Matilda by **Hillaire Belloc**

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 aglow   
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