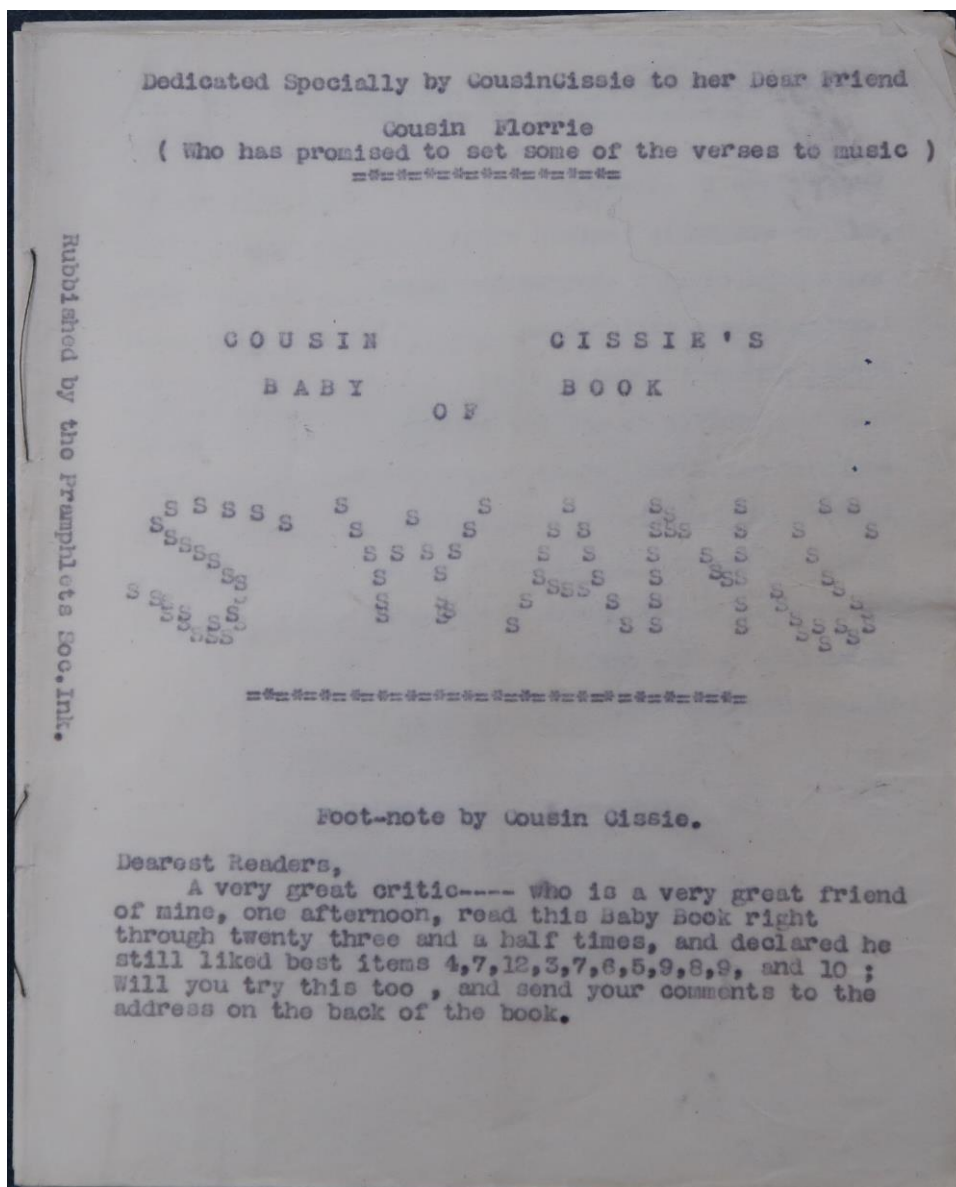


Cousin Cissie's Baby Book of Swans¹



*Dedicated specially by Cousin Cissie to her Dear Friend Cousin Florrie
(who has promised to set some of the verses to music)*

[vertically on left] Rubbished by the Pramphlets Soc. Ink.

Footnote by Cousin Cissie

Dearest Readers,

A very great critic – who is a very great friend of mine, one afternoon, read this Baby Book right through twenty three and a half times, and declared he still liked best items 4, 7, 12, 3, 7, 6, 5, 9, 8, 9, and 10; will you try this too, and send your comments to the address – at the end

¹ This text has been transcribed from two instances of the handwritten version of the lyrics and a typewritten version. There are a few minor differences from the text in the musical score of 1946; on the whole the handwritten version all in PAT's hand has been preferred, with fewer commas and double exclamation marks.

1 All by an elf in the moonlight

Black swans in silver lace
puff at the tulip lantern wicks,
and a dappled lynx admires the scene,
leaning upon a pillar base.
Purple grebes in sandal shoes
take the snuffer to and fro between
sublunar nectarines whose damask sheen
mirrors the lake-lap's indigo green,
twinkling beneath the midnight dew.
All sentinels must quench their spark
in welcome to the dark
innumerable embrace.

Canopy of filigree designed
by subterranean cheiromorphs
with nimbose sequins unconfined
to palanquin their water-kind
their soporific water-kind.

Dawn toads in plumes and braid
gallantly raise ladders for the morning band,
and riddling hairs are found amongst the shale
of the ruined balustrade.
Early shrew mice count their linen masks
in readiness for secret bouts of ale
distilled by studious owl or quail;
and choirs of embryo-quince regale
the closures where their creeper basks
with shrillsome bursts of appetite
in welcome to the bright
luxuriant parade.

Loom of tapestry entwined
by subterranean cheiromorphs
with vivid warlock-stones divined
to seneschal their waterkind,
their effervescent waterkind.

2 Blushing on the shelf

Inverted porcupine of coral pink,
Sebastian pierced with shafts of steel,
among the drifting algae you would sink,
and lose your tender cochineal.

But stranded on the crowded mantelpiece
a different world, my little swan, you scan.
The blurring of the gas-ring, and obese
and sumptuous bubbles, fudge stirred in the pan.

In my quaint pallid sanctum hedged around,
with creamy walls, collected china ware,
the pretty cretonnes, and the twinkling sound
of little thimbles; the frown or stare

of Holbein's English Royal court
and coloured prints of antiquated war
and outside the frozen panes distort
the flagstones leading to the crisp reedy shore,

Ah yes my little swan, it is a better place
for you to be upon the littered mantelpiece
and neighbour snuffbox or the joss-stick case,
than lose your hue and pins in the embrace
of the cold lake's wan ambergris.

3 Entertaining

Morning toads are never able
to keep away from our breakfast table,
hats off in the house, you know;
etiquette, manners, or out you go.

These welcome polished little beasts
assist us at our morning feasts.

That dish is out of bounds my dears
try hopscotch on the tray-cloth squares,
and Auntie Dear, upon my soul,
you've dipped one in the sugar bowl,
and on a lump you've stubbed its nose,
now there are the sugar-tongs, – try those.

Lucky it's not a toad you've got
to scoop within the honey-pot.

Oh Aunt Dalilah !! but it is !
what inconceivable carelessness !

4 Pyjama ridge

Woolly blue swan, with a slit down your back,
I slip my hand in the velvet crack,
And out of it blossoms in flower-silk folds
my summer kimono in lemons and golds.

I'm sorry your neck is so strangled and bent,
and your legs were deprived of development,
but really I think you sufficiently sweet
as you loll on the tuck of my linen-white sheet.

5 Aunt detaining

The Spring is delicious, my waterside grove
is thriving with blossoms of every clan;
I sprinkle them daily as gaily I rove
down the beds with a jade-green watering can.
There's a flower with eyelashes tinted with mauve,
and another that's scented of marzipan,
and further along's the intoxicant clove
near a plant with a spray like an ostrich fan.

Herbaceous borders, my sedulous pride
spread in every direction, in every degree;
there are sweet little miniatures by the lake-side
and nearer the house, by the walnut tree,
the frolic of foliage and colour grows wide,
with flagstones placed here and there for me
to wander amidst the flowers and guide,
with fingers of green their prolixity.

So perhaps this gay morning I'll meander about
and see what dear Auntie Dalilah is at.
Now where can she be? I'll give her a shout,
but no, past that boxhedge is bobbing her hat.
She's watering the dear panacea, no doubt.
Oh Auntie Dalilah ! whatever is that !
Your watering can with its sinuous spout
is a horrified swan, with its plumes dropping out !
Pray let it go free, you are squeezing it flat;
and you've ruined its green little woollen cravat !

6 Tea at the foot of the garden

Oh! Aunt Dalilah, dear, I fear,
I've sat upon the trumpet of your ear.
This wayward picknicking idea of yours deserves
to make us one big mass of nerves.

The horrid little beasts that will descend
to find within our teacups their sad end;
The quite obnoxious spot where-at,
dear Aunty, you elected to put down your hat.

And now a horsefly stings me on the wrist,
and naturally you rip your skirt if you insist
in rescuing a jampot rolling down into the lake,
Oh Aunt Dalilah, Please don't lean back on the cake!

It is a trial to be pestered thus
by miscreant squirrel and by duckbilled platypus,
the most objectionable picnic ever known,
No, No! Dear Aunt Dalilah, that's no telephone!

Oh heavens! You have grappled by the crop
a wretched swan whose squawks beg you to stop,
Ah! breathless bird, how sorely you atone
for being taken for an ebony telephone.

That comes of chewing electric flex, you naughty bird!
Now, silly, put it down, it makes you look absurd!

7 Me at the foot of the banisters

- (a) Oh dearest Aunt Dalilah, there upon the highest stair,
you are mouthing at the banister, and tearing at your hair.
 You have flung a soggy loofah which has slapped me in the face.
 Do you think such things appropriate to this time or to the place?
In fact, I take the liberty to protest and to declare
that it does me scanty pleasure, and it does you scantier grace,
that you bounce upon the landing in that very scanty lace.
- (b) You scream that you're frustrated of your matutinal lave,
I suggest you find a better provocation when you rave.
 If an unassuming waterfowl is swimming in your tub,
 a few polite suggestions would at once obtain your scrub.
And consider the commotion and disturbance it would save,
if you didn't wave that bath-brush like a Caribbean club,
for it's losing all its foliage like an autumn-shedding shrub.
- (c) Now a reasonable civility in dealing with the bird
would have rendered your position just a trifle less absurd.
 That it swallowed half your bathsalts and then fluttered up the flue,
 I blame in part your Wellingtons, but mostly I blame you.
And because it has a purple beak, it cannot be inferred
that to strike it with the loofah is the proper thing to do,
any more than if its beak was coloured copper, say, or blue.
- (d) And finally my dearest Aunt, when you have ceased to howl,
allow me to investigate your very curious towel.
 For pray observe it has webbed feet that fasten round your throat,
 and its emerald-coloured plumage strikes a very novel note.
I declare, dear Aunt Dalilah! you have beached another fowl!
that towel was once the weirdest swan I ever had afloat!
It's [*sic*] chances of survival, I regret, are most remote.
Which annoys me, Aunt Dalilah, for on swans I simply dote!

8. The rains haven't come

Now squinting swan in an agony,
please do not vomit over me;
protruding beakily above
the paving to my garden grove,
you hover at the corner tile
and dribble, which is infantile.
For someone's let a tennis-ball
into your leaden gullet fall,
and so, poor mediaeval spout,
you do not let much water out.
Funny such a thing should foil
the purpose of an old gargoyle.
But what can be that ugly splashing from the lake?
Is Aunt Dalilah wreaking horrid havoc in her wake?
Wherever can my garden rocking-chair have gone?
But dearest Aunt! how could you throw it in the water by mistake?
You mean you merely took it for a silk-embroidered swan?
I think this subject is not one to jest much more upon.

9 Vox humana

revised version

Pride of the garden, gold-leaf toad
feather in hand, and bow bestowed,
I think your spurs a little unwise
but would you care for a big surprise?
So we went to the cucumber frame and there
was a plant with a blossom of copper hair
and from its midst came a dirge and a mist
like a couple of kettles in tea-time tryst;
the toad perceived at once, it was wrong,
for only a swan could have uttered that song;
and the toad's eyes greyed, and he sped up a tree,
and lodged with a quail and an owl and a bee
who had borrowed an empty nest from me
for their summer holiday happy and free.

9 Vox humana

original version

Pride of the garden, golden toad
feather in hand, and bow bestowed,
I think your spurs a little unwise
but would you care for a big surprise?
So we went to the cucumber frame and there
was a plant with a blossom of copper hair
and from its midst came a dirge like a gong
and only a swan could have uttered that song;
The toad's eyes greyed and he sped up a tree
and lodged with a quail and an owl and a bee
who had borrowed an empty conifer nest from me
for a summer holiday happy and free.

10 Aunt arraigning

Oh take the kettle off the shining lamp,
and brew the silver pot of amber tea,
arrange the cushions for the jolly camp,
for here are gathered such a galaxy!

The gayest of the gay from everywhere,
with bushy tails, or lovely cuspid ears,
and some have quite delicious opal hair
in fact you never saw such gaiety, my dears!

And little Foxglove with his dainty wings
is passing round the cakestand, like an elf,
and artful Aphorism who fashions rings
is making secret signals at myself.

Oh what can be amiss, oh what indeed?
Is Aunt Dalilah causing more unrest?
Even beneath an anaesthetic she'd
still arouse acutely anxious interest.

Oh dearest Aunt Dalilah pray observe
the teapot you invert to fill each cup
is not the actual object of your verve,
but one of our poor swans that you've picked up.

And Aphorism still is making signs.
Come over here, my poppet, and explain.
To understand, my brain, I fear, declines,
pray render your hypothesis again.

Do you agree my dearest sapient guests
with what my little friend declares?
Poor Aunt Dalilah interests
our searching universal stares.

And can it be a yellow beak
that overhangs what might have been her lip?
What side-long eyes revolve and peek !
Oh we have made a slip!

That frosty crest, the dusky brow,
of course, my dears, we see it now!
No wonder, Aunt Dalilah, how you carried on,
considering you are nothing but a swan!
More gorgeous drinkie, darlings, cram the dainties free;
We'll launch dear Aunt Dalilah in the briny after tea!

11 La Plume de ma Tante

There is a mist of many a coloured feather,
a thickening cloud of down besets the air.
The garden's coated deep as snowy weather,
and yet it is a summer evening fair.
Why does this smothering downpour linger so?
A myriad cockatoos in moulting flight,
migrating to their southern archipelago,
have showered them on my garden in despite.

The orange-halves that on the beds repose
are hidden thickly, and the slugs they'd catch
no longer meet beneath, their lives to lose,
but wander at their will in this new thatch.

I hear the eidered owl complain atop the tree
telling the quail and bee in ample voice,
it is some swans' hilarity, quite plain to see,
and that their humour falls outside his choice.

And what's more right, I cannot say,
For all my swans are out at play;
They're sporting with a talisman today;
Anything! But let the dears be madly gay!

12 'D' at the foot of a letter

Farewell sweet waterkind so near to my heart,
and wellington waders, your permanent part.
Bid loofah and bathbrush repose and peace,
and read what Dalilah has penned to her niece.

Dear Hostess immaculate, here are my thanks
pray do not despise me as one of those cranks
I really enjoyed every hour of my stay
for your place is just charming, your neighbours most gay.

But Age and Debility make their advance
and lead us old fogeys a terrible dance.
Mistakes of identity, errors of vision,
illusions of hearing, which earn us derision.

And I've frequently taken a bird or a beast
for things they didn't resemble the least.
But never before was I so far-gone
as myself to be taken for a Swan!

13. Turn back the flock

Threading the flags of the curling skies,
vermillion shrieking, rosary-wise,
I see you glitter in fall and rise,
swans of the unguent nether verge.

Beads carnelion, dappled furs,
and the watchful lynx in the coppice purrs,
and counts his riddling tail of the burrs,
to the superlunary feathered dirge.

Lavender grows like the witches broom
and shoots small sparklets of magic bloom
which fade with the crimson croak of doom
from the lymph's fan-tracery surge.

Splashes of copes dipped into the mere,
give glimmers of onyx and jacinth rare
and lamps of a lovelier sheen appear
where the broideries rich with the water merge.

Leaning upon my derelict urn
I see the intricate tapestries churn,
shred by shred in the lake they burn,
but not to a sultry ash they turn,
(but listen to the weeping wind)
For these are the homecoming waterkind.

The nectarine drops from the clustered wall
and other sequestered treasures fall
at the passing breath of the hyacinth pall
which sinks like the sigh of some seneschal
that all these dreams opaquely divined:
Homecome are the dark waterkind.

P.S. Well, dears; wasn't the end delicious! (of course, they were a weeny bit late, but they did get there in the end – the darlings!)

[Comment by Cousin Gussie: "And where was that?"]

P.P.S. Cousin Cissie is oh so terribly sorry about that address, but she has decided that she must avoid it being foreclosed; but she thanks you so much for reading her Baby Book twenty four whole times, and she feels in her bones – both of them – that you enjoyed it, every comma and colon, even the last full stop.

CONFIDENTIAL

However did those awful toads get in?
Oh they just came, so she invited them.
And what about the lynx?
Well, that was always missing anyway.

Extract from letter from Cousin Cissie to Cousin Florrie.

"... No friend of mine could possibly play such a nasty wicked joke on me, as to write such music; it's not at all what I wanted. I assume it to be a forgery; done with malice to sever our cousinhood; whoever wrote that music will not be able to claim performing rights etc, as I shall publish it all as my own, dear Florrie, just to spite the mean criminal – whom I believe to be (hush!) our almost unmentionable Cousin Gussie. (poor poor depraved Augusta!) ..."

FOR SALE

Advertisement There will be a sale of property on the 4th inst.

Auctioneer: Mr Azulius Toadtapper

- (1.) Carraway Farm and acre-age down to Serpent Water.
- (2) Furniture & Effects, including embroidered stuffs, tapestries etc.
- (3) Livestock, including nine hundred and thirty three assorted (but somewhat miscellaneous) swans.

Dedicated Specially by Cousin Cissie to her dear friend
Cousin Florie.

(who has promised to set some of the verses to music)

M.S. Tranchell. 4. 115/1

Cousin Cissie's

Baby Book

of

SWANZ

Footnote by Cousin
Cissie.

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twenty three and a half times, and declared he still liked
items 4, 7, 12, 3, 7, 6, 5, 9, 8, 9, 10; will you try too, and send your comment
the address at the back.

Published by the Pamplets Soc. Inc.

Transcribed and edited by J D Gwinnell, January 2024

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