

## Children's Department.

Better than Gold.

It was a pretty piece of furzy hill as you might see anywhere. There was no road over it, only a cart-track in one place, and for the rest you might wander up and down at your own sweet will. The children played at hide-and-seek between the furze-bushes, and the gentle twitter of the swallows as they circled round was constantly heard above their heads. A range of chalk downs, green and swelling, rose at the back; the cowslips grew there, and clumps of beech-trees, their soft silky leaves just unfolding, covered the slopes.

But this hill was all sand, not chalk; and, as all gardeners know, that made the look of things quite different. Furze was there, of course, and just now, in this bright May-time, it was in all its glory.

Nowhere else but in England could you have seen such a mass of gold. At a little distance it was such a blaze that people turned to look at it, and the proud furze-bush was mightily pleased with the admiration they expressed. "What's so good as gold?" it asked, as it held up its head stiff and straight. "What's so good as gold?"

But there were other things on the hill besides the furze. There was the soft velvet moss, the pale scentless violet, the yellow tormentil; but, best of all, there were the bluebells. Lovely in colour, sweet to the senses, rising from their pale green leaves—who would not love them?

The little ones gathered their hands full, and still there were plenty left; nobody plucked the furze. Oh no! it was guarded, policeman-like, by such sharp prickles; and, besides, it was too grand—it was gold!

And the bluebells looked up timidly at the furze, and they whispered, "You are admired; but we are loved."

That spring passed away, and another, and a vast change had come

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over the furze-hill. All the gold was gone. Men had come and hacked away at the tough stems till a few stunted bushes only were left, and nothing of the glory remained.

"Give place to your betters," they had said grimly; "we want the land for building, and must get rid of the rubbish."

And the bluebells? They did not take the trouble to root them up, though they trampled them carelessly under foot, and the once flowery hill was left barren and unsightly.

Another spring came and went, and many another, too. The little children who once gathered the bluebells were grown-up men and women, and the swallows that flew overhead were the great-great-grandchildren of the former ones. The hill itself was changed indeed. It was covered, not with furze, but with villas. There were gardens full of the choicest flowers; the golden chain of the laburnum drooping over them, and the air fragrant with the scent of lilacs.

But how was this? In the midst of the bees, here and there, was something that did not belong to them! There were actually bluebells!—the bluebells of the old furze-hill! One in the narcissus border, another on the rockery, a third in the shady nook by the arbour. How could they have come there?

Ah, you may guess! No gardener had planted them, they were the original inhabitants. Nobody had cared to root them up—too insignificant to be worth the trouble; they were living their own simple life just as naturally in a garden as they used to do on the hillside.

And the children who lived in the villas ran out and gathered them, and cried with eager delight, "How nice to find bluebells here! Please, gardener, let them stay, and don't grub them up as you do the weeds. It would not be kind, you know, and besides we love them."

"All right," said the gardener, "for I remember when they were all over the hill, underneath the furze. Wonderful grand that was, but all gone now, and we let it go. As to the bluebells, faithful to their old soil, well,

't would be sort o' inhospitable to turn 'em out, so we'll just let 'em bide."

And the bluebells again lifted up their heads shyly, and murmured, "Love is better than gold, love is more lasting than gold."

## Is the World Round?

That was what the Grand Lama asked. But perhaps you do not know who the Grand Lama is. If you could have seen him you would have said he was very grand outside; but with such a question on his lips, you would have felt sure that the brain chambers within were not so well provided for.

Grand? yes—I should think he was; he had on a long gown of orange silk, bordered with purple velvet; the cuffs at the wrists were of sky-blue satin, and over all was thrown a splendid red scarf. Then on his head he wore a high felt hat, also of orange, contrived so that the ends of the same, worked in gold embroidery, fell down over the shoulders. Must he not have been imposing? I am sure our Queen could not come up to him at all. But the grand Lama is hardly a potentate—he is a priest.

You know, in some parts of Asia, where the religion called Buddhism prevails, the Grand Lama is the head or chief, treated with the greatest respect, and with reverence almost amounting to worship. But this splendid fellow is not very learned in geography, as we know from the question he asked the traveller who had been admitted into his august presence—"Is the world round?"

"You," he continued, "have been in many countries and talked with wise men, and I would like your opinion as to the shape of the world."

"I believe it to be shaped like a great ball," replied his visitor.

"I have heard so before," said the great man thoughtfully. "The Russians have told me so, and possibly, as they can predict eclipses, they must know; but it is contrary to the teaching of our books. What makes you think so?"

"I have many reasons," returned the traveller; "but the best and strongest arises from my own experience. I have been round it."

The questioner started with surprise. The words gave him a shock. "What do you mean?" he exclaimed. "How do you know?"

"I mean this: I turned my back on my home, and travelled many months in the same direction. Every morning the sun rose before my face and set behind my back; the earth seemed flat—there was neither ridge nor end, and at last, without once turning, I came again to my own country. Could I have done this if the world had not been round?"

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"Very strange—very strange," murmured the Grand Lama, when the traveller paused. "But where is your country?"

He listened to full descriptions of it, and it seemed to open up new ideas in his mind. He had heard of India and England, but not of America, and had no idea of the mighty Atlantic which rolls between the two worlds. The talk was long, but by no means was he convinced.

"It is not said so in our books," he repeated gravely, shaking his head

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