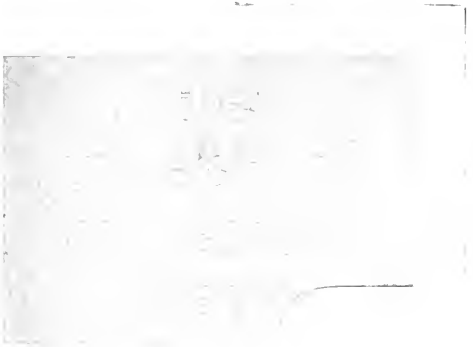

The April Baby's Book of Tunes


The MMCo.

'Watched them go off with their Skates'

The

April Baby's Book of Tunes

WITH

THE STORY OF HOW THEY CAME TO BE WRITTEN

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"ELIZABETH AND HER GERMAN GARDEN"

ILLUSTRATED BY KATE GREENAWAY

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The April Baby's Book of Tunes

with

The Story of how they came to be Written

ONCE upon a time there were three little girls called April, May, and June. Their mother thought it simpler to call them after the months they were born in, instead of having to worry over a choice between Jane, or Susan, or Mary, or any of the ordinary girl-names. She had meant to call the eldest one Jane, because it was such a short, tidy little name; but an aunt who was staying with her nearly cried, the bare idea made her so unhappy. You see, the aunt was very fond of Shakespeare, and wanted the baby to be called Ophelia, and there is a great difference

between the sound of Ophelia and the sound of Jane; but the mother didn't want to have a baby called Ophelia, and didn't want to argue either, so she settled it by having it christened after the month it was born in, and everybody said how queer.

Once she had begun doing that, of course she had to go on; but luckily the stork didn't bring any more babies after the June one, or I don't know what would have happened. How could you call a baby February, for instance? These babies lived in Germany, and that is why the stork brought them. In England you are dug up out of a parsley-bed, but in Germany you are brought by a stork, who flies through the air holding you in his beak, and you wriggle all the time like a little pink worm, and then he taps at the window of the house you are bound for, and puts you solemnly into the nice warm cushion that is sure to be ready for you, and you are rolled round and round in flannel things, and tied comfortably on to the cushion, and left to get your breath and collect your wits after the quick journey across the sky. That is exactly what happened to April, and May, and June. They often told their mother about it, and said they could remember it quite well.

Book of Tunes

They were about five, and six, and seven years old in the winter week I am going to tell you about. It was the week before Easter, when it oughtn't to have been winter at all; but strange things happen in the way of weather in those far-away forests where they live, and after having been quite like spring for a long while, it turned suddenly very cold.

At first when it began to snow they were delighted, and got out their sleigh and their snow-boots, and harnessed their mother's big dog to the sleigh, and drove him up and down the paths, only laughing all the louder when he ran them against a tree and pitched them off into the snow. But the next day the snow was so deep that it covered the sleigh right up, and came over their knees, and got inside their stockings at the top, and made them very uncomfortable; so they stayed indoors, and finished the presents they were making for their mother's Easter surprise.

German Easters are very nice things, something like Christmas, only instead of tables covered with presents round the Christmas tree, the presents are hidden out in the garden, in the grass or among the bushes that are generally just turning a faint green.

The April Baby's

Everybody gives everybody else presents; and then there are eggs of all sorts and sizes, some in sugar with chocolate things inside, and some in chocolate with sugar things inside, and some in china with presents inside, and a great many real eggs, hard-boiled, and dyed in colours that would astonish the hens who laid them, and you eat more of them than is good for you and afterwards are sorry.

April, May, and June knitted mittens for their mother. At Christmas they knitted mittens, and at Easter they knitted mittens, and for her birthday they knitted mittens; so that there was never any need for her to bother about buying mittens. They could all knit very nicely, and their mother used to say a little while before any of these festivals that she hoped Father Christmas, or the Easter hare, or the birthday sprite meant to bring her some mittens that time, for she loved them better than anything else. Then the babies were delighted, because knitting was easy, and it was so convenient that their mother should happen to like just what they liked best to make.

But in two days they had finished the mittens, and still it went on snowing.

Then they had to fall back upon their dolls, for it was snowing as though it never meant to stop. Never had been seen such an Easter. People went about saying, 'Did you ever?' to the people they met, and couldn't get over it at all. The window panes were sheets of ice, for there were I don't know how many degrees of frost, and each night it froze harder than it had done the night before. In the daytime the rooms were full of a wonderful white light from the snow outside, and the fires blazed extra cheerfully, and it was very cosy indoors in their mother's pretty rooms, where flowers blossomed all the year round, no matter what was going on outside, and where it always smelt of violets.

For two days, then, the babies played contentedly enough with their dolls. But dolls are but mortal, and how can you expect a doll you have had given you at Christmas to be anything but mangled by Easter? What they were playing with could hardly be called dolls at all, for although there was a great abundance of arms, and legs, and heads, and dresses, and wigs, and eyes, there was not one single complete doll in all the heap. June went about rattling half a dozen eyes in her pocket as grown-up people rattle their money; and when her mother

asked her what made that noise, she pulled out a handful of them in different sizes, and they looked so like real eyes that it quite gave her mother what is known as a turn, — which is a sort of feeling as though you were being suddenly pulled inside out and back again very quickly.

In two more days they had got to the stage in doll-playing in which you begin to chop up parts of the bodies and boil them, and warm bits of the wax and mould it into puddings, and make reckless porridge out of the bran stuffing and the water your face was washed in before dinner, — the stage, that is, which comes last of all, and just before you are put in the corner.

And still it went on snowing.

Their mother, who had been placidly reading all this time, began to be uneasy when she saw with what ardour the cooking in the next room was being carried on. The playroom opened into the library, where she sat this cold weather like Polly Flinders, warming her toes; and she got up every now and then and peeped in, stealing away again softly, half inclined to laugh, and yet disturbed by visions of corners in the near future as she saw the three chopping, and pounding, and stirring, with scarlet

'Don't push so, you awful 'Fun.'

cheeks and dishevelled hair and mouths shut tight, and an oddly vindictive look on their faces, as though there was more than mere cooking in what they were doing, — the look almost of those who are paying off old scores at last, and can't do it too thoroughly. And if you want to know what vindictive means, you look at your nurse's face next time she takes you behind a tree in the Park to shake you in comfort, without the least provocation, and when you know you have been an angel.

In another hour all their stock of remains had been used up, and they had had a banquet, which they cut rather short, however, on realising the dulness of only pretending to eat; and then, instead of tidying everything up, and washing the saucepans and plates like good children, they leant disconsolately against the window-sills, staring out into the white world outside through little holes they had scratched in the frost on the panes, and flattened their noses, and felt cross.

'Don't push so, you awful June,' said April, giving June an impatient shove. They often talked English together, though they were German babies, and if it was not quite like the English that little girls in England talk, neither was it, I am sure, any

worse than the German would be that English children of the same age might try to talk.

'I doesn't push,' said June blandly: and pushed with all her might.

June was a short, thick baby, and couldn't reach up to the windows as comfortably as the other two; and besides, April had scratched lovely big eye-holes with her nails in the ice on the pane, and June coveted them. Do you know what covet means? It is a dreadful feeling that seizes people when they see somebody else with the things they would like and haven't got, and makes them feel as though they were going to burst. June was sure she would burst if she didn't soon get April's holes, so she pushed and wriggled with all her strength, and when April protested, merely repeated reassuringly 'I doesn't push.'

But April was not to be put off like that, and finding that her legs were being violently dragged away from beneath her, swooped down on June, who would not let her go, and they both rolled over on the floor together, while May sat on her window-sill kicking her heels in great delight, and egged them on with cheers.

Then Séraphine, their French nurse, came in, and threw up her hands aghast at what she saw, — the room all littered with bran and doll's hair, the table covered with the remains of the feast, the sofa strewn with saucepans, and the two babies rolling over and over each other on the floor.

Séraphine had been meek, and soft, and delicate when first she came to be the babies' nurse, but that had all worn off long ago, and she had grown robust in the healthy forest air, and round and rosy on the wholesome country food, and with her roundness and rosiness had come a determination to have her own way and circumvent the babies; and they, after lording it over her during those first few blissful months, had found to their sorrowful surprise that she had unaccountably grown to be a match for them.

On this occasion also she was a match for them. First she threw up her hands and shrilly cried *Mon Dieu!* Then she ordered them to clear up all the mess they had made; and then, exasperated by the unwilling slowness of their movements, and still more so by the conviction that it was she who would ultimately have to do the clearing up, swept them off, after a

moment's impatient watching, into the three corners of the room, kept carefully clear for such emergencies. It was a good thing there was not a fourth baby, for there would have been no corner to put it in, because, though there was a fourth corner in this, as in most rooms, it was occupied by the stove. April pointed this out one day to her mother, who agreed that it was all very conveniently arranged.

Their mother in the next room heard Séraphine's entrance and exclamation of dismay, and then the sudden stillness which she knew from experience meant corners. She got up and looked out the window. It had left off snowing, and the garden was covered up with the loveliest smooth, thick, white coat, and all the trees looked like Christmas trees. It made one long, somehow, to run out and make footmarks everywhere on the spotlessness.

She waited a little while, so as not to interfere with Séraphine's ideas of justice, and then went into the playroom with an appropriately grave face, and called them out of their corners, and gave them a short lecture as mothers have to do when children are not good. She told them, when she had done, that of all things in the world she disliked having to lecture, and

she would be so grateful if only they would keep out of corners and save her the trouble of it; upon which there was a sudden outburst of enthusiasm, and a confusion of arms and legs, and a great amount of kissing, and then they made a determined attack on the saucepans and scoured with such goodwill that in ten minutes everything was tidy again, and they could pull on their boots and gaiters and go out and help their mother spoil the beautiful, fascinating snow.

But they sank right in, June up to her ears, May up to her neck, and April up to her shoulders, and it was quite impossible to move. So the mother ordered the sleigh, and had them wrapped up to the eyes in furs, and fur hoods pulled over their foreheads, and took them sleighing along the wintry roads.

Where these babies lived, when you drive in winter you sit in fur bags up to your waist, and the rest of you is so covered up that nothing but your eyes can be seen. If you don't do that you are frost-bitten, which is a very disagreeable thing to be, and may end in your nose crumbling away, and your beauty crumbling away with it. It is no use my telling you how cold the thermometer showed it to be, for children who live in London and

go for walks every day in the Park or Kensington Gardens needn't bother much about thermometers, so you wouldn't understand. But where April and her sisters lived, you look anxiously at the thermometer hanging outside your window before you go out, so as to know how many furs to put on, or whether you can venture out at all. Sometimes it is so cold that for days you are shut up in the house, especially if you happen to be a baby. The babies' mother very nearly decided to oil them all over, as the people do who live more or less at the North Pole, so that they should not feel the cold so much; but then she remembered that babies are sent into the world chiefly that mothers may have something to kiss all the time, and how can you kiss oiled babies? She soon found out in the sleigh that this was one of the days when people who are not oiled are better at home, and she turned back and sent April and May in again. June begged so hard to be allowed to stay that she took her a little further, giving in because June was the fattest, and fat babies are never so cold as lean ones. That is why, I suppose, everybody who lives up in those forests where the babies did, are so fat. They eat and drink a great deal all the summer, so that when the long, bitter winter

comes they may be nicely protected against the cold, and needn't buy so many furs; and though that sort of figure may not be pretty at a party, it is very convenient in a frost.

But the mother and June soon had to turn back too, for their eyelashes froze tight on to the long fur round their faces and they couldn't open their eyes any more, which made it dreadfully dull. So they went home again, and had to grope their way in, and thaw their eyelashes at the fire; and then the mother sat down and wondered what she could do to help the babies over the long days that had to be got through before it was time to hide the Easter eggs.

The schoolmaster who came every day to teach them was snowed up too in his house, so they had no lessons to keep them busy. Séraphine couldn't teach them, because she didn't know anything herself, which was the best of reasons; all she could do was to sing French songs without any tune in them over and over again till the babies had learnt them, by which time the mother in the next room was almost distracted. They had cooked their dolls, they had no lessons, they couldn't get out and run in the garden, — I don't believe any baby in the world could keep long

out of a corner under such conditions, or any mother, knowing its difficulties, be happy.

This particular mother didn't believe it either, and sat and wondered what she could do. She sat and wondered in front of the big fireplace, with her feet nearly in the fire. It had begun to snow again harder than ever, and she knew there was no chance of the babies getting out for two or three days. It grew dark, and when the tea was brought in, and fresh peat had been thrown on the fire, and the room was all full of firelight, she called the babies and invited them to come and have tea with her, and sit comfortably on a row of footstools in front of the fire, instead of solemnly round the schoolroom table with Séraphine's stern eye petrifying them from behind the teapot.

They loved having tea with their mother, although there was no jam on the bread and butter as there was in the schoolroom. They liked their mother without jam better a thousand times than Séraphine with jam,— even if it had been the best jam in the world, which, of course, as every baby knows, is apricot if it isn't strawberry. They flew to fetch footstools, and sat on them munching their bread and butter in the pleasant firelight, warming their toes

LITTLE POLLY FLINDERS.

Little Polly Flinders
Sat on the cinders,
Warming her little toes ;
Her mother came and caught her,
And whipp'd her little daughter,
For spoiling her nice new clothes.

at the blaze like their mother, and getting hotter, and happier, and more buttery every minute. Then their mother poured them each out a cup of her own tea in her own pretty cups, with saucers and spoons all proper, instead of the mortifying mugs they had in the schoolroom; and the tea was so hot and sweet and delicious that it made them feel as though their insides were being wrapped round in hot flannel petticoats with sugar on them, which is the loveliest feeling in the world.

'Now we're sitting like Polly Flinders,' said the mother.

'What's Flinders?' asked April.

'Is Flinders one girl?' asked June, scooping up the sugar at the bottom of her cup.

May said nothing, but put out her tongue as far as it would go, and then whisked it right round her mouth several times running with considerable skill. There was some butter on her nose, and some on her chin, and though she had a handkerchief, and a pocket to keep it in, and every convenience for cleaning herself, she preferred taking her tongue, and so not wasting either time or butter.

'Didn't I ever tell you about Polly Flinders?' asked the

mother, who had watched May's tongue, fascinated, till the last bit of butter had been safely captured. 'Didn't you ever hear how she

Sat in the cinders
Warming her little toes?
Her mummy came and caught her
And whipped her little daughter
For spoiling her nice new clothes.'

The babies looked at each other in astonishment.

'*Oh*, what a mummy!' cried April.

'*Poor* Flinders!' cried May.

'Did the mummy whip that Flinders with the hand, or with one stick?' asked June, deeply interested.

'I should think with her hand,' said the mother. 'You see, she had spoilt all the nice clothes her mummy had made her for Christmas, and it was very annoying.'

'Yes, but to whip *gleich!*' exclaimed May indignantly.

'I never did see one mummy like that before,' said April, shaking her head with grave disapproval.

Their mother was silent. She had known the story of Polly

'But Flinders' Foots was cold'

Flinders all her life, but had not noticed anything particularly blameworthy in the conduct of Mrs. Flinders. Indeed, as a child she had thought Mrs. Flinders had only done what was quite natural, and no more than the aggravating Polly deserved. It took her, therefore, some moments to readjust her views; but the babies were so frankly horrified that she was sure her views needed readjusting.

'It was a pretty pale blue dress,' she murmured, trying to justify Mrs. Flinders.

'But her foots was cold!' cried May.

'With ever so many tucks in it, all put in by the mummy.'

'But Flinders' *foots* was cold!' shouted the three babies, fixing their mother with six round reproachful eyes.

'And a beautiful new sash, with fringes on its ends — oh, babies, *such* a sash!'

'But Flinders' FOOTS was cold!' literally roared the babies, astounded and perplexed beyond measure at their mother's support of the wrong side. They knew very well the agonies of cold toes, and it was beyond their comprehension how their mother could for a moment think more of the dress, spoilt by an accident, than of the toes.

Then the mother left off defending Mrs. Flinders, and laughed, and getting up went behind the row of agitated babies and kissed each head one after the other, which was a sign that she gave in and agreed with them. 'She needn't have whipped her,' she said soothingly, 'a corner would have done quite as well, and she did deserve that, for she was evidently a careless Polly.'

'And if there didn't was no corner?' suggested June with a boldness of fancy that took everybody's breath away and produced a sudden silence.

Nobody spoke after that for several seconds. April and May sat thinking it out. June felt she must have said something clever, and swelled with pride. 'There is *always* corners,' said April at last, turning on her, '*und Du bist das grösste Schaf das es giebt*,' she added in nervous German, not having a sufficiently withering bit of English ready. And if you, my dear little boys and girls who read this, don't know what that means, I can only pity your exceeding ignorance.

Then April, having settled June, who sat looking like an air-ball just after it has been pricked, turned to her mother, 'Is that

a song, mummy, about Flinders?' she asked, clasping her hands round her knees and propping her chin on them.

'Yes, it's a song — a nursery rhyme I learnt when I was little.'

'But has it got music?'

'Music?' the mother racked her brains to try and remember the music belonging to Polly Flinders, and found none. She had a vague idea her nurse used to hum the words to her, but no definite tune would come into her mind. 'I never heard any music to it,' she said at last.

'Herr Schenk's songs all have music,' said April — Herr Schenk was the schoolmaster — 'and so have Séraphine's.'

'Oh yes,' said May, 'Séraphine's have lovely music, and if Séraphine's have lovely music, mummy's songs must have much lovelier.'

The mother thought Séraphine's tunes were not so very lovely, and she knew them all only too well, for how often had she been obliged to go into another room out of earshot while they were being drummed into the babies' heads? As for Herr Schenk's songs, he taught the babies hymns — very slow German hymns

called *chorales;* and as there was no piano in the schoolroom, and he sang right down in his boots, and they sang right up in the air, and they all sang out of tune, the effect was so doleful and weird that the mother in the next room often wondered how it was she didn't lift up her voice too, and weep. Her dog simply couldn't bear it at all, and howled so miserably when the *chorales* began that he had to be turned out every day at lesson-time.

'*Make* music for Flinders, mummy,' said April.

'Make music?' echoed the mother, taken aback.

'Yes, make one tune, and then the babies can sing it.'

'But I can't.'

'But if Herr Schenk and Séraphine can?'

'But those aren't their own tunes.'

'Oh, but mummies can make everything,' said April, looking up at her mother with the sweetest smile of absolute confidence. April's smile was so pretty that it made you think her much prettier than she was really. The mother used to feel sure that if angels ever smiled they must do it just like that.

'But I can't make tunes,' repeated the mother, beginning to feel uncomfortable, and wishing she had left the Flinders family alone

'*Oh!*' cried all the babies together, and laughed aloud. *They* were not to be taken in like that, so their mummy needn't think so. Was there ever anything that mummies could *not* do? And *their* mummy? They looked at each other and shrieked with laughter, the idea was so very ridiculous.

'Do you know how I feel, babies?' said the mother quickly. 'Just like a game of Oranges and Lemons. I am sure it would do me a great deal of good. Shall we play?'

But this had no effect. 'No, no,' they cried, jumping up and crowding round her, 'we only wants Flinders! Make music, mummy!'

And then they began to call her their sweet, *pwecious* mummy, their little dear mummykins, and all the nice names they could think of; and as they all tried to kiss her at once, she had to say she would try, if only to save herself from suffocation.

Here was a thing — Polly Flinders, apparently so harmless, turning on her and rending her!

'You will have to go away, then, while I try,' she said, feeling very wretched, though with a faint hope that they would prefer to stay and play games, and let her off making a tune rather than

be banished. But they made for the schoolroom door with the greatest alacrity. 'And then you calls us when it is ready,' they cried cheerfully, as they disappeared.

I don't suppose any of you children who read this story have ever written a tune, for if you have you are what is known as prodigies, which are an unpleasant variety of children, happily, for the peace of parents, exceedingly rare. But you leave off being a prodigy after a certain age, and this mother was much too old to be one, and had never shown the least symptoms of being one at any time; and when she was left alone to write the tune, and knew it had somehow got to be done, she felt as uncomfortable as you would if you were shut up in a room alone with a piano and told to compose music. But what will not mothers do for their children? You ask *your* mother to write tunes for you, and see if she will not do it at once! This mother went over to the piano and sat down, and first of all wished she had never heard of Polly Flinders and her toes. Then she wished that, having heard of them, she had kept the knowledge of them from her children. And then she began to agonise over a tune. You know there are some people who can loftily

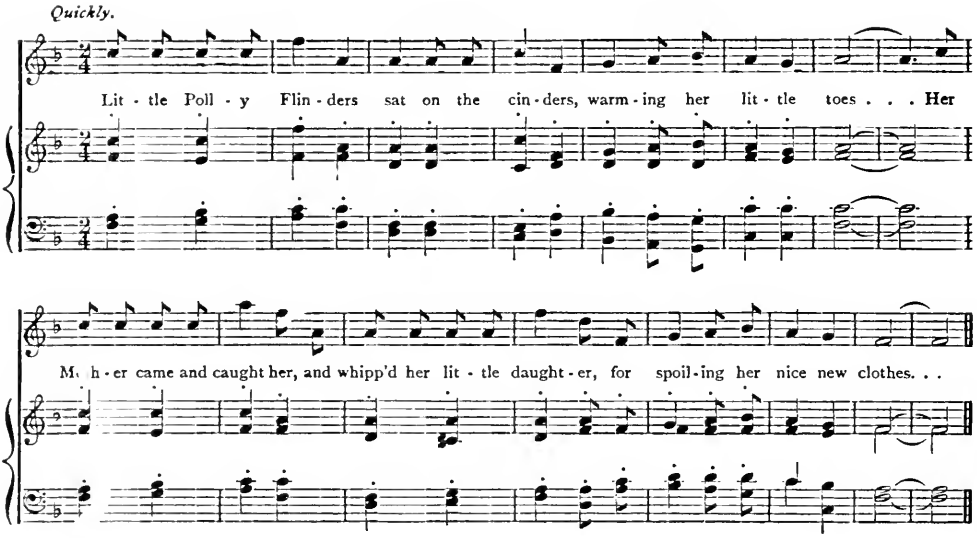
write down tunes ten miles away from the nearest piano; but this mother wasn't one of that sort, and she sat and agonised, with the soft pedal on so that the babies should not hear the bones of Polly's musical skeleton rattling before the skin had been produced. Then, as she had no music-paper, she got a pencil and a sheet of note-paper and wrote the tune down, the agonies at this stage becoming acute. And then she stared at it gloomily, trying to persuade herself that there was at least a sort of rude honesty about it, and hoped the babies would be pleased.

'Come in, babies!' she called faintly.

This is the tune: —

The April Baby's

LITTLE POLLY FLINDERS.



and sh needn't have been in any doubt as to the babies liking it, for they loved it. They rushed in when she called them, tumbling over each other in their hurry, and crowded round the mother who was still sitting very much depressed at the piano, holding the notes to which the reluctant Flinders had been reduced in her hand, and scrutinizing them with profound

The Strains of 'Petty Flinders'

disfavour. But when she had played and sung the tune to the babies, and it had been received with acclamations of delight, oh, what a load it was off her mind! I don't know who was most pleased, the mother or the babies. They insisted on being taught it at once, and in a very few minutes were dancing about the room singing it so vigorously that what with the dancing and the singing the whole house seemed to shake to the strains of *Polly Flinders*. Indeed, when they reached the part where Polly's mother catches her on that high note, their voices rose to the occasion with such a shriek of good-will that a row of stout china pots, which had always up to then stood with great dignity and composure on the mantelpiece, got such a fright and trembled so that they nearly tumbled off.

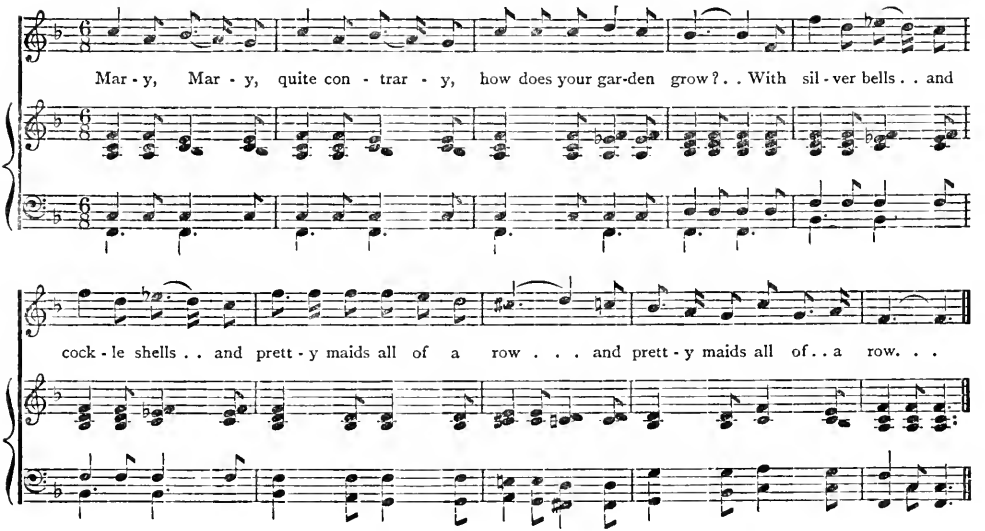
Well, the mother had found out how to amuse her babies. Till Easter, with its fresh supply of presents, should come, she would teach them the English nursery rhymes, and make up tunes so that they might sing them. At least it would be something new to them, for they had been brought up on German chorales, varied latterly by Séraphine's tra-la-la's. Their mother had sung little German songs to them as babies, dear little songs about

Sternleins, and *Engeleins*, and *Kindleins*, and they knew all those by heart; but they had not yet heard of the deeds of *Jack and Jill*, and the fate that overtook *Miss Muffet* (clearly a warning to all who make a practice of sitting on tuffets), and the base behaviour of the gentleman in *Where are you going to, my pretty maid;* or of the *Contrary Mary's* extraordinary garden, or the glorious bribe of cushions and cream offered *Curly Locks*, or of that wonderful pie that burst into song the moment the astonished king cut it. The mother, encouraged by the reception given to *Polly Flinders*, determined to try and turn these into music too, so that the babies might have something to sing that should neither be as filling as the chorales nor as frothy as the tra-la-la's; and she set to work on *Mary, Mary*, the very next morning, while the babies were clearing out their cupboards ready for the Easter toys.

It was not any easier to do than the first had been; indeed, the agonies seemed worse than ever, for a strange antipathy to a person who could fill her garden with things like shells and bells and people laid hold of the mother's soul, and grew and grew the more she thought of it. But it did get finished and written out at last, and here it is: —

Book of Tunes

MARY, MARY, QUITE CONTRARY.

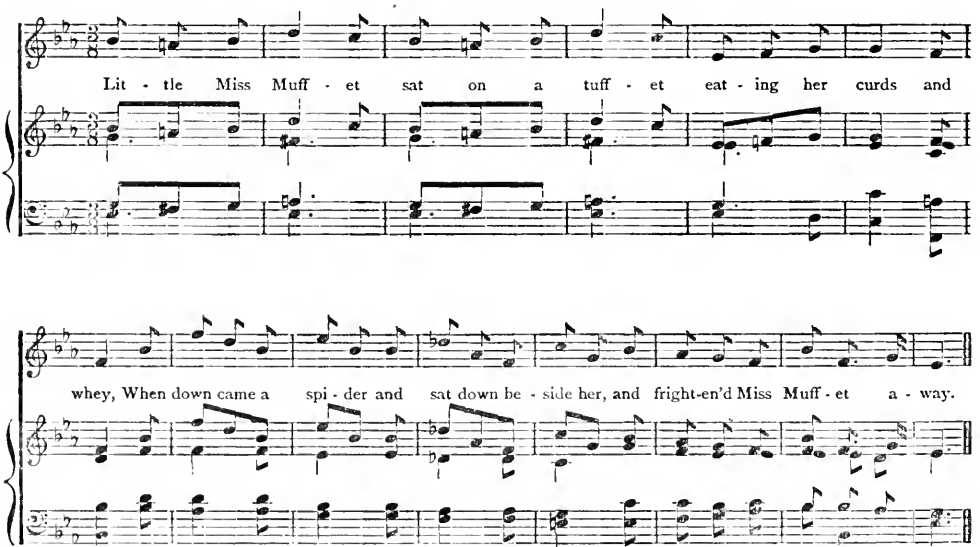


Then, after lunch, she gave the babies some pictures to cut out of the books they were already in, and some paste to paste them into other books with; and though it would seem simpler to leave them in the books they were in at first, the babies didn't think so, and cut out and pasted with such energy that they were very soon covered with paste all over, and might have been used

as scrap-books themselves; and when she had seen them fairly started she went away and shut herself up alone with Miss Muffet, and wrestled with her till she too had been forced into notes.

This is *Miss Muffet:*

LITTLE MISS MUFFET.



Then, just as the babies were getting rather tired of pasting, the servant came into the playroom with three letters on a salver, and presented them solemnly to each baby in turn. They were astonished, for they didn't get many letters, and wondered so long who they could be from that they nearly forgot to open them and see; and when they did, there was a lovely little pink letter inside, written in a large round hand that they could easily read, inviting them to tea in the library at four o'clock. The letters were written in German, and it is no good my telling you all the nice things that were in them, for I daresay you don't know a word of German.

At four o'clock, then, the three babies, with the paste all nicely scraped off them, appeared in the library, and there were the three footstools in front of the fire, and the mother's low chair at one end, and the tea table drawn up close beside it; and to-day, as it was a party, there was a jug of chocolate for the babies instead of tea, and a plate piled up with dough nuts freshly baked, with a decently big spoonful of jam in their middles instead of the little speck that lurks, looking so silly, in the stale

dough nuts you buy in shops, and that tastes so much sillier than it looks; and everything was so pleasant and cosy that the babies beamed all over their faces as they settled themselves down before the fire and smoothed their pinafores over their knees.

'Well, mummy?' said April, when they had drunk as much chocolate as they could conveniently hold, and the dough nut sugar had been rubbed off their cheeks, — for she knew there must be something else going to happen, or they wouldn't have been invited like that.

'Well, babies?' said the mother, smiling at the three expectant faces.

'What does we do next, mummy?'

'Next? Why, I've got two more tunes for you.' And she pulled *Mary* and *Miss Muffet* out of her pocket.

'Oh that is nice!' cried May, jumping up and down on her stool.

'You's one pwecious mummy,' said June, with strong approval.

April gave her mother a look, as much as to say 'Didn't I know mummies could do everything?' But she had no idea

MARY, MARY, QUITE CONTRARY.

Mary, Mary, quite contrary,
How does your garden grow?
With silver bells and cockle shells,
And pretty maids all of a row.

of what it had been like, making those tunes in cold blood and broad daylight.

'Well, my blessed babies,' began the mother, 'there was once a girl called Mary, who had a garden full of roses, and lilies, and buttercups, and daisies, and all the other flowers we have here in the summer; but she was so queer that instead of taking care of them and loving them, she dug them all up and threw them away.'

'What an awful Mawy,' observed June, who never could say r's.

'Then, where all the pretty things had been she put silver bells, and cockle shells, and in the borders along the sides of the paths where other people have hollyhocks, she put rows of pretty maids.

'Pretty *Mädchens?*'

'And bells what you rings?'

'And shells how there is at the *bain-de-mer?*' The babies always spoke of the seaside as the *bain-de-mer*, and pronounced it as though it had only two syllables, with a very big accent on the first one, so: BAINdmer. 'And then people used to come and look at her over the hedge, and laugh, and ask her how her

garden grew, for of course the bells and shells wouldn't grow, and the pretty maids grew so slowly that you couldn't see any difference in one summer at all. And the neighbours called her Mary quite contrary, because she would do things differently to everybody else, but she didn't mind a bit; and when they came and jeered, and called out "Mary, Mary, quite contrary, how does your garden grow?" she would answer back quite good-naturedly "With silver bells and cockle shells and pretty maids all of a row." And here's the tune she sang it to, and when I've told you about Miss Muffet we'll go and sing them both.'

'But mummy,' interrupted May, 'was that pretty, in Mary's garden?'

'I think our sort of garden is much prettier,' said the mother.

'And I! And I! And I!' cried the three babies with conviction.

'Except for the pretty maids.'

'Yes, except for the pretty *Mädchens*.'

'They must have looked little dears, all in a row.'

'Oh they must have looked little very dears,' said April; 'they must have looked like May,' she added, turning to May,

who gave a sort of pleased purr. April was always ready to fall upon May and fight things out if needs be, but that did not prevent her thinking her, in times of peace, an exceedingly beautiful person. The mother sometimes saw her go up to May the day after her head had been washed, when her face was almost lost in a shower of curls, and stroke her hair very gently, and say softly '*Too* pretty, *too* pretty is your hair!' Or she would take up her hand, and look at it and pat it, and say '*Such* dear tiny hands you got!' And as these flattering interludes would as often as not take place in the breathing spaces of a boxing match they didn't matter much, and certainly had no effect on May, who never cared whether she were thought pretty or not.

Then the mother began to tell them about Miss Muffet, and of course the first question the babies asked was 'What is a tuffet?' To which, equally of course, the mother replied 'A thing you sit on.'

'But you sits on such a many things,' objected the astute June, 'and they still isn't tuffets.'

'I think it must have been a three-legged stool,' said the mother, who had gone the length of examining the pages of

Nuttall's Pronouncing and Defining Dictionary in search of enlightenment, and had found that tuffets were left severely alone.

'I thinks it must have been one sofa,' said June.

'A sofa?'

'Yes, else two people can't sit together on anything other than one sofa.'

'But there weren't two people.'

'Yes, the spider did sit beside her.'

'But a spider isn't a people,' said April, looking puzzled.

'Yes she is,' said June.

'No she isn't,' said April, and then added, as though this truth had just dawned on her, 'she's an animal, and animals aren't people, they've got too many legs.'

'Oh that doesn't matter,' said June, airily.

'Oh yes it does,' said April; 'and there never isn't *one* people only, but always *two* —' and then she stopped, and looked worried.

'But if one of those peoples did go away? Then?' asked June; at which April looked more worried than ever.

Now this mother wasn't much good at explaining grammar, and was sure that even if she tried, the babies would only be

LITTLE MISS MUFFET.

Little Miss Muffet
Sat on a tuffet,
Eating her curds and whey ;
When down came a spider,
And sat down beside her,
And frighten'd Miss Muffet away.

more puzzled than before, so she proposed that instead of arguing they should come to the piano and learn the tunes she had written.

They set to work with even more ardour than the day before, for had they not been feasting on unaccustomed chocolate and dough nuts? And the dough nuts, judging from the reckless enthusiasm with which the two tunes were attacked and learn't, had got into their heads, which is not the usual place for dough nuts, and shows how beautifully light they must have been. Then they tried to act *Miss Muffet*, and quarrelled over the preliminaries just as grown up people do, each one wanting the best part for herself.

'I'se Miss Muffet!' shouted June, defiance in her eye.

'No, I!' cried May.

'No, *I* shall be Muffet,' said April, very quietly and firmly.

'Oh then I'se the spider,' said June.

'Yes, and I is Muffet,' said April quickly.

'But I? What is I, then?' asked May, aggrieved.

'Oh, you can be the — the curds and whey,' said June, always ready with brilliant suggestions.

'No, the tuffet,' said April.

May absolutely refused to be the curds and whey, and didn't at all like the idea of being a tuffet, a thing for others to sit on, a mute and inglorious three-legged stool, with nothing to say and nothing to do; but she generally did as she was told, and after some grumbling was persuaded to go on all fours, whereupon April took her seat with great dignity on her back, and holding a cup with chocolate dregs to represent the curds and whey, lifted up her voice and gave tongue to the opening lines of the immortal ditty. Then there was a wild yell such as never yet had been heard to issue from any spider, and June flung herself on to the only vacant bit of tuffet she could see, and as it was May's head and as she was a very fat and heavy spider, the tuffet collapsed under the shock, flattening itself out straight, and they all fell, shrieking loudly, into a heap. There was such a tangle of arms and legs that the mother found it difficult to sort them out, and set each baby on the feet that belonged to it again; and besides, she was laughing, and you know what your thumbs feel like when you laugh, and how weak they get, and how they won't pull. 'Miss Muffet's too hard to act,' she said, comforting them,

'because of that tiresome tuffet. Try *Mary, Mary.* One can be Mary, and the other two the row of pretty maids. Two are just enough for a row.'

'And if one went away from that row — then?' inquired June. But her mother sat down to the piano, and refused to argue.

This succeeded better. The pretty maids sang the first half, and April, dancing up and down her garden path in front of them, answered their questions with cheerful shrillness. They sang it over and over again. The mother had to play it so often that she got to dislike it with all her heart, and still they went on, the pretty maids beating time with their feet, and the busy Mary flying up and down faster and faster and more and more breathlessly, her hair streaming out behind, and her face aflame. At last the mother felt as though she were being mesmerized, and hardly noticed what they were doing, till a strange spluttering noise made her look up, and there stood the pretty maids gasping, with their eyes and noses and mouths full of chocolate which April was diligently pouring out of the jug on to their heads, muttering as she did so '*Doch, doch, Du musst begossen werden,*' — 'Yes, yes, thou must be watered.'

Now this was a dreadful thing to do, and could only be excused by the state of wild excitement into which she had worked herself over the part of Mary. The mother was so astonished that for a moment she sat looking on without saying a word. The pretty maids, though they choked, quite entered into the spirit of the thing, and felt that as they were growing in a garden it was only right they should be watered. And besides, the chocolate was very nice still, in spite of its being cold, and trickled agreeably down into the mouths they were careful to hold as wide open as they would go. But they wouldn't go wide enough, and most of it trickled down over their pinafores to the edge of their dresses, and then dropped off in thick drops on to their mother's favourite carpet, making dark and horrid pools at their feet.

Oh, it was a dreadful ending to a party! And the worst of it was they were so excited that they never gave a thought to the dreadfulness of it, which made it very difficult for their mother to rebuke them. 'Oh,' she said, pointing to the two pools on the carpet, 'Oh,' and when she had said that she stopped, and didn't seem able to go on. I don't know whether she was trying not

to cry at the spoilt carpet, or trying not to laugh at the spoilt babies, who looked pitiable objects now with their heads all over chocolate, while April stood staring at them in consternation, the empty jug in her hand.

After you have been very excited and happy there is always a horrible time that comes when you feel so flat, and dull, and stale, that you are more like ginger-beer without the ginger and the froth than anything else. That is how the babies felt when they were having the chocolate washed off their faces and heads, and were being put, with all the fizz gone out of them, into premature beds. It was very difficult to get the chocolate out of their hair, and Séraphine expressed her disapproval by scrubbing with such pitiless vigour that they felt quite dazed. And then it was bewildering besides having their heads washed on any night but Saturday. It seemed to upset things so, and they were used to regular ways, — head-washing on Saturday nights, clean clothes on Sunday morning, a smell of soap-suds pervading the passages on Monday — that is what had always happened ever since the world, with people in it wanting washing, began. Eve, explained April to June in subdued murmurs while they were undressing, used to

wash her long yellow hair on Saturdays too, dipping it up and down in the waters of Paradise; and as soap wasn't among the things that grew on the trees there, she used bananas instead, which were after all much more like soap than like bananas; and June asked whether she ate what was left over of the soap, when she had finished her washing, and April said people didn't eat soap, and June said people did eat bananas, and they talked it over in whispers, trying vainly to settle it, as they went shivering to bed.

The next morning, when the mother got up, she went to her bedroom window and tried to look out; but the snow was heaped up outside on the sills half way to the top. She was very sorry for the babies, who had been shut up now for more than a week. They seemed depressed, too, at breakfast time, and May had a cold, and kept on sneezing into her bread and milk. The first time she did it, and the second time too, the others said, *Gesundheit*, which is what people say in Germany when you sneeze; but when she went on doing it and didn't seem inclined to stop, they were irritated, and left off saying *Gesundheit* and said *pfui* instead, which is what people say in Germany when they are disgusted.

May didn't like having *pfui* said to her, and sniffed in a very injured manner; and Séraphine had got out of bed the wrong side, and was shrouded in impenetrable gloom and mystery; and there was a strong north wind blowing which got in at all the cracks and made it harder than ever to keep warm; so that things were looking rather bad all round.

Long before it had been time to get up, April and June had talked over in their beds whether their mother would invite them to tea and tunes again after the chocolate incident or not. June thought she would, because June's experience of mothers was that they were a long-suffering race, and slow to anger; but April had been the chief sinner, and was full of doubts. They would not have mentioned it for the world at breakfast, but looked out of the corners of their eyes very often at their mother while they were eating their bread and milk — so often, indeed, that once or twice the spoonfuls went astray, and emptied themselves on to their bibs instead of into their mouths, giving May an opportunity of calling out *Schmutzfinck*, which she did at once in a very loud voice, greatly to her relief and satisfaction, revenging herself in this way for the *pfuis* that had been hurled at her. *Schmutzfinck*

is not a polite thing to call any one, and means that the person who says it thinks you exceedingly dirty and generally objectionable; but it is wonderful what relief it gave May to say it, — she quite brightened up, and left off sniffing.

The mother was reading letters, and didn't seem to notice what anybody was doing, and Séraphine, whose duty it was to see that the bibs didn't get more than their fair share of breakfast, never bothered about either bibs or babies, but sat staring into space with a wild misgiving eye. There are some days, you know, when the best of people get out of bed the wrong side, and can't get right again the whole day, and set other people wrong too, and it was perfectly clear from Séraphine's face that that was what she had done that morning. Corners would await the babies that day at every turn if they were much with Séraphine, however carefully they might climb the narrow path of being good; so the mother carried April and June off with her into the store room after breakfast, and while she was ordering the dinner they gambolled innocently among the sausages, and played at hide and seek between the barrels of pickled cabbage, and visited their old kitten, now grown into a big and churlish cat, but beloved

still for old sake's sake and for its unforgettable sweetness on the first day they ever saw it, when it arrived at lesson-time in Herr Schenk's pocket, its front paws resting on the edge of the pocket, and its face resting on its paws, and its blue eyes, grown so green and fierce, gazing dreamily round. It was a Tom-cat, but the babies called it Rose.

'Now what shall I do with these babies of mine to-day?' the mother was asking herself all the time she was saying *Ja* to every suggestion of the cook's. Somebody from the village came and wanted to speak to her, and as it turned into a long conversation she had to send the babies back to Séraphine; and then something else happened that kept her, and it was nearly an hour before she could get away and see what was going on in the schoolroom. But the babies had made up a game for themselves that had put Séraphine to flight and was keeping them quite happy. They had got May on to the sofa, covered her well up, told her she was very ill and must sleep, and when the mother came in, April and June were striding up and down the room shouting German lullabies at the top of their voices.

'She shall sleep,' explained June in a stentorian whisper to her mother.

'But how can she with such a noise going on?'

'It isn't one noise, it's *Wiegenlieder*,' said June offended; and turning away began again to roar out something about *Schlaf, Kindlein, schlaf*, in a voice that shook the walls.

'Oh, she did sneeze so badly!' whispered April, with uplifted hands; 'Oh such a lot of times! Oh such a very lot of times!' And seeing that May had got her arms outside the cushion she had put on her chest, she pounced on them, dragged them underneath again, smoothed the cushion with resounding pats, and, bending down, shouted *schlaf, Kindlein, schlaf*, into her ear. Séraphine was nowhere to be seen, and indeed the lullabies were very maddening. May, however, seemed to like them, and lay on the sofa quite comfortable, and pleased at doing nothing; and though she sneezed a good deal, was otherwise enjoying herself.

'That child's ears can't be very sensitive,' thought the mother, getting away as quickly as possible; and she shut all the doors between the school-room and the drawing-room, and, as lullabies were the fashion, wrote a tune for *Hush-a-bye Baby*.

HUSH-A-BYE, BABY.

Hush-a-bye, baby, on the tree top,
When the wind blows the cradle will rock ;
When the bough breaks the cradle will fall,
And down comes baby and cradle and all.

By lunch time things were looking brighter. Séraphine had been so deafened by the singing that she had kept out of the way and left the babies alone; the mother was exhausted but pleased, for she had managed to write three tunes; the thermometer had gone up several degrees, the sun was shining gaily, and the babies would be able to go and skate on the stream at the end of the garden. It was the Thursday in Holy Week, and if a thaw set in soon there would still be a chance of a green Easter, and the eggs would be hidden after all in the garden. Of course if the garden is frozen up at Easter, or if it rains, the eggs have to be hidden in the house, under the tables and chairs, which is never half such fun; but where the babies lived it was nearly always fine and blue on Easter Sunday, and they had never yet been prevented from having their egg-hunt out of doors.

The mother watched them go off with their skates after lunch, jumping and running down the path that had been shovelled in the snow, and even Séraphine, the moment she got out of the house into the blessed sunshine, began to look happy, and as though life, after all, were a very pleasant thing. 'And so it is,' thought the mother, as she stood for a moment in the

sun, breathing in the pure cold air, and sheltered by the house from the north wind, 'and so it always will be, as long as there is sun to shine and people with the grace to say thank you.' And she went into the house and wrote three more tunes.

When they were finished she leant back in her chair and felt rather less sure about the pleasantness of life. 'May I never make another!' she said to herself. 'To-morrow is Good Friday, and the babies go to church. On Easter eve the egg-basket comes, and each one will be busy hiding her eggs. On Easter Sunday they will go to church again, and in the afternoon look for the eggs. And then perhaps the snow will be gone, and lessons will begin again, and the garden grow greener and greener every day, and never, never, never need I make any more tunes!' And she gave a deep sigh of relief, for you see she had only made the tunes to please the babies when they had nothing else to please them, and wouldn't have done so for any other person or reason in the world.

When, at dusk, the babies came tramping up the snow-path, jingling their skates, and very warm and cheerful, the library windows were ablaze with light. Their mother met them at the

door, and told them to take off their coats quickly and come to her, for the Easter hare had been to see her and had left something for them. I don't think the sort of hare that is called Easter ever goes to England, but in Germany they are supposed to bring all the eggs and presents at Easter in a basket, just as Father Christmas brings the presents at Christmas. The babies had often seen hares in the garden, but they never had baskets, and it was only the mother who was lucky enough to meet the real Easter hare, basket and all. As Easter time drew near she would come in from the garden and say, 'Who do you think I met, babies, in the copse where the anemones grow?' And they would listen with round eyes while she described the costume and conversation and conduct of the Easter hare. They used to prowl round the copse sometimes for hours, but they never saw him. 'He's rather shy,' said the mother.

It was wonderful what things that Easter hare did. The library was brilliant with lamps and candles, and the fire was blazing up the great chimney, and on a low table round which stood three little chairs, the Easter hare had put a cloth, and a new dolls' tea set that the babies had never seen, with spoons, and

knives, and tiny napkins, and in the middle of the table a little flower-pot with a whole snowdrop plant growing in it. There were a great many plates of cake, and bread and butter, and pieces of scone, and jam, for the plates were so small that one of each would never have filled the babies, and there was a little dish of white radishes on one side of the snowdrop, and a little dish of red radishes on the other side of the snowdrop, and it looked as festive a banquet as any one could wish to see. '*Oh!*' cried the babies when they came in.

'The Easter hare did it all,' said the mother, 'and has lent you his best tea things. He is coming in again to-night to fetch them, because he's giving rather a lot of parties himself just now, and can't spare them long.'

'Oh how dear he is!' cried April, dancing round the little table, while May hung fondly over the radishes.

But June took her mother aside. 'I wants to say you something,' she said, in a voice that sounded hollow, pulling her by her dress into a remote corner.

'Well?' said the mother bending down.

June put her arms round her mother's neck and drew her head

close. 'I doesn't believe there *is* one Easter hare,' she whispered in a loud and awful whisper.

'Oh you tickle me!' cried the mother, pulling herself up straight again with a jerk, and rubbing her ear.

'I doesn't believe there *ever* is Easter hares,' continued June, in a tone of gloomy conviction, while her mother rubbed her tickled ear without answering, 'nor any baskets too not. I doesn't believe there ever did *was* any, either.'

The mother stood looking down at her, mechanically rubbing her ear. 'What a dreadful baby you are,' she murmured at last; 'why don't you believe in him? When I was a little girl I believed everything.'

'But I not,' said June, shaking her head with a sort of solemn triumph, as though she thought it was very clever of her not to believe everything, and a great advance on the easy faith of her mother's youthful years; 'there isn't any hares with baskets, but only mummies.'

Then the mother stooped down and whispered that it was to be a secret between them, and June was so pleased at sharing a secret with her mother that she has faithfully kept it ever since,

and has never breathed a doubt to April and May, who firmly believe in him to this day. I saw the mother a little while ago, and she told me so.

The tea party began, very properly, with a German grace, and then April sat where the teapot was and poured out the tea; but the little cups came back to be filled again so quickly that she had no peace, and couldn't get on with her bread and butter, and as May and June wouldn't wait they began to help themselves, June drinking three cups to the other babies' one, so that by the time the party was over she was extremely full and unpopular. But she liked the feeling of being full, and as for being unpopular what did she care? She laughed till the tears rolled down her cheeks at the discomfiture of the others, when they found that even turning the teapot and milk jug upside down failed to produce another drop. They had had five cups each, and June had had fifteen. Saints would have been provoked at such gross unfairness and revolting greediness. April glared at her across the table: 'Guttersnipe!' she cried, in a voice of thunder.

'Look here, babies,' interrupted the mother from the other end of the room, feeling that the next thing to happen would be

The Tea Party

April's flinging herself upon June and sitting on her and jumping up and down, this being a favourite form of punishment, and knowing that people with fifteen cups of tea inside them mustn't be jumped on; 'look here, babies, at all the tunes I've made for you to-day. Did you ever hear of such a good mummy? Don't you want me to tell you the stories belonging to them?'

She knew this suggestion would bring them crowding round. It always did. There was nothing they loved so much as being told stories. Séraphine told them blood-curdling ones in French, all about bears and wolves coming to gobble up children who didn't prize and cherish their nurses as much as they deserved; you know the sort of story, I am sure, — the sort that makes your hair try to stand on end in the night if you wake up and begin to think of them. The babies' hair couldn't stand on end because it was too long, and besides, it was safely wrapped up in curl papers; but even if it could have it wouldn't have, for happily they were tough babies, and refused to be anything but amused by Séraphine's bears. I suppose nearly every baby has to pass through the stage of having to listen to the results in bears and black men of their nurse's fruitful imaginings, and it is a mercy if the victim is tough

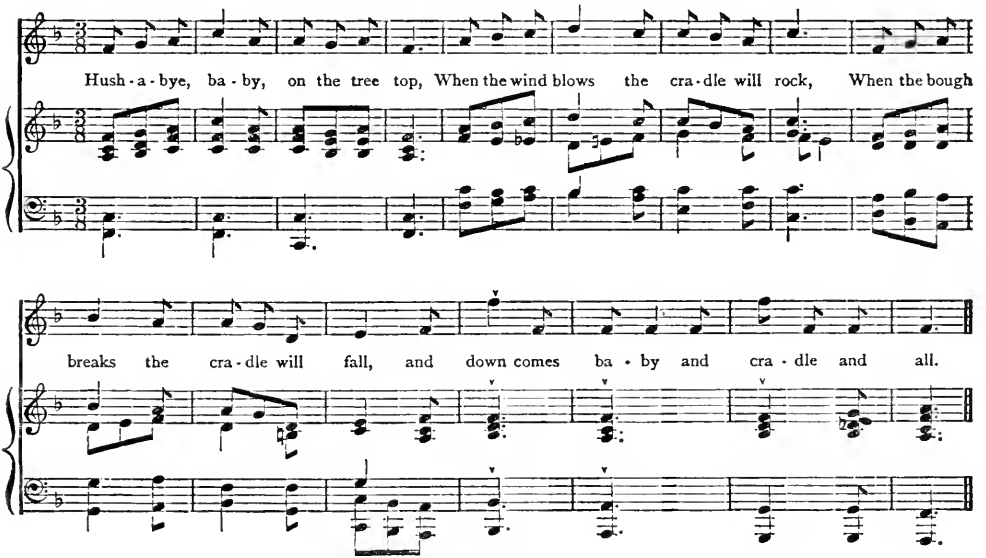
enough not to mind. When this mother I am telling you about was small, which she was in the days that for you children are merely pre-historic, during the greater part of three years she woke up every night and shivered for two or three hours, sick with fright, and very cold; and what do you think she was afraid of? A thing called the Crack of Doom, which her nurse had told her would usher in the Last Day; and the Last Day, said the nurse, might be expected to begin any night. The baby lay awake trembling, waiting to hear the crack, sure it would be a most horrible bang, her ears stuffed with as much of her stockings as would go in, besides her fingers, in abject misery every night for all that long time, when she might have been comfortably asleep. So when she grew up, and turned into a mother, she was thankful that her babies were so tough; and I hope all children who read this will try and be tough too, and refuse to be made wretched by such silly tales.

There was quite a little packet of tunes in the mother's hand, for, as I said, she had actually managed to write six that day. The babies sat at her feet, and she began to tell them the nursery rhymes, beginning with *Hush-a-bye, Baby*, and its perilous position,

left in its cradle on the top of a tree. They thought the poor hush-a-bye baby couldn't have had a very nice mummy, and asked if it was smashed, and if so whether it ever got mended again, and what became of the cradle, and if *Lieber Gott* wasn't very angry with the mummy for letting her baby get broken, and a great many other questions that were not always easy to answer.

This is its tune:

HUSH–A–BYE, BABY.



Then the mother told them about Jack and Jill going off so cheerfully in the morning, all clean and tidy, to the pump on the top of the hill to fetch water for their mother's cooking; and how they began to quarrel on the way down again, as boys and girls will, instead of walking carefully over the loose stones; and how Jack, while he was reaching across to pinch his sister, stumbled, and fell, and broke his head, and the pail of water fell on the top of him, and Jill fell on the top of the pail of water, and there was a horrid mess; so that instead of two nice clean good children bringing the water to cook with, their mother, after waiting ever so long and getting crosser each minute, saw a broken pail, and a broken head, and a pair of dripping children with torn clothes and foolish faces coming into her kitchen. 'Oh! it is a sad thing when children quarrel!' observed the mother, pointing the moral when she had reached the end of this tragic story; and she wagged her head several times, turning up her eyes so far that the babies at her feet couldn't see what they called the yolks of them at all, but only the whites, and were greatly impressed. They began to wag their heads too, shaking them slowly from side to side, all their sympathies being with Jack and Jill's mother.

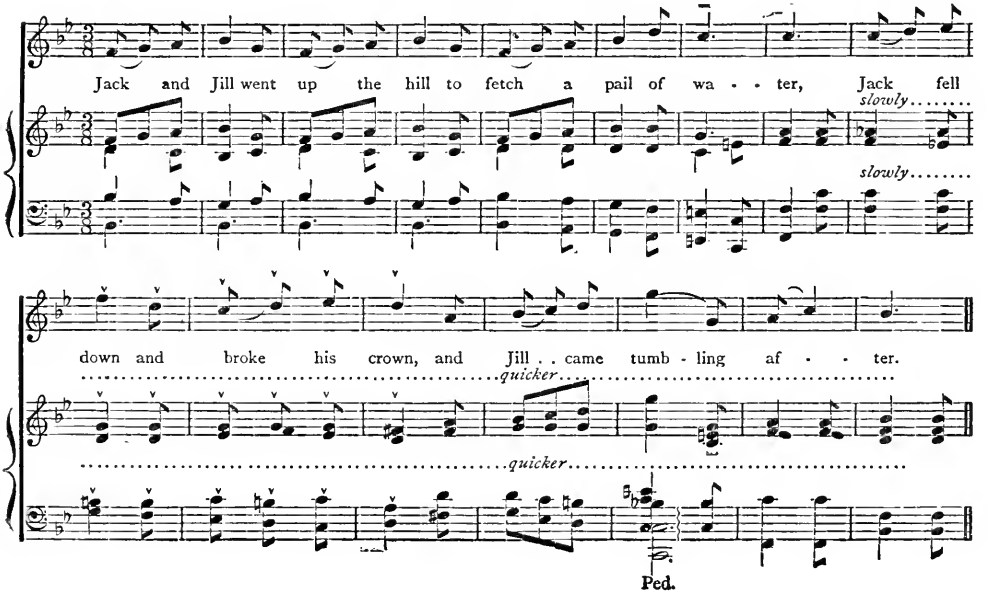
JACK AND JILL.

Jack and Jill went up the hill
To fetch a pail of water ;
Jack fell down and broke his crown,
And Jill came tumbling after.

But June remarked that nothing would have happened if the pump hadn't been on a hill. 'I never did see pumps on hills,' she added; which was very true, for where she lived there were no hills, and there was only one pump.

This is the *Jack and Jill* tune:

JACK AND JILL.

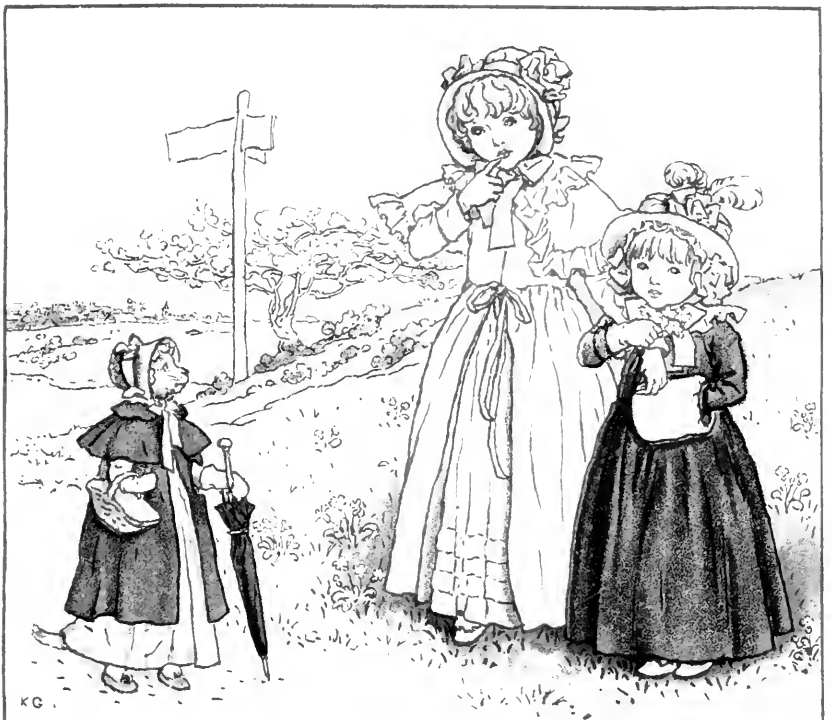


Then the mother told them about the Pussy Cat who went to London expressly to look at the Queen, but did nothing so grand as that after all, only chasing a poor little mouse under a chair and frightening it out of its wits, which of course it could have done just as well at home, and saved all the expense of the journey.

'Was she one German puss?' asked June.

'Oh, the poor German pussies are much too busy getting out of the way of all the stones that are thrown at them to have time for going anywhere and enjoying themselves. This puss must have been English, and sleek, and well cared for, with a kind master and mistress to stroke it every day and give it milk.'

The babies sat looking into the fire. A contented, amiable, affectionate cat was an animal they had never yet met. Where they lived, the poor cats were forced to be wild and spend their lives hunting in the fields and forests, because if they ever appeared within reach of a stone and a person to throw it, they were certain to have a bit of themselves broken or bruised. If a man with a gun met a cat he naturally shot it. If an old maid kept a cat, as old maids sometimes will, it was sure sooner or later to come home from an evening stroll with its ears cut off by the



PUSSY CAT, PUSSY CAT.

Pussy Cat, Pussy Cat, where have you been ?
I've been to London to look at the Queen.
Pussy Cat, Pussy Cat, what did you there ?
I frighten'd a little mouse under the chair.

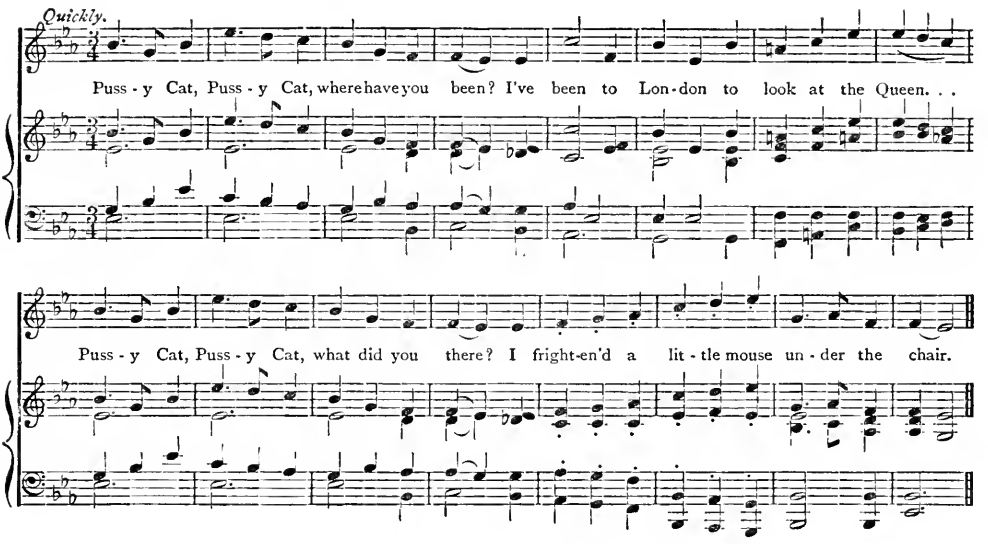
nearest farmer, who hoped by this means to make hunting in his fields, with the rain and dew getting into the exposed parts, a thing so disagreeable that the cat would never again indulge in it, and as for the next time it came home from an evening stroll, it would probably come in the character of a corpse.

The babies had themselves possessed kittens that they had loved and lost. Directly they were big enough they took to tree-climbing and bird-nesting, and finally stayed away altogether. It was in their blood, — the blood of ancient German cats, passed on through rows and rows of fathers and mothers who also had had stones thrown at them, and had climbed trees and eaten birds; and what is a poor cat to do? Rose, the black cat in the kitchen, had developed such strange and unpleasant habits of spitting and biting, and clawing, that it had been banished from the play-room. The servants only tolerated it because it killed the mice, and even they (I mean the servants, not the mice) never passed it without tweaking its tail. Think how dreadful it must be to go through life with a thing following you about behind that any-one can tweak who wants to! No wonder poor Rose's temper was so uncertain.

But what, thought the babies, must these cats of England be like, — these glorious cats of liberty and luxury of whom their mother so often talked? Fascinating pussies with cheerful faces, unclipped ears, and ribbons round their necks, creatures who were often more spoilt than anybody else in the house, who rubbed themselves, confident and purring, against the legs of strangers, who spent their days deliciously snoozing before the fire, who walked about with their untweaked tails straight up in the air in the excess of their contentment? The babies could hardly imagine such a happy state of things; but the mother showed them the cat pictures in English weekly papers from time to time, and there sure enough were just such cats as she had described, ribbons and all. They took a ribbon once to Rose, going up to him timidly, and offering, with polite and flattering speeches, to tie it round his neck; but he jumped off his chair and ran under a table, and, crouching down, glared at them out of the shadow with fiery eyeballs; so that they went away sorrowfully, for in his days of innocence they had loved him much.

This is the tune for *Pussy Cat:*

PUSSY CAT, PUSSY CAT.



The next rhyme the mother took up was the one about Curly Locks. You English children all know it, of course, — how somebody, who evidently wanted to marry her, offered her a cushion as a perpetual seat if only she would be his, and instead of washing dishes and feeding pigs, as she was doing when he made her his offer, she was to spend her time sitting on this

cushion sewing, and being fed at intervals with strawberries and sugar and cream.

'Strawberries and cream, babies, are very nice things.'

'*Ach ja!*' sighed the babies.

'But I shouldn't have liked the cushion and the needlework all day long.'

'No, no,' agreed the babies.

'And I know what I would have done in Curly Locks' place — I'd have let the young man go, and kept to the pigs.'

'But the strawberries?' insinuated May.

'*Ach ja!*' sighed April.

'I'd have let the strawberries go too,' said the mother; 'anything rather than the hot cushion and the sewing.'

'*Ach nein!*' sighed April softly, shaking her head, 'better take the strawberries.' And the other two silently nodded their approval.

'But we don't know what Curly Locks decided to do,' said the mother, 'for the rhyme doesn't go any farther. Perhaps she did marry him, and is sitting to this day on her cushion, and has grown dreadfully fat through never moving and eating so much

CURLY LOCKS.

Curly Locks, Curly Locks, wilt thou be mine?
Thou shalt not wash dishes nor yet feed the swine,
But sit on a cushion and sew a fine seam,
And feed upon strawberries, sugar, and cream.

sugar and cream, and hasn't even the energy to curl her hair any more. But perhaps she was wise, and kept to the pigs.'

'*Ach nein!*' gently disagreed the babies, 'the strawberries is better.'

The mother laughed. Strawberries did seem rather pleasant things just then, with the snow on the ground, and no prospect of them for months. 'Curly Locks was a little dear, anyhow,' she said, putting down her tune, 'and I am sure she chose whatever was best.'

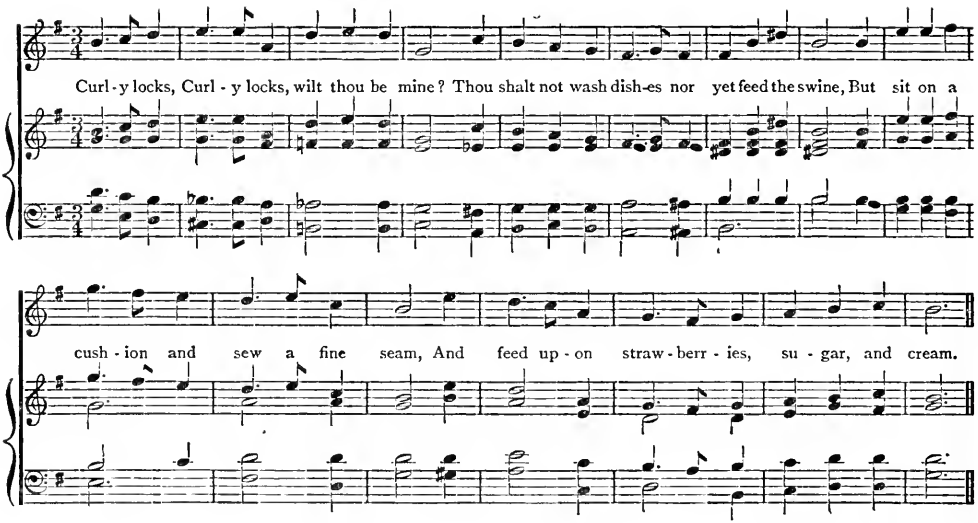
'*Ach ja!*' murmured the babies, 'she chose the strawberries.'

'Well, well,' said the mother.

This is the tune for *Curly Locks:* —

The April Baby's

CURLY LOCKS.



There were only two rhymes left, and the mother took up the top one. It was *Sing a Song of Sixpence.* But the pie in it was a difficulty, because pies and pie-dishes don't exist in Germany, and the babies had never seen one, and seemed, moreover, incapable of imagining one.

'What's a pie?' asked June at once; and the mother began

SING A SONG OF SIXPENCE.

Sing a song of sixpence, a pocket full of rye,
Four-and-twenty blackbirds baked in a pie ;
When the pie was open'd the birds began to sing,
Was not that a dainty dish to set before a King.

to explain pies, — as she thought, with beautiful clearness. She explained pies in theory and pies in practice, their nature and uses; pies generalised and pies particularised, and of particularised pies particularly this pie, with its wonderful blackbirds who went on singing, undaunted by having been baked; and when she had finished, and was looking round for a gleam of interest, they sat stolidly gazing into the fire, and June merely said, 'But what's a pie?'

Then she went into details, expatiating eloquently on the joys of those pies so dear to English children, — gooseberry pie in the early summer, cherry pie later on, plum and apple pie still later, and at Christmas those peculiar pies that bear the name of mince.

But the babies sat unmoved.

Then she took down *The Fairchild Family* from her bookshelves, an old children's book that your grandmothers used to read and whose pages bristle with pies, and she read out the descriptions of all the pies the Fairchild Family ate, still hoping to bring fire into the babies' eyes and water into their mouths. The Fairchild Family ate a great many pies. As a rule they were made of

raspberries and currants, and sometimes they were hot, and sometimes they were cold, and sometimes they were only apple; but the family was so fond of them that if one appeared on the table in front of him, Mr. Fairchild would cry out, on catching sight of it, 'What blessings we have about us, even in this world!' or something equally surprised and delighted. 'They all sat down,' read out the mother, with great expression and one eye on the babies, — 'they all sat down, full of joy, to eat roast fowl and some boiled bacon, with a nice cold currant and raspberry pie.'

But the babies remained blank.

'I shall send to England for a pie-dish, babies,' she rashly promised, in her effort to get a spark of enthusiasm out of them, 'and we'll make all the pies I have told you about.'

But the babies didn't turn a hair.

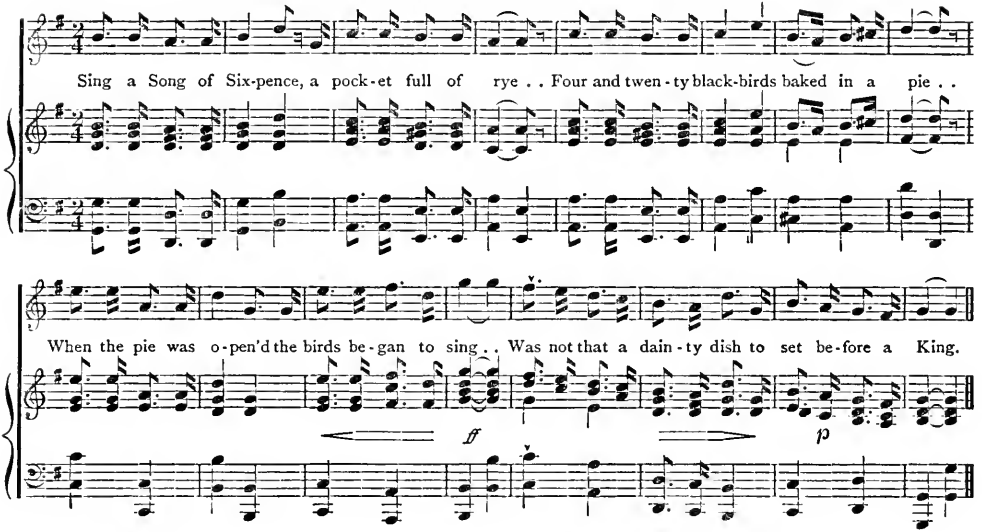
'Or, what would be still nicer,' she went on, even more rashly, 'I'll take you all to England on purpose to eat pies!'

But the babies sat like stones.

The mother gave it up.

This is the tune: —

SING A SONG OF SIXPENCE.



'The last one of all,' said the mother, 'is to be sung by two babies only, for it is a duet. May can't learn it to-night because of her cold, so April and June shall do it.'

It was *Where are you going to, my pretty maid?* First the mother told them the story, and described how very pretty the pretty maid was, but how, directly the young man found she had no money, he wouldn't marry her.

'But why must she have some money?' asked April.

'*I* has got seven *pfennings*,' said June, trying not to look proud.

'First he says will she marry him, and then he says he doesn't want to?' asked April, wonderingly.

'But mummy, was she one really milkmaid?' asked May.

'Yes, she was going milking when he met her.'

'And so pretty?'

'Oh, she was so pretty that the moment he saw her he wanted to marry her.'

'I never did yet see one pretty milkmaid,' remarked May.

'Neither did I,' confessed the mother; neither has any one else where the babies lived. Sometimes they used to go into the cow-sheds, and though there were long rows of cows stretching away as far as they could see, and a great many milkmaids all busy milking, no one could ever have called them pretty, however hard they tried. They were very strong, and very big, and wore short skirts reaching to their knees, and had bare legs and feet, and they milked very well, and were altogether estimable, but they weren't pretty. Most of them were married, with large families, and were quite old; so that the gay little milkmaid

WHERE ARE YOU GOING TO, MY PRETTY MAID?

Where are you going to, my pretty maid?
I'm going a-milking, Sir, she said.
May I go with you, my pretty maid?
You're kindly welcome, Sir, she said.
Who is your father, my pretty maid?
My father's a farmer, Sir, she said.
Say will you marry me, my pretty maid?
Yes, if you please, kind Sir, she said.
What is your fortune, my pretty maid?
My face is my fortune, kind Sir, she said.
Then I won't marry you, my pretty maid!
Nobody ask'd you, Sir, she said.

tripping across the buttercups, with shoes and stockings on, and a face like a flower, was almost as difficult to impress on the babies' imaginations as the pie had been.

'She wasn't like the milkmaids here,' explained the mother; 'she lived in England, where the happy cats are, and the pies.'

'And first he says will she marry him, and then he says he doesn't want to?' repeated April, to whom this conduct appeared extraordinary.

'Oh, she didn't care much, and only laughed at him when he went away.'

'Does you *like* that man, mummy?' asked June.

'Not much,' said the mother.

'I too not much,' said June with decision, 'I too not much at all.'

But June and the other two babies thought all male beings inferior creatures, because they had only met one boy in their lives, and they had been able to knock him down. Of course they saw distant boys from time to time, when they passed the end of the village street or were at the sea-side, but there was only one boy for them to play with, the families within reach

happening to be made up of girls. This boy had come to tea with his mother on his first introduction into their midst, and after tea, and while the two mothers sat on a sofa watching their children, and each one thinking how much nicer *hers* were, the babies said, 'Now we shall play.'

'Come, boy,' said June, seizing his arm as he showed no signs of moving, 'come — does you hear? We shall play.'

'I never play with little girls,' said the boy.

The babies stared. 'Why not?' they asked.

'They're much too stupid. They can't be soldiers when they grow up, and can't fight. I'm going to be a soldier, and fight everybody, and kill them too.' And he marched up and down the room with his head up and his shoulders back, making blood-thirsty lunges at the babies as he passed.

'Quite a little man you see,' whispered the delighted mamma on the sofa.

'I shall be one soldier too!' exclaimed June, fired with enthusiasm: and she began to march by his side.

'You can't, you silly, you're only a girl.'

'Oh, that doesn't matter!' she cried, with her usual airiness.

'Well you *are* a silly,' said the boy, with immense contempt.

'*You* is one silly!' cried June, giving him a mighty push.

He rolled over at once, for though he was bigger than she was, and older, he wasn't half as compact and determined; and she lost no time in sitting on him and jumping up and down violently, — this being, as I have said, a favourite form of vengeance. And as no one can respect a person they have knocked down and jumped on, and as the conclusion was that all boys must be alike, the babies, especially June, thought them a decidedly inferior set.

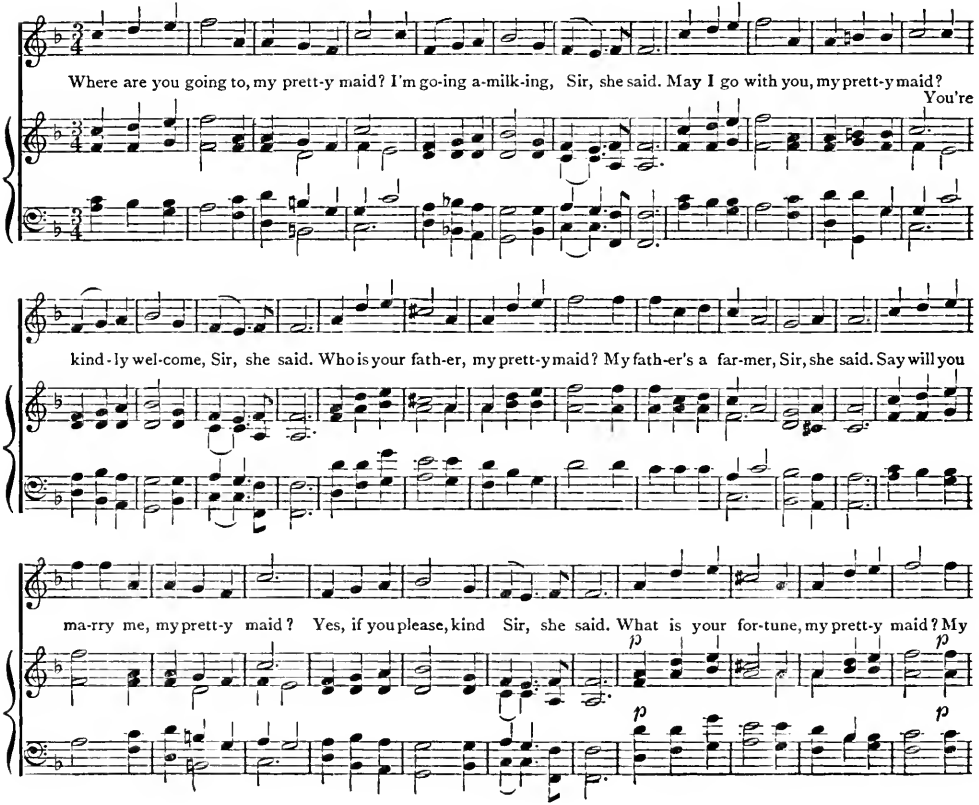
'Tuck up your dress, April,' said the mother. 'You shall be the young man, and June the pretty maid. Come, we'll go to the piano and I'll teach you to act it. May can look on and clap.'

The babies wore blue dresses with blue knickerbockers underneath to match, and April had only to tuck up her skirt to look just like a boy whose curls haven't been cut off. They all went to the piano, and the mother taught them the tune.

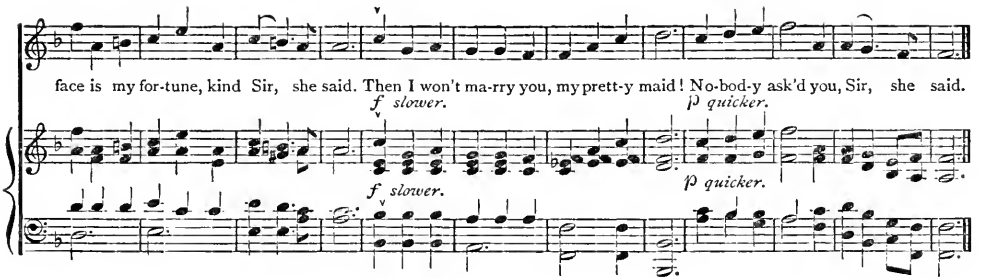
Here it is: —

The April Baby's

WHERE ARE YOU GOING TO, MY PRETTY MAID?



'Nobody asked you, Sir,' she said



It was the only tune of the six new ones that they were to learn that night, for it was already long past their bedtime. May sat on a sofa near, and applauded frantically. June made a very spirited milkmaid, and when the young man declared he wouldn't marry her, began to box with him, and as he turned tail and fled, pursued him round and round the room, defiantly shrieking '"Nobody asked you, Sir," she said,' till she couldn't go on for want of breath. The audience on the sofa was delighted, and clapped and cheered with all its might. The performance had to be given several times over, and the mother was as pleased as she could be that they liked to learn her tunes. You see they were babies who wanted very little to make them happy.

Then Séraphine appeared in the doorway, and though she said

nothing, looked such unutterable tubs and bedtime, that the mother, gathering all three together into her arms and giving them a final hug, told them they must go quickly, and promised to come and say good-night when they were in bed.

'It's English prayers to-night,' said April, as they went away. 'Won't you come when we says them, mummy?'

'Yes, I'll come. Be off now, my blessed darlings.'

The mother put the tunes together when they had gone, and began to shut the piano. The babies had been taught so many prayers by Herr Schenk and Séraphine that they had had to be divided into three sets, and the German ones were said one night, and the French ones the next night, and the English ones the night after that. In Herr Schenk's set there was a German hymn as well as the prayers, and in Séraphine's set there was a plaintive little tune to a short prayer: only in the English set there was no tune, although amongst the prayers was *Gentle Jesus, meek and mild.*

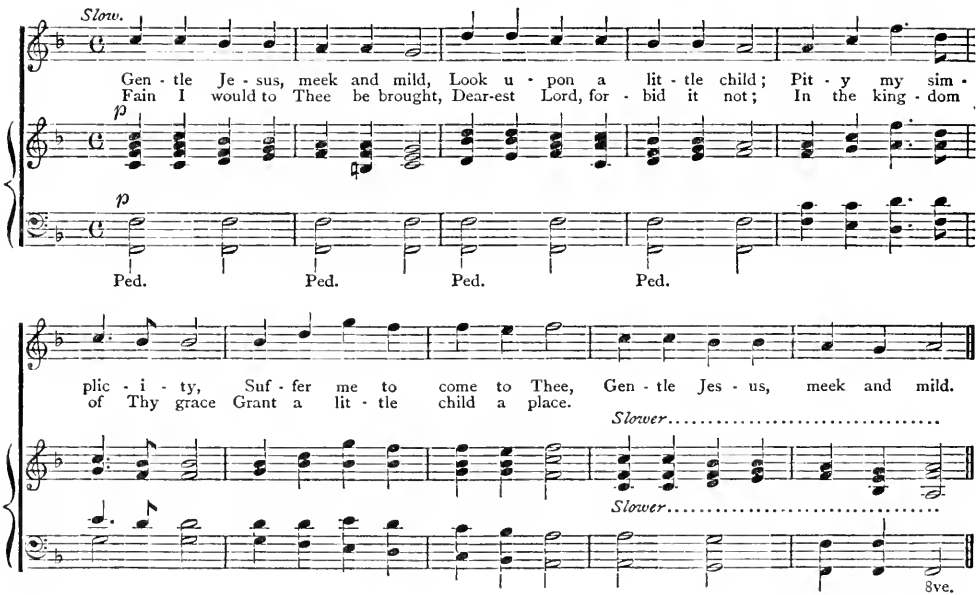
The mother, slowly shutting the piano, and putting things a little straight, thought of this, and came to the conclusion that to write one more tune wouldn't make much difference to her, and,

as it would be a hymn, it would finish off her week of tune-writing in a sweet and holy manner. And I don't know how it was, but though she had spent so much time struggling with all the other tunes, and had had such difficulties with them, and had suffered such horrid pangs, the hymn tune was finished in five minutes, and by the time she went up to say good-night to the babies it was written out and ready for them to learn the next day.

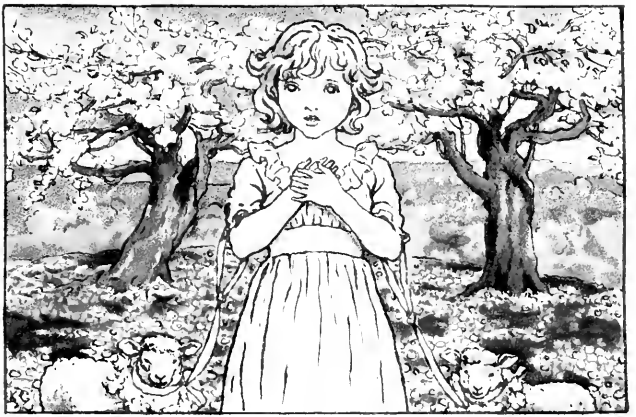
And so they did learn it the next day, and have sung it ever since on English prayer nights; and they look so good and angelic while they do it, kneeling in a row in their long night-gowns, with bowed heads and folded hands, that the mother sitting in the midst is sure they must be the dearest babies in the world. But as that is exactly what other mothers think of *their* babies, and as everybody can't be right, I don't suppose they can really be the dearest, although I know that they are very dear. This is the hymn tune: —

The April Baby's

GENTLE JESUS, MEEK AND MILD.



And when the mother went up half an hour later, as she had promised, and tucked them up in their beds, they were so tired that they couldn't keep their eyes open. 'Good-night, you sweet babies,' she said, stooping over each cot in turn, and kissing the sleepy baby in it.



GENTLE JESUS, MEEK AND MILD.

Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,
Look upon a little child ;
Pity my simplicity,
Suffer me to come to Thee,
Gentle Jesus, meek and mild.

Fain I would to Thee be brought,
Dearest Lord, forbid it not ;
In the kingdom of Thy grace
Grant a little child a place,
Gentle Jesus, meek and mild.

'Good-night, you sweet mummy,' said the babies faintly.

'We had fun, didn't we?'

'Oh but such fun!' murmured the babies, with their eyes shut.

'God bless you, precious babies.'

'God bless you, pwecious mummy,'—and then a voice out of the darkness added very slowly and drowsily 'Sleep—well—mummykins—and dweam—about—one—pwetty—angel—'

THE END