

about the ponies. He just makes up tunes and words as he goes along, it's the cunningest thing in all the world," Helen Ambrose said, with her delightful laugh.

Spudgins sat still and shut his eyes and he swayed to and fro a little. From his stepmother he had caught the trick of speaking spasmodically at times, rushing his words and then pausing for breath; he sang in the same way. His music was just a whisper, very indistinct and confidential. When each song finished he beamed and then said, "Now I'll give 'splanation."

Then he would talk for a long while, emphasizing his points with a little fat uplifted finger.

These "'splanations" were the most important part of his songs; the child had a quaint imagination, and being one by himself as it were, all the thoughts, the mysteries and the joys which would have been shared with other children in a natural way were embodied in these songs. It was extraordinary how varied were his subjects; there was a little grey pony on which he travelled into unknown lands: there were hills with holes in them in which he hid from some enemy; the smoke from the fire made one song: and the cakes on the daintily spread tea-table provoked quite a lot of poetry.

"If only he need never grow up," said Helen Ambrose with a sigh.

The songs and the explanations came to an end at last and Spudgins, having crawled from the foot of the bed to the pillows and given Mrs. Cheston a big hug and two kisses (a generous measure this!), was taken away for bath and bed. The two women lapsed into silence again when the child was gone. It was a silence pregnant with comprehensive sympathy: it carried healing: it

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