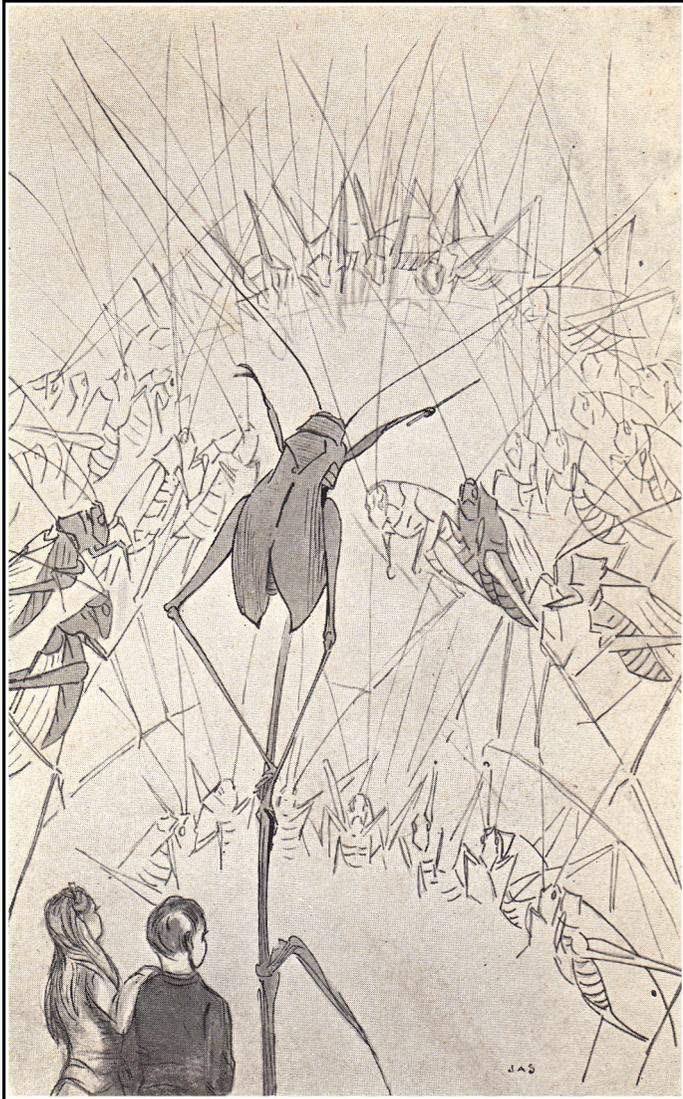


JACK'S INSECTS



The Great Katydid Concert

JACK'S INSECTS

BY

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illustrated by
J. A. Shepherd



YESTERDAY'S CLASSICS
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CHAPTER I

INSIDE THE BOOK

IT was getting quite near bed-time, and Jack and Maggie were both tired, for they had been up late the night before, because it was Jack's birthday. On that day Jack had only had time to look at the cover and illustrations of the new book on natural history which his mother had given him, and, even now, several important things, such as meals, walks and games, had prevented his reading it, in a proper way, till the evening; so that he was still in the first chapter, and so sleepy that, even if there had been time, he would not have been able to get to the end of it. But nothing would have made either him or his sister Maggie want to go to bed before the hands of the clock had got to the right place, and the proper remarks about it had been made.

This book was mostly about insects, because, as the rest of the animal kingdom had been exhausted, upon previous birthdays, only insects and spiders, and things of that sort, were left. This was one very good reason for having them now, for a new book ought to be about something new, but a still better one, perhaps, was that, just at that time, Jack was more interested in

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insects than in anything else, so that he had bought a butterfly-net, and was trying to make Maggie interested in them too.



It was getting quite near bed-time.

“I think you might be, Maggie,” he said, “because they *are* very interesting, you know, insects are.”

“I am interested in butterflies,” said Maggie, looking at a picture of some, which Jack had come to—“that is, they’re pretty, but I don’t like killing them.”

“But that’s entomology, you know, Maggie,” said Jack.

“I think it’s cruelty,” said Maggie sententiously—she was a little older than her brother, but not so scientific.

“No; but it isn’t, Maggie, really—not in that way,” Jack answered. “Just to throw one’s cap at them, and kill them and leave them there, without making any use of them, that’s cruelty, of course; but to catch them

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in a net, properly, and put them in a killing-bottle without hurting them—I mean without rubbing their wings—and then pin them out on cork, with their Latin names underneath them, that isn't, because—because it's important, you know.”

“Important!” cried Maggie. “Oh, Jack, how can it be?”

“But it is, Maggie, really, if you understood it,” explained Jack, “because—because it's entomology, you see, and *that's* important.”

“Is it? Oh, well, I don't see why, and I don't like it.”

“But it isn't only that, you know,” Jack went on. “There's setting them, and arranging them by families, and finding out about their habits, in books—in a book like this, you know—all insects, I mean, of course—entomology's about all insects, you know.”

“I should never like all insects,” said Maggie.

“But you would like knowing about them,” persisted Jack. “Entomology's”—he had learnt the word in the last week and thought a great deal of it—“*tremendously* interesting, really. I wish you'd read the book with me, Maggie. I'm sure if you were once to get into it——”

“I wish one *could* get into books,” said Maggie, yawning.

“Why, but so you can,” said Jack, yawning too (for it makes one yawn to see someone else doing it). “Of course you can. I'm just getting into this one.”

“Yes, but I don't mean in that way,” Maggie explained.

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“I mean if you could get inside them, as you go inside a room, and meet the people that there are in them, and find that they were real, and begin to talk to them, and—and go through them—through the book, you know—in that way.”

“Oh, Maggie,” said Jack, “*what* an idea! But it would be nice, though.”

“*Wouldn't* it!” said Maggie. “It would make reading things ever so much more interesting—even one's school books. Fancy if, instead of just reading in one's history, ‘Richard the Third, surnamed Crook-back,’ you could get inside the book and meet him, and see if he had a crooked back or not—because, you know, it says somewhere else that he hadn't really, but was only short and had one shoulder higher than the other, and then, after saying how he killed his nephews in the Tower, it says that it's doubtful if he really did kill them. But if one were to meet him in the book, one could ask him and find out, and——”

“No, but you couldn't, Maggie,” said Jack; “at least not to be sure, because first he mightn't say, or not say right, and, besides, if you met him in the book he'd have to be what he was there, and so he'd just keep changing, and you'd never really know.”

“Oh dear,” said Maggie, “I never thought of that; but that would make it all the more fun, you know, because they'd be contradicting one another, and then, of course, they'd have to fight, because they did in those times. Fancy one Richard the Third who was only short, with

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one high shoulder, challenging another because *he* was a real hunchback.”

“Oh, Maggie,” said Jack, “what nonsense you’re talking!”

“And then,” continued Maggie, “there’d be a Shakespeare’s Richard the Third, they always mention him as something different, and he’d have to fight, too, of course, and I believe *he’d* win; and besides they’d all want to kill each other so that only one of them should come to the crown, because they couldn’t all reign. How could they?”

“But they all do in the books,” said Jack, “so they’d all have to. There couldn’t be a king, you know, that didn’t come to the crown.”

“Oh, well, that would make it all the more curious,” said Maggie, “and it would be the same with all the other ones—or nearly all of them—and the great people too. There’d be several Cromwells and Straffords, and a Charles the First who was right, and wrong. Then there’d be a good Henry the Eighth and a bad one, and one that wasn’t quite good or quite bad—I believe there’d be a lot of Henry the Eighths—and two Mary Queen of Scots, anyhow, one that killed Darnley and was wicked and another that didn’t, and wasn’t; and that would make two Queen Elizabeths, too, you know, because——”

“Because it wouldn’t be fair if there weren’t,” said Jack. “It would be two to one, you know, only she’d behead them both.”

“No, I don’t mean that,” said Maggie; ‘but there’d be

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a Queen Elizabeth who *was* justified in beheading her and a Queen Elizabeth who wasn't justified—because there must be one for each kind of Mary, you know, and they'd all be arguing and disputing.”

“I wish I could get into *this* book in that way,” said Jack, “only we never could, really, because we're too big; and it wouldn't really be nice either, because there'd be no real countries or places, but only paper with their names written on it.”

“Oh no, Jack,” said Maggie eagerly, “it wouldn't be like that. Why should it? You might just as well say that the people—or the insects, if it was this one—would be only names written down. But if *they* were real why shouldn't the places be too—and as for being too big, why, how could we get into the book at all without getting small first?”

“Of course if we *did* get small——” said Jack.

“We'd have to, you know,” said Maggie, “so that settles it. And then as the things that were written about had got real, going from one page or chapter to another would be like going from one place or country to another place or country, and, of course, as they would be much nearer together, it would be natural to get there ever so much quicker, and without steamboats or anything. It would be absurd to have a steamboat to go to America or India in, when Europe was only a few lines or paragraphs away from them. We could walk there easily.”

“Of course we could,” said Jack. “That would be the natural way then.”

INSIDE THE BOOK

“And then,” continued Maggie, “if we were small enough to talk to one person or animal in a book, it would be just as natural to get a little smaller, or larger, so as to talk to another, you know, because they’re of different sizes. So then we should always be the right size whoever we were talking to—and an animal, or even an insect, *can* talk in a book, so that would make it natural too.”

“It *would* be fun,” said Jack.

“Yes,” said Maggie, “and I don’t see any reason at all why it shouldn’t happen.”

“More do I, now,” said Jack, and then they neither of them said anything for a little while.

“Oh, Maggie,” cried Jack, all of a sudden, and in a half-surprised tone of voice, “I believe I *am* getting inside the book.”

“*Are you?*” said Maggie.

“Yes, I am, really,” Jack answered; “do come too.”

“I don’t know if I can,” said Maggie. “It’s because your head’s on the book, I think.”

“Your head’s quite near it too,” said Jack, “and it’s touching mine. And it was you who thought of it, you know, Maggie, so you might come.”

“I’d much rather go into my history book,” said Maggie. “It would be much nicer talking to historical characters than to insects.”

“Not if you liked entomology better than you did

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history," said Jack—"and besides, that book's not here. Oh!"

"What?" said Maggie, and directly afterwards she called out, "Oh, Jack, I believe I *am* going into it."

"Then we both are," said Jack, "because—oh!"

"Oh, what *was* that?" said Maggie. "Something flashed."

"A butterfly, I think it was," said Jack, "because it flashed blue, and——"

"Oh! oh!! oh!!!" cried Maggie. "What flashes and what a wonderful colour! Oh, it can't be a butterfly."

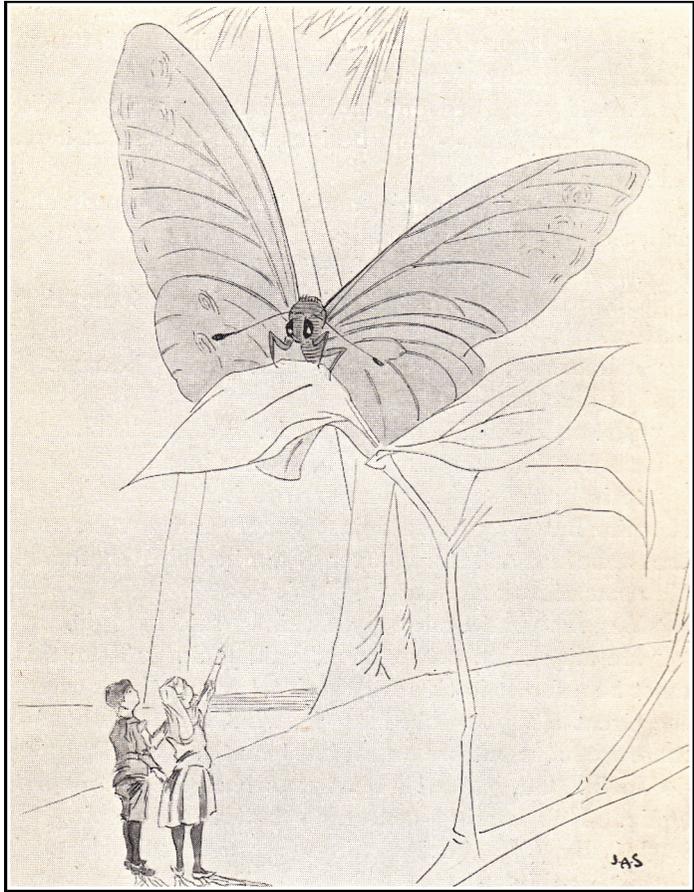
"It is," said Jack. "I'm sure it is. It's the Great Morpho Butterfly that I'd just got to, and you can see the flashes *he* makes a quarter of a mile off. Oh, there! You saw him then, Maggie, didn't you?"

"Yes, *that* was a butterfly, I think," said Maggie.

"He may come nearer soon," said Jack. "Then this must be a forest in South America, because that's where the Great Morpho—oh, Maggie, what trees! Oh, and there are more butterflies. What beauties! Oh, Maggie, do look! Oh, there! That was the Great Morpho again. He's coming nearer. I believe he's going to settle. By *Jingo*, he *is* settling. How beautiful! and"—this was in a tone of deep disappointment—"I haven't brought my net or my killing-bottle."

"I'm glad of that," said Maggie. "Oh, Jack, how can you want to kill such beautiful creatures?"

There were flashes all about now, and everything



“By Jingo, he is settling.”

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was getting plainer. They were certainly in a forest, and it was a tropical forest too—that was quite clear, because of the trees and the butterflies—so as there were no tropical forests at all near them, except in the book, there could be no doubt whatever that somehow they had got into the book, because, as Maggie said, there was no other way of explaining it.

Perhaps that was why things didn't seem quite so strange as one might have expected, because the trees were just like they were drawn in the pictures—only quite real—so that it would only be waste of time to describe them, because everybody knows what a tropical forest in a picture looks like. But as for the butterflies, it seemed to both Jack and Maggie that ones in a book never could have been so bright or so beautiful, but, of course, they must have been, because there they were. They wondered, too, for a little, how they could be flying about, but soon they found out that it was the descriptions more than the pictures that they were like, and it was the same, before long, with everything, and then they began to forget that they were in a book at all. It was *quite* real, even when one of the butterflies—it was the one that Jack had said was the Great Morpho Butterfly, the most beautiful, or, at any rate, the most splendid one of all—began to say something—in English, too—in fact, to make an answer to Maggie's last remark.

CHAPTER II

JACK PROMISES THE GREAT MORPHO BUTTERFLY

“THAT,” said the Great Morpho Butterfly, “is a sentiment that I entirely approve of.”

“Do you mean what I said about killing beautiful creatures?” said Maggie, who found herself talking to a butterfly quite naturally.

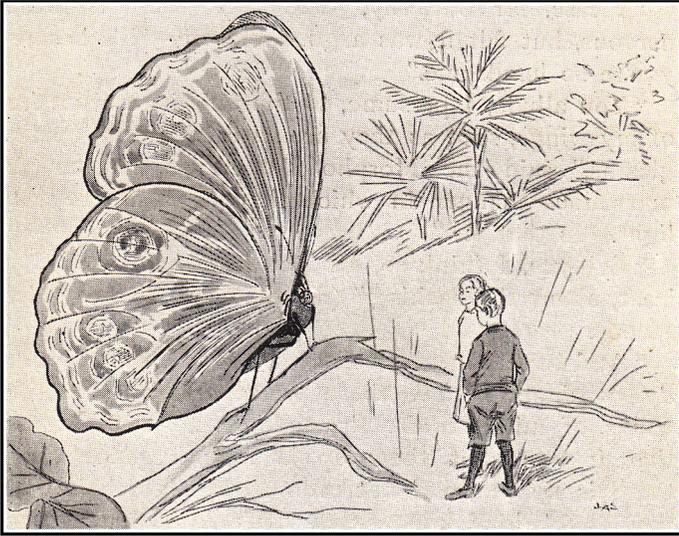
“Of course I do,” the Butterfly answered. “So you want to kill me, do you, you little insignificant wretch?”—this last, of course, was to Jack, who felt obliged to say he didn’t.

“You couldn’t if you did,” said the Morpho Butterfly. “Why, I should be over the tops of the trees in a moment, and I should just like to know how you’d catch me. Even if you could you couldn’t do it in the way you would like to—I mean in a butterfly-net—because I’m so large that I wouldn’t go into it.”

“Oh, I think you would,” said Jack, who remembered the butterfly-net he had left in the hall, but forgot that he was much too small now to lift it. “I think I could catch you in it if——”

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“I should like to see you try to,” said the Great Morpho Butterfly. “Why, how big do you suppose yourself to be? *I* am seven inches across the wings, which is more than you are, I think, across anything, so unless you could carry a net that was more than big enough to catch yourself in—— Kill me, indeed!”



“So you want to kill me, do you, you little insignificant wretch?”

Jack saw then what a mistake he had been making, and that it would be impossible for him now to be an entomologist any longer—for as for entomology without killing he had never thought of such a thing. So he said, “No, I think you’re right, Mr Butterfly. “I don’t think I should be able to catch you.”

“And he doesn’t want to, now, I’m sure,” said Maggie, wishing to make the conversation a little pleasanter.

“Only because he can’t,” said the Butterfly; “that’s

why. If anything were to make him the right size, he'd want to, again, directly."

"Oh, I don't think he would," Maggie said soothingly.

The Butterfly didn't look at all convinced. "And why, pray, should you ever want to kill me?" he said, turning to Jack again. "I don't mean now that you can't, but supposing that you could, you know. It's him that I'm asking," he added, somewhat severely, as Maggie was going to say something, "and I should prefer him to speak for himself. Well?"

"Please, Mr Butterfly," said Jack—he was rather nervous, but felt it was a good reason—"it's because you're so handsome."

"You allude, I presume, to the exquisite azure hue of my wings, shot as they are with iridescent opaline gleams," said the Morpho Butterfly, "and to the marvellous manner in which they flash in the sunlight. Is that it?"

"Er—yes, I think so, Mr Butterfly," said Jack; "at least, about the flashing" (for that was all he understood).

"And have you ever reflected," the Morpho Butterfly continued, "that these *extraordinarily* beautiful wings of mine require the sunlight to flash in, and that if you shut them up in a dark place where there is no sun, and not even a sky—which is what you would do, I know—they can't flash, at least not properly, and so are not nearly so handsome. Has *that* ever occurred to you?"

"No, I don't think so," said Jack.

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“You *would* keep me in the dark if you could, wouldn't you?” said the Butterfly.

“Yes, but that's because your colours fade in the light, you know,” said Jack, who was quite up in such subjects.

“They might just as well fade, I'm sure,” the Butterfly answered, “as be in a dingy room or museum, or anywhere where they were not *intended* to be. People who wish to admire my beauty should come and see it where it is most worth seeing, and, when they have seen it, they should leave it for other people to see when they come—not steal it and take it away with them, and put it somewhere where it doesn't look beautiful any more, and so is only wasted. To take a butterfly that was alive and flying about, out of its woods and fields, and kill it, and put it into a box, or a cabinet, is just the same as to take pictures off the walls of rooms, and hang them on trees and hedges. They would be out of place, and we are out of place, and we can neither of us look the better for it.”

“But you know, Mr Butterfly,” said Jack, “that everybody can't come out into the forests, where you live, to see you. Only a few can do that, you know, but when you are in a museum a great many people can come there, so that they know something about you, and can read your Latin name, and——”

“Good gracious!” said the Morpho Butterfly, in an irritated tone of voice, “if those are the people I'm killed for, I think I had much better be left alive. Everybody really capable of appreciating me would much rather

JACK PROMISES THE GREAT MORPHO BUTTERFLY

think of me alive and flying about than see me dead, with a pin through my body. Oh dear! people who can enjoy seeing butterflies in that way must be silly and cruel both. That, at any rate, is my opinion. I may be prejudiced, but if I am, it's natural."

Even Jack couldn't help admitting that for a butterfly to be prejudiced on such a subject *was* natural, and Maggie said, with a great deal of feeling, "I quite agree with you, Mr Butterfly."

"Any right-minded person must, I think," said the Great Morpho. "Now look here," he continued, with another flash of his wings, which made Jack, whom he had turned towards, jump, "as for my Latin name, anybody who wants to know that can find it in a book, and much good may it do him, and if anybody really does care about seeing me with a pin stuck through me, and not able to fly, well, there are enough museums with specimens of me in that condition to satisfy their barbarous tastes; but if people keep on killing me and putting me into drawers and boxes, mark my words"—here the Butterfly's voice became very impressive, and his antennæ quivered with emotion—"there will soon be no more Great Morpho Butterflies to stick pins through. We will all be in boxes and cabinets."

"Oh no, Mr Butterfly, please don't say that," said Maggie, for to her it seemed dreadful.

"I do say it," said the Morpho Butterfly. "We shall have disappeared as a living species, and therefore the world will have to get on without us."

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“Oh no, please, Mr Morpho,” said Jack, who had never thought of such a thing as that.

“It will not be my fault,” said the Morpho Butterfly, “so it’s no use appealing to me. On the contrary, I have always done my best to avert the calamity, and my efforts have been to some extent successful. But the evil is not confined to our species. I am a strong and high flier, and it’s not so easy to stick a pin through me. Others, however, are as inferior to myself in strength and agility as they are in appearance. Look about you!”

This was said in a very brisk tone of voice—it had been quite solemn just before—and in an instant the forest and the whole air, and everything, was quite full of butterflies, every one of which seemed to be the most beautiful kind in the world as long as you were looking at it, and not at another kind. Some, amongst which was the Great Morpho itself, were flying high up above the tops of the great forest trees, as quickly as swallows, almost, whilst others flapped lazily along in the sunny glades, so slowly that it seemed as if they paused at every flap, to show their beautiful wings more plainly. Some of these were of rich gold or orange, some of orange and red, others of blue, purple, scarlet or green, or of soft golden green mixed with deep velvety black. In others, again, all these colours and many more were mingled in various patterns, and there were some that, at first, seemed to have no colours at all, and then, all at once, shot out into many-coloured flashes, like diamonds. There were butterflies who looked of quite a plain white, at one moment, and, the next, glistened like the most beautiful white satin, and others whose wings were

quite clear and transparent, like glass, except for one spot in the centre of each of the larger pair, which was of a soft violet shade, like the petal of some very pretty flower. As this was the only part that could be seen, it looked as if a twin pair of flowers—say violets—and not a butterfly at all, were fluttering about in the air.

Besides all these beautiful tropical butterflies, Jack saw some that he recognised at once, such as the peacock and red admiral, and another that he had not seen, and never could see, now, in England, but had often read about, and seen plates of, that was like a flake of red copper, and shone most beautifully as it fluttered along. Another very handsome one, whose under wings ended in a long point, he felt sure was the swallow-tail butterfly, though he had never seen that either. He knew that it was very rare, and likely soon to become extinct in England, but he had never thought, before, of why it was so rare, or felt sorry that he and other people could not see it flying about, as once they used to—only that he could not catch it and kill it, and so make it rarer still. Many of these gorgeous tropical butterflies, too, had wings of much the same shape, whilst in others they first became narrow, at the ends, and then broadened out into a round or oval shape, like a battledore or tennis-racket, so that one might call them racket-tailed, rather than swallow-tailed butterflies. There was often a beautiful, richly-coloured spot where the ends broadened out, and some of these butterflies were amongst the handsomest of all of them.

There was a river running through the forest

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now—though neither Maggie nor Jack had noticed it before—and such streams of bright-coloured butterflies were flying backwards and forwards over it that it looked as if two living rainbows were passing one another in the air. Some of these butterflies, as they flew across, settled on the shores, or on sandbanks that lay in the water, and every now and then they would all fly up together, in a many-coloured cloud, whilst, higher in the air, amidst the glades and alleys of the forests, hundreds of other ones whirled and twirled about as if they were having a dance.

“There!” said the Great Morpho Butterfly, “that’s what it’s like with us butterflies before people begin to catch us and put us into killing-bottles and stick pins through us and sell us for money, which is what they call taking a scientific interest in us; but after that has been done for some time, the forests and meadows, and in fact the country generally, doesn’t look quite the same as it used to, and as time goes on it gets worse.”

As he said this, the beautiful lights and colours of all the butterflies they had been looking at began to die out of the air, and so quickly, too, that where there had been more than a thousand before, very soon there were less than a hundred, and before long there were only one or two to be seen, here and there, and then, all of a sudden, there were the great forests and rivers, with meadows and hills and other more familiar landscapes, but without any butterflies at all. It was quite wonderful how sad and wretched it seemed, after what they had just been seeing, even though the sun was still shining and the sky as blue as could be.



Streams of bright-coloured butterflies were flying backwards and forwards.

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“You can’t bring them back again when they’re once gone like that,” said the Morpho Butterfly to Maggie, who was looking very melancholy. “When an individual dies other individuals are left to take his place, but if a species dies it can never come to life again, because there are no more individuals *of* that species. They are all dead, and so the species is extinct.”

“Oh, but do bring them back again now,” said Maggie, who couldn’t believe that so many beautiful butterflies were gone for ever. “Can’t you, Mr Butterfly?”

“However,” continued the Morpho Butterfly, without answering this question, “you’ve got something to console you. After all, they’re not really gone.” As he said this, the forest, and everything else, seemed to change into one long, long gallery of a very enormous museum, with stuffed animals running (only not in the right way) all down the centre, and long, long rows of dark-looking things on each side.

“They’re not desks,” said the Butterfly, who saw that both Jack and Maggie looked puzzled (for they lived in the country), “but glass cases on legs, with covers over them, and that’s where we all are now. After we’re dead, you know, we’re kept in the dark, as you say, because the light hurts us then—it never used to before—but when anybody takes off any of the covers” (for there were people walking up and down the long gallery) “you’ll be able to see some of us again. They will, you know, as soon as they want to.”

Somehow it seemed as if very few of the people in the great long gallery—and there were not so very



All of a sudden, there were the great forests and rivers
. . . but without any butterflies at all.

many—did want to look at the dead butterflies in the cases, for it was only just now and then that somebody would lift up one of the covers, and then they put it back again almost directly. What they did look at was the big stuffed animals in the centre, and even that was in a very uninterested sort of way—the kind of way in which one goes through a photographic album. When the covers were lifted up, Jack and Maggie just saw something, for a moment, that looked like a piece of bright patchwork, or part of a harlequin's dress, and then it was gone again. They could neither of them have believed that the butterflies, which had been so full of beauty when flying about in their natural surroundings, could have lost so much of it, and looked so very inferior, when pinned in rows inside boxes.

“Because, you see,” said the Great Morpho Butterfly, just as if he had understood what they were thinking, “a great part of our beauty was our life and our motion, and it was that, and that only, that made us interesting, so that, if you take *that* away, you can't expect us to look at all the same. Then, of course, if you take away the sun and the air and the trees and flowers, as well, and put us into absurd little boxes in dark, dingy rooms, that makes it ever so much worse. We can't be expected to flash much in places like that. I doubt if even I could, effectively, under such very unfavourable conditions. As for seeing me a quarter of a mile off, as you can when I'm alive in my own forests, sometimes, well, you can try if you like—in London or any other large city.”

“Oh no, Mr Morpho,” said Jack, “that wouldn't do,

because I shouldn't be able to see you, because of the walls and houses."

"Exactly," said the Morpho Butterfly. "Walls and houses are not the right things for us. We are not fitted for such surroundings, and, depend upon it, if people really want to see us—if they really do care about it—they will come to pay us visits in our own homes, and, instead of killing us, as a reward for the pleasure we have given them, will leave us alive there, to give the same pleasure to others when they come."

"But——" said Jack.

"Of course, if you really want to exterminate us——" said the Great Morpho Butterfly.

"Oh no, Mr Butterfly, I'm sure he doesn't," said Maggie. "He won't collect butterflies any more."

"But it wouldn't be exterminating you, just to get a few specimens," said Jack.

"Oh yes, it would," said the Morpho Butterfly. "Most of the animals that have been exterminated have been exterminated in that very way."

This puzzled Jack a good deal, at first, because he thought it must be by killing a great many of them that animals were exterminated, and not only a few. But when he had turned it over in his mind, a little, it seemed to him that what the Morpho Butterfly really meant was that if numbers of people *all* took a few specimens, and kept on doing it, over and over again, that *that* would make a great many (and even a very great many), until, at last, there would be no more specimens to take. This

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seemed to him more and more likely to be the right meaning, and when the Morpho Butterfly, who had been quivering his wings and antennæ ever since he had last spoken, said suddenly, "As for specimens, it's a word I've no patience with, and the fewer, the worse, in my opinion," he felt quite sure of it.

"You mean the more, not the fewer, don't you, Mr Butterfly?" said Maggie.

"I mean what it really is, and not what people only say it is," the Morpho Butterfly answered. "If a man, or a boy" (here he looked full at Jack, and gave quite a fierce flash with his wings), "were to want one of us only, or two, or even three—some precise number—I might have confidence in him, even though I did hate him" (here there was another flash), "but, in my experience, the man who goes on killing and killing, and *never* leaves off, is the man who wants just a few specimens. Oh, don't talk to me in that way, *please*."

"But, Mr Morpho Butterfly," said Jack, "isn't collecting insects entomology?"

"No," said the Morpho Butterfly, in a very convinced tone of voice, "it is not."

This was the most astonishing answer that Jack had ever heard made to any question. He had spoken to his parents on the subject, and to some other grown-up people too—even to some of his schoolmasters—and they had all seemed to think that, to be an entomologist, one had only to collect insects and stick pins through them—how could they all be mistaken? It was clear that the Morpho Butterfly was wrong, and the proper

thing to do—though Jack was afraid he wouldn't find it easy—was to undeceive him. "Please, Mr Mor——", he began.

"What I mean," said the Morpho Butterfly, interrupting him, "is that it is not *real* entomology. *Real* entomology is finding out about the habits of insects, and that you can only do by watching them whilst they are alive, because after they are dead, you know, they haven't any habits. You admit *that*, I suppose?"

Of course Jack had to admit that, and the Butterfly continued, "Very well, then, if you keep killing insects—of course I mean respectable insects, not fleas and so forth——"

"Yes, of course, Mr Butterfly," said Maggie cheerfully—for this settled a difficulty which had occurred to her more than once.

"Why, then, as I say," the Morpho Butterfly continued, "they get fewer and fewer until at last there are no more of them left, and then one can know nothing of them."

"Oh yes, in books, Mr Butterfly," said Jack.

"But one can find out nothing new about them," said the Butterfly, "and the great pleasure of real entomology is doing that. Even if one does know the habits of a really interesting insect, it is much better to see them than only read about them, especially as what one reads in books is generally wrong."

"Oh no, Mr Morpho," said Jack—he felt sure that this must be a mistake—"not in good books."

"Good or bad," said the Morpho Butterfly, "they

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generally turn out to be wrong—or at any rate not quite right—every ten years or so, and sometimes a great deal sooner. Perhaps a very good one may go on being right for a year or two longer, but such cases are exceptional.”

“I know it’s like that with the history books,” said Maggie, “all except the dates of the kings and queens.”

“They’re always changing, themselves, at any rate,” said the Great Morpho Butterfly (just as if *he* had read history). “You see,” he continued, “the covers of books wear out, so that they have to be rebound, and it’s just the same with their insides. If you don’t believe me, you can ask the bookworm, on whose authority I have it. He lives inside all kinds of books, you know, and he tells me the changes he has witnessed in every department are quite remarkable. Nothing, in his opinion, can ever be settled—that’s his philosophy.”

This was quite a new idea to Jack, who had always thought that there was nothing in the world quite so certain as what one reads in a good natural history book.

“So you see,” went on the Great Morpho Butterfly, “if the sham entomologists—for that’s what *I* call them—keep killing all the beautiful and interesting insects that there are, it will get more and more difficult for the real entomologists to study their habits, or for anybody to see their beauty. What the fields and the forests look like when there are no butterflies flying about in them, you have seen already, so you can judge for yourselves

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what it will be when there is not even a bright beetle or pretty grasshopper to be seen.”

“Except in horrid drawers and boxes,” said Maggie, who was altogether of the Butterfly’s opinion.

“Exactly,” said the Morpho Butterfly. “Mark my words” (it was the second time he had used this expression and again he spoke very solemnly), “if things go on as they are now, nobody who lives in the country will be able to see a butterfly except by going to London.”

“Oh, I shouldn’t like that, Mr Butterfly,” said Jack—for what, he thought would be the use of a butterfly-net under such circumstances.

“Then don’t help to produce such a shocking state of things,” said the Morpho Butterfly. “That’s what you have been doing, you know, because you’ve been collecting butterflies.”

“Oh, but he won’t any more,” said Maggie; “I’m sure he won’t.”

“I haven’t got very many,” Jack said. “I’ve hardly begun yet—properly.”

“There could be no better time for leaving off,” said the Great Morpho Butterfly.

“But I haven’t filled a single——” Jack was beginning.

“Let me tell you,” said the Morpho Butterfly, “that, whenever you have killed any insect and stuck a pin through it, you have been a sham entomologist. But you can’t do that here, you know, and even only wanting

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to will make you a *very* unpopular character. Now the question is if you would like to be a real entomologist, because if you would there's some use in your staying here, but if you wouldn't there isn't."

But Jack did want to stay, because he thought it was interesting, and he certainly wanted to be a real entomologist. Of that he was quite sure, and so, of course, he said that he did.

"In that case," said the Morpho Butterfly, "and if you are prepared to go through the book in a right spirit—which will be very different from the spirit in which you began it—perhaps you will come out a real entomologist and not merely a sham one, as you are now, at the end of it."

"I'm not a sham entomologist," said Jack indignantly, for, though he was not quite so sure, now, as to what real entomology was, he didn't like being spoken of in that way.

"Then you agree to the conditions?" said the Morpho Butterfly.

Jack hesitated a little, but he thought that, as he couldn't collect butterflies now, he might just as well agree not to collect them, and so at last he said, "Yes."

"You must promise, you know," said the Morpho Butterfly—"never to collect, which, of course, means never to kill us any more. And by 'us' I mean insects."

"But if I *can't* collect you——" said Jack—for after all, he would rather not have promised.

"That doesn't matter," said the Morpho Butterfly.

JACK PROMISES THE GREAT MORPHO BUTTERFLY

“You might try to, although you can’t, and to have someone trying to collect one all day long would be almost as bad as being really collected—a most insufferable state of things!”

“Oh, all right, then, I promise not to—or to try either,” said Jack—and then he repeated the words.

“Very well,” said the Great Morpho Butterfly, “then from now we commence a new chapter.”

And as he said that, in a moment the long gallery, with the desks, and the stuffed animals and the sauntering people who looked so very little interested, had all disappeared, and there were the butterflies back again, looking more beautiful than ever.