

FOR EVERY BOY AND GIRL

THE FISHER-BOY



By Margaret Johnson.

Oh, as brown as a nut from his bare little toes
To the tip of his truly Assyrian nose,
The fisher-boy, little Tiglates,
Among the fall rushes sat fishing for carp
With a line very long and a hook very sharp,
As he sat every day,
Merry-hearted and gay,
And fished in his ancient Assyrian way,
By the banks of the river Euphrates.

A cloud on the highway, a sound in the air—
Now who could be coming, his fishes to scare,
And his basket not yet over-brimming!
His line from the water he carefully drew,
And after a gay little flourish or two
On the pipe he had made
From the rushes that swayed
In the river, a tune so enchanting he played
That the fishes to listen came swimming.

But the king was out hunting that day by the shore
Some twenty ferocious big lions or more,
And 't was this that had startled Tiglates;
With thunder of hoof-beat and rattle of wheel,
And shimmer of satin and sparkle of steel,
The grand cavalcade and the royal parade
Their glittering way, as it happened, had made
To the banks of the river Euphrates.

But even a king may grow weary in time
Of a royal amusement, however sublime,
And now by the river he halted;
His bow was too heavy, his arrows were dull,
His fan-bearers served but the breezes to lull,
The flies they were rude,
And the sun would intrude,
And in short his Assyrian Majesty's mood
Scarce befitted a rank so exalted!



"QUITE AS SWEET TO AN EARLY ASSYRIAN
EAR AS THE MUSIC OF BACH
OR BEETHOVEN."

The king, as he turned his imperial frown
On the stream, for presuming to spatter his gown,
He spied in the rushes the fisher-boy brown,
With his pipe and his basket of wicker;
And, seized with a sudden and royal caprice,
He vowed he must have for his supper a piece
Of that very same fish:
And 't was also his wish
That the piper should play, ere he tasted the dish,
That the moments might pass for him quicker.

Then ran the prime minister, florid and fat,
In a little gold fillet instead of a hat,
And a lot of gold tassels and fringe and all that,
And a dozen proud nobles behind him;
And down on the wondering fisher they pounced,

And the fish from his basket they speedily bounced,
And bore him away,
Never stopping to say
"By your leave!" for his Majesty's humor that day
Made it wise very promptly to mind him.



"THEY TOOK HIM AWAY."

In state on his throne with his purple-fringed tent
(For he carried one with him wherever he went),
And its cushions with gold interwoven,
He sat, while Tiglates, a trifle abashed
By the splendor that round him, bewildering,
Flashed,
Played a melody clear,
And—you may think it queer!—
Quite as sweet to an early Assyrian ear
As the music of Bach or Beethoven.

The king was delighted. "This fisher," he cried,
"No more in the wilderness here shall abide!
He shall come to my palace, shall stand at my side;
For, whatever his name and his fate, he's
A genius!" And straight, ere the boy could draw
back,
They had hustled him into a—no, not a hack,
But a chariot proud;
And away like a cloud
He was whirled, with the rest of the glittering crowd,
From the banks of the river Euphrates.

Now all of the wonderful things that befell
At the end of the journey, I really can't tell,
For the time, if we tried it, would fail us,
Each room in the palace was big as a church
And although for a window in vain you might
search,
There were portals a score,
And beside every door
Such a great winged bull as delighted of yore
The mighty King Sardanapalus.



"THEY SHOWED HIM THE QUEEN."

Here little Tiglates, the fisher unknown,
They dressed up in silks of an exquisite tone,
Perfumed with Assyrian eau-de-cologne,
And embroidered with sphinx and with griffin;
They fed him with locusts (you wouldn't like that!),
Pomegranates, pineapples, and partridges fat;
They showed him the queen,
Who, majestic of mien,
Couldn't move (so I judge from the pictures I've
seen)
For the jewels her garments were stiff in!

They showed him the gardens, the pride of the
world;

They had all his ringlets exquisitely curled
By a fine Babylonian barber.
He played for the king, and right merrily, too;
Yet—I know you will hardly believe it is true
That he had, with all this,
The presumption to miss
A low hut by the river, while tasting the bliss
Of a feast in his Majesty's arbor!

But for halls that were splendid and bulls that were
big,
If the truth must be spoken, he cared not a fig.
Nor for garments of tints that were Tyrian;
He wanted his mother, he wanted his home,
He wanted the dear muddy marshes to roam,
And the reeds by the stream
Just a beautiful dream

You think 't was a pity? Why, then you have
missed—
And 't is yours to find out—of my story the gist!
For to roam like the breezes wherever you list,
Or to dwell in exceedingly great ease

Shut up in a palace, with pleasure and pelf—
Why, even King Sardanapalus himself,
In his sovereignty high,
Might have thought with a sigh
Of the fisher, content with the reeds and the sky
By the banks of the river Euphrates!



NATURE-STUDY



This dear little goose of a
girlie—

"Who ever had notions like hers?
"If I lived in an evergreen forest,
I'd never be cold!" she avers.
And how could that happen, my dearest?
"Why, 'cause," her reply is the clearest—
"I'd go to the fir-tree that's nearest,
And buy me a nice set of
furs!"



THE SPELLING CLASS.



I love all of the days
Of the beautiful world,
Every day every hour and minute,
I could go on living forever and never
Grow weary of any-thing in it.