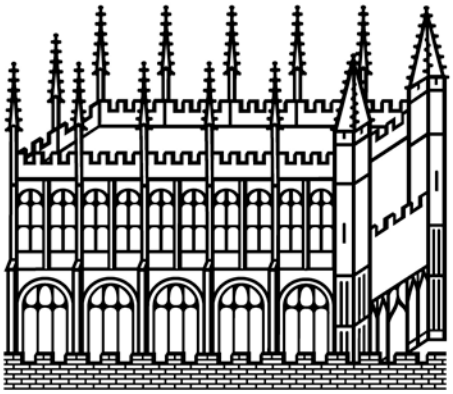
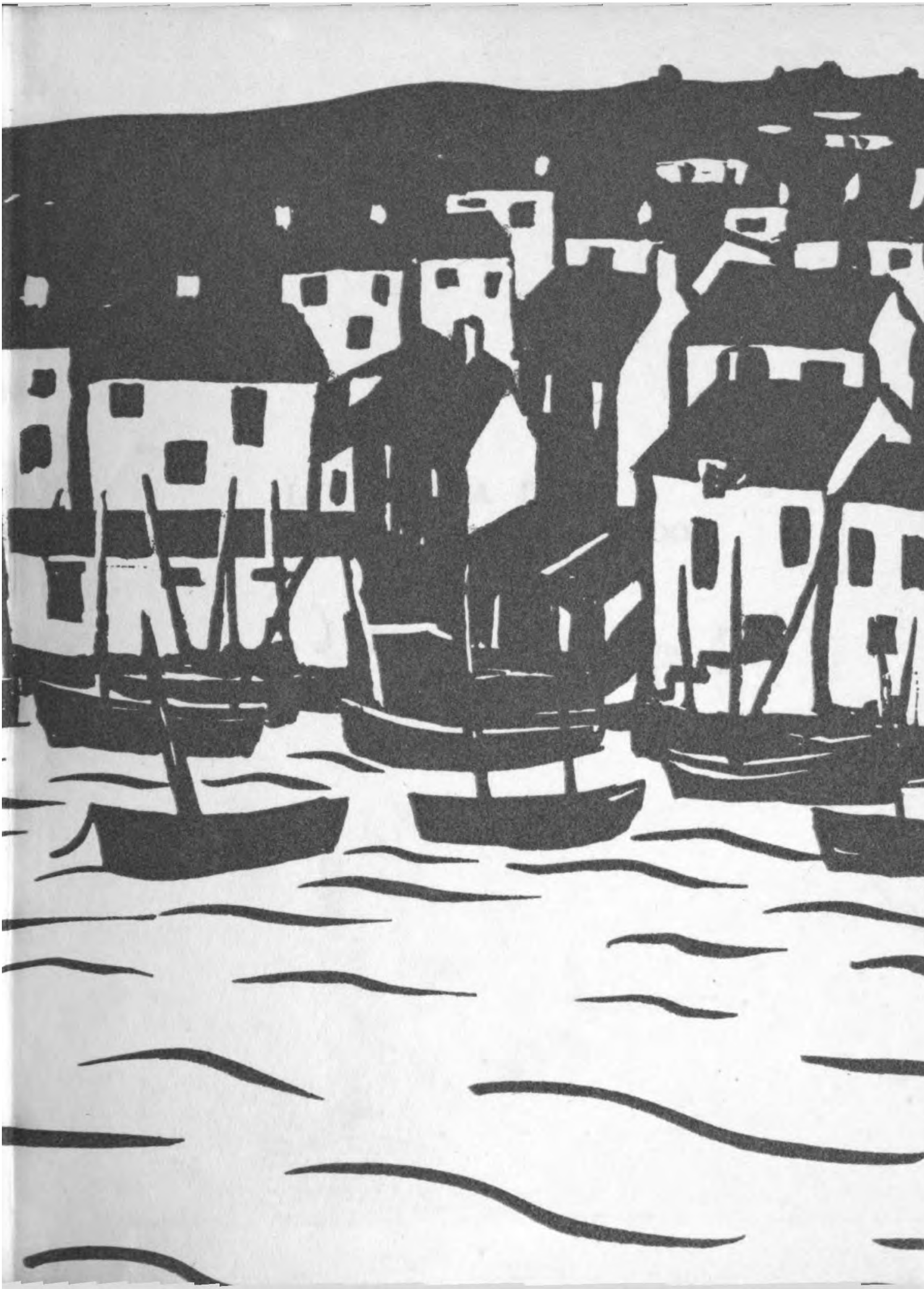


LITTLE SEA-DOG

ANATOLE FRANCE



LITTLE SEA DOGS
AND OTHER TALES OF CHILDHOOD

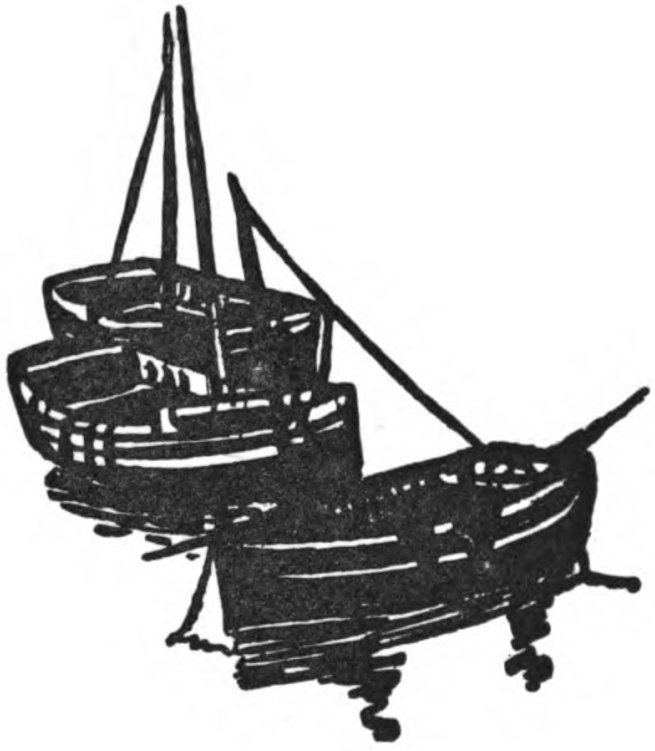
LITTLE SEA-DOGS

THEY are sailor boys, regular little sea-dogs. Look at them; they have their caps pulled down over their ears so that the gale blowing in from the sea and bringing the spindrift with it may not deafen them with its dreadful howling. They wear heavy woollen clothes to keep out the cold and wet. Their patched pea-jacket and breeches have been their elders' before them. Most of their garments have been contrived out of old things of their father's. Their soul is likewise of the same stuff as

their father's ; it is simple, brave, and long-suffering. At birth they inherited a single-hearted, noble temper. Who and what gave it them ? After God and their parents, the Sea. The Sea teaches sailors courage by teaching them to face danger. It is a rough but kindly instructor.

That is why our little sailor-boys, though their hearts are childlike still, have the spirit of gallant veterans. Elbows on the parapet of the sea-wall, they gaze out into the offing. It is more than the blue line marking the faint division between sea and sky that they see. Their eyes care little for the soft, changing colours of the ocean or the vast, contorted masses of the clouds. What they see, as they look seawards, is something more moving than the hue of the waves or the shape of the clouds ; it is a suggestion of human love. They are spying for the boats that sailed away for the fishing ; presently they will loom again on the horizon, laden with shrimp to the gunwales, and bringing home uncles and big brothers and fathers. The little fleet will soon appear yonder betwixt the ocean and God's sky with its white or brown sails. To-day the sky is unclouded, the sea calm ; the flood tide floats the

fishers gently to the shore. But the Ocean is a capricious old fellow, who takes all shapes and sings in many voices. To-day he laughs ; to-morrow he will be growling in the night under his beard of foam. He shipwrecks the most handy boats, though they have been blessed by the Priest to the chanting of the *Te Deum ;* he drowns the most skilful master mariners, and it is all his fault you see in the village, before the cottage doors where the nets hang to dry beside the fish-creels, so many women wearing black widow's weeds.



FANCHON

I

FANCHON went early one morning, like Little Red Riding-Hood, to see her grandmother, who lives right at the other end of the village. But Fanchon did not stop like little Red Riding-Hood, to gather nuts in the wood. She went straight on her way and she did not meet the wolf.

From a long way off she saw her grandmother sitting on the stone step at her cottage door, a smile on her toothless mouth and her arms, as dry and knotty as an old vine-stock, open to welcome her little granddaughter. It rejoices Fanchon's heart to spend a whole day with her grandmother ; and her

grandmother, whose trials and troubles are all over and who lives as happy as a cricket in the warm chimney-corner, is rejoiced too to see her son's little girl, the picture of her own childhood.

They have many things to tell each other, for one of them is coming back from the journey of life which the other is setting out on.

" You grow a bigger girl every day," says the old grandmother to Fanchon, " and every day I get smaller ; I scarcely need now to stoop at all to touch your forehead. What matters my great age when I can see the roses of my girlhood blooming again in your cheeks, my pretty Fanchon ? "

But Fanchon asked to be told again—for the hundredth time—all about the glittering paper flowers under the glass shade, the coloured pictures where our Generals in brilliant uniforms are overthrowing their enemies, the gilt cups, some of which have lost their handles, while others have kept theirs, and grandfather's gun that hangs above the chimney-piece from the nail where he put it up himself for the last time, thirty years ago.

But time flies, and the hour is come to get ready the midday dinner. Fanchon's grandmother stirs

up the drowsy fire ; then she breaks the eggs on the black earthenware platter. Fanchon is deeply interested in the bacon omelette as she watches it browning and sputtering over the fire. There is no one in the world like her grandmother for making omelettes and telling pretty stories. Fanchon sits on the settle, her chin on a level with the table, to eat the steaming omelette and drink the sparkling cider. But her grandmother eats her dinner, from force of habit, standing at the fireside. She holds her knife in her right hand, and in the other a crust of bread with her toothsome morsel on it. When both have done eating : " Grandmother," says Fanchon, " tell me the ' Blue Bird.' "

And her grandmother tells Fanchon how, by the spite of a bad fairy, a beautiful Prince was changed into a sky-blue bird, and of the grief the Princess felt when she heard of the transformation and saw her love fly all bleeding to the window of the Tower where she was shut up.

Fanchon thinks and thinks.

" Grandmother," she says at last, " is it a great while ago the Blue Bird flew to the Tower where the Princess was shut up ? "

Her grandmother tells her it was many a long day since, in the times when the animals used to talk.

" You were young then ? " asks Fanchon.

" I was not yet born," the old woman tells her.

And Fanchon says :

" So, Grandmother, there were things in the world even before you were born ? "

And when their talk is done, her grandmother gives Fanchon an apple with a hunch of bread and bids her :

" Run away, little one ; go and play and eat your apple in the garden."

And Fanchon goes into the garden, where there are trees and grass and flowers and birds.

2

HER grandmother's garden was full of grass and flowers and trees, and Fanchon thought it was the prettiest garden in all the world. By this time she had pulled out her pocket-knife to cut her bread with, as they do in the village. First she munched her apple, then she began upon her bread.

Presently a little bird came fluttering past her. Then a second came, and a third. Soon ten, twenty, thirty were crowding round Fanchon. There were grey birds, and red, there were yellow birds, and green, and blue. And all were pretty and they all sang. At first Fanchon could not think what they wanted. But she soon saw they were asking for bread and that they were little beggars. Yes, they were beggars, but they were singers as well. Fanchon was too kind-hearted to refuse bread to any one who paid for it with songs.

She was a little country girl, and she did not know that once long ago, in a country where white cliffs of marble are washed by the blue sea, a blind old man earned his daily bread by singing the shepherds' songs which the learned still admire to-day. But her heart laughed to hear the little birds, and she tossed them crumbs that never reached the ground, for the birds always caught them in the air.

Fanchon saw that the birds were not all the same in character. Some would stand in a ring round her feet waiting for the crumbs to fall into their beaks. These were philosophers. Others again she could

see circling nimbly on the wing all about her. She even noticed one little thief that darted in and pecked shamelessly at her own slice.

She broke the bread and threw crumbs to them all; but all could not get some to eat. Fanchon found that the boldest and cleverest left nothing for the others.

"That is not fair," she told them, "each of you ought to take his proper turn."

But they never heeded; nobody ever does, when you talk of fairness and justice. She tried every way to favour the weak and hearten the timid; but she could make nothing of it, and do what she would, she fed the big fat birds at the expense of the thin ones. This made her sorry; she was such a simple child she did not know it is the way of the world.

Crumb by crumb, the bread all went down the little singers' throats. And Fanchon went back very happy to her grandmother's house.

3

 HEN night fell, her grandmother took the basket in which Fanchon had brought her a cake, filled it with apples and grapes, hung it on the child's arm, and said :

" Now, Fanchon, go straight back home, without stopping to play with the village ragamuffins. Be a good girl always. Good-bye."

Then she kissed her. But Fanchon stood thinking at the door.

" Grandmother ? " she said.

" What is it, little Fanchon ? "

" I should like to know," said Fanchon, " if there are any beautiful Princes among the birds that ate up my bread."

" Now that there are no more fairies," her grandmother told her, " the birds are all birds and nothing else."

" Good-bye, Grandmother."

" Good-bye, Fanchon."

And Fanchon set off across the meadows for her

home, the chimneys of which she could see smoking a long way off against the red sky of sunset.

On the road she met Antoine, the gardener's little boy. He asked her :

" Will you come and play with me, Fanchon ? "

But she answered :

" I won't stop to play with you, because my grandmother told me not to. But I will give you an apple, because I love you very much."

Antoine took the apple and kissed the little girl.

They loved each other fondly.

He called her his little wife, and she called him her little husband.

As she went on her way, stepping soberly along like a staid, grown-up person, she heard behind her a merry twittering of birds, and turning round to look, she saw they were the same little pensioners she had fed when they were hungry. They came flying after her.

" Good night, little friends," she called to them, " good night ! It's bedtime now, so good night ! "

And the winged songsters answered her with little cries that mean " God keep you ! " in bird language.

So Fanchon came back to her mother's to the sound of sweet music in the air.

4

FANCHON lay down in the dark in her little bed, which a carpenter in the village had made long ago of walnut-wood and carved a light railing alongside. The good old man had been resting years and years now under the shadow of the church, in a grass-grown bed ; for Fanchon's cot had been her grandfather's when he was a little lad, and he had slept where she sleeps now. A curtain of pink-sprigged cotton protects her slumbers ; she sleeps, and in her dreams she sees the Blue Bird flying to his sweetheart's Castle. She thinks he is as beautiful as a star, but she never expects him to come and light on her shoulder. She knows *she* is not a Princess, and no Prince changed into a blue bird will come to visit her. She tells herself that all birds are not Princes : that the birds of her village are villagers, and that there might be one perhaps found amongst them, a little country lad

changed into a sparrow by a bad fairy and wearing in his heart under his brown feathers the love of little Fanchon. Yes, if *he* came and she knew him, she would give him not bread crumbs only, but cake and kisses. She would so like to see him, and lo ! she sees him ; he comes and perches on her shoulder. He is a jack-sparrow, only a common sparrow. He has nothing rich or rare about him, but he looks alert and lively. To tell the truth, he is a little torn and tattered ; he lacks a feather in his tail ; he has lost it in battle—unless it was through some bad fairy of the village. Fanchon has her suspicions he is a naughty bird. But she is a girl, and she does not mind her jack-sparrow being a trifle headstrong, if only he has a kind heart. She pets him and calls him pretty names. Suddenly he begins to grow bigger ; his body gets longer ; his wings turn into two arms ; he is a boy, and Fanchon knows who he is—Antoine, the gardener's little lad, who asks her :

" Shall we go and play together, shall we, Fanchon ? "

She claps her hands for joy, and away she goes. . . . But suddenly she wakes and rubs her eyes.

Her sparrow is gone, and so is Antoine ! She is all alone in her little room. The dawn, peeping in between the flowered curtains, throws a white, innocent light over her cot. She can hear the birds singing in the garden. She jumps out of bed in her little nightgown and opens the window ; she looks out into the garden, which is gay with flowers—roses, geraniums, and convolvulus—and spies her little pensioners, her little musicians, of yesterday. There they all sit in a row on the garden-fence, singing her a morning hymn to pay her for their crumbs of bread.

THE FANCY-DRESS BALL

HERE we have little boys who are conquering heroes and little girls who are heroines. Here we have shepherdesses in hoops and wreaths of roses and shepherds in satin coats, who carry crooks tied with knots of riband. Oh, what white, pretty sheep they must be these shepherds tend! Here are Alexander the Great and Zaïre, and Pyrrhus and Merope, Mahomet, Harlequin, Pierrot, Scapin, Blaise and Babette. They have come from all parts, from Greece and Rome and the lands of Faëry, to dance together. What a fine thing a fancy ball is, and how delicious to be a great King for an hour or a famous Princess! There is nothing to spoil the pleasure. No need to act up to your costume, nor even to talk in character.

It would be poor fun, mind you, to wear heroes' clothes if you had to have a hero's heart as well.

Heroes' hearts are torn with all sorts of sorrows. They are most of them famous for their calamities. If they had lived happy, we should never have heard of them. Merope had no wish to dance. Pyrrhus was cruelly slain by Orestes just when he was going to wed, and the innocent Zaïre perished by the hand of her lover the Turk, philosophical Turk though he was. As for Blaise and Babette, the song says they suffer fond regrets that go on forever.

Why speak of Pierrot and Scapin? You know as well as I do they were scamps, and got their ears pulled more than once. No! glory costs too dear, even Harlequin's. On the contrary, it is very agreeable to be little boys and girls, and have the look of being great personages. That is why there is no pleasure to compare with a fancy ball, when the dresses are splendid enough. Only to wear them makes you feel brave. Then think how proud and pretty all your little friends are with their feathers and mantles; how gallant and gay and noble they look, and how like the fine folks of olden times.

In the gallery, where you cannot see them, the

musicians, with sad, gentle faces, are tuning up their fiddles. A stately quadrille lies open on their stands. They are going to attack the old-fashioned piece. At the first notes our heroes and masks will lead off the dance.

THE SCHOOL

I PROCLAIM Mademoiselle Genseigne's school the best girls' school in the world. I declare miscreants and slanderers any who shall think or say the contrary. Mademoiselle Genseigne's pupils are all well-behaved and industrious, and there is no pleasanter sight to see than all their small figures sitting so still, and all the heads in a straight row. They look like so many little bottles into which Mademoiselle Genseigne is busy pouring useful knowledge.

Mademoiselle Genseigne sits very upright at her high desk. She has a gentle, serious face; her

neatly braided hair and her black tippet inspire respect and sympathy.

Mademoiselle Genseigne, who is very clever, is teaching her little pupils ciphering. She says to Rose Benoît :

" Rose Benoît, if I take four from twelve, what have I left ? "

" Four ? " answers Rose Benoît.

Mademoiselle Genseigne is not satisfied with the answer.

" And you, Emmeline Capel, if I take four from twelve, how much have I left ? "

" Eight," Emmeline Capel answers.

" You hear, Rose Benoît, I have eight left," insists Mademoiselle Genseigne.

Rose Benoît falls into a brown study. Mademoiselle Genseigne has eight left, she is told, but she has no notion if it is eight hats or eight handkerchiefs, or possibly eight apples or eight feathers. The doubt has long tormented her. She can make nothing of arithmetic.

On the other hand, she is very wise in Scripture History. Mademoiselle Genseigne has not another

pupil who can describe the Garden of Eden or Noah's Ark as Rose Benoît can. Rose Benoît knows every flower in the Garden and all the animals in the Ark. She knows as many fairy tales as Mademoiselle Genseigne herself. She knows all the fables of the Fox and the Crow, the Donkey and the Little Dog, the Cock and the Hen, and what they said to each other. She is not at all surprised to hear that the animals used once to talk. The wonder would be if some one told her they don't talk now. She is quite sure she understands what her big dog Tom says and her little canary Chirp. She is quite right; animals have always talked, and they talk still; but they only talk to their friends. Rose Benoît loves them and they love her, and that is why she understands what they say. To understand each other there is nothing like loving one another.

To-day Rose Benoît has said her lessons without a mistake. She has won a good mark. Emmeline Capel has a good mark, too, for knowing her arithmetic lesson so well.

On coming out of school, she told her mother she had a good mark. Then she asked her:

" A good mark, mother, what's the use of it ? "

" A good mark is of no use," Emmeline's mother answered, " that is the very reason why we should be proud to get one. You will find out one day, my child, that the rewards most highly esteemed are just those that bring honour without profit."

MARIE

ITTLE girls long to pluck flowers and stars—it is their nature to. But stars will not be plucked, and the lesson they teach little girls is, that in this world there are longings that are never satisfied. Mademoiselle Marie has gone into the park, where she came upon a bed of hydrangeas; she saw how pretty the flowers were and that made her gather one. It was very difficult; she dragged with both hands, and very nearly tumbled over backwards when the stalk broke. She is pleased and proud at what she has done. But nurse has seen her. She runs up, snatches at Mademoiselle Marie's arm, scolds her, and sets her to stand and repent, not in the black closet, but at the foot of a great chestnut, under the shade of a huge Japanese umbrella.

There Mademoiselle Marie sits and thinks, in great surprise and perplexity. Her flower in one

hand and the umbrella making a bright halo round her, she looks like a little idol from overseas.

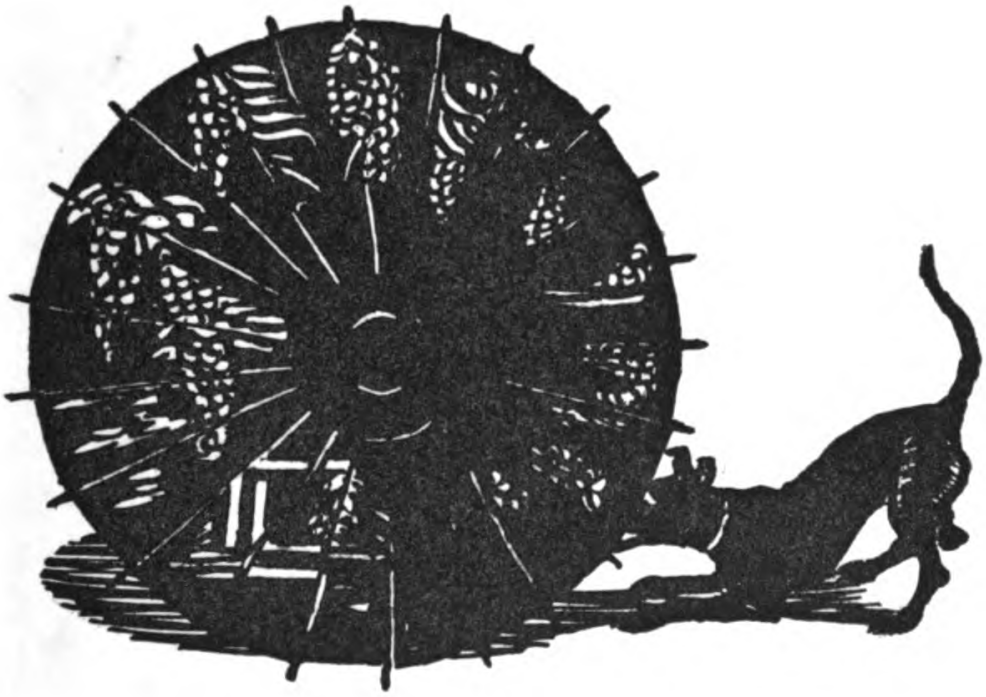
Nurse has told her : " Marie, you must not put that flower in your mouth. If you do it when I tell you not, your little dog Toto will come and eat up your ears." And with these terrible words she walks away.

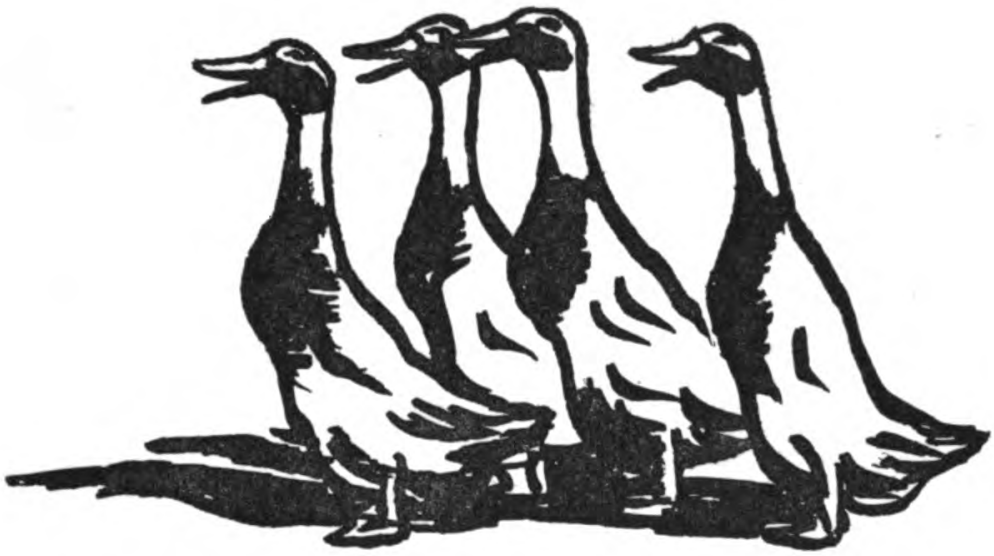
The young culprit, sitting quite still under her brilliant canopy, looks about her and gazes at earth and sky. It is a big world she sees, big enough and beautiful enough to amuse a little girl for some while. But her hydrangea blossom is more interesting than all the rest put together. She thinks to herself : " It is a flower ; it must smell good ? " And she puts her nose to the pretty pink and blue ball ; she sniffs, but she cannot smell anything. She is not very good at scenting perfume ; it is only a short while since she always used to blow at a rose instead of inhaling its odour. You must not laugh at her for that ; one cannot learn everything at once. Besides, if she had as keen a sense of smell as her mother, she would be no better off in this case. A hydrangea *has* no scent ; that is why we get tired of it, for all its loveliness. But now

HER FLOWER IN ONE HAND AND THE UMBRELLA MAKING A BRIGHT HALO ROUND HER, SHE LOOKS LIKE A LITTLE IDOL FROM OVERSEAS

Mademoiselle Marie begins to think : " Perhaps it's made of sugar, this flower." Then she opens her mouth very wide and is just going to lift the flower to her lips.

But suddenly, *yap !* goes her little dog. It is Toto, who comes bounding over a geranium bed and comes to a stand right in front of Mademoiselle Marie, with his ears cocked straight up, and stares hard at her out of his sharp little round eyes.





THE PANDEAN PIPES

THREE children of the same village, Pierre, Jacques and Jean, stand staring, side by side in a row, where they look for all the world like a mouth-organ or Pandean Pipes, only with three pipes instead of seven. Pierre, to the left, is a tall lad; Jean, to the right, is a short child; Jacques, who is betwixt the two, may call himself tall *or* short, according as he looks at his left-hand or his right-hand neighbour. It is a situation I would beg you to ponder, for it is your own, and mine, and everybody else's. Each one of us is just

like Jacques, and deems himself great or small according as his neighbours' inches are many or few.

That is the reason why it is true to say that Jacques is neither tall nor short, and why it is also true to say he is tall *and* he is short. He is what God chooses him to be. For us, he is the middle reed of our living Pandean Pipes.

But what is he doing, and what are his two comrades doing? They are staring, staring hard, all three. What at? At something that has disappeared in the distance, something that has vanished out of sight; yet they can see it still, and their eyes are dazzled with its splendours. It makes little Jean clean forget his eel-skin whiplash and the peg-top he has always been so fond of keeping for ever spinning with it in the dusty roads. Pierre and Jacques stand stolidly, their hands behind their backs.

What is the wonderful sight that has bewildered all three? A pedlar's cart, a hand-cart; they had seen it stop in the village street.

Then the pedlar drew back his oil-cloth covering, and all, men, women, and children, feasted their eyes on knives, scissors, pop-guns, jumping Jacks,

THEY ARE STARING, STARING HARD, ALL THREE. WHAT AT?

wooden soldiers and lead soldiers, bottles of scent, cakes of soap, coloured pictures, and a thousand other splendid objects. The servant-wenches from the farm and the mill turned pale with longing; Pierre and Jacques flushed red with delight. Little Jean put out his tongue at it all. Everything the barrow held seemed to them rich and rare. But what they coveted most of all were those mysterious articles whose meaning and use they could make nothing of. For instance, there were polished globes like mirrors that reflected their faces with the features ludicrously distorted. There were Épinal wares with figures in impossibly vivid colours; there were little cases and boxes with nobody knows what inside.

The women made purchases of muslins and laces by the yard, and the pedlar rolled the black oil-cloth cover back again over the treasures of his barrow. Then, pulling at the collar, he hauled off his load after him along the high road. And now barrow and barrow-man have disappeared below the horizon.

ROGER'S STUD

IT is a great anxiety keeping a stud. The horse is a delicate animal and needs a lot of looking after. Just ask Roger if it doesn't !

He is busy now grooming his noble chestnut, which would be the pearl of wooden horses, the flower of the Black Forest stud-farms, if only he had not lost half his tail in battle. Roger would so like to know whether wooden horses' tails grow again.

After rubbing them down in fancy, Roger gives his horses an imaginary feed of oats. That is the proper way to feed these elfin creatures of wood on whose backs little boys gallop through the land of dreams.

Now Roger is off for his ride, mounted on his mettled charger. The poor beast has no ears left and his mane is all notched like an old broken comb ; but Roger loves him. Why it would be hard to say!

This bay was the gift of a poor man; and the presents of the poor are somehow sweeter perhaps than any others.

Roger is off. He has ridden far. The flowers of the carpet are the blossoms of the tropical forest.

Good luck to you, little Roger! May your hobby-horse carry you happily through the world! May you never have a more dangerous mount! Small and great, we all ride ours! Which of us has not his hobby?

Men's hobbies gallop like mad things along the

roads of life ; one is chasing glory, another pleasure ; many leap over precipices and break their rider's neck. I wish you luck, little Roger, and I hope, when you are a man, you will bestride two hobbies that will always carry you along the right road ; one is spirited, the other gentle-tempered ; they are both noble steeds : one is called Courage and the other Kindness.

COURAGE

OUISON and Frédéric are off to school along the village street. The sun shines gaily and the two children are singing. They sing like the nightingale, because their hearts are light like his. They sing an old song their grandmothers sang when they were little girls, a song their children's children will sing one day ; for songs are tender flowers that never die, they fly from lip to lip down the ages. The lips fade and fall silent one after the other, but the song lives on for ever. There are songs come down to us from the days when the men were shepherds and all the women shepherdesses. That is the reason why they speak of nothing but sheep and wolves.

Louison and Frédéric sing ; their mouths are as round as a flower and the song rises shrill and thin and clear in the morning air. But listen ! suddenly the notes stick in Frédéric's throat.

What unseen power is it has strangled the music on the boy's lips? It is fear. Every day, as sure as fate, he comes upon the butcher's dog at the end of the village street, and every day his heart seems to stop and his legs begin to shake at the sight. Yet the butcher's dog does not fly at him, or even threaten to. He sits peaceably at his master's shop-door. But he is black, and he has a staring bloodshot eye and shows a row of sharp white teeth. He looks frightful. And then he squats there in the middle of bits of meat and offal and all sorts of horrors—which makes him more terrifying still. Of course it isn't his fault, but he is the presiding genius. Yes, a savage brute, the butcher's dog! So, the instant Frédéric catches sight of the beast before the shop, he picks up a big stone, as he sees grown-up men do to keep off bad-tempered curs, and he slinks past close, close under the opposite wall.

That is how he behaved this time; and Louison laughed at him.

She did not make any of those dare-devil speeches one generally caps with others more reckless still. No, she never said a word; she never stopped singing. But she altered her voice and began

"THEY SING LIKE THE NIGHTINGALE, BECAUSE THEIR HEARTS ARE LIGHT LIKE HIS"

singing on such a mocking note that Frédéric reddened to his very ears. Then his little head began to buzz with many thoughts. He learned that we must dread shame even more than danger. And he was afraid of being afraid.

So, when school was over and he saw the butcher's dog, he marched undauntedly past the astonished animal.

History adds that he kept a corner of his eye on Louison to see if she was looking. It is a true saying that, if there were no dames nor damsels in the world, men would be less courageous.

CATHERINE'S "AT HOME"

IT is five o'clock. Mademoiselle Catherine is "at home" to her dolls. It is her "day." The dolls do not talk; the little Genie that gave them their smile did not vouchsafe the gift of speech. He refused it for the general good; if dolls could talk, we should hear nobody but them. Still there is no lack of conversation. Mademoiselle Catherine talks for her guests as well as for herself; she asks questions and gives the answers.

"How do you do?—Very well, thank you. I broke my arm yesterday morning going to buy cakes. But it's quite well now.—Ah! so much the better.—And how is your little girl?—She has the whooping-cough.—Ah! what a pity! Does she cough much?—Oh, no, it's a whooping-cough where there's no cough. You know I had two more children last week.—Really? that makes four,

doesn't it?—Four or five, I've forgotten which. When you have so many, you get confused.—What a pretty frock you have.—Oh, I've got far prettier ones still at home.—Do you go to the theatre?—Yes, every evening. I was at the Opera yesterday; but Polichinelle wasn't playing, because the wolf had eaten him.—I go to dances every day, my dear.—It is so amusing.—Yes, I wear a blue gown and dance with the young men, Generals, Princes, Confectioners, all the most distinguished people.—You look as pretty as an angel to-day, my dear.—Oh, it's the spring.—Yes, but what a pity it's snowing.—*I* love the snow, because it's white.—Oh, there's black snow, you know.—Yes, but that's the bad snow."

There's fine conversation for you; Mademoiselle Catherine's tongue goes nineteen to the dozen. Still I have one fault to find with her; she talks all the time to the same visitor, who is pretty and wears a fine frock. There she is wrong. A good hostess is equally gracious to all her guests. She treats them all with affability, and if she shows any particular preference, it is to the more retiring and the less prosperous. We should flatter the unhappy; it is

the only flattery allowable. But Catherine has discovered this for herself. She has guessed the secret of true politeness: a kind heart is everything. She pours out tea for the company, and forgets nobody. On the contrary, she presses the dolls that are poor and unhappy and shy to help themselves to invisible cakes and sandwiches made of dominoes.

Some day Catherine will hold a salon where the old French courtesy will live again.

GETTING WELL

GERMAINE is ill. Nobody knows how it began. The arm which sows fever is invisible like the dustman's hand, the old fellow who comes every night and makes the little ones so sleepy. But Germaine was not ill very long and she was not very bad, and now she is getting well again. This getting well is even pleasanter than being quite well, which comes next. In the same way hoping and wishing are better, very often, than anything we wish for or hope for. Germaine lies in bed in her pretty, bright room, and her dreams are as bright-coloured as her room.

She looks, a little languidly still, at her doll, which sleeps beside her own bed. There are sympathies

that go deep between little girls and their dolls. Germaine's doll fell ill at the same time as her little mamma, and now she is getting well with her. She will take her first carriage outing sitting by Germaine's side.

She has seen the doctor too. Alfred came to feel the doll's pulse. He is Doctor " As-bad-as-can-be." He talks of nothing but cutting off arms and legs. But Germaine asked him so earnestly that he agreed to cure her dolly without slashing it to pieces. But he prescribed the nastiest medicines.

Illness has one advantage at any rate ; it makes us know our friends. Germaine is sure now she can count on Alfred's goodness ; she is certain Lucie is the best of sisters. All the nine days her illness lasted, Lucie came to learn her lessons and do her sewing in the sick room. She insists on bringing the little patient her herb-tea herself. And it is not a bitter potion, such as Alfred ordered ; no, it is balmy with the scent of wild flowers.

When she smells its perfume, Germaine's thoughts fly to the flowery mountain paths, the haunt of children and bees, where she played so often last

year. Alfred too remembers the beautiful ways, and the woods, and the springs, and the mules that climbed up and up on the brink of precipices with a sound of tinkling bells.

ACROSS THE MEADOWS

AFTER breakfast Catherine started off to the meadows with her little brother Jean. When they set out, the day seemed as young and fresh as they were. The sky was not altogether blue; it was grey rather, but of a tenderer grey than any blue. Catherine's eyes are just the same grey, as if made out of a bit of morning sky.

Catherine and Jean wander all by themselves through the fields. Their mother is a farmer's wife and is at work at home. They have no nurse-maid to take them, and they don't need one. They know their way, and all the woods and fields and hills. Catherine can tell the time by looking at the sun, and she has guessed all sorts of pretty secrets of Nature that town-bred children have no suspicion of. Little Jean himself understands a great many things about the woods, the pools, and the mountains, for his little soul is a country soul.

ACROSS THE MEADOWS

Catherine and Jean go roaming through the flowery meadows. As they go, Catherine gathers a nosegay. She picks blue centauries, scarlet poppies, cuckoo-flowers, and buttercups, which she also knows as "little chicks." She picks those pretty purple blossoms that grow in hedgerows and are called Venus' looking-glasses. She picks the dark ears of the milkwort, and crane's-bill and lily of the valley, whose tiny white bells shed a delicious perfume at the least puff of wind. Catherine loves flowers because they are beautiful; and she loves them too because they make such pretty ornaments. She is very simply dressed, and her pretty hair is hid under a brown linen cap. She wears a cotton check pinafore over her plain frock, and goes in wooden shoes. She has never seen rich dresses except on the Virgin Mary and the St. Catherine in the parish church. But there are some things little girls know directly they are born. Catherine knows that flowers are becoming to wear, and that pretty ladies who pin nosegays in their bosoms look lovelier than ever. So she has a notion she must be very fine indeed now, carrying a nosegay bigger than her own head. Her thoughts are as bright and fragrant

as her flowers. They are thoughts that cannot be put into words ; there are no words pretty enough. It wants song tunes for that, the liveliest and softest airs, the sweetest songs. So Catherine sings, as she gathers her nosegay : " Away to the woods alone " and " My heart is for him, my heart is for him."

Little Jean is of another temper. He follows another line of ideas. He is a broth of a boy, he is ; Jean is not breeched yet, but his spirit is beyond his years and there's no more rollicking blade than he. While he grips his sister's pinafore with one hand, for fear of tumbling, he shakes his whip in the other like a sturdy lad. His father's head stableman can hardly crack his any better when he meets his sweetheart, bringing home the horses from watering at the river. Little Jean is lulled by no soft reveries. He never heeds the field flowers. The games he dreams of are stiff jobs of work. His thoughts dwell on waggons stogged in the mire and big cart-horses hauling at the collar at his voice and under his lash.

Catherine and Jean have climbed above the meadows, up the hill, to a high ground from which you can make out all the chimneys of the village

dotted among the trees and in the far distance the steeples of six parishes. Then you see what a big place the world is. Then Catherine can better understand the stories she has been taught—the dove from the Ark, the Israelites in the Promised Land, and Jesus going from city to city.

" Let's sit down there," she says.

Down she sits, and, opening her hands, she sheds her flowery harvest all over her. She is all fragrant with blossoms, and in a moment the butterflies come fluttering round her. She picks and chooses and matches her flowers ; she weaves them into garlands and wreaths, and hangs flower-bells in her ears ; she is decked out now like the rustic image of a Holy Virgin the shepherds venerate. Her little brother Jean, who has been busy all this while driving a team of imaginary horses, sees her in all this bravery. Instantly he is filled with admiration. A religious awe penetrates all his childish soul. He stops, and the whip falls from his fingers. He feels that she is beautiful and all smothered in lovely flowers. He tries in vain to say all this in his soft, indistinct speech. But she has guessed. Little Catherine is his big sister, and a big sister is a little

mother; she foresees, she guesses; she has the sacred instinct.

"Yes, darling," cries Catherine, "I am going to make you a beautiful wreath, and you will look like a little king."

And so she twines together the white flowers, the yellow flowers, and the red flowers, into a chaplet. She puts it on little Jean's head, and he flushes with pride and pleasure. She kisses her little brother, lifts him in her arms and plants him, all garlanded with blossoms, on a big stone. Then she looks at him admiringly, because he is beautiful and *she* has made him so.

And standing there on his rustic pedestal, little Jean knows he is beautiful, and the thought fills him with a deep respect for himself. He feels he is something holy. Very upright and still, with round eyes and tight-drawn lips, arms by his side with the palms open and the fingers parted like the spokes of a wheel, he tastes a pious joy to be an idol—he is sure he is an idol now. The sky is overhead, the woods and fields lie at his feet. He is the hub of the universe. He alone is great, he alone is beautiful.

But suddenly Catherine breaks into a laugh. She shouts :

" Oh, how funny you look, little Jean ! how funny you do look ! "

She runs up and throws her arms round him, she kisses him and shakes him ; the heavy wreath of flowers slips down over his nose. And she laughs again :

" Oh, how funny he looks ! how very funny ! "

But it is no laughing matter for little Jean. He is sad and sorry, wondering why it is all over and he has left off being beautiful. It hurts to come down to earth again !

Now the wreath is unwound and tossed on the grass, and little Jean is like anybody else once more. Yes, he has left off being beautiful. But he is still a sturdy young scamp. He soon has his whip in hand again and now he is hauling his team of six, the six big cart-horses of his dreams, out of that rut. Catherine is still playing with her flowers. But some of them are dying. Others are closing in sleep. For the flowers go to sleep like the animals, and look ! the campanulas, plucked a few hours ago, are shutting their purple bells and sinking

SHE PUTS IT ON LITTLE JEAN'S HEAD AND HE FLUSHES WITH PRIDE AND PLEASURE. SHE KISSES HER LITTLE BROTHER

asleep in the little hands that have parted them from life.

A light breeze blows by, and Catherine shivers. It is night coming.

" I am hungry," says little Jean.

But Catherine has not a bit of bread to give her little brother. She says :

" Little brother, let's go back to the house."

And they both think of the cabbage soup steaming in the pot that hangs from the hook right under the great chimney. Catherine gathers her flowers in her arm, and taking her little brother by the hand she leads him homewards.

The sun sank slowly down to the ruddy West. The swallows swooped past the two children, almost touching them with their wings, that hardly seemed to move. It was getting dark. Catherine and Jean pressed closer together.

Catherine dropped her flowers one after the other by the way. They could hear, in the wide silence, the untiring chirp-chirp of the crickets. They were afraid, both of them, and they were sad ; the melancholy of nightfall had entered into their little hearts. All round them was familiar ground, but

the things they knew the best looked strange and uncanny. The earth seemed suddenly to have grown too big and too old for them. They were tired, and they began to think they would never reach the house, where mother was making the soup for all the family. Jean's whip hung limp and still, and Catherine let the last of her flowers slip

from her tired fingers. She was dragging Jean along by the arm, and neither said a word.

At last they saw a long way off the roof of their house and smoke rising in the darkening sky. Then they stopped running, and clapping their hands together, shouted for joy. Catherine kissed her little brother; then they set off running again as

fast as ever their weary legs would carry them. When they reached the village, there were women coming back from the fields who gave them good evening. They breathed again. Their mother was on the door-step, in a white cap, soup-ladle in hand.

" Come along, little ones, come along ! " she called to them. And they threw themselves into her arms. When she reached the parlour where the cabbage soup was smoking on the table, Catherine shivered again. She had seen night come down over the earth. Jean, seated on the settle, his chin on a level with the table, was already eating his soup.

THE MARCH PAST

RENÉ, Bernard, Roger, Jacques, and Étienne feel sure there is nothing finer in the world than to be a soldier. Francine agrees with them and she would love to be a boy to join the army. They think so because soldiers wear fine uniforms, epaulettes and gold lace, and glittering swords. There is yet another reason for putting the soldier in the front rank of citizens—because he gives his life for his Country. There is no true greatness in this world but that of sacrifice, and to offer one's life is the greatest of all sacrifices, because it includes all others. That is why the hearts of the crowd beat high when a regiment goes by.

René is the General. He wears a cocked hat and rides a war-horse. The hat is made of paper and the horse is a chair. His army consists of a drummer and four men—of whom one is a girl! "Shoulder

arms! Forward, march!" and the march past begins. Francine and Roger look quite imposing under arms. True, Jacques does not hold his gun very valiantly. He is a melancholy lad. But we must not blame him for that; dreamers can be just as brave as those who never dream at all. His little brother Étienne, the tiniest mite in the regiment, looks pensive. He is ambitious; he would like to be a general officer right away, and that makes him sad.

"Forward! forward!" René shouts the order. "We are to fall on the Chinese, who are in the dining-room." The Chinese are chairs. When you play at fighting, chairs make first-rate Chinese. They fall—and what better can the Chinese do? When all the chairs are feet in air, René announces: "Soldiers, now we have beaten the Chinese, we will have our rations." The idea is well received on all hands. Yes, soldiers must eat. This time the Commissariat has furnished the best of victuals—buns, maids of honour, coffee cakes and chocolate cakes, red-currant syrup. The army falls to with a will. Only Étienne will eat nothing. He frowns and looks enviously at the sword and cocked hat

which the General has left on a chair. He creeps up, snatches them, and slips into the next room. There he stands alone before the glass ; he puts on the cocked hat and waves the sword ; he is a General, a General without an army, a General all to himself. He tastes the pleasures of ambition—pleasures full of vague forecastings and long, long hopes.

DEAD LEAVES

AUTUMN is here. The wind blowing through the woods whirls about the dead leaves. The chestnuts are stripped bare already and lift their black skeleton arms in the air. And now the beeches and hornbeams are shedding *their* leaves. The birches and aspens are turned to trees of gold, and only the great oak keeps his coronal of green.

The morning is fresh ; a keen wind is chasing the clouds across a grey sky and reddening the youngsters' fingers. Pierre, Babet and Jeannot are

off to collect the dead leaves, the leaves that once, when they were still alive, were full of dew and songs of birds, and which now strew the ground in thousands and thousands with their little shrivelled corpses. They are dead, but they smell good. They will make a fine litter for Riquette, the goat, and Roussette, the cow. Pierre has taken his big basket ;

he is quite a little man. Babet has her sack ; she is quite a little woman. Jeannot comes last, trundling the wheelbarrow.

Down the hill they go at a run. At the edge of the wood they find the other village children, who are come too to lay in a store of dead leaves for the winter. It is not play, this ; it is work.

But never think the children are sad because they

ONE MORE ARMFUL OF DEAD LEAVES, AND THE LITTLE WORKERS WILL TAKE THE ROAD HOME

are at work. Work is serious, yes ; it is not sad. Very often the little ones mimic it in fun, and children's games, most times, are copies of their elders' workaday doings.

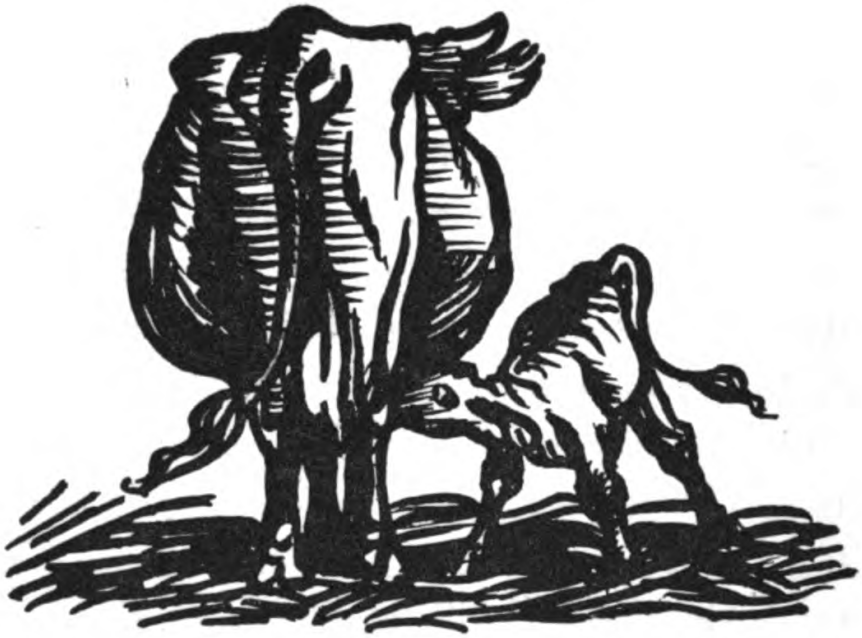
Now they are hard at it. The boys do their part in silence. They are peasant lads, and will soon be men, and peasants do not talk much. But it is different with the little peasant girls ; *their* tongues go at a fine pace, as they fill the baskets and bags.

But now the sun is climbing higher and warming the country pleasantly. From the cottage roofs rise light puffs of smoke. The children know what that means. The smoke tells them the pease-soup is cooking in the pot. One more armful of dead leaves, and the little workers will take the road home. It is a stiff climb. Bending under sacks or toiling behind barrows, they soon get hot, and the sweat comes out in beads. Pierre, Babet and Jeannot stop to take breath.

But the thought of the pease-soup keeps up their courage. Puffing and blowing, they reach home at last. Their mother is waiting for them on the door-step and calls out : " Come along, children, the soup is ready."

DEAD LEAVES

Our little friends find this capital. There's no soup so good as what you have worked for.



SUZANNE

THE Louvre, as you know, is a museum where beautiful things and ancient things are kept safe—and this is wisely done, for old age and beauty are both alike venerable. Among the most touching of the antiquities treasured in the Louvre Museum is a fragment of marble, worn and cracked in many places, but on which can still be clearly made out two maidens holding each a flower in her hand. Both are beautiful figures ; they were young when Greece was young. They say it was the age of perfect beauty. The sculptor who has left us their image represents them in profile, offering each other one of those lotus flowers that were deemed sacred. In the blue cups of their blossoms the world quaffed oblivion of the ills of life. Our men of learning have given much thought to these two maidens. They have turned over many books to

find out about them, big books, bound some in parchment, others in vellum, and many in pig-skin ; but they have never fathomed the reason why the two beautiful maidens hold up a flower in their hands.

What they could not discover after so much labour and thought, so many arduous days and sleepless nights, Mademoiselle Suzanne knew in a moment.

Her papa had taken her to the Louvre, where he had business. Mademoiselle Suzanne looked wonderingly at the antiques, and seeing gods with missing arms and legs and heads, she said to herself : " Ah ! yes, these are the grown-up gentlemen's dolls ; I see now gentlemen break their dollies the same as little girls do." But when she came to the two maidens who, each of them, hold a flower, she threw them a kiss, because they looked so charming. Then her father asked her :

" Why do they give each other a flower ? "

And Suzanne answered at once :

" To wish each other a happy birthday."

Then, after thinking a moment, she added :

" They have the same birthday ; they are both

alike and they are offering each other the same flower. Girl friends should always have the same birthday."

Now Suzanne is far away from the Louvre and the old Greek marbles ; she is in the kingdom of the birds and the flowers. She is spending the bright spring days in the meadows under shelter of the woods. She plays in the grass, and that is the sweetest sort of play. She remembers to-day is her little friend Jacqueline's birthday ; and so she is going to pick flowers which she will give Jacqueline, and kiss her.

FISHING

JEAN set out betimes in the morning with his sister Jeanne, a fishing-pole over his shoulder and a basket on his arm. It is holiday time and the school is shut; that is why Jean goes off every day with his sister Jeanne, a rod over his shoulder and a basket on his arm, along the river bank. Jean is a Tourainer, and Jeanne a lass of Touraine. The river is Tourainer too. It runs crystal-clear between silvery sallows under a moist, mild sky. Morning and evening white mists trail over the grass of the water-meadows. But Jean and Jeanne love the river neither for the greenery of its banks nor its clear waters that mirror the heavens. They love it for the fish in it. They stop presently at the most likely place, and Jeanne sits down under a pollard willow. Laying down his basket, Jean unwinds his tackle. This is very primitive—a switch, with a piece of thread and a bent pin at the

end of it. Jean supplied the rod, Jeanne gave the line and the hook; so the tackle is the common property of brother and sister. Both want it all to themselves, and this simple contrivance, only meant to do mischief to the fishes, becomes the cause of domestic broils and a rain of blows by the peaceful riverside. Brother and sister fight for the free use of the rod and line. Jean's arm is black and blue with pinches and Jeanne's cheek scarlet from her brother's slaps. At last, when they were tired of pinching and hitting, Jean and Jeanne consented to share amicably what neither could appropriate by force. They agreed that the rod should pass alternately from the brother's hands to the sister's after each fish they caught.

Jean begins. But there's no knowing when he will end. He does not break the treaty openly, but he shirks its consequences by a mean trick. Rather than have to hand over the tackle to his sister, he refuses to catch the fish that come, when they nibble the bait and set his float bobbing.

Jean is artful; Jeanne is patient. She has been waiting six hours. But at last she seems tired of doing nothing. She yawns, stretches, lies down in

the shade of the willow, and shuts her eyes. Jean spies her out of one corner of his, and he thinks she is asleep. The float dives. He whips out the line, at the end of which gleams a flash of silver. A gudgeon has taken the pin.

" Ah ! it's my turn now," cries a voice behind him.

And Jeanne snatches the rod.

THE PENALTIES OF GREATNESS

IT was to go and see their friend Jean that Roger, Marcel, Bernard, Jacques and Étienne set out along the broad highroad that winds like a handsome yellow riband through the fields and meadows.

Now they are off. They start all abreast; it is the best way. Only there is one defect in the arrangement this time; Étienne is too little to keep up.

He tries hard and puts his best foot foremost. His short legs stretch their widest. He swings his arms into the bargain. But he is too little; he cannot go as fast as his companions. He falls behind because he is too small; it is no use.

The big boys, who are older, should surely wait for him, you say, and suit their pace to his. So they should, but they don't. Forward! cry the strong ones of this world, and they leave the weaklings in the lurch. But hear the end of the story. All of a sudden our four tall, strong, sturdy friends see something jumping on the ground. It jumps because it is a frog, and it wants to reach the meadow along the roadside. The meadow is froggy's home, and he loves it; he has his residence there beside a brook. He jumps, and jumps.

He is a green frog, and he looks like a leaf that is alive. Now the lads are in the meadow; very soon they feel their feet sinking in the soft ground where the rank grass grows. A few steps more, and they are up to their knees in mud. The grass hid a swamp underneath.

They just manage to struggle out. Shoes, socks, calves are all as black as ink. The fairy of the green field has put gaiters of mire on the four bad boys.

Étienne comes up panting for breath. He hardly knows, when he sees them in this pickle, if he should be glad or sorry. His simple little heart is filled with a sense of the catastrophes that befall the great

and strong. As for the four muddy urchins, they turn back piteously the way they came, for how can they, I should like to know, how can they go and see their friend Jean with their shoes and stockings in this state? When they get home again, their mothers will know how naughty they have been by the evidence of their legs, while little Étienne's innocence will be legible on his sturdy little stumps.

A CHILD'S DINNER PARTY

HAT fun it is playing at dinner parties! You can have a very plain dinner or a very elaborate one, just as you like. You can manage it with nothing at all. Only you have to pretend a great deal then.

Thérèse and her little sister Pauline have asked Pierre and Marthe to a dinner in the country. Proper invitations have been issued, and they have been talking about it for days. Mamma has given her two little girls good advice—and good things to eat, too. There will be nougat and sweet cakes, and a chocolate cream. The table will be laid in the arbour.

"If only it will be fine!" cries Thérèse, who is nine now. At her age one knows the fondest hopes are often disappointed in this world and you cannot always do what you propose. But little Pauline has

none of these worries. She cannot think it will be wet. It will be fine, because she wants it to.

And lo! the great day has broken clear and sunny. Not a cloud in the sky. The two guests have come. How fortunate! For this was another subject of anxiety for Thérèse. Marthe had caught a cold, and perhaps she would not be better in time. As for little Pierre, everybody knows he always misses the train. You cannot blame him for it. It is his misfortune, not his fault. His mother is unpunctual by nature. Everywhere and always little Pierre arrives after everybody else; he has never in his life seen the beginning of anything. This has given him a dull, resigned look.

The dinner is served; ladies and gentlemen, take your places! Thérèse presides. She is thoughtful and serious; the housewifely instinct is awaking in her bosom. Pierre carves valiantly. Nose in the dish and elbows above his head, he struggles to divide the leg of a chicken. Why, his feet even take their part in the tremendous effort. Mademoiselle Marthe eats elegantly, without any ado or any noise, just like a grown-up lady. Pauline is not so particular; she eats how she can and as much as she can.

Thérèse, now serving her guests, now one of them herself, is content ; and contentment is better than joy. The little dog Gyp has come to eat up the scraps, and Thérèse thinks, as she watches him crunching the bones, that dogs know nothing of all the dainty ways that make grown-up dinners, and children's too, so refined and delightful.

THE ARTIST

MICHEL'S father is a painter. The boy has often watched him at his easel, and seen wonderful pictures of men and animals growing on the canvas, where earth and sea and sky and all nature appear in lifelike colours. He has seen his father lovingly painting women whose eyes and lips seem of flame and dew, women with fair, white skins and smiling mouths. When I am grown up, thinks little Michel, I shall not paint women. I shall paint horses, because that is finer.

Already he tries and tries to draw the finest animals he can imagine. But the horses his fingers make have this about them—they are not a bit like horses. They are more like ostriches on four legs. Yes, painting is very difficult.

Still, Michel makes giant strides, and now when you look at his drawings you can make out more or

less what they are meant for. He draws every day. He is painstaking and loves the work; and those two things are the best half of genius. Time will do the rest, and perhaps one day Michel will be as great a painter as his father. Yesterday he covered a sheet of foolscap with a fine composition, in which he represented a gentleman, stick in hand, walking by the sea-shore. Except that his arm comes out of his chest, the gentleman is very well drawn. He has four buttons on his coat; what could be more perfect? Near him is a tree. In the distance a boat. The gentleman looks as if he were going to pick up the boat in his hand and wanted to swallow the tree. The perspective is not quite right. They criticize the same fault in the greatest masters.

To-day Michel is finishing a still more ambitious design. It contains men, boats, and windmills. He puts the finishing touch to this great work. He looks at it, and the boats seem to glide over the water and the sails of the windmills to go round. He is proud of himself. He glories in his work, as true artists do, —as God did.

But he has forgotten the kitten playing on the floor beside him with a ball of thread. The moment

Michel leaves the room, the little animal will jump up on the table and with a knock of its white paw upset the ink-pot over the papers. Thus will perish Michel's masterpiece. The artist will be down-hearted at first. But soon he will produce another masterpiece to make good the wrong done him by the kitten and cruel fate. So talent rises victorious over ill fortune.

JACQUELINE AND MIRAUT

JACQUELINE and Miraut are old friends. Jacqueline is a little girl, and Miraut is a big dog. They are of the same world, they are both country bred ; hence their profound sympathy. How long have they known each other ? They cannot tell ; it goes beyond a dog's memory and beyond a little girl's. Besides, they don't need to know ; they have no wish and no need to know anything. All the idea they have is that they have been friends for a very long time, since the beginning of things ; for they cannot conceive, either of them, that the universe existed before their time. The world, as they imagine it, is young, simple, and artless as themselves. Jacqueline sees Miraut and Miraut sees Jacqueline right in the middle of it.

Miraut is far bigger and stronger than Jacqueline.

When he puts his fore-paws on the child's shoulders, he towers a whole head and chest above her. He could eat her up in three mouthfuls ; but he knows, he feels a virtue is in her, and that, small as she is, she is precious. He admires, he loves her. He

licks her face out of pure affection. Jacqueline loves him because he is strong and kind. She has a great respect for him. She notices that he knows many secrets she does not, and that the mysterious genius of the earth is in him. She reveres him as men in

olden days, under another sky, revered rustic, hairy gods of the woods and fields.

But one day she has a strange surprise that alarms, amazes her ; she sees her venerated divinity, her genius of the earth, her hairy god, Miraut, tied by a long leash to a tree, beside the well. She gazes and wonders. Miraut looks at her out of his honest, patient eyes. Not knowing he is a divinity, a shaggy god, he wears his chain and collar without resentment. But Jacqueline hesitates, she dares not go nearer. She cannot understand her divine and mysterious friend being a prisoner, and a vague sadness fills her childish soul.

TALES OF PIERRE AND SUZANNE

THE MONSTERS

PEOPLE who aver that they can recall nothing of their childhood's days have always greatly surprised me. For my own part I have retained vivid recollections of the time when I was quite a little boy. True, they are but isolated pictures, but for that very reason they stand out in bolder relief from the vague, mysterious background which surrounds them. Though I am still far enough from being an old man, these memories which I love seem to me to proceed from a past that is infinitely remote. In those days the world was radiant with its early glories and apparelled in the hues of dawn. Were I a savage I should take the world to be just as young—or just as old, if you will—as I myself. But a savage, unhappily, I am not. Many are the books I have read concerning the antiquity of the earth and the origin of species, and sadly I compare the

transitory life of the individual with the long endurance of the race. And so I know that it is not so very long ago that I used to sleep in a cot in a large room in a big, dilapidated house—since pulled down to make room for the new buildings of the École des Beaux Arts. It was here that my father lived, a humble practitioner of medicine and an ardent collector of the curiosities of Nature. Who asserts that children have no memory? I can see that room now with its green-sprigged wall-paper and a pretty coloured-print which, as I discovered later, represented Paul bearing Virginia in his arms across the ford of the Black River. In this room the most extraordinary adventures befel me.

As I have said, I had a little cot, which stood, in the daytime, in a corner. At night my mother used to move it into the middle of the room in order, no doubt, that it might be nearer her own bed, the great curtains of which filled me with awe and admiration. Putting me to bed was quite a performance. Entreaties, tears, and kisses, all had to be gone through. Nor was this the whole of the matter. When I had everything off but my shirt, I would dart away, leaping hither and thither like a

young rabbit, till at length my mother would catch hold of me beneath a piece of furniture and lay me in my cot. It was fine fun !

But no sooner had I lain down than the strangest individuals, people whom my family knew nothing about, began to move in procession all about me. They had noses like storks' bills, bristling moustaches, protuberant bellies, and legs like chanticleer's. They came in one after another showing themselves in profile, each with one goggle eye in the middle of his cheek, bearing brooms, skewers, guitars, squirts, and other instruments that I knew not. Such ugly beings had no business to show themselves ; but this at least I must record in their favour : they swept noiselessly along the wall, and not one of them—not even the littlest, and the last, who had a pair of bellows sticking out behind him—ever so much as took a step towards my bed. It was clear that some power held them to the walls across which they glided—seemingly unsubstantial things. This reassured me a little, but I never went to sleep. You can imagine one would not care to close one's eyes in such company as that, and I kept mine wide open. And yet, here is another marvel !

I would suddenly find the room was flooded with sunlight, and no one in it but my mother in her pink dressing-gown, and I could not for the life of me imagine how the night and the weird folk had vanished.

"What a boy you are to sleep," my mother would say with a laugh; and a fine sleeper I must indeed have been.

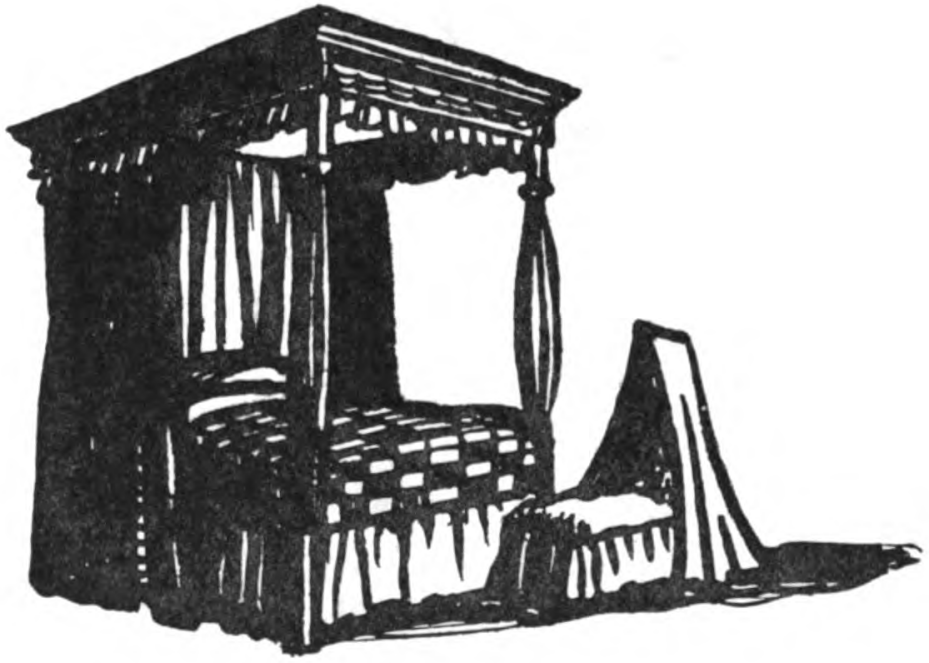
Yesterday, as I was taking a stroll along by the quays, I happened to see in a picture-shop one of those books of grotesques, now much sought after, which Callot of Lorraine wrought with his firm and delicate needle. When I was a child, Mère Mignot, our neighbour, who plied the trade of print-seller, covered a whole wall with them, and I used to gaze at them every day when I went out for my walk, and when I came in. I feasted my eyes upon these goblin shapes, and as I lay in my little bed I used to see them all again, and had not the sense to recognize them. O Jacques Callot, what wonders you could work!

The little *cahier* over whose leaves I lingered brought back a whole world that had faded from my memory. It seemed as though in the chambers

THEY CAME IN ONE AFTER ANOTHER SHOWING THEMSELVES IN PROFILE


BODLEIANA

of my soul there floated a perfumed dust, and that in its midst there passed the shadowy forms of those whom I had loved long since.



"I WILL GIVE YOU THIS ROSE"

WE used to live in a large house full of strange things. The walls were adorned with the arms of savage warriors surmounted by skulls and scalps. Pirogues with their paddles were suspended from the ceilings side by side with stuffed alligators. There were glass cases containing birds and birds'-nests, branches of coral, and a host of spiteful, malevolent-looking little skeletons. I never knew what bond my father had entered into with these monstrous creatures, but I know now. He had bound himself to collect them. Most enlightened and unselfish of men, it was his ambition to cram all creation into a cupboard. He did it in the interests of science; this was what he said, and what he believed. But as a matter of fact, he had the collecting mania upon him.

The whole place was stuffed with natural curiosities. The only room which had not suffered a zoological, ethnographical, or teratological invasion was the little drawing-room. There neither serpents' scales, nor turtle shells, nor bones, nor flint arrow-heads, nor tomahawks found a place; but only roses: the wall-paper was strewn with them. They were roses in bud, little, modest, timid things—all of them dainty, and all alike.

My mother, who was on anything but friendly terms with comparative zoology and craniology, used to pass her days in this room sitting at her work-table, while I, seated on the floor at her feet, would play with a sheep which, though once possessing four feet, had now come down to three, a circumstance which yet did not render it worthy to associate with the two-headed rabbits that figured in my father's teratological collection. I also had a doll that moved its arms and smelled of paint. I must have been gifted with a deal of imagination in those days, for this sheep and this doll played various parts in a multitude of dramas. When anything of a really interesting nature befel the sheep or the doll I used to relate it to my mother.

But to no purpose. Grown-up people, it may be observed, never really understand the stories children tell them. My mother was absent-minded. She never listened carefully enough. This was her great defect. But she had a way of looking at me with her great eyes and calling me " little noodle " that used to set everything to rights.

One day, in the little drawing-room, she put down her work and, picking me up in her arms, pointed to one of the flowers on the wall, saying, " I will give you this rose," and so that there might be no mistake she made a cross on it with her bodkin.

No present ever made me happier.

THE PRINCES IN THE TOWER

"HE looks like a brigand, this little boy of mine, with his hair sticking up in this fashion. Cut it *aux enfants d'Édouard*, Monsieur Valence."

Monsieur Valence, to whom my mother addressed these words, was an old hair-dresser, a lame, but dapper little man, the mere sight of whom reminded me of the horrid smell of heated curling-irons. I used to shrink from him not only because his hands were all greasy with pomade, but because he could never cut my hair without letting some of it get down my back. When, therefore, he began to put the white overall on me and to wrap a towel round my neck, I used to make a fuss, and he would say, "But surely you don't want to go about looking like a wild man, as though you had just come off the raft of the *Medusa?*"

Whenever he had the chance he used to relate, in his deep Southern tones, the story of the wreck of the *Medusa*, from which he had only been rescued after enduring the most horrible privations. The raft, the unavailing signals of distress, how they were driven to eat human flesh—he described it all with the easy-going manner of one who knew how to look on the bright side of things, for he was a jovial man, was Monsieur Valence.

He took too long over the business to please me that day, and did my hair in what struck me as being a very strange manner, when I looked at myself in the glass. It was all patted down quite smooth, and combed straight over my forehead nearly on to my eyebrows, and it fell down on to my cheeks like a spaniel's ears.

My mother was enchanted. Valence had done his work perfectly, and, arrayed as I was in my black velvet blouse, all that remained to be done, she said, was to shut me up with my elder brother in the Tower. "Ah, if they dared!" she added, taking me up in her arms with a delicious air of bravado.

And she carried me, hugging me tightly, to the carriage. For we were going to make a call.

I plied her with questions about this elder brother, and about the Tower, which made me feel afraid.

And then my mother—who was gifted with the divine patience and joyous simplicity of those beings whose sole mission in this world is to love—told me in pretty baby-talk how King Edward's two children, who were beautiful and good, were torn away from their mother and smothered in a dungeon of the Tower of London by their wicked uncle, Richard. And she said, too, having apparently obtained the idea from some popular picture of the day, that the Princes' little dog barked to warn them of the murderers' approach.

The story, she concluded, was a very ancient one, but so moving and so beautiful, that people still painted pictures of it and still acted it on the stage, and that when she saw it at the theatre all the audience had shed tears, and she with them.

I said that anyone must be very wicked to make my mamma weep like that, and all the other people too.

She replied that, on the contrary, such a play could only have been written by a very noble and a very clever man; but I did not understand her. I knew nothing then of the luxury of tears.

The carriage put us down in the Ile Saint Louis, outside an old house that I had not seen before; and we went up a stone staircase whose worn and broken steps sent a chill to my heart. At the first landing a little dog began yapping. "'Tis he," thought I, "'tis the dog of the Princes in the Tower"; and a sudden wild, uncontrollable panic took possession of me. Evidently this was the staircase of the Tower, and I with my hair cut to look like a bonnet, and my velvet blouse, was one of the little Princes. They were going to kill me! I would go no farther, and clung to my mother's dress shrieking, "Take me away, take me away! I don't want to go up the staircase of the Tower."

"Be quiet, then, you little silly. . . . There, there, then, don't be afraid. . . . This child is really too nervous. . . . Pierre, Pierre, my dear boy, do have a little sense."

But, stiff and convulsed with fear, I hung on to her skirt and refused to be comforted. I yelled, I howled, I choked, staring wildly into the shadows which my terror had peopled with a multitude of mysterious figures.

At the sound of my cries a door on the landing opened, and an old gentleman came out in whom, despite my terror, despite the Turkish cap and dressing-gown in which he was arrayed, I recognized my friend Robin, my good Robin who used once a week to bring me shortcakes in the lining of his hat. Yes, it was Robin himself; but I could not imagine how he came to be in the Tower, not knowing that "the Tower" was a house, that the house was old, and that it was natural that this old gentleman should inhabit it.

He stretched out his arms towards us, his snuff-box in his left hand, and between the thumb and forefinger of his right hand a pinch of snuff. It was he!

"Come in, dear lady," said he. "My wife is better; she will be delighted to see you. But Master Pierre, I fancy, is not very easy in his mind.

Is he frightened at our little dog? Come here, Finette."

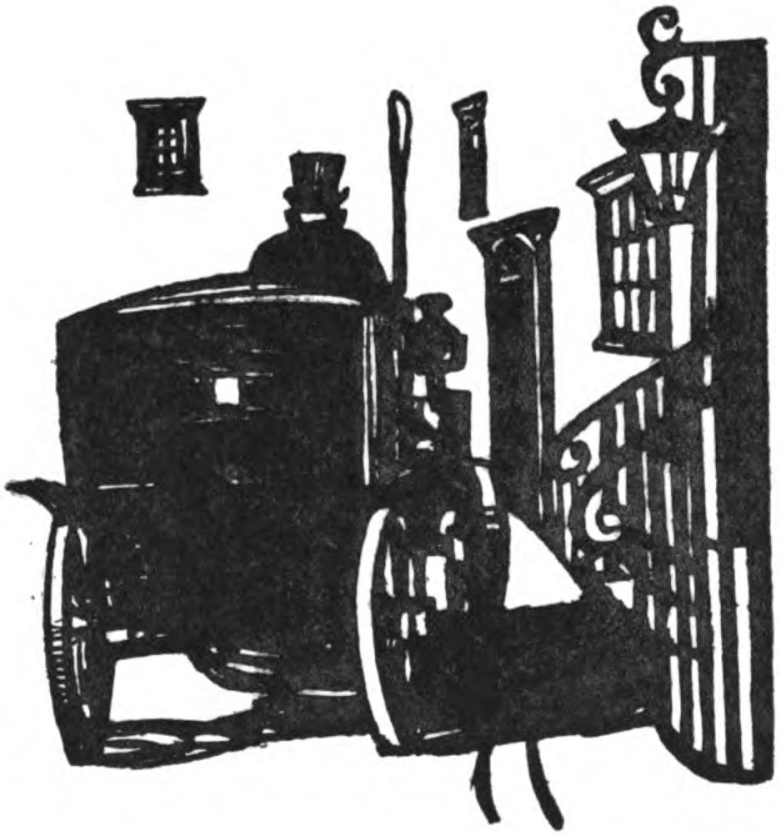
I was reassured, and said:

"You live in an ugly tower, Monsieur Robin!"

Here my mother gave my arm a pinch to prevent me, as I understood quite well, from asking my friend Robin for a cake, which was exactly what I was about to do.

In Monsieur and Madame Robin's yellow drawing-room I found Finette a great resource. I played with her, still retaining the belief that it was she who had barked at the murderers of the little Princes. This was why I let her have some of the cake which Monsieur Robin gave me. But one soon wearies of doing the same thing, especially when one is little. My thoughts flew hither and thither like birds that flit from branch to branch, and finally came back once more to the Princes in the Tower. Having formed an opinion concerning them, I was anxious to produce it. Catching hold of Monsieur Robin by the sleeve, I said, "I say, Monsieur Robin, if mamma had been in the Tower of London, you know, she wouldn't have let the wicked uncle smother the little Princes beneath their pillows."

I thought Monsieur Robin did not seem to appreciate the full force of my observation, but when we were alone—mamma and I—on the staircase, she gathered me up in her arms and exclaimed, " Oh, you little demon, you, how I love you ! "



THE STAR

UZANNE has completed her twelfth month to-night, and during the year that she has been on this old Earth of ours she has passed through a multitude of experiences. A man who could make as many valuable discoveries in twelve years as Suzanne has made in as many months, would be a god among his fellows. Children are neglected geniuses ; they seize on the world with superhuman energy. There is nothing comparable to this primal putting forth of vital force, this first upspringing of the soul. Do you realize what it is when these little creatures exercise the faculties of sight and touch, of observation, comparison, and memory ? Have you any conception of what walking, coming and going means to them ? And, then, their play ! Why, there you have the beginning of all the arts. A song and a puppet, a doll and a rhyme, why 'tis nearly the whole of Shakespeare !

Suzanne is the possessor of a great basketful of toys. Of these, only some, such as the wooden animals and india-rubber dolls, are toys by nature and intention. The others merely owe their toy-like state to a peculiar freak of fortune. These latter consist of old purses, scraps of lace, the bottoms of boxes, a yard-measure, a scissor-case, a tin kettle, a railway guide, and a pebble. They are one and all pitiably the worse for wear. Every day Suzanne pulls them out of the basket, one after another, to give to her mother. She bestows no exceptional attention on any one of them in particular, and as a rule makes no distinction between her little stock of possessions and things in general. For her, the whole world is a great big toy, all carved and painted.

If you took the trouble to enter into this conception of Nature, and, in the light of it, to interpret all that Suzanne does and thinks, you would be filled with admiration at the little soul's logic. But, then, we judge her according to our ideas, not hers. And because she does not reason like us, we conclude that she does not reason at all. What an injustice! I can look at the matter from the right

standpoint, and I can detect the workings of an ordered intelligence where the vulgar would perceive nothing but a succession of disconnected actions.

Nevertheless, I dwell in no fool's paradise. I am not a man who idolizes his children. I recognize that my daughter is not so vastly superior to any other child. I do not employ the language of exaggeration in speaking of her. I merely say to her mother :

" My dear, 'tis a very pretty little maid, this little maid of ours."

Her answer somewhat resembles the reply made by Mrs. Primrose when her neighbours paid her a like compliment.

" My friend, Suzanne is what Heaven has made her ; handsome enough, if she be good enough."

And as she says these words, she looks down long and lovingly at Suzanne, and beneath her drooping lashes one knows her eyes are beaming with pride and adoration.

But I insist.

" Agree that she is pretty," I say.

But she has several reasons for not agreeing, and I know them better than she does herself. She

likes to be continually hearing that her child is pretty. Yet, if she said so herself, she would regard it as a little unbecoming, she would deem herself slightly lacking in taste. But, above all, she would fear lest she should offend some mysterious, invisible power, a power which she does not know, but which she feels is at hand, somewhere in the background there, ready to visit on the children the pride of overweening mothers.

And where is the happy man who would not feel a sinking of the heart at the thought of that spectre so surely hiding behind the curtains? And who, at night, as he pressed his wife and child to his breast, would have the courage to say in the presence of the viewless horror, "Dear hearts, how much of our allotted portion of beauty and delight is still in store for us?" Therefore it is that I make reply:

"You are in the right, dear heart, you are ever in the right. Joy has lighted here, beneath this modest roof. Hush, speak softly therefore, lest she spread her wings and fly away. The Athenian mothers used to be afraid of Nemesis, a goddess ever present, never seen. Of her they knew nought save that she was Envy, the envy of the gods;

Nemesis, whose handiwork was always to be seen in that mysterious yet familiar thing—ill-luck. Ah! those Athenian mothers. I can see one of them—it is a picture I love to conjure up—I can see her now, stooping down beneath the shade of the laurel where the shrill cicadas sing. I can see her as she lays at the foot of the family altar her little nursling, naked as a baby god. I imagine she was called Lysilla, and that she dreaded Nemesis even as you dread it, my dearest; and that, like you, she was so far from wishing to humiliate other women by a great display of Eastern luxury, that all she thought of was obtaining pardon for being so happy and so beautiful. . . . Ah! Lysilla! Lysilla! Have you then passed away and left behind no shadow of your shapely form, nor a breath of your gracious soul? Are you, then, as if you had never been?"

But here Suzanne's mamma slit the thread of these wayward musings.

"Tell me," she said, "why you speak thus of this woman. She had her day as we are having ours. Such is life!"

"Do you imagine, then, my love, that what once has been can be no more?"

" Precisely. I am not like you, who see marvels in everything."

All this she said composedly, as she busied herself making ready to put Suzanne to bed. But Suzanne obstinately refused to be undressed.

In the annals of old Rome such obstinacy would be accounted a virtue, a fine trait in the life of a Titus, say, or a Vespasian, or an Alexander Severus ; but in Suzanne's case it brought her a scolding. Human Justice, what a mockery thou art ! But, truth to tell, if Suzanne wishes to stay up, it is not to watch over the safety of the Empire, but to rummage in the drawer of an old Dutch chest, a great roomy affair with huge brass handles.

Into it she dives. With one hand she holds on to the side of the thing to steady herself, and with the other she seizes bonnets, bodices, dresses, and, uttering all manner of little purling cries the while, casts them with a mighty effort at her feet.

As she stands there, a little lace shawl covering her back, how pathetically comical she looks, and when, every now and then, she turns her head to look at me, the satisfaction that is written on her features is more touching still.

I can restrain myself no longer:

"Just look at her!" I cry, forgetting all about Nemesis. "How adorable she looks standing at the drawer there."

With a gesture at once mutinous and fearful, her *maman* came and placed a finger on my lips. Then she went back to the ransacked drawer. Meanwhile I resumed my train of thought.

"Dearest, if Suzanne is adorable for what she knows, she is no less so for what she does not know. It is when her knowledge fails that her poetry is revealed."

At this Suzanne's mamma turned her eyes upon me, smiling a little mocking smile out of the corner of her mouth.

"Suzanne's poetry," she cried, "your daughter's poetry? Why, she's only happy when she's in the kitchen, that daughter of yours. I found her grubbing among the potato peelings the other day as happy as a queen. You call that poetry, do you?"

"Most certainly, my dear, most certainly! All Nature is mirrored in her eyes with so magnificent a purity that for her nothing in the world is dirty,

not even the refuse-basket. Therefore it is that you discovered her rapt in wondering admiration of cabbage leaves, onion skin, and shrimps' tails. It was a delicious experience for her. I assure you she transmutes Nature with heavenly alchemy, and whatsoever she sees or touches is instinct with beauty in her eyes."

During this harangue Suzanne quitted her chest of drawers and went to the window. Her mother followed her and took her in her arms. The lovely tresses of the acacia whose blossom lay in trails of white about our courtyard were bathed in the translucent darkness. The dog was sleeping with his front paws outside his kennel. Far off the earth lay drenched in liquid azure. We all three held our peace.

Then, amid the silence, the majestic silence of the night, Suzanne raised her arm as high as she could above her, and with her finger, which she could never stretch quite straight, she pointed to a star. This finger—a miracle of tiny loveliness—she would bend at intervals as though she were beckoning to something.

Then Suzanne talked to the star.

What she told it was not made up of words ; it was a language obscure and lovely, a sort of strange runic chant, something sweet yet profoundly mysterious, as is befitting to express the soul of a baby, when a star is mirrored in it.

" What a queer little thing it is ! " said her mother, giving her a hug.

GUIGNOL

ESTERDAY I took Suzanne to see Guignol. We both derived much pleasure from our visit. It is a performance within our intellectual compass. Were I a dramatic author I should write for marionettes. I don't know whether I should have sufficient talent to succeed; but, at all events, the task would not oppress me with alarm. But to compose sentences for the cultured lips of the fair comédiennes of the Comédie Française! I should never be daring enough for that. And then the drama—the grown-up people's idea of it, I mean—is too infinitely complicated a thing for me. I can simply make nothing of those highly involved intrigues that are all the craze just now. My whole art would consist in depicting the passions, and those of the simplest. That kind of thing would not do for the Gymnase, the Vaudeville,

or the Français ; but it would be first-rate for Guignol.

That is the place for strong and simple passions. The truncheon is their most ordinary instrument, and it cannot be doubted that the truncheon possesses conspicuous advantages from the comic point of view : an admirable agent is the truncheon, and gives no end of go to the play as it hurries on to the grand rough-and-tumble at the finish—the " grand charassement final," as the Lyons folk, with whom these performances originated, call the general mêlée with which they invariably conclude. A fatal, an everlasting affair, this " grand charassement." 'Tis the 10th August ! 'Tis the 9th Thermidor ! 'Tis Waterloo !

Well, I was telling you, I took Suzanne to Guignol yesterday. No doubt the piece had its shortcomings. I found it remarkably rich in obscurities ; but it was splendidly calculated to commend itself to the contemplative mind : it provided such plentiful food for thought. According to my view of it, the play is of the philosophic order. The characters are true to life, and they act with vigour. I will tell you the plot just as I heard it.

When the curtain went up, we saw Guignol himself appear on the scene. I recognized him : it was certainly he. His broad, placid face still showed the marks of the thwacks that had flattened his nose, though without marring the friendly ingenuousness of his look and smile.

He was not wearing the serge gaberdine or the cotton bonnet which in 1815 no citizen of Lyons could behold on the Allée des Botteaux without laughing. But if some survivor of those little boys who, away back in 1815, had seen both Guignol and Napoleon on the banks of the Rhone, had come, before dying of old age, and sat down beside us yesterday in the Champs-Élysées, he would have recognized the famous " salsify " of his beloved marionette, the little pigtail which danced and jigged so comically at the back of Guignol's neck. The rest of the costume—green coat and black cocked hat—was in keeping with the old Parisian tradition which represents Guignol as a kind of valet.

Guignol looked at us with his great eyes, and I was at once taken with his air of impudent candour and that transparent simplicity of soul which imparts

innocence to vice itself. As far as soul and expression went, it was the same old Guignol that the worthy Mourguet of Lyons played with such infinite jest and excellent fancy. I could almost hear him saying to his proprietor, Monsieur Canezou, who had declared his stories were enough to send a man to sleep standing up :

" You're right, let's go home to bed."

So far, our Guignol had said nothing. But his little pigtail was a-dance at the back of his neck, and everyone had begun to laugh.

Then Gringalet, his son, arrived on the scene, and rammed his head with fascinating grace into the paternal abdomen. The audience were not indignant ; on the contrary, they roared with laughter.

Such a début is the last word in dramatic art. And in case you don't know how it came about that this piece of audacity was such a success, I will tell you. Guignol is a valet, and wears a livery. Gringalet, his son, wears a blouse. He is no man's servant, and he does no work. This superiority enables him to misuse his father without offending the public's sense of propriety.

Mademoiselle Suzanne recognized this immediately, and her affection for Gringalet suffered no abatement. Indeed, Gringalet is the sort of person you can't help liking. He is thin and weedy, but he is full of resource. Gringalet is the man who jumps on the policeman. Mademoiselle Suzanne, who is six years old, has quite made up her mind regarding the representatives of law and order. She is " agin " them, and shakes her sides when Pandore gets a drubbing. Oh ! it is very wrong of her, no doubt. Still, I confess I should be sorry to have it otherwise. I like people to have something of the rebel in them, no matter what age they be. I myself am a peaceable citizen, a great respecter of authority, a most humble observer of the law. Nevertheless, if I saw some one play off a good trick on a gendarme or a sub-prefect or a park-keeper, I should be the first to laugh at it. But, let me see, we were talking about the tussle between Guignol and Gringalet.

Mademoiselle Suzanne takes Gringalet's part, and I Guignol's. You shall hear both sides and judge for yourself. Guignol and Gringalet have long been making for a mysterious village, known only to

themselves—the sort of village that would attract a wild rush of greedy desperadoes if they only knew of its existence. But this village was more difficult to find than the palace of the Sleeping Beauty that lay undiscovered for a hundred years. There was a certain spice of magic in the matter, for the region was inhabited by an Enchanter, an Enchanter who had a treasure which he had promised to bestow on whomsoever should emerge triumphant from divers trials, the very thought of which made your blood curdle. Our two travellers made their way into the enchanted region with very dissimilar ideas. Guignol is weary ; he lies down to sleep. His son upbraids him for his lack of grit.

" Is this how we are going to gain possession of the treasure which we have set out to seek ? "

And Guignol answers :

" Is there a treasure to compare with sleep ? "

I like that reply. I behold in Guignol a sage who has realized the vanity of all things, and whose sole desire is to enjoy repose after the sinful or bootless tumults of the world. But Mademoiselle Suzanne looks upon him as a muddy-mettled rascal who goes to sleep when he ought to be up and doing,

who will perhaps be the cause of their losing the things which they had set out to find—lovely things, too, perhaps—ribbons, cakes, and flowers! She applauds the zealous Gringalet, untiring in his quest of these glorious treasures.

As I have said, the trials they have to undergo are terrible. They have to face a crocodile and slay the Devil.

"There's the Devil!" said I to Suzanne.

"That! why, that's a black man!" she replied.

This was rationalism pure and simple, and I was in despair. But I knew better, and I remained an interested spectator of the battle between Gringalet and the Devil. It is an awful struggle, and it ends with the death of the Devil. Gringalet kills him.

Frankly, I don't look on that as his most laudable achievement. I can quite understand how some of the audience, possessed of superior spiritual insight to Mam'zelle Suzanne's, looked on it coldly, nay, with some degree of disapproval. For, look you, the Devil being dead, it would be good-bye to sin. Perhaps Beauty, the Devil's ally, would go with him. Perhaps we should never more behold the flowers

that enchant us, and the eyes for love of which we would lay down our lives. What, if that be so, what in the world would become of us? Should we still be able to practise virtue? I doubt it. Gringalet did not sufficiently realize that evil is as necessary a corollary of good as darkness is of light, that virtue is wholly in the effort, and that if there were no longer any Devil to fight against, the saints would be just as much out of work as the sinners. Everyone would be bored to death. I am sure that, when he killed the Devil, Gringalet committed an act of grave imprudence.

Well, Punchinello came on and made his bow, the curtain fell, and all the little boys and girls went home; but still I sat on, deep in meditation. Mam'zelle Suzanne, perceiving my thoughtful mien, concluded that I was in trouble. It is a common notion that it is only unhappy people who think.

Very delicately and tenderly she put her hand in mine, and asked me what I was grieving for.

I confessed that I was worried at Gringalet's having killed the Devil.

Thereupon she twined her little arms about my neck, and, putting her lips to my ear, she whispered:

" Let me tell you something ; Gringalet killed the black man, but not for good."

My misgivings vanished : " The Devil is not dead ! " I said to myself ; and we departed happy in our minds.

PIERRE

"HOW old is your little boy, Madame?" The mother looked at her child as one would look at a clock to see the time, and replied:

"Pierre? He is just twenty-nine months, Madame."

It would have done just as well to say two and a half; but Pierre is very sharp, and does a world of remarkable things for his age, and there would be a risk of other mothers being a shade less jealous if he were represented as slightly older, and therefore slightly less of a prodigy, than he actually is. She has yet another reason for not wishing to make Pierre a day older than his real age: she wishes him to remain her little one, her little baby boy. She feels that, little by little, he is slipping away from her. Ungrateful little beings, they are always bent on cutting themselves adrift. The primal separation

dates from their birth, for what, alas, has a mother then but her breast and her two arms to hold her baby to her.

Therefore, Pierre is just precisely twenty-nine months old. But it is a fine age that! I look on it with very considerable respect. I have several friends of that age who behave most handsomely towards me. Still, none of them are gifted with Pierre's imagination. Pierre displays extraordinary facility and some capriciousness in garnering his ideas. Some of them date from a remote past. He remembers faces that he has not seen for a month or more, and he discerns in the picture-books people give him a thousand and one peculiarities that charm and excite him. When he is turning over the one he likes best—the one with only half its pages torn—two red spots appear on his cheeks, and his eyes grow morbidly bright.

His mother is afraid of that hectic colour and those bright eyes. She is terrified lest his little brain should be overwrought; she thinks of fever and all kinds of things. Sometimes she almost wishes he were like the baker's little boy, whom she sees every day sitting outside the shop, with a great flat

face, expressionless blue eyes, a mouth lost to view beneath a pair of fat cheeks, and a general air of stupidity and health. There was no need for that boy's mother to be anxious about him, at any rate. But Pierre! his colour keeps coming and going, his little hands are burning hot, and he keeps turning and twisting about in his cot the whole night long.

The doctor, too, does not approve of our little one looking at pictures. He says he should have nothing to excite him. "Bring him up like a puppy," says he, "there's nothing very difficult about that."

Therein he errs, for it is a very difficult thing indeed. The doctor knows nothing about the psychology of a little boy of twenty-nine months. And is the doctor so sure that puppies do grow up without mental excitement? I knew one—he was about six weeks old—who used to dream the whole night through, and fell from laughter to tears with the most distressing rapidity. He used to fill my room with noises that indicated a highly disordered imagination. There wasn't much calmness about him. No, indeed!

And the little animal began to grow thin, like Pierre. Nevertheless he went on living. In the same way, Pierre has plenty of generous vitality in him; there is nothing organically wrong. But it would be good to see him less thin and pale.

Paris doesn't suit this little Parisian. Not that he doesn't like it there. On the contrary, the trouble is that he has too much to amuse him, too much variety of colour and movement, too many appeals to his imagination and his understanding; he wears himself out with it all.

Last July his mother took him—a poor, pinched, pale-faced little fellow—to some quiet spot in Switzerland, where he could see nothing but the pines upon the mountain side, the green pastures, and cows browsing in the valley below.

For three months he rested on the bosom of the great tranquil Nurse, three smiling months of happiness and unlimited brown bread. When he came back in the early part of October, it was a new Pierre that I beheld: a little gold and brown, almost chubby-faced, Pierre, with swarthy hands, a fine, sturdy voice, and a hearty laugh.

"Look at Pierre! Look what a fright he is!"

said the happy mother. "He has a face like a Dutch doll."

But the colour did not last. He grew pale, fragile, and excitable again, with something too suggestive of the rare exotic about him. Once more Paris began to exert its influence; and when I say Paris, I mean the spiritual, not the material Paris—the Paris that is everywhere and nowhere, Paris that fills one with a vague yearning, that makes one restless and eager, and sets the brain at work, even when one is quite a little child.

And so here was Pierre flushing and turning pale over his picture-books in the old way again. About the end of that December I found him nervous as ever, with great dilated eyes and burning hands. He slept poorly and didn't relish his food.

"It is nothing," said the doctor. "Give him plenty to eat."

Yes, but how? His poor mother had worried herself about him till she wept, but to no purpose.

Christmas Eve brought Pierre dolls and horses and soldiers galore. In the morning his mother was standing despondently in her dressing-gown in

front of the fireplace, looking doubtfully at this varied assortment of playthings.

"All these things will excite him more than ever," she said to herself, "there are too many of them." And softly, so as not to disturb Pierre, she took Punch—who had a wicked leer in his eyes—the soldiers, which she feared might lure her boy to the battle-field one day, she even took the good red horse, and, piling them up in her arms, went on tiptoe and hid them in her cupboard.

She left but one thing in the fireplace, and that was a white deal box, an eighteenpenny sheep-run that some poor man had sent him. Then she went and sat down by the little bed and gazed at her boy. Being a woman, the little deception involved in her beneficent action rather took her fancy, and she smiled. Then her glance lighted on the blue lines round her baby's eyes, and she said to herself, "What a dreadful thing it is that we cannot get the child to eat."

No sooner was he dressed than little Pierre opened the box and saw the sheep, the cows, the horses, and the trees, little curly trees. To be accurate, it was a farm-yard rather than a sheep-run.

He saw the farmer and the farmer's wife. The farmer was carrying a scythe, his wife a rake. They were going to the meadow to make hay, but they did not look as if they were walking. The farmer's wife had on a straw hat and a red dress. Pierre kissed her several times, and the paint came off on

his face. Then he looked at the house. It was so small and so low that the farmer's wife could not possibly have stood upright in it; but it had a door, and that was how Pierre knew it was a house.

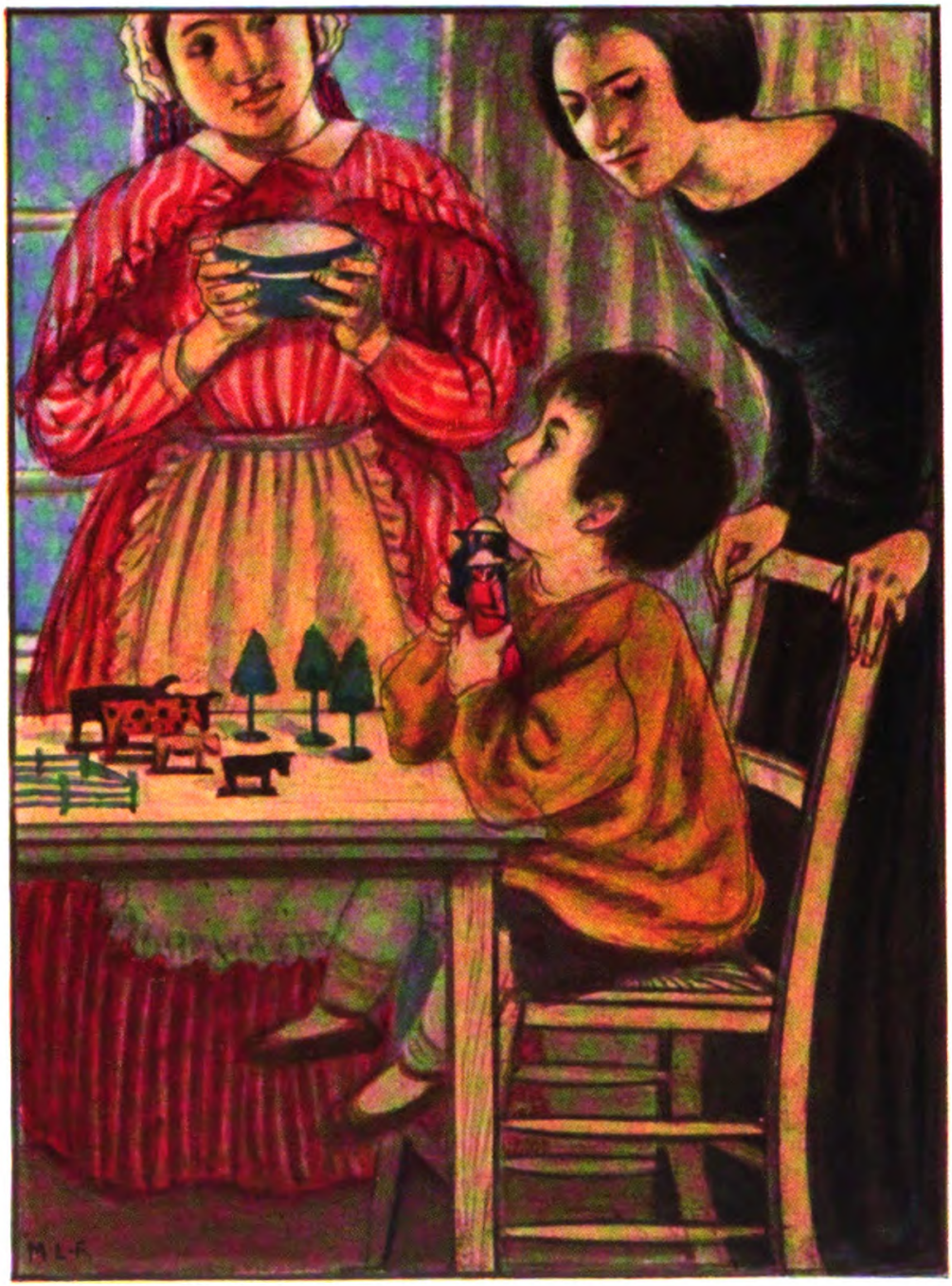
How do such things mirror themselves in the primitive, unjaded eyes of a little child? Whatever

the effect, there was, in this instance, enchantment in it. He grasped them in his little fists, and made his hands all sticky. He set them out on his little table, and called them by name in accents of fond affection : " Dada ! Toutou ! Moumou ! " He picked up one of the remarkable trees with its slim, straight bole and conical crest, and said, " A pine ! " It was a sort of revelation for his mother. She would never have guessed it. Why, of course, what could a green tree with a conical crest and a straight stem be, but a pine ? Still, she would never have recognized it unless Pierre had told her.

" You angel ! " she exclaimed ; and gave him such a hug that the sheep-run was three parts upset.

Meanwhile, Pierre went on discovering resemblances between the trees in the box and the trees which he had seen away among the mountains.

He saw other things, too, which his mother did not see. All those little pieces of painted wood brought back sweet visions to his mind. By their means he passed his days with the Alps once more around him ; he was back again in Switzerland, where he had been wont to eat so well. One idea led to another, and he began to think about food.



NEXT DAY HE LOOKED AT THE SHEEP-RUN, AND FELT HUNGRY AGAIN

" I should like some bread and milk," said he.

He ate and drank. His appetite came back. Next day he looked at the sheep-run, and felt hungry again. See what it is to have imagination ! A fortnight later he had grown into a sturdy little fellow once more. His mother was in raptures.

" Look," she said. " Look ! what cheeks ! And it's all due to poor Mr. Blank's sheep-run ! "

JESSY

THERE dwelt in London, in the reign of Elizabeth, one Bog, a man of learning, who, under the name of Bogus, had gained much renown by reason of a Treatise concerning Human Error, which no one had read.

Bogus, who had wrought thereat for twenty-five years, had as yet given none of it to the public; but his manuscript, writ fair and ranged on shelves

in a window recess, consisted of no less than ten folio volumes. Of these, the first treated of the error of coming into the world—the primary error from which all other errors do proceed. The subsequent volumes dealt with the errors of little boys and girls, of youthful folk, of those of riper years, and of the aged ; of the errors committed by persons of divers occupations, such as statesmen, merchants, soldiers, cooks, politicians, and so forth. The concluding volumes—as yet unfinished—were made up of observations concerning the errors of the body politic, which errors do arise from, and have their origin in, the errors committed by the individuals, or groups of individuals, composing it. And so perfect was the interdependence, one upon another, of the arguments in this great work, that no single page could be extracted therefrom without destroying the continuity of the whole. The proofs followed orderly, one after another, and the final demonstration established beyond all controversy that evil is the essence of life, and that if life be a quantity it may be affirmed with mathematical accuracy that the amount of evil upon the earth

is co-extensive with the amount of life existing upon it.

Bogus had not committed the error of getting married. He lived alone in his humble abode with an old housekeeper called Kat, that is Catherine. He used to call her Clausentina, because she came from Southampton, a town which is the successor to the Roman station of Clausentum.

But his sister, whose mind was of a less transcendental cast than her brother's, had perpetrated a whole series of errors, for she had fallen in love with a city cloth merchant, espoused the said merchant, and brought into the world a little daughter, whose name was Jessy. Her crowning error had been to die after ten years of married life, thus causing the death of the cloth merchant, who found it impossible to live without her. Bogus took the little orphan girl into his house out of pity, and also because he hoped that she would provide him with some valuable material for that section of his work which treated of the errors of children.

She was then six years of age. For the first eight days she was with the sage she wept and

said nothing. On the ninth, she addressed Bog as follows :

" I have seen Mamma ; she was dressed all in white ; she was wearing flowers in a fold of her dress ; she scattered them upon my bed, but I could not find them this morning. Give them to me ; give me Mamma's flowers ! "

Bog recorded this error, but he noted in his commentary thereon that the error was innocent and not wholly unpleasing.

Some time after this, Jessy came to Bog and said : " Uncle Bog, you are old and you are ugly ; but I love you, and you must love me."

Whereupon Bog took up his pen, but recognizing, after some conflict of mind, that he no longer presented a very youthful appearance, and that he never had been particularly handsome, he refrained from recording the child's remark. He merely said :

" Why must I love you, Jessy ? "

" Because I am little," was the reply.

" Is it so ? " Bog wondered. " Is it, then, true that we ought to love the little ones ? Peradventure

it is, for in good sooth they stand in great need of love. This would excuse the error common to mothers, who give to their little ones both their milk and their love. Here, methinks, is one chapter in my Treatise that I shall have to rewrite."

When, on the morning of his birthday, he went into the room where he kept his books and papers, he became aware of a pleasant smell, and he beheld a pot of carnations on his window-ledge.

There were but three flowers, but their hue was scarlet, and the sunlight shone pleasantly upon them. And everything was smiling in this learned chamber; the old tapestry arm-chair, the walnut table, even the ancient books in their dingy bindings of calf and vellum and pigskin looked down with smiles; and Bogus, withered and dried up as they, began to smile too.

"Look, Uncle Bog!" said Jessy, giving him a kiss. "This is Heaven here" (and she pointed through the little leaded panes to the misty blue of the outer air); "then here, lower down, is the Earth, the Earth in blossom" (and she pointed to the pot of pinks); "and then here, down

below, where these big black books are, this is Hell."

These " big black books " were nothing more nor less than the ten volumes of the Treatise on Human Error ranged along in the space under the window. This error of Jessy's reminded the doctor of his work, which he had neglected of late in order to take Jessy for walks in the streets and gardens. In the course of these wanderings, Jessy discovered a thousand delightful things, and she proceeded to make them known to Bogus, who had scarcely put his head out of doors in his life before.

He used to go back to his manuscripts, but somehow he no longer felt at home in his work. Jessy and the flowers alike were lacking.

By good fortune, philosophy came to his rescue at this juncture, and suggested the highly transcendental idea that Jessy served no useful purpose in the world, a truth to which he clung with tenacity because it was essential to the maintenance of his Theory.

It chanced that one day, when his thoughts were running on this theme, he discovered Jessy in his

library threading a needle by the window where the carnations were. He asked her what she wanted to sew.

" What ! Uncle Bog," said Jessy ; " don't you know that the swallows have flown away ? "

Bogus knew nothing about it, for the matter was not dealt with in Pliny or in Avicenna.

" Yes," continued Jessy ; " Kat told me yesterday."

" Kat ! " cried Bogus ; " does the child speak thus of the worthy Clausentina ? "

" Kat said to me yesterday, ' The swallows have flown away earlier than usual this year ; we shall have an early winter, and a hard one.' That is what Kat said, and, then, I saw Mother. She was in white, and there was a brightness about her hair. Only she had no flowers this time. She said to me, ' Jessy, you must take Uncle Bog's fur cloak from the press and mend it if it requires it.' I awoke, and as soon as I was dressed, I took the cloak from the press, and, as it is torn in several places, I am going to mend it."

Winter came, and fulfilled the prediction of the

swallows. Bogus in his cloak, with his feet by the fire, sat striving to patch up some of the chapters of his Treatise; but, every time he managed to reconcile his new experiences with his Theory of the Universality of Evil, Jessy perhaps would bring him a jug of good ale, or merely show her eyes and her smiling face, and all his theories would be blown to the winds once more.

When summer came again, uncle and niece went for rambles in the country. Jessy used to bring back flowers and herbs with her, and of an evening her uncle would sit by her and tell her their names, while she would arrange them according to their properties. One evening, as she was spreading out on the table the flowers which she had gathered during the day, she spoke to Bogus, saying:

"Now, Uncle Bog, I know the names of all the plants that you have shown me. Here are those which heal and console. I wish to keep them, in order that I may always know them, and that I may make them known to others. But I want a big book to press them in."

"Take this one," said Bog.

And he pointed to the first volume of the Treatise on Human Error.

When this volume had a plant on every page, they went on to the next, and in three summers the doctor's *magnum opus* had been completely changed into an herbarium.