

same height as herself, and when she had looked under it, and on both sides of it, and behind it, it occurred to her to look and see what was on the top of it.

She stretched herself up on tiptoe, and peeped over the edge of the mushroom, and her eyes immediately met those of a large blue caterpillar, which was sitting with its arms folded, quietly smoking a long hookah, and taking not the least notice of her or of anything else.

[Illustration]

For some time they looked at each other in silence: at last the caterpillar took the hookah out of its mouth, and languidly addressed her.

"Who are you?" said the caterpillar.

This was not an encouraging opening for a conversation: Alice replied rather shyly, "I--I hardly know, sir, just at present--at least I know who I was when I got up this morning, but I think I must have been changed several times since that."

"What do you mean by that?" said the caterpillar, "explain yourself!"

"I ca'n't explain myself, I'm afraid, sir," said Alice, "because I'm not myself, you see."

"I don't see," said the caterpillar.

"I'm afraid I can't put it more clearly," Alice replied very politely, "for I ca'n't understand it myself, and really to be so many different sizes in one day is very confusing."

"It isn't," said the caterpillar.

"Well, perhaps you haven't found it so yet," said Alice, "but when you have to turn into a chrysalis, you know, and then after that into a butterfly, I should think it'll feel a little queer, don't you think so?"

"Not a bit," said the caterpillar.

"All I know is," said Alice, "it would feel queer to me."

"You!" said the caterpillar contemptuously, "who are you?"

Which brought them back again to the beginning of the conversation: Alice felt a little irritated at the caterpillar making such very short remarks, and she drew herself up and said very gravely "I think you ought to tell me who you are, first."

"Why?" said the caterpillar.

Here was another puzzling question: and as Alice had no reason ready, and the caterpillar seemed to be in a very bad temper, she turned round and walked away.

"Come back!" the caterpillar called after her, "I've something important to say!"

This sounded promising: Alice turned and came back again.

"Keep your temper," said the caterpillar.

"Is that all?" said Alice, swallowing down her anger as well as she could.

"No," said the caterpillar.

Alice thought she might as well wait, as she had nothing else to do, and perhaps after all the caterpillar might tell her something worth hearing. For some minutes it puffed away at its hookah without speaking, but at last it unfolded its arms, took the hookah out of its mouth again, and said "so you think you're changed, do you?"

"Yes, sir," said Alice, "I ca'n't remember the things I used to know--I've tried to say "How doth the little busy bee" and it came all different!"

"Try and repeat "You are old, father William"," said the caterpillar.

Alice folded her hands, and began:

[Illustration]

1.

"You are old, father William," the young man said,
"And your hair is exceedingly white:
And yet you incessantly stand on your head--
Do you think, at your age, it is right?"

2.

"In my youth," father William replied to his son,
"I feared it might injure the brain
But now that I'm perfectly sure I have none,
Why, I do it again and again."

[Illustration]

3.

"You are old," said the youth, "as I mentioned before,

And have grown most uncommonly fat:
Yet you turned a back-somersault in at the door--
Pray what is the reason of that?"

4.

"In my youth," said the sage, as he shook his gray locks,
"I kept all my limbs very supple,
By the use of this ointment, five shillings the box--
Allow me to sell you a couple."

[Illustration]

5.

"You are old," said the youth, "and your jaws are too weak
For anything tougher than suet:
Yet you eat all the goose, with the bones and the beak--
Pray, how did you manage to do it?"

6.

"In my youth," said the old man, "I took to the law,
And argued each case with my wife,
And the muscular strength, which it gave to my jaw,
Has lasted the rest of my life."

[Illustration]

7.

"You are old," said the youth; "one would hardly suppose
That your eye was as steady as ever:
Yet you balanced an eel on the end of your nose--
What made you so awfully clever?"

8.

"I have answered three questions, and that is enough,"
Said his father, "don't give yourself airs!
Do you think I can listen all day to such stuff?
Be off, or I'll kick you down stairs!"

"That is not said right," said the caterpillar.

"Not quite right, I'm afraid," said Alice timidly, "some of the words have got altered."

"It is wrong from beginning to end," said the caterpillar decidedly, and there was silence for some minutes: the caterpillar was the first to speak.

"What size do you want to be?" it asked.