



CLASSIC LIVING BOOK  
THE STORIES  
MOTHER NATURE  
TOLD HER CHILDREN

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Jane Andrews

COMPLETE AND UNABRIDGED

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*The Stories Mother  
Nature Told Her  
Children*

by

JANE ANDREWS





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## *Introduction*

Do you know Mother Nature? She it is to whom God has given the care of the earth, and all that grows in or upon it, just as he has given to your mother the care of her family of boys and girls.

You may think that Mother Nature, like the famous “old woman who lived in the shoe,” has so many children that she doesn’t know what to do. But you will know better when you become acquainted with her, and learn how strong she is, and how active; how she can really be in fifty places at once, taking care of a sick tree, or a baby flower just born; and, at the same time, building underground palaces, guiding the steps of little travellers setting out on long journeys, and sweeping, dusting, and arranging her great house,—the earth. And all the while, in the midst of her patient and never-ending work, she will tell us the most charming and marvellous stories of ages ago when she was young, or of the treasures that lie hidden in the most distant and secret closets of her palace; just such stories as you all like so well to hear your mother tell when you gather round her in the twilight.

A few of these stories which she has told to me, I am about to tell you, beginning with this one.



# *Sketch of Jane Andrews*

by

MARGARET ANDREWS ALLEN.

*Reprinted from the "Kindergarten Magazine."*

*I*n the little Wisconsin town of Wilton, on Arbor Day, the children, in making their selection of names for the trees they planted, chose these three: "Washington, Longfellow, and Jane Andrews," — names which must have embodied for them some real personality, and thus secured their affection and loyalty. Last autumn a class of children in Portland, Ore., met at the house of their teacher, for a "Jane Andrews afternoon," to talk about this friend of theirs, and her books, making her one of themselves for those pleasant hours. And yet none of these persons—teacher or pupils—had ever seen Miss Andrews, and it was only through her books that she had become a real person to them. This has made me think that some account of my sister, and how these books came into being, might interest

her many friends all over the country, who know her merely through the children of her thought.

Through all her life, my sister had a great fondness for children, and a power of winning their confidence and love. But she had never thought of putting into writing the stories with which she often fascinated them, till in 1860, after intimate association with the children in her little school (in our old home at Newburyport, Mass.), "the stories grew of themselves," as she said. These stories appeared in 1862, under the title of *The Seven Little Sisters who Live on a Round Ball that Floats in the Air*. This was soon followed by *Each and All*, carrying on the story of the Seven Sisters.

I have always thought that we people who grow up on the seacoast feel our connection with all the nations of the world, the unity of races, more as a matter of instinct and circumstance than of reason.

The middle sea contains no crimson dulse;  
Its deeper waves cast up no pearls to view.  
Along the shore my hand is on its pulse,  
And I converse with many a shipwrecked crew.

To add to this natural tendency from position, was the fact that our ancestry on one side belonged to the merchant marine of New England; and many a tale of their adventures by sea and land, in strange

countries and among strange people, were the fire-side entertainment with which our mother beguiled the long winter evenings, while the distinct sound of the sea lent reality to the tale. And to her stories were added our father's rich store of old Scottish and English legends and ballads, and the stories of old New England, of which he had an endless store. Thus we grew up with a wide interest and a realization of things beyond our sight. The great outside world was peopled for us with real beings, not the dim shades which many children glean from second-class geographies. In after years, looking back on these stories of our childhood, we understood that only that which is endowed with life and reality is capable of interesting a child and bearing a vital part in his education. We learned, also, how the bent and interests of one's life are always influenced, and often determined, by the education of early years.

When my sister graduated from the Normal School at West Newton, Mass. (now the Framingham Normal School), she first put into writing, in her valedictory, her ideas on the teaching of geography,—the same ideas which she afterwards carried out in teaching the children of her little school, and in the writing of *The Seven Little Sisters*, which grew out of that teaching. In this she was led, as all true lovers of children are, by the thoughts of

the children themselves stimulating her thought and enabling her to give her Seven Sisters a real personality. To many a child, The Brown Baby is just as real as her own baby sister in the cradle by her side; and many a child with her sled longs for Agooknack's brisk little dogs, and looks with added interest at the dogs in the Eskimo Village at the World's Fair, or the seal in the zoological gardens at Philadelphia, because they are old friends of hers through these stories.

In a report of an entertainment given some years ago at the Perkins Institute for the Blind, we find that even there the Seven Sisters have found their way. I will quote the account as it appeared in the *Boston Transcript* at the time:

“While Mr. Hawkes was speaking, the little kindergartners had been diligently modeling in clay; and when he had ceased they gave an exercise called The Seven Sisters. The first tiny creature showed a round ball, and told us that it was a large ball that could float through space, and had men and trees on it; in short, it was the earth, which contained the homes of the Seven Sisters. The next child told of the little dark sister who lived in a warm country and ate cocoanuts, and she showed a cocanut. The next child told of the Eskimo sister who dwelt in a hut, and exhibited a clay hut. The fourth one

described the life of an Arab and her country, and had a successful model of an ostrich. Then a little girl told of the Swiss maiden who dwells high on the Alps, and of her brother the wood carver, and held up a bowl and spoon which were like the little Swiss girl's. The sixth girl showed some chopsticks with which the little Chinese girl eats, and the seventh told a very pretty story of the African sister, who wears bracelets and anklets of gold. The last of the Seven Sisters was the German maiden who lives on the Rhine. Then the sixth girl explained that though the Seven Sisters lived on different parts of the globe, they were all under the loving care of one Father.

Quite a number of these stories grew out of real events. The story of Louise, the Child of the Rhine, had its rise in the account a German emigrant gave my sister of his early life of hardship not far from Chicago, after happy days of prosperity near the Rhine. In *Each and All*, sequel to the *Seven Sisters*, Agoonack's wonderful voyage on the ice island is modeled after the real adventures of the crew of the *Polaris*. The little figures of clay, in *Christmas Time for Louise (Each and All)*, were really modeled by some little children in Kansas, when a circle of educated people tried to bring something beside the toil and privations of pioneer life into their

children's lives. The spirit of all this is brought out in the story of Louise.

Geographical plays grew naturally out of her work in the little school which she carried on in our house for many years, and each play was enthusiastically acted by her school children.

To "The Ten Boys on the Road from Long Ago to Now"—probably the most widely known of all her books excepting the *Seven Sisters*—she gave the most careful study, and it remained longest in her mind before committing it to paper. She desired greatly that each fact should be accurate as well as interesting. Her respect for children was too sincere for her to give them anything but the best work. She wished to make the noblest traits of all times and nations helpful to the boy and girl of today. The ruling lesson which her *Boys* teach is embodied in the closing sentence: "It is not what a boy has, but what he is, that makes him valuable to the world and the world valuable to him."

The "Stories Mother Nature Told Her Children" is a collection of the articles which appeared in *Our Young Folks* and *The Riverside Magazine*, shortly after the publication of the *Seven Sisters*, and were collected by my sister Emily and myself after the death of my sister Jane. She had intended to do this herself, and had already told me of the title which

we have used. In this book, also, there are many articles which I can easily place. The sixty-two little tadpoles lent joy to my childhood. What the Frost Giants Did to Nannie's Run really happened to some friends of ours in the early days of Washington Territory. Sea-Life is founded on the shipwreck of my sister Caroline in the Caribbean Sea, and Little Sunshine is a real child. The same story was told by Colonel Higginson in *Our Young Folks*, under the title of "Carrie's Shipwreck."

But the book which contains the most personal incident, and which is much less widely known than the others, since it has not found its way into the schools, is "Only a Year, and What it Brought." The story tells how a thoughtless but warm-hearted girl learned the joy of leading a helpful life, by putting her whole heart into the opportunity which came to her. "Something to do, and the power to do it," was my sister's answer, when asked her idea of a happy life. On page 111 is a description of my sister's room, as she fitted it up for herself when about sixteen years old. "Katie's Auction" is one which she really conducted for an old black woman in "Guinea", the African suburb of our town. The Thanksgiving party, in which the portraits of the ancestors are the only guests, brings in the old stories of our fireside. In fact, a great part of this book is based on real events,

which my sister used to illustrate the beauty and nobility of our everyday life that “thanks God for the opportunity offered and accepted.”

## *The Story of the Amber Beads*

*I* know a little Scotch girl: she lives among the Highlands. Her home is hardly more than a hut; her food, broth and bread. Her father keeps sheep on the hillsides; and, instead of wearing a coat, wraps himself in his plaid, for protection from the cold winds that drive before them great clouds of mist and snow among the mountains.

As for Jeanie herself (you must be careful to spell her name with an ea, for that is Scotch fashion), her yellow hair is bound about with a little snood; her face is browned by exposure to the weather; and her hands are hardened by work, for she helps her mother to cook and sew, to spin and weave.

One treasure little Jeanie has, which many a lady would be proud to wear. It is a necklace of amber beads,—“lamour beads,” old Elsie calls them; that is the name they went by when she was young.

You have, perhaps, seen amber, and know its rich, sunshiny color, and its fragrance when rubbed; and do you also know that rubbing will make amber

attract things somewhat as a magnet does? Jeanie's beads had all these properties, but some others besides, wonderful and lovely; and it is of those particularly that I wish to tell you. Each bead has inside of it some tiny thing, incased as if it had grown in the amber; and Jeanie is never tired of looking at, and wondering about, them. Here is one with a delicate bit of ferny moss shut up, as it were, in a globe of yellow light. In another is the tiniest fly,—his little wings outspread, and raised for flight. Again, she can show us a bee lodged in one bead that looks like solid honey, and a little bright-winged beetle in another. This one holds two slender pine-needles lying across each other, and here we see a single scale of a pine-cone; while yet another shows an atom of an acorn-cup, fit for a fairy's use. I wish you could see the beads, for I cannot tell you the half of their beauty. Now, where do you suppose they came from, and how did little Scotch Jeanie come into possession of such a treasure?

All she knows about it is, that her grandfather,—old Kenneth, who cowers now all day in the chimney-corner,—once, years ago when he was a young lad, went down upon the seashore after a great storm, hoping to help save something from the wreck of the "Goshawk," that had gone ashore during the night; and there among the slippery

seaweeds his foot had accidentally uncovered a clear, shining lump of amber, in which all these little creatures were embedded. Now, Kenneth loved a pretty Highland lass; and, when she promised to be his bride, he brought her a necklace of amber beads. He had carved them himself out of his lump of amber, working carefully to save in each bead the prettiest insect or moss, and thinking, while he toiled hour after hour, of the delight with which he should see his bride wear them. That bride was Jeanie's grandmother; and when she died last year, she said, "Let little Jeanie have my lamour beads, and keep them as long as she lives."

But what puzzled Jeanie was, how the amber came to be on the seashore; and, most of all, how the bees and mosses came inside of it. Should you like to know? If you would, that is one of Mother Nature's stories, and she will gladly tell it. Hear what she answers to our questions:—

"I remember a time, long, long before you were born,—long, even, before any men were living upon the earth; then these Scotch Highlands, as you call them, where little Jeanie lives, were covered with forests. There were oaks, poplars, beeches, and pines; and among them one kind of pine, tall and stately, from which a shining yellow gum flowed, just as you have seen little drops of sticky gum exude



from our own pine-trees. This beautiful yellow gum was fragrant; and, as the thousands of little insects fluttered about it in the warm sunshine, they were attracted by its pleasant odor,—perhaps, too, by its taste,—and once alighted upon it, they stuck fast, and could not get away; while the great yellow drops oozing out surrounded, and at last covered, them entirely. So, too, wind-blown bits of moss, leaves, acorns, cones, and little sticks were soon securely imbedded in the fast-flowing gum; and, as time went by, it hardened and hardened more and more. And this is amber.”

“That is well told, Mother Nature; but it does not explain how Kenneth’s lump of amber came to be on the seashore.”

“Wait, then, for the second part of the story.

“Did you ever hear that, in those very old times, the land sometimes sank down into the sea, even so deep that the water covered the very mountain-tops; and then, after ages, it was slowly lifted up again, to sink indeed, perhaps, yet again and again?

“You can hardly believe it, yet I myself was there to see; and I remember well when the great forests of the North of Scotland—the oaks, the poplars, and the amber-pines—were lowered into the deep sea. There, lying at the bottom of the ocean, the wood and the gum hardened like stone, and only

the great storms can disturb them as they lie half buried in the sand. It was one of those great storms that brought Kenneth's lump of amber to land."

If we could only walk on the bottom of the sea, what treasures we might find!

## *The New Life*

*I*t is May,—almost the end of May, indeed, and the Mayflowers have finished their blooming for this year. It is growing too warm for those delicate violets and hepaticas who dare to brave even March winds, and can bear snow better than summer heats.

Down at the edge of the pond the tall water-grasses and rushes are tossing their heads a little in the wind, and swinging a little, lightly and lazily, with the motion of the water; but the water is almost clear and still this morning, scarcely rippled, and in its beautiful, broad mirror reflecting the chestnut-trees on the bank, and the little points of land that run out from the shore, and give foothold to the old pines standing guard day and night, summer and winter, to watch up the pond and down.

Do you think now that you know how the pond looks in the sunshine of this May morning?

If we come close to the edge where the rushes are growing, and look down through the clear water, we shall see some uncouth and clumsy black bugs

crawling upon the bottom of the pond. They have six legs, and are covered with a coat of armor laid plate over plate. It looks hard and horny; and the insect himself has a dull, heavy way with him, and might be called very stupid were it not for his eagerness in catching and eating every little fly and mosquito that comes within his reach. His eyes grow fierce and almost bright; and he seizes with open mouth, and devours all day long, if he can find any thing suited to his taste.

I am afraid you will think he is not very interesting, and will not care to make his acquaintance. But, let me tell you, something very wonderful is about to happen to him; and if you stay and watch patiently, you will see what I saw once, and have never forgotten.

Here he is crawling in mud under the water this May morning: out over the pond shoot the flat water-boatmen, and the water-spiders dance and skip as if the pond were a floor of glass; while here and there skims a blue dragon-fly, with his fine, firm wings that look like the thinnest gauze, but are really wondrously strong for all their delicate appearance.

The dull, black bug sees all these bright, agile insects; and, for the first time in his life, he feels discontented with his own low place in the mud.

A longing creeps through him that is quite different from the customary longing for mosquitoes and flies. "I will creep up the stem of this rush," he thinks; "and perhaps, when I reach the surface of the water, I can dart like the little flat boatmen, or, better than all, shoot through the air like the blue-winged dragon-fly." But, as he crawls toilsomely up the slippery stem, the feeling that he has no wings like the dragon-fly makes him discouraged and almost despairing. At last, however, with much labor he has reached the surface, has crept out of the water, and, clinging to the green stem, feels the spring air and sunshine all about him. Now let him take passage with the boatmen, or ask some of the little spiders to dance. Why doesn't he begin to enjoy himself?

Alas! see his sad disappointment. After all this toil, after passing some splendid chances of good breakfasts on the way up, and spending all his strength on this one exploit, he finds the fresh air suffocating him, and a most strange and terrible feeling coming over him, as his coat-of-mail, which until now was always kept wet, shrinks, and seems even cracking off while the warm air dries it.

"Oh," thinks the poor bug, "I must die! It was folly in me to crawl up here. The mud and the water were good enough for my brothers, and good enough