OUR COLOURED ILLUSTRATIONS.

THE CHILDREN'S YEAR.

"The whole year! Every season for the children, say I!" and she who spoke was a poor old cripple, in a faded charity gown of blue printed calico, with a shawl of dull red serge, for that was the garb of twelve aged widows inhabiting the row of almshouses founded by Dame Alice Bernard, in the village of Bullockstile. "Let the children play and enjoy theirselves all times of the year," repeated this kind old soul, our friend and former household servant, dear old Margy Wilsey, who nursed our own children fifteen or twenty years ago. We, of course, agreed with good old Margy, for we had always found her in the right where matters of the heart and of common good feeling were concerned.

"I'm such a useless old woman now," she continued; "there's nothing for me to do all the year round (which I've run through seventy-four years of my own) but to look on at the dear children enjoying of theirselves, when so be it's fine weather and God Almighty's blessed sun be pleased to shine down upon them, in spring, summer, autumn, and winter, as is sure to come round in their righteous turn—Amen.

"I goes to the meadow stile—you know where it be—well-nigh so far as I can hobble there upon my crutch and stick; and there it looks all fresh and beautiful in the month of May, when all the golden-cups and the gold and silver daisies be coming up to see the sun, and keep company with the sweet green grass. And there I see that dear little Rosy, that was two years born into this world in the Christmas week before, and her mother had six of 'em in eight married years; and her two sisters, Mary and Jane, they were busy making that dear child a crown of golden flowers.

"That was a fine spell of bright sunshine weather for the hay that we got in the first week of July, when Farmer Sowton cut his ten-acre piece on the Monday; and he sent in most all the spare hands of the parish—men, wives, boys, maids, and children—to help in the spreading and tedding, and then to cart and carry. But this poor old woman, me you see here, that can't hardly stand, was bid to be there to look on, and to keep an eye on the little young ones, while their mothers and big sisters was busy in the work. And there I see that dear little Totty, and with her was Polly Madder, that had brought her father's dinner in the basket; and both rolling and tossing theirselves in the sweet new-mown grass, that cometh up and withereth as the life of man; and they was so full of their fun that Polly laughed and Totty crowed, till Jacky Madder he run up, and he buried 'em both for dead in mountains and heaps of hay, but they got up more alive than ever.

"I mind, too, once in October, I was a sitting by myself in the Nether Wood-lane, waiting for George's donkey-cart to give my poor old body a lift to the village. And there I see young Charley and Tom Soper, they had got both their caps full of things out of the hedge and the copse, acorns and hazelnuts, and hips and haws, and berries of the wild bramble that grows of its own free will. And I says to 'em, 'What's all that for?' And they says to me, 'It's collection for Mr. Parker at the school.' And I laughed right out; but then Charley he says, Mr. Parker's going to speechify to folk, with a lecture on Bottomy, and wants these to show folk how the plants keep their seeds in the fruits, and spring up and increase an hundredfold, Amen. So I was glad to think how the lads would get their learning, and hope they labour truly to earn their own living, and do their duty in that station, Amen. That's what I see the children do in last autumn season; but Mr. Parker drew some beautiful pictures of them things in the Illustrious London Almanack, and he called it 'Fruit and Leaf Pieces,' as I've heard tell.

"In the winter season, too, there was grand fine play for many of the boys and girls who didn't mind the cold, bless your heart; and with sliding and snow-balling, and all their fun, if you wasn't a very old body to be sure, it would make you warm to see. But then, being old myself, it was too cold for me to stop long out of door. Only then I could look out of window as I sat by my fire, in the snug little parlour they've granted me wherein to dwell by the gentlemen trustees' gracious bounty, Amen! And there I see Miss Addy and her little sister, that is our parson's two youngest daughters, and dear kind little young ladies; they had come out in the pelting snow to feed the blessed dickey-birds with a piece of bread off their own breakfasts, like the Children of Mercy in the picture-book. And the little one she stops and calls out 'Dog, dog!' when she sees Mr. Miller's Topsy, that was standing and hankering like for their piece of bread. So Topsy goes over to the children, wagging her tail and licking her lips; and Miss Addy says, 'Yes, we've a bit for you, Topsy!' And I see both the little girls break off their morsels for Topsy; but I think it was too dry for Topsy, for she only smelt the bread, and then licked their dear little hands, wagging her tail to say 'No, thank you,' and so went back in at Mr. Miller's street door.

"That was some of the dear children's games and pleasures, that I stop to see all through the blessed long year, so to call it, that is Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter; a long year to them who are young, but short is the year to me, though long have I been spared, and soon will it be my last on this here natural earth; but may the Lord grant we all be as little children in Heaven, Amen!"

FRUIT AND LEAF PIECES.

Three of our Colour-Printed Illustrations consist of natural-looking pictures of some familiar botanical objects, which may as well be taken together in whatever is worth saying about them. Acorns, and the bramble and other common berries, with that called the strawberry, which is properly not a berry, as they say; and the drupes or stone-fruit of a species of palm, dropped by chance amidst the foliage of the *Lamium purpureum*, or red dead nettle—these are the simple themes of our present brief remarks. But Nature has a way of putting a great deal of wonderful and beautiful contrivance into very ordinary things of life. All that belongs to the vegetable reproductive processes and their organic instruments, the flower, the fruit, and the seed of plants, is a perpetual miracle, far transcending the stupendous display of merely physical forces in the solar system and the stellar universe to our farthest ken. There are mysteries here quite beyond the reach of science.

The mighty British oak, as must have been discerned by a superficial observer, has a variety of forms in this country. But they may be resolved into the two principal kinds—wavy-leaved and flat-leaved; the former being a massive tree of wayward and irregular growth, with very tortuous branches, and with its leaves all lying in different planes. The flat-leaved oak has a more compact and symmetrical form, with branches nearly horizontal, and the leaves disposed in parallel directions. Now, one feature of botanical distinction between them is found in the sessile or stalkless position, in the flat-leaved oak, of its little yellowish tufted catkins, which must pass for flowers. The oak-nut, or acorn, in this case has to do without peduncles, but is shorter and thicker than the acorn of *Quercus robur*. This may not at first sight appear such a stupendous fact as to demand that we should wonder at it; but if we compare the acorns of the two different species, cutting them open and dissecting the embryo itself, will any microscope reveal to us the source of their essential variation? So likewise in the reproduction of the animal races, and the races, nations, and families of mankind, and even the offspring of individual human parents, it is a marvellous secret of nature by what means the special characteristics of each variety are maintained through successive generations.

Instead of these acorns, let us fancy a few clusters of hazel-nuts, thrown upon the ground along with those sprigs of bramble, loaded with such ripe and luscious blackberries, above which a belated butterfly is tempted to pause in his last lingering flight. They are more likely to be seen lying under the same hedge-row; and the schoolboy's appetite for rustic dainties will have associated these nuts and berries in many a pleasant remembrance of the plucking and eating thereof. From a botanical point of view, however, the acorn and the hazel-nut may equally be regarded as examples of one form or mode of structure for the protection of seed—namely, that by which it is encased in a hard outer shell. The fruit, or seed-covering and seed-nourishing egg, so to speak, of a vegetable, which belongs to the different rosaceous plants, shows many varieties of structure—as in the hips and haws of roses and briars, the cherry, the apple, the plum, the strawberry, the raspberry, and others of the same order, to which we are indebted for so much that delights the palate and every sense. In the arrangement of the embryonic parts, with relation to the store of albuminous substance by which their life and growth must be sustained, there is scope for great apparent differences of method; but the principle is alike in every kind of fruit. . It is the case and the food of the seeds that we most readily distinguish. Sometimes, as in the pod of a pea or bean, the seed-vessel is made to open by its own valve-action, so as to drop the bare seeds from their placental attachment to the sides of its womb. In other cases, as in all proper berries, such as the currant, the grape, and the gooseberry, a mass of pulp or sweet liquor, in a globe of soft membranes, surrounds the seeds of the plant, just as the yolk of an egg floats in its closed cup of nutritious liquid. Neither of these forms occurs in that great family of plants to which the bramble is referred. The blackberry, the raspberry, and the strawberry are not true berries, any more than the peach or the pear. Here, indeed, in the stone-fruit of the one and in the pome of the other last mentioned, we find two distinct modes of accommodating the seed, which is their kernel, imbedded centrally within the solid flesh. The kernel of a peach-stone has the same germinating function as the pips of an apple; but it is not exactly equivalent to the kernel of a nut, for that contains not only the seed, but also the feeding substance provided to maintain the embryonic growth. The stony case must decay—for it refuses to open—before ever the seed of a peach-tree or a cherry is allowed to strike into the earth and to raise its plumules into the air, exerting itself for its own livelihood. How unlike the position of leguminous seeds or the grains of an ear of corn, which are scattered with a shake or burst, and thrown loose upon the world to take care of themselves! The fleshy pulp or juice of succulent fruits, when left to rot upon the ground, mingles with the soil in which their seed has to grow; and the future plant is thus richly nourished with the best possible manure.

The bramble, with its fruit and flower, so common in our English rural scenery, is a plant that we should ill exchange for the exotic wonders of a tropical clime, represented in the hot-houses at Kew. Indeed, by its extensive family connection, including some of the

choicest beauties and treasures of our native flora, this homely creeper deserves no small regard. As for its fruit, when gathered perfectly ripe, if it be combined with slices of apple in a tart, the result is highly agreeable. There is but one thing better—the mixture of raspberries and red currants, in tart or pie, which affords to the healthy palate of childhood a rapture of surpassing joy. It would indeed be ungrateful to refrain from mentioning these particular gifts and graces of the honest British bramble and unsophisticated blackberry, to which, as Dick Swiveller would say, "the minions of fashionable luxury are strangers." No such plea is needed for giving a place of honour to the strawberry, which is everybody's favourite eating in summer—how soon it is gone from among us!—and the leaf of which has been chosen by heraldic invention for the symbolic ornament of a lofty rank in the aristocracy of this realm. It has also a pretty blossom, which nobody will, indeed, be so foolish as to gather, in preference to waiting for the promised fruit. Once more reverting to the points of botanical analogy, it is worthy of remark that the seeds of the strawberry are placed on the outside of the succulent receptacle which supports them, the enlarged growing point of the flower. This is a different constitution from any of those before noticed.

The nettle tribe are by no means so popular, and children often pursue this weed with vengeful execrations, for the stings it has inflicted upon their tender skins; but it is a herb of some beneficent properties. The medicinal virtues of its juice and seeds in the case of disagreeable swellings and tumours have been attested by physicians of repute; and many an old woman has a word of praise for nettle-tea, or nettle-broth. The stalk-fibres make good cord—indeed, hemp is a kind of nettle. The poison which stings in the nasty nettle is contained in tiny bags at the roots of the hairs, or bristles, which grow upon every leaf. This is the *Urtica*, or true nettle; but the plant shown in our Coloured Illustration is a *Lamium*, one of several different species of a stingless plant, which has foliage similar in appearance to that of the stinging nettle. They are called dead nettles, because they do not sting. The red dead nettle has flowers of a reddish purple hue, and its leaves are dull green, but slightly tinged with purple. There is a nettle-tree in Australia which grows 150 ft. high, and your hand is paralysed if you only pluck a leaf. Yet the same botanical family includes such agreeable plants as the fig, the mulberry, and the breadfruit-tree. Some of the most beautiful of our summer butterflies are constant visitors to the nettle, which supplies their chief food.

OLD MODES OF LOCOMOTION.

ANCIENT BRITONS IN THEIR CORACLES.

From the accounts given us by the Romans we learn that the Britons excelled in basketwork. They constructed canoes of osier, covered with skins of animals, and in these they paddled about the rivers, creeks, and fens of their country. Such vessels are still used by Welsh fishermen. The *cwrwgyl* is probably identical with the portable boats used by the Piets and Scots in crossing the rivers to invade England.

COACH OF THE TIME OF ELIZABETH.

During the whole of the early times of English history, through the Middle Ages till the end of the reign of the Tudors, and even to the beginning of the eighteenth century, riding on horseback was the only mode of land travelling generally available for long distances. Chaucer describes the Canterbury Pilgrims, of both sexes, as performing the journey in the saddle. Stow tells us in his "Chronicle" that coaches were first introduced into England in 1564. They were merely covered waggons, laid upon the axles without springs, and, even at a funeral pace, must have jolted most abominably. The Elizabethan coach could only with great difficulty traverse the streets of London, considering that these were described in a Paving Act of the period as "very foul and full of pits and sloughs, very perilous and noyous." Whenever these clumsy machines ventured into the open country, except in the driest weather, they almost invariably came to grief.

RIDING ON A PILLION.

Whilst stage-coach conveyance was only available along a very limited number of roads, and during that still earlier period when such roads as really existed were impassable for wheeled carriages, women were accustomed to ride behind one of the ruder sex on what was called a pillion (from pillow). This is defined by Johnson as a soft saddle set behind a horseman for a woman to sit on. Even Queens, on long journeys, preferred a seat on a pillion behind one of their officers to any other mode of conveyance. When Katharine of Spain came over, in 1501, to marry Arthur, son of Henry VII., she rode on a horse from the Tower to St. Paul's "with the pillion behind a lord named by the King." A similar method of riding is not obsolete even in the present day in remote country districts, if we may trust to certain representations of weddings in North Wales, where the bride and bridegroom are depicted as galloping furiously from a church, the former keeping her seat in a manner that we should conceive impossible to any but a professional circus-rider.

THE SEDAN-CHAIR.

Sedan-chairs were first seen in England when Charles, son of James I., on his return from Spain, brought with him three specimens of a peculiar character, somewhat resembling the Indian palankeen in the manner in which they were carried. The favourite, Buckingham, being in the habit of travelling about London in one of these, was abused by the populace for turning men into "slaves and beasts of burden." In spite, however, of popular clamour and the furious opposition of coach-drivers, this new and handy method of travelling steadily grew into favour. The frontispiece of a tract published in 1636, and entitled "Coach and Sedan Pleasantly Disputing for Place and Precedence," represents the form of the sedan and its bearers touting for custom. The mode of carrying was the same as that adopted in the later sedans. In the eighteenth century we find that the sedan, though considerably altered in form from the original type, had become a universal mode of conveyance for the higher and middle classes of society. The state of the pavement in the metropolis and the chief cities of Great Britain caused the sedan to be preferred, both for comfort and safety, to every description of coach. As there were no footpaths, and only a line of posts in the principal streets to protect pedestrians, none would even walk any distance who could afford to hire a sedan. The London chairmen were a numerous and influential body. Those who were in the service of the aristocracy had their gorgeous liveries, epaulettes, and cocked-hats. The hackney chairmen pervaded the neighbourhood of tavern doors, where they waited to be hired. They were chiefly Irishmen, and were distinguished by their muscular development, especially in the calves of their legs. That they were popularly believed to be somewhat given to insolence may be gathered from an incident in one of Smollett's novels, where, in retaliation for the hero having been insulted by two chairmen, the man who acts as his servant and trusty henchman conceals a number of heavy weights about his person, and hires the delinquents to carry him a certain distance. Staggering under the unusual load, each chairman suspects his comrade of not taking his fair share of the burden, and begins to abuse him accordingly. The strife waxing hotter, the two belligerents ultimately set down both box and passenger, in order to settle the dispute with their fists; whilst the real author of the quarrel quietly slips away, having deposited his weights in the chair for the subsequent enlightenment and consolation of the mutually-battered disputants.

THE OLD STAGE-COACH.

The stage-coach of the eighteenth century had very little in common with the mail-coach of the nineteenth. In Hogarth's Country Inn Yard we have a representation of these vehicles, which explains the fact that no one with the smallest power of bestriding a horse would ever have thought of making use of them. From the "Tales of an Antiquary," published in 1828, we obtain a description of the stage-coach of Hogarth's time." The roofs of the coaches, in most cases, rose into a swelling curve, which was sometimes surrounded by a high iron guard. The coachman and the guard, who always held his carbine ready cocked upon his knee, then sat together; not, as at present, upon a close, compact, varnished seat, but over a very long and narrow boot, which passed under a large spreading hammer-cloth. Behind the coach was the immense basket, stretching far and wide beyond the body, to which it was attached by long iron bars or supports passing beneath it. The wheels of these old carriages were large, massive, ill-formed, and usually of a red colour; and the three horses which were affixed to the whole machine—the foremost of which was helped onward by carrying a huge, long-legged elf of a postillion, dressed in a cocked-hat, with a large green and gold riding-coat—were all so far parted from it by the great length of their traces that it was with no little difficulty that the poor animals dragged their unwieldy burden along the road. It groaned and creaked at every fresh tug which they gave it, as a ship rocking or beating up through a heavy sea strains all her timbers, with a low moaning sound, as she drives over the contending waves." To this very cheerful picture of the delights of the road at this epoch we may add that the unfortunate passengers might expect the monotony of their journey to be broken at any moment by the appearance upon the scene of the regulation highwayman of the period, the supposed valour of the guard, with his formidable-looking blunderbuss, turning out to be a snare and a delusion, and vanishing at once before the threatening pistol of the Claude Duval or Dick Turpin of the hour, when a compulsory handing out of purses would immediately ensue.

THE PACK-HORSE TRAIN.

In McCulloch's account of the British Empire we read that "It was not till after the Peace of Paris, in 1763, that turnpike roads began to be extended to all parts of the kingdom." It is not surprising, therefore, that the old method of transporting goods on the backs of horses should have been practised up to a comparatively recent period. Passengers also frequently availed themselves of this primitive mode of travelling. Smollett's Roderick Random is described as riding from Scotland to Newcastle-on-Tyne, sitting upon a pack-saddle between two baskets, one of which contained his goods in a knapsack. The pack-horses travelled in gangs of thirty or forty, walking in a single file. The leading and most experienced horse carried a number of bells as a guide for those

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