

planting the little shoots in the damp ground, and they shot up in the hot sunshine into slender canes, half as high again as a man. By day, parrots flew over the blossoming canes, and by night came sparkling fire-flies, whilst at the edge of the fields grew waving palms. At harvest time the negroes cut off the canes with sickles, pressed them in the mill, boiled and cleared the syrup, and divided the crystallized sugar from the treacle. The freshly made cane sugar was brown, too, and had to be clarified several times with charcoal powder before it produced a beautiful white sugar loaf.

Now, both little lumps of sugar are lying together on the table. Which do you think is the best? If you look at them you will see that one is just as white and pure as the other, and if you taste them they are equally sweet. Therefore, it is just the same to you whether the sugar is made from beet-root in the field near by or comes from the sugar cane in Jamaica, if only it tastes sweet and is not too tiny a piece.

The Use of the Toad.

Nobody likes the toad, because she is so very ugly. She spent her youth in a marsh, and looks dirty and grey like the muddy water all round her, with a flat, clumsy body, and legs that are so short that she cannot give the graceful jumps the frog does when he is playing at being dancing master. She can only creep slowly on the ground, and drag herself along with difficulty.

Other animals do not care to have anything to do with the toad, for her skin gives out a poison, which the fox and every other beast of prey hates, though for the toad herself it is well that such visitors do not trouble her. She does not care to show herself by day, but hides away in some secret hiding place, only coming out at night. And what do you think she does in the damp meadow, or among the reeds, or in the garden, when it is dark?

I will tell you. Many beasts that shun the daylight appear at night; thousands of snails wake up and march to the cabbages, the lettuces, and to the other plants which the gardener grows with such care in his beds.

By day the singing birds are the policemen in the gardens, and pick the caterpillars off the leaves, but at night they are asleep in their nests, and the vagabonds could play about as they like, if it were not for the toads. They are the night-watchmen in the kitchen-garden. They follow along the slimy traces which the snails have left behind them,

and gobble up the greedy beasts. Those they do not catch the first night will be caught next time, for toads have a bright eye in their heads. It is Shakespeare who says in "As You Like It,"—

Sweet are the uses of adversity;

Which, like the toad, ugly and venomous,

Wears yet a precious jewel in his head.

Formerly gardeners persecuted toads when they found them in their gardens, for it seemed to them disgusting that such ugly beasts should creep about among flowers and vegetables. They killed them and threw them away, but now they have learnt better. As we keep a cat in the house to guard against the thievish mice, so we cherish the toads in the garden. Some gardeners in large towns like London and Paris actually buy toads to put them into their gardens, and these despised, ugly animals are even packed in barrels and sent across the sea to other countries. A creature may be ever so ugly, and yet be of great use in the world.

How the Squirrel Gets Over His Difficulties.

On a tree in the wood lives the squirrel, sitting on his hind legs on a branch, pricking up his ears and eating nuts. He builds his nest high up in the oak tree, where he tends his young and lays up a store of acorns for the long winter months. Every child, walking through the woods, is pleased to see him, for he does no one any harm.

But in spite of this the poor squirrel has many enemies to threaten his life, and day and night he must be on his guard. He can seldom defend himself with his teeth, and though his claws are well adapted for climbing, they are of no use as weapons against the cruel foes that persecute him.

By day the hawk makes a desperate onslaught on the squirrel, and at night comes the owl with big, fiery eyes. He swoops down upon the terrified little beast, to seize him with his pointed claws and tear him to pieces with his crooked beak. But the squirrel is an acrobat, and knows how to save himself, for he whisks nimbly to the other side of the tree, and while the bird flies after him the squirrel is round to the front again. In this way he climbs round and round the tree trunk, always away from the owl, who cannot follow as quickly, and all the time mounting higher and higher towards a loop-hole he knows of under a broken branch, where he slips in and lies in safety. The owl is left out in the cold. Let him fly on, for he won't catch our clever squirrel.