

THE PERSEVERING TORTOISE

AND

THE PRETENTIOUS HARE

circa 1904



by

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Once a turtle, finding plenty
In seclusion to bewitch,
Lived a *dolce far niente*
Kind of life within a ditch;
Rivers had no charm for him,
As he told his wife and daughter,
"Though my friends are in the swim,
Mud is thicker far than water."

One fine day, as was his habit,
He was dozing in the sun,
When a young and flippant rabbit
Happened by the ditch to run:
"Come and race me," he exclaimed,
"Fat inhabitant of puddles.
Sluggard! You should be ashamed.
Such a life the brain befuddles."

This, of course, was banter merely,
But it stirred the torpid blood
Of the turtle, and severely
Forth he issued from the mud.
"Done!" he cried. The race began,
But the hare resumed his banter,
Seeing how his rival ran
In a most unlovely canter.

Shouting, "Terrapin, you're bested!
You'd be wiser, dear old chap,
If you sat you down and rested
When you reach the second lap."
Quoth the turtle, "I refuse.
As for you, with all your talking,
Sit on any lap you choose.
I shall simply go on walking."

Now this sporting proposition
Was, upon its face, absurd;
Yet the hare, with expedition,
Took the tortoise at his word,
Ran until the final lap,
Then, supposing he'd outclassed him,
Laid him down and took a nap
And the patient turtle passed him!

Plodding on, he shortly made the
Line that marked the victor's goal;
Paused, and found he'd won, and laid the
Flattering unction to his soul.
Then in fashion grandiose,
Like an after-dinner speaker,
Touched his flipper to his nose,
And remarked, "Ahem! Eureka!"

And THE MORAL (lest you miss one) Is:

There's often time to spare,
And that races are (like this one)
Won not always by a hair.