

# VARIOUS

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**Various**  
**The Nursery, February**  
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Readers:*

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**for Youngest Readers**

**THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BUBBLE**

THE papa who writes this biography of a bubble never wrote a biography before in all his life. This is his first printed work. Perhaps some old person will criticise it severely.

"Why use such big words as 'biography' and 'criticise'?" this old person may ask. "Are you not writing for little people? Is not your subject a poor little bubble that could not have lived longer than three or four seconds?"

To which this papa replies: "Old person, do not meddle. This papa knows what he is about. The little folks understand very well that a 'biography' is a story of a life; that to 'criticise' is to find fault; and that a 'critic' is a fault-finder."

So all critics will please get out of the way, and leave this papa alone while he writes the biography of a bubble.

This bubble was born just as the clock struck four, on the afternoon of the 13th of January, 1873. Its name was "Diamond."

"Why, how could a bubble have a name?"

Now, you just be quiet and patient, and in good time you shall learn all. Papa had promised his little daughter Grace, that one of these days he would blow some bubbles for her amusement.

Grace reminded him several times of his promise; but papa was always too busy to attend to it. At last Grace said, "When will *one of these days* come?"—"It shall come now," said papa.

So he got a pipe, and a bowl of soap-suds; and Grace stood at his knee while he blew bubbles. Grace was delighted. "Name them," said she; for papa had named her kittens, and she thought he could name the bubbles.

The first one's name was "Sparkle." It was a very big bubble; but it did not live long. The name of the second was "Glory." I think it might have lived a second longer than it did, if Grace had not touched it with her finger.

The third bubble floated up almost to the ceiling. Its name was "Napoleon." It rose as bravely as if it had no fear of breaking. It expired of old age, after reaching the term of ten seconds and a half.

At last, just as the clock struck four, little "Diamond" appeared. She was a delicate little thing, and bright with all the colors of the rainbow. She was not proud like the other bubbles. She did not try to mount. Perhaps papa's breath made her go as

she did.

Grace admired "Diamond" very much. "Why, see, papa! She is coming to kiss me," said the little girl;—"she is on my cheek."

Yes, little "Diamond" ended her life on the cheek of innocence. What better end could she have had? Was it not much better than mounting to the cold, white ceiling, and living to a dull old age, like the big bubble whose name was Napoleon?

*Grace's Papa.*

# JACK'S MENAGERIE

"This is our grand menagerie,  
Beneath the crooked cherry-tree.  
The exhibition now begins:  
Admittance, only thirteen pins;  
And if the pins you cannot borrow,  
Why, then, we'll trust you till to-morrow.  
Don't be afraid to walk inside:  
The animals are safely tied.

"This is the elephant on the right:  
Don't meddle with him, or he'll bite.  
(He's Rover, Neddie's dog, you know.  
I wish he wouldn't fidget so!  
He doesn't think it fun to play  
Wild beast, and be chained up all day.)  
We'll feed him, pretty soon, with meat;  
Though grass is what he ought to eat.

"In that box are the kangaroos:  
Go near and pat them if you choose;  
(They're very much like Susie's rabbits,  
With just a change of name and habits.)  
You'll find them lively as a top:  
See, when I poke them, how they hop.

They are not fierce; but, oh! take care:  
We now approach the grizzly bear.

"See her long claws, and only hear  
Her awful growl when I go near!  
We found her lying on a rug,  
And just escaped her fearful hug.  
It took some time to get her caged:  
She's terrible when she's enraged.  
(You think, perhaps, it's Mabel's cat,  
But don't you be too sure of that!)"

"Here is the ostrich in her pen  
(It's Ernest's little bantam-hen):  
She came from Africa, of course,  
And runs as fast as any horse;  
And up above there is a bird  
Of whom you all have often heard,—  
The eagle ('That is not,' says Mary,  
'A pretty name for my canary')."

Just at this point, I grieve to say,  
The elephant broke quite away,  
O'erthrew the grizzly bear in rage,  
Upset the eagle in his cage,  
Flew at the kangaroos, and then  
Attacked the ostrich in her pen.  
Thus ended Jack's menagerie  
Beneath the crooked cherry tree!

*H. B.*

# THE STORY OF A LITTLE DUCK

I was one of a family of nine brothers and sisters. We all found ourselves outside our shells one fine, sunny day in spring; but we felt chilly, and were glad to nestle under the wings of the kind old hen whom we regarded as our mother.

In a day or two, we began to look about the world. We found that it comprised a pretty lawn, on which our mansion was placed, with a brick wall at one end of it. The other end of the world was at the foot of the lawn, and consisted of a level expanse as smooth as a sheet of glass.

Our mansion was formed of wood, with a high pointed roof, and with open bars in front, through which we could look out and enjoy the prospect. We could crawl under the bars easily; but mother-hen could not.

One day a great, strong giant came and lifted up our mansion right over our heads. This giant had two legs, but no wings. Poor thing! They called him a *little boy*. He frightened us very much at first; but as he fed us, and called us, "Ducky, ducky!" we soon grew fond of him.

When the boy had lifted up our mansion (which he called a coop), mother-hen started at once on a journey round the world. We stopped to pick up some bits of grain, and some little worms, which we found. "Cluck, cluck!" said mother-hen, which means, "Come, come!" and we all said, "Quack, quack!" which means,

"Yes, yes!"

On we went, threading our way through the forest of grass; and our ideas were much enlarged by finding that the world comprised a vast farm-yard as well as our lawn, and the distant glass-like boundary. On we went, "Cluck, cluck! quack, quack!" and at last found ourselves close to the smooth expanse, which we learned was called a *pond*, and composed of a beautiful liquid called "water."

Into this pond my brothers and sisters dashed, and of course I followed. How delicious! The water was cool and refreshing, and so buoyant, that we moved about on it more easily than we could walk on the land; but, when we looked back to the bank, we saw mother-hen calling out in grief and dread, "Cluck, cluck! come, come! you'll drown, drown! Oh, oh!"

"All right!" said my eldest brother; "no fear: here we are as jolly as sandboys! You may as well come. It's capital. Here goes for a dive!" And, so saying, under he went, and soon came up again, laughing, "Quack, quack! oh, it's *so* jolly!"

But poor mother-hen did not see any thing jolly about it, and was always in fear when we went to the pond, into which she would never go herself.

In time we grew up, and found that we could actually *fly in the air*. Oh, capital! When that horrible monster with four legs, which they called "a dog," ran after us, we opened our wings, and flew over the lawn to the pond. And there stood the stupid dog bawling out, "Bow, wow! bow, wow!"

One day our ideas were again expanded by our being driven through a gate. We then found that the world was much larger than we had thought; for beyond our wall was a broad ploughed field, as well as a vast forest, the edges of which touched the distant sky. Wonderful discovery! How grand a duck feels when gaining useful knowledge!

Every thing went on pleasantly enough, until a great awkward giant, named Bob, came and looked very hard at us. At first we did not like him; but he was really very kind, and called us "Ducky, ducky, ducky!" and threw us handfuls of barley. He then seized two or three of my fattest brothers and sisters, and frightened them so much, that they called out, "Quack, quack! don't, don't!" But they need not have made such a fuss, as he put them safely in a basket with a lid to it to keep off the rain, and took a great deal of care of them indeed.

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