

**Amber beads..**

**From The stories mother nature told her children**

**By Jane Andrews.**

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**Do you know Mother Nature? She it is to whom God has given the care of the earth, and all that grows in or upon it, just as he has given to your mother the care of her family of boys and girls. You may think that Mother Nature, like the famous "old woman who lived in the shoe," has so many children that she doesn't know what to do. But you will know better when you become acquainted with her, and learn how strong she is, and how active; how she can really be in fifty places at once, taking care of a sick tree, or a baby flower just born; and, at the same time, building underground palaces, guiding the steps of little travellers setting out on long journeys, and sweeping, dusting, and arranging her great house,--the earth.**

**And all the while, in the midst of her patient and never-ending work, she will tell us the most charming and marvellous stories of ages ago when she was young, or of the treasures that lie hidden in the most distant and secret closets of her palace; just such stories as you all like so well to hear your mother tell when you gather round her in the twilight. A few of these stories which she has told to me, I am about to tell you, beginning with this one. I know a little Scotch girl: she lives among the Highlands. Her home is hardly more than a hut; her food, broth and bread. Her father keeps sheep on the hillsides; and, instead of wearing a coat, wraps himself in his plaid, for protection from the cold winds that drive before them great clouds of mist and snow among the mountains.**

**As for Jeanie herself (you must be careful to spell her name with an ea, for that is Scotch fashion), her yellow hair is bound about with a little snood; her face is browned by exposure to the weather; and her hands are hardened by work, for she helps her mother to cook and sew, to spin and weave. One treasure little Jeanie has which many a lady would be proud to wear. It is a necklace of amber beads,--"lamour beads," old Elsie calls them; that is the name they went by when she was young. You have, perhaps, seen amber, and know its rich, sunshiny color, and its fragrance when rubbed; and do you also know that rubbing will make amber attract things somewhat as a magnet does? Jeanie's beads had all these properties, but some others besides, wonderful and lovely; and it is of those particularly that I wish to tell you.**

**Each bead has inside of it some tiny thing, incased as if it had grown in the amber; and Jeanie is never tired of looking at, and wondering about, them. Here is one with a delicate bit of ferny moss shut up, as it were, in a globe of yellow light. In another is the tiniest fly,--his little wings outspread, and raised for flight. Again, she can show us a bee lodged in one bead that looks like solid honey, and a little bright-winged beetle in another. This one holds two slender pine-needles lying across each other, and here we see a single scale of a pine-cone; while yet another shows an atom of an acorn-cup, fit for a fairy's use. I wish you could see the beads, for I cannot tell you the half of their beauty.**

**Now, where do you suppose they came from, and how did little Scotch Jeanie come into possession of such a treasure? All she knows about it is, that her grandfather,--old Kenneth, who cowers now all day in the chimney-corner,--once, years ago when he was a young lad, went down upon the seashore after a great storm, hoping to help save something from the wreck of the "Goshawk," that had gone ashore during the night; and there among the slippery seaweeds his foot had accidentally uncovered a clear, shining lump of amber, in which all these little creatures were embedded. Now, Kenneth loved a pretty Highland lass; and, when she promised to be his bride, he brought her a necklace of amber beads. He had carved them himself out of his lump of amber, working carefully to save in each bead the prettiest insect or moss, and thinking, while he toiled hour after hour, of the delight with which he should see his bride wear them.**

**That bride was Jeanie's grandmother; and when she died last year, she said, "Let little Jeanie have my lamour beads, and keep them as long as she lives." But what puzzled Jeanie was, how the amber came to be on the seashore; and, most of all, how the bees and mosses came inside of it. Should you like to know? If you would, that is one of Mother Nature's stories, and she will gladly tell it. Hear what she answers to our questions:-- "I remember a time, long, long before you were born,--long, even, before any men were living upon the earth; then these Scotch Highlands, as you call them, where little Jeanie lives, were covered with forests. There were oaks, poplars, beeches, and pines; and among them one kind of pine, tall and stately, from which a shining yellow gum flowed, just as you have seen little drops of sticky gum exude from our own pine-trees.**

**This beautiful yellow gum was fragrant; and, as the thousands of little insects fluttered about it in the warm sunshine, they were attracted by its pleasant odor,--perhaps, too, by its taste,--and once alighted upon it, they stuck fast, and could not get away; while the great yellow drops oozing out surrounded, and at last covered, them entirely. So, too, wind-blown bits of moss, leaves, acorns, cones, and little sticks were soon securely imbedded in the fast-flowing gum; and, as time went by, it hardened and hardened more and more. And this is amber." "That is well told, Mother Nature; but it does not explain how Kenneth's lump of amber came to be on the seashore." "Wait, then, for the second part of the story. "Did you ever hear that, in those very old times, the land sometimes sank down into the sea, even so deep that the water covered the very mountain-tops; and then, after ages, it was slowly lifted up again, to sink indeed, perhaps, yet again and again?**

**"You can hardly believe it, yet I myself was there to see; and I remember well when the great forests of the North of Scotland--the oaks, the poplars, and the amber-pines--were lowered into the deep sea. There, lying at the bottom of the ocean, the wood and the gum hardened like stone, and only the great storms can disturb them as they lie half buried in the sand. It was one of those great storms that brought Kenneth's lump of amber to land." If we could only walk on the bottom of the sea, what treasures we might find!**

**The end.**