

# AUNT JULIA'S

## HOMES IN THE ANIMAL KINGDOM

### THE HOME OF THE SNAIL

Sometime or another this vacation you may go on an excursion or a picnic. If in the place you will visit there is a river, look under the big stones in the river or under fallen trees in the water and surprise a snail. Do not try to catch it but watch it walk away. You will discover that it has only one foot. It is big and broad and flat and spreads out under the snail's body. When it creeps a snail looks as if it were walking on its stomach; so it is sometimes called stomach-footed. The foot of the snail is sticky to help it travel; it pushes ahead and sticks as it goes on its way.

As you may follow the snail, you will find out at once that it carries its home with it wherever it goes. Its shell is a thin and pretty house,



and always exactly the right size. When the snail first hatches, its house is a tiny one with but a single "turn" in it. As a snail travels and eat and grows until its foot is bigger and broader, the house has more and bigger turns in it so that the dweller and the dwelling fit each other all the time. The shell grows on the snail's own body.

A snail takes comfort in its own home. It keeps the wetness of the rain outside and it keeps the moisture of the snail's body inside. The wind cannot blow through the walls.

We have a saying: as slow as a snail. But there is one thing that this slow creature can do quickly. It can vanish inside its house at once and fasten the door after itself. If a bird or a person or some other animal comes suddenly near, the snail folds its broad flap of a foot lengthwise and pulls itself into its shell.

Then there is nothing to be seen but a quiet, shell house, across the doorway of which is drawn a snug, smooth shutter held fast as a bolted door.