

SEED-BABIES

SEED-BABIES

BY

MARGARET M. MORLEY

YESTERDAY'S CLASSICS

CHAPEL HILL, NORTH CAROLINA

Cover and arrangement © 2009 Yesterday's Classics, LLC.

This edition, first published in 2009 by Yesterday's Classics, an imprint of Yesterday's Classics, LLC, is an unabridged republication of the text originally published by Ginn & Company in 1896. For the complete listing of the books that are published by Yesterday's Classics, please visit www.yesterdaysclassics.com. Yesterday's Classics is the publishing arm of the Baldwin Online Children's Literature Project which presents the complete text of hundreds of classic books for children at www.mainlesson.com.

ISBN-10: 1-59915-316-5

ISBN-13: 978-1-59915-316-2

Yesterday's Classics, LLC
PO Box 3418
Chapel Hill, NC 27515

It will add very much to their interest in seeds if the children have peas, beans, nuts, etc., to look at as they read about them.

CONTENTS

BEANS.....	1
SWEET PEAS.....	15
PEANUTS	19
MELONS AND THEIR COUSINS	22
NUTS	28
MORE ABOUT NUTS	33
CRADLES	37
APPLE SEEDS.....	44
SWEET KITTIE CLOVER	49
A NEW KIND OF SEED	53
BUMBLE-BEES	57
FROGS.....	62
OTHER EGGS.....	67
BIRDS' EGGS.....	71

BEANS

I

“WELL, I never!”

Jack said that because all the beans he had planted were on top of the ground.

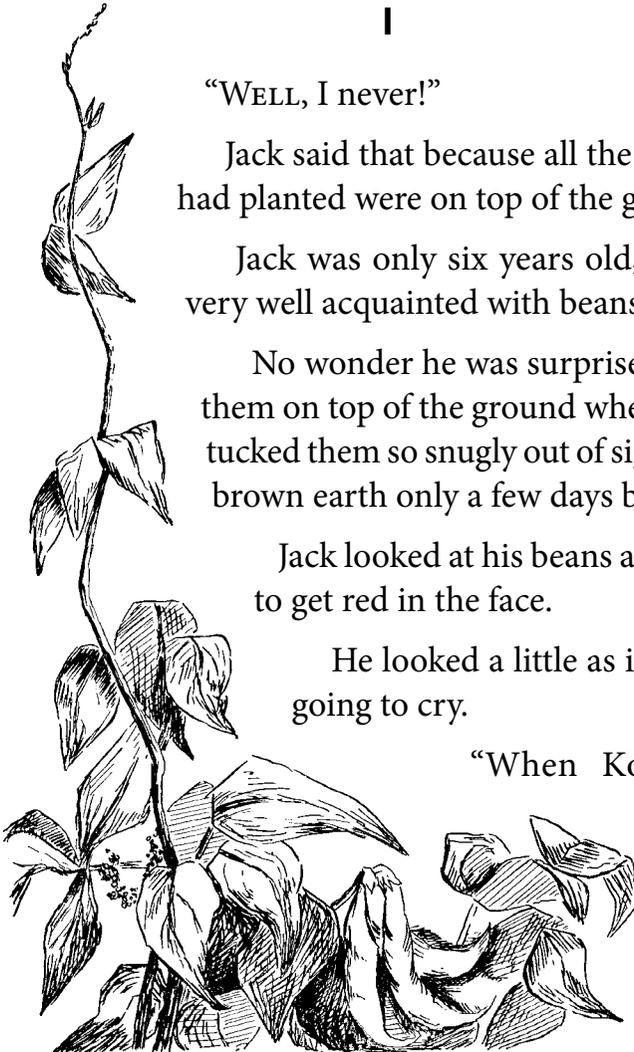
Jack was only six years old, and not very well acquainted with beans.

No wonder he was surprised to find them on top of the ground when he had tucked them so snugly out of sight in the brown earth only a few days before.

Jack looked at his beans and began to get red in the face.

He looked a little as if he were going to cry.

“When Ko comes I’ll just punch him!” he said at last.

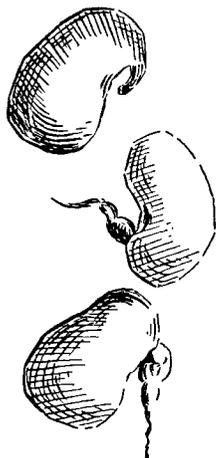


SEED-BABIES

For who could have uncovered his beans but his brother Ko?

For Ko would rather tease than eat his dinner,—except when there was chocolate pudding for dessert.

Ko's real name was Nicholas, but it took too long to say that, so Jack called him Ko for short.



Jack picked up a bean to replant it, and what do you think had happened? Something had, for it did not look as it did when he first put it in the ground.

It had turned green to begin with. Jack had planted white beans.

He knew they were white all through, for he had bitten a good many in two to see how they looked inside. And now the coat on the outside, that stuck so tightly at first, had peeled half off, and the bean was green!

Something more had happened,—a little white stem had come out of the bean and gone into the ground.

Jack was so surprised at all this that he forgot he was angry at Ko, and when his brother came up only told him to look.

Ko tried to pick up a bean too, but it was fastened quite firmly in the ground.

“They’re growing,” said Ko.

“Did you pull them up?” asked Jack.

BEANS

“No, indeed!” said Ko.

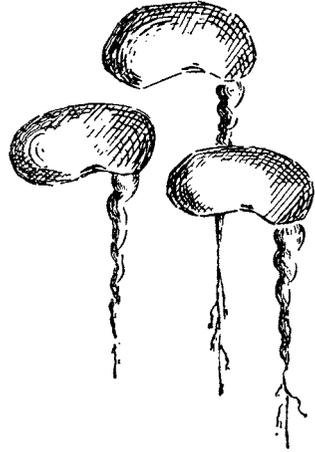
“They must have pulled themselves up,” said Jack.

“Yes,” said Ko, “that’s it. They grew so fast they pulled themselves right up.”

Then Jack sprinkled earth over them until he could not see them, and went away.

In two or three days they were all on top of the ground again!

“Well, well, well!” said Jack, “they don’t know anything—to keep unplanting themselves that way!”



But now he could not pick up any of the beans without tearing loose the stout little stem with roots at the end, that had gone down into the ground.

“You bean,” he said, tapping one on its green head,—for they had grown very green now,—“you bean, I shall plant you deep enough this time; you will die and not grow at all if you don’t stay still in the ground.”

At this the bean smiled.

A bean cannot smile, you say? Oh well, that is what nearly everybody would say, but I can tell you, a great many people do not know about beans, and I am sure that bean smiled.

“If I did stay still in the ground, how could I grow?” asked the bean.

SEED-BABIES

You think beans cannot talk?

Well, as I said before, a *great many* people do not know about beans; and whether they can talk or not, this bean asked Jack how it could grow if it stayed still in the ground. And what is more, Jack was “stumped,” as the boys say, by the question, and could not answer.



Of course nothing that stayed perfectly still could grow.

“But why don’t you send up a little stem and let the bean that I planted stay planted?” asked Jack.

“I will tell you,” said the bean; and if by this time you do not believe beans can talk, you may as well not read another word of this story.

Talking beans are just as true as “Cinderella,” or “Hop-o-my-thumb,” or “Little Red Riding-Hood,” or “Jack the Giant Killer,” and those people.

Of course everybody knows how true *they* are.

So Jack’s bean said, “I will tell you,” and then asked, “Are your hands clean?”

“They’re fair to middling,” said Jack, looking at his hands, and for the first time in his life wishing he had washed them.

“Oh well,” said the bean, “if they are not sticky it won’t matter. I am going to let you look at me, but I don’t want you to pull me apart, either on purpose or by accident.”

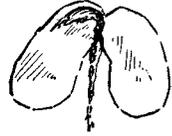
BEANS

“I won’t,” said Jack.

“Well, then, *very* gently open this green part that you planted when it was white, and that won’t stay under the ground, and look.”

Jack did so.

He found the green part was split in two halves, and right between the halves, fastened at the end where the root went down, were stowed away two pretty green leaves.



“My!” said Jack.

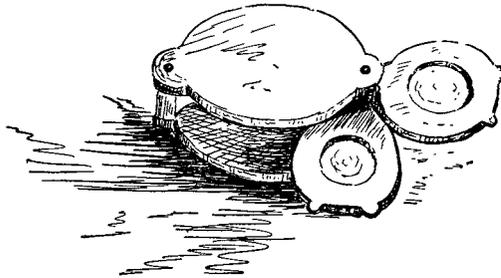
“Well, I guess so!” said the bean, rather proudly. “You see I have these little leaves packed away even when I am white.

“But then they are also white and very, very small.

“You very likely would not even see them, at least not with your own eyes.

“You would see something if you knew where to look, but you would not see two leaves without the help of a magnifying glass.

“But I know they are there all the time.”



II

“Tell me more,” said Jack. He thought it the jolliest thing in the world, as it certainly was, to have the beans talk to him.



The bean was as pleased as he was, for it liked to talk, and it could not always find so good a listener.

So it said, “I keep my two white little leaves very closely packed away between my two big hard white cotyledons.”

“Your two big hard white what?” asked Jack.

“Cotyledons.”

“My!” said Jack.

“Yes, cotyledons. You probably did not know there were two; you thought it was just one mass of white stuff. Probably you did not know my cotyledons had a coat, either.”

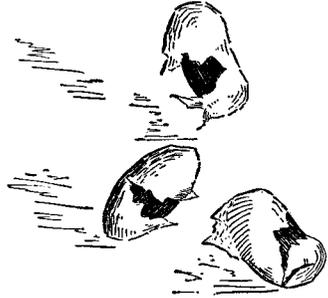
“Yes,” said Jack, “I knew that. It tears open when you grow. And I knew you split in two, only I didn’t know you called yourself cotyledons.”

“We don’t,” said the bean, with a funny little laugh, “but it is no matter what we call ourselves,—grown-up men call our seed-leaves cotyledons.”

BEANS

“I would rather know what *you* call them,” said Jack.

“Oh, I can’t tell you that; nobody can. But why don’t you ask me what I mean by my seed-leaves?”



“I think you mean the two halves that come apart with the two little leaves between them,” said Jack.

“Yes, so I do; but there are more than two leaves between; there is a little end that grows down and makes the root.”

“Yes,” said Jack, “I know.”

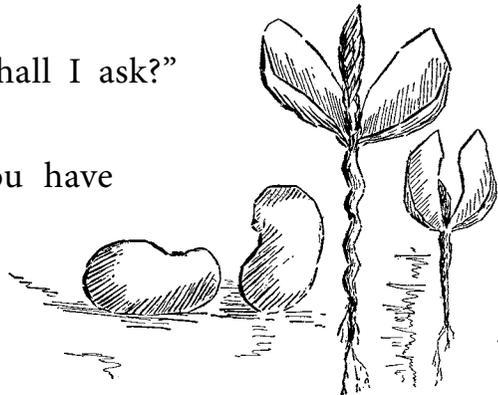
“Hush!” said the bean, “you don’t know anything about it. You must n’t tell me you know. You must just keep on asking me about myself.”

“You are cross,” said Jack.

“I am not,” said the bean, “I am only right.”

“Well, what shall I ask?” demanded Jack.

“Stupid! if you have nothing to ask, I have nothing to tell you, so good-bye.”



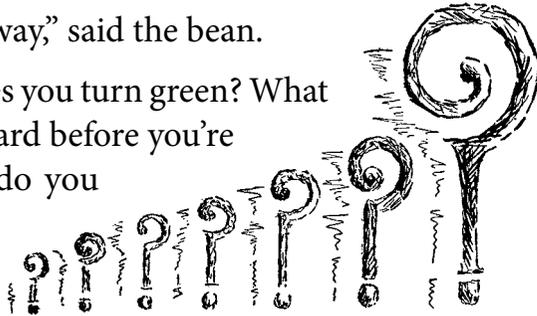
“Oh, don’t,”

SEED-BABIES

begged Jack. "I will ask and ask and ask, only don't stop telling."

"Well, ask away," said the bean.

"What makes you turn green? What makes you so hard before you're planted? How do you know when it's time to wake up? Where do—"



"Just hear the boy!" interrupted the bean, "asking a dozen questions and not waiting for an answer to any of them! Why don't you stop to take breath?"

"Why," said Jack, "now you can answer a long time."

"There's something in that," returned the bean, "and I will tell you about turning green. You turn green—"



"I don't," said Jack.



"Don't interrupt. I turn green because I cannot digest my food unless I do, and how am I to live without food? Even you could not live if you could not digest your food."

"I'm glad I don't turn green when I digest my food," said Jack; then asked, "What do you eat?"

"There you go again, another question and the

BEANS

first set not answered yet. I get my food from the air and the earth. I am fond of gas, and when I turn green I can digest it. You know the air is nothing but gas. Well, I can eat air.”

“I’m glad I don’t have to,” said Jack, thinking of chocolate pudding.

“Oh, of course, you prefer much coarser things, but don’t interrupt. I am fond of air, and the little leaves that I have stowed away need much food, so I just grow up to the top of the ground where there is to be found air and sunlight, and then I let my two little leaves draw all the good out of my cotyledons.

“They have air, too, and water, and the root sends them food, but they eat all the good out of my cotyledons as well, and that is why they grow so fast.



SEED-BABIES

“Look there! see that bean plant over there!

“The cotyledons are all withered and look like dried leaves; that is what they are, just dried leaves.

“That is the way mine will look some day.



“But I don’t care, for more leaves will grow above the first two, and I shall have plenty of stem and many leaves; and after a while beautiful flowers will come, and then lots of new seeds will grow from my flowers. You see how it is, don’t you? I am just the bean baby.”

“You are a great talker for a baby,” said Jack.

“Oh, yes,” you can’t understand that, of course, but as I said before, some people do not know about beans.”

“You say that pretty often,” said Jack.

But the bean only laughed and replied, “Well, it’s true, whether you like it or not.”



III

“CAN you tell me about peas?” Jack asked the bean next day. “I planted some and they stayed in the ground.”

“Perhaps I can,” the bean replied, “but they are different from us, and I have told you enough.”

“Well, I suppose after what you have told me, I can find out something about peas for myself,” said Jack.

“Of course you can,” replied the bean. “Some people never know anything, because they cannot find out without being told.”

“Good-by,” said Jack politely, “I am very much obliged to you”; but the bean was not so polite as Jack, for it did not answer at all.

Perhaps, however, that is the polite way among beans.

Jack was still thinking about beans when he went into the house and saw a pan of dried Lima beans soaking for dinner.

He took one up and slipped it out of its white jacket, and it fell apart in his hand, so that he saw quite plainly the little plant packed away at one end.

“It must like water better than I do—to swell itself



SEED-BABIES

that full,” said he to himself, for the soaked beans were about twice as large as the dried ones.

“Couldn’t grow a bit without it,” said Jack’s bean in a cross voice, popping from between his fingers back into the pan of water, “we have begun to grow, we have.”

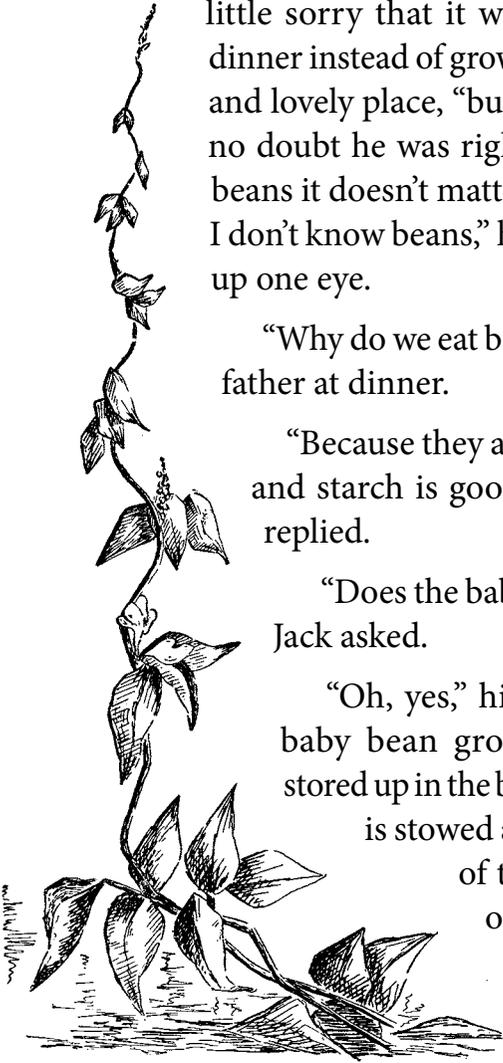
In spite of its crossness Jack felt a little sorry that it was to be eaten for dinner instead of growing in some damp and lovely place, “but,” he thought, and no doubt he was right, “maybe among beans it doesn’t matter if they are eaten. I don’t know beans,” he added, screwing up one eye.

“Why do we eat beans?” he asked his father at dinner.

“Because they are nearly all starch, and starch is good food,” his father replied.

“Does the baby bean eat starch?” Jack asked.

“Oh, yes,” his father said, “the baby bean grows on the starch stored up in the bean. The little plant is stowed away in one corner of the bean, and lives on the starch of the cotyledons when it first begins to grow.”



BEANS

“Yes, I know,” said Jack, “but don’t you think it is rather hard on the bean for us to eat it?”

“No,” his father replied, “there would not be room for all the beans to grow. Some would have to die anyway; and if the bean could understand, I am sure it would be very glad to give us food.”

“Perhaps it *does* understand,” said Jack thoughtfully. “Beans are great thinkers.”

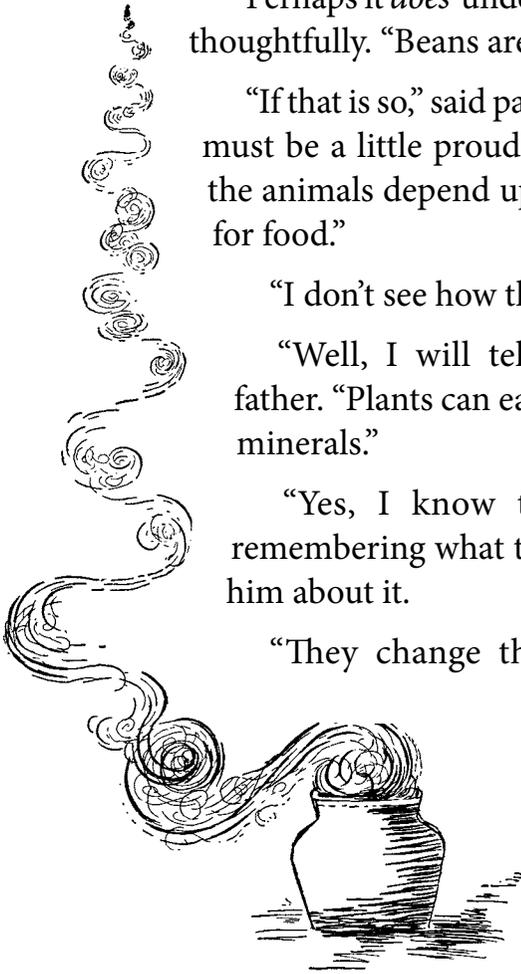
“If that is so,” said papa, smiling, “they must be a little proud to know that all the animals depend upon the plant life for food.”

“I don’t see how that is,” said Ko.

“Well, I will tell you,” said his father. “Plants can eat gases and other minerals.”

“Yes, I know that,” said Jack, remembering what the bean had told him about it.

“They change these things into plant material,” his father went on, “and people, who cannot eat earth and air, eat the plants, and so all are able to live.”



“But we might live on meat,” said Jack.

SEED-BABIES

“But what makes meat?” asked his father. “What do the animals we use for meat live on?”

“Plants,” Jack replied, nodding his head to show he understood.

“Yes, plants; and so, first or last, all the animals depend upon the plants for their lives.”

“If we keep on we shall know beans,” Ko said to Jack in a very sleepy tone of voice that night. But Jack, tucked up in his crib, was already in the Land of Nod.