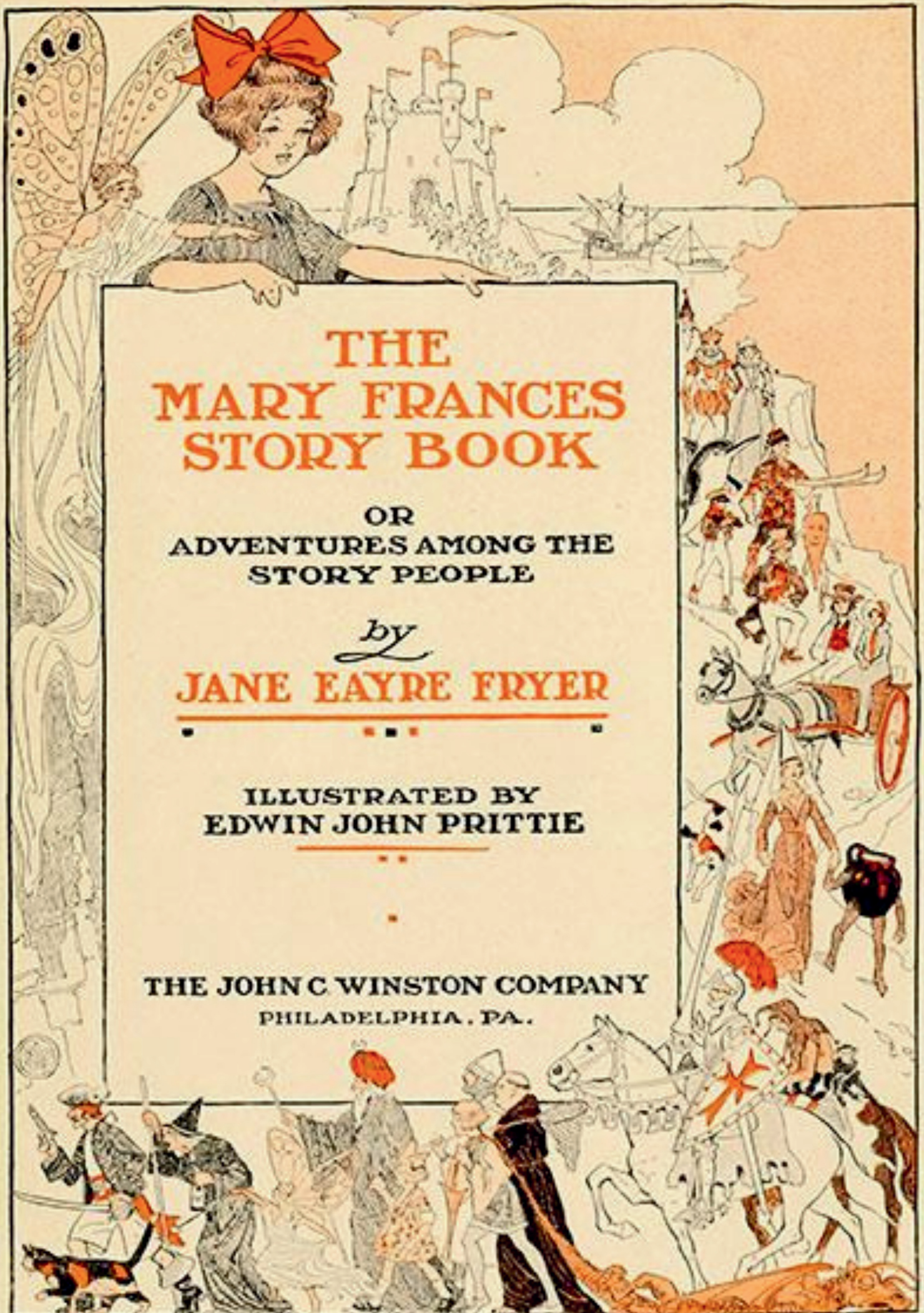


THE MARY FRANCES STORY BOOK

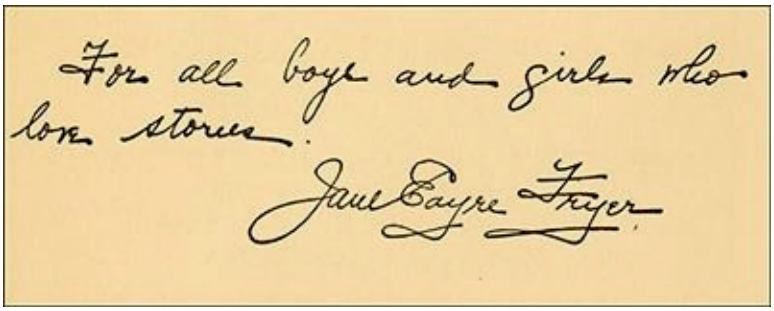
OR
ADVENTURES AMONG THE STORY PEOPLE

by

JANE EAYRE FRYER

ILLUSTRATED BY
EDWIN JOHN PRITTIE

THE JOHN C WINSTON COMPANY
PHILADELPHIA, PA.



For all boys and girls who love stories.
Jane Eayre Fryer

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OR ADVENTURES AMONG THE STORY PEOPLE
by JANE EAYRE FRYER
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THE JOHN C. WINSTON COMPANY PHILADELPHIA, PA.

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PREFACE

THE MARY FRANCES STORY BOOK is different from the other Mary Frances Books. They are part lessons and part story; they teach something about cooking and sewing, knitting and crocheting, housekeeping and gardening, and first-aid—and tell a story, too; but THE MARY FRANCES STORY BOOK is all story.

On a summer afternoon Mary Frances took a holiday and sailed away across the blue water to an island—an island formed by the top of a coral mountain resting in a sea of blue; oh, so blue—a brighter blue than the water in your mother's bluing tub—not the blue that makes you feel sad and blue, but the blue that makes you laugh with happiness. The island itself and the roofs of the houses were coral white, and the green was the green of the palm and banana and mahogany tree. The breezes that blew over them were the warm, soft breezes of the southern sun. This island was the "enchanted island" of the good story-tellers which Mary Frances was allowed to visit. The story people who lived there believed in truth and beauty, and courage and kindness, and these were the theme of their stories. Like all good islands, this island had enemies, but they came to a bad end, as, in the long run, all evil persons will; and truth and beauty, and courage and kindness won the day, as they always must in every land where the searchlight of the sun flashes its beams.

As may be imagined, when Mary Frances came home she had not only one, but many stories to tell; and they are written in this book.

J. E. F.

MERCHANTVILLE, N. J.

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THE TRIP TO STORY ISLAND

I

ON THE SHORE

IF only—" whispered Mary Frances to herself, as she closed the book she had been reading, "if only one could find the 'enchanted island,' and the 'hidden treasure of stories'—I wish—I wish the story told how to get there!"

She was sitting on the branches of a tree, which were so bent that they formed a sort of hammocky rocking chair. The tree was close to the bank of the river, and away in the distance the whitecaps of the ocean rolled up and broke upon the beach.

"It's quite a journey," said a small voice, "quite a long journey."

Mary Frances looked all around, but could not find where the voice came from.

"You see, it's out at sea," continued the voice; "and only one boat and one passenger a year. What's more——"

This last was uttered with a deep sigh.

"Why, where are you? Who are you?" asked Mary Frances, springing up.

"Here I am, but I won't be long," continued the voice. "You'd better look lively, for I can't cling to this fence much longer. Besides, I am almost out of element!"

Then the little girl saw a dolphin sitting on the top rail of the fence, holding on with one fin.

"Oh!" she cried, "do you really know where the 'enchanted island' is? Will you tell me how to get there?"

"That I will!" said the dolphin. "That I will, if you'll get me a little of my element first."

“What is that?” asked Mary Frances.

“Why, you couldn’t live without yours for one minute! I’ll die if I don’t get some soon!”

“Oh, dear, what can it be? Whatever in the world is your element? I don’t want you to die!”

“Be quick!” cried the dolphin, fanning himself with the other fin. “I feel very faint!”

“I’ll get some water!” Stooping quickly, Mary Frances filled her hat. Before she could dash it over him, the dolphin ducked his head into the hatful of water.

“Thank you,” he said, raising his head. “You’re not so dull after all. Water is my element; air is yours.”

“Of course,” said Mary Frances; but she wondered why the dolphin didn’t jump back into the water.

“The reason is that it takes me so long to climb a fence!”

“Oh!” said Mary Frances, although she didn’t see why the dolphin had to sit on a fence to talk.

“So that there’ll be no offense!” said the dolphin, after staring at her for a while; “but to refer to the trip—have you a ticket?”

“Why, no, I don’t think I have.” Mary Frances searched in her pockets, and pulled out some ribbon, a doll’s wig, a thimble, and a piece of paper.

“That’s the ticket!” exclaimed the dolphin, pointing with his fin. “All you need to do is to sign it. Have you a pencil?”

Mary Frances searched again in her pockets, while the dolphin looked on anxiously, but couldn’t find one.

“Well, never mind; just pull out one of my whiskers,” he said. “It will write right well.”

“But I might hurt you!” cried Mary Frances.

“Not if you take that loose one,” he said, pointing with his fin.

Very gently Mary Frances pulled it, and out it came.

“Sign your name!” cried the dolphin excitedly. “Right at the end of the paper!”

“Excuse me,” said Mary Frances; “my father says that no one should ever sign a paper without reading it.”

“That’s good reading!” said the dolphin. “Read it!”

And Mary Frances read:

Good for
One First Class Passage
to
Story Island

I Believe in All Good Fairies.
Signed ———
No. 1,234,567.

“Of course, I’ll sign that!” said Mary Frances, gravely using the dolphin’s whisker.

At that, the dolphin fell over with a great splash into the water.

“Oh!” screamed Mary Frances, “you’ll be drowned!” But, just at that moment, up came the dolphin’s head out of the water.

“My element!” he said. Then Mary Frances laughed to think how soon she had forgotten.

“Hold your ticket and wait right where you are!” the dolphin called out, swimming away.

Mary Frances watched the splashing tail and shining back flashing in the sun. Two or three times he leaped playfully in the air, turned somersaults in the water, and then disappeared from sight in the little cove near the mouth of the river.

II

THE GOOD FERRY PUTS OUT TO SEA

OH, my," thought Mary Frances; "oh, my, I hope he won't forget!"

After a little while, she caught sight of the dolphin swimming around the little high peninsula on one side of the cove. He seemed to be piloting something, for every few seconds he would leap up and look around as if to make sure that everything was as it should be.

Soon Mary Frances saw a beautiful little sailboat rounding the point. Surely it was following the dolphin. As it drew nearer she could read the name in gold letters on the prow, The Good Ferry.

A brisk wind filled the white sails and brought the boat so swiftly up the river that the dolphin had to swim with all his might to keep ahead. As she came to anchor in the shallow water near the bank, the dolphin called out, "Have you your ticket?"

"Yes," answered Mary Frances, holding it up to view.

"Then step on my back and jump aboard!" said the dolphin.

As Mary Frances placed her foot on the dolphin as on a bridge, he suddenly arched his back and tossed her aboard.

"Take plenty of time to look the ship over," he called out; "and don't lose your ticket!"

Then the dolphin, with The Good Ferry following in his wake, swam down the river and put out to sea.

The Good Ferry was a charming little boat, graceful in every line. It wasn't any longer than a large rowboat, but it seemed to have every comfort provided. There was on deck a comfortable deck chair; upon it was spread a beautiful steamer rug.

"I'll take a nice nap, after I look the boat over," thought Mary Frances.

As she made her way into the cabin, she uttered a cry of delight—and no wonder. Any girl would have loved it. The walls and woodwork were ivory white. Soft pink and light blue hangings fluttered at the windows. A large bowl, filled with pink roses and turquoise blue larkspurs, stood on the little golden dressing table with its folding mirrors.

A little ivory-white princess dresser, with its full-length mirror, stood across one corner, and an ivory-white bed across the other corner. On the rocking-chair, and bed, and dresser were painted pink and blue flowers, and the covers of the table, bed and dresser were embroidered with the same designs.

There was a wardrobe in a corner, and in it Mary Frances found the loveliest dressing gown of pink crêpe de chine, embroidered with sprays of light blue forget-me-nots, and white daisies with yellow centers, and pink roses; and a pair of light blue bedroom slippers and silk stockings, and a boudoir cap and nightgown, and a big steamer coat and cap—all just the right size.

"Just like a grown-up young lady," she thought.

There were two more doors; one led to a pretty white bathroom, and the other to a little dining-room, lined with mirrors.

"I can't get lonesome," thought Mary Frances, "with so many 'me's' about me;" and she laughed, and, just as she laughed, food appeared on the table. There were chicken soup, and celery, and olives, and crackers.

"Oh, dear! How hungry I am!" she exclaimed. "I guess this is meant for me;" and she sat down on the one chair at the table and began to eat the soup.

"I feel lots better!" said she, finishing the last drop. "It's not good table manners to tip this plate," she thought; "but I guess my reflections will excuse me," and she bowed to the pictures of herself in the mirrors, and laughed.

Then suddenly the soup course disappeared from the table, and in its place there were roast turkey and cranberry sauce, and roasted sweet potatoes and apple sauce, and the many other things which go to make an all-around feast.

"How wonderful!" exclaimed Mary Frances, helping herself to turkey. "But how stupid to eat by myself, with only myself for company." Just then she looked out of the porthole window and saw the dolphin, swimming ahead of the little ship.

"I'll go invite the dolphin to dinner," she thought; and went on deck.

Imagine her surprise to find that there was no land in sight. Neither was there any ship. The only other thing than the dolphin was the sea-gulls flying overhead.

"Hallo! Hallo!" shouted Mary Frances, making a trumpet of her hands. "Mr. Dolphin, Mr. Dolphin, one moment, please!"

The dolphin turned and looked at her. “Yes?” he asked, raising one eyebrow.

“Please, Mr. Dolphin, do you ever eat? I am lonesome, eating all alone.”

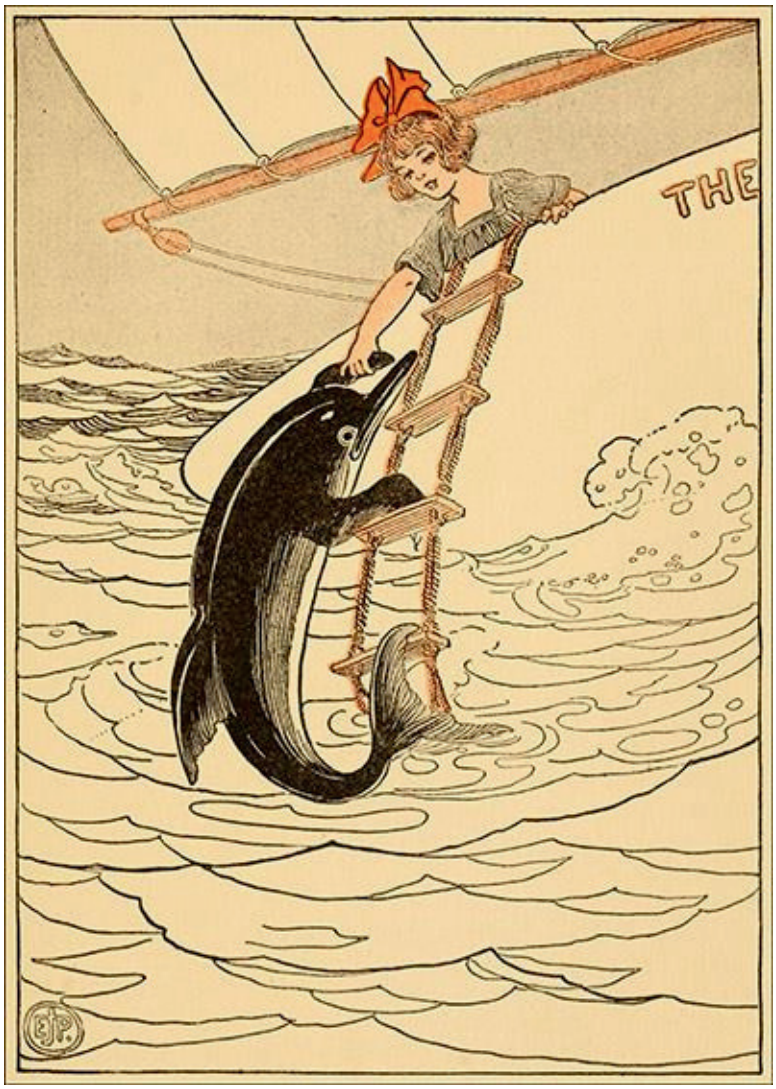
“I eat only fish,” said the dolphin. “They are in my element, you see. I do not find my food out of my element.”

“Oh, as to that,” replied Mary Frances, “I will fill a bowl with your element, if you will only accept the invitation.”

“Agreed!” said the dolphin, swimming to the rope ladder hanging over the side of the ship. Mary Frances leaned down and caught hold of his fins, when within reach, and helped him up.

When the dolphin reached the deck, she picked up a fire-pail with a rope attached, threw it overside, and brought up a pail of water. Then she hastened to the dining-room and brought a bowl.

After that she helped the dolphin to the dining table. The only chair was clamped in place to the floor, just as on any steamer, and she could not move it. So she changed her place to the side of the table. As the chair was a revolving one, like a desk chair, she turned and turned it until it reached the right height for the dolphin. She placed the bowl of water, “element” she called it, at the dolphin’s place.



MARY FRANCES LEANED DOWN AND CAUGHT HOLD OF HIS FINS

"Is there anything on the table, Mr. Dolphin," she asked, "which you would like?"

"Yes," sighed the dolphin, "I would like some more salt in my element soup."

Mary Frances gravely shook the salt-shaker over the bowl for a full minute. The dolphin tasted the water. "A little more, please," he said.

So Mary Frances emptied almost all the rest of the salt out of the shaker into the bowl. The dolphin dipped in his head. "That's excellent," he said, smacking his lips.

"Mercy," thought Mary Frances, "I do hope he won't turn into a salt mackerel."

“Salt Smackerel is my pet name,” said the dolphin, smacking his lips again, and wiping them with his fin.

“I hardly dare think,” thought Mary Frances, “yet I can’t help thinking, can I? What queer table manners he has! I suppose his mother never taught him not to smack his lips when he eats—just to chew with the lips closed.”

“I chew all I choose!” exclaimed the dolphin. “My mother never sat at a table, you see.”

“Oh!” said Mary Frances, “did she stand?”

“Three feet high in her stocking feet,” solemnly declared the dolphin, which Mary Frances didn’t consider an answer at all; but was too polite to say anything that might be annoying to a guest.

“I wonder what I can give him for dessert?” she thought.

“If you please,” said the dolphin, and Mary Frances noticed that he was very pale, “if you please, I do not care for any. You see, I have deserted my post—that is enough dessert for me, and I shouldn’t wonder if I’d be punished enough for it in a minute—Oh! Oh! what is that! It’s the pirate’s cat!” and with a scream, he leaped out of the window into the water.

III

THE PIRATE'S CAT

ME-OW! me-ow!" came the cat's voice from the door.

"Oh, Kitty! Kitty!" cried Mary Frances, running toward it. "Why, wherever did you come from? I thought I had looked all over the ship."

"Indeed," replied the cat, "even if you had, and you have not, you wouldn't have found me. The pirate's been watching a year to throw me on board The Good Ferry."

"Oh," exclaimed Mary Frances, "the pirate—why, I haven't seen any pirate!"

"Of course you haven't," said the cat; "he's too smart for that. He's been watching for a time when the dolphin had deserted his post."

"Oh, dear," thought Mary Frances, "it was all my fault;" but out loud she said, "Well, no great harm can come of it, anyway. Won't you have some dinner?"

"Yes, thank you," said the cat, looking longingly at the table.

"Take this chair," invited Mary Frances, pointing to the dolphin's place.

The cat leaped up on the chair, and carefully tucked a napkin into the collar on its neck. Mary Frances filled a plate with turkey and potatoes and gravy, and set it before the cat, who politely waited for her to take her place and begin to eat.

"Do not wait for me, Kitty," said his hostess; "I've finished this course, thank you."

Soon nothing was left on the plate.

Just as Mary Frances was going to suggest that ice cream might make a nice dessert, the cat began to tremble. It trembled so that the ship shook all over.

"Why, what is the matter?" asked Mary Frances. "Are you chilly?"

"Oh, dear, no," replied the cat, its teeth chattering. "Oh, dear, no; but I forgot! The pirate will hang me! He will! He will!"

"Why will he hang you?" asked Mary Frances, quite bewildered, and a little frightened.

"Speak softly," said the cat. "Come here, and I'll whisper." And behind his upraised paw, he told, "The pirate ordered me to eat the dolphin; and to bring his right fin to prove that I'd done it. And now I'm too full of dinner to do it."

"Eat him, indeed!" said Mary Frances, angrily. "I'd like to see you!"

"Oh, would you?" cried the cat. "If you only hadn't given me so much dinner, you might have had the pleasure—that is, if the dolphin had come aboard again. You see, I can't do it now; I can't catch him in the water. And the pirate said he'd come for me in an hour and nine minutes. It's close to that now," glancing at the clock. "Oh, what shall I do?"

"Why does the pirate want the dolphin killed?"

"Hush!" exclaimed the cat. "Speak softly! Come here! I'll whisper the reason to you. It's on account of the lost story. He thinks you might find it, and if the dolphin is destroyed, he can run down The Good Ferry. He can't do the work himself, for he is bound in chains on his own ship, but he has prisoners on board whom he orders about, just as he did me. He can't get within miles of The Good Ferry if the dolphin is guiding her. He was so mad that he didn't notice when the dolphin first came aboard that the foam from his mouth was strong soapsuds, and washed the black decks of the pirate ship snow white."

"But," said Mary Frances, "you forget—if the dolphin guides the ship, the pirate can't get you!"

At that the cat began to laugh joyously, and it laughed so hard that Mary Frances laughed too; and suddenly the meat course disappeared off the table and a huge block of ice cream appeared in its place, and Mary Frances and the cat—you know what they did.

IV

THE STORY OF THE LOST STORY

LET'S go on deck," said Mary Frances, when they had finished, "and perhaps you can tell me more about the lost story. But first you must solemnly promise that you will not eat the dolphin."

"I solemnly promise," said the cat, with upraised paw.

"Very well," said Mary Frances, leading the way to the deck chair, on which she lay down, while the cat curled himself up on a coil of rope near her head.

"It happened in this way," began the cat, in a low tone of voice, as he nervously looked around. "You know the 'enchanted island' is Storyland, and the home of the Story People. The Story King and Queen have ruled there forever. Well, one day a wicked fellow, who had always said there were no such things as fairies, somehow got into the 'enchanted island'—it has always been a mystery to me how he did it—and stole a story, and carried it away and hid it. The trouble is that no fairy is allowed to find it. The boy or girl who takes it back will be the first person allowed to enter the 'enchanted island' since it was lost."

"Do you know where it is hidden?" asked Mary Frances.

"I have a slight idea," whispered the cat.

"Is it on board the pirate ship?" she asked.

"It cannot be. I have searched everywhere—everywhere—everywhere-everywhere—" drowsily replied the cat. Mary Frances noticed that his eyes were closing.

"Just one thing more before you go to sleep, Puss; just one thing more," she said. "Do you know how long it will take to reach the 'enchanted island'?"

"And they sailed away,

A year and a day,

To the land where the palm tree grew,"

murmured the cat; and, shake him as she might, that was the only answer Mary Frances could get, until, at length, she could get no answer at all.

After she was certain he was asleep, she went to the bow of the boat and called softly to the dolphin.

He swam up close alongside. "Are you all right?" he asked.

"I am, indeed," replied Mary Frances; "but I want to tell you what the cat told me. First, I want to say that he will not hurt you because he is horribly afraid of the pirate, and he knows that he is safe on The Good Ferry as long as you protect it."

"That's right!" said the dolphin. "And now, how about the cat's tale?"

Then Mary Frances told the dolphin the story the cat had told her.

"Why can't we search for it now?" she asked.

"Well," replied the dolphin, "I am not exactly sure about the cat's tale myself, and every year I take one person direct to the island—that's my orders—that's my orders. None of them have ever found the lost story—so I've taken them direct home. That's been my orders; that's been my orders. Better go on, I say; better not take anybody else's word, I say, I say."

"All right," said Mary Frances, "just as you say; but a year's a pretty long time."

"That depends," replied the dolphin.

"A year is queer

If it's full of fear,

A year's a day

If it's full of play;

And I've heard say

A year will leap,

If you're sound asleep."

And away it swam.

And then Mary Frances noticed that the sky was getting dark, and she realized that she was very sleepy. She made her way to the white cabin and undressed and went to bed, wearing the pretty clothing which she found in the wardrobe.

"If I waken suddenly, and want to go on deck, I'll have on my negligee," she thought, as she tied the dressing gown in place and slipped on the boudoir cap.

V

LAND AHOY!

MARY FRANCES awoke with a start, and rubbed her eyes.

"Surely I heard somebody call," she said.

Again came the call, "Land ahoy! Land ahoy!"

"Why, that is what they called out on Columbus' ship when they discovered America!" thought Mary Frances, hurriedly dressing. "I wonder if we are discovering anything."

It was just getting light as she ran out on deck. At first she did not see any living thing except the dolphin, which was swimming ahead of the boat. She gazed around on the water. It was a deep blue color.

"It looks like the tub of bluing water when Nora rinses the clothes," she thought. "I wonder if it will color anything?" She ran to the railing, dipped up a pailful and dropped in her handkerchief. "Just clear water," she said; and hung it up to dry.

"Land ahoy!" came the call once more. Mary Frances looked up at the sails. There was the cat. He was sitting on the rope ladder, and holding his forepaws like a telescope. As soon as he saw Mary Frances, he pointed ahead and shouted, "Land ahoy!" Then she saw a dim outline of coast.

The cat scrambled down the rigging, and ran up to her. "Story Island! See!" he said.

"Why," exclaimed Mary Frances, "why, how long have I been asleep? I thought you said something about a year!"

"Ha, ha!" laughed the cat. "A year and a day, I said, and that it nearly is. You have been asleep just three hundred and sixty-five days and some hours."

"Have I really?" exclaimed Mary Frances; then hearing a sudden splash in the water, "Oh, what was that? Was it the pirate?"

“That? That wasn’t anything to be afraid of—just some flying fish,” answered the cat.

“Do they really have wings?” asked Mary Frances.

“They certainly do. Come, let us look into the water and see if there are any near the boat,” said the cat.

“Oh, oh, oh,” exclaimed Mary Frances, “what a beautiful fish I see! It has a tail of gold and a head of blue—turquoise blue. Isn’t it beautiful! See it, there!”

“Yes, I do,” said the cat; “it is an angel fish.”

“An angel fish! That’s just the right name for it,” said Mary Frances.

“Yes, I believe somebody who tasted one named it that,” said the cat.

“Surely nobody would eat such a beautiful creature,” Mary Frances said.

The cat smiled. “Its beauty is more than skin deep,” he said.

“Well, I wouldn’t eat anything so lovely,” said Mary Frances.

“That reminds me of a rhyme a fish taught me,” said the cat.

“That sounds mighty fishy,” thought Mary Frances, but she did not say anything.

“Shall I say it for you?” and without waiting to hear, he went on:

“Oh, mother, if you lived down in the sea

And a fish you had to be,

What kind of fish would be your wish?

My own would be—an angel fish.

“With nose of loveliest turquoise blue,

And tail-wings of yellowest golden hue—

I’m sure my most angelic wish

Is to be an angel fish.

“Don’t you suppose when fishes die

Their dream is never toward the sky;

But if they're good, their dearest wish

Is to be an angel fish?"

"JUST SOME FLYING FISH," ANSWERED THE CAT

"That is a pretty angelic wish, I'll say," added the cat. "Oh, there are some of the flying fish," pointing to a distance from the boat.

"They are not anything like as pretty as the angel fish," said Mary Frances.

"Oh, see the whale spouting!" exclaimed the cat, running to the other side of the boat.

And Mary Frances saw the long fountain of water shooting up in the air.

“My,” said the cat, “if I could just catch that whale, I could feed every hungry cat I ever heard of.”

“Why, how big is it?” asked Mary Frances.

“It’s twenty times as long as half again, and double the quarter wide,” said the cat.

“How large is that, if you please?” asked Mary Frances.

“If the length is multiplied by the thickness and then by breadth, it will give the correct volume,” said the cat; “at least, that’s according to tickle.”

“Tickle?” asked Mary Frances. “What is tickle?”

“Tickle is short for arithmetickle,” replied the cat.

“Oh?” said Mary Frances, “we don’t call it arithmetickle; we called it arithmetic.”

“That is nothing like so pretty a name,” said the cat, “and you get the same result.”

“But the size of the whale—” said Mary Frances, “what is it?”

“Can’t you do a simple little problem like that—when I’ve given you the rule?” asked the cat.

Mary Frances did not like to say that she had to give it up.

“Let bygones be bygones,” said the cat, “and look up ‘whales’ in the dictionary when you reach the island.”

“Oh, yes,” exclaimed Mary Frances. “Oh, I can see—I think I can see some houses! Oh, look, Cat, look! They are pure white!”

“Don’t you know why?” asked the cat.

“I suppose they are painted,” said Mary Frances.

“Painted, me whiskers!” exclaimed the cat. “They are not painted. They are made of coral.”

“What is coral?” asked Mary Frances.

“Come, I will show you,” said the cat, leading the way to the middle of the deck.

He lifted a wooden cover. Underneath was a deep box. The bottom of the box was made of glass.

"Now, you can see the bottom of the sea," said the cat. "See? See? See the bottom of the sea?"

"Oh, look at those white trees!" cried Mary Frances, gazing down into the clear water through the glass.

The cat laughed. "They are not trees," he said; "they are coral formations;" and he told her about the tiny coral insects which build coral growth by fastening their tiny shell bodies to each other.

"Do they know they are making trees?" asked Mary Frances.

"Oh, my, no," said the cat. "They just grow naturally, like any other babies. Sometimes they make fan-like forms, or sponge-shaped ones."

"Did they build the white houses over on the island?" asked Mary Frances.

"Of course not," said the cat; "what a curious question. They live only in the sea. The houses are up in the air—but they built the island."

"Not that big island!" exclaimed Mary Frances.

"You have not contradicted me before," said the cat. "If you know all about it——"

"I beg your pardon," said Mary Frances, very humbly. "Will you please tell me the rest?"

"They rest on the bottom of the ocean," said the cat. "The houses are made of the coral which is dug out of the cellars," he went on. "But, come, let us get ready; we are getting near port," and he began to wash his face and smooth back his whiskers.

Mary Frances took the hint, and went into the cabin.

She tidied her hair, and put on a fresh ribbon, and when she went on deck, she took her pocket mirror with her.

VI

THE OLD WITCH AND THE IRON-CHAIN CURTAIN

ARE my whiskers straight? Is my fur smooth? Is my face clean, please?" asked the cat without stopping, as soon as he saw her.

"You may see for yourself," said Mary Frances, holding the pocket mirror before him.

"Ah," he said, giving a sigh of relief. "I look absolutely scrubbed; I guess I'll do!"

"Dear me!" said Mary Frances. "I do wonder how it will seem. Isn't this a beautiful place? But I wonder why it looks so misty around the island. Can't we ask the dolphin?"

"I guess we'd better not," said the cat. "You see, a pilot doesn't like to be questioned."

"There is a boat coming this way!" exclaimed Mary Frances.

The cat began to shiver. His fur stood up on end. His tail lashed to and fro.

"It's the old witch's boat!" he cried. "She's the pirate's wife. I'm not afraid! I'm not afraid! I'm not afraid, though!" And he kept on saying, "I'm not afraid!" so often that Mary Frances began to laugh.

"St-stop that laughing!" came the voice of the old witch. "St-stop that laughing this instant, unless you have the lost st-story!"

"And if we have it, Madam Witch," called out the cat, "what then?"

By this time the boat was quite near. They could see the old witch tremble. She turned almost as white as snow. Her two front teeth chattered.

“If you had it, the curtain would part!” she suddenly exclaimed, laughing. “I forgot for a moment! Don’t try to fool me, Cat! Away with you! Away with you! Find it, if you can! Find it, if you can! Ha, ha! Ha, ha! Haw, haw, haw!” and she waved an oar at the boat.

Then Mary Frances saw that all around the island was stretched an iron-chain curtain.

“Don’t look at it, S-Sissy,” said the old witch. “It’s so s-strong that s-steel will not s-saw it. It will remain about St-Story Island, and will not open until the lost st-story is found; and until it is found not a boy or girl in the world will hear a new st-story!”

“We will find it!” shouted Mary Frances. “We will find it and bring it back and open the curtain!”

“Ha, ha!” laughed the old witch, holding her sides. “Ha, ha! it’s well hid. It’s well hid. You’ll be old and gray before you find it, I’ll warrant—and as for the cat, he’ll be so old he will sh-shake around in his s-skin, I’ll warrant. Ha, ha! Be off! Be off!” and, quickly turning her boat, she rowed away.

VII

FINDING THE LOST STORY

THE cat looked at Mary Frances.

Mary Frances looked at the cat.

“Ha, ha, and ha, ha!” said the cat. “We’ll laugh at her some day!”

“We will!” said Mary Frances, “we will, Puss! Let us call the dolphin.”

The dolphin swam up at that moment.

“Whither now?” it asked. “Where shall we go, Cat?”

“64° 40´ W., 32° 40´ N.,” said the cat; and the dolphin swam ahead, turned the boat, and soon the island was out of sight.

“Come, I am hungry!” said Mary Frances. “Let us go into the dining-room.”

“The dolphin has plenty of element soup,” she thought.

There was the table spread with a fine feast, and both she and the cat enjoyed it.

Just as they were finishing dessert, they heard a pounding noise. They rushed out on deck. The noise was made by the dolphin hitting the side of the boat with its tail.

It whispered two words, “Pirate Ship,” and swam ahead again.

The cat made a telescope with his paws, and looked out over the water. “Sure enough!” he cried, in fear. “Oh, my! Oh, my! and I haven’t eaten the dolphin!”

“For shame!” exclaimed Mary Frances. “For shame! You have forgotten that he can’t come very near while the dolphin is at his post!”

"Oh, yes; that is so. Excuse me, please. But what does the pirate mean by coming, I wonder?"

"Do you suppose he thinks we may be near finding the story?" asked Mary Frances.

"That's it!" exclaimed the cat. "I'll wager my whiskers that's his idea. So that if we espy it he'll get it first."

"Do you think we'll find it?" asked Mary Frances.

"My fur feels as though we would," said the cat. "Please tell me, is it sending out sparks?"

It was growing quite late in the afternoon, and quite dusky. Mary Frances, to her astonishment, saw great showers of electric sparks coming from the cat's body.

"You look like a sparkler on the Fourth of July, Cat," she said.

"Oh, isn't that fine!" said the cat. "You see, it's this way—the nearer we get to the story, the more sparklier my fur gets."

"So we must be quite near," said Mary Frances; "for I don't see how you could get much more sparklier."

"I forgot to tell you," said the cat, "that after we find the story, the dolphin's power to keep the pirate away is gone. We'll have to race like a rocket to beat his boat."

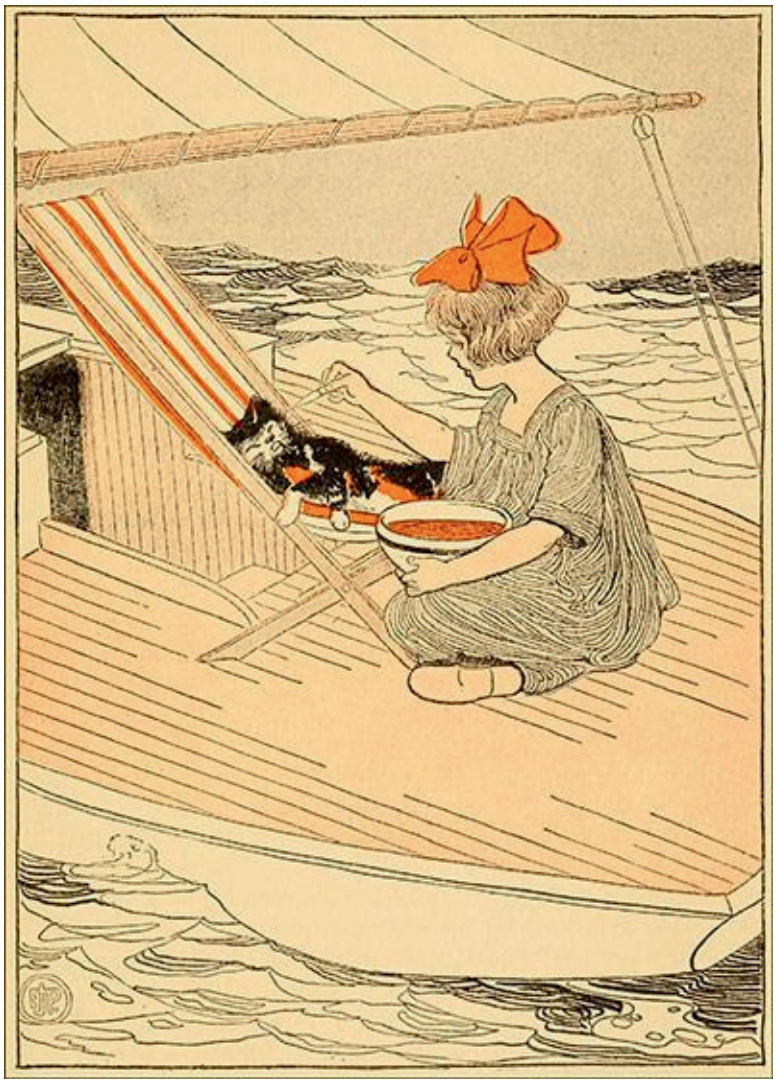
"Oh, my, what is the matter!" exclaimed Mary Frances, as the cat suddenly jumped high in the air, sending out a shower of sparks that fell at her feet on the deck. Over the side of the boat he fell, and all was dark as a pocket.

"Oh, Kitty, Kitty," cried the frightened girl, running to look into the water, but she saw nothing of the cat. Neither could she see the dolphin. She could see the dim light of the pirate's ship, and it seemed quite near.

"Whatever shall I do?" thought Mary Frances. "I really believe I am going to cry."

Just at that minute she heard a scratching on the side of The Good Ferry.

"Who's there?" she whispered.



SHE FED HIM A LITTLE AT A TIME WITH A MEDICINE DROPPER

No answer came. Just another scratching.

“Who’s there?” she asked again.

“Me-ow!” came a faint voice.

Mary Frances could see better now, for her eyes were getting accustomed to the darkness.

“Is it you, Puss?” she asked, peering down into the water.

When she saw it was the cat, she quickly let down the rope ladder, and the cat climbed aboard, and fell in a wet heap at her feet.

She lifted him carefully and carried him to the steamer chair. She did not notice that something dropped from his mouth as she lifted him.

She dried his wet fur, and went to the dining-room to get him a drink of water. There she saw a bowl of beef tea, which she took to him. She fed him a little at a time with a medicine dropper which she had found in the bathroom.

At length he opened his eyes.

"Where is it?" he asked.

"Where is what?" asked Mary Frances.

"The lost story," whispered the cat. "I carried it in my mouth. That is why I couldn't answer you when you asked who was there."

"I didn't see it," said Mary Frances.

"Oh, dear, oh dear!" exclaimed the cat. "It must be on deck! Let us look for it!"

"You are not able yet," said Mary Frances. "Lie still! I will look! Was it a roll or a book?"

"It was a glass bottle," said the cat, "and it may have rolled back into the sea—if that is what you mean by 'was it a roll?'"

Mary Frances went down on her hands and knees.

She crept all over the deck, feeling for it in the darkness. After a while the cat helped.

They worked all night, but could find nothing. In the morning, as it grew light, they both saw a dark green bottle caught in the top of the rope ladder which was fastened to the side of the boat. So lightly was the bottle held that it might easily have fallen back into the water and been lost again.

Mary Frances lifted it carefully. It was labeled—THE LOST STORY.

The bottle was sealed with a cork, and inside was a roll of paper.

"Oh, isn't it too good to be true!" exclaimed Mary Frances. "Where shall we hide it?"

"Let's label it CATSUP and put it on the side table in the dining-room," said the cat. "Put the new label right over the old one," he added.

"That's a splendid idea!" cried Mary Frances. "I'll do it right away!"

VIII

THE PIRATE CHASES THE GOOD FERRY

WHEN Mary Frances came on deck again, The Good Ferry was plowing the water so fast that a deep furrow of foam followed her. The dolphin was swimming so fast that it made deep waves with the motion of its tail.

Although going so rapidly, they could see that the pirate's black ship was keeping the distance the same as at first between them.

"I believe he is gaining," at length said the cat, who was using his paws for a telescope.

Mary Frances looked a little pale, but smiled. "I think we will make more time in a minute," she said. "Let's drop something overboard, and he may stop to pick it up."

So they filled a suitcase with paper, and dropped it over the side.

They were delighted when they saw the pirate's ship stop to pick it up. They could hear the loud ravings of the pirate when he found nothing inside.

The rest of the trip was very exciting, for the pirate's ship at one time was so close that they heard the pirate say to the cook, "Blast ye! Blast ye! Why don't ye jump aboard? Ye can make it in two jumps!"

"Jump yourself!" replied the cook.

Faster and faster swam the dolphin; faster and faster sailed The Good Ferry. Try as he would, the pirate could not overtake them. They saw him plainly, half a knot behind, jumping up and down on his deck, shaking his angry fists. As they reached the island he turned and gave up the chase in defeat.

When they came to the wharf, there stood the old witch, drinking ink out of a bottle.

“Ha, ha!” she honked. “S-so ye think ye’ve got the lost st-story, do ye? Well, ye haven’t; s-so there!”

Then she began to wave her arms about her head, laughing wildly. As Mary Frances stepped off the boat the old witch tried to snatch the story bottle out of her hand.

“Oh, you can’t scare me,” said Mary Frances. “Step aside, please,” and as she pushed past the wild old witch, the great iron-chain curtain fell with a crash, and before her was Fairyland, or Storyland, which, as you know, are one and the same.

IX

THE TERRIBLE PUNISHMENT OF THE PIRATE AND THE OLD WITCH

MARY FRANCES heard music and singing. She heard the words:

Who's the bravest in this land?

She who holds in her right hand

The long lost precious story;

She's the bravest in this land.

Then Mary Frances remembered, and stepped forward with the story.

She was met by a beautiful young lady, who introduced herself as the Story Lady, and a small company of story people, who led her to the castle of the King and Queen of Story Island. They took her into the court, where the rulers sat in state.

"Welcome!" said the Story King, rising.

"Welcome!" said the Story Queen, rising.

Then the King made a speech.

"You have done us a great service, young friend," he said; "and we hope to do something for you to show how much we appreciate it."

"Sir," said Mary Frances, handing him the bottle, "if it had not been for the dolphin and the cat, I never could have found the story."

"The dolphin has been rewarded," said the Story King; "he has had his head cut off——"

“Oh,” cried Mary Frances, “the poor, dear dolphin!”

“And has been turned again into a prince!” added the Story Queen. “He was the prince who kissed the Sleeping Beauty, and was under the spell of the old witch outside the chain curtain.”

“And the cat has been rewarded,” said the King. “He has charge of all the cats and kittens in all the stories ever told, or ever-to-be-told.”

This made Mary Frances happy, for she knew the cat would love that charge.

“Now,” said the Story King, “if you are not too tired, we will get over the business of trying the pirate and the witch!”

“I am not tired, thank you,” said Mary Frances, “for I slept three hundred and sixty-five days and nights on my way here.”

“Good!” said the King. “Please have this seat,” and he led her to a deep blue velvet chair.

The King then touched a button under the table, and a door opened.

In came a large man with a large beard. Mary Frances knew him at once. He was Blue Beard. He was trembling terribly.

“Fetch in the pirate, Blue Beard,” ordered the King.

Blue Beard bowed and left the room. Soon there came the clanging of chains, and Blue Beard led the pirate into the room, all wound up in a great section of the iron-chain curtain. He was dreadfully pale and very angry. His mouth was frothing and his breath was coming out of his nostrils like smoke.

He glowered at Mary Frances as though he would like to bite her, but she was not afraid.

“Behave!” said the King. “You cannot frighten a person who has been so brave as to part the iron-chain curtain. If she had been afraid of the old witch, the curtain would not have parted, and all the children in the world would have been still waiting for new stories.”

He turned to the Queen. “Have you a fitting punishment, my dear?” he asked.

“I have,” said the Queen, very solemnly. “It is this: the pirate shall *never again hear a story or read a story*!”

On hearing his fate the pirate screamed, “Anything rather than that! Please have mercy!” And he fell down in a dead faint.

Blue Beard dragged him out. Immediately after, the King ordered the old witch in.

"Tell the story of the lost story," ordered the King.

"Oh, S-Sir," stammered the old witch, "Oh, S-Sir, the pirate st-stole it, and took it on his sh-ship, and I st-stole it from him and put it in a bottle, and was going to bring it back, but I lost it overboard in a st-storm. I didn't want the pirate to know I took it, for he would have beaten me to death."

"Why did you try to take it from this young lady?" asked the Queen.

The old witch hung her head. "Because I wanted to keep it for my-s-self," she said.

"Well, what shall her punishment be, my dear?" asked the King.

"She shall be punished by never hearing the end of a story," declared the Queen. "*Only to the middle of a story shall she hear—never to the end.*"

Then the old witch gave a loud shriek, and ran out of the room as fast as she could. The King sent a giant after her, and had him lock both the pirate and the old witch up in big iron baskets, and carry them off to the end of Snowwhere.

"And now, my dear," said the King, "what is to be our dear little friend's reward?"

"Two rewards shall be hers," replied the Queen. "One is that she shall know that all the children of the world can have new stories every day; and the other is that she can stay with us for a visit and hear all the stories she wishes to hear."

"Very good," said the King. "Let us now hear the lost story." And all the Story People sat down to form a double circle.

With that the Story Lady, dressed like a butterfly, came dancing in. The King opened the green bottle, took out the roll of paper and handed it to her. She took her place at the end just where the circle closed, and began to read aloud the lost story, which is entitled "The Bubble Story."

X

THE BUBBLE STORY

LILLA walked through the garden, saying—

"I should like to be a princess," for she had been reading a story about a princess who had only to say "Come," and anything she wished for came at once.

It was a hot summer day, and she sat down on a mossy bank under an elm tree thinking what she should wish for if she had the power of the princess. All at once the garden seemed strange to her, and she heard a voice saying:

"If you take a rose from me

You will then a princess be."

She looked up and saw an aster growing in a green flower-pot which she had never seen before; and on one of the flowers was perched a tiny fairy.

"And you can have everything you can wish for except one thing. If you wish for that you will lose the rose."

"And what is that?" asked Lilla, taking the rose which the fairy offered her.

"You must never ask for soap bubbles."

"Oh, soap bubbles? Of course, I shall not wish for them!" said Lilla.

"Whenever you want anything," said the fairy, "just say:

"Rose, Rose, bring to me

Everything I wish to see."

"You will be a princess as long as you keep the rose. But you must never ask for soap bubbles. Good-by; now I must go back to my home."

So the fairy went to Fairyland, and Lilla went home; but no one knew her, because she was now a princess with long hair and a golden crown.

"I will go up to the castle on the hill," thought Lilla; "princesses go there to stay."

At the castle they were expecting a princess, so they thought Lilla must be the one who was coming, and they gave her a grand room, all hung with velvet curtains, to sleep in. On the table was a silver box which Lilla thought just right to keep her rose in.

"Now, I shall try what I can do with my rose," thought Lilla. So she thought of a box of toys, and said:

"Rose, Rose, bring to me

Everything I wish to see."

Scarcely had she spoken when a maid came to say that a box had come for her.

When the box was opened, Lilla saw so many pretty things that she thought she would like a Christmas tree to hang them on, and again she said:

"Rose, Rose, bring to me

Everything I wish to see."

And in a few minutes a Christmas tree arrived hung all over with gold and silver drops, and colored lights, and bonbons, and still more bonbons, and gifts of all kinds.

The people at the castle had never seen such a beautiful Christmas tree, and they were delighted with the gifts which Lilla divided among them.

Day after day Lilla asked her rose for something new, and every day more and more beautiful things came, till not only her own room, but the whole castle was full of them.

She gave them away to every one, for she soon grew tired of them.

ON ONE OF THE FLOWERS WAS PERCHED A TINY FAIRY

Every day she was trying to think of something she did not have, but at last there seemed nothing left to wish for.

That was when she began to long for—soap bubbles, which were the only things she must not have.

“But how beautiful thousands of soap bubbles would look, floating about in the sunshine with rainbow colors upon them,” she thought.

She could think of nothing else, and grew quite sad because she could not ask for soap bubbles.

So one day, she went into the garden, taking her rose with her. “Shall I ask? or shall I not?” she kept thinking, but she could not make up her mind.

So she counted on the buttons of her dress.

"Yes; no; yes; no; yes; no;

My mother told me to say—

Yes; no."

"Oh, dear," sighed Lilla, "I wanted it to come, 'yes'—I am going to ask for them!"

So she said the magic rhyme:

"Rose, Rose, bring to me

Everything I wish to see."

But no soap bubbles came. She looked all around the garden, even up in the branches of the trees, but no bubbles were to be seen.

Then she grew impatient; she took the rose, and said:

"Rose, Rose, bring to me

Everything I wish to see."

Then suddenly the air was filled with soap bubbles; little ones, big ones, floated all over the garden.

"Oh, aren't they lovely!" cried Lilla, holding out her arms to catch some; and then a bubble larger than the others opened, and closed around the golden rose, and lifted it out of her hand, floated quickly away with it, higher, higher, higher, until Lilla could no longer see it.

She watched and watched until only two soap bubbles were to be seen; then she sank on her knees, and stretched out her hands after them.

But it was too late; her rose was gone, the bubbles were gone, and she was no longer a princess. Her hair was as short as it ever had been, and her crown had disappeared.

It was of no use to return to the castle now, as the people would not know her. Where should she go? What could she do? She was so worried that she cried aloud, and you can imagine how glad she was to hear her own mother's voice saying:

“Lilla, dear, you must have fallen asleep. Come, wake up! Tell mother about your dream.”

“Why, mother, it was just like a story,” said Lilla, sitting up and rubbing her eyes.

Then she told her mother all about it.

“A very pretty story,” said her mother, “and one that shows you that people who can have almost everything they wish for, are not really happier than others. There is always something just out of their reach, and that makes them discontented with what they have.”

“Yes, even soap bubbles,” said Lilla, laughing.

* * * * * *

“That’s a good story—too good to be lost,” said the Story King, when the Story Lady finished.

“Yes, but we have better, and you shall hear some of them to-morrow,” said the Story Queen to Mary Frances, smiling graciously.

Then to the people she announced:

“There will be a reception in the court of honor this evening to our visitor, Mary Frances, the finder of the lost story. As it is now dark, let every one retire and prepare.”

Then all the people applauded, formed in line and marched out, each bowing to the King, Queen and Mary Frances, who stood rather timidly in her place with the Story Lady beside her.

After the others were gone, the Story Lady turned to her and said:

“The Queen has planned for you to be in my charge during your visit, and all you wish to see or hear is at your command.”

“How kind, and how perfectly lovely!” exclaimed Mary Frances, clapping her hands. “I couldn’t possibly wish for anything I would rather have than to be with you!”

This pleased the Story Lady greatly, and she led the way to their apartments.

I wish I had the time and space to tell you more about the wonderful and delightful reception—how Mary Frances stood in line with the King and Queen, and was introduced to all the people of the island as a distinguished visitor whose deed would never be forgotten as long as stories were told.

But if I were to relate all they said and did this book would not hold one-quarter of the stories which the Story Lady had planned for Mary Frances to hear.

The revels continued far into the night; and when at last they ended, Mary Frances retired to her apartment, excited and happy. As the Story Lady kissed her good-night, she said:

"To-morrow will be the first day."

STORIES TOLD THE FIRST DAY

MISCHIEVOUS ANNA AND PETER.—DIAMONDS AND TOADS.—THE MAGIC NECKLACE.—THE CAT AND THE CARROTS.—THE BRAHMIN, THE TIGER, AND THE JACKAL.—THE RED DRAGON.—TWO POEMS.—TINY'S ADVENTURES IN TINYTOWN.—MORE ADVENTURES.

STORIES TOLD THE FIRST DAY

XI

MISCHIEVOUS ANNA AND PETER

NOW, you must know that the Story People met at a certain hour every day to hear and to tell stories, new and old; for, as you may well believe, it is no small task to provide stories enough to feed the story-hungry children of the world.

Accordingly, when all were assembled, the Story King in his place, and Mary Frances in the seat of honor beside the Story Queen, the Story Lady began to tell the story of Mischievous Anna and Peter.

* * * * * *

Anna and Peter were always in mischief. One day they climbed to the top of a high wall. It was a fairy wall, and it grew higher and higher, until at last it went so high that they got frightened, for they did not know how they should get down again. So they held tight by each other and the wall, and began to cry.

But no one heard them. For they were far away from home; besides, they were as high up in the air as the top of a mountain.

"Oh! oh! oh!" sobbed Anna.

"Oh! oh! oh!" sobbed Peter.

And their eyes were red and their faces quite wet and dirty.

"I shall fall," said Peter.

"I can't hold on much longer," said Anna. And then they both sobbed "Oh! oh! oh!" again.

Then they heard a voice saying, “Oh! oh! oh!” after them. Only it was not any one crying, for the “oh! oh! oh!” had a very sweet sound.

They could not look round, for they dared not move their heads, and they dared not look down for fear of getting dizzy. But the voice seemed to be coming nearer. And so it was, for a fairy gate, with a tree beside it, and a little bit of ground to stand upon, was shooting up into the air just as the wall had done. And when it was as high as the wall it stopped, and Peter and Anna saw that a boy was leaning against the gate. He was playing on a whistle-pipe, and that made the sound they had heard.

“I will play you a tune,” said the boy. And he played so softly and sweetly that Peter and Anna left off crying.

“How did you come up?” asked Anna.

“On the gate,” said the boy.

“How are you going down?” asked Peter.

“On the gate, to be sure,” said the boy; “I have only to say—

“Gate, gate, let me go

Far down to the earth below.”

And as he said the words, down he went.

“Let us also try,” said Anna.

“Wall, wall, let us go

Far down to the earth below.”

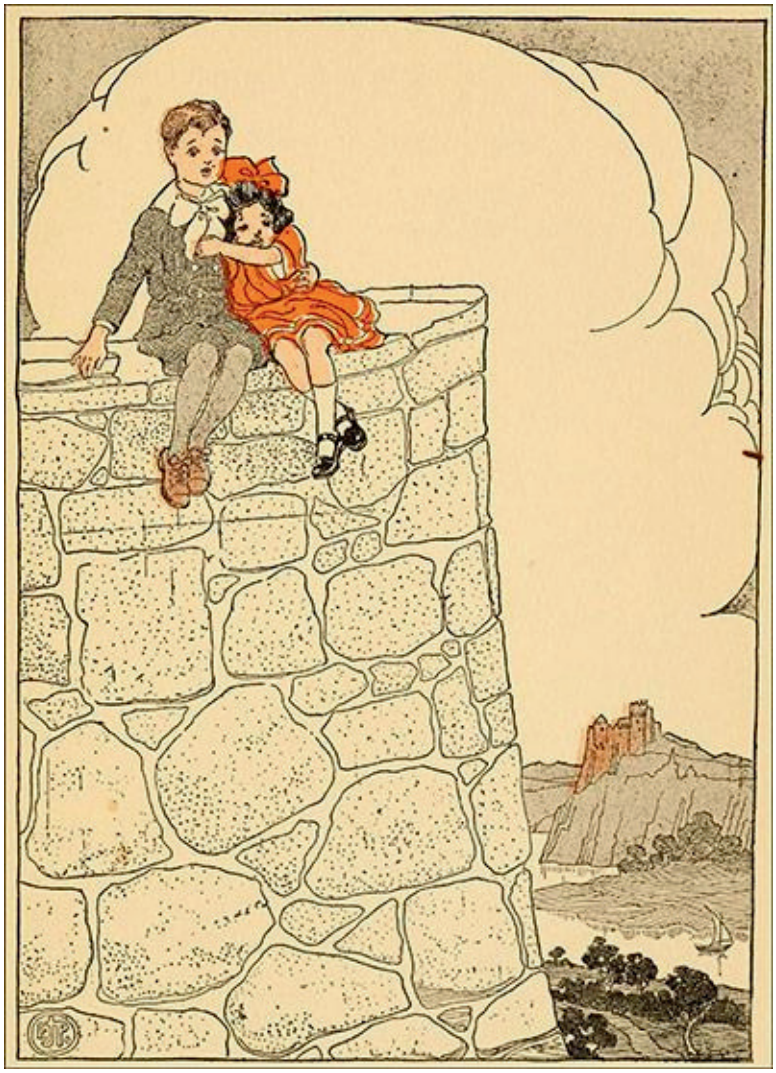
Then down went the wall to the ground, and Peter and Anna slid off, and stood staring at the boy, who was still playing on his pipe.

“What do you want most?” asked the boy. “My pipe will bring anything I ask for.”

“A silk frock with a flounce and a sash, and a bonnet with blue ribbons,” said Anna, who was fond of fine clothes.

“A new suit and pair of leather reins to play at horses with,” said Peter.

The boy played a lively tune, and before Anna could say “ready,” she found herself dressed in a fine new frock; while Peter had the reins in his hands, and a new suit of clothes with a great frill and a round hat.



THEY WERE AS HIGH UP IN THE AIR AS THE TOP OF A MOUNTAIN

Then the boy said “Good-by,” and Peter and Anna went towards home.

“I will go this way,” said Peter.

“I will go that,” said Anna.

So they parted.

Anna, as she walked along, heard little feet behind her; and when she reached the steps leading to her home she looked round, and what was her surprise when she saw a large mouse dressed like a lady, with a parasol in its hand.

"I am the Countess Mouse

Coming to your house;

With you I'll stay

Every day,"

said the mouse.

Now Anna was afraid of mice, and she said, "But I do not want you; besides, we have a large cat that will eat you up."

"No, it will not; I am a fairy mouse, and can eat up the cat if I please."

Anna was much frightened; this was truly a dreadful mouse.

"Go away! Oh, go away!" she said.

"No," answered the mouse; "as long as you wear my clothes I shall stay with you and take care of them."

"They are not yours," said Anna; "a boy with a whistle-pipe gave them to me."

"But he piped to me for them," said the mouse; "I have wardrobes full in my castle. You are quite welcome to them; but I must see that you do not spoil them. I shall sit by you at dinner, and play with you, and walk out with you, and sleep on your pillow at night."

"Oh dear! oh dear!" said Anna; "I wish I had never asked for a silk frock and bonnet."

"Shall I take them back?"

"Oh yes! oh yes! please, Countess Mouse,

Take them all back to your house."

"Well, as you have made a rhyme, I will do so," said the mouse, and she slapped Anna's arm sharply with her parasol. Then Anna's new clothes fell off, and she found herself in her

old cotton dress again. And the mouse grew larger and larger, and ran away to her castle with the silk frock and the grand bonnet.

Now while this was happening to Anna a queer-looking man in a peaked hat and long overcoat said to Peter, “Shall I be your horse?”

“Yes,” said Peter. And the man took the reins, and they went along merrily enough.

When they were close by his home, Peter said, “I am going in here.”

But the man said—

“No, no, you are going with me;

These are my reins, you cannot get free.”

“They cannot be yours,” said Peter; “a boy with a whistle-pipe gave them to me.”

“Ah, but he got them from me! I am a saddler, and have hundreds of them. And I want some little boys to help me to make more.”

“I don’t want to go,” said Peter.

But he could not loose the reins, and the man pulled him along faster and faster.

“Oh! oh! oh! I should be glad

If these reins I hadn’t had,”

said Peter.

“As you have made a rhyme,” said the man, “I’ll take them back, and you may go home.”

Then the man hit Peter sharply with one end of the reins, and his new suit fell off, and he found himself in his old pinafore.

Then Peter went home and told Anna what had happened to him; and Anna told Peter all about the mouse, and they both thought that they had had a lucky escape.

Just then the boy with the pipe came down the street. And the pipe played these words—

“Keep out of mischief; you never know

What may come to cause you woe;

What you may think is very good fun,

May give you trouble before you’ve done.”

Then the boy turned round the corner of the street, and Anna and Peter never saw him again.

* * * * * *

“My, but the mouse must have looked cunning!” Mary Frances said. “Thank you for telling me that story. I—I wish——”

“Would you like to hear another—about Isabella and her cruel stepsisters?” asked the Story Lady.

“I should love to hear it!” replied Mary Frances.

The story people smiled and nodded, and the Story Lady proceeded.

XII

DIAMONDS AND TOADS

ONCE upon a time there was a dear little girl named Isabella. She lived with her father, and her stepmother, and her two stepsisters.

Isabella was a pretty child and had sweet manners. Her stepsisters were not pretty, and they and their mother were jealous of Isabella.

They seldom spoke kindly to her; they made her do the hard work of the home, and treated her in a harsh manner, very much as Cinderella's stepmother and stepsisters treated Cinderella.

One of her hard duties was to fetch the water for the household from the well just outside the village.

It was quite a long walk to the well, and after Isabella had worked all the morning, cooking, and washing the dishes, and washing and ironing, or sweeping, she felt sometimes that she was too tired to go so far and carry home such a heavy load.

One day after washing and ironing, she said, "I wish one of you girls would go with me to the well to-day, and help me bring back the water. I am so tired."

"Indeed, they shall not!" exclaimed her stepmother angrily. "What do you think—that my daughters shall wait on you?"

"I do not care to get tanned in the sun," yawned one.

"I do not wish my hands to look as though I work," said the other haughtily.

So Isabella set out alone. She sat down to rest several times on her way, but after a while she reached the well. It was an old-fashioned affair, and had a moss-covered bucket on a long chain which wound on a roller. It was not hard work to drop the bucket down the well, but it was hard work to turn the handle of the roller until the dripping bucket reached the top. It was still harder work to empty the bucket into the pail she carried.

This day, when Isabella came to the well there was an old woman sitting on the well-curb. She was a wretched-looking old woman. She wore an old shawl about her head and shoulders.

When she saw Isabella she said, “Good-morrow, little maid.”

“Good morning,” said the little girl. “How do you do?”

“I should do very well, thank you,” said the old woman, “if I had a drink of water.”

“That you shall soon have,” said Isabella, forgetting her own tiredness because she felt sorry for her.

Isabella soon had the well bucket up, filled her pail, and then held it so that the thirsty woman could drink out of the side. She drank long and eagerly.

“Thank you,” she said at length. “Dear child, you will never be sorry for your kindness;” and she rose and walked away.

Isabella threw away the rest of the water, and after refilling her pail, set out for home.

When she reached the house, her stepmother said, “You are late! Where have you been?”

Isabella opened her mouth to answer—and what do you think happened? Out fell diamonds and roses.

Quickly the stepmother called her daughters and they began to sweep them up.

“Where have you been?” cried the stepsisters. “What has happened to you?”

Isabella tried to think what could have brought such a thing about, for she was as much surprised as any of them, but she could not think of anything unusual except the meeting with the old woman.

“Speak!” demanded her stepmother. “Are you trying to hide something from us?”

SHE DRANK LONG AND EAGERLY

Isabella said that she had met a strange old lady at the well, but that she could not remember anything else that had not happened every time she had gone for water.

Every once in a while as she was speaking diamonds and roses fell from her mouth.

“You need not go for the water the next time,” said her stepmother. “I shall send my own girls.”

The next day the two stepsisters went to fetch the water.

When they came to the well, there sat the old ragged woman on the curb.

“Good-morrow, young maidens,” said the old woman.

The stepsisters just stared at her.

“My, it is a warm day,” said the old woman, “and I am very thirsty. Will you give me a drink of water?”

“Indeed, we will not!” said the older one haughtily.

“The very idea!” exclaimed the younger one, looking at the old woman’s ragged clothes. “I should think not!”

Then they drew the water, all the time complaining and groaning about the hard work.

When they started to go home, the old woman spoke.

“You are not kind,” she said, “you will be sorry.” But they only laughed and hurried away.

Their mother met them at the door.

“Well, my dears,” she said, “how fared you? Did you meet any good fortune?”

“All we saw was an old woman at the well—such a ragged, wretched old thing she was, too!” answered one girl.

“And she wanted us to give her a drink of water. The idea!” the other girl said at the same time.

With the last words, out of their mouths fell several snakes and toads, which went scudding across the floor.

Their mother screamed and, gathering her skirts about her, jumped on a chair.

“Oh, where have you been?” she cried. “What has happened to you?”

And when the girls told her that they did not know, more snakes and toads fell from their mouths.

“This is an outrage!” exclaimed their mother. “Isabella has formed some terrible plot against you. She is to blame! Go bring her here, and I shall punish her. I shall whip her until she tells us the charm she has found.”

The girls ran out, and soon came back dragging Isabella between them.

Just as they reached their mother a bright light appeared in the room, and suddenly a beautiful fairy stood before them.

“Do not touch Isabella!” she said to the stepmother. “She is not in the least to blame for your children’s misfortune. Their cruel fate is their own fault. When I met Isabella at the

well and asked her for a drink of water, she gave it to me gladly and willingly, but when I met your daughters and asked them for a drink they treated me proudly and unkindly."

"You!" exclaimed the stepmother, looking upon the radiant creature with her shining fairy robes about her. "Met you, and would not give you a drink of water!"

The fairy smiled. "Ah, yes; it was I, but I did not look then as I now do. I was the ragged old woman at the well."

"If they had known it was you—" said the stepmother.

"If they had known it was I," the fairy said, "how could I have judged whether they were kind of heart, and polite to old people, and helpful to people in need?"

"When I met Isabella," the fairy went on, "I looked just as when I met your daughters, and she was very polite and kind to me, and gave me a drink, holding the pail while I drank, even though she was very tired. Because only polite and kind words came from her mouth, I gave her a good fairy gift, and because only impolite and unkind words came from the mouths of your daughters, I gave them another kind of gift."

"Oh, please take back the one you gave them," pleaded the mother.

"Do you mean Isabella's gift, too?" asked the fairy.

"Oh, no," the mother said. "Let her have her gift—but please, please take away the awful gift of my daughters!"

"Let me see," said the fairy, "what Isabella says about that. Shall I take back the gift of your stepsisters, my dear?"

"Oh, please, please do!" cried Isabella. "I am so sorry that they are unhappy."

"Very well, then," said the fairy. "For Isabella's sake, I shall take their gifts back, but only on one condition—that they promise to be kind and polite from now on."

"Oh, we promise! We promise!" cried both stepsisters at once.

"Unless you keep your promise," said the fairy, "the snakes and toads will come from your mouths again." And the fairy disappeared as suddenly as she had come.

But the snakes and toads did not come again, for the stepsisters and their mother were very kind to every one ever after, and Isabella lived a happy life from that day.

* * * * * *

"They just had to keep their promise, didn't they?" commented Mary Frances. "I am glad they did, for I do not like people to break promises."

“Neither do I,” agreed the Story Lady; “and that reminds me of one of our favorite stories—Coralie and the Magic Necklace.”

“Oh,” said Mary Frances, “but I like a story with magic in it.”

“Very well,” said the Story Lady, “I will tell you the story.”

XIII

THE MAGIC NECKLACE

ONCE there was a girl whose name was Coralie. She was a very pretty girl, and very clever. She was so bright in her lessons at school that all she needed to do was to read them over once, and she knew them.

She lived in a pretty home, and was a great pet. Her parents loved her dearly, and although they were not well off, they gave Coralie everything she wished for that they could afford. So, you see, she had all the comforts of life, if not the luxuries.

You would think she would have been a very happy child, wouldn't you? Well, she would have been if she had not had one very dreadful fault. Sometimes she told only half the truth; sometimes she told only quarter the truth; sometimes she stretched the truth so far that she broke it.

Her parents did everything they could to cure her of her dreadful fault, but everything failed. Even being in her room for a whole day with only bread and butter and milk did not help her. At last they became almost desperate.

One evening, after Coralie had gone to bed, her father said, "There is only one thing left, I suppose. We must take Coralie to the magician, Merlin."

"Yes," replied her mother with a sigh, "it is the only thing I can think of. You need not go, dear husband, for it will mean the loss of several days' work. I will take her myself. We can start to-morrow morning."

So in the morning, her mother and Coralie set out on their journey.

Now, the enchanter, Merlin, knew untruthful people even a long way off. He could tell them by their odor. So as Coralie and her mother drew near his palace, which was built of frosted glass, he threw some incense on the fire to keep himself from becoming ill.

At length, Coralie's mother rang the door bell, and Merlin himself came to the door. "Good afternoon," he said.

"Good afternoon," replied Coralie's mother; "we have come a long distance to see you, sir, because——"

Merlin raised his hand. "I know all about the reason," he said. "You have come to see me because you cannot make your daughter tell the truth. She is one of the most untruthful children that ever lived. I know, because her lies often make me ill. When I smelled her coming, I had to burn incense;" and he frowned terribly.

You can imagine how this frightened Coralie. She hid behind her mother. Her mother seemed frightened, too.

"Oh, sir," she begged, "please deal as gently with her as you can. We love her so dearly. We are so grieved that we cannot cure her our own selves."

"Do not fear," answered the magician. "I am not going to hurt her. All that I wish to do is to make her a present."

So he invited them into the palace, and led the way to his workroom. All the woodwork in the room was light green. The windows were studded with red and blue and green jewels, and they threw rainbow colors on the floor.

Merlin went to a golden table, and, opening a drawer, took out a beautiful amethyst necklace, with a diamond clasp. He threw the necklace around Coralie's neck.

"That is all," he said to her mother. "You may go. I am going to lend my magic necklace of truth to Coralie. I shall come for it in one year." Then he turned to Coralie, and said, "Do not take it off. If you do, great harm may come to you. Good-by," and he clapped his hands twice.

HE THREW THE NECKLACE AROUND CORALIE'S NECK

Two slaves appeared, and after bowing before Merlin, showed Coralie and her mother to the door.

Coralie, of course, was delighted with the necklace. All her life long she had wished for jewelry, but her parents could not afford to get her anything but the pretty seal ring which she wore. As to getting such a necklace as Merlin had given her, it would have taken everything they owned in the world to so much as buy the diamond clasp.

When she went back to school, the girls all gathered about her and began to admire the necklace.

"Isn't it beautiful!" they exclaimed. "What a lucky girl! Your people must have fallen heirs to a fortune!"

“Isn’t it pretty!” said Coralie, lifting the sparkling string for them to see better. “Yes, my father and mother gave it to me. You see, I have been ill, and they were so glad when I got well that they gave me this for a present.”

“Oh! Oh! Oh!” cried the girls.

And no wonder they did, for all the sparkle left the necklace, and it looked dull and old and scratched.

“What is the matter?” asked Coralie. “Don’t you think my parents could give it to me? They bought it, and paid an immense sum for it.”

At that falsehood, the necklace turned from the light purple amethyst color to a dull gray agate, and the diamond clasp to a mud-color shade. Then Coralie saw what had happened, and she was frightened.

“No,” she said, “they did not give it to me. We went to the magician, Merlin, and he lent it to me.”

At these truthful words, the necklace became as beautiful as ever. But the children began to laugh.

“What are you laughing at?” asked Coralie. “You needn’t make fun. Merlin was very glad to see us. When he saw us in the distance he sent his carriage to meet us. It was drawn by two fawn-colored horses, and the coachman wore livery. There was a great feast spread for us, and each of us had a servant in back of our chairs. We had golden plates to eat from, and——”

Suddenly Coralie stopped speaking, for the children were laughing at her harder than ever. She looked down at her necklace. No wonder they laughed. It was dull again in color, and had grown so long it rested upon the ground.

“Ho, ho, Coralie!” cried one. “Come, now! You are stretching the truth! Set us right!”

“Well,” confessed Coralie, “Merlin didn’t send any one to meet us. We walked, and we were in his palace only a little while.”

At these words, the necklace shrank to its right size, and resumed its own beautiful color.

“But now, Coralie,” cried the children, “but now tell us truly where you got the necklace. Did the magician give it to you?”

“Yes,” said Coralie, “he just handed it to me without saying a word. I think he——”

She did not finish the sentence, for the necklace had suddenly grown so tight that it was choking her, and she was gasping for breath.

“Come, come, Coralie!” cried one of the girls. “You are keeping back part of the truth! Tell the truth! What happened?”

“He said I was one of the most untruthful persons in the world,” admitted Coralie; and the necklace became itself again.

And so things kept on. Every time Coralie tried to say one untruthful thing, the necklace behaved in some queer, frightful way. Even the children became sorry for her, for she began to look worried all the time.

“If I were you, I’d take the necklace back,” one of the girls told her. “It gives you no happiness at all.”

“Indeed it doesn’t,” said Coralie, “I wish I——”

“Why don’t you take it back?” the girl asked.

Now, Coralie did not wish to tell her, and kept still, for she was wondering what she could possibly say; but the necklace began to act wildly. The stones began to dance up and down so hard that they hurt her.

“Merlin told me I must not take it off,” she said. “If I should do so, great harm would come to me. He is coming for it when I’ve worn it for a year.”

And the necklace shone just a little more brightly than before, and the diamond clasp sparkled so that it would have dazzled your eyes to look at it.

And after that Coralie began to lose the worried look, for the telling of the truth was beginning to be a habit with her. The necklace very seldom had to remind her, for every day it grew easier for her to tell the truth.

And when Merlin came for his necklace, he brought her a far more beautiful gift than the necklace, but it was one that she could not wear showily. It was a necklace of pearls, pearls of great price which she wore just over her heart. You see, Merlin needed his magic necklace for another child who did not tell the truth.

Nobody knows where the magic necklace is to-day; but if I were a child in the habit of telling falsehoods, I should not feel quite sure that it would not be found again.

* * * * * *

“Will it?” asked Mary Frances, as the Story Lady finished the story.

“It may be,” said the Story King. “I have an idea where it is. Why? Do you know any children who do not speak the truth?”

“I—I am sorry to say that I do,” Mary Frances said. “I do not know many, though. I know two who do not always tell the truth; and I know one child who isn’t kind to her pet cat. I wish I knew a story to tell her when I go home.”

“All right, perhaps you would like to hear the story of Linda.”

“Please tell it to me?” she asked.

So the Story Lady told the story of “The Cat and the Carrots.”

XIV

THE CAT AND THE CARROTS

LINDA was a little girl who rarely thought of any one but herself. She would take the warmest place by the fire and the largest piece of cake on the dish, or the finest apple or pear; and she would take away the toys from the other children, and did not care for anything as long as she was amused herself.

Her mother was very sorry to see that Linda was selfish, and used to talk very seriously to her about it, and to tell her that no one would love her if she did not mend her ways.

But Linda did not care, and she did not believe what her mother said.

"You will always love me, Mother," said she.

"Perhaps so," said her mother; "but then you are my own little girl, and it is my duty to take care of you. Besides, I shall be very sorry for you, because you will be very unhappy. But no one else will care for you. Every one will dislike you because you are selfish—every one in the world."

Linda did not say anything, but the words "every one in the world" came into her head many times during the day, and at night they came into her dreams, and she fancied she saw the words written in letters of fire, from which the flames shot up in all directions, and she was saying half aloud, "The bed will be on fire," when a voice said—

"But you are not in bed, you are in the farmyard."

Then she looked round, and saw that she was near the barn, and that there was a ladder not far off, and a great barrel close by. Also there was a heap of carrots, which Linda began to toss about, and to snap in two, and to pull the leaves off; and at last she was throwing them all into the duck-pond, when a voice suddenly said, "Stop!"

Linda looked round, but no one was to be seen.

“Stop!” said the voice again.

Then Linda looked down, and seated upon a stone she saw a carrot whose green top-knot of leaves she had broken off. Two little legs and two little arms had sprouted out, and it had eyes and a mouth, but no nose.

“Have you no feelings?” said the carrot. “Is it not enough to be taken from my home in the earth, without being knocked about and flung into a duck-pond? How would you like it?”

“I’m not a carrot,” said Linda.

“You don’t care for any one but yourself,” replied the carrot, growing redder and redder; “no one likes you, not even carrots, and you will find that some day people will pay you back for being so selfish. I am going to begin at once. Come carrots, carrots, carrots!” he shouted.

“In and out

Whirl about;

Pinch and beat her;

Let her know

Selfishness will bring her woe;

Come at once and greet her.”

Then suddenly all the carrots that were lying about sprang up, and those that were in the duck-pond sprang out of it. They were joined by those in the gardens near, and they came trooping along like an army. They could walk as well in the air as on the ground; and they whirled around Linda and pulled her hair and pinched her arms, till she cried aloud for mercy.

“Ho! ho! ho! only see

What it is our foe to be,”

shouted the carrots, as they twirled up and down and round and round.

"HAVE YOU NO FEELINGS?" SAID THE CARROT

The air was full of carrots, and the ground was covered by them, and Linda made up her mind that if she ever got clear of them she would never meddle with a carrot again as long as she lived. She kept off their blows as long as she could, but at last she was too tired to do so any longer, and she sank down to the ground crying, "Oh, please leave off! please leave off!"

"We now have done,

But we've had some fun,"

said the carrot who had first spoken to her.

“Carrots, depart,” said he, waving his hand.

The last carrot had said “Good-by,” but Linda had not spoken.

She waited till she thought he had gone, and then she looked up. The carrot certainly was not there, but a large cat was sitting beside her.

“Topsy, poor Topsy!” said Linda.

But Topsy put up her back, and her eyes looked very fierce.

“Poor Topsy, indeed!” said the cat, angrily; “don’t think to coax me, you never think of me in the house, you pull my whiskers and my tail, and you never give me a bit of meat, or anything nice that you are eating; and this morning, though I sat on the chair beside you, longing for a little new milk, you drank it all up—you did not leave me a drop. You are the most selfish little girl I know, and I don’t like you, so I am going to scratch you.”

“Oh dear! oh dear!” said Linda, “please don’t. The carrots have punished me till I am quite sore.”

“Cats, cats, one and all,

Tabby, tortoise-shell, come when I call,

Gray and yellow, black and white

Cats and kittens, come hither to-night.”

called the cat loudly.

Ah! all the cats and kittens in the world must have come. So many! And they all thronged round her, and sat upon her shoulders, and clung round her arms.

“All the cats in the world hate you,” said Topsy.

“We do! we do! we do!” mewed the cats. “She never cares what becomes of poor cats and kittens.”

Then the cats tumbled over each other, and tumbled over Linda, and crowded round her and upon her, until she was sitting under a heap of cats, with only her face peeping out, and Topsy was crouching in front, looking fiercely at her.

“Now that you cannot stir,” said Topsy, “I am going to scratch you.”

“Oh! oh! oh!” shrieked Linda, and she gave such a start that all the cats fell down upon the ground; and at that moment she opened her eyes, and found herself in her bed, with her mother standing beside her.

“What is the matter?” asked her mother, for she had heard Linda scream.

“Oh! oh! oh!” sobbed Linda, “I have had such a horrid dream.”

“Well, it was only a dream. You are awake now, and I am with you.”

“Every one in the world hates me, even the cats and the carrots,” sobbed Linda, and bit by bit she told her mother all her dream.

“It was such a horrid dream, and I was so frightened,” said Linda, “I can’t think why it came.”

“I will tell you,” said her mother; “it came out of your own heart. You had been thinking of the words I said to you, that every one would dislike you but myself. I am glad that you have had this dream, for it shows me that my words have sunk into my little girl’s heart, and I hope now that she will try to improve.”

“I will try,” said Linda.

And she did try, and whenever she was inclined to do any selfish act she thought of her wonderful dream, and said to herself, “I should not wish all the world to be like the cats and the carrots.”

* * * * * *

“That’s a good story,” said Mary Frances to the Queen. “I shall try to remember it.”

“It is a good story,” replied the Queen, smiling; “but we have still better, as you shall hear.”

Here a page boy who sat on a stool at the foot of the Story Lady began to fidget, as if to ask a question.

“Well, what is it, Roland?” asked the Story Lady.

“If you please, can’t we have a story about a boy?” answered Roland.

“Yes,” said the Story Lady; “you shall have two stories—one about a tiger, and the other about a page boy who killed a dragon.”

XV

THE BRAHMIN, THE TIGER, AND THE JACKAL

ONCE upon a time a Brahmin, who was walking along the road, came upon an iron cage in which some men had shut up a great Tiger.

As the Brahmin passed by, the Tiger called out:

"O brother Brahmin, brother Brahmin, have pity on me, and let me out for only one minute! I am so thirsty I shall die unless I can have a drink of water."

"I am afraid," said the Brahmin, "that if I let you out you will eat me."

"No, indeed," said the Tiger. "As soon as I have had some water, I will go back to my cage."

Then the Brahmin was sorry for the thirsty beast, and opened the cage door. Instantly the Tiger jumped out, and cried, "I will eat you first and drink the water afterwards."

"Do not be in such a hurry," said the Brahmin. "Let us ask the opinions of six, and, if they all say it is fair for you to kill me, then I am willing to die."

"Very well," said the Tiger, "we will ask the first six living things we meet."

So they walked on till they came to a Banyan-tree, and the Brahmin said, "Banyan-tree, Banyan-tree, hear and judge."

"Let me hear," said the Banyan-tree.

"This Tiger," said the Brahmin, "begged me to let him out of his cage to drink a little water and he promised not to hurt me. Now that he is free, he wishes to eat me. Is it fair that he should do so?"

Then the Banyan-tree said: “Men come to rest in my cool shade. When they have rested, they break my branches and scatter my leaves. They are a cruel race. Let the Tiger eat the man.”

“Tiger, Tiger,” said the Brahmin, “do not eat me yet. You said that you would hear the judgment of six.”

“Very well,” said the Tiger, and they went on their way. Soon they met a Camel.

“Camel, Camel,” cried the Brahmin, “hear and judge.”

“Let me hear,” said the Camel.

Then the Brahmin told his story.

“When I was young and strong and could work, my master took good care of me,” said the Camel; “but now that I am old, he starves me and beats me without mercy. Men are a cruel race. Let the Tiger eat the man.”

The Tiger would have killed the Brahmin then and there, but he said:

“Tiger, Tiger, do not eat me yet. You said that you would hear the judgment of six.”

“Very well,” said the Tiger, and they went on their way. Soon they saw an Ox lying near the road.

“Brother Ox, brother Ox,” cried the Brahmin, “hear and judge.”

“Let me hear,” said the Ox, and the Brahmin told his story.

“When I was young,” said the Ox, “my master was kind to me. Now that I am too old to work he has left me here to die. Men are a cruel race. Let the Tiger eat the man.”

They next saw an Eagle flying through the air, and the Brahmin cried:

“O Eagle, great Eagle, hear and judge.”

“Let me hear,” said the Eagle.

The Brahmin told his story, and the Eagle said:

“Whenever men see me, they try to shoot me; they climb the rocks to my nest and steal away my little ones. Men are a cruel race. Let the Tiger eat the man.”

Then the Tiger began to roar, but the Brahmin said, “Wait! we have yet two to ask.”

Soon they saw an Alligator, and the Brahmin told his story. But the Alligator said:

"Whenever I put my nose out of the water, men torment me. They are a cruel race. Let the Tiger eat the man."

The Brahmin was now in despair, but the Tiger was willing to keep his word. And the sixth judge was a Jackal. Now the Jackal is a miserable little beast whom no one likes, but he listened to the Brahmin's story.

"You must show me just where it was and how it happened," said the Jackal.

So they all went back to the cage.

"I was here," said the Brahmin, standing in the road.

"And I was in the cage," said the Tiger.

"Which way were you looking?" said the Jackal; "and show me the side of the cage where you stood."

"I was on this side," said the Tiger, jumping into the cage.

"Oh, yes, I see," said the Jackal. "And was the cage door shut?"

"Shut and bolted," said the Brahmin.

"Then shut and bolt it," said the Jackal.

When the Brahmin had done this, the Jackal said: "O wicked and ungrateful Tiger, you would have killed the good Brahmin who opened your cage door. Your cruelty shall be punished, for no one will ever let you out again. Go your way, friend Brahmin, and go in peace."

* * * * * *

"Good for the jackal!" said Roland, clapping his hands. "Now for the dragon!"

So the Story Lady went right on.

XVI

THE RED DRAGON

THERE lived in a marsh near a certain village, a red dragon which terrorized all the people round about; so the king of the country offered a great reward to any one who would kill the frightful beast.

A great many knights of the king's army went out one after the other to slay it, and each came back with a wonderful tale of how he had fought with the dragon; and, after wounding it, had given up the fight only for fear of being slain by the monster.

"Never mind; you will have better success next time," the kind king would say to each defeated knight. Then he would give him a valuable gift as a reward for his brave effort.

There was among the king's pages a little boy who was a great butterfly hunter. The king's librarian paid him a gold piece for every new butterfly he found.

This page was a great favorite of the king, and often rode with him on long journeys. One day when the king stopped in the neighborhood in which the dragon lived, the page boy slipped off with his net to hunt butterflies; and, in chasing a rare specimen, lost his way and wandered into the very swamp where the dragon was roaming about.

When the fierce old dragon saw the boy, he came rushing and roaring at him in a great rage. The frightened boy looked around; there were no trees to climb for safety, and he knew that if he ran he could not escape, for run as he might, the dragon could run still faster.

"WOW," SHRIEKED THE DRAGON

He had nothing with which to fight except his butterfly net. The net was fastened to the end of a long stout stick, and the boy decided to defend himself with this as best he could. When the monster charged down upon him, bellowing fearfully, he raised his stick and thrust it with all his might into the bulging side of the beast.

"Wow!" shrieked the dragon; and with a puff it went up in the air and burst, just as a balloon does when a hole is slashed in its cover.

The fierce old dragon was nothing but skin and air!

When he was sure it was quite dead, the boy grasped the empty dragon skin by its spiked tail, and dragged it back to the castle and showed it to the king. He was the maddest

king you ever heard of when he saw the dead dragon lying there, and sent off at once for the bold knights who had pretended to fight it so bravely.

"You old humbugs," he cried. "There lies the red dragon you bragged so much about fighting. It wasn't a thing but skin and air. If any one of you had so much as touched it with the point of a sword, it would have gone to pieces, as it did when my brave page boy struck it with his butterfly net."

The cowardly knights had no word to say. So the king ordered them to give the gifts they had received for fighting the dragon to the page boy, who was then so rich that he was able to buy a castle of his own. When he grew up, he was known as one of the bravest knights of that country.

XVII

TWO POEMS

THE page was pretty brave," said Roland. "When I was little I used to be scared of the dark, and my mother taught me a poem about being brave."

"Oh, say it for us, please!" cried a girl near him.

The boy shook his head in refusal, but Mary Frances gave him a smile and said, encouragingly, "Please, I want to hear it."

Then Roland rose, made a bow, and recited his poem:

IF I COULD CROW

Sometimes I waken up at night, And cannot see a speck of light; I snuggle down into my bed, And pull the clothes in overhead. I look and peer into the dark, As something seems to whisper, "Hark!" Then, with an awful sudden jump, My heart begins to thump and thump. Oh, my, I think I'll be so brave,

And all my courage try to save;

Then, as I feel my courage go,

Our yellow rooster starts to crow.

Then I'm ashamed, and feel so small

To think that I'm not brave at all;

To know that in the black, black night,

Our rooster crows—no soul in sight.

He flaps his wings and crows for fair;

His voice sounds like he didn't care—

Oh, well, what if I'm scared—I know

I'd be brave, too, if I could crow!

Just at this point the cat came bouncing into their midst.

"I have just time enough," he said, breathlessly; "if you are quite ready, I will begin."

You should have heard the children shout!

"We are quite ready! Go on, Puss! Begin, please," they cried.

So the cat made a bow, twirled his whiskers, and began:

THE TWINS[A]

There were two little kittens, a black and a gray,

And grandmother said, with a frown:

"It never will do to keep them both,

The black one we better drown.

"Don't cry, my dear," to tiny Bess,

"One kitten's enough to keep;

Now run to nurse, for 'tis growing late,

And time you were fast asleep."

The morrow dawned, and rosy and sweet

Came little Bess from her nap;

The nurse said, "Go into mother's room,

And look in grandmother's lap."

"Come here," said grandmother, with a smile,

From the rocking-chair where she sat;

"God has sent you two little brothers;

Now what do you think of that?"

Bess looked at the babies a moment,

With their wee heads, yellow and brown,

And then to grandmother soberly said,

"Which one are you going to drown?"

[A] Author unknown.

As soon as he had finished, he waltzed around three times, turned a somersault, and bounded out of the circle as quickly as he had appeared.

When the Story People had stopped laughing the Story King rose and waved his hand and said:

"That will do for to-day; we must not tire our guest."

"Oh, I am not tired," said Mary Frances; "I could listen to such stories forever."

"Dear child, I believe you love stories as much as we do," said the Queen, smiling at her enthusiasm. "Well, you shall have a delightful surprise to-morrow."

While the stories were being told, Mary Frances had noticed a little dried-up man, sitting at a table near the Story Lady, and writing rapidly with an immense quill pen. Before him was a pile of white paper and an inkwell. As she told the story he wrote it down, keeping even pace with her words. Mary Frances had never seen any one write so fast and she watched him, fascinated. Almost without an effort his pen flew over the paper, and as the last word of the story left the Story Lady's lips his pen stopped. Then he folded his papers neatly and laid them on the table.

As Mary Frances was passing out with the Story Lady, this little man, much to her surprise, stepped up and handed her the papers he had been writing.

"These," said he, "are your copies of the stories you have just heard."

"Oh, thank you, thank you," she replied, hesitating to take them.

"Yes, they are for you," said the Story Lady. "This is the Ready Writer; he will give you copies of all the stories you hear."

"Oh, thank you," said Mary Frances again to the Ready Writer. "How fast you write! You must be the fastest writer in the world!"

The little man bowed and retired, evidently much pleased with her praise of his skill.

XVIII

TINY'S ADVENTURES IN TINYTOWN

BEFORE it grows dark, I have something to show you—one of the most interesting sights on Story Island," said the Story Lady. "But we must hasten, because darkness falls here very suddenly; it drops like a curtain—all at once."

Together they walked down the castle steps and through the town. All was so strange to Mary Frances; the houses, the streets—everything was so fairy-like or story-like, and yet so familiar, that it seemed as if she had seen them all before.

"You live in Story Land, indeed," said Mary Frances, gazing eagerly about her.

"Yes," returned the Story Lady, "we are not a very matter-of-fact people."

Soon they came to a beautiful park on the outskirts of the town.

"This is the Queen's Garden," said the Story Lady. "Here are many of the trees, flowers and birds you read about in the story books."

"Oh! Oh!" cried Mary Frances, with delight, as she looked about her.

Many of the wonders were strange, but here and there others were familiar and she lingered to examine them.

"Not too long," warned the Story Lady, smiling, "or darkness will overtake us. Here is a surprise for you."

They came to an enclosure, surrounded by a white picket-fence about a foot high.

"What a tiny little town!" cried Mary Frances, looking down.

"Yes, that is what we call it—Tinytown."

“Why, it’s just like the towns at home,” said Mary Frances, looking closer. “There’s the school and the flag-staff, the public square and the fountain, the church, the fire-house, the stores and houses—just as they are at home! Oh, where did you get it?”

“We found it in your country,” replied the Story Lady; “and we brought it here and set it up just as you see it and named it after Tiny, the girl who discovered it—but it’s a long story.”

“Oh, won’t you tell me the story?”

“Yes; this evening.”

Mary Frances walked all around the fence and examined the little town minutely. “To think of finding that on Story Island!” she exclaimed. At the same time she felt a little pang of homesickness, but said nothing about it.

“Now we must hasten home,” said the Story Lady.

As it was broad daylight, Mary Frances thought it rather strange to hurry so, but just as they reached the castle, darkness fell and the daylight went just as if some one had pressed a button and shut it out.

That evening while they were resting comfortably in their apartments, the Story Lady related Tiny’s Adventures in Tinytown just as they are set down here.

Tiny Gets Lost

Tiny was out in the woods hunting chestnuts, when a bird flew overhead, a bright-colored bird.

Tiny saw the bird twice before she was certain it was a flicker.

At first it seemed like a golden streak of yellow as it flew by, but when it rested on a low bush, she felt sure there wasn’t any yellow about it. Instead, it was bluish-gray and brown. On its head was the most beautiful crescent of red. Its throat was a warm leaf-brown, specked with polka-dots of black.

JUST AT HER FEET LAY THE TINIEST LITTLE BIT OF A TOWN

"Strange!" thought Tiny, tiptoeing nearer and nearer. "Oh, no, it's not strange at all. Why, it's a flicker—a golden-winged woodpecker. Its wings are lined with yellow. Of course it looked like a yellow bird when flying overhead."

"Wick—wick—wick—wick—follow—me." The bird flew on a little farther.

"I will catch up soon, birdie!" Tiny called, and hurried to the branch where the bird was sitting.

"Wick—wick!" On and on it flew, Tiny following, when suddenly it disappeared entirely, and there was Tiny miles out in the forest, and not knowing the way back home at all. And not a single thing to eat, either.

“My, now I am scared!—but I won’t cry! I’m nine years old, and I won’t cry! I’ll look around and see if there isn’t something I can think to do,” but a big tear blinded her eye.

“Where’s my handkerchief? Where ever did I put my handkerchief?” She looked in her pocket. “But if I’m not going to cry, what do I need it for?” she asked herself, and brushed away a big drop with the back of her hand.

“Oh, oh, look!” Tiny laughed so that the woods echoed, and no wonder she did—for just at her feet lay the tiniest little bit of a town with real houses, no bigger than bird-houses; real people, too, not much taller than pins; real street-lamps no bigger than pencils; real carts no bigger than peanuts; real horses no bigger than katydids. In the center of the town was a lovely little fountain. From the fountain, walks led in four directions.

Houses and public buildings were along these walks; and scattered on the green lawns were pretty flower-beds.

“Oh, what a lovely cottage!” cried Tiny, spying a beautiful little house near the edge of the village.

“I’m going to pick it up! No, I’ll stoop down and look at it. People may be inside. If I picked it up they might be hurt and frightened.”

She leaned over and examined it closely, but was careful not to step into the town.

The walls were covered with vines, and geraniums bloomed at the windows. Charming white curtains hung on the sashes, showing off the brilliant color of the geraniums.

Smoke was coming out of the chimney.

“My, the people who live in that cottage must be getting supper!” The little girl spoke softly to herself. “It seems to me I can smell it cooking. What tiny little bits of dishes they must use—smaller than the littlest ones I own. Why, an acorn would be almost large enough for a bath tub for the house.”

Tiny laughed gayly at the idea.

“I’ll wait here for a minute or two to see if anybody comes out of the door,” she said, taking a seat on the twisted roots of a nearby tree; but, although she waited patiently for several minutes, no one appeared.

“How I wonder who lives in such a dear little home!” she thought. “It must be fun to live in such a beautiful little house. My, isn’t the whole town too sweet for anything! How I’d like to live there!”

She put her toe on the gravel walk which led across the tiny little town, and, in a second she was no longer a big girl; she was as little as a pin herself, only, of course, not so thin as a pin, but just the right size for the house.

Tiny is Put in the Lock-up

Tiny rubbed her tiny little eyes with her tiny little hand, and looked about her in amazement. She was very near the cottage she had so much admired. "I'd love to peep in the windows," she thought, "but it would be so rude. I guess I'll walk over toward the fountain."

"Oh, here comes a hand-organ and a little monkey!" Tiny put her hand in her pocket to find a penny, but all she found there were three chestnuts, each no bigger than a period. "Poor little monkey!" said Tiny as he came up to her, lifting his hat, "you must be tired. I wonder if you'd like these nuts."

The monkey smelled of the nuts, lifted his hat, looked at his master, and nodding his thanks, began to eat them.

"He no tired," said the Italian organ-grinder. "He work only two hours a day."

"Good!" said Tiny. "Does he play the rest of the day?"

"He play, play, play," smiled the man, and passed down the street.

"My," thought Tiny, as she walked along, "I wish I had taken some money with me this morning. If I had a nickel, I'd buy some bananas from that banana-man's fruit-stand. I certainly am hungry."

"Want banan's?" inquired the man as she stood looking at his wares.

Tiny nodded. "I haven't any money," she said, trying to keep from crying.

"Never mind," smiled the man, "I had little girl once. She gone. She die. I give banan's you." He handed her a half-dozen bananas no bigger than pencil points.

"Oh, thank you," said Tiny. "I'll never forget how kind you are."

But the man was on his way down the street before she finished.

She felt much better after eating and stood for quite a while watching the little fountain play and splash.

Away in the distance she heard a dog bark, and at the edge of the village she saw a tiny newsboy and with him a tiny dog, no bigger than a capital letter. Under his arm he carried tiny newspapers no bigger than postage stamps.

"Not much news in such a tiny paper!" thought Tiny, watching the fountain splash. "Some day I'll buy one to see what it says."

Suddenly she realized it was getting dark; people passed by her and went into the houses. She felt very lonely and a little frightened. "Oh, dear," she thought, "I do wonder where I'll sleep to-night? I wonder if it's against the law to sleep on the park benches?" She went over and sat down on one. "I guess I'll try sleeping here, anyhow."

She was just going to stretch out, when she saw a policeman coming toward her just as fast as he could walk.

"Come, come!" he said. "Who are you? I've never seen you around here before! What's your name? Where do you live?"

"Please, Mr. Policeman"—Tiny tried to keep her voice from shaking—"my name is Tiny and I'm lost."

"Tiny! Tiny! Tiny what? What's your other name?"

"They call me 'Tiny girl'," said Tiny.

"Tiny Girl!" grunted the policeman. "Girl! I've never heard of a Mr. Girl or a Mrs. Girl around here! Oh, I know—I understand now—you've run away from home—that's what you've done!"

"Oh, no, sir," began Tiny, but the policeman took her hand, and walked toward the town hall.

"You'll have to sleep over there to-night," said he, pointing to the building, "in care of the police matron; and in the morning we'll see what we can find out. Children that run away we always put in the lock-up."

They were inside the door now, and the policeman rapped three times on the tiny table. Out came the police matron. Tiny thought she looked rather severe.

"Matron," said the policeman, "I found this little girl on one of the park benches. She cannot tell me where she lives—she says she's lost and that her last name is Girl—Tiny Girl. You know there is no family of the name of Girl in this whole town. Put her to sleep in a bed and if anything turns up to-night to show who she is, I'll let you know. In the morning we'll investigate. Good night."

"Good night, Mr. Officer," said the police matron.

“Come,” she said to Tiny, “let me wash you and comb your hair, and give you some bread and milk. I’m certainly sorry such a little girl should be a runaway. Your clothes show you have a careful mother.”

“I didn’t run away,” sobbed Tiny; “I tell you I didn’t!”

“How did you come here, then?” asked the matron, stopping combing her hair.

“I was a big, real girl,” said Tiny, “and—and I was walking in the woods, with my mother’s permission, when a bird flew ahead of me and he beckoned me to come on. I wandered and wandered and I came to this place. I stepped on the walk, and—and—and—I—melted into the tiny little thing I am—so there! How I wish I had my mother——”

“Oh, what a story! What an awful story!” cried the police matron. “Stop right away! We don’t allow children to tell lies here!”

“It’s not a story,” began Tiny, but the police matron dragged her to a tiny bedroom, and undressed her and put her to bed.

“You will have your supper in bed,” said she, “then I’ll be sure of where you are!” And she brought a bowl no bigger than a cherry-stone full of bread and milk for Tiny’s supper.

At first Tiny couldn’t eat a mouthful, but she was really very hungry, and finally she ate it all up.

“Mother will find me somehow,” she thought, as she slipped out of bed and knelt to say her prayers.

Tiny is Adopted

The next morning Tiny was awakened by a knock at her door.

“Good morning,” smiled the police matron. “I have a delightful surprise for you.”

“Good morning. What can it be?” cried Tiny. “Did my mother——?”

“You’ve nearly guessed,” nodded the police matron, helping her put on her shoes and stockings. “You’re going to have a mother, for a dear old lady—Mrs. Bountiful—wants to adopt you.”

“To adopt me? Why, I thought all adopted children lived in orphanages.”

“Oh, my, no!” exclaimed the police matron. “Children that run away are often——”

“I didn’t run away!” Tiny stamped her tiny foot. “I tell you I didn’t.”

“Come, come,” said the police matron, “you don’t want me to tell your new friend that you have a bad temper and tell stories.”

Tiny certainly did not, and as she was now washed and dressed she went down-stairs with the police matron.

“Here she is, madam,” said the police matron very politely as she led Tiny to where the dearest bit of an old lady was sitting.

“Oh, you dear child!” exclaimed the tiny lady. “You’ve had no breakfast, have you?”

“I just got up,” whispered Tiny, not liking to let her think that the matron had been neglectful.

“Well, well,” smiled the little old lady, “we’ll soon see to that. I have my automobile outside. Good-by, Mrs. Matron.” And taking Tiny by the hand she went out.

“This is my son,” said the little old lady, as they walked up to the car. “He can drive an automobile beautifully. Shake hands with Tiny, Martin.”

“How do you do?”

“Pleased to meet you,” said Martin, lifting his tiny cap.

“Let us drive right home,” said his mother. “This dear little girl hasn’t had any breakfast.” They climbed in, and away Martin drove, down the street through the village park, past the fountain, over to the edge of the village, up to—where do you think?—right up in front of the cottage which Tiny had first seen in the little village.

“Oh, isn’t it a beau-ti-ful home!” she cried.

“How glad we are that you like it,” said the little lady. “Welcome to Rose Cottage.”

“Walk—right—in—Welcome—to—Rose—Cottage,” cried a new voice as they entered. It was a shrill, nasal voice.

Tiny looked around, but saw no one. “Look! I’m—right—here,” cried the voice again.

The little lady laughed. “All right, Polly,” she called, and Tiny saw in one corner of the room a pretty green-and-red-and-yellow poll-parrot.

She wanted to go nearer and pet him, but his mistress hurried her to the breakfast table.

“Let—us—take—a drive,” called out Polly presently.

“Why, yes, let us. Shall we go now, Martin?” asked Mrs. Bountiful.

“Yes, Mother,” smiled the big boy.

“Take—us—all,” called Polly, “Take—us—all—don’t—forget—the—monk.”

“Why,” asked Tiny, who had been very quiet, “what does he mean?”

“He means,” laughed the little lady, “that we take Martin’s pet monkey and Polly for a drive quite often—and they are both very much spoiled.”

“Oh, how lovely!” cried Tiny. “Have you a monkey, too?”

Martin brought the monkey, and his mother took the parrot, and they all got into the automobile.

“Where do we go first, Mother?” asked Martin.

“Will you excuse me, dear,” the little lady asked, “if I whisper? I want to surprise you.”

Tiny nodded and smiled, as his mother leaned over to reach Martin’s ear.

They drove along the park and over into the business part of the village, up to the livery-stables and stopped.

“Good morning, ma’am,” the liveryman said.

“Bring him out,” nodded the little lady, and the man disappeared into the stables.

Soon he led out the dearest little brown-and-white Shetland pony—no bigger than a cricket.

“Oh, oh, oh!” cried Tiny. “I’d like to kiss him!”

The little old lady laughed delightedly.

“He’s yours,” she cried. “Get out and try to ride him.”

Martin helped her into the wee saddle, the liveryman gave her a tiny whip and the pony cantered all the way down the street and back again.

“Oh, I never thought I’d own a real live pony,” sighed Tiny, patting the little thing’s neck. “It seems too good to be true.”

“Let us go down to the candy shop,” said Tiny’s fairy godmother.

The candy shop wasn’t far away and when they drew up outside, Martin fastened the pony to the lamp-post. The little old lady took Tiny into the shop.

“Here, dear,” she said, opening her purse, “are two dollars. Spend them both. You can have all the candy and ice cream you want.”

So Tiny ate five plates of ice cream and three boxes of candy.

“It was splendid,” she said to the little lady when they’d gotten home. “I’d like to kiss you for all these lovely times.”

“I’m so glad, dear motherless child,” said the little lady with tears in her eyes.

“But I’m not motherless—” began Tiny.

“There, there, we’ll forget about that,” interrupted her new mother.

That night she tucked Tiny into bed quite early.

I must tell you about Tiny’s bedroom. All the woodwork and furniture were white. On the floor was a rose-colored carpet, with a border of pink and white roses and green leaves. At the windows were white curtains with pink roses along each edge. On the little white bureau was a tiny set of golden brushes and combs and boxes and bottles, and in a gold vase on the dressing-table was a very beautiful bouquet of tiny real roses.

Everything was so sweet that Tiny used up nearly every word of praise she knew, and she fell asleep before the little lady had finished tucking her in bed.

It must have been near midnight when Tiny was awakened very suddenly by an awful pain.

She cried out loudly for her mother.

The little lady hastened to her room.

“You poor dear!” she cried. “Martin shall go immediately for Doctor Curum.”

Martin was back with the doctor before Tiny realized he had started.

“Well, well,” said the doctor, looking Tiny over, “this young lady has been having too good a time—eh?”

“Oh, Doctor,” cried the little old lady, “will she die? It is my fault. I gave her too much candy.”

“Don’t worry,” smiled the doctor, quickly opening his case. “These medicines will cure her.”

“I will stay with you, dear,” said the little lady, after seeing the doctor to the door.

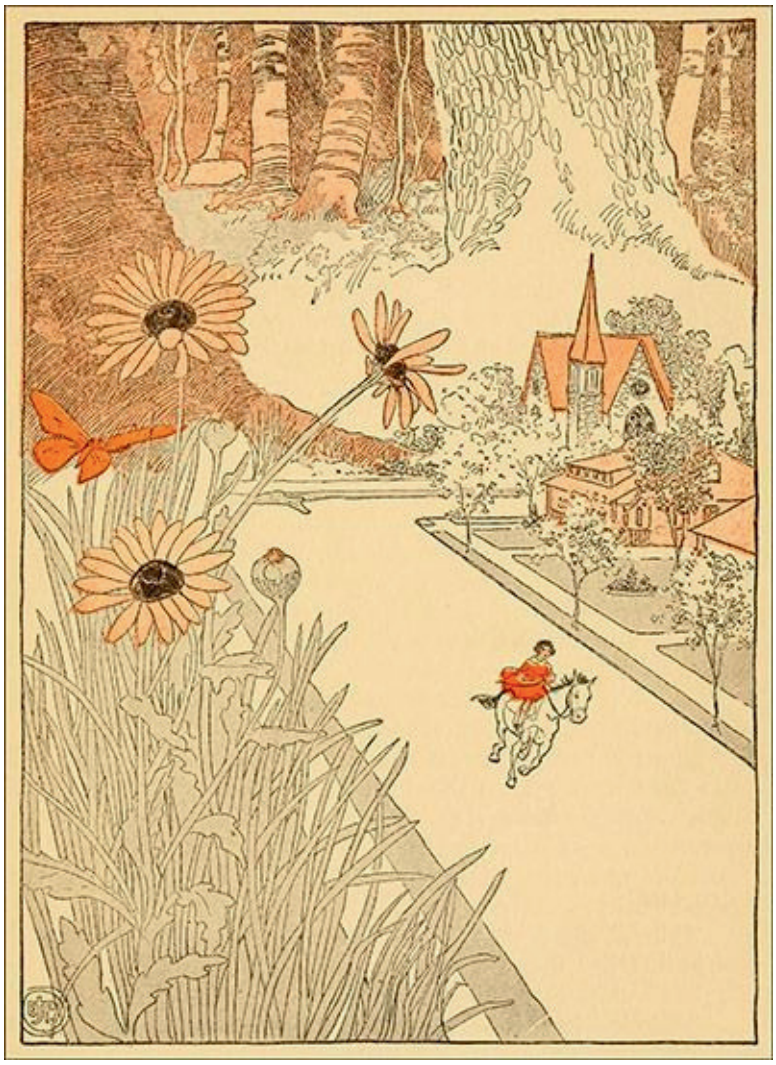
Tiny soon fell asleep and did not wake until early daylight.

“My, I feel all right,” she thought, stretching her little arms over her head. “How glad I am! But what smells so queer? I believe it’s smoke! Oh, it is! Something’s on fire!”

She sprang out of bed. The little lady had fallen asleep in the tiny white rocking-chair on the other side of Tiny’s bed. She looked so sweet in her rose kimono with a sweet smile on her lips, that Tiny hadn’t the heart to waken her.

“How tired she must be,” thought Tiny. “I’ll find out where the fire is first.”

She slipped into her clothes, and was soon out-of-doors. She saw immediately where the fire was—over on the next avenue, where smoke and flame were coming out of the roof of a building.



THE PONY CANTERED ALL THE WAY DOWN THE STREET

Tiny Discovers a Fire

"Oh, oh," thought Tiny, "what shall I do? I know!" as she spied the pony in the stable where Martin had put him the night before. "I'll ride over to the fire-house and tell them, and then I'll ride to the house and warn the people."

"Do your best, Love Trot," she whispered to the dappled pony.

He pricked up his ears, and picked up his feet, and in no time to speak of Tiny was at the fire-house.

Just as she reached the door, a big dog (at least it seemed big to Tiny, for it was almost the size of Love Trot) came around the corner of the building. He raised up his head and barked as he ran toward her.

Tiny was so scared that she quickly jumped on the pony and was going to ride away, when a window of the fire-house opened and a man called out:

"Don't be afraid, little girl, that's Big Jim, the fire dog. He helps with all the fires. He won't bite you. Lie down, Jim."

Jim spread himself down at the pony's side, wagged his tail, and looked up at Tiny with big brown eyes which seemed to say he was sorry he frightened her.

She soon explained her errand and was riding at full speed to the house that was on fire.

Down the street clanged the engine drawn by the beautiful little fire horses. Then came the hose-wagon, and then all the firemen with the ladders, and Big Jim, who was riding as though he were the most important member of the fire company.

Meanwhile, the little lady awoke. She sniffed the air and opened her eyes.

"Tiny," she said, "how are you, dear? It seems to me I smell smoke. Doesn't it to you?"

She looked at the bed.

"Where has the child gone?" she cried. "All her clothes are gone, too!"

"Martin! Martin!" she called. "Martin, get right up, and go to the police station in the town hall. Tiny has run away—has run away again!"

"All right, Mother," answered Martin from his room. "I'm already dressed, I'll ride the pony right over there." But Trot was gone, and Martin ran all the way.

“Why, why didn’t you take your automobile and chase after her?” asked the policeman when Martin told him the story. “That’s the best thing to do now. I’d go help you—but I’m needed at the fire. You’d better start right away, you don’t want to lose any time.”

“Oh, yes,” answered Martin, “I know. I know. I’ll go right home and take out the car—but where do you think I had better chase to first?”

“Inquire of the first person you meet,” called out the policeman.

Martin and his mother were soon in the car, but there were few people on the street, as nearly all had gone to the fire.

“Drive on a way,” said the distracted little lady. “Drive anywhere. It’s better than sitting still.”

They hadn’t gone very far before they saw Tiny riding Trot toward them.

“Were you worried?” she called, hailing them from a distance. “I went to the fire-house to warn them of the fire.” She explained it all to them as she came up to the car; how she wakened, and smelled the smoke, and how she didn’t like to waken the little lady, and how she saw Trot fastened in the stable, and how she rode him to the fire-house.

“Dear, dear girlie,” said the little lady. “How brave you are! I’m so glad you didn’t run away again.”

“I never ran away,” answered Tiny. “I never, never ran away!”

“We know you did once, dear,” said the little lady; “but we’re trying to forget that.”

XIX

TINY HAS MORE ADVENTURES

IT seems to me," said the little lady, a few days after the fire, "that it would be nice for you to start in school, Tiny dear. I met Miss Spectacles yesterday, and she asked me whether I was not going to send you soon. 'I don't want the truant officer to inquire into the case,' she explained."

"Oh, nothing could please me better!" exclaimed Tiny. "I love you dearly, but it would just be splendid to know some children."

Martin and the little lady took Tiny in the automobile to the schoolhouse, which was the most delightful school building Tiny could imagine. It stood on the center of a green lawn. All kinds of swings and games were arranged in the playgrounds. The little lady introduced Tiny to her teacher.

"I'm glad to have so brave a child under my care," smiled Miss Spectacles, "for I've heard all about Tiny and the fire."

Tiny blushed and stood on one foot. "It didn't seem very brave to me," she said, "but I'm glad you think you'll like me."

After the little lady had gone, the teacher showed Tiny to a desk and gave her lesson-books. Tiny studied the lessons well, and when recess-time came was quite ready for play.

The children stared at her a good deal, for no doubt they too had heard about the fire, and many had seen her on her pony; but she was so friendly in her manner that the girls soon overcame their shyness and began to talk with her.

There was one particularly pretty girl who was especially nice to Tiny, and gave her half her apple to eat. There was another little girl whose mother combed her hair in one braid at the back of her head. Just as she started to talk with Tiny, one of the boys came along, and pulled the little girl's hair.

"Hello, Piggy," he said. "Hello, Piggy. Piggy-wiggy, Piggy-wiggy."

“Oh, dear,” said the little girl, “I do wish they wouldn’t call me names.”

“For shame!” Tiny called to the boy. “It is dreadfully rude for you to call names. I won’t like you one bit if you call names.”

“Ha, ha!” laughed the boy. “I don’t care! Piggy-wiggy wears a pig-tail.”

“Never mind, dear,” said Tiny. “I believe I can make him stop.”

Then the bell rang.

After school Tiny went to the boy. “Listen,” she said, “what’ll you take to stop calling names?”

“What’ll I take?” repeated the boy.

“Yes,” said Tiny, “will you promise to stop if I give you ten cents?”

“Nope,” said the boy. “It’s too much fun.”

“Will you take a quarter?”

“Nope.”

“Well,” said Tiny, “that’s all I have. I spent all the rest of my money for ice cream and cake.”

“Say,” said the boy, “are you offering for honest?”

“Certainly,” said Tiny.

“Well, then, I’ll take a ride on your pony to stop. How about that?”

“Oh—” began Tiny, “I——”

“I’ll always call her Piggy if you don’t,” said the boy.

“How far?” asked Tiny.

“Far’s I want to go,” answered the boy.

“I’ll let you know to-morrow,” said Tiny, for that was the last thing she wanted to pay, and she was worried.

“I’m afraid school doesn’t agree with our Tiny,” said the little lady to Martin that evening, “she is so quiet.”

Tiny, who was playing the pretty white piano, turned.

"I was thinking, dear lady," she said, and she told of Piggy-wiggy.

"Humph," said Martin. "That's easy. Let me know who that fellow is and I'll stop him."

"Can't you manage better than that, son?" asked his mother. "Why not let the boy ride Trot when you and Tiny are nearby in the car, and can see that he is treated right?"

"That's a splendid idea," cried Tiny, kissing the little lady. "Will you, Martin? I know the boy is just crazy to ride the pony."

So a plan was agreed upon, and the boy did have a ride on Love Trot, and he did stop calling the little girl names, and Tiny had the joy of knowing she had made two people happy.

Tiny Saves a Baby's Life

"Tiny," said the little lady after school the next day, "don't you want to run over to the grocery shop and get some sugar for the pudding?"

"Indeed I do," laughed Tiny; "there's nothing I like better than pudding, you know."

The grocerman was very pleasant and Tiny noticed he gave her extra good weight.

"Shall I send it home for you, Miss?" he asked as his grocery wagon drove up.

"No, thank you," said Tiny, "I'll carry it," and the wagon drove on.

As Tiny reached the corner, she saw a baby toddling across the street.

"I wonder that baby's mother lets it go out alone," thought Tiny.

SHE RAN AS FAST AS SHE COULD AND WAS JUST IN TIME TO DRAG THE BABY OUT OF THE WAY OF T
WAGON

Just at that minute the grocer's horse and wagon dashed around the corner. Tiny saw in a moment what would happen if somebody didn't run to the baby, so dropping her bag of sugar, which burst open and spread all over the ground, she ran as fast as she could and was just in the nick of time to drag the baby out of the way of the wagon.

"Bless me! Bless me!" panted the policeman, running up. "I hurried as fast as I could. If it hadn't been for this little girl," he continued to the baby's mother, who was now crying, "that baby would—— Why, it's the little girl that ran away! How do you do?"

"I didn't run away," sobbed Tiny; "I didn't."

“Well, well,” said the policeman, “I guess we can begin to forget it by this time. After the fire warning and this——” But Tiny was hurrying away to the store to get more sugar.

“I do hope they won’t worry at home,” she thought.

“That’s the girl,” said the grocer’s boy as Tiny went into the store. “She was just in time.”

He had been telling about the near-accident.

The grocer couldn’t thank Tiny enough for saving the baby’s life, and he asked her to ride in the grocery wagon so that she would get home sooner.

“I was so afraid you would worry, dear lady,” she said as she told the story, “and I spilled all the sugar—every bit.”

“Oh, my dear, I’m so thankful you were not hurt,” said the little lady, “that I would give a hundred bags of sugar—you, dear brave little heroine,” as she took her on her lap.

“My mother,” began Tiny, “was something like you and——”

“Hush, dear,” said the little lady, smoothing her hair.

“You like to go to school, don’t you?” she asked to change the subject.

“My, I never enjoyed school so much in all my life,” said Tiny.

“Oh, you used to go, of course, didn’t you?”

“Always,” said Tiny, “my father was—” and her voice began to sound full of tears.

“Strange,” said the little lady to herself. “Very strange why she ran away. Maybe we’ll find out some day. I’ll inquire again if the police have found out anything more about her.”

Tiny Goes Shopping

The next morning Tiny took her pig-bank from the mantel and began to count her money.

“Wasn’t your mother dear to give me all this spending money, Martin?” said Tiny to Martin as he came into the room. “I do wonder how much there is; won’t you please help me count it?”

“Seven dollars and eighteen cents,” counted Martin, laying down the last coin. “My! that’s a lot of money, Tiny. What are you going to do with it?”

“Oh, Martin, don’t tell, please. Oh, it must be a secret! I do want it to be a surprise!”

“Wild horses couldn’t drag it out of me,” said Martin; “but what’s the secret?”

“Why, Saturday is your mother’s birthday, and I’m going to buy her a present.”

“Grand. What will you buy?” he asked.

“I really don’t know,” said Tiny, “but I’m going shopping this afternoon after school. I’ve had permission to get out early, because I told Miss Spectacles about the surprise.”

“Wasn’t that kind of her!” said Martin.

“People are often kinder than they seem,” said Tiny.

Just as she put the bank in its place on the mantel, Mrs. Bountiful came in. “Why, dear,” said she, “what a saving little girl you are; I haven’t given you any money in a long time; here is a dollar.”

“Oh, thank you,” said Tiny, “but you have been so good to me, I don’t like——”

“Never mind, dear,” said the little lady. “Come, it’s time to go to school.”

“I’ll be ready in a minute, as soon as I get my books.”

“Here is a banana for recess,” said Mrs. Bountiful, following her and kissing her good-by.

On her way out as Tiny passed the mantel, she quickly slipped her bank into her school-bag.

“Good-by, all,” said she.

She could scarcely wait for the time to come for her to go shopping, and it seemed almost a week until Miss Spectacles nodded her head that she might be dismissed.

On her way to the store, she would put her hand in her school-bag every once in a while to see if the bank was safe.

She had been to the Globe Department Store with Mrs. Bountiful more than once.

“What shall I buy?” she thought.

Just then she noticed a cute little china cat. She picked it up. “That’s certainly cute,” she thought, “but not very useful,” so she put it down and picked up a little stuffed dog. “Neither is that,” she concluded and put it down.

“Do you wish anything?” asked the saleslady politely.

“No, thank you,” replied Tiny.

She picked up several funny little images, and was so much interested that she did not notice that any one was near until she heard a voice, a man’s voice, speaking to the saleslady in an undertone: “I’ve been watching that child for some time, Miss Sellum; please keep an eye on her.”

“Oh, I don’t think she’d take anything, Mr. Knockem,” replied the girl.

Tiny looked around. No one was in sight except the pretty saleslady and a tall, haughty-looking man.

“I wonder who they mean?” thought Tiny. “Oh, they must mean me because I touched those things,” and she burst into tears.

“I never stole anything in my life—not a single—thing—ever,” she sobbed. “I’m Mrs. Bountiful’s—little—girl——”

“Mercy!” exclaimed Miss Sellum.

“Pardon me, Miss,” begged the floor-walker—for that was who Mr. Knockem was, and right scared he was, too, for Mrs. Bountiful was one of their best customers. “I didn’t mean any harm. Can I be of assistance to you?”

“Why, sir,” said Tiny, drying her eyes, “it’s all right—I shouldn’t have touched anything, I know, but—I’m trying to select a present for Mrs. Bountiful’s birthday. It comes Saturday, you see——”

“Oh, that’s it, that’s it, is it?” asked a new voice. It was so kind, and full of joy that Tiny knew she’d like its owner before she looked up at the kindly, bald-headed gentleman who had joined them.

“Leave the little miss to me, Mr. Knockem,” he said.

“Oh, certainly, Mr. Storem; certainly, sir,” said the floor-walker.

“Well, my dear,” said the stout gentleman, “I believe I can help you. I know Mrs. Bountiful quite well. The other day she was in the store inquiring for vanity hand-bags.”

“The kind all filled with golden powder boxes, and mirrors, and coin holders?” asked Tiny eagerly.

“Yes,” smiled Mr. Storem, “and here they are at this counter. Miss Prettyman, will you show those bags to Miss——”

“My name is Tiny, sir,” said the little girl, much pleased with the lady, who brought several bags for her to see.

“How much is this?” she asked, selecting a charming violet one, lined with dainty flowered silk.

“Five dollars,” said Miss Prettyman. “I’ve sold bags for years, but I never saw so lovely a one at that price.”

“I’ll take that, please,” said Tiny, reaching into her school-bag for her bank.

“Oh, dear,” she cried, “how am I going to get the money out of my pig?”

You should have heard Mr. Storem laugh. “Well, well,” he said, “I guess I’ll have to help you.”

So he helped Tiny “fish” out the five dollars.

Just then some one called him away.

“I’ll be back in a few minutes, Miss Tiny,” he said.

When the cash girl returned with the parcel, the saleslady handed it over to Tiny just as if she were grown up.

“Gee,” exclaimed the cash girl, “ain’t she swell, Miss Prettyman, with the owner of the store escorting her around!”

“Is he? Does he own this store?” asked Tiny, wide-eyed.

“Yes, Miss Tiny,” said Miss Prettyman.

Just at that moment Mr. Storem returned.

“Is there anything else, Miss Tiny?”

“Oh, I don’t like to trouble you, sir,” began Tiny.

“Tut! Tut! Don’t mention it, little one,” said he. “The gentleman who just called me told me you are the little girl who warned the people about the fire, and saved the baby’s life. It is an honor to do anything to help you.”

Tiny blushed. “Thank you. Well, if it isn’t too much trouble, please show me where I can get some beads to make a necklace for Mrs. Bountiful.”

“Certainly, certainly,” said Mr. Storem. “Right this way.”

Tiny selected some beautiful beads, and Mr. Storem helped her again in getting the money from her bank.

“Mrs. Bountiful will love the necklace if I make it,” she said. “She told me it is the kindness and the thought more than the costliness of a gift that counts. My own mother always——”

“Your own mother!” exclaimed Mr. Storem. “Your own! Isn’t Mrs. Bountiful your mother?”

“Why, no, sir,” exclaimed Tiny.

“I read it in the Tinytown News. I read about a little girl who ran away,” interrupted Mr. Storem.

“I didn’t,” said Tiny. “I didn’t run away, but nobody believes me.”

“I do, dear,” smiled the big man. “I do!” and Tiny loved him for it.

“Good-by!” she said, “and thank you! Thank you more than I can tell you.”

It was rather late when she reached Rose Cottage, but the little lady had been called out to see a sick neighbor, so she was able to hide her gifts away. Finally Saturday came. Tiny wrapped her gifts in tissue paper and tied them with blue ribbon, and laid them on the breakfast table at Mrs. Bountiful’s place.

The little lady was delighted. She opened the bag and took out the purse and powder box and examined them and looked at herself in the mirror.

“Oh, you made the necklace yourself? Isn’t it lovely, my dear?” she sighed. “You are just such a darling, loving, thoughtful little girl as I always dreamed of for my own daughter.”

“Put on your finery, Mother,” said Martin, handing her the bag and throwing the necklace over her head.

“My present,” exclaimed Martin, “is in my room,” and, excusing himself, he brought a pretty hand-carved tea-table.

“I made it for you myself, Mother.”

“Was there ever such a happy old lady as I!” cried Mrs. Bountiful, putting her arms around both the children.

“Was there ever one who gave other people so much happiness?” asked Tiny.

Tiny’s Mother Finds Her

“I wish I could tell mother about everything,” thought Tiny as she walked along the road to school. “My, what perfectly lovely times I have had, and how dear the little lady is; but I do miss mother. How frightened she must be!”

A tear dropped from her eye.

“I won’t cry, though,” she thought. “Mother surely will find me! I know she’s looking everywhere!”

Just then she noticed a tiny little bird in the branches of the tree overhead.

“Wick—wick!” he sang.

“Oh, you pretty little thing,” cried Tiny.

The bird flew to a low bush, Tiny following. On and on they went, until Tiny was surprised to find herself at the end of the town.

“Why, I’m almost lost again,” she thought, “I better turn back.”

“Wick—wick!” sang the bird, as he alighted on a tree just outside the town.

To Tiny’s amazement, he was no longer a little bird, but the same big golden-winged woodpecker that she had followed into the forest when she left home. She was just about to run after him when a shadow fell across the roadway and she looked up.

“Mother!” she cried. “Oh, Mother!”

For the shadow was that of her mother who had gone out into the woods to look for her.

She stretched out her tiny little arms, but she was so very small her mother didn’t see her.

“Oh, Mother, here I am,” she cried, running toward her.

She stepped off the edge of Tinytown, and in a second she was her own self again, as big as ever.

How she laughed and cried and hugged and kissed her mother. Then she told all about Tinytown—just as I’ve told you, and showed her the lovely little Rose Cottage, the town hall, the school house, the church, the fire-engine house and the shops.

“Mother, they were all so perfectly dear to me I hate to leave them,” she said.

“Why, Tiny, girl,” laughed her mother, “we can visit Tinytown again, now we know where it is—then you can always keep your friends.”

“Yes, and I can explain to them, Mother dear, how they were mistaken, and I didn’t run away.”

But when Tiny and her mother came to look for it a few days later, Tinytown was gone. The Story People had taken it for their own.

“MOTHER!” SHE CRIED. “OH, MOTHER!”

* * * * * *

“What a sweet story!” exclaimed Mary Frances, when the Story Lady finished.

“Yes, it is a sweet story,” she returned, “and we were so glad to get it, and the town, too. It shows our children how the children of other countries live.”

"Aren't you tired after telling so many stories?" asked Mary Frances.

"Oh, no, I never grow tired of hearing and telling stories; but I like to hear you talk. Won't you tell me something from your country?"

"Yes—let me see. All I can think of is a little poem about a robin and a buttercup."

"Do let me hear it."

So she recited—

THE ROBIN AND THE BUTTERCUP[B]

Down in the field, one day in June,
The flowers all bloomed together,
Save one, who tried to hide herself,
And drooped that pleasant weather.
A robin, who had flown too high,
And felt a little lazy,
Was resting near a buttercup,
Who wished she were a daisy.
For daisies grow so trig and tall!
She always had a passion
For wearing frills around her neck,
In just the daisies' fashion.
And buttercups must always be
The same old tiresome color;
While daisies dress in gold and white,
Although their gold is duller.

“Dear Robin,” said the sad young flower,

“Perhaps you’d not mind trying

To find a nice white frill for me,

Some day when you are flying?”

“You silly thing!” the robin said,

“I think you must be crazy;

I’d rather be my honest self

Than any made-up daisy.

“You’re nicer in your own bright gown,

The little children love you;

Be the best buttercup you can,

And think no flower above you.

“Though swallows leave me out of sight,

We’d better keep our places;

Perhaps the world would go all wrong,

With one too many daisies.

“Look bravely up into the sky,

And be content with knowing

That God wished for a buttercup

Just here, where you are growing.”

[B] Sarah Orne Jewett.

“Oh, thank you,” said the Story Lady, “I like that. You must write it down for me. Tomorrow you shall have a lot of stories.”

STORIES TOLD THE SECOND DAY

THE MAGIC MASK.—THE CLOSING DOOR.—TOM GOES DOWN THE WELL.—GLOOMY GUS AND THE CHRISTMAS CAT.—PATTY AND HER PITCHER.

STORIES TOLD THE SECOND DAY

XX

THE MAGIC MASK

WHEN all the Story People were assembled, the Story King in his place, Mary Frances in the seat of honor beside the Story Queen, the Ready Writer at his table with pen in hand, the Story Lady began to tell one story after another. Even the clock ticked softly, as if listening, and no sound was heard except the sweet music of her voice as it ran from story to story, until five in all were told.

* * * * * *

Many years ago, a little prince was born in a rich country across the sea. He had long been wished for, and great was the rejoicing throughout the land when he came.

As you may suppose, he was given everything he wanted. Indeed, if he were denied anything for a moment, he would set up so great a cry that the servants would run in haste to bring him what he desired; and if he were opposed by any one he would frown and stamp his foot, and throw himself into such a rage that his whole face would become ugly and distorted, and the little children would run in fear from him.

When he grew up, he delighted to fight; and nothing pleased him better than to put on his armor and helmet and ride forth at the head of his army.

He won many, many victories, and his country grew richer and stronger than it had ever been before.

By and by the time came when his father, the king, died, and the prince took his place. Then he wished for a queen, and began to think of a beautiful princess he had met in one of the cities which he ruled over. And the more he thought about her, the more anxious he was that she should become his wife. No one else was half so fair and lovely to his eyes.

So one day, he made up his mind to go to see the princess. He bade his servants deck him out in regal splendor, and put on him his royal robes and his jeweled crown.

"How do I look?" he asked his valet. "Did I ever appear more handsome?"

"Oh, no, your majesty," replied the valet. "If you will look in the long mirror, you will see that."

When the king looked in the glass, he saw a wonderful reflection. His robe was of velvet and satin in royal purple and green, jeweled, trimmed, and embroidered—nothing was wanting in the costume. Then he saw his own face—all seamed with frowns and hard, cruel lines.

"Oh," he thought, "such a face will frighten the lovely princess! What shall I do? She will never be willing to marry me!"

And he sent all his servants away, and sat down in a fit of melancholy; or, as some people say, "in a fit of the blues."

For hours he just sat and glowered. Once a page approached him to say that his luncheon was served, but he told him to be gone before he ordered his head chopped off. You can imagine how fast the page ran away. When the page told the other servants, they said, "We must not go near him until he rings for us when he comes out of his angry mood."

After a while the bell did ring, and in fear and trembling the valet went to see what the king wished.

"Tell the groom to saddle my best steed and have it at the palace steps within ten minutes, and do you undress me and put me in my riding suit."

Quickly the change was made, quickly the horse was saddled, quickly the king was mounted and riding away.

"No!" he thundered, when the groom rode up to attend him on his journey. "No one comes with me! I ride alone!"

Through forest and dale, through valley, stream, and over stubble the king rode, on, and on, and on, until he came to the home of the enchanter, Herlo.

Thrice he knocked at the door, and a deep voice bade him enter.

"Good-day, Enchanter," said the king, lifting the latch and entering; "I have come on a most important errand."

"I know your errand," replied Herlo; "you wish to gain the princess Viola for a wife, and you fear she will not love you enough to marry you."

“How can she, when she sees my face?” said the king. “I have come to ask your help. Is there anything you can do for me?”

The enchanter stopped to think, then he raised his head and told the king, “Yes; I have a plan, but it needs your own help. I can change your features if you will do as I tell you.”

The king was very glad, and he promised to do everything the enchanter bade him do.

“Very well,” said Herlo. “I will make you a magic mask of thinnest wax. It will be exactly the shape of your face, and no one will know that you are wearing it except yourself. I will paint it with my magic paint so that your features will look kind and pleasant, instead of fierce and stern. I will fasten it upon your face so that you need never take it off.”

“Make it”—said the king, “as handsome and attractive as you possibly can, and I will pay you any price you ask.”

“This I can do only with your help,” Herlo explained; “only on this one condition—that you keep your own face in exactly the lines I shall paint. One angry frown or one cruel smile will crack the mask apart and ruin it, and I can never replace it.”

Now the king wanted the princess for his queen more than anything else he had ever wished for, so he said, “Yes, I promise. Tell me what I shall do to keep the mask from cracking.”

“You must not lose your temper,” the enchanter told him. “You must think kind thoughts. You must try to make your people happy. You must help them, not by fighting, but by building libraries and schools and hospitals. You must see that there are none of your subjects in want; you must try to relieve all suffering, even of animals. You must follow this rule:

Help the weak if you are strong;

Love the old if you are young;

Own a fault if you are wrong;

When you’re angry, hold your tongue.

“Call here again within ten days, and the mask will be ready. Good-by.”

So the king rode away with happiness in his heart.

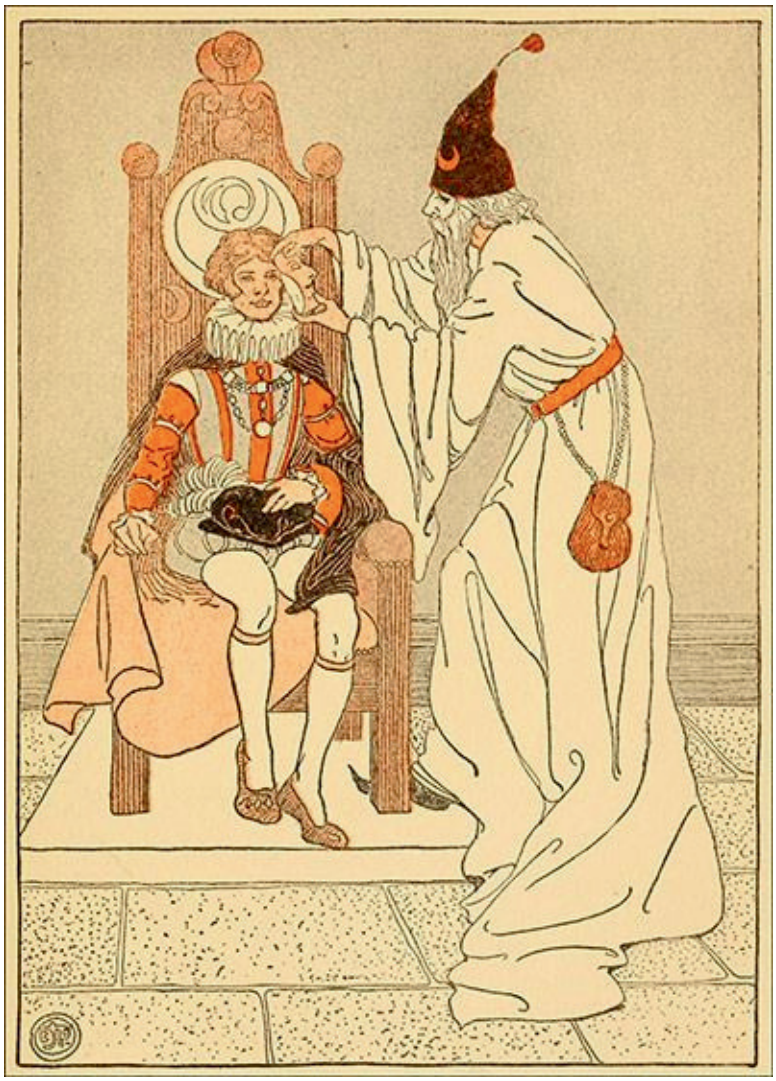
The ten days passed slowly enough, and he could scarcely wait for the last day to come. Early in the morning, he again rode alone to the home of the enchanter.

The magic mask was ready, and Herlo tried it on the king's face. It fitted exactly, but it transformed his countenance. Gone was the ugly scowl; gone, the frown between his eyes; gone, the thin, straight, sullen lips. In their stead were pleasant smiles; and kind, tender eyes; and merciful, unselfish lips.

And again the king rode away with happiness in his heart, for Herlo had shown him his face in a glass.

The next day, he rode with his retinue of courtiers to the home of the lovely princess, and she thought him all that could be desired, and promised to be his wife.

And one wonderful day in the springtime they were married. Two years sped quickly away in great joy and happiness, for the princess found her husband to be even more kind and forbearing than she had thought he would be. The servants never could understand what had happened to change the king. Instead of being frightened by his presence, they were only too glad to serve him, and his royal household was the happiest in the world.



THE MAGIC MASK WAS READY, AND HERLO TRIED IT ON THE KING'S FACE

You would think that the king would have then been satisfied, wouldn't you? But he was not quite satisfied, for one thing troubled him.

When the queen would smile in approval of his kindness, and his self-control, he would think, "I wish I had not deceived my dear wife. I wish she knew my own self."

At last he could bear it no longer, and so one day he rode for the third time to the home of the enchanter, Herlo. And again Herlo met him at the door. The king said:

"O Herlo, I have come to you to ask you to take back your magic mask. I cannot wear it any longer, because I cannot bear to deceive my dear wife who thinks me so kind and good. Better the truth than to deceive so true and kind a person as my queen."

"I warn you," replied Herlo, "that if I once take off the magic mask, you can never have it replaced. Think carefully before I remove it."

"Yes," said the king, "I know, and I have weighed the question carefully. It is better to be my own true self than to live behind a false face. Better that the queen should despise me than to live under false pretenses and have her love when unworthy."

So the enchanter took off the mask, and bade the king good-speed.

You can imagine how the king felt as he rode home this time; how he dreaded looking into his glass, although he knew he must do so before he entered the presence of the queen; and how he feared that what he most prized in this world was about to be lost—his wife's loving trust in him.

But can you imagine his joy when he looked into the glass and saw his own face—for his own face was handsomer than the mask! The ugly frown and the wicked, cruel lines were gone, for his face had been molded into the exact likeness of the mask; and when he came into the presence of his wife she saw no difference in him. He was the husband she had always so much honored and loved.

* * * * * *

"And they lived happily ever after," finished the Story Lady. Then after a slight pause, she went on: "Now we will have a little goblin story."

XXI

THE CLOSING DOOR

THERE was once a little girl, who had a dear little room, all her own, which was full of treasures, and was as lovely as love could make it.

You never could imagine, no matter how you tried, a room more beautiful than hers; for it was white and shining from the snowy floor to the ceiling, which looked as if it might have been made of a fleecy cloud. The curtains at the windows were like the petals of a lily, and the little bed was like swan's down.

There were white pansies, too, that bloomed in the windows, and a dove whose voice was sweet as music; and among her treasures she had a string of pearls which she was to wear about her neck when the king of the country sent for her, as he had promised to do some day.

This string of pearls grew longer and more beautiful as the little girl grew older, for a new pearl was given her as soon as she waked up each morning; and every one was a gift from this king, who bade her keep them fair.

Her mother helped her to take care of them and of all the other beautiful things in her room. Every morning, after the new pearl was slipped on the string, they would set the room in order; and every evening they would look over the treasures and enjoy them together, while they carefully wiped away any specks of dust that had gotten in during the day and made the room less lovely.

There were several doors and windows, which the little girl could open and shut just as she pleased, in this room; but there was one door which was always open, and that was the one which led into her mother's room.

No matter what Little Daughter was doing, she was happier if her mother was near; and, although she sometimes ran away into her own room and played by herself, she always bounded out at her mother's first call, and sprang into her mother's arms, gladder than ever to be with her because she had been away.

Now one day when the little girl was playing alone, she had a visitor who came in without knocking and who seemed, at first, very much out of place in the shining white room, for he was a goblin and as black as a lump of coal. He had not been there more than a very few minutes, however, before nearly everything in the room began to look more like him and less like driven snow; and although the little girl thought that he was very strange and ugly when she first saw him, she soon grew used to him, and found him an entertaining playfellow.

She wanted to call her mother to see him; but he said:

"Oh! no; we are having such a nice time together, and she's busy, you know."

So the little girl did not call; and the mother, who was making a dress of fine lace for her darling, did not dream that a goblin was in the little white room.

The goblin did not make any noise, you know, for he tiptoed all the time, as if he were afraid; and if he heard a sound he would jump. But he was a merry goblin, and he amused the little girl so much that she did not notice the change in her dear room.

The curtains grew dingy, the floor dusty, and the ceiling looked as if it might have been made of a rain cloud; but the child played on, and got out all her treasures to show to her visitor.

The pansies drooped and faded, the white dove hid its head beneath its wing and moaned; and the last pearl on the precious string grew dark when the goblin touched it with his smutty fingers.

"Oh, dear me," said the little girl when she saw this, "I must call my mother; for these are the pearls that I must wear to the king's court when he sends for me."

"Never mind," said the goblin, "we can wash it, and if it isn't just as white as before, what difference does it make about one pearl?"

"But mother says that they all must be as fair as the morning," insisted the little girl, ready to cry. "And what will she say when she sees this one?"

"You shut the door, then," said the goblin, pointing to the door that had never been closed, "and I'll wash the pearl."

So the little girl ran to close the door, and the goblin began to rub the pearl; but it only seemed to grow darker. Now the door had been open so long that it was hard to move, and it creaked on its hinges as the little girl tried to close it. When the mother heard this she looked up to see what was the matter. She had been thinking about the dress which she was making; but when she saw the closing door, her heart stood still with fear; for she knew that if it once closed tight she might never be able to open it again.

She dropped her fine laces and ran towards the door, calling, “Little Daughter! Little Daughter! Where are you?” and she reached out her hands to stop the door.

But as soon as the little girl heard that loving voice she answered:

“Mother! Oh, Mother! I need you so! My pearl is turning black and everything is wrong!” and, flinging the door wide open, she ran into her mother’s arms.

When the two went together into the little room, the goblin had gone. The pansies now bloomed again, and the white dove cooed in peace; but there was much work for the mother and daughter, and they rubbed and scrubbed and washed and swept and dusted, till the room was so beautiful that you would not have known that a goblin had been there—except for the one pearl which was a little blue always, even when the king was ready for Little Daughter to come to his court, although that was not until she was a very old woman.

As for the door, it was never closed again; for Little Daughter and her mother put two golden hearts against it and nothing in this world could have shut it then.

* * * * * *

As the story ended, the Story Lady paused while the clock ticked twice, and then said, “Next we will have a funny story about a silver teapot.”

XXII

TOM GOES DOWN THE WELL

I SEE it, I see it!" cried Tom eagerly, balancing himself perilously over the well-curb. "It's down at the bottom!"

"Did you suppose it would float?" asked Bess, with a touch of scorn in her tones.

"Let me see," cried Bob, pushing forward.

"You clear out," said Archie; "you're to blame for dropping it in; you'd better go before you tumble in yourself, you little goose."

Archie's broken arm felt very stiff to-day, and his temper was slightly damaged, too. All four children gathered around the well, at the bottom of which lay the silver teapot, like truth, bright and shining, but apparently not to be recovered by mortals.

Mr. Bradley had gone to the village, and the children were determined to get the silver teapot up before his return, for as yet they had not thought it necessary to mention its disappearance, and Mr. Bradley was not the man to notice its absence.

"Of course, if it was lost we should have to tell," Bess had said to her brother; "but as long as we know where it is, and that it's safe, there's no need to say anything about it."

"Well, what's to be done?" asked Archie. "I can't go after it, with my broken arm."

"Now I suppose we will hear of nothing but your broken arm for a month, and you'll shirk everything for it. 'I can't study 'cause my arm's broken; I can't go errands 'cause my arm's broken; I can't go to church 'cause my arm's broken;' that will be your whine, Archie; but don't try your dodges on me, for I won't stand it. If it really hurts you, I'm sorry, and I'll lick any fellow that touches you till you get well again, but none of your humbug. Of course you can't go down the well; you couldn't if your arm wasn't broken." This was from Tom.

Meanwhile Bess had gone to the house for a long fishing-pole, and soon returned carrying it.

“We’ll fasten a hook to the end of it, and fish the teapot up,” said she.

“Ho, ho! Do you suppose it will bite like a fish?” laughed Tom.

“No, I do not, Tom Bradley. But I suppose if I tie a string to the pole, and fasten an iron hook to one end, with a stone to keep it down, that I can wiggle it round in the water till the hook catches in the handle, and then we can drag it up; that’s what I suppose,” answered Bess, preparing to carry out her design.

“There’s something in that, Bess; you’re not so stupid as you look. Give me the pole and let me try.”

“No, go and get one for yourself.”

“Where will I find the hook?”

“In the smoke-house, where I got mine.”

“Oh, get me one, too,” cried Bob.

“And me one, too,” cried Archie.

Before half an hour had passed, the four children, all armed with fishing-poles, were intently wiggling in the water, catching their hooks in the stones by the side of the well, entangling their lines, digging their elbows into each other’s sides, in their frantic attempts to pull their hooks loose; scolding, pushing, and getting generally excited.

Every few moments Tom would pull Bess back by her sun-bonnet, and save her from tumbling over in her eagerness; but so far from being grateful to her deliverer, Bess resented the treatment indignantly.

“Stop jerking my head so,” she cried.

“You’ll be in, in a minute; you’d have been in then if I hadn’t jerked you,” answered Tom.

“Well, what if I had! Let me alone. If I go in, that’s my own lookout.”

“Your own look in, you mean. My gracious, wouldn’t you astonish the toads down there! But you’d get your face clean.”

“Now, Tom, you let me be; I ’most had it that time!”

“So you’ve said forty times. This is all humbug; I’m going down on the rope for it.”

“Oh, no, Tom, please don’t. Indeed, you’ll be drowned; the rope will break; you’ll kill yourself; you’ll catch cold,” cried Bess, in alarm. She could fight Tom all day long, when in the mood for it; but to see him deliberately rush into danger, or to contemplate the fact that a hair of his precious head might be hurt, was more than our intrepid Bess could bear.

“Pooh! girl! coward!” retorted thankless Tom, pointing the finger of scorn at his sister.

“Who’s afraid of what? Stand back, small boys, I’m going in,” and Tom began to divest himself of his jacket.

“You’ll poison the water,” suggested Archie.

“It will be so cold,” moaned Bob. But nobody took any notice of Bob; he was treated with great contempt, and much hustled, as the author of the mischief. All felt that if Tom came to grief, Bob would be answerable.

“I’ll scream for a hundred years without stopping, Tom,” cried Bess wildly. “You shan’t go down, you shan’t; I’ll call some one. Murray! Peter! Maggie! O-o-o-o-o-o-o-me! O-o-o-oh, o-o-o-o-o-me!”

“Stop screaming, and help,” said Tom, who had his shirt sleeves rolled up to the elbow, and his pantaloons to his knee—why, no one but Tom could tell. “Now do you three hold on tight to this bucket; don’t let go for a moment; pull away as hard as you can when I tell you to. Now for it!”

And without more ado, Tom clung to the other rope with his hands, and twisted his feet around the bucket handle.

“Hold on tight, and let me down easy,” said Tom, and the three children clung desperately to their rope, and lowered him little by little. Long experience in rescuing cats from a watery grave in the well had taught the children how to manage the ropes and buckets; but they had not calculated on the fact that Tom would be heavier than a cat; and it was with red faces and straining muscles that they dragged away on their rope. However, they were able to keep Tom steady, and he, clinging with one hand to his rope, and pushing himself away from the sides of the well with the other, made his dangerous descent as successfully as though his coadjutors had been gifted with Samson’s strength. A sudden splash and shiver told them he had reached the water, and a shout of triumph declared that the teapot was rescued.

As Tom shouted, all three children let go the rope and rushed to the side of the well to look at the victorious hero.

It was a most fortunate circumstance that the water in the well was low, and that Tom, plunged suddenly to the bottom by this unexpected movement, was able, after much scrambling, to stand upright with his head out of water; otherwise the earthly career of Thomas Bradley would have been brought to a sudden and untimely end.

As it was, he stood in the cold water up to his shoulders, clinging still to the rope, holding the teapot with one hand, and wildly vociferating to his admiring audience whose heads hung over the well-curb, and their faces, as seen in this position by Tom, looked like those of grinning fiends.

"What made you let go?" roared Tom, and his voice sounded hollow and unnatural as it resounded from the depths of his cool and shady retreat.

"Oh, Tom, have you got it? Have you really? Ain't it cold? Are you hurt? Were you scared? Is the teapot broken?" were a few of the questions that came faintly to him from above and sounded very unlike angel whispers to the diver for teapots, who stood first on one leg, then on the other, to prevent equal cramp in both.

"Draw me up! You silly children! You goose of a Bess! Why don't you draw me up?"

"We're so tired?" called down Archie. "I helped to lower you with only one arm, but I can't drag any more. My arm's broken."

"Bess! draw me up, I tell you!" screamed Tom from below.

"I will, Tom; I'm going to," answered Bess, who now reached up and recovered the bucket, that had flown with a jerk to the top of the well-roof when it had been so suddenly abandoned.

But all the united efforts of Bess and Bob and Archie's left arm could not raise Tom. After a desperate tug he was raised an inch, and suddenly lowered again. The result was a splash, a scramble below, and Tom's voice sputtering incoherent invectives. Again and again the children tugged, and again and again Tom splashed, scrambled and sputtered.

At last a red, anxious face looked down to him, and Bessie's voice, choked with tears, called out:

"Oh, Tom, do hold on till I call Maggie; we can't get you up."

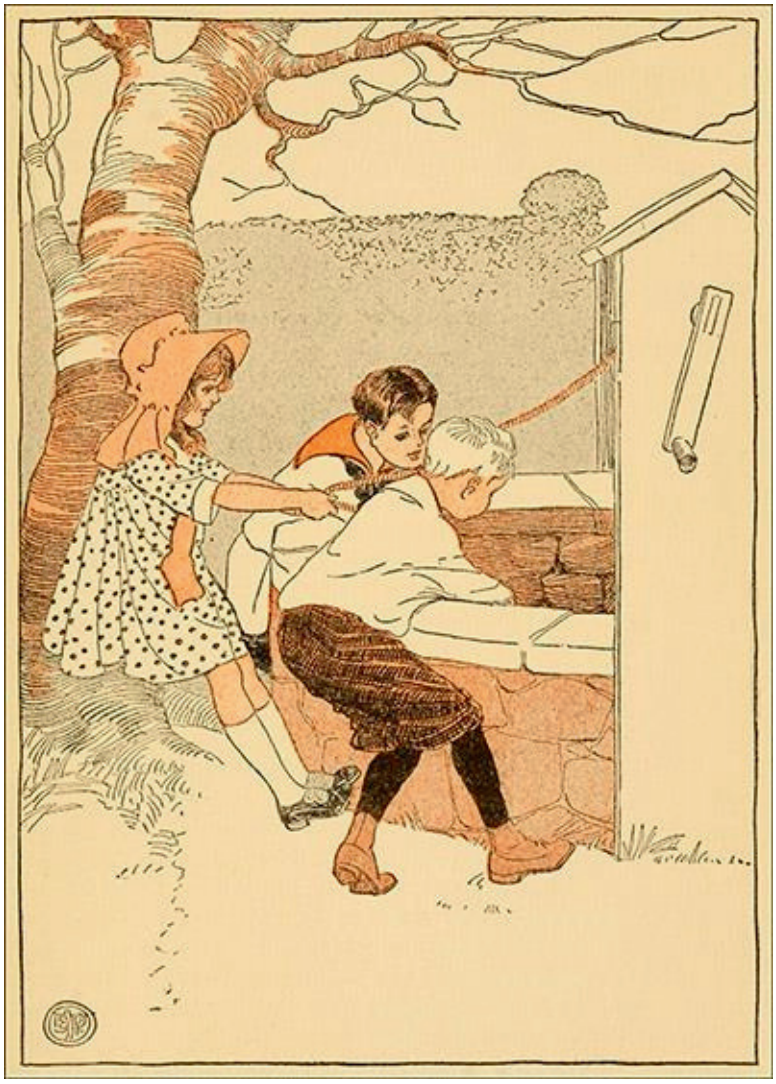
Away ran Bess to call help, followed by Archie; but Bob, whose ideas on some points were as yet but feebly developed, seized one of the long poles, and began to poke at his brother with it, under the impression that some good would come of these unaided efforts.

"Bob, be done! You'll put my eye out!" cried poor Tom, desperately, as the swinging iron hook circled around his head.

"Catch hold! Catch hold!" cried Bob, getting excited as he saw how near he came to grappling his brother.

"Just let me get up once, and I'll catch hold," muttered Tom, wrathfully; then, raising his voice, he yelled as loud as he could for help. "Pete! P-e-e-e-e-ter! P-e-e-e-e-e-e-ter!"

But Peter was a mile away, and consequently could not hear. Maggie had improved the occasion of her master's absence to visit her friend and neighbor, Miss Flaherty, for half an hour; and Kate, summoned from her baking, came to the rescue, but only assisted by wringing her hands and wailing.



BUT ALL THE UNITED EFFORTS OF BESS AND BOB AND ARCHIE'S LEFT ARM COULD NOT RAISE TOM

"Och, he's lost wid the cold! Shure an' he'll get his death now! Arrah, what childer yez arre!"

"Take hold of the rope and pull," cried Bess.

"I couldn't rise him; shure an' I'd only pull him up be snaps, and dhrop him again," said Kate, who showed a lamentable want of confidence in her own abilities.

“Oh, do something!” cried Bess, now almost beside herself with fear; “do something, Kate. Oh, where is Murray?”

“Garn for a load o’ wood, and won’t be home till night,” answered Kate.

“Oh, Tom, can’t you shinny up the rope?” called down Bess.

“No. I’m too stiff now with cold; besides, I couldn’t do it anyway,” moaned the captive Tom, who looked like a Triton blowing on a conch-shell, as he stood with uplifted teapot. He seemed to think the teapot should be kept dry at all hazards, and wearied his arm to keep it above water.

“I’ll run next door and call Mr. Wilson,” said Bess, more hopefully, and started on this errand, while Kate, suddenly inspired, rushed to the kitchen sink, where stood the iron pump, connected by a pipe with the well, and began to pump vigorously, apparently with the anticipation of seeing Tom ooze through the spout, for which purpose, and to make the matter surer, she removed the filter.

As Bess ran she was suddenly stopped at the gate by the sight of a carriage which had just driven up, and out of which now stepped Aunt Maria and Aunt Maria’s husband, Uncle Daniel. These were the very grimmest and grandest of all the relations. When they came to see mamma, Bess had always to sit perfectly still on a chair, answer very politely, have her very best dress on, her hair parted directly in the middle and be intensely proper. As for the boys, they suffered the torture by soap and water, and endured their new jackets, could not whittle, nor whistle, nor wrestle, and were sustained under these tribulations only by the expectation of a very good dinner and a “bully” dessert!

The white-and-gold china always came out on these occasions, the best double-damask tablecloth and napkins, the heaviest silver forks and spoons, the silver salt-cellars, and—oh, agony of agonies!—the silver teapot!

For one awful moment Bess stood stunned. Then her anxiety for Tom overcame every other consideration, and before Aunt Maria could say, “How do you do, Elizabeth?” she had caught her uncle by his august coat-tail and in a piteous voice besought him to come and pull on the rope.

“Pull on a rope, Elizabeth!” said Uncle Daniel in mild astonishment. “Why should I pull on a rope, my dear?” and Aunt Maria murmured, “Very astonishing thing for a child to say.”

“Oh, come quick! Hurry faster! Tom’s down in the well!” cried Bess, with freely flowing tears.

“Tom down a well! And how did he get there?”

Uncle Daniel never hurried, and required a reason, always, for the hope that was in his friends.

“He went down for the teapot,” sobbed Bess, “the silver teapot, and we can’t pull him up again; and he’s all cramped with cold. Oh, do hurry!”

“The silver teapot down the well; my mother’s silver teapot! Daniel, didn’t I always say that Mary Bradley should never have had that teapot? This must be looked into.”

And with dignified strides Aunt Maria marched to the well.

Tom’s teeth by this time were chattering so that he fully expected they would all drop out, and the three fishers were so completely demoralized by their fears as to be speechless.

Uncle Daniel was a slow man. He leisurely looked down at Tom, then up at the wheel, then at the rope, and calmly remarked, “All new, I see.” Then he slowly took off his coat, and as slowly carried it into the house, stopped to give an order to his coachman, who had driven around to the stable, and came with measured pace to where the three frightened children stood listening to Aunt Maria, who was doing her duty by them strictly and fully.

Uncle Daniel then took hold of the rope, gave a long, strong, calm pull, and in an instant, Tom, “dripping with coolness, arose from the well.”

* * * * * *

As soon as they had stopped laughing, the story teller said:

“I will now tell you a Christmas story of the Great Northwest.”

XXIII

GLOOMY GUS AND THE CHRISTMAS CAT

THE Canadian miner was the first of the men to finish "washing up," on his return from the mine.

"Where's Barbara?" he asked, tossing his towel at a peg.

"She has a little cold and I put her to bed," replied Mrs. St. Clair.

The anxiety in the mother's voice kept him from asking any more questions. He followed the other men in to supper.

"It seems lonesome without Barbara," said McGill, the mining engineer.

The rough men had made a pet of the laughing, blue-eyed little girl, and they missed her. She had slipped into their lives so quietly that they did not realize how much they looked forward to seeing her at the end of the day. And Barbara returned their love. A mining camp is hardly the place for a child, but Barbara's father was dead, and her mother became the cook at the Little Bear Mine.

After supper the men sat in a grave, silent circle before the great open fireplace. There seemed to be nothing to talk about. Other evenings these big, rough men had had Barbara to romp with, all except Gloomy Gus.

But then Gloomy Gus never showed any interest in anything. He was a big, gruff Swede, whose name appeared on the company's books as Gustavus Schwarstun. To the men, however, he was "Gloomy Gus."

"This will give me a chance to finish her snowshoes," the Canadian finally said, with an assumed air of gayety. "Christmas is almost here."

He went to the bunk room and returned with a pair of small snowshoes he was making.

Every one of the men was making Barbara a present—every one but Gloomy Gus. McGill eyed him sharply.

The big Swede did something which at another time would have met with a roar of laughter; but not a man smiled when he pulled a ball of red yarn and a half-knitted mitten out of his pocket.

"I learned how to do it in the old country," he said as he busied his rough, calloused fingers with the crude pine knitting needles he had made. He had unraveled the sleeve of a new red sweater to get the yarn he needed.

The men found it hard to work that evening, and trooped off to their bunks earlier than usual.

McGill remained. He went down the hall to Mrs. St. Clair's room, where a light was still burning, and tapped gently.

"I'm going to put a cot in the mess room and sleep in there to-night," he told her. "You may need me."

It was after midnight when she called him. McGill found the little patient's fever high. He listened to Barbara's labored breathing and counted her pulse.

When he looked up, he found Mrs. St. Clair watching him anxiously. He knew from her eyes that she shared his fear—the fear that Barbara might have pneumonia. McGill had helped the doctor fight several cases of the disease in those mountains. They had generally been losing fights, but he set to work.

The big, hobnailed boots of the men fell softly on the rough floors as their wearers slipped in for breakfast. They had prepared it themselves and ate it silently. During the meal McGill came in. He looked worried and did not eat. After they had finished the men waited for him to speak.

"It's pneumonia," he said briefly.

That was all. Soon the men slipped off quietly to the mine, and McGill went back to Barbara.

By night Barbara was delirious.

"It looks bad," McGill admitted to the men. "She is fretting over that cat."

When Barbara came to the Little Bear Mine, she had brought with her a small Maltese kitten, her dearest possession. The death of the little kitten a week before had been the greatest tragedy in her young life.

After supper the men tried to work on their presents, but somehow the work dragged. The hours passed, but the men did not leave the mess room. Toward midnight McGill came out to them. “Mrs. St. Clair says you had better come in now if you want to see her. She’s— she’s going!”

The whole crew, from mucker to foreman, tiptoed down the hall—all except Gus. He didn’t seem to notice that they went.

Into the sick room they filed and stood in a little embarrassed group by the door. Barbara tossed fretfully on the bed, her eyes glowing with unnatural brightness.

“I want a kitty, Santa Claus! I want my kitty!” she wailed feebly.

The Canadian miner, tears rolling down his cheeks, left the room. The others followed.

Gus was still in his place by the fire when they returned.

“I can’t stand it to see her begging for that kitten,” said the Canadian. “I would risk my life to get one for her. I’d try to get to Telluride, if I thought I could get back in time to do any good.”

A minute afterwards Gus got up slowly and went out to the bunk room.

But Gus did not stop there long. He drew on an extra sweater, rubber coat and furs, snatched his skis and pole, and slipped from the house.

It was after midnight. The thermometer registered way below zero. The wind swirled down from the mountain tops with the lash of a gale. But Gus did not mind the storm; a master of the ski, he swung down the trail with a speed that mocked the wind at his back.

Telluride, the nearest town, was thirteen miles away, the only route leading there being over a zigzag pack trail. From the mine this trail descends the crest of a ridge until it strikes the edge of the canyon, staggers back and forth down the steep face of the canyon, then for the rest of the way meekly follows the river.

It is only a pack trail, narrow and dangerous at best. During the summer a line of burros or donkeys winds along it, bringing down ore from the mine and carrying back provisions. But when winter sets in, the trail becomes very dangerous, and the zigzags have caused the death of many prospectors who have stayed too late in the mountains, or taken the trail too early in the spring.

Gus had little difficulty down the first part of the trail. In an hour he reached the zigzags. They were covered with hanging masses of snow that threatened with every blast to go grinding down the wall of the canyon.

By his pole Gus held himself on to the side of the canyon, moving cautiously across hanging drifts. He made his way only by grim, desperate effort.

At the end of thirty minutes of hard struggle he stood half-way down the trail. Then a savage blast tore a pile of clinging snow from the top and drove it at him. Gus saw it start, gathering speed and bulk as it came. The whole mountain side began to move. Tons of hard-packed snow were slipping, and he was directly in their path. There was no way of dodging the avalanche—he must outrace it.

There was no time to zigzag back and forth down the side of the canyon; he had to take as direct a route as the avalanche. He threw his pole from his grasp and shot ahead of the oncoming mass of snow. Death was behind him. Before him rocks jutted out to trip him, and jump-offs endangered his course.

HE SWUNG DOWN THE TRAIL WITH A SPEED THAT MATCHED THE WIND AT HIS BACK

But he rode his skis with reckless abandon, leaping, twisting, dodging down the slope. Behind him crashed the snow. He was veering to the left to escape its path.

A leap brought him to the bottom of the canyon. But before he could glide to safety, a mass of snow at the side of the slide caught and hurled him before it, bruised and half buried.

A desperate struggle freed him. His skis were broken, his muscles were bruised and twisted.

It was half-past three when he reached the outskirts of the town. Mounting the steps of the first house, he rained heavy blows upon the door. The owner stuck his head out of a window. "Who's there?" he asked.

"Give me a cat!" Gus ordered in a rough voice.

"Are you crazy?" yelled the enraged man at the window.

"I've got to have a cat! I'm from the Little Bear! Cook's little girl is sick—pneumonia! She's goin' to die if we don't get her a cat!"

"From the Little Bear? Over the zigzags? Impossible!"

"Give me a cat or I'll break your door in!"

Presently a light glimmered through the night and a hastily clad man joined Gus. A search of the neighborhood produced a cat and fresh skis. In half an hour Gus was on the trail back.

At the mine the men had not gone to their bunks that night. They huddled before the fireplace, awaiting the dreaded news. McGill slipped by now and then on some errand.

The night dragged through, and Christmas dawned.

Christmas! This was the first time they had planned a real Christmas since they left their homes years ago. But now the heart had been taken out of the day.

They sat down to a listless breakfast. McGill came in.

"She's still fighting. She's got to win or lose pretty soon," he said.

They did not go to the mine that morning. It was the first Christmas the Little Bear Mine had not run.

At ten o'clock McGill came in to report.

“Boys, I can’t stand it any longer. She’s wearing her strength away fretting for that cat. I’m not sure that a cat would really quiet her, and I hardly believe any living man can make it to Telluride, but I’m going to try.”

“No, you’re not,” said the Canadian. “She needs you here. Besides, you’re worn out. I’ll get the cat.”

“We’ll draw for it,” said the men.

“No use. Gus and I are the only two good enough on skis to have a fighting chance.”

“Gus! That brute hasn’t got the heart of a mine mule! He wouldn’t go at the point of a gun! Where is he? I haven’t seen him since last night,” stormed the foreman.

Silently the men watched the Canadian prepare for the trail. They were rough men, who held life cheaply, but not one of them believed a man had a chance to make the trail and return safely.

Suddenly the door opened and Gus staggered in. He tried to cross the room, but his worn-out muscles refused to act, and he sank to the floor.

The men sprang to him, laid him on a cot, pulled off his furs, and unbuttoned his coat. Underneath the coat was an old sack. One of the men gave it a shake. Out on the floor rolled a half-frozen, half-smothered kitten. It told the story; it told them that Gus was a hero.

The next morning when consciousness returned to Gus, the men carried his cot into Barbara’s room. On the bed he could see a little figure, frail and worn, but sleeping the restful sleep of exhaustion. One little arm was outside the covers, hugging up closely a fluff of a kitten. Beside the bed, he saw the mother, smiling happily through her tears, for she knew that Barbara would get well.

XXIV

PATTY AND HER PITCHER

AT the end of the story the Story Lady paused a moment, and then said: "We will now leave the cold and snowy world and come back to our warm and pleasant Fairyland and to the story of Patty and her Pitcher."

"This is the delightful surprise I spoke of," said the Story Queen to Mary Frances. "Just watch the magic circle."

Mary Frances noticed a large circle drawn on the carpet, about which all the Story People were grouped.

"You are going to hear the story and see it acted at the same time. The Story Lady will control the action with her voice."

In the Magic Circle

Mary Frances sat listening entranced to the voice of the Story Lady. It flowed on and on like sweet music, now rising, now falling, filling the ear with charming sound, and the imagination with a perfect picture of the story she was telling.

The story began:

"The most charming little girl in her native village was Patty—"

At the words a little girl, Patty, not much bigger than Tiny of Tinytown sprang up in the circle with her little home and the village all about her.

"The pigeons flew down—to coo around her—"

And they flew down and cooed.

"The chickens fed from her hand—"

And the chickens came running.

"The cat rolled over her feet and purred—"

And the cat did it.

"The steady old dog, Bluff, cut his liveliest capers—"

And Bluff did it.

As the story fell from the Story Lady's lips there was instant obedience in the village of the magic circle. The characters obeyed the voice instantly, just as the feet of children dancing obey the music of the piano. So the story flowed on—the acting kept pace with the voice and did everything the words said.

Mary Frances sat spellbound, for she had never seen anything so beautiful as the way in which that wonderful voice brought every player and every action to her ears and eyes at the same time.

This is the story. If you keep your eyes on the magic circle you can see it as Mary Frances saw it—through the veil of words.

* * * * * *

The Wonderful Pitcher

The most charming little girl in her native village, was Patty; at least, so all the neighbors said, and what everybody says ought to have some truth in it.

Patty deserved their kind words, for she loved everybody and everything, and in return she was loved by all who knew her. The pigeons flew down from their little house to coo around her; the chickens fed from her hand; the cat rolled over her feet and purred with pleasure; and even the steady old dog, Bluff, put himself to the trouble of cutting his liveliest capers to attract her attention.

Patty was always busy, too, about something. When she was no higher than your knee, she used to bustle about and do little things in the handiest manner; and as for sewing, she was the pattern child at the dame's school, where her sampler was hung upon the wall, as a guide to the other children.

She lived in a little cottage with her parents, who were now old and very poor, and depended upon their little daughter for many things which they were too feeble to do for themselves. One of her daily duties was to go to the spring for water.

She would dip her pitcher into the clear, bright liquid, and sing her sweet little songs, with a voice that made every one who passed that way stop to listen with delight.

Upon one of her journeys to the spring, occurred the great event of her life, of which I am now about to tell you.

Patty had filled her pitcher at the spring, and was carrying it home with some little difficulty, for it was quite heavy when filled. When almost in sight of her cottage, she saw a poor, old, travel-worn woman sitting by the wayside, as if overcome by the fatigue of a long journey.

She sat upon the trunk of a fallen tree; her face was as brown as a nut, and covered with a complete network of wrinkles, while her dim eyes looked dull and sunken. At her back was tied a bundle which seemed quite large enough for a strong man to carry.

She watched Patty as she came near, and cast eager eyes upon the water in the pitcher, which seemed so cool and tempting; and after looking at Patty's rosy, good-natured face, she asked for some water.

"Dear little child," said she in a feeble voice, "give me a drink from your pitcher, for I am very old, and faint, and weary."

"To be sure, mother, and welcome," said Patty, sweetly, as she raised up the pitcher so that the old woman could drink.

Long and eagerly did the poor creature drink of the delicious water; so long, indeed, that Patty was much surprised at her extreme thirst.

"Thank you, my darling. Heaven will reward you for your kindness," said the old woman.

"Oh, you are quite welcome, mother," said Patty again, shouldering her pitcher, and going cheerfully on her way, singing in the lightness of her heart, at the pleasure of having relieved the poor woman's distress.

But she had not gone far before she was overtaken by a large dog, who seemed to be bound upon a long journey; for he was covered with dust, his eyes were bloodshot, and his parched tongue hung from his mouth to catch the cool air.

"Poor fellow," said Patty, in a kind voice.

The dog turned around at the words, and stopped to look at her. She held out her hand, and he came nearer. She then set down her pitcher to caress him, but he strove eagerly to reach the pitcher which his instinct told him contained water. Patty understood his wants, and held the pitcher to the poor dog so that he could drink with comfort.

He lapped and lapped, until she began to think he would never leave off. At last, he looked up into her face, and licked her hand in gratitude; then, after bounding and gamboling about to show how refreshed he was, trotted on his way.

Patty now looked into her pitcher and found that it was more than half empty, so that she must take all her journey over again; for it was of no use going home with a pitcher but half full.

As she rose, she saw some hare-bells by the side of the road which appeared to be in a very drooping, dusty state, so she at once poured over them all the water that remained in the pitcher.

Then, with her pitcher once more upon her shoulder, she turned her steps again toward the spring, without a single regret at the double work she had to do. She traveled blithely on over the dusty road, cheering the way with her sweet songs, and soon arrived once more at the margin of the spring.

Resting for a few minutes in the shade, she gazed sleepily at the bubbling water, and all kinds of fanciful thoughts passed through her mind. She was just dropping off into a little nap, when she thought she heard some one call her by name. It was a sweet little voice, and Patty could hardly distinguish it from the tinkling of the spring.

She rose quickly to her feet, and looked in every direction for the owner of the voice, but in vain; till suddenly casting eyes upon the spring, she saw, to her amazement, a dear little face looking up at her from the water; and presently there stood before her one of the most beautiful little creatures Patty had ever seen.

She balanced lightly upon the surface of the rippling water, where she seemed to stand with the same ease as Patty did upon the land, and was really no higher than the pitcher.

"So, Patty," said she, "so you have come back again, my dear?"

"Yes, Madam," replied Patty, who, to say the truth, felt somewhat alarmed; "yes, Madam, because I——"

"I know all about it," said the fairy, for it was a fairy, you know; "and it is because I do know, that you see me here, for I am now come to make you a useful present."

"A present!" said Patty, with a pleased surprise.

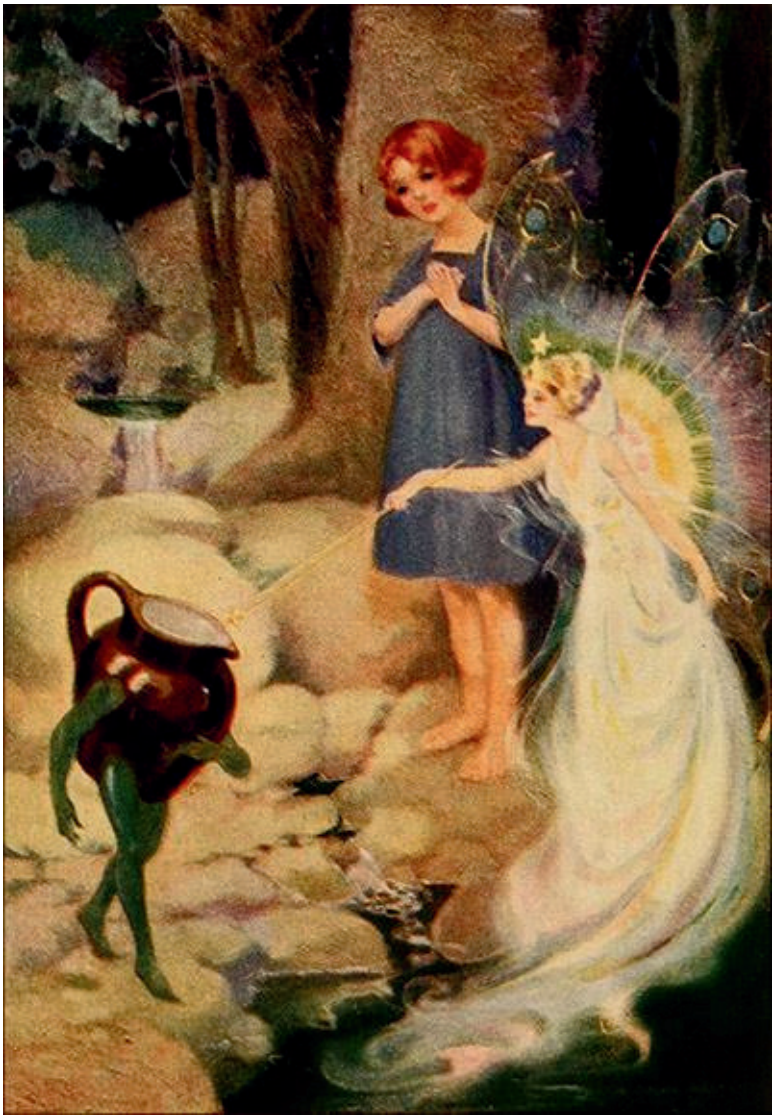
"Yes, and such a one," replied the fairy, "as will be a lasting reward for your goodness of heart toward others, and your little care for yourself. You blush because you do not remember the many kind things you have done, and I am the more pleased to see that you think I am giving you unmerited praise.

"That you think so little of all the kind actions which are the ornament of your life, assures me of the purity of your motives; for it is our duty to forget the good we do to

others, and to remember only the good that others do to us. You have always done so, my dear Patty.

"To reward you, I will place a spell upon your pitcher, which will always be full of water or milk, as you may desire. It will also be able to move and work whenever you wish it, and will always prove your firm friend in any trouble.

"If it should, by any mishap, be parted from you, it will easily, by its magic powers, be able to find you; and in whatever position you may happen to be, you will always find it by your side, as adviser and friend; so put your pitcher on the ground, and look into it."



SHE THEN TOUCHED THE PITCHER WITH HER WAND

Patty did so, and to her surprise, saw the bright water gradually rising until the pitcher was full to the brim. When she saw it was full she tried to lift it, but found it too heavy for her strength.

"You need not trouble yourself to carry it," said the fairy, smiling; "it will save you all further trouble on that score."

She then touched the pitcher with her wand, when to Patty's greater surprise, two very well-formed legs grew out of the bottom, and a pair of neat little arms appeared at the top of the vessel, which, as soon as it was firm on its legs, made a very polite bow to Patty as its future mistress.

"Now, Patty," said the fairy, "follow your pitcher, and you cannot possibly go wrong;" and as she finished speaking, she gradually faded away, and at last broke into a thousand sparkling drops, which mingled with the bubbling stream, and were soon borne away on its bosom.

Patty rubbed her eyes as if to make sure that she was awake; for the whole thing seemed to her like a wonderful dream. She coughed aloud, and at last began to pinch herself until she found it painful, when she finally concluded that she must be really awake. But more convincing than all, there stood the saucy brown pitcher firmly upon its sturdy green legs, with its toes turned out in the politest manner of the day, and its little fists planted in its sides in a style that was very business-like indeed.

"Quite ready to start, mistress," said a little voice that made Patty jump, for the fairy had not told her that the pitcher could speak; but screwing up courage, she said: "Come on, then, Pitcher," and set the example by starting off into a run.

And didn't the pitcher follow her in good earnest! Indeed, it ran so fast that it soon overtook her, and not only that, but it ran beyond her, long before she got half-way home.

But the most surprising thing was that, although it hopped along with the most wonderful strides and jumps over the rough places in its path, it did not spill one single drop of water in its progress. This puzzled Patty, who, with her utmost care, could never avoid wetting her dress whenever she had tried to run with the pitcher, even half full.

"What will people think when we get into the village?" thought Patty, as she looked at her strange companion; "I'm sure they will be frightened, and what will father and mother say when they see what I have brought home with me?"

"Do not trouble yourself about that," said the pitcher, who seemed to know her thoughts; "your parents will soon get accustomed to me, and be much pleased when they see how handy I am, for you do not yet know half of my good qualities."

As he was speaking, they came to a very high stile. "Shall I help you over?" said Patty, thinking of his short legs.

“Oh, dear, no,” said the pitcher; “see how little I need it.” And, so saying, he skipped over the stile in the most graceful manner. As he did so, a dog who was passing put his tail between his legs, and after two or three very weak barks, scurried off in evident fright and surprise.

A man was at the same time coming along the road with a slow and pompous walk—for he was the squire of the village—who, upon seeing the strange pitcher clear the stile, was rendered almost speechless with amazement; but as soon as he saw the little legs speeding toward him, he uttered one loud exclamation of terror, and fled!

His hat flew one way, his cane another, and his cloak mounted into the air like wings. Being very fat, however, he had not gone far before his legs failed him, and he lay kicking in a furze bush, roaring for help. Patty could not help laughing at the sight, but the pitcher, trotting on with the greatest unconcern, soon reached the cottage door to the astonishment of Patty’s parents.

The pitcher walked quietly into the cottage, and sat down in a corner, tucking its legs carefully under it, so that no one could see them. The neighbors, therefore, who had been alarmed at the squire’s account of his fright and disaster, and came to the cottage in crowds, only saw a pitcher, such as they all had at home, and put the old squire down as being a little bit out of his mind.

Patty was awakened next morning by hearing a noise below, as if someone was very busy with the furniture. She heard the chairs pushed about, and presently the handle of a pail klink down as plain as could be. So she put on her clothes and crept down stairs. She peeped cautiously through the red curtains at the bottom, and there, to her wondering surprise, she saw, what do you think?—not any thieves, but the astonishing pitcher; and what do you think it was doing? Why, it was mopping up the red tiles of the floor as handily as if it had never done anything else all the days of its life; and more wonderful still, the fire was made, and was burning brightly upon the hearth!

We can imagine a pitcher of water washing the floor, but we cannot imagine it doing anything else with a fire except putting it out. But, no! the fire was lighted, the kettle was on, and there it was, merrily singing a little song about breakfast being nearly ready.

“Good morning, dear mistress,” said the pitcher, cheerfully; “you need not trouble yourself to do anything but grow and improve your mind; for from henceforth you will have but little labor to do, as I am here to do it for you.”

You may suppose that Patty was well pleased to hear this, for she was now growing to be a tall girl, and felt a great desire to improve herself with books, which as yet she had had very little time to do, having been so much taken up with her household cares.

When Patty was left alone in the evening with the pitcher, she told him how much she was obliged to him for all he had done, and how much she wished to learn; but did not

know what to do for books, as she had read the few she already possessed, many times over.

"Oh, I can soon help you there," said the pitcher, "for you have only to wish, and I will yield you as much milk as you desire. You can then make butter and cheese, and go sell them at the market town; buy as many books as you like, and have something left for other purposes besides."

No sooner said than done. Patty set out all the pans she had, and all she could borrow from her kind neighbors, and as fast as they came the pitcher ran about and filled them; so that she soon had plenty of cream for her butter and cheese.

She had only to ask, and a good neighbor lent her a churn, while the pitcher furnished a pair of arms to do the churning, and such butter was produced as had not been seen in the village for many a day. You may suppose that Patty was pleased; and as for her dear old parents, they hardly knew what to make of it all.

The same good neighbor lent her a gentle horse and some baskets; and early one lovely morning, she started for the market-town, to which the pleased pitcher pointed out the way. He did not go with her, as he said the people of the town were not accustomed to see brown pitchers with legs, so he should stay at home and see about making the cheese.

Patty rode cheerfully on her way, looking as happy and handsome as the best farmer's daughter of them all—so everybody in the market said—and she soon sold all her butter at the very best prices of the day.

And so Patty went on thriving, and doing good to every one in need, until in course of time, she grew into a beautiful and lovable young woman, living in comfort with her old parents in one of the prettiest cottages in the village.

Every one said that she deserved her good fortune; no one envied her; she was loved by young and old; so, as you may well believe, she was happy as the day is long.

The Well-dressed Stranger

And now, a wonderful thing came to pass, which changed the whole course of Patty's simple and contented life. One evening, she was standing in her garden, feeding her pigeons, when a well-dressed stranger approached the gate. After looking at her with admiration for a moment, he bowed gracefully, at the same time removing his plumed hat, and, in the politest manner, inquired the way to the next town.

Patty answered him pleasantly, and as she spoke, the music of her voice and the charming modesty of her manner seemed to strike the young man with surprise and pleasure.

He looked at her intently for a moment, which made Patty's eyes seek the ground in blushing confusion; then bowing again with greater respect than before, he proceeded slowly on his way, often looking back for another glimpse of sweet Patty.

And now, as you probably guess, the handsome young stranger came again and again, although he knew his way very well indeed between the village and the neighboring town. At last she found that it was the way to her heart he was seeking. He told her parents that he was rich, and wished to have a wife of whom every one spoke well. He did not care how poor she might be, so that she loved him; since he had wealth enough for both, and could choose to marry when and where he pleased.

You must not suppose, however, that Patty fell into the arms of the young stranger at once. He coaxed her a great deal before she consented to be his wife; as she wanted to make sure that he was as upright in character as he was handsome in appearance.

The parents smiled as they looked upon the ardent and handsome lover, whom, however, they did not think a bit too good for their darling Patty; and so, in as short a time as was possible, they were happily married.

Now the stranger who had married Patty was a prince in disguise; and the pretty cottage-girl became a great princess, surrounded with all the splendor of her high station!

Did Patty now forget her early home and her old friend, the pitcher? No, she did not, for the pitcher went with her; but her parents wished to end their days in the peaceful village where they were born. In the splendid state in which she now lived, the pitcher was as useful to her as before, though in a different way. When the poor came to the palace gate, he gave them bread and nourishing soup for their families, for which they daily blessed the kind princess who relieved their wants. So you see the pitcher, although now not called upon to work, still continued, in the name of his mistress, to do good to all around.

Patty in Trouble

But, alas! the best of us cannot escape from envious hearts and wicked tongues, and so it befell with Patty. Her dream of happiness was short. Many of the wicked courtiers envied her the love of the people, to whom Patty was endeared by her gentle kindness; and they whispered slanders into the ears of the prince, her husband, who at last, I am sorry to say, was weak enough to listen to them; for they aroused his fears by telling him that she was trying to bribe the people by her charities to rebel against him.

They also said that she was served by evil spirits, and pointed to the good and innocent pitcher as a proof of their wicked tales. Alas for human weakness! The prince at last became convinced of her guilt; and although his heart ached, he had her put into one of the dungeons of the palace; and there poor Patty was left to mourn over the too easy belief of her husband in her guilt.

She did not, however, mourn long, for as night came on, the prison door gently opened, and there, to her great delight, she saw the faithful pitcher, with a bunch of keys in his hand.

"Come," said he, "let us return to your peaceful home, and show your husband that it is his heart and not his riches that you covet. He will come back to reason and repentance when he finds he has lost you."

Poor Patty followed him in deep grief; but they had not gone far in their flight, when she perceived with alarm, that they were followed by a band of soldiers. She screamed with fright.

"BE NOT ALARMED, DEAR MISTRESS," SAID THE PITCHER

The Pitcher to the Rescue

“Be not alarmed, dear mistress,” said the pitcher; “I will soon stop their pursuit.” So saying, he bent over the side of a rock and poured out a cataract of water through the valley in which the soldiers were marching.

Soon the water swelled into huge waves, which swept the soldiers from their path, and compelled them to save their lives by swimming to the nearest land, when, wet and dispirited, they soon returned to their master, the foolish prince.

That night Patty slept once more beneath the sheltering roof of her parents, who, as you may suppose, received their darling with open arms.

She once more found herself in her beloved garden, and the flowers, as you may believe, were often watered with her tears. It was but natural that her thoughts should wander to the home of her husband, and that she should grieve over his cruelty in return for her pure and ardent love. Hope, however, whispered to her, in the midst of her tears, that he would yet learn how false the stories were that had caused not only her unhappiness, but his also. The pitcher, too, was always at her side to give her comfort in her silent sorrow.

And thus days and weeks rolled on, but no news or messenger reached her from her husband. Had he entirely abandoned her? Or did he believe her to have been swept by the torrent that had so nearly drowned his soldiers, who were too busy looking out for their own safety to notice what had become of her?

She hoped that it was so, as that in a measure would excuse him; and even now, he might be mourning her as lost to him forever! For surely, she thought, long ere this the evil tongues must have appeared to him in their true light.

One morning, she rose earlier than usual. She was restless and could not sleep. The pure air was cool and refreshing to her fevered brow. Looking sadly around her, she saw the dear old pitcher trimming the flowers just like an experienced gardener.

“Good morning, dear mistress,” said he, rubbing his hands cheerfully; “you are up betimes to-day, for the sun has hardly yet peeped into the valley. I am glad you are so early afoot. As you see, I am taking extra care with the garden, for I expect visitors to-day!”

“Visitors?” said Patty with an inquiring look.

“Yes, visitors,” said the pitcher, from whose mouth issued a low, chuckling laugh; “I can distinctly hear footsteps in the distance, and they are coming this way. Listen! they are now near enough for mortal ears to hear!”

And so they were; nearer and nearer they came. Presently the figure of a traveler, with a hood over his face, came in sight. He stopped a moment, threw back his hood, and stood,

struck with amazement; for it was the prince, her husband, who believed her to be dead—drowned in the valley, after she had escaped from prison!

"This," said the pitcher, "is the visitor I expected. Believing you to be dead, he has wandered in many lands to cure his grief; and at last ventured to this quiet cottage to see once more the spot where he first had the good fortune to meet you. He has bitterly grieved over the sin he has committed in believing you guilty of coveting his riches, when he alone was all your riches and your delight.

"That you are still alive, is the reward for his sincere repentance. He finds you in your parents' home where he saw you first, regretting nothing of your past life, except the loss of the husband you love so well."

The faithful pitcher here ceased speaking. The prince rushed forward with a cry of delight, and knelt at Patty's feet and begged her forgiveness.

The pitcher, like a discreet friend, placed her hand in his, and went into the cottage.

The prince now happy in his love, which had increased a hundred fold, wished at once to return to his palace; and desired to send forward a messenger, so that he might bring back his recovered wife in triumph. The pitcher, upon this, came out and joined them.

"Prince," said he, "spare yourself this trouble. I am here to render a last service to my mistress. Since your sincere love now leaves nothing for her to desire, the fairy who appointed me to reward her for the greatest of human virtues—self-denial, now recalls me to her water-palace."

Behold! As he ceased speaking, jets of sparkling water rose high in the air from his mouth, until the valley was filled by a lovely lake, upon which floated a gilded barge, manned by stout rowers in the prince's livery, and gay with flags of all colors.

Patty then took an affectionate leave of her parents, and she and her husband stepped into the barge. Still the water flowed from the pitcher's mouth, until the lake grew into a mighty river, down which they floated until they came in sight of their beautiful home, standing high upon the rocks which bordered the stream.

Hundreds of flags floated from the towers, and booming cannon sent forth a noisy welcome. Crowds of rejoicing people stood to receive their beloved mistress, whose kindness had long ago endeared her to their grateful hearts; and, when at length they landed, the people rushed forward—happy if they even succeeded in kissing the hem of her garment.

After that Patty lived many years in peace and prosperity; but the magic pitcher was seen no more, for Patty was happy, and its loving task was done.

* * * * * *

As the Story Lady ceased speaking, the actors vanished from the magic circle into thin air.

"Oh, I wish I could learn to tell stories like that!" exclaimed Mary Frances.

"You can," said the Story King, heartily; "for you have come to the home of good story-tellers."

"Yes, you can, my dear, because you love stories," said the Story Queen.

"And for that reason you will always be young," added the Story King; "for good story-tellers never grow old."

"It seems too good to be true; the Story Lady is so wonderful," returned Mary Frances.

This outspoken admiration pleased the Story People very much, for they were very proud of their Story Lady.

Now the Ready Writer folded the copies of the five stories; stepped up with a funny little bow and handed them to their guest as before; and that was the end of the Second Day.

THE STORIES OF THE THIRD DAY

SIR GALAHAD

KING ARTHUR AND THE KNIGHTS OF THE ROUND TABLE.—GALAHAD RECEIVES THE ORDER OF KNIGHTHOOD.—THE ADVENTURE OF THE SWORD IN THE STONE.—SIR GALAHAD SITS IN THE PERILOUS SEAT.—SIR GALAHAD WINS THE SWORD OF BALIN LE SAVAGE.—THE KNIGHTS OF THE ROUND TABLE SET OUT IN QUEST OF THE HOLY GRAIL.—SIR GALAHAD FINDS A WHITE SHIELD WITH A RED CROSS.—SIR LAUNCELOT AND SIR PERCIVAL ATTACK SIR GALAHAD.—THE ADVENTURE OF THE GENTLEWOMAN, THE MYSTERIOUS SHIP, AND THE SWORD OF THE STRANGE BELT.—THE GENTLEWOMAN RISKS HER LIFE FOR ANOTHER.—SIR GALAHAD MEETS A KNIGHT IN WHITE ARMOR.—SIR GALAHAD ACHIEVES HIS QUEST, AND BEARS THE HOLY GRAIL ACROSS THE SEA.—THE PASSING OF SIR GALAHAD, THE END OF SIR PERCIVAL, AND THE RETURN OF SIR BORS TO CAMELOT.—HOW SIR LAUNFAL ACHIEVED THE HOLY GRAIL.

THE STORIES OF THE THIRD DAY

XXV

SIR GALAHAD

King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table

WHEN the Story People were assembled on the third day, the Story Lady began:

In the early days of Britain there lived a noble king, Arthur, and his brave knights of the Round Table. The king and his knights were famous for their feats of arms, their deeds of valor, and their many adventures. Among them none was nobler and braver than King Arthur, until Galahad came; but Galahad surpassed them all, because he accomplished the feat in which so many failed—he conquered himself, as you shall hear.

Now King Arthur held his court three times a year, at Christmas, at Easter, and at Pentecost, in the lovely town of Camelot. Here stood Camelot Castle, with its high towers and great jousting field in the meadow by the river, where the knights held their tournaments and performed their feats of arms.

At these times all the brave knights of Christendom flocked to Camelot, and the bravest were chosen to sit at the Round Table, where they feasted, told their adventures, and planned new deeds of valor. Here King Arthur would charge them to commit no murder, outrage, or treason; also to be courteous and never to refuse mercy; always to defend women and children on pain of death; and never to fight in a wrong quarrel for law or worldly goods; and to this he pledged both old and young every year at the high feast of Pentecost.

In the center of the great hall of the castle, with its lofty arches and high windows, stood the Round Table. "Merlin, the magician," so the tale goes, "made the Round Table in token of the roundness of the world; for all the bravest of the world, Christian and heathen,

resort to the Round Table; and when they are chosen to be of that company, they think themselves more happy and more in honor, than if they had gotten half the world."

When Merlin had made this wonderful table he said that, by the knights who sat about it, the truth of the Holy Grail should be well known.

Now, the Holy Grail was the cup which was supposed to have been used by our Saviour at the Last Supper, and was said to have been brought into Britain by Joseph of Arimathea. After a time, through the sin of those who had charge of it, this holy vessel became lost, and the knights of the Round Table sought to recover it; but only a knight who was perfectly blameless in thought, word, and act could hope to succeed.

When Merlin was asked who was best fitted for this quest, he said that three blameless knights should achieve it; and that one of the three should surpass his father as much as the lion surpasses the leopard, both in strength and boldness.

Those who heard Merlin say this, said, "Since there is to be such a knight, you should make by your skill a seat for him to sit in."

Merlin answered that he would do this; and so he made the Perilous Seat, in which no man dare sit on pain of being hurt, except the knight for whom the seat was made. This knight was Sir Galahad, of whom the poet Tennyson writes:

"My good sword carves the casques of men,

My tough lance thrusteth sure,

My strength is as the strength of ten,

Because my heart is pure."

The tales themselves are from an old book, "Le Morte d' Arthur," written by Sir Thomas Malory in the fifteenth century.

Galahad Receives the Order of Knighthood

One day, at Pentecost, when the tables were set, ready for the feasting to begin, there rode into the great hall of the castle a fair gentlewoman on horseback, her horse covered with sweat and foam. Quickly alighting, she came to King Arthur, who was surrounded by his knights, and saluted him.

"Damsel, God bless you," said the king.

“Sir,” said she, “show me where Sir Launcelot is.”

“There you may see him,” said the king, pointing to the knight.

She went to Sir Launcelot and said, “Sir Launcelot, I salute you and require that you come with me.”

“What is your will with me?” asked Sir Launcelot.

“You shall soon know and understand,” she replied.

“Well,” said he, “I will gladly go with you.”

Sir Launcelot bade his squire saddle his horse and bring his armor.

The queen then came to Sir Launcelot and asked in surprise, “Will you leave us at the high feast?”

The gentlewoman answered for him: “Madam, he shall be with you again to-morrow at mid-day.”

So Sir Launcelot departed with the gentlewoman and rode into a great forest till he came to an abbey. When the squire opened the gates he entered and descended from his horse, and there met two of his cousins, Sir Bors and Sir Lionel, who were very glad to see him.

“Sir,” said Sir Bors, “what adventure brings you here? We thought to see you at Camelot to-morrow.”

“A gentlewoman brought me here,” said Sir Launcelot, “but I know not the cause.”

While they were talking, twelve nuns came in, bringing with them Galahad, a youth so handsome and well-made that scarcely in the world might men find his match; and all the ladies wept.

“Sir,” said one of the ladies, “we bring here your son, whom we have nourished for you; and we pray you now to make him a knight, for he could not receive the order of knighthood from a worthier man’s hand.”

Sir Launcelot looked at the young squire and thought that, for his age, he had never seen so fine a man.

“Is this your own desire?” he asked.

“Yes,” replied his son.

“Then you shall receive the high order of knighthood to-morrow,” said Sir Launcelot.

Early in the morning at Galahad's desire he made him a knight, and said, "God make him a good man, for he is as handsome as any man that lives." This he did in the presence of his two cousins and the ladies of the abbey.

"Now, fair sir," said he, "will you come with me to the court of King Arthur?"

"Sir," said Sir Galahad, "I cannot go with you at this time, but shortly I will come."

Sir Launcelot then departed with his cousins and returned to Camelot, and the king and queen and all the knights were exceeding glad to see them.

The Adventure of the Sword in the Stone

When the king and his knights entered the great hall for the feast, they were surprised to see on the seats about the Round Table their names in letters of gold, which told where each one ought to sit. When they came to the Perilous Seat, they saw letters newly-written which said:

"Four hundred and fifty-four winters have now passed since the birth of our Lord, and this seat ought to be filled."

They all said, "This is a strange and a marvelous thing."

Sir Launcelot then counted the time and said, "It seems to me this seat ought to be filled to-day; for this is the feast of Pentecost after the four hundred and fifty-fourth year; and, if it please all here, let no one see these words till he arrives who ought to achieve this adventure."

Then they took a silken cloth and covered the letters in the Perilous Seat, and the king ordered the dinner to be served.

"Sir," said Sir Kay, the steward, "if you go now to dinner you will break an old custom of your court, for you never sit down on this day until you have seen some adventure."

"You speak the truth," said King Arthur, "but I was so glad to see Sir Launcelot and his cousins that I forgot the custom."

While they were still speaking, a squire came in and said to the king, "Sir, I bring you marvelous tidings."

"What are they?" he asked.

"Sir, I saw in the river below a great stone floating on the water, and in it a sword sticking."

"Then," said the king, "I will see that marvel."

The knights went with him down to the river and saw there a stone of red marble floating, like a great millstone, and in the middle was stuck a beautiful sword, in the handle of which were words formed of precious stones set in gold, which said:

"Never shall man draw me out, save the one by whose side I ought to hang, and he shall be the best knight of the world."

When the king read the letters, he said to Sir Launcelot, "Fair sir, this sword ought to be yours; for I am sure you are the best knight of the world."

"Sir," answered Sir Launcelot soberly, "it is not my sword, nor am I bold enough to grasp it, for it ought not to hang by my side; also, whoever attempts to draw it and fails, will receive a wound and will not live long after; and I am sure you must know that to-day the adventures of the Holy Grail will begin."

"Now, fair nephew," said the king to Sir Gawain, "attempt it once for me."

"Sir," said Sir Gawain, "I will obey your command."

Immediately he grasped the sword by the handle, but could not stir it.

"I thank you," said King Arthur.

"Sir Gawain," said Sir Launcelot, "this sword will one day hurt you so sorely that you will wish you had never put your hand to it for the best castle of the realm."

"Sir," said Sir Gawain, "I might not resist my uncle's command."

When King Arthur heard this he was sorry, and then he bade Sir Percival try it, who said that he would gladly, to bear Sir Gawain company. Thereupon he took hold of the sword and drew it strongly, but he could not even move it. After that there was no one who was bold enough to attempt it.

"Now you may go to dinner," said Sir Kay, "for you have seen a marvelous adventure."

Sir Galahad Sits in the Perilous Seat

The king and all the knights then returned to the castle and each knight sat in his own place at the table, and the young men who were not knights served them. When all were served and all the seats were filled except the Perilous Seat, a strange thing happened; for

all the windows and doors of the castle shut by themselves; yet, for all that, the hall was not greatly darkened.

King Arthur was the first to speak. “Fair comrades,” he said, “we have seen marvels to-day; but methinks ere night we shall see still greater marvels.”

Even while he was speaking, an old man came in, clothed all in white; and none of the knights knew who he was or where he came from. With him was a young knight in red armor, without sword or shield; but an empty scabbard hung by his side.

“Peace be with you, gentlemen,” said the old man; then to King Arthur, “Sir, I bring you a young knight who is of king’s lineage, and of the kindred of Joseph of Arimathea; therefore the marvels of this court, and of strange countries, shall be fully accomplished.”

IMMEDIATELY HE GRASPED THE SWORD BY THE HANDLE, BUT COULD NOT STIR IT

The king was truly glad to hear this, and said, "Sir, you are heartily welcome, and the young knight with you."

When the young knight had taken off his armor he stood in a coat of red silk, and the old man put on his shoulder a mantle, furred with fine ermine, and said: "Sir, follow me."

Then he led the way to the Perilous Seat, beside which sat Sir Launcelot; and then lifted up the cloth and found new letters which said:

"This is the seat of Sir Galahad, the good knight."

"Sir," said the old man, "know well this place is yours."

Sir Galahad sat down safely in the Perilous Seat, and then said to his guide, "Sir, you may now go your way, for you have done as you were commanded to do; and recommend me to my grandfather, King Pelleas, and say that I shall come to see him as soon as I may."

When the old man departed twenty squires met him, and they took their horses and rode away.

The knights of the Round Table wondered greatly at Sir Galahad, because he was so youthful, and because he dared to sit in the Perilous Seat; and they did not know where he was from, save from God, and they said, "This is he by whom the Holy Grail shall be achieved, for no man ever before sat there unhurt."

Sir Launcelot looked at his son with great joy, and Sir Bors said to his comrades, "Upon pain of my life, this young knight shall come to great honor."

There was so much noise in the hall that the queen heard it, and she had a great desire to see the knight who dared such an adventure. When dinner was done the king rose and went to Sir Galahad's seat and lifted the cloth and read his name. Then he showed it to Sir Gawain and said, "Fair nephew, now we have among us the blameless knight who will bring honor to us all; and, upon pain of my life, he shall achieve the Holy Grail, as Sir Launcelot has given us to understand."

King Arthur then came to Sir Galahad and said, "Sir, you are welcome, for you shall move many good knights to seek the Holy Grail, and you shall achieve what no other knight has been able to accomplish."

Sir Galahad Wins the Sword of Balin Le Savage

The king then took Sir Galahad by the hand, and went down to the river to show him the adventure of the stone, and the queen and many ladies went with them and saw the stone floating in the water.

"Sir," said the king to him, "here is a great marvel as ever I saw, and right good knights have attempted it and failed."

"Sir," answered Sir Galahad, "that is no marvel, for the adventure is not theirs, but mine; and because of this sword I brought none with me, for its empty scabbard hangs by my side."

Then he grasped the sword quickly, and drew it out of the stone, and put it into his scabbard, and said, "Now it goes better than it did before."

"Sir," said the king, "a shield also God shall send you."

"Now," said Sir Galahad, "I have the sword that once belonged to the good knight, Sir Balin le Savage; with this sword he slew his brother Balan, and that was a great pity, for neither knew that he fought his brother until wounded to death."

With that they saw a lady on a white horse riding along the river bank toward them. She saluted the king and queen and asked for Sir Launcelot.

"I am here, fair lady," said Sir Launcelot.

Then she said, weeping, "Your great doings are changed since this morning."

"Damsel, why do you say so?" demanded Sir Launcelot.

"I say truth," said she, "for you were to-day the best knight in the world, but whoever said so now would be proved a liar. There is one better than you, for you dared not grasp the sword! Therefore, I ask you to remember that you are no longer the best knight in the world."

"As to that," said he, "I know well I was never the best."

"Yes," said the damsel, "you were, and are yet of any sinful man of the world: and, Sir," she said to the king, "Nacien, the hermit, sends word of the greatest honor that ever befell king in Britain, for to-day the Holy Grail shall appear to thee and all thy comrades of the Round Table."

Having thus spoken, the damsel took her leave and departed the same way that she came.

"Now," said the king, "I am sure that all of you who sit at the Round Table will set out in quest of the Holy Grail, and I shall never see you together again; therefore let us go to the

meadow of Camelot and hold a tournament, so that after your death men may say that we were all together on this day."

To this they all agreed, and assembled with their arms in the jousting field. Now the king wished to prove Sir Galahad and to see what he would do. At the king's request he put on his armor, but would not take a shield. Then Sir Gawain begged him to take a spear, which he did. And the queen sat in a tower with all her ladies to see the tournament.

Then Sir Galahad took his place in the field and began to break marvelously the spears of those who rode against him, so that men wondered. In a short while he overthrew and unhorsed many of the good knights of the Round Table, save two, Sir Launcelot and Sir Percival.

Then the king made Sir Galahad alight from his horse and unlace his helmet so that Queen Guinevere might see him closely. When she saw him she said, "Truly, he is the son of Sir Launcelot, for never did two men more resemble each other; it is no wonder that he has great valor."

A lady who stood by said, "Madam, ought he of right to be so good a knight?"

THEN SIR GALAHAD TOOK HIS PLACE IN THE FIELD

"Yes," said she, "for he comes of the best knights in the world, and of the highest lineage."

The Knights of the Round Table Set Out in Quest of the Holy Grail

The king and all his knights then left the jousting field, and rode to Camelot Church to evensong; and after that they went home to supper. At supper, as each knight sat in his own place at the Round Table, there arose a great storm, and the cracking and crying of the thunder was so terrible that they thought the roof and walls of the castle were breaking apart.

In the midst of the blast a sunbeam entered the great window, seven times whiter than the light of day. Then every knight seemed fairer than his comrades had ever seen him, and no one dared speak for a long while, but all looked at each other as if they had been dumb.

Then there entered on the sunbeam the Holy Grail, but it was covered with a white silken cloth, so that no one could see it, or who bore it. Then the hall was filled with sweet odors, and every knight had such meat and drink as he liked best; and when the Holy Grail had been borne through the hall, it departed as suddenly as it came and the marvelous light with it, but no one knew where. When they had breath to speak, the king gave thanks.

"Certainly," said he, "we ought greatly to thank our Lord for what he has shown us to-day at this high feast of Pentecost."

"Now," said Sir Gawain, "we have been served to-day with the food we liked best, but are sorry that we did not see the Holy Grail uncovered. Therefore, I will here make a vow to set forth on its quest to-morrow to be gone a year and a day, or longer if need be, and I shall not return till I have seen it more openly than to-day. If I do not find it, I shall return again, if it be not contrary to the will of our Lord."

When the knights of the Round Table heard this, the most part of them arose and made the same vow. But King Arthur was greatly displeased, for he well knew that they might not break their vows.

"Alas," said he, "your vows will nearly slay me; they will rob me of the bravest comrades and the truest knights ever seen together in any realm; and I foresee that we shall never meet in fellowship again, for many of you that I have loved as well as my life will die in this quest."

With that the tears came into his eyes, and he said, "Sir Gawain, Sir Gawain, you have given me great sorrow, for I much doubt that my true fellowship shall ever meet here again."

"Ah," said Sir Launcelot, "comfort yourself; it will bring us greater honor than if we had died in any other quest, for of death we are sure."

"Ah, Sir Launcelot," said the king, "the great love I have had for you all the days of my life makes me say such sorrowful words; for Christian king never had so many worthy men at his table as I have had at the Round Table to-day."

When the queen and her gentlewomen heard these things, they were filled with sorrow, for their knights held them in great honor and affection, but the queen was the most sorely grieved of all.

"I marvel," said she, "that the king will permit them to leave him."

Thus all the court was troubled that night, and many of the ladies desired to accompany their husbands; but an old knight arose and said this could not be, for in so high and dangerous a service they must go forth alone.

After a while they all went to rest, and Sir Galahad was put to bed in the king's own chamber. As soon as it was daylight the king arose, for he had no sleep that night for sorrow. He went at once to Sir Gawain and Sir Launcelot and said again, "Ah! Sir Gawain! Sir Gawain! You have betrayed me, for my court will never be restored; but you will never be as sorry for me as I am for you."

With that the tears began to run down his face, and he said, "Ah! knight, Sir Launcelot! I ask that you counsel me, for I wish this quest to be undone, and it can be."

"Sir," said Sir Launcelot, "you saw yesterday that many worthy knights were sworn to this quest, and they cannot break their vows."

"That I know well," said the king, "but my grief at their going is so great that no joy will ever heal it."

After the king had gone, the two knights ordered their squires to bring their arms, and when they were armed they joined their comrades and all went to the church to hear their service.

After the service was over the king took count of those who had taken the vow to search for the Holy Grail and found that there were a hundred and fifty, all knights of the Round Table.

When they had bidden the queen and their ladies farewell, they put on their helmets and were ready to set forth, and there was weeping and great sorrow. Then the queen departed to her chamber to hide her grief. So the knights mounted their horses and rode through the streets of Camelot, and there was much weeping of both rich and poor; and the king turned away, for he could not speak for weeping.

After leaving the town, the men at arms rode all day, and toward evening arrived at a castle called Vagon. The lord of the castle was a good old man and he opened his gates and made them welcome and gave them good cheer, and there they passed the night. In the morning they all agreed that they should separate; so, bidding each other farewell, they departed, and each knight took the way that pleased him best.

Sir Galahad Finds a White Shield With a Red Cross

Now Sir Galahad rode four days without adventure, for as yet he had no shield. On the fourth day, toward evening, he arrived at a white abbey where he was received with great honor. There he found two knights of the Round Table, Sir Badgemagus and Sir Uwaine, who were delighted to see him, and they went to supper together.

“Sirs,” said Sir Galahad, “what adventure brought you here?”

“Sir,” they answered, “we are told there is a shield in this place, and whoever wears it about his neck will be wounded to death within three days, or else be maimed forever.”

“Ah! Sir,” said Sir Badgemagus, “I shall wear it to-morrow and attempt this strange adventure.”

“By my faith!” cried Sir Galahad.

“Sir,” said Sir Badgemagus, “if I do not achieve the adventure of the shield, you shall try it, for I am sure you shall not fail.”

“Sir,” said Sir Galahad, “I agree right well to that, for I have no shield.”

The next day when Sir Badgemagus inquired for the shield a monk led him behind the altar, where the shield hung as white as snow, but in the center was a red cross.

“Sir,” said the monk, “no knight ought to hang this shield about his neck, unless he be the worthiest in the world, therefore I counsel you to be well-advised.”

“Well,” said Sir Badgemagus, “I know I am not the worthiest knight in the world, yet I shall attempt to wear it.”

He then took the shield and said to Sir Galahad, “If it please you, I pray you remain here, till you know how I succeed.”

“I shall await you here,” said he.

After riding two miles, Sir Badgemagus and his squire came to a hermit’s house, from which a goodly knight rode forth to meet him. This knight was in white armor, horse and all, and he came as fast as his horse might run, with his spear in rest. Sir Badgemagus ran against him with such violence that he broke his spear upon the white knight’s shield; but the other struck him so hard that he broke his armor, pierced him through the shoulder and threw him from his horse.

With that the white knight alighted and took the white shield from him, saying,

“Knight, thou hast done a foolish act, for this shield ought not be borne save by one that shall have no equal.”

Then he said to the wounded knight’s squire, “Bear this shield to the good knight, Sir Galahad, and greet him well for me.”

“Sir,” said the squire, “what is your name?”

“Take no heed of my name,” said the white knight; “it is not for you to know, nor any earthly man.”

“Now, fair sir,” said the squire, “tell me why this shield cannot be borne without injury to the bearer.”

“Now, since you ask me,” said he, “this shield belongs to no man but Sir Galahad.”

Then he set the wounded man on his horse and brought him to the hermit’s house and laid him gently in a bed, where his wound was dressed. There he lay a long time, and hardly escaped with his life.

“Sir Galahad,” said the squire on his return, “the knight who wounded Sir Badgemagus sends you greeting, and bids you bear this shield, for through it great adventures shall befall.”

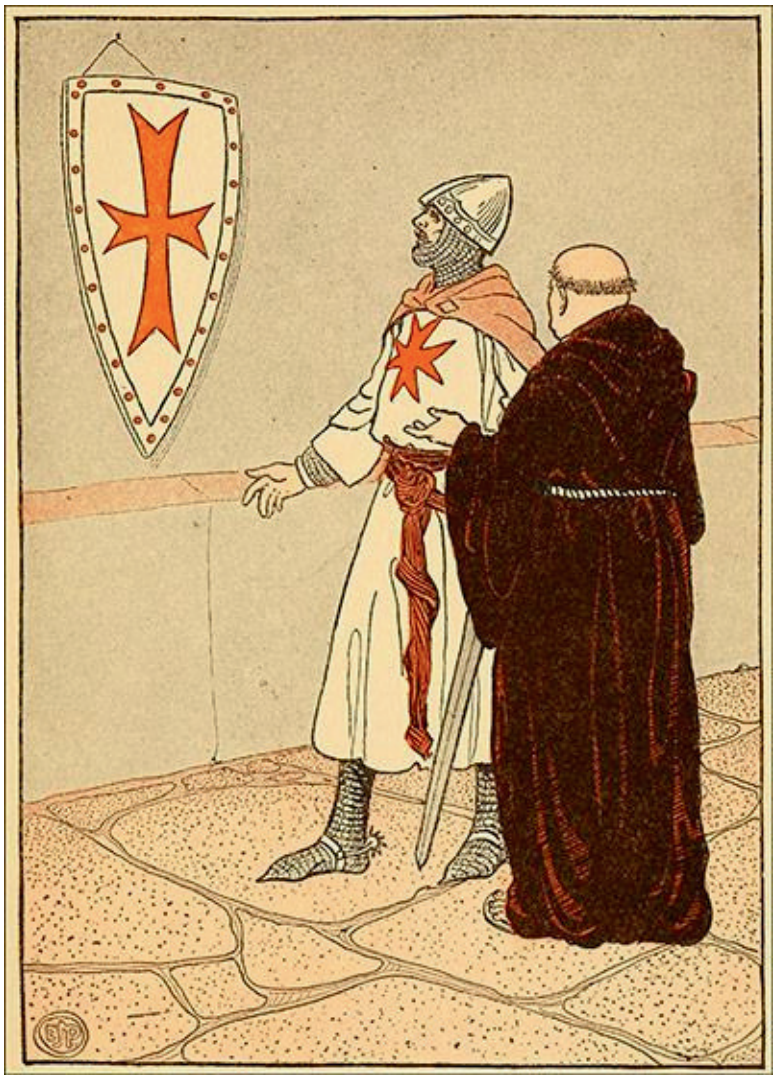
“Now blessed be God and fortune,” said Sir Galahad.

He then put on his armor, mounted his horse, hung the shield about his neck and commended them to God. Sir Uwaine said that if it pleased him he would accompany him.

“Sir,” said Sir Galahad, “that cannot be, for I must ride alone.”

After awhile he came to the hermit’s house, where he met the white knight and saluted him courteously.

“Sir,” said he, “this shield must have seen many marvelous things.”



A MONK LED HIM BEHIND THE ALTAR WHERE THE SHIELD HUNG WHITE AS SNOW, BUT IN THE CENT
WAS A RED CROSS

"Sir," said the knight, "the legend says that, thirty years after the crucifixion, Joseph of Arimathea, the gentle knight who took down our Lord from the cross, departed from Jerusalem and his people with him, and came to a city called Sarras. Now, Evelake, the king of Sarras, had a war against the Saracens. Joseph told the king that he would be defeated and slain unless he gave up his belief of the old law and believed in the new.

"He then showed him the right belief, to which he agreed with all his heart, and this white shield was made for Evelake in the name of Him who died on the cross. After he had overcome his enemies with the help of this shield, he was baptized and, for the most part, all the people of the city.

“Soon after this Joseph departed from Sarras and Evelake with him; and, so the tale goes, Joseph carried the holy vessel and Evelake the shield, till, by good fortune, they came into the land of Britain.

“In due time Joseph lay on his death-bed and Evelake was full of sorrow and said, ‘For thy love I left my country; now, since thou art going out of the world, leave me some token of remembrance.’

“‘I will do that gladly,’ said Joseph; ‘bring me the shield.’

“Now Joseph made a cross on this shield with his own blood, and said, ‘Now you may know that I love you, for when you see this cross you shall think of me, for it shall always be as clear as it is now; and no man shall bear this shield without injury, except the good knight, Sir Galahad, who shall do many marvelous things.’

“Now know, Sir Galahad, that this is the day set for you to have this shield.” When he had thus spoken the white knight vanished from his sight.

Sir Launcelot and Sir Percival Attack Sir Galahad

Thus equipped with a shield, Sir Galahad set out on his quest; and, after many adventures, found himself in a vast forest. There he saw Sir Launcelot and Sir Percival riding along, but neither knew him, for he had newly disguised himself.

Sir Launcelot, his father, at once put his spear in rest and rode at his son, Sir Galahad, who struck so hard in his own defense that he threw both horse and man. Then he drew his sword to defend himself against Sir Percival who now attacked him. He dealt him such a blow that it broke his cap of steel; and, if the sword had not swerved, Sir Percival might have been slain. As it was, he fell out of his saddle.

These encounters took place near the hermitage of a lady who was a recluse. When she saw Sir Galahad ride she said, “God be with you, the best knight of the world.”

Then she cried aloud, so that Sir Launcelot and Sir Percival might hear, “Ah! certainly, if those two knights had known thee as well as I do, they would not have dared the encounter.”

When Sir Galahad heard her say this, he was much afraid of being known; so he put spurs to his horse and rode away at a great pace. Then both knights knew that it was Sir Galahad, and quickly mounted their horses and rode after him, but he was soon out of their sight, and they turned back with heavy hearts.

“Let us make inquiry of yonder recluse,” said Sir Percival.

“Do as you please,” said Sir Launcelot; and then rode headlong, keeping no path, but as wild adventure led him, and was soon lost in the depths of the forest.

But Sir Percival went to the door of the recluse, who asked what he wished.

"Madam," he replied, "I am a knight of King Arthur's court, Sir Percival de Galis. Do you know the knight with the white shield?"

When the recluse heard his name she was exceeding glad, for she greatly loved him, as she had a right to do, for she was an aunt of his whom he had never seen.

"Sir," said she, "why would you know?"

"Truly, madam," said he, "that I may fight with him, for I am ashamed of my defeat."

"Ah! Sir Percival," said she, "I see that you have a great will to be slain as your father was through recklessness."

"Madam," said he, "it seems by your words that you know me."

"Yes," said she, "I ought to know you, for I am your aunt."

Then Sir Percival wept, when he knew who she was.

"Ah! fair nephew," said she, "when have you heard from your mother?"

"Truly," said he, "not in a great while, but I often dream of her in my sleep."

"Fair nephew," said she, "your mother is dead; for after you set out on this quest, she fell into such sorrow that she soon died."

"Now may God have mercy on her soul," said he sadly, "for I was sorely afraid of it; but we must all change our life. Now, tell me, fair aunt, was that knight he who bore the red arms at Pentecost?"

"That is he," said his aunt; "he is without equal, for he works by miracle, and cannot be overcome by the hands of any earthly man."

"Now, madam," said he, "since I know this I will never have to do with Sir Galahad except by way of kindness. Tell me how I may find him, for I would much love his company."

"Fair nephew," said she, "you must ride to the castle of Goothe, where his first cousin lives, and there you may lodge for the night. If you get no word of him there, ride straight to the castle of Carbonek where the crippled king lives and there you will hear tidings."

Sir Percival left his aunt sorrowing, and rode till evensong when he heard a clock strike. Then he came upon a castle closed in with high walls and deep ditches, and knocked

at the gate, but could get no word of Sir Galahad. There he passed the night, and in the morning departed and rode till the hour of noon.

In a valley he overtook a company of about twenty men at arms who bore a dead knight upon a hearse. When they saw Sir Percival they asked him who he was.

"A knight of King Arthur's court," he answered.

Then they cried all at once, "Kill him!"

Straightway Sir Percival struck the first to the ground and his horse upon him. Then seven of them at once ran at him and threw him and slew his horse.

Now, had not the good knight, Sir Galahad, happened by adventure in those parts, they would have killed or captured Sir Percival instantly. But when he saw so many knights attacking one man, he cried, "Spare that knight's life!"

With that he charged the twenty men at arms as fast as his horse might drive with spear in rest, and hurled the foremost horse and man to the ground. When his spear was broken he seized his sword and struck out right and left, so that it was a marvel to see. At every blow he cut one down or wounded him, so that the rest became frightened and fled into a thick forest and Sir Galahad followed hard after them.

When Sir Percival saw him chase them so, he knew it was Sir Galahad and wept with rage, for his horse was dead. He ran after him afoot, crying for him to stop while he thanked him.

But Sir Galahad rode fast after the knights he was chasing and was soon out of sight. And as fast as he could Sir Percival went after him on foot, crying, but could not overtake him.

The Adventure of the Gentlewoman, the Mysterious Ship, and the Sword of the Strange Belt

Now, says the tale, when Sir Galahad had rescued Sir Percival, he went into a vast forest, where he rode many journeys and found many adventures.

One day, after many weary hours on horseback, as night was falling, he arrived at a lonely hermitage and knocked. The good man was very glad to welcome a knight-errant and to hear his tales, and so they talked till late. Soon after they had gone to rest, there was a knocking at the door.

When the hermit asked who was there, a voice said, "I am a gentlewoman who would speak with the knight that is with you."

Then the good man awoke Sir Galahad and bade him arise and speak with the gentlewoman, who, said he, "seems to have great need of you." So Sir Galahad arose and asked her wish.

"Sir Galahad," said she, "I wish you to arm yourself, mount your horse and follow me, and I will show you within three days the highest adventure that any knight ever saw."

Sir Galahad took his arms at once, mounted his horse, commended himself to God, and bade the gentlewoman go and he would follow where she wished.

The damsel rode as fast as her horse would gallop that night and all the next day till they came within reach of the sea. Toward night they halted at a castle that was enclosed with running water and high walls. Here Sir Galahad had great welcome, for the lady of the castle was the damsel's lady.

When he was unarmed the damsel said to the lady, "Madam, shall we lodge here to-night?"

"No," said she, "but only till he has dined and slept a little."

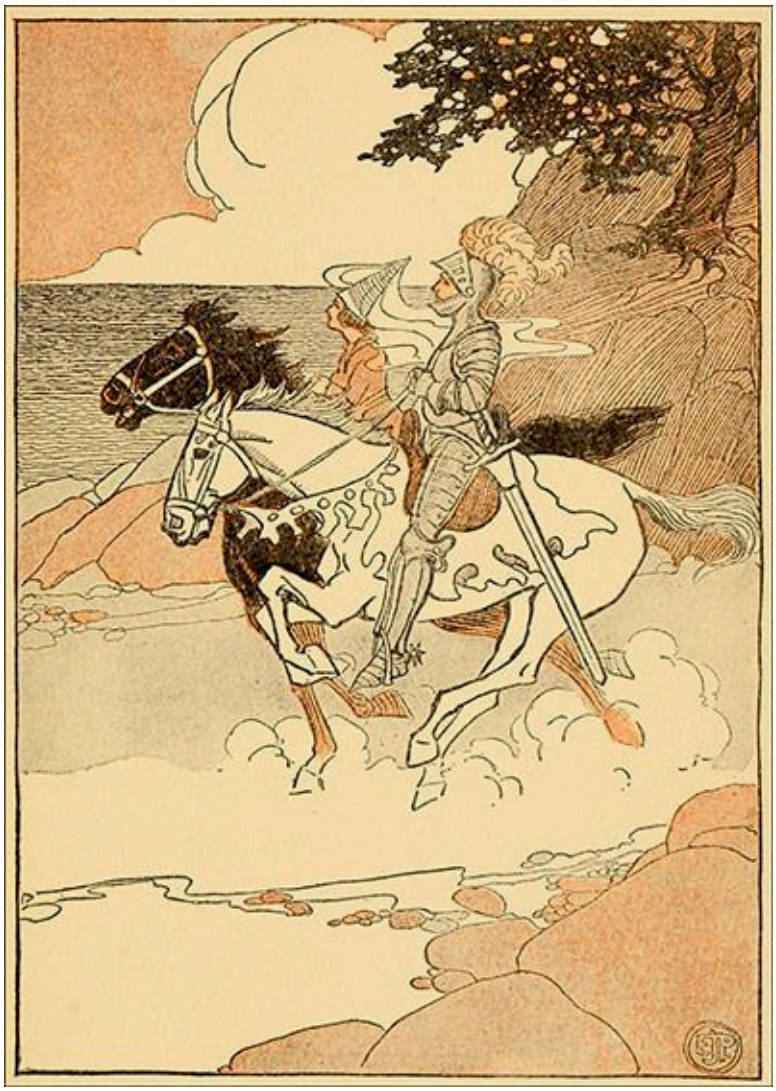
So he ate and slept till the maid called him, and then armed himself by torchlight. When the maid and he were both mounted they left the castle and rode till they reached the seaside. There they found in the darkness a ship awaiting them, and two voices cried from on shipboard, "Welcome, Sir Galahad; we have long waited for you."

When he heard these words, he asked them who they were.

"Sir," said the damsel, "Leave your horse here and I shall leave mine."

When they entered the ship he was welcomed with great joy by those whose voices he had heard, who were none other than Sir Bors and Sir Percival, and he was exceeding glad of their company. As soon as they were on board the wind arose and drove them through the sea. After a while morning dawned and Sir Galahad took off his helmet and his sword and asked his comrades where the ship was from.

"Truly," said they, "you know as well as we, but of God's grace."



THE DAMSEL RODE AS FAST AS HER HORSE WOULD GALLOP THAT NIGHT AND ALL THE NEXT DAY TI
THEY CAME IN SIGHT OF THE SEA

Then they told of their adventures since they last parted and of their great temptations.

"Truly," said Sir Galahad, "you are much indebted to God for escaping great dangers; and had it not been for this gentlewoman, I should not have come here; for I never thought to find you in this strange country."

"Ah, Sir Galahad," said Sir Bors, "if your father, Sir Launcelot, were here, it seems to me we should lack nothing."

"That may not be," said he, "except it please our Lord."

Now, neither Sir Percival nor Sir Bors knew the gentlewoman, for she was veiled. By this time the ship was far distant from the land of Britain, and, by chance, had arrived between two great rocks which were exceeding dangerous. Neither could they land, for there was a great whirlpool of the sea. After buffeting about, they escaped the danger and came into a calmer sea, and there saw another ship at anchor to which they might go in safety.

"Let us go there," said the gentlewoman, "and we shall see adventures, if our Lord wills."

When they came alongside, they found a fine ship, but no one appeared to be on board. On the stern they read these strange and dreadful words:

"Whoever enters this ship must be steadfast in his belief, for I am faith; therefore, beware, for if thou fail, I shall not help thee."

Then the gentlewoman asked, "Do you know who I am?"

"Truly," said Sir Percival, "I do not know you."

"Know well," said she, "I am your sister, the daughter of King Pellinore; therefore you are the man in the world I most like. If you are not in perfect belief and enter the ship, you will perish, for it will suffer no sin in it."

Now, when Sir Percival knew she was his sister, he was very glad and said, "Fair sister, I shall enter therein, for if I be worthless, or an untrue knight, there shall I perish."

Without further parley Sir Galahad stepped on board the strange ship, followed by the gentlewoman, Sir Bors, and Sir Percival.

The fittings were so rich and perfect that they wondered, for they had never seen the like. In the cabin in the midst of the ship there stood a beautiful bed with a coverlet of fine silk, and on it at the foot lay a great sword of marvelous beauty, which was drawn out of its scabbard half a foot and more, as if one had tried to draw it and could not.

"Here is a mystery," cried Sir Percival, "I shall attempt to handle the sword." So he tried to grasp it; but, try as he might, he could not.

"Now, by my faith," said he, "I have failed."

Sir Bors also set his hand to the sword and failed. Sir Galahad looked at it more closely, and saw on it letters as red as blood which said:

“Let him who would draw me from my scabbard see that he be bolder than other men, for whoso draweth me shall not escape injury to his body, or wounding unto death.”

“By my faith,” said Sir Galahad, “I would like to draw this sword out of its scabbard, but the penalty is so great that I shall not try it.”

“Sir,” said the gentlewoman, “know that all men are warned against drawing this sword, save you.”

As they looked closer they saw that the sword-belt was made of hempen cord of such poor account that it did not seem strong enough to bear so heavy a weight. The scabbard was of serpent’s skin and on it were letters of gold and silver which said:

“Whoever bears me as I ought to be borne should be bolder than other men; for the body of him by whose side I ought to hang shall not suffer shame while he wears this belt, and no one shall dare change this belt except a maid who is a king’s daughter.”

“Sir,” said the gentlewoman to Sir Galahad, “there was a king called Pelleas, the maimed king, who, while he was able to ride, strongly supported Christendom and the holy church. Upon a day he hunted in a wood, which bordered the sea, and at last he lost his hounds and his knights, and found this ship. When he saw the letters he entered, for he was right perfect in his life; here he found this sword and drew it out as far as you now see. With that, there entered a spear and wounded him in both his thighs. His wounds have never healed and never shall until we come to him. Thus,” said she, “was not Pelleas, your grandfather, maimed for his boldness?”

“By my faith!” said Sir Galahad.

Then, as they stood looking at the bed in wonder, Sir Percival lifted the coverlet and found a writing which told of the ship, by whom it was made and how it came there, but that does not belong to this tale.

“Now,” said Sir Galahad, “where shall we find the maid who shall make a belt strong enough to carry this sword?”

“Fair sir,” said Sir Percival’s sister, “do not fear, for I shall show you a belt fit for such a sword.”

She then opened a box and took out a belt, wrought with golden threads, and set with precious stones, and a rich buckle of gold.

“Lo! sirs,” said she, “here is a belt that ought to bear this sword; for the greatest part of it is woven of my own hair, which I loved full well when I was a woman of the world; but as soon as I knew this adventure was appointed to me, I clipped off my hair and made this belt.”

“We are truly grateful,” said Sir Bors, “for without your help, we should have endured much suffering.”

The gentlewoman then put the new belt on the sword.

“Now,” said the three knights, “what is the name of the sword and what shall we call it?”

“Truly,” said she, “the Sword of the Strange Belt.”

They then said to Sir Galahad, “We pray you to gird yourself with the sword, which hath been so long desired in the land of Britain.”

“Now let me begin,” said Sir Galahad, “to grip this sword to give you courage; but know that it belongs to me no more than it does to you.”

He then gripped it with his fingers and drew it forth, and Sir Percival’s sister girded him with the sword.

“Now I care not if I die,” said she, “for I have made thee now the worthiest knight in the world.”

“Fair damsel,” said Sir Galahad, “you have done so much, that I shall be your knight all the days of my life.”

The Gentlewoman Risks Her Life for Another

When they had achieved the adventure of the mysterious sword, they returned to their own ship, and the wind arose and drove them out to sea at a great pace. All that day and night they went before the south wind, and on the morrow came to the borders of Scotland where they were forced to land, for they were without food. Here, after leaving the ship, they were attacked by wicked knights because they were of King Arthur’s court, and had many other adventures, which are no part of this tale.

Then on a day all heard a voice which said:

“Sir Galahad, thou hast well avenged me on God’s enemies, now hasten to the maimed king that he may receive his health, for which he has waited so long.”

On the way they came to a castle which belonged to a gentlewoman who had lain for many years under a strange malady which no doctor could cure. But an old man had said, "If she were anointed with the blood of a maid who is a king's daughter, she would recover her health."

"Now," said Sir Percival's sister, when she heard this, "fair knights, I foresee that this gentlewoman will die, unless she have part of my blood."

Straightway the knights opposed her and Sir Galahad said, "Certainly, if ye bleed so much ye will die."

"Truly," said she, "if I die to heal her, I shall have great honor and soul's health, and I shall do it to-morrow;" and nothing they said could change her.

The next day, after they had heard service, Sir Percival's sister bade them bring the sick lady.

Then said she, "Who shall let my blood?"

So they brought a doctor who did as she desired; but she bled so much that the dish was full, and no one could stop it.

Then she said to the sick lady, "Madam, if I come by my death to make you well, for God's love pray for me."

With that she fell into a swoon. Sir Galahad, Sir Percival, and Sir Bors quickly lifted her up and tried to staunch her blood; but she had bled so much that she could not live.

When she awoke out of her swoon she said, "Fair brother, Sir Percival, I must die for the healing of this lady; so I require that you bury me not in this country, but as soon as I am dead take me down to the sea, put me in a boat and let me go as adventure will lead me; and as soon as you three come to the city of Sarras, there to achieve the Holy Grail, you shall find me arrived under a tower, and there bury me in the spiritual place. For there Sir Galahad shall be buried, and you also, my brother, in the same place."

When Sir Percival heard these words he promised her, weeping, and her soul departed from the body. As they knelt beside her they again heard a voice which said, "To-morrow early you three shall separate from each other till the adventure bring you to the maimed king."

The same day the sick lady was healed, but she sorrowed exceedingly for the death of the maiden.

Sir Percival wrote a letter telling how his sister had helped them in strange adventures and put it in her right hand. Then the knights carried her to the sea and laid her in a boat and covered her with silk, and the wind arose and drove the boat from the land, and they all watched it till it was lost to their sight.

Then they returned to the castle and forthwith there fell a sudden tempest of thunder, lightning and rain that shook the earth, and evensong was passed ere the tempest ceased.

On the morrow the three knights separated and each went his own way.

Sir Galahad Meets a Knight in White Armor

The story says that after Sir Launcelot rode into the forest after Sir Galahad and was lost, he escaped many perils, but at last came to the water of Morteise as the night was falling. Not knowing what to do, he lay down to sleep and await what adventure God would send him.

When he was asleep he heard a voice in a dream which said, "Launcelot, rise up, take thine armor and enter the first ship thou shalt find."

When he heard these words he rose up and set out toward the sea. By good fortune he found a ship which was without sail and oars, and he saw no one.

As soon as he was on shipboard he was filled with joy such as he had never felt before, and in this joy he lay down and slept till daylight.

When he awoke he was astonished to see there a fair bed in which lay a dead gentlewoman. As he looked he saw in her right hand Sir Percival's letter, which told who she was and what she had achieved.

There Sir Launcelot spent some days, not knowing what to do. One night as he was sitting on the shore, he heard a horseman coming that way and waited to see what would happen. The rider, who seemed to be a knight, rode to where the ship was, alighted, and went on board.

Sir Launcelot went toward him and said, "Sir, you are welcome."

The other returned his salute and asked his name, "for," said he, "my heart goes out to you."

"Truly," said Sir Launcelot, "my name is Sir Launcelot of the Lake."

"Sir," said the other, "then you are welcome, for you were the beginning of me in this world."

"Ah! Are you Sir Galahad?"

"Yes, in truth." With that Sir Galahad leaped to the shore, kneeled down and asked Sir Launcelot's blessing, and then took off his helmet and kissed him.

With great joy they told of the marvels and adventures that had happened to them since they left the court. Sir Galahad told of the high honor of Sir Percival's sister, that she was the best maid living, and that her death was a great pity. When Sir Launcelot heard how the marvelous sword was gotten, he asked to see it, and kissed the hilt and the scabbard.

"Truly," said he, "I never heard of such high and strange adventures before."

So Sir Launcelot and Sir Galahad spent many days together in the ship, and served God daily and nightly with all their power; and often the ship carried them to far islands where they met with many strange and perilous adventures.

Upon a Monday it happened that they landed at the edge of a forest which was by the sea. Standing by a cross of stone they saw a knight on horseback, armed all in white, who held by his right hand a white horse. He came to the ship, saluted the two knights and said, "Sir Galahad, you have been with your father long enough; leap upon this horse and ride where adventure shall lead in quest of the Holy Grail."

Sir Galahad turned to his father and kissed him full courteously and said, "Father, I do not know that I shall see you again till I find the Holy Grail."

"I pray you," said Sir Launcelot, "that you will pray our Father in heaven to keep me in his service."

Sir Galahad mounted his horse and then they all heard a voice that said, "Think to do well, for the one shall never see the other till the dreadful day of doom."

"Now, my son, Sir Galahad," said Sir Launcelot, "since we shall never see each other again, I pray the high Father of heaven to preserve both you and me."

"Sir," said Sir Galahad, "no prayer avails so much as yours." So saying, he rode into the forest and his father saw him no more.

The knight in white armor then vanished as he came, and Sir Launcelot returned to the ship, and the wind arose and drove him many days across the sea to a distant land. Soon after that he left the ship, which kept on its lonely journey, until at last it arrived at the city of Sarras with its fair burden.

Now Sir Launcelot began to long for the realm of Britain which he had not seen for a year and more. So, commending himself to God, he rode through many countries and came at last to Camelot.

Here he found King Arthur and Queen Guinevere; but many of the knights of the Round Table were missing, for already more than half of them had been slain. However, Sir Gawain, Sir Ector, and Sir Lionel had returned, and many others who had failed in their quest of the Holy Grail.

All the court was exceedingly glad to see Sir Launcelot, who told of his adventures since he had departed; and also those of Sir Galahad, Sir Percival, and Sir Bors, which he knew by the letter of the dead gentlewoman, and from Sir Galahad himself.

"Now, would God," said the king, "that all three were here."

"That cannot be," said Sir Launcelot, "for two of them you shall never see, but one of them shall come again."

Sir Galahad Achieves His Quest, and Bears the Holy Grail Across the Sea

Now after Sir Galahad bade his father farewell and entered the forest, he rode many journeys in vain. At last he found his way out of the forest and rode five days toward the castle of the maimed king; and ever Sir Percival followed after till he overtook him, and they went on in company. At a crossroads they met Sir Bors who was riding alone, and so to their great joy the three knights were together again.

"In more than a year and half," said Sir Bors, "I have not slept ten times in a bed, only in wild forests and mountains; but God was always with me."

Thus they rode a long time till they came to the castle of Carbonek, where lived Pelleas, the maimed king, who was the grandfather of Sir Galahad.

When they entered the castle hall, a bed was brought in whereon lay the good old man they had come so far to see. King Pelleas was very happy, for he knew that the quest of the Holy Grail was about to be achieved.

"Sir Galahad," said he, lifting up his head, "you are welcome, for I have long prayed for your coming, but now I trust that my suffering shall be allayed."

Eliazar, King Pelleas' son, then brought the broken sword with which Joseph was wounded in the thigh after he came to Britain. Sir Bors took the two pieces and tried to force them together again, but he could not. Then Sir Percival tried, but he had no more power than Sir Bors.

"Now it is your turn," said they to Sir Galahad, "for if an earthly man can achieve it, you can."

Sir Galahad then took the pieces and set them together, and the sword seemed as if it had just been forged and never broken. When they recovered from their astonishment they gave the sword to Sir Bors, for he was a good knight and a worthy man.

A little before evening a strange thing happened; the sword became wondrously heated so that no one could handle it, and a voice was heard which said, "They that ought not to sit at the table of our Lord arise, for now shall true knights be fed."

So all went out save King Pelleas and his son and a maid who was his niece, and the three knights; and a table of silver was before them with the holy vessel, covered with a cloth of silk.

With that they saw nine knights all armed come in at the hall door, who took off their armor and said to Sir Galahad, "Sir, we have ridden hard to be with you at this table."

"You are welcome," said he, "but whence come you?"

Three of them said they were from Gaul, three from Ireland, and three from Denmark.

Upon that a voice said, "Let those among you who are not in quest of the Holy Grail depart." So King Pelleas and his son and niece departed.

As the knights sat waiting, it seemed to them that there appeared a man from heaven, before the table on which the Holy Grail was, and they saw letters in his forehead which said:

"This is Joseph, the first bishop of Christendom, whom our Lord rescued in the city of Sarras."

With him were angels who bore a spear which bled marvelously.

Then the knights wondered, for Joseph had died more than three hundred years before.

"Oh, knights," said he, "wonder not, for at one time I was an earthly man. Now shall ye have such food as never knights tasted."

When he had said this, he and the angels vanished, and they sat there in great dread. Then they looked and saw, as it were, another man enter who said:

"My knights and my servants who are come out of this earthly life, ye shall now see a part of my secrets and my hidden things." Then he took the holy vessel and proffered it to Sir Galahad, who kneeled down and partook; and so after him all the knights.

"Galahad," said he, "dost thou know what I hold in my hands?"

"Nay," said Sir Galahad, "unless ye tell me."

"This," said he, "is the holy vessel in which I ate the Last Supper, but thou hast not seen it openly as thou shalt see it in the city of Sarras; therefore, thou must go hence, and bear this vessel with thee. This night it shall depart from the realm of Britain to be seen no more, for it is not honored as it ought to be by the people of this land, who are turned to evil

living. Therefore, go to-morrow down to the sea where you shall find a ship ready; and with you take the sword with the strange belt, and Sir Bors and Sir Percival. Also I will that ye take the blood of the spear and anoint the maimed king, and he shall have his health."

Then he gave them his blessing and vanished away. Sir Galahad went at once to the spear which lay on the table and touched the blood with his fingers and came to his grandfather, the maimed king, and anointed him. Immediately he stood upon his feet a whole man, and gave thanks for his healing.

That same night, about midnight, they heard a voice that said, "Go ye hence as I bade you."

"Lord, we thank thee," said they; "now may we prove ourselves worthy."

In all haste they took their armor, ready to depart. Now, the three knights of Gaul were great gentlemen, and Sir Galahad said to them: "If you come to King Arthur's court I pray you salute my father, Sir Launcelot, and all the company of the Round Table," and they promised to do so.

Sir Galahad, Sir Percival, and Sir Bors then departed and rode three days, till they came to the seashore and found their ship. When they went on board they saw the table of silver and the Holy Grail covered with a cloth of red silk, and were exceeding glad to have them in their keeping.

Now, on the voyage Sir Galahad spent a long time in prayer, asking that he might pass out of this world; he prayed so earnestly that at last a voice said to him, "Galahad, thou shalt have thy request."

Sir Percival heard this and asked him why he prayed for such things.

"That shall I tell you," said he. "The other day when we saw part of our adventures of the Holy Grail, I was filled with such joy as I supposed no earthly man could feel; therefore, I know well that when my body is dead, my soul shall have the great joy of heaven."

Then he lay down and slept a great while, and when he awoke he saw before him the city of Sarras; and as they were about to land they saw the ship in which Sir Percival had put his sister.

"Truly," said Sir Percival, "well has my sister kept her word."

They first took out of their ship the table of silver and the holy vessel, and Sir Percival and Sir Bors went before, and Sir Galahad behind. At the city gate they saw a crooked old man. Then Sir Galahad called him and bade him help bear the heavy table.

"Truly," said the old man, "for ten years I have not been able to walk without crutches."

"Care not," said Sir Galahad. "Rise up and show thy good will."

On getting up he found himself whole as he ever was; so he ran and took hold with Sir Galahad. At once the report spread that a cripple had been cured by a strange knight that had entered the city.

The three knights then returned to the water and brought Sir Percival's sister into the spiritual place, and buried her richly as a king's daughter ought to be.

When the king of the city, who was called Estorause, saw the three comrades he asked them who they were and what they brought upon the table of silver, and they told him the truth of the Holy Grail. Now the king was a tyrant of heathen birth, and he took them and put them in prison in a deep hole.

At the year's end King Estorause fell sick and knew that he would die; then he sent for the three knights and asked pardon for what he had done, and they forgave him freely, and so he died.

When the king was dead all the city was disheartened and knew not who might be their king. As they were in council there came a voice that bade them choose the youngest of the three knights. So they made Sir Galahad king with the assent of all the people of the city.

His first act was to have made a chest of gold and precious stones to cover the holy vessel, and every morning the three comrades came to the palace where it was kept and said their devotions.

The Passing of Sir Galahad, The End of Sir Percival, and the Return of Sir Bors to Camelot

Now, after Sir Galahad had been king a year, the three friends rose early, as was their custom, and came to the palace and saw the holy vessel and a man kneeling there, who had about him a great company of angels.

He called Sir Galahad and said, "Come forth, good and faithful servant, and thou shalt see what thou hast much desired to see."

Then Sir Galahad began to tremble greatly, for he knew his time had come.

"Now," said the good man, "knowest thou who I am?"

"Nay," said Sir Galahad.

"I am Joseph of Arimathea, whom our Lord sent here to bear thee fellowship; for thou art like me more than any other in two things. One is, thou hast seen the Holy Grail; and the other is, thou hast been a blameless knight as I am."

When he had said these words, Sir Galahad went to Sir Percival and Sir Bors and kissed them and commended them to God, and said, "Salute me to my father, Sir Launcelot, as soon as ye see him and bid him remember this unstable world."

He then kneeled before the table and prayed, and suddenly his soul departed and a great company of angels bore his soul up to heaven. And his two friends saw a hand take the holy vessel and bear it up to heaven. Since then no man has ever been so bold as to say that he had seen the Holy Grail.

When Sir Percival and Sir Bors saw Sir Galahad dead, they sorrowed as much as ever did two men, and if they had not been good men they might easily have fallen into despair; and the people of the city sorrowed with them.

As soon as Sir Galahad was buried, Sir Percival retired to a hermitage outside the city and Sir Bors was always with him. Thus Sir Percival lived a year and two months, and then passed out of this world, and Sir Bors buried him by his sister and Sir Galahad in the spiritual place.

Now, when Sir Bors saw that he was alone in a far country, as far away as Babylon, he took his armor and departed from Sarras and entered a ship, and so at last came to the realm of Britain and to Camelot where King Arthur was. On his return there was great rejoicing at the court, for they thought that he was dead, he had been so long out of the country.

Then King Arthur sent for the best clerks to make a chronicle of the adventures of the good knights. Sir Bors told of Sir Percival and his sister, and of Sir Galahad and the Holy Grail. Sir Launcelot told what he had seen; and all the tales were written in great books and put in the armory at Salisbury.

Sir Bors said to Sir Launcelot, "Sir Galahad, your son, saluted you by me, and after you, King Arthur and all the court, and so did Sir Percival; for I buried them with mine own hands in the far city of Sarras. Also, Sir Launcelot, Sir Galahad bids you remember this unstable world, as ye promised when ye were together more than half a year."

"That is true," said Sir Launcelot; "now I trust to God his prayer shall avail me."

Then Sir Launcelot put his arms about Sir Bors and said, "Gentle cousin, you are welcome to me, and all that ever I may do for you and yours, you shall find me ready at all times, while I have life, and this I promise you faithfully, and never to fail you: and know well, gentle cousin, Sir Bors, that you and I will never separate while our lives shall last."

"Sir," said he, "I will as ye will."

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"Sir Galahad was not the only knight who found the Holy Grail," added the Story Lady after a pause.

"But I thought from the story," said Mary Frances, "that Sir Galahad and his two comrades were the only ones who were permitted to find it."

"No, there were others," said the Story Lady. "Your own American poet, James Russell Lowell, tells of another, Sir Launfal, who found the Grail in a place he had never thought to look."

The Story People listened eagerly, for they liked the tale of Sir Galahad so much that they were ready for more; so the Story Lady told the tale of a fourth knight who succeeded.

XXVI

HOW SIR LAUNFAL ACHIEVED THE HOLY GRAIL

ONCE upon a time there was a young knight, Sir Launfal, who had read of the success of Sir Galahad, and of the failure of many of the knights of the Round Table. This made him very eager to try his fortune; so he vowed that some day he too would set out in quest of the Holy Grail.

Now, Sir Launfal lived in a cold gray castle in the North Country, whose gates were never opened save to knights or ladies of high degree, who were as proud and haughty as himself.

One beautiful June day, Sir Launfal was in the happy mood which often comes to people after the passing of a cold, bleak winter; a day when it seems easy for the grass to be green, the sky to be blue, and the heart to be brave.

On this lovely day Sir Launfal remembered his vow and called his squire, and said, "Bring me my best armor and my golden spurs and get my horse ready, for to-morrow I shall set out over land and sea in quest of the Holy Grail."

When the squire brought his shining armor, the knight put it on, and said to himself, "I will never sleep in a bed nor lay my head on a soft pillow till I have performed my vow."

With that he lay down in the tall grasses by the brook, his golden spurs by his side, to think and plan what he would do. Slowly his eyelids closed; slowly sleep came upon him and he dreamed, and this was his dream.

It is summer. The crows flap their wings and fly by twos and threes overhead in the deep blue sky. The cattle stand in the shallow brook, and the water runs along with a sweet gurgling music. The little birds sing in the branches of the trees as if trying to burst their throats telling of the joy of living. Even the leaves seem to sing on the trees, the earth is so beautiful and gay. But the castle stands encircled by its high walls and deep ditch full of water, proud, haughty and forbidding, untouched by the loveliness round about it.

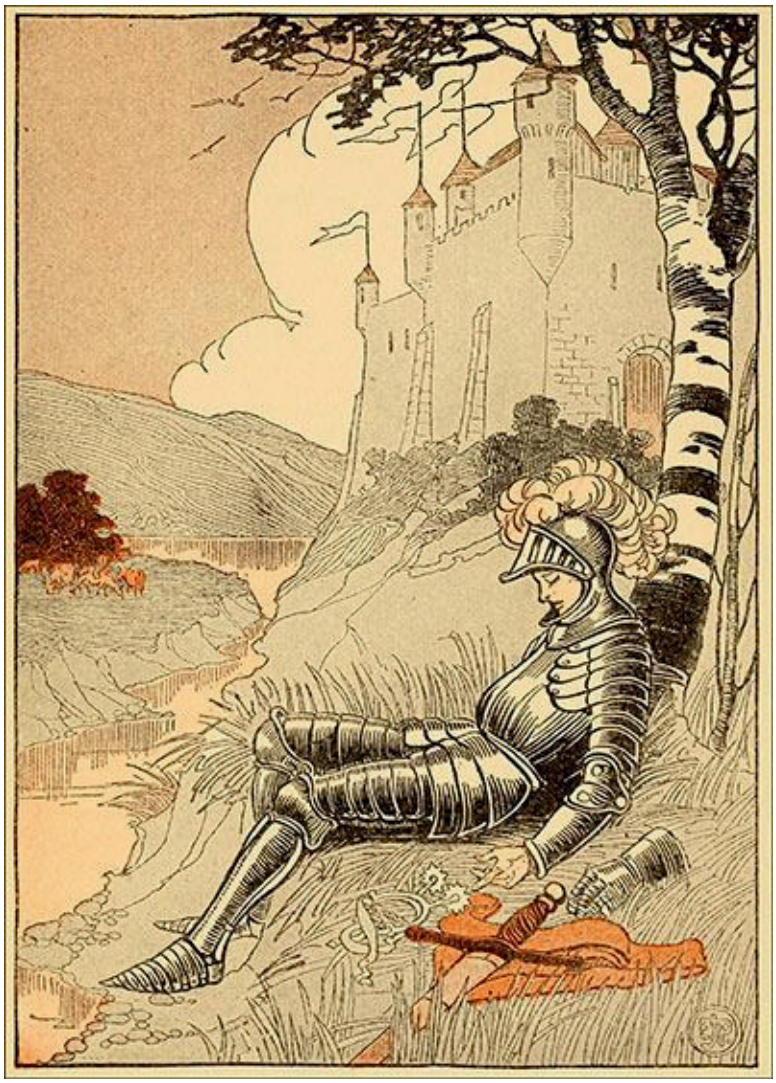
The drawbridge drops over the water with a surly clang, and through the dark arch across the bridge springs a charger, bearing Sir Launfal, dressed in his gilded armor which gleams brightly in the sun. He is setting forth wherever adventure may lead him in quest of the Holy Grail.

Just as he passes out, he is aware of a beggar who sits crouching by the dark gate. The beggar is a leper; he holds out his hands and begs an alms. The sight of so much misery fills the young knight with loathing, but he scornfully tosses him a piece of gold and rides on.

Strange to say, the beggar leaves the gold on the ground and says, "Better turn away empty from the rich man's door, and take the poor man's crust and his blessing, than such a worthless gift as that."

Now the scene changes; it is winter. There are no leaves on the bushes and trees. The bare boughs rattle shudderingly as the winds sweep through them. The brook is frozen over and the cattle are huddled in their stalls. A single crow sits high up in a tree-top in the wintry sunlight, and the cold snow covers the ground.

At the castle gate stands a bent old man, worn out and frail. The wind rustles through his wiry gray hair, and blows through his ragged clothing. He peers eagerly through the window slits at the joyous scene within, for it is Christmas time, and then turns away.



SLOWLY SLEEP CAME UPON HIM AND HE DREAMED

The bent old man is Sir Launfal. After many weary years he has returned to his castle disappointed, for he has not found the Holy Grail, and another heir who thinks him long dead rules in his place. He sinks down by the gate and his mind wanders. He sees again the scenes of the desert, the camels as they pass over the hot sands, the vain search of the caravan for water, and then the slender necklace of grass about the little spring as it leaps and laughs in the shade.

Suddenly he hears a voice. “For Christ’s sweet sake I beg an alms.”

Sir Launfal is startled and looks around him. There at his side he sees the leper cowering, more wretched, more miserable, more loathsome than before. But he does not look at him in scorn this time. Instead, he says, “I will share with you the little that I have, for in giving to you I shall be giving to Him who has given so much for me.”

So he divides his crust of coarse bread and gives half to the beggar, and he goes to the brook, breaks open the ice, and gives him a drink of water from his wooden bowl.

Then suddenly a light shines round about the place, and the leper no longer crouches at his side, but stands a glorified figure who says:

"Lo, it is I, be not afraid!

In many climes, without avail,

Thou hast spent thy life for the Holy Grail;

Behold, it is here—this cup which thou

Did'st fill at the streamlet for me but now;

This crust is my body broken for thee,

This water His blood that died on the tree.

* * * * * *

Not what we give, but what we share,

For the gift without the giver is bare;

Who gives himself with his alms feeds three,

Himself, his hungering neighbor, and me."

Sir Launfal awoke, sat up and rubbed his eyes, and looked about him. Here were the tall grasses, the brook, the cattle, just as he had left them when he went to sleep and dreamed. He was not in rags and tatters, but was a young knight clad in gleaming armor, his spurs at his feet. It was not winter, but a beautiful June day, with birds flying about, singing songs of gladness, and cattle browsing in the meadows.

Sir Launfal quickly arose and made his way into the great hall of the castle where every one met him with surprise.

"Why, sir knight," said his sister, "we thought by now you would be far on your journey in quest of the Holy Grail."

"I have found it," cried Sir Launfal, "here at my castle gate!"

Then he laid aside his arms and said to his squire, “Hang these idle weapons upon the walls and let the spiders weave their webs about them. Whoever would find the Holy Grail must wear another sort of armor—the armor of unselfish kindness.”

Now, the castle gates stand wide open and those in need are as welcome there as the birds in the elm-tree’s branches. No matter what the weather outside, it is summer in the castle the year round, for hearts are happy in giving and sharing the great blessings there bestowed; and the happiest of all is the good knight himself.

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“So you see, Sir Launfal found the Holy Grail, and he did something even better,” said the Story Lady as she finished the tale; “he showed others how to find it.”

THE STORIES OF THE FOURTH DAY

MUSIC BEWITCHED.—ANN CATCHES A THIEF.—JOHN AND MARGARET PATON AMONG SAVAGES.—THE STRANGE GUEST.—ROBERT OF SICILY.—THE MAN WITHOUT A COUNTRY.—YOUR FLAG AND MY FLAG.

THE STORIES OF THE FOURTH DAY

XXVII

MUSIC BEWITCHED

WHEN all the Story People were assembled, the Story King in his place, Mary Frances in the blue velvet chair beside the Story Queen, the Ready Writer with pen upraised, the Story Lady began:

"To-day we have six short stories. The first is about a school boy named Bob, and how he conquered his worst enemies."

* * * * * *

Bob's Three Foes

Thud! thud! thud! "Hit him in the eye!" "Knock the pipe out of his mouth!" "Ha! ha! there goes his nose! I hit him that time!"

These dreadful sounds seemed to say that some barbarous piece of cruelty was going on; but the victim was only a snow-man, which the boys of Strappington School had set up in their playground. Truth to tell, the snow-man did not like it much, but boys cannot be expected to understand the feelings of a snow-man, so he bore it very patiently, and when one snowball came in each eye, and a third in his mouth, he never spoke a word or flinched a muscle.

But how was the schoolmaster to know that it was only a snow-man? And what was more natural than that he should peep over the playground wall to see what was going on? And how was little Ralph Ruddy to know that the schoolmaster was there? And how was he to know that the snowball which was meant for the snow-man's pipe would land itself on the schoolmaster's nose? Oh, the horror that seized upon the school at that dire event! and the dead silence that reigned in that playground! For those were the good old times of long ago when anything that went wrong was set right with a birch rod. Little Ralph Ruddy

knew only too well what was coming when the angry schoolmaster ordered him into the schoolroom.

The snow-man, of course, was left in the playground all alone. He saw the boys troop indoors and heard some angry words and some cries of pain and saw poor little Ralph thrust into the cold playground, and heard the door slam behind him, and stared without once turning his head or blinking his eyes, while the little fellow sat on the snowy doorstep, with a knuckle screwed into each eye; and indeed the good snow-man himself felt half inclined to cry, only the tears froze inside before they got out of his eyes. So he couldn't.

When the bell rang at four o'clock, the boys came out, and among them Bob Hardy, the son of a poor farm laborer.

"A cruel shame I call it," muttered Bob, "to whip a little chap like that, and then shut him out in the cold. I told him Ralph Ruddy never meant to do it, and then he caned me as well. A real brute I call him, and I'll pay him out, too. I declare I'll break his bedroom windows this very night, and let him try how he likes the winter wind!"

And Bob meant to do it, too. He climbed out of the cottage window when all were asleep, and made his way down to the schoolhouse by moonlight, with a pocketfull of stones, and climbed the wall of the playground, and stood there all ready to open fire, when a voice startled him, a sort of shivering whisper.

"Better not, Bob! Better wait a bit!" said the voice.

Bob dropped the stone and looked about, but there was no one near except the snow-man shining weirdly in the pale moonlight. However, the words, whoever spoke them, set Bob a thinking, and instead of breaking the schoolmaster's windows, he went home again and got into bed.

That was in January, and when January was done February came, as happens in most years. February brought good fortune—at least Bob's mother said so, for she got a job as charwoman at the squire's, for which she was well paid.

It did not turn out so very well, though, after all, for the butler said she stole a silver spoon, and told the squire so; and if the butler could have proved what he said, the squire would have sent her to prison; only he could not, so she got off, and Bob's mother declared that she had no doubt the butler took the spoon himself.

"All right," said Bob to himself, "I'll try the strength of my new oaken stick across that butler's back."

And he meant it, too, for that very evening he shouldered his cudgel and tramped away to the big house. And when he got there the door stood wide open, so in he walked.

Now there hung in the hall the portrait of a queer old lady in a stiff frill and a long waist, and an old-fashioned hoop petticoat; and when Bob entered the house what should this old lady do but shake her head at him! To be sure there was only a flickering lamp in the entry, and Bob thought at first it must have been the dim light and his own fancy, so he went striding through the hall with his cudgel in his hand.

"Better not, Bob!" said the old lady. "Better wait a bit!"

"Why, they won't let me do anything!" grumbled Bob; but he went home without thrashing the butler, all the same.

That was in February, you know. Well, when February was done, March came, and with it came greater ill-fortune than ever; for Bob's father was driving his master's horse and cart to market, when, what should jump out of the ditch but old Nanny Jones's donkey, an ugly beast at the best of times, and enough to frighten any horse; but what must the brute do on this occasion but set up a terrific braying, which sent Farmer Thornycroft's new horse nearly out of his wits, so that he backed the cart and all that was in it—including Bob's father—into the ditch. A pretty sight they looked there, for the horse was sitting where the driver ought to be, and Bob's father was seated, much against his wish, in a large basket full of eggs, with his legs sticking out one side and his head the other.

Of course Farmer Thornycroft did not like to lose his eggs—who would?—for even the most obliging hens cannot be persuaded to lay an extra number in order to make up for those that are broken; but for all that Farmer Thornycroft had no right to lay all the blame on Bob's father, and stop two shillings out of his week's wage. So Bob's father protested, and that made Farmer Thornycroft angry, and then, since fire kindles fire, Bob's father grew angry too, and called the farmer a cruel brute; so the farmer dismissed him, and gave him no wages at all.

We can hardly be surprised that when Bob heard of all this he felt a trifle out of sorts, but the desire for vengeance which he felt could hardly be justified. He went pelting over the fields, and all the way he went he muttered to himself:

"A cruel shame I call it, but I'll pay him out; I mean to let his sheep out of the pen, and then I will just go and tell him that I've done it."

Now, the field just before you come to Farmer Thornycroft's sheep-pen was sown with spring wheat, and they had put up a scarecrow there to frighten the birds away. The scarecrow was very much down in the world—his coat had no buttons and his hat had no brim, and his trousers had only a leg and a half—his well-to-do relations in the tailors' windows would not have cared to meet him in the street at all. But even the ragged and unfortunate have their feelings, and the scarecrow was truly sorry to see Bob scouring across the field in such a temper; so just as Bob passed him, he flapped out at him with one sleeve, and the boy turned sharply round to see who it was.

"Only a scarecrow," said he, "blown about by the wind," and went on his way. But as he went, strange to say, he heard, or thought he heard, a voice call after him, "Better not, Bob! Better wait a bit!"

So Bob went home again and never let the sheep astray after all, but he thought it very hard that he might not punish either the schoolmaster, or the butler, or the farmer.

Father Pan's Revenge

Now the folk that hide behind the shadows thought well of Bob for his self-restraint, and they determined that they would work for him and make all straight again; so when Bob went down to the river side next day, and took out his knife to cut some reeds for "whistle-pipes," Father Pan breathed upon the reeds and enchanted them.

"What a breeze!" exclaimed Bob; but he knew nothing at all of what had in reality happened.

Bob finished his pan-pipes, and trudged along and whistled on them to his heart's content. When he got to the village he was surprised to see a little girl begin to dance to his tune, and then another little girl, and then another. Bob was so astonished that he left off playing and stood looking at them, open-mouthed, with wonder; but so soon as ever he left off playing, the little girls ceased to dance; and as soon as they had recovered their breath they began to beg him not to play again, for the whistle-pipes, they were sure, must be bewitched.

"Ho! ho!" cried Bob, "here's a pretty game; I'll just give the schoolmaster a turn. Come, that will not do him any harm, at any rate!"

Strange to say, at that very moment the schoolmaster came along the street.

"Toot! toot! toot! tweedle, tweedle, toot!" went the pan-pipes, and away went the schoolmaster's legs, cutting such capers as the world never looked upon before. Gayly trudged Bob along the street, and gayly danced the schoolmaster. The people looked out of their windows and laughed, and the poor schoolmaster begged Bob to leave off playing.

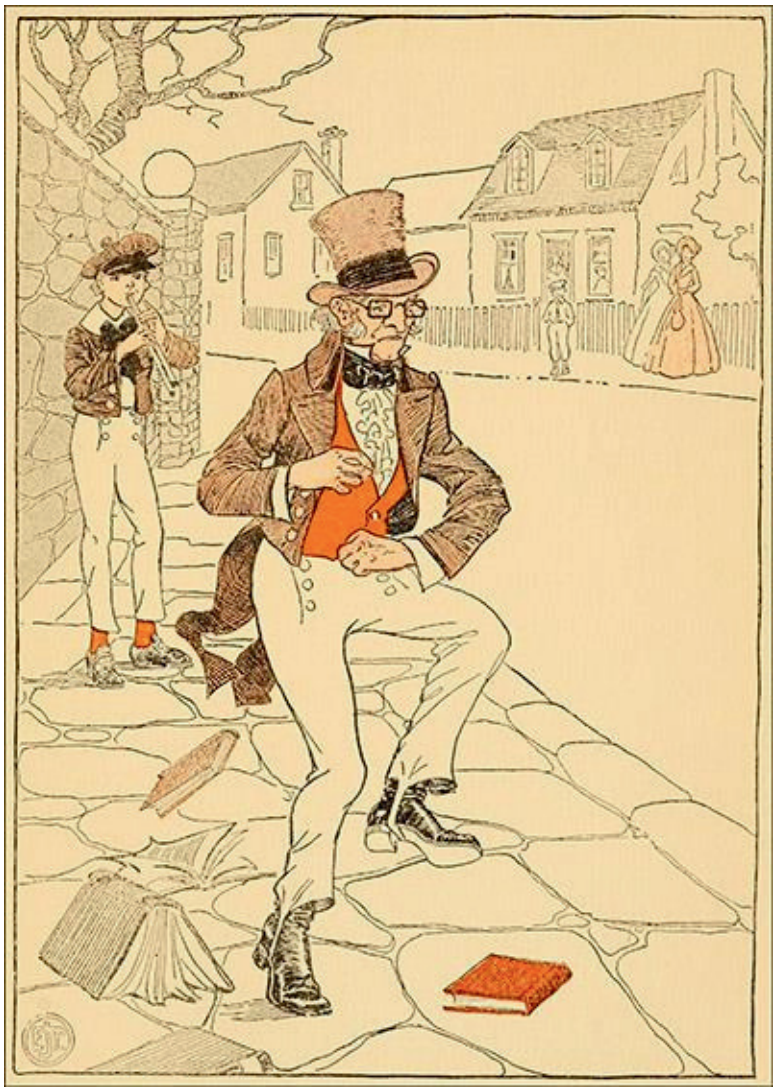
"No, no," answered Bob; "I saw you make poor little Ralph Ruddy dance with pain. It is your turn now."

Just then the squire's butler came down the street. Of course he was much puzzled to see the schoolmaster dancing to the sound of a boy's whistle, but he was presently more surprised to find himself doing the very same thing. He tried with all his might to retain his stately gait; but it was all of no use, his legs flew up in spite of himself, and away he went behind the schoolmaster, following Bob all through the village.

The best sight was still to come; for the tyrannical Farmer Thornycroft was just then walking home from market in a great heat, with a big sample of corn in each of his side-

pockets, and turning suddenly round a corner, went right into the middle of the strange procession and caught the infection in a moment. Up flew his great fat legs, and away he went, pitching and tossing, and jumping and twirling, and jigging up and down like an elephant in a fit.

How the people laughed, to be sure, standing in their doorways and viewing this odd trio! It was good for them that they did not come too near, or they would have been seized with the fit as well. The schoolmaster was nearly fainting, the butler was in despair, and the perspiration poured down the farmer's face; but that mattered not to Bob; he had promised himself to take them for a dance all round the village, and he did it; and, at length, when he had completed the tour, he stopped for just one minute, and asked the schoolmaster whether he would beg Ralph Ruddy's pardon, and the schoolmaster said he would if only Bob would leave off playing. Then he asked the farmer if he would take his father back and pay him his wages, and the farmer said he would; and finally he asked the butler if he would give up the spoon that he had stolen, and confess to the squire that Bob's mother had nothing to do with it, but the butler said, "Oh, no, indeed!"



AWAY WENT THE SCHOOLMASTER'S LEGS, CUTTING SUCH CAPERS AS THE WORLD NEVER LOOKED U
BEFORE

So Bob began to play again, and they all began to dance again, till at last the schoolmaster and the farmer both punched the butler until he promised; and then Bob left off playing. The three poor men went home in a terrible plight; and the schoolmaster begged little Ralph's pardon, and the butler cleared the stain from Bob's mother's character, and Bob's father went back to work, and Farmer Thornycroft soon afterwards took Bob on too, and he made the best farm-boy that ever lived.

* * * * * *

The Story Lady rested a minute while the Story People were laughing and talking about what they had heard. As she began again, there was instant silence.

“The next story,” she said, “is that of a brave girl who lived in the work-a-day world.”

XXVIII

ANN CATCHES A THIEF

AS a rule the office in which Ann Carstairs was employed did not close until six o'clock, but at five-thirty on the December afternoon of this story Ann found herself alone.

At four, the heads of the firm left for the day; and the billing clerk and the stenographer, taking advantage of the absence of authority, helped themselves to an extra half hour.

"We have a little shopping to do," the billing clerk explained as they passed Ann's desk.

Before they reached the stair door, the inside salesman closed his desk with a snap, and seized his hat and coat.

"Wait a minute, girls," he called; "I'll take you down to Broadway in my machine." As he followed them he said to Ann, "Good night, Miss Carstairs, don't stay late!"

A few minutes after they had gone, Mr. Bradford, the bookkeeper, closed the safe and twirled the nickel knob gayly; "I'm off, too," he announced. "I'm going to leave the vault for you to close to-night, Miss Ann."

He shrugged himself into his overcoat and departed stiffly. He had worked hard over his books that afternoon, and his legs and arms were aching in unison with his head. He came back for a moment to turn off some of the big lights.

"No use wasting electricity," he explained. "No one will be in this evening, and a little girl like you can't use all this light."

A minute later Ann heard the street door at the foot of the stairs close with a bang, and she was left all alone in the big office.

She was not sorry to be alone. The day had been hard, and her nerves had been near the breaking point all the afternoon. The switchboard was Ann's special charge, but she also took care of the odds and ends of copy work and dictation for her busy associates. Odds and ends have a curious way of accumulating and Ann seldom had a spare moment.

"I'm just dead tired," she declared aloud, raising her arms above her head in a vain effort to relieve their ache. "I'm always snowed under with work, yet no one seems to think I have anything to do. It's just: 'Miss Carstairs, will you copy that for me?' 'I'll give you a letter now, Miss Carstairs, and you can run it off in your spare time.' Spare time! Did any one ever see me with a moment to spare? They don't think I amount to a row of pins, anyway. I'd just like to show them; I'd like to let Mr. Ross see that I do amount to something."

Mr. Ross was the senior partner of the big manufacturing plant, and eighteen-year-old Ann admired him immensely. He was so calm, so quiet, and yet so forceful; a splendid business man, but one whose family's wants and wishes were cared for before all else. Ann knew he must be an ideal father, for he possessed all the qualities that Ann's own father had lacked.

Mr. Carstairs had been far from an ideal parent and had ended his selfish, careless life just as Ann was preparing to enter college. Ann and her mother had bravely gathered together what money remained, and Ann started off to a business school instead.

For three months she worked feverishly night and day, and at the end of that time, when their finances were in a precarious condition, she left the school to enter the manufacturing firm of Ross and Hayward. She had been there for nearly two years now, years of worry and careful planning to make the slender salary cover growing needs.

"We have almost proved that the necessities of life are unnecessary, so nearly have we come to getting along on next to nothing," she had laughingly told her mother only the evening before.

But though she joked about it, the situation was becoming serious, and Ann had reached the place where she felt that she must steel herself to the point of asking for more wages.

"Do people always have to ask for an increase?" she wondered. "Everybody here treats me as if I were a child, except when it comes to giving me work. That's a different matter."

Ann did not as a rule complain about the amount of work she had to do. Instead, she was rather proud of being able to accomplish so much in a single day. To-night, however, she was tired and all out of sorts. She felt, too, that her looks were all against her. Curly hair and freckles, added to a diminutive figure, gave her a decidedly childlike appearance.

“I wish,” she declared to herself, “I wish I were tall and had straight hair, and wrinkles around my mouth. What chance has anyone to advance when she is short and freckled? I just must make them sit up and take notice!”

She glanced around her with a proprietary look as she spoke. Her desk and switchboard were in the outer office near the head of the short flight of stairs leading from the street door, and commanded a view of the entrance door and the stairway leading to the upper floors. At the extreme end of the room was the entrance to the stock room, and beside it the great iron door leading to the vault where the business records were kept. In the dark corner by the vault door stood two tall piles of sales books. Since the bookkeeper had turned off the extra lights, the big office was lighted only by the globe above Ann’s head. The heavy presses and machinery in the factory, running at full speed, shook the building, and their roar and clatter sounded unusually loud now that the office was quiet.

The switchboard was never very busy after half-past five, and Ann leaned back in her chair and closed her eyes for a moment. She opened them almost immediately with a start, suddenly aware of another presence in the big office. The new janitor, a scraggly feather duster in his hand, stood by her desk.

“Did you want something?” Ann asked sharply.

She did not approve of the new janitor; his hair was too long and shaggy, his chin too stubbly, and his bushy eyebrows shaded eyelids that drooped. His appearance was in accord with his shiftless way of dusting and sweeping, Ann thought with disfavor. Her voice was decidedly sharp as she asked again, “Did you want something?”

“I wanted to see the cashier,” the man answered. His drooping eyelids gave a peculiar, leering expression to his face that filled Ann with repulsion. Then she braced herself; no matter how afraid she was, he must not know it.

“He has gone for the day. Come back in the morning,” she said, turning to her typewriter to cut the conversation short. The man hesitated for a moment, but her preoccupied air chilled him and Ann soon heard him walk away.

At that moment a tall young woman came hurrying down the stairs from the upper floor.

“I declare!” she cried, looking about the darkened office. “Everybody has gone home! And Mr. Bradford has locked the safe! Now will you tell me, Miss Carstairs, what I am going to do with all this money?”

She waved a green cardboard box in the air as she spoke, her voice rising higher and higher in her agitation.

“I have collected eight hundred dollars on those Liberty Bond payments, and here Mr. Bradford has locked the safe and gone home. I’m going to the country to-night and I can’t take all this money with me.”

“Sh! Miss Benson!” Ann warned, glancing quickly at the swing door that had not yet ceased swaying after the departing janitor. “Don’t tell any one. Can’t you put it in the vault? Mr. Bradford left it for me to lock to-night.”

“But,” Miss Benson objected, “something may happen to it and I am responsible. I can’t take it with me, though. I’ll have to put it in there, I guess.”

“See, Miss Carstairs,” she called a moment later from the depths of the vault, “I’m putting it beside the stamp box.”

With Miss Benson’s departure the big office suddenly seemed doubly large, and dim and empty. Ann shivered slightly, appalled by the fact that she was alone with eight hundred dollars in cash in the open vault. The factory machinery made such a din that none of the employees could hear if she called for help. What would she do if the janitor had overheard Miss Benson and should make up his mind to steal the money? She glanced sharply at the swinging door. It was quiet now.

She reassured herself. “I’m as nervous as Miss Benson. I’ll just shut that vault now, though, and have it over with. It is almost six o’clock anyway.”

At that moment a call came in on the telephone, the strident whir startling the girl with its suddenness.

“Ross and Hayward,” she answered mechanically into the receiver.

“Miss Carstairs,”—it was Mr. Ross speaking—“I left a couple of Liberty Bonds in my desk. Please tell Bradford to put them into the safe.”

“Mr. Bradford has gone for the day, Mr. Ross,” she answered, “but he has left the vault for me to close; I’ll put them in.”

“All right. Put them in the stamp box; I guess they’ll be all right there. Good night!”

Ann pulled out the plug and rose from her desk. Her rubber-soled shoes made no noise as she crossed the room. She found the bonds face down on Mr. Ross’s desk, and as she picked them up she could not fail to notice the denominations. She stared at them.

“Two thousand dollars!” she whispered awestruck. “If only they were mine!”

As she started to place them in the stamp box, its shabbiness caught her eye. She hesitated, then laid the bonds down.

"I'll get a new box for the stamps," she decided, snapping off the light as she left the vault.

Ann knew just where to find the particular box that she wanted and did not stop to turn on the light as she entered the stockroom. She was in the act of reaching up for the box, when the door stealthily opened. She shrank back against the shelves as the new janitor came in. He stopped for a moment and glanced around, then a minute later Ann heard the snap of the electric button as the light in the vault was turned on. She gasped in dismay. The bonds and the Liberty Loan money were all there in plain sight! For a brief moment the girl was paralyzed with fright. The janitor was after the money! She rushed forward. As she paused by the open doorway of the vault she had a momentary glimpse of the janitor with the green box in one hand, and heard the familiar crackly paper of the bonds as he hurriedly thrust them into his pocket. In a panic she caught the huge iron door and slammed it shut, hurriedly throwing the big bolt in place.

"I've got him," she gasped exultantly; but the words had not left her lips before she was knocked from her feet by a sudden blow on her shoulder. As she fell, another stunning blow came upon her head.

A minute later, so it seemed to the girl, she opened her eyes to find Mr. Ross and his daughter, Margaret, bending over her.

"She's coming to, now," she could faintly hear Mr. Ross say. "Bathe her head some more."

Then he added jokingly, "Well, now, Miss Ann, you certainly gave us a start. What were you trying to do?"

Ann's head ached agonizingly. She lifted her hand to her forehead, and felt it gingerly. A lump as large as a walnut was there just above the temple. She became aware, now that the mist was fading from her eyes and the ringing from her ears, that the factory was quiet. All the noise of machinery had ceased.

"What time is it?" she asked; and then, without waiting for an answer, "Where did you come from?"

"It is after eight. We were driving by on our way to see a friend on the East Side, and I thought I would drop in and see if you had remembered to lock the safe." Mr. Ross laughed. "Fortunate for you that I doubted your ability."

Ann raised her head and looked about her; then she dropped it heavily back on the improvised pillow Miss Ross had tucked under her head.

"It was that old sales book that knocked me down. It must have been on the edge of the pile and tipped over when I slammed the door." She felt the bump on her head again. "I suppose I hit the wrapping desk when I fell."

“It wouldn’t take much to knock out a little thing like you,” Mr. Ross laughed.

Ann opened her eyes again, a thought flashed through her mind, and she sat bolt upright on the floor.

“Mr. Ross,” she said, “if I can prove to you that I was big enough to save you two thousand dollars, would you think me big enough to be given an increase in salary?”

“I surely would, Miss Carstairs!” Mr. Ross answered, becoming suddenly grave.

Ann’s voice shook with excitement.

“Your bonds are safe in the vault, Mr. Ross, together with eight hundred dollars that Miss Benson collected on Liberty Loan payments—and the new janitor!”

“You’re a brave girl,” said Mr. Ross, helping her to her feet. “The increase is yours; you have certainly earned it.”

* * * * * *

“She was, indeed, a brave girl,” said the Story King, as the Story Lady paused; “and deserved all her good fortune.”

“The next,” went on the Story Lady, smiling, “is the story of a young man and a young woman whose only ambition in life was to help others.”

XXIX

JOHN AND MARGARET PATON AMONG SAVAGES

THE tropical island of Aniwa drowsed in the afternoon sunshine. Long, lazy swells rolling in from the Pacific broke on the outlying reefs, overflowed into the turquoise bay, and gently lapped the stretch of sandy beach. The softest of breezes stirred the palm trees and rustled the banana thickets.

Before the door of a low, thatched hut, nestling under a clump of date-palms, stood a fair-haired young woman anxiously watching a canoe which was making a perilous passage through the surf to the shelter of the bay. When at last it slid into smooth water she breathed a sigh of relief and went slowly down the hill toward the shore.

The craft nosed stealthily up to the beach, where a stalwart, grave-faced white man sprang out; then the boat, propelled by the muscular arms of two kinky-headed blacks, slipped away and vanished around a little promontory.

"I'm glad you're safe home, John," the young woman cried, as the big man came swiftly toward her. "Is all well?"

"Very far from that, Margaret," the newcomer answered, as he reached her side. "I've found a great deal of unrest throughout the island."

"Because of the drought?"

"Yes," he replied, and stood looking down upon her thoughtfully.

She came nearer and slipped her arm through his.

"I can see that you are anxious, John," she said softly. "Do you fear an uprising?"

BEFORE THE DOOR OF A LOW, THATCHED HUT STOOD A FAIR-HAIRED YOUNG WOMAN

"Margaret," he exclaimed, as they turned and began to climb the hill to the hut, "I should not have brought you here!"

"Oh!" she cried. "More than anything else I desired the privilege of helping you in your work. Do you mean that I have failed? That I have proved a burden rather than a help?"

"You know it is not that," he replied quickly. "You have been wonderful, dear. But I should not have allowed you to leave old Scotland for the hardships and perils of these heathen isles."

"It has not been easy," she acknowledged; "but I have never once regretted coming."

"I thought I was doing right to bring you," he went on; "but now—now—"

“You feel,” she interposed, “that we are in real danger?”

“We shall be if the natives rise,” he replied. “I think you should know the truth, dear.”

Her blue eyes darkened, but there was no fear in them.

“But the people have come to feel we are their friends,” she protested. “Some of them love us. Surely they will not harm us.”

By this time they had reached the hut. He put her gently into a camp-chair before the door, and flung himself upon the white sand at her feet.

“A trading-ship touched on the other side of the island yesterday,” he told her.

“And paid for five hundred pounds’ worth of sandalwood with a barrel of rum, I suppose,” she commented.

“They were a little more generous this time,” he replied grimly. “They left several barrels.”

“No wonder then,” she said, “that the people are mad to-day.”

“They also left,” he continued, “in the mind of the old chief the impression that we missionaries are responsible for the drought.”

“Oh, too bad!” she exclaimed softly.

“Yes,” he agreed. “Old Namakei informed me just now that if another moon passes without rain the island will have no more of our God or of us.”

“What did you answer?” she asked.

“I told him,” and he smiled, “that I would dig in the earth and reveal a place where God’s rain is buried. He scoffed at first, but finally agreed to come with his warriors and help with the digging.”

“But, John,” she queried, “will you really be able to dig a well on this island?”

“Of course, I can’t be certain,” he answered; “but I’ve been studying the soil, and it seems probable. Anyway, it’s our one chance to appease the old chief’s ire and continue our work.”

John Gibson Paton had come out to the New Hebrides some years before, and settled on the cannibal island of Tanna.

He had begun at once to teach the people and had succeeded in greatly improving their condition, when a trading vessel had brought measles to the island. An epidemic followed, and the natives died like flies.

They were so bitterly angry against those who had brought the plague that they became suspicious of all white men, even the missionary who had always helped them, and he was finally obliged to flee for his life.

With great difficulty he escaped to a passing ship bound for Australia. From Australia, he went to his homeland, Scotland.

He had a wonderfully happy time on this visit among his friends and relatives, for he was married to the pretty Scotch lassie whom he had learned to love.

He felt that life would be very hard for her on the island of Tanna, and he decided to go, instead, to Aniwa, where the natives were less fierce and more intelligent. Besides, they had asked that a missionary be sent to them.

They were very glad when he came bringing his pretty wife, and they tried to learn all he told them.

All went well until the traders who came to the South Seas for sandalwood and cocoanuts and the rich tropical fruits, discovered that the natives were becoming more intelligent, and could not be cheated or swindled so easily since the missionaries were teaching them.

So the traders made up their minds to try to turn the blacks against Doctor Paton and his wife, and his native helpers.

They had not been able to do much until the time of the long drought, told about at the beginning of this story. You see, they depended almost entirely upon rain for fresh water to drink.

Never before in the memory of living men had the islands been so long without rain. The people were terrified and ready for any outbreak.

But the young missionaries, sitting silently under the palms, realized that the traders might so excite the natives with their talk, and with the rum, that they might become murderers and revert to cannibalism.

“Where will you dig the well, John?” Margaret asked at length.

“On the slope over there.” He nodded toward the opposite hill. “I shall begin work tomorrow. Chief Namakei comes an hour after sunrise.”

“If you succeed in reaching fresh water, shall we be safe?”

“Yes, and if not, I hate to think of what may happen.”

“But anyway,” she declared, “I’m sure you will find God’s rain, John.”

Weary days and nights followed; days when the doctor and his band of native helpers dug from dawn to dark in the sandy soil; nights when the young white people, too anxious to sleep, sat under their palm trees and watched while the moon sank into the sea, and the volcano of Tann, “the lighthouse of the Pacific,” flung its blazing banners high against the heavens.

Two weeks passed and the diggers found no water. Then one day the continued drought left the old chief’s favorite water-hole quite dry. On the same day the side of the new well caved in.

The two troubles coming together turned the interest of Namakei to suspicion. When the digging began again he forbade his men to take part in the work, and, though he still watched the other toilers, his beady eyes had the look of a hawk’s just ready to pounce upon its prey.

The moon was full before the cave-in was repaired. The next morning the two remaining helpers did not report for duty, and old Namakei told the doctor that they would not come back.

“They are my prisoners,” he laughed. “If Missi Paton wish help in finding the buried rain, let his God give it.”

“His God will give it,” the missionary replied, calmly.

And alone Doctor Paton went on with his undertaking.

Two days, three days, passed, and still no water. Namakei assumed a more threatening attitude.

“The moon wanes!” he warned the missionary.

And then one morning when the doctor went down into the well he saw something gleaming at his feet. He bent down, gazing with eager eyes. It was water!

“But will it be fresh?” he asked himself, with fast-beating heart. On so tiny an island the sea water might easily penetrate the soil.

Very slowly he dipped his finger into the now fast-rising water and lifted it to his lips. And then suddenly he sank down in the dampness and wept like a child. The water was fresh and pure and sweet, God’s rain indeed.

By noonday the well was filled with the life-giving water, and from every part of the island the natives gathered to behold the miracle of the rain which had come up from the

earth instead of down from the sky, and to do honor to Missi Paton who had given it to them.

And when he assured them that it would always be there so long as the island remained in the sea, and that drought would nevermore bring suffering and distress among them, they kissed his hands in gratitude.

Never again did the evil words of the traders against their beloved Missi have any weight with the natives of Aniwa, and never again did they turn away from the Christian religion and the Christian God; and, if you should visit the island to-day, you would be shown by the proud people the well where John Gibson Paton found by faith and prayer and labor the buried blessing so many years ago.

* * * * * *

Again the Story People clapped their hands as the story ended, for they love to hear of nothing better than a brave and an unselfish deed.

"That is a good story," said Mary Frances.

"Yes," said the Story King; "the stories of those who risk their lives for others are the best of all our stories."

"Yes," agreed the Story Queen; "they are the best of all."

"Now," said the Story Lady, "we come to our fourth story."

XXX

THE STRANGE GUEST

ON the summit of one of the heights of a wild country district along the Rhine, there stood many years ago an old castle. In this castle lived a beautiful maiden with her father and two elderly aunts.

Her father was a jolly old nobleman, very fond of his beer, and very fond of hearing himself talk, too. He enjoyed his own jokes better than anyone else, perhaps.

Even so, his dearest possession was his beautiful daughter, his only child. He loved her as the apple of his eye, and wished to give her all happiness.

She had little chance of being lonely, for there were always a large number of poor relatives visiting the nobleman, and indeed they made these visits so long that they sometimes stayed for years.

She often wondered, however, who might be living in the castle on the heights across the valley. She could just see the outlines of the walls and towers on clear days from the balcony outside her bedroom window.

"Father," she said one day, "could we not ride over to that castle some time? I'm forever dreaming stories about those who live within it."

A heavy cloud settled over her father's countenance.

"Never let me hear you make mention of it again, my daughter!" he thundered.

And of course she said no more, but she spoke about it to one of her aunts that evening.

"Dear aunt, why was my father vexed when I mentioned that castle this morning?" she asked, pointing out of her window.

"Hush, my child," replied her aunt. "There is a feud between the two families."

“A feud?” questioned the maiden. “A feud? Why, we do not even know them! How can there be a feud?”

“It dates back to the time of our great-great-grandfathers,” her aunt told her, “and no loyal member of this family would ever have anything to do with a member of that family. Never mention the matter again!” Then suddenly changing the subject, “Did you finish your embroidery stint for to-day? How far have you worked? Let me see.”

The maiden blushed, arose, and brought a large sheet of unfinished tapestry to her aunt, which she unfolded before her.

Her aunt put on her spectacles to examine the work.

“Wait!” she exclaimed. “I’ll call my sister.”

The other aunt was in the doorway, however, and joined her in examining the work.

“I see a missed stitch here!” she commented.

“Ah, yes, and a loose end there!” added the other. “It is growing dark. No knowing how many flaws we would find by daylight. To-morrow you will do better, I hope.”

“I will try,” promised the niece.

And so the maiden grew. By the time she was eighteen, she could not only embroider tapestries, and play a dozen airs on her guitar and harp, but could write a short note, with not more than ten misspelled words, and could sign her own full name without missing a letter.

These accomplishments, in that day, were considered quite a finished education for a young lady.

On her eighteenth birthday the castle was in bustling excitement because there was to be an affair of utmost importance. And this affair was none other than a great family gathering to receive the intended bridegroom of the maiden.

Her father had promised her in marriage to the son of an old nobleman, a friend of his who lived in a distant province.

The parents had arranged all the details, and the young people were engaged to be married without even seeing each other. The time was appointed for the wedding, which was to take place at the home of the maiden on her eighteenth birthday.

The bridegroom had already set out on his journey and was expected to arrive at any moment.

The castle was in a tumult. The fair bride had been decked out with uncommon care. Her aunts had quarreled about every article of her dress, and while they were quarreling, she had made up her own mind about each article she would wear. The result was that she looked as lovely as a dream. The soft lustre of her eyes, the rose-petal hue of her cheeks, the quick rise and fall of her bosom, showed the excitement in her heart.

Meanwhile her aunts gave her all kinds of directions as to her behavior.

"When you first see him, my dear niece," advised one aunt, "lower your eyes, as becomes a modest young lady."

"Yes," added the other aunt, "and when you courtesy, catch your skirts, so," and she made a deep old-fashioned bow.

The old baron was no less busy with preparations than the others. Having, in fact, nothing to do but wait, he worried everybody else about every detail. He wandered from the top to the bottom of the castle, begging everybody to be diligent, and filling everybody with anxiety. He was naturally a bustling little man, and he buzzed about in every hall and chamber like a blue-bottle fly on a warm summer's day.

In the meantime, things had been gathered together for the making of a great feast. The forests had rung with the sound of the huntsman's horn. The kitchen was crowded with good cheer, and the castle was a model of ancient hospitality.

The long tables had been spread with the handsomest trenchers and dishes within the castle. The last finishing touches had been added to the wedding gown, the bride waited trembling with anxious expectation. Everything was ready to receive the distinguished guest—but the guest did not come.

Hour after hour rolled by. The sun began to set, and the baron mounted for the eleventh time to the high tower, and strained his eyes in hope of catching sight of the count and his attendants.

Once he thought he saw them, for there were a number of men seen advancing slowly on horseback, but when they had nearly reached the foot of the mountain, they suddenly struck off in a different direction.

The last rays of the sun departed. The bats began to flit by in the twilight. The road grew dimmer and dimmer to sight, and nothing seemed to be stirring in it except, now and then, a peasant lagging homeward from his day's labor.

While the old castle was in this nervous state, very different things were happening to the bridegroom.

The young count was riding along on horseback in a jog-trot fashion toward the bride he had never seen.

“There is no haste necessary,” he said to his attendants; “we will be there all in good time. Let us enjoy the scenery.”

At the inn where he stopped for refreshment, he met another young nobleman with whom he had been good friends several years before while both were in the army.

“And which way do you travel?” asked the count’s friend.

“We go through the East pass, and upward through the mountain road,” he replied.

“How fortunate!” exclaimed his friend. “I am going in the same direction.”

So they agreed to travel together, and soon set off, the count leaving word for his servants to follow and overtake him later.

“Now, tell what has happened in your life since we last met,” said the count’s friend as their horses stepped out abreast. “Has your heart been touched by the beauty of any maiden?”

ONCE HE THOUGHT HE SAW THEM

Then the count told him about his coming wedding with a young lady he had never seen, but who was said to be very lovely.

In this way they entered one of the loneliest and most thickly wooded passes in the mountains.

All this happened in the days when bands of robbers lived in woods, and when ghosts were said to haunt old castles.

As the count turned to speak to his companion, suddenly from out the woods there sprang a small band of robbers who immediately attacked them.

They made a brave fight, but were nearly overcome by numbers when the count's retinue of servants came riding up. The robbers fled at sight of them, but not until they had given the count a dreadful wound.

He was carried back to the nearest town through which he had so joyfully ridden such a short while before. A priest, who was also quite a doctor, was brought to his bedside, but everyone knew that the poor young count's moments were few to live in this world.

He motioned his friend near, and whispered between gasping breaths, "I—beg—you—to—go—to—the—castle—of—my—betrothed—and—tell—why—I—did—not—keep—my—appointment."

Then gathering strength, he added in a stronger voice, "Unless this is done, I shall not sleep quietly in my grave!"

He spoke so solemnly that his friend gave his promise without hesitating. This seemed to soothe him, and he closed his eyes as if in sleep, but he soon began to talk wildly, and call for his horse, saying he must hasten to the home of his bride, and thinking he was leaping into the saddle, he suddenly drew his last breath.

His friend was deeply grieved. His heart was heavy within him. He scarcely knew how to keep his promise, for he was the son of the nobleman whose castle the maiden had been forbidden to mention; and, because of the feud between the two families, he hated all the more to be the bearer of such bad news. Still he thought that he would like to see the lovely girl, and he felt that he must try to carry out the promise he had made to his dying friend. So he made arrangements for the poor count's burial in the cathedral near the graves of his noble ancestors, and set out on his journey.

It is now high time that we should return to the castle, where everybody was hungrily awaiting the guest.

Night closed in, but still no guest arrived. The baron descended from the high tower in despair.

"It is so dark that I can see nothing now," he said. "There is no use in watching longer."

The banquet had been postponed from hour to hour. The cooks in the kitchen were desperate. The meats were already overdone, and every one was beginning to look as though it were a time of famine.

"We cannot delay longer," the baron finally said. "I fear we must proceed with the feast without our guest."

All were seated at the table and on the point of commencing, when the sound of a horn from outside the gate gave notice that a stranger was approaching.

Another long blast filled the old courts of the castle with its echoes, and was answered by the warden from the walls.

The baron hastened to receive his future son-in-law.

The drawbridge had been let down, and the stranger was before the gate.

He was a tall, gallant cavalier, mounted on a beautiful black steed. His face was pale. He had a gleaming eye, and yet wore an air of sadness.

The baron was a little embarrassed to think that he should come in so simple a way without a retinue of friends and servants. He thought that the young count did not show proper appreciation of the honor of marrying his daughter, but he comforted himself by thinking, "He has been so anxious to see his bride that he has hurried off without waiting for attendants."

"I am sorry," began the stranger, "to break in upon you at such an hour——"

"Oh, pray, do not worry," interrupted the baron, "it is as nothing," and he continued with a world of compliment and greeting. For, to tell the truth, the baron was very proud of his ability to make pretty speeches.

He kept on talking so fast that the stranger was unable to put a word in edgewise, and by the time he paused, they had reached the inner court of the castle.

The stranger was again about to speak when he was once more interrupted by a group of the baron's relatives leading forth the blushing bride.

The Wedding Feast

The stranger gazed on her for a moment as one entranced. It seemed as if his whole soul beamed forth in the gaze, and rested upon her beauty.

One of the maiden aunts whispered something in her ear. She made an effort to speak. Her moist blue eyes were timidly raised, gave a shy glance at the stranger, and were cast again to the ground.

Her words died away, but there was a sweet smile playing about her lips, and a soft dimpling of the cheek showed that she was pleased to meet so charming a person.

The late hour at which the guest had arrived left no time for talk. The stranger attempted again to tell his sad news, but the baron would not listen, and immediately led the way to the untasted banquet.

The feast was served in the great hall of the castle. Around the walls hung the portraits of the bride's ancestors, and the horns and tusks of animals they had killed in the hunt. Armor and spears, and torn banners hung next to jaws of wolves and tusks of boars, and spears and battle axes. A large pair of antlers hung just over the head of the youthful bridegroom.

The stranger took but little notice of the company or of the entertainment. He scarcely tasted the banquet, but seemed absorbed in admiring the bride. He talked with her in a low tone that could not be overheard. The bride's color came and went, and she listened to him with deep attention. Now and then she made some reply, but she was very quiet most of the time, and when his glance was turned she looked at him with much pleasure.

"They have fallen in love at first sight," whispered one aunt.

"I felt that it would be so," said the other.

The feast went on merrily, or at least noisily, for the guests were all blessed with large appetites.

The baron told his longest and best stories. If he told anything marvelous, his hearers were lost in astonishment. If he told anything funny, they laughed just loud and long enough to please him greatly.

Amidst all this frolic, the stranger seemed lost in thought. His only conversation was with the bride, and seemed to grow more and more earnest and mysterious. Clouds began to steal over her fair face, and the guests noticed that she trembled.

Their gayety was chilled by such actions. The song and laughter grew less and less frequent. There were pauses in the conversation.

Dismal stories were told by several people. The baron nearly frightened some of the ladies into hysterics with the history of the ghost horseman that carried away the fair young woman, Lenora.

The bridegroom listened to this tale with great attention. He kept his eye fixed on the baron, and, as the story drew to a close, began gradually to rise from his seat, growing taller and taller, until, to the baron's eye, he seemed almost to tower into a giant.

The moment the tale was finished, he heaved a deep sigh, and took a solemn farewell of the company. They were all in amazement. The baron was perfectly thunderstruck.

"What! going to leave the castle at midnight? Why, everything is ready for your reception; a room is ready for you if you wish to retire."

The stranger shook his head mournfully and said: "I must lay my head in a different place to-night."

Then waving his farewell to the company, he stalked slowly out of the hall.

The maiden aunts seemed turned to stone. The bride hung her head, and a tear stole down her cheek.

The baron followed the stranger to the great court of the castle, where the black horse stood pawing the earth and snorting with impatience.

When they reached the portal whose deep, high archway was dimly lighted by a lantern, the stranger paused and spoke to the baron in a hollow tone of voice.

"Now that we are alone," said he, "I will tell you my reason for leaving. I have an engagement in——"

"Why," asked the baron, "cannot you send some one in your place?"

"I must keep this engagement myself—I must go myself——"

"Ay," said the baron, "but not until to-morrow—to-morrow you shall take your bride there."

"No! No!" replied the stranger with greater solemnity. "My engagement is with no bride. The grave awaits me! I must go back where I came from!"

He sprang upon his black charger, dashed over the drawbridge, and the sound of the clatter of his horse's hoofs was lost in the whistling of the night's blast.

The baron watched him until out of sight, then muttered, "He must have been a ghost!"

He returned to the hall in great bewilderment, and related what had just passed. Two ladies fainted; others sickened with the idea of having banqueted with a spectre.

A TALL FIGURE STOOD AMONG THE SHADOWS OF THE TREES

The company tried to guess whose ghost it might have been. Some talked of wood-demons and others of mountain sprites, but all was dim uncertainty and mystery.

The next morning, however, put an end to guessing, for word came of the death of the young count on his way to the castle, and every one felt sure that the stranger of the night before was indeed his spectre.

You can imagine how dreadful the baron felt. He shut himself up in his rooms. His guests stayed on, for they could not think of going when he was in such trouble, and then, too, the remnants of the feast were to be eaten and drunk!

But the poor bride was most to be pitied. To have lost a promised husband before she was acquainted with him! And such a husband! Everybody wept for her.

The Midnight Music

On the night of the second day after, she retired to her room with one of her aunts who insisted upon sleeping with her.

The aunt was one of the best tellers of ghost stories in all the land, and in telling one of her longest, fell asleep in the midst of it.

The room was in a distant corner of the castle, and overlooked a small garden. The niece lay gazing at the beams of the rising moon as they shone on the trembling leaves of an aspen tree before the latticed window.

The castle clock had just tolled midnight when a soft strain of music stole up from the garden.

She rose hastily from her bed and stepped lightly to the window.

A tall figure stood among the shadows of the trees. As it raised its head, a beam of moonlight fell on its face. In a moment she knew him—her promised bridegroom!

A loud shriek at that moment burst upon her ear, and her aunt, who had been awakened by the music and had followed her to the window, fell into her arms.

When she looked again, the spectre had disappeared.

Of the two, the aunt required the more soothing. She was beside herself with terror.

As for the young lady, she did not feel frightened. There was something, even in the spectre of her lover, very charming.

The aunt declared she would never sleep in that room again. The niece for once was determined to have her own way, and declared she would not sleep in any other room. The consequence was that she had to sleep there alone.

She begged her aunt to promise not to tell about this moonlight visitor, for she said it was the only comfort she had in her great disappointment, and the good old lady promised. How long she would have kept her promise is uncertain, for she dearly loved to talk about mysterious happenings.

She did keep it to herself for a whole week; and then, suddenly, she did not need to keep it longer. For word was brought to the breakfast table that the young lady was not to be found.

Her room was empty. Her bed had not been slept in. The window was open! The bird had flown!

Nearly every one was struck speechless, when the aunt who had slept with her, suddenly regained her speech, and wringing her hands, shrieked out, “The goblin! the goblin! She’s carried away by the goblin!”

In a few words, she told of the dreadful scene in the garden; and all concluded that the spectre must have carried off his bride. Two of the servants said they had heard the clatter of horse’s hoofs down the mountain-side about midnight, and had no doubt it was the black charger of the spectre.

The poor baron was inconsolable. What sorrow to have his only child, his daughter, carried off by a goblin! How terrible to have, perhaps, goblin grandchildren! As usual, he was completely bewildered, and all the castle was in an uproar.

The men were ordered to take horses, and hunt in every road and path and by-way. The baron himself had just drawn on his jack-boots and girded on his sword, when he glanced out the window, and paused because of what he saw.

A lady was approaching the castle on horseback. Beside her, mounted on a black charger, was a cavalier.

She galloped up to the gate, sprang from the horse, and running into the castle, fell at the baron’s feet.

It was his lost daughter, and her companion—the spectre bridegroom.

The baron was astonished. He looked at his daughter, then at the spectre, and almost doubted his eyes.

The spectre was wonderfully improved in appearance. His dress was splendid, and set off his noble figure. He was no longer pale and sad. His face was flushed with the joy of youth.

The mystery was soon cleared up. The cavalier (for you must have known all along he was no goblin) told the whole story—how he had met his young friend; how they had traveled together; how the young nobleman had met his death. He said that the sight of the beautiful young lady had made him forget everything except the desire to be near her. At first, when the baron would not listen to his explanation, he thought it would do no harm to accept the situation as it was.

If the baron’s family had not had a feud with his own family, he would have explained everything after the banquet, but he feared that, under the circumstances, he might never see the young lady again. When the baron had told how the fair Lenora had been carried off by the goblin, the idea of being a goblin himself came to him. And he said that he did not feel exactly right about doing this, but his friends had told him to remember the old saying that “everything was fair in love.”

The baron pardoned the young couple on the spot. The festival at the castle was continued.

Only the aunt was disappointed. She who had told so many stories about true ghosts, was embarrassed to find the only ghost which she had actually seen should turn out to be a real live person, but she was so happy at having her niece back again that her embarrassment was as nothing.

But the niece was perfectly happy in having found him a real living person, and—since they lived happily ever after—here the story ends.

* * * * * *

"And another begins," added the Story Lady, after a slight pause.

At the Story King's nod of approval, she proceeded.

XXXI

ROBERT OF SICILY

THERE is an old legend of a proud king, named Robert of Sicily. This legend tells of the greatest event of Robert's life; and the poet, Longfellow, has written a beautiful poem about it, which every one should read. This is the story:

Robert, King of Sicily, was a very proud monarch and a very selfish one. He spent most of his time enjoying himself, and gave little heed to the wants of his people.

On St. John's eve he attended vesper service with a great retinue of knights and lords and pages. He was dressed most magnificently, and proudly sat while the choir chanted some strange Latin words.

The king did not understand Latin, and turning to a learned clerk nearby, he said, "What do those words mean?"

The clerk answered, "They mean,

'He has put down the mighty from their seat,

And has exalted them of low degree!'"

The king laughed scornfully, and said, "It is well that such words are sung in Latin, for there is no power on earth that can push me from my throne."

Then he leaned back yawning, and fell asleep.

When he awoke it was already night; the church was empty and all in darkness.

The king was angry at finding himself alone. He groped his way toward the great doors, but found them locked.

Then he thought of the windows, but they were high above his reach. Then he became frightened and cried aloud. He listened, but all that he heard was the resounding echoes of his cries, as they rang, again and again, through the high, vaulted ceiling of the church.

He knocked with his fists against the doors, and swore awful oaths against every one in his court. He became so angry that he tore his magnificent robes into shreds. He had long since lost his hat and cloak.

At length the sexton of the church heard the noise, and he thought that perhaps thieves were breaking into the church, so he lit his lantern and went to the door. When he could make himself heard, he asked, "Who is there?"

The king, half choked with rage, answered fiercely, "Open, 'tis I, the king. Are you afraid?"

The frightened sexton muttered to himself: "It is some drunken beggar, or some one crazy;" and, turning the great key, he flung open the doors.

A man in torn garments, without hat or cloak, rushed past him. He neither looked at him nor spoke, but, leaping into the darkness, vanished almost like a spectre from his sight.

Bareheaded, breathless, covered with dust and cobwebs, Robert strode on through the darkness, and came to the palace gates. He rushed through the courtyard, thrusting aside the guards and pages, and hurried up the broad stairs. From hall to hall he passed in breathless speed, although he heard voices and cries to stop him, until he came to the banquet room, which was blazing with light.

There he stood motionless, speechless, amazed; for on the throne there sat another king, wearing his crown, his robes, and even his signet ring. He looked at first glance exactly like King Robert. He was of the same height and the same form and features; but there was a gracious beauty about him which Robert lacked.

King Robert stood there, gazing at him in anger and rage when he looked up. With a glance of surprise and pity, he asked, "Who are you?"

Robert answered, "I am the king, and I have come to take my place; you are an imposter who pretends to be king."

At these words the angry guests sprang up with drawn swords, but the man on the throne said, "No, not the king, but the king's jester. You shall from now on wear the bells and scalloped cape of the court jester, and make fun for us all. Your companion shall be an ape." Then he turned away toward his guests.

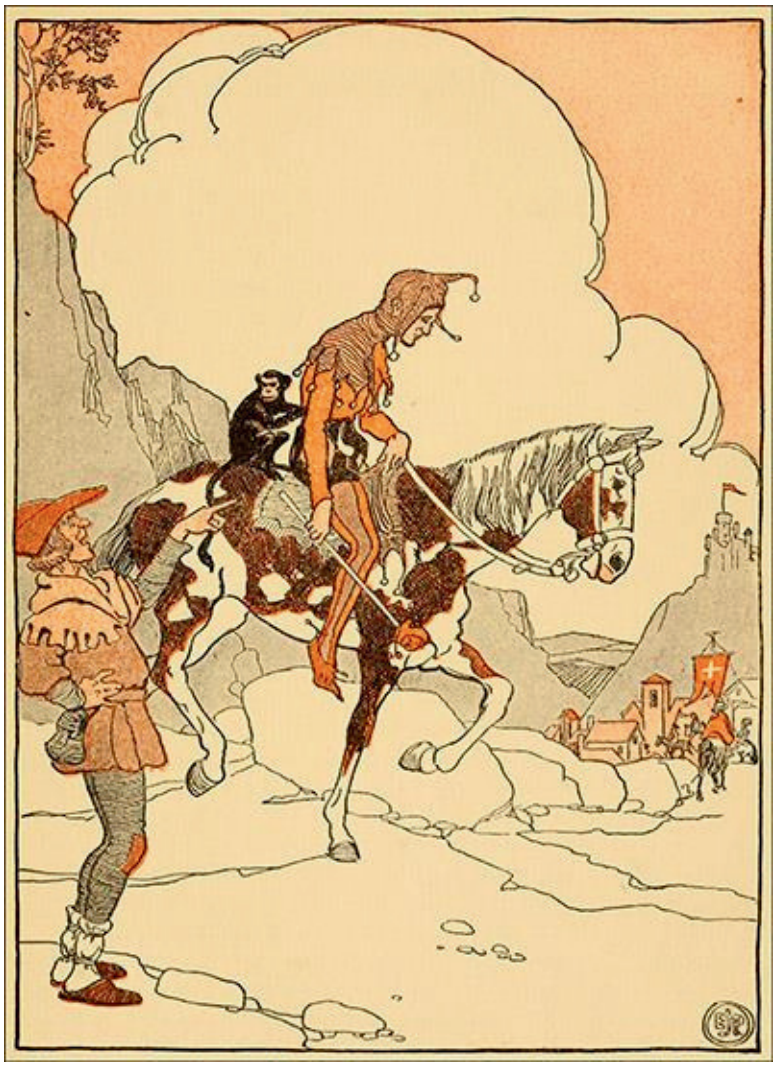
Some of the servants came forward to take Robert away, and they were quite deaf to his ravings and angry threats. With shouts of laughter they pushed him on before them down the stairs, and mockingly bowed before him, and pretended to honor him, all the

while laughing and tittering and making fun of him. They left him in a room in the stable where at length, exhausted, he fell asleep.

The next morning, waking with the day's first light, he thought to himself: "I've had an ugly dream." But the straw rustled when he turned his head, and there were the jester's cap and bells lying near. He heard the horses champing in their stalls, and on looking around the room saw the poor ape. So he remembered. It was no dream. His happy life that he thought could not be changed, had vanished from him.

The days came and went. Under the rule of the new king the island prospered as never before. Robert continued to be the jester, laughed at and scorned. His only friend was the ape. His only food, what others left.

Sometimes the other king would meet him, and ask, "Are you still the king?" and always Robert would throw back his head and fling the answer haughtily, "I am, I am the king!"



TOWARD THE VERY LAST, ROBERT, THE JESTER, RODE ON A PIEBALD PONY

Robert had two brothers; one was Valmond, Emperor of Allemaine, the other was Pope Urbane. One day, almost three years after the wild night that Robert had been locked in the church, ambassadors came from Valmond, Emperor of Allemaine, bringing letters. The letters asked King Robert to join his brother Valmond in a visit to their brother at Rome. The ambassadors were received with great pleasure, and were presented with many beautiful gifts of robes and jewels.

Then the king who was not King Robert went with them across the sea to Italy. He was accompanied by a great retinue of knights, all dressed in uniform, wearing gay plumes in their helmets. They rode horses with jeweled bridles, and even wore golden spurs. They were followed by pages and servants; and, toward the very last, Robert, the jester, rode on a piebald pony, and behind was perched the ape. Through every town they went they made much fun for the people, who followed along after, laughing and poking fun at them. The company were received with great pomp and ceremony, and the three brothers seemed delighted at being together again.

Suddenly Robert burst through the crowd, and running up to them cried, "I am the king! Do you not know me? Look at me. I am your brother, Robert of Sicily. This man is but an imposter! He is not the king!"

The emperor and the pope looked at the angry worried jester for a long moment; then the emperor laughed, and said, "What strange sport to keep a crazy fellow for a jester!" and the poor baffled jester was hustled back into the crowd.

Then came Easter Sunday, and the beauty and the solemnity of the Easter services touched the hearts of all men. Robert was deeply moved. For the first time in his life he saw what kind of man he had been. He saw how selfish and proud and haughty he had been. He wished with all his soul that he had been a better man, and he made up his mind that, no matter what happened, he would never be so selfish and mean again.

Now, the visit ended; the grand visitors left Rome and journeyed homeward. And when they were once more established, the king on the throne sent for Robert. He motioned every one else out of the room and beckoned Robert to draw near.

And when they were alone, he asked, "Art thou the king?"

Robert bowed his head, and folding his arms, said, "You know best. I only know that I have sinned, and have been proud and selfish. Let me go from here and try to make up in some way for the wrong which I have done!"

And just as he finished saying this, there rose through the windows loud and clear the words of the chant:

“He has put down the mighty from their seat,

And has exalted them of low degree!”

Then the man who was with Robert cried joyously. “I am not the king! I am an angel! You are the king!”

When King Robert raised his eyes—lo! he was alone, but all dressed in his magnificent apparel as of old; and when his courtiers came, they found him kneeling upon the floor in silent prayer.

* * * * * *

“Robert was fortunate,” said the Story King, “in learning his lesson before it was too late.”

“Yes, indeed, he was,” answered the Story Lady. “The fourth story is of a young man who repented when it was too late.”

XXXII

THE MAN WITHOUT A COUNTRY

ONCE there was a man, a young officer in the United States Army, who did a dreadful thing—he cursed his native country!

He pretended for a while that he did not care, when he was punished, but in the end he was very, very sorry. Because he wore his uniform without the official buttons, the sailors on the ships on which he was imprisoned called him "Plain Buttons."

His name was Philip Nolan. Lieutenant Nolan was as fine a young officer as there was in the "Legion of the West," as the Western division of the United States Army was called in those early days, one hundred years ago.

At that time the Mississippi valley was the Far West to most people, and seemed a very distant land indeed. There were a number of forts along the river and Nolan was stationed in one of these. Nolan's idol was the brilliant and dashing Aaron Burr, who visited the fort several times between 1805 and 1807. He walked and talked with Nolan and obtained a very strong influence over him. He got Nolan to take him out in his skiff and show him something of the great river and the plans for the new post; and by the time Burr's visit was over Nolan was enlisted body and soul in Burr's disloyal schemes. From then on, though he did not yet know it, Nolan lived as a man without a country.

Burr soon got into trouble with the government, and some of his friends were tried for treason, Nolan among them. It became very plain during the trial that Nolan would do anything Burr told him; that he would obey Burr far quicker than his country in spite of his oath as an officer of the army.

So when Colonel Morgan, who was president of the court, asked Nolan, at the close of the trial, whether he wished to say anything to show that he had always been faithful to the United States, he cried out, in a fit of frenzy: "Curse the United States! I wish I may never hear of the United States again!"

Probably he did not realize how the words would shock old Colonel Morgan and the other members of the court. Half the officers who sat with him had served through the Revolutionary War, and had risked their lives, not to say their necks, cheerfully and loyally for the country which Nolan so lightly cursed in his madness.

It may be said for Nolan that he had grown up in the West of those days, then an almost unknown country. He had been educated on a plantation, where the most welcome guests were Spanish officers and French merchants from Orleans, who, to say the least, were unfriendly to the United States. He had spent half his youth with an older brother, hunting horses in Texas, which was not then a part of the United States. In a word, the "United States" meant almost nothing to him.

Yet there was little excuse for Nolan. He had sworn on his faith as a Christian to be true to the United States. It was the United States which gave him the uniform he wore and the sword by his side. Nay, Burr cared nothing for poor Nolan, but had picked him out to aid him in his wicked plots, only because of the uniform he wore. Of course, Nolan did not know this, and it did not excuse him; but it does partly explain why he cursed his country and wished that he might never hear her name again.

He never did hear her name but once again. From that moment, September 23, 1807, till the day he died, May 11, 1863, he never heard her name again. For that half-century and more he was a man without a country.

Colonel Morgan, as you may suppose, was terribly shocked. If Nolan had compared George Washington to Benedict Arnold, or had cried, "God save King George," Morgan would not have felt worse. He called the court into his private room, and returned in fifteen minutes, with a face white as a sheet, to say:

"Prisoner, hear the sentence of the Court! The Court decides, subject to the approval of the President, that you never hear the name of the United States again."

Nolan laughed; but nobody else laughed—the whole room was hushed dead as night for a minute. Then Colonel Morgan added, "Mr. Marshall, take the prisoner to Orleans in an armed boat and deliver him to the naval commander there. Request him to order that no one shall mention the United States to the prisoner while he is on board ship."

Colonel Morgan himself went to Washington and President Jefferson approved the sentence, so a plan was formed to keep Nolan constantly at sea, far from his own country. The ships of our navy took few long cruises then, but one ship was directed to carry the prisoner as far away as it was going, then transfer him to another vessel before it sailed for home. He was to be confined only so far as necessary to prevent his escape and to make it certain that he never saw or heard of his country again.

As soon as a vessel on which Nolan sailed was homeward bound, Nolan was transferred to an outward-bound vessel for another cruise. At first he made light of it—but

in time he learned something he had not thought of, perhaps—that there was no going home for him, even to a prison.

There were some twenty such transfers which took him all over the world, but which kept him all his life at least some hundred miles from the country he had hoped he might never hear of again.

HE FLUNG THE BOOK INTO THE SEA

Nolan wore his uniform, but with plain buttons. He always had a sentry before his door, but the men were as good to him as his sentence permitted. No mess wanted to have him with them too steadily because they could never talk about home matters when he was present—more than half the talk men liked to have at sea. They took turns inviting him to dinner, and the captain always asked him on Mondays. He could have any books or papers

not printed in America. Newspapers having any mention of America had to be gone over and the allusions cut out. He used to join the men as they were reading on deck and take his turn in reading aloud.

Once when they were cruising around the Cape of Good Hope, somebody got hold of Scott's "Lay of the Last Minstrel," which was then new and famous. Nolan was reading to the others when he came to this passage:

"Breathes there the man with soul so dead

Who never to himself hath said,

This is my own, my native land!

Whose heart hath ne'er within him burned,

As home his footsteps he hath turned

From wandering on a foreign strand?

"If such there breathe, go, mark him well;

For him no minstrel raptures swell;

High though his titles, proud his name,

Boundless his wealth as wish can claim,—

Despite those titles, power and pelf,

The wretch, concentred all in self"——

Here the poor fellow choked, and could not go on, but started up and flung the book into the sea and fled to his stateroom. It was two months before he dared join the men again.

There was a change in Nolan after this. He never read aloud again, unless it was the Bible or Shakespeare, or something else he was sure of. He was always shy afterwards and very seldom spoke unless spoken to, except to a very few friends. He generally had the nervous, tired look of a heart-wounded man. Sometimes he tried to trap people into mentioning his country, but he never succeeded; his sentence was too well known among the men who had him in charge.

There was only one day on which, perhaps, he was really happy, except when he knew his lonely life was closing. Once, during the war of 1812, the ship on which he was staying

had a fight with an English frigate. A round shot from the enemy entered one of the ports and killed the officer of the gun himself and many of the gun's crew. Now you may say what you choose about courage, but that is not a nice thing to see. But, as the men who were not killed picked themselves up, and as they and the surgeon's people were carrying off the bodies, there appeared Nolan, in his shirt sleeves, with the rammer in his hand, and, just as if he had been the officer, told them off with authority—who should go to the cock-pit with the wounded men, who should stay with him—perfectly cheery, and with that way which makes men feel sure all is right and is going to be right. And he finished loading the gun with his own hands, aimed it, and bade the men fire. And there he stayed, captain of that gun, keeping those fellows in spirits, till the enemy struck—sitting on the carriage while the gun was cooling, though he was exposed all the time,—showing them easier ways to handle heavy shot—making the raw hands laugh at their own blunders—and when the gun cooled again, getting it loaded and fired twice as often as any other gun on the ship. The commodore walked forward by way of encouraging the men, and Nolan touched his hat and said:

"I am showing them how we do this in the artillery, sir."

"I see you are, and I thank you, sir," the commodore said; "and I shall never forget this day, sir, and you never shall, sir."

And after the whole thing was over, and he had the Englishman's sword, in the midst of the state and ceremony of the quarter-deck, he said:

"Where is Mr. Nolan? Ask Mr. Nolan to come here." And when Nolan came, he said:

"Mr. Nolan, we are all very grateful to you; you are one of us to-day; you will be named in the despatches."

And then the commodore took off his own sword of ceremony, and gave it to Nolan, and made him put it on. Nolan cried like a baby, and well he might. He had not worn a sword since that infernal day at Fort Adams. But always afterwards on occasions of ceremony, he wore that quaint old French sword of the commodore's.

The commodore did mention him in the despatches, and asked that he might be pardoned. He wrote a special letter to the Secretary of War. But nothing ever came of it.

At another time Nolan went with a young officer named Vaughan to overhaul a dirty little schooner which had slaves on board. Nolan was the only one who could speak Portuguese, the language used by the slavers. There were but few of the negroes. Vaughan had their handcuffs and ankle-cuffs knocked off and put these on the rascals of the schooner's crew. Then Nolan told the blacks that they were free, and that Vaughan would take them to Cape Palmas.

Now, Cape Palmas was a long way from their native land, and they said, "Not Palmas. Take us home, take us to our own country, take us to our own pickaninnies and our own

women." One complained that he had not heard from home for more than six months. It was terribly hard for Nolan, but he translated these speeches, and told the negroes Vaughan's answer in some fashion.

"Tell them—yes, yes, yes!" Vaughan said. "Tell them they shall go to the Mountains of the Moon, if they will. If I sail the schooner through the Great White Desert, they shall go home!"

And then they all fell to kissing Nolan, and wanted to rub his nose with theirs.

As they were being rowed back to the ship, he lay in the stern sheets and said to a young midshipman of whom he was very fond:

"Youngster, let that show you what it is to be without a family, without a home, and without a country. And if you are ever tempted to say a word or do a thing that shall put a bar between you and your family, your home, and your country, pray God in His mercy to take you that instant home to His own heaven. Stick by your family, boy; forget you have a self, while you do everything for them. Think of your home, boy; write, and send, and talk about it. Let it be nearer and nearer to your thought, the farther you have to travel from it; and rush back to it when you are free, as that poor black slave is doing now. And for your country, boy," and the words rattled in his throat, "and for that flag," and he pointed to the ship, "never dream a dream but of serving her as she bids you, though the service carry you through a thousand hells. No matter what happens to you, no matter who flatters you or who abuses you, never look at another flag, never let a night pass but you pray God to bless that flag. Remember, boy, that behind all these men you have to do with, behind officers, and government, and people even, there is the country herself, your country, and that you belong to her as you belong to your own mother. Stand by her, boy, as you would stand by your mother, if those devils there had got hold of her to-day!"

And then Nolan added, almost in a whisper, "Oh, if anybody had said so to me when I was of your age!"

Years passed on, and Nolan's sentence was unrevoked, though his friends had more than once asked for a pardon.

The end came when he had been upwards of fifty years at sea, and he asked the ship's doctor for a visit from Captain Danforth, whom he liked. Danforth tells us about Nolan's last hours and calls him "dear old Nolan," so we know his love was returned.

The officer saw what a little shrine poor Nolan had made of his stateroom. Up above were the stars and stripes, and around a portrait of Washington he had painted a majestic eagle, with lightnings blazing from his beak and his foot just clasping the whole globe, which the wings overshadowed. Nolan said, with a sad smile, "Here, you see, I have a country!" Over the foot of the bed was a great map of the United States, drawn from memory, which he had there to look upon as he lay in his berth. Quaint old names were on it, in large letters: Indiana Territory, Mississippi Territory, and Louisiana Territory.

“Danforth,” he said, “I know I am dying. I cannot get home. Surely you will tell me something now? Stop! Stop! Do not speak till I say what I am sure you know, that there is not in this ship, that there is not in America—God bless her!—a more loyal man than I. There cannot be a man who loves the old flag or prays for it as I do. There are thirty-four stars in it now, Danforth. I thank God for that, though I do not know what their names are. There has never been one taken away. I thank God for that. But tell me something—tell me everything, Danforth, before I die!”

Captain Danforth, in writing about it afterwards says: “I felt like a monster that I had not told him everything before. Though obeying orders, who was I that I should have been acting the tyrant all this time over this dear, sainted old man, who had expiated, in his whole manhood’s life, the madness of a boy’s treason.”

“Mr. Nolan,” he said, “I will tell you everything you ask about.”

Then he told him the names of all the new states, and drew them in on the map. He told him of the inventions—the steamboats, the railroads and telegraphs; he tried to tell him all that had happened to the great and growing country in fifty years. He told him about Abraham Lincoln, who was then President—except that he could not wound his friend by mentioning a word about the cruel Civil War which was then raging.

Nolan drank it in and enjoyed it more than we can tell. After that he seemed to grow weary and said he would go to sleep. He bent Danforth down and kissed him, and then said, “Look in my Bible, Captain, when I am gone.”

Danforth went away with no thought that this was the end. But in an hour, when the doctor went in gently, he found Nolan had breathed away his life with a smile.

They looked in his Bible, and there was a slip of paper at the place where he had marked the text:

“They desire a country, even a heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He hath prepared for them a city.”

On this slip of paper he had written:

“Bury me in the sea; it has been my home, and I love it. But will not some one set up a stone for my memory at Fort Adams or at Orleans, that my disgrace may not be more than I ought to bear? Say on it:

‘In Memory of

PHILIP NOLAN

Lieutenant in the Army of the United States.

He loved his country as no other man has loved her;
but no man deserved less at her hands.’”

XXXIII

YOUR FLAG AND MY FLAG

WHEN the story was finished the Story People did not applaud; they felt sorry for poor Philip who had repented so bitterly.

Mary Frances felt sad, and sorry, too; as she did every time she heard the story, for she had often heard it before.

"How Americans love their country!" said the Story King. "They must love it as much as we love our island!"

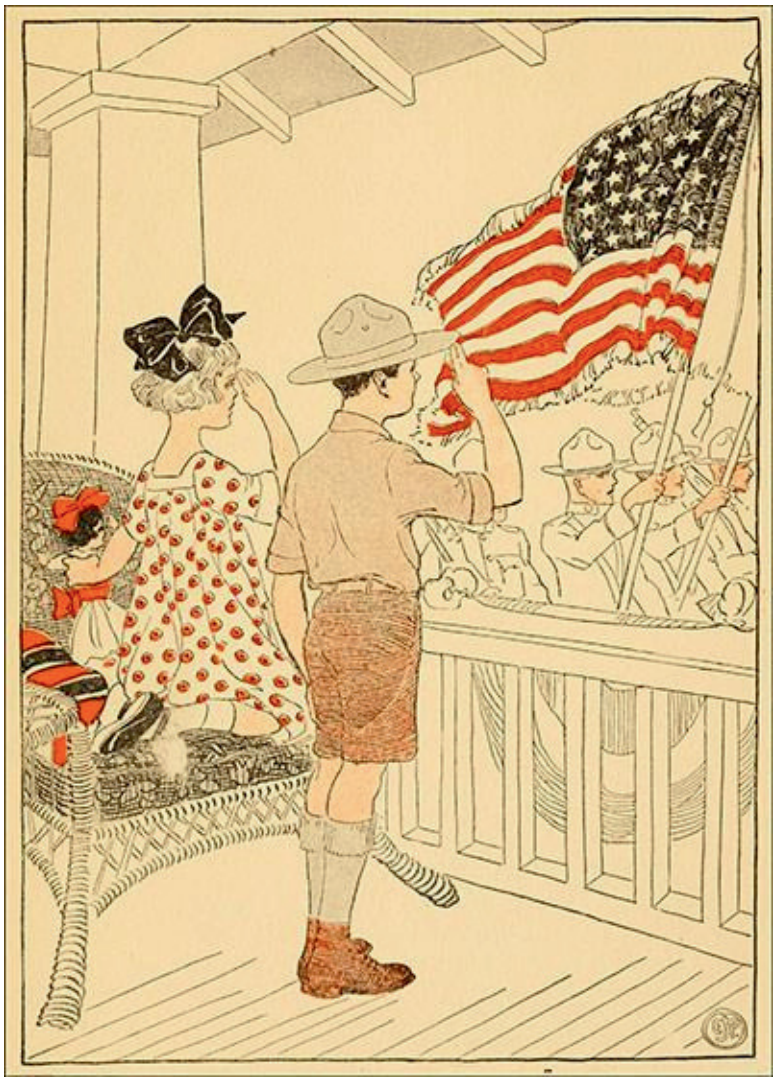
"Indeed, they do love it," answered Mary Frances patriotically. "I think it's the greatest big country in all the world!"

The Story People smiled and clapped their hands at this speech, for they admire loyalty wherever shown.

"Yes, it is," said the Story Queen, "and we think our island is the greatest little country in all the world."

"So it is! Indeed, it is! I love it next to my own!" cried Mary Frances; and the Story People applauded again.

"There is a little poem about the Stars and Stripes that is very popular in America," said the Story Lady, smiling. "Now that the stories are finished for the day, perhaps our guest will recite it for us."



YOUR FLAG AND MY FLAG

Mary Frances blushed, and then rose in her place and recited:

Your flag and my flag,
And how it flies to-day
In your land and my land
And half a world away!
Rose-red and blood-red

The stripes forever gleam;

Snow-white and soul-white—

The good forefathers' dream;

Sky-blue and true-blue, with stars to gleam aright—

The gloried guidon of the day; a shelter through the night.

Your flag and my flag!

And, oh, how much it holds—

Your land and my land—

Secure within its folds!

Your heart and my heart

Beat quicker at the sight;

Sun-kissed and wind-tossed—

Red and blue and white.

The one flag—the great flag—the flag for me and you—

Glorified all else beside—the red and white and blue!

Your flag and my flag!

To every star and stripe

The drums beat as hearts beat,

And fifers shrilly pipe!

Your flag and my flag—

A blessing in the sky;

Your hope and my hope—

It never hid a lie!

Home land and far land and half the world around,

Old Glory hears our glad salute and ripples to the sound.[C]

[C] From the "Trail to Boyland," by Wilbur D. Nesbit, Copyright 1904. Used by special permission of the publishers, The Bobbs-Merrill Company.

As Mary Frances sat down, the Story People clapped their hands enthusiastically; and the Ready Writer handed her her copies of the stories for the day. The copy of the poem which he had made, he kept for themselves.

As Mary Frances and the Story Lady were going out, the Story Queen stopped them and said:

"We shall expect you both to dinner to-night—just a little family party, you know."

"Oh, thank you, that will be delightful," both replied.

Mary Frances thought ruefully of her best dress hanging uselessly in the closet at home and wished she had it. "But it's no use wishing," she thought. "It's all so unexpected."

However, with the help of the Story Lady, she was arrayed for the occasion, and when she saw herself in the mirror she said, "There must be two of us; that doesn't look like me."

But it was she. So when they left their apartments and went downstairs into the dining-hall, she was in very high spirits.

Mary Frances had eaten many dinners, but never one like that. Yet, strange to say, she doesn't remember what she ate. But she does remember how kind and friendly the Story King and Queen were, and how they plied her with questions about her own country. She thinks, perhaps, she bragged a little too much in telling of its wonders, but she excuses herself to herself, thinking, "Well, my country is worth bragging about, I'm sure." During a lull in the conversation, Mary Frances asked the King, "Won't you tell me where all the stories come from?"

"With pleasure," he replied. "They come from all countries. The world is full of people who are doing brave and noble deeds, and when we hear of such deeds, we have them written down and pass them on."

"Of course," he added, "there are other people who are doing cowardly and selfish things, but we don't bother with them, except to punish them as we did the pirate. We see to it that no good story is ever lost; that is why we were so concerned about the lost story."

"You can see," said the Queen, "that it keeps us pretty busy."

"Indeed, it must," returned Mary Frances. "I think it's very kind of you to let me visit you."

"Dear child," said the Queen, "we shall make a story about it—several stories——"

“Yes, delightful stories,” interrupted the Story Lady, “and I shall tell them! Oh, yes, I shall tell them!”

THE LAST DAY ON STORY ISLAND

THE CRICKET ON THE HEARTH, A FAIRY TALE OF HOME.—CHIRP THE FIRST.—CHIRP THE SECOND.—CHIRP THE THIRD.—THE RETURN HOME.

THE LAST DAY ON STORY ISLAND
THE CRICKET ON THE HEARTH

XXXIV

CHIRP THE FIRST

WHEN the Story People were all assembled, the Story Lady began:

"To-day we have only one story, 'The Cricket on the Hearth,' which was first told by one of our greatest story-tellers, Charles Dickens, who wrote 'The Christmas Carol' and many other stories that children love to hear."

The Peerybingles

"Heyday! The cricket's merrier than ever to-night, I think," said John, stopping, in his slow way, to listen to its musical chirp, chirp, chirp!

"And it's sure to bring us good fortune, John! It always has done so. To have a cricket on the hearth is the luckiest thing in the world!"

That is what John Peerybingle's little wife Dot said one stormy night after John had come in from delivering packages and boxes, and she had given him his tea and had put the baby to sleep. For John Peerybingle was a local expressman; or, as they say in England, a carrier.

"The first time I heard its cheerful little note, John," Dot continued, "was the night you brought me home—when you brought me to my new home here; its little mistress. Nearly a year ago. You recollect, John?"

Oh, yes. John remembered. I should think so!

“Its chirp was such a welcome to me. It seemed so full of promise and encouragement. It seemed to say you would be kind and gentle with me, and would not expect to find an old head on the shoulders of your foolish little wife. I had a fear of that, John, then.”

John thoughtfully patted one of the shoulders, and then the head of his little wife, as though to say, “No, no; he had no such expectation; he had been quite content to take them as they were.”

“The cricket spoke the truth, John, for you have been, I am sure, the most considerate, the most affectionate of husbands. This has been a happy home, John; and I love the cricket for its sake.”

“Why, so do I, then,” said the carrier, “so do I, Dot.”

“I love it for the many times I have heard it,” Dot went on musing, “and the many thoughts its harmless music has given me. Sometimes, in the twilight, when I have felt a little down-hearted, John—before the precious baby came to keep me company and make the house gay—when I have thought how lonely you would be if I should die, or I should be if you should die, its chirp, chirp, chirp, upon the hearth has filled me with new trust and confidence. For you see, John, I was afraid, being so much younger than you, that you might not find me at all suitable as a wife, and that you might find it hard to learn to love me as you would if I were older and had had more experience. I was thinking just before you came in to-night, dear, how the cricket has cheered me at such times; and I love it for their sake.”

“And so do I,” repeated John. “But, Dot! How you talk! I learn to love you? I had learned that long before I brought you here to be the cricket’s little mistress, Dot.”

She laid her hand, an instant, on his arm, and looked up at him as if she would have told him something. Next moment, she was down upon her knees before the basket of packages which John had brought in from his cart. Perhaps some of them would be called for; the others he would deliver in the morning.

“There are not many of them to-night, John. Why, what’s this round box? Heart alive, John, it’s a wedding-cake!”

“Leave a woman to find that out,” said John admiringly. “Now, a man would never have thought of it! But it’s my belief that if you packed a wedding cake in a tea-chest, or in a feather bed, or in salmon-keg, a woman would be sure to find it out directly. Yes, I called for it at the pastry-cook’s.”

“And it weighs, I don’t know what—whole hundred weights!” cried Dot, making a great show of trying to lift it. “Whose is it, John? Where is it going?”

“Read the writing on the other side,” said John.

"Why, John! My goodness, John!" exclaimed Dot.

"Ah! Who'd have thought it!" John returned.

"You never mean to say," asked Dot, sitting on the floor and shaking her head at him, "that it's for Gruff and Tackleton, the toy-maker!"

John nodded. Mrs. Peerybingle nodded also, fifty times at least—in dumb and pitying amazement.

And Tilly Slowboy, the nurse-maid, and helper of all work, began to talk in an undertone to the baby, who had awakened, as she walked to and fro with him in her arms: "Was it for Gruffs and Tackletons, then, and would it call at the pastry-cooks' for wedding cakes, and did its mothers know the boxes when its fathers brought them home;" and so on.

"And that marriage is really to come about!" said Dot, after seeing that the baby was all right. "Why, she and I were girls at school together, John."

John might have been thinking of how Dot looked then, but he made no answer.

"And he's as old! As unlike May! Why, how many years older than you is Gruff and Tackleton, John?"

"How many more cups of tea shall I drink at one sitting than Gruff and Tackleton ever took in four sittings, I wonder!" replied John good-humoredly.

But even this brought no smile to the face of his little wife. The cricket, too, had stopped. Somehow the room was not so cheerful as it had been. Nothing like it.

The Strange Old Gentleman

"So these are all the parcels, are they, John?" she asked, after a little while; "so these are all the parcels, John?"

"That's all," said John. "Why—no—I—I declare—I've clean forgotten the old gentleman!"

"The old gentleman?"

"In the cart," said John. "He was asleep, down in the straw, the last time I saw him. I've very nearly remembered him twice since I came in; but he went out of my head again."

John hastily rose and lighting a candle went out the door. "Halloa! Yahip there! Rouse up! That's my hearty!" he called as he made his way to the wagon-shed.

Soon the Stranger stood, bareheaded and motionless in the middle of the room. He had long white hair, good features, singularly bold and well-defined for an old man. His eyes were dark and bright and smiling. He saluted the carrier's wife by gravely bowing.

His clothes were very quaint and old-fashioned, a long, long way behind the time.

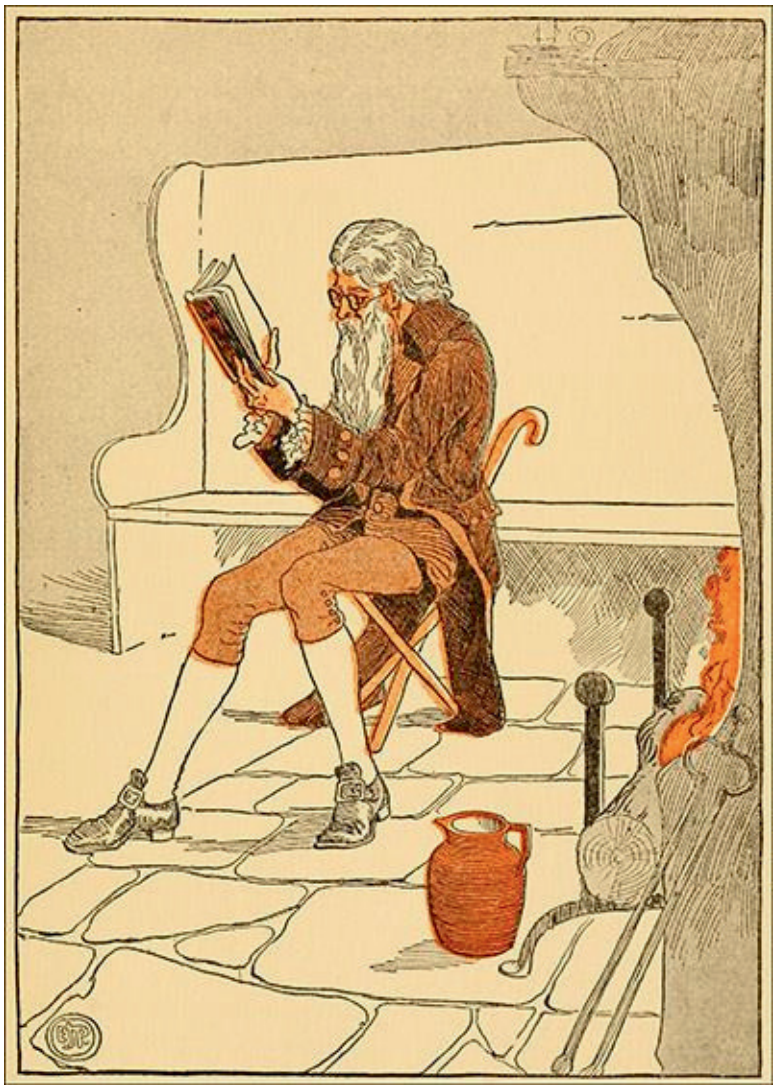
Their color was brown, all over. In his hand he carried a great brown club or walking-stick. He struck this upon the floor and it fell open and became a chair on which he sat down quite composedly.

"There!" said the carrier, turning to his wife. "That's the way I found him, sitting by the roadside! Upright as a milestone, and almost as deaf as one!"

"Sitting in the open air, John!"

"In the open air," replied the carrier, "just at dusk. 'Will you take me along?' he asked, and gave me eighteen pence. Then he got into the cart. And here he is."

"He's going, John, I think!"



"IF YOU PLEASE, I WAS TO BE LEFT TILL CALLED FOR"

Not at all. He was only going to speak.

"If you please, I was to be left till called for," said the Stranger, mildly. "Don't mind me."

With that he took a pair of spectacles from one of his large pockets, and a book from another, and leisurely began to read. Boxer, the carrier's big dog, came sniffing at his legs, but he took no more notice of Boxer than if he had been a lamb.

The carrier and his wife glanced at each other in perplexity. The Stranger raised his head; and looking from Dot toward John, said:

"Your daughter, my good friend?"

“Wife,” said John.

“Niece?” asked the Stranger.

“Wife,” roared John.

“Indeed?” observed the Stranger. “Surely—very young!”

Dot took the baby from the couch where Tilly Slowboy had laid him. The Stranger quietly resumed his reading; but before he had read two lines, he interrupted his reading to say to John:

“Baby yours?”

John gave a gigantic nod, equal to an answer given through a speaking trumpet.

“Girl?” asked the Stranger.

“Bo-o-oy!” roared John.

“Also very young, eh?”

Mrs. Peerybingle instantly spoke. “Two months and three da-ays. Vaccinated just six weeks ago-o! Took very fine-ly! Considered by the doctors a remarkably beautiful chi-ild! Equal to the general run of children at five months o-ld! Takes notice of everything. May seem impossible to you, but true.”

Here the breathless little mother, who had been shrieking these short sentences into the old man’s ear until her face was crimson, held the baby up before him to prove her words, while Tilly Slowboy sprang around in cow-like gambols to amuse the infant, uttering words which sounded like “Ketcher! Ketcher!”

“Hark!” said John. “He’s called for, sure enough. There’s some one at the door. Open it, Tilly.”

Caleb Plummer

Before she could reach it, however, it was opened from the outside, for it was a primitive sort of door with a latch that any one could lift if he chose. In came a little, meager, thoughtful, dingy-faced man.

He seemed to have made himself a great-coat from the burlap covering of some old box; for, when he turned to shut the door, and keep the weather out, one could read upon the back of the garment the letters “G & T” in large black capitals; also the word “GLASS” in smaller capitals.

“Good-evening, John!” said the little man. “Good-evening, mum. Good-evening, Tilly! Good-evening, unbeknown! How’s baby, mum? Boxer’s pretty well, I hope?”

“All well and thriving, Caleb,” replied Dot. “I am sure you need only look at the dear child, for one, to know that.”

“And I’m sure I only need look at you for another,” said Caleb; “or at John for another; or Tilly, as far as that goes; or certainly at Boxer.”

“Busy just now, Caleb?” asked the carrier.

“Why, pretty busy, John,” he returned. “Pretty much so. There’s a lot of demand for Noah’s Arks at present. I’d like to be able to take more pains in making the families, but I can’t do it at the price. It would be a satisfaction, though, to one’s mind, to make it plain which was Shems and Hams, and which was wives. Ah, well! Have you got anything in the parcel line for me, John?”

The carrier put his hand into the pocket of the coat he had taken off, and brought out a tiny flower-pot, carefully wrapped in moss and tissue paper.

“There it is!” he said, adjusting it with great care. “Not so much as a leaf damaged. Full of buds!”

Caleb’s dull eye brightened as he took it, and thanked him.

“It was expensive, Caleb,” said the carrier. “Very dear at this season.”

“Never mind that. It would be cheap to me, whatever it cost,” returned the little man. “Anything else, John?”

“A small box,” replied the carrier. “Here you are!”

“‘For Caleb Plummer,’” read the old man, spelling out the directions. “‘With Cash!’ With cash, John? I don’t think it’s for me!”

“‘With Care,’” corrected the carrier, looking over his shoulder. “Where do you make out ‘cash’?”

“Oh! To be sure!” said Caleb. “It’s all right. ‘With Care!’ Yes, yes; that’s mine. It might have been ‘With Cash,’ if my dear boy in South America had lived, John. You loved him like a son; didn’t you? You needn’t say you did. I know, of course.”

He read again, “‘Caleb Plummer. With Care.’ Yes, yes; it’s all right. It’s a box of dolls’ eyes for my daughter’s work. I wish it was her own sight in a box, John!”

“I wish it was, or could be,” cried the carrier.

“Thankee,” said the little man. “You speak very hearty. To think that she should never see the dolls—and them a staring at her so bold, all day long! That’s where it cuts. What’s the cost, John,—what’s the damage?”

“I’ll damage you,” said John, “if you ask.”

“Well, it’s like you to say that,” observed the little man. “It’s your kind way. Let me see. I think that’s all.”

“I think not,” said the carrier. “Try again.”

“Something for our governor, eh?” asked Caleb after thinking a little while. “To be sure. That’s what I came for; but my head’s so full of them Noah’s Arks and things! He hasn’t been here, has he?”

“Not he,” returned the carrier. “He’s too busy, courting.”

“He’s coming, though,” said Caleb; “for he told me to keep on the near side of the road going home, and it was ten to one he’d take me up. I’d better go, by-the-way.”

He turned to Dot. “You couldn’t have the goodness to let me pinch Boxer’s tail, mum, for half a moment, could you?”

“Why, Caleb! What a question!”

“Oh, never mind, mum,” said the little man. “He mightn’t like it, perhaps. There’s a small order come in for toys—dogs that will bark; and I wish to go as close to nature as possible for a sixpence. That’s all. Never mind, mum.”

It happened that Boxer just at that moment began to bark with zeal. But, as this bark meant the approach of some new visitor, Caleb, postponing his study of dogs’ barks, shouldered the big round box of wedding cake and said good-by. He might have spared himself the trouble, however, for he met his employer upon the threshold.

Tackleton

“Oh! You are here, are you? Wait a bit. I’ll take you home!”

He turned to John. “John Peerybingle, my service to you. More of my service to your pretty wife. Handsomer every day—and younger!”

“I should be astonished at your paying compliments, Mr. Tackleton,” said Dot, not altogether pleasantly, “but for what I have just heard about you—being engaged to be married.”

“You know all about it, then?”

“I have gotten myself to believe it somehow,” said Dot.

“After a hard struggle, I suppose?”

“Very.”

Tackleton, the toy merchant, was well known in the neighborhood. Many people called him Gruff and Tackleton, the name of the firm when Gruff was Tackleton’s partner. Although Tackleton had bought out Gruff’s interest years before, the name still remained.

It was odd that such a man should have been a toy-maker, for he had no interest in toys whatever. He despised them, and wouldn’t have bought one for the world. The only toys in his shop which he could abide were the ugly ones. Hideous, red-eyed Jacks-in-Boxes, vampire kites, and fiery dragons really did give him some pleasure, for he saw that they scared little children. A very pleasant person, Tackleton! Not the kind of person you would think was going to be married, and to a young wife, too—a beautiful young wife.

He didn’t look much like a bridegroom as he stood in the carrier’s kitchen, with a twist in his dry face, and a screw in his body, and his hat jerked over the bridge of his nose, and his hands tucked down into the bottom of his pockets, and his whole sarcastic, ill-conditioned, self—peering out of one little corner of one little eye, like the concentrated essence of any number of ravens. But a bridegroom he was designed to be.

“In three days’ time—next Thursday—the last day of the first month of the year—is my wedding day,” said Tackleton.

Did I mention that he had always one eye wide open and one eye nearly shut; and the eye nearly shut was always the expressive eye? I don’t think I did.

“That’s my wedding-day!” said Tackleton, rattling his money in his pocket.

“Why, that’s the anniversary of our wedding, too!” exclaimed the carrier.

“Ha, ha!” laughed Tackleton. “Odd! You’re just such another couple as we will be! Just!”

At this speech, Dot was most indignant. What next would the man say? As though her John resembled Tackleton in any particular!

“I say! A word with you,” murmured Tackleton, nudging the carrier with his elbow, and taking him off a little way. “You’ll come to the wedding, won’t you? We’re in the same boat, you know.”

“How in the same boat?” asked John.

"Why, you're not so youthful as your wife, yourself," said Tackleton, with another nudge. "Come and spend an evening with us beforehand."

"Why?" demanded John, astonished at this hospitality.

"Why?" returned the other. "That's a new way to receive an invitation. Why—for pleasure—to be sociable, you know, and all that."

"I thought you were never sociable," said John, in his plain way.

"As you like; what does it matter? Your company will produce a favorable impression on Mrs. Tackleton that-will-be. You'll say you'll come?"

"We have arranged to keep our wedding day at home," said John. "We think, you see, that home——"

"Bah! What's home?" cried Tackleton. "Four walls and a ceiling! Why don't you kill that cricket? I would! I always do! I hate their noise! You'll say you'll come, to-morrow evening?"

"You kill the crickets, eh?" said John.

"Scrunch 'em, sir," returned the other, setting his heel heavily on the floor. "Then you won't give us to-morrow evening? Well! Next day you go out visiting, I know. I'll meet you there, and bring my wife that-is-to-be. It'll do her good. You're agreeable? Thankee. What's that?"

Dot is Upset

It was a loud cry from the carrier's wife; a loud, sharp, sudden cry, that made the room ring like a glass bell that was struck. She had risen from her seat and stood like one transfixed by terror and surprise. The Stranger had gone toward the fire to warm himself, but he was quite still.

"Dot!" cried the carrier, "Darling Dot! What's the matter?"

They were all about her in a moment. Caleb, who had been dozing on the cake-box, in the first start, seized Tilly Slowboy by the hair, but immediately apologized.

"Mary!" exclaimed the carrier, for Dot's real name was Mary, Dot being only a pet name of her husband's. "Mary dear, are you ill? What is it? Tell me, dear."

But at first she could not answer. She wept bitterly, and covered her face with her apron; then burst into a wild fit of laughter, and then started crying again. At length she let John lead her to the fire, where she sat down. The old man was standing there as before.

"I'm better, John," she said. "I'm quite well. It was only a fancy, something coming before my eyes. It's gone, quite gone now."

"But why did she look at the old gentleman, as if addressing him?" thought John. "Was her mind wandering?"

"I'm glad it's gone," muttered Tackleton, turning the expressive eye around the room. "I wonder where it's gone, and what it was. Humph, Caleb, come here! Who's that man with the gray hair?"

"I don't know, sir," Caleb answered in a whisper. "Never saw him before in all my life. He'd make a beautiful figure for a nut-cracker; quite a new model."

"Not ugly enough!" said Tackleton.

"Or a match-safe," Caleb continued. "What a model! Unscrew his head to put the matches in. Let them fall down to his neck, and take out."

"Not half ugly enough," said Tackleton. "Nothing in him at all. Come! Bring that box! All right now, I hope, Mrs. Peerybingle?"

"Oh, quite right! Quite right!" said the little woman, waving him hurriedly away. "Good-night!"

"Good-night," said Tackleton. "Good-night, John Peerybingle! Take care how you carry that box, Caleb. Let it fall and I'll murder you! Dark as pitch, and weather worse than ever, eh? Good-night!"

So, with another sharp look round the room, he went out the door, followed by Caleb with the wedding cake on his head.

The carrier had been so much astonished by his little wife, and so busily trying to sooth her that he had scarcely been conscious of the Stranger's presence until now, when he looked up and saw him standing there, their only guest!

"He don't belong to them, you see," said John. "I must give him a hint to go."

Just at that moment the old gentleman came toward him, saying, "I beg your pardon, friend, but since my attendant has not come and the weather is so bad, can you, in your kindness, let me rent a bed here?"

"Yes, yes!" cried Dot. "Yes! Certainly!"

"Oh!" exclaimed the carrier, surprised by the quickness of her consent. "Well, I don't object; still I'm not quite sure—"

"Hush!" she interrupted. "Dear John, please."

“Why, he’s stone deaf,” urged John.

“I know, but—” She turned to the Stranger. “Yes, sir, certainly. Yes! Certainly!” Then to John. “I’ll make him up a bed directly, John.”

As she hurried off to do it, the fluttering way she did it was so strange that the carrier looked after her, quite dumfounded.

“Did its mothers make up a beds then?” cried Tilly Slowboy to the baby; “and did its hair grow brown and curly when its caps was lifted off, and frighten it, as precious pets, a-sitting by the fire?”

“What frightened Dot, I wonder?” thought the carrier, pacing to and fro, and half listening to Tilly’s silly chatter.

The bed was soon made ready, and the Stranger, who would not take anything but a cup of tea, retired.

After Dot put the baby to bed, she arranged the great comfortable fireside chair for the carrier, and filled his pipe for him. Then she brought her little stool and, placing it beside his knee, sat down for a cozy chat.

But the carrier fell to dreaming, and Boxer, who was stretched at his feet, I am quite ashamed to say, snored aloud. Just then the cricket began its song, and Dot, too, fell a-dreaming.

But what was that young figure of a man which remained there, singly and alone? Why did it linger still, so near her with its arm upon the chimney-piece, ever repeating in a whisper, “Married! and not to me!”

XXXV

CHIRP THE SECOND

Bertha, the Blind Girl, and Her Father

CALEB PLUMMER, the toy-maker, and his blind daughter lived all alone by themselves, as the Story Books say, in a little cracked nutshell of a wooden house, close to the big establishment of Gruff and Tackleton, the toy merchants.

I have said that Caleb and his poor blind daughter lived here. I should have said that Caleb lived here, and his poor blind daughter lived somewhere else—in a sort of enchanted fairyland, where no shabbiness or poverty or trouble ever entered; for Caleb, in the magic of his devoted, deathless love for his daughter, played a little game of "Pretend" which made the blind girl think their home beautiful, her father rich and handsome, and that nothing was lacking which they needed.

The blind girl never knew that the ceilings were broken and the walls blotched, and bare of plaster here and there, the beams warped and bending because of age. The blind girl never knew that the woodwork was rotting and the paper peeling off the walls, and the little building withering away.

The blind girl never knew that the dishes were ugly and cracked, and the carpets threadbare; that sorrow and faint-heartedness were in the house; that Caleb's scanty hairs were turning grayer, and more gray, before her sightless face.

The blind girl never knew that they had a master, cold, exacting, and not caring how they got along—never knew that Tackleton was Tackleton, in fact. For Caleb led her to think his rough words were meant for jokes; that he was very good to them, and had a peculiarity in that he could not bear to be thanked for any favor he had done.

You know why he did this. It was because he felt so sorry for poor blind Bertha that he deceived her into thinking everything lovely and fair in order that she might be happier. He, too, had had a cricket singing on the hearth when his motherless girl was very young, and

when he listened to its music, he made up his mind to cheer the little one's dark way by every means he could devise.

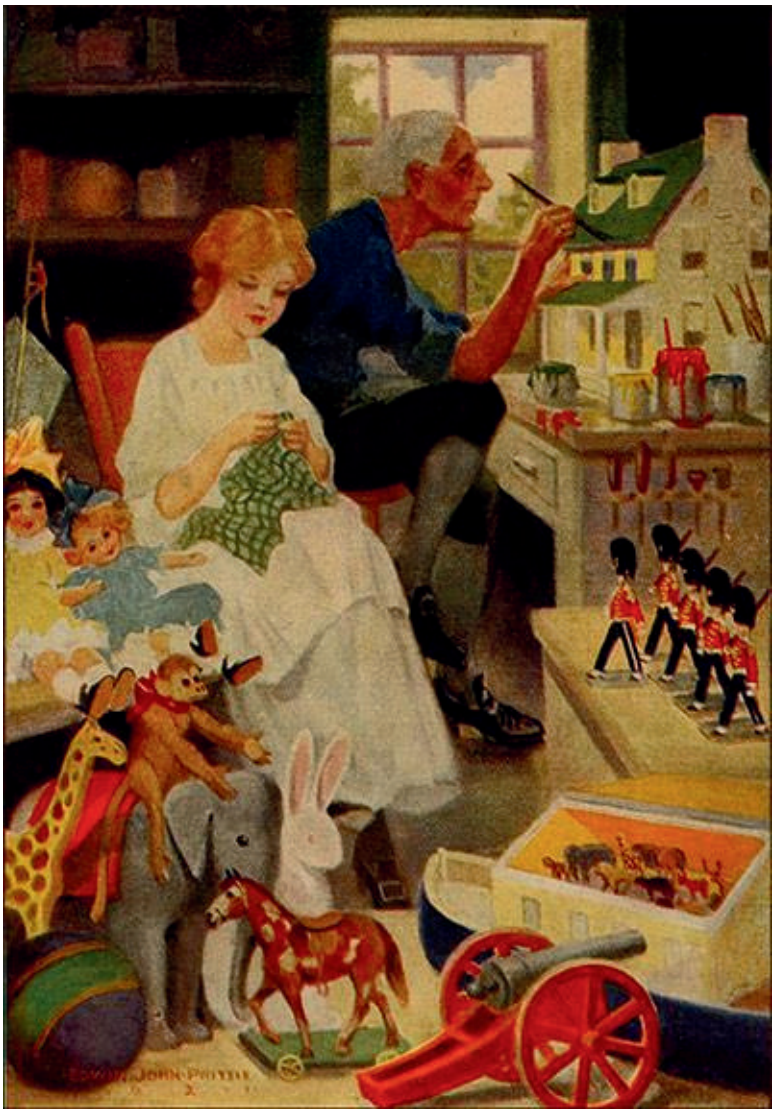
Caleb and his daughter were at work together in their usual working room, which served them for their ordinary living room as well; and a strange place it was.

There were houses in it, furnished and unfurnished, for dolls of all stations in life. Nice houses for dolls of moderate means; smaller houses for dolls not so well off; fine town residences for dolls of high estate. Some of the houses were already furnished with a view to the conveniences of dolls of limited income; others could be furnished on notice from the shelves nearby which were full of chairs and tables, sofas, bedsteads, and other articles of furniture.

Then there were many dolls themselves of all kinds and from all stations in life.

There were various other samples of his handicraft besides dolls and dolls' houses in Caleb Plummer's room. There were Noah's Arks in which the birds and beasts were an uncommonly tight fit, I assure you. There were scores of little carts, which, when the wheels went round, performed most doleful music. There were small fiddles and drums, and no end of cannon, shields and spears.

There were little fellows in red breeches who would tumble down head first along a piece of tape. There were old gentlemen dolls who would fly over trapeze bars when pressed in the right place. There were beasts of all sorts; horses, in particular, of every breed, from the little spotted gray on four legs, to the thoroughbred rocked on his highest mettle.



THERE WERE HOUSES IN IT, FURNISHED AND UNFURNISHED, FOR DOLLS OF ALL STATIONS IN LIFE

There were dozens and dozens of other little toys, but you already can imagine how the room looked.

In the midst of all these objects, Caleb and his daughter sat at work; the blind girl busy as a doll's dressmaker; Caleb painting a desirable doll's family mansion.

"So you were out in the rain last night, Father, in your beautiful new great-coat," said Caleb's daughter.

"In my beautiful new great-coat," answered Caleb, glancing toward a clothes-rack in the room on which the burlap garment was carefully hung to dry.

"How glad I am you bought it, Father! And such a stylish tailor!"

"It's too good for me," said Caleb.

The blind girl rested from her work and laughed with delight. "Too good, Father! What can be too good for you?"

"I'm half ashamed to wear it, though," said Caleb, watching the effect of what he said on her brightening face, "upon my word! When I hear the boys and people say behind me, 'Hallo! Here's a swell!' I don't know which way to look. And when the beggar wouldn't go away last night; and when I said I am a very common man, said, 'No, Your Honor! Bless Your Honor, don't say that!' I was quite ashamed. I really felt as if I hadn't a right to wear it."

Happy blind girl! How merry she was with the idea!

"I see you, Father," she said, clasping her hands, "as plainly as if I had the eyes I never want when you are with me. A blue coat——"

"Bright blue," said Caleb.

"Yes, yes! Bright blue!" exclaimed the girl, turning up her radiant face; "the color I can just remember in the blessed sky! You told me it was blue before. A bright blue coat——"

"Made loose to the figure," suggested Caleb.

"Yes! loose to the figure!" cried the blind girl, laughing heartily; "and in it, you, dear Father, with your merry eye, your smiling face, your free step, and your dark hair—looking so young and handsome!"

"There! There!" said Caleb, "I shall be vain presently."

"I think you are already!" cried the blind girl, pointing at him in her glee. "I know you, Father! Ha, ha, ha! I've found you out, you see!"

How different the picture in her mind from Caleb as he sat observing her. She had spoken of his free step. She was right in that. For years and years he had never once crossed their threshold with his own slow pace, but with a footfall free and sprightly, for her to hear; and never, even when his heart was heaviest, had he forgotten the light tread that was to render her own so cheerful and courageous.

"There we are," said Caleb, falling back a step or two to better judge his work. "It's a pity the whole front of this doll's house opens at once! If there was only a staircase in it, now, and regular doors to go in at! But that's the worst of my work, I'm always trying to make believe!"

"You are speaking quite softly. Are you tired, Father?"

"Tired?" echoed Caleb with a great burst of enthusiasm. "What should tire me, Bertha? I was never tired. What does it mean?"

To give greater force to his words, he checked himself in the middle of a yawn, and began to hum a song. He sang it with a pretended care-free manner that made his face look a thousand times more meagre and more thoughtful than before.

Tackleton Comes In

Just then Tackleton put his head in at the door. "What! You're singing, are you?" he thundered. "Go it! I can't sing!"

Nobody would have suspected that he could. He hadn't a singing face by any means.

"I can't afford to sing," said Tackleton. "I'm glad you can. I hope you can afford to work, too. Hardly time for both, I should think."

Caleb turned toward his daughter, and said in a low tone, "If you could only see him, Bertha, how he's winking at me. Such a man to joke! You'd think, if you didn't know him, he was in earnest—wouldn't you now?"

The blind girl smiled and nodded.

"The bird that can sing and won't sing, must be made to sing," grumbled Tackleton. "What about the owl that can't sing, and oughtn't to sing, and will sing. Is there anything that he should be made to do?"

"The way he's winking at me this moment!" whispered Caleb to his daughter. "Oh, my gracious!"

"Always merry and light-hearted with us!" cried the smiling Bertha.

"Oh, you're there, are you?" answered Tackleton. "Poor idiot!"

He really did believe she was an idiot; and, strange to say, he thought her an idiot because she was fond of him.

"Well! being there, how are you?" said Tackleton, in his grudging way.

"Oh, well; quite well. And as happy as even you could wish me to be—as happy as you would make the whole world, if you could."

"Poor idiot!" muttered Tackleton. "No gleam of reason! Not a gleam!"

The blind girl took his hand, and held it a moment in her own two hands, and laid her cheek against it tenderly, before releasing it. There was so much affectionate gratitude in the act, that Tackleton himself was moved to say, in a milder growl than usual:

"What's the matter now?"

“I stood the little plant beside my pillow when I went to sleep last night, and remembered it in my dreams. When the day came, and the glorious red sun—the red sun, Father?”

“Red in the mornings and in the evenings, Bertha,” said poor Caleb, with a woeful glance at his employer.

“When it rose, and bright light came into the room, I turned the little tree towards it, and blessed Heaven for making such precious things, and blessed you for sending it to cheer me.”

“Whew!” said Tackleton under his breath, “we’re getting on! The next thing will be the padded cell.”

Meanwhile Caleb looked as if he were uncertain whether Tackleton had done anything deserving of praise or not. Yet he knew that with his own hands he had brought the little rose tree home for her so carefully, and that with his own lips he had made her believe that it was a gift from Tackleton, in order to keep her from suspecting how much he every day denied himself to save the money it cost—that she might be the happier.

“Bertha!” said Tackleton, with for once a show of cordiality, “Come here.”

“Oh, I can come straight to you. You needn’t guide me!”

“Shall I tell you a secret, Bertha?”

“If you will,” she answered eagerly.

How bright the darkened face looked! How anxious the listening head!

“This is the day on which that spoiled child, John Peerybingle’s wife, pays her regular visit to you—makes what she calls her ‘picnic’ here, ain’t it?” said Tackleton, with a look of distaste for the affair.

“Yes,” replied Bertha, “this is the day.”

“I thought so,” said Tackleton. “I should like to join the party.”

“Do you hear that, Father?” cried Bertha in delight.

“Yes, yes, I heard it,” murmured Caleb, with the look somewhat of a sleepwalker, “but I don’t believe it.”

“You see,” said Tackleton, “I—I want to bring the Peerybingles a little more into the company of May Fielding, for I am going to be married to May.”

"Married!" cried the blind girl, starting from him.

"Oh! She's such a confounded idiot," muttered Tackleton, "that I was afraid she'd never comprehend. Ah, yes, Bertha! Married! Church, parson, clerk, bells, satin, veils, and all the rest of the tomfoolery. A wedding, you know; a wedding. Don't you know what a wedding is?"

"I know," replied the blind girl gently. "I understand."

"Do you?" muttered Tackleton. "It's more than I expected." Then aloud: "Well, on that account I want to join the party, and bring May and her mother. I'll send in a little something or other before the afternoon—a cold leg of mutton, or some comfortable trifle of that sort. You'll expect me?"

"Yes," she answered, turning away.

"I don't think you will," muttered Tackleton, looking at her; "for you seem to have forgotten all about it already. Caleb!"

"I may venture to say I'm here, I suppose," thought Caleb. "Sir?"

"Take care she don't forget what I've been saying to her."

"She never forgets," returned Caleb; "it's one of the few things she ain't clever in."

"'Every man thinks his geese swans'," observed the toy merchant, with a shrug of his shoulders. "Poor idiot!"

Having delivered this remark with much contempt, old Gruff and Tackleton went out.

Bertha's Eyes

Bertha remained where he had left her, lost in thought. The gayety had vanished from her face, and it was very sad. Three or four times she shook her head as if bewailing some loss.

It was not until Caleb had been busy for some time in yoking a team of wooden horses to the tongue of a little wooden wagon by the simple means of nails, driven through the vital parts of their bodies, that she drew near his work-bench, and, sitting down beside him, said: "Father, I am lonely. I want to borrow your eyes."

"Here they are," said Caleb. "Always ready. They are more yours than mine, Bertha, any hour in the four-and-twenty. What shall your eyes do for you, dear?"

"My patient, willing eyes!" the blind girl said. "Will they look around the room, Father?"

“All right, no sooner said than done, Bertha.”

“Tell me about it.”

“It’s much the same as usual,” said Caleb. “Homely, but snug. The gay colors on the walls; the bright flowers on the plates and other dishes; the shining wood, where there are no panels; the general cheerfulness and neatness of the building; all make it very pretty.”

Cheerful and neat it was, wherever Bertha’s hands could busy themselves, but nowhere else were cheerfulness and neatness possible in the old crazy shed which Caleb’s fancy painted with such pleasant description.

“You have your working clothes on, and are not so gallant as when you wear the handsome coat?” said Bertha, touching him.

“Not quite so gallant,” answered Caleb. “Pretty lively, though.”

“Father,” said the blind girl, drawing close to his side, and putting one arm around his neck, “tell me something about May. Is she very pretty?”

“She is indeed,” said Caleb. And she was indeed. It was quite a rare thing for Caleb not to draw upon his imagination.

“I can imagine her,” said Bertha. “Her hair is dark, darker than mine. Her voice is sweet and musical, I know. I have often loved to hear it. Her form——”

“There’s not a doll in all the room can compare with her,” said Caleb. “And her eyes!”

He stopped; for Bertha’s arm around his neck had given a sudden pressure. He coughed a moment; hammered a moment; then began to sing the gay song about the sparkling bowl, a thing he always did when in such difficulties.

“Now, about your friend, our benefactor, Mr. Tackleton—I am never tired, you know, of hearing about him. Now, was I ever?” she said hastily.

“Of course not!” answered Caleb. “And with reason.”

“Ah, with much reason!” cried the blind girl so fervently that Caleb began to doubt if he had been wise in deceiving her.

“Tell me about him, dear father,” said Bertha. “Many times again! His face is kind and tender, honest and true, I am sure it is! The goodness in his heart shines out in his countenance.”

“And makes it noble,” added Caleb, who was rather desperate by now.

“And makes it noble!” cried the blind girl. “He is older than May, Father?”

“Yes, quite a little older; but that don’t signify,” said Caleb.

“Oh, no, Father! Just to think, she can do so much for him when he grows old and infirm, and can nurse him if he gets ill, and help him in every way. Will she do all this, Father?”

“No doubt of it,” said Caleb.

“I love her for that, Father. I love her with all my heart,” exclaimed the blind girl.

The Carrier’s Cart

In the meantime there had been a lively scene at John Peerybingle’s, for little Mrs. Peerybingle naturally couldn’t think of going anywhere without the baby; and to get the baby ready took time.

Not that there was so much of the baby, but there was so much to do about it, and it all had to be done by easy stages. For instance, when the baby was got, by hook or by crook, to a certain point in dressing, and you might have supposed that another touch or two would finish him off, and turn him out a tiptop baby, he was unexpectedly extinguished in a warm nightgown, and hustled off to bed; where he simmered, so to speak, between sheets and blankets, for the best part of an hour.

From this place of inaction, he was recalled, shining very much, and roaring violently, to partake of his luncheon. After which, he went to sleep again.

Then Mrs. Peerybingle took the opportunity to make herself look as fine as possible, and Miss Slowboy put on her best bib-and-tucker.

By this time, the baby, being all alive again, was dressed by the united efforts of Mrs. Peerybingle and Miss Slowboy, and put into his cream-colored coat and flannel cap; and so, in course of time, they all three got to the door, where John’s old horse stood tearing up the road with impatient autographs, and from where Boxer might be seen a little distance down the road, looking back, tempting the horse to come on without orders.

If you think that Mrs. Peerybingle needed a chair or anything of that kind to help her climb into the cart, you are mistaken, or you don’t know John Peerybingle, for before you could have seen him, he lifted her from the ground; and there she was in place, fresh and rosy, saying, “Oh, John, how can you!”

“All ready?” asked John, starting off, after Miss Slowboy and the baby were in place.

“John, you’ve got the basket with the veal-and-ham-pie and other things?” asked Dot. “If you haven’t, you must turn around again this very minute.”

“You’re a nice little article,” replied the carrier, “to be talking about turning round after keeping me a full quarter of an hour behind my time.”

“I am sorry for it, John,” said Dot, “but I really could not think of going to Bertha’s—I would not do it, John, on any account—without the veal-and-ham-pie and things. Whoa!” This last word was addressed to the horse, who didn’t mind at all.

“Oh, do turn round, John,” begged Mrs. Peerybingle. “Please!”

“It’ll be time enough to do that,” said John, “when I begin to leave things behind me. The basket’s here safe enough.”

“What a hard-hearted monster you must be, John, not to have said so at once, and saved me such a turn! I declare I wouldn’t go to Bertha’s without the veal-and-ham-pie and things for any money. Regularly, once a fortnight, ever since we have been married we have had our little picnic. If anything were to go wrong with it, I should almost think we were never to be lucky again.”

“It was a kind thought in the first place,” said the carrier, “and I honor you for it, little woman.”

“My dear John,” replied Dot, turning very red, “don’t talk about honoring me. Good gracious!”

“By-the-bye—” observed the carrier, “that old gentleman——”

Dot looked embarrassed.

“He’s an odd fish,” said the carrier. “I can’t make him out. I don’t believe there’s any harm in him, though.”

“None at all. I’m—I’m sure there’s none at all.”

“Yes?” said the carrier, with his eyes attracted to her face because she had spoken so earnestly. “Well, I am glad you feel so certain about it, because it makes me feel surer. It’s curious he should have taken it into his head to ask us for lodgings, ain’t it? Things come about so strangely.”

“So very strangely,” she rejoined in a low voice, scarcely audible.

“However, he’s a good-natured old gentleman,” said John, “and pays as a gentleman, and I think his word is to be relied upon, like a gentleman’s. I had quite a long talk with him this morning. He can hear me better already he says, as he gets more used to my voice. He told me a great deal about himself, and I told him a good deal about myself; and a rare lot of questions he asked me. I told him about having two routes, you know, in my business; one

day going to the right from our house and back again, another day going left from our house and back again (for he's a stranger, and don't know the names of the places about here); and he seemed quite pleased. 'Why,' he says, 'then I shall be returning your way to-night. I thought I'd be coming in exactly the opposite direction. That's capital! I may trouble you for another lift, perhaps, but I'll promise not to fall asleep again.' He was sound asleep surely! Dot, what are you thinking of?"

"Thinking of, John? I—I was listening to you."

"Oh! that's all right!" said the carrier. "I was afraid, from the look of your face, that I had gone rambling on so long as to set you thinking of something else. I was very near it, I'll be bound."

Dot making no reply, they jogged on for some time in silence. But it was not very easy to remain silent long in John Peerybingle's cart, for everybody on the road had something to say, though it might only be, "How are you?" and indeed it was very often nothing else. Sometimes passengers on foot or on horseback plodded on a little way beside the cart just for the pleasure of having a chat.

Then, too, everybody knew Boxer, all along the road—especially the fowls and pigs, who, when they saw him coming, running with his body all on one side and his ears pricked up inquisitively, would make tracks and not wait for any nearer acquaintance. Wherever he went, somebody or other might cry, "Hello! Here's Boxer!" and with that, out came at least two or three other somebodies to bid John Peerybingle and his pretty wife good-day.

The packages and parcels to be delivered were as numerous as usual, and it required many stops to give them out. This was not the worst part of the journey by any means. Some people were so full of wonder about their parcels, and other people so full of directions about the parcels they were sending off by John, and John took so keen an interest in all the parcels, that it was as good as a play, and Dot thoroughly enjoyed it, as she looked on from her seat in the cart.

THEY JOGGED ON FOR SOME TIME IN SILENCE

The trip was a little foggy, to be sure, in the January weather; and was raw and cold. But who cared for such trifles? Not Dot, decidedly. Not Tilly Slowboy, for she deemed sitting in a cart, on any terms, the highest point of human joys. Not the baby, I'll be bound; for it's not in baby nature to be warmer or more sound asleep than the blessed young Peerybingle was, all the way.

You couldn't see very far in the fog, of course; but you could see a great deal! It's astonishing how much you may see in a thicker fog than that, if you will only take the trouble to look for it. Why, even to sit looking for hazy fairy rings, and ghostly figures near the hedges and trees was a pleasant occupation, to make no mention of the unexpected shapes in which the trees themselves came out of the mists and glided in again.

In one place there was a great mound of weeds burning, and they watched the fire flaring through the fog, with here and there a dash of red in it, until, because of getting "smoke up her nose," as she explained, Miss Slowboy choked and woke the baby, who wouldn't go to sleep again. But Boxer, who was in advance a quarter of a mile or so, had passed the outskirts of the town, and gained the corner of the street where Caleb and his daughter lived; and long before they reached the door, he and the blind girl were on the pavement waiting to receive them.

The Party at Caleb's

May Fielding was already there; and so was her mother, a little querulous chip of an old lady with a peevish face. Gruff and Tackleton was also there, pretending to be agreeable and perfectly at home, and really quite as much out of his element as a fish out of water.

"May! My dear old friend!" cried Dot, running up to meet her. "What happiness to see you!"

Her old friend was as glad as she, and it really was, if you'll believe me, a pleasant sight to see them embrace each other. Tackleton had shown taste, beyond all question. May was very pretty. And so was Dot pretty. They simply set each other's beauty off and, as John Peerybingle came near saying, they ought to have been born sisters—which was the only improvement you could have suggested.

Tackleton had brought his leg of mutton, and, wonderful to relate, a tart beside—but he could afford such generosity this time; one doesn't get married every day. And in addition to these dainties, there were the veal-and-ham-pie and "things," as Mrs. Peerybingle called them; which were chiefly nuts and oranges and cakes.

When the repast was set forth on the table, together with Caleb's contribution, a bowl of smoking potatoes, which was all he was allowed to provide, Tackleton led his future mother-in-law to the post of honor. Why, she was gotten up for the occasion; even wearing gloves. Caleb sat next his daughter. Dot and her old school friend were side by side. The carrier took care of the bottom of the table. Miss Slowboy was seated a little distance away, far from every other article of furniture but the chair she sat on, that she might have nothing to knock the baby's head against. She was delighted not only to take care of the baby, but to stare around at the toys.

"Ah, May," said Dot. "Dear, dear, what changes! To talk of those merry school days makes one young again."

"Why, you ain't particularly old at any time, are you?" said Tackleton.

"Look at my sober, plodding husband there," returned Dot. "He adds twenty years to my age at least. Don't you, John?"

"Forty," John replied.

"How many *you'll* add to May's I am sure I don't know," said Dot, laughing. "But she can't be much less than a hundred years of age on her next birthday."

"Ha, ha!" laughed Tackleton. Hollow as a drum was the laugh, though. And he looked as if he could have twisted Dot's neck comfortably.

"Dear, dear," said Dot. "Only think how we used to talk sometimes about the husbands we would choose. I don't know how lively and gay mine was not to be! And as to May's—ah, dear! I don't know whether to laugh or cry when I think what silly girls we were."

May seemed to know which to do, for the color flashed into her face and tears stood in her eyes.

"We little thought how things would come about," said Dot. "I never fixed on John, I'm sure; I never so much as thought of him. And if I had told you you were ever to be married to Mr. Tackleton—why, you'd have slapped me, wouldn't you, May?"

Though May didn't say yes, she certainly didn't say no, or express no, by any means.

Tackleton laughed—quite shouted, he laughed so loud. John Peerybingle laughed too, in his ordinary, good-natured and contented manner; but his was a mere whisper of a laugh compared to Tackleton's.

"You couldn't help yourselves for all that," said Tackleton. "You couldn't resist us, you see. Here we are! Here we are! Where are your gay young bridegrooms now?"

"Some of them are dead," said Dot; "and some of them forgotten. Some of them, if they could stand among us at this moment, would not believe that we are the same creatures, because they would not believe we *could* forget them so. No! they would not believe one word of it!"

"Why, Dot!" exclaimed the carrier. "Little woman!" And Dot kept quiet, while Tackleton looked at her through his half-shut eye.

May uttered no word, good or bad, but sat quite still, with her eyes downcast, and made no sign of interest in what had passed. Her mother, however, observed that girls were girls, and bygones were bygones, and that so long as young people were young and thoughtless, they would probably conduct themselves like young and thoughtless persons. She then remarked that she thanked heaven that she had always found in May a dutiful and obedient child, for which she took no credit to herself, though she had every reason to believe it was owing to herself. With regard to Mr. Tackleton, she said that he was a son-in-law to be desired, as no one in their senses could doubt.

Now, the meal ended, John Peerybingle rose to go, for he only stopped to feed his horse, and to enjoy the social hour before finishing his route. He would call for Dot on his way back. This was always the program on picnic days.

"Good-by," he said, pulling on his dreadnought coat. "I shall be back at the usual time. Good-by, all."

Then he called Boxer, and soon the old horse and the cart were making lively music down the road.

Caleb and Bertha were talking together at one end of the room.

"So bring me the precious baby, Tilly," said Dot, drawing a chair to the fire; "and while I have him in my lap, here's Mrs. Fielding, Tilly, who will tell me all about the management of babies, and straighten me out in twenty points where I'm as wrong as can be. Won't you, Mrs. Fielding?"

Here Tackleton walked out, and Mrs. Fielding, sitting bolt upright in front of Dot, gave her such a marvelous collection of receipts and rules that would, if Dot had carried them out, have utterly destroyed the young Peerybingle, even if he had been an infant Samson.

Now Dot brought her needlework out of her pocket, and had a whispering chat with May while the old lady dozed, and after a while Caleb and Bertha joined them, and all found it a very short afternoon.

Then as it grew dark, since it was the solemn rule that Bertha should do no household tasks on the days of the picnics, Dot trimmed the fire, and swept the hearth, and set the tea-tray out, and drew the curtains, and lighted a candle. Then she played an air or two on a rude kind of harp which Caleb had made for Bertha, and played them very well; for Nature had made her delicate little ear as choice a one for music as it would have been for jewels—if she had had them to wear.

By this time, it was the usual hour for tea, and Tackleton came back again, to share the meal and spend the evening.

When it was night, and tea was over, and Dot had nothing more to do after washing the cups and saucers—when the time drew near for the carrier's return, Dot began to grow nervous. Every time she heard the sound of distant wheels, her color came and went, and she was restless. Not as good wives are when listening for their husbands. No, no, no. It was a different sort of restlessness from that.

Soon wheels were heard very near—horse's feet—the barking of a dog—and then the scratching of Boxer's paw.

"Whose step is that?" cried Bertha, starting up.

"'Whose step'?" said the carrier, standing in the door, his brown face ruddy as a winter berry from the keen night air. "Why, mine."

"The other step," Bertha said. "The man's tread behind you!"

"She's not to be deceived," observed the carrier, laughing. "Come along, sir. You'll be welcome, never fear!"

The Shadow on the Hearth

He spoke in a loud tone; and as he spoke, the deaf old gentleman entered.

"He's not so much a stranger that you haven't seen him once, Caleb," said the carrier. "You'll give him house-room till we go?"

"Oh, surely, John, and take it as an honor."

"He's the best company on earth to talk secrets in," said John. "I have reasonably good lungs, but he tried them, I'll tell you." Turning to the old gentleman, he spoke in a loud voice again, "Sit down, sir. All friends here, and glad to see you."

Then he added in his natural tone, "A chair in the chimney-corner, and leave to sit silent and look pleasantly about him is all he cares for. He's easily pleased."

Bertha had been listening intently. She called Caleb to her side, and when he came, asked him, in a low voice, to describe their visitor. When he had done so, she moved away and showed no further interest in him.

The carrier was in high spirits, good fellow that he was, and fonder of his little wife than ever.

"Some folks may think it queer," he said jokingly, putting his rough arm about her, as she stood apart from the others, "but I like this little lady somehow. Look yonder, Dot."

He pointed to the old man. She looked down. I think she trembled.

"He's—ha, ha, ha!—he is so fond of you that he talked of nothing else the whole way here. I like him for it."

"I wish he had a better subject, John," she said with an uneasy glance about the room—at Tackleton especially.

"A better subject!" cried the jovial John. "There's no such thing. Come! Off with the great-coat, off with this thick shawl, off with the heavy wrappings! And now for a cozy half-hour by the fire. How would it please you, Mrs. Fielding, to have a game of cards, you and I?

All right? Where are the cards, Dot—and will you let us have a cup of tea here if there's any left, small wife?"

Soon the carrier and the old lady were deep within the game. At first the carrier looked about him sometimes with a smile, or now and then called Dot to peep over his shoulder to advise him on some knotty point. But soon he became so absorbed that he had neither eyes nor ears to spare, and his whole attention was upon the cards, and he thought of nothing else, until a hand was laid upon his shoulder.

"I am sorry to disturb you," said Tackleton in a low voice, "but I want a word with you, please."

"It's my turn to deal," returned the carrier. "Can you wait?"

"No," said Tackleton. "Come on, man."

There was an expression in his pale face which made John rise immediately, and ask him in a hurry what the matter was.

"Hush, John Peerybingle," said Tackleton. "I am sorry for this. I am indeed. I have been afraid of it. I have suspected it from the first."

"What is it?" asked the carrier in alarm.

"Hush! I'll show you if you'll come with me."

The carrier accompanied him without another word. They went across the yard, where the stars were shining, and by a little side door they entered Tackleton's own counting-house. There, through a window, they could look into a window of the wareroom where the boxes of toys were kept. The counting-house was closed for the night, and there was no light, but a dim light was burning in the wareroom, so they could easily see within.

"Wait a moment!" said Tackleton. "Can you bear to look through that window, do you think?"

"Why not?" asked the carrier.

"It will be a shock," said Tackleton. "Promise not to do anything violent."

And then John looked, and what do you think he saw?

He saw his dear young wife with the old man—old no longer, but straight and handsome, holding in his hands his soft white hair with which he had made every one think him old and treat him so kindly. He saw her listening to him as he bent his head to whisper

in her ear, and then let him place his arm about her waist and lead her slowly to the door. He saw her, with her own hands, adjust the wig on his head, laughing as she did so!

John felt weak as an infant as Tackleton led him back to the house.

He was wrapped up to the chin and busy with his horse and parcels when she came into the room, ready for going home.

"Now, John, dear! Good-night, May! Good-night, Bertha," she said.

How could she kiss them? How be so blithe and gay in her parting? Why didn't she blush? Tackleton as well as John wondered.

Tilly was hushing the baby and as she walked to and fro, she was repeating drowsily:
"Did they thought that it was to be its wives wring its heart almost to breaking? and did it weep all nights when nobody was there to see it?"

"Now, Tilly, give me the baby," said little Mrs. Peerybingle. "Good-night, Mr. Tackleton. Where's John, for goodness' sake?"

"He's going to walk beside the horse's head," said Tackleton, who helped her into the cart.

"My dear John! Walk?—to-night?"

The muffled figure of her husband made a hasty sign; and the Stranger and nurse being by this time in their places, the old horse moved off, Boxer running on before, running back, running round and round the cart, and barking merrily.

When Tackleton had gone off likewise, taking May and her mother, poor Caleb sat down by the fire beside his daughter. The toys that had been wound and set in motion for the baby had run down long ago. In the silence one might have imagined that they had been stricken motionless with wonder at Dot being false, or Tackleton beloved under any set of circumstances.

Presently Bertha spoke.

"After Mr. Tackleton is married, we shall not see so much of him, shall we, Father?"

"Well, we might—that is to say—" began Caleb.

"How I should love to be like May, Father, and have my eyes so that I might serve him, might show my love for him, who has been so good, so kind, so dear."

Poor Caleb! How often he said to himself as he looked at her, in remorse, "Have I deceived her from her cradle, thinking to make her happier, but to break her heart at last?"

XXXVI

CHIRP THE THIRD

John Listens to the Cricket

THE Dutch clock in the corner struck ten, when the carrier sat down at his fireside. So troubled was he that he scarcely heard the cuckoo as it counted off the strokes.

He could scarcely believe what his eyes had seen in the wareroom of Gruff and Tackleton. If any one had told him, he would not have believed his Dot could be a party to such dreadful deceit.

Yet, in his own heart, he did not blame her, but rather the old young man who had been so wickedly unfair, and he was planning to do him harm to pay him back. He hoped that Dot would be able to explain; but no—there really wasn't any hope of that.

There, she was coming.

She had been upstairs with the baby, putting it to bed.

As he sat brooding near the hearth, she came close to him, and put her little stool at his feet. He then felt her hand upon his own, and knew she was looking up in his face.

He glanced at her. She looked as sweet as ever, until she caught the expression on his face. At first she seemed surprised, then her surprise changed in a wild recognition of his thoughts, and she simply bent her head and clasped her hands, but no words were said.

At length she rose and went away, and he felt glad, for the first time since he had known her, to have her gone.

There was a gun hanging on the wall. He took it down, and moved toward the Stranger's room. He put his hand to the door—when suddenly the struggling fire burst into a glow of light, and the cricket on the hearth began to chirp.

No sound he could have heard, no human voice, not even hers, could so have moved and softened him. The very words in which she had told him of her love for this same cricket were as if just spoken in her sweet, pleasant voice, making household music; and they thrilled through and through his better nature, and awoke it into life and action.

He moved from the door like a man who had been walking in his sleep when awakening from a frightful dream. He put the gun aside. Clasping his hands before his face, he sat down again beside the fire.

The cricket on the hearth came out into the room and stood in fairy shape before him.

"'I love it'," said the fairy voice, "'for the many times I have heard it, and the many thoughts its harmless music has given me'."

"She said so!" cried the carrier. "True!" "'This has been a happy home, John; and I love the cricket for its sake.'"

"She's so sweet-tempered, so cheerful, busy, light-hearted. Otherwise I never could have loved her as I did."

The voice, correcting him, said, "do."

"You should trust her," the fairy voice said.

All night long he listened to the voice. All night long the household fairies were busy with him, showing him how sweet and dear she was; how he had never found her untrue, or had reason to doubt her except this once.

He rose up when it was broad day, and washed and tidied himself.

He could not go on his usual rounds, for it was Tackleton's wedding day. He had planned to go merrily to the church with Dot. But such plans were at an end. Ah! what a different wedding anniversary he had expected!

John Blames Himself

The carrier had thought that Tackleton would pay him an early visit, and he was right. He had just finished brushing his hair when he saw the merchant in his carriage coming along the road. As the carriage drew near he saw that Tackleton was dressed out sprucely for marriage, and that he had decorated his horse's head with flowers and favors.

The horse looked much more like a bridegroom than Tackleton, whose half-closed eye was more disagreeably expressive than ever. But the carrier took little heed of this. His thoughts were elsewhere.

"John Peerybingle!" said Tackleton. "My good fellow, how do you find yourself this morning?"

"I have had but a poor night, Mr. Tackleton," said the carrier, shaking his head, "for I have been a good deal disturbed in my mind. But it's over now! Can you spare me half an hour or so, for some private talk?"

"I came on purpose," returned Tackleton lightly. "Never mind the horse. He'll stand quiet enough if you'll give him a mouthful of hay."

"You are not to be married before noon, I think?" said John.

"No," answered Tackleton. "Plenty of time. Plenty of time."

When they entered the kitchen, Tilly Slowboy was knocking at the Stranger's door. One of her very red eyes was at the keyhole, for she had been crying because her mistress cried. She was knocking very loud, and seemed frightened.

"If you please, I can't make nobody hear," said Tilly, looking round. "I hope nobody ain't gone and been and died, if you please."

This hope Miss Slowboy made more emphatic by kicking on the door, but it led to no result.

"Shall I help?" asked Tackleton, turning to John.

The carrier nodded his head.

So Tackleton went to the door and he, too, kicked and knocked; and he, too, failed to get any reply. But he thought of trying the handle of the door, and as it opened easily, he peeped in, went in, and soon came running out again.

"He's gone!" said Tackleton; "and the window's open. I don't see any marks—to be sure—or signs of a fight, but I thought perhaps you might have been so angry——"

He nearly shut up the expressive eye altogether, he looked at John so hard. And he gave his eye, and his face, and his whole body, a sharp twist, as if he would have screwed the truth out of John.

"Make yourself easy," said the carrier. "He went into that room last night without harm in word or act from me, and no one has entered it since. He has gone away of his own free will."

"Oh! Well, I think he has got off pretty easy," said Tackleton, taking a chair.

The sneer was lost upon the carrier, who sat down, too, and shaded his face in his hand for some time before speaking.

"You showed me last night," he said at length, "my wife, my dear wife that I love, deceiving me, and meeting a strange man who had deceived me. I think there's no man in the world I wouldn't rather have had show it to me."

"I confess I know that I am not a favorite in your home, John, because I never believed wholly in your pretty little wife," said Tackleton.

"And as you did show me, and as you saw her to such disadvantage, it is right you should know what my mind is on the subject. For it's settled, and nothing can change it."

Tackleton muttered a few words about its being necessary to decide, but he was overawed by the manner of his companion. Plain and unpolished as it was, there was something noble and dignified about it.

"I am a plain, rough man," continued the carrier, "with very little to recommend me. I am not a clever man, as you very well know. I am not a young man. I loved my little Dot because I had seen her grow up from a child, in her father's house; because I knew how precious she was; because she had been in my life for years and years."

He paused a moment, then went on.

"I often thought that though I wasn't good enough for her, I should make her a kind husband, and perhaps appreciate her better than another. And so it came about we were married."

"Hah!" said Tackleton, with a shake of his head.

"I knew how much I loved her, and how happy I should be," continued the carrier; "but I had not sufficiently considered her."

"No," said Tackleton. "No; you didn't stop to think how giddy, frivolous, fickle, vain! Hah!"

"You'd better not interrupt me," said the carrier, with some sternness, "till you understand me, which you seem far from doing."

The toy merchant looked at him in surprise.

"I didn't consider that I took her, at her age, with her beauty, away from her young companions and their many scenes of pleasure into my dull house and my tedious society. I didn't consider how little suited I was to her fun and humor, and how wearisome I must be

to one of her quick spirit. No! I took advantage of her hopeful nature, and I married her. I shouldn't have done so!"

The toy merchant gazed at him without winking. Even the half-shut eye was now open.

"Heaven bless her!" said the carrier, "for the cheerful way she has tried not to let me see how it was! Heaven help me, that, in my slow mind I have not found it out before. Poor child! Poor Dot! Strange I did not realize when I have seen her eyes fill with tears on hearing of such a marriage as our own spoken of. How good and kind she has been! The thought will comfort me when I am here alone."

"Here alone?" said Tackleton. "Then you do mean to take some notice of her deceit?"

"I mean," answered the carrier, "to do her the greatest kindness in my power—to try to make it all up to her. She shall be free to go where she will."

"Make it up to her!" exclaimed Tackleton, twisting and turning his great ears with his hands. "I must have heard wrong. You didn't say that, of course."

"Didn't I speak plainly?" said the carrier, giving the toy merchant a shake.

"Very plainly indeed," answered Tackleton.

"As if I meant it?"

"Very much as if you meant it."

"Anger and distrust have left me," said the carrier; "and nothing but my grief remains. In an unhappy moment some old lover, better suited to her years than I, returned. Last night she saw him in the interview we witnessed. It was wrong. But otherwise than this, she is innocent if there is truth on earth! I should not have taken her from her home. She shall return to it, and I will trouble her no more. Her father and mother will be here to-day, and they shall take her home. This is the end of what you showed me. Now, it's over."

"Oh, no, John, not over. Do not say it's over yet. Not quite yet. I heard your noble words. I could not steal out again, letting you think me ignorant of what you said. Do not say it's over—'till the clock has struck again!"

Dot had entered quietly while John and Tackleton were talking, and had heard every word.

"No hand can make the clock which will strike again for me the hours that are gone," replied the carrier, with a faint smile. "But let it be so, if you will, my dear."

"Well!" muttered Tackleton. "I must be off, for when it strikes again, I must be on my way to church. Good-by, John Peerybingle."

The carrier saw him to the door, watched his horse until it disappeared in the distance, and then went out himself.

His little wife, being left alone, sobbed piteously, but often dried her tears to say how good and dear he was!—and once or twice she laughed through her tears so heartily and triumphantly that Tilly was quite horrified.

"Ow, if you please, don't!" said Tilly. "It's enough to dead and bury the baby; so it is, if you please."

"Will you bring him to see me sometimes," inquired her mistress, "when I don't live here, and have gone to my old home?"

"Ow, if you please, don't!" cried Tilly, throwing back her head. She looked a great deal like Boxer when he howled. "Ow, if you please, don't! What has everybody gone and been and done with everybody, making everybody so miserable? Ow-w-w!"

Caleb Confesses His Deceit

And she might have kept on, if just at that moment Caleb Plummer had not come in, leading his daughter.

"Why, Mary" (which was Dot's other name, you remember). "Why, Mary!" said Bertha. "Not at the wedding?"

"I told her you would not be there, mum," whispered Caleb. "I heard as much last night. But bless you," said the little man, "I don't care what they say. I don't believe them. There ain't much of me, but what little there is would be torn to pieces sooner than I'd believe a word against you!"

He put his arms around her neck and hugged her very much as a child might have hugged one of the dolls he had made.

"Bertha wanted to come see you instead of going to the wedding," said Caleb, "so we started in good time. I often wish I had not deceived her in regard to Tackleton, and I've come to the conclusion that I'd better tell her the truth. You'll stay with us while I tell her, won't you, mum?" he inquired, trembling from head to foot. "I don't know what effect it may have upon her. I don't know what she'll think of me; I don't know that she'll ever care for her father afterwards. But it's best she should be undeceived, and I must bear the consequences as I deserve."

"Mary," said Bertha, "where is your hand? I heard them speaking softly last night of some blame against you. They were wrong. I told them so. I scorned to hear a word! I know

and trust you, Mary, so well that could my sight be restored at this instant, I could choose you from a crowd—my sister!"

Her father went on one side of her, while Dot remained on the other, holding her hand.

"Bertha, my dear," said Caleb, "I have something on my mind I want to tell you while we three are alone. Listen kindly! I have a confession to make to you."

"A confession, Father?"

"Yes, my child; I have wandered from the truth," said Caleb, with a pitiable expression in his face. "I have wandered from the truth, intending to be kind to you; and have been cruel."

She turned toward him, and repeated the word, "Cruel?"

"He accuses himself too strongly, Bertha," said Dot. "You'll say so, presently. You'll be the first to tell him so."

"He, cruel to me?" cried Bertha, with an unbelieving smile.

"Not meaning to be, my child," said Caleb, "but I have been, although I never knew it until yesterday. My dear blind daughter, forgive me. The world, dear heart, is not as you imagine it. It is not as I have represented it. The eyes you have trusted in have been false to you."

She turned her wondering face toward him still, but drew back, and clung closer to her friend.

"Your road in life was rough, my poor one," said Caleb, "and I meant to smooth it for you. I have pictured things to you as different from what they are. I have even changed the characters of some people, to make you happier. I have surrounded you with fancies."

"But living people are not fancies," she said, turning very pale. "You can't change them."

"I have done so, Bertha," Caleb told her. "There is one person you know——"

"Oh, Father, why do you say I know?" she said. "I who am so miserably blind."

She stretched out her hands as if to feel her way.

"The marriage that takes place to-day," Caleb continued, "is with a stern, sordid, grinding man. He has been a hard master to you and me, my dear, for many years. Ugly in

his looks and in his nature. Cold and callous always. Unlike what I have painted him to you in everything, my child—in everything."

"Oh, why," cried the blind girl, "why did you ever do this? Teach me to love a person who really never existed? It is like death!"

Her poor father hung his head and offered no reply in his penitence and sorrow.

Suddenly the cricket on the hearth, unheard by all but her, began to chirp, not merrily, but so mournfully that her tears began to flow; and when the fairy spirit which had been near the carrier all night, appeared behind her, pointing toward her father, she turned to Dot.

"Mary," she said, "tell me what my home is like—what it is truly."

"It is a poor place, Bertha; very poor and bare indeed. The house will scarcely keep out the wind and rain another winter. It is as roughly shielded from the weather, Bertha," Dot continued in a low voice, "as your poor father in his sackcloth coat."

The blind girl, greatly agitated, rose and led the carrier's wife a little aside.

"Those presents that I treasured so much; that came almost at my wish," she said, trembling; "where did they come from? Did you send them?"

"No."

"Who, then?"

Dot saw she knew already, and was silent. The blind girl spread her hands before her face again, but in quite a different manner now.

"Dear Mary, a moment, please. Speak softly. Tell me truly. Look across the room to where we were sitting just now—to where my father is—my father, so kind and loving to me—and tell me what you see."

"I see," said Dot, who understood her well, "an old man sitting in a chair, and leaning over sorrowfully with his head resting in his hands. He looks as if his child should comfort him, Bertha."

"Yes, yes. She will. Go on."

"He is an old man, worn with care and work. He is a sad, thoughtful, gray-haired man, who seems to have lost the object he most loved in the world—his child for whom he lived."

The blind girl broke away from her, and dropping on her knees before him, threw her arms around his neck.

“Oh, my Father! My dear, dear Father!” she cried. “I have been so blind! But now my eyes are open. I never knew you. To think, I might have died and never truly known the father who has been so loving to me!”

Caleb managed to say, “My Bertha!”

“And in my blindness, I believed him to be so different,” said the girl, still caressing him, “so young and gay!”

“The fresh, smart father in the blue coat—” said poor Caleb, “he’s gone!”

“Nothing is gone,” she answered. “Dearest Father, no! Everything is here—in you. But, Father——” She hesitated.

“Mary—Mary is just what you told me? There is no change in her? You never told me anything of her that was not true?”

“I should have done so, I’m afraid,” said Caleb, “if I could have made her better than she was. But I must have changed her for the worse, if I had changed *her* at all. Nothing could improve her, Bertha.”

The blind girl was delighted with this reply, even though she had felt so sure of what it must be, and her renewed embrace of Dot was charming to behold.

The Dead Returns to Life

Dot glanced at the clock, and saw that it was within a few minutes of striking, and immediately became very excited.

“More changes than you think for may happen, though,” said Dot; “changes for the better, I mean; changes for great joy to some of us. You mustn’t let them startle you too much when they come. But listen! You’ve a quick ear, Bertha. Do you hear wheels upon the road?”

“Yes—coming very fast.”

“I—I—I know you have a quick ear,” said Dot, holding her hand to her heart and talking as fast as she could, “because I have often noticed it, and because you were so quick to hear that strange step last night. Though why you should have taken such quick notice of it, and said, ‘Whose step is that?’ seems strange. But, as I said just now, there are great changes in this world; great changes, and we can’t do better than prepare ourselves to be surprised at hardly anything.”

Caleb wondered what she meant, for he saw that she was speaking to him as much as to his daughter. He saw with astonishment, that she was fluttered and distressed, and could scarcely breathe, as she held to a chair to save herself from falling.

“They are wheels indeed!” she panted. “Coming nearer! Nearer! Very close! And now you hear them stopping at the garden gate! And now you hear a step outside the door—the same step, Bertha—is it not?—and now!——”

She uttered a cry of delight; and running up to Caleb, put her hands over his eyes, as a young man rushed into the room, and flinging his hat into the air, came sweeping down upon them.

“Is it over?” cried Dot.

“Yes!”

“Happily over?”

“Yes!”

“Do you know the voice, dear Caleb? Did you ever hear one like it before?” cried Dot.

“If my boy who went to South America had not died—if he were alive—” said Caleb, trembling.

“He is alive!” shrieked Dot, taking her hands from his eyes, and clapping them in ecstasy. “Look at him! See, here he stands before you, healthy and strong! Your own dear son. Your own dear living brother, Bertha!”

She turned to meet the sunburned sailor half way, and let him kiss her heartily.

Just at this moment, the carrier entered. Upon seeing them thus, he started back.

“Look, John!” cried Caleb. “Look here! My own son! Him that you fitted out, and sent away yourself! Him you were always such a friend to!”

The carrier advanced to seize him by the hand, but stepped back as he noticed his resemblance to the deaf man in the cart.

“Edward! Was it you?”

“Now tell him all!” cried Dot. “Tell him all, Edward, and don’t spare me.”

“I was the man,” said Edward.

“And you stole, disguised, into the home of your old friend!” the carrier said. “I would never have believed it of you! There was a true and frank boy once—how many years is it, Caleb, since we heard that he was dead, and had it proved, we thought? He would never have done that!”

“There was a generous friend of mine, once, a friend, who was more a father than a friend; he never would have judged a man before he heard his case. You were he. So I am certain you will hear me now.”

The carrier, with a troubled glance at Dot, replied, “Well, that’s but fair. I will.”

“You must know, then, that when I left here, a boy, I was in love, and my love was returned, but the girl was very young, and couldn’t quite make up her mind. Still I felt quite certain that she loved me as dearly as I loved her.”

“You did!” exclaimed the carrier.

“Yes; and now I am sure she did. So all through the hardships and perils of my years away, I was constantly thinking of when I should come back to her. When I landed, twenty miles from here, I heard she had bestowed herself upon another and a richer man. I did not wish to find fault with her if she had preferred him. What I wanted to find out was whether she had done this of her own free will. I wanted to judge for myself just how she felt, so I disguised myself—you know how; and waited on the road—you know where. You had no suspicion of me; neither had she,” pointing to Dot, “until I whispered in her ear at the fireside, and so startled her that she nearly betrayed me.”

“Oh, Dot!” exclaimed the carrier.

“But when she knew that Edward was alive, and had come back,” sobbed Dot, now speaking for herself, as she had long wished to do, “and when he told her why he had disguised himself, she advised him to keep his secret close, by all means; for she knew that his old friend, John Peerybingle, was too open in his nature to keep such a secret, no matter how he tried. Then she—that’s me, John—told him all, how his sweetheart had thought him dead; and how she had, after all the years, been over-persuaded by her mother, because the silly, dear, old thing called the marriage advantageous; and when she—that’s me, John—told him they were not yet married (but soon would be) and that it would be nothing but a sacrifice if it went on, for there was no love on her side; and when he went nearly wild with joy to hear it; when she—that’s me again, John—said she would help him, and carry messages to his sweetheart, as she had so often done as a girl; and she would find out what his sweetheart thought was right——”

“Oh!” said John.

“And it was right, John,” Dot continued, catching her breath, “for they were married, John, an hour ago! And here’s the bride! And Gruff and Tackleton may die a bachelor! And I’m a happy little woman. May God bless you!”

As she drew May forward and lavished all kinds of good wishes and congratulations upon her, the carrier stood confounded. As he flew towards her, Dot stretched out her hand to stop him.

"John, dear John, forgive me! It was wrong to have a secret from you. I'm very sorry. I didn't think it any harm until the night when I came and sat down by you on the little stool. But when I looked at your face, I knew you must have seen me walking in the wareroom with Edward, and were suspicious of me. But oh, John, how could—how could you think wrong of me?"

John Peerybingle would have caught her in his arms; but no, she wouldn't let him.

"Wait a minute, please, John dear, until you let me hear you tell me that you believe me, and trust me, and that you know how much I love you—so much that I'll never have another secret from you; and that you'll never, never think of sending me from my home, and yours, John, and our cricket on the hearth."

Then you would have been delighted to see Dot run into the carrier's arms. You may be sure the carrier was in a state of perfect rapture; and you may be sure that everybody, especially Miss Slowboy, wept for joy, and she, wishing to include the baby, handed him around to everyone in succession as if he were something to eat or drink.

But now the sound of wheels was heard again outside the door, and somebody exclaimed that Gruff and Tackleton was coming back in. Soon he appeared, looking warm and flustered.

"My, what in nation's this, John Peerybingle!" said Tackleton. "There's some mistake. I had an appointment with Miss Fielding to meet me at the church, and—oh, here she is!" seeing her with Edward, to whom he then turned, saying:

"I beg your pardon, sir; I haven't the pleasure of knowing you; but if you can do me the favor to spare this young lady—she has a rather particular engagement with me this morning."

"But I can't spare her," said Edward. "I couldn't think of it."

"What do you mean, you vagabond?" exclaimed Tackleton.

"I mean—and I pardon you for being vexed—I mean that I am as deaf to your harsh words as I was last night."

Such a startled look as Tackleton gave him!

“It is too bad, sir,” said Edward, holding out May’s left hand, especially the third finger, “that the young lady can’t accompany you to the church; but as she has been there once this morning, perhaps you’ll excuse her.”

Tackleton looked hard at the third finger, and took a ring out of his waistcoat pocket.

“Miss Slowboy,” said Tackleton, “will you have the kindness to throw that into the fire? Thank you.”

“It was a previous engagement, quite an old engagement, that prevented my wife from keeping her appointment with you, I assure you,” said Edward.

“Mr. Tackleton will do me the justice to say that I told him about this old engagement many times, and that I never could forget it,” said May, blushing.

“Oh, certainly,” said Tackleton. “Oh, to be sure! Oh, it’s all right, it’s quite correct. You are now Mrs. Edward Plummer, I infer?”

“That’s the name,” said the bridegroom.

“Ah, I shouldn’t have known you,” said Tackleton. “I give you joy, sir.”

With these words, he hurried away, merely stopping at the gate to take the flowers and favors off the horse’s head, and to kick the horse once, just to relieve his feelings.

Of course, the next thing in order was the wedding feast; and Dot set to work with all her might, even calling in some neighborly help, and everybody, as if on the point of life or death, ran against each other in all the doorways, and round all the corners, tumbling over Tilly Slowboy and the baby everywhere.

Then there was an expedition to find Mrs. Fielding, and to apologize to her, and to bring her back, happy and forgiving. At first, she would not listen at all, and wouldn’t say anything but, “Now carry me to my grave,” which seemed absurd, on account of her not being dead, or even ill.

After a while she settled down into a dreadful calm, and advantage was taken of this to get her into her coat and gloves, and carry her off to John Peerybingle’s.

When they reached the house, there were Dot’s father and mother; and May’s mother and Dot’s mother began to renew their acquaintance.

After a grand confusion of talk and action, they actually were seated at the table. To have missed that dinner would have been to have missed as good and as jolly a meal as man need eat.

After dinner, Caleb sang his song about the sparkling bowl; and, you may not believe it, but he sang it through.

And, by-the-bye, a most unexpected thing occurred just as he finished the last verse.

Tackleton Does the Unexpected

There was a tap at the door, and a man came staggering in with a big round box, which he set on the table in the center of the nuts and apples. He said:

"Mr. Tackleton's compliments, and as he hasn't got no use for the cake himself, perhaps you'll eat it."

And with these words, he walked off.

There was some surprise among the company, as you may imagine. Mrs. Fielding suggested that the cake might be poisoned, and told about a cake which she had heard of that had turned a seminary of young ladies blue. But, notwithstanding the story, the cake was cut by May with much ceremony and rejoicing.

I don't think any one had tasted it, when there came another tap at the door, and the same man appeared again, having under his arm a big brown paper parcel.

"Mr. Tackleton's compliments, and he's sent a few toys for the baby. They ain't ugly."

The whole party would not have been able to find words to express their astonishment even if they had had plenty of time. But they had none, for the messenger had scarcely shut the door when there came another tap, and Tackleton himself walked in.

"Mrs. Peerybingle!" said the toy merchant, hat in hand, "I'm sorry. I'm sour by disposition, but I am going to try to do better. Caleb, I might have had you and your daughter for dear friends. As it is, my house is lonely to-night. I have not even a cricket on the hearth. I have scared them all away. Be kind to me, please; let me join this happy party!"

He was at home in five minutes. You never saw such a fellow. *What* had he been doing with himself all his life, never to have known before how much fun he had in him! Or what had the fairies been doing with him to change him so!

There was but one more living creature wanted to make the party complete, and in the twinkling of an eye, there he was, very thirsty—with hard running, for Boxer had gone all the way with the cart on its journey, and being disgusted at finding his master absent, and unable to induce the horse to come with him, had turned tail and trotted home.

There was a dance in the evening; but since the old people didn't dance, and Dot said her dancing days were over because, I believe, she preferred to sit near the carrier really, Edward and May were the only dancers, and they got up amid great applause, to dance alone, while Bertha played her liveliest tune.

Well, if you'll believe me, they had not been dancing five minutes, when the carrier suddenly jumps up, takes Dot round the waist, dashes out into the room, and starts off with her, toe and heel, quite wonderfully. Tackleton no sooner sees this than he skims across to Mrs. Fielding, and follows suit. Then Dot's father and mother, and Caleb and Tilly Slowboy join in.

Hark! how the cricket joins the music with its chirp! chirp! chirp! and how the kettle hums!

THE RETURN HOME
GOOD-BY, MARY FRANCES. COME AGAIN!

THE RETURN HOME

XXXVII

GOOD-BY, MARY FRANCES. COME AGAIN!

IN the middle of the story, "The Cricket on the Hearth," when everybody was so anxious to hear more, there came the sound of many voices, and then a loud scream. Mary Frances knew it was the voice of the old witch, who had been listening.

"Let me be!" she was crying. "I don't want to go away! I want to find out who the old man was! I want to find out who the old man was! I want to see if Tackleton did marry May Fielding! I won't go! S-so there! Did I tramp all the miles to get here just to be taken back again?"

Then came the deep, heavy voice of the giant: "Be quiet!" it said. "Be quiet! No, you won't have to go back. We'll take you. This time we'll lock you up so tight you'll stay where you're put, and you'll come when you're bid. That's what you'll do!"

"S-somebody tell me quick!" screamed the old witch. "Quick! Did May Fielding marry Tackleton? Did she? Did she?" and Mary Frances heard her screaming, "Did she? Did she?" until her voice died away.

How Mary Frances longed to tell her no, but she did not dare!

"She deserves her punishment," the Queen whispered, and since she knew that that was true, Mary Frances did not speak.

After the story was over, she received her copy from the Ready Writer and slipped it into her story satchel with the rest of the stories. Then she wandered down by the seashore alone. Near the shore there was a boy with a feather in his cap sitting on a rock. She knew him in a minute.

“Where did the giant take the old witch, do you think, Peter Pan?” she asked.

“To the Devil’s Den,” said Peter. “I saw them go.”

“To the Devil’s Den!” cried Mary Frances. “How dreadful!”

“It’s not such a bad place,” said Peter. “It is just a deep cave. It is lighted from a large opening in the top. Its name is the worst thing about it; but the old witch cannot get out of it if they lock her in.”

“Oh, she got away from the giant’s basket, then?”

“She did. She was so crazy to hear a story through that she watched her first chance to make off when the giant guard was asleep.”

“What about the pirate?” asked Mary Frances.

“He is chained to a rock in the Pirate’s Cove, and he spends his time jumping in and out of the water. He has jumped so much and so hard that the suds are rising all around him just as when you blow bubbles in a bowl, holding the pipe down in the water. Poor thing! Some day the suds will rise so high that the bubbles will cover him and smother him.”

“Is there no way for him to save himself?” asked Mary Frances.

“Certainly!” said Peter Pan. “All he has to do is to be good; but he won’t be! He’s just naturally wicked. He’d murder fairies if he could, and he’d steal all the stories in the world, and he’d feed children on charcoal and castor oil—he told me so once. It was after I caught him trying to steal my shadow.”

“He must have a wicked heart!” said Mary Frances.

“Once I asked him why he was so bad,” Peter told her “and what do you think he said?”

“I don’t know, I’m sure,” she returned.

“He said it was because his mother never kissed him.”

“His mother never kissed him!” exclaimed Mary Frances. “Why, what a queer kind of mother! Now my mother——”

Suddenly she felt very homesick. Tears sprang to her eyes. “Why, Peter!” she cried wistfully. “Why, Peter! It must be over a year since my mother kissed me! Shall I turn wicked, too? Oh, I wish I could see her—my own dear mother!”

As she finished speaking, a beautiful little sail-boat appeared before them. It was smaller than The Good Ferry.

“Step aboard, then,” said Peter Pan, rising and leading her toward the boat. “This is a fairy boat. You will be home in an hour. Sit in the stern. Take the tiller in your hand. Hold it steady, and wish out loud where you want to go.”

He helped Mary Frances into the boat.

“Oh, but I haven’t thanked the Story People for my wonderful, wonderful time!” she exclaimed. “I wish I could thank them!”

Even as she spoke, every door and window of the castle opened and the Story People appeared.

“Thank you all! Thank you forever—and—ever! Thank you for all the girls and boys in the world!” cried Mary Frances.

“Have you your stories?” called the Story King.

“Yes, I have them here!” said Mary Frances, holding up her story satchel.

“When you want more, come again, dear child,” called the Story Queen.

“Oh, yes, come again!” called all the Story People. “For we love you! The Story People love all children. Take our love to all you can, and good-by! Good-by! Good-by!”

“Good-by, dear, dear friends!” called Mary Frances, as the little boat sailed away. “Good-by, and thank you!”

She watched until the island was too far away for her to make out the forms of the people at the castle windows. Then she wished aloud, “Home! Take me to my mother and father and my brother, little fairy sail-boat!”

And the wind blew and filled the sails and the sun warmed and cheered her, and the waves danced about the boat, making little lapping sounds which were like music—and the next thing she knew she was running up the garden walk into her mother’s open arms.

“The stories are not yours, dear; they belong to all children,” said her mother, when Mary Frances emptied her story satchel, and told of her wonderful adventures among the Story People. “Let us make enough copies for them all.”

And so they wrote this book.