

# HEXAPOD STORIES

***Books by  
Edith M. Patch***

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# HEXAPOD STORIES

by

*Edith M. Patch*

*illustrated by*

*Robert J. Sim*

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TO  
ALICE PATCH



## TO INTRODUCE TWELVE LITTLE HEXAPODS

THE Hexapods are funny folk who have six feet. That is they have six when they are grown up, though some of the children have none at all, and some have as many as twenty-two. You can tell from this that they are strange people, and you may call them fairies if you like!

They have wings,—the grown-up ones do,—wonderful wings of many shapes and colors. Luna's wings are green,—pale, pale green,—and very lovely, with a purple border on them. Perhaps there is nothing more beautiful in the world than Luna's wings. When Van flies, you can see the yellow edge of her brown wings; and when she alights—hesto! presto! you can see nothing at all; for she disappears from sight even though she is near enough to touch. Carol wears her wings neatly folded like a fan, except when she is using them. And Gryl, the little black minstrel—oh, Gryl fiddles with his wings.

They do queer things that we could not do if we tried. Old Bumble sleeps for more than half a year, and then wakes, thinking nothing of it at all, as if that were the most natural way to take a nap. Keti starts to build

## *HEXAPOD STORIES*

himself a log cabin before he is a day old; and finishes it, too, in time, with no one to show him how. And Cecid bewitches the willow with a magic no one else can learn.

Yes, you may call the Hexapods fairies, if you like; but you must never, never forget that they are every bit as real and true as you are, even if they are so very different.

They are not far away, not farther than the flowers or the trees or the nearest brook. And there are so many millions of them that every child in the world might have some for pets and they would never be missed.

And let me tell you this, for this is very important: although Hexapods are common and easy to find, there is not one among them all that does not have a story about his life so strange and interesting that he is worth watching just to find out what his story is.

Are you pleased to know that, whether you are in the country or in the city, and whether it is summer or winter, you are living right in the midst of Hexapod Land, where you have these most wonderful fairies for next-door neighbors?

EDITH M. PATCH.





*Van was ready to enjoy a New Year's Dinner.*

## CHAPTER I

# VAN, THE SLEEPY BUTTERFLY

### *Who Was Wakened by a January Thaw*

VAN was having a happy time making her New Year's calls.

She had crept out of bed about noon, for there was no cold wind blowing, and the sun had thrown its warm rays against the loose piece of bark under which she was sleeping. These warm rays had wakened her. That was a pleasant way of starting January, to have the sun knock at her door with its own sort of "Happy New Year!"

Other pleasant things happened, too. To begin with, Van was thirsty; and there is much to enjoy in being hungry and thirsty if there is food and drink near by. She had had nothing to eat during November or December, as it had been too cold for two months to do anything but sleep; and she was ready now to enjoy a New Year's dinner.

So she must have been glad when she had some invitations to "come and have a feast." Of course these were not written in notes, and put into envelopes, and

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stamped, and brought her by Uncle Sam's post-man. Nor were they brought her by messenger boys who said in words, "You are invited to dine at Mrs. Appleby's." Those would have been silly ways, for Van was a butterfly, and what did she know about written or spoken invitations or dinner-bells?

But there was a way for all that to let her know the table was spread for her. And after all, what better way, when folk (either boys or butterflies) have been without food until they are hungry, than to be tempted by good smells?

The first invitation that the air brought Van was from an old apple tree that lived near the edge of the woods. My, my! what a good-smelling one it was! The apples had frozen on the ground, and now they had thawed and were soft, and the juice was like cider. Oh, oh! what a feast for a thirsty butterfly!

Other guests had been before her. Brother Rabbit had eaten there more than once. Mr. Fieldmouse had nibbled up half an apple and left a pile of crumbs in its place. And the birds? There was one that very minute pecking with its thick short bill at an apple that had caught in the branches. So bird and beast and butterfly were all made happy by the New Year's gift of the old apple tree.

The second invitation the air brought Van was from a maple tree that lived down the same lane not far away. This was such a good one that Van could hardly get there fast enough. She fluttered her wings in a hurry to get a quick start, and then sailed for a little way. Then

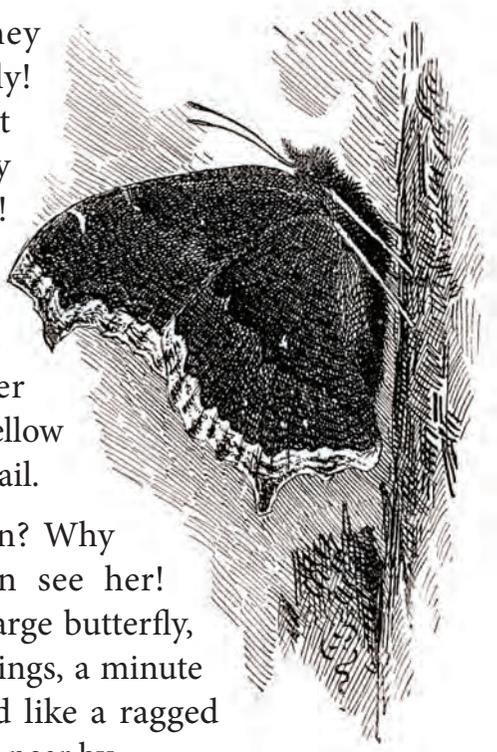
VAN, THE SLEEPY BUTTERFLY

she fluttered her wings again as if she wanted to get there before it was too late. And no wonder! For there was a broken branch on the maple and a little icicle where some sap had dripped out and had frozen, and now the icicle was melting. Maple syrup! Oh! oh! oh!

The third invitation that the air brought to Van was—But we shall never know because, just as she was starting to her third feast, a boy and a girl came racing down the lane.

“Oh, see!” they called; “a butterfly! A big beauty! Just think! A butterfly on New Year’s Day! Let’s take it home to show!” So they ran after Van, who was spreading her brown wings with yellow borders for a slow sail.

Oho! catch Van? Why they couldn’t even see her! What had been a large butterfly, with wide showy wings, a minute before, now looked like a ragged bit of bark on a tree near by. Van had hidden. And she was almost near enough to touch, though perhaps a little too high. She had hidden right in plain sight. And all



*Van now looked like a ragged bit of bark.*

## HEXAPOD STORIES

she had done was sit on the bark of the tree and fold her wings above her back and keep still. Catch Van? Why Van could fool a bird in a game of hide-and-seek!

By the time the children gave up the hunt, the sun was under a cloud and the wind felt chilly. So Van did not have any more feasting that day, or make any more New Year's calls. She was near her shelter of loose bark and crept up under cover out of the wind. She had had a good time. She had had cider and maple-sap enough to last her until the next thaw spell—be it one week or two, or one month, or two, or even three. Time was all alike to her when the weather was cold—short or long, it was the same! She just slept! You may ask the wisest man you know why it did Van no harm when the weather was cold as zero. If he is very wise, indeed, he will tell you, "I do not know why."

But our not knowing why made no difference to Van. She did live through the cold winter in the north, with no shelter but a loose bit of bark, just as her grandmother had lived one winter in a hollow tree, and her great-great-grandmother had lived under the roof of an old empty shed.

As spring came on, Van had invitations from the pussy willow, where she met some pretty flies with stripes on their bodies. She called, too, on the trailing arbutus, where she met Old Bumble more than once; for they both drank from those sweet pink cups and carried pollen from flower to flower.

Some time in May Van found that she could not spend all her time in calling on flowers, however much

*VAN, THE SLEEPY BUTTERFLY*

she liked their nectar, and however much they needed to have their pollen carried for them. So she hunted for a willow tree, and made a little ring around one of its twigs. This ring was set with fifty jewels, the very best she had to offer to the world. Of course, these jewels were her eggs.

In about two weeks they began to hatch, and Sister Essa was the very first of them all to bite around the edge of her egg-shell, until the top lifted like a little lid and out she came, looking much too long to be curled up in the shell she crept out of.

Essa did not go away from her brother and sister caterpillars. When they were all hatched, they crept off together and lay in a row side by side, with their heads at the edge of the leaf. There they had their breakfast, which it took them several days to eat.

And what do you suppose it was? No, their mother did not bring them cider from old soft apples, or syrup from broken maple twigs, or nectar from flowers. She was not like Old Bumble, who fed her babies every day. Van did not bring her fifty children one single thing to eat. Sister Essa was hungry, too; and so were the rest of the family. And here they were left on a willow branch, where there was nothing at all but leaves—food their mother never could have eaten with her long tongue, if she had uncoiled it and tried.

But we needn't worry about those babies. In less than the flick of a minute Sister Essa had nibbled a tiny green bite out of the top of the willow leaf, nodding her little head over it as her jaws opened and shut as if there

## HEXAPOD STORIES

were nothing better to be had for a breakfast. All her brothers and sisters were nodding their heads just the same way, and while they were about it, they nibbled off the whole top of the leaf just as if it were a green layer cake and they wanted only the shiny frosting. Before breakfast was over, Sister Essa led them to another leaf, where they lay side by side in a row as before, and ate until their skins were too tight to hold another bit of shiny green frosting.

That was a sign that their breakfast was over; so they spun a thin mat with silk which they spilled out of a little tube near their lower lips, and took a nap on the mat.

The first day they rested quietly, but the second day they acted as if they were having bad dreams and tossed their heads a great deal. In fact Sister Essa jerked so hard at last that her little skull came off like an empty shell. By that time she was wide-awake, and crept out of her tight skin through the collar-hole the skull left when it tumbled off. Before she had time to turn around, all her brothers and sisters were jerking their skulls off, too, and creeping out of their skins through the collar-hole.

Something funny had happened to them and they never looked the same again. They now had new heads, with bigger jaws and fine new stretchy skins.

After that nap that had had such a queer end, they were hungry; so they went off to some new leaves (this time one was not big enough to hold them all) and lay in rows and ate their luncheon. It was so good they did

VAN, *THE SLEEPY BUTTERFLY*

not stop for nearly a week. When their luncheon was over at last, they spun another thin silk mat and had another nap. They woke in about two days, jerking their skulls off again, and crept through the collar-hole in their skins just as they had before. They now had still bigger heads, and skins that were stretchier than ever.

Well, that was the way Sister Essa went on doing, until she had had her dinner and another luncheon and her supper. Each meal lasted several days, with a day or two for a nap in between. Every time she awakened, she pushed and jerked inside her old skin, until her skull fell off like an empty nut-shell; and when she crept out of the collar-hole she looked different from the way she looked when she went to sleep.

By the time she was eating her supper, her skin was a soft black color, with little white specks like a “pepper-and-salt” suit. Down the middle of her back was a row of pretty red spots, and growing all over her sides were black spines with pointed branches. She was now two inches long and a fine-looking caterpillar—after one got used to seeing her.

As her brothers and sisters had all had the same sort of time growing that she had had, they were fine-looking, too, and so big that the fifty of them together made the tip of the willow branch hang down. They ate more for this meal than for any other, and they did not nibble just the shiny frosting as they did at breakfast when they were tiny—they gobbled up all the flat green cakes on the branch. This would have been a bad thing for a little tree which needed all its leaves to grow with.



*Each meal lasted several days.*

## VAN, *THE SLEEPY BUTTERFLY*

Of course, if they had been on a small tree, it would have been better to take them off. But this was a big, big one, forty years old, and it was growing wild near a brook, with no gardener to trim off some of its branches; and what leaves Essa and the others ate could be spared as well as not. Of course, their supper must be a hearty one, for it had to last them until they were butterflies, like Van, with a long tongue to uncoil when calling on the flowers to sip nectar and to carry pollen.

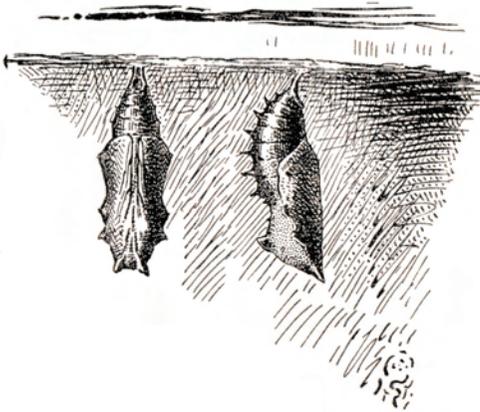
You never would think, to look at Essa, that she would ever fly; for there she sat clinging to the branch with ten of her feet and drawing the edge of the leaf down to her mouth with her other six feet, and she didn't have a sign of wings anywhere on her back.

Ah, but Essa could do several things you would never think she could! She had never done them before—why should she now? You might not think she could creep head first down the trunk of the tree, and take a walk, as fast as she could hurry, along the ground, until she came to an old fence; and climb the fence, and spin a silk peg on the lower edge of a board, and fasten her hind-legs to the silk peg, and let go with all her other legs, and hang there head-down until her skull split and her skin ripped down the back seam!

You wouldn't know how Essa could do that, would you? And if you ask the wisest man you see *how* a caterpillar can do wonderful things like that just once in her life, without learning or without any one to show her about making a silk peg, maybe he will tell you he doesn't know, either.

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But our not knowing how she can do it made no difference to Essa. That is just what she did when she had finished her supper; and while she was about it, she changed into a chrysalis, which looked no more like a butterfly than it did like a caterpillar.



*There they hung on their silk pegs.*

Well, there they hung, Essa and her forty-nine funny brother and sister chrysalids, for about ten days; and none of them knew anything about Lampy's fireworks on the Fourth o' July. Soon after that Essa broke her

chrysalis case, and tumbled out head first. She didn't tumble far, for her feet caught hold of the empty case, and she hung there with her soft little wings down, until they grew big and stopped throbbing. She clung with four feet; but you must not think she had no more feet than a cat or a dog, for her first pair were folded against her breast and covered up by her pretty brown fur.

Some people said Essa's wings were purple, and some said they were brown. I don't know what you would think about their color. But all agreed that the border was pale yellow, and that next the yellow on the upper side was a dark band with lovely pale blue spots on it. And everybody who saw her said that she was

VAN, *THE SLEEPY BUTTERFLY*

a very beautiful butterfly when she spread her wings open, and that, when she folded them shut above her back, she looked like a piece of bark.

Essa flew about and made calls on the flowers, for there was flower nectar instead of frozen apple-cider in July. After a time she made a ring about the twig of a tree all set with her egg-jewels. I have forgotten whether she chose a willow or an elm; but it made no difference which, for her daughter Opie, when she hatched, could eat either one. If it had been an oak, Opie would have starved to death; but of course Essa would not have left her eggs on an oak or a pine tree.

Well, Opie and her brother and sister caterpillars ate and napped and grew, and changed into chrysalids and then into butterflies, just as their mother and their uncles and aunts had done.

But by this time it was the fall of the year, and Opie found her life much more like her grandmother's than it was like her mother's; for Essa had been a summer butterfly and Opie, like Van, was a winter one. So she flew about and called on the fall flowers, and when the days grew cold, she found a shelter as her grandmother Van had done, and went to sleep, clinging with four feet to the roof of her winter bedroom and folding the other two close to her breast.

There she rested all the winter long, except when the days were warm enough to thaw her out. For be it one month or three or even four, time was all alike to her when the weather was cold—short or long, it was all the same. Opie just slept!

## CHAPTER II

# OLD BUMBLE

CANDLEMAS DAY was bright and fair.

Perhaps the ground-hog came out of his hole and was scared by his shadow and went back to bed again. I do not know.

But I know Old Bumble didn't come out of her hole that day. Her legs were all cramped up with the cold, and even her pretty black and yellow fur couldn't keep her warm.

You see, she had chosen to make her winter bedroom in a little cave on the north side of a dry bank, and the sunshine did not touch it. This did very well last August when she went to bed. If she had been in a sunny place then, it might have been too hot for her. It didn't take much to disturb her when she first went to sleep. If anything had got into her bedroom then and touched her, she would have shaken herself and gone away and found or made a new place. In August she was what is called "a very light sleeper," and couldn't bear to be touched.

In winter she was different. If the ground-hog

## OLD BUMBLE

had pawed her cave open and rolled her out of bed on Candlemas Day, she would not have known anything about it!

He didn't, so there she slept, though she had been napping for six months already and would very likely keep at it for two or three more. Isn't that pretty lazy for a bee?



*Old Bumble's long nap.*

She had not done one bit of work before she went to bed, either—that is, nothing except to straighten out her bedroom a little; and as that was hardly more than a hole in the ground, the process did not take her long. She had not even hunted for her own dinner, which was to last her all winter. She helped herself to some fresh honey that her older sisters had put into a honey-mug, and drank enough to fill her honey-sack, and then went off and crept into bed. Pretty lazy for a bee, wasn't she?

She not only slept through Candlemas Day, but St. Valentine's Day came, with its pretty shower of

## HEXAPOD STORIES

cards and letters, and she didn't wake up then. George Washington's birthday found her sleeping still; and she didn't even dream while people were putting green ribbons in their buttonholes on St. Patrick's Day.

It was not, I think, until April that she first roused herself and poked her sleepy head out of doors. Perhaps she was a little April Fool, for there was not much that she could do so early in the spring.

Maybe, though, she could find something to drink, to make her feel better after her nap of many months. Yes, the cool wind brought her a sweet smell from the trailing arbutus, the loveliest blossom that grows in the spring. For Old Bumble lived in a land where people had not yet robbed the woods of this dear flower, which used to be very common in the days of your grandfathers, and is getting to be so rare that, unless you and the rest of us are careful, there will not be any left at all for your grandchildren to see.

Well, Old Bumble found a few of the very earliest pink sprays in the sunny places, and she sang a happy humming song as she sipped at the tiny sweet cups.

She did not stay up very long that day, for the sun soon went under a cloud and she felt like going to bed again. Then for a week or so it rained, so she took a nap until the weather was fine. After that, she got up and sipped from the different spring flowers as they blossomed, but still slept through the colder days.

Did anyone ever tell you that a bee is a busy little thing?

## *OLD BUMBLE*

Well, you see how Old Bumble spent the greater part of the year just dozing the time away. But wait and see what she did the rest of her days!

As soon as the weather was warm enough she started out on a hunting trip. She buzzed slowly along near the ground, but this time it wasn't flowers she was after. She was house-hunting. Just bedrooms no longer suited her. She was done with sleeping day after day. What she wanted now was a nursery. She must find a place where she could bring up a family of children.

So here and there, and there and here, she flew, singing her slow hunting song as she went. Now and then she stopped and peeped into a hole, to see if she liked it; and if it was not good enough for her home, she came out and hunted still farther.

At last she found a place that would do nicely for her nursery. It was a home a field-mouse had lived in once upon a time, and a field-mouse has very good taste about underground houses. Any way, Old Bumble liked the same kind.

Of course it needed tidying up a bit after being empty so long. So she went right to house-cleaning as if she knew all about it. She had never done such a thing in her life before, but she was not so stupid that she had to be shown how to do everything. She had a way of getting things right the first time she tried. She had saved her strength for many months, and now she was going to use it.

Her nursery must be just exactly right! For one thing, it should be dry; and this empty mouse-hole

## HEXAPOD STORIES

had grown damp. So she worked about in the part she was going to use, and dried it out with the warmth of her body. She found the softest bits the mother mouse had left there, and shook them up with her jaws and piled them in a heap. Right in the very middle of this she hollowed out a little room, which covered her up, top and all, except a hole at one side which she kept for a doorway into her snug little nursery.



*How Bumble's nest looked inside.*

Then off she flew to the flowers for yellow pollen, which she gathered and packed into her pollen baskets on her hind legs. She brought back her load and put a lump of this yellow stuff, made moist and sweet with honey, right on the floor of her nursery. Next she brushed some wax off her body and made a little nest of it big enough for a few eggs.

Before night came on, she brushed off some more wax, and this she made into a honey-mug just inside

## *OLD BUMBLE*

her doorway, and into this she put what honey she had had time to gather.

But she must not fly too late, for her eggs must not get cold. If they did, it would take them longer to hatch, and she needed her daughters to help her as soon as could be. She sat on the little wax nest to keep it warm, and left it only long enough to fill her honey-mug, so that she could eat from it in the night or on stormy days. For, though she could sleep all winter without eating, she needed food now to give her strength.

In a few days her eggs hatched, and then she was busy as a mother robin feeding her young. They were white little babies without hair or legs, and you never could guess to look at one that it would some day be a black-and-yellow furry bee. You could not take a peep at them, though, as you can at little birds, because their nest had a tight wax cover, and the nest was in the nursery, and the nursery was in a hole, and the hole was in the ground.

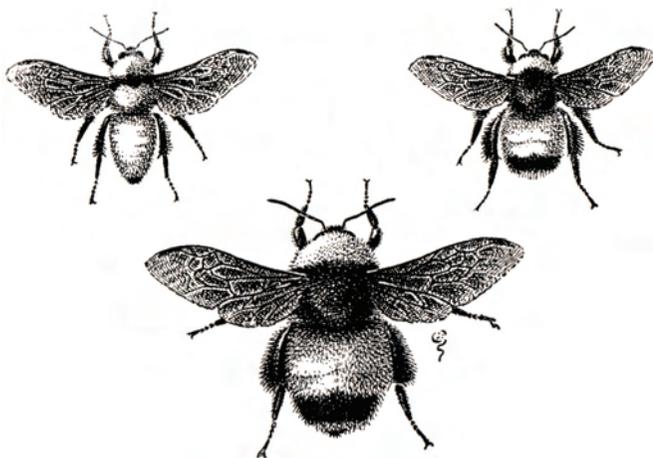
Now, how could Old Bumble feed her little ones if she kept them shut up tight in bag of wax? Well, for part of their food they ate up the pollen paste she kept bringing and sticking close against their nest.

But that wasn't all they had to eat. Their mother mixed some pollen with honey until it was thin, and then bit a hole in the top of the nest and dropped it from her mouth. Every time she did this, she mended with wax the hole she made, for her babies had to be kept shut up tight.

You can see that, with getting pollen and nectar

## HEXAPOD STORIES

from the flowers, and making pollen-paste and honey for the children, and brushing wax from her body to use in keeping the nest and honey-mug mended, and storing honey in the honey-mug for nights and stormy days, the mother bee was not so lazy as she seemed at first. We might call her a very busy Old Bumble, indeed. A happy one, too, humming her cheerful song as she flew about on her out-door errands.



*Old Bumble and a son and daughter bee.*

In eleven or twelve days the little ones stopped eating and each one spun a thin cocoon about herself, for she must still be covered up. This would seem to give their mother a chance to rest. But no! It only meant new duties. She must clean away the wax and pollen from the cocoons, and make new wax nests and lay more eggs. Besides, she must keep the cocoons warm. So she spread her furry body out as big as she could make it stretch, like a mother biddy covering her little ones under her feathers.

## OLD BUMBLE

After about two weeks, or maybe it was not quite so long, the young bees began to bite holes in the caps of their cocoons, which might make you think of chickens pipping their shells. They had had enough of being shut up. They were now coming out into the world. This time Old Bumble did not try to wax them in. She helped them out. She might well be glad to see her daughters, even though they were queer and feeble little things. Their fur was as wet as a chicken's down when it first comes out of the shell. Their legs were so weak they could hardly toddle over to the honey-mug for their breakfast. After they had eaten, they crept back and cuddled down under their mother, until their fur was dry and fluffy and they felt strong.

Only a few days more, and Old Bumble's daughters were ready to help her. Good, faithful, cheery Old Bumble—her pretty wings had grown tattered and torn with her flying for food. Her fur coat, that was so fresh and fine, was now looking ragged. But the little daughters that snuggled up close to her soon began to do her flying, and she could stay at home and keep house and rest her tired wings.

What was this stir and bustle about the nursery? Why, Hum and Buzz were ready to start out on their first journey. And little Flyaway was going, too. They looked much as their mother did when she left her bedroom, only much, much smaller. As their sisters were not quite ready yet to fly, they stayed at home and helped Hum and Buzz and Flyaway, when they came back, to feed the baby sisters that hatched from the eggs Old Bumble laid while they were spinning their cocoons.



*Hum and Buzz were ready to start out on their journey  
and Flyaway was going too.*

## *OLD BUMBLE*

Now that the mother bee did not have to fly out of doors for the food, she laid eggs and eggs and still more eggs, so that the nursery was full of baby sisters of all sizes, from the egg to the cocoon age. As soon as the older ones came out of their cocoons, and had eaten and grown strong, they helped care for the growing babies. If they did not fly off to bring home fresh food, they stayed with their mother to help her with the nursery work.

So the happy, busy Old Bumble and the daughters spent the days, doing together all the hard though pleasant tasks of bringing up a large family of children. Each day seemed much like another, and each new sister that crept out of her cocoon looked like her oldest sisters, only some were larger. Not one was as big as Old Bumble, though. Not one!

Much of their work was flying from flower to flower for nectar to make honey out of, and to gather pollen to take home in the baskets on their legs. And while they were doing this for themselves and their younger sisters, they carried pollen from flower to flower, which helped make the seeds grow. So we can have the big red clovers and many other flowers they visit, so long as we do not destroy the bumblebees.

Time passed in this way until about the first of August. Then something different came to pass in this wonderful home. Some sisters crept out of their cocoons, who were as big as their mother—every bit as big as Old Bumble! And what is more, about the same time, some brother bees crept out of their cocoons: the

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very first brothers that Buzz and Hum and Flyaway ever had—Old Bumble's very first sons!

These brothers did nothing to help their sisters who had tended them while they were growing up. These sons of the family did nothing to help their mother. But the sisters and their mother could do for themselves and each other, so it made little difference to them what the gay bumblebee lads did if they kept out of the way. And they did this for the most part, having a fine time of it, flying from flower to flower, eating as much as they liked, but taking nothing home for the others.

And those August sisters, those big ones who looked like their mother—what did they, who were strongest of all, do in the home where they had grown up? Well, they sipped at the honey-mugs their smaller, older sisters had filled; and then, when they were strong, they sipped again. Some went to flowers, too; but some went only to the mugs in the nursery. They drank long, until their honey-sacks were filled. They needed food to last a long, long time, as a camel needs water enough to last him during a whole trip across the desert. It was their good-bye feast, and when it was done they went out through the doorway of that wonderful nursery. And they never came back again.

Never!

They flew about a little while, and then, when they were ready, they crept into their bedrooms, each one by herself, and fell into their August doze.

Ah me, the lazy things! There was clover yet, and many a sweet flower that needed its pollen carried for it,

## *OLD BUMBLE*

that it might have seeds. The smaller sisters, not nearly so strong, were still cheerfully at work, though their wings were tattered and torn and their fine fur coats were ragged. And these so fresh and big, with whole wings and new coats, weren't they ashamed to sleep the summer days away?

No, they were not ashamed. It was not for them to tear their wings and spoil their clothes. Not yet! They had nothing to do in the world but to rest and save their strength. That is what their mother did the year before.

So we will not call them lazy any more even if they did sleep so long. They rested while the hot August sun shone over the earth, and kept it all so warm that they did not sleep soundly, but moved now and then, as if they were dozing before a fire and just taking naps.

They rested while the red and yellow leaves fell to the ground like a gay and beautiful shower! They rested while the snow followed after the leaves, and the cold made them numb in their beds.

It was time enough to be up and doing when Spring called again. And shall we hope that when they wakened, brave and beautiful as their mother had been the year before—shall we hope that, when they flew low, humming their happy hunting song, the children of men had left spring flowers enough for the children of Old Bumble?