

THEN THEY WILL UNDERSTAND Down below the surface of a quiet pond lived a little colony of water bugs. They were a happy colony, living far away from the sun. For many months they were very busy, scurrying over the soft mud on the bottom of the pond.

They did notice that every once in a while one of their colony seemed to lose interest in going about with his friends. Clinging to the stem of a pond lily, he gradually moved out of sight and was seen no more.

"Look!" said one of the water bugs to another. "One of our colony is climbing up the lily stalk. Where do you suppose he is going?"

Up, up, up he went slowly. Even as they watched him, the water bug disappeared from sight. His friends waited and waited but he didn't return.

"That's funny!" said one water bug to another.

"Wasn't he happy here?" asked a second water bug.

"Where do you suppose he went?" wondered a third.

No one had an answer. They were greatly puzzled.

Finally one of the water bugs, a leader in the colony, gathered his friends together. "I have an idea. The next one of us who climbs up the lily stalk must promise to come back and tell us where he went and why."

"We promise," they said solemnly.

One spring day, not long after, the very water bug who had suggested the plan found himself climbing up the lily stalk. Up, up, up he went. Before he knew what was happening, he had broken through the surface of the water, and fallen onto the broad, green lily pad above.

When he awoke, he looked about with surprise. He couldn't believe what he saw. A startling change had come to his old body. His movement revealed four silver wings and a long tail. Even as he struggled, he felt an impulse to move his wings. The warmth of the sun dried the moisture from the new body. He moved his wings again and suddenly found himself up above the water. He had become a dragonfly.

Swooping and dipping in great curves, he flew through the air. He felt exhilarated in the new atmosphere. By and by, he lighted happily on a lily pad to rest. Then it was that he chanced to look below to the bottom of the pond. Why, he was right above his old friends, the water bugs! There they were, scurrying about, just as he had been doing some time before.

Then he remembered the promise: "The next one of us who climbs up the lily stalk will come back and tell where he went and why."

Without thinking, he darted down. Suddenly he hit the surface of the water.

"I can't return!" he said in dismay. "At least I tried, but I can't keep my promise. Even if I could go back, not one of the water bugs would know me in my new body. I guess I'll just have to wait until they become dragonflies, too. Then they'll understand what happened to me, and where I went."

And the dragonfly winged off happily into his wonderful new world of sun and air.