

FOUR LITTLE FOXES.

A TALE FOUNDED ON FACT.

THE pet of our sailors at the north pole,
There lived a big cat as black as a coal;
And every day, in a lordly dish,
They served him a meal of meat or of fish;
And every day, with appetite keen,
He gobbled it up, and licked the plate clean.

Well, the sailors one day, going out for a stroll,
Found four little creatures alive in a hole.
When they got them on board they saw they were
foxes,
And they gave them their quarters in baskets and
boxes.
And day after day, with looks of appeal,

They watched the black cat intent on his meal;
And much they desired his victuals to share,
But Tom, with rude gestures, bid them beware.
So the four little foxes determined to meet,
And somehow secure the much coveted treat.

Next day the four foxes met without fail;
Three mustered in front, one made for Tom's tail,
And gave it a tug; then the little back-biter
Took to his heels, and, being younger and lighter,
Contrived to escape. But while Tom was pursuing
The three little foxes were up and were doing;
They seized on the plate, and snatched it away,
And Tom lost his meal—at least, for that day.

THE AMUSEMENTS OF HINDOO CHILDREN.



THE long hot day has come to an end. In an Indian bungalow the doors are opened, and the bearer proceeds to spread a carpet, and place chairs upon the *chabutra*, an erection of bricks and mortar, about three feet high, built out in the centre of the compound, so that the inhabitants of the bungalow may sit and "eat the air," according to the common Indian phrase, without any anxious thoughts about snakes. The mem-sahib (as the lady of the house is called) and the children are not going for their usual drive; the monsoon is coming rapidly up country, and the heavy clouds which are rolling up from the eastward to-night render it prudent to remain at home. There are many groans from the children, for their evening drive is what they look forward to during the whole of the long hot day, and ayahs and bearers are not in the very best of humours, when suddenly a monotonous but welcome sound is heard at the gateway. Ecstatic shouts of "Bunderwallah, bunderwallah, hai!" ("Here is the monkey-man!") come from children and ayahs alike, and the mem-sahib, though weary enough of the oft-repeated performance, has not the heart to send him away; and presently the bunderwallah, with his two monkeys and his curious little drum, appears. A space is cleared for them, and after the monkey-man has made a profound salaam to the lady and the children the performance begins.

Small dark faces have been peeping round the corner of the bungalow meanwhile, and whenever proceedings have fairly commenced a crowd of small children appear as if by magic, drawn by the music, irresistible to them, of the monkey-drum. Behind them, at a little distance, scorning to appear among the baba-log (children), and yet unwilling to miss any of the fun, are three boys, of eleven or twelve, belonging respectively to the bearer, the bhistic (water-carrier), and one of the syces (grooms). The bearer's boy is at a mission-school; he hopes to be a chuprassi (messenger), and is devoting more time to his education than is usual in order to learn to read and write English well, and so obtain high wages. The bhistic's boy has no such ambition; he will follow his father's calling, and, as it is, helps him considerably. The syce's boy, the eldest of a large family, is working for himself already; he is said to be a very sharp boy, and gets three rupees (6s.) a month for driving bullocks, &c.

The bunderwallah has meanwhile arrayed the two monkeys in some quaint jackets and hats, which give them a very grotesque appearance, and then he begins to chant in a peculiar tone, beating his drum all the time, "Naicho bunder, naicho bunder!" ("Dance, monkeys, dance!") He goes on always in the same tone, and keeping time with his drum. "You are a good monkey! You are a bad monkey! Make a salaam to the mem-sahib! Why are you angry? Dance, monkeys, dance! Now you are a messenger, dance, dance! Now you are a soldier, dance, dance," &c. &c. All this

world, and sweetmeats—"metai," as they call them—are dear to the hearts of Hindoo children; strange sticky compounds, though they are, of sugar, ghee (clarified butter), and almonds.

A number of curious and pretty sweetmeats are made specially for the Dassèrah, of all shapes and forms, such as elephants, tigers, lamys, fruits, &c.

After this festival is over, the girls do not play with dolls for about three months. During the cold season, which now comes on, they have some lively games. "Lapac dandà" and "giri dandà" are played with sticks and balls; and in the bright sunny winter afternoons groups of children may be seen on the maidan, or any open space near the native city, playing at these or at "Kubaddi," which is very unlike prisoner's base, and "gèri," which is very much the same as the game English boys call "cat."

During the great Mohammedan festival of the Mohurrum the boys have a game called "pata," which consists of fencing and mock combats with wooden swords. On the great day of the Mohurrum, when the air is throbbing with the noise of drums, and dense crowds of people are hurrying to and fro, the children are in the greatest state of delight and excitement, rushing about and watching the processions from the various Mohammedan quarters.

In spring the Hindoo Holi festival takes place, and for about a week all is confusion in the streets of the native cities; a crimson powder is thrown about, staining the clothes of every one who is unfortunate enough to come near it, and the Lord of Misrule holds sway everywhere.

As the hot weather comes on, and the evenings lengthen, kites become all the rage. All over the maidan or open plain groups of children and big boys are lolling about, and half-a-dozen kites are floating softly in the still warm air, rising gently and almost imperceptibly till they are mere specks in the sky. Suddenly some change occurs in the upper air currents; the kites begin to descend rapidly, the strings are wound up, and all is hurry-scurry among the youngsters. Soon there is a shock of dismay, for one of the kites has stuck in a tree in the Colonel Sahib's garden, and great would be his indignation if any of the motley crew were to venture into his grounds. There is nothing for it but to wait patiently till the friendly darkness descends, and then they will creep through a hole in the dodonia hedge and release their treasure. All are not so fortunate, however; and lost kites are "treasure trove."

Somewhere about this time of the year the boys play with marbles, and the girls with what in Scotland are called "chuckie-stones."

When the intense burning heat of May and June has given place to the clouded skies and more moderate temperature of the rainy season, *swings* may be seen on every convenient tree, and loud are the shouts of merriment as one after another take their turn. For some reason unknown, swinging is considered to be an amusement more especially for girls; but the boys seem to be equally fond of it. During the rainy season, also, the boys play with a species of top, and a curious little wooden plaything, called a "chakai." It is a little wheel, or rather two wheels joined together; a piece of fine twine is tied round the centre, and the chakai is thrown out the full length of the string, and pulled in again so dexterously that the string twines tightly round the centre part between the wheels.

The little ones are, like children in this country, very fond of imitating the pursuits of their elders. Sometimes they pretend to be shepherds leading their flocks of sheep and goats; sometimes they represent a string of Cabul merchants, with their camels loaded with dried fruits; and again they are pilgrims to some far-off shrine, with their *lotas* (brass vessels) of Ganges water upon their shoulders. Then, too, beneath some large tree in the compound, or under the palm-trees by the well, may be seen a house, with a miniature fireplace of mud and wonderful arrangements of broken crockery.

Hindoo children have not so many nursery rhymes as English children, but they have many songs in praise of their false gods, and they have also songs for the different seasons. One very sweet and plaintive air sung by the women and children during the rainy season has been set to Christian words, and is sung as a hymn by the native Christians.

Every one who has ever been in India knows the little song of "Tali Bajao," which the ayahs sing alike to their own little ones and to their pale-faced nurslings,

"Clap your hands, clap your hands,
Cook the bread for father.
Clap your hands, clap your hands."

And so it goes on for half-a-dozen verses, and is sung to a very brisk lively air.

Another nursery rhyme, not so well known, is the one commencing

"Age, age, judge collector,
Pichi hai captan."
["First come the judge, and collector,
Afterwards the captain."]

The air of this is very pretty, and sung in the soft monotonous tones of the native women, has a wonderfully soothing effect upon a restless child.

When the day's work is over for the older people, and the day's play for the children, young and old

sit upon the ground, round the blazing fire of sticks and leaves, watching the preparation of the evening meal, and talking or telling stories, of which, in conclusion, the following is a specimen.

Once upon a time there lived a certain bourria ma (old woman); she had left her only son at home with her relatives many years before, when she went to service. He was a little boy when she left him, but now he was a middle-aged man, and was jemadar, or head servant, to a rajah. She had long wished to go and see him, and give him her blessing before she died, and at last her master and mistress consented, on condition that she would promise to come back again in six months. Now the great Beabàn jungle lay between the place in which she resided and the rajah's territory where her son was, and many of the neighbours said to her, "do not go away alone through the great jungle, for never will you return alive;" but the old woman

had set her heart upon it, and nothing would turn her aside.

So she set off, and journeyed along for some time unmolested, till at last she met a fox.

"Where are you going?" he said.

"I am going to see my son," she replied. "He is jemadar to a great rajah, and I have not seen him since he was a little boy."

"You will never see him again," said the fox, "for I am going to make a meal of you."

"You would be very foolish," said the cunning old woman, "for, as you see, I am very thin—nothing but bones, in fact—but while I stay with my son I will get plenty of ghee (clarified butter) and rice, and perhaps sweetmeats, and I shall be

very fat when I come back again; and I must come back, for I promised my sahib (master) to be back in six months' time." So she got away from the fox, but soon after she met a jackal, and the same thing happened; and then she met a wolf, and he eyed her so hungrily that she trembled and thought he would certainly devour her, bones and all, but when he heard of the ghee, he licked his lips and let her go. After going some distance she met a tiger, and he growled and looked so fierce that she began to wish she had never set out

on her journey, but he, too, allowed her to escape; and now she was quite near the edge of the jungle, and thought all danger was over, when a tremendous roar seemed to shake the very ground she stood on, and a huge lion bounded out from the long grass where he had been hidden. The poor old woman was so prostrated with terror that she sank down upon the ground, but she knew



THE GAME OF "PATA." (See p. 268).

her story so well by this time that she stammered through it almost unconsciously.

"Very well," said the lion, "you are just a heap of bones, but at the end of six months I will be here watching for you."

After all these adventures the old woman was very happy when she arrived at her son's house, and she found him even better off than she expected. He received her with the greatest kindness, gave her ghee, and rice, and kid's flesh, and as many sweetmeats as she could eat. Then he gave her two new suits of clothes, and a silver necklace, and four silver bracelets. Never was there a happier old woman than she, and she got so fat nobody could have supposed her to be the same

person. But, alas! the six months passed quickly away, and one day her son found her in tears and asked her the reason. "Ah!" she replied, "death awaits me in the jungle;" and she told her son all her story. Now at the rajah's court there lived a very wise pundit; so the son took a present in his hand, and asked him what was to be done. The pundit gave him a large mutka (earthenware pitcher), which he said possessed the gift of going along of itself, and told him to put his mother inside and close it up, and tell her to sing all the time. The son went home quite happy, he packed his mother into the mutka (though it was a very tight fit), and gave her a little jar of ghee and some sweetmeats to eat on the way, and then he closed the lid, and the bourria began to sing, and off rolled the mutka. Very soon after entering the jungle she heard a roar, which made her tremble like the leaves on the trees when a "tofan" (dust storm) is rolling up, and presently the lion said, "Where are you going, oh Mutka? and have you seen a bourria ma coming this way?"

Now the bourria began to sing very quickly:

"Whence comes the bourria? and whence come you?
Go on, Mr. Mutka, to Timbuctoo."

And away rolled the mutka so quickly that the lion was soon left far behind, and returned to his

occupation of watching for the bourria who was to come back so very fat.

The mutka journeyed on rapidly, and passed in turn the tiger, the wolf, and the jackal. Each of these asked where the bourria was, and each got the same answer—

"Whence comes the bourria? and whence come you?
Go on, Mr. Mutka, to Timbuctoo."

Last of all came the fox, and he asked the same question and received the same reply as the others. Now the fox is the most cunning of all animals, and he thought it was an odd thing that this big round mutka should be going away to Timbuctoo, and he had regretful thoughts of the bourria who was to be so fat, and somehow he thought the two had something to do with each other, so he ran up behind the mutka and gave it a great push, and over it went, breaking into a dozen pieces as it upset, and out rolled the bourria. She had the jar of ghee in her hand, and, cunning bourria that she was, she threw a handful of ghee right into the fox's eyes just as he was going to spring upon her, which blinded him so effectually that she got time to escape.

So she cheated all the wild beasts in the great Beabàn jungle, and got home at the very time she promised to come.

CLEVER FRANK.

A TRUE STORY FOR BOYS.

By the Author of "Brave Little Heart," "Little Hinges, &c."



SAY, Frank, aren't you coming home now? we shall be dreadfully late for dinner."

"In a minute, Geoff. One more round; here goes."

"Papa and mamma are going to have dinner early to-day. They'll be angry if we're late."

"Never mind about that. I can always get myself out of scrapes."

"I know that," replied Geoff, impatiently handling his skates;

"but I'm not so clever as you, Frank, so come along."

"I must go," cried Geoff, after waiting five minutes longer, and he turned resolutely away from the pond. In a few minutes Frank caught him up, and they ran along together.

"Dinner is served," said Mary, the housemaid, as she opened the door.

Geoff flung off his coat and ran up-stairs to wash his hands. Frank burst excitedly into the dining-room. "Papa," he cried, not heeding his father's frowning face, "I have found out where Nep has hidden her puppies. As I came home from school, what should I see but Madam Nep trotting across the fields by Ashleigh Farm. I followed her, and what do you think? There, in Farmer Ashleigh's stables, in an old hamper, she has two such pretty little pups; but it was a long time before I found her out, for the sly old thing, when she saw me, kept on trotting off in every direction but the right, and I had to hide and keep out of sight. She thinks you shan't drown either of them this time."

Frank's father laughed. He was evidently pleased at the discovery. "So that's how you came to be so late," he said. "But you shouldn't come to dinner in that rumpled condition."

"I thought I should be keeping you waiting," Frank replied, apologetically. His father seemed pleased at his thoughtfulness.