

## THE ROBIN'S EGG.

What was ever so dainty of hue?  
 Who can tell is it green, is it blue?  
 Look, little girl,  
 At this beautiful pearl  
 Hid in the nest of the robin!

Nay, little girl! Nay, nay, don't touch!  
 Wait for a week—a week's not much—  
 Then come here, and see  
 What there will be  
 Hid in the nest of the robin!

What shall you see? A wonderful sight.  
 Then, little girl, step light, step light,  
 That no sound may be heard  
 By the baby bird  
 Hid in the nest of the robin!

## NATURAL HISTORY FOR THE LITTLE ONES.

## MORE FLOWERS OF THE SEA.

ADAPTED FROM JUVENILE MCNAIR WRIGHT.

## THE FLYING FLOWERS.

I knew a little boy who, the first time that he noticed dragon-flies, cried out "Oh, see all those flowers flying!" That was a pretty idea. It well described the dragon-flies. Their shape, colours, and motions are very lovely. I am sorry that such beautiful creatures have had harsh names given to them. They are called Dragon-Flies, Horse Stingers, Darning Needles, Spindles, and so on. These names have nothing true in them. These pretty insects never harm any one.

The French people call them Little Ladies. Now, that is a nicer name. It is given to them because they are graceful and pretty, and also neat and delicate, in their looks and motions. I knew a man who called these insects Air-Jewels. That was because they are almost always on the wing, and their eyes and bodies flash and shine like precious gems. I have known silly people to start and scream when one of these dragon-flies came darting by. That was foolish; they might as well scream at a rose or a violet.

They are very active in their motions, and are very seldom at rest. They fly so swiftly that you can scarcely see their thin wings, but only the flash of their bright coloured bodies. Dragon flies like damp or wet places. You will find them above lakes and ponds. They fly over marshy places or by the edges of quiet streams. There you will see hundreds of gay dragon flies darting up and down. They swing in the sunbeams, as if glad to be alive. In their great beauty the dragon flies are as pretty as the butterflies. Like them, they love the sunshine. They are the children of the summer time. The hotter the weather, the happier the dragon flies seem to be.

The wide wings look like delicate lace spread on a fine frame. A little child who found one of these wings; brought it to me, saying "I got a good piece of lace!"

While it is an egg, a larva, and a pupa, it lives under the water. Only when about to burst from the pupa-case, and at last get its wings, does it leave the water

and seek the upper air. This larva does not run after its food, but lies waiting for it. On the bottom of the pond, hidden in the shadow of a leaf, root, or stone, or seated on stems or leaves that are under water, the larva waits patiently for its prey to come by. Did you ever see a person with a net for catching insects? As insects dart by, the person with the net brings it down over them with a quick motion.

The dragon-fly larva has something much like this to catch its food. When the prey comes by, the larva snaps out its rool, and so catches the things that are swimming along a little way off. They do not see their foe, and do not know that he can reach so far with his sweep net.

I suppose the little creatures that swim along feel quite happy and safe, and then, all at once, out springs this weapon, and they are gone. But this little plague of the pond is not quite safe himself. There are some other creatures down under the water that eat him. All nature is a kind of game of "tit for tat," you see.

Once the larva wanted nothing better than to chase bugs about under water. Now, all at once it longs for the free air and for the sun. It needs no one to tell it what to do. It knows exactly how it should act.

It seeks the stem of some tall reed that grows in the water. Slowly it crawls up the stem. The hooks on the feet take fast hold as it goes, and it keeps on until it is nearly a yard above water. It drives the hooks into the stem. It

likes best to find two reeds or stems near, so that it can take hold of both and swing between the two. Then, like a child in a swing, it begins to sway to and fro. Now, as it sways, a strange thing happens. The hard pupa-case splits open upon the back, and look, inside the case, we see the perfect insect, with its wings!

The new insect twists and pulls, and so gets free; and little by little its head, legs, wings, and long body come forth, and finally hang only by the last ring of the body. Then you would think it was dead. But it is only resting. After about fifteen minutes it awakes. Taking hold firm with its feet upon a stem or leaf, it lets go its hold upon the pupa-case. That is left hanging by its hooks in its place.

Here is now a dragon-fly, with large head, with two great cluster eyes, six legs, four wings, and long, bright-hued body! But still the insect does not look like the full-made dragon-fly. The colours are dull, and the wings are folded up. The body is soft, damp, and too short. The big eyes are dim. Now and then its wings quiver. As they quiver they spread out, fold after fold, as silken banners wave out upon the air. Then at last they are spread out wide in all their beauty. The dragon-fly has reached its last and highest state. It can sail away where it pleases on its new wings.



HOME OF THE DRAGON-FLY.