

FOR THE CHILDREN

Mr. Back-Swimmer, the Boat-Fly

By LOUISE D. MITCHELL.

ONCE upon a time a Little Boy-Spider and a Little Girl-Spider were looking for something to do that was real fun. They had played all of the games they knew and were quite tired of them; so they were looking around for something they had never done before. Now, it happened that at the moment when they had decided that they *must* have something quite, quite new to play, they were standing beside a pretty pond that was very still and overhung with trees, so that it made the water seem quite dark.

But out in the very middle of the pond was a nice bright spot, where Father Sun seemed to be burning the dark water with a yellow fire and turning it all to gold.

"How I should like to get out there to that nice bright spot and bring back some of that golden light," said the Little Girl-Spider, longingly. "It would be so pretty to play with! Maybe we could make candles of it. Oh, *wouldn't* it be fun to do it!"

"Well, maybe we can do it," said the Little Boy-Spider kindly as he glanced about him. He was always very kind and loving to his Little Sister.

"All we need is a boat," said the Little Girl-Spider. "And then you could row me out there. I'll take this little leaf-basket and lean over the side of the boat and scoop up a great deal of the golden light—and then we can sit down here on this pretty stone and spend all the rest of the day making our candles out of dried grass sticks with some of the golden light at the top."

"All right," said the Little Boy-Spider, quickly, "that is what we will do. Oh, goody, I think I see a boat and it's right near shore. Now we can go right away and get the golden light. Bring your little leaf-basket and follow me!"

"Do you think you would know how to row, Little Brother?" the Little Girl-Spider asked timidly as she ran after him.

"Well, there isn't much to know about it," he replied. "You just put a stick in the water and push on it; then you pull it out again, and then put it in again, and push on the water some more. I think it will be very easy to do. I will try it anyway."

"How many sticks do you use?" she asked.

"Oh, just one when you begin and then when you get used to doing it, you can use as many as you like. But you needn't be afraid with me, Little Sister, I will take care of you."

"But what a funny boat! What are all those sticks lying on it for?"

"I don't know. Maybe somebody put them there. Now, sit down there in the stern, while I get aboard. There we are, and away for the golden light!"

"Is that the pushing stick you are holding?"

"Yes, and they call these pushing sticks 'oars,' Little Sister."

"I'll try to remember. Do you—oh, oh, Little Brother, something queer is happening! Look—look!"

And sure enough, something queer was happening, for two of the sticks that had been lying on the boat when they got aboard were moving! This startling sight filled the two Spider-Children with sudden terror. The Little Boy-Spider tried to be brave for his Little Sister's sake, but in his fright he dropped his oar into the water and it soon floated away. The Little Spider-Children now felt quite

helpless and stood there trembling with fright, watching the two sticks unfolding, just like two knife-blades opening out.

I really do not know what they would have done in their terror, for they had both decided to jump overboard and try to get back to the shore, had not a very, very kind voice said, just then:

"Now, don't be afraid, my children, nothing is going to hurt you at all. Just remain there, quietly, and I will tell you all about it. You thought I was a boat, I see, but I am not. I was asleep and I did not hear—feel, I mean—you come aboard me. I am Mr. Back-Swimmer, and use these two hind legs of mine as my oars. With them I can move swiftly about from one end of the pond to the other. I can even row myself down to the bottom of the pond and remain there quite a time, although my real home is on the surface of the water. I have to carry a load of air down with me to breathe while I am below, and this I stow away in small holes under that fringe of tiny hairs which you will see along the ridge that is in the centre of your 'boat.' Ha! ha! So you thought I was a boat, did you? Well, never mind, I am not in the least offended. We all make mistakes, sometimes. Now tell me what you wanted."

So the Little Boy-Spider, no longer afraid, told him all about the tiny candles they were going to make, and Mr. Back-Swimmer listened very carefully. But he said, gravely:

"Now, my dear children, I will row you out there so that you may see the lovely golden light, but I am sorry to say that you will not be able to take any of it away in your little leaf-basket. Now, sit down quietly and we will go there right away."

So the Little Spider Brother and Sister sat very still, and in just about a second they found themselves away out there near the lovely golden light. And, oh, how bright it was! Then after a while Mr. Back-Swimmer asked them if they had seen enough, and they said, "Yes, thank you," and so he rowed them swiftly back to the shore. And then they thanked him again and again for all his trouble and kindness and he went away.

"Little Sister," said the Little Boy-Spider very softly, "what did you think of the lovely golden light?"

"I—I—was afraid of it, Little Brother," she whispered.

"Well, I am going to tell you a secret," he said, bravely. "I was afraid, too."—*New Idea Magazine.*

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When Jane Stands Up to Sing.

By Elizabeth Piercy.

When Jane stands up in church to sing,

She sings away with all her might;
And as she cannot read the hymn
She does not get the words quite right.

She sings about all kinds of things—
About the stained-glass window-panes,

The Shepherd with the little lambs,
The shepherds watching on the plains:

About the halos and the crowns,
And fishers on a stormy sea;
And when her thoughts are sorrowful
She sings them in a minor key.

About the preacher, too, she sings,
And all the people—and—once—
oh—

Mother and I had such a fright!
For Jane was singing a solo.

—*Windsor Magazine.*



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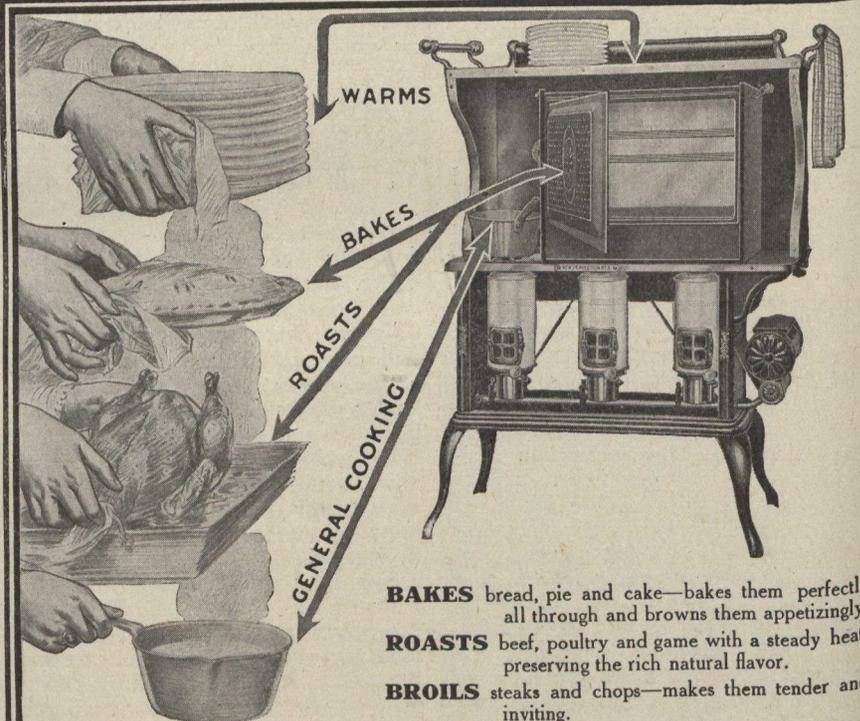
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