**Matilda**

*Who told Lies, and was Burned to Death.*

Matilda told such dreadful lies,

It made one gasp and stretch one's eyes;

Her aunt, who, from her earliest youth,

Had kept a strict regard for truth,

Attempted to believe Matilda:

The effort very nearly killed her,

And would have done so, had not she

Discovered this infirmity.

For once, towards the close of day,

Matilda, growing tired of play,

And finding she was left alone,

Went tiptoe to the telephone

And summoned the immediate aid

Of London's noble fire-brigade.

Within an hour the gallant band

Were pouring in on every hand,

From Putney, Hackney Downs, and Bow.

With courage high and hearts a-glow,

They galloped, roaring through the town,

'Matilda's house is burning down!'

Inspired by British cheers and loud

Proceeding from the frenzied crowd,

They ran their ladders through a score

Of windows on the ball Room floor;

And took peculiar pains to souse

The pictures up and down the house,

Until Matilda's aunt succeeded

In showing them they were not needed;

And even then she had to pay

To get the men to go away!

It happened that a few weeks later

Her aunt was off to the theatre

To see that interesting play

*The Second Mrs. Tanqueray.*

She had refused to take her niece

To hear this entertaining piece:

A deprivation just and wise

To punish her for telling lies.

That night a fire *did* break out--

You should have heard Matilda shout!

You should have heard her scream and bawl,

And throw the window up and call

To people passing in the street--

(The rapidly increasing heat

Encouraging her to obtain

Their confidence) -- but all in vain!

For every time she shouted 'Fire!'

They only answered 'Little liar!'

And therefore when her aunt returned,

Matilda and the house were burned! *by Hilaire Belloc*