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Ririro

IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

Ririro

A Happy Surprise

Here you see a branch from the red maple.

On the flowering shoots three buds grow side by side. The middle, smaller one holds the leaves. These leaves do not appear until the two outer, larger buds have burst into flower clusters; for the flowers of the red maple appear before its leaves.

I want you to bring to school as many different kinds of branches as you can find, and I hope you will examine them all very carefully. Notice the position of their buds, and whether these grow close together or are scattered far apart, and whether one bud grows just opposite another; and look for the marks left by the leaves which broke off last fall.

When the buds are large enough, you will find it interesting to pull them apart (but you must do this with great care) and see how beautifully wrapped are the baby leaves and flowers.

I chose the branch of the horse-chestnut for special examination, because its large buds show their contents plainly.

When a bud grows on the tip of a stem, its work is to carry on that stem; but when it grows just above a leaf scar, you can be sure that it is a young branch. Such a branch may bear either leaves or flowers, or both.

But buds do not all grow up at the same time, or necessarily at all.

The strongest ones are the first to open. The others may keep quiet for some time, not unfolding, perhaps, unless some of the earlier ones are killed. In this case, the waiting buds try to fill the gap, and carry on the good work of clothing the tree with leaves and flowers.

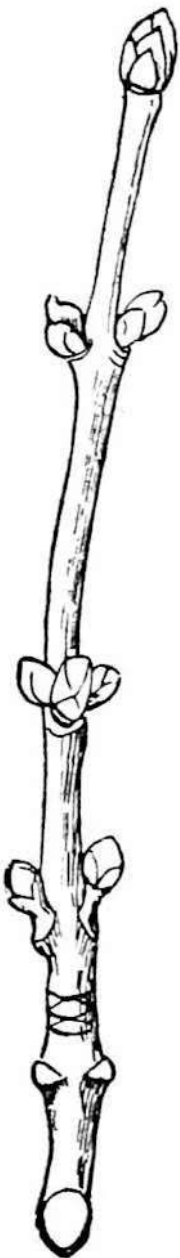
Sometimes they wait over till another year, and occasionally a bud never opens at all. You all enjoyed planting seeds, and watching them grow under your very eyes.

Now I am going to propose to you a scheme which has given me quite as much pleasure as my pot gardens.

When the buds on the winter branches have swelled the least little bit, after a few warm days in February perhaps, go to the woods and cut several branches in places where no one will miss them, and take them home and put them in warm water, in a warm, bright corner, and see what happens.

It will be a real joy to you, watching these little buds get bigger and bigger, till the outer wrappings are forced apart, and either thrown well aside, or pushed off altogether; and you will be filled with delight when the

delicate baby leaves begin to stretch themselves, or,



better still, when the pure, beautiful flowers burst from the brown, dead-looking twigs.

Get branches of cherry, apple, peach, and pear; and bring in the pussy willow, the maple, the Forsythia, the spicebush, and, if you can find it, the mountain laurel; and if you do not pass many moments of almost breathless pleasure watching the wonders these budding branches are so eager to reveal, you are not the children I take you to be.

