

REALLY TRULY
FAIRY STORIES

HELEN S. WOODRUFF





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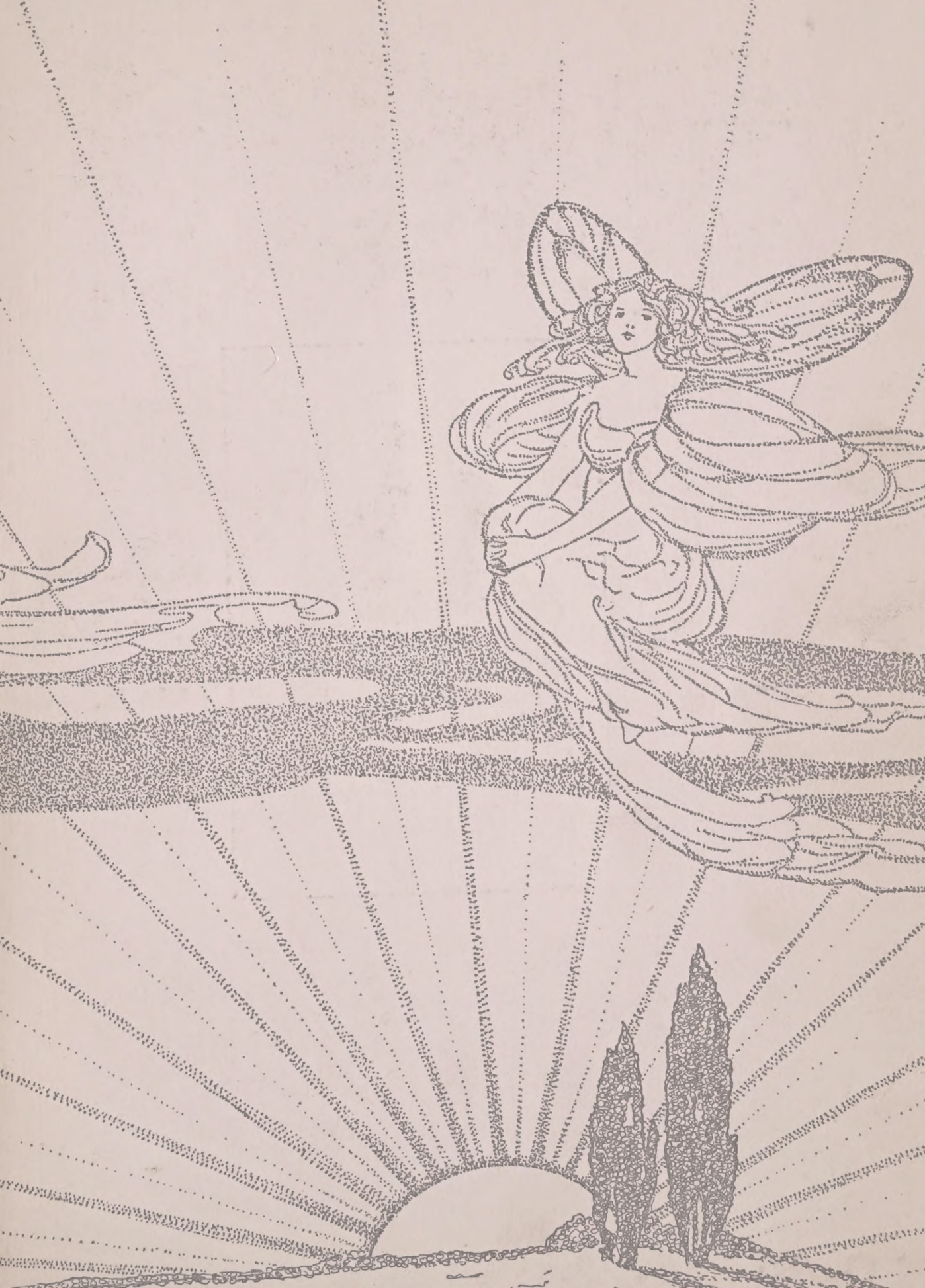
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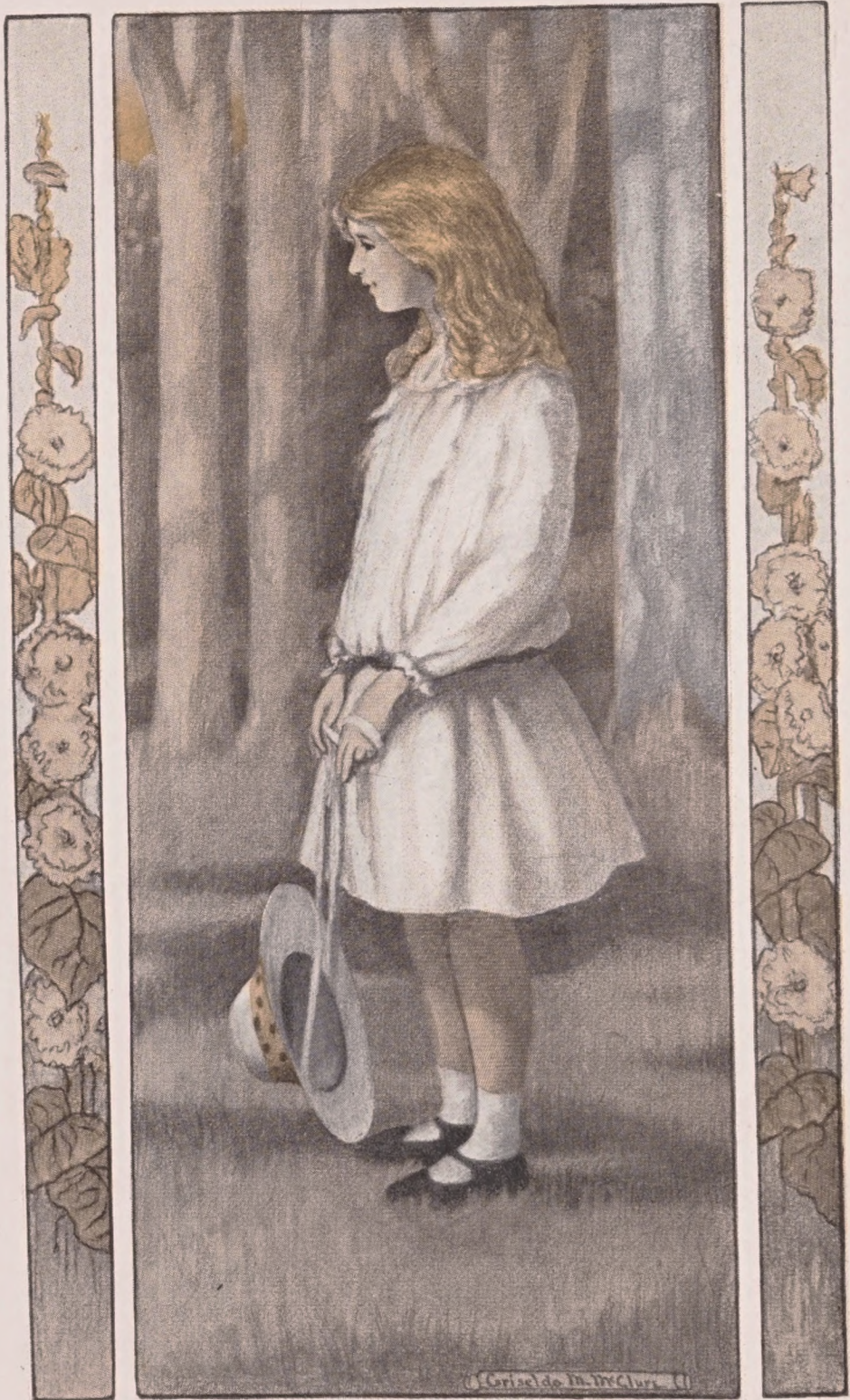
REALLY TRULY FAIRY STORIES

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GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY
NEW YORK



PYXIE, THE WOOD-FAIRY-GIRL

REALLY · TRULY
FAIRY · STORIES

HELEN · S · WOODRUFF



WITH · DECORATIONS · BY
GRISÉLDA · M · M^cCLURE

NEW · YORK

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no. 1.

WITH ADMIRATION
THIS LITTLE BOOK IS DEDICATED TO
JULIA MAY LEARY
WHOSE UNDERSTANDING LOVE OF CHILDREN
MAKES HER REALISE THE LATENT BEAUTY IN THEIR
POWERS OF IMAGINATION



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CHAPTER ONE

Pyxie's Christening



Pyxie's Christening



LITTLE PYXIE is the Really Truly Fairies' God-child, and lives in a big, old-fashioned farmhouse surrounded by a stiff, up-standing Sentinel Grove. The fairies of woods and streams and fields are her playmates, and have told her all their fairy secrets: why the Laughing Brook that tumbles over the stones just back of her garden is always happy; why the little perfumed flowers that grow along its banks bend down to gaze at themselves in the mirror-like water; why the trees continually whisper together, and the tall reeds and grasses bow to and fro all day.

The world is a beautiful place to live in if you

believe in fairies, and Pyxie, who does believe with her whole heart and soul, is wonderfully happy now as she dances about among them; for they have christened her "Pyxie, the Wood-Fairy Girl," and she understands everything she hears them talking about in the Really Truly World of Fairies. Wouldn't you like to be told about her christening?

She used to be just an ordinary everyday little girl named Sylvia. But now it's all different; and this is how it happened:

One hot day when the whole wide world seemed cross and tired, Sylvia stole away through the Sentinel Grove to the edge of the Laughing Brook. Nothing had gone right! Willie and Tommy, with whom she generally played, had told her they weren't going to play "girl's play" any more, and so, hurt and forlorn, she wandered away from them, wondering what she should do.

"Everybody's cross today and I hate the whole world!" she pouted, and, throwing herself down on the bank of the brook, she continued to grumble and scowl.

At her scowls and ugly words old Mr. Sun, who had been smiling over a tall tree, was so shocked and grieved that he hid behind a nearby cloud, while the birds, who had been singing gaily to welcome her to their woodland glade, ceased, and over everything there descended a sudden curious stillness.

"Why, what's the matter, I wonder," she exclaimed in alarm, noticing the sudden change. "It

sounds like God said 'Hush! I don't like it!' " and she jumped to her feet.

Directly in front of where she had been sitting the gay little brook ran over its bed of smooth stones; and now as she stepped down closer to it, watching and listening, she could hear the gentle laughter of its waters in the general silence of the surrounding woods.

"I wonder why it's so merry and everything else is all so still," she said, more and more troubled at the ominous silence. "I wonder——"

But as she spoke her attention was attracted to a big rock over which the water fell in a sparkling cataract, and as she looked she saw thousands of little white fairies spring up from about it and begin a mad dance towards her. Whirling and swirling, on they came, their laughing faces alight with fun.

"Oh," she cried, at once interested in the pretty sight, and, wading out into the brook, leaned forward and was about to touch them when, Swish! Whirl! away they went, leaving only dew-drops, like tears, on the rock where they had been.

She caught her breath and, leaning still farther forward in her eagerness, tried to see where they had gone—when suddenly, without any warning whatever, they returned and danced below her, their sparkling eyes laughing up into hers again.

"Oh," she said, "who are you? And why are you so happy?" and she looked nervously about her once

more. "I was just beginning to get scared at all this saddy stillness."

As she asked the question one of the fairies danced closer to her than the rest, and spoke in a gentle voice:

"I'll tell you why we are so happy——" but before she could finish her sentence all the others came dancing forward, too, and catching hold of her laughingly pulled her out of sight, leaving Sylvia puzzled and annoyed.

"Oh, how silly!" Sylvia scolded. "Why did they go away!" and a frown like that which had shocked the sun clouded her brow—when Swish! Whirl! all the little fairies returned and laughed up into her face again.

"We are the Water Sprites," they cried, "and are happy because we help to make this beautiful world more beautiful. That's what all life is for!" and joining hands in the merriest sort of dance they suddenly disappeared once more.

"Now there they go!" Sylvia cried in annoyance. "I wonder where they go when they——" But before she could finish, up they came, dancing and smiling merrily.

"Why do you go away so much? Tell me, tell me!" she begged; but utterly disregarding her question down they went again, frolicking beneath the surface for a moment, then coming up and dancing more madly than ever!

"I don't believe you do anything but run away!"

Sylvia pouted. "How do you help make the world beautiful——" and again they were gone before she had ceased speaking.

Then coming up, they danced and curtsied mockingly.

"You *shall* answer my questions!" she cried angrily. "I just won't be treated this way! How do you make the world beautiful? Answer, answer, before you go again!"

But only laughing at her they disappeared, appeared, disappeared again and again, dancing, dancing, ever dancing!

Then their Queen spoke: "Don't you think our dance is beautiful? We do!" and, surrounded by all the others, she came nearer to Sylvia as she stood watching them crossly.

Around and around her ankles they danced, swirling and whirling and eddying and flinging their lacy draperies in silvery confusion about their slim white bodies.

"Oh, yes, you dance very well," Sylvia agreed, "but——"

"We do lots of other things, too," the Queen answered. "Sing her your work-song, Mates!" turning to the others, who, obeying her command, began to sing:

Whirl, Whirl, Whirl;
Swirl, Swirl, Swirl;
We're the little Water Sprites,
Working all the days and nights.

*Swirl, Swirl, Swirl;
Whirl, Whirl, Whirl——”*

But just then, right in the middle of their song, out of sight they dove!

“Well, I wonder how they work, and why?” Sylvia said thoughtfully, forgetting to frown this time, and eagerly watching for their return.

*“We guard the fish and tad-poles,
And all the water folks
That live in shady, quiet holes
Beneath the spreading oaks.*

*We feed the sea and rivers.
We furnish motive power.
We turn around the mill-wheel
That grinds you out your flour——”*

But down they had gone again, and Sylvia could hear only very, very faintly their voices as they sang the chorus:

*“Whirl, Whirl, Whirl;
All our lives we’ve whirled!
Swirl, Swirl, Swirl;
The happiest Sprites in the world!”*

Then up they came and once more began their laughing frolic about the rock.

"Oh you *are* beautiful!" Sylvia cried in glee, completely forgetting her crossness by now. "That's how you make the world more beautiful, isn't it? But then, if you're so happy, why is everything else so *unhappy*?" suddenly remembering the dreadful stillness of the woods.

Without answering, save with a whirl, the Queen danced right up to her, and at this Sylvia just couldn't help laughing right out!

"Oh, you funny little dancy, prancy Queen!" she cried gleefully, and at the sound of her laughter a burst of joyous sounds rang forth, coming as suddenly as the stillness had come over everything before. The fairy voices all through the woods, and even from the fields beyond, broke into a regular chorus of echoing gladness! Old Mr. Sun popped out from behind his cloud and beamed at her; and everywhere she heard the happy little laugh that she herself had started echo and re-echo in a thousand silvan tones.

"Ah, that unhappiness was *your* fault. Don't you see?" the dancing Queen explained. "It's really too bad," smiling at Sylvia's wide-eyed wonder, "but when a little child scowls and says she 'hates everything,' it makes the whole world sad. Then, as you saw, all the fairies go off and hide! But when a little child is glad, and laughs and dances as we Water Sprites do, then everything else is glad too, and all the Really Truly Fairies come back and laugh with her."

"All the fairies have come back now," Sylvia said, looking about her earnestly. "Don't you hear their voices?"

"Yes," the Spray Queen answered, "they came when *you* laughed and brought the sunshine back! You can always do that. It's a God-given gift that *all* little children have!" And with this bit of information the Queen with all her train danced merrily out of sight, splashing and diving beneath the surface to reappear in a moment, as always. Now coming up they all began to sing:

*"Whirl, Whirl, Whirl;
Swirl, Swirl, Swirl;
We're the little Water Sprites,
Dancing all the days and nights.
Laugh and dance, too, Little Girl,
Come and join our merry whirl!
We're the happiest mites in the world.
Swirl, Swirl, Swirl!"*

Sylvia laughed again and, wading nearer the rock and on into their very midst, begged breathlessly:

"Oh, tell me more! Tell me more, you dancy, prancy things!"

At these words the Queen separated herself from the rest, and pausing a moment at Sylvia's feet, said: "This lesson you must learn. Laugh and dance, it matters not how hard your tasks may be; for that is

the secret of true happiness"—and down out of sight she went!

"Oh, I wish *I* was a fairy," Sylvia said, watching wistfully for the Queen's return; "a really truly fairy girl!"

"Do you?" the little Queen said, returning as Sylvia knew she would and dancing merrily about her dimpled ankles; "do you?"

"Do you? Do you?" all the other little Water Sprites echoed, jumping up and dancing, too.

"Yes, I do," Sylvia answered eagerly. Then laughing and stooping down until her flushed face was very near their own, she asked: "Isn't there any way you could turn me into one?"

"Indeed there is!" the Queen agreed; "bend still nearer me!" And then Sylvia saw the whole dancing train gather together and, forming a bright, foamy froth, come dashing over the rock and cover her yellow curls with their sun-kissed, rainbow-tinted spray!

*"With the touch of our spray
On the top of your curl
We christen you Pyxie,
The Wood-Fairy-Girl!
Swirl, Swirl; Whirl, Whirl;
Pyxie, the Wood-Fairy-Girl!"*

and then they were gone out of sight again!

Since that time Pyxie has been the Fairies' God-

child, and is continually learning more and more about their really truly secrets. Would you like to share with Pyxie some of the secrets that they told her?

CHAPTER TWO

The Flower-Fairies' Marriage





YXIE'S friends, Willie and Tommy, were down at the swimming hole diving and plunging, splashing up the cool water and shouting with glee. She could hear their far-off laughter, for the frolicsome little Breezes caught up their voices and wafted them across the intervening fields to her listening ears.

For a moment she stood sadly, envious and rather forlorn; and then suddenly remembering her experience of the day before she laughed, too, and began to wade out into the Laughing Brook and on towards the big rock where the Spray-Fairies lived.

"Oh, little dancy Sprites," she called, looking

down at the sparkling water, "come up and play with me!" And with that up they all came and started their merry swirling whirl about her feet.

"I'm never going to be lonely any more now," she confided to them, "even if the boys won't play with me, for I've got you!" So holding her skirts high, she laughed and waded down the stream between its grass and flower-bordered banks.

As she reached a curve in the winding brook she came to a spot where two lovely little lilies leaned far out over its banks and gazed in rapt admiration at their own reflections in the mirror-like water below them.

"Why, you vain little things!" she cried, "aren't you ashamed to admire your own prettiness so much!" and reaching her hand out she was about to pluck them both, when suddenly a great big old Bumble Bee buzzed from the nearest one and, unsheathing the sword that he always carries, plunged it swiftly into her hand, angrily bumbling:

"Don't you dare! Don't you dare!"

"Oh," she exclaimed, jumping back with pain and surprise, "you hateful old thing!" and quick tears sprang to her eyes as she dipped her wounded hand into the cooling water.

At the sight of her tears the Bumble Bee ceased his furious bumble, and gazing at her sadly said in a deep, kind buzz:

"I'm sorry to have hurt you, Little Maid; but you mustn't destroy the palace of the Princess, you know.

I am her guardian and must guard her regardless of everything!"

"The palace of the Princess?" Sylvia repeated questioningly, at once forgetting her smarting hand. "Where?"

"Why here," he replied, flying back to the flower from which he had come and hovering above it with an air of protection.

"Oh," Pyxie gasped, taken completely by surprise. "I didn't know a Princess could live in a lily! Tell me all about it!" and leaning forward eagerly she peered down into the cup of the little flower. There, in its very centre stood a tiny fairy crowned with gold.

"Why there *is* a Princess, sure enough," she declared.

"Yes," the Bumble Bee agreed, "there's a fairy Princess in almost every wild flower, attended by a band of brother princes. That's why you shouldn't pick them, for each time you do you destroy a fairy palace and the love affair of a Prince and Princess; and then they can't get married and have little baby flowers as they were intended to do. It's much better to leave them growing in the woods——"

"Oh, do flowers get married?" Sylvia interrupted, standing still and watching the two lilies in spite of the Water Sprites' murmured pleadings to go on down the stream. And then before the old Bumble Bee had time to answer, she continued:

"But the Princess couldn't marry her own broth-

ers! Could she? People never do that. And how is another flower's Prince going to get near enough to make love to her, anyway?"

"Ah, that is where *I* help!" the Bumble Bee bumbled. "Do you see this other lily palace?" and he alighted upon the edge of a twin blossom that Pyxie had also noticed admiring its reflection.

"Yes, yes," she said, nodding until her curls bobbed and curtsied mischievously.

"Well, one of the Princes in there wants to marry her very much."

"Oh, does he?" she asked. "Let's see him—now don't bumble so hard! I'm not going to hurt him!" and she drew the flower gently towards her, gazing down into its palace centre while the guardian bee hummed and buzzed uneasily about her.

"Look here, old Mr. Funny Bumbler," she laughed up at him, letting go of the flower, "don't you know who I am? I'm Pyxie, the Wood-Fairy-Girl, and I wouldn't hurt any of you little Wood-folks for anything!"

"Oh," he said in a very changed bumble, alighting again upon the other flower and smiling up at her. "Why didn't you tell me that before? So you are our new God-child; well, well! and he looked her over with interest.

"I was told about you at the ball last night."

"Were you?" Pyxie asked, forgetting to watch the lilies in her interest at such news.

The Bumble Bee bowed his pompous head

grandly. "Yes," he said. "And it seems to me you're rather a decent sort to be a *child*. Well, I won't be angry with you any more, and I'm really quite glad to meet you!" he condescended further. "I'm Father Bumble, King of the Bees, you know," and he gave her a solemn, dignified bow.

"And I'm glad to meet you, Your Majesty," Sylvia said, dropping him a curtsy and laughing. "But tell me about the Flower-fairies. You say *this* Princess," pointing to the lily's golden room where six Princes were grouped around their sister, "is in love with that other Prince? I think that's awfully exciting! Please tell me everything you know about them—the vain little things!" for they continued to gaze, spellbound, into the blue water-mirror below them.

"But it isn't vanity that makes them look into the water," the Bumble Bee bumbled. "You entirely misunderstand. They are looking at each other, for you see they are prisoners in their Flower-palaces and——"

"Prisoners?" Sylvia interrupted, "the poor little things! Why are they prisoners, and who made them so, anyhow?"

"Ah, that's another story," the Bumble Bee buzzed. "Some gossiping fairy will tell you about it in all good time, I doubt not; but now you want to hear of the Prince and Princess, don't you?"

"Oh, yes, yes," Pyxie agreed eagerly. "Go on."

"Well, as I was saying when you interrupted me,

they are prisoners, and so the Prince cannot go to his Lady-love to pay his homage as he would like to do——”

“Then how do you know he’s in love with her?” she asked.

The old bee frowned slightly at the interruption, but pleased, after all, at her eagerness to hear his story, proceeded to say: “Because they have both told me that they love each other. I am their Priest and most trusted messenger—I marry many of the flowers, you know—and ever since the first day that the Prince espied the Princess’s beautiful face reflected over her prison walls down into the blue of the water he has been sending her his loving, perfumed kisses.”

“How pretty,” Sylvia murmured, looking earnestly at the little flower-lovers. “Go on!”

“These kisses the gay little Breezes have been carrying back and forth, while I have been continually the bearer of loving messages—— But here come the Breeze-fairies now!” he interrupted himself to exclaim as a dainty host of laughing fairies came trooping merrily through the reeds and rushes at Sylvia’s feet.

On they came, exquisite in their zephyr grace, playing on their Pipes O’ Pan.

“Oh, are you coming to help the flower-lovers make love?” Pyxie asked, watching them excitedly.

“No, Little Maid,” one of them answered, and detaching himself from the rest he danced up and

kissed her hair. "We are here to play the wedding march this time, for this is the marriage day of Prince and Princess Lily. Hark!"

As he spoke a sweet sound of music broke out afresh, and all the reeds and grasses bowed their heads in time, as playing, playing, ever more sweetly, the Breeze-fairies danced about the bridal flowers.

Old Father Bumble chuckled with delight, and giving Pyxie a sly understanding wink, buzzed away to the nearby flower-palace of the lily Prince. With a respectful bowing of his proud head he entered its golden portals and disappeared from sight.

"Why, what's he doing now, I wonder?" Pyxie said to herself, once more taking hold of the lily stem and looking curiously down at the little Prince seated among his royal brothers.

The Breeze-fairies played more and more softly, hovering near, and as she watched the bride-groom Prince she saw him give the Bumble Bee Priest a tiny ball of golden pollen. Back then he crawled to the edge of a petal and, bumbling, spread his wings for flight.

The Prince smiled down at the Princess's flower-face reflected in the water so near his own, and in a voice as sweet as his perfumed breath, murmured: "With this token of my love, dear flower-heart, I do thee wed!"

Across then to the waiting Flower-Princess Father Bumble joyfully flew, and with buzzing words of blessing placed the marriage token in her

outstretched lily hands. With a happy smile she, the lovely little royal bride, gathered it to her heart, and Pyxie realised that she had seen the fairy-marriage of two beautiful flowers.

“Oh, how pretty and happy they are!” she exclaimed, laughing and looking up at the priest who was again bumbling about with an air of pompous importance. “Did you ever marry two Flower-fairies before?”

“Did I?” he buzzed, wagging his head in self-satisfied pride. “Well, I should say I had! I help the Breezes marry all the really truly Wood-fairies just this way;—those that live in flowers and trees, and in fact in all God’s growing plants; for you see if it wasn’t for such fairy-marriages there wouldn’t be any really truly *baby* fairies at all!”

“Then you and the dear little Breezes are awfully necessary—aren’t you?” Pyxie said, “for you help make our Summer world!”

“Of course we do! Of course we do! You’ve learned another fairy secret that all children should know, Little Maid,” the Breezes whispered. Then dancing all about her, they kissed her once more and fled.

Old Father Bumble, without answering, joined them and, waving her an adieu, they all went away to attend to their priestly duties among the other flower and tree lovers that were awaiting them.

CHAPTER THREE

The Star-Fairies



The Star-Fairies



YLVIA sat at her window watching through the parted curtains as the Tree-fairies in the Sentinel Grove whispered their fairy secrets to one another. Back and forth, back and forth they swayed, gently curtsying, now meeting and

kissing, now parting and waving adieu. It was all lovely, she thought, and as she sat dreaming of the happy days which had passed since she became the fairies' God-child, she decided she would sit right where she was all the rest of the drowsy afternoon and just do nothing but watch these little fairies at their play and perhaps guess what it was that they were telling each other.

Just about that time, however, the restless little

Breezes guessed her laziness, and flying in at the window began to scold.

“What, this lovely afternoon! And here you sit indoors! Come, come, Lazy One, and play truant with us in the woods!”

“But it’s so nice and comfy here,” Sylvia argued.

Without answering they flew from the window and beckoned, beckoned, to her from the Sentinel Grove, occasionally stopping a moment to play with the Tree-fairies, then beckoning to her once more; until unable to resist their cooling summons, she jumped up and ran out beneath the shady trees.

“Come, come,” they called, starting away as soon as she reached them. So picking up from the grass her big blue bonnet, as blue as the skies, she laughed and ran after them.

On and on they lured her. Coming up from behind they would whisper persuasively, then hurry on ahead, and hardly realising it she followed them through many woods and fields, and on, forever on, far, far from home. It was great fun, and she felt so free and happy she was glad she had not stayed in her room.

After a while, however, when she had gone a long, long way, farther away than she had ever been before, she discovered that she was awfully tired.

“Oh, little floaty Breeze-fairies,” she cried, as they continued to beckon and call, “teach me how to fly, for my feet are very tired!”

But unheeding, fickle as always, the truant Breezes flew on, laughing and mocking her because she could not follow as fast as they led.

"Well, I don't care," Pyxie said, dropping down into the shade of a lonely maple, "I'm sleepy anyway!" and curling up on the soft moss at its feet she settled herself for a nap.

Old Mr. Western Sun watched her there for a while, and then, as her eyelids began to close, he, too, felt sleepy and slipped away to his bed behind the hills; the nesting Mother-birds began their lulling, good-night songs; and over everything there descended a misty twilight quiet; and Pyxie slept.

"It's growin' dark!

"Growin' dark!

"Growin' dark!"

a big old bull-frog warned her from a nearby pool; but she heard only the little Dream-fairies, who, dancing about her head, whispered:

"Sleep, Sylvia, sleep."

Then the little Breezes, ashamed of their desertion, returned and frolicked through her loosened curls. Old Judge Owl, popping from his hole in the tree just above her head, looked down at her in surprise.

"Who're you?"

"Who're you?"

he hooted hoarsely; but she did not stir.

Slowly and stealthily the Night-fairies flew across the sky, trailing their shadows after them, and the Stars, awakened by their big brother Moon, jumped from their day-time beds and blinked sleepily at the nodding Earth below.

"Who're you?"

"Who're you?"

old Judge Owl called again, more shrilly this time, and Pyxie, stirring, murmured: "I'm Sylvia——" and then, at last aroused, she jumped up and looked about with sudden terror.

"Oh," she gasped; "oh, it's night-time and I'm way away from home!" and with that Mr. Frog croaked again in his throatiest croak:

"You're lost!"

"You're lost!"

"You're lost!"

"No, I'm not lost!" Pyxie said angrily, swallowing hard to keep the tears back; for she didn't want the frog to see how frightened she really was. "You're always croaking! I came out here with the Breeze-fairies and they'll show me the way back home!"

But as she looked around her not one single Breeze-fairy did she see, for they had all sailed away to the Land of Sleep on a big cloud, soft and fluffy.

"But it's dark!"

"It's dark!"

"It's dark!"

the croaky old bull-frog bellowed, his hollow voice echoing through the dusk like a big bass drum.

"Well, even if it is dark I can find my way home by myself," she answered. So picking up her bonnet she began to run bravely through the woods, though her heart was thumping so hard she forgot to listen to the friendly voices of all the little Wood-fairies. They, neglected and knowing they had been forgotten by their Fairy-girl, hid their eyes and mourned.

Then, for the first time, Pyxie looked up. The Night-fairies had spread their shadow-mantles clear over the sky, and it was no longer blue. The stars, wide awake now, winked and blinked at her, and the moon, rising above the tall, tall trees, made them point shadow-fingers towards the West, and whispered: "That's the way back home, Little Maid."

She ran on, thanking the kind old trees as she passed, and soon found she was crossing the fields and going through the strips of woodland where the Breeze-fairies had lured her not many hours before. It all looked very friendly and familiar in the silvery moonlight, and she began to recover from her fright.

"Oh, little swaying Tree-fairies," she said, stopping to catch her breath before running on, "you look like my Tree-fairies at home in the Sentinel Grove. Tell me, what do you talk about when you whisper secrets together, anyway? I've so often wanted to know!"

"Ah, Little Maid," they answered, "we're gather-

ing gossip for Peter Pan!" and with that they swayed and curtsied to and fro.

As their leaves parted, met, and parted again, Pyxie once more caught sight of the blinking stars, and running on she talked to them as she went.

"Oh, winky, blinky Stars," she said, "and you, too, old Moon-man, I wish you'd come a little closer. Night-time's such a lonely time, and it's hard to find my way."

No sooner had she spoken than one of the Stars, with a wink and a blink and a nod and a smile, whizzed right out of its place in the Heavens and came tearing across the sky! On it came with a rush, leaving a shimmering golden path behind it, until it seemed to drop and fall right behind the trees out of sight!

"Oh," Pyxie cried, "you beautiful Shooting Star!" But before she could say another word she was surrounded by dozens of tinier stars, all blinking, all winking, and flickering about in the air.

"Why where in the world did you come from?" she asked in surprise. "Are you fairies, or just *baby-stars*?" and she laughed with delight at their pretty twinkling flicker.

"We're both, Little Maid," they answered in voices light and gladsome; "for we are the earthly babies of the Star-fairies, and come each night with our little fairy torches to 'light' the other fairies about."

"Oh, then you'll 'light' me back home—won't you,

please?" Pyxie pleaded, "for I'm Pyxie, the Fairy-girl, you know, and it's really very hard to find my way, even if I'm not scared any more."

"We will, we will, little Pyxie, dear," they all twinkled in a flutter, flying around and around her head. "That's why we're here; so come!" and with that their laughter tinkled-twinkled out happily, and they began guiding Sylvia on through the woods.

At the sweet night sound of their merriment all the feathery ferns stirred in their sleep, and the flowers exhaled a dreamy perfume as the Dew-fairies rose up and kissed their slumbering faces.

"But where did you come from?" Sylvia asked. "You didn't answer that question, and I'm awfully anxious to know. Did you come down from Heaven with that big star that fell?"

"Yes, yes," they again laughed with a tinkling twinkle. "We came down with her because she's our great-greatest-grandmother, you know. But come," as Sylvia stopped in astonishment, "we must 'light' you onward!"

Sylvia ran forward as they bid her, but questioned breathlessly: "Your great-greatest-grandmother? I don't think I quite understand——"

"Of course you don't!" one of them broke in. "Mortal-folk seldom understand about our fairy-make-believe family," and they all joined in the speaker's twinkling tinkle.

"Why I've heard some little girls like you call us 'Lightning-bugs,' " he continued.

“And *I've* heard our name was ‘Fire-flies,’” another of them scoffed. And they flew and flickered, twinkling and tinkling in and out among the trees as they led Pyxie nearer and ever nearer her home.

“Well, I’ll never call you either again,” Pyxie promised, “now that I know you are really truly Star-fairies!” Then suddenly remembering and peering about her she said: “But we must hurry, dear little Star-fairies, for I’m sure my mother will be worried!”

So on and on they all went through the woodland glade, across the Laughing Brook, and finally into the Sentinel Grove where Pyxie’s home stood waiting, its window-eyes anxiously searching for her through the drowsing twilight.

“Good night, Little Maid,” said the Star-fairies in the sky and those flickering all about her in the grove. “Good night. We’ll ‘light’ all the Dream-fairies to you. Good night!” and they twinkled and tinkled away merrily as Sylvia ran into the house.

CHAPTER FOUR

Fairy Prisoners



Fairy Prisoners



ONE afternoon, a little while after the Star-fairies had shown Pyxie the way back home in the dark, she was walking slowly along the dusty road that wound in and out of golden hay-fields over beyond the Laughing Brook. She did not dance along as gaily as usual, for it was very warm, and when she thought of her home guarded by the stiff-standing Sentinel Grove in which the Tree-fairies lived she wished that she had not left its shaded coolness.

“Oh, Mr. Sun,” she sighed, stopping beneath the only tree in sight and looking up through its motionless leaves, “why do you smile so hard to-day—you

make it so awfully hot!" And with that she sank down upon a big flat stone that lay, cool and lazy, in its shade and, flinging her bonnet upon the ground, brushed back the moist curls that clung so lovingly to her dimpled cheeks.

"We'll cool you! We'll cool you!" a dainty chorus of mischievous voices whispered, and, looking around, Pyxie saw her frolicsome friends, the Breeze-fairies, spring up and begin dancing merrily towards her. Swiftly they came, and their sweet transparent faces, as pure as the woodland air, laughed into hers, while they caught up the loosened strands of her sun-kissed hair and tossed it hither and thither, playing hide and seek in its tousled glory.

The Tree-fairies, filled with joy at the cooling breath, swayed and clapped their hands, while the little Sunbeams, glad too, filtered through their midst and began a flickering dance at Sylvia's feet. Old Mr. Sun, not to be outdone, became frolicsome in his big genial way, and peek-a-booing at her bade her look about at his happy Summer world.

"Hey there, Sylvia! What you doing?" she suddenly heard Tommy's voice call, and turning she spied him and Willie as they came tearing down the road, kicking up the dust in perfect clouds.

"I'm talking to the Tree-fairies and old Mr. Sun, and——"

"Oh, shucks," Tommy scoffed as they both stopped; "that's girl's play! Come on, Bill, let's beat it!" and he started slowly down the road again.

"It's not girl's play; it's really truly play!" Pyxie stated indignantly, as he stopped again and grinned his teasing, diabolical grin.

"Now look here, Tom," Willie said, at once on the defensive for his girl friend, "you shut up teasing Sylvia; you do it too much," and then turning to her he continued: "I think it's nice to play like you do. Tommy hasn't got any imagination, that's what's the matter with him!" Nevertheless Willie had a boy's love for rough play, and preferred to look for adventure with Tommy; so he joined him again, and both of them began kicking up the dust once more.

Pyxie, looking wistfully after them for a moment more, almost let the scowl that the sun hated cloud her brow, and then her face brightened and she said: "But they haven't got the fairies for their friends, and *I* have!" So she leaned contentedly back against the rock and began her fairy conversation.

"Oh, tree full of lovely Summer fairies," she called happily, looking up into the quivering leaves and beginning her play with them, "you seem to like this heat of old Mr. Sun's."

"Of course they do," Mr. Sun himself beamed, smiling harder than ever at his favourite Fairy-girl. "Just look how the Flower-fairies hold up their sweet faces for my kisses; and the butterflies, see how they flutter about in careless ecstasy! Why, I'm their very life! They worship me, for I am their God of the Heavens!"

And Pyxie, watching earnestly, realised that what he said was true, and that all the really truly fairies near her were continually bowing their heads in adoration as they returned his sunny smiles.

Just at that moment a noise, grating and insistent, broke sharply upon the sun-laden air, and, surprised, she jumped to her feet.

"Why, what's that!" she cried, peering up into the tree from which the sound seemed to come, and becoming more and more puzzled at its high-pitched monotone insistence.

Rasping, scraping, buzzing, it came from among the quivering leaves like a thousand ill-tuned cymbals.

"Z—z—z—z—z—z—z!!
Cicada! Cicada-fairies, we!
Beating to say how hot it'll be!
 Z—z—z—z—z—z—z!!!"

"Well, I never heard really truly fairies make a funny noise like that before," Pyxie said, laughing and standing upon her tip-toes, vainly trying to see into the low-hanging branches. "What in the world are you? I wish I *could* see!" and jumping lightly up and down she struggled to catch hold of the lowest branch, but without avail.

"Z—z—z—z—z—z—z!
Cicadas!—Cicadas—Cicadas, we!!!"

they sang in their harsh voices over and over again, and Pyxie, becoming still more anxious to see them, called:

“Oh, please come down, little funny-named drummers, for you must be drummers—talking or singing couldn’t sound like that. Come down! I won’t hurt you! I’m Pyxie, the fairy’s God-child, and all the fairies tell me their secrets now. Come down—*please*—and tell me how and why you make such funny noises.”

But continuing their call foretelling great heat the Cicadas paid absolutely no attention to her request. So, at last becoming discouraged, she ceased endeavouring to reach them and sat down again upon the stone.

She had not been seated there long, however, when the Breeze-fairies, who had whimsically run off as usual for a few minutes’ frolic across the fields, returned and once more danced about her.

“Look there! Look there!” they whispered, tossing her curls and pointing over their shoulders; and as Pyxie whirled quickly around, what did she see but a host of small brown bodies, no larger than her thumb, just emerging from beneath the turf.

Up and up they came, slowly, painfully; crawling, scrambling, pushing their way right through the soil and out into the light of day.

“Why, you queer looking things!” she cried. “Who are you?” And then fearing lest she might have hurt their feelings, she added: “Perhaps you

are fairies in disguise!" and bending over nearer them she smiled. "Tell me, are you disguised fairies—or did some wicked fairy turn you into bugs? You don't look like fairies, and yet——"

One of them sighed, and listening closely Sylvia heard it say, "Both, both, Little Maid; for we are Drum-fairies who have been prisoners in a deep, dark dungeon, and these ugly bug-armours which you see are our prison shackles."

"Why, you poor little things, I'm so sorry for you!" Pyxie cried. "But now you're escaping, aren't you?" and she hopped aside to let them pass.

Slowly, clumsily, they crawled on towards the tree without answering, and she said again: "Tell me, aren't you escaping? I'll try to help you if you will only just tell me."

But they crawled slowly on, each too eager in his endeavour to proceed to listen to her sympathetic offer.

"I do wish you would tell me," she said wistfully. "Every day since the Spray-fairies christened me at the Laughing Brook I've asked some of the really truly fairies questions just like I'm asking you now, and they've always answered me. But I can't seem to get anybody to answer my questions today, and every one of them is important; things I'm awfully anxious to know!"

But though she waited and watched eagerly for the little crawling beasts at her feet to say something, the only sound that reached her ears was the

insistent "Z—z—z—z—z—z!" coming from the tree above her.

On and on, silently, the horde of little prisoners crawled, and seeing them reach the tree and begin painfully scrambling up it, Pyxie again spoke:

"I don't think you'll like that tree," she said. "Those other fairies living in it are so noisy, and they make that raspy sound so much. Now if you'd only——"

"But they are our brothers," one of the prisoners at last answered, seemingly aroused by her remark, "so we love that noise!" And they all seemed to hurry their pace at these words.

"Your brothers?" Sylvia asked excitedly, delighted that she had gotten them to answer her. "Then you *are* escaping, aren't you? You must be escaping home. Oh, do for Goodness' Sake tell me all about it! Tell me everything. All about yourselves, and your dungeon, and how you got there—and where was your dungeon?—And how did you happen to be in a dungeon, anyway?—And did you want to escape just to get to that tree? Tell me, please tell me!" she begged all in one breath, dancing up and down in her eagerness. "I'm so awfully anxious to know! You see, I never met any really truly prisoners before!"

"We are escaping to the warmth and protection of the great Sun-god," the first prisoner said, "for he is the best friend we ever had," and he led the host of other prisoners on, steadily up the tree-trunk. Then

pausing a second he asked: "Do you happen to know whether he's at home or not?"

Pyxie laughed. "Why, yes. Can't you see him? There he is up there," pointing above the tall tree towards the clear blue of the sky. "He's my best friend, too—that is," she qualified, "almost my best friend, and I was talking to him just before I saw you. But you haven't answered all my questions yet! Why is he your best friend? Is he your 'God of the Heavens'? And besides, haven't you been seeing him every day right along? I have; and I know he visits all the really truly fairies every day, 'cause he told me so."

"Ah, he does not visit them when they are prisoners in a dungeon dark and drear," the first prisoner sighed. "None of us have seen his dear face for over three hundred days!"

"Goodness Gracious Alive! How awful!" Pyxie exclaimed with sympathy, wondering how she would feel in their place. "But surely his grandchildren, the little dancing Sunbeams, danced in at your windows?"

"No," he returned, "for we didn't have any windows. We've been in total darkness for nearly a year," and turning his round eyes towards her Pyxie saw that they were full of tears.

"Well, I never felt so sorry for anybody in all my life!" she said, and there were tears of sympathy in her own eyes. "But you haven't told me what made you prisoners yet. Was it a war?"

"Yes," he said, bowing his head at the sad recollection, while all the others bowed their heads, too; "but it's a long story."

"Then tell it to me," Sylvia urged. "Go on!"

"Well, one hot day last Summer," he proceeded, crawling on up the tree in company with the others, "we of the Fairy Drum Corps were here in our Family Tree. The Sun-god was beaming his brightest upon us, and our fathers were beating away on their drums and cymbals——"

"Oh, I thought it must be something like that," Pyxie broke in.

The speaker frowned at her interruption, and seeing this Pyxie murmured, "Excuse me," and he resumed:

"Beating away on their drums and cymbals to warn all the other Wood-fairies how awfully hot it was going to be, when suddenly without any warning at all we heard the most terrifying sound, and looking up through the leaves we saw an army of Evil-fairies flying towards us, led by their vicious Queen!"

"Oh, oh!" Pyxie gasped, "who were they and what was the name of their Queen?"

"Big Wasp, the Bad," he answered in a guttural tone of hatred. "And we were so frightened that we began rushing hither and thither, trying to hide.— Our fathers ceased their music, and the little Breezes, seeing our plight, flew up in sudden gusty warning. 'Run Pillar-babies, run!' they called."

"And did you?" Pyxie asked, her eyes dancing with excitement. "Did you?"

"You bet we did! You bet we did!" the whole crowd of slowly climbing prisoners broke in in a chorus, aroused to speech for the first time.

"Down that tree we tumbled lickety-split," the first speaker went on, "and when we reached the ground, 'Whisk! Whisk!' we went right down out of sight!—But then," and his voice trailed off—then broke, and he seemed unable to go on with his narrative.

"Yes, yes," Pyxie said. "Go on!"

"Then—we heard a battle raging above us—and pretty soon we saw Big Wasp the Bad, with her army, come burrowing down towards us dragging our fathers as helpless captives!"

By now all the little prisoners had crawled high up upon the tree-trunk and stood, a motionless array, apparently fast asleep, while their speaker proceeded:

"Of course as soon as we saw that, we tried to burrow farther away, but it was too late; and waving their wands of Evil Magic those bad fairies turned us into the fettered, armoured beasties that you now see!"

"Oh, you poor, poor little Fairy Prisoners!" Pyxie sympathised. "What happened next?"

"We were tied hand and foot and cast into a dungeon—where we've been ever since," he finished bitterly.

"That was just too cruel for anything!" Pyxie broke out angrily; then her face brightened as she said: "But you are free now, so you ought to be happy."

"But think how mortified we must be to be seen in these hideous clumsy bug-armours, when we were once beautiful free creatures of the Tree-tops. Bah!" and he looked at his and his companions' ugly shackles in utter disgust. "And even if we succeed in reaching our brothers in this Tree-top, how are we ever going to be really happy again looking as we do now! In such ugly dress they will despise us and refuse to admit us as their equals!"

"But maybe if you asked some good kind fairy to turn you into 'beautiful free creatures' again, she'd do it," Sylvia suggested, feeling more and more sorry for these poor disguised fairies. "That's the way I became a Fairy-girl: I just asked the Spray Fairies at the Laughing Brook if they couldn't turn me into one and they did."

"What good, kind fairy would waste her time or sympathy on such as we?" he said sullenly. "No, we'll just have to——"

But just then Pyxie heard above his voice, drowning it out completely, a familiar fluttering twitter, and looking up she saw her friends the Breeze-fairies gently wave the leaves aside, and let a million little Sunbeam-fairies come dancing through.

"We'll free you! We'll free you!" they laughed, and down, down they came in their shifting golden

dance, and smote the Fairy-prisoners full upon their backs with magic wands of purest gold!

“Crack! Crack!” went the ugly, shackling bug-armours, and with a cry of glad surprise the whole host of prisoners found they were free, and stepping out of each armour there came a broad-winged fairy, dressed in beautiful green and shimmering bronze.

Pyxie stood spell-bound, unable to do anything but look, and as old Mr. Sun bent forward, flooding them with his warm smiles, she saw them spread their wings of gauzy lace and fly up, up, ever nearer their Sun-god and in amongst their brothers of the Tree-tops.

With a joyous burst of welcome then the brothers began afresh the beating of their little drums and cymbals, and listening intently, she heard also the little freed prisoners as they joined in.

Clear and loud the merry warning sounded as it does on every hot Summer's day:

“Z—z—z—z—z—z—z!!
*We're so happy now that we're free
Up in the top of our Family Tree,
Beating to say how hot it'll be!
Z—z—z—z—z—z—z!!”*

CHAPTER FIVE

The Rainbow-Fairies



The Rainbow- Fairies



TOMMY was playing Indian under a big tree in Pyxie's Sentinel Grove. Spying him there, she left her friends at the Laughing Brook and ran to join him.

"Tommy," she said, noticing that he was looking eagerly up into the branches, "do you know why the trees whisper together? I do. The Tree-fairies told me the other night when I got lost in the woods."

"Oh, shucks!" Tommy answered, frowning, puzzled and annoyed as he always was by the little girl. "You talk such queer talk, Sylvia! I thought you were Willie. Where is he, anyhow?"

"I don't know," Pyxie answered. "Maybe some bad fairy has stolen him," smiling mischievously and

enjoying the knowledge that she could thus tease him who was so continually teasing her.

"He went to your house after a hatchet," Tommy said irritably, "and said he'd be right back."

"Well, I haven't seen him; but I'll play Indian with you. Let me be squaw; you never want to be that."

"Naw," Tommy said, "I don't want any squaws; this is a war camp!" and turning his back upon her he went on gazing up into the tree in his play.

Pyxie stood angry and hurt.

"All right, Mr. Selfish, you'll be sorry some——" and then remembering the secret of true happiness that she had lately learned from the dancing Spray-fairies, she ceased suddenly and, humming a tune, began skipping away from him.

"Oh, Tree-top-fairies, and all you fairies everywhere," she half sang in her laughing, happy voice, "I love you, and I'm never going to be unhappy again, never again," and she danced from the grove out of Tommy's sight and on into the fields beyond.

"Come, come," she called, "come all you fairies that love me and let's frolic here in the field!" and dancing like a little wayward sprite herself she talked and sang as she went.

Suddenly she felt kisses on her cheeks, her bobbing curls, and even the kiss-spot just under one rosy little ear where her mother loved to kiss her, and pretending surprise she stopped.

"Oh, so it's you!" she exclaimed, as she saw a

group of transparent fairies dancing about in mid air, their faces alight with fun. "Who *are* you?"

"We're the Fairies-of-the-Summer-Breeze," they twittered, entering into her game and bowing and curtsying as though just being introduced. "We hear you are the fairies' God-child, Pyxie," they went on, "and we're charmed to meet you!"

"Oh, you little dancy rascals!" she laughed, dropping her tone of banter and talking to them as her old truant friends. "What mischief are you up to today? The last time I went with you you ran off and left me in the darkening woods! Oh, I know your pranks!" and she shook her finger at them reproachfully.

But kissing her again and again they danced more and more mischievously around her head, until she had to laugh in spite of herself.

"Come," they begged. "Come with us and we'll show you a lovely sight!"

"Yes, but how do I know you won't run off and leave me again?" she asked, hesitating, though longing with all her heart to follow their beckoning fingers and see.

"We promise! We promise!" they cried, merrily flying away; while Pyxie, eager as always to discover new wonders, followed them as they flew.

Over meadows filled with waving grasses and sweet field flowers they went, then into a dark, shady woods, where suddenly, without even an "Excuse me" they flew off and left her as before.

“Breeze-fairies! Breeze-fairies!” she called; “you little bad Breeze-fairies, you promised not to leave me!” and she stood still hoping for their return. But the little Breezes, as fickle as their mother, the Wind, had forgotten all about her by now and were frolicking far away among the flirting field flowers.

“Oh, oh,” she cried, beginning to feel alarmed, “why did I come anyway! They’ve left me all alone in another dark forest!” and she ran wildly back and forth trying to find her way out.

“Why, I believe I’m lost sure enough this time,” and tears sprang to her eyes. “Well, anyway,” choking back a sob, “I’m glad Mr. Bull-frog isn’t here to croak ‘You’re lost, you’re lost!’ I guess I can surely find my way soon, and if I can’t some good fairies will find *me* and show me, just as the Star-fairies did—maybe *they* are awake and can show me. It certainly looks dark enough in here,” and she peered up through the closely clustered leaves of the trees all about her, trying to see the sky, and whether the Star-fairies were blinking down from it. All she saw, however, was a very black cloud frowning angrily upon her!

“Goodness, how awfully hard the sky is scowling!” she exclaimed. “I think the Spray-fairies had better tell *it* the secret of true happiness!” And then just as she was thinking how she could tell the sky how wrong it was to scowl, she felt the first splatter of rain upon her upturned face.

Splatter, splatter, down it came harder and harder,

until in a second, before she could think what to do or where to hide, she was soaking wet from head to foot, a forlorn little object in the midst of the dripping woods.

“Why, this is perfectly dreadful,” she cried, chilled and frightened, and then seeing the rain had ceased as suddenly as it had begun, she dried her eyes and determined she would be brave.

“I’m sure some fairy will rescue me soon,” she said over and over to herself, “so I mustn’t be unhappy!”

She trudged on and on then, until she came to the edge of the woods.

“Why, here’s the field I crossed,” she exclaimed in a relieved voice, stopping to look about her, “and there’s——” but as she looked more closely over the open field she realised she had never seen it before.

Straight ahead of her, rising from the far side, she saw a tall, tall hill. It seemed to reach almost to Heaven it was so tall, and on its top there rested the big black cloud that she had noticed in the woods.

“Oh, I’m awfully scared!” she whispered to herself as the cloud frowned down upon her. “I think I’ll go back to the woods,” and she would have turned back had she not heard, just then, the gentle breath of the Breeze-fairies’ wings.

Turning about quickly she saw their mischievous faces smiling impishly as they flew forward, passing her and beckoning her up the hill.

“You naughty little Breezes!” she cried, at once

forgetting her fright in the pleasure she felt at their return. "Why did you run off and leave me? I can never trust you again!"

But shaking their transparent heads they continued their silent dance, and beckoned her on and on.

"Well, I guess I've just got to see what's at the top of that funny hill," she said, her curiosity getting the better of her determination not to listen to the Breezes' lure. So shaking her curls elvishly she ran after them as hard as ever she could!

Up and up the hill they trooped, over rocks that sheltered baby-ferns and on through the smiling flowers, until she had reached the top. Then looking up above her head she saw that the big black cloud had sailed away and in its place had come a big white cloud, all soft and fluffy; and beyond that the beautiful arch of a rainbow stood firmly glowing against the sky.

"Oh, look, Breeze-fairies, look!" she cried. "What a beautiful, wonderful place!" and she ran forward eagerly—and discovered that the white cloud was full of fairies.

There they were, hundreds and hundreds of them, gathered together around one more beautiful than the rest, all dressed in shimmering silvery gauze, and as she stood gazing at them the Beautiful One leaned forward and smiled.

"I am Princess Cloud, Queen of the Air," she said in a voice soft and low, "and who are you, my dear?"

Sylvia gasped, for so radiantly lovely was the little

Princess that her eyes were dazzled as she looked upon her; but almost at once recalling her manners she said, with a swaying bow such as the Tree-fairies made when they bowed to her:

“I’m Pyxie, Your Majesty; an earthly Fairy-Girl.” Then forgetting her manners again in her curiosity to know all about the lovely strangers, she continued: “But tell me, please, what are you doing here, for I’m awfully anxious to know!”

“Ah,” the shimmering Princess answered, “I’m driving about the Heavens in my Cloud-chariot, for that’s my business, you know.” Then seeing Sylvia did not quite understand she explained further: “I drive about all day and all night watching over the ferns and flowers that grow along the way-sides.”

“Oh, you are a really truly Sky-fairy, then!” Sylvia said. “I know lots of Earth fairies, for I’m their God-child, you know; but I never knew a Sky-fairy before. Tell me, why do you watch over the ferns and flowers?”

“Why, flowers, you know, are the imprisoned souls of Sky-fairies who have been captured by old Mother Earth and held prisoners for a while,” she said. “So of course we free fairies who still live in the sky are terribly sorry for them, and gather together, as you see us now, and weep and weep for them.”

Pyxie’s eyes opened wider than ever. “Was all that rain just now your tears?” she asked. “I never knew that before!—But tell me, don’t the poor little

Sky-fairies' souls ever get out of prison? I know some other fairies that——”

“Oh, yes,” the Queen of the Air interrupted her to say. “When they have helped to beautify old Mother Earth for a while, blessing and cheering all her Mortal-folk, their souls are freed and come up home to the skies!”

“Do they?” Pyxie asked. “Oh, I'd like to see them. I never saw flowers blooming in the sky!”

“Oh, I guess you have, Little Maid,” the lovely Princess smiled.

“No, I'm sure I haven't,” Pyxie said, shaking her curls very positively. “Are they as beautiful as you?”

“Far, far more beautiful than I!” and turning upon her throne the Queen of the Air, and all the shimmering fairies about her, pointed to the flower-hued rainbow that bridged the valley beyond.

“There they are!” she cried; “for when they return to my realm they bring with them all the lovely tints of their flower-prisons, and though free, continue to show the colours of the flowers, glorified!”

“How lovely!” Pyxie said. “I know all the Flower-fairies, but they never told me that. Tell me more, please. Go on!”

“When we send down our tears to those still imprisoned upon the Earth,” the Cloud-princess went on, “the Rainbow-flower-fairies come forth and softly glow in the sky, to show the Flower-fairies' souls that are escaping from the Earth the way back home.”

"Then the rainbow is really a Heaven flower-garden, isn't it?" the little Fairy-girl said with a happy laugh.

"Yes, a garden made of Flower-fairies' souls," the Princess answered reverently.

"And do you s'pose if they knew I was trying to escape back to my home they'd try to show me the way?" Pyxie asked anxiously. "For I was lost just now when the Breeze-fairies persuaded me to come up here."

"Yes, indeed they will," the Princess assured her; "just follow the curve of the rainbow and see!"

And as Pyxie ran forward over the crest of the hill, there, way down on the opposite side of the valley where the other end of the rainbow rested, she saw her home with her mother on the porch watching anxiously for her.

So kissing her hand in adieu to her newest friends, the Cloud-fairies, down the hill she ran and was soon safe, held tightly within her mother's arms.

CHAPTER SIX

The Fairies' Birth Gifts

The Fairies' Birth Gifts



NEW really truly fairy baby had just been born among the reeds and rushes at the Laughing Brook, and above its cradle its God-parents, the good little fairies of forest and field and sky, were hovering ready to bestow their birthday gifts.

Old Mr. Sun beamed down upon the scene rather puzzled for a moment, and then realising what it was all about he bade his Sunbeam grandchildren go down with a gift from him.

“We come, we come, Little One,” they cried, pouring down in a golden shower, “to bring you happiness, the joy and happiness of the sunshine, for with that gift you can never, never be sad!” and they danced about, kissing the babe in their glee.

“Stop! Stop!” cried the little Spray-fairies, springing up from about their rock and beginning a gay swirling dance. “Don’t you know Pyxie hasn’t come? And we mustn’t bestow any of our gifts until our Fairy-girl is here to see! Stop!” and so saying they smote the Sunbeam-fairies square upon their wings.

With that the little Rainbows, afraid of a quarrel, came between the two fairy bands, bidding them both be friends.

“Why, that’s so, Pyxie isn’t here, sure enough!” the little Breeze-fairies fluttered. “We’ll go fetch her!” and off they flew to her home in the Sentinel Grove not very far away.

Now Pyxie was busy giving her gardenful of Flower-fairies a sprinkling drink, but as she saw the Breeze-fairies coming she lifted her face and dimpled.

“Hello, you little rascalawags!” she cried, “more mischief, I suppose! Well, what’s up this time?”

“A christening,” they answered. “A christening; for a sweet new fairy’s been born. So come, we need you!” and away they flew towards the brook again, beckoning her on.

“Well, you sometimes get me into terribly scarey muddles,” she laughed, “but”—flinging down her watering-pot, “there’s always something interesting to see, so I guess I’ll go with you.”

So she soon found herself at the edge of the Laughing Brook surrounded by her fairy friends.

"But where's the baby fairy that's to be christened?" she asked, looking vainly about her and questioning the fairy group.

"There! There!" a chorus of happy voices answered, as the Sunbeam-fairies pointed golden fingers towards a nearby reed, the Breezes swaying it to and fro, while a cloud of other fairies swarmed just over it, their arms full of beautiful gifts.

Pyxie stepped nearer, and there upon the reed, sure enough, she saw a fairy baby asleep in a glossy black cradle-shell.

"Oh, you sweet little funny thing!" she exclaimed; then looking more thoughtful, "now I suppose Willie and Tommy would call you a 'big old black bug,' but *I* know that you are a really truly fairy. My eyes have been touched with the Spray-fairies' lovely magical spell, for I'm Pyxie, you know, the Fairy-girl!"

"Yes, yes, Pyxie, step closer," the hovering fairies said, "for we were just waiting for you to come before giving the baby her birthday gifts. Now we must go on with the christening.

"All right," the Fairy-girl agreed, stepping just as close as she could. "Go on, God-parents, I'm watching!"

Just then, however, old Father Bumble came bumbling up.

"What's all this fuss-fuss?" he asked in a deep buzz of self-importance. "My! My!"

"We're christening this baby, your Worship," one

of the fairies spoke up, "and you're just in time to help."

"Very well, very well," he bumbled, bowing his buzzy head and mumbling some words of prayer. "Proceed, proceed," with a pompous wave of his wings at the dancing Sunbeam-fairies.

They flickered back their assent, and bending above the sleeping babe said, as they had said before: "Our gift is sunshine and happiness, dear, so your life will always be glad!" and down, down they showered bundles of blessings, made of their golden glow.

"And our gift shall be grateful shadows in which to hide when it's hot!" the Tree-fairies rustled together, bowing and nodding, as they presented a parcel of shade.

"And ours the love of perfumed flowers and the honey that grows at their hearts," the Flower-fairies whispered with their sweetest breath.

"You shall have from us," the mischievous Breeze-fairies laughed, "little breeze-wings on which to float about."

"While our gift shall be the gift of hope," the Rainbows archly murmured, coming nearer and bestowing a crystal ball of myriad-colored clearness. Through this they told the baby he must look if trouble should ever approach. "For," they explained, "trouble will turn to hope if you never forget the rainbow!"

"Oh, I wish I could give it something!" Sylvia said wistfully.

"Why, you can, you can!" the fairies all answered in a merry chorus. "Just stop a moment and think."

Pyxie's big eyes grew wider than ever and more puzzled, and then puckering her forehead she thought very hard for several moments.

"Oh, I know now," she finally said; "I'll give you my love and protection, and the love of all little Mortal-folks everywhere!" and laughing, she blew the funny baby a kiss from her rosy finger-tips.

He stirred and opened his bulging eyes, but did not speak, so old Father Bumble went on with *his* part, in a solemn, dignified buzz:

"And now *I* give you my blessing—and a name," and gathering dew from the font of a flower he sprinkled it upon the baby's head.

"Thou shalt be called Caddis-fly, a really truly fairy. Go forth and help make the world beautiful! Amen."

A hymn of Nature's wonders broke forth at this benediction, the onlooking God-parents joining in; when suddenly there came from behind them the hissing evil sound of terrible anger in a loud discordant note.

"Oh," Sylvia cried, "what's that!" but before she could whirl around all the fairy voices had ceased, and she saw a horribly grimacing bad fairy alight right down in their midst.

"Ah—ha!" the Evil One cried, leering about her, "so you thought to dower this child with nothing but

gifts of good, eh? Well, *I* wasn't asked to this christening, but I guess I can have my say!"

"Oh, you horrid, *horrid* old thing! Go 'way!!" Pyxie exclaimed, stamping her foot. But the Evil Fairy only laughed her screeching laugh, while a perfect storm of frightened wails broke out from the fairies of forest and fields and sky.

"Oh, oh," they wept, "'tis Big Wasp the Bad, come with her gift of wickedness!" and crowding nearer the helpless babe they tried their best to shield it. But not one among them had the power to stay her evil hand, so on she crept until she reached the little christened one.

"From me," she said slowly, bending above its glossy shell-cradle until her ugly face almost touched the baby's frightened one, "you shall have this curse: *Selfishness.*"

The other fairies mourned and groaned with anguish, and tears of distress came to Pyxie's bright eyes, but Big Wasp the Bad continued:

"Yes, selfishness! So content with yourself and your wonderful gifts shall you be that you shall think only of yourself, and thus you shall build your own prison, for so it is always with those who do not think of others! You shall live in the prison of selfishness all alone; you shall——"

"Here, here," the Spray-fairies interrupted. "Stop!" and they for once stood very still by their rock. "We haven't given our birth gift yet, and though we cannot undo your evil spell we can do this:

After many moons have passed our laughing waters shall have washed away your accursed bondage. This poor little fairy shall emerge from our midst in *unselfish* splendour and, forgetting self, fly about upon the Breeze-fairies' gift, helping to make the world beautiful!"

"Oh, goody, goody! I'm so glad!" Pyxie cried, clapping her hands and jumping up and down. Then growing serious, she continued: "But I feel so sorry for it! And when will it have to build its prison, the poor thing?"

"This second!" Big Wasp the Bad hissed. And chuckling in evil glee she struck the baby with her wand.

Down, down, down from the swaying reed it tumbled, shell-cradle and all, straight into the crystal-clear waters of the Laughing Brook.

"Oh-h!" Pyxie exclaimed in chorus with the fairies, and peering through the water they saw it immediately begin crawling about upon the sandy bottom.

There were other small water creatures all about busily engaged in building their winter homes; but the baby-caddis-fly, utterly oblivious of anything save its own comfort, snatched their materials and began to build for itself.

"Oh, look!" Pyxie said to the fairies, "it has started its prison! Isn't there *any* way we can stop it? I *do* feel so sorry for the poor little thing!"

"No, Little Maid, it must learn its own lesson just

as all selfish folk do," the Tree-fairies sighed, and all of the fairies, silent and sad, watched as the Caddis-fly continued busily working, snatching tiny sticks and stones away from its neighbours and gluing them together about himself in a long, round prison-cell.

"See, see, how smart *I* be!" he exclaimed, speaking for the first time and wagging his foolish, vain head. "A palace I'll make, from the sticks that I take, and nobody shall use it but *me!*" And with that, having completed the task of making its outer walls, he crawled back into it.

No sooner had he done so than a disagreeable, shrill laugh broke the stillness of the onlookers, and Pyxie saw that Big Wasp once more hovered above the Caddis baby, waving her wand in the air just over the surface of the brook. With a final toss of his selfish head the little Caddis-fly tried to come out to greet her, when lo and behold! he found he was bound by her curse to the prison he had built and could only leave it at the risk of his life!

"Let me out!" he begged. But laughing her hideous laughter the Evil One only scoffed at his distress, and then flew away and left him, for she saw that her curse had turned him into a helpless prisoner and that none of his birth gifts could help him now.

* * * * *

Many moons later Pyxie was once again playing at the Laughing Brook. The Breeze-fairies teased her

to follow them as usual, frolicking with mischief through her hair, the Trees bowed to and fro, and the Flower-fairies gazed at their own reflections in the brook's mirrored coolness, when suddenly without any warning whatever the Spray-fairies cried out in gladdest glee:

*'Swirl, Whirl, Swirl, Whirl;
OUR magic has worked, Little Girl!'*

and turning quickly towards the brook Pyxie saw the long imprisoned Caddis-fly baby rise up! up! to the surface of the water and, instantly spreading its exquisite Breeze-wings, fly away.

"Oh, God-parent-fairies of woods and streams and fields, look, look! There goes the little selfish Caddis-baby! He's escaped!" she cried, pointing after him.

The Breeze-fairies laughed with joy and, flying hither and thither, whispered the secret everywhere. "He's using *our* gift, see!" And they all watched him as he mounted higher and higher on the lacy wings that they had given him.

"And now," the dancing Sunbeams smiled, "he shall know the happiness that is our gift!"

"He shall drink the nectar from our lips!" the Flower-fairies joined in.

"And rest in our shade when he's tired!" the Trees sighed, clapping their hands and waving back and forth as they spoke.

And Pyxie, standing watching as the escaped Cad-dis-fairy flew farther and farther away, cried:

“Good luck, little Breezy-wings!” and wafted him a kiss from the tip of her fingers as he disappeared into the blue of the sky where it met the mirroring pond far beyond her sight.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Where Dreams Come From



Where Dreams Come From



OLD Mr. Sun had gone to bed, and Pyxie's mother and father had kissed her good night and gone away, too, so that she now lay half awake, half asleep, her tousled curls covering the pillow, while the Sky-fairies shadowed the world with their thick gray mantles and everything grew still.

It was becoming quite dark in the little casemented room, but she did not feel frightened, for she knew that her ever watchful friends, the really truly fairies, were always near to guard her from all harm. So lying quietly now she looked from her window, through the vines that clung half over it, out into the

dimly lit garden where the flowers slumbered, recalling dreamily how in the early evening she had seen the Dew-fairies gather about them and, spangling them with jewels, kiss their sleeping faces.

She could see into the Sentinel Grove, too, where the softly rustling Trees whispered, whispered, gathered their gossip for Peter Pan, and out beyond it all, way away from the edge of the woods, there came faintly to her listening ears the laughing voices of the Spray-fairies as they danced in their Laughing Brook.

Then, one by one, Heaven's starry eyes opened, and old Mr. Moon-man came sailing slowly up through his sea of clouds and stopped, seeming to hang suspended just outside of Pyxie's window. She smiled into his round funny face, and he smiled back at her, until her eyelids became so heavy she couldn't hold them open another single second; so down, down they fluttered until the long lashes caressed her dimpled cheeks and little Pyxie, the Fairy-girl, fell fast asleep.

Floating in through the casement then there came a bevy of wonderful fairies, palest green with silvery lights, in the smiling trail of the moon. In and in and in they came, fluttering and flying, until the whole room seemed filled to overflowing with the beauty of their dream-like presence as they floated around Pyxie's little white bed.

Pyxie was asleep, so her day-time mortal-eyes were

closed; but the magic of her dream-eyes was wide awake now and she watched the pretty host.

“Oh, little night-time sprite,” she cried in her magic dream-voice, spying one lovelier than all the rest, “come closer, I want to see what you are!”

So down it fluttered until its gauzy wings brushed her curls back from her ear, and in a voice as sweet as the evening air whispered:

“I’m a Dream-fairy, and my fairy name is Free Fancy!” Then it fluttered away.

“Oh,” Sylvia smiled, suddenly opening her real eyes and murmuring: “But you look like a butterfly, and you must have kissed me just now!” Whereupon her heavy eyelids dropped down again, and all the Dream-fairies began fluttering more gaily than ever about her curly head.

“Yes, that’s what Mortal-folks call me,” little Free Fancy tinkled, “a butterfly, a *night*-butterfly; but I’m really a really truly fairy, you know, and my really truly name is Luna-moth. I’m named for my great-greatest-grandparent, the Moon!” and laughing at the puzzled look on Sylvia’s sleeping face she joined the others as they continued to flutter aimlessly just as all dreams do, around and around and around in the veil of mist that divides Dreamland from the Land-that-never-was!

“But where did so many of you come from?” Pyxie asked in her magic dream-voice so soft and low that no mortal ear could hear it.

“From the Kingdom of Beautiful Dreams.” they

answered in a silvery chorus, stooping to kiss her brow.

"Where *is* that? I've so often wanted to know where dreams come from," and she turned restlessly, smiling and rumpling her curls.

Free Fancy hesitated a moment, then whispering something to her sister-dreams they all leaned forward and touched the sleeping child with their moonshine wands.

"Come with us and see!" they said, and Sylvia saw that a million Moonbeam-fairies had come thronging into her room in among the Dream-fairies, and that they were towing a beautiful silvern boat!

Gently they floated just above her head, and she discovered that she was being lifted by the Dream-fairies about her—until, wafted to and fro for a moment, she reached the boat and embarked.

Softly then it sailed, first rising high above the bed, then steadying its dainty keel it made for the window and sailed away, out, out into the Sea of Dreams, over the Land of Sleep!

The rhythmical motion soothed and lulled her like her mother's bed-time songs, and smiling she sailed on, far, far away from home and into a moonlit forest of swaying Tree-fairies.

As they passed gaily on through this Sylvia saw the little Tree-fairies saying their evening prayers in the top-most branches, and the birds, who are Nature's fairies, too, you know, singing the world to sleep. All about her other slumbering children, on

their voyages of joy, saluted as they sailed past, each in his Boat of Dreams.

On and on Sylvia went, the Dream-fairies leading the way, until with a downward flutter they sank and stopped before the stump of an aspen tree.

"Oh," her Dream-voice cried, as she felt the plunge of the boat, "where are we going, pray?" But before any answer came from the hovering Dream-fairies, she saw the stump and its sweetheart-vine that grew around it so lovingly, and felt that she was safe.

"Here we are!" they said, "at the wonderful Palace of Night!" and lifting her from the boat they stood her up on the mossy ground where the moon-beam-fairies flickered.

Straight into the vine, then, the little Dream-fairies flew, and stopping before a big cluster of white blossoms, bowed their pretty heads.

"Why, what are you doing; tell me, tell me!" Pyxie begged, quite as excited as she was in her day-time wanderings 'mongst the fairies of woods and fields.

"We are paying our homage to the Queen of Night," the lovely moth who had kissed her said. "Mortal-folk call it the Moon-flower vine, but if you'll come a little closer I'll show you a Queen and her train!"

Sylvia went close up to the biggest blossom of all, and there, sure enough, she saw the beautiful Queen of Night with a golden crown upon her head. and

about her groups of worshipful courtiers dressed in palest gold.

"She looks like the Flower-fairy Princess that got married," Sylvia said dreamily, and as her voice echoed through the woodland glade all the other day-time fairies stirred and whispered her name in their sleep.

With the sound of their familiar tones in her ears she realised she was in a land where they all knew her. "Well," she exclaimed, "I didn't know before that all of *you* came to the Land of Dreams, too!"

"Of course we do," they murmured softly, "that's why Dreamland is always beautiful for children who believe in us and love us! The Land of Dreams is in the Realm of Sweet Thoughts, and that realm belongs to every little child!" Then laughing and dancing they pointed out all the mystic wonders of the moonshiny night, and Sylvia looking about her said:

"It's beautiful, little Dream-fairies, and just like my day-time play, only it's *realer*, that's all!" And she stood watching, intensely interested in everything she saw, while the dream-world's life went busily on about her.

Looking once more into the Palace of Night, the big exquisite blossom of the moon-flower vine, she saw all the large-winged Luna-moths that were really truly Dream-fairies come and go before her. Up they would fly to the Queen and, pausing before her

throne, bow their heads again and again in gentle loving homage.

To each of them the Queen gave a bundle wrapped in a fold of starlight and tied with a tiny rainbow. These they tucked carefully under their wings and merrily flew away.

“Why, what’s that you’re giving them, your Nightly Majesty?” Pyxie asked, unable to keep her questions to herself even in her sleep.

The Queen of the Night returned her wide-eyed gaze, seeming to see her standing there for the first time; and then she spoke:

“They are little children’s dreams,” she said, “for I and my loved courtiers keep guard over all the dear little ones who love us and believe in fairies! And thus you see we send out to them each night the rainbow dreams that flutter about their heads like the beautiful moths that carry them!”

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Storm-Fairies' Battle

The Storm- Fairies' Battle



LATE one afternoon Sylvia was playing in her garden among the little Flower-fairies, when suddenly she felt cool rain-drops upon her flushed cheeks, and looking up saw a low-hanging Cloud-chariot filled with little Sky-fairies crying, their thick gray mantles held to their streaming eyes.

"Oh, Fairy-sisters," she heard them mourn, as, weeping, they bent ever nearer the up-looking flower-faces. "Oh, souls of imprisoned sweetness, we weep for you, so grow, grow, grow!"

She understood it all perfectly, for many weeks before, on the day when she had gotten lost in the

woods and the Rainbow-fairies had shown her the way back home, had not the Cloud-fairies explained it to her? Had not the Queen told her how the flowers were the Earthly prisons of the Sky-fairies who, when the flowers had had their growth, were freed and joined the Rainbow, helping to make it beautiful with the colours of their glorified souls? So now she smiled up into the cloud and said:

“They’ll soon be free, Cloud-fairies dear, so don’t cry *too* hard!”

But just then another cloud came scurrying across the sky, and as she watched it she saw that it was filled with strange leaden-coloured fairies that she had never seen before.

The little Summer Breezes seeing them, too, suddenly sprang up about her, and with looks of fright cried: “Run, Pyxie, run! A storm’s a-coming! A storm’s a-coming!” and off they flew to hide in their Echo-cave way over beyond the Rainbow.

“Who are they, those strange fairies, I wonder,” Pyxie said to herself, disregarding the Breeze’s warning and standing still midst the gentle patter of the Cloud-fairies’ tears.

As she stood thus she saw the first Cloud-chariot come scurrying across the sky all soft and fluffy, and as it got just above her head she could see quite plainly that the Air-Queen, seated in the midst of the weeping Sky-fairies, was the one she had talked to on that ‘day when the fickle Breezes had led her up the tall, tall hill.

So waving her little hand she called: "Hello there, my Air-Queen!"

As she spoke, however, she saw that the Queen's face, instead of being all sweet smiles as it had been on the day when she had first seen her, was now all frowns and worry.

"I wonder what's the matter with her," she said, puzzled, rather hurt that the Queen paid no attention to her salutation; "her face looks all black!"

But at that moment Pyxie saw that the leaden-coloured cloud was sailing rapidly forward—was overtaking the Air-Queen's chariot—and then, that it had sailed on by. *Then* she heard a rumble, and listening closely knew it came from the leaden-coloured cloud.

"You think you are the Ruler of the Heavens," it rumbled angrily. "Well, I'll just show you; for I am Thunder-r-r, the Power-r-rful!!" and it frowned darkly upon the Air-Queen and her train.

The Air-Queen trembled for a moment in fright, and seeing this the Thunder gave another threatening grumbling roar. "I'll this day destroy you, and r-r-rule!!"

And then the Air-Queen lost her temper completely and, drawing her sword, with a flash she whipped up the Wind-steeds hitched to her Cloud-chariot and charged furiously after the enemy.

"Usurper!" she hissed. Then turning to her train of weeping Sky-fairies she cried in lightning command:

*“Fight! Fight! for your Ruler, my Braves!
Or we shall be beaten by knaves!
Your swords you must flash
Before their guns crash,
Flash-flash for your Ruler, my Braves!”*

And drying their eyes the Sky-fairies flashed-flashed-flashed their swords of fire, cutting right through the enemies' ranks.

Away and away then the two Cloud-armies hurried and scurried right across the darkened Heavens!

Old Mr. Western Sun, saddened by such a display of temper, hid his face; the other little fairies that live in the sky peeped out with terror from behind a dark curtain that veiled their presence, and the Cloud-fairies wept down harder than ever; while Mother Earth's fairy-children crouched about her skirts and trembled, and Pyxie saw that over the entire world there had descended a hushed, ominous silence.

“Oh,” she gasped, so fascinated by the tremendous sight of the battling Heavens that she stood rooted to the spot, “I'm sure there's going to be a dreadful Heaven-war!” and she continued to gaze up into the clouds.

“Hey, there, Sylvia! Ain't you got sense enough to come in out of the rain?” Tommy called as he and Willie tore across the far end of the lawn and burst unceremoniously into Pyxie's house. “Come on in,

you silly!" and having reached the doorway he and Willie both stood beckoning to her wildly.

"No," she said, "I want to stay here in the garden and watch the Sky-fairies!" and she continued to gaze upwards, intensely interested in what she saw going on in the clouds above her.

Suddenly, terrifically, from out the deep dark re-sounding Thunder-caves far down below the horizon, the Thunder-fairies' cannon-corps came rolling blackly into view! On they came, growling, grumbling, their heavy guns firing at the Air-Queen's Cloud-chariot as it again charged forward.

At the awful noise of it all the Air-Queen and all her train seemed to waver for a moment, but quickly gathering together again the Queen cried:

*"Rally about me, my men!
Flash-flash, again and again!
Your swords you MUST flash
Before their guns crash!
With a last blinding flash we shall win!!"*

And from all about the Queen's Cloud-chariot Sylvia saw troops of Light-cavalry flashing out quick as lightning; and drawing their fiery swords, they cut great jagged gaps in the enemy's lines!

"Sylvia, Sylvia!" her mother called in quick alarm, appearing in the doorway just then and seeing Pyxie standing, spell-bound, in the midst of the crouching garden; "come in at once!"

Reluctantly leaving her flower friends to their fate beneath the quarrelling skies Pyxie ran into the house and shut the door, and with a frightful bang and crash, and roar, the whole host of Thunder-fairies fired all their guns at once!

“Oh-h!” she squealed, sticking her fingers into her ears, “the battle has begun in deadly earnest! See, see!” and she pointed out of the window to the sky, where the Light-cavalry were rallying about their Queen and flash-flash-flashing their fiery swords fearlessly.

Volley after volley of the Thunder-fairies’ guns came rolling and roaring right over the house-top, drowning every other sound as they hurled their thunder-bolts into the Air-Queen’s ranks!

“Flash-flash-flash!!” went the Light-cavalry’s swords as they rushed forward and grappled with the clashing, roaring Thunder!

R-O-O-ARR! R-O-O-ARR!! went the Thunder’s deadly guns!

The whole sky was a terrible, struggling battlefield, and Sylvia, at last awed and half-frightened, caught her breath and crouched down by her mother’s knees.

“It’s perfectly awful for fairies to fight like that!” she gasped.

“Hooray, I think it’s bully!” Willie said, pressing his nose flat against the streaming window-pane.

Tommy pressed his nose flat against the window-

pane, too, but would not enter into Pyxie's mood; so Willie went on:

"It's a regular ripper, Sylvia. Hooray, the Thunder-fairies are beating!"

"No they're not," Sylvia quickly contradicted him. "Don't you hear——"

But drowning out her voice completely the two Cloud-armies went on furiously fighting out their world-old quarrel, and for several moments Sylvia could not make herself heard.

Presently, however, the Thunder's guns fired a little less often, and she said: "Don't you see them retreating? My Air-Queen and her Light-cavalry are beating!"

Then as the sound of the Thunder became more and more distant, and the flashing kept up, she continued:

"The Light-cavalry are driving the Thunders back into their deep, dark cave way over beyond the Rainbow!"

"Humph!" Tommy scoffed, unable to control himself longer; "such foolish talk!" and though, with Willie, he still had his nose pressed flat against the window-pane, he managed to make a face at Pyxie where she stood.

Again the Light-cavalry flash-flash-flashed their swords, and again the Thunder's guns rolled; but this time it was way away near the Sunrise Hills, and Sylvia clapped her hands with delight.

"Goody! Goody!" she cried, "the horrid old

usurpers are getting out of my Air-Queen's realm as fast as ever they can!" And sure enough, with a last despairing "R-O-O-ARR!" the Thunder-fairies gave up the battle and retreated into their cave, dragging their grumbling disappointment after them in a muffled, far-off roll!

"Thank Goodness, it's over!" Sylvia sighed with relief; and old Mother Earth, sighing too, shook out her wet skirts and aroused her crouching children.

"What, *you* frightened by a little temper in the skies!" she scolded as the Tree and Flower-fairies continued to hold down their heads and let the rain-drops drip from them tearfully. "For shame! *I* need smiles, not tears!"

For a moment more they hung their heads, apparently unable to obey, and then old Mr. Sun popped out and they smiled up at him once more. Mother Earth laughed outright at this, and everywhere the birds began to sing.

Sylvia danced towards the door, her curls bobbing merrily. "Come on, boys, let's go see the Garden. The Flower-fairies must be half drowned, the poor little things!" and skipping gaily out she ran down the steps.

"Come on, Bill, let *us* splash in the mud-puddles!" Tommy suggested with glee, and suiting the action to the words he and Willie followed her, and were soon in the muddy condition that gladdened their very souls!

Pyxie, intent only on her play with the really truly

fairies, ran on lightly across the grass, still spangled with the Cloud-fairies' tears, and entered the garden alone.

"Oh, you sad little weepy things!" she exclaimed, as, flitting from flower to flower like a butterfly, she kissed their sweet wet faces. "It's all over, so you must dry your eyes and laugh; for see," and she pointed, "here comes the Queen-of-the-Air and her little Breezes!"

And raising their heads still higher towards the Sun the Flower-fairies saw the Air-Queen come sailing once more across the sky. This time, however, her head was held high in conquering pride; she smiled, and all about her her subjects, the Cloud-fairies, smiled too. Around and around danced the truant Breezes, and though her Cloud-chariot was now of purest white, the steeds she drove were of brilliant sunset hues, her pathway was strewn with Sky-blush roses, and everywhere, over the whole wide windswept Heavens, there glowed the colours of the Flower-fairies' souls, glorified.

Sylvia drew in her breath sharply at the wonderful sight, and old Mr. Sun, smiling harder than ever, bade his Rainbow dancers come forth from their Crystal-cave down near the Laughing Brook, and dance among the jewelled flowers.

CHAPTER NINE

The Coming of the Winter-
Fairies

The Coming of the Winter- Fairies



OLD King Cold's forerunner, Jack Frost, started it, the impish elf, or else the Summer world would not have fled away. Coming in his hoary garb, he had teased and chased the Summer until she hid her eyes and wept equinoctial tears; and then with a wave of his withering wand he freed the Flower-fairies, just as Pyxie had been told he would, and their souls were wafted up to help make the Rainbow.

Old Priest Bumble-bee, discouraged with the blossomless world, hid himself and slept like all the other winged fairies; and everywhere Mother Earth seemed waiting for Old King Cold, the Prince of Winter, to arrive.

Then with another wave of his wand Jack Frost turned the bright green dresses of the Tree-fairies into brilliant orange, red, and russet brown. Stark November ran quickly after flaming October, and screaming on his blow-trumpet old King Cold, the Prince of Winter, marched down from his home in the North, and firmly settling himself within Mother Earth's arms bade his grandchildren, the Winter-fairies, come forth to dance and play.

Obeying him the little Summer Breezes, now grown into Winter Winds, came sweeping down about him and danced in icy splendour, their breaths turning the Water Sprites everywhere into rainbow-tinted crystal, clear as truth!

Old Mr. Sun, though oftentimes pale and shivering, continued to get up every morning and, shining down into the upturned face of Mother Earth, tried to cheer and warm her with his smiles. But one morning the Cloud-fairies had drawn their Mist of Tears clear across the Heavens, and though he got up as usual, he could not see one single thing!

"Why," he exclaimed, "who'll wake Pyxie if I can't smile in at her window!" And so saying he smiled harder than ever in his anxious endeavour to coax the weeping Cloud-fairies from the sky. But without avail; for, gathering more closely together, they wept softly.

"How provoking they are, to cut off my view like this!" old Mr. Sun exclaimed; and then in a worried tone—"And who *will* wake Pyxie?"

But just then up into the sky swept a whole host of Winter Winds, crying gaily: "We'll chase the clouds away so that you can!" And dancing and blowing they did their very best to send the Cloud-fairies scurrying off; but continuing to weep deeply, the Cloud-fairies paid absolutely no attention to them, and went on singing their song of rain.

Then the Winter Winds lost their temper. "What!" they cried, "you will not mind us!" and whistling and blowing angrily they swept in a great cold wave around and around just beneath where the Cloud-fairies wept.

"When we blow you *must* go!" they blustered out in stormy scoldings; but the Cloud-fairies wept on, their tears dripping steadily down into the colder air below them.

Then the Winter Winds got more angry than ever, and sang out in a big blustery chorus:

*"Blow, blow, blow!
If you don't go
We'll turn your tear-drops into snow!"*

and smote the Cloud-fairies' tears with their wands of Winter ice!

And then the most wonderful thing happened! All the little raindrops crystallized as quick as a wink, and turning into White Snowflake-fairies whirled and swirled down toward Mother Earth, dancing merrily.

Their faces were very beautiful and sparkling, and as they held their warm fluffy furs about them they laughed at the cross old Winter Winds who, surprised at the success of their threat, momentarily subsided into chilly silence. Old Mr. Sun peeped out for a moment and, smiling, bade the Snow-fairies go down and wake his Fairy-girl!

Inside the casemented room of the Big House, guarded by the bare upstanding Sentinel Grove, the Fairy-girl's really-truly-body slept, knowing nothing of the Winter world fast growing white outside her window, but her dream-body sailing far, far away over the Sea of Sleep was now in the golden Dreamland of Summer, and as she opened her magic night-eyes, the eyes that had been given her by Free Fancy, the Queen of Dreamland, she saw the Spray-fairies frolicking in the Laughing Brook. Old Priest Bumble-bee was there too, marrying millions of Flower-fairies; the Star-fairies winked and blinked at her just as they had done when the Breezes left her in the woods to find her way home all alone in the dark; and the Fairy-rainbows played hide and seek among the sun-kissed blossoms of her garden.

"Oh, it's just like my Summertime play, only it's realler, that's all!" she said, as she had said once before when the Dream-fairies showed her the Queen of Night sending sweet dreams to little children by her Moth messengers.

But just then, right in the midst of her realliest truliest dream, the Flame-fairies on her hearth

jumped up from among their companions of the smouldering embers and began a snapping, crackling dance, calling to her to wake and come nearer their merry warmth.

At the sound of their voices she opened her eyes and looked about the room sleepily; but not seeing old Mr. Sun beaming his good-morning in at her window she turned over and closed her eyes again.

The Snow-flake-fairies whirled down to earth faster and faster, clustering together, and tapped against her window-pane.

"What a lazy one she is!" they laughed. Then tip-tapping more loudly they called in a swirling chorus:

"Wake up, Pyxie! Wake up!"

At the soft sound of them Pyxie at last roused, and jumping from her little bed ran to the window.

"Oh, oh," she gasped with delight as she saw its decorated surface and then looked through it to the dancing snowflakes beyond. "Everything's going to be beautiful—but I wonder what this is?" examining the pane more closely and discovering a lovely tracery of ferns and trees wrought upon it in silver.

The Snowflake-fairies paused in their tapping a moment to answer: "Why, don't you know? It's the Dream of Summer that old Jack Frost has sent you!" Then beginning to dance again they said further: "But we can show you something even more beautiful; for we have turned the whole world into Fairyland!"

And sure enough they had, for by now everything was covered with their soft mantle of white, and everywhere old King Cold, Prince of Winter, ruled supreme.

The Winter Winds suddenly remembered their Breezy childhood pranks, and mischievously shaking the window blustered through the softly-falling flakes: "Come, come, Lazy One, and play truant with us in the woods!"

Sylvia laughed. "Oh, you rascalawags, I know who you are! Do you think I'm going to follow your mischief-beckonings out into this snow-storm? Well, I'm not; it's too cold!" and she smiled back towards the hearth where the Flame-fairies danced.

"But the world is Fairyland!" they urged.

"Yes, the world is Fairyland!" the Snowflakes repeated. "Come and see!" and they danced and beckoned so merrily that Pyxie finally said:

"Well, I just guess I've got to go!" And in spite of the Flame-fairies' warning against the cold she jumped into her warmest clothes, and putting on her rubber boots was soon ready.

"Blow! Blow! Away you go!" the Wind-fairies blustered, and running after them as they drove the Snowflakes merrily forward Pyxie found herself going towards the Laughing Brook.

Together they all danced through the Sentinel Grove, wrapped in its fluffy frostiness, and Sylvia looked to see her fairy friends of woods and streams and fields jump up and welcome her just as they

used to do; but not one single one did she see, for they were all fast asleep beneath the blanket of soft, diamond-dusted down.

"Come, come," the Snowflakes urged in their whispering voices as they danced down and kissed her hair, her cheeks, her eyelashes.

"I just believe you're trying to play a prank on me again," she said to the Winter-winds; "for even if you are grown up you are still awfully full of mischief!"

But without answering they beckoned her on.

"Yes, and with these dancy, prancy Snowflakes to help you," she continued, laughing up at the sprites, "there's no telling what you'll do to me, or where you'll make me go! But I've just got to see all the wonderful, magical things!" And so, unable as always to resist any summons from the really truly fairies, she danced on and soon found herself at the edge of the Laughing Brook.

"Why, what in the world has happened?" she said, stopping and staring with surprise at the crystal-covered surface. "There isn't a Spray-fairy in sight!"

But as she looked and listened she could hear their laughing voices in a very, very faint chorus way down below the ice.

"Whirl, Swirl, Whirl!

Laugh and dance Little Girl!

Come and join our merry whirl——"

“But how can I ‘join your merry whirl,’ ” Pyxie interrupted them, “when you aren’t even here for me to wade in?” And she stepped from the bank onto the icy surface. And then, with a laugh of surprise, she discovered that though it looked so like beautiful thin glass it was quite strong enough to bear her whole weight!

“Oh, what fun!” she exclaimed, and sliding out upon it to the Big Rock, where the Spray-fairies had lived, she gazed eagerly about her. “It is Fairyland, sure enough,” looking at the snow-covered banks, where the brown reeds and grasses were now a fluffy white. “I just believe I’ll go on a voyage of discovery!” And so following the Wind and Snow-fairies as they beckoned, she went rapidly over the crystal surface of the Brook.

On and on they led her under low-hanging boughs of hemlock weighted down with the snow, where the shadows were all purple and scary; then out into the dancing, whirling Snowflakes again; until presently she came to a part of the Brook she had often seen from the woods, but which she had never dared explore.

“Oh, Goody!” she said, “this deep part is all glassy, too, and I can walk between those tall, tall banks! Now I’ll find out where you come from, Laughing Brook! I’ve so often wanted to know!” So laughing and talking she ran on.

It was very exciting, and after she had gone a far, far ways, farther than that time when she had met

the Cloud-queen on the hill-top, she came to a big open archway in a rock directly before her, and saw that though the water was all frozen here, too, it came right out from under the arch!

"Oh, oh, I wonder what it is!" she gasped, but as she spoke old Mr. Sun popped out and beamed suddenly down on her, and at his smile a whole host of Rainbow-fairies sprang from the ice and began to dance about her, flashing their jewels merrily.

"Ah, Little Maid, you've found our Crystal home," they cried in tiny bell-like tones. "Come in, come in, and see how we live in Winter!"

"But I'm on a voyage of discovery to see where the Laughing Brook comes from," Sylvia answered.

"Then come with us and we'll show you later." And so, ducking her head, Sylvia began to walk in under the crystal archway.

The Winter-winds blew and howled at her as she disappeared, angry because they had grown so big that they could not follow; but only mocking them merrily, she entered and looked about her.

It was all beautiful. Clustered around about where she had entered she saw Baby-fern and Tree-fairies fast sleep, while flitting just above their heads a host of Dream-fairies hovered, waiting to carry their Dreams of Summer to all the window-panes.

"Oh, I know about you!" Sylvia laughed, "for the Snow-fairies told me who you were this morning," and then going on still farther she saw another group of fairies busily engaged.

"Who are you?" she demanded, dancing up to them and speaking in her fairiest tones.

Their Queen looked up silently for a moment before answering, and then seeing who Pyxie really was, said:

"We're old King Cold's jewellers, making diamond dust with which to spangle his robe." And stepping aside she showed her a lovely little Jewel-mill, in which they were grinding frozen dewdrops culled from the summer flowers.

"Oh, how wonderful!" Sylvia cried; "but I must go on exploring, for the Rainbows said they would show me where the Laughing Brook came from after I got through here. And I'm awfully anxious to know!"

"Are you?" they asked. "Then go right through there!" and they pointed to another hole in the rock just ahead of where Sylvia stood.

For a moment she hesitated. It was so very, very small she did not believe she could squeeze through! Then making herself just as near the size of a fairy as she possibly could, she did squeeze through, and found herself in the darkest, blackest, inkiest darkness she had ever known!

"Oh-h! Oh!" she gasped in terrified alarm. "Where have I come?"

"Oh-h! Oh!" a host of mocking voices gasped after her. "Where have I come?"

Pyxie peered about her more and more alarmed; but not one single thing could she see!

“Who, who—is that—talking?” she trembled in fright.

“Who, who—is that—talking?” the voices echoed.

Scared almost out of her wits the poor child took what courage she had left in both hands and began to run! But as she did so she could hear a thousand feet running after her! Her heart felt as though it would jump right out of her body, and she slipped and stumbled along painfully! Then she stopped.

“Why, it’s the Echo-fairies!” she said, laughing. And mocking her, they laughed too, and seemed to crowd nearer in the dark.

“You little rascalawags,” she scolded; “you frightened me dreadfully! But now I won’t be scared any more!”

And so she went bravely on, feeling her way most carefully.

The air was cold and damp, and Jack Frost’s little Nipping Imps ran after her and slashed at her toes and fingers, but on she went until finally she heard a murmured song like that of the little Spray-fairies in the Brook, and felt the smoothness of the ice give way beneath her feet.

“Why, I am in water,” she said, surprised. “It must be the Laughing Brook again!” and just as she spoke the most wonderful thing happened; for, turning an angle in the wall, she saw old Mr. Sun’s full-beaming face shining down upon her, and saw also that she was in a light, round chamber with a hole in the top!

"Hello, Mr. Sun, where am I?" she laughed up at him, and smiling down at her harder than ever he pointed with one of his golden ray-fingers towards a big rock.

"You're in the Crystal Palace of Winter way over beyond the Rainbow," he answered. "See!"

And looking at the rock Sylvia saw seated upon it the old Prince of Winter dressed in his hoary robes, while dancing all about him were Snowflake-fairies covering him with their soft caresses.

"Your Majesty, I'm Pyxie, the Wood-fairy-girl," Sylvia said, going up to the rock-throne and curtsying just as the Snowflakes did, "and I've come to pay my homage."

At this old King Cold bowed his head magnificently and would have spoken, but just then little old Jack Frost, the Court Jester, danced up in impish mockery and said:

"She has done nothing of the sort, your Coldness," bowing just as she had done, "it is woman's curiosity that has brought her here. She's looking for the home of the Laughing Brook! Ha! Ha!" and he laughed at Sylvia's evident confusion.

Then Sylvia heard another voice say: "Let not the Imp's biting words tease you, Little Maid. It is natural and right that little children should know the source of everything beautiful. Here, stoop down and look! The Brook's birthplace is under this rock, and I'm the Mother Spring that bore it!" And bubbling up, a lovely crystal stream of water flowed

past Sylvia's feet, and then in icy-coated splendour went singing towards the woods and fields.

"Oh, how lovely!" Pyxie exclaimed, beginning to dance up and down. "I think I'll——"

But hearing a noise very foreign to the fairy scene in which she stood, she broke off in the middle of her sentence and looked up to see Tommy and Willie looking down at her through the hole in the chamber's roof. Their faces were incredulous as they stared at her, until finally breaking the silence she said:

"Isn't it beautiful, this Palace of Winter?"

Tommy sniffed. "Palace nothing! It's our Robber's Hole, and you come out! We don't allow girls. How did you get down, anyway? We've been playing right here and didn't see you!"

"I followed the Winter-winds and Snow-fairies up the Laughing Brook," Sylvia replied.

"Oh, shucks, you couldn't have!" Tommy contradicted; but Willie, his eyes round with excitement, leaned far over the edge and said:

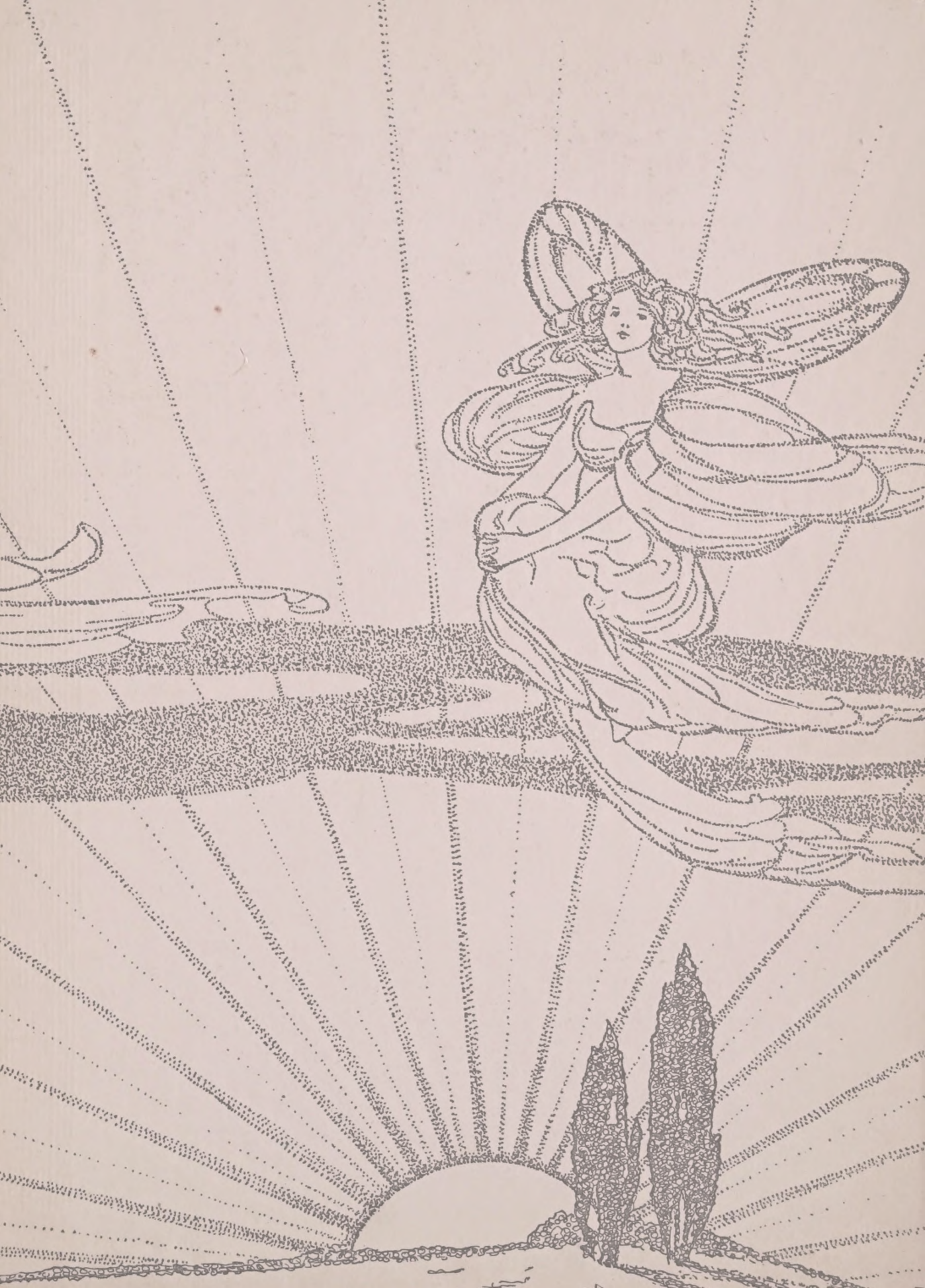
"Here, Sylvia, take my hand and pull yourself up! You've discovered a *cave* if you did that! I've always thought this was one, but never could find out! Anybody that's as smart as you are can play Indian with me, all right, all right, whether they are a girl or not!" And he made a face at Tommy.

So very soon Pyxie was standing outside the cave, the Sunbeams kissing her ruffled curls, while she told both boys all about her wonderful adventure.

Since then Tommy, as well as Willie, often asks her to play with them in the Sentinel Grove; but having once learned the secret of true happiness from the fairies of woods and stream and fields she loves best to play with her friends, the Really Truly Fairies, and learn more and more of their beautiful secrets.

THE END





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