

“‘Fork it out!’ cried Watson.”

THE PHANTOM FUNDS.

(Concluded from page 55.)

MEANWHILE a lively scene was taking place in the Conqueror's Keep. Treacher had been correct in his surmise. The noble order of the Ku-Klux-Klan had assembled under the chairmanship of Kenneth Watson to consider the future actions of the Society. A roll-call having proved that every member (nine in all) was present, Kenneth, assuming a function not usual with chairmen, exclaimed in a loud voice: 'I now propose that Mr. Treasurer' (his real name was Potter) 'be called upon to produce the cryptic charter of the Society and its total funds, as they at present stand.'

'Nothing simpler!' came the voice of Potter, with just a dash of defiance in its tone. 'But you always seem jolly anxious about the coin.'

'Prevention is better than cure, my man,' retorted the Chairman.

The insinuation was more than Potter's temper could support. Turning sharply upon Watson, he flung an old dinner knife at his feet. 'There's the key of the bank!' he cried. 'Open it yourself. I resign the treasurership!'

Kenneth eyed him sternly. For a moment his wrath was impressively silent, then in withering tones he said: 'You're talking tommy-rot. You can't resign till I kick you out; for every one knows that by the cryptic charter, once a member of the Ku-Klux-Klan means always a member, unless the will of the Chief is otherwise. You have committed treason. Mr. Sergeant, arrest the prisoner!'

Potter, assuming a Napoleonic attitude, laughed derisively. A pale-faced, timid little boy, named Power—the smallest of the nine—marched on the treasurer, and endeavoured to do his duty. The utter fruitlessness of his efforts aroused a titter among the assembly, which broke into unseemly laughter when Potter exclaimed, jocosely, 'Now, Mr. Sergeant, leave off tickling, do you hear!'

Kenneth Watson, red with fury at the insult to his official dignity, bore down upon the rebel, and the smother that followed led Galloway to raise his voice for 'order.'

It was only adding fuel to the fire, for the chairman, still hanging on to the treasurer's neck quite regardless of the apoplectic symptoms he was inducing, yelled out hotly: 'Shut up, can't you! It's my place to keep order. You're only secretary.'

'Then why don't you stop this rotting?' retorted Galloway. 'We shall have half the school in here presently.'

Whether wounded by the evidence in this speech that his most trusted ally had ratted, or impressed by the warning it contained, we cannot say; but certain it is that Kenneth suspended hostilities forthwith, and donning the air which we are led to suppose was assumed by Cromwell on a memorable occasion, ordered the timid sergeant to take up the key of the bank.

Silence followed tumult, as little Power, acting under the instructions of the chairman, made his way to the wall at one side of the chamber, and, inserting the key between two courses of the masonry, coaxed a large stone from its position. The members (with the exception of Potter, who was searching the dirty floor for his collar stud) gathered round, but a moment later all

stepped back with an exclamation of concern. The cavity was empty!

Kenneth walked through the cordon of onlookers, smiling triumphantly. 'Just as I thought,' he said. 'Every penny gone, and the charter into the bargain! Close the bank!' he added, grimly; and little Power replaced the stone with melancholy deliberation. 'Now, Mr. Treasurer, what have you got to say?'

Potter, still on all fours, looked up at the crowd around him in speechless amazement, transferring his gaze to each face in turn.

'Fork it out!' cried Watson. 'I guessed you would be up to some hanky-panky if a close watch wasn't kept.'

Potter's presence of mind returned. 'Say that again, you cad!' he shouted, springing to his feet. 'I haven't touched a penny. It was safe in there twenty minutes ago. I saw it. So did Galloway.'

'Sh—h! Don't make such a row!' cried two or three.

'A row, eh?' sneered Potter. 'I like that. Tell this beggar to eat his words. If you don't, I'll push 'em down his throat.'

There was so much righteous anger in his manner that even Watson quailed before him, but oil was poured on the troubled waters next moment by Galloway. 'I move a resolution,' said he, 'to the effect that what Mr. Treasurer says is quite right. I remember seeing the funds of the society in the bank twenty minutes ago, together with the charter, and since that time the treasurer has been in my company all the while.'

'Then if you are not sharing the plunder,' said Watson morosely, 'I suppose we must take it for granted that some bounder has discovered our secret hiding-place. Don't be so touchy,' he added, as Galloway was about to interrupt. 'Upon my word, I shall resign the chairmanship of the society if I can't express an opinion without being jumped on.'

The apology was understood, and the Ku-Klux-Klan, as became a discreet society, proceeded to discuss the situation reasonably. The final outcome was an elaborate scheme for running the culprit to earth by placing some ink-stained pennies in the bank as a lure; and so ingenious was the plan, so great the prospect of entertainment in the result, that not a member could deplore the loss of a subscription likely to secure such sport.

'Mark my words, the plot will pan out A1,' cried Watson, as the discussion reached a close. 'We put the enticing bait in the bank, keep away from the place for a time, and I'll undertake to say that no fellow can touch the stuff without leaving a dye mark on his hands that time only will get rid of.'

While speaking he drew a little bottle from his pocket (its contents had been used to engross the cryptic charter), and allowed a drop or two to escape from it on to a penny. Galloway, Potter and Power readily made a similar sacrifice, and the coins thus marked were forthwith carried to the bank.

Little Power applied the key again and removed the stone, but had hardly done so when, with a startled cry, he leapt to his feet. 'Look! Look!' he exclaimed, pointing into the cavity. 'There it is! Watson, Potter—all of you—look! How on earth did it get there?'

With tingling nerves, the members of the Ku-Klux-Klan crowded their heads together, and stared into the mysterious bank. There was no doubting what they

saw. The cryptic charter, with the Society's funds, lay in the accustomed place. Astounding! Unaccountable! Marvellous in the extreme! They looked at each other in bewilderment. Who could explain such a remarkable occurrence? No one. It was not to be explained, and so impressed were the Ku-Klux-Klan by its uncanniness that they agreed to withdraw their funds and dissolve the club.

This resolution might not have been so unanimously supported if, during the sitting, they had seen Treacher (after putting the money back in the hole of the dividing wall) steal softly from the companion chamber of the Conqueror's Keep, and had heard him mutter: 'That was a narrow squeak of tumbling into hot water, upon my word!'

JOHN LEA.

A POINTED ARGUMENT.

SAID the pencil to the rubber,
'Your manners I deplore;
The lines I drew were beautiful—
I won't draw any more;
I think it's most impertinent
Such drawing to erase;
The members of the pencil-box
All think it's a disgrace.'

Said the paper to the pencil,
'I think the rubber's right;
Your marks were very heavy, when
They should have been quite light;
I hope you'll beg his pardon, and
Just draw them once again,
For when you scratched my tender face
He rubbed away the pain!'

LILIAN HOLMES.

THE DUTCH WINDMILL.

HOLLAND is the country of the canal, the bulb, and the windmill. The last-named has a great deal to do; for it not only does the usual grinding work of a mill; it has also to act as a news-giver. The births, marriages, and deaths which occur in the miller's family, instead of being announced in a newspaper, are notified by the mill. When the miller is married, the mill is stopped with the arms of the wheel in a slanting position, and with sails unfurled. To announce a birth, he again stops the wheel in a slanting position, but at a more acute angle than that of the wedding-day, while the two upper sails are unfurled. When a miller dies, all the sails are unfurled. The wheel is turned round until the arms form an upright cross, and in this position they remain until after the funeral. If one of these mills could talk, it would perhaps say something like this (but of course it would speak Dutch):

'I am the mill; your bread you owe to me,
And very much obliged you ought to be.
'I am the mill; of wedded love I tell,
Less noisily than clash of marriage-bell.
'I am the mill; my upper sails unfurled
Tell that a child is born into the world.
'I am the mill; I mourn my master's loss;
But bid his friends find comfort in the Cross.'

E. D.

FROM OUR READERS.

I.—THE CUCKOO.

DOWN in the dark, deep, silent wood,
Deep in the thicket green,
There you will hear the voice of a bird,
But the bird itself's unseen.

Long may you hunt to find the bird,
Long, may it be, in vain,
Till one day a glimpse you may catch,
But fleet as of falling rain.

But the glimpse of the bird long will stay,
Stay in the inward mind,
And you will remember the cuckoo
When blows the winter wind.

GERALDINE HAMILTON (age 12).

A YEAR IN A GARDEN.

II.—FEBRUARY.

ONE of the seed-boxes was used for mustard and another for cress. But the mustard was sown a few days later than the cress, as it grows much more quickly. Both boxes were placed in a warm cupboard in the kitchen and covered with glass. Billy had also bought a packet of cos lettuce seed, and some of this was mixed with a little silver sand, and then sown rather thickly in another box. This lettuce seed would be grown in exactly the same way as the mustard and cress, and would be cut and eaten when it would be about three inches high. As soon as the first little seed leaves appeared the boxes would be brought out into the light. In another packet of seed Billy had centred very high hopes; these were Ailsa Craig tomato seeds. They were in a deeper box, one inch apart, so that the little plants would have plenty of room to grow. Afterwards the children washed and scrubbed clean a number of little three-inch pots, into which the tomato seedlings would be pricked out in April.

A fine half-holiday towards the end of the month gave them a chance to do some work outside, and they made a bed for shallots. This bed sloped a little and faced the east, so that it got all the morning sun when there was any. It was about a yard wide, and, with a straight strip of wood, it was marked off in rows nine inches apart; then the bulbs were just pressed down into the soil, not buried at all, one at a time, six inches from each other. As they worked, the children felt that spring had really come. The sun was shining; bees were coming out of their hives at the bottom of the garden; a lovely little hose-in-hose was out in the polyanthus bed; and the tulips were beginning to push up their pointed leaves impatiently into the light. But, unfortunately, that night a frost came and loosened all the bulbs, and when it thawed Billy and Babe had to spend an hour settling them back into their holes again. Once more trouble happened to the bulbs before they got a chance to start making roots; it came the last week of the month. Early one morning Babe ran to her brother to say that a lot of the bulbs were out of their holes again. There had been no frost, and it was only after some discussion and thought that the children discovered that this time worms were the culprits. With their heads the worms had pushed up some of the bulbs and tipped them right over.

That morning, as they left the garden to go to school,



The Yellow Bunting.

a little yellow bird hopped on the path in front of them. Then it flew away to the hedge.

'Billy, a canary!' Babe exclaimed.

'No, only a yellow bunting,' he replied. 'Now, keep very still and listen! Perhaps it will sing a few notes.'

But it was too early in the year, and the day was still too wintry.

'But it will sing soon,' Billy said. 'And when it does

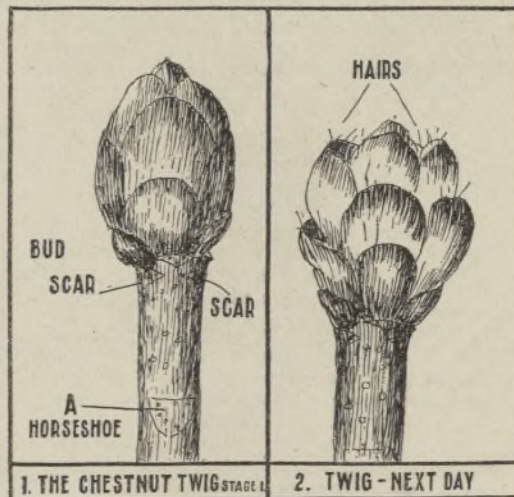


Cos Lettuce grown from Seed in a Box.

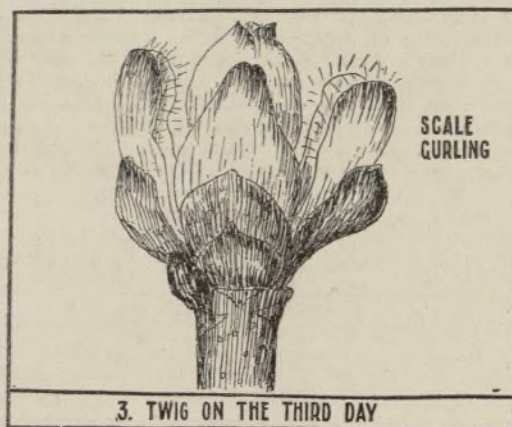
sing, if you listen carefully, you will hear it say, 'A little bit of bread and *no* cheese.' But you will have to listen carefully, because it has not got a very strong voice.'

MY CHESTNUT TWIG.

HAVE you ever tried to persuade a horse chestnut twig to go on growing in water *after it is gathered?* When I was first told that it could be done, I was, I am afraid, rather unbelieving, and I may have even smiled. However, the friend who told me it could be



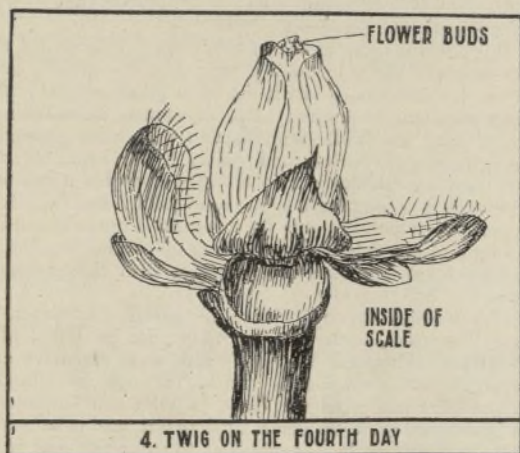
done, thinking, I expect, that '*seeing* was believing,' brought to me a few days later several twigs in order that I might try for myself. Well, I put them in specimen glasses in a warm sitting-room, and made up my mind I would take note of what happened each day—if anything *did* happen!



3. TWIG ON THE THIRD DAY

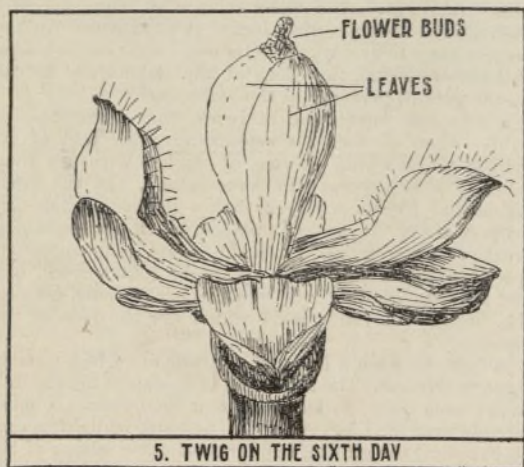
I had sufficient faith in the word of my friend to think that, after a time, perhaps the twig might open a little; so I got out my sketch-book and made a sketch of the jolliest-looking twig, and here he is in fig. 1.

The stem was of a brown colour on which were many tiny dots. At Δ is to be seen the reason why this tree is called a *horse* chestnut. This funny little mark is the scar left by the leaf of last year; this is where it was attached to the stem and those little dots on it are the places where certain ends of veins broke off when



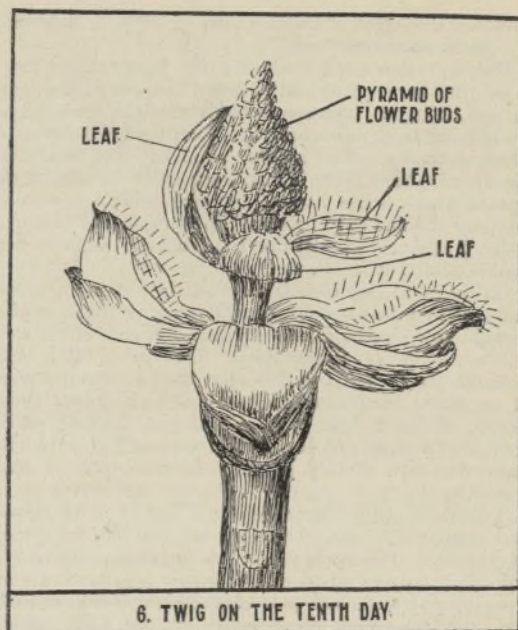
the leaf fell last autumn. As the shape suggests a horseshoe, and those dots the nail-holes, some one, years and years ago, called it a horse chestnut tree, to distinguish it from a sweet (or Spanish) chestnut tree.

Now, close up under the top bud, on either side of the stem, you will see parts of two more scars, also another in the middle above, and on the left a tiny almost black



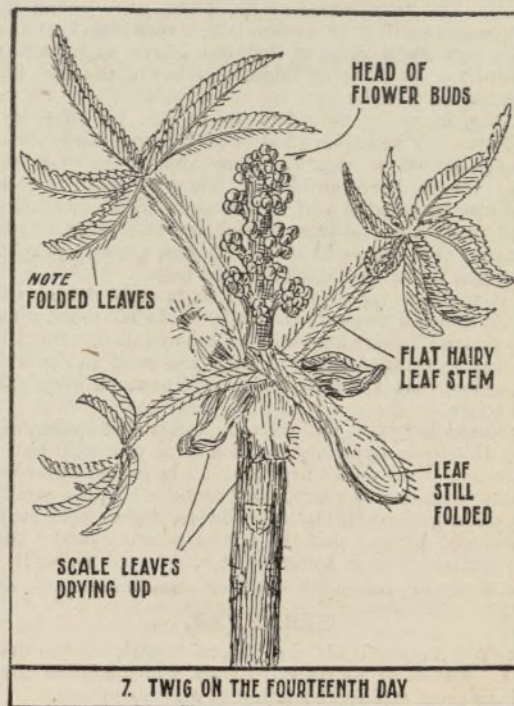
bud, which no doubt would have developed later. The big top bud was just a close mass of red-brown leaves all shiny and a little bit sticky. If you look at the tips of twigs on trees in spring, especially chestnuts, you will find they are generally shiny, and often sticky.

The next day, I found to my surprise that something *had* happened already. So I drew the twig again, and here he is in fig. 2. The warm room had so heartened him up that he had started to open; the leaves ('scales' or 'scale leaves'—they are, you know, not the ordinary



leaves) had begun to lean back, so to speak. When this happened I found that these scales were not brown all over, but only in the parts that were visible when the bud was shut up tightly, as in fig. 1. With the opening out, I could see a greeny-white colour appear below.

Then, too, I was greatly struck by the hairs which I



found on the edges of these scales. I suppose they help to hold the bud together.

The next morning I was quite in a hurry to get down to see whether anything further had happened; and, sure enough, it had! You see in fig. 3 that the scale leaves are leaning back more, and also curling up a bit sideways, so that the tops become pointed. You can now observe also that there is only very little brown on the tips of those scale leaves, because when they were clasping the bud only just the top showed. If you look at fig. 1 again, you will find that the top scale is just visible, and that is all.

On the next day (fig. 4) I found the outer scales had most of them fallen back considerably, so much so that I could now see the *insides* of some of them, which were quite silvery in appearance. Besides this, I was tremendously excited to find that at the extreme point of my shoot some tiny pink lumps had shown themselves, so that I then knew I had got a shoot which contained a cluster of flowers! I must tell you that the shoot was now covered by only one more pair of scale leaves.

Two days passed now before I had time to inspect and sketch my twig, so that a good deal had happened, as you will observe in fig. 5. A further scale leaf in front had turned down and more of the flowers were showing; also the last pair of scale leaves had released the bud from their clasp, exposing the naked shoot, consisting of a cluster of flowers surrounded by the tiny leaves *proper*, but all a mass of wool, almost as though they were made of white felt.

Now four days passed before I could again sketch my twig, and here in fig. 6 you see the four leaves (three visible and one hidden behind the flowers) have opened out and exposed to view the little pyramid of flower-buds. The four leaves, with many hairs round, the edges, were still very woolly, but on very close examination you could observe that the leaves were perfect, each little leaflet being folded together in the bud, like the leaves of a book.

Once more my twig had to be left for four days without my attention; but then I found the state of things shown in fig. 7. Here you notice that the real leaves have unfolded. They were of a very delicate green; the leaf stems were thick and woolly, and many hairs still remained on the backs of the leaves. The pyramid of flowers had grown up a bit, and was just a pink mass of little balls.

Here I am sorry to say my story ends, for at this point I could persuade the twig to do no more. The leaves and flowers gradually wilted and died. But still I was more than satisfied with my twig, and greatly surprised that it could be made to do so much when only in water.

Now I hope you will get some twigs next spring, and try this little experiment. I am sure you will be interested. Ever since I first tried it I have every year had some twigs in my study, and I am always quite excited to see how many will contain flowers. Select your twigs carefully, picking out the fattest you can find; and, having put them in water—watch.

E. M. B.

GIRAFFES.

AWAY, south of the Sahara Desert, lie the deep forests of Equatorial Africa, which are the home of the great giraffe, the tallest of all quadrupeds.

Its name is derived from the Egyptian soraphe, or 'long neck,' and is gained from the prominence of that distinctive feature, the giraffe's most remarkable possession. For the head of the great animal is sometimes as high as eighteen feet from the ground, while, strange to say, the number of vertebrae, or spine-joints, in its neck is only seven—the same number that every other quadruped possesses.

But there is more to say of this neck. It is joined to the animal's skull in such a way that the giraffe can throw his head back till it lies in a straight line with his neck; this is a great help, of course, in reaching and seizing his food. For, as you may have guessed, the giraffe's favourite food grows high; branches of tall trees—particularly acacias—appeal to his appetite, and with his long mobile neck, aided by his peculiar upper lip—which projects far beyond his nostrils and is strong and muscular—he can reach up to, and break off, the strongest branches in the forest with the greatest ease.

But besides the upper lip, the giraffe has another useful weapon, with the help of which he seizes his food: his ribbon-like tongue is almost as sensitive an organ as is the elephant's trunk. It can be drawn in and out; made long or short, at will; and employed to grasp and pick up small objects; it has been said that 'the tip can be so tapered as to enter the ring of a small key.' I have read, too, that by the help of this clever tongue and upper lip the animal is able to pick off the leaves of its favourite acacias and other thorny plants so carefully that he swallows the foliage and leaves the thorns behind.

You might imagine that the giraffe would be a fierce animal, but it is not. It generally feeds in quiet herds of about forty or fifty, and if it be attacked it seeks safety in flight. And when it runs, it runs speedily with its 'wide straggling legs;' it is difficult for the fleetest horse to overtake it in its flight as it half-gallops, half-ambles along, the 'legs of the same side,' as one writer puts it, 'moving at the same time.'

It happens sometimes, however, that a giraffe *does* fight. Then it uses its resources to the best of its ability, 'discharging storms of kicks' with its hind legs! For it has one very fierce enemy. In the great Equatorial forests where it makes its home there are herds of other 'big game,' amongst which come crashing great rhinoceros, elephants, buffaloes, and numerous species of antelopes: lions are to be found there, too, and it is the lions—fierce South African lions, perhaps the fiercest in the world—which are the foes of the giraffe.

A fight between a lion and a giraffe must be a terrible sight to witness. The lion's aim is to leap on his victim's back; sometimes he succeeds, and then ensues a most terrible race for life. Attacked, perhaps, while drinking at a stream, the giraffe, feeling the sudden spring of his enemy and its fierce claws in his back, sets off at a mad gallop, trying meanwhile to shake the tyrant to the ground and so to rid himself of his terrible burden as he goes.

But it is of no use; he may run for miles, at each stride his strength grows less, for the lion 'rides proudly, tearing as he goes':

'Tis vain—the thirsty sands are drinking
His streaming blood, his strength is sinking . . .
He falls, and with convulsive throes,
Resigns his throat to the raging foe . . .'

There is one point that may be of interest to you, though it bears but indirectly on the subject of this article. The home of the giraffe, situated as it is in the haunts of the 'greatest game in the world,' is also, strange to say, the home of the tiny dwarf tribes that hide in the identical forests where dwell their stronger and fiercer neighbours. How strange that the same part of the world should shelter the giraffe, tallest of all quadrupeds, and the smallest race of pygmies known to man.

ETHEL TALBOT.

CHINNA.

By MRS. HOBART-HAMPDEN,

Author of 'The Secret Valley,' etc., etc.

(Continued from page 50.)

'THAT is the voice of my man,' said Mrs. Chinna. 'And, from the fashion in which he calls, I know that the hunting has been good.'

And she ran to throw more wood on to the flames; and, a moment later, into the circle of firelight came Chinna and Brian, looking extremely pleased with themselves. And over Chinna's shoulder was slung the carcass of a barking deer. And he called gaily to Mrs. Chinna: 'See what further good luck the white children have brought us. Here is meat for all without stint.'

And Brian ran to Nancy and Frederick to tell them of his adventures; but he had to cut the story short to help Chinna in the skinning of the deer, which was another adventure in itself. The soft brown pelt was separated very carefully from the underskin, rubbed with wood ashes, and pegged out on the ground to dry. And a goodly portion of the meat was cut into pieces with the little axe, and packed into the pot. The remainder was hung across the branch of a tree to keep it safe from jackals, and other sly thieves of the night. And then, while Mrs. Chinna cooked and Chinna smoked, the three children talked by the fire.

'Chinna taught me how to walk very, very softly,' Brian began. 'So that the leaves and twigs shouldn't crackle underfoot. And, once or twice, he let me use the bow and arrows. Not the poisoned arrows, but the other kind. I didn't hit anything, but I'm sure I could if I practised a little.'

And he went on to describe how cleverly Chinna had tracked the barking deer. How a bent twig, a tiny chewed piece of grass, were sufficient to guide him. 'Often I couldn't see the things to which he pointed,' Brian went on. 'But sometimes I could. Oh, Nancy, it really will be fun if we have to stay here for a little while. If we could only let them know at home where we are, it would be the nicest thing that has ever happened to us.'

'It is the nicest thing,' Frederick affirmed. 'It's a story come true.' He was quite as firm a believer in Chinna's powers by this time as was Chinna himself, and was looking forward hopefully to an exciting future. Chinna, no doubt, could make spirits actually appear; now he, Frederick, would find out all about them, and might perhaps be allowed to capture a little tame spirit for himself. And he would take it home with him, for, of course, eventually they would return home. Of this Frederick had no doubts at all. In fact, already he

pictured himself relating his adventures: first to Mr. and Mrs. Galbraith, and then to the servants, who would sit round him in an admiring circle, and listen most intently to all that he had to say.

'It is nice here,' Nancy, too, agreed. And planned that she would ask Mrs. Chinna to teach her how to cook, and would help the little woman with all her work, which was just the kind of work that Nancy liked best. Often she had played at housekeeping, and persuaded Brian and Frederick to eat imaginary meals she cooked for them, and to live in an imaginary house of which she was the housekeeper. Now she could keep house in earnest: it was a most delightful prospect, dimmed only, as Brian had said, by the thought of the anxiety that those at home must be suffering. But to leave this refuge they had found was, Nancy reasoned again, more likely in the end to increase that anxiety than to diminish it. And she began to tell Brian all that Mrs. Chinna had said, and the conclusion at which she herself had arrived, a conclusion with which Brian was in complete agreement.

And then Mrs. Chinna announced that the stew was ready, and, with a long iron spoon, she fished venison chops out of the pot, and very good they tasted. All the better, perhaps, because there were no knives and forks, but only fingers, to help in the eating. And when bedtime came, Chinna made a great mattress of springy green boughs with dry grass heaped on the top for the children. And so comfortable was this bed, that very soon they were asleep.

It was the turn of Chinna and Mrs. Chinna to talk now by the fire of the strange guests the day had brought them. Mrs. Chinna was fully convinced by this time that the children were indeed human; but Chinna still inclined to the theory that they came from another world.

'The spirits have sent them to us to bring us luck,' he reassured; 'in reward for the faithful service I have ever rendered.'

But, though they were not altogether in accord on this point, the little couple were otherwise in complete agreement. Chinna and Mrs. Chinna were equally sure that to leave their forests was the one thing that was not possible. They would guard the children, and look after them to their best ability. They would share with them food and shelter. But the world beyond the forest they deemed a place full of dangers and pitfalls into which no sane person would venture far. Though Chinna would boldly face the most savage of savage beasts with only his little bow and axe as weapons—though Mrs. Chinna would remain unafraid for days alone in the clearing, the very thought of an unknown country set them quaking. Their mothers and fathers, their more distant ancestors, had never left the forests for more than a few hours at a time. Therefore it seemed plain to these two that they could act in no other fashion.

'The children have come to us. It is well; very well. The children shall stay with us as long as they will,' Chinna concluded finally, and stretched himself comfortably to sleep. And, when Mrs. Chinna had arranged the burning brands so that they should keep aglow until the morning, and had tethered the goat securely within the hut lest it should wander in the night, she too slept, wrapped in the cloth she usually wore across her shoulders.

(Continued on page 66.)



"The skinning of the deer was another adventure in itself."