

LITTLE TALES FOR LITTLE PEOPLE



Where Does the Rain Come From?

WHERE does all the rain come from? From the clouds, you say? Yes; but that doesn't go very far. What are clouds? Think a bit. Have you ever seen anything close at hand which looks like a cloud? Of course you have. There is the steam that comes out of the spout of the kettle or out of the funnel of a locomotive. Yes, that is cloud, and it is exactly the same thing that you see up in the sky on a rainy day.

It may seem a funny thing to say, but a cloud is simply water dust. Watch the puffs of steam coming out of the engine, and you will notice that quite close to the funnel you see nothing at all. It is only a few inches away from the mouth that it begins to look cloudy.

The steam or water vapor, which is made in the boiler of the locomotive you can not see. It is as clear and invisible as air itself. But the moment the steam gets outside into the cold air it begins to cool. The tiny little invisible particles of which it is composed join together into larger ones, which are still very small, but large enough for you to see, and so you get the milky-white looking thing we call cloud.

Now, I want you to notice another thing. When the cloud from the kettle has floated a little way it begins to disappear again. That is because the heat of the kitchen changes the water dust back into true steam or vapor. The vapor is still there, but you can't see it.

If you made the kitchen very hot and went on boiling kettles all day long, the air would get very moist indeed, but you would not see the moisture except on the walls. But if you suddenly opened the window and let in the cold air, the kitchen would get quite cloudy.

There is one way in which we boil water all day long, and that is in our own bodies. Have you ever noticed on a cold winter's day the cloud that your breath makes right in front of your nose? That is because our breath has so much water vapor or steam in it. This steam is made by the heating of our blood, which is chiefly water, in our bodies, which are full of little fireplaces, of which I will tell you another time.

Two Little Dimples.

Two little dimples went out to look
For snug little places to hide,
They thought that they never could find a
nook.
Till dear Minny Apples they spied!
Then down these two
Little dimples flew,
Till each was lodged in a cheek,
And for years they've tried
But they cannot hide,
For when Minny laughs out they peek.

How Little Japs Play.

In Japan the boys and girls have many holidays.

The favorite holiday sport for both boys and men is kites flying. Their kites are very gorgeous—and very large, many of them, some of them being as big as two doors put together. These huge ones, of course, it takes several men to raise and fly.

And they are in all sorts of wonderful shapes—birds with outspread wings, flowers, butterflies and hideous ogres.

Then, too, the boys have just a simple square kite with a picture of some favorite military or naval hero pasted on it.

The boys like to wage kite battles with one another.

The way they do this is by pasting bits of glass to the strings and then running with all their might trying to cross the strings of the other boys with their own and to cut them by means of the glass.

Many of them make their kites sing. It is probably done by fastening various little things to the strings. The sound is like that of an eolian harp.

The favorite game of the girls of Japan is battledore and shuttlecock. And a very pretty sight it is, you may be sure, when a bevy of pretty Japanese girls enters into this game.

Their faces are painted perfectly white, while their lips are colored a brilliant vermilion. Their hair is done up into bows and butterfly shapes, and from head to foot they are dressed in robes of brilliant colors, fastened with handsome girdles and sashes.

Grandpa's Toy.

When grandpa was a little boy—
And that's a far-off day,
For now grandpa is very old,
And never thinks of play—

Grandpa lived in the good old times
When "everything was right";
They had no carpets on the floors,
And they read by candle-light.

And his toy-horse looks very crude,
Its tail is like a broom;
The wagon is high and funny,
And has but little room.

But grandpa thinks it the nicest toy
That ever yet was made;
He would never for an automobile
This queer old wagon trade.

I suppose when you are grandpa
You'll think your toys were great
Way back in the days when you were
young;
But you'll be out of date.
—St. Nicholas.

A Fish that Shoots.

Though a captive in a bowl of water, a beaked pet of the Japanese is allowed to use its blow-gun. It could not very well be otherwise, because its beak serves as the tube through which water is forced as shot. This fish, the chaetodon, feeds on flies and other insects, but it is not forced to depend, as nearly every other fish is, on the accidental fall of its victims into the water. When it sees a fly above the water the wily creature tries to hide, with only its peculiar beak above the surface, the point directed toward the prey. Suddenly it shoots a drop of water at the fly with such true aim that the insect falls and is immediately snapped up by the fish.

Many little Japanese boys and girls amuse themselves by holding toward the fish a fly on the end of a slender rod for the fun of seeing the funny archer take him.

This fish has a most remarkable form, and its colors are bold and beautiful. Its figure is almost circular or disc-like, and it is about a foot in size. Over its head and body are five dark gold stripes edged with brown and white, and in the middle of the soft back fin there is a large spot of black edged with white.

A near relation of this Japanese pet is called a charioteer because of the enormously long spine like a whip. The use of this whip has never been learned. The body of the fish is striped with black as if a person had varnished it. The first band passes over the neck and upper part of the head, making it a fitting background for the very bright eye of this peculiar creature.

These chaetodon inhabit the Indian and Polynesian seas, but only the beaked fish is made a household pet on account of the development of its snout, which is more than half the length of the whole head, and the fun of seeing it shoot.

Making Giant Soap Bubbles.

Blowing soap bubbles used to be more popular among the boys and girls than it is in these days, but still there is plenty of amusement to be had by those skillful in the art. These spheres are too frail to last long, it is true, but there is a way of making them far tougher than is common—so tough, indeed, that they will roll around the carpet of a room for some

time before bursting. Into a pint of warm water shave a piece of brown laundry soap about an inch square, containing a good proportion of lye. When this is thoroughly dissolved add a tablespoonful of gum arabic and stir till melted. Then a teaspoonful of glycerin is necessary, and lastly a quart of cold water.

If the bubble-makers are not very little people and know how to keep the water out of their mouths wonderfully colored bubbles can be made by separating this mixture into cups and adding a pinch of different diamond dyes to each. But for little people strawberry or currant juice for pink bubbles and orange juice for yellow are perhaps safer. The lye in the soap, plus the glycerin, increases the brilliancy of the bubbles and the gum gives them elasticity. Hot water is necessary to dissolve the various ingredients, but unless cold water is added they expand and break too rapidly in the blowing process. A curious pipe that will blow several bubbles at one time can be obtained from any kindergarten supply house.

When the Cat's Away.

A Town Mouse went to his country cousin,
And had a taste of his homely fare;
He said, "Why, my dear, I could give you
a dozen
Of better things than this humble fare;
Come up to town, and we'll go and dine
Together in my house so fine."
—St. Nicholas.

So the little Country Mouse hurried up
To where her relative lived in state—
Prepared on all good things to sup,
Though the hours they kept were some-
what late.
"Oh, shan't we just have a dainty bite,"
Said the Town Mouse, "after supper to-
night?"

So off they went to the tables where
The guests late feasted, and ate their
crumbs,
And dined full royally, till, "Who comes?"
Cried the Country Mouse, "See two cats
there!"
No doubt they are here to hunt for a
mouse,
So let us be off; I don't like this house!

An enemy lurks in these halls to mice,
So we'll cease to bite 'neath this tempt-
ing board,
And they'll make short work of us in a
trice.

So what's the use of your larder's hoard?
I'd rather go back to my plainer diet,
In my own little corner, snug and quiet."

So off they went to their humble dinner,
That the Country Mouse left cooking at
home,
And though it's certain they both got
thinner,
I think they were wise not to try and
room;
For it's only when the Cats are away,
That Mice in comfort can dine and play.
—Philadelphia Ledger.

Japanese Houses.

You ought to see a Japanese house, boys and girls.

You know what a sliding door is like? Most of us have sliding doors between the parlor and sitting room, or between the sitting room and the dining room.

Well, try to imagine what our houses would be like if they consisted altogether of sliding doors, so that you could go from one room to another at any point in the wall that you might choose.

Wouldn't that be queer? But that is the style of house that Japanese boys and girls live in.

All that a Japanese carpenter does when he builds a house is to put up four corner posts, put in a floor, place four crossbeams from post to post, put a roof on top, and then make a groove all around the under side of the crossbeams and in the floor (just like the grooves that our carpenters make for sliding doors), then between the grooves in the floor and the grooves in the crossbeams the Japanese carpenter fits over so many running shutters.

Then he divides the house up into as many rooms as the owner wishes, and

these are divided from each other by the same kind of sliding shutters.

So, you see, a Japanese house really has no doors at all, for it is easy enough to shove any shutter back and pass from one room into another. Every shutter has a little burnished handle to it for that purpose.

Hunting Elephants.

What a vast number of objects are made of ivory! Knife handles sometimes and paper cutters and all sorts of useful and ornamental objects, carved wood of all kinds, stamp boxes, penholders, rare little carved statuettes. Even thrones have been made of ivory. If the elephant had teeth and tusks enough, it would be hard to say what people would not manufacture out of this beautiful material. In Russia floors of the state apartments in the palace are inlaid with ivory, and one African sultan has surrounded his straw-thatched palace with a fence of elephants' tusks, a barricade far more valuable and curious than beautiful.

That the elephants annually slain in Africa and India could furnish half the ivory used in one year, those who are acquainted with elephant hunting as well as with the quantity of ivory used annually in Europe, America and Asia know very well to be impossible. The ivory diggers, therefore, have to assist the elephant hunters.

With the same zeal with which the petroleum borers in America seek to discover a new oil well do the ivory diggers on the Arctic coasts search for mammoth's tusks. Every spring, when the ice begins to thaw, the marshy land of Eastern Siberia reveals new mines of fossil ivory. The traders are very jealous, and allow no one else to work these mines on the coasts and islands under their control. They make every effort to send at least 50,000 pounds of fossil ivory a year westward along the great caravan road.

It is a strange sight to see an ivory caravan as it silently hurries onward through the desolate plains in the extreme north. The closely muffled-up figures, their faces hidden, balanced on lofty saddles, journey on and on by the strange light of the Aurora Borealis, through the long nights, sometimes across steppes so swampy in summer that they are scarcely passable. Nothing seems to arouse these quaint figures from their stolid apathy. The snow-storm does not affect them, nor does the biting cold terrify them. Yet the danger to the caravan from these two causes is very great.

When next you see a piece of ivory think how many days of toil and nights of bitter hardship the ivory caravan endures in order to transport the smooth, white material to civilization.

A Child's Thought of God.

I.
They say that God lives very high;
But if you look above the pines
You cannot see our God; and why?

II.
And if you dig down in the mines
You never see Him in the gold,
Though from Him all that's glory shines.

III.
God is so good, He wears a fold
Of heaven and earth across His face—
Like secrets kept, for love, untold.

IV.
But still I feel that His embrace
Slides down by thrills, through all things
made,
Through sight and sound of every place:

V.
As if my tender mother laid
On my shut lips her kisses' pressure,
Half-waking me at night, and said,
"Who kissed you through the dark, dear
guesser?"
—Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

