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AND  
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INTENDED AS  
A COMPANION TO THOSE MUCH ADMIRIED PIECES,  
THE  
BUTTERFLY'S BALL,  
AND  
THE PEACOCK "AT HOME."

By *W. B.*

ILLUSTRATED WITH ELEGANT ENGRAVINGS.



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1807.

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A FACSIMILE REPRODUCTION

OF THE

EDITION OF 1766

WITH AN INTRODUCTION

GIVING SOME ACCOUNT OF THE BOOK AND SOME SPECULATIONS  
AS TO ITS AUTHORSHIP

BY

CHARLES WELSH

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# THE ELEPHANT'S BALL

AND

*Grande Fête Champêtre*

A FACSIMILE REPRODUCTION

OF THE

EDITION OF 1807

*WITH AN INTRODUCTION*

BY CHARLES WELSH

GRIFFITH & FARRAN

*Successors to Newbery & Harris*

WEST CORNER OF ST PAUL'S CHURCHYARD, LONDON

FIELD & TUER, YE LEADENHALL PRESSE, E.C.

M D C C C L X X X I I I



## INTRODUCTION.

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EARLY in the present century John Harris—one of the successors to the business of “Honest John Newbery,” now carried on by Messrs Griffith & Farran at the old corner of St. Paul’s Churchyard—began the publication of a series of little books, which for many years were probably among the most famous of the productions of the House. Now, however, according to the fate which usually overtakes books for children, nearly all of them are forgotten or unknown.

The first book in this series which was known as *Harris’s Cabinet* was “The Butterfly’s Ball,” and was published in January 1807. This was followed in the same year by “The Peacock at Home” (a sequel to “The Butterfly’s Ball”), “The Elephant’s Ball,” and “The Lion’s Masquerade;” and then (prompted no doubt by the success of these, for we learn on the publisher’s authority that of the two first 40,000 copies were sold within twelve months) Mr Harris brought out a

torrent of little books of a like kind, of which the titles were : "The Lioness's Ball," "The Lobster's Voyage to the Brazils," "The Cat's Concert," "The Fishes' Grand Gala," "Madame Grimalkin's Party," "The Jackdaw's Home," "The Lion's Parliament," "The Water King's Levée;" and in 1809, by which time, naturally enough, the idea seems to have become quite threshed out and exhausted, the last of the Series was published; this was entitled, "The Three Wishes, or Think before you Speak."

Of this long list of books a few of the titles are still familiar, and one of them, "The Butterfly's Ball," may certainly claim to have become a Nursery Classic. It is still in regular demand; the edition now in sale being illustrated by Harrison Weir; it has been published in various forms, and has figured in most of the collections of prose and verse for the young that have been issued during this century. Probably to the minds of hundreds of people past middle age few lines are more familiar than the opening couplet—

"Come take up your hats, and away let us haste  
To the Butterfly's Ball and Grasshopper's Feast"—

and many no doubt by a little effort of memory could repeat the whole poem.

Hardly less famous were the three books which next

followed in order of issue—"The Peacock at Home," "The Elephant's Ball," and "The Lion's Masquerade." Their original size was 5 by 4 inches, and they were issued in a simple printed paper wrapper. It is of these first four books that the reprint is here given, and in order to present both pictures and text with greater effect this reprint has been made upon considerably larger paper; the text and illustrations are fac-simile reproductions of originals from the celebrated Flaxman collection recently dispersed at a sale by Messrs Christie, Manson, & Woods, when Mr Tuer, to whom I am indebted for their loan, became their fortunate possessor. "The Butterfly's Ball" is not a reproduction of the first edition, which, as will be shown later on, would be considered by those who are familiar with the poem as incomplete. Moreover, the illustrations in the edition here presented are obviously by the same hand as that which embellished the other three books, and it was felt that for these reasons it would possess a greater interest.

"The Butterfly's Ball" first appeared in the November number of the *Gentleman's Magazine*, where it is said to have been written by William Roscoe—M.P. for Liverpool, the author of "The Life of Leo X.," and well known in the literary circles of his day—for the use of his children, and set to music by order of their Majesties for the Princess Mary.

When the verses were subsequently published in book form, the text and pictures were engraved together on copperplates. An edition, with pictures on separate pages, appeared early in the next year, which is the one here reproduced.

In this edition there are many variations from the previous one. The allusions to "little Robert"—evidently William Roscoe's son—do not occur in the former, and many slight improvements, tending to make the verses more rhythmical and flowing, are introduced. The whole passage, "Then close on his haunches" (p. 7) to "Chirp his own praises the rest of the night," &c. (p. 10), is an interpolation in this later edition. It is, I believe, certain that the verses were written by Roscoe for his children on the occasion of the birthday of his son Robert, who was nearly the youngest of his seven sons. No doubt when they were copied out for setting to music the allusions to his own family were omitted by the author. A correspondent of *Notes and Queries*—who is, I believe, a niece of the late Sir George Smart—says, in reference to the question of the setting of the verses to music, that—

"The MS., in Roscoe's own handwriting, as sent to Sir G. Smart for setting to music, is in a valuable collection of autographs bequeathed by the musician to his daughter. The glee was written for the three princesses—Elizabeth, Augusta, and Mary—daughters of George III. and pupils of Sir George, and was performed by them during one of their usual visits to Weymouth."

“The Peacock at Home” and “The Lion’s Masquerade” were, as the title-page puts it, written “by a Lady,” and we should most likely have remained in ignorance as to who the lady was if there had not been published in 1816 another little book of a somewhat similar character, entitled “The Peacock and Parrot on their Tour to discover the Author of ‘The Peacock at Home,’” which, the Preface tells us, was written immediately after the appearance of “The Peacock at Home,” but from various circumstances was laid aside. “In the opinion of the publishers,” the Preface goes on to say, “it is so nearly allied in point of merit to that celebrated trifle that it is introduced at this late period.”

The book relates in verse how the peacock and parrot—

“ . . . far as England extends  
Then together did travel to visit their friends,  
Endeavour to find out the name of our poet,  
And ere we return ten to one that we know it.”

After long travelling—

“ A path strewed with flowers they gaily pursued,  
And in fancy their long-sought Incognita viewed,  
Till all their cares over in Dorset they found her,  
And plucking a wreath of green bay-leaves they crowned her.”

In a footnote is added, “Mrs Dorset was the authoress of ‘The Peacock at Home.’”

Mrs Dorset, according to a note by Mr Dyce which appears on the fly-leaf of a copy of "The Peacock at Home," in the Dyce and Forster Collection at South Kensington, was sister to Charlotte Smith. Their maiden name was Turner.

The British Museum Catalogue says Mrs Dorset also wrote "The Three Wishes, or Think before you Speak," which is the last on the list of books in *Harris's Cabinet*. (See p. iv.)

It seems to be clear that the same lady wrote "The Lion's Masquerade" as "The Peacock at Home," for in "The Lioness's Ball" (a companion to "The Lion's Masquerade") the dedication begins thus—

" I do not, fair Dorset, I do not aspire,  
With notes so unhallowed as mine,  
To touch the sweet strings of thy beautiful lyre,  
Or covet the praise that is thine."

I regret that I am unable to offer any conjecture here as to the "W. B." who wrote "The Elephant's Ball:" the same initials appear to an appendix to an edition of "Goody Two Shoes," published some time before 1780, but this may be a coincidence only.

Besides the interest and merit of these little books on literary grounds, these earlier editions are especially note-

worthy because they were illustrated by the painter William Mulready, and the drawings he made for them are amongst the earliest efforts of his genius : they were executed before he had reached man's estate. It is not a little curious to observe in this connection how many artists who have risen to eminence have at the outset of their career been employed in illustrating books for children ; it would indeed appear that until comparatively recent years the veriest tiro was considered capable of furnishing the necessary embellishments for books for the nursery—a state of things which, we need not say, happily does not obtain in the present day. Notwithstanding this, however, these and many other little books of a bygone time abound in instructive indications of the beginnings of genius which has subsequently delighted the world with its masterpieces.

In connection with Mulready and children's books it may be interesting to note that in 1806 a little book called "The Looking Glass" was published, said to be written by William Godwin under the name of "Theophilus Markliffe." This work is the history and early adventures of a young artist, and it is known that it was compiled from a conversation with Mulready, who was then engaged in illustrating some juvenile books for the author, and the facts in it relate to the painter's early life. It contains illustrations of the talent of the subject

done at three, five, and six years old, which are presumed to be imitations of Mulready's own drawings at the same ages.

I cannot more fitly close these few words of Introduction than by quoting the quaint and curious announcement with which Mr Harris was wont to commend these little books to the public. "It is unnecessary," says he, "for the publisher to say anything more of these little productions than that they have been purchased with avidity and read with satisfaction by persons in all ranks of life." No doubt the public of to-day will be curious to see what manner of book it was that was so eagerly sought after by the children of the early days of the present century, and interested in comparing it with the more finished but often showy and sensational productions of our own time.

C. W.

LEYTONSTONE,  
*September 1883.*

THE  
ELEPHANT'S BALL,  
AND  
*Grand Fete Champetre.*

Intended as a COMPANION to those much admired PIECES,  
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By W. B.

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ORIGINAL JUVENILE LIBRARY THE CORNER OF  
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1807.

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*Field & Tuer, Ye Leadenhalle Presse, London.*

THE  
ELEPHANT'S BALL,

AND

*Grand Fete Champetre.*

*&c. &c.*

THE insects and birds, with the balls and their feasts  
Caus'd much conversation among all the beasts :  
The Elephant, famous for sense as for size,  
At such entertainments express'd much surprise

Says he, "shall these impudent tribes of the air,  
"To break our soft slumbers thus wantonly dare?  
"Shall these petty creatures, us beasts far below,  
"Exceed us in consequence, fashion, and show?  
"Forbid it, true dignity, honour and pride!—  
"A grand rural fête I will shortly provide,  
"That for pomp, taste, and splendor, shall far leave behind,  
"All former attempts of a similar kind."  
The Buffalo, Bison, Elk, Antelope, Pard,  
All heard what he spoke, with due marks of regard.

*Frontispiece.*



— *Shall these impudent tribes of the air." p. 4*

*London. Pub. Dec. 5. 1807 by J. Harris corner St. Paul's Church Yd.*







*"Here first came the Lion so gallant & strong". p.5.*

A number of messengers quickly he sent  
To the beasts, far and near, to make known his intent.  
The place he design'd for the scene of his plan,  
Was a valley remote from the dwellings of man :  
Well guarded with mountains, embellish'd with trees,  
And furnish'd with rivers, that flow'd to the seas.  
Here first came the Lion so gallant and strong,  
Well known by his main that is shaggy and long ;  
The Jackall, his slave, follow'd close in his rear,  
Resolv'd the good things with his master to share.

The Leopard came next—a gay sight to the eye,  
—With his coat spotted over—like stars in the sky—  
The Tiger his system of slaughter declin'd,  
At once, a good supper and pleasure to find.  
The bulky Rhinoceros, came with his bride ;  
Well arm'd with his horn, and his coat of mail hide.  
Then came the Hyena, whose cries authors say, )  
Oft lead the fond traveller out of his way, )  
Whom quickly he seizes and renders his prey. )  
The Wolf hasten'd hither, that Ruffian so bold,  
Who kills the poor sheep, when they stray from the fold.





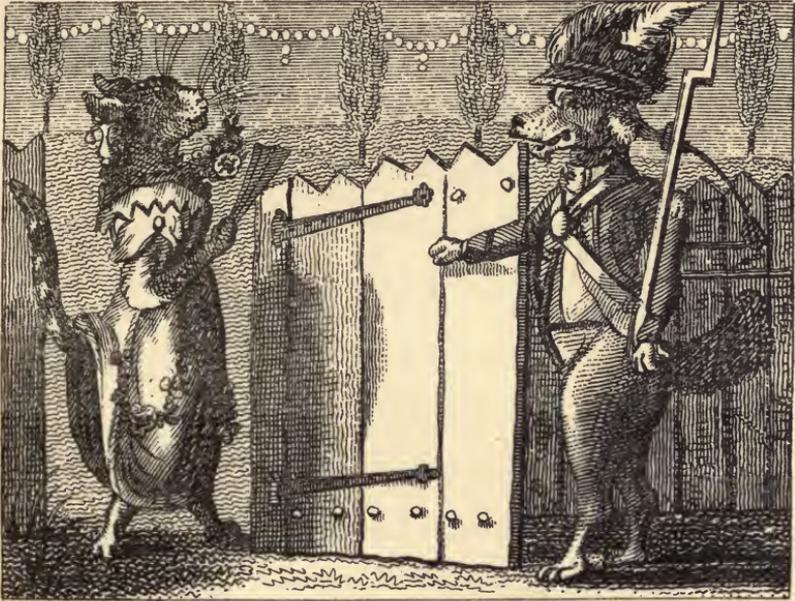
*"The Moth when Invited got up with much pain". p.7.*

The Bear having slept the long winter away,  
Arriv'd, from the north, to be merry and gay.  
The Panther ferocious—the Lynx of quick sight,  
The Preacher \* and Glutton\* came hither that night.  
The Camel, so often with burthens opprest,  
Was glad for a while from his labour to rest.  
The Sloth, when invited, got up with much pain,  
Just groan'd out, "Ah, No!" and then laid down again.  
The Fox, near the hen-roost, no longer kept watch,  
But hied to the feast, better viands to catch.

\* Wild Beasts of that name.

The Monkey, so cunning, and full of his sport,  
To show *All his Talents* came to this resort.  
The Dog and Grimalkin\* from service releas'd,  
Expected good snacks, at the end of the feast :  
The first at the gate, as a centinel stood ;  
The last kept the Rats and the Mice from the food.  
The crowd of strange quadrupeds seen at the ball,  
'Twere tedious and needless to mention them all ;  
To shorten the story, suffice it to say  
Some scores, nay some hundreds, attended that day.—

\* The Cat.



*"The Dog at the gate as a centinel stood." p. 8.*



But most of the tame and domestical kind,  
For fear of some stratagem, tarried behind.  
Due caution is prudent ! but laws had been made—  
No Beast, on that night, should another invade.  
Before we go farther, 'tis proper to state,  
Each female was asked to attend with her mate ;  
Of these, many came to this fête of renown,  
But some were prevented by causes well known.  
Now Sol had retir'd to the ocean to sleep :  
The Guests had arriv'd their gay vigils to keep—  
Their hall was a lawn, of sufficient extent,  
Well skirted with trees, the rude winds to prevent :

The thick-woven branches deep curtains display'd ;  
And heaven's high arch a grand canopy made.  
Some thousands of lamps, fix'd to poplars were seen,  
That shone most resplendent, red, yellow, and green.  
When forms, introductions, and such were gone through,  
'Twas quickly resolv'd the gay dance to pursue ;  
The musical band, on a terrace appearing,  
Perform'd many tunes that enchanted the hearing ;  
The Ape, on the haut-boy much science display'd—  
The Monkey the fiddle delightfully play'd—  
The Orang-Outang touch'd the harp with great skill,  
The Ass beat the drum, with effect and good will,  
And the Squirrel kept ringing his merry bells still. }



*"The Monkey the fiddle delightfully played." p.10.*







*"The Elephant state by majestic & tall." p.11.*

The Elephant, stately, majestic, and tall,  
With Cousin Rhinoceros open'd the ball—  
With dignified mien the two partners advanc'd,  
And the *De la Cour* minuet gracefully danc'd.  
The Lion and Unicorn, beasts of great fame,  
With much admiration, accomplish'd the same.  
The Tiger and Leopard, an active young pair,  
Perform'd a brisk jig, with an excellent air.  
Next Bruin\* stood up with a good natur'd smile,  
And caper'd a horn-pipe, in singular style,  
With a staff in his paws, and erect all the while.

\* The Bear.

The Fox, Wolf, and Panther, their humours to please,  
Danc'd three-hand'd reels with much spirit and ease.  
A few tried cotillions, and such like French fancies,  
But most of them join'd in John Bull's country dances.  
Some beasts were not us'd to these violent motions,  
And some were too old or too grave in their notions ;  
Of these a great many diverted their hours  
With whist, lue, backgammon, quadrille or all-fours.  
Much time being spent in these pleasing diversions,  
A motion was made to remit their exertions :  
For supper was waiting ; which, on this occasion,  
Was manag'd with skill, and exact regulation.



*"Next Bruin stood up with a good naturid smile." p.11.*



The bosom of earth a firm table supply'd—  
The cloth was green grass, with gay flow'rets body'd ;  
The various utensils by nature were cast,  
And suited completely this antique repast.  
The generous host had provided great plenty,  
To suit various palates, of every dainty.  
Some scores of fat oxen were roasted entire,  
For those whose keen stomachs plain beef might require.  
Profusion of veal, nice lamb, and good mutton,  
To tickle the taste of each more refin'd glutton—  
Abundance of fish, game and poultry, for those  
Whose epicure palates such niceties chose.

Ripe fruits and rich sweet meats were serv'd, in great store,  
Of which much remain'd when the banquet was o'er ;  
For, as to mild foods of the vegetive kind,  
Few guests at the table to these were inclin'd ;  
Rare hap for such persons as travell'd that way,  
By chance or design, on the following day.  
On wine and strong spirits few chose to regale,  
As most were accustom'd to Adam's old ale.  
When supper was ended, and each happy guest  
Had freely partaken of what he lov'd best ;  
Of toasts and of sentiments various were giv'n ;  
As " Health to our Host, and the Land that we live in."





*Rule. Britannia, the Lion sung, &c." p. 45.*

The former was drank with huzzas, three-times-three,  
Which echo repeated with rapturous glee.  
Now mirth and good humour pervaded the throng,  
And each was requested to furnish a song,  
Which many comply'd with ; but such as deny'd,  
Some whimsical laughable story supply'd.  
The Lion, " Britannia Rule," sung mighty well :  
The Tiger, "in English Roast Beef," did excel.  
While others made all the wide valley to ring,  
With " Nile's Glorious Battle," and " God Save the King."

In such good amusements the evening they past,  
Till Aurora appear'd to the eastward at last :  
When back to their homes, they return'd one and all,  
Well pleas'd with the sports at the Elephant's Ball.

W. B.



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