

"MAMMA, please tell us a story!" cried all the young dragons.

"Children, do be less noisy!" said their father, the Honorable Samuel P. Dragon. He had slain a knight that very evening and was perhaps a little irritable. Young dragons should be thoughtful, and should never disturb their parents after the night's fighting is over.

"Hush, children!" said Mrs. Dragon. "Your father has to fight hard all night, and in the day he needs his rest. I will tell you one nice story, if you will promise to go quietly to bed afterward."

The youngsters coiled down into comfortable hollows in the rock, and Mrs. Dragon prepared to begin her story.

"I suppose you would prefer a man-story?"

"Please, Mamma. We are *so* tired of 'When I was a little dragon.' Tell us a real man-story; but be sure not to have the dragon hurt. We like it to end happily, Mamma."

"Very well. Listen quietly, now. Don't rustle your wings nor flop your tails — Sammy! stop blowing flames into your sister's face, this moment! or not a word shall you hear.

"There was once a most delightful land, full of bogs and moist-smelling marshes, of dark rocky caves, all damp and cold. The lakes were covered with beautiful green mold, no flowers grew in the fields — nothing but cool rushes, ferns, and mosses. In short, it was a land in which any dragon might be glad to crawl: no sunshine to crinkle the scales or dry up the wings, no bright glaring fields to dazzle one's poor eyes. Why, even at midday one could slide comfortably about on the slippery,

slimy banks and never catch a blink of a sunbeam on the water."

"Oh, how nice! Really and truly, Mamma?" asked the small dragons, laughing with so much delight that the flames from their pretty scarlet throats lighted up the cave until Mr. Dragon stirred uneasily in his dreams; for he had fallen asleep.

"Really and truly," their mother went on, in a lower tone. "In this charming country, your father and I began our cave-keeping. We were very happy for a time, for not too far from us was your father's estate, — a fertile valley well stocked with plump and well-flavored inhabitants. You have never seen any whole men, have you?"

"No," they replied eagerly. "What are they like?"

"Oh, so ugly. To begin with, they have no scales, no wings, no claws —"

"No wings and no claws? How frightful they must be!" exclaimed young Samuel Dragon, Jr., proudly expanding his green pinions.

"Not a wing!" replied Mrs. Dragon. "And they walk, when mature, exclusively on their hind legs."

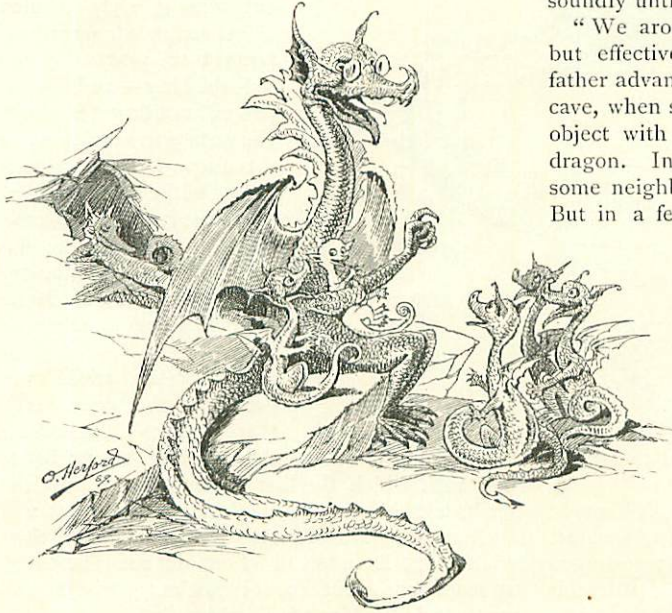
"Why is that?" asked the children.

"I can not tell. It does seem absurd. When young they go on all-fours like sensible animals, but the elders pull and persuade, teach and coax, until the poor little things rear up on their hind legs, and then the foolish old ones seem satisfied. Men are very queer. When they first came on this earth, — this earth where dragons dwell, — they lived, properly enough, in caves like the rest of the

world. But they are a stupid and restless kind of creatures, and soon began to tear pieces out of the world to make caves to suit themselves. Now they slaughter trees, slice and split them, fasten the pieces together, and stalk in and out of queer little holes called 'doors.' But I can not spare time to tell you any more about their curious instincts—you must read it for yourselves some day in the 'Dragon's Economical Cave-keeper,' the marketing manual. Look in the index under 'Animal Foods: Apes, Men, and various Bipeds.' You will find it interesting—and useful too.

"As I said, we were happy for a time. We used to stroll out quietly in the evening, and often managed to secure a nice chubby man or two, in an hour's flight. But at length came an age when those mean creatures decided to revolt. That is, they kept in their little caves at night, and compelled us to go out so frequently in the unhealthy, glaring daylight, that our scales were hardly fit to be seen. Even with all this exposure, we would succeed in catching only some of the little ones—indeed during a whole month I caught nothing but two thin miserable specimens. Think how your poor mother suffered! I was almost starved. I became so thin that I rattled!"

Mrs. Dragon looked at the young audience, and saw that the eyes of the two smallest were really



shedding sparks. She was touched by their sympathy, but, fearing the story was becoming too sad, hastened to brighten it.

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"Well, dears, it did not last long. Your father was young, rash, and brave, in those nights. One dawn he said, 'Really, Scalena, this will not do. I can stand this foolishness no longer!' I asked what he intended, but he waved his tail in a threatening way, and smiled knowingly as he whetted his claws on a new piece of sandstone. The next night, bidding me not to be anxious, he left me. I looked after him as long as I could see the flames in the sky, and then returned wearily to our cave to pick the last bone.



"The next morning, just at dawn, he returned with a delicious marketing,—he said it was a *butcher*, I think, though it may have been a *judge*, the flavor is much the same. Then, when we had retired into the darkest, dampest, cosiest corner of the cave, he told me very modestly the story of his great achievement.

"Your brave father, children, had been down to where the whole swarm of men lived, and actually had beaten to pieces one of the wooden caves! He made light of his exploit, and only rejoiced in it because, as he said, he had no fear now of famine or even of scarcity. We sat up late that happy morning, enjoyed a delicious supper, and slept soundly until nightfall.

"We arose with the moon, and after a hasty but effective toilet on his new sandstone, your father advanced glidingly toward the mouth of the cave, when suddenly there presented itself a dark object with a shiny coat, much like that of a dragon. Indeed, we thought for a moment it was some neighbor who had dropped in to breakfast. But in a few seconds we saw that it was what

is called a *knight*. A knight, children, is an animal which, though edible, is noxious, and sometimes dangerous to young or careless dragons. I have heard of such being even killed by this spiteful little pest. They are found among men—in fact, they are a species of men that has a hard shell. You know there are hard-shell crabs and soft-shell crabs, and so, likewise, there are hard and soft shelled men. Our visitor was a hard-shell who had, while prowling about, found our cave either by accident or willfully.

"I do not deny that I was a trifle anxious; but your father was merely angry. Giving a great roar, he blew out a mass of dark smoke and scarlet flames at the unfortunate little knight.

"But, though small, the knight was plucky and showed fight. As your father carelessly leaped toward him, the knight scratched dear Papa slightly with a long, hard stick, on the end of which was a bit of very hard shell. Then the knight rode out—for he had enslaved an unfortunate horse, as these cruel men do, my pets, and by means of a

"I obeyed him, for your father is always right, and out he flew with a rush of smoke and flame."

"Oh, Mother, and was Father killed?" asked one of the youngest—little Tommy Dragon.

"Of course not!" replied his elder brother, scornfully. "Don't you see him sleeping over there, all safe and sound? Don't be so silly!"

"You must not speak so sharply to your little brother!" said Mrs. Dragon, "or I shall end the story at once!"

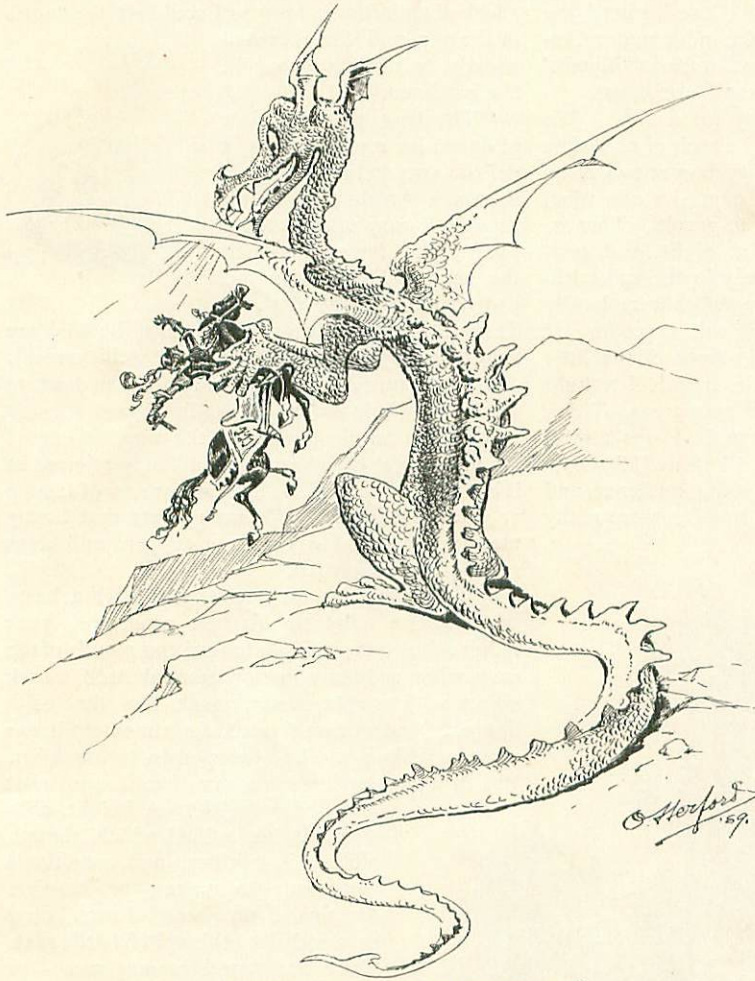
"Oh, please go on," exclaimed all the young dragons; "it is just the most interesting part!"

Pleased with their eagerness, she resumed:

"I did not see the hunt, but your father has often described it to me. The knight came wickedly at him, hoping to scratch him with the sharp stick; but with one whisk of his long green tail, your father broke the thing into small pieces! So you see, Sam," said this thoughtful parent, turning slyly to her eldest son, "it is most important to practice your tail-whisking—and I hope you will not forget it when you go to your next lesson."

Sammy Dragon turned saffron with confusion, but it was evident that he resolved to profit by the little moral so ingeniously woven, by careful Mrs. Dragon, into a mere man-story.

"After the stick was broken," she went on, "the vicious little knight



"THERE WAS NO DOUBT OF THE RESULT!"

contrivance in its mouth, he made it carry him about wherever he chose.

"Your father eagerly followed, though I sought in vain to restrain him. 'No, Scalena,' said he. 'This is a question of principle! As a true dragon and your loving mate, it is my duty to destroy this dangerous little fellow. Do not be foolish; I will bring you the body of the fierce creature. They are excellent eating. But you must sharpen your claws, my dear, for the shells are exceedingly hard to remove and most difficult of digestion.'

snatched out another, made entirely of the hard shell with which the first was only tipped. With this he tried his worst to break some of your father's lovely scales. Think what a ferocious animal this knight must have been! I can not see what they are made for; but then, it is instinct, perhaps, we must not judge him too harshly.

"This new weapon met the fate of the other. It was crunched up by your father's strong teeth, and then he descended upon the little hard-shell man with a great swoop—and that ended the bat-

tle! Your father is a modest dragon, but he was really proud of the swiftness with which he ended that conflict. After he once had a fair opportunity to use his newly sharpened claws, there was no doubt of the result!

"We ate the knight at our next meal. I was glad to welcome your father; but he said, 'Pooh! nonsense!' and made light of the whole matter."

The young dragons were delighted, and even thought of asking for another story; but their mother, for the first time, noticed that it was almost broad daylight.

"But goodness, children, I hear the horrid little birds singing!" said she. "Run away to bed with you. Wrap yourselves up tight in your moist wings, and be sure to sleep on damp rocks in a draught where you will keep good and cold."

The youngsters crawled away to rest, while Mrs. Dragon went to rouse the Honorable Samuel P.

Dragon. To her surprise she saw his great green eyes glowing with a sulphurous satisfaction.

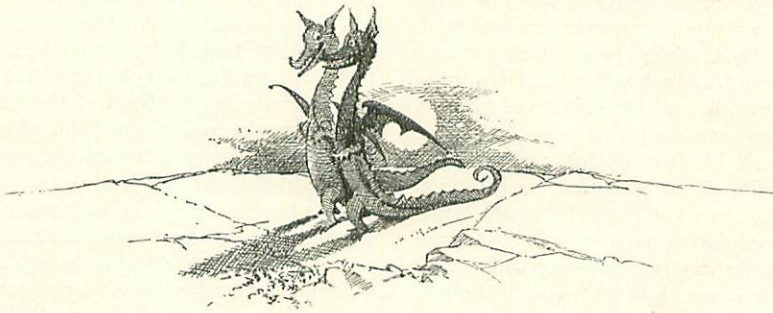
"There are no times like the old times!" said he, drowsily. "That was really a splendid hunt!"

"Yes, dear," replied his mate, with a proud and happy smile; "but I had no idea *you* were listening to my foolish stories. We must now go to rest, or you won't be up till midnight — and then there won't be a single man about. Remember, 'it is the late dragon that catches the knight.'"

The Honorable Samuel P. Dragon rubbed his claws gently together as he selected a nice cosy place for the day. He was humming to himself, and faithful Mrs. Dragon smiled fondly as she recognized the tune. It was:

"I fear no foe in shining armor!"

"Ah!" said she to herself, "the old people like man-stories as well as the little ones!"



## THE SOUTH WIND.

BY CHARLES B. GOING.

OVER the fields, where the dew was wet,  
Over a meadow with daisies set,  
Shaking the pearls in the spider's net,  
The soft south wind came stealing.  
It was full of the scent of the sweet wild rose;  
And it lingered along, where the streamlet flows,  
Till it made the forget-me-nots' eyes unclosed,  
And started the blue-bells pealing.

Under the measureless blue of the sky,  
Drifting the silvery cloudlets by,  
Drinking the dew-brimmed flower-cups dry,  
The warm south wind was blowing.  
It was sweet with the breath of a thousand springs;  
And it sang to the grasses, as ever it sings,  
With a sound like the moving of myriad wings,  
Or the whisper of wild flowers growing.

Over the fields, in the evening glow,  
Stirring the trees, as the sun sank low,  
Swaying the meadow-grass to and fro,  
A breeze from the south came creeping.  
It rocked the birds in their drowsy nest;  
It cradled the blue-eyed grass to rest;  
And its good-night kisses were softly pressed  
On pale wild roses sleeping.

And only the stars and the fireflies knew  
How the south wind murmured, the whole night  
through,  
In scented fields, where the clover grew  
And soft white mists were wreathing.  
For it stole away, when the night was spent,  
And none could follow the way it went;  
But the wild flowers knew what the wind's song  
meant,  
As they waked to its last low breathing.