

MR COCKLE AND MRS TINKLE  
THE ORIGINAL AND MODERNISED  
VERSIONS COMPARED



ORIGINAL SKETCH FOR MR COCKLE & MRS  
TINKLE BY BOTOX PORTER

FOREWORD  
BY MRS AMANDA J THREADBONE

The past, we are often told, is a foreign country, which is to say, frequently out of step with current European thinking and a touch insanitary. Leaving aside, for the moment, the insanitary, is it any the worse for all that? Modern day habits - as the future will doubtless tell us - are not always up to much and many things which are currently vogue - even fashionably *de rigueur* - will seem hide-bound and passé, once they have fallen from favour. A pendulum, as Professor Thrupiece used to say, is never far from swinging and, as a world-renowned 60s swinger himself, he was well-placed to know.

Of course things do and must change. But is progress always Progress with a capital "P"? Take for example an old children's book such as we have here for our consideration and ponder for a moment its message and the language in which that message is expressed. Are not the grammar, syntax and vocabulary rich, associative and more properly becoming of an English-speaking nation rooted in the old certainties and steadfast in the face of the Barbarian assault at our gates? And are not the sentiments themselves - archaic as they might seem - possessed of a certain noble simplicity: the utterings of a people at peace with themselves and aware that the bread does not always fall butter-side up?

Ms Porter's prose - remarkable for a girl not yet 13 years of age - evidences a maturity of thought, an awareness of burgeoning responsibility and a sensibility very much in tune with its times. Perhaps Britain was subjugating the "peoples" of India and Africa and places even more far-flung, but was it not, as we can now attest, for their own good as the principles of fair mindedness, democracy and faith in God were spread upon the hitherto barren wastes? Perhaps, to focus more forensically on the matter in hand, children were - in modern parlance - "repressed" or "held-back", "seen but not heard"; but were they not also unfailingly polite, obedient to their parents and governesses and ready to "do as they were told". Imagine having a Victorian or Edwardian grandchild to stay accompanied by their retinue of carers and compare that with the unattended lumps of petulant dough that fetch up uninvited on one's doorstep today.

Call me old fashioned, but reading these pages, I cannot help but think that something has been lost in the current era. Call it improvement, call it modernity, call it equality. I call it improverishemnet, modishness and mediocrity.

So re-vising the original 1887 text of Mr Cockle and Mrs Tinkle has been a pleasure and an education - and, above all, a reminder of a time when talking back was a crime and failure to finish one's cucumber sandwiches whilst little black children starved in the colonies a sin punishable by God on High.

As my mother was wont to say: "Think on"

Mrs Amanda J Threadbone  
Threadbone Towers



Mr Cockle and Mrs Tinkle are two anthropomorphised creatures whose education in this short volume will stand as an example to real children everywhere. They are the beneficiaries of the educational advantages now available to middle class children in our improving era and are keen to acquire as much practical knowledge of the creatures who will support their future lifestyles as they can. Today their teacher has determined that they shall go on a field walking exercise the better to appreciate the scientific underpinnings of the habitats which will be theirs to command when they are older and wiser. At the risk of enjoyment, they have undertaken to learn as much as they can. By following them on their journey of discovery you too may benefit from the enlightenment which the book of nature freely provides to those with the discipline to study it patiently and diligently. Your parents will have purchased this book (or if importunate will have borrowed it from a Lending Library) for your benefit. Reward their thoughtfulness for your welfare in the way they would most appreciate, which is to say, by treating the volume itself with respect and its content with seriousness.

First they went to The Parson's house. His deplorably sentimental but strictly non-evangelical wife has several pets. Write a short disquisition on the value of domestic animals to Christian women without issue.

Then, respecting the sanctity of private property, they looked over a hedge into the Schoolteacher's Garden. There were manifold different species on display. Identify the *fauna* according to the Linnean system and place them in an evolutionary hierarchy of the sort of which Mr Darwin might approve.

After a lesson in arithmetic, algebra and solid geometry, they went to a lowly peasant's farm. It was predictably filthy. In the farm-yard there were several beasts of burden as well as diverse creatures whose mean and un-Godly existence is justified only by their usefulness to mankind. Can you explain why tending such animals is the natural lot of the less-well educated, whilst best avoided by those with ambition?

Subsequently they proceeded deep into the nearby woodland which was accessible to the public only because of the beneficent generosity of landlord Sir Toby Many-Acres. There was a multiplicity of diverse *genera* therein. Can you adumbrate their proper Latin names as well as determine, on a rational basis, which are most eligible for culling?

Mr Cockle and Mrs Tinkle were the very best of friends. They liked to go on adventures together and to meet other animals in the hope that they too would become good friends. One day they decided to explore. They really wanted to meet lots of interesting creatures and have fun together.

First they went to Mrs Threadbone's house. She had four dogs and four cats. Can you count them?

Then they looked in Miss Sizemore's garden. There were lots of different insects. Do you know how many they found?

After a snack they went to Mrs Oats's farm. In the farmyard were lots of different animals. Can you tell what they are?

Next they went deep into the woods. There were lots of different animals there. Can you see the hedgehog?



At length, they made their way to the meadows which were currently the subject of great agricultural improvement according to the system derived in Norfolk by Lord Leicester. In the meadow there were several types of hare. Which ones do you think would be most suitable for coursing and which for hunting down with dogs?

Eventually, after a pause for refreshment and reflection, they laid down their bibles and repaired to the Zoological Gardens. Identify those species which are native to our British colonies and those native to territories temporarily held by our Nation's foes? Which ones look trustworthy and which bear the shifty hallmarks of their dark-skinned captors?

In the midst of the Zoological Gardens there were some unusual creatures. Which ones would make the best rugs and which the best trophies? Which would be most suitable for taxidermy? Are any particularly eligible for transformation into Smoking Room ashtrays?

It was time for grace and a light repast in order to keep both body and soul in good Christian standing. Afterwards they visited the bird sanctuary. How many of those illustrated are edible and which could be most conveniently stuffed inside another? How many birds would your parents expect to shoot and eat on Christmas Day? [Additional Exercise: Take the total number of birds divided by the total number of species and multiply the product by 4 to the power of 5. When you have determined the answer, estimate [in imperial ounces] the likely weight of feed necessary to sustain that combined sum for a calendar [non-Leap] year.]

At 4 o'clock precisely they arrived at the Aquarium. They observed at remarkably close quarters some marine species of interest to Natural Philosophers of the wider scientific community. Do you know how the smaller ones could be best eviscerated and presented as a gift to Her Majesty in this year of her Jubilee?

Finally they went to the Museum. They encountered a number of curious creatures which are currently subject to draconian control lest their number and nature impede our imperial progress. Can you say in which order they would best be rendered extinct? [You may wish to take into account their danger to colonial administrators and District Officers.] You will also note that a boot once belonging to a mauled infantryman is displayed as a warning sign to others. Hand in all workings.

A little later on they went into the meadows. In the meadow there were lots of hares. Which one do you think is Mummy hare?

Eventually they arrived at the big zoo. What animals did they find there? Which ones did they find twice?

In the middle of the zoo there were some very curious creatures. Which one looks the fiercest? The tiger or the lion?

It was time for lunch. Then they visited the bird sanctuary. How many pairs did they meet?

At 4 o'clock they arrived at the aquarium. They met some ever-so soggy creatures. Do you know what they are?

Finally they went to the museum. They met some strange creatures you don't see alive any more. But something doesn't look quite right. Can you tell which one doesn't belong here?

Mr Cockle and Mrs Tinkle had learned much during their field-walking day. They were undestandably diminished in body but not in spirit by their significant exertions. Soon they were ready for sleep, though they did not neglect to bathe as nanny bid them, wish their parents a fond good night, and thank the Good Lord for all his kindnesses before retiring to their cots. Experience had taught them that a good night's sleep would help them to mark and inwardly digest the many new facts that they had acquired during their providential day.

And so children we leave Mr Cockle and Mrs Tinkle to sleep. It is the sleep of the righteous and to those of you who are also righteous, God-fearing and obedient we wish you peace and pray that the Lord will keep and protect you from all the fears and dangers of this night.

Sleep in the Lord Mr Cockle. Sleep the sleep of the pure-in-heart Mrs Tinkle. Sleep the sleep of the innocent creatures of Creation everywhere. [Except in Tibet where black-hearted heathens even now threaten our gallant troops.]

Bottox Potter  
The Rectory  
Childeoak

Mr Cockle and Mrs Tinkle had lots of fun and met so many new friends. What an exciting day! They were both very tired after their adventures and went to bed especially early. Soon they were fast asleep, dreaming happily of all the creatures they seen. Sleep tight Mr Cockle. Sleep tight Mrs Tinkle. Sleep tight lovely creatures everywhere.





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