

## Our Young Folks.

## Too Little.

The chair was hardly high enough,  
Her head came just above the table;  
Her little fist a pencil grasped  
And scribbled fast as it was able.

"I'm writing stories," she explained,  
And down the busy head bent lower;  
"Ah, read one to me, dear," I begged—  
And then the dimpled hand moved slower.

"O, Auntie,"—and the baby face  
Drew back, then, with the blue eyes lighting;  
"I'd love too, only I'm so small  
I don't know how to read my writing."

—Clara Louise Burnham, in April WIDE AWAKE.

## A Little Impostor.

But yesterday  
Upon the short green grass  
We played croquet,  
I, and this little lass—  
This very same  
That is so lame—  
And she with shout and glee  
Was flitting, as a bee  
Flies from a clover top  
To a near weed and then,  
Pausing, but not to stop,  
Hums back again.

So blithe, so skilled,  
She is her little hand  
The mallet held,  
As fairy might her wand—  
This very same  
That is so lame—  
And danced so blither, whither,  
I scarcely could tell whither;  
I only know that I  
Was very sure to find  
Myself, however spy,  
Far, far behind.

Her orange ball  
Sped through the arch straight,  
Nor failed at all!  
And I—I had to wait.  
This with, this same  
That is so lame—  
Never a nimbler one  
Under the summer's sun  
Played at the pretty game;  
Who would have thought to-day  
She would be hobbling, lame,  
Crippled this way!

Ah! in her eyes  
I see the rogue shine through!  
Through all disguise  
Still dance those eyes of blue—  
They dance the same  
Although you're lame!  
Crutches and wretchedness  
In such a flowery dress?  
My lady, why not say—  
You hint it very plain—  
"Pray let me at croquet  
Beat you again!"

—Clara Doty Bates, in April WIDE AWAKE.

## STUCK IN THE MUD.

Stuck in the mud! It sounds common;  
place enough, for who is there that has not  
had the misfortune, at one time or another,  
to be stuck in the mud more or less? And  
yet I have found the situation on several  
occasions of my life very far from common-  
place; indeed, as "picturesque" as any  
man could wish for, and far more dangerous  
than I liked. For I have been stuck in the  
mud on elephant-back, on camel-back, on  
horseback, and each time that it happened,  
I found myself in somewhat serious physical  
danger.

To begin with the elephant. It was on  
one of the hottest days of May, one of the  
hottest months of the Indian year, that I  
found myself one of a party starting for a  
tiger-jungle. The tiger had been marked  
down in some "elephant grass" about a  
mile beyond the fast-drying bed of a small  
water-pool, and we were already in sight of  
the place where the striped monster was  
said to be lying when we came to the first of  
the water pools.

Now, one of the dangers to be guarded  
against when riding on an elephant, is that  
of the animal stepping upon boggy ground.  
The elephant, as soon as it finds its feet  
sinking, seizes the first thing it can reach,  
and puts it under its feet to keep itself up,  
and the first thing, as a rule, is the man  
who is driving it! For the elephant, the  
moment that it suspects the ground to be  
too soft to bear up its huge weight, swings  
its trunk round, and drags the mahout (as  
the driver is called) off its head, and  
tramples his body under foot in the hope of  
saving itself.

Its next thought is to drag the howdah,  
on which the riders sit, off its back, and to  
treat it (no matter what it contains) in the  
same way as the wretched mahout has been  
served. The result is that elephant-riders,  
whenever they hear the cry of *fuss-gya*—  
"stuck in the mud"—scramble or tumble  
off the animal's back as fast as they can.

Well, we were going along very slowly  
and quietly, when we came to one of the  
water-pools. The leading elephant of the  
procession passed round it to the left hand.  
But when my mahout came up to the place,  
he chose to drive my elephant across the  
pool instead of around it. It certainly  
looked safe enough.

There was not a drop of water in the  
pool, and the surface of the mud looked as  
hard and firm as a sunbaked brick floor.  
Even the intelligence of the elephant was  
deceived, for just as it was stepping on to  
the treacherous ground, it pulled up in a  
careless sort of way a tuft of dead reeds, and  
began to switch it idly from side to side as  
if keeping off the flies.

The pool had a very slight depression in  
the centre, and just as the elephant got into  
the middle of this—it stopped. Then came  
a sudden jolt as if the great beast had  
slipped, and the next instant, with a shrill  
cry of terror, the elephant flung its trunk  
up in the air!

"*Fuss-gya!*" shrieked the mahout, plung-  
ing off the elephant's head to the ground!  
"*Fuss-gya,*" we shouted in response, as  
we shot off its back!

And not a minute too soon, for the ele-  
phant's trunk, reaching out for anything it  
could touch, to put under its feet, had  
already dragged the pad half off its back,  
and had we been on it, we should have been  
flung forward, directly in front of the ter-  
rified animal. And once on the ground,  
there would have been but little hope for us.

But as it was, we were safe, and by good  
luck we were able to make the elephant safe  
too, for a dead tree was close by, and we  
gave it a pile of branches to put under its  
fore feet, and as soon as these were on firm  
footing, the huge thing backed slowly up the  
bank upon solid ground again!

Very often, however, it happens that an  
elephant—"stuck in the mud" can not be  
released—for tiger-jungles are often hun-  
dreds of miles from any ropes or planks, or  
other life-saving appliances—and the poor  
brute has to be shot where it stands, to  
linger death from starvation or a cruel  
one from wild beasts. Elephants, there-  
fore, are as a rule extraordinarily careful  
as to the solidity of the ground they tread  
on.

## Are Birds of Any Use?

It is early dawn—the dew glistens on  
shrub and flower. The sun, just rising,  
throws a halo of glory on all around. Two  
little grey Sparrows are perched high up  
on the bell-tower of an ancient grammar-  
school. After chatting a while, and nod-  
ding their wise little heads, down they flow  
from their lofty perch, and begin, very  
busily indeed, to pick up the worms and  
grubs off a beautiful flower-bed in the pretty  
garden lying below the old bell-tower. A  
Robin, perched on a branch of one of the  
old apple-trees growing in the grass-plot,  
watches our two friends for some time, then  
puffing out his little red breast, says:

"Sillies that you are, giving yourselves  
all that trouble, going round and round  
those flowers, and poking your bills under  
the leaves, when you have only to make use  
of your eyes to see the worms waiting for  
you on this grass. Come, silly birds, and  
eat them up before the heat of the sun sends  
them into their holes."

"Ah, that won't do for us, Mr. Robin,"  
replied the little Cock-sparrow, pausing in  
his task, and cocking up his eye at his  
neighbor in the tree; "my wife and I are  
working for our dear mistress, who pays us  
well for what we do; and if you will take  
my advice, you will come and work too."

"*Chirp!*" chirps the little wife, "we must  
work for our wages, that we may pay our  
debts."

"Wages and debts! what do you mean!"  
cried Master Robin, with another very con-  
temptuous puff out of his little red breast.

"We will tell you, if you will come  
down; we cannot speak to you while you  
are so high up in that tree, else we shall  
have to stop our work to make you hear,  
but when you are down here we can both  
talk and work."

The Robin, being a very curious bird,  
flies on to a dwarf rose-bush close at hand.

"Go on," says he, "I'm listening."  
"Well, I will tell you," begins the Cock-  
sparrow. "We are working for our sweet  
little mistress, that she may have the beau-  
tiful flowers she loves so dearly, and which  
these worms and grubs would eat up, if we  
did not eat them, and—"

"And," interrupts the little hen, rustling  
up her feathers in her eagerness to speak,  
and turning up her eyes, all sparkling like  
the dew, at Master Robin on his rose-bush  
—"and that we may show to her how  
grateful we are for all the kind and loving  
care she took of us in the cold and bitter  
winter-time, when the snow lay so thick on  
the ground we could not see a blade of  
grass, and should have died but for her."

"Selfish, thoughtless little bird that I  
am," sang out the Robin, "to forget our  
dear little mistress bringing out the crumbs  
every morning while that bitter weather  
lasted. We should all have been starved  
but for her. I, of all birds ought not to  
have forgotten, for I had a chilblain on my  
big toe, which caused me to hop on my leg,  
and I saw how sorry she was for me by the  
big tears in her eyes. I will work for her  
—aye, that I will!" And he pecked away  
at the worms and grubs with a most hearty  
appetite and will.

"Good, good—very good, indeed!" war-  
bles the Lark, as he soars above the heads  
of the busy birds. "I also will do my  
share; I will sing your story to the sweetest  
tune in my book. Aye, I will do far more  
than that; as I soar up and up to the glori-  
ous sky, I will sing the story to the Great  
Creator, and when quite out of sight, the  
sweet echo will come back through the  
glistening dew, and the bright sunbeams,  
to gladden the hearts of the grateful and  
loving little birds of earth." And away he  
soars, trilling his sweetest melody; and the  
sun breaks out in all its glorious majesty,  
and the morning's work is done.

"So, my child, the birds are of use, you  
see."

## Kind Words.

"Buy a box, please, sir!" The speaker  
was a little match girl, who, on a summer's  
afternoon, stood at the entrance of one of  
the large London railway stations. She was  
trying to find customers among the gentle-  
men who were hurrying along to catch the  
trains that would take them from busy,  
smoky London to their pleasant homes.  
Most of them never saw the little girl, or,  
if they did, took no notice of her. At  
length one gentleman, at the sound of the  
plaintiff voice, "Buy a box, please, sir?"  
stopped a moment. "No, I don't want any,"  
he said, and was passing on when the hun-  
gry look of the poor child arrested him,  
and he remembered a bag of biscuits which  
his little daughter had given him that  
morning for his luncheon, but which he had  
been too busy to eat. So he too, tumbled out  
of his pocket, and gave them to her, saying,  
"Here, darling, here are some biscuits for  
you." She took them without one word of  
thanks, which rather surprised the gentle-  
man, and he turned to go; but looking back  
he saw her standing with the biscuits still  
in her hand, her eyes full of tears, and he  
heard her say to herself, "he called me  
darling, he did!"

Don't you think that my friend went  
home to his own darlings with a happier  
heart for the kind word he had spoken to  
that poor child? Perhaps it was the only  
one she had heard for many a day.

Dear children,—you who live in happy  
homes, and have sunny smiles and loving  
words given you all day long,—will you not  
think sometimes of those poor little outcasts  
who have no homes? and if you have no  
more to give them, at least give them kind  
words.

## Bunny.

Bunny is a very affectionate little rabbit;  
he is so clean in his habits, and especially  
clean in keeping an almost pure white coat,  
dashed with a few spots of black. He comes  
to the table at meal times and attracts our

attention by pushing his nose against our  
feet, until we give him a piece of bread and  
butter, or a potato. Besides a supply of  
cabbage leaves, he occasionally looks for a  
drink of milk or a piece of celery or lettuce  
leaf. This is all the change of diet he gets.  
He runs after us up and down the house, and  
unless he is shut up in the kitchen at night,  
will even follow us to our bedrooms. On our  
retiring to bed he will make a run round  
and round one of us for two or three times  
and circle back again round us, as if to pre-  
vent his becoming giddy, at the same time  
grunting a subdued little noise of pleasure.  
If we take a little stick, providing he has  
had his meal and is comfortably satisfied,  
he will bite the stick and playfully jorking  
his head will project the stick away from  
him, waiting to repeat the performance  
again and again, and this he will do for sev-  
eral minutes until we get tired of the play  
ourselves. If he is not noticed at table he  
will jump upon our knees, rather than miss  
being noticed, and will submit to be nursed,  
only on condition that he is fed; otherwise  
a slight pressure of his teeth may very soon  
remind us that he must be allowed to jump  
down again off our knee. Once this winter  
our little pet took very ill and remained  
near the fire all day, and this continued for  
three days, during which time he did not  
eat anything whatever. A plentiful supply  
of cold water was given to him at the fire,  
which he appeared to like, and this "med-  
icine" restored him to his usual friskiness.  
We do not know anybody who has made a  
rabbit so domesticated as ourselves, but  
we have read the interesting account of  
the training of three hares by the poet Cow-  
per.

## Strength of the Tiger.

The strength of the tiger is prodigious.  
By a single cuff of his great fore-paw he will  
break the skull of an ox as easily as one  
could smash a goose-berry; and then taking  
his prey by the neck, will straiten his  
muscles and march off at a half-trot, with  
only the hoofs and tail of the defunct animal  
trailing on the ground. An eminent travel-  
ler relates that a buffalo belonging to a  
peasant in India, having got helplessly  
stuck in the swamp, its owner went to seek  
assistance of his neighbours to drag it out.  
While he was gone, however, a tiger visited  
the spot, and unceremoniously slew and  
drew the buffalo out of the mire, and had  
just got it comfortably over his shoulders  
preparatory to trotting home, when the  
herdsman and his friends approached. The  
buffalo, which weighed more than a thou-  
sand pounds, had its skull fractured and  
its body nearly emptied of blood.

## Children's Questions.

What position ought parents to assume  
with regard to the questions the children  
ask? Ought they to be answered honestly,  
fully and fairly, or, when answering is dif-  
ficult, should the child be put off with eva-  
sion, an idle "I don't know," or "Never  
mind about that now?" A certain class of  
questions it is, of course, impossible to an-  
swer; as when a child 3 years old asked his  
father, "What makes water wet?" for al-  
though the father was a chemist he could  
not adjust his knowledge to the child's com-  
prehension. Generally speaking, however,  
it is both easier and more natural to respond  
to the childish craving for information by a  
full and direct answer, even at the risk of  
not being fully understood, than to attempt  
to adjust to the child's understanding an-  
swers that cannot be so adjusted.

## Children's Sayings.

Once when Daisy's mamma had missed  
her for a long time, she went to look for  
her. Where do you suppose she found her?  
Sitting on the rug with a shawl wound  
around her. When mamma opened the  
door, Daisy said, "Hush! Hush! I am  
telling, and doing to hatch some little bid-  
dies." Mamma shook her off the nest, and  
found that the little thing had been patient-  
ly sitting on six A B C blocks, a darning  
egg, a little china mug and a broken doll  
head.