hive. There was a wooden board sloping up to it. Bees were flying in and out of the hive, and they sounded rather alarming.

Peggy drew back. "I don't think I want to go in," she said. "What do they do in there?"

"Now, don't be silly," said the elf, pulling her forward. "We'll take you to the Queen herself! What do you think of that? It isn't everyone that knows a queen, I can tell you. The

Queen Bee is a marvellous person."

Well, Peggy felt that she *would* like to meet a queen, so she let herself be taken into the dark, noisy hive. It was crowded with bees, hundreds and hundreds of them.

"They seem so busy, and in such a hurry," said Peggy.

"S-s-s-s-such a lot to be done!" buzzed the bees around.

"It's very hot in here," said Peggy.

"Yes, it is," said the bee who had flown down on to her frock, and who had come with her and the elf. "Wait a bit—I'll get someone to cool the hive just here."

He spoke to a hurrying bee, who at once stood still and began to whirr his wings very quickly indeed. He made a lovely breeze, and Peggy felt cool at once.

"Oh," she said, "it's like the electric fan we have at home! It whirrs like the bee's wing, and makes the air cool."

"Ah, we had that idea long before *you* had!" said the bee. He led Peggy farther into the hive. She noticed some bees busily cleaning it, picking up bits of dirt, and taking them out of the hive.

"How nice and clean you keep the hive!" she said to the bee. "You keep it cool and you keep it clean! I should never have known about that, if I hadn't come inside."

The bee led Peggy and the elf to some cells made of wax. There were a great many of them, neatly made next to one another. Peggy saw a bee putting some yellow powder into one of the cells.

"Look!" she said. "That bee has a pocket in his leg—and he is taking yellow pollen-powder out of it! Did he get it from the flowers?"

"Yes," said the bee. "We all have pockets in our knees, you know—we can put as much pollen there as we can carry. We use it when we make Bee-Bread."

"Whatever is that?" asked Peggy in surprise. "Bee-Bread! It sounds delicious!"

"It's what we feed our bee-babies on," said the bee. "Would you like to taste some? It's made of pollen-powder and honey."

He gave some to Peggy and the elf and they ate it. It really was delicious!

"I should like that instead of bread and jam," said Peggy. "Where are your bee-babies, bee? I'd like to see them."

"I'll take you to the Nurse-Bees, and they will show you the babies," said the big bee. He took them to some other cells, in which were some tiny white grubs. The Nurse-Bees were there looking after them, feeding them carefully.

"Will these grubs grow into bees?" asked Peggy. "Oh, look!—there are eggs in these cells—and little white grubs in these—and I can't see what's in these because each cell has a lid on."

One of the Nurse-Bees lifted up the lid. Inside was a bee-grub spinning itself a little cocoon.

"In a few days it will split its cocoon, bite round the cap of the cell—and come out as a good little worker bee, like me!" said the bee.

"I should like to see where you put the honey now," said Peggy.

The bee took Peggy and the elf back to the cells where they had seen bees putting pollen. Near by were other cells, and into these the bees were putting honey from their honey sacs. It did look nice. "Couldn't I taste just a little?" asked Peggy.

"Dip your finger into one of the cells," said the elf. So Peggy did, though the bees looked at her as if they didn't really like her to take their precious honey!

She licked the honey off her finger. It was lovely!

"We get it from the flowers," said the bee. "They like us to take pollen from one flower to another, you know, so that they can make plenty of good seed, and as a reward they give us sweet honey. We store it in the cells here, so that we can use it for food in the winter, when there are no flowers."

"But we take your honey away," said Peggy.

"Yes, you do—but you give us other food instead," said the bee, "so we don't mind very much. Now—I'll take you to our great Queen. Be very polite, please. She is wonderful. She lays hundreds of eggs a day, so that our hive may have plenty of workers. We build the cells for her to lay the eggs in."

The bee led the elf and the little girl to where a very large bee indeed was looking into some empty cells.

"She is thinking of laying some eggs in them to-day," whispered the bee. "Your Majesty, I have brought a little girl and an elf to see you."

The Queen turned round and faced them. Her feelers quivered, and her big eyes shone in the dim hive. She had a much bigger, thicker body than the other bees.

Peggy gave a little curtsey, and so did the elf. "How do you do?" said the Queen in a buzzing voice. "Won't you stay here in the hive and work with us? It is pleasant work we do, and it is great fun to live all together like this."

"Thank you, Your Majesty, but we have homes of our own," said the elf politely. Peggy didn't dare to say a word.

The bee hurried them away after that. "The Queen is very busy to-day," he said. "She has *so* many eggs to lay!"

He took them to the door of the hive and said good-bye. Peggy smiled at him.

"That was a lovely adventure," she said. "I know exactly what the inside of a busy hive is like, now. I've met so many bees that I shall never be afraid of one again. Thank you for showing me everything. Good-bye!"

"Good-bye!" buzzed the bee, and flew off to get some honey from a flower in Peggy's garden. The elf took her back to where she had left her book. She rubbed some blue ointment on to Peggy's hand, and the little girl at once grew big again.

She saw her mother coming down the garden, and she called to her: "Mother! I've been inside the bee-hive! I really have!"

"You've been dreaming!" said Mother. But she hadn't, had she?

Teaching Notes. Points for Discussion.

1. This is the story of the bees and their ways.

2. If possible, take children to visit bee-hives and let them watch bees going in and out.

3. What do the bees give us? Where do they get it?

4. Bees are different from such insects as butterflies and bluebottles, because they go to work each day, instead of playing all the time.

5. What other insects work together? (Wasps, ants.)

6. The flowers and the bees "make a bargain"—the bees take pollen about for the flowers, and in return the flowers make honey for the bees.

2 (Book 17)
THE TWO LITTLE FRIENDS

A family of ducklings were swimming with their mother duck, and she was quacking to tell them to be sure and keep close to her.

"Quack! Quack! Beware of enemies! Keep by me and I can look after you. Quack! Quack!"

She had nine little ducklings, and they were all quite used to the water now. One of them, little Webtoes, did not like keeping close to his mother.

"Mother goes so fast!" he said. "I want to swim into all those exciting little patches of water, and see what I can find."

"Quack! Quack! Come along, Webby!" called his mother. "Dear me, now where has that child gone?"

"Webby, come along!" cried his brothers and sisters. Webby paddled along after his family, and off they all went again.

But as soon as he could, Webby slipped behind again. He saw that the stream ran off a little way, making a kind of back-water. It looked so exciting.

"I really must see what is in there," said Webby, and he swam busily away from his family. He saw a big dragon-fly sitting on a water-plant and he snapped at it. It rose into the air with such a whirr that Webby was quite frightened.

Then he felt sure he saw a frog swimming below him. Webby knew that frogs made a good dinner, so down he dived into the water, to see if he could catch the frog. His little tail stuck up into the air, and that was all there was to be seen of him.

But just below Webby there were some water-weeds growing, and Webby's neck got caught in them. He tried to free himself, but he could not. He was held fast.

"Mother! Mother!" he cried, but he was under water, and his quacks sounded like gurgles. His mother was far away and could not hear him.

Webby might easily have been drowned if someone had not come swimming busily by. It was a baby moor-hen, a little dark bird, not much bigger than Webby himself.

The baby moor-hen was most astonished to see Webby's tail sticking straight up into the air. He was even more astonished to hear the queer gurgles coming up from the water.

The little moor-hen was called Bobbin, because he bobbed his head in and out, to and fro, as he swam. He hurried up beside Webby and had a good look at him.

"What are you doing?" he asked. "Is there anything good down there?"

"Gurgle, gurgle, gurgle," said poor Webby, trying his hardest to get out of the weed.

"What did you say?" asked Bobbin. But Webby could answer nothing but "gurgle, gurgle".

Bobbin felt rather alarmed. He was a good diver himself, and he dived in beside Webby to see what was happening.

"Oh, you are caught in the weeds!" he cried. "I will help you."

He began to peck at the long weeds with his sharp little beak. He struck at them with his feet. Soon he had set poor Webby free, and the little duckling rose to the surface choking for breath.

“Oh! Oh!” gasped Webby, taking in deep breaths of air. “I was nearly drowned. Where’s my mother, where’s my mother?”

His mother was far away. Bobbin was sorry for the little duckling. “I heard a family of ducks go by a long time ago,” he said. “You had better come with me. My mother will look after you.”

So the little black moor-hen and the yellow duckling swam side by side down the stream until they came to another little family.

This time it was a family of moor-hens—but the mother was not with them. There were six babies counting little Bobbin, and they were all exactly alike. They crowded round Webby in excitement.

“What are you? A duckling? Oh, we have never seen a duckling so close before! What a funny beak you have!”

“It isn’t funny,” said Webby. “It’s just the right shape for shovelling round in the mud of the pond. I find plenty of water-insects down in the mud. It’s a good beak for that sort of thing.”

“Our beaks will be red when we grow up,” said the little moor-hens, “and we shall wear red garters too.”

“Where is your mother?” asked Webby, who felt as if he wanted some sort of mother there to comfort him. A big red beak looked over the edge of a kind of platform made of rushes and reeds near by.

“I’m their mother,” said a voice. “I can’t come down because I’m sitting on eggs, and they may hatch at any moment.”

Webby was surprised. “But you’ve got one family already,” he said, looking round at the little moor-hens.

“I know,” said the moor-hen, “but I like two or three families. My first lot are very good children. They will help me to feed the second lot of babies when they hatch. Come along up here and let me look at you.”

“I can’t climb up,” said Webby.

“Climb like this, using the tips of your wings,” said Bobbin, and he went up the side of the big nest easily, using his feet and wings. Webby saw that he had a kind of claw on his wings to help him up. He wished he had too.

The moor-hens pushed him up into the nest. He was very glad to be there, because the mother moor-hen was kind to him and let him nestle up close to her.

“So you got caught in the weeds, did you?” she said. “Poor little baby. Stay with me for a while and have a rest.”

There were a lot of spotted eggs in the nest. They were not very comfortable to lie on, but they were warm. Webby told the mother moor-hen all about his adventure.

“You shouldn’t have left your mother’s side,” she said. “Bobbin will take you back to her later on.”

Bobbin climbed up into the nest beside Webby. He liked the duckling very much.

“What funny feet you have!” he said to Webby, when he saw the webs of skins between each of the duckling’s toes. “Mother, hasn’t he got funny feet?”

“Well, they are very good feet for swimming, you know,” said his mother. “Very good indeed. The webs of skin push the water away well when Webby swims, and he gets along very quickly. All ducks have webbed feet.”

"Why haven't *we*?" asked Bobbin, looking at his own feet. "I want webbed feet, Mother. It would be much easier to swim if I had webbed feet. Why don't I have them? I am a swimming bird, and I think I ought to have them."

"Yes, but you are also a walking bird," said his mother. "You need to walk and run, very often, and then webbed feet would be of no use to you. Sometimes you will have to run over water-weeds, and over the flat leaves of the water-lilies, Bobbin, as well as over land in the winter-time, when the ponds are frozen. You will find your clawed feet very useful to you then."

"Bobbin has feet rather like the hens in our farmyard," said Webby. "They are not a bit like the feet of a water-bird."

"Hark! My eggs are hatching!" said the big moor-hen suddenly. And then, to Webby's delight, he saw the shells of the eggs breaking, and out of them came another little family of moor-hens, one after another!

"I am afraid you will have to get out of the nest now," said the big moor-hen. "There will not be room for you, Webby. But now that my eggs are hatched, I will leave them for a while, and take you to your mother. Bobbin shall come too."

"We'll all come!" said the tiny moor-hens. But the big moor-hen wanted them to watch over the nest for her. "The tiny birds will not be hungry yet, so do not feed them," she said. "I will cover them with rushes when I leave. You must watch out for the rat for me."

Then she and Bobbin and Webby set off to find Webby's mother. They swam merrily along down the stream, and Webby kept very close to the mother moor-hen! He didn't want to be lost again.

Suddenly the big moor-hen heard a dog barking. "Get under the water!" she cried. "Swim under the water!"

Then, to Webby's astonishment, the big black bird dived under the water, and swam to the opposite bank, only her red beak showing above the surface! Bobbin did it too. It was very clever. Webby did his best, but he was very much afraid of getting caught in water-weeds again.

At last they all met the duck family coming down the stream again to look for Webby. How pleased they were to see him!

"Mother! Mother! This is Bobbin, who saved me from drowning in the water-weeds!" said Webby, swimming up to his big white mother. She gave him a gentle peck.

"Naughty duckling! Why didn't you keep close to me as I told you to?"

"Can he be my friend?" asked Bobbin. "I want to come and see him sometimes, and I want him to come and see *me*."

"Bobbin is a most sensible bird," said his mother. "You can safely let Webby be his friend."

So Webby and Bobbin became friends, and very often you can see Bobbin swimming with the little duck family, and Webby swimming with the moor-hens.

Teaching Notes. Points for Discussion.

1. This story tells of the differences between duck and moor-hen, and of the characteristics of the latter.

2. Why does the duckling have his feet webbed? Why doesn't the moor-hen? (Moor-hen also runs on land, and for this webbed feet would be unsuitable.)

3. How does the moor-hen hide from enemies when she is in the water?

4. Discuss the unselfish help the baby moor-hens give to their mother by helping to feed the next batch of babies.

5. Take children to pond where moor-hens swim, if possible.

1 (Book 18)
THE QUEEN WHO WANTED A NEW DRESS

(*This story is founded on an old Chinese Legend*)

"I want a new dress," said the Queen.

"Madam, you have three new dresses," said her little maid, waving a big fan over the Queen's head to make her cool.

"They are all too hot," said the Queen. "The red one is so stiff and heavy that even if I am not wearing it, it stands up by itself!"

"It is a beautiful dress," said the little maid, wishing that she had one half so lovely.

"I want a new dress, cool and soft and light," said the Queen. "Oh, I can see it in my mind, little maid—it is a cool, pale yellow—it moves like water as I walk—it is so light that I can hardly feel it when I wear it."

"We have no stuff to make a dress like that, Madam," said the little maid. The Queen sighed.

"That is true," she said. "I will walk in the woods now, little maid, by myself. It will be cooler there."

The Queen left her palace and went into the cool woods. She sat down beneath a big mulberry tree. The wind blew softly and she felt cooler. She lay back and looked up into the big tree.

She saw the leaves waving gently in the breeze. She saw flickers of sunlight here and there. Then she saw something else.

"There are insects in that tree," said the Queen, sitting up. "I remember watching them when I was a child. There are hundreds there, just as there were when I was little."

She sat and thought about them. "I remember seeing the eggs," she said to herself. "Little white things on the underside of the leaf. I remember seeing them hatch out into tiny black grubs, like bits of black cotton."

She looked up into the tree. The caterpillars there were fat and big, grey-white in colour. The Queen stood up and pulled a branch down to see.

"What big creatures they are!" she said. "I used to long to keep some for pets when I was little, but nobody would let me. Now I am Queen, I can do what I like. I shall keep some and see what they do."

She called her little maid. "Bring a box," she said. "I want to put some of these grubs in."

"But madam! You cannot touch such creatures!" said the little maid.

"Bring me a box," said the Queen. "What is wrong with these insects? They will not harm me if I touch them."

Soon there were about twenty in a big box. The Queen put some fresh mulberry leaves in with them. Then the little maid carried them carefully into the palace.

"Each day you will clean out the box, and give fresh leaves to my grubs," said the Queen. "I have a queer idea in my head about them. Look after them well."

The little maid did as she was told. Each morning she cleaned out the box, and she picked fresh leaves from the mulberry trees for the hungry caterpillars.

How they ate! The little maid could hear them eating the leaves, as she sat quietly fanning her mistress. She was sure they would burst themselves if they ate so much.

They did split their skins one day! The little maid was frightened. She ran crying to her mistress.

"They have eaten too much! Their skins are splitting! It isn't my fault, it isn't my fault!"

The Queen laughed. "They will have good new skins underneath," she said. And she was right. When the little maid went back to the grubs, she saw that all their split skins were on the floor of the box, and the caterpillars themselves had fine new skins, and were eating away happily.

They ate and they ate. There seemed no end to their eating. The maid fed them and cleaned them, watching them grow bigger and bigger. Again they split their skins, and then they seemed to lose their appetites.

"Put some twigs into the box," said the Queen. So the little maid picked some small twigs and put them in the box. She watched to see what the caterpillars did.

They did a very strange thing. First they all fastened themselves to the twigs with bits of thread, rather like the silk a spider weaves, but stronger. Then the grubs began to make cocoons for themselves. They moved their heads round and round, round and round, and silk came from their lower lips as they moved. Yards and yards of pale-yellow silk thread came from each silkworm's lips, and soon, to the little maid's surprise, all the caterpillars were hidden in little cases or cocoons of yellow.

She went to her mistress. "The caterpillars have gone," she said. "They have made themselves queer cases of yellow. I watched them making the thread for the cases. It came from their lower lips, yards and yards of it!"

"I too have watched them," said the Queen. "And now I want to see if we can do something. Fetch a piece of smooth shining wood, little maid, and bring it to me."

The girl went to get a piece of smooth wood. The Queen took up one of the cocoons and began to try and find a loose thread.

She found it—and then she jerked it. The thread came undone a little, and the yellow cocoon jumped and rolled on the table as the Queen unravelled the silken thread.

"You are undoing the caterpillar case!" cried the little maid. "May I undo one too?"

"Yes," said the Queen. "See how fine and strong this thread is! We have no thread to compare with it! It is better than cotton, better than wool. It is fit for a queen!"

The two worked away at the cocoons, which jumped and jerked on the table, as the Queen and her maid undid the thread of which they had been made. Soon there was no cocoon left—only the brown case in which the caterpillar slept!

"Now," said the Queen. "I think that if we can get this beautiful thread woven into cloth, we shall find that we shall have exactly the right stuff to make me a cool, light, beautiful dress, such as no queen has ever worn before!"

The Queen showed the thread to her cloth-makers, and they looked at it in wonder. They pulled it, they let it slide over their fingers, they held it up to the light.

"A beautiful thread!" they said. "Where did you get it from, Your Majesty?"

"From these caterpillars," said the Queen, and she took them to the tree on which many of the caterpillars still fed. The tree was hung with thousands of the yellow cocoons, for most of the caterpillars had now woven themselves cases in which to sleep.

The cloth-makers stared in surprise and wonder. Then they looked joyful.

“You got the fine thread from the cases these caterpillars made! Why, Your Majesty, there is enough thread up there in those yellow cocoons to make you the most beautiful dress in the world!”

“That’s just what I want,” said the Queen, smiling. “Take the silk from thousands of cocoons, cloth-maker, and weave me some cloth. Then my dressmakers can make me a beautiful dress that moves like water when I walk!”

And so the first silk dress was made. The Queen wore it a month later, and everyone cried out in wonder to see the fine, soft dress that swung round her tiny feet.

“We will call it silk,” said the Queen, pleased. “And those caterpillars that make it shall be called silkworms.”

We wear silk dresses too, don’t we, when we go to parties? Feel the silk and see how soft and light and beautiful it is. Did you know that it came from the busy little silkworms, weaving cocoons for themselves to sleep in?

The Queen ordered thousands of the silkworms to be kept and fed, so that they might make dresses for her, and very soon, all over her great country of China, her people began to keep silkworms too.

You can as well, if you like. Buy the eggs, and put them into a box. They will hatch out into black thread-like caterpillars. Feed them on lettuce-leaf if you have no mulberry tree near. You will see them growing into big, grey-white caterpillars, that eat all the day long, and split their tight skins four times.

Then they will weave their silken cocoon, and you can take the silk for yourself. Out of the hard brown case inside will come a pretty, light-brown moth—and, if you are lucky, she will lay you enough eggs for yourself and for all your friends as well!

Teaching Notes. Points for Discussion.

1. This is the story of how the Chinese first used silkworms for silk.
2. Silkworm eggs are cheap and easy to buy. Buy a batch, let the children see them hatch out and grow into big grey grubs.
3. Feed on mulberry leaves if possible, as they are better than lettuce.
4. Discuss the cleverness of the grubs in making such a fine silken thread. Let children watch them weaving cocoons.
5. Unwind a cocoon to show the children the thread of fine, strong silk.
6. Silkworms grow into moths. What is the difference between moths and butterflies?

2 (Book 18)
THE FAMILY IN THE CORN-FIELD

Once upon a time there was a tiny harvest-mouse. She was a dear little thing, with bright black eyes that were as friendly as a robin's, and a long tail that she liked to curl round things, just as a monkey does.

She lived in the fields, and hunted about for the things she liked to eat.

"I like seeds," said the dormouse when he met the harvest-mouse. "What do *you* like?"

"Well, I like seeds too," said the harvest-mouse. "But I like insects as well."

"Where do you get your seeds from?" asked the dormouse. "Do you know of any good place?"

"Oh yes!" said the little harvest-mouse, and she took the dormouse to a corn-field. "Look—there are plenty of seeds here for you and for me too."

"How do you get them?" asked the dormouse, looking up at the ears of corn high above his head.

"Like this," said the harvest-mouse, and she ran up the stalk of wheat, and sat on the ear! "I'll bite off the top, and bring it down!" she said. "Then we can have a great feast!"

She bit through the stalk below the ear, holding on to the stem with her feet and tail. The dormouse thought it was very clever of her to use her tail like that.

There were one or two insects on the ear of corn, and the harvest-mouse ate them. She soon bit through the corn-stalk, and she called out to the dormouse below:

"Look out! The seeds are coming!"

The ear fell to the ground and the dormouse ran to it in glee. Soon the two little mice were very busy picking out the grains and eating them. They were delicious.

The harvest-mouse was pleased to have a friend. For some evenings the two played together, and then the dormouse came to say he was going away.

"Oh, what a pity!" said the harvest-mouse sadly. "I was lonely before you came—and now I shall be lonely again."

"Well, I know a nice little harvest-mouse who is lonely too," said the dormouse. "Shall I tell him about you, and then perhaps you can be friends?"

"Oh yes, please do," said the harvest-mouse joyfully. Then she said good-bye to her friend, gave him some grains of corn as a present, and watched him run off through the grasses.

Next day, just as she was missing him very much, she heard a little chirping noise from the other side of the hedge, and she pricked up her ears.

"That's another harvest-mouse!" she said, and watched to see. She saw a little blunt nose poking through the grasses, and two bright black eyes looked at her. Then a little reddish-yellow mouse slid through the hedge and came beside her. He had a long tail like hers, and he wound it round the stem of a corn-stalk near by.

The two little mice looked at one another. "The dormouse told me about you," said the new mouse. "Are you lonely? I am."

"Then let's be friends," said the harvest-mouse. "It is so nice to do everything together."

"I think you are beautiful," said the little mouse. "I love your big black eyes, and your woffly nose, and your nice long tail. I think you would make a dear little wife for me."

It was lovely sharing everything together. They ran up the stalks of corn to find ripening ears, and they pulled out the grains for food. They caught what insects they could and shared those too. They went everywhere together, in between the tall stalks of corn, across the ditches, through the hedges, everywhere.

It was fun. There was always plenty to do, and plenty to see. They talked to the sparrows and to the field-voles. They talked to the grey squirrel and to the lizards when they met them.

Then one day the little wife said she would like a nest.

"I feel as if I want to make a nest," she said. "A nice round ball of a nest, swung up in the corn-stalks I love. Will you help me?"

A nest was exciting. What was it to be made of? "I think we will take blades of wheat and grass," said the little harvest-mouse. "I am sure I can weave those together nicely. I can easily cut some with my teeth, and split them if I want to."

It was such a busy time for the mice. They worked hard to make a nest for themselves. They cut down blades of wheat and grass, and they took them up to the corn-stalks to weave a nice little nest.

"We will let some of the tall corn-stalks go right through the nest," said the little mouse. "Then they will hold it up firmly."

Soon the nest began to look like one. More and more blades of wheat were woven round and about the strong corn-stalks. Then the little she-mouse made a soft lining inside.

"What about a door for your nest?" said a sparrow, flying down to see it. "I make a nest too, but mine is open at the top. Yours isn't. You will have to make a door."

"No, I shan't," said the little mouse. "I don't need a door."

"But how will you get in and out?" asked the sparrow. "You *must* have a door!"

"I just *push* my way in and out," said the mouse. "Watch me!" She ran up the corn-stalk, pushed aside the blades in front of her, and disappeared into the nest! She came out at the other side, much to the surprise of the sparrow.

"There you are, you see!" she said. "I told you I didn't need a door. There is no door—and yet there is a way in at any part of my nest. Come and try."

"No, thank you," said the sparrow, flying off. "I am far too big to get into your clever little nest. It is really very beautiful."

One night when the other harvest-mouse was coming back to the nest, he heard a sound of squeaks coming from it, and he listened in surprise. There were quite a lot of different squeaks. Who could be in the nest besides his little wife? He pushed his way in to see.

"Oh, look!" cried the little wife. "We have some babies—seven of them! Do you like them? Did you hear them squeaking? They are my very own, and I am so happy."

"What a good thing we built such a lovely nest," said the father mouse. "Now they will be safe and warm and comfortable."

They were certainly warm! The nest was very small, but it took all the nine mice quite well. They cuddled there together, both little and big, happy and safe.

"I'm glad we have no door to our nest," said the little mother mouse. "If we have no door, no one can come in and get our babies."

The wind blew and rocked the corn-stalks. The nest swung a little here and there, like a cradle. It was lovely. When the rain came it could not get into the nest because it was so well made. The sun warmed it, and made it so hot that the little mother mouse had to push her blunt nose out for a breath of fresh air.

The dormouse came back one day to look for his old friend. He was delighted when he saw the nest and heard the babies squeaking.

"Ah—you are certainly not lonely any more!" he said. "I am very glad. You have plenty of food in this field too, haven't you? Are you putting some aside for the winter?"

"Yes," said the mice, peeping out of their nest. "We have a hole under the roots of the hedge over there, and we have stored away quite a lot of grain. We shall be all right in the winter. Don't worry about us. Have *you* got some corn stored up too?"

"I don't need it," said the dormouse. "I shall sleep through the winter."

The baby mice grew well. They became strong and lively. They wanted to get out of the hot nest and run about.

And then one day the dormouse came running to the nest in a great hurry. "Quick! Quick!" he cried. "A dreadful thing is happening. Men are here, cutting down the corn! Come out from your nest before it is too late, for you will be cut down too, and your nest will be spoilt."

But alas—even as he spoke, a machine came by, and the corn-stalks were cut. Down they fell, and down fell the little ball of a nest. The dormouse was very sad, and ran back quickly into the hedge, grieving for his friends.

But he soon heard a cheerful little chirping noise, and turning round, he saw the whole family of harvest mice near by, big and small mice together!

"Oh, there you are!" he cried. "I came to warn you that the corn is being cut."

"Thank you," said the mice. "But we left the nest yesterday. We don't want it any more. We are teaching our children how to look after themselves. Aren't they a lovely family?"

They certainly *are*! Here they are, all of them together. Which do you like the best?

Teaching Notes. Points for Discussion.

1. This is the story of the harvest-mouse and its wonderful nest.
2. Where does the harvest-mouse live? How does it get the grains of corn to eat?
3. How does it make its nest? Is it a good idea to have no door? Where does it put its nest?
4. Let a child be a harvest-mouse and tell a dormouse about his nest.
5. Draw stalks of corn, and a nest-ball hung among them.

1 (Book 19)
THE CRAB WITH A LONG TAIL

In the big rock-pool by the sea lived many creatures. There were crabs, big and little. There were little grey shrimps, and much bigger prawns. There were sea-anemones, waving their feelers about, trying to catch their dinner.

It was an exciting place to live in, because the tide came in and out so often, bringing all kinds of treasures with it. Sometimes it was odd bits of seaweed that had floated in from deeper water. Sometimes it was empty shells. Sometimes it was a jellyfish or a starfish, who had tales to tell of the life they had led outside the big pool.

It was difficult to get out of the pool once any creature was in it. High rocks were set all around, and once you were there, you had to stay. So the creatures came to know one another very well indeed.

The big prawns darted backwards about the pool, using their strong tails to jerk themselves along. When they wanted to swim forwards, they used their little swimmerets, set under their tails. The shrimps darted about too, and if they wanted to hide from any enemy, they burrowed a little way into the sand, so that they could not be seen.

The sea-anemones sat close together on the rocks, looking like red or green lumps of jelly. Then suddenly they would open, unfurl their ring of feelers, and wave them about like thick petals. If any tiny water-creature came near, the petals would close over him, and down he would go into the anemone's middle. That was the end of him.

The crabs all knew one another well. There were a few big crabs, some middle-size, and some quite small. At times they had to go and hide themselves away in dark corners, where nobody would find them.

A big prawn was always surprised at this. He spoke to a shrimp.

"Where has that big green crab gone? He was rushing about the pool yesterday, staring at me with his eyes on stalks. I wanted to tell him something and now I can't find him."

"I think I saw him going into that dark hole over there, under the rock," said the shrimp. "He didn't look very well."

"It's most peculiar," said the prawn. "Crabs always seem to be going off into dark corners by themselves every now and then. What do they do there? Have they got a secret store of food?"

"I don't know," said the shrimp. "I don't like peeping at crabs too much. One gave me a nasty nip with his claws once, and I have never forgotten it."

"Well, *I* shall go and see what that green crab is doing," said the prawn. "And if he has a secret store of food that he feasts on all by himself, I shall tell him what I think of him!"

So the prawn swam over to the dark hole and made his way inside, using his swimmerets to get him gently along. He kept his tail ready to jerk hard so that he could send himself quickly backwards out of the hole, if the crab was angry with him.

The crab was in the hole, right at the back, hidden by some seaweed. He took no notice of the prawn at all. He was behaving in a very strange manner.

He was wriggling about, turning and twisting himself from side to side as if he was in pain. Then he rubbed his horny legs hard against one another, making quite a noise. The prawn was alarmed.

"Are you ill?" he said. "What is the matter, green crab? Why have you come here to do this?"

"Don't talk to me," panted the crab. "I am very, very busy. Go away."

The prawn didn't go away. He stayed and watched the crab. The crab was so tired out that it lay quietly for a while, and then it began to wriggle about once more.

Suddenly the shell of the crab split right across its back! The prawn was amazed, and he backed away a little. Then the crab jumped right out of its old skin, and lay beside his shell. The split in the shell closed up, and the prawn stared in even greater surprise.

"I don't know which is you and which is your old shell," said the prawn—and indeed the two did look exactly the same, for the crab's shell was perfect, down to the smallest claw!

But the crab began to grow so fast that soon there was no doubt which was which! "I feel better now," he said. "I shall grow quickly, and soon a new shell will begin to harden over my body. All crabs do this once a year till they are fully grown, prawn. You have no right to come and peep. Go away."

The prawn went away to tell the exciting news to his friends. As he swam out into the pool, he saw a peculiar kind of creature. It would have been like a crab if it had not got a long tail!

"What are you?" asked the prawn, stopping to look. "You look very much like a crab—but you have a long tail behind you. It looks a very soft tail too. You'd better be careful of it in case enemies come to eat it."

"Oh dear, oh dear, I know that," said the funny-looking crab, trying to tuck his tail under him. "I did have a shell to tuck it into, but I've lost it. A big wave took me into this pool, and I am so afraid of meeting enemies everywhere."

"There's a crab in that hole over there," said the prawn. "He's just jumped out of his shell, and he's feeling in quite a good temper now. Go and talk to him and see if he can help you."

So the crab-with-a-long-tail went to talk to the green crab. "I can't find a shell to put my tail into!" he wailed. "What am I to do?"

"Well, you *are* a funny creature!" said the big crab. "You wear armour as I do—except on your long tail. *My* tail is fastened neatly beneath me. I do think it's silly of you to have such a long tail, if you can't grow a shell over it."

"Oh, here's a shell to wear on it," said the other crab. There was a small periwinkle shell in the hole, and he tucked his tail into it.

"That looks very silly," said the big crab. "Very silly indeed—like a little hat on your tail. What you want, crab, is a nice big empty whelk shell. If you could find one of those, you could first of all put your tail in, by crawling in backwards—then you could put all your body in—and you could guard the entrance to the shell by hanging out your claws."

"That sounds such a good idea," said the little crab, tucking his long tail under him again. "If only I could find a whelk shell! But I'm so afraid that whilst I am looking for it someone will catch the end of my soft tail and nip it!"

"Well, I'm afraid I can't help you at the moment," said the green crab. "It will be a day or two before my own shell hardens over my body again. I daren't go out until then. But look—there's that prawn peeping in again. We'll make him help you."

So they spoke to the prawn, who was only too glad to help, for he did love telling bits of news to all his friends.

"Do you know where there is a big empty whelk shell?" asked the crab. "This friend of mine here, with a long tail, wants to make his home in one."

“I’ll find one for you, oh, I’ll certainly find one for you!” said the prawn. He jerked his tail down and shot swiftly backwards, much to the small crab’s surprise.

He was back again in two or three minutes. “I’ve found just the thing!” he said. “Come and see quickly, whilst there is no one about.”

The crab-with-a-long-tail followed the prawn, dragging himself along as quickly as he could. The prawn took him to where a big empty whelk shell lay on the sand. The crab was full of joy.

“It’s fine!” he said. “It’s just the right size for me. I’ll put my tail into it straight away!”

He put his tail into it, right into the very end of the shell. He held on with a pair of little pincers he had at the tip of his tail. Then he pushed the rest of his body carefully into the shell. It really did fit him well.

He hung his big claws out of the entrance. “Now no one can get me!” he said. “My claws are guarding the only way in. When I want to walk about, I shall take my new home with me. I am so pleased. I shall always be your friend, prawn, and the friend of the other crab too!”

So, when the green crab had grown himself a fine new suit of armour and came out from his hole, the crab-with-a-long-tail (who was now called a hermit-crab) and the prawn often met together for a meal. The hermit-crab was good at finding food, and then you could see the three of them together enjoying it. The prawn always swam over their heads, picking up any bits of food that floated away.

You may often find a hermit-crab on the seashore, well tucked into an empty shell. Don’t try to pull him out or you will hurt him. Wasn’t it a good idea to tuck his tail into a shell?

Teaching Notes. Points for Discussion.

1. This story tells of some of the characteristics of, and differences between, the ordinary crab and the hermit-crab.

2. If possible, have a few large whelk shells to show the kind of home the hermit-crab likes.

3. Do you think it is a good idea for the hermit-crab to choose a shell for a home? Why?

4. What happens when a crab grows too big for his shell?

5. What other creatures split their skins or shells? (Dragonfly grub, caterpillars, gnats.)

2 (Book 19)
THE SURPRISING STARFISH

All the shellfish in the rock-pool were afraid of the starfish. There were limpets and mussels there, and other shellfish, and not one of them had a good word to say for the starfish.

"He comes walking along here on his five fingers, looking for food, and if he sees one of us quietly sitting on a rock, he tears us off, pops us into his greedy mouth, shell and all, and eats us!" said a big mussel.

"Does he eat your shell too?" said a small grey shrimp, darting by.

"Oh yes," said the mussel. "He spits out our empty shells afterwards. Haven't you noticed what a lot of empty shells there are in this pool? Well, that is mostly because the hungry starfish lives here."

The shrimp darted off to see where the starfish was. The little hermit-crab told him. The hermit-crab was a funny fellow. He was a crab with a long soft tail, and he liked to tuck it into an empty shell for safety. So he had a big empty whelk-shell for his home, and wherever he went, he pulled it along after him.

He knew where the starfish was. "He came walking by me this morning," said the little hermit-crab, poking his head out of his shell. "He thought he was going to eat me, because he felt sure I was a whelk. But I wasn't!"

"What did you do?" asked the shrimp.

"Oh, I put out my claws—like this—and gave him such a fright," said the hermit-crab. "He went off quickly, and I heard him say, 'That's the first time I saw a whelk with claws!' He went over to that side of the pool."

The crab waved a claw, and the shrimp darted over to the other side of the pool. Sure enough, there was the big starfish, wandering along on his five fingers, looking for something to eat. He was always hungry.

"Starfish, how do you see?" asked the shrimp. "It seems to me you are just five fingers and a tummy! Where are you eyes?"

"At the end of my fingers," said the starfish. "Come a little nearer, and you will see them, shrimp."

"No, thank you," said the shrimp, jerking his tail sharply, and darting backwards. "You don't mind what you eat, and *I* don't want to be your dinner."

The shrimp looked as hard as he could at the end of the starfish's fingers, and sure enough, there were eyes there that could see! It did seem a funny place to have eyes. The shrimp swam all round the starfish, watching him move along.

"How do you move along?" he asked at last. "You have no legs that I can see. You haven't any fins. You haven't even a tail like mine that will send you through the water. How *do* you get along?"

"Easily," said the starfish. "Look, I'll turn myself upside down for a minute, and I'll put out my hundreds of tiny legs for you to see. They are what take me along."

The starfish turned himself slowly over, and lay on his back in the sand. Then the shrimp saw what he meant by legs. On the underside of the five fingers were many tiny little white tube-like things that the starfish could move in and out of his fingers. At the end of each was a kind of sucker which could take firm hold of whatever he was walking over.

"There you are," said the starfish, putting his "legs" in and out so that the shrimp might see them. "Those are what I use to creep about on. I put out a few, take hold of the rock, pull myself forward, put out other legs, and so I go on, using all my legs one after another. It's easy."

The starfish turned himself the right way again, and crept quickly off to find a few more shellfish. Soon he had eaten quite a lot. Then he caught a shrimp and one or two sea-worms. Everyone in the pool began to get alarmed, for they feared that their turn would come next.

"What *are* we to do about the starfish?" said the shrimps to the shellfish. "Soon he will have eaten everything in the pool! Can we send him away?"

"No, he certainly won't go away whilst there is plenty of food for him here," said a big limpet. "We must think of some other idea. Look—here comes the jellyfish. He will perhaps tell us what to do. He floats about in the big world outside our pool, and knows a lot."

So they asked the jellyfish. He came floating into the pond like a big umbrella. He had fringes all round his body. The shrimps kept away from these, for they knew quite well that they were stinging-threads which would hurt them and kill them.

The jellyfish heard what everyone had to say. "*We* can't punish the starfish," he said. "We are not strong enough. Only big creatures like men can hurt things like starfishes and lobsters and big crabs. You should get man to punish the starfish for you."

"But how can we?" asked the shrimps, swimming round the jellyfish, but not going very near.

"Well, I have just floated by the pier," said the jellyfish, "and I saw a good many men sitting high up there, their fishing rods beside them, and their fishing-lines dropping down to the water."

"Go on," said the shrimps. "You have some good idea to tell us, jellyfish!"

"Well, I have," said the jellyfish, bobbing about, rather pleased with himself. "Now, at the end of these fishing-lines there are all sorts of things called bait, which the fishermen put on hooks to catch fish with. Sometimes the bait is a dead crab, sometimes a dead shellfish, sometimes a worm—all things that the starfish likes."

"Yes, he does like those," said the shrimps.

"Well, now," said the jellyfish, "let us tell the starfish that there is plenty of food to be found hanging on lines by the pier. He will go to get it, and will be caught on a hook! The fishermen hate anyone who steals their bait, if it is not a fish, and they will be angry with him and punish him."

This seemed a very good idea to the creatures in the pool. They were sure their enemy would not come back again if only he were caught on a fish-hook! So they found him and told him.

"Food on lines!" said the starfish, pleased. "That sounds good. I will go to get some."

So he glided up the big rocks, and went out beyond, into the deep sea that flowed around the pier. And there, just as he had been told, he found food hanging on lines! The bait swung in the water, waiting for fish to bite it and get hooked. The starfish knew nothing about hooks. He only saw the worms, and he longed to eat them for his dinner.

He went to the worm and put it into his mouth. But as he did so, he felt a sharp prick. He was caught on the hook! The fisherman felt the weight of the starfish and he called out in delight. "I've got a fish! I've got a fish!"

He wound in his line—but when he saw that he had only caught a starfish, he was angry. He pulled the starfish on to the pier beside him, and spoke crossly to it.

“You tiresome starfish! You come and steal our bait whenever you can! Well, I am going to punish you, so that never again will you steal food that doesn’t belong to you!”

The man took his knife and cut the starfish in half. Now it was two bits, one with two fingers, and the other bit with three. The man took up the bits and flung them as far away as he could.

The two halves fell into the rock-pool and the creatures there stared in surprise. “It’s the starfish! He’s been cut in two! He’s dead. We shall never be afraid of him again.”

But, to their surprise, the two halves did not seem to be dead! They even crawled about, and found a hole to go into. The water-creatures did not like to go into the hole, and in a few days they forgot all about the starfish, and didn’t think of him again.

But in two or three weeks’ time, what a shock they had! Out of the hole crawled a starfish with five fingers—and then a second one with five fingers! There were two starfishes instead of two bits.

“I’ve grown new fingers for each of my bits,” said the first starfish proudly. “Two for the bit with three fingers, and three for the bit with only two. So now I am *two* starfishes. Aren’t you pleased, everybody?”

But nobody was pleased at all! What was the good of getting the starfish punished, if all that happened was that he turned into two?

“We shall have to put up with the two starfishes now,” said the shrimps. “If we meddle with him any more, he may turn into three or four or five! Then we shall be worse off than ever!”

Wouldn’t the fisherman be surprised if he knew what had happened to the starfish he cut in half?

Teaching Notes. Points for Discussion.

1. This story tells of the characteristics of the starfish.
2. Why don’t other sea-creatures like the starfish?
3. How can he see? How can he walk?
4. Why don’t fishermen like him, and what do they do to him? What happens when he is cut in half?
5. What other creatures does he know in the sea?
6. Draw a five-fingered starfish.

1 (Book 20)
SEA-FOAM'S ADVENTURE

Not very far from the sea-shore there lived a family of sprites. They were very small, they had wings like bees, and tiny voices like the gurgle of water over pebbles.

They were quite a big family. There were five boy-sprites and five girls. Their mother liked them to be dressed nicely, and she was very clever at making their coats and frocks of the yellow petals of the horned poppy that grew on the beach, or of the fronds of seaweed she found on the rocks.

It was a very hot summer, and the sun shone down every day. The mother was afraid that the children would get sun-stroke, so she made them all wear hats.

You will never guess what the hats were! They were empty limpet-shells! You know those dear little pointed shells you find on the seashore, don't you? They really are rather like little hats.

Well, all the sprites had one each, and very sweet they looked in them too.

But Sea-Foam, the smallest sprite, was always losing hers, and her mother was cross with her.

"Sea-Foam, I am always having to get you a new hat," she said. "This is the very last time I will do so. Next time you lose your hat, I shall not give you another. You will have to stay indoors till the sun goes down."

Well, Sea-Foam came home without her hat the very next day! She said she really didn't know *where* she had put it.

"I just popped it down for a minute," she said, "and when I looked round, it was gone."

"You are always making silly excuses," said her mother crossly. "Now you will not go out at all whilst it is sunny. You shall stay at home and help me."

"But, Mother, I am going to a party to-morrow," said Sea-Foam.

"No, you are not," said her mother. "You can't go to a party without a hat. And I shall not give you another hat at all."

Poor Sea-Foam! She was very unhappy. She had to stay indoors all that day and help her mother. When the evening came she was allowed out, because the sun was going down and was no longer so hot.

"Perhaps I can get myself another hat," said Sea-Foam to herself. "Mother always goes down to the shore to get our hats. I will go down too, and see if I can get one."

So down to the sea she went. She came to the rocks—and there, sitting tight on the rocks, she saw hundreds and hundreds of limpet-hats! She stared at them in delight.

"Well, look at that!" she said. "Hundreds of hats! Lots of them are just my size too. I shall choose the very prettiest, and take it home with me. Then I shall be able to go to the party after all."

Sea-Foam looked at the limpet-shells. She chose one that seemed just her size. She tried to pick it off the rock.

But she could not move it! It was stuck fast to the rock. Sea-Foam tried it again. She pulled as hard as ever she could. But it wasn't a bit of good. She could not move the limpet-shell at all.

She tried to move another—and another. But not one of them would come away from the rock. It was very strange.

"Well, I wonder how Mother gets the hats for us," said Sea-Foam. "Oh dear—the tide is coming in! It's all round this rock. I'll have to swim."

A big wave splashed right over the rock. Sea-Foam slipped into the water. She could swim very well, for she was a sea-sprite. She used her arms and legs to swim with, and she used her wings rather like fins.

She met a big prawn and was rather startled. He stared at her. "Why have you come here?" he asked.

"I came to get a limpet-shell hat," said Sea-Foam. "But I can't move any shell from the rock. It's very queer. I think someone must have stuck them all on with glue."

"Silly sprite," said the prawn, darting backwards. "It's the *empty* shells you want—those limpets on the rock are alive! They've got limpet-bodies inside them!"

"*Have* they?" cried Sea-Foam in surprise. "I thought shells were always empty—just shells."

"How foolish you are!" said the prawn, staring at the sprite with eyes set on stalks. "Haven't you ever seen a snail-shell? You know perfectly well that snails have bodies, don't you? Well, at one time or another, all empty sea-shells had bodies of some sort too. And those limpets on the rock certainly have. They couldn't cling to the rock if they hadn't."

"I want to go and talk to them," said Sea-Foam. So the prawn took her over to the rock, which was now under water. He tapped with his tail at a shell.

"Someone to talk to you!" he said. "She didn't know you had a body inside your shell."

"All shellfish have!" said a watery voice from inside the shell. "And because those bodies are so soft, and have no bones, we have to grow shells to protect them."

"Oh," said Sea-Foam. "How do you grow your shells, limpet? Do tell me!"

"It's quite easy," said the limpet. "At first shellfish are very, very small, no bigger than tiny beads. Our bodies grow big inside our shells, but we do not split them as the crab does, and jump out of them. We add a bit to the edges of our shells to make them bigger!"

"How do you do that?" asked Sea-Foam. The limpet moved itself a little in the water, and Sea-Foam saw that it was putting the edge of its soft body just over the rim of its shell.

"Do you see what I am doing?" asked the limpet. "When I put the edge of my soft body over the rim of my shell, I can make a new edge to it, so that it would become bigger. That is how all shellfish make their shells bigger."

"It's like magic," said Sea-Foam. "Limpet, why couldn't I take you off the rock?"

"Because I wouldn't let you!" said the limpet. "I clung there tightly, as I always do! If I sat there loosely, any bird could peck me off. We limpets know how to stick tight!"

"Don't you dislike it when the tide goes out and there is no water round you?" asked Sea-Foam.

"Oh, I just shut a little water up inside my shell when the tide goes out," said the limpet. "Enough to last me till the tide comes back again, as it always does. I don't really mind whether it is in or out."

"What do you eat?" asked Sea-Foam.

"I'll show you," said the limpet, and he began to glide very slowly away from his place on the rock. Sea-Foam saw that there was quite a ring made on the rock, where the limpet had stood.

"Yes, that's my mark," said the limpet. "I always go back there. I'm at home there. Now look—I am going to have a good dinner off this seaweed."

He put out a curious kind of tongue that was set with very queer teeth. "It's like a file," said Sea-Foam. "It is a tooth-ribbon, limpet, and you are using it to file off some seaweed for your meal! You are very clever. Do all shellfish do the same?"

"Oh no," said the limpet. "Some of us have the power to rasp a hole in somebody's shell, and pull out the soft body inside. That's not very pleasant! I always keep away from whelks if I can, because once I had a brother whose shell was bored into by a whelk. He was eaten then."

"I think you'd better go home, sprite," said the prawn, swimming up. "There is a very high tide, and you may find it difficult to swim so far."

"All right," said Sea-Foam. She watched the limpet going back to his mark on the rock. He fitted himself into it and then stayed still.

"Good-bye," the limpet said to the sprite. "I hope you know a little more about shellfish than you did! I am a one-shelled creature, but you will find plenty that live inside *two* shells. Look out for them because they are very pretty."

"Good-bye," said Sea-Foam. "Stick tight to your rock, limpet, and don't let a wave dash you off. Oh dear—I do wish I'd found a new hat. I do so want to go to the party."

"Look on the beach, at the edge of the waves," said the prawn. "There are sure to be some there, thrown up by the tide."

Sea-Foam swam to the edge of the sea, and then ran up the shore. She looked at the edge of the waves that were coming up the beach higher and higher, and to her joy she saw hundreds of empty shells. She found four limpet-shells that fitted her well.

"I'll take them all home," she thought. "Then it won't matter if I lose one or two. What an adventure I have had!"

She took all the limpet-shell hats home with her, and her mother was pleased.

"Now you can go to the party!" she said. "But perhaps you had better take all four with you, Sea-Foam, for I am sure you will lose two or three there!"

"Mother, did you know that these shells are not *really* hats?" said Sea-Foam. "They are the houses of little creatures that have soft bodies. Isn't that queer?"

"Well, well, well!" said her mother, laughing. "Fancy wearing somebody's house for a hat!"

Teaching Notes. Points for Discussion.

1. This is a story of the limpet and its ways.
2. Have plenty of empty limpet shells to show the children. Let them sit them on their thumbs to see what funny little "hats" they make.
3. We have a saying "stick like a *limpet*". What does it mean?
4. Why does a limpet grow a shell? Why does a snail?
5. A limpet is one-shelled. Other shellfish are two-shelled. Who knows some?
6. Draw some limpet-hats.

2 (Book 20)
THE BAD BLUEBOTTLE FLY

There was once a big bluebottle fly. It had a shining blue-black body, and wings that made a very loud buzzing noise. "Z-z-z-z-z-z!" they went. "Z-z-z-z-z-z-z!"

The bluebottle looked in at the window. There was a little boy inside, painting a picture. Beside him was an apple his mother had given him. He was painting a bit of the picture, then taking a bite of his apple, then painting another piece of the picture.

The bluebottle smelt the apple. It smelt sweet and strong. It wanted to get at it. But it could not find the way indoors. So it flew away into the garden again.

It came to the dustbin. The lid was partly off, and a bad smell came from the dustbin. The bluebottle liked bad smells.

It walked inside the dustbin. There was a lot of nasty rubbish there. The bluebottle walked all over it, and smelt it, and sucked a little dirty juice. Its feet were covered with nasty-smelling bits of rubbish.

It flew out again and went to the window once more. This time it flew to the top part of the pane, which was open. It flew inside with a joyful buzz. Now it could get that apple!

It flew straight down on to the apple. It walked all over the bitten part, leaving bits of dirt from its feet there. The little boy noticed the fly and brushed it away.

"Go away," he said. "I don't like you."

The bluebottle flew out of the window again. The little boy picked up his apple and bit it —but alas, he not only ate the apple, but he swallowed the bits of dirt that the bluebottle's feet had left.

And that night he was ill. The dirt made him ill, so that he could not go to school the next day or the next.

But the bluebottle went on having a fine time. It flew round the garden for a while, and then went back to the dustbin again. But someone had put the lid on tightly, so the fly could not get in.

It flew into the road. There was plenty of nasty-smelling dirt there, left by dogs and horses. The fly flew down to it, and walked all over it. Its feet were covered in dirt again when it flew up.

It saw a baby in a pram, sucking a sweet. It was a piece of barley-sugar. The fly flew down to the pram, and buzzed. "Z-z-z-z-z-z-z-z! Z-z-z-z-z-z-z-z!"

The baby looked at the fly and waved her piece of barley sugar. She did not know that the bluebottle was a bad fly and would do her harm.

The fly flew on to the piece of barley sugar and walked up and down it. The baby was afraid of the fly and dropped the sweet on to the pram-cover.

The bluebottle enjoyed it very much. Its feet stuck to the barley sugar as it sucked up the sweetness. When the mother came out to look at her baby, the fly flew away with a loud "Z-z-z-z-z-z-z!".

"Oh, you've dropped your sweet," said the mother. She picked it up and gave it to the baby. The little thing put it into her mouth at once. It was covered with tiny bits of filth from the fly's feet, and she sucked them all off into her mouth.

And that day she became very ill, for dirt and filth make anyone ill. The mother called in the doctor, and he shook his head and looked grave.

"This is very serious," he said. "You must take great care of this baby. She is very ill."

For a whole week the baby was ill, and nobody really knew what had caused her illness. Nobody guessed it was the bad bluebottle fly, with her dirty feet.

The bluebottle didn't know anything about the baby's illness. She flew off the pram into the hot sunshine and buzzed happily down the lane. She went to the farm, and there looked for all the nasty-smelling things she could find. She was really happy when she was in the midst of dirt.

She walked over all the rubbish-heaps. She walked into the pigsty and had a lovely time there. She went into the stables, and buzzed round for an hour, walking over all the dirtiest corners she could find.

Then she went into the fields where the men were at work. She soon found their lunch baskets and buzzed busily round them. She could not get at the food because it was well wrapped up.

But when the men came to have their dinner the fly had a wonderful time. She walked over any sandwich that was set down for a moment. She ran all over an apple that one of the men was eating. She sat for a long time on a bit of cheese.

She wiped her dirty feet on all the things she walked on. They were quite clean when she left the men—but she left them the dirt to eat on their sandwiches, apple, and cheese.

Two of them were ill the next day. They could not go to work. The farmer was sorry, because it was a busy time of year for him, and he could not spare any of his men. But he had to do without them.

"It's tiresome that they should fall ill just when we are so busy," he said. "I wonder what made them ill—the hot sun, perhaps."

But it was not the hot sun. It was the bluebottle's dirty feet. What a lot of harm that little fly had done!

Where was she now? She had found a way in at the door of somebody's larder. The cook had left it open for a few minutes, and the fly had flown in. She buzzed round for a while, and then settled down on the joint of meat.

She liked the smell of meat just as much as she liked the smell of dirt. She laid some eggs in the joint. She laid a great many.

The cook came in and disturbed the fly. It buzzed round and the cook tried to catch it. But the fly went up to the ceiling and stayed there, walking upside down.

The cook put a meat-safe over the joint and went out again.

The fly could not lay any more eggs on the joint of meat. But there was a duck there, waiting to be roasted. The bluebottle flew down to it. Perhaps she could find a nice place to lay some more eggs, somewhere on the duck.

She chose a corner of the duck and laid a good many eggs there too. Then the larder door opened, and the mistress of the house came in to get some milk. The fly flew up with a buzz.

"A bluebottle!" said the mistress, and went to fetch a roll of newspaper. She hit out at the fly, and killed it. It fell to the floor.

"Bad bluebottle!" said the mistress. "You do such a lot of harm, and bring so much illness, with your dirty feet! I would not kill you if you were good, like the little ladybird, but you are bad, and make our babies and our children ill. Now you can do no more harm!"

But the bluebottle had left a good deal of harm behind her! Her eggs soon hatched out in the meat and in the dead duck. They hatched out into ugly little grubs, who were glad to find so much food all around them.

They could not eat the meat or the duck, because they could not chew. So they did something else. They sent out something from their mouths that made the solid meat turn into a kind of gravy.

Then the grubs had a lovely time. They sucked up the gravy. There was food all around them, more than they could eat! They turned more and more of it bad. It began to smell terrible.

When the mistress went into the larder, she cried out in horror: "What has gone bad? Whatever can it be? Oh, what a terrible smell!"

Then she saw that the joint of meat had gone bad. The bluebottle grubs had turned their corner of it into evil-smelling gravy, and were busily sucking and growing, sucking and growing.

The duck was the same. It smelt very bad. The mistress was upset.

"Good food wasted!" she said. "Look at all these horrible grubs, cook, eating our food. We must never let this happen again."

"How did they get there?" asked the cook in surprise.

"You know that bluebottle I killed?" said the mistress. "Well, she must have laid her eggs in the meat and in the duck—and now they have hatched out into these grubs which have made the meat so bad that it would make us all ill if we ate it!"

So the food had to be burnt, and that was a great waste. All because of the bad bluebottle fly. She had made so many people ill, and had spoilt so much good food.

We won't let her spoil *our* food, will we, or make *us* ill! "Z-z-z-z-z-z-z-z-z-z!" Keep away from us, bad bluebottle.

Teaching Notes. Points for Discussion.

1. This story tells of the great harm that bluebottles do.

2. How do bluebottles bring harm to us? (By walking on filth and dirt, and then on our food.)

3. How can we stop them doing harm? (By keeping lids on dustbins, burning up rubbish, being as clean as possible, keeping food under covers, etc.)

4. We must protect insects that are our friends and destroy those that are our enemies. Which are our friends?

5. Make up a little play in which a bluebottle brings harm to a baby.

1 (Book 21)
THE THREE BAD IMPS

There were once three bad imps. They were called Snip, Snap and Snorum, and they really were very naughty.

They were very small—not even as tall as a daisy. They had all kinds of jobs to do, and they did them very badly.

They were supposed to help the moths when they crept out of their cocoons—but they pulled them out so roughly that sometimes they spoilt the wings of the little creatures.

They had to polish up the little coppery beetles that ran through the grasses—and sometimes they polished the beetles' feet too, so that they slipped and slid all over the place!

They were always up to naughty tricks, and nobody could ever catch them to punish them. They were so small, and could hide so easily.

"Nobody will ever catch *me*!" Snip would boast, as he swung up and down on a grass-blade.

"And I can always hide where nobody can find me!" said Snap.

"We're as clever as can be!" said Snorum. And so they were. They got into trouble every day, but they slipped out of it as easily as worms slip out of their holes!

But one day they really went too far. They had been told to brush the hairs of a furry caterpillar who had fallen into the mud and got very dirty.

And instead of brushing his hairs and making him nice and clean again, Snip, Snap and Snorum cut off all his hairs to make themselves little fur coats!

Well, of course, the caterpillar complained very loudly indeed, and the pixies set off to find and catch the three bad imps.

"We'll punish them well!" said the biggest pixie. "I shall spank each of them with a good, strong grass-blade!"

But nobody could catch those naughty imps. They hid here, and they hid there—and even when they were found, they slipped away easily.

"They have polished themselves all over with the polish they use for the beetles," said the biggest pixie. "So, even if we get hold of them, we can't hold them! They slip out of our hands like eels."

"What shall we do, then?" asked the smallest pixie. "How can we catch them?"

"Well, first we must find them," said the biggest pixie. "Now—where can they be?"

"Send the ants to find out," said another pixie. "They can run here, there and everywhere, and they will soon find where they are hiding."

So the little brown ants were sent hurrying through the wood, between the grasses, to find the hidden imps. One ant found them and came hurrying back.

"They are asleep in the leaves of the honeysuckle, where it climbs high," said the tiny ant. "If you come now, you could catch them."

"They will slip out of our hands as soon as we touch them," said the pixies. "If only we could trap them. Little ant, where could we find a trap that will hold the imps?"

"Only the spiders make traps," said the ant. "You might ask *them*."

So the pixies called the spiders, and they came running over the grass on their eight legs, their eyes looking wisely at the pixies.

"Come with us," said the pixies. "We want you to make a trap for some naughty imps."

So, all together, the pixies and the spiders ran to the honeysuckle, where it climbed high. Softly they all climbed up the twisted stems, and came to where the imps were lying fast asleep among the honeysuckle leaves.

"Can you make a trap to catch them all?" whispered the pixies. The spiders looked at one another. Yes—they could!

"There are six of us," said a fine big spider. "We can make a cage, if you like—a six-sided cage of web, that will hold the three naughty imps as long as you like!"

"Oh *yes*!" cried the pixies. "Make six webs, in the form of a square—four for the sides, one for the top and one for the bottom. That will be a splendid cage. But be careful not to wake the imps." The spiders began their work. The pixies watched them. The spiders were very clever indeed. Underneath each spider were little lumps, and from them they drew the thread for their webs.

"These are our spinnerets," said a big spider to a pixie. "We spin our web from them. The thread isn't really made till it oozes out of our spinnerets, you know. It squeezes out like a liquid, and the air makes it set, so that we get threads to work with."

"It's like magic," said the pixies in wonder. They watched the spiders pull the thread from their spinnerets, more and more and more—as much as ever they needed.

"Feel the thread," said a spider. "It's so fine—and yet so strong."

"Yes, it is," said the pixies. "We would like some to sew our party frocks with! Hurry, spiders, or the imps will wake."

Each spider chose a leaf, stalk or twig to hang her outer threads on. It was marvellous to watch them.

After they had fixed their outer threads, they began to make thread that ran to the middle and back, like spokes of a wheel. The three imps slept soundly all the time, for the spiders made no noise at all.

"See how the spiders use their clawed feet to guide the thread," whispered a pixie. "And look at their eight eyes. Aren't they clever creatures? They are not insects, are they?"

"No," said the biggest spider, "of course we are not insects. Insects have six legs—we have eight. Insects have their bodies in three parts. We have only two. Do not call us insects, pixies!"

"We won't," said the pixies, watching the making of the webs in delight. "Oh look—now the spiders are running a spiral thread round and round the spokes!"

So they were. They had finished all the spokes, and were now moving round their webs, letting out a thread that went round and round in smaller and smaller circles.

"The imps will never, never be able to escape from this trap," said a pixie.

"We will make the web sticky too," said a spider. "If we hang tiny sticky drops along the threads, the imps will find themselves caught fast if they try to break through!"

"I have seen flies caught in webs," said pixies. "I suppose the stickiness holds them fast, spider?"

"Of course," said the spider, pulling a thread tighter. "Now—we have finished. Shall we go and hide under leaves, and watch what happens?"

"Yes," said the pixies. So the spiders ran up to some leaves, and hid themselves there, waiting silently, just as they did when they waited for flies to come.

Soon the imps awoke and stretched themselves—and they saw the trap they were in! They jumped to their feet in alarm.

“What’s this! We’re in a cage!”

“It’s a cage made of spider’s web!”

“Break it, break it!”

The three imps flung themselves against the webby walls of the strange cage. They broke the threads—but in a trice the sticky web fell on their arms and legs and heads—they were caught!

They struggled, and they wriggled, but it was no use. The strong, sticky threads held them as tightly as they could hold flies. Down rushed the spiders and, pouring out more thread from their spinnerets, they rolled the imps round and round in it, until they were helpless.

“Thank you, spiders,” said the pixies. “We are very grateful to you. Now at last we have caught these bad little imps! They will be well punished!”

“If you want our help again at any time, just let us know,” said the spiders. “We’ll come running to you on our eight long legs!”

The imps were carried off by the pixies—and dear me, didn’t they get well spanked! They sobbed and they cried, and they promised they would be as good as gold.

And so far, they have—you’ll find that the caterpillars have their hairs well brushed, and the ladybirds and beetles are well polished now.

But the imps keep away from the spiders. They have never forgotten how they were caught in a webby trap, spun by the six clever spiders!

Teaching Notes. Points for Discussion.

1. This story tells of spiders and the way they make their webs.

2. A spider is not an insect. Why? (Insects have six legs, their bodies are in three parts, etc.)

3. Where does the spider get her thread from?

4. How does she make her web? Draw on blackboard the various stages, finishing with the complete web.

5. Let children draw a spider with eight legs.

6. Take children to see spider webs in the garden.

2 (Book 21)
SILLY SAMMY AND THE CORN

Once upon a time there was a boy who lived in a big town. He had hardly ever been to the country, so when one day he was sent there, for a treat, he was surprised at all he saw.

But Sammy was a silly little boy. He did all the things he was told not to do.

"Be sure not to leave the gate of the hen-run open," said the farmer's wife. "I don't want all my hens out, because they will lay their eggs under the hedges then, and it takes me a long time to find them."

Well, of course, Sammy *did* leave the gate open, and out went all the hens! It was very tiresome of him.

He was told *not* to go into the hayfield, because the farmer did not want his hay trampled down. But Sammy went in, just the same, and spoilt quite a big corner. The farmer was cross with him.

Then he left the gate of the cow-field open too, after he had been swinging on it, and all the cows walked out and wandered a long way down the road before anyone knew about it.

It took about an hour to get them back again, and Sammy felt ashamed of himself.

Sammy was quite good for a little while after that. Then he took the dog for a walk, and went by the big corn-field.

The corn was almost ripe. It was tall, taller than Sammy, and it stood rustling in the wind, almost as if it was telling secrets. It bent its ears towards one another as if they were listening. It was a lovely deep yellow.

The dog rushed into the field after a rabbit. Sammy stood looking after him, thinking it would be great fun to rush about in the corn too.

"After all, corn is only a kind of grass," said Sammy. "What harm can I do if I run about in it a little?"

So in he went, and began to chase the dog. The dog became very excited and leapt here and there, breaking the corn in many places. Soon the two of them had trampled down big patches here and there. They were spoiling the corn very badly.

Then the farmer came by. How angry he was to see the boy and the dog spoiling his lovely corn-field. He called loudly to Sammy:

"Come here! And bring the dog with you!"

Sammy came. "I hope he's not going to be cross with me!" he thought. "After all, it's only golden grass! I can't do much harm to it!"

The farmer *was* angry. He spanked Sammy hard and made him cry. "You don't seem to mind spoiling other people's work," said the farmer crossly. "Don't you know, Sammy, that many people have worked hard on that corn-field, and *will* work harder still—and the sun and rain have done their share as well—all to bring you a nice loaf of bread on to your breakfast-table!"

Sammy stopped crying. "What do you mean?" he said. "What has this silly field of corn got to do with the loaf I eat at breakfast-time?"

"Well, well, well!" said the farmer. "If that's all you know about things, you're sillier than I thought! I can't stop to tell you now—and I'm too angry. Go home, you bad little boy!"

Poor Sammy! He didn't want to go home. He sat down at the edge of the corn-field, and began to cry again. He was tired with his walk, and soon he lay back and shut his eyes.

When he opened his eyes again, what a surprise he got! The corn-field was no longer there. At least, the field was there, but there was no corn in it.

Sammy stared in astonishment. "What has happened?" he said. Then he saw two big horses coming along, pulling a plough. They snorted loudly as they passed.

"Here's that silly boy Sammy," they said. "What's the good of us working hard like this, ploughing up the land for the farmer to sow his seed, when that stupid boy will spoil the corn?"

Then the farmer came along with two men and a machine. They sowed seed in the field, and Sammy watched the seed falling from the box at the back of the machine. When the men passed they clicked their tongues at Sammy.

"There's that silly boy! Here we are, working hard at sowing the corn, so that he may have bread to eat—and all he does is to trample down our corn!"

Sammy felt strange. He didn't like this at all. He wondered if he should get up and go, before anyone else said horrid things to him.

But the men went off the field, and it was empty. Then Sammy saw to his surprise that the seed was already growing. Green corn sprang up in long lines, tender and beautiful.

Then there came the rain, and in the patter of the raindrops Sammy heard his name again.

"There's Sammy! See him lying there! Here we all are, thousands of raindrops, working hard to make the corn grow to make his bread—but *he* won't help a bit. You'll see—he'll spoil the corn if he can!"

The rain stopped and the sun came out, flooding the wet field with gold. And a voice came out of the gold.

"Grow, blades of wheat, grow high! Take no notice of that silly boy! He will do his best to spoil you, although you are growing to make him bread. Grow, wheat, grow high!"

Sammy felt very queer. He didn't like all these voices that spoke his name, and seemed to think so little of him. He watched the field of corn grow green and high. He heard it whispering, and he felt certain he could make out his name.

"S-s-s-s-s-sammy! There he is-s-s-s-s! S-s-s-s-sammy! S-s-s-s-s-silly S-s-s-sammy!"

Now the corn was high and golden, just as it had been when Sammy and the dog went into it. But even as Sammy looked, men came into the field with a big machine that cut the corn in a marvellous way.

The corn fell to the ground, not only cut, but neatly bound into sheaves. It was wonderful to see.

But as the men passed Sammy on their marvellous machine, they spoke about him. "That's the boy who trampled down this corn! That's why it isn't so good to cut as it ought to be. He tried to spoil it. He didn't know that he was spoiling his own breakfast!"

Then men and women too came into the field and began to build the sheaves of corn into big stooks. And whenever they passed Sammy, they said the same thing.

"Look! There's that silly boy who doesn't try to help! Sammy is his name."

Then the corn, when it was ready, was piled into wagons and taken to the farmyard to build into stacks till the thresher came to beat out the grain from the husks. And even the sound of the big threshing-machine seemed to laugh at Sammy. "Boom-boom! that's Sammy over there! He tried his best to spoil the corn that gives him bread! Boom-boom!"

Then the corn was sent to the miller to grind into flour. The miller came by that way, and he too stopped to point at Sammy. “I’ve got the flour from the corn! It grew in this field that you trampled down. Silly little Sammy!”

“What a lot happens to corn!” said Sammy to himself. “I’d no idea so many people and animals had to work hard to get the corn ready for our bread.”

Last of all the baker came by, carrying his big basket of bread on his back. He spoke to Sammy too.

“I’m going to the farm with this bread for your tea. I made this bread from the flour that was ground by the miller out of the corn that grew in this field. You did your best to spoil the corn, didn’t you? Ah! what’s the sense of spoiling your own tea?”

Sammy jumped up. He ran back to the farm as fast as he could. He didn’t know whether he had been dreaming or not, but he just longed to be with someone he knew. As he got to the gate, the baker came from the farm-house door.

He smiled at Sammy. “Nice new bread for your tea!” he said. “Made from the farmer’s own corn, so it ought to be good.”

Sammy sat down to tea just as the farmer came in. “Well!” he said, not cross any more, for he was a kindly man. “I’d better tell you the story of the corn, hadn’t I, young man, and then you won’t be so silly as to try and spoil a corn-field again.”

“I know the story, thank you,” said Sammy. “First you and the horses plough the field. Then you sow the seed. Then the rain comes and wets it and the sun comes and warms it, and it grows. Then, when it is ready, the men come with their big reaping and binding machine, and cut the corn.”

“Well, you *do* know a lot!” said the farmer.

“I know more,” said Sammy. “Men and women set the corn-sheaves into stooks, and then it is taken to the yard to be put in a stack. Then the threshing-machine comes and threshes the grain from the husks. The miller grinds the grain into flour. The baker bakes it into bread—and I have it for my tea!”

“Well, take some bread-and-butter, then,” said the farmer, laughing. Sammy shook his head.

“I won’t have any tea to-day,” he said. “I don’t deserve new bread when I spoilt the corn. But I didn’t know the whole story, you see.

“You’ve told it so well, you shall have as much new bread as you like!” said the farmer’s wife. So Sammy made a good tea after all, and was happy again. Didn’t he tell the story of the corn well?

Can you tell it too?

Teaching Notes. Points for Discussion.

1. This is the story of the corn.

2. What helps it to grow?

3. What happens when it is ripe? Who has seen a cornfield when it is gold? Who has seen one being cut?

4. After the corn is cut and stacked and threshed, what happens to it? What does the miller do?

5. What does the baker do? How many people do we have to thank for our loaf of bread? Count and see.

6. Take children to see a cornfield, if possible.

1 (Book 22)
THE SWALLOWS IN THE BARN

One fine day in the early summer, two dark-blue swallows flew into the farmer's old barn. They perched up in the roof, and talked to one another.

"We will build our nest here, on this big wooden beam. This is just the place!"

They flew out again and went to the farmer's pond, where the white ducks swam. They flew down to the muddy edge, and took up a little of the mud in their beaks.

"Why do you want mud?" quacked the ducks in astonishment.

"We make our nests of mud!" twittered the swallows. "We mix the mud with a little hair, or a little straw from the yard. Then it makes a very fine nest."

"We shall line it with grass and a few soft feathers," said the mother swallow. "Then I shall lay my eggs there. Good-bye! We will come and fetch some more mud soon."

The swallows made their mud-nest on the big wooden beam. Then they lined it softly. The mother swallow sat in it and laid four white eggs, speckled with brown and grey. She was very proud of them.

"We shall soon have some baby birds of our own," she said to her mate. "I will sit on the eggs to keep them warm. Go and fly in the air, and catch me a beakful of insects. I shall soon be hungry."

Her little mate fed her well whilst she sat on the eggs and kept them warm. One day the swallow was excited.

"Our eggs are hatching!" she twittered. "Listen! The shells are breaking!"

Four tiny birds came out of the eggs. The swallows were full of joy. But how busy they were each day now, for they had four babies to feed as well as themselves!

They flew high in the air on their strong wings, all day long, opening their wide beaks and catching hundreds of flies for their little ones. Many other swallows were doing the same thing. The air seemed full of flashing wings and long forked tails, as the swallows darted here and there in the blue summer sky.

Outside the barn, just under the eaves, was another nest. It belonged to a pair of noisy, untidy sparrows. They too had laid eggs which had hatched. But their babies were already big, and were almost ready to fly.

"Chirrup, chirrup!" said the sparrows, all day long.

"Twitter, twitter, twitter!" said the swallows, in their sweet, high voices.

Sometimes the sparrows flew into the barn to see how the baby swallows were getting on. Sometimes the swallows went to see the baby sparrows. It was fun to have two little families growing up together.

One day a big rat came into the barn. He ran up the big beams in the wall of the barn. He came to the beam where the swallows' nest lay. He was hungry. He wanted baby birds to eat, or eggs.

The two swallows were out in the sky, hunting for insects. Only the four tiny swallows were in the nest. But into the barn flew the mother sparrow, and she saw the big grey rat.

"Chirrup, chirrup!" she called, and flew round the rat in anger. "Go away! I will call the stable cat in here! Go away!"

The cock-sparrow flew in when he heard his mate chirrup in anger. “Fetch the cat, fetch the cat!” cried the hen-sparrow.

The cock-sparrow flew out. The cat was sitting in the sunshine outside. The sparrow flew round her head, and she jumped up. She wanted to catch the sparrow for her dinner. But he flew off in front of her.

The cat ran after him on her soft paws. He flew into the barn again, and the cat darted in too.

“Here comes the cat, here comes the cat!” called the mother sparrow in delight. The rat was afraid. He turned away from the swallows’ nest, and ran along another beam, hoping that the cat would not see him.

She smelt him, and then she saw him. She darted up a beam and chased him. He fled away down a hole, making up his mind that he would not go into the barn again! The cat went out into the sunshine.

How glad the two swallows were when they knew that their little ones were safe! “Thank you, thank you!” they twittered again and again to the sparrows. “You saved our little ones from the rat. We will always be friends with you. Our children shall be friends too.”

So, when the young sparrows and young swallows had all learnt to fly, they became friends. The little blue swallows did not like perching in trees with the little brown sparrows, and the sparrows did not like flying too high in the air. But they often flew round the trees together, and chirruped and twittered merrily.

Summer went. Autumn came. The young sparrows had learnt a great deal, for they were always talking together with other birds. They spoke to their swallow friends about the winter days.

“Soon it will be cold weather. But we shall have fun then. We will take you to the farm-yard and show you where to find spilt corn. We will take you to the hedges and show you good seeds. We will play games together, and make as much noise as we like.”

“We shan’t be here then,” said the young swallows. “You see, we don’t eat seeds. Our beaks are not strong enough. We eat insects. We shall fly away when the cold days come, and leave you.”

“Oh no! Don’t do that!” cried the sparrows. “We should miss you dreadfully. Stay here. We will ask the robin to catch insects for you.”

“He won’t do that,” said the swallows. “He will hardly find enough for himself. He has told us that there are hardly any in the winter. We cannot starve, so we must fly away from here.”

“Where will you go to?” asked the sparrows, very sadly.

“A long way away,” said the swallows. “We shall fly to a warm country, where the sun will still be hot, and where there will be plenty of insects for us to eat.”

“How will you know the way?” asked the sparrows. “You have never been before.”

“We shall find the way all right,” said the swallows. “The wind will help us too. It will blow behind us. We shall miss you, little friends.”

“Please don’t go. Do stay,” begged the young sparrows. “Surely just four swallows can find enough food for the winter.”

“Well—we will see,” said the little swallows. “We don’t want to leave this farm-yard that we love, or the pond we skim over, or the barn we know so well. Maybe we will stay after all.”

But one day in the autumn the young swallows felt very restless. A cold wind had begun to blow. There did not seem to be so many insects. They flew here and there on their wide, strong wings, and suddenly they did not want to stay near the farm-yard any more.

One swallow after another settled on the roof of the old barn. Dozens of them, scores of them, hundreds of them gathered together, twittering.

"It is time to go. Say good-bye! It is time to go! We will fly to-night, to-night!"

The young swallows said good-bye to the sparrows. "We must go after all. We cannot stay. The wind is blowing to help us. We shall never forget you."

"Come back again," begged the sparrows. "You were born here, in the old barn. You grew up in the sky above the fields and the farm. Your home is really here. Come back again. We shall look out for you!"

"We will come back," promised the young swallows. "Good-bye! We must go, we must go!"

And that evening they flew away in a great flock of many hundreds. Their steel-blue wings beat the air, and their voices twittered high.

"We are going! Good-bye! But we will come back again."

Now they are gone and the little sparrows are lonely without their friends. But one day in April, when the sun is warm and the sky is blue, the swallows will come back.

Yes—the little swallows born in the old barn, will come back to the farm-yard, back to the barn, and will build their nest there for their own little young ones. Wait patiently, little brown sparrows—find seeds for your winter food—fly round the farm-yard you know so well.

And then one day you will see the swallows again, back from their winter home. Chirrup, chirrup, twitter, twitter! What joy to be all together again once more!

Teaching Notes. Points for Discussion.

1. This is the story of the life of sparrows and swallows, and the differences between them.
2. Why do the swallows fly in the air so much? (To *catch* their food.)
3. What do the sparrows have for food?
4. Why do the swallows fly away in the autumn? Why do the sparrows stay here?
5. We must watch for the swallows to gather together, when they leave us, and we must watch for the first one to return in spring.
6. Throw out bread for sparrows and let children watch them. Let them watch swallows in the sky.

2 (Book 22)
THE BIRTHDAY PARTY

Once upon a time Bron the Brownie wanted to give a birthday party.

"It shall be the most wonderful party ever given," said Bron. "I shall give it in the field that runs down to the stream, then those who want to can go for a sail in the moonlight."

"What will you have to eat?" asked Jinky.

"Honey cakes, daisy-jelly, bilberry buns, and the most delicious ice-creams ever made," said Bron. "And I shall have lemonade to drink, made of dewdrops shaken off the grass."

"It does sound nice," said Tippitty.

"And I shall ask the Princess Peronel," said Bron. "She loves a party. She will be staying with her aunt, quite near here, on my birthday. I am sure she will love to come."

Everyone in Cuckoo Wood felt excited. A moonlight party near the stream, with lots of nice things to eat and drink. What fun!

Bron was very busy. He wrote out cards to tell everyone to come. He got the grey squirrel to take them to his friends, and everyone wrote back at once to say they would come.

He began to make jellies and cakes, biscuits and buns. He ordered himself a new suit of red and gold, with a pointed hat that was set with bells. "They will ring whenever I walk," said Bron. "Then people will know I am coming."

"Where will you get all the glasses and cups and plates and dishes from?" asked Tippitty. "You won't have nearly enough."

"The oak tree is giving me acorn-cups," said Bron. "I am borrowing all the other things from Jinky and Gobo—and perhaps you would lend me a few glasses, Tippitty dear."

It was to be such a big party. Bron went down to the meadow and had a look at it. He had asked all the little folk he knew—the brownies, the elves, the pixies, and a few of the nicely-behaved goblins.

"The Princess Peronel says she will come too," he told everyone. "So you must all wear your very *best* dresses and suits, and polish up your wings nicely."

"Where are you going to get all the chairs and tables you want?" asked Jinky. "I can lend you mine, Bron, but I haven't very many."

"Oh, I've thought about all that," said Bron. "I have written to the enchanter Heyho, and asked him to make me hundreds of little chairs and tables, and to send them here by midday, before the party. Then I shall have plenty of time to arrange them before midnight comes, and we begin the party. It doesn't start till twelve o'clock, you know."

"How is he going to send them?" asked Jinky.

"His black cats are going to bring them," said Bron. "He is going to pack them all up neatly, and put them on the backs of his big cats. Then they will bring them to me by midday. I shall arrange them in the meadow then. Won't it be fun?"

The day of the party came. Bron's new suit was ready, and his hat with little bells. He looked very fine. He hurried about, looking to see if the jellies were all right, and the lemonade was sweet enough.

Midday came—but no black cats! Bron looked out for them, and wondered why they were late. One o'clock came—two o'clock. Still no black cats with all the tables and chairs.

Then, at three o'clock, a poor, limping cat came mewing to Bron. The cat was much bigger than little Bron. He looked up at her in surprise.

"Where are the other cats?" he asked. "You are one of Heyho's cats, aren't you? Where are the little chairs and tables you were to bring?"

"Oh, Bron, a dreadful thing happened," said the cat. "As we were going down Breezy Hill, with the piles of little chairs and tables tied safely to our backs, a big brown dog came trotting by. He saw us and chased us all."

"Oh dear! What happened?" asked Bron.

"Well, we rushed up trees," said the cat, "and all the little chairs and tables caught in the boughs and were smashed to bits. Oh, Bron, I'm so sorry."

"This is dreadful," said Bron.

"I got down the tree first, and came to tell you," said the cat. "The dog chased me again, and I hurt my paw. The other cats have gone back to our master. But he will not be able to send you any more chairs and tables in time for your party."

Bron felt as if he would burst into tears. "How can I have a party without tables and chairs?" he wailed. "I can't put the cups and plates on the ground! Oh dear, oh dear, this is a dreadful thing to happen just before the party! Whatever am I to do?"

The cat didn't know. She ran back to her master and left poor Bron looking very sad. Jinky came to see him, and he listened to the dreadful news.

"Bron—don't worry too much. I believe I know what we can do!" he said. "Let's *grow* our own tables and stools!"

"What do you mean—*grow* them?" said Bron. "I don't know enough magic for that."

"Let's put a mushroom spell on your meadow!" said Jinky. "Then mushrooms will grow up all over it."

"What's the good of that?" asked Bron. "You know what a long time plants take to grow—weeks and weeks. Don't be silly!"

"No, Bron, no—mushrooms are not like green plants that take a long time to grow," said Jinky. "They are quite different. They grow very, very quickly—in a night! You know how quickly toadstools grow, don't you? Well, mushrooms grow very quickly too, and they have nice broad tops that will do well for tables and stools. Do let's come and try it."

Bron began to cheer up. He went with Jinky to the meadow. Jinky began to dig about in the ground a bit, and he showed Bron some small white threads here and there. "Just a bit of mushroom magic, and hundreds of mushrooms will grow!" he said.

"I don't know mushroom magic," said Bron. But Jinky did. He fetched his best wand and did a little waving and chanting. Bron thought he was really very clever.

"And now we'll just see what happens!" said Jinky, when he had finished.

Well, it really was very surprising. Before long, wherever there were the white threads that Jinky had found, and wherever there had been mushroom spores—the only "seed" that mushrooms have—the ground began to move a little and to heave up.

"Jinky! Jinky! The mushrooms are growing!" cried Bron in delight. "Here's one—and another—and another! Oh, what fun! There will be hundreds of them. Wherever I tread I can feel them growing."

Well, by the time that it was nearly midnight, the meadow was covered with mushrooms! They grew very quickly indeed, as mushrooms always do, and Bron was full of joy when he saw what fine little tables and stools they would make.

He and Jinky and Tippitty quickly set out the goodies on the biggest mushrooms. By the time the guests arrived, everything was ready, and there was Bron, jingling his bells and giving the pretty little Princess Peronel and all his guests a great welcome!

"What marvellous tables and stools!" said the Princess. "I do like them. Aren't they nice and soft to sit on—and oh! do look underneath the tops, everyone—there are the prettiest pink frills there, as soft as silk. Bron, I think they are the nicest tables and stools I have ever seen!"

Everyone else thought so too. The tables couldn't be knocked over, because they grew from the ground. There were so many of them that everyone could sit down at once if they wanted to.

It was a splendid party. The things to eat and drink were really lovely. There were tiny boats on the stream, made of curled-up water-lily leaves, with a white petal for a sail. The Princess had a wonderful time.

"This is the nicest party I have ever been to," she said to Bron. "The very nicest! As it is your birthday I would like to give you a present, and please wear it."

She gave him a little shiny brooch in the shape of a mushroom! She had made it by magic and Bron was very pleased with it. "I shall always remember this party when I wear it," he said. "Thank you, Princess Peronel."

At dawn the guests all went home. Jinky and Bron cleared away the dishes and cups. Nothing was left except the mushroom stools and tables.

"It's a pity they will all be wasted," said Bron. "They are so pretty, with their frills underneath, and they smell so nice!"

But they were not wasted—for, when the little folk were all sound asleep in the early morning sun, children came into the fields with baskets.

"Mushrooms!" they cried. "Mushrooms for breakfast! Oh look! there are hundreds, all with pretty frills, and nice white caps. Mushrooms! Mushrooms!"

They picked them all—and for their breakfast they ate the stools and tables that the little folk had grown so quickly the night before. They *did* enjoy them!

It's queer that mushrooms and toadstools always grow so quickly, isn't it? There must be some of Jinky's magic about!

Teaching Notes. Points for Discussion.

1. This story tells of mushrooms and their quick growth.

2. Have some mushrooms to show the children. Let them see the beautiful pink "frills" underneath.

3. Mushrooms belong to the fungus family. What else does? (Toadstools, puff-balls, etc.)

4. Mushrooms are eatable. Many toadstools are poisonous. Point out danger of eating things we do not know about.

5. Draw mushrooms for Bron's party, or model them.

1 (Book 23)
THE WATER-BABIES

"Eeeeeeeeee!"

The cow heard the high little whine, and turned her head. She saw a tiny insect, with a yellow-brown body, long legs and wings. She swung her tail round, hoping to keep the insect away, for she knew that she might suddenly feel a bite.

The insect was a gnat. "Eeeeeeeee!" she whined, in her high voice. "Let me bite you. I want to suck your blood, because then I shall be strong enough to go and lay my eggs."

But the cow would not let her bite her. She went off to the stream and stood in the water up to her waist, lashing her tail round her.

So the gnat went to a horse, and whined round him. "Eeeeeeeee! I want to bite you and get a little of your blood. I have eggs to lay, and that will help me to lay them."

The horse did not like winged insects. He had been bitten by a horse-fly that summer, and he knew how much it hurt. He tossed his heavy mane and swung his hairy tail about, trying to whisk away the gnat. One of his hairs struck her, and she nearly fell.

She flew away in fright. She came to where a girl was lying reading in a garden. She had no stockings on, so her plump legs were bare. This was just what the gnat wanted. She flew down, with her high whine.

"Eeeeeeeee! I have found something good to bite!"

The girl did not hear the high whining noise. The gnat flew down on to one of her legs and settled there. She pricked the girl's skin sharply, and sucked up a tiny drop of blood.

The girl gave a cry of pain and sat up. She smacked at her leg, and the gnat flew high into the air, humming with joy. "I have sucked your blood! Now I can lay my eggs."

The girl rubbed her leg where it had been bitten. She saw a red mark there. It swelled up and became a painful bump.

"Oh dear—now I shall be awake all night with this gnat-bite hurting me," she said. "Bother the gnats! Why must they bite us?"

The gnat was happy. She flew off to lay her eggs. She wanted to find some water. She herself had been a water-baby, and her children were to be water-babies too.

She came to a stream. No—that would not do because her eggs might be spoilt in running water. She flew off again and came to a puddle. No—that would not do either, for it would soon dry up.

She came to a pond, and she thought that would do very well. The water was quite still. Her eggs would be safe there.

She settled down on the surface of the water. She was so light that she could not sink. A water-spider came up and spoke to her.

"What are you doing? Why do you stand like that on the pond?"

"Do not disturb me," said the gnat. "I am about to do the most important thing in my life. I am going to lay my eggs."

"How many will you lay?" asked the water-spider.

"Oh, hundreds and hundreds," said the gnat.

"They will float away and be eaten," said the spider.

“No, they won’t,” said the gnat. “I shall lay them in a kind of raft, all together, and I shall fasten them to this tiny twig so that they will not float away.”

The spider watched the gnat with great interest. The tiny insect laid many eggs, hundreds and hundreds, as she had said. She laid them all neatly together in rows, so that they did look just like a raft. She fastened them to the tiny twig.

“There!” she said. “Now my biggest job is done. Even if I die, I shall have left hundreds like myself behind me—for although my eggs will hatch out into water-babies, they will end their lives in the air, gnats just like me!”

She flew off. The water-spider looked at the raft of eggs and called out to the flying gnat:

“Wait a minute! How will these babies of yours hatch out into the water? Won’t they climb out into the air and die?”

“No,” said the gnat, as she flew off. “The lids of the eggs are underneath, so that the babies will come out into the water.”

She was right. When the water-spider came by in a few days, she saw that little lids at the bottom of the eggs were opening, and out of them came the gnat babies.

They were curious little creatures, about half an inch long. They had large heads, no legs, but plenty of bristles on their heads which waved about.

When they wanted to breathe they went up to the top of the water, and put out their tails. Then they could take in air. Down they went again into the pond, getting along quickly, wriggling here and there looking for food.

The water-spider often talked to them. She told them that their mother was a winged insect who lived high in the air, above the water. But they did not believe her.

“We are water-grubs,” they said. “We cannot fly. We have no wings. We haven’t even any legs!”

Two or three times the water-babies split their skins as they grew. Then they changed. Their heads grew much larger, and looked as if they were wearing helmets. They each grew a tiny pair of fins at the end of their bodies.

“Why don’t you eat?” asked the water-spider. “You never eat anything now. You will die if you do not eat.”

“No, we shan’t,” said the water-babies. “We are not hungry now. We don’t want to eat. We can’t eat. We only want to swim about, and go up to the top of the water and take in air sometimes.”

“You used to stick your tail-end out of the water a little while ago,” said the spider. “But now you put your heads out. I think you are strange little creatures. What will happen to you next?”

The water-babies didn’t know. They were quite happy in the water. They didn’t like it when the water-spider told them that she was sure they would one day fly in the air, as their mother had done.

“Don’t say that to us,” they said. “We are water-creatures. We don’t want to go up into the air. We have no wings. You are saying silly things.”

But the water-spider was telling the truth. One day a very strange thing happened. All the water-babies rose to the surface of the pond. They floated there, feeling rather queer and strange.

The sun shone down on them. Their skin became very dry. It had always been wet before. It became drier and drier and then suddenly began to crack.

The water-spider watched to see what was going to happen. “Your skin is cracked, and it looks like little boats!” said the spider. “You are floating on the top of the water just like little boats! What are you going to do?”

The water-babies did not know what they were going to do. They only knew that they felt strange. They began to move, inside their cracked boat-skins.

And, to the water-spider’s great surprise, little winged creatures began to climb out of the boats! They had long legs, yellow-brown bodies—and wings! Yes, wings! It was astonishing to see.

“How did you grow your wings?” asked the spider. But the young gnats did not know. They clung to their old skins, which rocked like boats, and stretched out their crumpled wings.

The sun shone down and dried their wings. Soon they were smooth, without a single wrinkle in them. The gnats spread them out.

“Fly!” said the spider in excitement. “Let me see you fly! Wings are meant to fly, and you have wings. I always told you you would fly.”

But still the little gnats clung to their tiny boats, made of their old skins. A wind blew, and ripples came on the pond. The boats rocked dangerously.

“If you don’t fly, your boats will turn over, and you will be drowned!” said the water-spider. “You are not water-babies now. You are creatures of the air!”

The gnats spread their wings. They flew up into the air joyfully. What a wonderful life *this* was, up in the air and sunshine, flying wherever they wanted to, on light wings that carried them right over the pond and away.

“Away! Away!” they cried. “This is the best life of all! It was fun down below in the water—but it is wonderful up in the air!”

Now they were gnats. The ones who were going to lay eggs made a curious whining noise.

“Eeeeeeeee! Eeeeeeeee!” said one gnat, dancing high. “If I can bite someone, I shall be able to lay hundreds of eggs.”

“Eeeeeeeee!”

The cow heard the high little whine and turned her head, just as she did at the very beginning of this story. If you want to know what happened, well, just read it over again!

Eggs, grubs, gnats, eggs, grubs, gnats—so the story of life goes on, over and over again. There is never any end to it!

Teaching Notes. Points for Discussion.

1. This story tells the life-history of the gnat.
2. Where does the mother-gnat lay her eggs?
3. What happens to them when they hatch out? How do the babies breathe?
4. What happens to them when it is time for them to stop being water-babies and turn into creatures of the air?
5. Why don’t we like gnats? How can we stop them breeding? (Have no stagnant water.)
6. Gnat-grubs may sometimes be seen in rain-butts and barrels. Show the children some, if possible.

2 (Book 23)
THE RABBIT'S PARTY

"I want to have a party," said Bobtail the rabbit. "It is my birthday very soon."

"I will help you with your party," said Big-Eyes the hare. "I will help you to write the cards to invite your friends to the party."

"Thank you," said Bobtail. "I shall ask Hoppy the frog. And Crawly the toad. And Flitter the bat."

"You must ask Dozy the dormouse," said Big-Eyes. "And you must not forget Scaly the snake. Do you want to ask Prickles the hedgehog?"

"Yes," said Bobtail. "But we must tell him not to sit close to anyone. He is not very nice to sit next to—we will give him a place by himself."

So they asked Hoppy the frog, Crawly the toad, Flitter the bat, Dozy the dormouse, Scaly the snake, and Prickles the hedgehog to come to the party.

They were all very excited. A party is such fun.

"Will there be some nice big flies to eat?" asked Hoppy the frog.

"Will you make me some beetle cake?" asked Prickles the hedgehog.

"Don't put me next to Scaly the snake, please," said Crawly the toad. "He might try to eat me for his tea. I shall make myself taste very nasty if he does, but it would spoil the party for me."

The party was to be on the last day of October. Bobtail did hope the weather would be fine. But in the last week of October the frost came, and a cold wind blew. Bobtail shivered, and was glad that he had such a warm fur coat on.

"We had better not hold the party on the hillside," he said to Big-Eyes the hare. "It will be much too cold. We will hold it under the ground, down in my cosy burrow."

The day of the party came. Big-Eyes and Bobtail were very busy getting the tea ready. It was a fine tea. There were beetle cakes for Prickles and Flitter the bat. There were seed buns for Dozy the dormouse.

"Carrot cake for me, please," said Big-Eyes the hare. "Shall I go and catch some flies for Hoppy and Crawly to eat with their bread and butter, Bobtail?"

At three o'clock everything was ready. The rabbit and the hare waited for their friends to come.

But nobody came. Nobody at all.

"They are very late," said Bobtail, looking out of his burrow.

"There is no one on the hillside," said Big-Eyes. "Why are they so late? Have they forgotten?"

It was very sad. Nobody came to the party. Only Big-Eyes and Bobtail sat there, looking at the lovely tea.

"We must go and see why the others haven't come," said Bobtail at last. "Come along, Big-Eyes."

They ran out on to the hillside. They went to the pond, hoping to see Hoppy the frog. But he was not to be seen on the bank. They called him.

"Hoppy! Hoppy! Why don't you come to the party?"

The little robin called from a bush near by. “Hoppy is asleep! When the cold frost came at night he dived into the pond with the other frogs. He is in the mud at the bottom, fast asleep! Don’t wake him. He will sleep all through the winter days.”

“Dear me!” said Bobtail. “Well, *he* can’t come to the party, then. Big-Eyes, we will fetch Crawly the toad.”

They went to the big stone in the damp ditch, where Crawly often sat. They peeped underneath it. Crawly was there—but his eyes were shut.

“Crawly!” called Bobtail. “Why don’t you come to the party?”

Crawly didn’t wake up. He was fast asleep. The little robin sang loudly again to the rabbit and the hare.

“Crawly doesn’t like the cold days and nights. He says there are no flies or grubs for him to eat. He has gone to sleep for the winter. Don’t wake him.”

“Bother!” said Big-Eyes. “*He* can’t come to the party!”

“We will fetch Flitter the bat,” said Bobtail. “He lives in that old barn over there.”

So they went to the barn and peeped inside. It was dark and smelly. Bobtail looked up and saw many little black bats hanging up in the roof of the barn.

“They are all hanging upside down,” he said to Big-Eyes in surprise. “How funny! They have covered themselves with their wings. They must be asleep too.”

“Yes, they are,” said the robin, who had followed them. “Bats don’t like the winter, you know. They always sleep soundly when it is very cold weather. Didn’t you know that? Don’t wake them.”

“Oh dear!” said Bobtail. “Flitter can’t come to the party. I can see him up there, fast asleep.”

“What a pity!” said Big-Eyes. “Let’s go and find Dozy the dormouse. He has a nice little home under the roots of a tree. I know where it is.”

So they went to find Dozy. The robin flew beside them. The hole in the tree-roots was not big enough for Bobtail and Big-Eyes to go down. So they called Dozy.

“Dozy the dormouse! Come up at once. Have you forgotten it’s the party?”

“Sh! Sh!” said the robin. “Dozy is asleep. He is afraid of the cold winter days, when the frost nips his tiny toes. He made himself nice and fat before he went to sleep. Don’t wake him.”

“Well, this is very sad,” said Bobtail. “We will find Scaly the snake.”

Scaly was in a hollow tree. Bobtail peeped in, but he could hardly see Scaly because the snake had curled himself up tightly with many other snakes like himself. There they were, all twisted up cosily together—fast asleep!

“Snakes always sleep in the winter-time,” said the robin. “Don’t wake Scaly. He won’t like it.”

“There’s only Prickles the hedgehog left,” said Bobtail sadly. “He lives in a hole in the bank over there.”

So they went to Prickles’ hole. He had lined it with dead leaves to make it cosy. There was a funny little noise coming from the hole.

“He’s snoring,” said the robin, flitting near. “He often does in the winter. He won’t wake up whilst it is so cold. Don’t wake him, will you? He’s so snug down there.”

Bobtail listened to the little snores that came from Dozy’s hole. He looked very sad.

“I won’t wake him,” he said. “But, Robin, it is such a pity—Big-Eyes and I are having a party to-day, and not one of the friends we asked have come to it. They are all asleep.”

“Well, you shouldn’t have chosen people who would be asleep,” said the robin.

“They were awake when we asked them,” said Bobtail. “They said they would like to come to my birthday party.”

“Oh, is it your birthday?” said the robin. “Many happy returns of the day.”

“Thank you,” said Bobtail. But he still looked sad.

“Ask Slinky the stoat,” said the robin. “He is wide awake all the winter.”

“No, thank you,” said Bobtail at once. “He eats rabbits.”

“Well, ask Wily the weasel,” said the robin. “He stays awake all the winter, even when it’s snowing.”

“No, thank you,” said Bobtail again. “He eats rabbits too.”

“Well, what about Red-Coat the fox?” said the robin. “He’s always wide awake. He would love to come.”

“You are being silly,” said Bobtail. “Don’t you know that foxes are always hunting rabbits? Think of something sensible.”

The robin thought hard. “You could ask *me*,” he said at last. “I don’t eat rabbits. But I should very much like beetle-cake, or bread-and-butter and flies.”

“Well, you come, then,” said Bobtail, cheering up. “It’s funny that so many animals like to sleep in the winter. It’s quite a good idea, really, if you don’t like the cold and you can’t get food to eat. But it has spoilt my party.”

It didn’t spoil it after all, because the robin brought a sparrow, a thrush, and two jolly blackbirds to the party. They ate all the food, they sang songs, and they played “Catch a feather from my tail”, which was great fun.

“Well, it was a lovely party,” said Bobtail happily, hopping into his burrow after he had said good-bye to his guests. “I’m very tired and sleepy now. But *I* shan’t sleep all the winter away! Oh no—I shall wake up to-morrow.”

And, of course, he did.

Teaching Notes. Points for Discussion.

1. This story tells of the hibernation of various creatures.
2. Which creatures didn’t come to Bobtail’s party? Why not?
3. Why were they all asleep?
4. Who were awake? Why do some creatures sleep and some keep awake? Who can tell?
5. If you were an animal and thought you would go to sleep for the winter, what hiding-place would you choose?
6. Make a little play with a rabbit running about trying to find his summer friends to play with. They are all hiding away.

1 (Book 24)
TEN-TOES THE TAILOR

In the middle of Windy Wood lived Ten-Toes the Tailor. He was called Ten-Toes because when he was at work he always sat on the floor with crossed legs, and as he wore no shoes, you could count his ten big toes easily.

Everyone knew Ten-Toes. He made tunics for the brownies, party frocks for the pixies, and cloaks for anyone who asked him.

When the autumn came and there were few flowers, Ten-Toes could not find enough bright petals to use for frocks and coats. The poppies had gone. The dandelions were few. The golden buttercups were no longer to be seen.

And it was always in the autumn that the little folk came to him and wanted dozens of warm frocks and coats, tunics and cloaks!

Ten-Toes sat under a wild cherry tree and sewed busily, his legs crossed beneath him, his ten toes showing up well. Beside him was a big waste-paper basket, into which he put all his bits and pieces, his snippings and rags. He was a tidy fellow, and did not like anything to blow away on the wind.

He popped a bit of rag into the basket. Then he put a few threads there. The cherry tree above him thought he was very tidy and neat.

It whispered to Ten-Toes: "I wish I had a basket like that, Ten-Toes. I haven't anywhere to put *my* rubbish!"

"Do trees have rubbish, then?" asked Ten-Toes in surprise.

"Oh, there are lots of things in me that I don't want to keep, and would be glad to throw away," said the cherry tree. "But I have nowhere to throw them."

"Well, dear me, you would need a very large-size dustbin, not a little basket!" said Ten-Toes, sewing away busily.

"I always feel I am very, very untidy when I throw away my leaves in the autumn," said the cherry tree. "But the wind sweeps those away for me, and piles them in the ditches and under the hedgerows."

Ten-Toes went on sewing. Then he looked up. "You know, cherry tree," he said, "I have thought of rather a good idea. You always throw away your leaves in the autumn, don't you? Well, can't you send all your rubbish, the things you don't want, up to your leaves before you throw them off? You would get rid of it easily that way."

"Well, yes, I suppose I could," said the cherry tree. "But it would turn my leaves a funny colour, Ten-Toes, because plant rubbish is never green, you know. Green is always our good colour, that shows we are working hard to get food from the sunlight and air. It wouldn't do to have leaves that were not green."

"I don't see that it matters *what* colour your leaves are when you throw them away!" said Ten-Toes. "You work hard through your leaves, I know, but you stop working with them when you throw them away, don't you? Well, why should it matter, then, if they are red or orange, yellow or brown!"

"I suppose it wouldn't matter at all," said the cherry tree. "Well, I'll try it, Ten-Toes. I'll begin to get rid of all the things I don't want, my rubbish, by sending them up to my leaves. Then, when I lose my leaves, I shall also lose my rubbish!"

So the cherry tree sent her rubbish up to her pretty leaves. They were green when she first began to send it up, but the rubbish made them change colour. They became a beautiful pink, and then later a glowing deeper pink, a crimson!

Ten-Toes was astonished. "Cherry-tree, it may be your rubbish that is changing the colour of your leaves, but dear me, it is making you look very beautiful!" he said. "You are dressed in pink and red now instead of in green. You look lovely!"

"I'm glad," said the tree happily. "I shall feel better when I have got rid of all my rubbish. It is quite easy to send it away to my leaves."

Ten-Toes stood looking up at the beautiful cherry tree. Not one of her leaves was green. Every leaf was a glowing pink, lovely and surprising to see.

An idea came into Ten-Toes' mind. What marvellous cloaks those pink leaves would make! He could cut them up and sew them into the most beautiful cloaks the little folk had ever seen!

He spoke to the cherry tree in excitement. "Cherry tree! May I have your leaves, please? I could use them to make the most lovely cloaks for my friends! I have never seen such a beautiful pink."

"Yes, of course you can," said the cherry tree. "*You* thought of the idea, didn't you, that has changed my leaves from green to pink? Well, you deserve a reward. But don't pick my leaves, Ten-Toes. Wait till they fall, please."

"When will that be?" asked Ten-Toes, impatiently.

"In a little while," said the cherry tree. "Soon they will fall at a touch from the frost or the wind, though in summer they have to have a hard tug to bring them away."

"Why do they fall so easily in the autumn?" asked Ten-Toes in wonder.

"Climb up and see," said the cherry tree. "I do what all trees do in the autumn. I loosen my leaves little by little in a very clever way."

Ten-Toes climbed the cherry tree to see how she loosened her leaves. He looked closely at the leaf-stalk, where it joined the twig.

"Ten-Toes, there are little strings or fibres running from the leaf-stalk into my twig," said the tree. "They are what hold the leaf firmly to the twig. But now I am growing little layers of cork between the stalk and the twig, so that the stalk-strings or fibres cannot hold on any more. Slip your finger between a leaf-stalk and a twig, and feel how loose it is getting."

Ten-Toes' finger was very tiny. He could just feel the layers of cork growing between the stalk and the twig. A snap—and the leaf would easily be off!

"That's very clever of you," he said to the cherry tree. "I often wondered how it was that leaves were so loose in the autumn, though if a big gale blew in the summer, hardly a leaf would fall!"

"Well, we all do that—loosen our own leaves," said the cherry tree. "That's the easiest way to do it—to grow something between the stalk-fibres and the twig. Soon my leaves will be so loose that at the first frost hundreds will come away, and if a wind blows you will see even more whirling free through the air."

It was just as the cherry tree had said. Soon her leaves were so loose that they fell by the hundred. Ten-Toes caught the beautiful pink things as they came fluttering down to the ground. He stored them away, and then set to work to make lovely cloaks for the little folk.

"How marvellous!" they all cried. "Oh, Ten-Toes where did you get such a lovely colour for our cloaks?"

“From the cherry tree,” said Ten-Toes. “I told it to send its rubbish up to its leaves this autumn, and get rid of it when it sent its leaves flying off on the wind. So it did, and the rubbish turned the leaves this lovely pink. Wasn’t it a good idea?”

“Splendid!” cried the little folk. “Why don’t all the trees do that? Think how lovely they would look in the autumn then, if they all changed from green to some bright colour!”

“Go round and tell all the trees, so that they too will do what the cherry tree did, when next autumn comes,” said Ten-Toes.

So the little folk went and whispered to all the trees they knew: “When you want to throw away your leaves, send your rubbish up to them, and they will turn a lovely colour! Then you will be beautiful before you become bare and brown!”

The trees listened and did as they were told. The chestnut tree turned its leaves yellow and brown. The beech changed to a most glorious gold. Ten-Toes could hardly believe his eyes when he saw the carpet of rich gold on the ground.

“I can make golden dresses for everyone!” he cried. “And cloaks for the king and queen themselves!”

The creeper turned a glowing red. The limes changed to a beautiful pale yellow. The oak turned russet brown, and the birches showered little golden leaves on to Ten-Toes’ head whenever he walked below.

It’s queer, isn’t it, that such lovely colours should come from the rubbish the trees don’t want! Keep your eyes open this autumn, and see how many different colours you can see.

Teaching Notes. Points for Discussion.

1. This story explains simply how it is that leaves change colour and fall in the autumn.
2. Let children bring as many coloured leaves in as they can, and talk about them.
3. Take them to see a wood changing colour, if possible.
4. Let them play the game of catching a falling leaf—for every leaf caught there will be a happy day next year!
5. Let children draw and colour the autumn leaves.

2 (Book 24)
THE BROWNIE AND THE IVY

One day a bird flew over a hillside, with a berry in its mouth. It saw a cat on the ground below, and it opened its beak to call a warning to its friends.

The berry dropped out of its mouth and fell to the ground. It rolled a little way and came to rest at the foot of an oak tree.

A beetle quickly got out of its way, thinking that it was alive. "I'm only a berry," said the berry. "I am an ivy berry, dropped by a bird. My seeds are inside me."

"Oh," said the beetle. "I thought you were alive, the way you rolled by me. Are you going to grow here?"

"I have to grow where I fall," said the berry. "This would be a good place to grow. I can use this big oak to help me to climb upwards to the light."

It put out a little root and pushed down into the ground. It put out a shoot and grew upwards. It put out little green leaves, five-pointed and very pretty.

"There's a new ivy-plant," said the beetle to the spider.

"It will grow up the oak tree," said a lizard to a mole. "Its stalk is too weak to hold itself up. It has to hold on to something else."

"It will choke me," said the deep voice of the oak tree. "What is the good of being king of the forest if a little plant like the ivy is allowed to kill me?"

"But how can it kill you?" asked the freckled thrush.

"Ah, that little ivy-plant looks small enough now," said the oak. "But soon it will grow high, it will send its stems all round my big trunk, it will send out little white hold-fast roots that will cling to my bark, it will grow as high as I am, and choke me to death!"

"I will tell the old brownie who lives in the cave," said the thrush. "He loves you, and thinks you are a grand tree. He will pull up the ivy-plant and save you from being choked to death."

So the thrush flew to the old brownie. He listened and nodded his head. "Yes, yes," he said. "The ivy will choke the grand old oak, and kill it. I have seen ivy kill many trees. I will go and pull it up."

So he went to where the little ivy-plant was growing up the oak tree. It had sent its weak stem up the trunk of the tree, and had already put out little hold-fast roots, which, like tiny fingers, clung to the rough bark of the oak's trunk. They were not proper roots, like the ones in the ground. They were only meant to hold the ivy fast to the oak tree.

The old brownie put his hand out and pulled the ivy-stem away from the oak tree. All the little white hold-fast roots broke away. The ivy-stem drooped to the ground. The brownie put his hand down to the bottom of the stem to pull the whole plant up.

"Don't! Don't!" said the ivy. "Don't pull me up. I have done no harm."

"Ah, but you *will* do harm," said the brownie. "You will kill this oak tree."

"I had to grow where I fell," said the ivy. "I could not take myself anywhere else, brownie. It is not my fault that I grow at the bottom of the oak tree."

"That is true," said the brownie. "But I must pull you up, all the same."

He gave the ivy-plant a strong pull. It came up from the ground, roots and all.

"I shall die," it said. "And I wanted to live and enjoy the sunshine and rain. I tell you brownie, if you would give me a chance, I would do a great deal of good. Help me, and I promise you that I, in my turn, will help others."

"Very well," said the brownie. "I *will* give you a chance. I like to give chances. I will plant you over here, ivy, at the bottom of this dead tree. You cannot do it any harm, and you will help to cover up its ugliness with your pretty green leaves."

He planted the ivy roots in the ground at the foot of the old hollow tree. He raised the stem a little and laid it against the trunk. "Your little hold-fast roots will soon grow," he said. "They will raise you up again. Now, ivy, do your best, and let me see if you really do help others, when you are given the chance!"

The ivy soon rooted itself properly in the ground again. Its leaves stiffened and held themselves out to the sunlight. Its stem was held tightly against the dead tree's trunk by new little hold-fast roots.

All the summer it grew. It put out leaf after leaf, it shot up the old dead tree, and clothed it in dark green, pointed leaves, glossy and thick.

"That ugly old tree is pretty, now that the ivy is growing up it," said the thrush to the blackbird. "In the winter it may be thick enough for us to roost in."

The summer passed. Most of the trees and plants had been in flower, and were now full of seed. But the ivy had put out no flowers at all.

"Don't you have any flowers?" asked the butterfly, hovering over the ivy leaves.

"Later on," said the ivy.

"But it is autumn now," said the butterfly. "Soon it will be winter. If you do not flower now, it will be too late!"

In the month of October the ivy put up clusters of flower-buds. Yes, it was late in the year, but the ivy did not mind the early frosts at night.

It pushed up its flower-buds, and then, one sunny autumn day, the buds opened into greenish-yellow flowers. They were not very showy, but they smelt very strong. There was plenty of sweet honey in the middle of each flower for any hungry insect.

The insects were very hungry now. There was not much food for them to eat, for most of the honey-flowers had died. But here was a feast indeed!

The news soon went round, and plenty of creatures came for the honey. There were peacock butterflies, red admirals, buzzing bluebottles, striped wasps, small flies of all kinds. They came flocking round the ivy-flowers, drinking the sweet nectar, and enjoying the sunshine, pale though it was.

The spiders came to the feast too—but not to eat the honey! No, they came to catch the flies! All up and down the ivy, near the clusters of flowers, the spiders spun their beautiful webs, hoping to catch the sleepy insects when they had drunk all the honey they could.

"Thank you, ivy," said the butterflies. "You have done us a good turn. We could find no food to eat. Now we shall find a warm corner somewhere and sleep for the winter."

"Thank you, ivy," said a queen wasp. "I enjoyed that feast. Now I shall sleep all winter through, well fed and happy, and awake in the spring to build a new hive."

The flowers faded. Winter came. All the insects disappeared. The ivy did not drop its leaves, but held on to them all the winter.

Birds came to roost in the thick ivy that climbed close against the trunk of the old dead tree. The leaves sheltered them from the cold wind.

The queen wasp sheltered there too. Big bunches of snails clustered together, and slept behind the leaves in peace. Chrysalids slept there as well, hidden behind the ivy. It gave a roof to them all.

It was a hard winter. The birds stripped the berries from the hawthorn trees, they ate all the hips and elderberries, and all the privet berries too. They went to the yew trees and pulled the berries from the green branches there.

By the time the spring came there were no berries left for the birds, and they were very hungry. Then some grand news went round in March.

"There are plenty of berries on the ivy! Come and see, come and see! The ivy is full of ripe black berries, juicy and soft!"

Then the birds flocked to the ivy-plant, which was now covered with black berries that looked very much like boot-buttons. What a feast they had! They pulled the black berries from the ivy and gobbled them greedily.

The old brownie found them there when he came by. "Why, how you have grown!" he said to the ivy. "Have you kept your promise to me? Have you tried to do good, not harm?"

"Ask the birds, and the snails, the flies and the butterflies!" said the ivy, nodding its leaves in the wind.

"The ivy gave us honey in the autumn!" said the butterflies, who had come out from their sleeping place that warm spring day.

"The ivy sheltered me in the winter," said the queen wasp.

"It sheltered us too," said the sparrows.

"And now it is giving us good berries to eat when we are hungry after the long winter," said the thrush and the blackbird. "We could not do without the ivy, old brownie!"

"Then I am glad I gave you a chance," said the brownie to the ivy. "Grow, ivy-plant, grow high, and give food and shelter to the little wild creatures."

The ivy is still twined round the old dead tree. Look out for its blossoms and its berries. It will give you some too!

Teaching Notes. Points for Discussion.

1. This is the story of the ivy and its ways.
2. The ivy can do harm if we are not careful. What harm does it do?
3. How does it climb a wall or a tree?
4. Why are the insects so pleased when its blossoms come out? (Last feast of the season.)
5. Its boot-button berries are a great help to hungry birds in February.
6. Bring some ivy leaves in and let each child place one on paper, hold it down and draw round it. Colour it.

1 (Book 25)
DIGGY'S LITTLE GARDEN

Diggy the goblin bought a cottage with a dear little garden. It was full of weeds, and it took him a very long time to pull them all up.

"I shall build a wall all round my garden," said Diggy. "I won't have weed in my beds. I just won't. They must keep out! I shall only have the flowers I plant myself!"

So he built a wall all round his garden to keep out the weeds. He planted flower seeds and seeds of things to eat, such as mustard and cress, lettuces and onions.

They all grew well—but, oh dear me, so did the weeds! Diggy looked at them in surprise and rage.

"How did you come here, weeds?" he asked. "Didn't I build a wall to keep you out? How did you come here, you horrid big dandelion?"

"I came as a little seed, flying along with a parachute of hairs on the wind," said the dandelion. "I came over the wall."

"Then back you go, over the wall!" said Diggy, and he dug up the dandelion and threw it over the wall, big long root and all.

Then he spoke to the thistles. "How did *you* come here, you horrid, prickly thistles?"

"We flew here as thistle-down," said the thistles. "We sailed over the wall when the wind blew, and floated down into your garden, tiny seeds that grew."

"Well, grow somewhere else!" said the goblin crossly, and he dug them all up. "I won't have weeds in my garden, I won't, I won't! Next year I will have just the plants I sow, but nothing else."

But the next year there were quite a lot of things in Diggy's garden that he hadn't planted himself. There was a tiny prickly gorse bush, very small indeed, that pricked Diggy's foot one day. He was very angry.

"How did *you* get here?" he said.

"Well, there is a big gorse bush over the wall," said the tiny gorse plant. "When the seeds were ripe in the little pods, they were popped out in the hot sun, like little bullets exploding from a gun. I was one of the seeds, and I was shot over your wall. So I grew, you see."

"Then I must build my wall higher," said Diggy crossly. "I will not have that gorse bush popping its seeds at me like that!"

Other things grew in Diggy's garden too. There was a tiny ash-tree, that was very difficult to pull up. He was cross with it.

"I don't want ash-trees in my garden! It is only a small garden, and ash-trees grow so big. You would take away all my sunshine and air. I shall pull you up!"

He pulled up the little tree and looked at it. "Now how did *you* come here, I should like to know?" he said. "The nearest ash-tree is two whole fields away!"

"Well, you see," said the little ash-tree. "I flew over your wall on a nice little wing. I was an ash-key, a little spinner that whirled away on the breeze ever so high. The wind caught my wing, twisted it, and I flew quite a long way till I came to your wall. I flew over the wall, and here I am! I grew well in your garden."

"Well, I shall have to build my wall so high that it will keep even tree-seeds out," said Diggy crossly. "Dear me—here's a little maple-tree! I suppose that flew over the wall on

wings too!"

Diggy pulled up every weed he could see. He built his wall nice and high—so high that it kept the sun out part of the day, and his flowers were not so good as they ought to have been.

The next year Diggy found a little hawthorn-tree in his garden, and a tiny wild rose stem too, beginning to climb up the wall.

"Well, well, well!" said Diggy in surprise. "Now how did *you* get here? I know quite well that neither of you give wings to your seeds, and they don't pop out like bullets from a gun, either!"

"No, we don't," said the hawthorn and the wild rose.

"Well, how did you get here then?" asked Diggy. "You both have berries, don't you? You have haws, hawthorn, and you have scarlet hips, wild rose!"

"Yes," said the wild rose. "But we got the birds to bring us here, Diggy."

"The *birds*!" said Diggy. "How did that happen?"

"They were hungry and they came to eat our berries," said the hawthorn. "The thrush ate mine and the blackbird ate the hips. They flew to your garden to clean their beaks here—and a few seeds dropped on to your beds. Then we grew, of course!"

"So that's how it happened!" said Diggy. "I shall forbid the birds to bring any seeds here at all. I simply won't have it."

So he spoke crossly to the birds, and they promised they would not wipe their beaks in his garden any more.

The high wall kept out the dandelion seeds, and the thistle-down no longer floated over. The birds kept their promise, and brought no berries into the garden.

But dear me, the next year the garden was full of the wild willow-herb! How cross Diggy was. He stood and stared at the little plants and then he scolded them.

"Now what have *you* come here for? You live quite a long way away, in the wood. I've seen you there, tall and pink in the summer. How did you come here? It is such a long way."

"Well, when the willow-herbs made seed, the long seed-cases split downwards, and there were the seeds inside," said the willow-herbs. "And each little seed had a tuft of hairs it could fly away on! The wind took us and blew us over your wall. We were so light that we could fly very high, on a big wind. We had a lovely time."

"Well, out you go!" said Diggy and he threw the little plants over his wall.

After that he kept a very strict eye on his garden, and no weed dared to grow. He told the birds he would pull their tails hard if they dared to bring seeds of any kind. He even warned the starlings to wipe their feet on the grass outside his garden before they came into it, in case they had any seeds stuck to their toes.

"He's silly!" said the gorse. "He's afraid of a little hard work! All gardeners have to weed."

"I wish I could get over the wall!" said the little violet. "I can shoot out my seeds well, but I can't shoot them over that high wall."

"I shake my seeds out of holes in my head," said the poppy. "But I could never shake them over the wall."

"It would be fun to get some seeds into Diggy's garden again," said the gorse bush. "It really would."

"Well, let's send a message to the goose-grass, then, and tell it to keep a look-out for Diggy and his dog," said the dandelion.

"Why, how does the goose-grass send away its seeds?" asked the thistle.

"Don't you know?" said the dandelion. "Oh, it's very clever. It puts tiny hooks on its seeds, that catch against dogs' coats, or against the legs of people—and *they* take away the seeds, and drop them somewhere, without knowing it! It's a very good trick!"

So a message was sent to the goose-grass that grew round the edges of the field, and it kept a look-out for Diggy and his dog. One day they went walking there—and whenever they brushed against the goose-grass its little hooked fruits caught on to the dog's legs and on to Diggy's woollen stockings!

Diggy wiped his feet well before going indoors. He brushed his dog too, and then, seeing that he had little round things on his stockings, he brushed those away as well. They fell on to the nearest garden bed and lay there.

And the next spring Diggy was angry to see dozens of little goose-grass weeds springing up there, as strong as could be!

"Weeds again!" he cried. "Now how did *you* get here? I'll punish whoever brought you! I'll spank them hard. I'll make them sorry for bringing weeds into my garden."

"Yes, you do that, Diggy," said the goose-grass. "You do that! You spank them very hard."

"I will," said Diggy. "Who brought you into my garden? The wind? The birds?"

"*You* did, Diggy, *you* did!" said the goose-grass. "We came into your garden clinging to your stockings and to your dog's legs. You brought us here, Diggy, really you did! Spank yourself, Diggy, and spank your dog!"

Diggy stared at the goose-grass—and then he laughed. How he laughed!

"Oh dear, oh dear!" he said. "It's no good my trying to keep plants out of my garden. You'll get here somehow. You're too clever for me, far too clever. Come in, if you will, and I'll pull you up. Well, well, fancy my dog bringing you in and my legs bringing you in too—and I didn't know it. What a trick, what a clever trick!"

Teaching Notes. Points for Discussion.

1. This story tells of the many different ways in which seeds are dispersed.
2. How did the weeds get into Diggy's garden? Which plants sent their seeds there?
3. How did the seeds get there on the wind? (Wings, plumes, hairs, etc.)
4. How did the birds cause weeds to grow in Diggy's garden? How did Diggy and his dog take seeds in?
5. Bring as many different seeds and fruits as possible to show the children.
6. Let them choose one they like and draw it, telling you how it could get into Diggy's garden.

2 (Book 25)
HOPPITTY-SKIP AND CRAWL-ABOUT

Hoppitty-Skip was a frog. He could jump very high in the air, because his hind legs were long and strong.

One day he leapt high, and came down plop—but not on the ground! He had jumped on to the back of a toad!

"Crrr-oak!" said the toad crossly. "Look where you are going!"

"Oh, I'm sorry," said the frog, jumping off the toad's back quickly. "You are so like a clod of earth that I didn't see you."

"I suppose I am," said the toad. "It is a good idea to hide from enemies by looking exactly like the ground. Where are you going?"

"I am going to the pond," said the frog. "I think it is time I found a little wife and had some eggs laid in the pond."

"I shall soon be doing the same," said the toad. "I always go to the pond at the bottom of this field."

"Oh, that's a long way away," said the frog. "I go to the little pond near by."

"Don't go there this year," said the toad. "There are ducks on it."

"Well, I will come to your pond, then," said the frog.

In a short time the frog had found a little mate, and she had laid her eggs in a big mass of jelly in the pond. The toad too, had eggs, but they were not in a mass—they were in a double-string of jelly, wound in and out of the water-weeds.

"My eggs rise up to the surface where the sun can warm them," said the frog. "Look—you can see the tiny black specks wriggling in the jelly. They are tadpoles already."

Soon there were both frog and toad tadpoles in the pond. They wriggled about and had a lovely time.

"Let us leave the pond now," said the frog to the toad. "I am tired of all these wriggling tadpoles. We will go and find a nice damp place somewhere in a ditch."

So they left the warm pond and made their way to a ditch the toad knew. The frog went by leaps and bounds, but the toad didn't. He either crawled, or did some funny little hops that made the frog laugh.

"Why don't you leap along like me?" he said. "You're so slow."

"I am not made like you," said the toad. "I am heavier and my legs are shorter. Anyway, why do you leap along so quickly? It is a hot day. Go slowly."

"I can't help jumping," said the frog. "And besides, Crawl-About, my high leaps are very useful to me sometimes, when enemies are near."

"I don't believe it," said Crawl-About. "It is much wiser to crouch on the ground and pretend to be a clod of earth, as I do."

Just then a rat came by and saw the frog and the toad. The toad sank to the earth and seemed to vanish, he was so like the soil. The rat pounced on the frog—but at once the little creature rose high in the air, and the rat ran back, startled. By the time he had come back again to find the frog, Hoppitty-Skip had vanished into some long grass.

He waited until the rat had gone. Then he looked for his friend. He could not see him at all—and then suddenly he saw the toad's beautiful coppery eyes looking at him near by. He was

still crouching on the ground, so like it that the frog could only make out his shining eyes.

"Well, did you see how I startled the rat?" asked the frog in delight. "Didn't I make him jump? I just had time to vanish into the long grass."

"Well, your way of dealing with enemies is good for you, and mine is good for me," said the toad, beginning to crawl again. "We all have our different ways, Hoppitty-Skip. Mine is to crouch down and keep still, yours is to jump. I have another way of getting the better of an enemy too."

"What's that?" asked the frog. But the toad had no breath to tell him.

They found a good place in a ditch. The long grass was damp there, and both the creatures liked that. They did not like dryness. They sat and waited for food to come to them. The toad fell asleep.

The frog had a lovely time. A big bluebottle fly came along and perched on a leaf just above the frog's head. Out flicked his tongue—and the fly was gone! The frog blinked his eyes and swallowed.

He waited for another fly to come. But the next thing that came along was a fat green caterpillar, arching its back as it crawled.

Out flicked the frog's tongue—and the surprised caterpillar disappeared down the frog's throat.

"I say!" said a little mouse near by. "I say, Hoppitty-Skip—how do you manage to catch flies and grubs so easily? You must have a very long tongue!"

"I've a very clever sort of tongue," said the frog, and he flicked it out to show the mouse. "Look, it's fastened to the front of my mouth, instead of to the back, as yours is. So I can flick it out much farther!"

He flicked it out again and hit the mouse on the nose with it. "Don't," said the mouse. "Your tongue feels sticky. Look—there's another fly!"

A big fly was buzzing just above their heads. The frog flicked out his long tongue, and flicked it back again. The fly was stuck on the end of his tongue, and went down his throat! "Most delicious," said the frog. "It's a very great pity old Crawl-About sleeps all the day—he misses such a lot of good meals!"

Crawl-About woke up at night. He gave a croak and set out on a walk. "Where are you going?" called the frog, who wanted to sleep. "You'll lose your way in the dark."

"No, I shan't," said the toad. "I never do. I always know my way back easily. I am off to find a few slugs, a score or so of beetles, and maybe even a baby mouse if I can get one. I'll be back by the morning."

Sure enough, he was back in his place by the morning, though he had crawled and hopped quite a long way in the night. He told Hoppitty-Skip that he had had a very good time, and eaten so many things that all he wanted to do now was to sleep.

"You are not really very good company," said the frog. "You like to sleep all day and wander off at night. Well, well—all the more flies for me, I suppose!"

The frog's body was smooth and fresh-looking. The toad's was pimply and dark, much drier than the frog's. The frog thought he had much the nicer body of the two, and he was glad he had quick legs and a high bound. It was fun to be in the field that hot summer weather. It was always moist in the ditch.

One day the rat came back again. The frog gave a great leap and got away. The toad crouched down flat as before. But the rat saw him and pounced fiercely on him.

“Now he’ll be eaten!” said Hoppitty-Skip, in fright. “Oh, what a pity he hasn’t a good high jump as I have, then he could get away quickly.”

But the toad had yet another way in which he could get rid of an enemy. From his pimply body he sent out some nasty-smelling, nasty-tasting stuff. The rat got a taste of it and drew back, his mouth open in disgust.

“Eat me if you like,” croaked the toad, “but I shall be the most horrible-tasting meal you have ever had! I may even poison you. Lick me, rat—taste me! Do you still think you would like me for a meal?”

The rat fled, still with his mouth wide open. He couldn’t bear the evil taste on his tongue. Oh, he would never, never pounce on a toad again!

“Are you there, Hoppitty-Skip?” asked Crawl-About. “Don’t look so frightened. I am quite all right. Your trick of leaping is very good—but my trick of hiding, and of sending out nasty-tasting stuff all over my back, is even better!”

Soon the cold days came. “I must get back to the pond,” said the frog. “Come with me, Crawl-About. Come and sleep in the mud with me. We shall be safe there all through the winter.”

“I might,” said the toad sleepily. “Go and have a look at the pond and see if it is very crowded.”

The frog went, and soon came hopping back. The toad was under a big stone. The frog peeped beneath it.

“Come to the pond,” he said. “There is plenty of room. I have found two good places in the mud at the bottom.”

But there was no answer. The toad had already gone to sleep for the winter! Nothing would wake him. He slept soundly under his stone, looking like a dark piece of stone.

“Well, there’s no waking him,” said Hoppitty-Skip. “Good-bye, Crawl-About. I’m off to sleep in the pond. See you again in the spring!”

And off he hopped to sleep the cold days and nights away, tucked into the mud at the bottom of the pond. You won’t be able to see him in the winter—but you might find Crawl-About. Don’t disturb him, will you?

Teaching Notes. Points for Discussion.

1. This story tells the differences between frog and toad.
2. Who would be quicker at getting to the pond—the frog or the toad? Why?
3. How does the frog escape from his enemies?
4. How does the toad escape? He has two ways—one by crouching down like a clod, the other by oozing evil-tasting liquid from his back, which makes him nasty to eat.
5. Ask the children if they know anything else about the frog and toad.
6. Make a little play about a rat trying to catch a frog and toad, and how they escape.

1 (Book 26)
FRECKLES THE THRUSH

There was once a young thrush called Freckles. It was a good name for him, because he had speckles all over his breast. He was a pretty creature, and he had a good voice.

"You will be able to sing well next spring," said his mother, when she heard him try to sing a few notes one day. "Remember to sing each bit two or three times over, then you will get it right."

The young thrush was a clever bird. He soon learnt to look after himself. He knew how to tug a worm sharply from its hole without breaking it. He knew which caterpillars were good to eat and which were not.

"I don't like the brown hairy ones," he said to his mother. "They tickle my throat. But I do like the fat juicy ones without any hairs at all."

He found out that the little red ladybirds didn't taste at all nice. He ate one or two, but they left such a nasty taste in his mouth that he didn't eat any more.

"It's better not to eat anything that is that bright colour," said his mother. "Red is for danger, remember."

When the autumn came, the thrush could not find so many grubs and flies to eat. He sometimes found a worm, if he was out nice and early in the morning. But the flies and caterpillars seemed to be disappearing.

He spoke to his mother about it. He did not go about with her any more, because he was big enough to look after himself. But he met her sometimes, and liked to have a talk.

"Where are the flies and grubs?" he asked. "I can't seem to find any now."

"The cold weather is coming," said his mother wisely. "There will not be many to find. Now you must hunt in the hedges for berries to eat, Freckles. They are very nice. You will like them."

The thrush met a swallow as he flew through the air and called to him: "Come and hunt for berries with me. It is getting too late for insects."

"I don't like berries," twittered the swallow. "I am going to fly away to warmer lands, where there will be plenty of insects for me. I am going to-night. Good-bye!"

And the next day there was not a swallow to be seen. They had all gone from the sky. They were far on their way to warmer lands, flying low over the sea, flying as fast as the wind, and faster!

The thrush missed them. He saw that the martins were gone too. "And the cuckoos have been gone a long time," he thought. "What a lot of birds go away for the winter. Well, *I* shall stay. There is plenty of food for me here in the hedges and fields. It is a good thing that I can eat berries as well as insects!"

One day the thrush found a snail. It had not yet gone to sleep for the winter, and was crawling sleepily along. The thrush pounced on it.

At once the snail put in its head and curled itself right into its hard shell. The thrush pecked at it, but it would not put its head out again.

"Silly thrush!" said the snail, from inside his shell. "Stupid bird! What do you suppose I carry my shell about for? It is so that you can't get at me!"

“You are a rude little snail,” said the thrush, and gave him another peck. But his beak was not strong enough to break the snail’s shell.

“Peck away!” said the snail. “I don’t mind you at all! I think birds are silly. You wouldn’t believe how many blackbirds and thrushes have tried to eat me. I’m not afraid of any of you.”

The thrush pecked away again. But it was not a bit of good. The snail’s shell was very hard.

“Birds are stupid,” said the snail. “Snails are much cleverer. We grow a house and carry it about so that no one can eat us. But if a cat jumps at you, there is no hope for you! Why don’t *you* grow a shell and be safe? Peck away, thrush, and wear out your beak! Peck away, silly bird!”

The thrush was angry with the cheeky little snail, but he could not break the shell. He flew away and went to look for hips and haws in the hedges.

The snail crawled to a wall, where there were many others like himself. He told them all he had said to the thrush.

“There was no need to be rude,” said an older snail. “You should have curled up and said nothing. Now, grow a hard front door over the entrance of your shell, creep close to me, and sleep.”

All the snails clustered together, grew hard front doors over their shell openings, and slept through the winter. They needed no food, and no warmth.

The thrush did not like the cold, frosty days. So many birds went to hunt for berries that soon the hedges were stripped and bare. There were no haws on the may tree. There were no hips on the wild rose bushes. The elder berries had gone and the privet berries were all eaten.

The thrush found some yew bushes and ate the pink berries there. He liked them very much. The little tits liked them too, and the thrush spent a long time chasing them away.

There were some holly berries in the woods too, but the thrush did not like them very much. He found some pearly-grey berries high up in a tree, growing on a mistletoe bough—but the mistle-thrush was there, feasting on them, and he would not let the thrush have any.

Then the thrush found a bird-table set up in someone’s garden. The table was spread with food each day, and the thrush soon became tame enough to fly down and share it with robins, sparrows, chaffinches and blackbirds.

The winter passed. At the end of it the ivy berries ripened, and showed in the hedges like black boot-buttons. The thrush had a good feast then!

One day he found the big cluster of snails under the wall. What a feast they would be, if only he could get them out of their shells! They were just waking up from their winter sleep.

The rude little snail saw him and popped back his head at once. “There’s that stupid great thrush again!” he said. “What’s the use of him coming here? He can’t eat snails! Go away, silly—you will never be able to eat me!”

The thrush flew away—but he thought about the snail for a long time. He knew there was a nice soft body inside the snail-shell. It would be good to have a meal like that after eating berries for so many weeks.

“How can I break that shell?” wondered the thrush. “If only I could! But my beak is no stronger now than it was last year. My voice is better—I can sing beautifully now—but my beak will never break that hard snail-shell!”

He met the little snail crawling along in the sunshine. “Yah!” said the snail, and popped his head inside his shell at once.

The thrush was angry. He snatched up the snail in his beak and flew off with him. What could he do with him? He must do something!

He flew down into a garden. There was a big stone there, at the edge of a rockery. A great idea came into the thrush's mind.

"I will bang the snail hard on this stone," he thought. "Maybe the stone is harder than my beak! I will see if the stone will break the shell for me."

So he banged the snail hard against the stone. Whack, whack, whack! Whack, whack, whack!

"Don't, don't!" cried the snail in a fright. "What are you doing?"

Whack, whack, whack! The thrush hit the snail hard against the stone. Suddenly the shell cracked and broke. The thrush put the snail down on the path and pecked hard at him. Now that the shell was broken it was easy to get at the soft body inside!

That was the end of the snail. He was soon eaten, and all that was left of him were some bits of shell scattered around the big stone!

"Now I know how to eat snails!" thought the thrush in joy. "I am really growing up! Tirry-lee, lee, lee, how did I do it, how did I do it?"

And now the thrush has a snail every day for his dinner. How do I know this? Well, I know it because the stone he uses for his anvil is in my garden, and as I sit here by myself I can hear the thrush using his anvil busily.

Whack, whack, whack! Whack, whack, whack! He is banging a snail hard against his anvil, and soon there will be one snail less eating my lettuces!

"Live in my garden all your life long, Freckles," I say to him when I see him. "You eat the insects and snails there, and you sing me beautiful songs. You are my very good friend, and I love you!"

"Love you, love you, love you!" sings the thrush. It's lovely to hear him!

Teaching Notes. Points for Discussion.

1. This is the story of the thrush and his ways.
2. Tell the children to watch for thrushes in the garden and notice their freckled breasts.
3. What does the thrush eat? How can a clever thrush eat a snail?
4. Why didn't the thrush fly off with the swallows? Why had the swallows gone?
5. The thrush has a lovely voice. Listen for his song and then make the children listen too. Put words to it "Ju-dee-Ju-dee, do-it, do-it", etc.

2 (Book 26)
THE LITTLE PLOUGHMAN

Johnny was digging up his little garden. It was autumn, and all the gardeners were digging hard, so Johnny was doing the same.

Sometimes Johnny dug up a worm. He flew into quite a temper when he saw one. "Horrid worm! What are you doing in my garden? I won't have you here! I'll kill you!"

And then Johnny would drive his spade down on to the wriggling worm, and cut it into pieces.

When his mother came out to see how he was getting on, she saw the poor worms, and she stared at them in surprise.

"Johnny! You surely haven't been killing the worms!"

"Yes, I have," said Johnny. "They're no use at all. They just wriggle about and make holes everywhere. I don't like them."

"Johnny, we couldn't do without the worms," said his mother. "We really couldn't. They are like tiny ploughmen, working hard in the ground, day after day, night after night, all over the place."

"Whatever do you mean, Mother?" said Johnny, surprised. "Ploughmen! They haven't got ploughs! They don't turn up the earth, like ploughs do."

"That's exactly what they *do* do!" said Mother. "Look—come here on to our lawn, Johnny. Do you see these little mounds of earth, that we call worm-casts? Well, those have been put there by the worms. It is earth from down below, that has been eaten by the worms, passed right through their bodies, and then thrown up to the grass."

"Oh," said Johnny. "Yes—they do turn up the earth then—they do act like tiny ploughmen. Is that good, Mother?"

"Very good," said his mother. "It means that old, stale earth is always being brought up from below, and made into very fine powder at the top. Just feel a worm-cast. Johnny, and see how fine it is."

Johnny picked up a worm-cast and crumbled it in his fingers. It was very fine indeed, like powder.

"I'm sorry I killed the worms now," he said, looking rather red. "I didn't think. I didn't know they were any use at all! I just thought they lived in their holes blind and deaf and not a bit of good. Just stupid little creatures that the birds liked to eat."

"Oh, the worms aren't so stupid as you think," said Mother. "Come over here. Do you see these worm-holes, all stuffed up with odds and ends?"

Johnny looked down at a worm-hole. He could not see the opening, because someone had stuffed it up with dead leaves, stalks and bits of straw.

"Who put those things into the worm-hole, and why did they do it?" he said in wonder.

"The worms did it," said Mother. "They like to keep out the damp and the cold—so they carefully stuff up the entrance to their holes with anything handy. A clever idea, isn't it? They can't be so stupid as you thought, Johnny!"

"Does the worm live down its hole all the time?" asked Johnny.

"It has a kind of little room at the end of its hole," said Mother. "It lies there, coiled up. At night it comes out to feed. It may find a flower-petal to eat—a bit of potato skin—or a dead

leaf. If it finds nothing it likes, it simply eats the earth, for in the soil are tiny seeds and eggs. Then it throws the earth out, and makes those worm-casts."

"Well, I never knew worms were so interesting before," said Johnny. "You almost make me feel I'd like to keep some for pets, Mother!"

"Well, let's!" said his Mother. "We will make a wormery, Johnny, and the worms shall show you how they tunnel and plough for us! That will be a good idea."

"Whatever is a wormery?" asked Johnny.

"Put down your spade, and we will make one together," said his mother. So Johnny put down his spade and went with his mother. She went to the shed and took down an old glass jar. "Go and wash it," she said. So Johnny went and washed it well.

Then Mother said they were going to fill the jar. "We will put five or six different layers in," she said. "Then you will be able to watch the worms mixing them all up, just as they mix up the earth for us below ground."

Mother put a layer of ordinary soil into the jar, at the bottom. "Now let's put some yellow sand out of my sand-pit," said Johnny.

So a layer of the yellow sand went in next. Then Johnny fetched some chalk, crushed it into powder, and put in a layer of that. That was three layers.

"Now what about a layer of gravel?" said Mother. "And there is some fibre in that bag over there, that I use for planting my bulbs in—we'll put a layer of that too."

"And here's some black charcoal," said Johnny, getting quite excited. "That's nice and black and will show up well, Mother. And let's put one last layer on the top—we can use earth again, can't we?"

"Right," said his mother. They looked at the jar. It looked funny, with its seven different layers, all nice and even and straight.

"We must wet the layers," said Mother, "or the worms will not like their new home. They breathe through their bodies, you see, Johnny, so they do not like very dry earth."

So they watered the layers well, and then they went to look for worms.

Johnny soon dug up three or four big ones. He put them on the top layer of the jar. By the time he had come back with another worm, all the others had disappeared!

"They must be down in the jar already," said Johnny. "Oh yes—look—there's one tunnelling along the side of the glass, Mother. I can see it well. Look what a nice tunnel it has made!"

"We'll stand the jar on the window-sill in the nursery," said Mother. "Then we can watch each day and see how much work the worms do!"

So the jar was put on the window-sill. Johnny showed it to all his friends and told them it was the wormery in which were his pet worms.

"You always said you didn't like the stupid worms and killed them," said Peter in surprise.

"Well, they are not stupid, after all, and they do a lot of work for us underground, like little ploughmen, and I am not going to kill them any more!" said Johnny.

It was most surprising what the worms did in that big glass jar! By the very next day those straight layers had begun to go a little crooked!

"Look, Mother!" said John. "The layer of earth is mixing up with the layer of sand. And look—the fibre is mixing with the gravel."

"So it is," said Mother. "The worms must have been very busy!"

Day by day the worms tunnelled here and there in the layers. Day by day the layers went more and more crooked, and became mixed up with each other.

“Soon we shan’t be able to tell one layer from another!” said Johnny.

He was quite right. After some time nobody could possibly tell how many layers had been put into the big jar, nor what they were! The jar just looked a real mixture of everything.

“It looks as if we took everything and mixed it up well before we put it into the jar!” said Johnny. “No one would ever guess we had put those layers in so evenly and carefully.”

Johnny let his worms out after a while, and put them back into the earth.

“You are good little worms!” he said. “Fine little ploughmen! You turn the earth up well for us, and mix it all up. You must be a great help to the farmers. I will never kill you again. Mother, I do wish all children knew how to make a wormery, and could keep one just to see what good little ploughmen the worms are! I wish somebody would tell them—then they could.”

Well—*I* have told you. So see if you can make one and watch your worms. You really will be surprised at what they do.

Teaching Notes. Points for Discussion.

1. This is the story of the worm and its ways.
2. Discuss why “ploughman” is a good name for a worm.
3. Where does the worm live? How does he get about? What does he feed on?
4. We must look for worm-holes in the garden and see how the worm has stuffed them up.
5. Make a wormery. Let the children help and then watch it day by day to see the work of the worms in it.

1 (Book 27)
THE WONDERFUL CONKER

The children went out to pick up conkers from under the big chestnut trees in the lane.

The wind was blowing hard, and the prickly chestnut cases were falling down every minute. When they reached the ground, they burst open, and inside lay one or two, or even three satin-brown chestnuts.

"What lovely conkers we are finding to-day," said Peter, picking up a beauty. "Look at this one—it's so round, and so smooth and shiny."

"They look as if they have been polished," said Joan.

"We shall be able to play conkers all the week!" said Jack. "I shall choose the very biggest I find, and then let it fight all *your* conkers, Peter!"

The children did love playing this game. I expect you have played conkers too, haven't you?

When Jack got home, he looked through his bag of conkers, and chose out the biggest. It really was a beauty. Jack made a hole in it, and threaded a strong string through, knotting it well to hold the big brown seed.

Then he swung it round and round on the string. "This conker will be a wonder!" he said. "It will beat everyone else's! It will be the most wonderful conker that was ever found!"

He went to find Peter to ask him to play conkers. "Mine will be the conqueror," he said to Peter. "Mine is the king of conquerors, the best conker that ever lived!"

The boys began to play. First Peter fetched his own conker on a string. He held it on the string for Jack to hit with his. It swung a little in the air.

Jack hit out at Peter's conker with his own. Smack! It hit it, and smashed it into pieces!

"Now my conker is a oner," said Jack. "It has beaten one conker. Get another, Peter."

So Peter got another. He had a turn at hitting Jack's conker with it, but Jack's big conker just swung back a little, and did not seem to mind the blow at all.

Then it was Jack's turn. He swung his big conker, and aimed at Peter's. Smack! It split in half and the two bits fell off the string to the floor.

"Now mine's a twoer!" shouted Jack, in great joy. "I tell you, Peter, this conker will kill a hundred conkers before it's finished!"

It certainly was a marvellous conker. No other conker could stand against it. Usually a conker was smashed at the first blow, if Jack's hit it—sometimes it took two blows, but hardly ever three.

"It's a twenty-sixer!" said Jack proudly, at the end of the first day.

"It's a fifty-twoer," he said at the end of the second day.

"It's a seventy-fiver," he said at the end of the third day.

"It's a hundred and sixer!" he said at the end of a week. So you can see how good it was.

And then it broke a fine conker belonging to Harry. Harry's was a fifty-fiver and he was very proud of it. He was angry when Jack's conker smashed his to bits. He could not bear to lose any game, and he flew at Jack when his conker was smashed.

"You horrid thing!" he cried. "I hate your conker. Where is it? Give it to me! I'll put an end to it so that it won't kill any more conkers!"

He snatched it from Jack, string and all. He swung it round and round and then let go the string. The conker, with its string-tail behind it, flew high into the air and fell somewhere beyond the hedge.

Jack gave a shout of dismay. “Oh, Harry! My wonderful conker! You’ve no right to throw it away like that.”

He ran off to find it. He squeezed through the hedge and looked everywhere. But it had disappeared. There was no sign of it anywhere. It was very sad. Jack was almost in tears.

“Now I shall never see it again,” he said. “It’s gone for ever. My wonderful conker! Oh, I did like it so much. Now its days of excitement are ended, and I’ve lost it.”

The conker fell on the ground and rolled down a small hole, its string-tail behind it. It lay there, quite still. A thrush saw it and gave it a peck. A worm wriggled by it and moved it a little.

It lay there day after day. The rain wetted it. The wind dried it. The sun warmed it. It was forgotten and nobody noticed it.

Then a strange thing happened to it. It burst a piece of its shell, and put out a strong white root! The root grew downwards, as roots do. It grew down into the wet soil and held the chestnut there firmly.

The days went by. The string fell away from the conker and lay in the grass. The conker’s root grew and grew.

And then something else grew. A shoot grew upwards, not downwards, as the root had done! It slowly poked its way out of the shell, like a little white snake, and pointed itself up to the sky.

The conker itself began to get smaller, for the root and the shoot took the goodness from it. But it didn’t mind, because it was better to be a plant than a conker.

Now the root held the conker so firmly that no worm could move it. The shoot was tall, and lo and behold, it put out buds that opened out into green fingers!

“You are like the big chestnut tree over there,” said the red robin, hopping up. “You are small, but you have a fan of leaves just like the other tree.”

The tiny tree grew and grew. It was in a good, sheltered spot, and it grew strong and beautiful. Later it became higher than the buttercups that now grew around it.

Jack came to pick buttercups one day. He was with Peter and Joan. He remembered his wonderful conker as he picked the buttercups.

“Do you remember my wonderful conker?” he said. “Do you remember how it smashed all the other conkers?”

“Yes,” said Peter. “And I remember how that horrid Harry took it away from you, and threw it into the air.”

“And it was lost for ever,” said Joan sadly. “It was a horrid end for such a wonderful conker, Jack.”

“I hunted for it so long, but I never found it,” said Jack, feeling sad.

“I say!” said Peter, stopping suddenly. “Look at this—what is it?”

They all looked—it was the beautiful little chestnut tree, that had grown from the lost conker!

“It’s a tiny chestnut tree,” said Jack. “Oh, don’t I wish I could take it home for my garden! Isn’t it a beauty?”

“We are not allowed to take things like that out of fields or woods,” said Peter. “We are only allowed to pick flowers. No one must take any roots away.”

"I know," said Jack. He bent down to scrape away the grass from the bottom of the tree-stem. The little tree just came up to his knee.

Then he gave a shout. "Look! I can see an old conker! Why, the little tree is growing out of it! Do look! It's a tiny conker-tree!"

They all looked, and then Peter scraped away a little more. They saw the old, withered-up conker, with the root growing downwards, and the shoot growing upwards. And they saw something else too! They saw where there had been a hole in the conker.

"It was *my* conker—my own wonderful conker!" cried Jack in surprise and delight. "It was, it was! There is the hole in it still—and oh look—isn't this a bit of old string—yes, it is! It must have been the bit that was in the conker's hole!"

"Well, Jack—if it is your old conker, then surely the tree that grew from it is yours too," said Joan. "Look—there's the farmer. We'll ask him."

So they asked him and he laughed. "Of course the tree is yours!" he said. "It is growing from that wonderful conker of yours! Dig it up, and take it home!"

So they dug it up and took it home. Jack planted it in his garden, and after some years it grew into a beautiful tree, big enough to give everyone shade on a summer's day.

"It's funny," said Jack to Peter. "I thought my conker had come to a sad end—but all that happened to it was a wonderful beginning! It wasn't just a conker—it was something that wanted to be a tree!"

"Well, a fine conker like that deserved to grow," said Peter. "Perhaps *our* children will pick up conkers from underneath it one day."

Perhaps they will. I hope they do, don't you?

Teaching Notes. Points for Discussion.

1. This is a tale of germination, taking the horse-chestnut as example.

2. Bring plenty of chestnuts for the children to handle and play with. Put string through some and let the children play "conkers" as in the story. Bring the prickly cases too.

3. A conker is not only a plaything, but a large seed—the fruit of the chestnut tree.

4. We will plant some conkers in pots, or, if possible, in a special glass jar so that we can watch root and shoot appearing.

5. What will the conker grow into?

2 (Book 27)
NID-NOD'S MISTAKE

It was winter-time, and at Dame Twinkle's school all the little pupils were getting excited about Christmas.

"I am making a pin-cushion for my mother," said little Feefo.

"And I am making a pipe-rack for my father," said the brownie who was head of the class.

"Dame Twinkle! Are we going to have a concert?" cried little Pippin. "Oh, do let's!"

"Of course," said Dame Twinkle. "You will be able to sing some of your songs and say some of the nice poems you have learnt. Of course we will have a concert."

"Oh, Dame Twinkle, we shall be able to decorate the schoolroom well, shan't we?" said Nid-Nod. "Oh, let's make it really beautiful, shall we?"

"Yes, we will," said Dame Twinkle. "We will go out to the woods and fields and fetch in all kinds of nice leaves and berries for decoration."

"I shall thread holly berries and leaves in a long string and loop it round the lamp!" said Feefo. "I know how to do that."

"I shall bring pine branches and stand them in vases in the corners of the room," said Pippin.

"Pooh!—why bring dull pine branches, full of nasty sharp needles?" said Nid-Nod. "Why not bring some really pretty boughs? I think I shall bring in oak boughs. I do think their leaves are so pretty. They are shaped like feathers."

Everyone stared at Nid-Nod and laughed. He didn't know why. He glared round at them. Everyone was always laughing at him.

"Laugh if you like," he said, "but I tell you oak-leaves are very pretty. Yes, and I shall go and bring in some chestnut leaves too. I love the way they spread out their big finger-leaves. I shall put them round the pictures."

Everyone laughed again.

"Now, now," said Dame Twinkle, with a very bright twinkle in her eye. "No more laughing and chattering. Soon we will make a list of things for Christmas decorations, and you shall each bring something."

So, two weeks before the concert, the list was made. Everyone said what he or she would like to bring.

"Holly berries and leaves," said Feefo.

"And I'll bring pine branches," said Pippin.

"And I'll bring oak leaves," said Nid-Nod. Feefo giggled. Dame Twinkle wrote everything down. "Oak leaves from Nid-Nod," she wrote. Then she looked at the brownie.

"What will you bring, brownie?" she asked.

"Ivy," said the brownie. "I pass plenty on my way to school. I think the leaves are so well-shaped, Dame Twinkle. Some of them are dusty, but I can wash them and dry them and even polish them, can't I?"

"Certainly," said Dame Twinkle, and she wrote down, "Ivy leaves from the brownie."

"I'll bring some dark-green laurel," said Jinky.

"What, that nasty dark stuff!" said Nid-Nod. "What dull trees and leaves you are all choosing. Dame Twinkle, I'll bring sprays of pretty birch leaves. They are so small and dainty

—much better than the tough, leathery laurel leaves!"

"Very well, Nid-Nod," said Dame Twinkle, and wrote "birch leaves" beside Nid-Nod's name too.

"I'll bring some yew from the churchyard," said Feefo.

"And I'll bring the Christmas tree!" said Dame Twinkle. "I have a dear little fir tree growing in my garden which will do beautifully for a Christmas tree. They are always spruce fir-trees, you know."

"Good!" said Pippin. "Now we're all bringing something!"

"I'm bringing the most!" said Nid-Nod proudly, "and I'm bringing the prettiest leaves too —the oak leaves, the chestnut leaves and the birch leaves. Much nicer than prickly holly and ugly laurel!"

"You won't bring anything, Nid-Nod," said Feefo with a giggle. Dame Twinkle rapped on her desk.

"No talking now," she said. "Let Nid-Nod bring the things he wants to—and if he does we will be very grateful to him."

Well, in two or three days the school children began to look for the things they said they would bring. Feefo found plenty of holly leaves and berries and began to string them together very cleverly. She found some yew too, with its waxen-pink berries.

The brownie brought sprigs of ivy, and washed, dried and polished each leaf till it shone.

Jinky brought branches of dark-green laurel, and Pippin brought fine pine branches, full of needle-like leaves that pricked quite sharply.

Dame Twinkle dug up the fir tree in her garden and set it in a pot. It looked lovely. The children longed to see it all dressed up in candles, ornaments and presents.

And what about Nid-Nod? Well, he had promised to bring many things too. "Oak leaves," said Nid-Nod. "I will get those first. I know where the big oak trees grow in the middle of the wood."

So he went to the wood and found the oak trees. But oh dear, what a pity, the one he went to had only a few brown leaves on that rustled and shook in the wind. It had no green ones on at all.

"Bother!" said Nid-Nod. "I must find another oak tree, I suppose."

So he went to another one—but that had no leaves on at all! Its branches spread out bare and brown. Nid-Nod scratched his head "What a nuisance! I see that all the oak trees are bare. Now, why didn't I think of that? I didn't remember that they dropped their leaves in the autumn."

He went to where the big tall chestnut grew, its branches spreading wide on every side. He looked up to find some leaves. But there were no leaves there. Not one of the pretty fan-shaped cluster of leaves was to be seen. The tree was bare, except for its brown buds, already growing fat.

"Well, well, well—so the chestnut tree has dropped its leaves too!" said Nid-Nod, feeling cross. "How annoying! Why didn't I remember that? Well, I expect the other children too will find they can't bring some of the leaves they said they would. I shan't be the only one!"

He went to find a silver birch tree. He saw the pretty silvery-white trunk shining between the trees and ran to it.

But alas—the birch tree too was bare! Nid-Nod could pick no leaves from it, for the birch tree had thrown them all down in the autumn. There she stood, her fine thin branches waving gently round her like a mist of brown—but not a leaf was to be seen!

“Then I must bring something else, I suppose,” said Nid-Nod, feeling cross with himself. He looked round the woods. What should he bring?

He couldn’t bring pine branches because Pippin had chosen those. He couldn’t bring yew or holly because Feefo had said she would bring them. He couldn’t bring ivy because the brownie was bringing it.

“I can’t bring anything! All the others have chosen the things I could bring!” said Nid-Nod, and he began to cry.

Next morning all the children except Nid-Nod had brought their Christmas decorations. Only Nid-Nod’s hands were empty. Dame Twinkle looked at him.

“Where are the oak leaves, the chestnut leaves and the birch leaves you said you would bring, Nid-Nod?” she asked.

“They’ve all dropped their leaves,” said Nid-Nod gloomily. “I was silly. I forgot that only evergreens kept their leaves on in the winter-time. I suppose that’s why they have such tough, leathery sort of leaves—they have got to last for much longer than a year.”

“Poor Nid-Nod!” said Dame Twinkle, as everyone began to laugh at him. “So you are the only one left out of the Christmas decorations! Go out into the garden and see if you can find something green to bring in. There may be an evergreen there we have forgotten to use!”

So Nid-Nod went into the garden—and he saw the hedge of green privet that ran round the beds! “Oh, good!” said Nid-Nod, and he picked some sprays. “I don’t like you very much, privet—but at least you are green in the winter-time, and will give me something to take for the Christmas decorations!”

So Nid-Nod took some green leaves after all, and decorated the school clock very nicely with sprays of privet. I do wonder what *you* would have chosen to bring, if you had belonged to Dame Twinkle’s school! You wouldn’t have made a mistake like Nid-Nod, I am sure!

Teaching Notes. Points for Discussion.

1. This story emphasises the difference between evergreens and trees that shed their leaves.
2. What trees shed their leaves? Who can think of the most?
3. Who can think of some evergreens? Who can bring some to school?
4. Do evergreens ever shed their leaves? (Yes, little by little.) We will look underneath them and see if we find dead leaves.
5. Is the Christmas tree an evergreen?

1 (Book 28)
GOOD OLD MINER THE MOLE

Once upon a time there was great excitement in Rabbit-Town. All the bunnies met together and talked for a long time.

"The green goblins have said they are going to come here, to our burrows, catch us, and keep us for servants," said Floppy, the chief rabbit.

"How wicked!" cried everyone.

"They are small creatures and can easily get down our burrows," said Bobtail. "They have only got to put a guard at each entrance, and send goblins down into our holes, to be able to catch all of us easily!"

"If we can't get out of our front doors or our back doors, we can't help being caught," said Whiskers.

"Well, what are we going to do, then?" said Floppy.

"How are the goblins going to get here?" asked Whiskers. "They live the other side of the river. They can't swim, and I know they have no boats."

"They have little aeroplanes," said Bobtail. "They got the wizard Tail-Hat to make them for them. They can fly them easily. The aeroplanes have wheels underneath, just as real ones have, and they will easily land on our smooth hillside."

All the rabbits stared at one another in fear. Whatever could they do to stop the goblins?

"It's a pity the hillside is so smooth and grassy," said Floppy.

"Well, we have made it like that by nibbling the grass every evening," said Bobtail. "If only we could make the hillside bumpy, so that aeroplanes can't land!"

A little rabbit who was listening came shyly up. "Please," he said, "I think I know someone who could help you. He could make the hillside full of bumps and lumps!"

"What do you mean, Furry?" said Floppy in surprise. "Make the hillside full of bumps and lumps! Who is this that can do such a thing?"

"It's a friend of mine, Miner the mole," said Furry, his nose trembling because he was so shy. "He throws up little hills wherever he goes, because he makes tunnels, you see—and if I asked him to tunnel under the grass on our hillside, he could make so many hills that the goblin aeroplanes couldn't land!"

"Well, well, what an idea!" said Bobtail. "Fetch this friend of yours here."

Furry sped away down the burrow. He went to a burrow a good way away, and listened. He could hear someone scratching and digging not far off. He drummed with his hind paws on the ground.

"Miner the mole! Miner the mole! It is your friend Furry calling you! I want you! Dig this way."

Miner the mole, who had very sharp hearing indeed, tunnelled his way towards the burrow where Furry sat. Soon he broke through the wall, and his little snout looked through.

"Miner the mole! Come with me!" said Furry. "I will tell you everything as we go along. I believe you can save us rabbits from the green goblins!"

He told the mole everything as they went along the burrows, back to the rabbits' meeting. The big rabbits stared at the curious little mole.

“Is this Miner the mole?” said Floppy. “Good-day to you, mole. I hear that you spend your time tunnelling through the earth, and throwing up little hills as you go.”

“Well, I’ve got to put the earth somewhere,” said the mole. He was much smaller than the rabbits, and his fur looked very velvety. It did not grow all one way as the fur of the rabbits did—it could be stroked either forwards or backwards.

“Why do you burrow and tunnel so much?” asked Bobtail. “You don’t live in your burrow as we do, do you?”

“Oh no,” said the mole. “I tunnel because I want food. You see, I am always hungry, and I have to hunt for my food. It’s easy to get food if you eat the grass that grows on the hillside. But I don’t like grass.”

“What do you like to eat, then?” asked Whiskers.

“Oh, beetles, and worms and all kinds of grubs I find under the ground,” said Miner the mole. “I dig after them, you see, and I eat hundreds. Look at my front paws—they are specially made for digging.”

He held them out. They were strange paws, turned outwards for digging. “They are like spades!” said Whiskers. “What strong claws you have! You are a real little miner, mole!”

“What do you want me to do for you?” asked the mole. “Tell me, please, because I feel hungry again and I want to get back to my digging. I could do with a few beetles and slugs for my dinner.”

“Well, I am sure you will find plenty under the grass on our hillside,” said Floppy. “We will take you and show you where to dig—and we do beg of you, mole, to throw up as many hills as you can, so that when the goblins come to land their aeroplanes, they will all crash!”

The rabbits took the mole out to the hillside. “Right!” said Miner the mole. “I’ll begin just here—and I’ll throw up line after line of mole-hills, so look out!”

The rabbits watched him—and even as they looked, the mole seemed to sink into the ground! His enormously strong front paws worked like powerful spades, and he dug a hole for himself so fast that it seemed as if he sank into the ground. In half a minute he was gone!

And then the rabbits saw mole-hills rising one by one down the smooth hillside! It was queer to see them! As the mole tunnelled, so he threw up the earth that he scraped away, and it rose in little hillocks behind him.

“What did I tell you!” cried Furry in delight. “Didn’t I say he would cover the hillside with bumps and lumps? Wasn’t I right? Just look at all the little mounds he is making!”

Miner the mole worked in a long line, and behind him rose a row of hillocks of earth. Then he turned, went to the right, and began to tunnel back again, up the hill, instead of down. And behind him rose the lumps and bumps of earth again.

“Oh, it’s wonderful to watch Miner the mole at work,” said Whiskers. “Really wonderful! What a fine tunneller he is! Why, the whole country-side must be tunnelled by the moles, hunting for their food all the time!”

Soon the hillside was covered with mounds. There were dozens of them. The rabbits were delighted.

“What a shock for the green goblins when they try to land in their aeroplanes!” they cried. “What a surprise for them!”

It was indeed! Two days later, in the early morning, the green goblins set off to catch the rabbits for their servants. They got into their neat little aeroplanes, set the engines going, and rose into the air. The rabbits across the river heard the roar of the small engines.

“Here they come!” they cried, and every rabbit ran to the entrance of his burrow to watch what would happen.

“R-r-r-r-r-r-r!” The aeroplanes came skimming over the river to the hillside. The green goblins looked for a good place to land.

But what was this? There was nowhere to land! The hillside was covered with lumps and bumps of earth!

“We can’t land in safety!” shouted the goblins to one another. “The mole has been at work! He has covered the hillside with mounds of earth. We shall crash if we try to land.”

They tried to find landing-places farther down the hill, but they couldn’t, for there were so many bushes there. So they had to fly back again across the river, and leave the rabbits in peace.

“Hurray!” cried all the rabbits, coming out and frisking round. “Hurray! The green goblins have gone. We are safe! Miner the mole, come up and let us tell you how you have saved us!”

Miner the mole poked his little snout up and grinned at the excited rabbits.

“Don’t bother to thank me,” he said. “I have had such a good feast! There were hundreds of beetles and grubs in your hillside. I shall get as fat as butter soon! Good-bye!”

He disappeared into the earth, and the rabbits saw another line of hillocks growing, as he tunnelled quickly down the hillside.

“Good old Miner the mole!” they said. “Furry, it *was* a fine idea of yours to get him! You shall have the very best burrow to live in, all to yourself!”

The green goblins never came back again, so the rabbits were safe. They flew away in their little aeroplanes and nobody has ever heard of them since.

Teaching Notes. Points for Discussion.

1. This is the story of the mole and his ways.
2. Why do we call the mole a miner? What does he do?
3. What does he dig with? Why does he tunnel through the earth as he does?
4. What are mole-hills? Have you seen any? How are they made?
5. Draw a picture of mole-hills.

2 (Book 28)
THE MISTLE-THRUSH AND THE MISTLETOE

In the woods grew a tall holly tree. Its leaves were so prickly that no animal ever nibbled them. They were glossy and shiny, and the holly tree wore them all the year round.

Near by was a big oak tree. It was green and thick all the summer, but in the winter its leaves had gone, and it stood bare and brown.

The holly tree was glad to keep its leaves. It did not like the look of the bare trees around. It thought it was a stupid idea to drop leaves in the autumn.

"Such a waste!" said the holly. "Why bother to grow leaves just for a few months? I grow mine for years."

"Don't you ever drop them?" asked the oak tree, bending its strong branches a little in the wind.

"Oh yes, now and again," said the holly tree. "All evergreens drop their leaves now and again. You will find dry pine needles under the pine trees, and brown privet leaves under the privet bushes. And you will find dried-up holly leaves around my foot, if you cared to look! But I certainly don't throw my leaves away every winter."

"You have some beautiful red berries on you," said the oak tree. "My acorns are all gone now. They have dropped off, as my leaves do. But you have your berries and your leaves too! You are very beautiful."

"The children like to come and pick my sprays of shining leaves and scarlet berries to make their homes pretty at Christmas time," said the holly. "I am always proud of that."

"I have something growing on me that the children come to pick too," said the oak tree. "But it does not belong to me. It is a plant that grows on me and takes part of my sap for its food."

"How strange!" said the holly. "What is it?"

"It is a plant called mistletoe," said the oak. Sure enough, growing from a stout branch of the oak, was a big green tuft of leaves, set with dim grey-green berries, like pearls.

Then the mistletoe spoke. "Yes, I am the mistletoe. I cannot grow as you trees do, with proper roots in the ground. I have to grow on other trees, and get their help to grow my leaves and flowers and berries."

"I don't like you," said the oak. "You are a robber-plant. You steal from me!"

"I know," said the mistletoe. "But that is how I am made. I can't help it. I work with my leaves and get some of my own food from the sunlight and air—but as I have no proper roots, I have to get some of my food from you too, oak tree."

"Each year you grow bigger and bigger," grumbled the oak tree. "If you get much bigger, you will rob me of too much sap, and then I shall feel ill and perhaps die."

"I never grow very big," said the mistletoe. "I never grow bigger than a bush. Look—here are some children coming. Maybe they will pick me as well as the holly."

"Oh look, look!" cried the children, as they came near the holly tree and the oak. "Holly berries—and oh, mistletoe growing from the oak, as well! We can take some home for Christmas."

So they cut some beautiful shining green sprays from the holly tree, set with bright red berries. Then they cut some sprays of the mistletoe, also set with berries, but not so bright or

so beautiful as those of the holly.

The holly sprays were put round the pictures and looked gay against the walls. “We do love the holly berries,” said the children.

The mistletoe was hung over the lamp, and over the doorway. “It is to kiss one another under,” said the children. “It is an old, old custom, isn’t it, Mother, to kiss under the mistletoe?”

So, on Christmas morning, they kissed under the mistletoe, and wished each other a happy Christmas. The holly leaves shone in the firelight, and the mistletoe swung to and fro every time the door was opened.

“It’s nice being here, isn’t it?” said a holly spray to the mistletoe. “It’s fun when the children shout and laugh. I shall be sorry when Christmas is over and we are thrown away.”

“Thrown away!” said the mistletoe in dismay. “Oh, we shan’t be thrown away, shall we? I shan’t like that.”

“Well, I shan’t mind much,” said the holly. “I expect I shall be thrown over the hedge into the field beyond—and some of my berries will lie in the ground and grow into tiny little holly trees. Perhaps the same thing will happen to you.”

“I don’t want that to happen,” said the mistletoe. “My berries will not grow in the ground. They will only grow if they are on the branches of trees.”

“How queer,” said the holly. “Well—I’m afraid no one will throw you up into a tree! So your berries will be wasted.”

The holly was thrown over the hedge into the field, and its berries grew into tiny holly trees. But the mistletoe spray was put on the bird-table.

“The mistle-thrushes like the mistletoe berries,” said the children. “So they shall have them.”

A big mistle-thrush saw the spray of mistletoe and flew down at once. He pecked eagerly at the berries. They were very juicy, and the seeds inside were sticky.

“These berries are nice,” said the mistle-thrush to the chaffinch. “Leave them for me, please. I can eat them all.”

“You have some of the seeds stuck to your beak,” said the chaffinch. “You do look funny!”

“Do I?” said the thrush. “Well, I can wipe them off. Mistletoe berries are always sticky.”

He flew up to the branch of a nearby apple tree. He wiped his beak there carefully. A seed fell off his beak and stuck to the branch.

The thrush flew away. The little seed rolled slowly down the side of the branch sticking to it all the way. It came to the underside of the branch, and stayed there. It was happy because this was where it wanted to be.

“I should not grow in the ground,” said the seed to itself. “I can only grow on the branch of a tree!”

It put out a funny little thing that pierced right through the bark of the apple branch. It was not a root. It was what is called a sinker, because it sank itself down into the tree.

The sinker reached the sap inside the tree. It fed on it. It took enough food from the apple tree to grow itself a pair of leaves.

When the mistle-thrush sat in the apple tree he noticed the tiny mistletoe plant.

“How did *you* get here?” he sang.

“You planted me!” said the little mistletoe.

“I did not!” said the mistle-thrush. “I don’t plant seeds!”

“But you planted *me*!” said the mistletoe. “You cleaned your beak on this branch and left behind a seed. And I am that seed, grown into a little plant. I sent down sinkers into the branch, and I shall go on sending more and more, until I have grown into a great tuft of mistletoe!”

“How strange!” said the mistle-thrush. “And I suppose you too will have flowers and berries in good time—and I shall come along and feast on your berries, wipe the seeds away from my beak—and start yet more mistletoe plants growing!”

“I will make my seed very sticky, so that they will cling to your beak!” said the mistletoe.

“You are very clever,” said the thrush, and flew off on his quick wings.

The children noticed the mistletoe plant growing from their apple tree one day. “Oh look!” they cried. “Here’s a mistletoe bush growing out of the branch of an apple tree! How queer! Who could have planted it there? *We* didn’t!”

“I did, I did, I did!” sang the big mistle-thrush from a nearby tree. “I planted it there with my beak! Yes, I wiped off the sticky seeds and left them there on the branch. And they grew, they grew. I planted the mistletoe, I did, I did, I did!”

The children heard him in surprise. “Do you think he really did?” they said to one another. “After all, he is called the *mistle*-thrush—so perhaps he did!”

He certainly did. But you can plant a mistletoe seed too, if you want to! Just press it into a crack of the bark, and watch to see the mistletoe grow!

Teaching Notes. Points for Discussion.

1. This is the story of the mistletoe and how it is planted.
2. Where does the mistletoe grow? Has anyone seen it growing? What does it look like?
3. Who plants the mistletoe seed? Does he mean to? How does he manage it?
4. When do we have mistletoe? What do we do underneath it?
5. Bring a bunch or sprig to school to show children. The berries are poisonous.
6. Plant some mistletoe berries on the bough of oak or apple.

1 (Book 29)
SUSAN AND THE BIRDS

Susan was very fond of the birds in the garden. She badly wanted to get near to them and watch them. But whenever she crept close, they flew away.

"It's such a pity, Mummy," she said. "I only want to watch them, and see how pretty they are, and find out what bird sings so sweetly—but they won't let me. It isn't kind of them to keep flying away. Don't they know I'm their friend?"

"Well, no, they don't, darling," said her mother. "You see, most people don't bother about watching the birds, they just frighten them away—so they think you are the same."

"But I'm not," said Susan. "I want to be friends with them—but they won't be friends with me!"

"Well, you must make them tame," said her mother. "Then they will let you come near them."

"How can I make them tame?" asked Susan. "Tell me, and I will."

"We will give them a bird-table," said her mother. "They will love that. It is winter-time now, and all the birds that eat insects are hungry, because there are so few flies and grubs to be found. They will soon come to your table, and then you can watch them closely."

So Mother made Susan a bird-table. It was very easy to make. First Mother took a square piece of board. That was for the top of the table. Then she found an old broom-handle, rather long. That was for the leg. She nailed the square bit of board to the broom-handle, and then drove the other end of the handle into the ground.

"There's your table for the birds!" she said to Susan. "Now, if you spread it with bits of food each day, you will soon make friends with the birds!"

The table was very near Susan's playroom window. She was pleased. "I can sit in the window and watch the birds hop on to the table easily," she said. "Mummy, what shall I put on it? Anything else besides food?"

"Well, the birds would like a few twigs nailed behind the table, I think," said Mother. "Then they can perch on those when they fly down. And you should put a bowl of water out too, Susan. They have to drink as well as to eat—and on a nice fine day they may bathe in the water too."

Susan couldn't help feeling excited. She put a bowl of water on the table, and then she found a few nice twigs in the hedge. With her little hammer and a few nails, she nailed the twigs to the back of the table. Now it was ready!

"What do the birds like to eat?" she asked. "I know some of them like insects, but I can't give them those. Most of them like soaked bread, don't they, Mummy?"

"Yes. You can give them that—and any crumbs from the tablecloth and bread-bin—and the scrapings from the milk-pudding dish," said Mother.

So Susan put those out on the bird-table. Then she went into her playroom, hid behind the curtain and watched.

The sparrows saw the food there first. They talked about it quite a lot in the trees near by, and wondered if they dared to go down and try it.

"There is no cat about," said a brown sparrow. "Let's go. I'll fly down first and then chirrup to you if it's safe."

So he flew down to the twigs at the back of the bird-table, and had a look at the food. It looked very good to him! He flew down on to the table and pecked at the bread.

"The first bird on my table!" said Susan in joy. "What a little dear he is, with his brown coat and dark head!"

"Chirrup, chirrup!" said the sparrow, and at once two or three more flew down to peck at the soaked bread. Soon the table was quite full of the noisy little birds.

Susan pressed her nose close to the window-pane. The birds saw her, and flew away in fright. But another little bird flew down at once and gave a little trill.

"Oh—a robin!" said Susan. "A lovely red-breast. Look at his red breast, Mummy, and his bright black eyes, and long thin legs. Isn't he lovely? And oh, what a rich little song he has!"

The robin pecked at the bits of milk pudding and the bread. When two or three sparrows flew down again he flew off. "He doesn't like to mix with the noisy sparrows," said Mother, who had come to watch too. "Ah, look—here's a lovely big bird, Susan. What is it?"

"A blackbird, of course!" said Susan. "Everyone knows *him*!"

He was a black, glossy fellow, much bigger than the sparrows. He drove them away and began to peck up the bread and the pudding greedily. Whilst he was eating it a bird as big as he was flew down and joined him.

It was brown and had speckles all over its chest. "What is it?" asked Susan.

"A thrush, of course!" said Mother. "Look at the freckles on his breast. You can always tell a thrush by those—and both he and the blackbird have lovely songs too. You will hear them in the spring-time."

"That's four different kinds of birds already," said Susan. "Oh, Mummy, my bird-table *is* going to be fun!"

"We'll put something else on the table to-morrow," said Mother. "Then one or two other birds will come."

So the next day Mother gave Susan two bones, one to hang from the table and the other to put *on* the table.

"Why should I hang one on string?" asked Susan.

"For the tits," said Mother. "They like to swing on their food—so they can swing on this bone. But the big starlings like to stand on their bone—so you can just lay that one on the table for them."

It was great fun to watch for the little tits, and the merry starlings. The tits came first. They were pretty little birds, with blue caps on their heads, and blue and yellow coats.

"Blue-tits," said Mother. "You may perhaps see the great-tit too. He wears a black cap, and is bigger, so you will know him when he comes. See how those blue-tits stand upside down on their bone and swing to and fro. Aren't they enjoying it!"

It was great fun to watch the tits, but it was even more fun to watch the starlings. They were bigger than the tits and sparrows, but not so big as the blackbird. They were greedy, noisy, bad-mannered birds, dressed in feathers that shone blue and green and purple.

"Oh, look how they peck one another, and call each other rude names!" said Susan. "Oh, Mummy, that one has pushed the other off the table! No—he's back again—and he's pushed the first one off the bone—and now a third one is trying his hardest to drag the bone away!"

The starlings chattered and squawked, pecked and quarrelled. It was really funny to watch them. Some sparrows came down to join in the fun, and the blackbird turned up, but flew away because the table was too crowded.

“I do like my bird-table!” said Susan. “It’s the greatest fun, Mummy. The birds don’t seem to mind me peeping at them now, either. They must know that it is I who put the food out for them!”

The birds sipped the water, and once the robin had a bath in it. He splashed the water all over himself. It was sweet to watch him.

“Now we will put out something for a few seed-eating birds,” said Mummy. “I would like you to see the pretty chaffinch, Susan. He will come if we get a few seeds for him.”

So they bought a mixture of bird-seed and put some on the table. The sparrows found the seeds at once and pecked them up greedily.

“Their beaks are very good for breaking up the seeds,” said Susan, watching them. “They have big strong beaks, haven’t they, Mummy?”

“So has the chaffinch, if only he would come and show us his beak!” said Mother. “Ah—good—there he is! Now see how pretty he is, Susan, with his bright pink breast, and the white bars on his wings, that flash when he flies!”

“Pink pink!” said the chaffinch, as he flew down to the table for the first time. “Seeds for me! Pink pink!”

He took some in his strong beak and cracked them well. Susan saw that he had just the same kind of beak as the sparrows, but he was a neater, prettier bird. His little wife flew down to the table too, but she hadn’t his beautiful pink breast.

“Mummy, I know heaps of birds now,” said Susan. “And I shall get to know lots more, shan’t I? Mummy, do you think the birds are pleased with their bird-table?”

“Very pleased,” said Mother. “And they will pay you back for your kindness in the spring, Susan!”

They did! The thrush sang his song over and over again to her. The blackbird fluted in his wonderful voice. The robin sang in little trills. The chaffinch carolled loudly. It was wonderful to hear them all!

“Thank you!” said Susan. “You have paid me well for your table!”

Do have a table for the birds too. You will love it just as much as Susan did.

Teaching Notes. Points for Discussion.

1. This story tells of the making of a bird-table, and its visitors.
2. Make a bird-table for the children. If possible, let them help.
3. What shall we put on it? Discuss this well. Let each child offer to bring something.
4. What birds shall we see on it? Look up pictures; talk about them.
5. Let children put out food and water each day.
6. Keep list of visitors and the food they eat.

2 (Book 29)
THE VERY LOVELY PATTERN

Betty was sitting in her seat at school, trying very hard to think of a lovely pattern to draw and chalk.

"I'm no good at drawing," said Betty to herself. "Not a bit of good! I never shall be. But oh, I do wish I could think of a pattern to draw on this page, so that Miss Brown would be pleased with me!"

"Betty! Are you dreaming as usual?" said Miss Brown. "Do get on with your work."

"I'm trying to think of a pattern," said Betty. "But it's very hard."

"No, it isn't. It's easy," said Harry. "Look, Betty—do you see my pattern? I've made a whole row of little rounds, with squares inside them, and I am going to colour the squares yellow, and the bits inside the rounds are going to be blue. It will be a lovely pattern when it's finished. I shall make it all over the page."

"Yes—it *is* lovely!" said Betty. "I think I'll do that pattern too!"

"No," said Harry. "You mustn't. It's *my* pattern, the one *I* thought of. You mustn't copy."

"No, you must think of one for yourself," said Peggy. "Look at mine, Betty. Do you like it?"

Betty looked at Peggy's. She had drawn a pattern of ivy-leaves all over her page, joining them together with stalks. It was really lovely.

"Oh dear—I do, *do* wish I could think of a lovely pattern too," said Betty.

But do you know, by the end of the lesson poor Betty still sat with an empty page before her! She hadn't drawn anything. Miss Brown was cross.

"That is really naughty, Betty," she said. "You must take your pattern book home with you, and think of a pattern to bring me to-morrow morning. You have wasted half an hour."

Betty was very upset. She badly wanted to cry. She worked very hard in the next lesson, but all the time she was thinking of whether or not she would be able to bring Miss Brown a lovely pattern the next day. She was sure she wouldn't be able to.

"It's snowing!" said Harry suddenly. "Oh, Miss Brown, look—it's snowing! How lovely!"

Everyone looked out of the window. Big white snow-flakes came floating down without a sound.

"The snow is so quiet," said Betty. "That's what I love so much about it. It's so very, very quiet."

"It will be lovely to go home in the snow," said Harry. "Miss Brown, isn't it fun to look up into the sky when it is snowing and see millions and millions of snow-flakes coming down? Where do they come from?"

"Well," said Miss Brown, "when the clouds float through very cold air, they become frozen. Sometimes, you know, the clouds turn into rain-drops. But when there is frost about, they turn into tiny ice-crystals instead—and these join together and make a big snow-flake. It has to fall down, because light though it is, it is too heavy to float in the sky."

"Snow-flakes look like pieces of cloud," said Harry. "Bits of frozen mist—how lovely!"

Betty thought it was lovely too. As she went home through the snow, she looked up into the sky. It was full of falling flakes, silent and slow and beautiful.

The little girl lost her way in the snow. She suddenly knew she was lost, and she leaned against a tree and began to cry.

"What's the matter?" said a little voice, and Betty saw a small man, dressed just like a brownie, all in brown from top to toe.

"Everything's gone wrong to-day!" said Betty, sobbing. "I've lost my way in the snow—and Miss Brown was very cross with me because I couldn't think of a pattern."

"What sort of a pattern?" asked the brownie in surprise. "Why do you have to think of patterns?"

Betty told him. "It's something we do at school. We make up our own patterns, draw them and colour them. It's fun to do it if you are clever at thinking of patterns. But I'm not."

"But why do you bother to think of them?" asked the brownie. "There are lovely patterns all round you. A daisy-flower makes a lovely pattern—so does a pretty oak-leaf."

"There aren't any daisies or oak-leaves about now," said Betty. "I can't copy those."

"Well, look—you've got a most wonderful pattern on your sleeve!" said the brownie suddenly. "Look! Look!"

Betty saw a snow-flake caught on the sleeve of her black coat. She looked at it hard.

"Haven't you got good eyes?" said the brownie. "Can you see that the snow-flake is made up of tiny crystals—oh, *very* tiny?"

"Yes, I can," said Betty, looking hard. "Oh, what lovely patterns they are, brownie! Oh, I do wish I could see them bigger!"

"I'll get my magic glass for you," said the brownie, and he suddenly opened a door in a tree, went inside, and hopped out again with a round glass that had a handle.

"It's a magnifying glass," said Betty. "My granny has one when she wants to read the newspaper. She holds it over the print and it makes all the letters look big, so that she can easily read them."

"Well, this will make the snow-crystals look much bigger to you," said the brownie. He held the glass over Betty's black sleeve—and the little girl cried out in delight.

"Oh! Oh! They are beautiful! Oh, Brownie, they are the loveliest shapes!"

"But they are all alike in one way, although they are all quite different," said the brownie. "Look at them carefully, and count how many sides each little crystal has got, Betty."

Betty counted. "How funny! They all have six sides!" she said. "All of them. Not one of them has four or five or seven sides—they all have six!"

"Ice-crystals always do," said the brownie. "But although they always have to have six sides, you won't find one ice-crystal that is like another. They all grow into a different six-sided pattern. Isn't that marvellous?"

"It's like magic," said Betty. "Just like magic. Oh—the snow-flake has melted into water! The ice-crystals have gone. Quick—I want to see some more. I'll catch another snow-flake on my black sleeve."

Soon she was looking at yet more tiny crystals through the glass. They all had six sides, and they were beautiful. Look at some of them in the picture, and count the sides. They are all different—each of them has six sides!

"Brownie," said Betty suddenly, "I shall choose these ice-crystals for the pattern I have to do for Miss Brown. Oh, they will make a most wonderful pattern! I can make a different pattern for every page in my drawing book—patterns much lovelier than any of the other children draw. Oh, I do feel excited!"

"I'll show you the way home," said the brownie. "I'm glad you are pleased about the ice-crystals. It's funny you didn't know about them. You'll be able to make fine patterns now!"

Betty went home. She thought of the lovely six-sided crystals she had seen, and she began to draw them very carefully. Here is a pattern she drew. Do you like it?

She drew a page of this pattern. Then she turned over and drew a page of a second pattern, choosing another ice-crystal whose shape she remembered.

Mother came to see. "Darling, what a lovely pattern!" she said. "Quite perfect! How *did* you think of it!"

"I didn't," said Betty. "I saw it on my black sleeve, out in the snow. It's a six-sided ice-crystal, Mother. Oh, Mother, where is Granny's glass—the one that makes things look bigger? Do take it out into the snow and look through it at a snow-flake on your sleeve! Then you will see how different all the ice-crystals are—and yet each one has six sides. There is no end to the shapes and patterns they make."

Miss Brown was full of surprise when she saw Betty's patterns the next day. "You didn't do these, dear, surely!" she said. "Why, even I couldn't think of patterns like this. They are wonderful."

"I'll show you where to find them," said Betty happily. "It's snowing, Miss Brown. Come out with me—and all the others too—and I'll show you where I found these beautiful patterns!"

She took them out into the snow, and they saw what she had seen. You will want to see it too, of course. So remember, next time it snows, go out with a bit of black cloth and catch a snow-flake. You'll get such a surprise when you see the beautiful six-sided crystals in the flake.

Teaching Notes. Points for Discussion.

1. This story tells of the six-sided ice-crystals and their beauty.
2. If possible, tell the story on a snowy day. Let children watch snow-flakes falling.
3. Provide magnifying glass, and let children look at snow-flake on piece of black cloth.
4. Who can draw a six-sided ice-crystal? Who can make a pattern of them?
5. Show children prepared drawings of ice-crystals. Let them count the number of sides.

1 (Book 30)
WOFFLY THE RABBIT AND QUICK-EARSTHE HARE

Once there was a young rabbit called Woffly. He lived in a burrow with his family, and he was very happy.

"It's fun to be a rabbit!" said Woffly. "It's fun to go out in the evening and nibble the nice juicy grass. It's fun to chase the other rabbits and fun to play hide-and-seek in the burrows."

One day Woffly ran down the hillside far away from the others. He had always been told not to do this, but he did so badly want to know what was at the bottom of the hill.

There was a field there. Woffly ran out on to it—and suddenly he met somebody rather like himself. The two animals stared at one another.

"Hallo," said Woffly at last. "Are you a rabbit?"

"No, I'm a hare," said the little creature. "I'm not very old. My name is Quick-Ears. I hear very, very well, you know."

"You are very like me," said Woffly. "You must be a cousin of mine."

"I am," said Quick-Ears. "And that is why we are rather alike. But you are smaller than I am, and your ears are not so long. Your eyes are smaller than mine too."

"You have black tips to your ears, and I haven't," said Woffly. "Shall we have a race? I am sure I can run faster than you!"

"Of course you can't!" said the little hare. "Hares can always run faster than rabbits. Now then—one, two, three—go!"

Off they went across the field. But Quick-Ears was right. He was the faster of the two, and he won quite easily.

"Stay with me for a little while," he said to Woffly. "I like you. Play with me for a few days."

"Where is your hole?" asked Woffly. "I like to be near a hole so that I can pop down if danger comes."

"Don't be silly!" said Quick-Ears. "A hole indeed! No hare needs a hole to hide in! He can always get away on his quick legs. His ears and eyes and nose tell him when enemies are near, and he can run faster than any of them!"

"Well, where is your home, then, if you haven't a hole?" said Woffly in wonder.

"I'll show you," said the hare, and he took Woffly to the middle of the field. He showed him a dent in the dry ground there. "This is my home," he said. "I just settle down in this dent I have made with my body—and there I sleep and rest."

"I want a rest now," said Woffly. "I am tired after our race. Shall we lie down side by side and rest?"

"You can have my place," said the hare. "I will make myself another beside you."

Woffly settled down into the hare's place, and Quick-Ears made himself another beside him, moving his body about in the earth until he had made himself a good resting-place his own size and shape.

"I must go to sleep," said Woffly, closing his eyes. "That was a long race."

He slept—and so did Quick-Ears. But after a while the ever-ready ears of the little hare heard a sound, even though he was asleep. His big eyes flicked open, and his nose quivered.

His ears heard the slightest sound across the fields. He heard the high squeak of the flying bat, the tiny squeal of a far-away mouse, the brush of the owl's wings as it flew.

The sound came again, and Quick-Ears knew what it was. The red fox!

He leapt up and awoke Woffly. "Run! Run! There is the red fox coming! Run!"

Poor Woffly. He looked about for a hole to dart into, but there was none. There was only the open field around him. He ran off, right across it, his little white bobtail showing behind him.

Quick-Ears went with him. When they came to the hillside, the little hare stopped and listened, his big ears sticking straight up from his head.

"He's coming this way!" he said suddenly. "I heard the click of his claws against a stone. Up the hillside, quickly, rabbit, or the red fox will catch us!"

"Here's my burrow! Here's my burrow!" panted Woffly. "Follow me! Follow my white bobbing tail, Quick-Ears. I will take you to safety! No fox can get down my burrow!"

He darted into a hole, his white bobtail showing clearly, a guide to the running hare behind. Both animals lay down at the bottom of the burrow, panting.

"You must stay a day or two with me," said the rabbit. "You cannot go out if the red fox is about. He eats hares and rabbits, even big ones."

"Yes, I will stay with you," said the hare. "Perhaps a hole is better to hide in, after all."

"Don't keep putting your ears up," said Woffly. "Put them down flat—like this."

He showed Quick-Ears how to lay his ears flat—but the little hare kept forgetting.

"I can't hear properly with my ears laid flat," he grumbled. "I simply can't hear!"

"You don't need to, when you are safe in a hole," said Woffly. "There is no danger about in our burrows. We are safe here. Do keep your ears down, Quick-Ears."

The little hare tried his hardest to keep his ears flat, but whenever he heard a noise, his ears flicked themselves upright. Soon they became quite bruised against the roof of the burrow.

"I want to go out of this hole," said the little hare, the next morning. "I want to put my ears up for a while. They don't like always being flat. Let's go out and play. We can keep near the burrow, in case the red fox comes along."

So out they went on to the dewy hillside. The grass was short and sweet. There were many rabbits playing together. It was fun.

"I can see how useful your white bobtails are, when so many of you play together," said Quick-Ears. "When a rabbit sees danger, he turns to run to his hole—and his white bobtail flashes up and down, so that all the other rabbits suddenly catch sight of it—and they run too."

"Yes, it's a good idea," said Woffly. "And there's another good idea we have too. When a rabbit smells danger and wants to warn everyone on the hillside, he drums with his hind legs on the ground. We all hear the noise, and we run for our lives!"

The little hare liked playing with the rabbits. He ran races with them, but he always won. Woffly told the others how hard Quick-Ears found it to keep his ears flat when he was under the ground.

That made them laugh. "Oh, all rabbits hold their ears flat, when they are in their burrows," said a small rabbit. "Fancy you not knowing how to do it, hare!"

"I do know how to do it," said Quick-Ears, "but after all, I am not used to burrows as you are. You would not like lying out in the open under the stars, if you came to stay with me. We all have our own ways."

A curious sound came up the hillside. R-r-r-r-r-r-r! R-r-r-r-r-r-r! All the rabbits stopped feeding and looked up, their ears upright.

"That's old Whiskers drumming with his hind legs to say danger is about!" said Woffly. "I expect it's the red fox again. Quick, we must go!"

All the rabbits were rushing off to their holes, their white bobtails showing clearly. Quick-Ears did not follow Woffly. Instead he raced off down the hill.

Woffly called after him.

"Quick-Ears! Quick-Ears! Come back! It is not safe down there. Come into my burrow and hide. You will be quite safe there."

"No, no, Woffly!" cried the little hare. "I do not feel safe in your narrow, dark burrow! I want the light and the open air! I want the sun above me, and the stars at night. I would rather trust to my quick ears and swift legs, than to your dark burrow!"

"Let him go," said old Whiskers. "Hares and rabbits are different, with their own ways and their own likings. Let him go!"

So Woffly ran to his hole, and Quick-Ears ran to his field. Hares will be hares and rabbits will be rabbits!

The two often meet and play a game together—but each thinks his own way of life is best. And so it is, for him!

Teaching Notes. Points for Discussion.

1. The story tells the difference in life and looks of rabbit and hare.

2. Enumerate these differences to the children, or let them tell you what they are: for example, the rabbit's ears can lie flat, the hare keeps his upright, the hare lives in the open fields, the rabbit underground, etc.

3. Discuss the danger signals of rabbit—the drumming on ground and the flash of the white bobtail.

4. Act a little play with rabbits and hares, based on the story.

2 (Book 30)
THE LITTLE FIR-TREE

Once upon a time there was a little fir-tree, not much bigger than you. It grew in a forest on the mountainside. It was an evergreen, so it did not drop all its narrow green leaves in the autumn, but held on to some of them all the year round.

Many little fir-trees grew around it. Near by were some full-grown firs, tall and straight and strong. Sometimes men came to cut them down and to send them away.

Then the little fir-tree would wonder where they were going, and would feel sad.

"It is dreadful to be cut down," said the little tree. "Dreadful to have our branches sawn off, and to be nothing but a straight pole!"

"Do not be sad," said a big fir-tree near by. "We are going to be made into straight telegraph poles—and some of us will be the masts of ships. Ah, that's a grand end for a fir-tree—to be planted in a ship, and to hold the flapping sails that send the ship along!"

The little fir-tree thought that would indeed be a grand life. It hoped that when it had grown tall and straight, it too would end as a mast in a ship.

"It would be grand to drive along over the water, hearing the wind once again, being of use for many, many years," thought the little fir-tree.

All the small, growing fir-trees hoped the same thing, and they grew a little each year. Then one winter there came a great storm.

It broke on the mountain-side where the forest of fir-trees grew. It sent a great wind blowing through their branches.

"We shall fall, we shall fall!" said the fir-trees, and their branches tossed and shouted in the wind.

"We have no deep roots!" they said. "Do not blow so hard, wind! You will blow us over!"

"You should grow big deep roots," said the wind. "I cannot up-root the strong oak, because it sends its roots deep down. But your roots are too near the surface!"

One big fir-tree gave a deep groan. The wind had blown so strongly against it that it was pulled right out of the ground. It toppled over—it fell!

It crashed against the next fir-tree and made that fall too. That one fell against a third tree, and down this went as well. Crash! Crash! Crash!

Each falling tree hit the one next to it, and soon many were falling like a row of dominoes, through the forest. The last one fell on the little fir-tree, and pulled it up by its roots.

The gale died down. The sun came out. Men came into the forest to see what trees had been blown down.

"Look—a great path has been made in the forest, by one tree uprooting the next," said one of the men. "We will clear away the fallen trees."

So, very soon, the sound of axes was heard in the forest, and one after another of the fallen trees was chopped away from its roots, its branches trimmed off, and it was taken away to be made into a telegraph pole, or the mast of a ship.

The men came to the little fir-tree, which had been up-rooted by the last falling tree. "Look," said one, "here is a young tree up-rooted. It is almost dead."

"Give it a chance," said another man. "We will replant it and see if it will grow."

So they put the little fir-tree back into the ground and stamped down the earth around its roots.

The little tree was almost dead. Its roots were half-frozen. It felt ill and weak.

But soon its roots took firm hold of the earth again, and began to feed the tree. It felt better. Its branches stiffened a little. It put its topmost spoke straight. All spruce firs have a spear at the top, which they stick straight upwards to the sky. The little fir-tree was glad to point its spike up again too.

But, because it had been up-rooted for so long, the little fir-tree did not grow well. It was short and stunted. It did not grow freely upwards as the other young trees did. It remained small and short, not much bigger than you.

"You must try to grow," said the other trees. "If you don't, you will be pulled up and burnt, for you will be of no use to anyone. Try to grow, little fir-tree."

"I am trying," said the little tree. "But something has happened to me. I am afraid I shall always be small. I have lost the power of growing."

It did grow a very little—but by the time the other firs were tall and straight, the little fir-tree was very tiny still. It was sad.

"I know I shall be thrown away," it said to itself. "I know I shall. I did want to be of some use in the world—but now I shan't be. When the men come to look at the other young trees, they will think they are fine—but they are sure to pull me up."

Sure enough, when the men came round just before Christmas, they were very pleased with the other young firs—but they did not think much of the little one.

"This is a poor tree," said one. "It will never be any good."

They went on, into the forest. But later on one of the men came back to the little fir-tree. He dug round its roots, and then pulled it out of the ground. He put it over his shoulder.

"Good-bye!" called the little fir-tree to all its friends. "Good-bye! I am going to be thrown away. I am of no use. But I wanted to be, I did want to be!"

The man walked down the mountain-side with the little tree. He came to a cosy house, with lights shining from the windows, for it was almost dark. He stamped into the house, shook the snow off his shoulders, and called loudly:

"Peter! Ann! I've got something for you!" Two children came running out, and they shouted for joy to see the dear little fir-tree.

"Oh, what a dear little tree! It's just the right size!"

Then a good many things happened that puzzled the little fir-tree very much. It was put into a big tub. The tub was wound round and round with bright red silk, and looked very gay.

Then clips were put on the branches of the little tree, and candles were stuck into the clips! Soon it had candles from top to bottom!

Then bright, shining ornaments were hung from every branch. Some were blue, some were red, some were green and some were yellow. They were very lovely, made of the finest glass.

"I am beautiful!" said the little tree in surprise. "I may be small and under-grown—but how lovely I am, dressed in these shining things! How the children must love me!"

Then other things were hung on the little tree—presents wrapped in bright paper. Some of them pulled down the branches, for they were heavy, but the little tree didn't mind. It was too happy to mind anything.

Strings of glittering tinsel were hung everywhere on the tree. And then, at the very top, a wonderful fairy doll was put, with a silver crown and wand, and a fluffy frock that stood out all round her.

“I never saw such a beautiful tree as you!” said the fairy doll. “Never! I am proud to be at the top of you. You have a nice straight spike there that I can lean against.”

“All spruce firs have those spikes at the top,” said the fir-tree proudly. “That is how you can tell us from other fir-trees. Why have the children made me so beautiful, little doll?”

“You are their Christmas tree!” said the doll. “Didn’t you know that children take little fir-trees at Christmas time, dress them up, and hang their presents there? Ah, it is a wonderful thing to be a Christmas tree, and bring happiness and joy to many people.”

“I am glad I didn’t grow,” said the little tree. “Oh, I *am* glad I didn’t grow. Once I wanted to be the mast of a ship. Now I am glad to be a Christmas tree.”

It shone softly when the candles were lighted. “We have never had such a lovely Christmas tree before,” said Peter. “Isn’t it beautiful? Its branches are just the right size. It is a dear little tree.”

“We will plant it out in the garden when Christmas is over,” said their mother. “Then it will take root there—and maybe next year, we can dig it up again and have it once more for our tree!”

“And the year after—and the year after!” cried the children.

So I expect they will. What a lovely life for the little fir-tree—to grow in the wind and the sun all the year—and to be a shining Christmas tree in the winter!

Teaching Notes. Points for Discussion.

1. The story tells of fir-trees and their use, and of some of their characteristics.

2. Discuss the various things that a fir-tree can be, if it is cut down—for example, telegraph pole, mast of ship, flag-pole.

3. How can you tell a spruce fir? By the one straight spike at the top.

4. Touch lightly on evergreens.

5. Let the children draw a spruce fir as a Christmas tree.

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Mis-spelled words and printer errors have been fixed.

Inconsistency in hyphenation has been retained.

[The end of *Stories and Notes to Enid Blyton Nature Plates* by Enid Blyton]