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'The Bird flew across an open part of the park, quite in their sight'—p. 32.

SPRING
AND SUMMER.



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Spring and Summer.

THE sun shone brightly, and Julia took Mary to walk in the garden. The aconites were in flower, and many snowdrops were showing their white heads, and the pink and blue hepaticas were just peeping from under their covering of leaves, as if they were intending to make quite sure of fine weather before they ventured out. The hardy lauristina had many flowers upon it, and on these flowers Julia saw some bees, that were humming and buzzing about. 'See Mary,' she said, 'here are some bees; how pleasant it is to see them, and do you not like to hear the sound they make; they seem to tell us spring is coming.'

But Mary did not hear anything that Julia said, except that there were some bees: she jumped and clapped her hands, and very hurriedly said 'Fetch a jar! fetch a jar!'

‘What do you want a jar for?’ asked Julia.

‘For the bees to put their honey in,’ replied Mary.

Julia could scarcely help laughing outright at such a funny notion. But she did not laugh, for she had been taught that it is neither wise nor kind to let a little child feel itself to be ridiculed, however strange a mistake it may have made. So she kindly told Mary that the bees would not put their honey into a jar if she did fetch one.

Mary looked very disappointed, and said, ‘But you told me that the honey I saw in a jar the other evening had been stored up for us by the busy bees.’

‘Yes, I did tell you so, Mary; but I did not say that the bees put it into the jar. They take it to their own homes before we have it. They can only carry a very little at a time, and they fly from their own homes to the flowers, backwards and forwards, to and fro, a great many times, and they must fly equal to many miles distance, and spend many hours before they could collect enough to fill even a little jar.’

‘But,’ said Mary, ‘where are the bees’

homes? and what have they got there to put the honey in?’

‘Why, Mary, have you never seen Mrs. Green’s beehives? Those hives are the homes of her bees. And all honey bees that live in England have hives; but mama has told me that in some parts of the world, honey bees are wild, and they make their nests, or homes, in trees and in rocks. In their hives are many little cells, all neatly made of very thin wax, where the bees put the honey.’

‘Then do the same persons who make the hives make the little cells for the honey?’ asked Mary.

‘Now think, Mary,’ said Julia, ‘and remember that little poem you have learnt, where it says of the busy bee,

“How skilfully she builds her cell,
How neat she spreads her wax,”—

then you will know that the bees make the cells for themselves, and what is even more wonderful, they make the wax. I cannot tell you exactly how they do it; but when we are both older we shall be able to understand it better. I know it is God who has

given them the power and skill to do as they do. Once, when you were too young to go with us, mama took me to see some beehives with glass tops to them, where we could see the bees at work, and I think it is very likely she will take me again and you with us. We will ask her.'

As soon as they went into the house again, Mary told her mama what they had been talking about, and asked her to take them to see the glass beehives. She promised them that if all was well, when the weather was more summer-like, she would take them.

'Oh when will it be summer?' exclaimed Mary; 'is it not summer to-day?'

'All in good time, my little girl; this has been a fine morning, but it is not summer yet. Now to amuse you, I will make you a picture of different sorts of beehives, and of some honey-comb, which is the name of the whole lot of waxen cells, and a picture of a bee and a queen bee.'

Mary was very much pleased with the pictures, and very much amused to hear that each hive of bees really has a queen, and that some of the bees act as her servants, and always remain near her, and clear her path for



her wherever she goes about the hive; and when she rests they take away any bits of rubbish that may be upon her, and lick her face and make her all smooth and in order.

‘But, mama,’ said Mary, ‘do the busy bees put the honey in the hive on purpose for us? How do they know we shall like it?’

‘Well, Mary, I cannot say that the bees think about us when they store up their honey. They do it because it is their nature. If they could tell us why they put the

honey so safe in their little cells, they would most likely say, 'It is for food for ourselves in the winter. But as you make us a nice warm house, and plant plenty of sweet flowers near us, we do not mind sparing you some of our honey, only if you do not leave enough to feed us through the winter, you must be sure to give us instead some sugar and beer, or something else we like to eat, or we shall be starved before the flowers come again, and then what will you do for honey another year?'

'And what indeed should we do if the bees were all starved? Little Mary must go without honey on her bread, and without wax upon her dolly too: for wax, that is used for so many purposes, is made by the bees. Now Mary shall go in the nursery and try and draw the pictures of the honey-comb, and bees, and beehives.'

Mary tried to draw the pictures, and although they were not quite like mama's, she was very happy over them. And she went to bed half hoping that summer really was come at last, although mama had told her in the morning that it was not summer yet.

The next morning was dull and cold, and Mary could see no bees flying about, and she did not enjoy being out-of-doors herself: and the morning after there was a deep snow upon the ground, which Mary's brothers enjoyed very much to play with. And Mary herself would have liked to play with them, much more than her mama thought fit that a little girl should. But she was a good child and contented herself with running up and down the path that had been swept, watching her brothers, and sometimes merrily laughing at the fun they made with the snowballs.

By and by Mary was in a more thoughtful mood, and was almost ready to cry, lest the snowdrops and other beautiful flowers should be quite killed with being so buried in snow.

She felt very glad when her mama told her that they did not feel the snow cold to them; that instead of being cold, it was as good to them as a nice warm blanket is to a little girl: keeping off the cold frosty air that would hurt them, and as soon as the air becomes warmer it would melt the snow away, and the flowers would be there, as fresh and as smiling as a little girl who has just awakened from a good night's rest.

‘Ah,’ said sister Julia, ‘you thought summer was come yesterday, but winter was only playing bo-peep with us, and now to-day is here again, and this is what I think it might say—

‘Ah, little girl! did you think I should go?
I’ve only been for my robe of snow.’

And winter wore her robe of snow for more than a week, and very beautiful she looked; but Mary was very glad when the warm air came from the south and melted it all away and brought her flowers in sight again.

One day, soon after the snow was gone, Mary was employing herself in-doors when she heard some one under the window singing

“Buy a broom, pretty maids;
Do you want any brooms,
To keep your house clean,
And to sweep out your rooms?”

When Mary looked out of window, she saw a woman with such clothes on as she had

never seen before. When the woman saw Mary, she curtsied, and nodded and smiled, and held out some of her brooms to her, and said

“A big one for the lady,

A little one for the baby.

Buy a broom, Miss! buy a broom!”

Mary asked her mama to buy her one of the brooms, which were only little fancy things, made by shaving thin strips at one end of a stick and then curling them; but she thought one would do nicely to sweep her doll's house with.

While the broom was being bought, Mary saw that the woman had also some baskets, just such she said as she wanted to put her spring flowers into when she gathered them. Her mama gave her leave to have which she liked, and she had a basket instead of a broom. And Julia had a basket too; and the woman, after thanking them a great many times, went away singing for more customers.

‘What a strange looking woman that is,’ said Mary.

‘She certainly looks different from the women you are used to see, but she does not



look strange in her own country. She and many of her countrywomen come all the way over the sea from Holland, to try to gain a little money by selling such baskets and brooms as you saw just now.'

'I remember,' said Julia, 'you told me that the little white wooden animals, and the Noah's ark and the animals in it, were made in Holland; and then you said,

"The children of Holland
Take pleasure in making
What the children of England
Take pleasure in breaking."

'It is true,' said mama, 'that very many of the toys used by the children of England are made by very young children in Holland. They seem to be very apt at such work, and besides that, a sort of fir tree grows there which is particularly suited to such purposes. I am glad, however, to see that you are careful with your toys, and therefore the latter part of the rhyme is not correct as it regards you. But, Mary, there is one reason why I like to see a 'buy-a-broom woman,' as these Dutch people are called, and if you knew the reason, I think you would like it also.

'What can that be, mama?'

'Because they come only at the spring of the year, when it appears to have turned for fine weather, and they seem as plainly as the bee or the cuckoo to say, 'Summer is near.'

'Well, mama,' said Julia, 'it is pleasant to see anything that tells us of spring or summer, especially after such a long winter as this has been. May I read you a little poem that Mary sometimes puts me in mind

of, when she says—‘When will it be summer?’

‘Yes, dear, if you will read it carefully, so that Mary can understand it.’

Julia read—

“Spring! where are you tarrying now?
Why art thou so long unfelt?
Winter went a month ago,
When the snows began to melt.

“I am coming, little maiden,
With the pleasant sunshine laden;
With the honey for the bee,
With the blossom for the tree,
With the flower and with the leaf;
Till I come, the time is brief.

“I am coming, I am coming!
Hark, the busy bee is humming;
See, the lark is soaring high,
In the bright and sunny sky;
And the gnats are on the wing;—
Little maiden, now is spring!”

‘Yes that is very pretty, but there is a great deal more of the poem, I will repeat the last verse to you.

“Turn thine eyes to earth and heaven;
God for thee the spring hath given!
Taught the birds their melodies;
Clothed the earth, and cleared the skies,
For thy pleasure, or thy food;—
Pour thy soul in gratitude!
So may'st thou 'midst blessings dwell:
Little maiden, fare thee well.”

Now put away your little baskets. I hope we shall soon have some really fine spring weather, which is the same to Mary as summer, and that you will enjoy many nice rambles in the garden and the fields, and gather into your baskets many things from which you may gain instruction and pleasure. And while you are happy amidst all the beauties of nature, remember to feel love and gratitude to God, the maker of all. Try also if you cannot accompany your own pleasures with usefulness to some of your fellow-creatures.'

'This morning is warm and fine, and Julia and Mary may fetch their new baskets, and I will go with them along Grey's lane, and we will look under the hedge on the sunny side and see what we can find there to put in them.'

The little girls were very much pleased to hear their mama say this, and they did not need any one to hurry them in dressing.

They were but a few steps down the lane when Julia said, 'I can see a beautiful violet, and here is another, and another.'

‘Let me gather some,’ said Mary, and Julia kindly showed her the violets, and how to pluck them with nice long stalks.

Their baskets were nearly full of violets, and they were getting towards the other end of the lane, when they saw a man come into it. Though he was cleanly dressed, he looked pale and sickly, and on his arm hung a basket. Just where they had gathered their first violets, he stooped down and appeared to be looking for some.

‘Is that man looking for violets, mama?’ asked Julia. ‘I thought only children gathered such flowers.’

‘We will see,’ said mama; and when the man was nearer to them, their mama spoke to him, and he said that he *was* looking for violets. That he came from a town seven miles off, and gathered violets from different banks as he came along, and he had hoped to get some there. ‘But,’ said he, ‘I have gathered a good many this morning, and now I shall walk back as quickly as I can, and when I have tied the violets up in bunches, I shall sell them in the street to passers by.’

‘Oh, you shall have mine,’ said Julia,

‘only I should like to keep one little bunch to show to papa when we go home.’ So Julia kept a few for herself, and gave the rest to the man. Little Mary, who had



stood listening all the time, lifted up her basket and emptied it into the man's, who seemed very much pleased and thanked them very much.

When the man was gone, their mama said 'I am glad you gave the poor man your violets, and I am pleased that your kindly feel-

ing towards him did not lead you to forget for the moment dear papa, who I know will be pleased with those you take home to him.'

As they were going home, they peeped over the bank into a woody dell, where they saw some very pretty white flowers, of which even Julia could not remember the name. Their mama told them it was the wood anemone, and she showed them the way into the dell, where they were much pleased to go, and their baskets were soon filled again with flowers.

• As soon as they saw papa after their return home, the bunch of violets was given to him, and they told him all about their walk, and the man gathering violets. Papa thanked them for remembering him, and said 'You seem very happy this bright spring morning, and make me think of a little rhyme that I used to be fond of, and you may like to repeat it:

"Spring, the sweet Spring,
Is the year's pleasant king,
Then blooms each thing:
Children dance in a ring;
Cold doth not sting;
The pretty birds do sing
Cuckoo—juggle—juggle—
Pu we—to witta woo."

‘Thank you, papa; yes, we can soon learn that, and I hope we shall hear the cuckoo very soon.’

In a few days daisies and buttercups were in full bloom, and the purple orchis was very abundant in the meadows. Some of all these found their places in the little girls’ baskets, and gave them pleasure. They did not throw them about, and trample on them or waste them as soon as they were gathered; but some they put into neat little flower jars in their nursery, and others they made into chains and necklaces, which was a pretty amusement for little Mary.

And sometimes they used to carry a nosegay of wild flowers to the cottage of little Jane, who was a sickly child and a cripple, and perhaps might have passed all the spring without seeing its beauties, if there had not been any kind enough to remember her, and carry them to her. The pleased looks of the little sick girl made Julia and Mary really happy.

During many of their rambles the little girls had listened in hopes of hearing the cuckoo, but they had been disappointed; and Julia said, 'I really think the cuckoo has forgotten his way to us this year.'

'Oh no, don't fear that. Cuckoo knows his way to us this year as well as he did two hundred years ago, when this ditty, which I will say to you, was written :

" In April—come he will ;
In May—he sings all day ;
In June—he alters his tune ;
In July—he prepares to fly ;
In August—go he must."

'Then if he sings all day in May, mama, we ought to hear him now, for this is May, and a fine day in May.'

'Well, we will go to the park, and I think we shall hear him there.'

They were soon pleased and almost startled at hearing—'Cuckoo!—cuckoo!' repeated many times.

Their mama said she could judge by the sound where he was, and that he was very near. They were still listening and looking

when the bird flew across an open part of the park quite in their sight, and he alighted on another tree, and said 'cuckoo' again.

Mary was delighted to hear and see the bird both, and she said 'perhaps he has got a nest in that tree; do you think he has, mama?'

'Oh no, he has no nest there, and more than that, he has not a nest anywhere. He says

"Wherever I roam, I make my home,
And I can rest without a nest."

Unlike all other birds, cuckoos do not make nests for their young ones, but put an egg into any nest they may take a fancy to. They generally choose the nest of a hedge-sparrow, and the poor little sparrow, unaware of the trick which cuckoo has played with her nest, keeps sitting on the egg and hatches it as if it were one of her own. By and by cuckoo is hatched, and such a great bird he is that he wants the room of all the nest to himself, so he quickly sets to work, and without asking leave, turns out any eggs or little ones that may be in it, and takes

possession of all himself: there he sits, and contentedly takes of the old sparrow the food which she would have given to her own little ones. I almost wonder that the old sparrow should give it food, and sit upon it and keep it warm until it is strong enough to take care of itself. Nevertheless, she does so: there is some instinct which causes her to do so, that we cannot understand.'

A few weeks after this, Julia and Mary were busy in the garden filling their little baskets with ripe strawberries, and gooseberries, and currants. Mary held the baskets and Julia gathered the fruit, because she could tell which were really ripe. They were good children, and their mama knew that they would no more eat fruit without leave, than they would meddle with or take any other thing that was not their own.

Many a run did they take in the course of the summer with some fruit in their baskets to little Jane, and other of their poor sick neighbours, and so much pleasure did they find in being kind and sharing their enjoy-

ments with others, that they are not likely to grow up to be either selfish or useless, nor yet be very unhappy because summer does not last all the year round.



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