

from Down in the Forest**MONKEY**

" ALL monkeys are brothers,"
 Agreed the amiable small creature,
 "But one has to draw the line,"
 Dropping a coconut to show just where.
 His smile was *in extremis*,
 Like the end of a cocktail evening.
 His lips twitched, he was squeamish,
 Hated hurting heads or feelings.
 "A joke's a joke," he stuttered,
 "But some things even I cannot condone.
 My brothers wouldn't like it.
 I speak not for myself alone."
 The drooping palm-leaves
 Were playing their end-of-performance tunes.
 The tree-trunk bowed
 Like a tactful manager despising his patrons.

SILKWORMS

THERE was dismay in the famous northern city worms,
 As the Buddhists objected to the smothering of silk
 (Which is done to stop them biting their way
 Out of the cocoon and injuring the silk.)
 Millions of silkworms stewing in steam-chambers.
 Are silkworms not our little brothers?
 Yes but our sisters need to dress themselves in silk;
 Or need the job of spinning it.
 The crisis lasted till a special worm was unearthed
 Who leaves a hole in the top of his cocoon
 Through which he can emerge without a show of force.
 This amenable worm is now left unsmothered
 To make millions of large and fruitful butterflies,
 And the guiltless silk embraces the limbs of our little sisters.
 So, all silkworms are our brothers once again,
 And the good news resumes its progress round the world.
 Mosquitoes gaze at the tins of "Shelltox,"
 Wondering what moral it holds for them.

WHITE ELEPHANT

THE white elephant
 Was handled with great care and labelled "Fragile."
 They tied him to a police post, then 'phoned
 For a very large lorry and empty roads.

They wiped away the elephantine sweat
 Every few minutes with pocket handkerchiefs,
 Lest the pink patches should run, and the whole dissolve
 To a merely metaphorical white elephant.

The animal preened himself and desired a mirror.
 "Clearly not all elephants are precisely brothers!"
 He trumpeted modestly to himself,
 This innocent beneficiary of pigmental accident.

The pink patches were in the oddest places,
 But one should not look a gift horse in the mouth.
 Technically White, he was a dish for a king
 And promotion (head of police post) for the finder.

The teacher, halted in the roadside traffic,
 Observed the stroking of an elephant with handkerchiefs.
 "The humanity of Man!" he trumpeted, "Who but He
 Would care for a poor old elephant with skin disease!"

MAN

WE should treasure this cobra
 Were it the only one.
 Can't Nature take the human hint,
 Must we help her on?

Soul, then morals, tried and failed.
 If this fails too, there's only tooth and claw.
 Yet brothers are exhausting, row on row:
 Give me a friend—he murmured—three or four,

Who know all men are brothers, even though
 They may not like their brothers saying so.