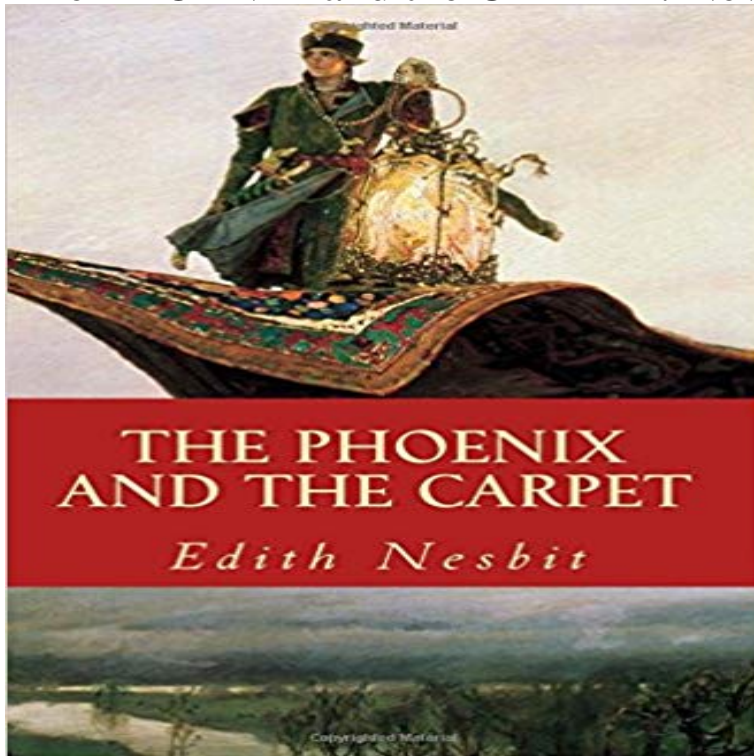


## The PHOENIX and the CARPET: New Edition



It began with the day when it was almost the Fifth of November, and a doubt arose in some breastRoberts, I fancyas to the quality of the fireworks laid in for the Guy Fawkes celebration. They were jolly cheap, said whoever it was, and I think it was Robert, and suppose they didnt go off on the night? Those Prosser kids would have something to snigger about then. The ones I got are all right, Jane said; I know they are, because the man at the shop said they were worth thribble the money Im sure thribble isnt grammar, Anthea said. Of course it isnt, said Cyril; one word cant be grammar all by itself, so you neednt be so jolly clever. Anthea was rummaging in the corner-drawers of her mind for a very disagreeable answer, when she remembered what a wet day it was, and how the boys had been disappointed of that ride to London and back on the top of the tram, which their mother had promised them as a reward for not having once forgotten, for six whole days, to wipe their boots on the mat when they came home from school. So Anthea only said, Dont be so jolly clever yourself, Squirrel. And the fireworks look all right, and youll have the eightpence that your tram fares didnt cost to-day, to buy something more with. You ought to get a perfectly lovely Catharine wheel for eightpence. I daresay, said Cyril, coldly; but its not YOUR eightpence anyhow But look here, said Robert, really now, about the fireworks. We dont want to be disgraced before those kids next door. They think because they wear red plush on Sundays no one else is any good. I wouldnt wear plush if it was ever sounless it was black to be beheaded in, if I was Mary Queen of Scots, said Anthea, with scorn. Robert stuck steadily to his point. One great point about Robert is the steadiness with which he can stick. I think we ought to test them, he said. You young duffer, said Cyril, fireworks are like postage-stamps. You can only use them

once. What do you suppose it means by Carters tested seeds in the advertisement? There was a blank silence. Then Cyril touched his forehead with his finger and shook his head. A little wrong here, he said. I was always afraid of that with poor Robert. All that cleverness, you know, and being top in algebra so often its bound to tell Dry up, said Robert, fiercely. Dont you see? You cant TEST seeds if you do them ALL. You just take a few here and there, and if those grow you can feel pretty sure the others will bewhat do you call it? Father told me up to sample. Dont you think we ought to sample the fire-works? Just shut our eyes and each draw one out, and then try them. But its raining cats and dogs, said Jane. And Queen Anne is dead, rejoined Robert. No one was in a very good temper. We neednt go out to do them; we can just move back the table, and let them off on the old tea-tray we play toboggans with. I dont know what YOU think, but I think its time we did something, and that would be really useful; because then we shouldnt just HOPE the fireworks would make those Prossers sit up we should KNOW. It WOULD be something to do, Cyril owned with languid approval. So the table was moved back. And then the hole in the carpet, that had been near the window till the carpet was turned round, showed most awfully. But Anthea stole out on tip-toe, and got the tray when cook wasnt looking, and brought it in and put it over the hole. Then all the fireworks were put on the table, and each of the four children shut its eyes very tight and put out its hand and grasped something. Robert took a cracker, Cyril and Anthea had Roman candles; but Janes fat paw closed on the gem of the whole collection, the Jack-in-the-box that had cost two shillings, and one at least of the party I will not say which, because it was sorry afterwards declared that Jane had done it on purpose. Nobody was pleased.

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