

# The Elephant and the Rhinoceros.

A Story for Children.

By Ada Leonora Harris.

THE Rhinoceros heaved a sigh which seemed to come from his very boots—and a Rhinoceros. you know, wears very thick boots.

"It's no use," he said. "You can make sausages out of a pig, but you can't make poetry out of a Rhinoceros, and it's no use pretending you can. I've tried it upside down and inside out and sideways, and I can't make it rhyme with anything."

"I once saw a Rhinoceros  
Bathing in the Bosphorus,"  
hummed the Elephant.

The Rhinoceros shook his head. "I'm quite sure you never did," he said. "And it isn't a real rhyme, either."

"It might be better, I admit," said the Elephant; "but it might be a good deal worse. Just lend me a stump of lead pencil, will you? And the back of an envelope or something. I've an idea in my head. And ideas, if not nailed on the spot, generally get mislaid."

"I'm afraid I can't oblige you," said the Rhinoceros, after he had rummaged and routed round his den. "Wait a minute, though. Here's a cabbage stump, and—yes, here's the paper my lunch was wrapped in. Will that do?"

"It's better than nothing," said the Elephant, smoothing out the paper with his trunk and rubbing the cabbage stump to a point.

The Rhinoceros watched him for about half an hour or so in silence. Then he remarked, "I suppose that's poetry you're writing? I saw you bite off that last line to make it the same length as the others."

The Elephant blushed a deep drab. "Wait a bit," he said, "until I've polished it up, and then, if you like, I'll read it to you."

"Take your time," said the Rhino-

ceros; "but mind you only write on one side of the paper—the side that hasn't any mustard on it. Ready? All right, fire away."

Read the Elephant—

"I asked him once, I asked him twice,  
I asked him yet again—"

"That makes three times altogether," said the Rhinoceros. "Why don't you say, 'I asked him three times,' and have done with it?"

"I asked him yet again—that's thrice," went on the Elephant.

"So it is," said the Rhinoceros; "only you might have boiled it down more."

The Elephant ignored this remark, and read on—

"While none—admission was half-price—  
Were near us."

"What was the good of charging half-price if there was nobody there?" interrupted the Rhinoceros. "I call it throwing money away."

"That's poetic licence," explained the Elephant.

"Does that mean poetry may be consumed on the premises?" inquired the Rhinoceros; "because I'm not sure we've got that kind. I don't believe the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals would allow it. What's more, I haven't the least idea what you are driving at."

"If you're going to argue about every line in this fashion," said the Elephant, irritably, "we shall never get through. Poetic licence means look after the rhyme, and leave the sense to look after itself. Now, where was I?"

"Though none—admission was half-price—  
Were near us."

"I said, 'I wish you'd tell me why  
You seem to sum the passage by?'"

"And what are you, you were answered Rai-  
N—"

"That's just what I've always said,"

exclaimed the Rhinoceros, excitedly. "Why was I? When they said, 'Name this animal, why didn't they give me a pet name like—like 'Dodo,' for instance?'"

The Elephant shrugged his shoulders, as much as to imply that he gave it up.

"The tiger in the next-door van,"

he went on,

"I mean the one in black-and-tan—"

"It isn't a tiger," put in the Rhinoceros. "It's a Grizzly Bear—you know that as well as I do—and he's snoring away like anything at this very minute."

"Does a Grizzly Bear wear black and tan?" asked the Elephant, with a long-suffering expression. "I'd got to make it rhyme with 'van' somehow. Let him snore. If you wake him up, as you will if you don't look out, you'll soon find out what Grizzly Bear rhymes with."

"Go on," said the Rhinoceros, hurriedly. "What about the tiger?"

"The tiger in the next-door van," repeated the Elephant;

"Is rather deaf and therefore can not hear us."

("That's a good thing," muttered the Rhinoceros.)

"He answered with a tearful eye. Although to keep things straight I try, You can't deny I'm still Awry—  
Noceros."

"I am," sobbed the Rhinoceros, suddenly giving way to uncontrollable emotion. "I don't deny it. But I'm not to blame. It isn't my fault. It all depends upon the way I'm spelt."

"Well, cheer up," said the Elephant, putting his trunk through the bars and slapping him on the back. "We'll see if we can't spell you differently in the next verse."

The Rhinoceros rubbed his eyes with his hoofs, and gradually became calmer, while the Elephant cleared his throat and read—

"The day is short, the way is long,  
The wind blows hot as well as strong,  
I said, 'Suppose you sing a song—"

"I don't sing," put in the Rhinoceros, hastily. "I'm not the figure for it. And I'm always afraid of breaking down—"

"You're too thin-skinned," interrupted the Elephant. "You're too thin-skinned, as I've often said before, and it's a great mistake."

"I was going to say breaking down the platform," continued the Rhinoceros.

"That's quite another thing," said the Elephant. "I've done that myself before now. Let me see, where was I?"

"I said, 'Suppose you sing a song  
To cheer us?'"

He gave the largest kind of sigh—"

"I beg your pardon, what size did you say?" inquired the Rhinoceros.

"I said 'sigh,' not 'size,'" replied the Elephant, wrinkling his trunk in annoyance at the interruption. "How you do keep putting in and putting me out."

"He gave the largest kind of sigh,"

he repeated, emphasizing the last word with a slap of his trunk,

"Remark'd his throat was rather dry,  
Then sang 'the bloom is on the Rye—  
Noceros.'"

"Is that all?" asked the Rhinoceros, yawning, as the poet looked round for applause; "because I'm dying, simply dying, for my tea."

"There's one more verse," said the Elephant, in a rather hurt tone of voice:

"Then these last words he up and spoke—"

"Up and spoke 'isn't grammar," corrected the Rhinoceros. "You should say 'he spoke up.'"

The Elephant was so disgusted that he drove his trunk right through the paper and read in a voice husky with indignation—

"Then these last words he up and spoke,  
"You're not," he said, "like other folk,  
Who only come to laugh and joke,  
And jeer us."

"I'm really grieved to say 'Good-bye,  
But time is up, and I must fly—"

The Elephant sneezed so loudly that the Grizzly Bear in the next cage woke up with a start, and sat up on his hind legs and made unkind remarks.

"I told you," said the Rhinoceros, as soon as he could get a word in edgewise; "I particularly told you not to write on the mustardy side of the paper!"