

**CHAMBERS'S  
EDUCATIONAL COURSE.  
CHAMBERS'S NATIONAL  
READING BOOKS: BOOK IV**

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**VARIOUS**

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NATIONAL  
READING BOOKS

BOOK IV.

W. & R. CHAMBERS  
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## PREFACE.

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THE FOURTH NATIONAL READING-BOOK is constructed on the same plan as the Third. INFORMATION LESSONS comprise Lessons on Animals, on Health, and on Physical Geography. The *Lessons on Animals* are arranged in a systematic manner, so as to form a simple introduction to Zoology. These embrace the Vertebrate animals. The Invertebrates are treated of in Book V. It is hoped that these, while forming interesting and useful Reading Lessons, will tend to foster a more humane treatment of the lower animals.—The *Lessons on Health* are intended to supply useful information on a subject with regard to which our pupils are left too much in ignorance.—The *Lessons on Physical Geography* are descriptive of the easier and more attractive portions of that subject. It is believed that these three series of lessons will be appreciated as being on the subjects best suited for the young at this stage.

The MISCELLANEOUS LESSONS consist of Narrative, Didactic, and Moral pieces, both in prose and poetry. These include Historical and Biographical Sketches; and the Poetical Extracts, as is proper at this stage, are very numerous.

The more difficult words are accented and have their meanings given at the beginning of each lesson. At the end of the book are Lists of Words for exercise in Spelling, and copious Vocabularies of Saxon, Latin, and Greek Roots, with derivatives.

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THE  
FOURTH NATIONAL READING-BOOK.

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THE VOICES OF SPRING FLOWERS (1).

admira'tion.	har'inger, forerunner.
consequen'tial.	illu'minated, lighted up.
enam'elled.	jer'kin, jacket.
enro'ling.	magnif'icent.
frag'ile, easily broken, delicate.	pecu'liary.

It was spring—flowers enamelled the ground that had so lately been covered with frost; the tender buds upon the trees were swelling and bursting into life; the young shoots that had for many months been wrapped in a clothing of snow, were putting forth their leaves of freshest green; birds sang on the branches, or flew hither and thither, collecting materials for their nests; the wind blew from the south, bearing on its wings the odour of violets. The glorious sun shone gaily on all around, and nature, responding to the warm influence, sent forth its grateful offering of fresh wild-flowers; the squirrels sprang from tree to tree; and the wood-pigeon, nestling in the branches, cooed softly to her mate, and seemed in her voice of love to speak the promise of summer.

In this scene of loveliness, a little girl wandered forth. She stopped frequently to inhale the scent of the sweet violets, and to cull bright flowers as they rose to view; till, wearied with the load she had gathered, she sat down on a grassy mound to arrange her treasures, and with childish glee chatted to each as it passed through her tiny fingers.

At last she exclaimed: 'What is it that makes flowers so beautiful, and all so unlike each other? I wish they could speak to me, and tell me where they lie hidden all the dark cold winter, when the snow lies on the ground!' While occupied with these thoughts, a dreamy influence rapidly stole over her bright fancy, and sleep fell on her heavy eyelids. She did not know that the spot on which she lay was fairy ground, and if there a favoured being chanced to sleep, the secrets of fairy-land would be revealed to that being.

Now, this little girl was born on a Midsummer Eve, and was therefore peculiarly favoured by the fairies. She was, besides, good, gentle, and true, and of a nature such as the good spirits love to watch over; and as that little girl lay with her arms encircling the flowers, her attendant fairy touched her eyes with her enchanted wand, and she opened them on a scene of unspeakable beauty. A strain of music, softer and sweeter than she had ever before heard, fell on her ear; and astonishment held her in silent admiration. She was not frightened, for all was too beautiful; but wonder and delight so filled her mind, that she could only gaze speechless on the scene around her.

She seemed to be in a vast and brilliantly lighted hall; but yet when she looked steadfastly at the ceiling, there was the sky, with its myriads of stars

looking like a net-work of diamonds—the same sky she so often gazed on from her little bed, but far more blue, and the stars more clear and bright. The walls, too, were ever changing; sometimes they appeared like those of some magnificent saloon, with columns and arches hung with tapestry, and brilliantly illuminated; and again, when she looked, they seemed to wave like tall trees, whose tops almost reached the sky. But the most wonderful thing of all, was the company with which this hall was filled. All around her, as far as she could see, was a multitude of little people, all beautiful and all splendidly dressed, but so small, that she could have covered any one of them with her little hand; some were so tiny, indeed, that she could hardly discern their features. She felt that she could not step without crushing some of them, and so remained lying where she was, only raising herself on her elbow, and looking with great delight on all around her. At last she heard a low sweet voice speaking to her.

‘Little girl,’ it said, ‘you were wishing, but a short time since, that the flowers could speak to you; we are the spirits of the flowers, and have heard and granted your wish. You shall now see some of us singly; and then we will answer what questions you like to ask.’

The fairies now retired for a short distance, leaving a little space round the child, in which appeared, one by one, various little beings, all most beautiful, but yet all differing one from the other. And first there came a slender little figure, clothed entirely in robes of purest white, except that the border of her dress and of her veil were of a light green. She was very beautiful, but very, very pale, and so fragile that it seemed as if a breath would have destroyed her. By her side walked a little