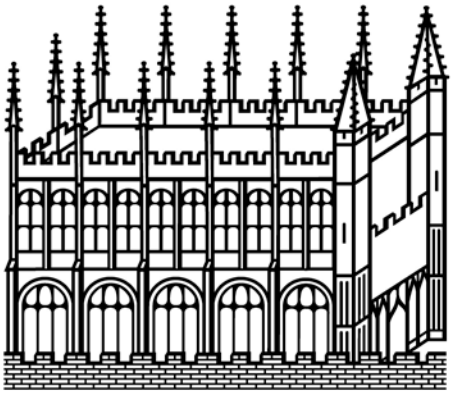

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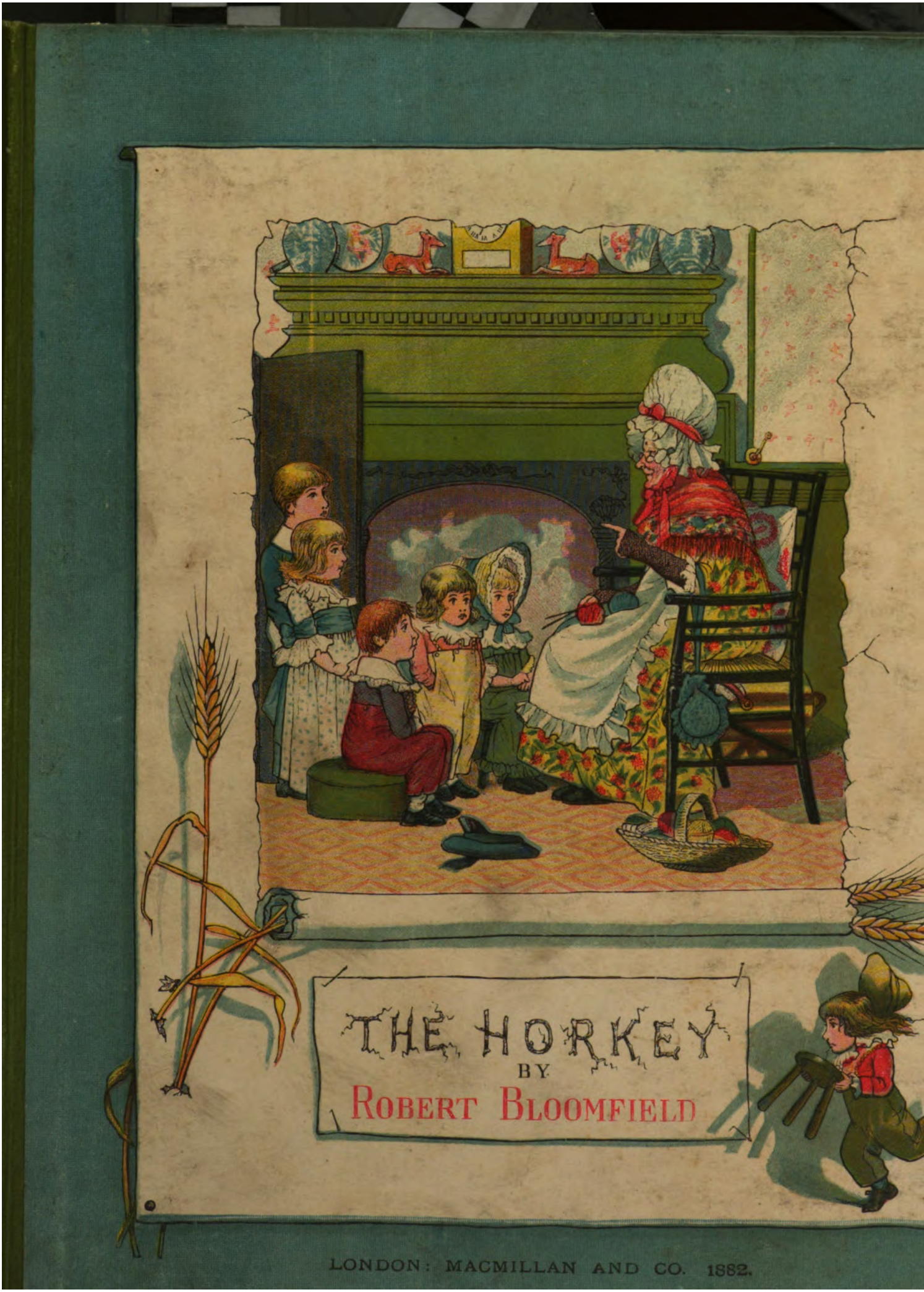
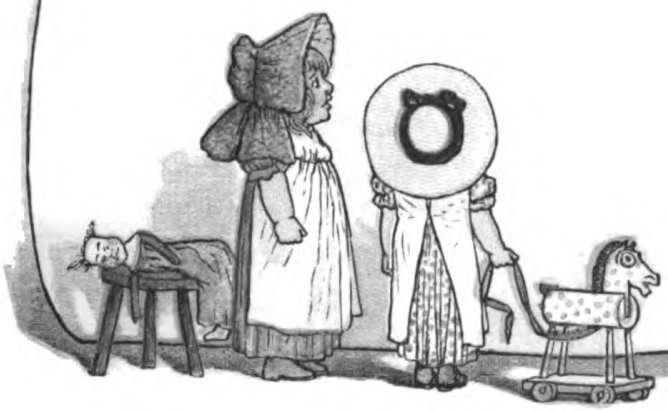


LONDON: MACMILLAN AND CO. 1882.

THE HORKEY

A Provincial Ballad



252. b. 14

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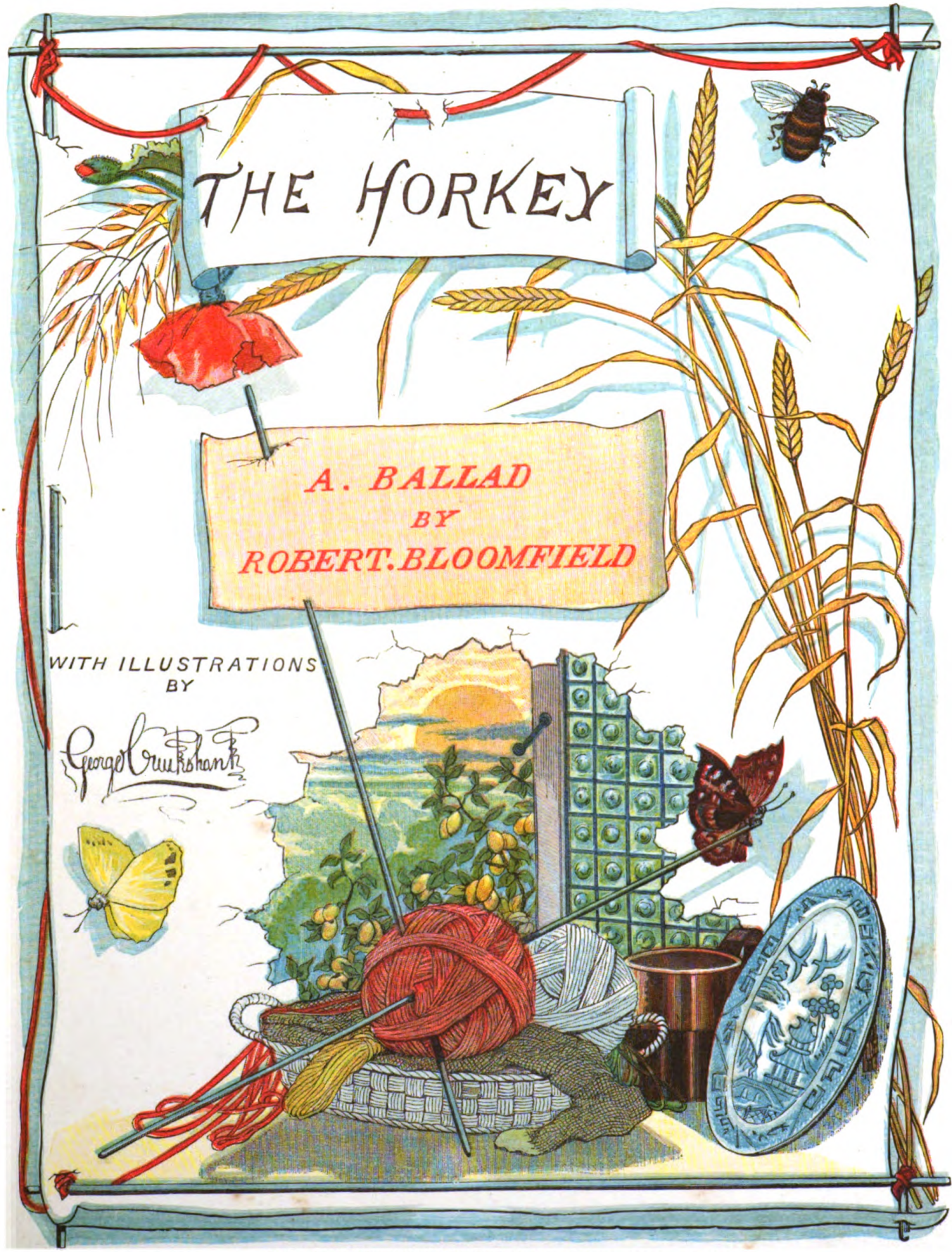
BODLEIANA · BIRMINGHAM

A Family Portrait of Miss Judie Twitchet.



LONDON: MACMILLAN AND CO. 1882.

Produced by R. Clay, Sons, and Taylor, Bread Street Hill, London.

My dear young Ladies and Gentlemen,

Do you know what "The Horkey" is?

No, probably not.

Do you care to know what "The Horkey" is?

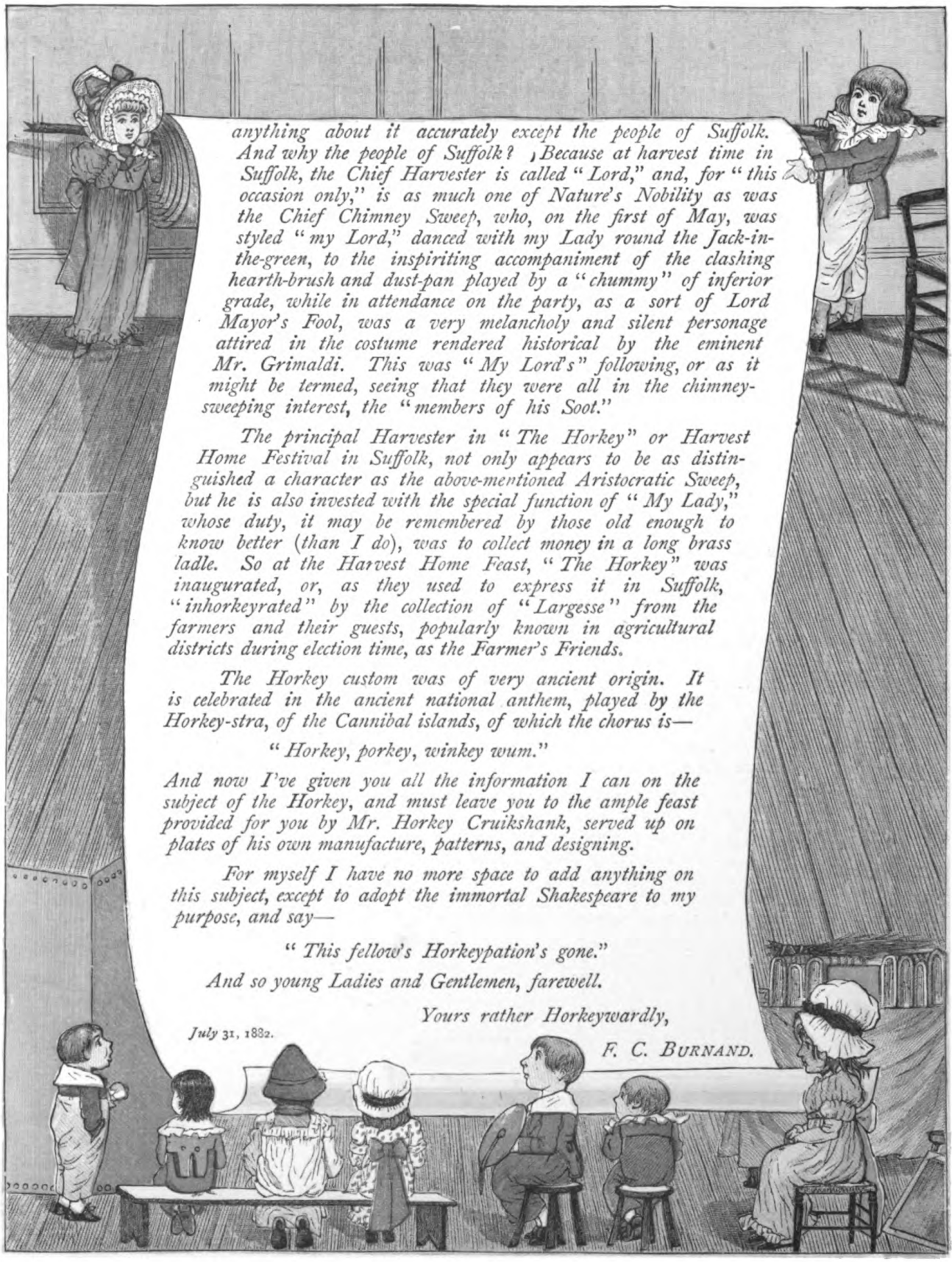
Yes, you do.

First, look at Mr. Cruikshank's pictures of interiors, exteriors, and architectural, or, rather, his "Horkey-tectural" designs.

"What on earth is 'The Horkey?'" It is a wonderful name, and might be a game, a dance, a chieftain, a ghost, or an epidemic. No one would have been surprised to hear that "The Horkey" had entertained a large party of guests at his castle, that the retainers had gathered together by torchlight, and out of compliment to this chieftain, had danced "The Horkey," of which there would have been various pictorial representations, generally remarkable for strong effects of light and shadow, and a considerable display of muscle, in the weekly illustrated papers. I should not have expressed any astonishment on coming across an animated scene in one of these journals with, underneath, the legend—"H.R.H. the Prince of Wales dancing 'The Horkey.'" Later in the year, when I had forgotten these illustrations, a picture of "A Scene in Norway, Horkey on the Ice," would have seemed to me quite the right thing in the right place.

In the dull and silly season, I should have been grateful for a letter from "a Traveller," drawing public attention to a curious provincial superstition connected with the apparition of "The Horkey," which has lately been seen in the neighbourhood of the little village of X—— on the banks of the Y——. "The Horkey," in this case, would probably be described as bearing "a close resemblance to the Irish Banshee."

But the real meaning of "The Horkey," very few would have been Hawky-eye'd enough to discover, and no folk would have known



anything about it accurately except the people of Suffolk. And why the people of Suffolk? Because at harvest time in Suffolk, the Chief Harvester is called "Lord," and, for "this occasion only," is as much one of Nature's Nobility as was the Chief Chimney Sweep, who, on the first of May, was styled "my Lord," danced with my Lady round the Jack-in-the-green, to the inspiriting accompaniment of the clashing hearth-brush and dust-pan played by a "chummy" of inferior grade, while in attendance on the party, as a sort of Lord Mayor's Fool, was a very melancholy and silent personage attired in the costume rendered historical by the eminent Mr. Grimaldi. This was "My Lord's" following, or as it might be termed, seeing that they were all in the chimney-sweeping interest, the "members of his Soot."

The principal Harvester in "The Horkey" or Harvest Home Festival in Suffolk, not only appears to be as distinguished a character as the above-mentioned Aristocratic Sweep, but he is also invested with the special function of "My Lady," whose duty, it may be remembered by those old enough to know better (than I do), was to collect money in a long brass ladle. So at the Harvest Home Feast, "The Horkey" was inaugurated, or, as they used to express it in Suffolk, "inhorkeyrated" by the collection of "Largesse" from the farmers and their guests, popularly known in agricultural districts during election time, as the Farmer's Friends.

The Horkey custom was of very ancient origin. It is celebrated in the ancient national anthem, played by the Horkey-stra, of the Cannibal islands, of which the chorus is—

"Horkey, porkey, winkey wum."

And now I've given you all the information I can on the subject of the Horkey, and must leave you to the ample feast provided for you by Mr. Horkey Cruikshank, served up on plates of his own manufacture, patterns, and designing.

For myself I have no more space to add anything on this subject, except to adopt the immortal Shakespeare to my purpose, and say—

"This fellow's Horkeypation's gone."

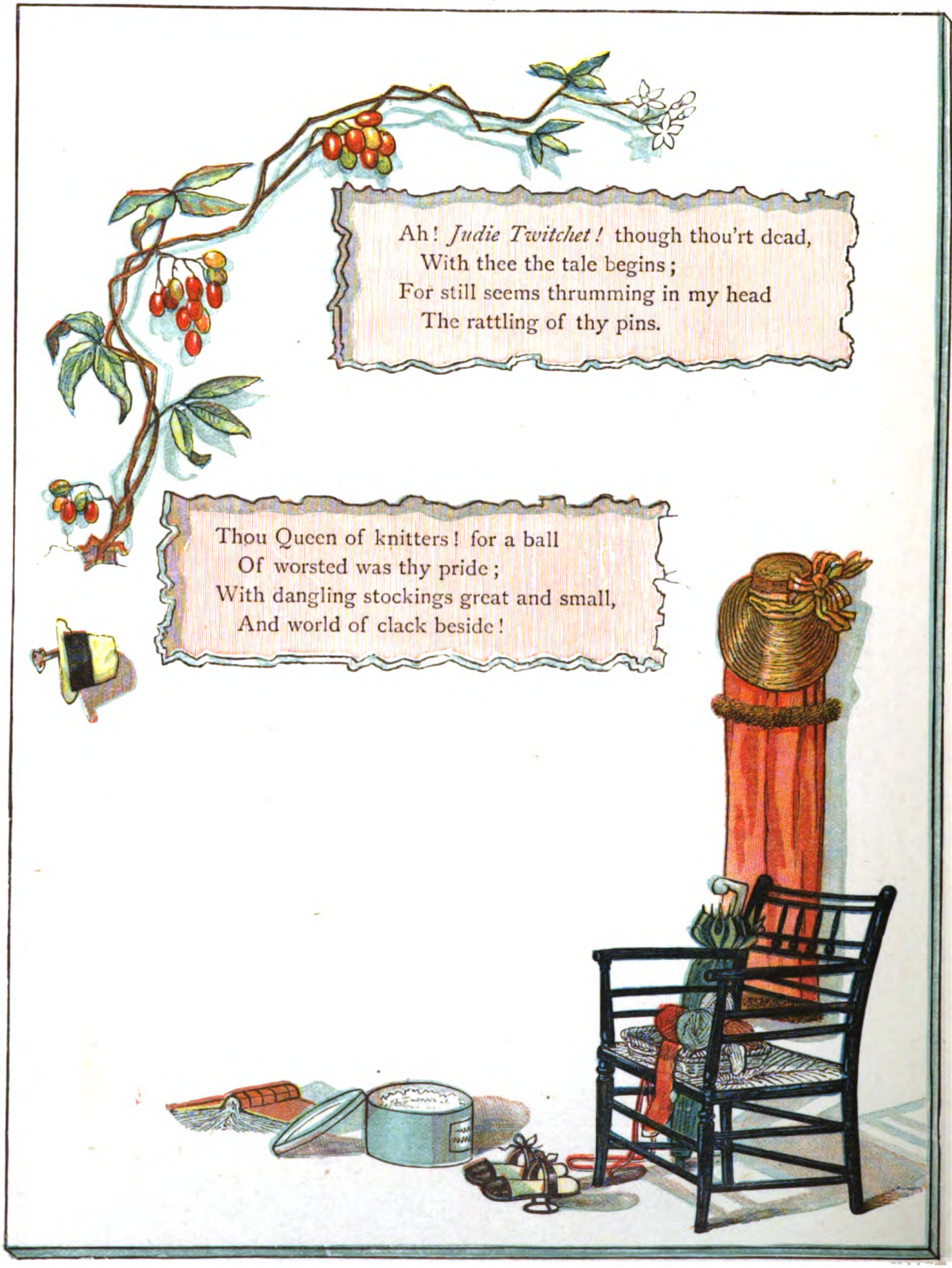
And so young Ladies and Gentlemen, farewell.

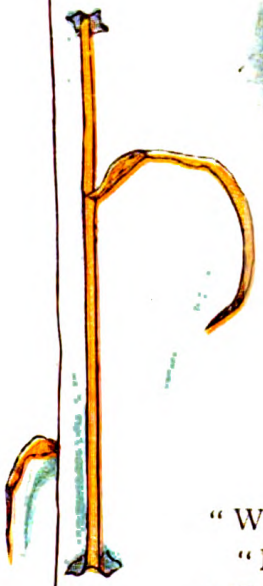
Yours rather Horkeywardly,

July 31, 1882.

F. C. Burnand.

WHAT gossips prattled in the sun,
Who talked him fairly down,
Up, memory! tell; 'tis Suffolk fun,
And lingo of their own.

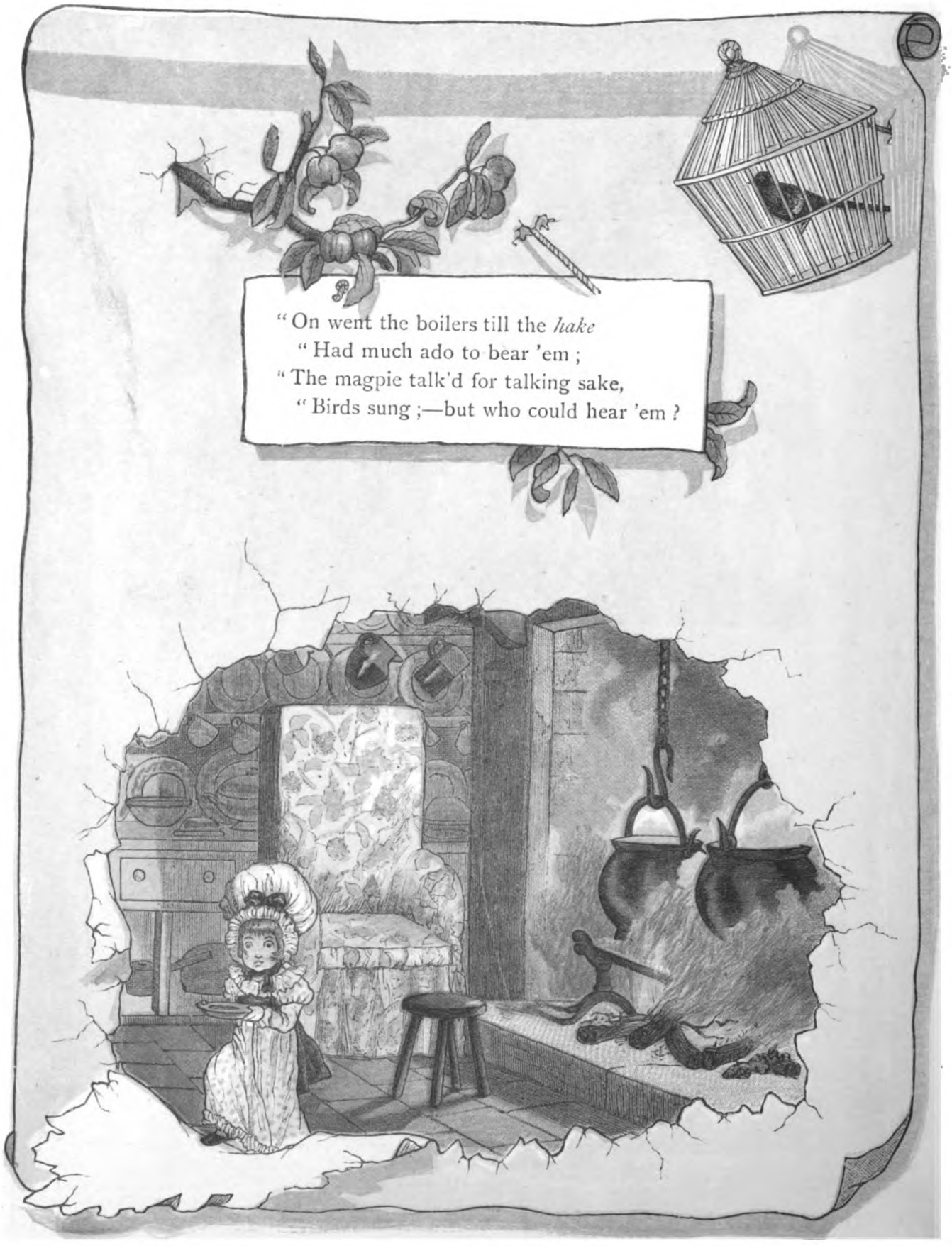

Ah! *Judie Twitchet!* though thou'rt dead,
With thee the tale begins;
For still seems thrumming in my head
The rattling of thy pins.
Thou Queen of knitters! for a ball
Of worsted was thy pride;
With dangling stockings great and small,
And world of clack beside!



"We did so laugh; the moon shone bright;
"More fun you never knew;
"'Twas Farmer Cheerum's *Horkey night*,
"And I, and Grace, and Sue——

"But bring a stool, sit round about,
"And boys, be quiet, pray;
"And let me tell my story out;
"'Twas *sitch* a merry day!

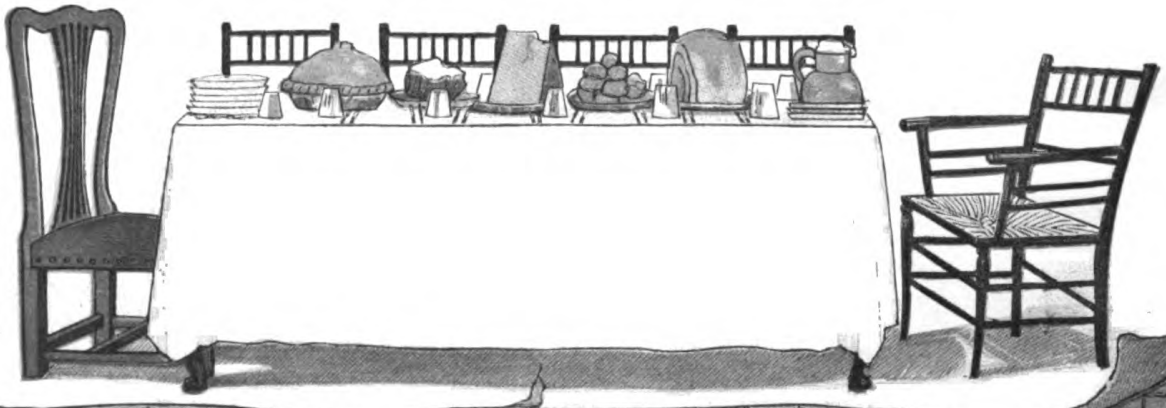
"The butcher whistled at the door,
"And brought a load of meat;
"Boys rubb'd their hands, and cried, 'There's more,'
"Dogs wagg'd their tails to see't.

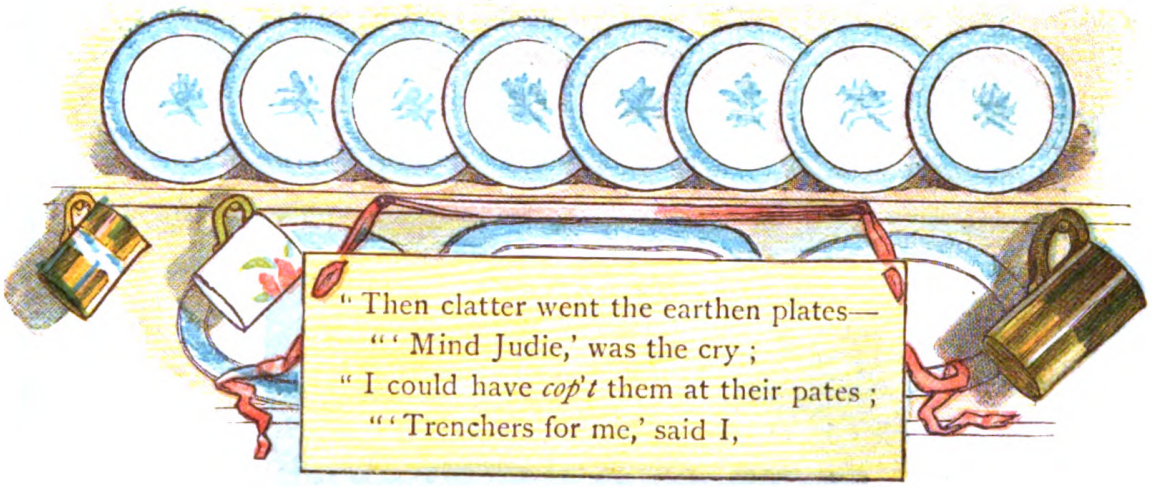

"On went the boilers till the *hake*
"Had much ado to bear 'em ;
"The magpie talk'd for talking sake,
"Birds sung ;—but who could hear 'em ?

" Creak went the jack ; the cats were *scar'd*
" We had not time to heed 'em,
" The *owd hins* cackled in the yard,
" For we forgot to feed 'em !

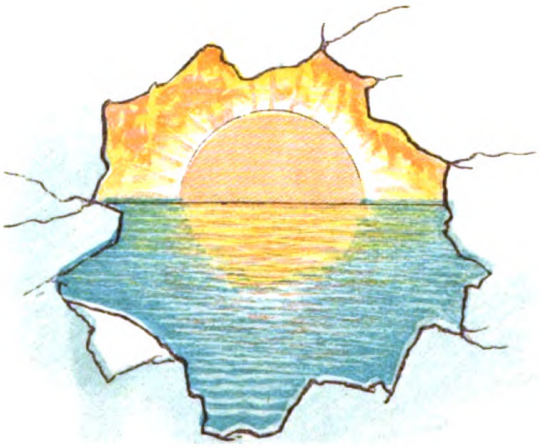
" Yet 'twas not I, as I may say,
" Because as how, d'ye see,
" I only help'd there for the day ;
" They cou'dn't lay't to me.

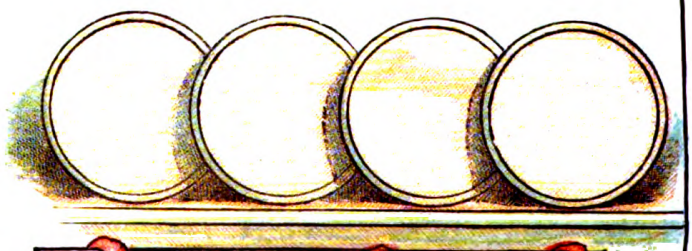
" Now Mrs. Cheerum's best lace cap
" Was mounted on her head ;
" Guests at the door began to rap,
" And now the cloth was spread.



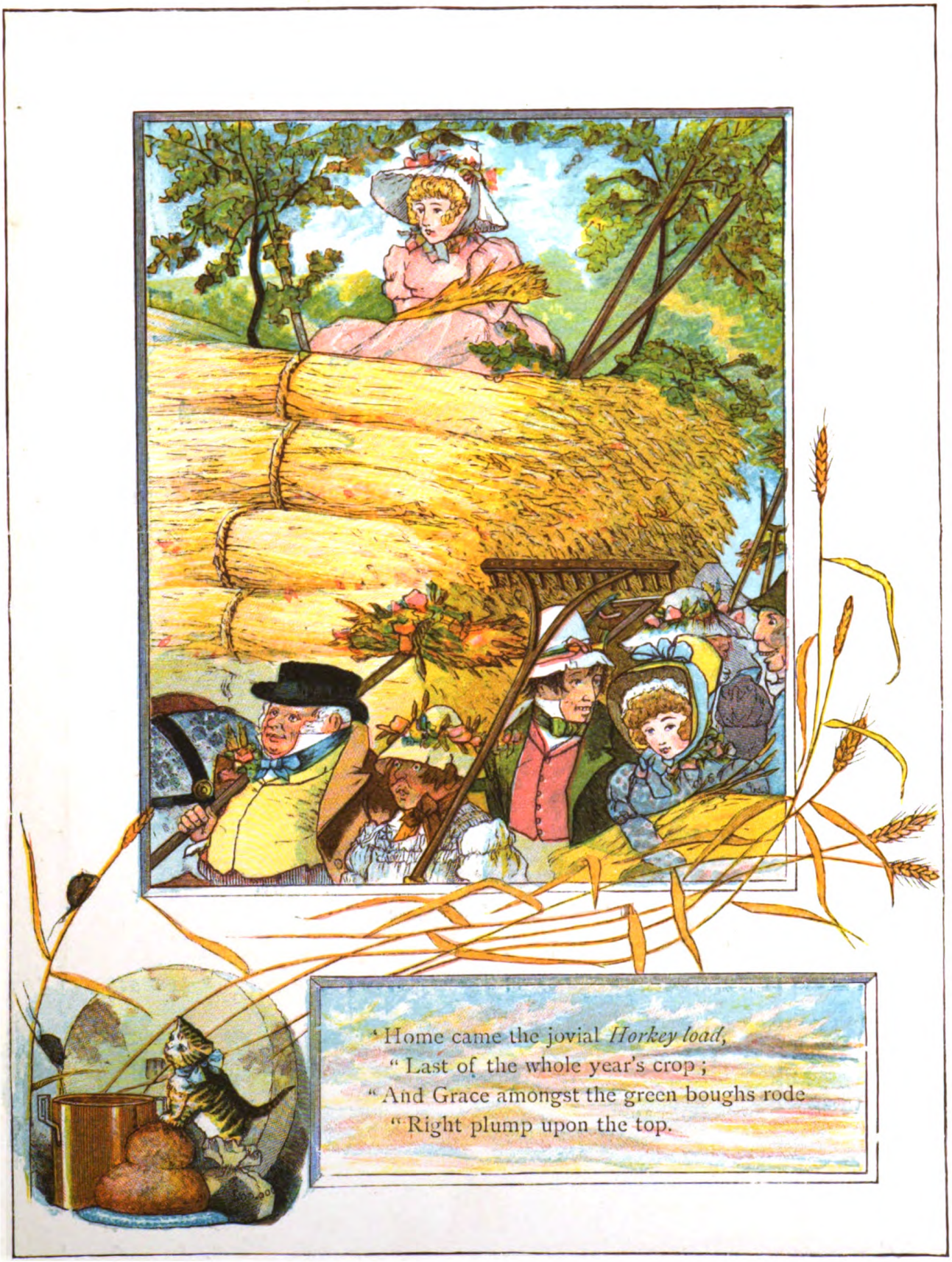


"Then clatter went the earthen plates—
"'Mind Judie,' was the cry;
"I could have *cop't* them at their pates;
"'Trenchers for me,' said I,





"'That look so clean upon the ledge,
"'And never mind a fall;
"'Nor never turn a sharp knife's edge;—
"'But fashion rules us all.'

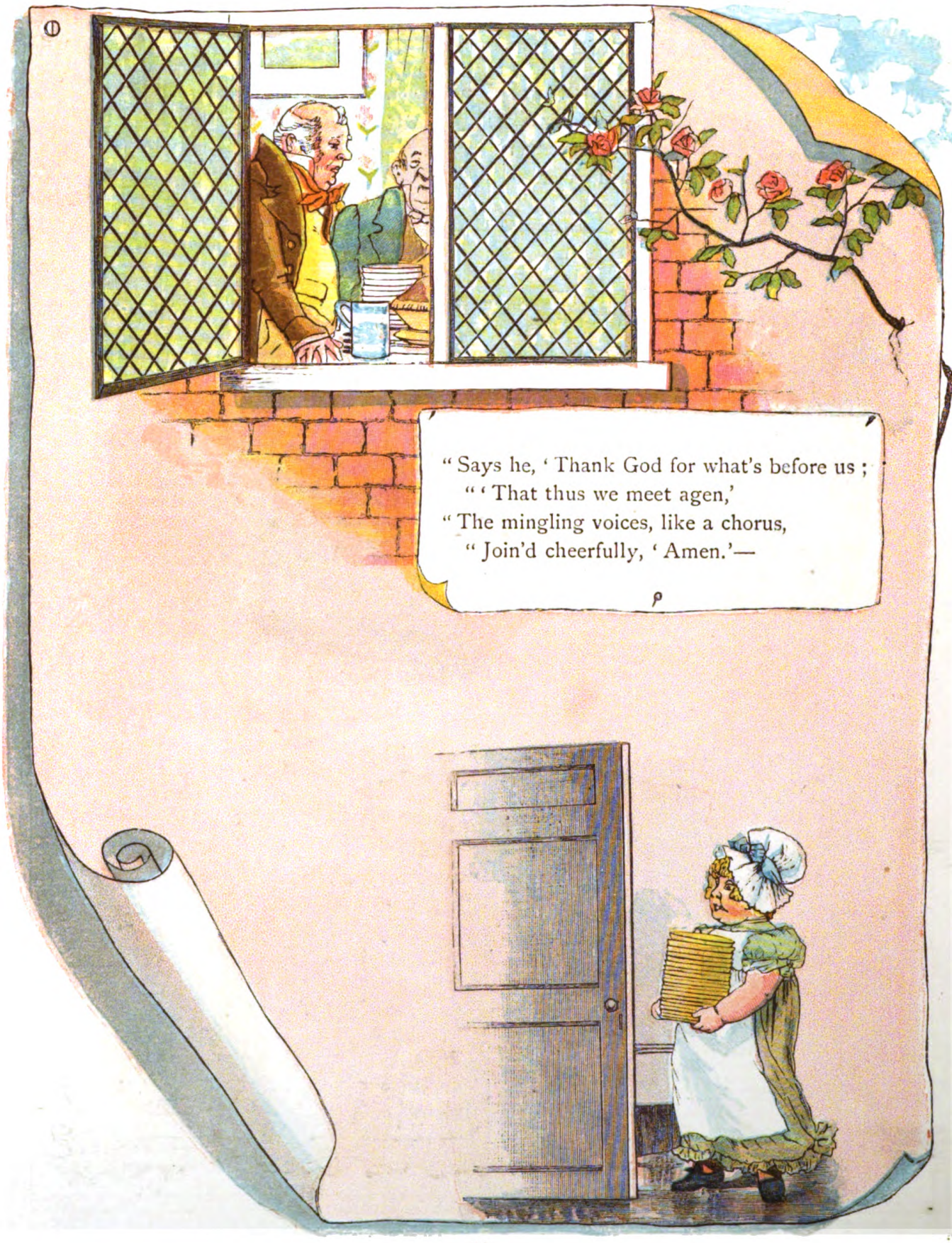


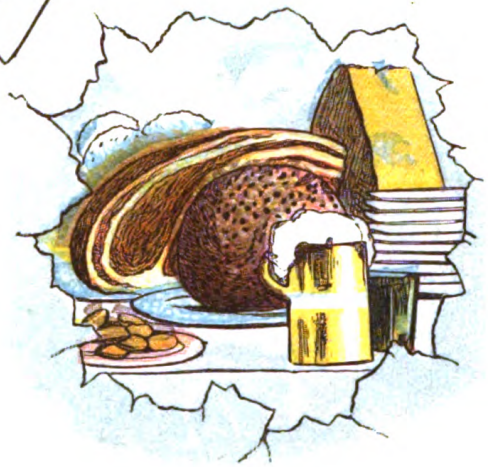
"Home came the jovial *Horkey load,*
"Last of the whole year's crop;
"And Grace amongst the green boughs rode
"Right plump upon the top.

"This way and that the waggon reel'd,
"And never queen rode higher;
"*Her* cheeks were colour'd in the field,
"And ours before the fire.

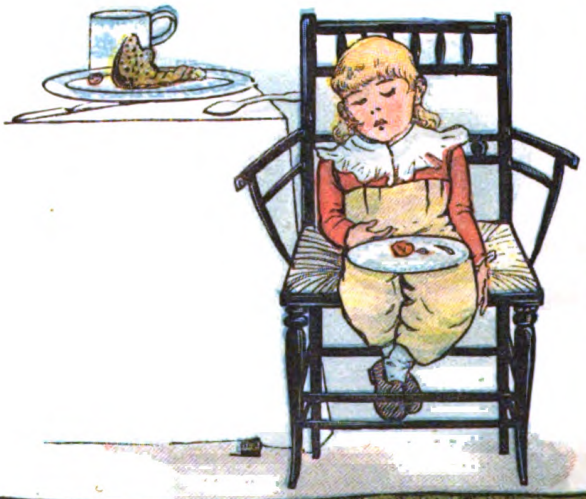
"The laughing harvest-folks, and John,
"Came in and look'd askew;
"'Twas my red face that set them on,
"And then they leer'd at Sue.

"And Farmer Cheerum went, good man,
"And broach'd the *Horkey beer;*
"And *sitch a mort* of folks began
"To eat up our good cheer.


"Says he, 'Thank God for what's before us;
"'That thus we meet agen,'
"The mingling voices, like a chorus,
"Join'd cheerfully, 'Amen.'—



" Welcome and plenty, there they found 'em,
" The ribs of beef grew light ;
" And puddings—till the boys got round 'em,
" And then they vanish'd quite !



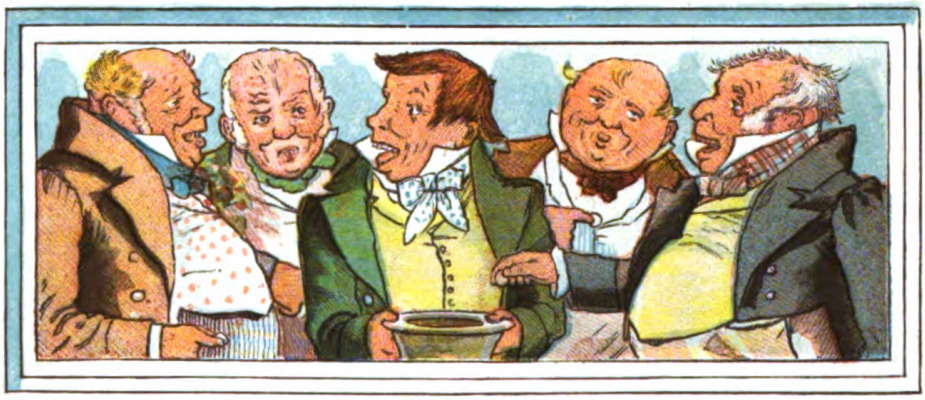
"Now all the guests, with Farmer Crouder,
"Began to prate of corn;
"And we found out they talk'd the louder
"The oft'ner pass'd the Horn.

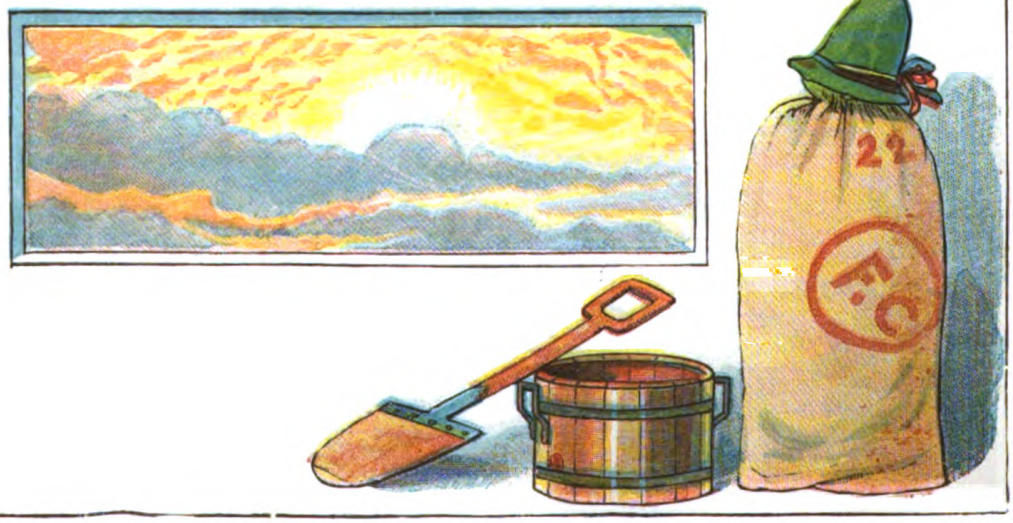
"John sung 'Old Benbow' loud and strong,
"And I, 'The Constant Swain,'
"'Cheer up my Lads,' was Simon's song,
"'We'll conquer them again.'
"Out came the nuts; we set a cracking;
"The ale came round our way;
"*By gom*, we women fell a clacking
"As loud again as they.

" Now twelve o'clock was drawing nigh,
" And all in merry cue;
" I knock'd the cask, 'O, ho!' said I,
" 'We've almost conquer'd you.'

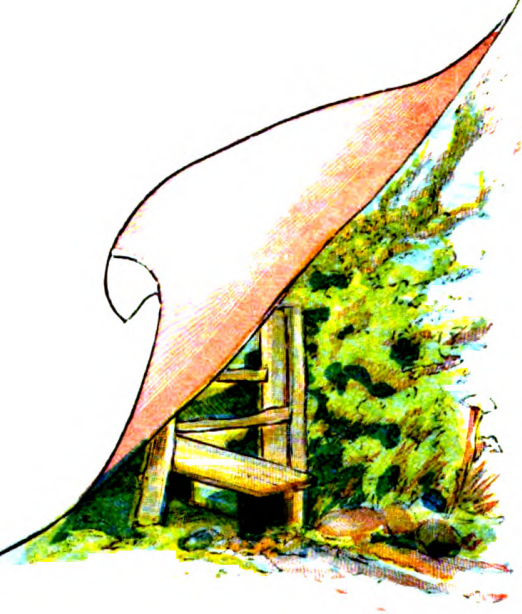
" *My Lord* begg'd round, and held his hat,
" Says Farmer Gruff, says he,
" ' There's many a Lord, Sam, I know that,
" ' Has begg'd as well as thee.'
' Bump in his hat the shillings tumbl'd
" All round among the folks;
' Laugh if you wool,' said Sam, and mumbl'd
" ' You pay for all your jokes.'

"Joint stock you know among the men,
"To drink at their own charges;
"So up they got full drive, and then
"Went out to *halloo largess.*





"And sure enough the noise they made!!—
—"But let me mind my tale;
"We follow'd them, we wor'nt afraid,
"We'ad all been drinking ale.

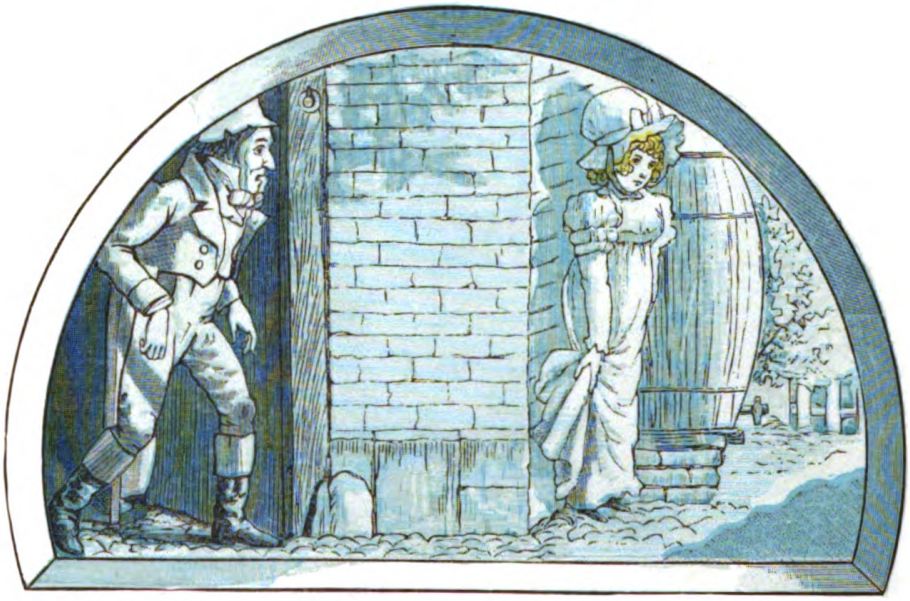


"As they stood hallooing back to back,
"We, lightly as a feather,
"Went sideling round, and in a crack
"Had pinn'd their coats together.

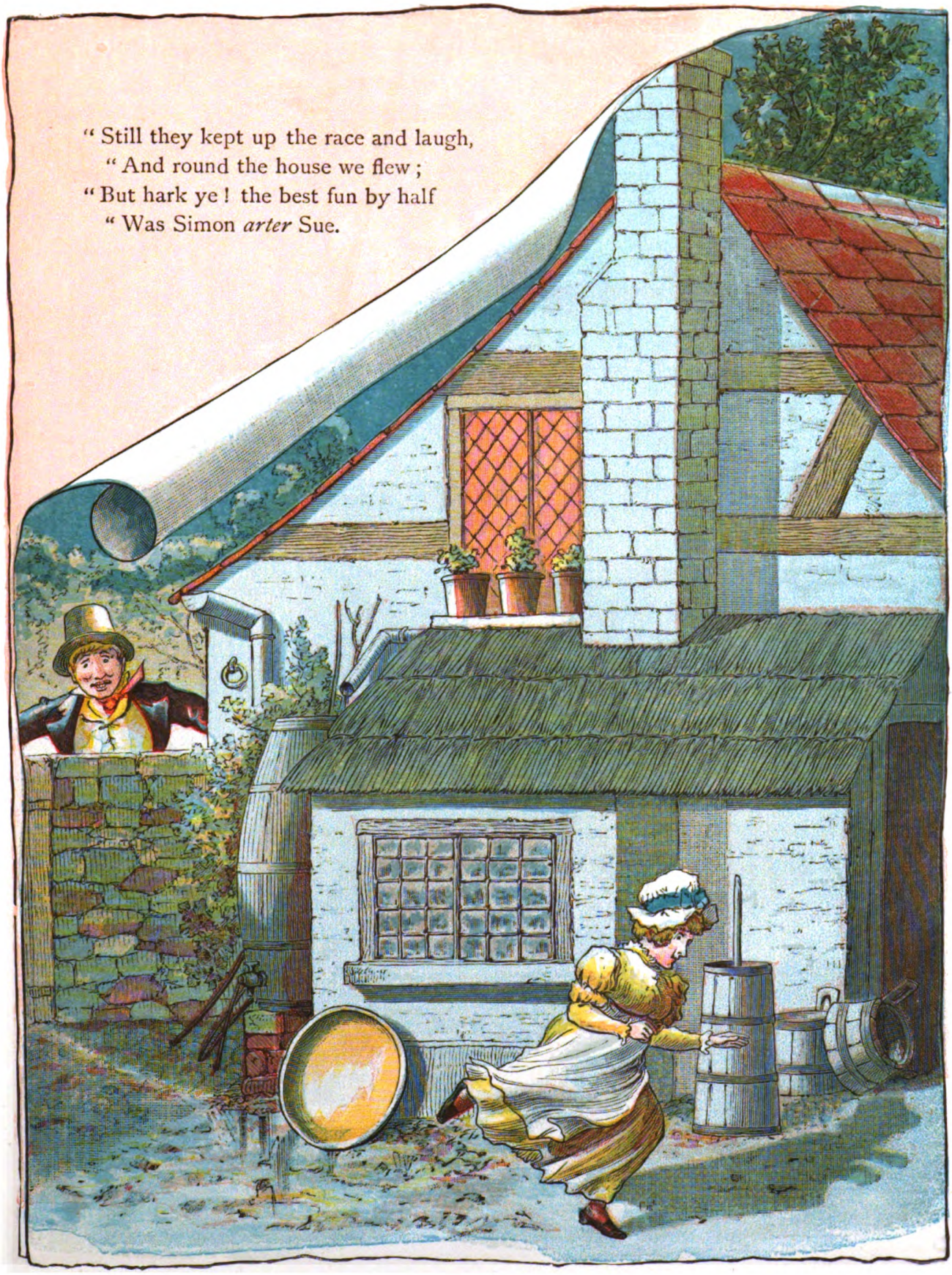
"'Twas near upon't as light as noon:
"'*A largess*,' on the hill,
"They shouted to the full round moon,
"I think I hear 'em still!
"But when they found the trick, my stars
"They well knew who to blame,
Our giggles turn'd to ha, ha, ha's,
"And *arter* us they came.

" Grace by the tumbril made a squat,
" Then ran as Sam came by,
" They said she could not run for fat ;
" *I know* she did not try.

"Sue round the *neathouse* squalling ran,
"Where Simon scarcely dare;
"He stopt,—for he's a fearful man——
"'*By gom*, there's *suffen* there!'

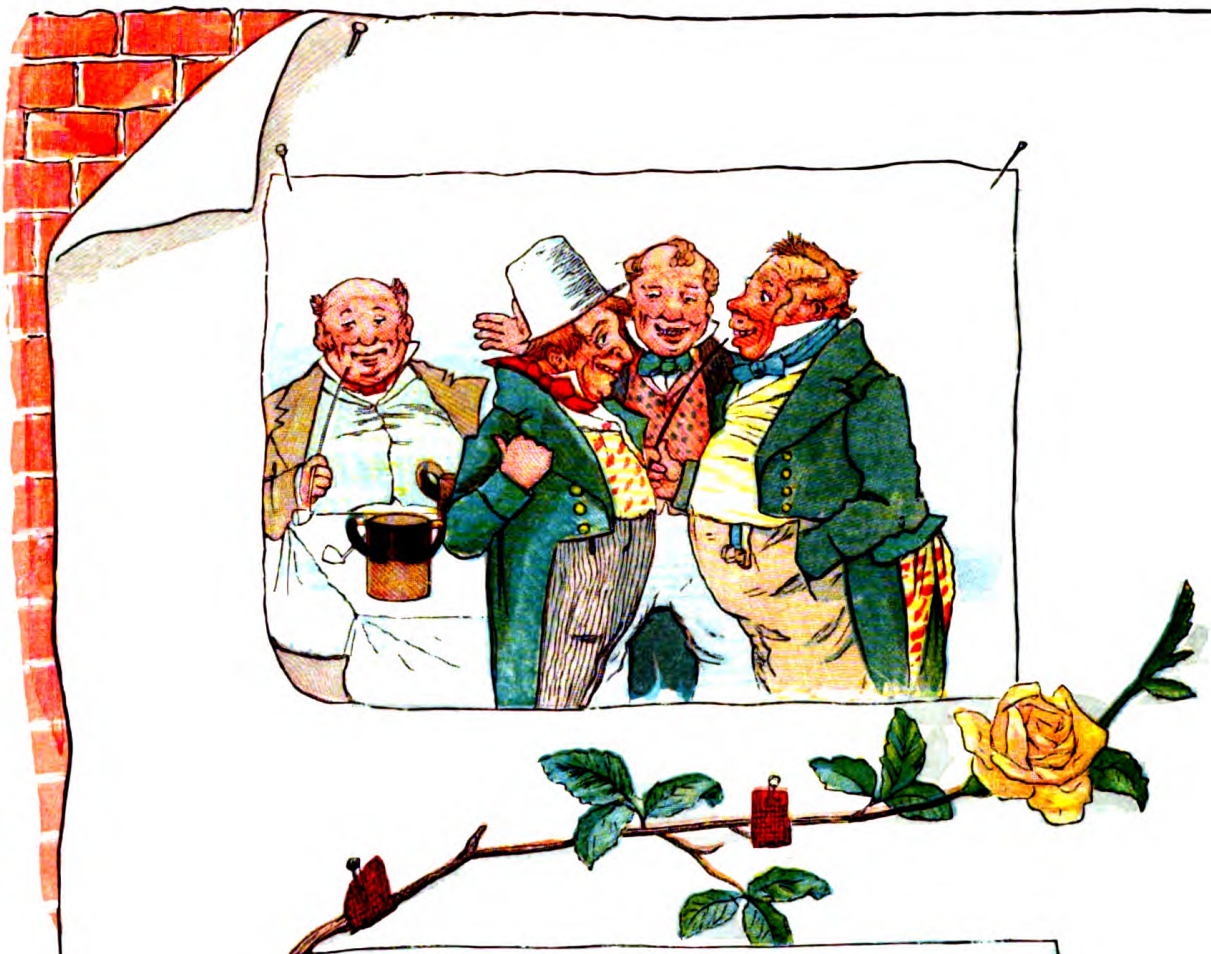


"And off set John, with all his might,
"To chase me down the yard,
"Till I was nearly *gran'd* outright;
"He hugg'd so woundly hard.


" Still they kept up the race and laugh,
" And round the house we flew ;
" But hark ye ! the best fun by half
" Was Simon *arter* Sue.

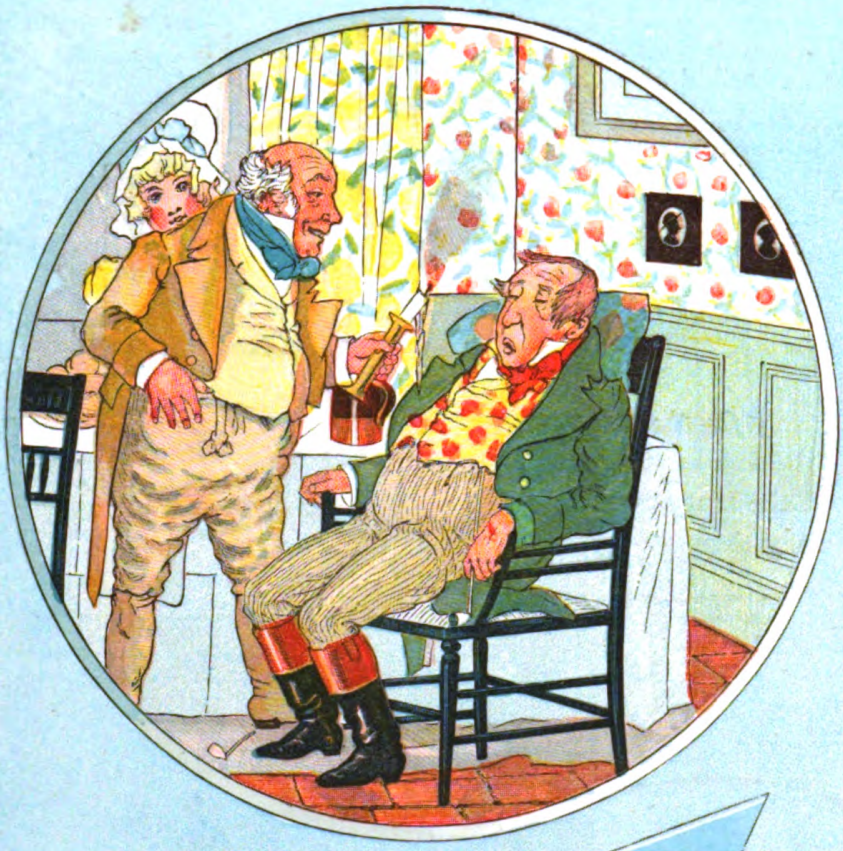
"She car'd not, dark nor light, not she,
"So, near the dairy door,
"She pass'd a clean white hog, you see,
"They'd *kilt* the day before.

"High on the *spirket* there it hung,—
"'Now Susie—what can save ye?'
"Round the cold pig his arms he flung,
"And cried, 'Ah! here I have ye!'



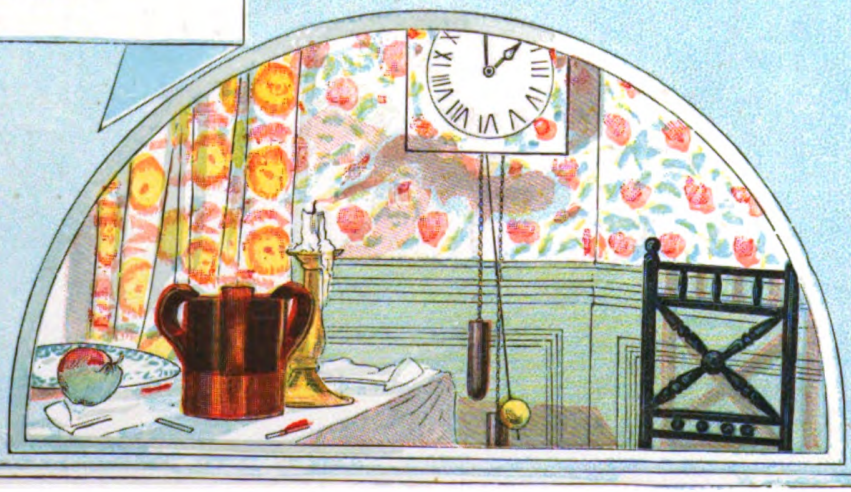
"The farmers heard what Simon said,
"And what a noise! good lack!
"Some almost laugh'd themselves *to dead*,
"And others clapt his back.

"We all at once began to tell
"What fun we had abroad;
"But Simon stood our jeers right well;
—"He fell asleep and snor'd.

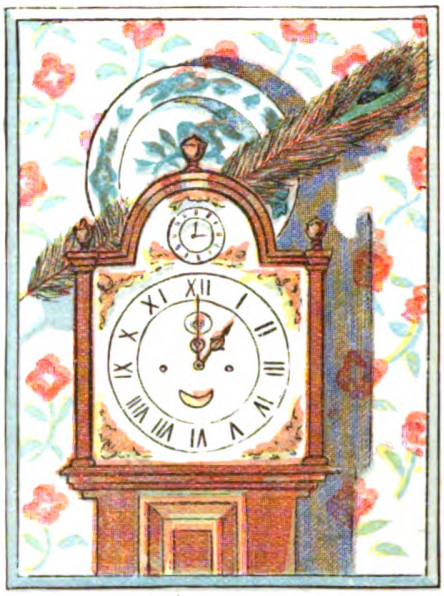


"Then in his button-hole upright,
"Did Farmer Crouder put,
"A slip of paper twisted tight,
"And held the candle *to't.*

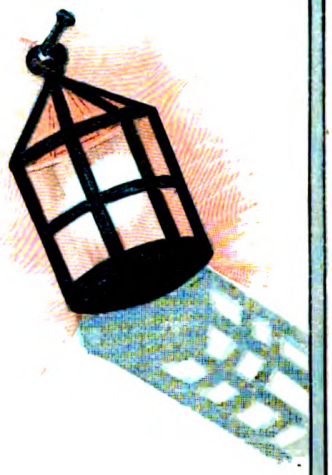
"It smok'd, and smok'd, beneath his nose,
"The harmless blaze crept higher;
"Till with a vengeance up he rose,
"Grace, Judie, Sue! fire, fire!

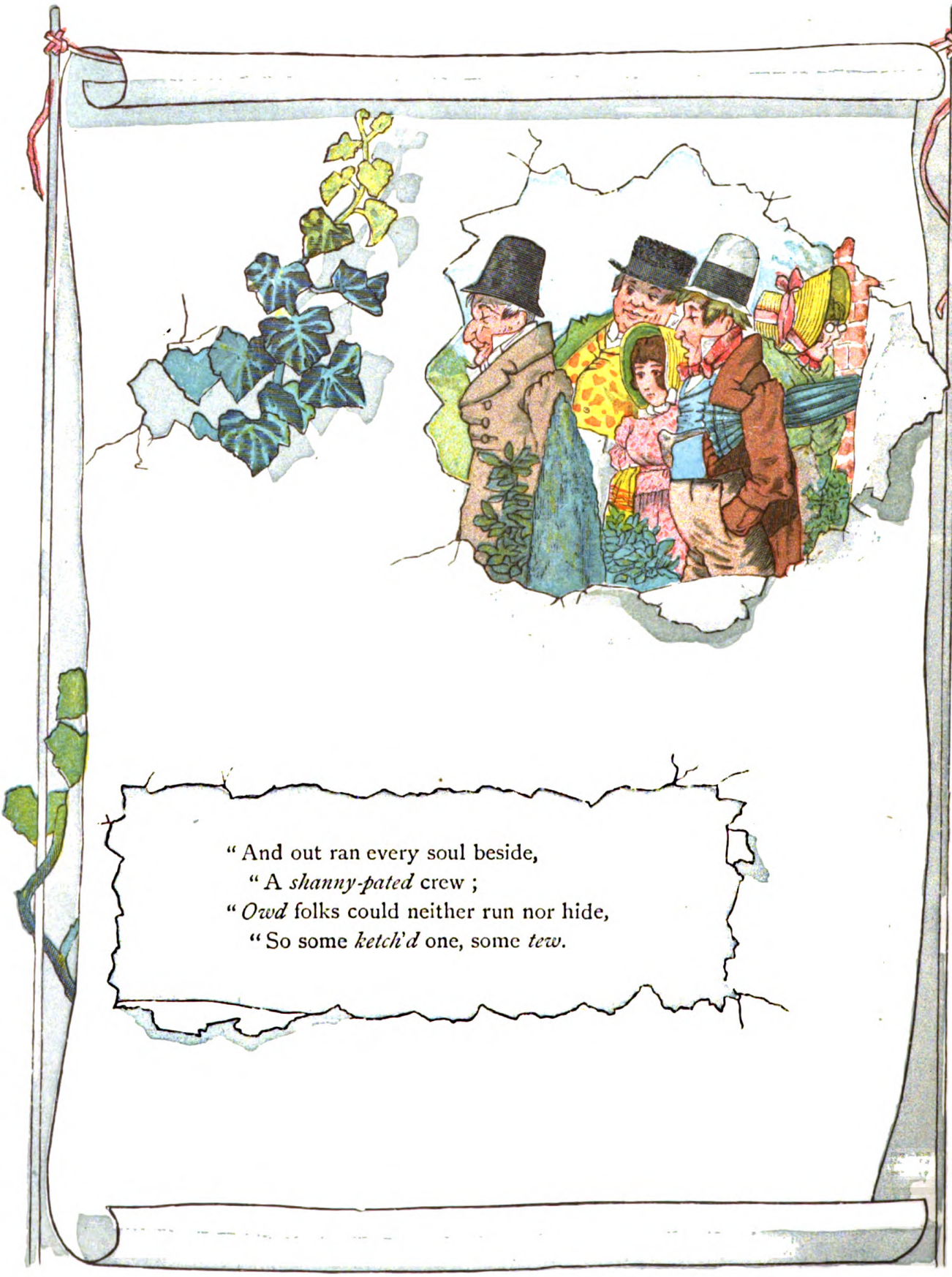


"The clock struck one—some talk'd of parting,
"Some said it was a sin,
"And *hitch'd* their chairs;—but those for starting
"Now let the moonlight in.

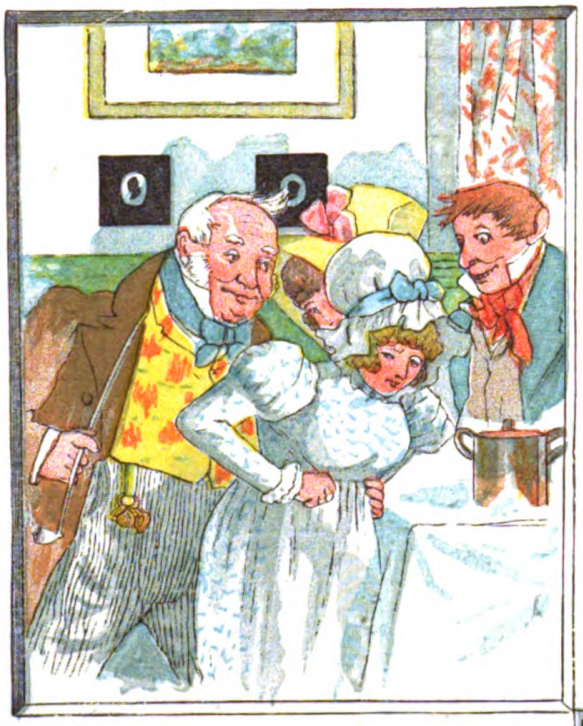


"*Owd* women, loitering *for the nonce*,
"Stood praising the fine weather;
"The menfolks took the hint at once
"To kiss them altogether.





"And out ran every soul beside,
"A *shanny-pated* crew ;
"*Owd* folks could neither run nor hide,
"So some *ketch'd* one, some *tew*.



"They *skriggl'd* and began to scold,
"But laughing got the master;
"Some *quack'ling* cried, 'let go your hold;'
"The farmers held the faster.

" All innocent, that I'll be sworn,
" There wor'nt a bit of sorrow,
And women, if their gowns *are* torn,
" Can mend them on the morrow.

" Our shadows helter skelter danc'd
" About the moonlight ground ;
" The wondering sheep, as on we pranc'd,
" Got up and gaz'd around,

"And well they might—till Farmer Cheerum,
"Now with a hearty glee,
"Bade all good morn as he came near 'em,
"And then to bed went he.

"Then off we stroll'd this way and that,
"With merry voices ringing;
"And Echo answered us right pat,
"As home we rambl'd singing.

" For, when we laugh'd, it laugh'd again,
" And to our own doors follow'd!
"' Yo, ho!' we cried; 'Yo, ho!' so plain
" The misty meadow halloo'd.

Poor Judie!—Thus Time knits or spins
The worsted from Life's ball!
Death stopt thy tales, and stopt thy pins,
—And so he'll serve us all.

"That's all my tale, and all the fun,
"Come, turn your wheels about ;
"My worsted, see !—that's nicely done,
"Just held my story out ! !"