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READ ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

Jack the preacher

Abbie Phillips Walker

One morning in very early springtime the big Evergreen Trees began to talk about the part they took in telling all the woodland flowers that it was spring.

"Why, if we were not here," said one Evergreen Tree, "who would awake these sleepy springtime flowers to their duty? I should like you to tell me!"

"You speak truly, brother," said another tree. "We are ever green and need no awakening to our duty; but for us the woods would be a sorry-looking place in the summer. Those lazy crocuses would sleep right on and on!"

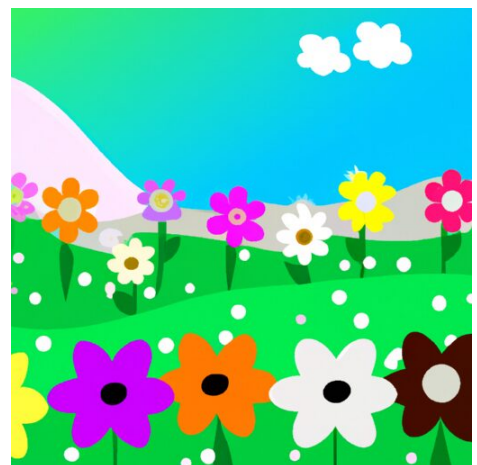
"Yes, and the little violets never would dare show their timid little heads," said another Evergreen Tree, "when the soft winds begin to run through the woods. It is then we call forth to all sleeping flowers and shrubs and bushes: 'Awake! It is time to get up!'"

"And who would tell the Bee summer was on its way?" said another Tree. "He would never get his work started at all if it were not for us. How lucky the flowers and all the woodland things are that we are here to tell them when to get up!"

So the Evergreens talked and bragged about how they preached Springtime to the woodland folk, and as they talked all the spring flowers awoke and the insects began lazily to stretch their wings, but it was not because of what the big Evergreen Trees were saying; no, it was because they had heard the voice of the little woodland preacher.

And who was he, do you think? Why, no other than Jack-in-the-pulpit, who gives a talk every spring to all the woodland dwellers on just how to bloom and how to buzz and when to do it.

Every night for ever so long before it is time for the crocus or the violet or any early spring flower to bloom, when it is the magic hour the Fairies come running through the woods and touch Jack on his nodding little head under the dry leaves and up he pops and begins to preach.



So when the flowers and bees and things heard the big Evergreen Trees talking they nodded to each other and laughed. "Isn't it funny to hear them?" said a

beautiful yellow crocus. "Those tall trees know nothing about the real truth of things, do they?"

"Fancy thinking they awaken us!" said another flower. "Why, they themselves are asleep. They get so used to winter they stand still all the time, but who is to tell them the truth about our Preacher Jack? The Evergreen Trees never bend or sway to one side or the other far enough to see the beauties of our woodland spring. They only know what the winds tell them."

"Let them think what they like," said a little bush of pretty blossoms. "It does not hurt Jack-in-the-pulpit if the Evergreens think they are the preachers of the woods, for all the spring and summer flowers know that Jack has always been our preacher and the Evergreens haven't any pulpit to preach from. Only they do not know it."

And so the sleepy old Evergreens thought they were the ones who awakened the flowers and preached to them about their duty, and no one ever told them about little Jack-in-the-pulpit, who always has and always will preach about the spring and summer to all the woodland dwellers.

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