

**WINGS AND
STINGS. A TALE FOR
THE YOUNG**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649441273

Wings and Stings. A Tale for the Young by A. L. O. E.

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Cover @ 2017

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A. L. O. E.

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WINGS AND STINGS.

"Then I can't go to-night,—I will not go!" exclaimed Polly, sinking down and burrowing into tears.—Page 44.

WINGS AND STINGS.

A TALE FOR THE YOUNG.

BY

A. N. O. E. I. E.

AUTHOR OF THE "ILLUSTRATED TALE," "CHILDREN OF THE OPENING,"
"THE WOODS," &c.

How doth the little busy bee
Improve each stirring hour,
And gather honey all the day,
From every opening flower.



T. NELSON AND SONS, LONDON; EDINBURGH;
AND NEW YORK.

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WINGS AND STINGS.

CHAPTER I.

THE BIG HIVE AND THE LITTLE ONE.

"HAD you not better go on a little faster with your work, Polly?" said Minnie Wingfield, glancing up for a minute from her own, over which her little fingers had been busily moving, and from which she now for the first time raised her eyes.

"I wish that there were no such thing as work!" exclaimed Polly from her favourite seat by the school-room window, through which she had been watching the bees thronging in and out of their hive, some flying away to seek honied treasure, some returning laden with it to their home.

"I think that work makes one enjoy play more," replied Minnie, her soft voice scarcely heard amidst the confusion of sounds which filled the school-room, for there was a spelling-class answering questions at the moment, and

the hum of voices from the boys' school-room, which adjoined that of the girls, added not a little to the noise.

The house might itself be regarded as a hive, its rosy-cheeked scholars as a little swarm of bees, and knowledge as the honey of which they were in search, drawn, not from flowers, but from the leaves of certain dog's-eared books, which had few charms for the eyes of Polly Bright.

"I never have any play!" said the little girl peevishly. "As soon as school is over, and I should like a little fun, there is Johnny to be looked after, and the baby to be carried. I hate the care of children, mother knows that I do, and I think that baby is always crying on purpose to tease me!"

"Yet it must be pleasant to think that you are helping your mother, and doing your duty."

Polly uttered a little grunting sound, which did not seem like consent, and ran her needle two or three times into her seam, always drawing it back instead of pushing it through, which every one knows is not the way to get on with work.

"Why even these little bees," Minnie continued, "have a sort of duty of their own, and how steadily they set about it!"

"Pretty easy duty! playing amongst flowers, and feasting upon honey!"

"Oh! but"—

"Minnie Wingfield, no talking allowed in school!" cried the teacher, from the top of the room, turning towards the corner near the window. "Polly Bright, you are always the last in your class!"

This time the lazy fingers did draw the needle through, but a cross ill-tempered look was on the face of the little girl, while her companion, Minnie, colouring at the reproof, only worked faster than before.

We will leave them seated on their bench with their sewing in their hands, and passing through the little window, as only authors and their readers can do, cross the narrow garden with its small rows of cabbages and onions, bordered by a line of stunted gooseberry bushes, and mixing with the busy inhabitants of the hive, glide through the tiny opening around which they cluster, and enter the palace of the bees. Now I have a suspicion, that though my young readers may be well acquainted with honey-comb and honey, and have even had hives on a bench in their own gardens, they never in their lives have been inside one, and are totally ignorant of the language of bees. For your benefit, therefore, I intend to translate a little of the buzzing chit-chat of the winged nation; and, begging you to consider yourself as little as possible, conduct you at once to the palace of Queen Farina.

A very curious and beautiful palace it is, the Crystal Palace itself is not more perfect in its way. Look at the long lines of cells, framed with the nicest care, row above row, built of pure white wax, varnished with gum, and filled with provisions for the winter! Yonder are the nurseries for the infant bees; these larger apartments are for the royal race; that—largest of all—is the state-chamber of the queen! How straight are the passages, just wide enough to let two travellers pass without jostling! And as for the inhabitants of this singular palace, or rather, I should say, this populous city, though for a moment you may think them all hurrying and bustling about in utter confusion, I assure you that they are governed by the strictest order, each knows her own business, her own proper place! I am afraid that before you are well acquainted with your small companions, you may find some difficulty in knowing one from another, as each bee looks as much like her neighbour as a pin does to a pin. I am not speaking, of course, of her majesty the queen, distinguished as she is from all her subjects by the dignified length of her figure and the shortness of her wings; but you certainly would not discover, unless I told you, that the little creature hanging from the upper comb is considered a beauty in Bee-land. You must at once fancy your eyes