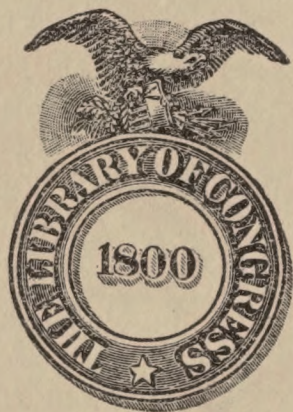


A SUMMER IN THE APPLE TREE INN



By ELLA
PARTRIDGE
LIPSETT



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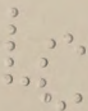
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A SUMMER IN THE APPLE TREE INN

BY

ELLA PARTRIDGE LIPSETT

With Four Illustrations by Mary Wellman



NEW YORK
HENRY HOLT AND COMPANY
1906

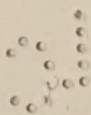
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*To the Cheery Captain,
My Father*

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A SUMMER IN THE APPLE TREE INN

CHAPTER I

THE FAIRY GODMOTHER

IT'S raining cats and dogs," wailed Dorothy forlornly, pressing her face close to the window pane against which the driving rain dashed and trickled in headlong rivulets, "and it's our first day in the country, too."

"Dorothy!" exclaimed a reproachful voice from the depths of a four-poster bed, "you promised to call me if you waked up first," and the bedclothes heaved in restless billows until Mildred's tousled head appeared above the white confusion.

"You needn't be so keen to get up," snapped Dorothy crossly, "we cannot go out, and it is as cold as anything. The fog is so thick I cannot even see the bay. So we won't be able to watch the boats, and that would have been something to do at least."

“Oh,” groaned Mildred, jumping from the bed and running across to the window to see for herself the unkindness of the weather, “we cannot go to the barn or play in the garden, and the brook will be too high to wade in.”

“Of course,” wailed Dorothy, “and I suppose we will have to play in that stuffy attic with the rusty sword and the old hoopskirts and the duds we left there last summer. And Aunt Margaret will say after breakfast, ‘now run up to the playroom, kiddies, and “make believe” until I have time to frolic with you. We must have a merry day in spite of the rainy weather,’” she mimicked naughtily.

Mildred giggled, but she glanced uneasily toward the open door, for she thought she had heard a footstep in Aunt Margaret’s room beyond. Dorothy was always so funny when she was just cross enough to imitate people, and even father said she was clever at it sometimes.

“Then grandma will tell us a story this evening about some remarkable children she used to know when she was young, and we’ll have to sit still and be respectful when all of our fingers and toes are just

aching to wiggle. What is it, Dorothy, that always keeps going and screwing inside when we have to sit still in church and other places? It's like—like——”

“A motor carriage with the brake on,” suggested Dorothy, as she splashed into one of the shining little tubs which stood on either side of the toilet stand and which Harriet had filled with water the night before. “It just shakes and chugs frantically, but the brake won't let it move.”

“Do we have a motor, too, Dorothy?” looking askance at the other tub into which she was also expected to plunge for her morning bath.

Dorothy looked superior. “It's not called motor in our physiology,” pronouncing it very carefully, “but it means the same thing as circulation. That never stops even when we are asleep.”

“Did you ever see one, Dorothy?”

“See a circulation? You silly! No, I never did. Now, Mildred, get into that tub this minute. You're just fooling round to gain time, and you're hoping you'll have to miss your bath; I know you.”

“But it’s so cold,” whimpered the child, touching the water cautiously with her little pink toes, “and father’s not here to ask if we had our bath.”

“Coward!” taunted Dorothy contemptuously. “‘’Fraid of the dark, ’fraid of the wet, ’fraid the goblins will get you yet!’ You know well enough why father wants us to take our cold dip. It makes us tough and strong, and that’s why we never have things like other girls. Get in this minute! I’m not going to wait to curl your hair after I’m dressed, so you had better scuttle. I smell something good and brownish too, from the kitchen.”

“Wish grandma would have hot cakes this cold morning,” sputtered Mildred.

“By the way,” said Dorothy suddenly, “what did you do with the chocolate father gave you to carry in the train yesterday? Did you leave any of it? I saw you and Bob snipping and tasting all the time and you never passed it to us, you were so mean.”

“I was not,” contradicted Mildred shortly. “Ough, this water is so cold! We just tasted it first to see if it had vanilla in it, then Bob asked if I did not think it was a bit burnt, so we snipped a little

more to see, but it wasn't, so there! Please hand me that towel, Dorothy."

"Then where is it, pray?"

"Why, that Chinaman took the bag and I suppose he's eaten the candy by this time. What makes Aunt Margaret have that heathen laundryman work for her?"

"He's not a Chinaman or a laundryman either. He's a Japanese, and Aunty says he knows enough to stock a university. He came over here to learn English a long time ago, on grandfather's ship, and he's known our people ever since, and so this summer he asked Aunt Margaret to let him live here. I know he wouldn't eat the candy. He's too polite to sneak. Why, he took off his hat even to me, last night at the station, and said in his queer, sharp kind of a voice, 'Will the honourable Miss allow me to carry her luggage?' And when he lifted Lydia into the carriage, he said, 'Will the little lady permit Koto to place her in the carriage?'"

"What makes him so polite? Did they begin with him when he was small, just as mother does with us?"

“No, indeed, they began with the very first one of them all, and there never was a rude Japanese born; father said so.”

Mildred sighed. “I wish I was one. It’s so hard to be made to be polite when you don’t want to be.”

“It certainly is. Goodness, what a tangle! What makes you have such curly hair, Mildred? The rest of us don’t. And Mildred, don’t gobble when you eat, for mother is not here to reprove you. And for mercy’s sake, don’t stare at Koto when he waits on the table, or he will think you are an aborigine.”

“I don’t gobble,” grumbled Mildred. “I saw you eat a banana in four bites, on the train yesterday, and then you hid the skin under the cushion and pretended you didn’t know it was there.”

“You’d better hush,” warned Dorothy, tweaking the golden curls she was brushing vigorously; “I could tell tales, too.”

“Yes, but you’re ten years old and I’m only seven. And mother says you ought to be an example in things, but you’re not.”

“Because I’m ten years old then,” very loftily, “I

do not intend to explain my conduct to any child."

"You'd better take lessons from Koto, if he's so polite, missy! Oh, Dorothy, why didn't he have his eye holes cut bigger?"

"He didn't have anything to do with it—he was born that way."

"That don't make any difference. Puppies are born with ears and tails, and coachmen always cut them off in the stable to make them valuable. Bob said so."

"Koto couldn't have his eyes cut. He's like all his people. You couldn't expect him to be like us."

"Why not? Didn't God make all of us?"

"Yes, but he has lots of patterns and he uses a different one for every country. Now, I absolutely refuse to answer another question."

"Good-morning, girls," called a cheery voice from the doorway, and Aunt Margaret bustled in, fresh and rosy in her white morning gown. "I'll tie the hair ribbons in a jiffy. The bell is just ringing." And the subdued tones of a bronze gong sounded softly through the quiet house.

“Now, let’s button these dresses like Jack Robinson, for grandma is waiting for her coffee, and Harriet had the waffle irons smoking hot when I slipped into the kitchen just now. Bob and Lydia are down already, and I’m sure he has counted every white swallow on the blue syrup jug, for I saw him eyeing it on the table, and I have every reason to believe that he has had evidence of the genuineness of the syrup inside. There, we look as tidy as pins and as fresh as roses. Come, we can all go down together. The stairs are wide and lead to pleasant places.”

“Are you really a fairy godmother?” asked Mildred shyly, as they crowded down the stairway, three abreast, as Aunt Margaret had an arm about each little girl, “and do you have a wand and things? Father said so.”

Aunt Margaret laughed. “Father didn’t mean a real fairy godmother, though I might make believe to be one for a little time. I have a place in my room where I sit and think out things for people and they work about like magic sometimes, but I won’t begin to make believe now, I’m too hungry to pretend anything.”

Bob and Lydia were waiting on the hearth in front of a cheery driftwood fire, as the May day was as chilly as fall, and outside the rain poured unceasingly. The blazing fire drove away the gloom from the dining-room, whose long windows reached down to the floor and overlooked the fog-covered bay.

Grandma's gentle face beamed at the children over the coffee urn and her cheeks were as pink as the ribbons on her pretty cap.

"Isn't it nice to have them here, Margaret? And it's the baby's first visit too, alone," nodding to Lydia, who had been too small to leave her mother last summer. But the other children had visited Beach Farm many times and knew every nook and cranny within it as well as every dell and cove without.

To Lydia everything was new and strange, and the children smiled at her awe of the silver coffee urn and her amazement at grandma's portrait brooch, to say nothing of the quivering ribbons on her cap. They all stared equally at the slender Koto, who seemed to serve everybody at once and to know each time when another waffle would be acceptable.

Of course, the waffles were brown and delicious. Harriet intended them to be, and the maple syrup was the nicest that ever flowed from trees. The little blue jug was passed around and around without a reprimand from grandma, who never once suggested that maple syrup was bad at times for the digestion. Bob had his milk cup filled four times unrebuked, for there was a lovely Jersey cow in the barn and no milkman to send in a bill for extras.

Aunt Margaret's tabby cat sat on the back of her chair and glared uncompromisingly with her yellow eyes at the children and the Japanese alike. It had been hard enough to import the almond-eyed Asiatic, but to add four children at one time was more than her equanimity could stand. Thank goodness, she had the barn as a place of refuge, and she knew of hiding places that even four pairs of shining eyes could not ferret out.

"Let me see," grandma chatted on. "Bob is twelve, Dorothy ten, Mildred seven and Lydia five, all a year older than last year and knowing a year more of everything. Well, dears, you will find a welcome in every part of the farm, and some sur-

prises too, which I hope will please you. Koto here, will spend his spare time playing with you and he has already devised many new games in his wise young head."

Koto smiled delightedly and bowed respectfully to grandma, while his sparkling eyes spoke unutterable things to the children. Mildred suddenly displayed such an agonised expression on her little face that Aunt Margaret asked anxiously if anything was wrong.

"I'm just trying to make believe that I'm used to seeing a Japanese in the dining-room. But Aunt Margaret, why didn't God make him out of a different pattern?"

Aunt Margaret spoke quickly to Koto, who left the room on some errand, and she flashed a glance at grandma, who was very busy with the coffee urn, and whose ribbons quivered above it with some agitation.

"I think, Mildred," said Aunt Margaret quietly, "that you will soon be accustomed to him, and I assure you he will be the merriest playfellow in the world. You must remember that he comes of a

very good family and is not an ordinary person at all. I trust none of you will fail to be courteous to him."

"And now," went on Aunt Margaret, when the last drop of milk had been swallowed and the last sticky crumb of waffle had been munched, "I'm going to begin to be the fairy godmother and each of you may have one wish which we will try to fulfil in some way. I think Lydia had better begin, as she believes most in fairies."

Lydia blushed and hid her eyes behind a long be-ribboned curl, which she pulled over her face.

"Come, Lydia, don't be shy. You needn't put on before us," and Bob prodded her under the table with his foot. Lydia suddenly smiled like a sun-beam behind her fluffy hair. "I wish," she said softly, "that we had a real fairy to play with. I thought," she whispered, pointing to the bunch of flowers in the centre of the table, "I saw something move in there, with shining wings, and I hoped it was a fairy."

The children laughed merrily at Lydia's imaginary fairy, but Aunt Margaret rose from her chair and

leaned across to look more closely at the flowers, and when she touched them, lo, something moved and fluttered.

It was a butterfly, a huge black and yellow fellow, and he floated leisurely across the room to the window sill where some potted plants were blooming gaily. Lydia was so startled that she ran and hid her face against grandma's shoulder, while Bob exclaimed excitedly that the cocoon must be hidden somewhere.

"He's just hatched, Aunt Margaret, for there is still some powdery down on his wings."

In the midst of the excitement, old tabby sneaked from under the table, and watching her chance, sprang after the beautiful floating bit of colour. But it quickly soared so high that she could only snap her teeth and blink her eyes in disappointment. She was quickly banished from the room, and Bob watched carefully to keep the butterfly away from the draft in the chimney place.

"It's my fairy," suddenly piped Lydia. "I had my wish come true in one minute." And as the child spoke, the butterfly fluttered over to her and lit

on the ruffle of her apron. With mingled fear and delight Lydia looked with dilated eyes at the exquisite stranger sitting so confidently on her shoulder.

“I suppose,” said grandma softly to Aunt Margaret, “that Koto could account for it.”

“A beautiful beginning, mother. I hope the other surprises will be as successful. Come, let us go on with the wishes while we are watching Lydia and her fairy. Mildred may have her turn now.”

“Oh,” laughed the child, shutting her eyes tight together, “I wish I could have my pocket full of candy, and be able to eat it all without having to take medicine after it.”

“Pig, pig!” teased Dorothy, “what a wish to tell anybody.”

“I don’t care, the wish was right in my heart and I told it.”

“Of course,” said Aunt Margaret, “she may have her wish, but I’m not so sure about the medicine. Your father sent me a little box of sugar pills with specific directions, but as long as they are sweet you won’t care whether they are candy or medicine.

You know that even fairy godmothers have to be sensible and not give people wishes that would be harmful to them.

“Now, Dorothy, it is your turn.”

“I wish,” said Dorothy quickly, “that I could have all the books I wanted to read, and that I could just play a while and have a good time without having to be an example to the children. It’s a strain sometimes,” and she sighed like a little old woman. “I can never even be myself because I have to remember that the children might be looking or copying.”

Aunt Margaret looked curiously into Dorothy’s frank brown eyes, and her face was very grave as she encouraged her to go on with her wish.

“Then I would like to have a place where I can make believe cook and mix and mess things to my heart’s content. Mother won’t allow it at home because it worries Janet, and then she says it makes me untidy, but I like to be untidy and make things with my own hands.”

“Oh,” and Aunt Margaret smiled so suddenly that it seemed like a rift of sunshine across her face,

“I know all about it, Dorothy, and we’ll talk it over some other time. Now let Bob tell what a real boy wishes for.”

“Of course,” said Bob, “I could wish for things to eat like Mildred, and for books like Dorothy, but my very heart’s wish is for a box of paints and some brushes, and a chance to use them. And then I wish I could do something—something to please father this summer. He says he’ll give me up pretty soon if it doesn’t come, but—but——,” and Bob looked so uncomfortable that Aunt Margaret laughed merrily.

“Never mind, Bob, if it is too painful a subject to tell your fairy godmother. At any rate the paints are already waiting for you; and as for that ‘something,’ we’ll contrive it in some way.”

“Now run and get on your cloaks and rubbers, girls, while Bob and I hunt for umbrellas. We are all going out, as your grandfather would have said, ‘on a voyage of discovery,’ but it’s only to the orchard and not on the sea. It’s no wonder,” she said to Bob, “that we all adore the sight and smell of the sea when our very bones and marrow are filled

with the love of it. Are you going to be a sailor too, Bob?"

"Yes, if I cannot be a painter. But father says he won't allow any idle artists in his family."

"Now what is that dreadful 'something,' Bob," she coaxed softly.

"It's because I'm a coward, Aunt Margaret, and father can't thrash it out of me." Bob's face grew very red, and his lips quivered, as Aunt Margaret suddenly put her arm around him and gave him a good squeeze.

"Never mind, old chap. I know a road to it that your father doesn't dream of. No, I won't tell anybody, but I'm glad to know what it is. Ready, girls? Now, off we go to the orchard."

Away they went under the dripping trees still covered with apple blossoms, while the grass beneath was strewn with the pink-tipped petals.

CHAPTER II

THE APPLE TREE INN

BOB was the first to discover it, as he had hurried on ahead along the gravel path, and when he suddenly came upon the odd-looking building, nestled among the apple trees, he gave a long whistle of astonishment.

“What is it, Aunt Margaret?” he called back.
“This was not here last year.”

“No,” she answered, smiling, “this is one of the surprises.” And when they all stood in front of the door, she called their attention to the swinging painted sign above it. One side was printed in bright red letters, “The Apple Tree Inn,” and on the other was a wonderful sketch of an apple tree whose fruit was as scarlet as cherries in August and about as large.

On either side of the door were two small windows draped with muslin curtains, and the polished



M. Wellman

THE APPLE-TREE INN.

glass glistened like two shining eyes beneath the overhanging eaves. The house was brown and one story high with a curious sloping roof, and the short chimney was painted red and capped with a pompous weather vane.

“Why it’s like a bird house, only prettier and bigger,” exclaimed the children. “But why did somebody want an inn in your orchard, Aunt Margaret?”

But Aunt Margaret had opened the door without first knocking with the cute brass knocker and the children crowded eagerly after her. Then she rapidly explained that the building had formerly done service as a granary, and with the help of Koto and a clever carpenter it had been moved and transformed into a habitable little dwelling.

“Of course, you know now that it is a playhouse for you children, and each of you will find in it just what belongs to you. There are three rooms and a tiny kitchen beyond for Dorothy, who will be house-keeper and will see that it is kept orderly and properly. Here are the keys of the cabinets and closets, and you could not have a better day to become ac-

quainted with the treasures waiting for you in them. Now, I will leave you, but shall expect you to return to the house in time for dinner. And," she nodded archly, "grandma and I will be so happy to receive invitations to afternoon tea, if Dorothy could manage to serve it about four o'clock."

And away she went out in the rain again, leaving the children breathless with delight, and positive that there never had been such a playhouse in all the world, nor a more delightful fairy godmother.

They wandered about the quaintly furnished rooms and tested the comfort of all the inviting little rocking chairs which stood in every corner. They peeped into the pretty baskets on the tables and admired the strange designs on the matting which covered the floor of every room. Queer Japanese kites and fans decorated the walls, and in one room a huge umbrella had been opened and fastened to a beam so that it spread its flowered cover as if to protect the occupants of the room from possible summer showers. From the very centre of it hung a brilliant butterfly whose paper wings fluttered with every breath of air. In another room behind a won-

derful screen with shelves, Bob found a miniature studio with an easel, and paints and brushes enough to have stocked a shop. Then there was a cabinet too, all of his very own, with tiny drawers and cupboards enough to satisfy the most curious of boys. In the same room was a case of books beneath a cosy window seat, covered with cushions of such gay colours that they resembled stuffed rainbows sewed together. And on the cushions were verses painted and one of them ran like this:

“Rest a while and lean on me,
I’m full of comfort as can be.”

In fact there were jingles sprinkled everywhere throughout the little house. Above the doors were rhymes of welcome and hospitality. On the chairs were invitations to sit and stay a while. In the kitchen, on the dishes and even the tiny tea kettle sang a funny line:

“A cup of tea for thee and me,
I’ll boil and sing quite merrily.”

On the bookshelf was printed a warning that the children said was for Dorothy:

The Apple Tree Inn

“Read not only with your eyes,
Nor when your duty elsewhere lies.”

In the smallest room, which flaunted a paper covered with gorgeous roses climbing over a trellis, ran a picture moulding about as high as Lydia's head, and on it had been placed a row of real Japanese dolls dressed as daintily as possible. And there were a whole family of dolls sitting demurely in one corner on the floor, and they all smiled in such a friendly way that Lydia's heart was captivated immediately. And the funny part of it was that on the mother doll's breast was pinned a paper on which was written this strange communication:

“We've come to spend the summer,
In the Inn of Apple Trees,
And we'll try in every manner,
Our hostesses to please.”

The other children beamed with delight as their belongings were revealed to them, but Mildred could not find anything suitable to her taste until she discovered in one of the little closets a china Mandarin whose head nodded approvingly every minute. A

single touch removed his cap and lo, he was filled with candy, the very kind she enjoyed most. But around the cap was written the strangest rhyme of all:

“To those who seek my sweets for self,
And share not every candy small,
Will find it only bitter pelf,
They'd better touch me not at all.”

“I don't care what it says,” said Mildred stubbornly, “as long as I can have the candy that is in it.”

But the kitchen! Dorothy screamed with delight when she spied the tiny stove, in which a wood fire was burning briskly. The children immediately expressed desires for everything they loved to eat, until Dorothy compromised by promising to make some fudge that very minute. Then she stood and gazed at the prim array of shining tins upon the shelves, and the brown, blue and yellow dishes in the glass cupboard, and her bright eyes discovered many devices which would have pleased a much older and more experienced cook. A recipe book bound in scarlet lay on the well-scrubbed table, above

which hung a tiny mirror on which was painted in white letters :

“ A cook whose face is fair with smiles,
Will never spoil her cake,
So all through your kitchen trials,
Pray watch the smiles, no chances take.”

On one side of the kitchen a deep closet with shelves covered with fancy paper revealed groceries and goodies to be cooked when the fancy pleased the young maid. And in the midst of it all stood a chocolate cake on a pretty plate all ready for the afternoon tea. Now they really could invite grandma and Aunt Margaret, and the girls hurried to the umbrella room where they had found a wicker table and a tea-set all ready for a feast. There were dainty paper napkins and a fringed cloth with a border of bright flowers, and when the table was ready, with the caddy filled and all, Dorothy clasped her hands and gloated over it with every housewifely instinct in her little being wide awake.

“ It’s a perfect dream,” she sighed, “ and I shall never want to leave it. I can learn everything now, and may be sometime, if father should grow very

poor, the family will appreciate my love of cooking, for I could help economise."

Out in the kitchen with a blue checked apron tied around her chubby neck, Lydia grated chocolate for the fudge, in the making of which each child was to have a share.

"I guess I'm going to love to cook too," she dimpled, "but I'll have fairies help me bake my cakes, and they'll never burn or sink in the middle like Janet's do. And I'll take home some of this fudge for that dear beautiful butterfly who's waiting to tell me something the fairies said. But I believe I know what it came for, Dorothy," running to the door, "I know what the butterfly came for."

"What?" asked all the children at once.

"To tell us what to say to Aunt Margaret for making this happy place."

"But what? Of course, we know we must say something."

"Why, tell her we won't frown in it or be cross in it or be sneaky or tell tales all summer. Because if we did it might all fly away and even our fairy godmother couldn't bring it back."

“Oh, foolish Lydia, it couldn't fly away. The house is fastened down tight, and even the wind couldn't blow it away.”

But Lydia shook her head and pointed a prophesying finger at Mildred.

“I believe,” she said solemnly, “that if we are very bad in this house or fractious, that all these nice things would be taken away because we didn't—didn't——” she hesitated, blushing, because she could not remember the long word.

“Appreciate,” finished Bob.

“Now, Lydia, stop playing witch and go on grating chocolate. You can do that better than you can talk, and we are all aching for some of Dor's fudge.”

And Bob slipped away to his studio to arrange his paints and brushes. He carefully examined the studies in water colour he found in the cabinet drawers, and he outlined one of them rather skilfully for a boy. He stuck at his work, dreaming dreams of the great picture he would paint some day of a knight clad in white garments, whose “bravery had won renown in the great world around.” Then

presently a whiff of boiling chocolate disturbed his vision of Sir Launfal, and with that reminder of another pleasure still in store for him, he slipped into the kitchen, leaving on his easel his first attempt at art.

With cheeks ablaze and face radiant with content, Dorothy was bending over the stove stirring vigorously a dark savoury mixture in an enamel saucepan.

“Oh, Bob,” she cried, “did you ever know such a heavenly time? Doesn’t this smell delicious?” turning to drop a little of the chocolate into a cup of cold water which Lydia was holding, as busy in doing that simple thing as if she was superintending the cleaning of the entire house.

“We’re going to have it for tea, Bob,” she laughed happily, “and I’m helping to make it because it is something real to do, instead of making believe with doll dishes.”

“I’ve a mind to try to make some tea biscuit,” said Dorothy presently. “But they ought to be served hot so I guess I’ll wait until after dinner and then coax Harriet for some more butter.”

“Oh, Dorothy!” suddenly exclaimed Mildred, pointing to a can on one of the upper shelves, “there’s some maple syrup. Get it down, won’t you? And let’s have some hot cakes right now.”

Bob looked at Dorothy and shook his head vigorously.

“No, indeed,” he spoke up sharply, “no more maple syrup to-day, Mildred. Your face is streaked with candy now, and we don’t want to have you sick on our hands. Besides, Aunt Margaret will suppose that Dor and I have some sense.”

“I don’t care,” pouted Mildred, flinging down the cup she was holding, “keep your old sugar, meany! I’ll find something just as good.” And off she flounced into the other room, where the Mandarin nodded and smiled so cordially that she forgot to be cross, and smiled at him in sympathy.

“You silly thing,” she giggled, “I hope you are full of candy down to your very toes. What a pity you cannot talk and tell us about your funny people! No,” she called back to Dorothy, “I’m not going to wipe those dishes. Can’t have any fudge? I don’t care. I’ve got plenty of candy.”

Then with her hands full of candy she tiptoed behind Bob's screen to see what he had been doing so quietly. She fingered the pretty moist colours and played with the brushes, and finally began to draw broad streaks across the paper with them.

"Oh," she whispered to herself, "I can paint as well as Bob and it's lots of fun to see things creep out under the brushes." So absorbed had she become that she did not hear her brother come back to finish his work, and she did not know he was there until a sounding smack on one of her ears sent her spinning off the stool.

"You mean thing!" stormed Bob. "I don't care if you are hurt. What did you spoil my picture for?"

Screaming with rage and pain Mildred went out to tell of Bob's cruelty, but in the kitchen she encountered such a surprise that she stood with her mouth wide open while the half-formed scream slipped down her throat again.

The kitchen door had at that moment opened softly, and on the threshold stood a young sailor lad drenched with rain, which ran off his clothes and

formed in little puddles on the floor. He pulled off his cap respectfully to Dorothy, who was quite too amazed to speak and too dignified to run away.

“I knocked, Miss,” apologetically, “but somebody was making a row,” flashing a smile at Mildred, “and you didn’t hear me.”

The young fellow’s face was thin and dark and his eyes were brown and sparkled with merriment as he eyed the awe-stricken group before him. His suit of blue flannel was soaked and bedraggled, and he carried his boots in his hand along with a bundle wrapped in a red handkerchief.

“I noticed your sign, ‘The Apple Tree Inn,’ and I thought I might get a dinner here. It’s too far to go back to the village and I’ve not had a mouthful since yesterday. I can pay you for it, Miss.”

Dorothy managed finally to command voice enough to say weakly:

“But this is only a make-believe inn. I’m sure Aunt Margaret will be glad to give you a dinner if you’ll go to the house. It’s just beyond the orchard.”

“I know that,” he said. “I’ve been prowling

around here all day. There's a reason why I don't want to go to the house, but I hoped you might——"

He stopped suddenly and stooped to pick up his bundle he had dropped so wearily.

"Oh, wait a minute," cried Dorothy impulsively, "maybe I can find you something to eat. I don't know very much about cooking, but——"

"You can make hot cakes," whispered Mildred from behind the door of the umbrella room where she and Lydia had sought refuge from the stranger, "and there's that maple syrup."

"The very thing. And there's still some butter. Maybe you know how to mix hot cakes yourself," Dorothy said shyly to the sailor.

"Indeed, I do, and if you'll give me leave I'll have them frying on the griddle in a jiffy."

"Dorothy," said Bob suddenly from the doorway, "do you think Aunt Margaret would like to have you do this?"

"Bless me," remarked the sailor brightly, "here's the man of the house. I'm making myself at home in your kitchen. But the little lady here has got a heart in her and I'm grateful enough to her. I don't

mind saying to you that I'm not a bad fellow, only there has been a mistake made and I'm trying to hide myself for a few days."

But Bob still demurred:

"I'm sure Aunt Margaret will be angry when she knows."

The sailor, who had deftly mixed the flour, milk and eggs Dorothy had brought him, saluted Bob with the cake turner and said gravely, as he dropped the mixture carefully on the griddle:

"I'll have to trust to your honour not to betray a fellow who has asked refuge at your hands. Oh," he went on appealingly, "I beg all of you not to inform on me. You'll never be sorry you helped me when you know the truth. You may be in a fix yourself some day and be glad to trust children with your life."

"Life!" exclaimed Bob breathlessly, "what do you mean?" as the sailor turned back to the cakes which he tossed skilfully over and over as they browned.

"You see, I'm a deserter. I ran away from my ship. In another day I can reach the city where my

friends are and then I'll be safe. That is why I ask you to give me a chance to get away."

The children looked at one another doubtfully. How strange it was to have someone ask them for help and to trust to their honour not to betray a guest.

"There won't any of us tell," spoke up Dorothy suddenly. "We are only too glad to do something for somebody. But you'd better eat your cakes while they are hot. We can talk afterwards."

"You see on shipboard," he explained, as he ate his cakes with keen enjoyment, never suspecting that the young audience gasped in amazement at the flood of syrup with which he deluged his plate, "a sailor does not have a chance to defend himself against an officer, and when anything goes wrong the blue-jackets have to swallow rough talk and accusations without saying a word. And if you're thinking of being a sailor, young fellow, just let me say, don't run away to sea. That's what I did, and now I'm running home again."

"Oh," cried Dorothy in sudden alarm, "here comes Koto. Whatever shall we do?"

At that minute the rat-tat of the knocker echoed through the little house and the sailor sprang to his feet in an instant. He caught up his cap and bundle and without a word slipped out of the kitchen, and was gone before anyone had stirred.

“Oh, Bob, please let Koto in. I’m scared to pieces,” panted Dorothy, who scuttled the dishes and frying pan into the closet before the door was opened. The children jumped up and giggled with excitement and when Koto stepped inside they danced around him wildly.

“Madame wishes all of you to return to the house, Missie. I’m to take the little lady while the rest follow me immediately.”

“Is it dinner time?” Dorothy tried to ask composedly.

“Not yet, but occurrences make it necessary for you to come.”

And so they went into the rain, each one glancing apprehensively into the orchard, and wondering if the boy with the brown eyes and pleasant face were watching them from behind the wood pile and hoping he could trust them.

CHAPTER III

THE TRUST

THE children found the house all bustle and confusion, and in the dining-room three men in uniform were talking eagerly to Aunt Margaret. They stood with their backs to the fire and slyly watched Harriet's preparations for dinner, and as she hurried in and out, an occasional whiff of something appetising came floating in from the kitchen.

“Here they are at last,” exclaimed Aunt Margaret with a sigh of relief. “I'm sorry to have to call you one minute sooner than necessary, but these gentlemen, who are in a hurry, wanted to question you about a sailor boy who has been seen hanging around the place. You see,” she explained gently, “he is a very naughty thief and they have come to arrest him.”

The children stood stricken with amazement, but none of them moved their eyes from the sun-tanned

faces of the officers, while over each little face crept a look of fear.

“Do they know what a sailor is?” asked one of the men gruffly.

“Oh, yes. Their father is a ship’s surgeon and their grandfather was a sea captain many years ago, but they are surprised to find you here. Perhaps I should not have mentioned that you have come to arrest someone. Their tongues will loosen after dinner, however. Yes, Koto, we will come at once. You will be glad, gentlemen, that dinner is served at last.”

“You see,” explained one of the officers kindly to the children, “our vessel put into the bay two days ago to harbour from the storm, and the morning after, the fog was so heavy that we laid to for another day. Then it was that the captain discovered that his chest had been tampered with and a box of money stolen. They at once suspected a youth who had been seen hanging around the cabin. He was accused, his kit closely examined to see if the money could be found. The accusation infuriated the fellow, who was really a very nice boy, and he

up and slipped away from the vessel. Of course, we followed him as soon as he was missed. We found a boat he had used down here on the beach and we believe he is hiding somewhere about this place. We have stationed men in different places and they are to blow whistles if they see him.”

Dorothy wrung her hands under the table and kept her eyes on her plate. Her face was so pale that Aunt Margaret watched her narrowly. Bob scowled openly at the officers and wondered if the sailor really had that money in the dirty bundle. Lydia quivered with suppressed excitement; but Mildred quietly ate her dinner, and when Koto was clearing the table for dessert the child pushed back her chair and asked to be excused.

“Why, Mildred,” said Aunt Margaret, “we are going to have your favourite pudding for dessert.”

Mildred blushed and stammered incoherently, and Aunt Margaret was puzzled at her behaviour.

“Of course, you may go, my dear. Harriet will save you some of the pudding for your tea.”

Mildred slipped quickly into the kitchen and went

direct to Harriet, who was flurried and upset by the unexpected guests and the news that a thief had been prowling around the place.

“Harriet, will you give me a piece of that chicken and some bread and butter to take to the cottage this afternoon?”

“For goodness sake, haven’t you had enough to eat at the table?”

“Yes, but I want to take some to the Inn,” coaxed the child.

“No, Miss, not a bit of chicken do you get to take away. And what’s more you’re not going back there alone with that dangerous man about.”

“I’m just going to get something,” she replied, running out into the hall for her cloak, “and I won’t be a minute.”

“I’ll tell your aunt on you,” called Harriet from the doorway as Mildred scurried down the gravel path into the Inn, leaving the door open in her excitement. She skipped to the table and half emptied the Mandarin of his store of candy, and catching up one of the paper napkins from the tea table hastily

wrapped the sweets in it. Then tiptoeing to the shed beyond the kitchen she called breathlessly:

“Mr. Sailor, where are you? Quick!” Slowly from behind the woodpile rose the dark head, and the pleasant face looked anxiously at the child.

“Quick!” she said, handing him the package. “It’s just some candy, but Harriet wouldn’t give me any chicken, and the men have come to catch you. They’re eating their dinner now.”

“Oh, they’ve come, have they?” his face growing pale and hard. “They’ll never take me alive, though,” he muttered through his teeth. “I’m obliged, Miss, for the candy and the warning, but I can wait here safe enough,” and he quickly disappeared as if by magic when a sound near by startled him.

Mildred slipped into the kitchen and closed the door and was just snipping off a piece of the fudge which had been cooling on the window sill, when a gruff voice behind her made her jump almost out of her boots. She looked over her shoulder fearfully and there stood one of the strangers from the house.

He had also excused himself and had followed the child suspiciously to the Inn.

“Thought I’d come over and see your baby house,” he said eyeing the child keenly. “It’s a regular little fairy house, sure, isn’t it?” he went on, opening closet doors and peering behind the stove. He peeped out into the shed and muttered something under his breath, while Mildred stood aghast with the piece of fudge in her fingers, and watched him with round-eyed wonder.

“Are the other men coming, too?” she asked as he sat himself down in the largest chair and made himself comfortable.

“They are coming later,” he answered shortly, and began to read the verses which confronted him everywhere. “Who wrote all those things?” he questioned, as Mildred stood fingering her apron nervously and wondering why he stayed.

“Aunt Margaret and Koto. If we learn them that way, we’ll never forget what they say,” she explained. “That one on the Mandarin is for me because I’m selfish about candy and never want to divide.”

“Indeed, and what does it say?”

Mildred read it to him, and then shyly she said:

“I don’t know what pelf means, but I think it’s a bitter pill to take when the candy makes you sick.”

The man smiled. “How long have you been here?”

“We came last night and we felt so bad when we saw the rain this morning. But after all, Aunt Margaret gave us this house and we didn’t care at all about the weather then.”

“It’s most too soon for you to have visitors,” said the man.

“I don’t suppose anyone would go out on such a day like this, even to see such a pretty house.”

“Oh, but we have had a visitor,” she began and then stopped suddenly, covered with confusion.

“Yes, I knew you had. But who was it?”

“Oh, Koto,” answered Mildred glibly.

“Does he ever go barefooted?” asked the man, cunningly.

“Oh, I don’t know,” and she ran to open the door for the procession that she saw coming along the path.

Aunt Margaret came first with the two girls and the officers followed closely behind. In the rear, at a respectful distance, came Koto, with a covered basket which he carried around to the kitchen door.

“What have you there?” asked the first officer, who was peeping into the shed again.

“Something for the tea this afternoon. The young ladies entertain to-day.”

“Oh! Do you ever go barefooted?” pointing to the muddy tracks on the shed floor.

Koto drew himself up stiffly. “I do not,” he answered coldly. The man nodded and went back into the kitchen, and Koto, catching up the broom that stood in the corner of the shed, swept away the mud and arranged the wood more neatly in one corner where it had become awry.

“Stupid men,” he said aloud. “I’d help the boy to get away if I knew where he was, and I’d give him this basket, too, for I happen to know that it has clothes in it as well as food.”

“I have every reason to believe, Madam,” said the first officer to Aunt Margaret, who looked a little annoyed at the way the men were stamping

about the tiny rooms, "that the sailor has been here this morning. And while I don't believe he is here now, we will watch the place pretty closely. We'll have to move that wood pile out yonder, for it is plenty high enough for the boy to hide behind."

"I think it is rather a shame to spoil the children's games this afternoon," said Aunt Margaret, "and I must ask you to station your men where the children will not see them. Of course, Koto will assist you in moving the wood, and I trust you will be convinced that there is no one concealed anywhere about the Inn."

"Very well. We will have the wood moved at once." And beckoning to the other officers he left the room. And the children, white with fear and apprehension, followed them to the kitchen, holding each other's hands for mutual encouragement.

Koto was still arranging the wood when the officers brusquely ordered him to toss it down to see if anyone were behind it.

"There is no one there," said Koto testily. "I have just tidied the shed and put the wood in order."

"But I intend to see," persisted the man.

“You must excuse me,” said Koto politely, “I’m too busy to play with a wood pile.”

“You insolent dog!” blustered the man, approaching Koto threateningly. But before he could touch the wily Japanese, who had clutched the broom a little more firmly, a shrill whistle sounded from the direction of the barn. Away ran all the men as fast as their size and age would permit, and Koto smiled a queer little smile and stepped into the house to ask for further orders.

“It’s too bad, children,” Aunt Margaret was saying, “but I really think you had all better go back to the house and wait until this trouble is over.”

“I will remain and defend the children,” volunteered Koto respectfully.

“Oh, very well. I shall feel greatly relieved. Grandma and I shall be back at four o’clock, and I hope we shall be able to bring sunshine with us, for the clouds are rapidly breaking away and the rain has stopped at last.”

Presently Bob came running in, rosy-faced and breathless, and he whispered to Dorothy out in the kitchen that he had blown a whistle he had found in

the barn and then had crept under the straw and hid. "When the men came they couldn't find anybody and they swore awfully. Then they went off up the road, and I skipped."

Dorothy gave him a rapturous hug. "You clever boy," she said softly. "Why, that officer was just beginning to row with Koto when he heard you blowing."

"How now, young people," said Koto cheerfully, interrupting their confidences; "what do you say to doing some paper work for an hour? I have quite a lot of it stored away in the kitchen closet and a pot of paste as well. Perhaps Master Bob will permit us to use some of his water colours and we'll make some favours for the tea table."

So they spread some papers on the floor to catch the clippings, and they all sat cross-legged in a circle, watching Koto's slender yellow fingers cut and pinch and paste the pretty crepe paper.

"First of all we'll make a set of apple blossom cups to hold the bonbons Miss Dorothy cooked this morning, and then I'll show you how to cut them and I will paint and paste while you do that."

Then he cut out an apple blossom pattern and smoothed and pressed the paper until it curled like the petals of the real flower. A bit of heavy green paper was pasted underneath to form the dainty calyx and to hold the whole in shape. Some tiny slivers of yellow made the flower's golden heart, and then he deftly tinted the petals with Bob's paints, until they seemed almost as fresh and rosy as the blossoms on the trees outside in the orchard. It looked so pretty when Dorothy filled it with fudge and placed it on the table that he had to promise to make enough so that each one should have a blossom cup. And as they cut and pasted busily Koto told them about the fairy butterfly, and said he had found the cocoon long ago and had saved it very carefully and only this morning he had discovered that it had hatched and was sailing around his room "and I thought it would do to play with for a little while. And when no one was looking I hid him in the flowers on the table."

"And I saw him first, because I'm always looking for fairies and I hoped he was one," said Lydia

sorrowfully. "I don't believe I ever will find a real one, but I know some people do."

"Of course," assured Koto, smiling mischievously; "but you have to do certain things before you can see them, you know."

"What do you have to do?"

"Well," mysteriously, "you have to send them word that you really want to see them, because they are very sensitive and won't go where people do not believe in them."

"Do you send a telegram?" asked Mildred, flourishing a paint brush.

"Yes, a fairy telegram. The wind takes them, you know, because it generally passes swiftly through the streets in fairyland, and so it is safe to carry a message because it never talks on the way, you know."

"But do you have to pay the wind just as you do a messenger in uniform? How do you do that?"

"Have you ever noticed how the wind loves to blow papers along the street and turns and twists and flutters them and dashes them headlong into something? Well, you just take some bits of paper

and hold them up high in both hands, then open your fingers slowly and let the wind take the scraps when it come blowing along.”

“Then what do you say?” asked Lydia breathlessly.

“‘Listen wind and bear a line,
To fairyland for me.
Bid the fairies come to dine,
And drink a cup of fragrant tea.’

“Then after you brew the tea of scarlet moss flowers, they will smell it far away and will come clamouring at your window.”

Mildred suddenly looked over her shoulder at the windows, while Lydia clasped her little hands and said soberly:

“Oh, Dorothy, if you will learn to cook that kind of tea and the fairies will come, I’ll never sasperate you any more.”

“Koto would have to do it,” said Dorothy; “maybe he will sometime.”

“Did you ever hear of the apple blossom fairy?” said Koto suddenly.

“Oh, no; tell us about it,” they all cried.

“Yes, but you must work every minute, if we are to have the paper cups ready in time.

“In my country,” he went on, “the apple trees are not as large as yours, but they have many more blossoms and very little fruit. We care only to feast our eyes on the beautiful flowers and not for the taste of the knobby apples. They say, and the legend comes all the way down from our ancestors, that in every apple tree lives a fairy, who with her many assistants, conducts the toilet of the apple blossoms every morning. Their faces are bathed in silvery dew, then each petal is painted with dainty paint to match the color of the rosy dawn. Nothing, you know, in nature is ever wasted, not even the colours of the flowers, so when a blossom withers and turns as brown as the earth from which it came and which it must match in order to enter it again, its colours are then used in other ways, in flowers perhaps, or sunsets or rainbows. The apple tree fairy loved the dawn so that she always painted the white petals just that colour, so that it would not be used for anything else. And the reason they never have any more colour is because there is no more

time to paint them before the sun rises. For, you know, each flower must be ready for the reception of their king, the sun, who salutes every little blossom, no matter how humble it is.

“Apple blossoms have a song they sing among themselves, and every day you might hear their queer rustling music if you listened:

“‘Oh, honourable sun, we bow to thee,
And greet thy gracious majesty,
We simple flowers, shy and pale,
Blush only when you gently hail.
But after you kiss each fragrant leaf,
All day we seem a rosy wreath.’

“‘The flowers of the dawn,’ we call them. Now, I think, these cups are nearly ready. Do you like them, little folks?” And Koto pointed to the row of pretty flowers.

“Oh,” cried the children rapturously, “they are the most beautiful things, and we will make some of them for our Sunday school fair when we go home. Nobody else will know how to do them, and we thank you, Koto,” Dorothy added gratefully, “for doing them for us.”

“And now shall we not tidy up a bit and get out the tea things, as it is getting on to the hour, missie?”

So the fire was lit again and the sticky dishes were washed and put away and Koto was too polite to make any remarks about them. The chocolate cake was placed in the centre of the table with the apple blossom cups in a circle around it. Koto folded the napkins to look like tiny fans, and he placed one on each plate with a spray of real flowers from the orchard. Then he arranged the chairs sociably around the table and deftly fashioned out of a paper napkin a dainty cap for Dorothy, who was to pour tea and be the matron of the house. And when he heard she desired to serve biscuit for tea he obligingly measured the flour for her so that no mistake would be made, and Dorothy stirred and rolled while he cut the dough into little hearts and fans and pricked them with a fork. When at last they were popped into the oven, the children daren't even whisper for fear the brownies in the stove would sit on the biscuit just to make them heavy. And, oh! when they were finally taken out and were so brown and

crumbly, Dorothy danced with delight over her success.

“You were so good,” she said to Koto. “I can do it alone next time. And I smiled every time I looked into that glass,” pointing to the tiny mirror over the kitchen table.

Koto hurried to the house to fetch some more butter, for biscuit are like hot cakes and need so much butter, just as Aunt Margaret and grandma lifted the knocker on the front door. He was back again by the time they had taken off their things. When the butter dish had been placed on the table he announced that tea was ready.

There never had been such an afternoon tea before. Each of the children did something toward the entertainment of the guests. Lydia sang an odd little song about hopping birds, and Mildred spoke an awesome piece about looking out for goblins. Dorothy recited a dramatic poem about the owl and the pussy cat going to sea, and Bob whistled a shrill solo and trilled so merrily that even Koto softly clapped his hands out in the kitchen. Grandma and Aunt Margaret had such an enjoyable time that they

hated to go home, and they stayed until it was nearly dark, and there was scarcely time to dress for supper. But before the house was closed for the night, the children secretly slipped to the kitchen door and looked out at the wood pile, which did not seem to have been disturbed. But the mysterious basket Koto had brought had entirely disappeared.

CHAPTER IV

THE MYSTERIOUS CABINET

THE next morning was so bright and clear that the children could scarcely wait to finish breakfast before they raced away through the orchard, glistening with dew and sunshine, to the Inn, to see if the truant sailor was still hidden behind the woodpile. But there were no traces of him to be found, and they were wofully disappointed not to have another glimpse of him.

Of course there were little duties to be performed in the tiny house, and Dorothy, enveloped in a voluminous blue apron, and with a gay cap fastened over her pretty brown hair, began to carefully arrange and dust the little rooms. The feather duster flirted its red plumes delightfully, and once Dorothy shook it defiantly at a saucy robin who was liting joyously in a nearby apple tree. The robin sang in the tree, and Dorothy carolled happily in the house, and no one could have told which heart was the gayer or

more contented. The children had taken the doll family for a walk and Bob was painting industriously behind his curious screen.

“You may dust all around me, Dor,” he said, “but don’t touch the studio. Besides, dust, you know, ages things and makes them artistic.”

“Yes, and it makes sneezes as well, and is untidy, too,” the practical Dorothy retorted.

Now it happened while Dorothy was whisking her duster over the quaint, inlaid cabinet, whose tiny doors were studded with small brass nails, she suddenly remembered what Aunt Margaret had said about its being her very own, and was only to be opened when she was quite alone in the Inn. Its filigree key hung on the housewifely bunch which dangled at her belt, and after listening to hear if Bob was moving about, she slipped it noiselessly into the lock and turned it with unnecessary care, for Bob was absorbed in mixing colours and did not notice or even remember Dorothy’s presence in the house.

Imagine her surprise when she found the interior lined with small mirrors set at different angles and

which reflected her eager little face a dozen different times. Even the studded doors contained a round glass set in curious metal, and Dorothy was very disappointed to find nothing at all in the cabinet when she had expected it to reveal untold treasures.

She was about to close the door when the gleam of a wee brass knob at the side of the largest mirror caught her eye, and touching it gently, she thrilled with delight when the glass immediately sprang back, disclosing a sandalwood box delicately carved and sweet with its own faint odour.

“ Oh! ” and she drew her breath in ecstasy as she looked at the lovely box. “ How like a story book, and what do you suppose is in it? ”

As she slowly pressed the spring she hovered over it with cheeks aflame and eyes flashing with anticipation. The feather duster which had been tucked under her arm fell with a thump to the floor and Dorothy, too eager to seek the comfort of a chair in which to examine her treasure, sat down beside the duster and opened the mysterious box. A small package wrapped in silver paper lay within it and

Dorothy removed it as carefully as if she was unwrapping a precious jewel. When the last bit of paper had been laid aside she found she was holding a small silk bag of curious shape and texture. She slipped her fingers cautiously into its unknown depths and pulled out a fine gold chain, so delicate that it seemed like a single gleaming thread. Attached to the chain was a curious ornament of jade, the dull green stone so precious to the heart of every Japanese.

“How beautiful it is!” exclaimed the delighted girl, as she ran to the kitchen to peep in the small mirror hanging over the spotless table. “I shall wear it under my dress and have it for a talisman. I wonder why Aunt Margaret did not keep it for my birthday. But of course, I would rather have it now.”

When she had admired the ornament to her heart's content, she slipped it under her dress and returned to the other room, and was astonished to find Koto peering eagerly into the cabinet. He sprang to his feet in confusion and apologised for his curiosity.

“ I have heard of this cabinet, Miss Dorothy, and seeing it open took the liberty of looking in it. I did not mean to be offensively prying, but with your permission, sometime, I would like to examine it for something which I believe is hidden in it.”

“ Why, I’ve just found this,” showing the little chain and bag; “ and the box was hidden in that little cubby-hole back there.”

Koto looked at her treasures closely, but shook his head and turned away from the cabinet, which Dorothy quickly closed and locked.

“ How did you know about it? ” she asked as she picked up the feather duster.

“ We had one something like it at home and it was secretly removed from the pal—house, I mean, and I have searched the whole of Japan to find it, because of certain papers it contained.”

“ Can this be it? ” the girl asked in amazement. “ How did Aunt Margaret get it? ”

“ Your honourable grandfather bought it in Tokio, but did not know its history. It was kept in the attic many years until Madam placed it here for you. She allowed me to look at it once, but we

decided it could not be the same one." Then dismissing the subject with an elaborate bow and a wave of his hands, he asked brightly:

"Would you and Master Bob like to row over to the island to prospect for the location for the camp we are to occupy next month."

The magic word "camp" penetrated even Bob's absorbed attention, and with a joyful "hurrah" he ran out from behind the screen exclaiming:

"Did Aunt Margaret say we might go? Has the boat been caulked? and had we better take some candles to explore the cave?"

"And I'll carry this lovely Japanese parasol I've found in the closet, and we will make a pretty picture on the water, won't we?" and Dorothy scurried happily about, finishing the work conscientiously before she would go off with the others.

In less time than it takes to tell it, the trio were hurrying across the garden and through the meadow beyond which the little river, like a silvery ribbon, slipped leisurely along on its way to join the blue waters of the bay. About a quarter of a mile below, it spread out a broad shallow arm, in the midst of

which lay a small island covered with trees and underbrush. Under a heap of stones in the centre of the island Bob had discovered a cave where all of their shovels and buckets and the Swiss Family Robinson's raft had been stored for the winter.

“Madam, your aunt,” began Koto, as he slowly rowed along and feathered the oars for Bob's satisfaction and approval, “wishes us to return by noon, and as it is just ten o'clock, we have two hours to plan for the camp which she proposes to establish on Bird Island. She has permitted me to tell you about it, as I am to erect the tents and make things comfortable. It will not be ready of course until the weather permits of sleeping out of doors, but we thought that Master Bob might be willing to stay here with me a few days to assist in clearing the site.”

“I'd like to help,” said Bob slowly, “but I don't want to sleep out of doors.”

Koto looked surprised, but his almond-shaped eyes twinkled mischievously.

“Why,” he remonstrated, “we'll have the cosiest kind of a shakedown and we'll live in it until the

camp is completed. Of course, we will go back for dinners, but breakfasts and suppers we can manage here. There is no way of learning woodcraft except by living in the midst of it, and the island is as safe as your own room, Master Bob."

Bob said nothing, but he fumbled busily with the tiller ropes, and Koto eyed his cast-down face narrowly. But Dorothy wriggled with delight under her gay paper umbrella and chattered breathlessly about the thousand things they could play in the woods all day.

"Oh, Koto, shall we have a regular camp fire and a swinging kettle on crossed sticks? And can we roast apples and corn in the ashes? And shall we have balsam boughs to sleep on? We can make believe we are first settlers and can discover things, maybe a buried treasure somewhere. And Bob, while you and Koto are getting things ready, we will row out and visit you and bring you goodies every day. Oh," she sighed, "Aunt Margaret certainly understands children and knows what a good time is."

The children rummaged in the cave and brought

out all sorts of playthings and paraphernalia belonging to the familiar Robinsons, whose adventures have formed the basis of make-believes for at least three generations of young folks.

“We couldn’t go on playing the same thing forever, you know, Bob,” Dorothy explained as she dug vigorously in the sand of the snowy beach; “we had to have a change, and camping out is the most fun of anything I can think of.”

“Humph,” replied Bob thoughtfully; “I am not so keen to stay out of doors at night in the woods. Who knows what might be hiding among the trees? Why, tramps could swim across the river and rob us in our beds.”

“Pooh! Who’s afraid? Koto will be here and we’ll bring Aunt Margaret’s dog. Maybe we can have a gun, too, to defend ourselves. If you are always going to be afraid and spoil things you’ll not amount to much when you get to be a man. No real man is ever afraid of anything. There’s something in them that grows bravery; father said so, and you’d better let yours begin to sprout pretty soon or you’ll always be a coward. We girls are

not afraid of the woods, and Aunt Margaret will take care of Lydia at night."

Bob kicked the sand viciously with the toe of his boot and said hotly: "I hate like thunder to be called a coward, but I'm not going to stay out here like a savage, when I can stay at home with grandma. Hello, there's Koto calling us. Let's run along the beach." And away they went, Bob speeding far ahead of Dorothy, who pounded heavily after her fleet-footed brother.

"Come softly," called Koto from an old seat beneath a tangle of vines and bushes; "I want to show you something." Then motioning the children to sit beside him, he raised to his lips a long, curious-looking pipe, which he had deftly fashioned from a piece of reed, and he blew through it several times.

"Now watch the clearing opposite and see the birds gather to take part in our concert. Don't move or speak, either of you."

Then he began to play soft, weird notes upon his crude pipe, which trilled up and down in the oddest way. In a few minutes Dorothy recognised the call

of the wood thrush, which he was piping sweetly, even finishing with the graceful turn of two short notes, like a genuine feathered songster. Again and again he repeated the clear notes, first softly, then loudly, and presently an answering call came floating from the thicket. Koto replied faintly. Suddenly there was a whirr of wings and a white-throated thrush lit on a branch opposite the group and eyed them with a saucy cocked head. Koto piped clearly and patiently, and presently the pretty brown bird swelled its little throat and poured forth the sweetest song to be heard among the feathered minstrels.

Dorothy clasped her hands in delight and looked in wonder at Koto, as the thrush swayed back and forth trilling defiance at the unseen singer, and presently, with a flirt of his tail, he darted away to tell the other inmates of the wood of the unheard of intrusion.

“Hush,” he whispered, when Bob attempted to speak; “wait;” and he piped another call, whose first long note was followed by a perfect riot of melody. Quickly from the woods came a gay

spink-spank, and a happy bob-o-link chirruped brightly to his unseen brother.

“How beautiful!” whispered Dorothy. “Where did you learn that music, Koto?”

But Koto shook his head and went on playing patiently. Presently the deep song of the meadow lark rang out clear and true from the simple pipe, and away beyond the clearing, almost to the beach, they heard the quick notes of an eager response to Koto’s call.

“There!” he exclaimed suddenly, slipping the pipe into his pocket. “We’ll make friends with the wood folk, and when we really live among them they will serenade us cheerfully. But we had better be running down to the boat, as it is nearly twelve o’clock.”

Koto allowed Bob to row nearly all the way back, to the boy’s delight, and he even showed him the long, slow, even stroke that makes rowing an act of grace as well as of skill and strength.

“We’ll have a canoe for rowing our errands to and from the island,” said Koto; “and you’ll have to paddle it yourself, Master Bob. Madam, your

aunt, wishes you to learn many such things this summer, as they belong to a boy's 'growing' and help him to learn to control himself. Self-dependence and reliance are founded on ability to control and manage, and I think such things come to be a habit if one only has the right start. Simple pluck comes from practice and no man was ever brave until he was tested and tried."

Bob looked suspiciously at Koto, wondering if Aunt Margaret had "peached," but the Japanese was thoughtfully watching the oars as Bob tried to pull alike on each of them.

"Of course, you understand about such things," went on Koto, "as your father is a remarkably plucky man, and your honourable grandfather went down in his ship with his cap raised to salute the grim death awaiting him and his crew, who were gathered about him. A boy with such men back of him ought to develop a character to be proud of."

Oh, yes, Bob understood the tiny lecture, but no one had ever spoken in such a way before of these things so vital to a boy's life, and he looked at Koto with a newborn respect, for a man who could make

paper flowers and play bird music on a reed pipe, and then talk about hard problems as if he could half unravel the knots.

“I don’t think I’d mind speaking to him about things somehow, ’cause he won’t flare up as father does and think I ought to understand without any explaining. Maybe if I could get a good start while I’m away from home father would let up on me a little.”

Bob fastened the boat securely to the little landing place, and when he overtook the others he heard Dorothy say:

“I don’t know how to thank you for our lovely time to-day, Koto, and I thought we might be able to do something for you in return.”

Koto looked at her strangely and bowing courteously, said kindly:

“I’m glad to make you happy, Miss Dorothy, and I’m repaid by your appreciation. Oh, here are the little ladies waiting for us at the garden gate. Perhaps another time they may be permitted to accompany us. Who knows, we may even find fairies on the island for Miss Lydia, who discovered

my butterfly first of all. Madam could not spare them to-day." But he did not add that Aunt Margaret was trying to gratify Dorothy's wish to have a good time by herself, away from the little girls, whose behaviour was to be copied from their older sister. Dorothy's pathetic expression, "It gets to be a strain," went straight to Aunt Margaret's heart, and knowing what it meant for a girl to be real, understood and planned pleasant things for her reluctantly model niece.

CHAPTER V

THE GENIE OF THE SILVERY MIST

IT all came about through Lydia trying to send a telegram to fairyland with bits of pretty pink paper, as Koto had suggested. A brisk wind had caught them from her little hands, turning and twisting them playfully until they fluttered out of sight beyond the old stone wall. Lydia watched them until the last piece had been blown away, then ran into the Inn to tell Dorothy that the message was gone, and the wind was flying on its way to deliver it.

Dorothy was in the kitchen, elbow deep in the flour, with which the table was also profusely sprinkled. The scarlet cookbook was propped up against a water pitcher and Dorothy was saying over and over again, "One quart of flour, two teaspoonfuls of baking powder, one-half teaspoonful of salt, and one pint of cream."

"Oh, Lydia," she exclaimed impatiently, as the

child came bouncing in to tell about the fairy telegram, "you have made me forget if I put in the salt."

"Taste it and then you'll know. Oh," she coaxed; "can't I roll them just a little? I never did in all my life."

"No, but you may cut them out if you want to; but be sure to shuffle the cutter thoroughly in that heap of flour, or else the biscuit will stick."

"Have you been smiling into the glass, Dorothy, like the verse says? You didn't look so pleasant when I came in and I'm 'fraid the brownies will sit on these biscuit, surely."

"Indeed, they won't!" exclaimed Dorothy positively; "they are going to be as nice as possible, for we are going to have tea again to-day, and Aunt Margaret has invited Koto to come in and tell us a story afterwards. He and Mildred are out in the garden now digging something mysterious. Mildred always did love flowers and Koto has started her a little garden all of her own. He bought her a lot of seeds in the village, and she says he soaked them in hot water for several days so

that they were ready to sprout when they were planted.”

“ I’ll get my fairy friends to hurry them up, and Mildred will be so happy. Now, Dorothy, I’ve got these cut and have stuck the fork twice in every one of them, and I guess I’ll run out to Mildred’s garden and see if I can’t help them with that mysterious. But, oh, I forgot. Did you know something was out here in the Inn last night with a light? ”

“ Why, no! ” exclaimed Dorothy in astonishment. “ Who was it? ”

“ I don’t know, but I was looking out the window to see if I could find any stars, and I saw a light over here. But Aunt Margaret said the starlight was in my eyes, so I saw brightness everywhere. But I truly did see a twinkle through the trees.”

Dorothy puckered her forehead thoughtfully. “ I don’t see what it could have been, Lydia; but I guess it was a firefly or a glow worm.”

“ Oh, then it must have been the fairies after all, ” cried Lydia; “ for fireflies are their lanterns. Didn’t you know, Dorothy? I must tell Aunt Margaret. Maybe she didn’t think about it.”

Of course the biscuit were very nice. Both grandma and Aunt Margaret said so, and they were also delighted with the dainty comfits made of dates stuffed with peanuts and dipped into lemon juice. Koto had shown Dorothy how to make them and Aunt Margaret asked permission to take home the directions so that she might serve them for supper the next Sunday when the minister and his little girl were coming to spend the afternoon.

“On Sunday?” cried the children. “Then we cannot play or anything.”

“Oh, yes, you can. Besides, you have the Inn to show them.”

“And I’ll put it in spick and span order,” said Dorothy; “and we’ll make fudge with nuts in it, girls, if you’ll help crack them. And maybe we can have afternoon tea; but I’d have to have lots more of cups and things.”

Aunt Margaret acquiesced at once, and promised to lend cups and spoons and saucers enough, and even suggested that Dorothy might learn to make tiny sugar cakes for tea. Harriet would be glad to be invited over to instruct. And auntie said she

would speak to her about it after the ironing was done.

“Aunt Margaret,” asked Mildred presently, “did you get Koto just to play with us this summer?”

“It looks very like it, Mildred; but he wanted to come and was delighted when I consented. I think Koto has some secret quest in his life which he is trying to fulfil, and while I have not yet heard what it is, I believe he is looking for some proofs of his birth, so that he can claim something in Japan. He was so interested in your cabinet, Dorothy, at first until I let him examine it, when he seemed to think he had no reason to expect to find anything in it for himself. Hush, here he comes now to tell us a story. Is he not gotten up regardless in his native costume? It is very nice of him to take so much trouble.”

When the table had been pushed aside, the family sat in a half circle under the Japanese umbrella, and Koto, declining a cup of tea and a chair as well, sat cross-legged on a rug. He at once spread on the floor before him a square of black silk, under which he slipped something he took from one of his

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sleeves. He was gaily attired in a gorgeous dress of crimson and black, which came way down to his heels, and around his head he wore a black band containing a flashing stone that shone like a gleaming eye in the middle of his forehead. He carried a beautiful little fan, covered with glistening spangles, and as he talked, he fluttered it either fast or slow, or waved it with such rapidity that one could only see the glitter of it. It seemed almost to become a part of the telling of the story, and the girls eyed it curiously.

He began to speak in a sing-song voice which flowed evenly along with a fascinating rhythm, and if they had not all been deeply interested they would have been soothed to sleep.

“In the olden days, before the time of books, when people lived in castles and châteaux, far apart and isolated, they depended for their occasional entertainment upon the tales of wandering minstrels. These sprightly story-tellers recited verses and romances of knights and ladies, jousts and balls and gallant deeds, tales of wars and heroes, as well as legends and strange rhymes of fairy

folk and merry sprites. No written narrative can compare with the charm of a minstrel's personality.

“Now, in my country, men still tell stories for a living and everybody can write a rhyme about something. They fasten them on the trees, and post them everywhere, so that at some seasons, the land is one great verse. Once I travelled with one of these professional men and he taught me all his art contained for him. Then I went further and discovered new ways that he did not know, and the story I'm going to spin to-day came straight from Tokio.

“Once upon a time there was a young prince in Japan who lived in a wonderful palace surrounded by terraces and gardens filled with every kind of blooming trees which were worth a day's journey to see, so beautiful were they. Now, this prince was only a little lad and he believed like the rest of his people, in fairies and dragons and make-believes, and that is why we are such a happy, contented people. Even if our hearts are heavy and sad, we think it is not polite to worry our friends with our

troubles. So, we smile just the same and have the appearance of being gay even if we are not. Sometimes people pretend so long that they find themselves happy. Even our children must be sweet when they are quite mad and don't want to play or anything. Of course it is hard to say, when someone has remarked how hateful one is, 'I thank you for telling me I'm not agreeable to you. I will at once make myself pleasant.' We teach our children to be respectful to one another, too, and even if they do quarrel, they never smack one another's faces."

The crimson of Koto's robe seemed suddenly to have reflected in the faces of the four children who wriggled about uneasily until he hurried on with his tale.

"Now, the prince could also say funny little rhymes, and it was because of them that his troubles began. One day he was playing beneath a gorgeous cherry tree laden with flowers almost to the ground, for its branches grew very low indeed. And as he romped and chased the flashing dragon flies which returned again and again to hover over

the dainty flowers, he sang a verse he had made himself, and this is what it was :

“ ‘The cherry blossoms’ pretty faces
Are wet with morning dew.
Would you change augustly places
If they asked you to?
They’ve just left their homes, all lined
With soft silk, cool and green,
But their hearts they’ve left behind
With the cherries yet unseen!’

“ As he sang it for the third time, he heard the softest kind of a voice, like a chime of bells, saying right behind him: ‘ Would you like to see the home of the cherry fairy and the dragon flies as well?’

“ The prince sprang quickly around to the other side of the tree, and lo, there stood the most beautiful woman in all the world. She was dressed in a cherry-coloured silk, and in her hair were glittering ornaments, as well as cherry blossoms. She seemed to float across the grass with her robes all trailing, and she beckoned to the boy to follow, and, being a boy, he did.

“ They left the palace garden and climbed down the path leading to the town, but before they reached

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it she turned suddenly and entered a house, and of course, the boy went also. They crossed the cool, dark court and went out on a beautiful lawn which reached away down to the river, on which floated a cockle shell of a boat moored quite close at hand. The beautiful woman stepped into it, followed by her charge, and away they went, skimming over the water as if they were sailing in an enchanted skiff. Birds hovered over them, and sometimes lit upon the boat, which floated softly along without a sound, or swinging of oars, or flapping of sails. The air was sweet and fresh and blew gently from the south, laden with the odour of flowers and pine trees. The boy thought it was very pleasant and was glad he had left the garden, which alas, he was not to see again for many, many years."

Koto spoke very slowly and sorrowfully, and covered his eyes with his fan for a minute, as if he were one with the sorrows of the prince. But presently he went on brightly, fluttering his fan excitedly:

"They came to a lonely island, which seemed suddenly to have risen out of the water, which

was so blue that away off where it joined the sky no one could detect the difference. There was a strange mist hanging low over the island, but through it, like a filmy veil, they could see the outline of trees and all kinds of flowers and shrubs. The boat darted in to the shore and the boy sprang eagerly out upon the beach, but the cherry lady remained in the boat and said so gently: 'I will wait here a little, prince. Do you run yonder beyond the fir trees and ask the sentinel to direct you to the fairy house.'

"So the boy scampered off, and when he reached the fir trees he looked back and the lady and the boat had entirely disappeared, and in spite of loud calling and praying to her to return, he never saw her again, or the boat either. And that part of the prince's life was shut off from him entirely. The new one awaiting him was full of strange experiences, some hard and bitter and others so sweet and beautiful that they were worth all the loneliness he had to endure so long.

"By and by he wandered back to the fir trees again and accosted the odd-looking dwarf who was

guarding the two huge gates made of woven vines and branches and on which flowers were blooming gaily. He swung them open for the prince to enter, but the boy hesitated and drew back even from so inviting a scene. Finally, the dwarf bade him enter or go away, and the little fellow smothered his fear and anxiety and crossed the threshold of fairyland to his new life.

“ He found himself in the midst of the strangest kind of a place, with straight, prim paths, bordered with fantastically cut hedges, while on every hand was a riotous profusion of flowers. Here and there were great trees hung with gay festoons and vines, and beyond the garden stood a row of pines and balsams whose spicy odours perfumed the air. As the lad strolled along the walks he was aware of dainty little figures scurrying around corners and peering curiously at him from behind hedges, and finally he became nervous and ran swiftly toward the grove from which he heard faint sounds of music. He approached it softly and peeped cautiously through the branches, and there on the ground beneath a canopy of green sat a man whose face was as beau-



THE DWARF SWUNG THE GATES OPEN FOR THE PRINCE TO ENTER.

tiful as the dawn. It showed love and tenderness, and seemed to be illuminated by something from within, for his eyes flashed and glowed with a light the boy never had seen before.

“ ‘Is he not beautiful?’ whispered something in his ear as he looked again and again. He started and looked around and saw a tiny green sprite sitting on a branch beside him, and the wee creature smiled gaily at the boy’s astonishment.

“ ‘I’m just a green fairy,’ he explained kindly, ‘what we call a working fairy. I trim leaves and open buds in the spring, and when the time comes for the general opening, I have to work, I can tell you.’ ”

“ ‘And who is that?’ asked the prince, pointing to the man opposite.

“ ‘Oh, didn’t you know? Why, he is the genie of the Silvery Mist. This place is called the Isle of the Silvery Mist. Perhaps you’ve noticed the white cloud that hovers above it always? That’s to keep people from seeing how beautiful it is. Now, you sit down here and wait a while and I’ll come back and introduce you to him.’ ”

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“The genie was playing softly on a small reed pipe, and all about him on the grass were myriads of birds of every kind and colour, and all of them were listening intently to the notes he was playing so sweetly. He called on the birds, one after another to sing the tones he piped and they warbled and whistled and trilled away until the place sounded like a conservatory of music. Finally, he came upon a difficult little measure and called upon a lark to try it alone, and the pretty bird swelled its tiny throat and sang it as gaily as if it had known it all its life. The genie played with it and nodded in perfect time and the other birds chirruped loudly in approval. Song after song was whistled and trilled until the genie caught sight of the eager little face peering through the trees. With a wave of his hand he dismissed his class and called to the boy to come in at once.

“‘I’m glad you came in time to hear the singing lesson,’ he said cordially. ‘I have to train nearly all these birds before they fly away to make the world pleasant with their songs. I’m now going over to the schoolhouse where the fairies study, and

perhaps as we walk along you will tell me how you reached here.'

"When the little prince had told how he had been brought to the isle of the Silvery Mist, the genie looked grave and sorrowful.

"The cherry blossom lady was one of your father's bitterest enemies and she brought you here because she knew you could not get away again, so your father would have no heir. But do not despair, my lad. The old genie has done many difficult things in his lifetime, and perhaps we may find a way out of your trouble too.'

"Then he showed him the pretty schoolhouse where hundreds of fairies, elves and brownies were working and studying busily, and the boy was amazed to see how many things it is necessary for a fairy to know. Some were cutting out rose petals, others painting lilies, some were scouring leaves and others sharpening cruel thorns. Others were sewing patches on gay flowers and here and there were girls embroidering butterflies' wings.

"It would be impossible to relate all the thousand things they were doing, and if you think fairyland

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is an idle place where only rollicking and feasting and dancing are the usual order of things, you are mistaken. Every fairy must be skilled in its duty, and everyone studies diligently until the time comes for him to drift abroad.

“‘ And the dragons?’ questioned the prince.

“‘ Not since we arrived in the island have these dragons appeared, although we occasionally hear rumbles and smell sulphurous fumes. But while love and gentleness reign on the island, the fiery creatures will remain subdued in their caves, so you need never be afraid while you remain with us.’

“ So the boy lived among the kindly, busy people and learned many of their arts, even to the playing of the pipes, so he was able to join the orchestra and play for the fairy dances along with the crickets and their creaking fiddles. And the genie revealed the wonders of the earth to him and showed him how happiness reigned over the world and only waited to be recognised and claimed by the people. He taught the boy to look into his own heart to find talents which would make him honoured among men.

“ ‘Everyone has them,’ he said, ‘and you need only to want to do a thing hard enough and to stick at it, and lo, even Aladdin’s lamp could not accomplish greater wonders!’

“Of course, the boy listened and stored all these things in his heart and he could feel his ambition sprouting, and he longed to know what he could do. But one night, he went to sleep and dreamt that the genie was carrying him in his arms and the fairies were following them bearing gifts. All the time they journeyed, the genie whispered wonderful secrets to the boy and at last he said:

“ ‘Now, the way to fairyland lies along the silvery moonbeams, and if you ever want to come back to us, don’t try to sail on the river, but sit quietly down in the moonlight, close your eyes and say softly, ‘Am I happy and kind and busy enough to gain admission to fairyland?’ After you have thought yourself over thoroughly and honestly, open your eyes and look along the moonbeam and you will see at the other end, the gates of the Island of the Silvery Mist.”

“When he awoke in the morning he found him-

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self under the cherry tree in the garden, and springing up he cried, 'It was only a dream after all!' But there were strangers in the palace and they scoffed at the youth in his flowing robes and they drove him away, saying, 'Begone, you impostor!'

"Of course, there was nothing to do but to go, and then began his wandering over all the world, for he had many things to do before he could ever go back to the genie, so he drifted from place to place, singing and playing his reed pipe, until he became known as the Enchanted Piper, for no one had ever heard such music before. Now, the piper still lives and longs for the genie and the birds, but meantime he is doing his best to make himself fit to return to the Island, by serving wherever service is needed, by being happy wherever happiness is wanted, by loving, when any heart will open to let him in."

"Oh, don't stop," cried the children, "tell us more about the genie."

"Another time," he said gently. "But first, let us see what is going on beneath this piece of silk."

Slowly he lifted the corners of the silk, and behold, there was only a tiny apple tree growing in a

red pot, and Mildred immediately whispered to Dorothy, "I helped him plant that. It isn't much to look at, is it?"

Koto heard the disappointed whisper and smiled knowingly. "Just wait a minute," he said reassuringly, "and watch the little tree."

After a few minutes the leaves seemed to be growing longer, and presently the tree shot up fully three inches taller.

"Oh," screamed Dorothy, plumping herself down on the floor beside Koto. "It's growing right before our eyes." And sure enough it was.

Gradually tiny buds appeared and opened, showing the same tinted petals which were growing on the trees outside. Then they fell and scattered all around the pot and on the piece of silk, and before anyone knew it, wee green apples began to push out on the stems, and grew and ripened until they blushed and turned all rosy like lady apples.

"Now," began Koto proudly, "everyone may have an apple. And Miss Mildred will please look in hers, for there is a gift in it, I'm sure."

Mildred immediately bit into the apple and al-

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though she made a wry face because it was so hard and sour, she afterwards beamed with delight when she found at the very core, a silver anchor pin as pretty as could be.

“The sailor boy left it,” explained Koto, rising to go, “and he hoped you would wear it for his sake. He wanted you to know that he thought you were a very plucky girl to warn him as you did.”

The children looked at Mildred and poor Mildred's face grew red and she stammered with embarrassment. And then, seeing that Aunt Margaret was smiling at her, she ran across and hid her scarlet cheeks against her shoulder.

What a funny time it was! Everybody knew everybody else's secret, and yet no one would say a word. No one wanted to break the trust and so no one said anything until Aunt Margaret patted Mildred's curls and said kindly:

“It's very nice to have earned such a pretty gift, is it not, my dear?”

CHAPTER VI

THE WAY THINGS HAPPENED

OF course," said Aunt Margaret, "I believe Koto was telling his own story. But I must confess I do not see why he does not settle down to some serious work. He is certainly clever enough to amount to something, and I think he dreams and makes-believe too much. You know, of course, that he was your grandfather's servant when he was a mere lad, and I have not seen him for years until I met him in the spring in a shop in New York. He told me he was searching for an old family relic and he never intended to relax his efforts until he found it. Someone had brought it to America and he intended to find it if it took a whole lifetime."

"I suspect he is the genie himself," remarked Mildred, "'cause who else could make an apple tree grow in a minute?"

“He’s a conjurer, that’s what he is. Father has told me about them,” said Bob wisely.

“No, indeed,” and Lydia shook her head knowingly. “It was fairies and they didn’t show themselves at all. I telegraphed for them, don’t you know, Dor? They’ll probably be over here to-night. Oh, Aunt Margaret, can’t we come over as soon as we see the light?”

But when the evening came, the child had forgotten all about the lights in the Inn, and when the girls had gone to bed, it was Aunt Margaret and Bob who slipped across the orchard and tiptoed close to the window where they had discovered a light twinkling among the trees. They made no noise as they crept through the grass and Aunt Margaret was just tall enough to see into the room. She gave a hasty glance, stifled an exclamation, and turned quickly away.

“What is it, auntie?” whispered Bob, stretching up to see, but Aunt Margaret caught his arm and hurried him away.

“It was only Koto busy at work, and I think, Bob,

we had better not mention it to anyone. Our prowling around here to-night, I mean."

"All right," assented Bob cheerfully, "but I don't see where he got the key. Dorothy is so careful of it."

Aunt Margaret did not go to bed at once, but sat in her "thinking" chair and pondered long and deeply over Koto's strange occupation. He had been seated on the floor with Dorothy's cabinet in front of him and he was pressing vigorously the nail heads in the little doors with his fingers. A curious piece of paper lay on the floor beside him, evidently containing directions, as he referred to it constantly. It had been the expression of his face that had startled her so; for his teeth were clinched and his eyes flashed menacingly. "What can he be after in that cabinet. He should have asked permission to examine it, if he thought it was of use to him."

Then she recalled the day in the attic when she and Koto had been rummaging for furnishings for the Inn. She had suddenly pulled out this little cabinet and remembering the sandal-

wood box in it, had decided to give it to Dorothy along with the chain her father had brought from Japan, years ago. She had dusted it carefully, and then called Koto to look at it, and as soon as he had laid eyes on it, he gave a gasping cry, and fell on his knees, covering his face with his hands. The sound of her voice brought him to his senses, and quickly pulling himself together he apologised for his emotion; saying the beautiful thing had reminded him of his own home, and he had broken down. She allowed him to examine it then and there, but there was nothing in it, and the poor fellow was cast down enough.

“What did you hope to find in it?” she had asked.

“Only papers, Madam; but there is nothing there.”

“And now,” said Aunt Margaret, nodding vigorously, “that is the cabinet and he is looking for a secret compartment, and I hope he will find it, too. But I must go to see the ‘Cap’n’ and ask him if he remembers when father bought that cabinet in Tokio.”

The very next morning, Aunt Margaret bundled the two little girls and Bob into the dayton, and drove over to a small village situated on a narrow neck of land, lying between the bay and the sea. To be sure, it was only a collection of fishermen's cottages, but she knew the children could find plenty to amuse them while she talked to the "Cap'n," who had been mate on her father's ship many years before.

It was a long, uninteresting drive, but as soon as the children caught sight of the sea, they were so eager to see the breakers that they could not urge gentle old Dobbin along fast enough.

"Oh, it's just as different from the bay as can be!" they cried. "And wouldn't it be fine if we could see a wreck to-day?"

But the day was fair and a gentle wind tipped the waves with a narrow line of foam as they dashed and broke and scurried along the beach, with a never-ending rhythm. The minute the carriage stopped in front of one of the weather-beaten houses, the young folk scrambled down and were off along the shining sands at such a rate of speed that it looked

as if they had never known what freedom was before.

Aunt Margaret's brisk knock on the blistered, painted door brought kindly, smiling Mrs. Bennett, who told her the "Cap'n" was out in the boathouse caulking, and if she'd go right 'round he'd be more than glad to see her.

"Of course, Ma'am, you'll stop to dinner with the children. We have a fine chowder to-day, and it'll be a treat for them."

"You are always so kind, Mrs. Bennett, but we cannot stay to-day. I have a lunch in the carriage and we'll eat it on the way back."

She found the old man busy at work and as soon as he saw his beloved commander's daughter, he whisked off his cap and bowed like a French dancing master. But Margaret held out her hand and he shook it with a grasp that made her almost wince.

"Well, I am glad to see you. Did you fetch the children?"

"Yes, but they ran away before I could stop them. They are like all the rest of us, Cap'n. They love the sight and the smell of the sea."

“Aye, we love it too well, too, sometimes, Ma’am.”

“Now, Cap’n,” said Aunt Margaret slowly, smiling into his rough, old face, as seamed and wrinkled by stress of wind and weather as the clapboards of his little home, “do you remember when you and father sailed to Japan the last time and brought home the cases of tea over which you had that quarrel with the government?”

“Remember!” snorted the old tar, “indeed, I do, as well as if ’twas yesterday. And how mad the Captain was at the red tape officials who claimed the boxes were not filled with tea.”

“Yes, I know; but do you remember when you were in Tokio of hearing father mention having bought a curious teak-wood cabinet?”

The Cap’n pulled his white beard thoughtfully, and looked away toward the sea as if he had no recollections that the mighty deep did not share.

“Seems as if I couldn’t quite remember and yet there’s a glimmer of it too. If you’ll just set down here on the stool, ma’am, and let me smoke and work, maybe it’ll come quicker. I can think better

when I've a pipe stem between my teeth and I've heard other sailors say so, too. It helps to concentrate, you see."

While Aunt Margaret waited for the Cap'n's memory to awaken, she watched the children running to and fro, chased by the breakers which raced them swiftly sometimes. The beach was a busy place that morning, as the fishing smacks had come in during the night, and the sands were strewn with nets and tackle. Men were gathered in groups talking over the home news or smoking contentedly on the doorsteps of their homes as tidy and trim as the deck of a well-kept vessel. At some of the open windows simple lace curtains fluttered, and in front of every house was a clamshell-bordered flower bed. While no flowers as yet decorated the prim circles and squares, they were all ready for the planting.

Every one of the houses faced the sea, as if the inmates dared not turn their backs upon the restless water from which their living came and upon which the village men had spent their lives.

The Cap'n painted and puffed away and Aunt Margaret sat so still that she was afraid he must

have forgotten her, and she was just about to remind him of her presence when he dropped the brush into the paint bucket and seating himself on the lower step of the boathouse, nodded cheerfully and encouragingly.

“I’ve got it now,” he said, “and a queer tale it is, but you must remember that when a lot of sailors are ashore in foreign parts, they cut antics that they would not do at home. Well, I recollect the very night the Captain first saw that cabinet. Seems as if it hadn’t been but a week ago.

“It was on the night of the year the Japanese set lighted lanterns afloat on the sea, and a pretty sight and custom it is, too. Well, I was watching them float away into the darkness, the wind driving some of them out to sea, when presently up come the Cap’n all rigged out in his dress-ups, and says he, ‘I’ve business in town. Come along, mate.’

“So, I slipped on my jacket and away we went. And what an evening we had! We wandered along the main street all hung with curious lanterns, and laughed heartily at the curious names painted on the lintels of the houses like ‘The Home of a Thousand

Plum Flowers,' and ever so many such outlandish titles.

"The sliding screens of most of the houses were shut and we could not see anything through the thick paper windows, so we just walked, out of curiosity, down one of the side streets to see what we could of the queer ways. Presently we came to a large place which was lit up from cellar to garret and people were coming and going busily.

"'It's a party,' said the Cap'n. 'Let's wait and see if we can't get an invite to supper.'

"So we waited beside the entry and watched the ladies tripping in on their stilted shoes. By and by, the Cap'n caught my arm and he said: 'There goes the famous geisha from the tea garden we saw yesterday, and if she's going to dance in there I'm going to see her.'

"I tried to persuade him not to go, but he said he hadn't dressed up for nothing, so he stepped up to the door and presented his card to the heathen waiter who stood there, and bless me, if they didn't all bow to the very floor and invite him in at once. He told me about it afterwards. He said they were

having some kind of a smelling game, where you have to tell the different kinds of incense as they were burning, and as he had so keen a nose he guessed the most of all. The Cap'n would not accept the gold dingle-dangle they offered him as a prize, as he was a stranger to them all; but then the host said that anything his house contained was the Cap'n's, and he must take something away as a souvenir. Well, as long as they insisted the Cap'n looked about a bit and presently he said: 'I will take that bit of teak-wood closet over there.'

"He thought the host looked kinder flabbergasted and he was just going to say, 'Never mind,' when the celestial said:

"'If the honourable Cap'n will allow me to remove some private papers from it, I'll have it removed at once to his augustly ship.'

"So after supper they cleared it out and insisted upon having a man carry it for the Cap'n. I was hanging around outside and he sent the man back and gave me the thing to lug for him. We had a hearty laugh over the adventure which your father said had been worth the risk he had run.

“Those were great days, ma’am, and I’m glad to recall them again.”

“Well, well,” ejaculated Aunt Margaret, “and that is the story of the teak-wood cabinet. Naturally, father never told us about his audacity. I think I shall restore it if I ever have a chance.”

“How’s your Jap getting along, ma’am? He seemed a likely fellow the day I called on you. He was painting the baby house for the children.”

“We call it ‘The Apple Tree Inn,’ now, Captain, and you must come over and inspect it, and I’m sure you will think it a tidy little craft. And we cannot let you off when we go to Bird Island, Captain. You shall have a tent of your own and we shall all be eager listeners to your camp-fire stories. Now, I must round up the youngsters and drive home again, though I hate to go away from you all. It has been the height of my ambition to live in one of these little grey houses, and to have a garden with borders of clamshells.”

“You’d soon weary of it,” laughed Mrs. Bennett, who had joined them, “specially in winter time

when the mist from the sea freezes all over the front of the house.”

Of course, they insisted upon the children taking a basket of pretty shells, and Mrs. Bennett brought something from the kitchen wrapped in a white napkin, the Captain added a basket of beautiful fish for grandma, and both old people promised to join them in camp during August.

After they had jogged along a bit and everybody was quite sure it was luncheon time, Aunt Margaret pulled a basket from under the seat and opened it amidst exclamations of delight. There were tiny sandwiches cut in triangles, and any quantity of chocolate cake. There were rosy apples stuffed with bananas and dates; and if you never have tasted one of these delicacies, do not wait another day before you attempt to make one. Mrs. Bennett's napkin contained six little sponge cakes filled with fat plump raisins and everybody wished there had been two apiece. Even Aunt Margaret confessed that the sea air made her ravenous, and she hoped Harriet would save something from dinner for them all.

Of course, Harriet had kept dinner nice and hot

for them and not one of them remembered that they had had any luncheon at all when they sat down at the table.

Dorothy came running in to hear about the ride and then she told them of her funny adventure in the Inn while they were gone.

“I was curled up on the window seat reading, with that ‘Rest Awhile’ cushion behind my back, and I was so interested in my book that I did not hear anybody knock, and presently the front door opened, and somebody said, ‘Hello, in there!’

“Of course, I flew to see who it was and there stood an old lady gorgeously dressed, with a pink sunshade and a beautiful fluffy hat tied under her chin. She couldn’t have been a very old lady either, because her clothes were so very young.

“‘Good-morning,’ I said, because I thought she was a friend of yours, Aunt Margaret, ‘won’t you come in? Auntie has gone to drive.’

“‘Has she, indeed?’ she replied politely. ‘I want to know, my child, whose Inn this is, and if I can get a cup of tea. I’m very hot from my walk.’

“Then she kept on exclaiming about everything

till I could hardly get her to listen while I told her I hadn't any fire and it would take too long to get a cup of tea. I offered to get her a glass of iced milk, but she said impatiently: 'Go and fetch me something, I'm tired to death.'

"Then she sat down in one of the rocking chairs, and I left her trying to read the verses on the door. She was peering through a pair of spectacles fastened on a spoon-handled looking thing, and when I got back I heard her say: 'Well, this is something I never thought of for my children. What a place! What a place!'

"Oh, and when she saw the plate of jumbles Harriet had given me—they were fresh and almost warm—she said at once that she would take off her hat and stay a while with me. And, Aunt Margaret, she never left even a crumb of those cakes. I think she really wanted some more, but I daren't ask Harriet for another plateful."

"And then what did she do?"

"She asked me about father and mother, and who had built the Inn, and then she wanted to know if I would serve milk and jumbles if she would drive

over from the hotel. I said I didn't think you would let me, but I invited her to tea sometime when you were at home."

"That was quite right, Dorothy; but I do not know her at all. She is probably a summer boarder at The Breakers, the large hotel beyond the village."

"Then before she went she patted my shoulder and said: 'I don't know when I have spent such a morning, I have had such a charming time and I am coming again. As for those jumbles, I have not tasted any since I was a girl at home, and if your cook will bake a batch of them for me I will pay her liberally. Tell your Aunt Margaret I shall call on her with my husband: and I think you are a very wonderful little hostess, my dear.'"

"Wasn't she nice to say that?" asked Dorothy, beaming. "And then what do you think I found under the plate?" and the girl held up a crisp five dollar bill.

"Rather expensive cakes, I should think," remarked Aunt Margaret, "but she was very sweet to give it to you. Of course, Harriet may bake some

more jumbles, and if your visitor never returns, why, we'll eat them ourselves."

And both Lydia and Mildred looked as if they hoped, way down in their hearts, that the old lady, who loved jumbles quite as much as they did, would forget to come after them, even after Harriet had good-naturedly consented to bake them.

Somehow, the next morning, when Koto and Bob went off to the Island armed with small axes and a well-filled dinner basket, the boy had nothing to say about his objection to sleeping out of doors and he went to work with a will under Koto's instructions. It was not long, however, before his arms ached and his muscles stung with pain.

"It's only because you've never used them in this way before," explained Koto, "and they are pretty flabby. But in a few days the muscles will harden and you will forget you have any except for the delight of being able to pound and lift and carry. I'll give you a rub down to-night, after we go back to the house, for we probably shan't have our shake-downs ready to-day. Don't you think," went on Koto, "that this clearing ought to be used for the

dining tent? You see it overlooks the bay, and there are so few bushes to be cut down."

So they chopped and cleared and dug holes for the tent poles, and Koto was kind enough to make many excuses to save the boy from the heaviest part of the labour.

Then, with the irresistible confidence which is always born of comradeship in the woods, Bob told Koto of his trouble and his fear of everything.

"Father says I'm the only coward ever born in our family, and he thinks it is a disgrace. But what is a fellow to do when his feet stay glued to the ground when he ought to fight or run?"

"I wonder," said Koto, throwing down his shovel and flinging himself full length on the ground beside it, "if your father ever thought that by his constant telling you that you were a coward, only made it more apparent. We have a queer way in my country of managing such things. We never would acknowledge that you were afraid, but would seize every opportunity of telling you that you were just the opposite, and by constant repetition you would get to think, by and by, that you were not, and

you would not be afraid. Now, I don't believe that a boy as sturdy and honest-eyed as you could be a coward."

"Well, you see," explained Bob in a burst of confidence, "I thought I was getting on very well when one day last winter, one of the boys mocked me during recitation and was very insulting. And, of course, at recess, the boys urged me to fight him, and I would not. And finally, the fellow himself came up and jeered at me and called me things, and of course, nobody could stand that, so I just up and hit him. Well, sir, he just pummelled me to pieces, and for all I set my teeth and hit back I could not touch him. Then somebody told father I had let a boy spank me, and he was so furious that he would not speak to me for a week."

"Did you ever take boxing lessons?" asked Koto suddenly.

"No, some of the fellows did last term, but I just did some exercises and track running."

"That settles it," and Koto sprang to his feet, his face aglow with interest. "If your father expects you to fight your way through the world with your

fists, then I can be of some use to you in starting you right. I learned to box when I was but knee high, and although I never box now, the knowledge that I can defend myself and others against the most stalwart ruffian and could probably down him before he could hit me, is the only bit of pride I allow myself to foster. Up on your feet this minute, and square off, sir!"

Then Koto showed him the first rudiments of the manly art of self-defence, and all through the summer he made the boy keep up the practice, and so rapid was his progress that the clever Japanese had more than one black eye to illustrate his pupil's skill. Of course, the first lesson was short and brisk and afterward Koto bade his pupil take a dip in the river. A quick rub down with his hands served instead of a towel and Bob's cheeks glowed with colour when he appeared at the supper table that night.

"Dear me," exclaimed Aunt Margaret, "I shall have to turn Dorothy over to Koto to train. Such roses should be growing in her cheeks, too."

"They just mean appetite, Aunt Margaret, and

I'm glad to see that Harriet expected me to be hungry, as she's got an extra plate of bread and butter on my side of the table. Jiminy, Aunt Margaret, I've had the happiest day of my life. Koto knows how to make work seem like play, and then he knows so well how a fellow feels about things."

Aunt Margaret thought of the talk she had with Koto after Bob's confidence about the mysterious something, and Koto, with a thoughtfulness that surprised her, had advised her to let him win the boy's heart and learn in that way the story of his trouble.

"I can do more," he had said, "by being practical with him than you can, Madam, with your ideals of bravery and manliness," and she had agreed to let him try. So, then, it was on that little island in the midst of the swiftly flowing river that Bob learned from the strangest man that ever crossed the seas, strong, plain truths on the growing of boys along certain lines. Everybody knows that boys are like grapevines, with little tendrils which cling fast to whatever they grasp. And it is the gradual movement of the wee tendrils that determines the direc-

tion of the climbing vine. With tendrils for habits then, and the vine for character, there is a main chance for a fruitful or a wasted vintage in boys.

And where else in all the world is there a better place for getting at the heart of a boy than in the woods? All that a lad thinks or does crops out among the quiet whisperings of the trees and the twittering of the birds, and the still witchery of the woodland seems to awake the instincts of the early days when men lived and trapped and hunted in the forests. These instincts can never be educated out of a man, and Koto, knowing this, added his knowledge of woodcraft to this influence, and Bob drank it in as unconsciously as he did the fragrant odour of the spicy pines. The friendship of these two was beautiful to see, for when a man can win a boy's love, he is apt to be his very best when that boy's around. And who is there that can resist the respect and confidence in a boy's face when he gazes upon the man who has reached the goal for which he is striving? Isn't the adoration of the lad priceless to the man?

So, Koto, looking down into Bob's bright eyes

and eager face thought of the old man he had called the genie in his story to the children. In this man's care he had spent his youth on an island in the Pacific, but how he ever got there and the manner of his transportation to Japan would ever remain a mystery. Year after year, the kind old man had added to the lad's unfolding mind stores of knowledge about nature, flowers, birds and trees. And Koto had learned, too, what a boy's companionship might become to a lonely man, and he was thankful for Bob's overture of friendship. In his long search for the missing link of his life, although he had played to and amused many children, he had never stayed long enough with them to enjoy their comradeship. He and his reed pipe were always welcome, for the piper of Tokio was known from tip to tip of the Island, but when the music was over the little folks soon forgot the player.

Now, that night, when Bob was just about half asleep, he heard the door of his room open gently and Koto whisper softly:

"Are you asleep, friend Bob?"

"No, come in," the boy answered drowsily.

“Don’t rouse yourself. I only wanted to say ‘good-night,’” slipping into the chair standing beside the bed. “You see,” went on Koto in his even voice, “I don’t mind telling you that I do get terribly lonesome in the evenings, and I’m a bit blue to-night, so I’ve come to be comforted.”

Bob felt very queer and he did not know exactly what to say; but he put out a hand to Koto, who gave it a good squeeze. “Just close your eyes and go to sleep, and let me sit here so I can be near someone for a while. I won’t disturb you.”

So Koto sat there silently in the dark, watching the moonlight streaming in at the window, and he hoped it would light the boy’s way into dreamland. Just as Bob’s quiet breathing told him that he was nearly there, Koto suddenly stooped over the boy and with a quick movement aroused him enough for him to hear the Japanese saying over and over again:

“To-morrow you will not be afraid. You will be brave and manly and thoughtful. There is nothing in this beautiful world to fear—you will never think of being afraid.”

And Bob went sound asleep with the words ringing in his ears. Then satisfied that his little friend was asleep, Koto slipped away leaving him to dream in the moonlight alone.

“They say,” he muttered, as he crept to his own room, “that to whisper to a child as it is going to sleep about the thing you most wish it to be, will influence his mind so strongly, it being the last impression it received, that it will become a habit unconsciously to the little one. And now we shall see if it works.” And so shall we.

Koto was about to enter the Inn the following morning when the sound of a woful little voice made him hesitate in the doorway.

“I don’t care,” wailed Mildred mournfully, “Dorothy and Harriet are shut up in the kitchen and Lydia is playing mother all by herself, and I think you might let me have just one brush and a little paint to try with. I love to draw, too, only I didn’t know it before, and nobody put a thing in this house for me to amuse myself with, so now.”

“Well,” replied Bob indifferently, “you are not

an interesting child, you see, and you never think of anything but something to eat, so people suppose that's all you ever want. Nothing to do? Why, there's a basket over there with a real silver thimble in it, and I should think any girl would like to sew."

"I do know how to sew, but I must have somebody to talk to while I'm doing it. It's such lonesome work, Bob."

"Oh, pshaw, go and do it anyway, and don't pester me. I have only a little time to work, as Koto and I are going to the Island and won't be back until to-morrow."

With sudden silence and a sudden resolve which made every fluffy curl dance as she shook her head vigorously, Mildred opened the sewing basket and went to work laboriously on a bit of hemming somebody had conveniently started. Then when Koto finally made his appearance she was stitching quite happily and humming a funny little tune at the same time.

"Well, well," exclaimed Koto in surprise, "is everybody so busy they cannot talk to me a minute?" And at the sound of his voice the other children

came running with an eagerness that brought a sparkle to the Japanese's eyes. Dorothy quickly opened the kitchen door and showed him a pan of beautifully browned tea cakes, the first she had ever made.

"Aren't they beautiful?" she cried. "I just wish Janet could see them, for Harriet says they are quite as nice as any cook could possibly make. She's going to clean the kitchen for me, too, while I cool off. That little stove is like a furnace this warm day."

"And now, young people," began Koto, hesitatingly, "I've been wondering how you would like to take part in a play, an out-of-door affair, to amuse our guests while we are in camp. You will each have a part to study and I will manage everything. I have already planned the dresses and will copy down the lines each of you will speak. There will be two acts and some music."

"Oh," exclaimed the children in one breath, "we'll study all right. We love to act, and a play out-of-doors will be the finest thing that ever was."

"Don't say anything about it, and we will sur-

prise everybody as soon as we are ready. Come, Bob, it's time we were off."

Now, Koto had recently brought out another small boat from the boathouse, which he had repainted and left moored to the tiny float that served for a landing, and when he and Bob had finally rowed away to their work on the Island, they left the two little girls sitting on the grassy bank looking wistfully after them. Suddenly Mildred's eyes shone with mischievous delight. Running to the float she caught hold of the rope with which the boat was securely tied and drew it in to the landing.

"Come," she cried excitedly, "get in and let's pretend we are going, too."

"Oh, what fun!" giggled Lydia, tumbling into the boat with the family of dolls she had brought out for an airing, and the child squealed with alarm as Mildred bounced in fearlessly after her, rocking the little craft from side to side purposely just to frighten her sister.

Presently, when the boat was quiet, Lydia carefully arranged the dolls in a row around the small seat in the stern and sat down on the bottom of the

boat, so that she could be near them in case they should become afraid on their first voyage. Mildred perched herself in the bow of the boat, and, as she had no mind to allow the boat to remain idle at the landing, she contrived, in some way, to loosen the rope, and she watched eagerly for the craft to move away with the current. By and by, Lydia gave a little scream and cried in alarm:

“Oh, we’re moving, Mildred! The boat has got away. Whatever shall we do?”

“Just sit still and let it move,” replied the girl, grinning at Lydia’s excited face.

“But we haven’t got any steering things,” cried the child, “and how are we going to get back?”

“Oh, the water will bring us back when we are ready. We are going to the Island now, and Koto will see us and pull us in.”

“Oh,” smiled Lydia, reassured, “let’s make out we are going to visit the genie of the Silvery Mist like Koto told us, and we can see fairies and things.”

“Of course,” answered Mildred, watching the water, “we are going pretty slow and I’m afraid we won’t get there in time for dinner. I wish we had

brought something to eat, but then Dor would have had to know and spoil things."

"What fun!" tittered Lydia. "Nobody knows we are going and we will have something to tell when we get back. I wish I had my parasol, though, 'cause the dolls must have my sunbonnet, so they won't get tanned."

"Silly!" sniffed Mildred, "Put on your bonnet, you'll get the headache in the sun."

So the little boat drifted aimlessly down the river, bobbing up and down, drifting and turning in the swifter eddies and sometimes almost touching the shore as it floated along. At first the children sang merrily, their small weak voices echoing strangely through the quiet woods. Then after a while they grew quiet, and Lydia chatted softly to her dolls, while Mildred watched eagerly for the Island to appear. But, alas, they drifted right past it without knowing it, and neither the busy man or boy knew the voyagers were near at hand.

By and by, Lydia cuddled her head down against the mother doll and went fast asleep, and Mildred began to look a little anxiously for the truant Island.

The shadows in the woods seemed to be growing deeper and the river fairly raced along and murmured busily. The child wished she had not come, then she wished Lydia would wake up, it was so quiet and lonesome. She wished a dozen things in as many minutes, and finally tears gathered in her blue eyes.

“I guess we’re going to sea, and whales will eat us,” she thought lugubriously, “and then Aunt Margaret will make me go to bed without any supper I know. Lydia,” she called sharply, “wake up! You must, because we’re going to meet a whale, or a pirate, or something.”

With a dismal wail Lydia sat up rubbing her eyes and looking fearfully around for the terrible fate awaiting them.

“Where is it?” she demanded.

“They’ll surely come pretty soon,” sobbed Mildred, “and I wish we were home, I do.”

“You said you knew the way,” began Lydia, “and now you don’t——”

“I can’t help it. You wanted to come, too,” snapped Mildred, “I’m not all to blame, so now.

Koto ought not have left that boat where we could get it."

"But you thought of it first," went on Lydia. "I'm just as hungry as anything, Mildred, and I suppose I'll be punished, too." Then gathering her dolls in her arms protectingly, the child waited stoically for either the whale, or the pirate, whichever happened to appear first.

And then what do you suppose happened?

Suddenly the bushes at the edge of the river on one side were violently pushed aside and a young boy armed with rod and creel, stepped into view. Spying the boat, he hallooed cheerily:

"Boat ahoy! Where are you bound?"

"Oh," screamed Mildred, waving her sunbonnet frantically, "we're lost and are going out to sea, and we're afraid of whales and other things."

The boy laughed. "Where are your oars?" he called, seeing that the children were alone and thoroughly frightened.

"We haven't any and we're scared. Won't you come and get us?"

"Hold on a bit," he called, as the boat drifted on,

“Oh, we can’t!” wailed Mildred, “and we’re so afraid. Don’t let us go!”

“Not on your life!” he called reassuringly, hastily flinging off his coat and shoes. In a second he had plunged into the water and swam boldly after the rapidly floating boat. The children watched his approach with mingled awe and delight, and when he caught hold of the rope that had dragged in the water all the way, he gently turned the little craft, and with the rope twisted about his shoulders, he towed them safely to the shore. When at last the two little girls stood on dry land, they looked shyly at their rescuer, who was smiling oddly at Mildred.

“Why,” she suddenly cried, clapping her hands, “Lydia, it’s the sailor boy!”

And so it was. And when he had fastened the boat securely and given Lydia her dolls, he started off toward the hotel, where he assured them his grandmother would take care of them.

“You see,” he explained to Mildred, “I got away all right and hid in the woods a few days, and ate the food your aunt had put in the basket for me,

and then after a while I slipped away on a train to the city, when I found that my grandmother was here for the summer at this hotel. Then, of course, I came trudging back to find her. She was mighty glad to see me, too, and I was willing enough to promise never to run away to sea again, I can tell you."

"And you won't get arrested?" asked Mildred.

"Not much. Grandmother's lawyer will attend to that and I'm to go to college in the fall as they wanted me to at first."

The crowd of fashionably dressed people on the hotel porch asked many curious questions of the dripping boy and his charges, but after a few hurried words of explanation, his grandmother whisked them off upstairs and ordered their dinner to be served in her room. The children were abashed at first at the elegance of the old lady and her surroundings, but in a little while she had them chatting as if they had known her all their lives.

"Of all things," she kept saying. "Harry took refuge in your little Inn, and then I accidentally discovered it one day and had some milk——"

“Oh, are you the jumbley lady?” asked Mildred wonderingly.

“Yes,” she laughed, “and now my boy has rescued you. Well, well. Pretty soon we all shall drive over and thank your Aunt Margaret for being so kind to a stray sailor boy and then I think we shall about be quits.”

But it was not until late that afternoon that an astonishing carriage load drove into the door yard, and Aunt Margaret, pale with anxiety, could say nothing for a few minutes, but held the little girls tightly in her arms, while the sailor boy and his grandmother pretended to be interested in the ferns and flowers growing on the broad piazza.

Of course, they stayed to tea and they were all the merriest kind of a company, and Mildred and Lydia did not have to go to bed supperless at all; but what Aunt Margaret said to them as she tucked them away in their white beds, neither of them ever forgot, and probably they would rather not have it told right out before everybody.

CHAPTER VII

THE PIPER FROM TOKIO

WHEN Sunday came and with it the gentle old minister and his two little daughters, Jennie and Molly, the Apple Tree Inn was in spick and span order, and the three hostesses had on their very best Sabbath frocks as well as their most companyfied manners.

Now, the little country girls had never seen anything quite so fine or pleasing as the toys and playthings with which the Inn was filled, and after every nook and corner had been inspected, they were quite contented to sit in the pretty wicker rockers and hold the family of dolls, whose very best clothes had been donned for this occasion. Then Mildred and Lydia passed the nut fudge, served in the dainty paper cups Koto had made, and were so disappointed because they made no remarks about them. But the girls were following their mother's directions not to take notice, or speak about things, because city people

were used to having everything beautiful, and didn't think it was polite to talk about things in their own houses. These children were tremendously impressed by the somewhat exaggerated courtesy of the little hostesses, and they looked with awe at Dorothy when she informed them that she took care of the Inn and did all the cooking that was done in it, because she had been to cooking school.

“Of course, you know, that cooking is taught in the public schools now in the city, because they think it helps a girl to be careful and thoughtful and useful after she is grown up. In fact,” went on Dorothy primly, “I've heard that country girls don't begin to know what we do about housework and scientific cooking. Why, even our smallest tots are taught to sew and mix and cook a little. Of course, we never do these things at home, but they are valuable to know.”

“Don't you know how to do anything?” Mildred asked the older girl curiously.

“Know how to do anything?” she echoed, her face flushing at Dorothy's superior air. “Why,” she explained simply, “I help mother cook and bake,

and I skim the milk and mould the butter after it is churned, and wrap it in oiled paper to send to the store. Then Molly and I wipe the dishes and bring the cooking things from the cellar to save mother the stairs. I dust after mother sweeps and I always make the johnnycake for breakfast and the pancakes for supper. We girls go after the cow and feed the chickens——”

“And darn the stockings,” interrupted Molly, breathlessly, “and peel apples and potatoes, and bring in wood and help with the washing and hanging out. We iron the small pieces and make the fire and wash the carriage after it rains, and weed the garden and set the table, and tend the baby and watch the front gate for company so that mother can get off her wrapper in time to go to the door.”

“Goodness!” exclaimed Dorothy, nonplussed at this recital. “And when do you go to school, pray?”

“In the winter time, and we learn just as many things as you do, too. We sew and cut and fit, and Molly can make lovely aprons with ruffles over the shoulders, and——”

“And Jennie can hemstitch just beautifully, and

a lady at the farm paid her to do some fine hemming, too.”

“And we study Latin with father, and Molly’s going to be a teacher when she knows enough. And I don’t think it’s so fine to live in the city because you can’t go coasting when the crust is on the snow, or help at sugaring time, or go nutting, or anything.”

“Poof!” said Dorothy scornfully, quite forgetting the four pairs of bright eyes which were watching her hitherto beautiful manners. “Those are countrified amusements, and I suppose you do enjoy them. But we have the theatres and——”

“Why, Dorothy,” interrupted Mildred, “you know you never went to a theatre but once, and we never have been. And I would give anything to coast down hill on a sled and to eat maple sugar——”

Dorothy sniffed. “I don’t doubt it, Mildred, but I have other tastes.” Then suddenly realising that she was beginning to be hateful she politely offered to take the guests for a walk down to the river and show them the new landing Koto was making.

Of course, Bob went along, but only because Aunt

Margaret insisted that he, too, should have a part in the entertainment of the little girls, and by and by, when they began to talk about the camp, he chatted about the arrangements quite eagerly and willingly. Things went on very well until the whole crowd tried to stand on the float at once, and as the boards had not been quite securely fastened, Bob cautioned Dorothy and the older girl to keep off and stand on the grass near by.

“We are perfectly safe,” answered Dorothy, superbly indifferent, for Molly was laughing at the fears of the children who daren’t go in wading because of the deep water.

“City children are always afraid of everything,” she was saying in a manner that reflected Dorothy’s own, “and I don’t believe you know what it is to have fun out of doors.”

Now, Molly stood directly behind Dorothy on the unsteady little wharf, and when Dorothy, who was really out of humour with everybody and everything, wheeled around so quickly to deny the accusation, she startled the girl, who lost her balance and plunged headlong into the water.

Of course, they were paralysed with fright, for the river was deep and none of them could swim except Bob, and he only knew a little about it. But, when the girl disappeared beneath the water the boy knew he must do something, and quickly, too, and, although he shook from head to foot, he set his teeth as he pulled off his jacket, and when the old fear glued his feet to the ground, he suddenly heard Koto calling, "There is nothing to fear in the world. Why Bob, you're not afraid." Then, without looking around to see where the Japanese was, he dived into the water and caught hold of the girl as she was slowly coming to the surface. She clutched him wildly and he struggled manfully to free himself so that he could strike out with his arms, but the terrified child only held faster as the girls on the shore screamed "Help! Help!" in their little childish voices. Dorothy wrung her hands and the children sobbed with fright, and even Mildred crouched on the grass moaning in despair, "Oh, they'll be drowned. Why don't somebody come?"

It's all very well to talk about fear and to preach about self-possession, but it is only the actual facing

of danger that will bring out the pluck that is in a boy. Now, Bob knew that there was no possible chance of a rescue, for Koto did not come, and as he floundered about in the water, he suddenly remembered a story he had read in an old magazine in the attic, about what to do in just such an emergency. So, he stopped struggling with the girl and began to tread water, begging her to hold her head above water until they could reach the land. It seemed hours before he heard an encouraging shout from the shore and he turned directly toward it to find his shoulders clutched by a pair of thin brown hands.

“I’ve got you, Bob!” screamed Dorothy. “Take hold of the boards, I’ll steady you.”

The little girl was quite exhausted when Dorothy finally dragged her on to the float, and as soon as Bob staggered to the grass he fainted dead away and then the children raced to the house to get somebody. It was Koto, after all, who came running first, and lifted his pupil in his arms, carried him swiftly to the nearest place and laid him all dripping and muddy on the rug which was to have been his seat

during the story-telling which was to follow the tea.

The little girls flew back and forth to and from the house, to bring dry things for Bob, but Koto insisted upon bringing a couch from the veranda for him to rest quietly upon before he had to see any of the other people. Aunt Margaret turned her attention to the poor little guest, who had been taken to the house, and nobody gave a thought to Dorothy, who had been the cause of the whole trouble. It was not until tea-time had arrived and all had nearly recovered from the excitement, that Dorothy was missed. Koto found her smuggled away on one of the hay lofts in the barn crying her heart out because she had been so hateful and nearly killed Bob and Molly. He comforted her as much as he dared, because he was wise enough to leave that to Aunt Margaret to do; but finally, he induced her to wipe her eyes and go to the Inn, as everybody wanted something to eat and would be very much happier after they had it.

It was a very tear-stained, rumped little hostess who poured tea, while Mildred and Lydia passed the

thin slices of bread and butter and the delicious cakes, which Aunt Margaret at once said were more evenly browned than Harriet's ever were. Then she fixed the cambric tea for the children, and, when no one was looking, she dropped into each cup a curious looking pod, which, after it had been in the liquid for a few minutes suddenly opened and bloomed into the most beautiful little flower imaginable.

Of course, Lydia said it was some fairy work and everyone was breathless with wonder and delight, for the flowers did not fade, but remained fresh and sweet. Then, presently, one of the girls bit into the centre of her tea cake, and when her teeth jarred against something quite hard and unbiteable, an investigation discovered a small Japanese coin, and there proved to be one for everybody. Strangest of all, Aunt Margaret had in her pocket some lovely narrow velvet ribbon, so that each girl could hang the gold piece for a pendant around her neck. Dorothy slipped hers on the gold chain beside the jade ornament, and Bob hung his on his watch chain at once.

Then Mildred discovered in a box beneath the tea table, some gay red apples made of silk and to be used as pin cushions, and a prettier souvenir of the Apple Tree Inn could not have been devised. Before they had finished talking over the surprises, Koto arrived in his gorgeous robes with his jewelled head band and glittering fan. But this time, instead of a piece of black silk, he placed on a small stool in front of him, after he had seated himself cross-legged on the floor, a large egg, as fresh and new as if some clucking old hen had lately laid it. The little country lasses were rendered quite speechless with astonishment, but it was no wonder, for they had never seen a foreigner before, and Koto was dressed in his most elaborate costume.

For a few moments he sat silently before his audience, fluttering his gay little fan, until he was sure he had gained everyone's attention. Then he began his story, speaking so rapidly that it was necessary to listen very closely in order to catch every word.

“In the olden days, which were the happiest times, people say, a lovely little princess lived in a huge castle near the sea. The castle was grim and

grey and fairly bristled with battlements and turrets, and always from the highest tower floated a flag, on which was blazoned a chanticleer, or rooster, as we call it, which was the device of the royal house of which the princess' father was the last representative. The banners bearing this design had led the subjects of the realm into every battle, and victory had never failed to follow this barnyard guidon.

“Now, at this special time there had been disturbances and troubles with the neighbouring rulers, and the prince had not been as successful with his army as usual, and he and his people were well-nigh disheartened over it. He was more than perplexed to know how to retain his people's confidence both in himself and in the emblem which stood for everything that was just and merciful. As he knew that he would be compelled to declare war almost immediately, he feared their disapproval and the refusal of their support of his plans.

“During all the active preparations for war, the little princess had a hard time of it. She was not allowed to play in the gardens, in spite of the trusty sentries who faithfully guarded the gates, for her

father would take no risks when the safety of his daughter was at stake. So, she had to be content to romp on the terraces and play beneath the frowning battlements with her dolls and toys, all alone. She was of too high rank to be allowed to know the children of the officers of the household, and the nearest princesses were many leagues away, so she was compelled to people her part of the palace with make-believe children and fairies and all of the delightful wonderland inhabitants.

“ But she grew very tired of the stiff little trees which grew in tubs on the terraces, and the potted plants her father had placed all about could not take the place of the beautiful flower beds in the far-away gardens and the shrubs and blossoming trees in which birds twittered and sang the whole day long. Besides, her little feet ached for the feel of the crisp, fresh grass, and she longed for the hum of insects and the sweet smell of the lovely brown earth. The only birds she could hear were the chattering sparrows which had built nests away up in the crevices of the battlements, and as they could only chirp and not sing, she did not care for them at all.

“Now, one day during the winter, when Jack Frost had covered the earth with a mantle of snow, and hushed the insects and sent the birds away on their Southern journey, the little princess was about as unhappy as a small girl can be. She tried very bravely not to show it, because her father, the prince, was worried and bothered almost to death, so she kept silent and played quietly by herself. It nearly always happens that thoughtful girls have some reward for their unselfishness, and one day, as we said before, a minstrel applied at the castle gate for shelter and food, and as he was dressed in the simple garb of a pilgrim and had nothing but a very small pack slung on his shoulder and a musical instrument in a case, the sentry admitted him according to orders.

“Then, of course, he was ushered at once before the prince, in what was called the thousand-mat room, because of the many, many rugs on the floor, as well as those used to cover the walls on every side. This was the room where the prince received his staff officers and his cabinet, and when there was no official business going on, the princess was al-

lowed to sit quietly in one corner, just to be near her father, who loved his little daughter devotedly. So when the minstrel explained that he was but a strolling musician, he was at once asked to play for the princess, who treated him very cordially indeed. She, very sweetly, invited him to sit beside her on the mat, and she loved him at once, because he had a look in his eyes that drew all children to him. Then he played many sprightly tunes for her amusement, and finally she clapped her hands and cried:

“ ‘You are the piper from Tokio, because all the singing birds are shut up in your reed pipe.’ ”

“ And so he was, and right pleased was he that the princess had heard of him. Then, when the child cuddled her glossy head against his arm, he played his merriest airs, the ones that always tingled in people’s toes and made them smile and long to dance and trip about. Then suddenly it seemed as if the wind was blowing a gale about the castle, for it whistled shrilly and made one shiver as it blew. After a while it grew more gentle and it sounded as if soft breezes had come up from the south, bringing the sweet smell of pines and flowers. Then the

murmur of brooks could be heard, freed from Jack Frost's tight grip, and with it came the twitter of birds and a song or two to show that spring was near. One could almost smell the fresh greenness of it all and see the red buds tipping every twig and branch. The creak of a cricket and the buzz of a bee announced the coming of early summer, and suddenly the room was filled with the lilt of birds and the rustle of the trees as they whispered among the newly arrived leaves.

“By and by, the minstrel laid down his pipe. ‘Summer has come, little princess,’ and he smiled into her bright eyes, ‘and if you like we will have a few flowers and butterflies for you to see?’

“So, he took from his pocket a few wee eggs and some odd-looking cocoons along with some knobbly roots and bulbs. After the prince had ordered a rug to be spread for his treasures, the piper arranged them to his liking and then breathed over them softly for a few minutes. Presently, one of the eggs nearest at hand was heard to crack and the faintest ‘Peep, peep,’ came from the shell. Then another and another until it seemed as if all of the tiny eggs

were going to hatch right there before their very eyes. Finally, the shells fell apart and the birdlings, with huge mouths, cried for the feathery mothers. But before they had time to be unhappy or very hungry, they began to grow and almost before the princess could believe it they went hopping about as if they had been used to living in a castle all their days. Of course, all the while the birds were growing and feathering, the roots had sprouted and were putting forth leaves as busily as if they were growing in a real garden.

“And when the birds began to sing, the buds began to open, and in a trice, the rug was a mass of dainty blossoms, hyacinths, tulips and daffodils. Before they had quite finished opening, tall lilies had shot up from one corner and after them came buttercups and daisies, and nodding chrysanthemums. And when the birds saw the flowers nodding so sociably, they swelled their little throats and sang and lilted as blithely as if the summer sun was shining and the blue sky covering them all. After a little, from beneath a clump of grasses, there came a butterfly, all yellow and downy, and others followed him

and floated familiarly around the thousand-mat room. Then the flash of darting dragon flies was seen, and, when the creaking fiddles of the crickets were heard, the princess clasped her hands in ecstasy, for crickets are greatly beloved and honoured in our Japan.

“ ‘Oh,’ she cried, ‘can you make it last all the time, honourable piper?—this summer day? You may stay with us, and father will give you the king’s room, and I will serve you with my own hands if you will never go away.’

“ ‘Yes,’ spoke up the prince, smiling at his daughter’s happy face, ‘you shall make your home with us and will give the princess a merry heart with your music and your birds.’

“ ‘Alas,’ replied the piper, ‘I have my mission to perform and I never stay anywhere.’

“ Now, it happened that when the officers and retainers heard of the wonderful things that were being done in the thousand-mat room they crowded around the doors to see and hear. Everyone was delighted and charmed by the music and the wee garden, until the gruff old minister of state brushed

his way rudely into the room and spoke far more sharply to the prince than any other man would have dared to do.

“ ‘There are no birds or flowers, Excellency,’ he cried; ‘the man has bewitched you all. I have been watching, and there is nothing,’ pointing to the rug, ‘there but a few odds and ends of roots and broken shells. He put a spell on you and you must be warned. He may come from our enemies.’

“That word was enough to alarm the prince, and fearing to believe what his own eyes had seen, he followed the minister’s wishes and had the piper placed in a dungeon out of harm’s way. Of course, it was cruel, but the minstrel had his pipe and he played until the guards begged to be relieved for fear he would enchant them and make them open the prison door.

“In the meantime, the subjects of the prince refused to follow the chancleer banner to battle.

“ ‘We shall fail: you cannot promise even the smallest victory. But, if you can bring back the spirit of the rooster which always used to sit and crow on the battlements in the olden times, before

our people went forth to war, we will follow you to the ends of the world.'

"What was the prince to do? He was in such a quandary that he was quite wild with anxiety. And how could he command the spirit to appear, when it had only been a legend, centuries old, in his house? The poor prince consulted his court, his officers and all the wise men in his realm, but no one could suggest anything to relieve the situation.

"Finally, one morning, the little princess asked her father timidly if she could go to the piper's dungeon to take him some goodies and to hear him play, for all the soldiers in the palace were talking about the wonderful music he played in the gloom of his cell.

" 'The minstrel?' questioned the prince, who had forgotten all about the piper of Tokio. Then suddenly an idea flashed across him. 'The very thing!' he exclaimed.

"Then that morning, when the cabinet had assembled, the officers of state asked the reason of the sudden summons, and the piper was brought from his dungeon to face the stately gathering, but he

was not afraid, because there is nothing in all this beautiful world to fear.

“ ‘ You shall question him,’ whispered the prince to the minister of state, ‘ about the birds and butterflies you did not see, and if he can account for them he shall go free on one condition.’ ”

“ ‘ Yes,’ whispered back the minister eagerly; ‘ and the condition?’ ”

“ ‘ I will tell him that when you have finished with him.’ ”

“ So the grim old man questioned and examined and pestered the poor minstrel, yet they could not make him impatient, or confess that he was a sorcerer. Finally, the minister looked triumphant.

“ ‘ Prove that there were any butterflies in the thousand-mat room. If you cannot, I’ll have you beheaded before sundown.’ ”

“ And lo, while he was yet speaking, from somewhere, nobody ever knew exactly where, there came floating and sailing leisurely, a huge yellow butterfly, with azure wings and powdery body, and what did it do but flutter over to the minister of state,

and light upon the very finger he was wagging at the quiet piper.

“ ‘ A butterfly ! ’ he gasped.

“ ‘ A butterfly ! ’ echoed the prince.

“ ‘ A butterfly ! ’ murmured the minstrel, his eyes gleaming strangely.

“ ‘ Surely, ’ whispered the assemblage. When the lightsome thing had drifted away toward the ceiling, the minister of state turned to the prince and said, ungraciously :

“ ‘ There may have been butterflies in the thousand-mat room that day, your Excellency.’

“ Then the prince rose, tall and terrible, they said.

“ ‘ Minstrel, ’ he thundered, ‘ you may go free if you can perform an act of magic for me, and not else. If you can conjure the spirit of the chanticleer that floats on yonder flag, to crow on the battlements, according to the legend, before my people, you shall go safely and not empty-handed from my realm.’

“ ‘ As you will, Excellency, ’ replied the minstrel, ‘ and when you will.’

“ So a proclamation was sent forth to the further-

est part of the realm that the prince desired to speak to every subject who had borne arms, and every soldier of his house was bidden to a feast on a certain day. Of course, it took days for the runners to reach all of the people, but the seventh day, the crowd having gathered around the castle, the prince was both glad and sorry, for fear the minstrel would trick him and lose for him the allegiance of these men.

“But when the time came and he stood on the terrace in his uniform, and began to speak to the people who had served his father before him, he forgot his fears and the piper and talked as only a true leader can. After a little, he noticed a commotion in the multitude, and many pointing to the nearest battlement. Finally, one bolder than the rest, cried:

“‘Excellency, look at the sign of victory; the first in seventy years.’

“Turning quickly, the prince saw, bright and clear against the blue sky, the figure of a chanticleer, whose feathers glistened in the sunlight. And even as he looked, the creature crowed, long and full and

clear. The crowd cheered and tossed their hats, and the uproar was terrific.

“‘Long live the victorious prince, the great ruler and warrior!’

“There was great feasting and rejoicing in the castle all day, but the prince gave the minstrel a bag of gold and sent him away before the people heard of his presence in the palace.”

“But what became of the rooster?” cried Mildred breathlessly.

Koto smiled. Touching the egg lying before him on the wicker stool, he said significantly:

“Here it is. You shall see it at once.”

And while they were all looking wonderingly at it, the shell began to crack and the funniest little “peep, peep” came from the opening. Then, to everybody’s delight, Koto gently touched the two pieces and they fell apart, and there stood the yellowest fluffiest little chicken in the world. The girls tried to take it up but Koko said “No” so sternly that they let it be, and were content to watch it. And that wonderful chick grew and put out pin feathers, a tiny pair of spurs and a wee comb right

before their astonished eyes. Then almost at once, he became a good-sized little Cochin China rooster, with a gorgeous comb and beautiful tail feathers, and he strutted up and down with the air of a drum major.

To the children's delight he presently lifted up his perky head and crowed, as he must have done on the battlements in Japan that day, but when Koto said something to him that no one understood, he stalked back and stood beside the two halves of the eggshell. Immediately he began to shrink, and he grew smaller and smaller, and when he had dwindled to a size to fit the shell, Koto clapped him in it, fitted it together and slipped it into his sleeve without a word, then left the room before a single question could be asked or even thought of.

But what a torrent of questions followed his departure! And Aunt Margaret was besieged to explain Koto's magic.

"I cannot explain it," the good lady was compelled to confess; "but I think he makes us see what he wishes us to, although the things we think we see are not there."

The gentle old rector shook his head disapprovingly when they turned to him for his opinion.

“I can only say with the minister of state, my dears, that there may have been a rooster.”

After the elder people had left the Inn, Bob ran off to find his friend, to see if he could wheedle out of him the secret of his black art, as Dorothy called it. The little girls immediately began to pretend that they were princesses shut up in an old castle, but Dorothy and Molly were constrained and ill at ease. Dorothy had apologised for her rudeness, but Molly felt very keenly the snub administered to her little sister and herself. Aunt Margaret had dressed the little girl in an entire outfit of Dorothy's, even to one of her prettiest dresses, while her own clothes were hung out to dry. Molly fingered the dainty ruffles and the soft sash, and felt as if the dress and the girl did not fit, somehow.

“I don't see how it is,” she finally volunteered, “that the girls in the city always have such pretty dresses. Don't you have any old ones for rainy days, or when you do chores? Why, we buy just

plain calico to wear round, and keep our best things to put on when we go to church, or to the town."

"Mother buys our things," said Dorothy, eyeing Molly strangely; "but it must be nice to have some homely clothes once in a while and be able to forget not to muss them. We have to be careful even when we play, because we can have but just so many white aprons in the wash, and we have to keep them spotless. The girls in school call us the children from 'Spotless Town,' and it's dreadfully trying, but we've got used to it."

"Of course," said Molly promptly. "Now I feel just like a doll in a store window. I wouldn't darst to play in this dress. But I must remember how it is made, and I shouldn't wonder if mother could make Jennie's pink gingham like this, without the trimming, though. Girls in our village don't begin to wear lace and things until they are in the sixth reader and have been to the opera house just once, anyway. You can always tell the minute one of them has been, because she will quirk her little fingers and kinder screw when she walks, and bat her

eyes like a colt when you think you've got it cornered in the pasture."

"Have you ever seen a play?" asked Dorothy. "I've seen one in the grandest theatre."

"No, but we have plays of our own in the barn, just the same. And we have a real curtain that lets up and down, and a stage and footlights made of candles. They don't sound very fine, but they are, though. We have ever so many plays, and we are practising a new one now about a ghost, and it's so real and terrible that we are all afraid to go up to bed in the dark afterwards. But we don't let on, because our mothers would make us stop it."

"Oh, how lovely!" sighed Dorothy enviously. "I am just as fond of acting as I can be, but I never have a chance to act as hard as I'd like to. The children laugh when I get too tragic and giggle when I'm the heroine and wring my hands and plead with the villain to spare my life."

"I like the singing parts best, and I'm always the primer donner when we have one. And I love to sweep out and bow my haughty head to the audience, and stand and look inspired when the

orchestra plays. It's just a jew's harp, but it does. And then when I sing the audience sits enraptured, and, of course, I get encores, and then I run out and nod playfully, the way they say actors do, and that pleases the people as much as the music."

"Did you ever write a play?" whispered Dorothy, confidingly.

"No," breathed back Molly, her eyes wide with incredulity; "did you?"

"Yes, and I've got it upstairs in my trunk. But you mustn't ever tell. Nobody ever thought of putting such a story into a play before, and what do you think it is?"

"I cannot guess, unless it's Mary, Queen of Scots."

"You are getting pretty warm," laughed Dorothy; "it's about Queen Elizabeth. Not the cruel, wicked queen that cut off Mary's head, but when she was jolly and merry and played she was just like other people, the way Marie Antoinette did. There is a part where she dances 'the Spanish Panic' in the garden to a whistle, and I asked my dancing teacher to show me how to do it, and then I put it in the

play. Oh, there are the most beautiful ladies in it in ruffs and farthingales, only I don't know exactly what they are, but they sound lovely."

"How much you know about history," said Molly admiringly.

"I've read a good deal," said Dorothy modestly, "and I've learned the queen's part myself, so if we ever can act it, why I will know the hardest part. I wish you could play in it, too. You could sing, you know, before the queen, and she'd give you a priceless jewel and say, 'by my halidom, what a lark we have here!' and then your fortune would be made."

"How can you think it all out, Dorothy? Isn't it too wonderful?"

"Oh, it isn't finished yet, for I can only write on Saturdays and occasionally; but I get so excited over it sometimes that I really cry and feel as if the people were truly real."

"If that's the way you feel, then you're a born writer. They all do that. Mother said so. And they can make believe as well as children can."

"Do you really think so?" asked Dorothy

eagerly. "You are so encouraging, Molly; I'm glad I told you."

"Wouldn't it be nice when we are grown up, if you would write a play and I could sing in it? And you could sit in the audience and see me."

"But I would have to go on the stage, too, so I could go out with you when the people applauded, and we'd take hold of hands and bow together to the audience."

"There's an audience waiting for you in the sitting-room," interrupted Bob mischievously, "and Aunt Margaret sent me after you. She wants some Sunday hymns before supper, and you're to come right off. I'll race you to the porch, if you'll start even."

CHAPTER VIII

A DANCE AND A DINNER

ONE morning, not long after that eventful Sunday, Aunt Margaret announced at the breakfast table that she and grandma were going to New York on the following day, to be gone three days.

“And,” she went on smiling at the astonished faces, “we have decided to let Dorothy keep house for you while we are away, that is, she may do the cooking for you children in the Inn, and Harriet will lend her the necessary dishes and give her the things she wishes to prepare for the meals. Koto will sleep in the guest chamber down stairs, so that he may act as guardian at night, and, of course, he will be your companion during the day.”

“Oh, do you mean, Aunt Margaret,” asked Dorothy eagerly, “that I may make waffles for breakfast all by myself, and omelets and things?”

“Of course,” replied Aunt Margaret; “and the

girls will do all they can to assist you, I know. Besides, Harriet will lend a helping hand, and will be delighted to give advice if you ask for it."

"Oh, how jolly!" cried the four children; "and we can have a truly Inn, and maybe somebody will come and ask for lodgings and dinner."

"I'll begin to study that recipe-book this very day and decide what I will want to cook," added Dorothy. "I shall have the most beautiful time trying different things. Molly said the other day that every girl ought to know how to do one thing well, so that she could earn her living at it if she had to some time."

"And would you like to be a cook, Dorothy?" asked grandma quizzically.

"Not a real kitcheny cook, but I might go about teaching other women how to do it, and show them, if they study it right, that they don't need to make such a fuss over it. And how they can keep themselves as neat and clean and sweet as Molly says her mother does. Molly calls her a dainty cook, and that's what I'm going to be, I guess, as long as I have to be something."

“Molly’s mother has invited you to visit the girls for a few days after we come from camp, and I think it would be nice for you to go, Dorothy. They live on a regular farm, and I know you would enjoy it. But now, come, and we will go to the pantry and make out a list of the things you are to take to the Inn.”

The morning passed very quickly to Dorothy, who trotted busily about and jingled her keys with a true housewifely air. The little girls helped to carry the dishes to the Inn and assisted Dorothy in arranging them on the shelves. A large square table was placed under the Japanese umbrella in place of the tiny tea table which was pushed back against the wall, and a snowy linen cloth was left for Dorothy to spread on it as soon as she was ready to begin her first dinner. Lydia and Mildred were told that they would find some old finery in the attic, in which they might dress up and make believe, when they grew tired of playing in the Inn. Nobody was to go near the river until Aunt Margaret came back, and Koto was to be everywhere at once and keep things harmonious.

It was with many misgivings that Aunt Margaret drove away with grandma in the early morning, and she glanced back at the house as if she were very loath to leave her little guests. All the way to New York she kept wishing she was back again, and nobody knows how many anxious thoughts she sent flying to the Inn.

Dorothy was up betimes and had the fire made and the waffle iron piping hot before the children were even dressed. The red recipe book was propped open with the tea strainer, and she had read the directions for making waffles so many times that she knew them by heart, and sang the words to a merry tune, and stirred the batter vigorously in time to it:

“One quart of flour, one-third cup of butter, sweet milk enough to make a batter; three eggs, white and yolk beaten separately, and add a little salt and two teaspoonfuls of baking powder.”

The first ones were scenting the whole house with their delicious brown smell, when Bob came dashing into the kitchen sniffing delightedly as he ran.

“Oh, I say, Dor, you’re a brick to give us waffles

the first thing. Make a lot of them, will you? and give us all the butter they'll hold. Good, you've filled the syrup jug clear up to the brim. Whew, that's great, I say! What else have you got for breakfast?" peeping beneath the cover of a dish sitting on the back of the stove—"Scrambled eggs and warmed-over biscuit? They're good enough for me, if they will only crunch when I bite them."

"I'll fill the milk cups, Dorothy," cried Mildred, running in with her dress still unfastened. And Lydia, spying the dish of peaches on the table, begged to be allowed to sprinkle them with sugar after they were cut up.

"I'll make them look like snow mountains, Dorothy, and put enough sugar on them so that they will leave powder rims around our mouths when we eat them."

"Here, let me turn that spit or whatever you call that waffle thing. You're getting as red as fire, Dor, and you've burned every finger already, I know."

But Dorothy hurried to place a plate of the nicely browned waffles on the table to keep the children away from the fire until she had finished. Of

course, the waffles were tough, but with lots of butter and oceans of syrup, they were eatable, and the rest of the breakfast was very nice.

“Don’t apologise for them, Dor,” mumbled Bob, speaking with his mouth full; “we’ll eat them and call them good, too. Harriet has been making them for a century, and you’ve just begun, so there’s got to be a difference. What are you going to have for dinner? It doesn’t matter what if there’s plenty of it, and we can have all we want without asking for it.”

Harriet very thoughtfully sent over about eleven o’clock to know if the little girls would like a bit of lunch before dinner was ready. Of course they had only milk and cookies, and they did not tell Dorothy that the good woman feared they had not made out a breakfast. She helped with the steak at dinner time and generously added some baked potatoes to the menu for the Inn. Then afterwards she sent Koto over with some ice-cold custard baked in pretty cups and covered with meringue as light as foam and as tender.

“Oh, Harriet,” groaned Dorothy that afternoon,

“it’s the dishwashing that is so hard. It takes so long and there are so many. I just don’t see why we have to have them. I don’t have time to read or play, because it’s just time to get something ready for dinner. But, thank goodness, I’m going to have everything cold for supper to-night. I hope Aunt Margaret won’t stay but the three days, because the children will always be hungry and keep thinking of new dishes they want me to make all the time. And I’ve got to have waffles to-morrow again because Bob says I ought to make one really good batch before I stop.”

“Never mind, miss,” comforted Harriet, “I’m baking to-morrow morning and I’ll help out with things for you, too.”

Dorothy was glad to idle away a little time that afternoon, and she read herself to sleep in the hammock, and did not hear the arrival of an unexpected guest at the house. This gentleman had suddenly appeared with a note from Aunt Margaret requesting Koto to entertain her friend for one night and to help him off in time to catch the express the following morning. Koto had fingered the note

nervously, and he eyed the stranger long and doubtfully, but his appearance was in his favour and the note could not be ignored. So the stranger was duly installed in the guest chamber, but he did not know that the wily Japanese slept on a cot placed across the doorway of that room and no one could pass without first waking him. There was no trace of the precaution in the morning, however, and no one was the wiser. Koto invented many duties to keep him in the front of the house, and he was distressed until the man took his departure early in the morning. He did not visit the Inn, or pay any attention to the children, who ran against him when he was coming down stairs as noiselessly as a tabby cat. And he went away without anyone knowing why he came or whither he went.

After his departure, Koto hurried to the Inn with some slips of closely written paper, which he gave to the children to look over. On each slip was a description of one of the characters in the little play of which he had spoken, and the lines each child was to learn by heart.

“It’s very simple, you see, children, and the story

of the play tells itself as you speak. I will go over it with you when you have learned your lines, and I am going to get Miss Dorothy to teach Miss Lydia the words she is to recite. Now remember, not a word to anybody until the time comes and we are quite ready.”

Leaving Dorothy engrossed in her preparations for dinner, the little girls ran off to the attic to dress up in the finery Aunt Margaret had left for them, and to their delight they found two evening dresses with long trains and innumerable flounces, which they immediately put on. They pinned up the front of the skirts, and Mildred draped over Lydia's shoulders a scarlet silk shawl, over which something had been spilled, though there were parts that looked very nice indeed. Over her own blue waist she tied an old chiffon fichu she had rescued from the piece bag. It was considerably ruffled, but when she tied it quite tight it looked very stylish, or so she thought, falling over the green satin skirt. Lydia's costume was of pink silk, with a ruffle of some fluffy material, and she kicked her little feet in and out beneath it just to see it ripple. In a huge bandbox

Mildred found a bunch of blue feathers, which she immediately fastened in Lydia's hair, and on her own blond head she placed a shabby velvet hat, on which she had fastened two long peacock feathers.

"Now, I'm the Queen of Sheba," she announced, sweeping around the garret with her trailing robes, "and you are Lady Jane Grey before she had her head cut off. So you must make believe you are very beautiful and everybody wants you to wear a crown some day. Why, what is this?" she exclaimed suddenly, stopping to pick up a small leather bag she had spied beneath the leg of a table. "It's a pocket bag and I'll use it for my handkerchief," and she opened it and dumped the contents into her lap as she sat on the attic stairs.

To her amazement, a heap of sparkling jewellery fell out. There were two necklaces, one of pearl and another of glittering stones. There were rings, too, and some pretty pins, and Lydia immediately hung the necklaces over her scarlet shawl and slipped a ring on every finger.

"They are not truly gold," said Mildred, "or they would not be in the attic, so we will just play

with them anyway. I guess, though, I'd better tie these rings on, they are so awful loose." So with some pink cord which she tied to each ring, she made a bracelet around Lydia's dimpled wrist. Then she decked her faded fichu with the pins, and they started off to make calls.

Down the path, out into the road, and along under the shady trees walked these two strange little figures. The nodding grasses brushed their silken skirts and the dust, in spite of their precautions, marred the edges of the flounces. The briars of some stray blackberry bushes caught the chiffon fichu, and scratched the satin skirt viciously as Mildred picked the few berries left on the bushes.

"I don't believe any of our friends will be at home at this time of day, Lady Jane," said the Queen of Sheba, whose mouth was all stained with berry juice.

"I don't mind much," replied Lady Jane, who was struggling bravely to carry her heavy train out of the dust. Her little face was growing very pink, for the sun was warm and her nodding plumes afforded no shade whatever.

“There’s a seat down by the bridge, Lady Jane, so keep right on till we come to it. We may find somebody there and have a chance to talk about the news.”

So they sat down on the old wooden bench without a back and carried on an animated conversation with some ultra fashionables who had just returned from Europe and had been to the theatre and ridden in the park. They admired the beautiful dresses and new jewels right from “Paree,” although Mildred had to confess that she did not bring them over herself.

“One of my friends, you see, Mrs. Bridges, goes over every week, and she brought me these pins the last time she went. And Lady Jane’s rings are like the new ones the queen has. Of course, I’m a queen, too, but I have to come to visit my plain relatives sometimes, and that’s the reason we are walking this morning instead of having our own coach with the white horses.”

“And do you know, Mrs. Bridges,” simpered Lydia, “that I’m going on the stage to be a great actress? We have a new act all ready and we’ll send

you some tickets, as they will be so dear I don't think you can afford to buy them. Everybody will be there, so wear you loveliest clothes and be sure and take your spyglass so you can see my wonderful gowns. I have had seven new ones, and one of them is blue plush trimmed with white fur, and I wear a bonnet with it."

"Oh, yes," went on Mildred, "tell her about the most wonderful genii that turned your plate into a looking-glass because you are so beautiful, and about the carriage he made for you that goes without horses, and——" listening a minute, "here it comes, I do declare."

And sure enough, the whirr of an automobile was heard in the distance and in a very few minutes a gorgeous motor carriage came noiselessly into view. At the sight of the children seated by the roadside, the young man who was the sole occupant, stopped his machine and gave a low whistle of astonishment. Then he courteously lifted his hat and the children immediately arose and courtesied in their best dancing school manner.

“May I ask, ladies,” he inquired politely, “if you have seen a lady on horseback pass here lately?”

“Not since we’ve been sitting here. We’ve just come, too,” said Mildred.

“Did you come far?” he asked gravely; “and did you walk?”

“We came from the Apple Tree Inn,” smirked Mildred, “and we’re making calls this morning. My sister, Lady Jane Grey, is getting acquainted with my friends before she goes to Europe.”

“Lady Jane Grey?” in surprised tones; “indeed, I am delighted to see her. And may I ask if you are——”

“I am the Queen of Sheba, and don’t amount to anything very much. Still I’m somebody,” said Mildred candidly.

“It would be a great privilege, your Excellency, if you would permit me to take you home. I am simply riding around to keep my auto in order, and——”

“Shall we go?” whispered Mildred; “you know auntie said we were not to talk to strangers.”

“I don’t care,” and Lydia tossed her plumed head, “I’m going. It’s too hot to walk, besides I’ve pretended until I’m so warm,” and she lifted her silken skirts, and followed by Mildred, ran toward the auto, from which the young man instantly sprang to assist them. He helped them in and, to their intense satisfaction, they went whizzing off along the road just as they always had wished they might. Lydia’s faded feathers were tossed and blown about and they stood triumphantly erect when the young man slowed up opposite the entrance of an estate.

“My name is Jack Spenser, ladies,” he said politely, “and I live here at the Towers with my mother. Now, she is at home this morning, if you would like to include her in your calling list, and I’m sure she would be charmed to see you. Shall we ride in?”

“What do you think, Lydia?”

“Of course, Mildred, we are to go. He is a neighbour, and Aunt Margaret didn’t know he would like to know us, or she would not have said not to be friendly to anybody she did not know. Besides,”

looking sideways at the young man, "I think he is as nice as anything."

Then on they went, through the driveway and along the well-kept road under arching trees. Here, the air was sweet and cool and the auto ran so smoothly and slowly that they had time to chat a little before they reached the house.

"Wouldn't Dorothy enjoy this, though," said Mildred happily. "She's at home getting dinner ready this morning. Aunt Margaret has gone to New York and we do our own cooking now."

"And Koto is so funny," giggled Lydia. "He thinks he knows how to play mother and he don't like to tell us we mustn't do things, so he says, 'You would be conferring a favour, missy, if you would kindly get at something else.'"

"And who is Koto?" asked Mr. Spenser, who looked so sober and yet had such smiling eyes.

"He's Aunt Margaret's Japanese," explained Mildred, "and he knows how to do everything and he's so terribly polite."

"Why, what do you think?" chatted Lydia; "he can make apple trees grow right before your eyes

and hatch roosters in five minutes, and shrinks them and put them back in the shell again."

"Goodness!" exclaimed Mr. Spenser, looking doubtfully at Lydia. "Who is he, anyhow?"

"Why, he's just a heathen, and he waits on the table and plays with us. He doesn't have to eat in the kitchen either, for he has a little table in his own room. I asked him once if he knew his catechism by heart and he screwed up his face and said: 'We do not to have to say those "shall not" commandments in my country; we have to say that we shall do things.' What's the difference? Do you know?"

"Here we are at the house," exclaimed Mr. Spenser, and, as the auto stopped he called out cheerily to an old lady who was sitting on the veranda: "I've brought some famous ladies to call, mother. I trust you are in a condition to receive royalty this morning."

And when the old lady came forward smiling, he gravely introduced the Queen of Sheba and Lady Jane Grey.

"Delighted, I'm sure," she said cordially, and in a minute or two the children were comfortably



HE GRAVELY INTRODUCED THE QUEEN OF SHEBA AND THE
LADY JANE GREY.

ensconced in huge rocking chairs and were sipping the most delicious lemonade. At first they were shy and somewhat abashed at the smiles on the faces of the young ladies who hurried from the house to be introduced to them, but when the sound of a softly-played piano in one of the rooms caught Lydia's ear she said at once:

“Oh, there's some music, Mildred; and we haven't heard any for so long.”

“Do you play, or anything?” asked Mr. Spenser, watching the children's bright faces.

“No, but we never get tired hearing playing, 'cept,” and she sighed, “when Mildred has to practise.”

“Tell Madge to play something jolly,” whispered Mr. Spenser to one of the younger girls, and in a second there came floating out to the porch the catching rhythm of the gayest dance in the world. Lydia's eyes sparkled with delight and she nodded her plumed head in perfect time. “Oh,” she cried, “wouldn't I just like to dance that!”

“Come, come,” exclaimed the girls, “we'll clear a place for you. Can you dance, either of you?”

“Why,” said Lydia reproachfully, “we go to dancing school and can dance the minuet and the two-step and the——”

“Get up this minute, then, and do the minuet for us. Madge will play it. The parlor floor has been waxed this very morning.

So the children gathered up their trains and followed the ladies into the house, and soon they were dancing, with pleasure beaming in every feature. To and fro they slowly moved, back and forth in perfect step with the measured rhythm of the stately dance. Their courtesies would have done credit to a professional, and Lydia tripped about on her dainty toes in the most fetching way imaginable. She dimpled and coquetted with her partner, and bowed with such grace that no one would have believed the dance had not been specially rehearsed. And the children made a pretty picture in the dim, cool room, with their soft silk dresses, whose gay colours reflected brightly in the long mirrors hanging at each end of the apartment.

Scarcely had they stopped, flushed and breathless and smiling sweetly at the generous applause of the

onlookers, when a young girl came into the room and looked carelessly at them. Then, spying the glittering necklace which lay sparkling on Lydia's red silk shawl and the pink stringed rings on her tiny fingers, she sprang forward with a cry: "Where, oh, where, did you get them?" and the others crowded around as she dropped on her knees beside the frightened child.

"Why," stammered Lydia, "we got them at home."

"Take them off," she commanded, "they are mine."

"I wouldn't alarm the little girl, Miss Best," said Mr. Spenser, quietly taking Lydia's hand in his. "Suppose Madge and I go home with the Queen of Sheba and Lady Jane Grey and bring the trinkets back after they have finished playing with them."

"But they were stolen——"

"Hush," said Mrs. Spenser, "these children are nieces of one of our neighbours, and had nothing to do with the robbery. Of course, it is strange that they should have these things, but Madge and Jack

will find out all about it for you. I do not wish to have the little girls frightened."

Of course, the children knew something was wrong with the jewellery they had on, and they were very quiet and troubled all the way home. When Koto came running to help them from the auto, Madge took him aside and spoke rapidly in an undertone.

"Please find out at once where the children found the jewels they are wearing with their play dresses. They said they found them in the attic, but we have every reason to believe they belong to a guest in our house who was robbed night before last. I am at loss to know how they came to be in this house. I will take them back with me, I think."

"I do not know, Madam. Mrs. De Long is away from home and I could not let anything be taken from the house during her absence. The children shall put the jewels just where they found them and we must wait until Madam returns."

"Will you, then, be responsible for the safety of the gems?"

"I will be responsible, Madam."

“Very well. You hear, Jack,” turning to her brother, who still sat in the auto, “this man will hold himself responsible for Mary’s things. Very well,” to Koto. “And now we are going over to see the Inn.”

The children scampered off at once to the attic, where they stripped themselves of their finery, and Mildred carefully replaced the necklace, rings and pins in the leather bag and gave it to Koto, who had followed them.

“I will keep it safely,” he said. “And now, little ladies, run off at once and forget all about it.”

When they reached the Inn, they found Madge and her brother chatting gaily with Bob and Dorothy, who still had on her cooking apron and pretty muslin cap, and Dorothy was saying:

“I’ll have to go to the kitchen, but Bob will show you the Inn gladly,” and she explained how Aunt Margaret had let her keep house while she was gone because she loved to cook and be busy.

“There’s not another place like it in all the world,” exclaimed Mr. Spenser, “and your dinner smells remarkably good, Miss Dorothy.”

Dorothy laughed and hurried away, for something was boiling over with a terrible splutter, and the chicken in the skillet sputtered threateningly, because the fire was too hot. The new friends wandered about the Inn and read the verses with keen delight.

“I cannot improve on them, but I can add one,” said Mr. Spenser, and taking out his pencil he wrote something on a card which he handed to Bob, who took it at once to Dorothy in the kitchen:

“In the Inn of the Apple Tree,
There lives a cook who’s fair to see.
Her savoury dishes smell so good,
How I wish, oh, that she would,
Share her dinner with a man who’s as hungry as can be.”

Dorothy peeped shyly out of the door and said hospitably: “We’d be glad if you would both stay, but you see, I’m afraid you ought to wait and let Harriet cook dinner.”

“Nonsense,” cried the young people, “we’ll come and help and have the jolliest kind of a meal.”

“Oh, then,” exclaimed Dorothy, “do you know how to make the gravy that goes with fried chicken?”

“Yes, I do, and I’ll come out and show you,” and Miss Madge slipped out to the kitchen and spied the mirror with the verse at the first glance. “I’ll copy it to use in my own kitchen if I ever have one,” she said, smiling knowingly at Dorothy.

Lydia was at once dispatched to Harriet to ask for more butter and bread, and in addition she sent a dish of her very best pickled watermelon. Mildred was asked to set two other places at the table and they were pretty crowded when all sat down. But they had a jolly time and the chicken was delicious enough to suit even a Marylander. The corn was sweet and tender, and the potatoes were creamed and flaked until they looked like a heap of snow. Harriet sent Koto over with a newly baked squash pie to help out with the dessert of peaches and cream. And when nobody could eat another mouthful, they sat and told stories until a queer scratching at the front door made Mr. Spenser start, and, looking at his sister he laughed and said:

“It’s my collie, Wag, Miss Dorothy. He follows me, no matter where I go, and I was wondering if he was not nearly due here.”

Of course, Wag had all the chicken bones that a dog could possibly wish, and while he sat and crunched them he was surrounded by an admiring circle. Presently, Koto came along and when he stopped to speak to the beautiful animal, the dog dropped his bone at the sound of his voice, and sprang erect with every hair bristling along his tawny back. Then, with a bound, he sprang upon the Japanese and placing his paws on his shoulders licked his face rapturously. Finding himself repulsed, however, he dropped at Koto's side and laid his head lovingly against his feet.

"How very queer!" remarked Mr. Spenser to Koto. "He has never done that to anyone but me before. Have you ever seen Wag before? But, of course not. He was only a puppy when he came from Scotland, and for two years he has been with me constantly."

"What part of Scotland?" asked Koto quietly, patting the dog's head kindly.

"From Paisley. He belonged to a farmer who raised sheep and also bred shepherd dogs."

"Indeed," replied Koto, his eyes sparkling.

“Two years and a half ago I was at Paisley and it was in the winter time. I was travelling with a lord, a very high one indeed, and when we arrived at that station there was no one to meet us, and, as he insisted upon going to find the house to which we were bound, we secured some horses and rode out in one of the worst snow storms I have ever seen. After we had ridden miles, we came upon a few sheep huddled against a fence for shelter and near them on the ground, nearly covered with snow, lay a young collie who had been disabled in some way. I have been fond of dogs always, so I lifted him to my saddle and let him nestle against me as we rode. Finally we succeeded in finding a farm house and there we stayed three days, snow bound.

“During that time the dog and I became fast friends and I hated to leave him when we came away. It scarcely seems possible that Wag can be that dog, but I can soon tell, however.” Taking his reed pipe from his pocket he began to play softly, “All the Blue Bonnets are over the Border,” and at the first note the dog leaped to his feet, barking furiously as Koto played louder and with spirit. He

darted about under the trees and circled around the Japanese with his plumed tail erect and his eyes questioning eagerly.

“That,” said Koto presently, “is the air the farmer used when it was time for the dogs to round up the sheep, and Wag evidently remembers it after all.”

And so he did. And not only remembered the rescue from the cold and the snow, but repaid it double fold as everybody will see.

CHAPTER IX

THE BOY AND THE BURGLAR

THE moon had been shining brightly into Bob's bedroom when Koto slipped into his accustomed place beside the little bed. And the tired boy had dozed off to sleep with his eyes full of moonlight and with Koto's softly spoken words, "there's nothing in this beautiful world to fear," whispering in his drowsy ears.

Tired to death with his day's work and his responsibilities, Koto tumbled into his own bed and slept a deep heavy sleep that dulled his ears to the cautious opening of a window somewhere in the quiet house, the stealthy footsteps on the stairs and the muffled closing of a door.

But Bob, awakened by that vague something that knows no name, sat up suddenly in bed, looked fearfully around his now darkened room and sleepily muttered, "What's that?" As if in answer to his question, the something moving outside in the hall

brushed against his door, and in an instant he was awake, alert and of course, alarmed. He waited a second or two and then hearing the sound of a closing door, sprang out of bed and opened his own door just a crack to see who could possibly have gone into Aunt Margaret's room opposite. A faint streak of light shone under the door, and, wondering if Harriet had gone there for something, he waited to see when she came out. But she was so long and the light seemed to burn so steadily that he finally stepped out into the hall and listened with his ear against the crack of the door. Then came a queer clicking sound which he seemed to have heard before though he could not quite remember where. Click-click-whir-r. Where had he heard that funny noise in Aunt Margaret's room before? Then there was the sound of something heavy falling and everything was quiet for a few minutes. Then the click and whir-r began again.

“Oh,” gasped Bob, suddenly, “it's the safe. Somebody's turning the lock and the letters are falling. I saw Aunt Margaret open it once. But who can it be?”

For an instant Bob stood irresolute. What should he do anyway? Call Koto, of course; but suppose while he was stealing downstairs the somebody should come out of the room and get away in the dark? Then, quick as a thought, Bob darted away into his room, caught up a rope with which Koto had been teaching him to splice, and quickly tying a noose in one end he stepped back into the hall, slipped the loop over the door handle and then fastened it securely around his own door knob. Any attempt to open the opposite door would only hold it faster as the noose would tighten at the first pull.

Then downstairs he sped to shake Koto frantically, and before the Japanese was fairly awake he was scrabbling into his clothes and listening to the excited account of the trap which was holding the unconscious burglar. Then, with grim determination that boded ill for the man, Koto walked quietly upstairs, and, of course, in the dark, ran against the rope and so shook the door handle violently. In an instant the light disappeared and no sound was heard from the room. Supposing that Bob was quaking with fear in the hall below and wishing to

dispose of the thief before the children were frightened, he whispered softly:

“Bob, will you ring for John to come down from the loft?”

But there was no reply from the darkness below, and with a shake of his head, the Japanese at once planned a trick by which he could secure the man alone. So he waited and watched, and after a while he heard the door handle turn softly and warily, but of course, the rope resisted and the door would not open. Then after a long silence the light re-appeared and the handle was cautiously turned again. Then again more vigorously and the rope gave a little. A muttered growl was heard through the crack of the door which, however, held stout and fast.

Now was Koto's time. Removing the rope from Bob's door he held it tightly in his own hands, and when the next terrific tug came from the occupant of the room, he suddenly released it, and the door banged back and sent the man sprawling on the floor. Before he could spring to his feet, however, Koto had his arms pinioned behind his back, and by

the light of the bull's eye which burned nearby on the floor, he twisted the end of the rope about his wrists and the man was a prisoner. Then lifting the light Koto looked at him and whistled softly.

“Oh, ho!” he said. “The friend to spend the night. The man with the note. I hope you found out all you wanted to know about the house while you were here, my quondam guest. I did not expect you quite so soon, although I knew you would come back for those jewels. You see, your face and the cut of your jaw tell secrets. A man is what he thinks, my friend, and some people can read faces like books; did you know that?”

Just then the door of the girls' room opened and Harriet, with a coloured handkerchief tied around her head, peered cautiously out into the hall.

“What's the matter?” she asked crossly. “What are you doing there, Mr. Koto? and who are you talking to?”

“A visitor who comes in the night and carries a jimmy with him. Don't alarm the children, Mrs. Harriet. We'll soon get quieted down.”

“Alarm the children! My laws, they are trying

to see through me now. Miss Mildred, you stop! You can't——" shutting the door emphatically.

"Come," said Koto roughly, "get up and we'll go below. No use frightening the little people."

"Go below? Take me!" said the man insolently.

"Yes?" and Koto's eyes flashed ominously, for the man was sneering at the slim little Japanese, who seemed so small beside his own bulk and brute strength. Whipping a knife from his pocket, Koto cut the rope from the door and then cut it again close to the man's wrists. Then quickly straightening the man's legs, he tied his feet together with the remaining piece.

"Now," he said grimly, "you'll be taken."

Bracing himself steadily, he suddenly stooped and caught the man under his arms and lifted him to his feet, and before the astonished fellow realised where he was, Koto had flung him across his back and was going slowly and carefully downstairs. And Harriet, whose curiosity had got the better of her, came out into the hall followed by the three girls in their nightdresses, and obligingly held the bull's eye to light him to the very bottom step. The

little girls peeped cautiously over the rail at the man sitting in the hall chair where Koto had placed him. And when the hall lamp was finally lighted they drew back abashed by the angry sullen face which stared at them.

“Land,” exclaimed Harriet, “it’s a wonder that we weren’t all murdered in our beds!”

“Oh, wouldn’t it have been terrible?” and the little girls whispered and fluttered and shook their heads and curled up their pretty pink toes excitedly. Presently Lydia came tiptoeing down a few steps and looked over the banisters in a speculative way.

“I’m going down,” she announced, “to speak to him,” and in spite of Harriet and Dorothy, who reminded her with horror that she was not dressed, the child went her way obstinately. Koto had gone off for a minute to find the hired man in the extension of the house, so that he might go after the sheriff. And Lydia tripped across the hall and stood in front of the thief with her little face eager with the question she wanted to ask. The group on the landing watched her as if she had approached

some wild animal who might any minute jump up with a roar and devour her.

“Mr. Thief,” she said softly, “how did you get in?”

“Got in the window,” he replied roughly, staring at the pretty apparition with sullen eyes.

“The dining-room window?”

“Yes,” sharply.

“Did you see any fairies?” Lydia whispered eagerly, forgetting all about her fear of the fellow.

“Nope. Why?”

“Because I left the window unfastened so that they could get in to-night. I thought surely they would come this time.”

The man laughed. Not a harsh repulsive laugh, but a genuine roaring “ha, ha!” that sent the child skipping hastily back to the stairs.

“’Twas a funny kind of a fairy that came, my little dear,” he called, “and your heathen caught so neatly. But that is one on me! A fairy! By my soul, what a joke!”

The man was still chuckling when Koto came back, annoyed because the hired man had absented

himself without leave, and there was no one to go after the officer, which meant an uncomfortable night for all of them. But while he stood frowning at the man in the chair, he caught the sound of swift carriage wheels coming up the drive. Stepping to the door, he opened it just as the sheriff and two men strode up on the porch, with a gruff:

“Where’s the man?”

It was not until the men were about to drive away with their prisoner that Koto had a chance to ask how they happened to hear of the burglar.

“Small boy came to the house and roused us. Said he lived here. Wouldn’t come with us, but walked back.”

“Oh,” was all Koto had to say.

In a few minutes a hot, dusty, perspiring boy stumbled up the steps and into the hall, sat down in the chair lately occupied by the burglar, mopped his face and ejaculated:

“Whew, I’m so warm!”

“It’s warm work at best, handling burglars,” remarked Koto, coming out of the dining-room, where he had been investigating the windows. “It was

very good of you to go for the sheriff, for I was rather bothered to know what to do about the man. How did you go?"

"Through Caxton's woods. Short cut, you know. My, but it was dark! And once I was scared stiff."

Koto smiled. "I don't think you need use the word scared any more, Bob; you were not really frightened."

"Yes, I was, but I stuck it out after I had started. The shadows were dreadful and it was as quiet as anything."

"Will you stay down with me, Bob, and talk it over a little? The girls have gone to bed, but I don't believe any of us will sleep any more to-night."

The house was soon quiet again and Bob was asleep beside Koto almost before a word had been said. But the Japanese stared into the darkness with wide open eyes and a queer smile on his face.

"The genie was a wise man, and no doubt. The plan does work and Bob is coming round like a little man. How queer it is, too, that it is only as a child is going to sleep that this suggesting can be done.

It's the last waking thought and it remains in some way. Surely it is the strangest idea a man ever thought of. I should like to try it in some other lines. Maybe I shall sometime," and he went on smiling in the dark.

When the children came down in the morning, they found that Aunt Margaret and Grandma had just arrived and were in a great state of excitement over the attempted robbery. The safe was opened at once and the jewels were given to Koto, who had placed them there for safety, to turn to Mrs. Spenser. Miss Madge and Mr. Jack came back with him in the automobile and then took the children for a spin, to give Aunt Margaret time to unpack and talk over things with Koto and Harriet.

Wag sat on the front seat between Bob and Mr. Jack, and the three little girls and Miss Madge squeezed together on the back seat. They spun along the smooth road leaving great trails of dust behind them, and when they passed a house or farm they stopped and gave a rollicking yell, to which Mr. Jack added: "Ray, ray, ray! Beech farm's the

place to stay! We'll never go away! Ray, ray, ray!"

The quiet country people thought the city folks had gone quite mad, and more than one shy lad gave a terrified glance and cried, "Indians!" and fled to the barn in terror. Wag barked and Mr. Jack sounded the horn, and so between them all made considerable noise. Poor Wag's ears gave them all great distress, because the wind blew them back when the auto sped so swiftly, and finally, Dorothy tied her handkerchief over them to keep out the dust, and a queer looking object he was to be sure.

Presently Mr. Jack stopped the machine, jumped down and, opening one of the long wicker baskets, took out the oddest kind of a box covered with red paper and tied with red ribbon. Of course, it was filled with candy, automobile caramels stuffed with nuts and macaroons. Can you imagine anything nicer?

And so, every morning until it was time to go to camp, when the children came downstairs in the morning, they found Wag, patiently waiting outside

the door with a tiny note in his mouth, asking if they could go to ride in the "kid car." And it took all four of them to write the answer, and then Wag would go off with it in his mouth with as much importance as if he was an official messenger.

Then suddenly, there came one day, the announcement that the camp was ready, and the children were asked to select the books and toys they wished to take along. Great hampers of goodies were filled and carried to the boats and Koto and two men rowed them to the island. After the huge bundles of bedding and boxes of dishes and sundry cooking things had been transported, Aunt Margaret with the children slipped down the river in a boat rowed by Mr. Jack, who obligingly stayed and helped put things to rights, even to hanging the kettle on two forked sticks and a crossed piece. He promised to come again and show them how to bake corn bread in a pan in the ashes beneath the fire, and in fact he managed to find an errand to the island nearly every day.

There were delightful mornings with romps and races on the white sand of the little beach, and won-

derful games of make-believe in the caves beneath the rocks. When noon came the dining tent was the merriest place of all, for the sides of the tent were folded back, and except for the canopy overhead it was like eating out of doors. The river hurried noiselessly by and the trees nodded and whispered in sympathy with the gay chatter in the tent. Birds flitted from branch to branch, twittering and watching with cocked heads for possible stray crumbs. Some bold saucy fellows once darted in and sat for a few minutes on the back of Aunt Margaret's chair, and finally Koto fixed a rod across one side where these feathered visitors could wait for tidbits to be tossed to them. These meal times were the happiest times of all, for Koto proved himself to be a wonderful cook, and the children invaded his little canvas kitchen with curiosity and awe. Everything was arranged in the oddest way, and right at hand, too; and even Aunt Margaret came sometimes, to watch the preparation of some strange dish which no one but Koto knew how to make.

"I am sure, Koto," said Aunt Margaret, one day after the Japanese had served a sweetish dish with



IN THE EVENINGS THE PARTY GATHERED AROUND A SPARKLING
FIRE TO HEAR HIS STORIES

a sauce in which floated rosy cherries stuffed with nuts, "that this dish must have come from the place of the wonderful rooster, and if we but close our eyes there will be nothing here."

"No, Madam, this pudding is not conjured; it is a wholesome reality."

Nearly every day, too, he devised some new amusement for them, and in the evenings the party gathered around a sparkling fire to hear his stories and adventures. And while he talked they roasted apples and ears of corn, and fed the fire with pine cones to keep it red and hot.

It was hard to get used to sleeping in the little tents which were arranged in a circle around an open space. The noise of the crickets and toads seemed so very near and strange, and the trees and twigs had such a queer way of snapping in the stillness. Sometimes the leaves and bushes rustled as if something was moving about in the dark, but after a night or two everybody went to sleep at once and forgot the "might-be's" and the shadows.

Then in the early morning there was such a scamp-

ering of bare feet to the little bathing place, which had been screened off for the girls and Aunt Margaret. And such a splashing and ducking and screaming turned the morning bath into a regular jollification.

In the quiet afternoons Koto took the children down to a shady part of the beach and heard their lines and showed them the way each part must be recited in the simple little out-of-door play he had written for them. There were only two songs to be learned and he played the melodies on his reed pipe until they knew them by heart, and could sing them with spirit and confidence. Then presently he began to clear a place for the tiny theatre, where there was to be a platform stage, and comfortable seats for the audience. And everybody kept the secret until the right time came and we all know how hard it must have been to do that.

One Sunday afternoon the Cap'n and his wife came to stay in the woods a day or two, and he got Koto to build a raft and poled the children clear down the bay and back again just for the fun of it. And with him they played Swiss Family Robinson

and were truly wrecked, and Wag, who stayed nearly all the time with the Japanese, swam with a signal of distress to Koto, who had remained in camp that day. It came about in the oddest kind of a way and nobody was exactly to blame.

One day when Koto was too busy to go along, the Cap'n thought he could manage the raft alone, so off they went, Dorothy, Mildred, Lydia and Wag, with the Cap'n poling at the side. They had hoisted an old green and white umbrella in the centre of the raft and under it sat the girls who were, respectively, Mrs. Robinson and her young daughters. They had aboard about everything that could possibly be required for such a voyage, even the enchanted bag was filled with small provisions for emergencies. They had a real telescope for watching for vessels at sea and for the north star should they happen to be moving at night. They also had a lantern, an anchor, a speaking trumpet, to say nothing of an air rifle should they meet a pirate or savages along the shore, and various tins of cookies and apples furnished refreshment for the crew. The family of dolls sat stiffly around the umbrella pole, and,

as they had been on one eventful voyage, they did not seem very enthusiastic over the present one.

Everything went well with the raft until at a sharp bend of the river, the long pole snapped in a most surprising way, and as the Cap'n was not at all prepared for this event, he fell headlong into the river, while the raft dashed up against a heap of rocks and tilted up on one side in a very dangerous way. Everybody screamed and the family of dolls fell flat on their faces as if they had been expecting some such catastrophe long before. The little girls, however, sat quite still, but Dorothy and Bob sprang to save some of the things, a few of which, the telescope and a tin of cookies were rolling into the water. Wag had immediately plunged into the river after the Cap'n and when they came splashing onto the raft again the old man was keenly distressed at the accident. He mopped his dripping face and hair and sat on the very edge of the raft so that the children would not get wet. He looked at the raft and the broken pole and simply, but quietly said, "I swan!"

“What are you going to do?” asked Bob curiously.

“Well, I don’t see what we can do but get another pole from somewheres.”

“I’ll tell you what let’s do,” spoke up Dorothy, “let’s send back after Koto to bring the boat.”

“Just the thing,” remarked the Cap’n drily, “shall we telegraph?”

“No,” said Dorothy, “I thought we might send Wag. He knows how to take a message.”

So after the tiny note had been placed in Wag’s mouth, and Bob had exclaimed, “Koto! Koto!” and whistled, “All the Blue Bonnets,” the dog leaped into the river, swam rapidly to the opposite bank and darted off through the woods at a breakneck speed. Then, there was nothing to do but to wait, and the children comforted themselves by eating crackers and apples and some cream mints that Dorothy found in the enchanted bag.

“Do you suppose Koto will really come?” asked the Cap’n dubiously.

“Why, of course,” exclaimed Dorothy. “He would do anything for us. He is the truest friend

in the world and we never think of him as a servant. His manners are so beautiful that," looking at Bob, "we think we must appear like savages beside him. Aunt Margaret says it is because he never thinks of himself, but always of what he can do for other people's comfort and accommodation, whatever that means. And he takes off his hat and holds it in his hand even when he is talking to Lydia. Bob's going to try to remember that, too."

"Did you ever happen to hear how he came to your grandfather?"

"No, but we'd like to, mightily," said Bob, eagerly.

"Well, it was just this way. We had touched at several of the largest seaports in Japan, and had our cargo pretty well completed. We were trading in silks, teas and porcelains then, when the Captain, your grandfather, suddenly decided to take a run north for a couple of days to see if he could head off a certain merchantman before we headed the ship for home. He hoped to save time in this way, but we had our trip for nothing after all. Well, we had been at sea about three days, when, one after-

noon, as the Captain was sitting in his cabin, he was suddenly disturbed by someone entering and standing before him waiting respectfully until he should be noticed. He glanced up quickly and saw, to his astonishment, a young Japanese boy, dressed in rather soiled white linen.

“ ‘Where, in the name of Confucius, did you come from?’

“ ‘I have been hiding for three days in among the cargo,’ he answered, in very imperfect English.

“ ‘A stowaway, by the dragon of Yokohama!’ exclaimed the Captain angrily. ‘What right had you to try to steal a trip on my vessel?’

“ ‘I am not trying to steal it, honourable Captain. See, I can pay for my passage,’ and stepping forward, he laid a couple of gold pieces on the desk.

“ ‘I don’t want your money,’ roared the Captain, ‘not two red cents. I should put about and take you straight back to your father.’

“ ‘I’ve not run away, augustly Sir. I’ve not a kindred, but I could not get away unless I hid.’

“ ‘Do you know what we do to stowaways on a merchant vessel? We haul them up to the yard-

arm to keep Mother Cary's chickens away, and then, we drop them overboard.'

" 'Very well, Sir, I am ready,' said the little Japanese, looking quietly into the Captain's scowling face.

" 'Here, Bennett,' he called, as I was passing the door, 'take this boy to the fo'castle, clean him up in some way and bring him back in an hour. I've told him he is to hang on the yardarm for stowing away on my ship, but——' 'Go with this man,' in Japanese to the boy.

" Now I could not speak a word of his lingo, but as he understood a little English we contrived to make our conversation intelligible. He had some clean linen in a small bundle which he had with him, and he said he had lived for three days on rice cakes and one small bottle of water. So, before I took him back to the Captain, we went to the galley where I had the cook give the lad a snack of meat and some bread. The poor chap ate it as if he was famished, and the sailors crowded around him, idly curious to see the fellow who had dared acknowledge to the Captain that he was a stowaway. Your

grandfather was not a mild-tempered man, but he had a heart of gold, children, even if he was a bit emphatic in his speech.

“ Presently I took the boy back to the cabin, and the Captain looked up from his writing. He eyed the lad from top to toe and the little Jap stood the scrutiny manfully. Then the Captain said gruffly:

“ ‘ Are you ready? ’

“ ‘ I am ready, honourable Captain. But first allow me to give you this, ’ laying a small packet of gold pieces on the desk, with a fine gold chain. ‘ It would not be wise to waste them on sea gulls and fish, so if you will use them I shall be very grateful. ’

“ ‘ Well, ’ the Captain flashed a look at me and for a minute he was nonplussed. ‘ Take your trinkets, boy. I’ve some work for you to do first. Go into my small room yonder and get out my uniforms and clean them. Then tidy up the place a bit and ask Jim, the cook, to show you about my table, for I want you to wait on me hereafter, and see if you know how to decant a bottle. Keep yourself busy and remember that yard-arm is always there. ’

“By the time we reached Boston, the Captain said he would not part with Koto at any price, and he stayed with your grandfather as cabin-boy until he grew too large and too bookish. Then he went off to school. Both he and I had left the ship before,” raising his hand in salute, “before she went down with the Captain and her crew.”

“Did grandpa really mean to hang him to the yardarm and——”

“Here they come!” cried Dorothy. And sure enough, there was the boat with Wag and Koto, and a short stout man, at the sight of whose rosy face, the children set up a cry of delight.

“Father! Father!” they cried. “You’ve come just in time to rescue us and we aren’t hurt and it’s such fun. And wasn’t Wag a dear to take the message? When did you come and where’s mother? And did you see the Apple Tree Inn? Are you going to have a tent, and did Aunt Margaret know you were coming and never told us?”

The question poured forth in a perfect torrent until they were all comfortably seated in the boat, while Wag was made to sit on the raft, which was

towed behind. There was a merry laugh at the Swiss Family Robinson and the seamanship of the the Cap'n. But father asked Koto for the little note written on the label of the box of crackers, and he put it away very carefully in his pocketbook.

CHAPTER X

THE PLAY

THE doctor could stay only three days away from his ship, and as one of them must be spent with grandma, and one in travelling to and fro, there had to be as much crowded into the day in camp as the hours would allow. Of course, the play had to be given at once and Bob hurried to deliver the invitations to the Spensers, and to the sailor boy and his grandmother, and one to grandma, who was to be rowed home again in the evening. Then they all turned to and helped Koto decorate the stage and cover the benches with canvas. Tall rows of hemlock and spruce trees had been sawed off and placed like a huge hedge around the cleared space in which the stage had been erected, and on the opposite sides of the stage two graceful spruce trees hid the edges of the platform, in front of which a prim, trimmed row of scrub pine had been set into the ground, so that the rough underpinning was

completely concealed. Two fine wires had been stretched across from tree to tree and upon these was hung a green curtain, while above had been festooned huge ropes of ground pine, so that the scenes on the little stage would appear as if in a frame of fresh green.

Aunt Margaret worked busily on the dainty crepe paper dresses the children were to wear, and Koto hurried everywhere at once, and yet found time to smuggle the doctor down to the beach for a chat about Bob and his trouble. When the two men had finished talking, the doctor could not see quite clearly across the water, for his eyes were misty, and in his heart he was glad he had a son. Bob never knew why his father suddenly became chummy like other boy's fathers, but he was delighted, for he had always thought that to be friends with one's own father was the finest thing that could happen to a boy. And his rosy face beamed at dinner that day when the old Cap'n rose to his feet and proposed a toast to be drunk in fresh new cider, "to the memory of the grandfather, the Commander, whose spirit, bravery and courage lived again in his son,

and were cropping out rapidly in the boy, in whom the best of each had come together in the making of a gallant man."

It was the jolliest kind of a dinner, for the Cap'n spun yarns about his old Commander and his ship, and the doctor told stories about his seamanship, and the children listened with such interest that they almost forgot to eat the lovely dessert which Koto had found time to prepare especially for this occasion. It was a macaroon and cornstarch pudding, made in moulds shaped like tiny ships, and the sauce was in three colours, cherry, white and green, while into the top of every ship had been stuck a tiny Union Jack.

Everybody had a favour in the shape of a paper telescope filled with tiny sugar plums which the doctor had brought all the way from Cairo, and such a jolly time they had altogether, that it was nearly time for the play to begin when they rose from the table. Then everybody had to help Harriet wipe the dishes, for she had come to take part in it all. As soon as the pretty crepe dresses had been donned and the excited children had been hur-

ried back of the stage, which was also hidden behind another row of spruce trees, the boats began to arrive with the guests. Everybody exclaimed and chatted about the clever little theatre, and, as Mr. Jack had brought huge bouquets for the little actresses, and the ladies nibbled the bonbons Dorothy had made, it was exactly like a real theatre party. But the sweet fresh air and the fragrance of the woods would never be found in any town playhouse.

After a few minutes the curtains were pulled aside and the audience saw an odd little scene in a Japanese garden. The stage was covered with green canvas to imitate grass, and a sand path wound in and out among clumps of potted balsam and pine trees, while borders of flowering plants from grandma's garden gave the appearance of prim flower beds. Huge festoons of ground pine were draped across the back of the stage to give a thick woodsy look to the trees beyond. Great bunches of spiky ferns seemed to grow in every nook and cranny, and feathery brakes were arranged in stiff rows around the edge of the stage. Real birds darted across the stage and swung on the tops of

the tiny pine trees, and now and then a clear note trilled from some feathered throat.

Irrepressible giggles came from behind the scenes until the Garden Fairy made her appearance and occasional loud whispers added to the audience's enjoyment of the whole performance.

IN A CASTLE GARDEN.

A FAIRY PLAY.

Characters.

Cherry Blossom In a Mist . . .	MILDRED
The Garden Fairy	LYDIA
The Wandering Minstrel	KOTÔ
The Blue Butterfly	DOROTHY
The Crimson Dragon Fly	BOB

Scene in a Japanese garden just back of an old palace belonging to a Prince who is the father of Cherry Blossom in a Mist. The Garden Fairy appears limp and bedraggled and seated on a mossy bank untying her tinsel-tipped shoes, which she shakes vigorously. She is dressed in white tulle, with gauze wings and a flower wreath on her head.

THE GARDEN FAIRY. (*Shaking her little shoes*)
You are not fairy shoes at all. (*Crossly*). You

let me fall down and tear my dress and hurt my wings. And now you are full of tired and don't want to hurry around the garden and gather the rose leaves that the little Princess shook off of the flowers this morning. They have got to be picked up and saved to be made over for the wee buds. And the leaves have got to have their edges curled a little so they won't grow stiff and wiry. But I suppose I must go about in my stocking feet. Oh, (*peering through the fern bushes*) here comes Cherry Blossom in a Mist! How I do wish she did not have to play in my garden! She rumples up the flowers and musses the paths when she romps and runs. I had better hide behind these trees and wait until she goes away. She might think I was made to play with.

(CHERRY BLOSSOM IN A MIST *comes slowly along the sand path, sniffing the flowers and humming softly. Finally she spies the fairy shoes lying on the ground where the GARDEN FAIRY had dropped them.*)

CHERRY BLOSSOM. Oh! What have I found! The dearest little shoes in the world. They are so

tiny. I think they must belong to a fairy. Why, (*trying them on*) I cannot begin to get them on. But if they are magic shoes I'll put them in my pocket and then I'll see real fairies instead of making believe all the time. (*Slips them into the sleeve of her pretty kimono made after the style of a dress for a Japanese girl of high rank.*) Why, the flowers are all looking at me. And the roses have such pretty faces. How could I ever shake them as I did this morning just to see petals fly. And the baby buds have on such dear caps tucked down over their ears. Those trees over there are laughing at me and shaking their leaves. I wonder if it is because I've talked to them a good deal and made believe that they had fairies hidden away somewhere. I did not suppose they understood, though. Where can all that music come from? Everything seems to be singing. The crickets and the katydids and the grass-hoppers are singing verses, but they go so fast I cannot tell what they are saying. (*Listens*) That must be the wind talking to those pine trees over there. I'll run and find out what it is about.

(*The GARDEN FAIRY slips out of her hiding place*)

and runs to the back of the stage where she calls softly.) Dragon Fly, Dragon Fly. Come quickly, I want you.

(DRAGON FLY, *dressed in crimson with gauze wings and small peaked cap comes running in a hurry.*) What's the matter, Garden Fairy? You look bothered. Where are your shoes? Did they hurt you?

GARDEN FAIRY. Cherry Blossom picked them up and put them in her pocket. And of course, she can hear and see everything that goes on in the garden. How stupid of me to drop them. And now the wind is telling the pine trees about the arrival of the Blue Butterfly, and the Princess is listening. Suppose she waits and chases the Butterfly or tries to catch her? Why, the Queen would send us right away from our garden and we would have to wander about without anything to do. The wind ought to have seen that she is listening and stopped murmuring right away. Do you dare go and dart at her and make her run away?

DRAGON FLY. I don't like to scare her because she might have me caught and put into a cage. But

I'll argue with her a little. (*Goes over to CHERRY BLOSSOM, who starts to run away at the sight of such a huge dragon fly.*) Don't run away, little Princess. I am pretty large for a dragon fly, but that is because you are seeing things as they really are, now that you have the Garden Fairy's shoes in your pocket.

CHERRY BLOSSOM. Do they really belong to a fairy? And may I keep them always?

DRAGON FLY. I hardly think so, as she is obliged to go in her stocking feet until you give them up. And in such a garden she might run thorns in her toes, you know. It's really dangerous for her. A truly kind-hearted person would return them at once.

CHERRY BLOSSOM. But if I give them up I won't be able to see any of the funny things in the garden. And do you know what I heard the wind whisper to the pine trees?

DRAGON FLY. I hope you did not listen, Princess Cherry Blossom, because that would not be polite even in enchanted land. And we may do mischievous things, but we are never anything but polite,

except the toads, who will sometimes hop away and not speak to you when you address them. But they live in deep wells generally, where they learn very little about good manners. Here comes one now. (*Toad hops across the stage.*)

CHERRY BLOSSOM. He is not even going to look at us, is he?

DRAGON FLY. No; but he is not so surly as he looks. He told me the other day that all he cared for was to have the moon shine down in his well, and sometimes he waited days and days to have a flower drop from the garden into the water. Then he was perfectly happy.

CHERRY BLOSSOM. Just let him go past. Don't say anything, please. If he should go knee-dee, go-hunk, I should jump like everything.

DRAGON FLY. You are not afraid of things, are you? I sting sometimes when I'm very angry.

CHERRY BLOSSOM (*drawing back a little*). But you seem to be very pleasant just now. Have you always been a dragon fly? (*politely*).

DRAGON FLY. Oh! No! I'll sing you a song about myself and then you'll know what I used to be.

The Play

DRAGON FLY SONG.

A darting dragon fly, they say,
A prince he was until one day,
A fairy heard him saying things,
That felt like hot and burning stings.

A prince, said she, should be so kind,
That no one can his equal find.
But you, because you will not try,
Shall be henceforth, a dragon fly.

A dragon fly with flashing wings.
A crimson mantle like a king's,
In royal colours shall you go,
Until some kindness do you show.

Of course I am that dragon fly,
A jolly rover too, am I,
When boys fling stones and sticks at me,
I turn and laugh at them in glee.

A dart, a flash and I'm away
With wind and rippling pool to play.
Above the water hover I,
A glimpse of my gay self to spy.

Shy little flowers I love to scare,
By darting close, but hurting ne'er.
They duck their heads all in a fright,
Then off I go in sheer delight.

Some day when I've a mind to be,
That thing that then will set me free,
A truly royal prince, but my!
I'd rather be a dragon fly.

CHERRY BLOSSOM. But if you should ever be a real prince you might come and play with me and we could have merry times in the castle. There isn't anybody there I can romp with now, and I get very lonely. Won't you do something kind pretty quick?

(Clear voice calls from back of stage.) Where is everybody? Fairy and Dragon Fly, where are you?

(DRAGON FLY wrings his hands and looks ruefully at CHERRY BLOSSOM). It is the Blue Butterfly from Fairyland. She bring us news every day and orders from the Queen. You'd better keep out of sight and hide behind one of those trees, or else she will fly away again.

CHERRY BLOSSOM. But where is the Garden Fairy? I have not seen her yet.

DRAGON FLY. Sh; get behind that tree, quick. Here they both come.

(BUTTERFLY appears singing softly):

The Play

We waft about,
And gently flout,
The soft winds as they blow.
With touch as light,
As breezes' flight,
From flower to flower we go.

The news we take,
And interest wake,
In the flower land.
From fields to flowers,
In rosy bowers,
We fly, a welcome band.

As petals fall,
So lightly all,
We flutter on our way.
With wings so airy,
Made by a fairy,
We flit the livelong day.

At night we rest,
And seek a nest;
In a flower's heart we creep.
'Neath petals rare,
Without a care,
The wind lulls us to sleep.

BLUE BUTTERFLY. Oh! Here you are, Dragon
Fly. I have a message for you. Word has been

sent to the Queen that the Piper of Tokio is coming to the Castle here, and that there is danger of his being imprisoned by the Prince. Now, you and Garden Fairy must prevent this some way. The Piper is the best friend we ever had, and the Prince must not be allowed to touch him. So, put your heads together and think of something, quick. If you could steal the Princess and hold her——

(DRAGON FLY *and* GARDEN FAIRY *together.*)

Hush! She is here in the garden. She probably heard you.

BLUE BUTTERFLY. Bring her right here. I want to talk to her. (DRAGON FLY *calls to the* PRINCESS, *who comes slowly, looking in delight at the* GARDEN FAIRY).

CHERRY BLOSSOM. I heard what you said about the Piper of Tokio coming to the Castle, and I'm so happy. I hope he will stay and enchant something for me with his music.

BLUE BUTTERFLY. Of course he will, and tell you fairy stories, too. But you must not let him go into the Castle where your honourable father can do him any harm. Will you allow him to hide in your

garden until we have dealt with the Prince, as only we can do?

CHERRY BLOSSOM. Oh! What fun; and I'll bring him food every day, and he can play so that the soldiers will not touch him. I've heard them talking about his music. They say he can play open prison doors.

BLUE BUTTERFLY. That is so, but we will be grateful to you always, little Princess, if you——
Hark! (*Music in the distance*) It's the Piper coming now. How glad I am to be here.

GARDEN FAIRY (*running to CHERRY BLOSSOM*). Give me my shoes, dear Princess. I cannot let the Piper see me in my stockings.

(CHERRY BLOSSOM *reluctantly draws them out*). Then I cannot see you again. And I did so want to play with you for a little.

GARDEN FAIRY. Some other time, Princess. If you are kind to the Piper you shall have my shoes again. (*Disappears with others*).

(*Enter Koto, attired as a minstrel. Carries reed pipe*). Good-morning, little Princess. Why do you look so sad?

CHERRY BLOSSOM. Because the fairies have gone away, and I could only play with them such a little time.

KOTO. Have they been here this morning? Then, let's play to bring them back again. (*Plays a merry tune and CHERRY BLOSSOM watches anxiously for fairies to return*).

CHERRY BLOSSOM. I am afraid they have gone too far. But they said they would be so glad to see you. The wind told the pine trees that the Blue Butterfly had left Fairyland with the news of your journey here, and I heard it, and then she came and told the Dragon Fly, and I heard that, too, because I had the Garden Fairy's shoes in my pocket. And when she heard you coming she took them back, and they all went away.

KOTO. Well, they will return presently. You see, they knew I was coming to see you, and of course they had to wait until I had done so. They are very polite, these wee fairies.

CHERRY BLOSSOM. I wish I could make them stay with me. Do you know how I could?

KOTO. Why, just make them think that they could

do more than anybody else to make you happy, and that you need them more than anyone, and I think they will stay. They are very unselfish.

CHERRY BLOSSOM. Well, I'll try that the next time I see them. But I am forgetting: You have had no tea and you must be tired. I will be back in just a minute, dear Piper, please excuse me.

(As soon as she goes, the BUTTERFLY and the FAIRIES come hurrying out from behind the bushes).

KOTO. I thought you would not appear until the Princess went away. How glad I am to see my friends again.

BLUE BUTTERFLY. But we are so worried about you. There is a rumour that the Prince will imprison you.

KOTO *(laughing)*. Just a rumour, my friends. I have only come to see if I cannot make the Princess a little happier. She tells me she is very lonely, as children of high rank always are. They may not romp with simple little people. Now, if you would help me bring a little brightness into this small life, I would be very grateful, and I should not feel that I have journeyed all this distance in vain.

FAIRIES. But what can we do?

KOTO. Well, the Dragon Fly might be kind to her and become a live prince again, and the Garden Fairy could play she is a jolly little girl, and the Blue Butterfly can go back to Fairyland and get permission to stay with the Princess whenever she was needed.

(The FAIRIES look at each other in dismay. The dear PIPER has asked them to give up their fairy guises and become just like plain children, who would have to make believe).

DRAGON FLY *(stoutly)*. I for one, will do it, but my! I'd rather be a dragon fly.

GARDEN FAIRY. It would only be because you asked it and it would please you.

BLUE BUTTERFLY. I will go back at once to Fairyland, and be here by the time the Princess brings the tea things.

KOTO. To make other people happy is what we are here for, is it not? Whether we are in Fairyland or a castle garden. Come, now, off with the wings and stings. *(The two FAIRIES run away and the BLUE BUTTERFLY disappears behind the pine trees.)*

(CHERRY BLOSSOM *staggers in with a tray covered with dainties and the PIPER nibbles a little at them to please her*).

KOTO. You are very thoughtful and hospitable, little Princess, and now in return, I will play to you, if you will sit down on this mossy bank and listen.

CHERRY BLOSSOM. Play the tunes that bring the birds and the butterflies, and that make the children follow you, and the jolly songs that turn the winter into summertime, with rustling leaves and nodding flowers. I've heard of your music, and I would rather have the real you than all the whole of Fairyland.

(*While he amuses her with his clever music, the FAIRIES, dressed as Japanese children, steal back upon the stage, and presently Koto spies them.*)

KOTO. I told you so, little Princess: The little Fairies have come back, and see, they have made themselves like real children, so that they could stay and play with you.

(*Children run forward and catch her hands*).

CHERRY BLOSSOM. I'm so happy to have some playfellows; but I must know if you have brought

your wands and wings. And do you think the Queen will ever come to visit you at the Castle?

ALL TOGETHER. Maybe she will, but we cannot tell. We did not bring our wings because we left them to be mended by the fairy seamstress. We do not often have time to have them repaired; and we can stay until the trees begin to blossom in the spring and then everybody in Fairyland has to work.

BLUE BUTTERFLY. Perhaps the Queen would allow us to take Cherry Blossom back with us, and then she can see the dragons and the brownies, and elves that never go away from home. And we'll take her to ride on the fiery tails of the rockety stars and we'll dance on the moonbeams——

GARDEN FAIRY (*interrupting*). And we'll teach her how to make party dresses out of silvery clouds, and lace handkerchiefs out of cobwebs, and how to catch dewdrops to wear in her hair.

DRAGON FLY. And hear the crickets fiddle and the birds sing in opera, and go to the fairy races in the summer time, and the garden parties in the orchard.

KOTO (*gently*). While you are showing the Princess all of these strange things, let her also see

the wonderful telescope with which the Fairy Queen sees into children's hearts, and then whenever anything goes wrong with them, she sends a messenger out to find the lost smiles and happiness. Tears, you know, are never seen in Fairyland, and the fairies are trying to banish them from ours.

CHERRY BLOSSOM. I won't have to cry now or feel sorry for myself. I shan't have to make believe even to be happy.

DRAGON FLY (*aside*). And how I shall miss my dips into the cool ponds after gnats and things.

GARDEN FAIRY (*softly*). And I my rides on the swift swallows.

BLUE BUTTERFLY. We will all miss a lot, but we will gain something, too, and being real for a time will be a relief from pretending forever, for that is what we really do all our lives—just make believe we are anything at all, and only people that do that too, know anything about Fairies. Come, let us dance in a magic circle, while the Piper plays and puts us in tune to begin our new lives right merrily.

DANCE.

(*Curtain.*)

CHAPTER XI

THE END OF THE QUEST

OF course, they were all delighted with the simple childplay, and the children were called out and presented with the flowers Mr. Spenser had brought, and Dorothy bowed over the row of scrub pines, as if they had been the foot-lights of a real theatre.

“Oh,” she exclaimed to Bob, afterwards, “I felt as if I might act almost anything after that, even Portia or Juliet, maybe. And I know that the actors that make themselves great are the very ones that best can make believe that they are somebody else. That’s the whole secret.”

“Well, you’d better believe that Aunt Margaret wants you as plain Dorothy this minute, to help her with the tea things. But, if you do ever get to be a great actress, Dor, don’t howl when you cry, the way you do when we play the ‘Wide, Wide World.’ You do look awfully funny.”

The little girls, still dressed in their crepe paper kimonos, handed the cups about, and Bob passed the plates of cake with such a fascinating manner that the doctor choked over his tea, and grandma looked in alarm at his red face. "That blessed Japanese," she heard him say under his breath.

After the doctor had been told about the sailor boy, and the voyage of the two little girls, the adventures of Lady Jane Grey and the Queen of Sheba, and everybody had been as entertaining as possible, grandma then decided it was time for her return to the farm, before the afternoon shadows grew long over the river and woods. So, the doctor and Koto rowed her home, and the children begged her to hold on tight to the boat and not wriggle about, for it was a very ticklish thing for a very old lady to go on the water at all.

After a short time, however, Koto came rowing rapidly back with the doctor, who had found a telegram waiting for him at the farm ordering him to return to his ship at once. So he promised to go over the Apple Tree Inn before he went to the train, and to read all the cunning verses and look into the

kitchen mirror and at the apple blossom cups Koto had made, so that he could tell mother all about it. Then he hugged all four of them at once, and told them that he was proud of them in a bunch, and of each one separately for some one different thing.

“Only three weeks more with grandma, young folks, and then home to mother, who has missed her chicks very much. You’ll have a happy time to think of all winter, and some of the things you will never forget, especially Koto. I am trying to persuade him to go into the university at home, so maybe we shall see something of him this winter.”

Then off they went with Wag sitting in the bow of the boat, and the children waved and called after them until the boat was out of sight and hearing. Koto was very quiet when the doctor tried to thank him for his goodness to his little people.

“It has been a great pleasure to be with them,” he said simply; “they are all splendid youngsters, and will be something one of these days.”

“Think over what I said about coming to town,” urged the doctor. “There ought to be a berth for you in the university. Do come.”

Koto shook his head and smiled. "I'm going to Japan in a few weeks, doctor. I must find my place in my own country. Evidently I have wasted many years in searching for those papers, but the object was a serious one to me. It has been a hard quest, but I guess I might as well give it up and go back."

"You cannot find any trace of them, or of the people who stole them?"

"No, and I never will. I shall not be acknowledged the heir as I hoped and prayed I might be, for my father's sake. The property will revert to the State next year, so I had better end the quest and get down to my life's work."

But sometimes it happens that we are nearer the goal when we think it is furthest away, and although Koto had decided to give up his attempts to find his papers, the end of the quest came in a most surprising way and almost immediately, too.

It was quite late that night when Koto went back to the Apple Tree Inn to lock it safely, and after he had secured the kitchen door and was passing the cabinet, he stopped just a minute to look at it. He was carrying a small lighted lamp in his hand, and

when he stooped over to peer at the studded door, a heavy stone, hurled through the open doorway, struck him on the side of his head, and he fell like a log to the floor. The lamp crashed and the oil, which scattered and ran in every direction, burned in little blue flames along the matting.

And a man skulking among the apple trees outside, sneaked away, muttering, "I've fixed him for tying me and carrying me down stairs, the yellow heathen."

Of course, the little fingers of fire ran quickly across the matting into the next room, caught the fluffy ruffles of the curtains, and in a few minutes the whole house was ablaze. The flames crept around Koto and singed his hair and burnt holes in his clothing and still he lay there unconscious of the danger menacing him. Suddenly from the orchard there came a long bay, a fierce rush, a deep growl, and Wag, with every hair bristling, leaped into the blazing room, seized Koto's shoulder and pulled and tugged frantically until he had dragged the Japanese out under the trees. Then, with his beautiful coat burnt and scorched, his paws blis-

tered and the plume on his tail entirely burnt off, the dog crouched down by the unconscious man and howled and moaned so piteously that a man, who was passing in the road, and happened to spy the smoke, jumped over the old stone wall and ran across the orchard. Koto was at once lifted away from the heat of the burning building, and the man stood for a second peering into the front room, wondering if he could not save some of the pretty things of which he had heard so much. He suddenly made a dash at a venture and caught up the cabinet, as it was nearest the door, and springing back he flung it down on the ground and rolled himself over and over on the grass to put out the sparks that had clung to his clothes. In a few minutes he had aroused the inmates of the house, grandma, Harriet and John, the man, who was dispatched at once for a doctor, as soon as Koto had been carried into the best guest room downstairs.

Then it remained for poor Wag to bring other assistance, for he hobbled home when they had shut him out of Koto's room, and sitting beneath his master's bedroom window, howled until he came

downstairs to find out what ailed the dog. Then, in the light from the great lamp in the hall, Mr. Spenser saw the burns and the singed hair, and asked quickly what the matter was and where it was. Wag started off at once, limping down the front steps.

“All right, I’ll go with you, you almost human things;” and in a few minutes he was following quickly after Wag, who led him straight to the smouldering ruins of the Apple Tree Inn. Then he hurried to the house, where he saw lights moving about, and of course, offered the services of his auto to fetch the other doctor and a nurse from the village. And then Wag crawled away into a corner of the hall and watched jealously everyone who went in and out of the bedroom. Finally, when one of the doctors was hurrying through the hall he remembered the man had said that the dog must have pulled Koto from the flames, and noticing Wag crouching in the corner, stooped to examine him. He went back into the sick-room and in a few minutes returned with bandages and a cooling lotion, and Wag’s paws were soon swathed in the softest linen, and as gently as if he had been a baby.

And the next day they let him have his own way, and he slept beside Koto's bed, and the kind-hearted nurse took care of them both.

After Mr. Jack had finished the many errands to the village, he went off to the boat landing and rowed rapidly down the river to explain Koto's absence to Aunt Margaret, who was much worried, and feared to remain alone in camp all night with the children.

Then the little folks were awakened and bade to dress quickly, and in a few minutes they were skimming along over the water, all weeping bitterly over the destruction of the Inn and poor Koto's injuries.

The next day they tiptoed around the house and haunted the hall into which Koto's door opened. They gathered flowers from the garden and sent them to him with all kinds of sweet messages, and pouted because Wag was admitted to the sacred precincts and they were not. The little girls went to ride with Mr. Spenser, but they coaxed Dorothy in vain to accompany them.

"No, indeed," she would say; "I am allowed to

help fix his food and beat the eggs he has to take, and he might want them while I was away, and I would never get over it."

Then, finally, there came a day when they were allowed to creep into the darkened room and look at the invalid, whose eyes burned brilliantly beneath the bandages on his head.

"Oh, Koto," whispered Mildred pityingly, "shall you have any hair at all when you get well? Won't you look too funny?"

Koto smiled. "I'm glad enough to have any head at all," he said softly. "I thank you for all the flowers and messages you have sent. And I want to tell Miss Dorothy to look in the top drawer of my dresser upstairs and find four boxes. There is one for each of you. I intended to take them to the camp to give you that night."

"Koto," said Mildred curiously, "did the stone hurt when it hit you?"

"A little," he replied in a voice that made the nurse hustle the children out of the room as quickly as possible.

And what do you think they found in those four

boxes? Dorothy's had in it a gold bracelet, made like a twisted dragon, and each of the little girls had a fine gold chain on which hung a wee gilt and white fairy with a wand and filigree wings. Bob's had a watch chain ornament made of jade, with some fine gold lettering on it in Japanese characters, which he afterwards learned meant "courage." Aunt Margaret did not like it very much, for the presents were expensive, but she said nothing to spoil the children's delight over their gifts.

Of course, the camp was broken up and the things stored away to use next year. Nothing could be done without Koto, who had planned and managed the whole thing from the beginning. The ruins of the Apple Tree Inn were quickly cleared away, and someone picked up the cabinet and placed it on the side porch where everybody forgot all about it. Every little while during the day the children would remember something they wished could have been saved from the fire, and they used to pretend that the genie of the Silvery Mist could conjure their beloved Inn back again.

"Koto could do it, of course," said Dorothy,

“but it would be a strain on him to have to keep on conjuring hard enough so that we could play in it.”

One day Lydia asked Harriet why she did not have that verse painted around her kitchen mirror so she would remember to smile while she baked.

“Bless your heart, missy,” replied the good-natured Harriet, “if I spent my time smiling and looking into the glass, you would have precious few cakes to eat. I’ll have to take my chances on having the oven brownies sit on my baking. They won’t do it but once, if I ever catch them.”

“You wouldn’t hurt a fairy, would you?” exclaimed Lydia in astonishment.

“I wouldn’t, if I knew it was one, missy, but if it looked like a roach or a spider, it would not have much chance to conjure me.”

That afternoon when the little folks sat in one of the apple trees, Bob said to Lydia curiously: “Say, Lydia, did you honestly unfasten the dining-room window that night so that the fairies could get in? And did that horrid burglar discover it?”

“Yes, I did. And I crept downstairs after

Harriet was asleep and I heard somebody in Aunt Margaret's room, and thought they had come, so I opened the door just a crack to see, and I saw that thief. But I shut it so softly that he did not hear me. But——”

Bob whistled. “And you did not tell anybody?”

“No, because I did not know but what the fairies had sent him. But,” and she nodded vigorously, “I'll never do it again, because men aren't ever fairies; Koto said so.”

“You would be scared to pieces if you should see one,” said Bob consolingly, “and scoot upstairs like sixty.”

“I saw you scoot up stairs yourself only last night, mister,” said Mildred scornfully. “You flew upstairs and slammed your door as if you were afraid the burglar was hiding in the dark on the landing, so there.”

“I wasn't scared; I was just pretending that I was a hospital doctor, and somebody had sent for me in a hurry. I was just saving time.”

“Humph! I went to the Children's Hospital once with mother, and the doctors there went as soft as

anything, and when they shut a door they almost breathed it shut."

"Well, mine was a different kind of a hospital," answered Bob indifferently, as he walked away whistling.

One afternoon, after dinner, the children were told to go around to the side porch for a little, and there they found Koto sitting in a great steamer chair. They hovered around him and plied him with questions until the nurse threatened to send them all away.

"Can't he even show me how sore his hand is under the bandage?" demanded Mildred. "I let him see my finger when it was cut and Aunt Margaret had bound it up. It was awful bloody."

"Well, this is different," said the nurse gently; "besides it hurts to have the bandage touched."

While they were chatting merrily about what they were going to do next summer, and every plan included Koto, of course, the sailor boy and his grandmother came suddenly along the path. Koto tried to rise from his chair, but the sailor's grandmother insisted upon his staying in his chair.

“I must only stay a few minutes and I want to speak to you. Please send the youngsters away for a little.”

Then when they were alone she asked him if he had planned and built the Apple Tree Inn.

“I did a small part of it, madam, but Mrs. DeLong planned it.”

“Have you the plans—the drawings, I mean?”

“Yes, they were kept. Would you like to have them, madam?”

“Not just now, until I tell you what my plan is. My idea is this: I am so grateful to the children for their share in helping my grandson to escape from the officers that day, that I would like to rebuild the Apple Tree Inn to show my gratitude. So when they come again, they will find it waiting for them.”

Koto's eyes gleamed. “Indeed, madam, I have spent hours trying to find some way in which I could do that very thing, but my means are too limited. If you will undertake it, I will give you every assistance in my power.”

“All right, then. Some day when you are able,

I will come over and we will discuss it. In the meantime, I will go and approach Mrs. DeLong on the subject.”

And she did come again and again, and the three talked and planned together, and Aunt Margaret promised to furnish the second inn exactly like the first, and the work was to begin as soon as the children had gone home and before Koto's return to Japan. So, in spite of his enforced idleness, he was kept busy suggesting ideas about the drawings and the engaging of the workmen and painters. And so many improvements and new ideas were brought out, that it seemed certain the second Apple Tree Inn would utterly eclipse the first.

The plans were nearly completed and the workmen actually engaged, when the sailor boy's grandmother came hurrying over one afternoon to consult Koto about a change in the shape of the little veranda that was to be added to the plans for the Inn. She was dressed in her cherry-coloured silk, and the children, including Koto, all started when they saw her. Koto had been telling one of his wonderful stories, and she said she would be glad to listen

until he had finished it, but he insisted upon stopping at once.

“It seems to me,” she said abruptly, pointing to the cabinet which the fire had marred and spoiled, “that that thing could be cleaned and polished again.”

“I was thinking the other day,” said Aunt Margaret, “that I would send it to the city and have it repaired in some way.”

“These doors have always had the greatest fascination for me,” went on the sailor’s grandmother, pressing the stained brass nails with her dainty fingers. Suddenly, under the slightest pressure, a panel in the tiny door fell open with a click and she drew back in dismay. “What have I done? I’ve broken something.”

A cry from Mildred caused them all to turn in alarm. “Look at Koto. What is the matter with him?” she whimpered.

Koto had risen to his feet and his eyes were staring wildly at the secret panel. His hands were clenched in his efforts to control his excitement, and, without a word, the sailor’s grandmother stepped

back and allowed him to go to the cabinet. Slowly he moved towards it, and like a man in a dream, he knelt down and thrust the fingers of his well hand into the aperture. Then he drew out a small folded paper, and another, and another, each of which he opened with trembling fingers. Silently he knelt there as if powerless to move. Tears rolled down his cheeks, and he sobbed like a child. Suddenly, however, he sprang up and holding the papers triumphantly above his head, cried: "At last! At last! I can now prove I am my father's son, after all these years." Then he pressed the papers against his face caressingly.

After a minute he saw that he was being watched curiously, and stepping in front of the sailor's grandmother with a manner that might have graced a king, he stooped and raised the edge of her gown to his lips, saying very humbly:

"For all my life long I shall be very grateful to this lady in the cherry-coloured dress for giving back to me what that other one in the cherry gown took away. See," he explained, showing the papers, yellowed with age, "this is my birth cer-

tificate; this my father's will, and this, the record of my mother's marriage portion. They were stolen years ago, and I have searched and traced the cabinet, which once belonged to my father, all over the world, it seems to me. When, finally, I heard it was here, I determined to end the quest if I failed to find them in the cabinet. And here they are!"

Everybody congratulated him, and Lydia threw her arms around him and gave him a great hug, which made his eyes misty again.

"You won't have to go away now, will you, Koto?" she asked wistfully.

"Indeed, little lady, I shall have to go almost at once."

"But he will come again," said Aunt Margaret, kindly, for she saw the excitement had been too much for the sick man, and she hurried the children away on some errand.

"I should like to ask one thing," said Koto, after a few minutes, "and that is to be allowed to fit up one room in the Inn and dedicate it to the lady in the cherry-coloured dress, who also shall have a room in my own house named after her." And he did it,

too. And long afterwards, when the sailor boy, who went to Japan with Koto, was asked to invite his grandmother to visit him in the palace, she found it the loveliest room anyone had ever dreamt of.

When Koto was able to travel, he went to town with the children, taking with him the cabinet which had been given to him at once, and to-day it stands singed and stained, in a glass case in Koto's palace, and is an object held in great honour and respect by his household.

He stayed with the doctor for a week or two, and he was as kind and thoughtful as when he was at the Beach Farm, and in fact, the children were rather disappointed because he did not show in any way that he was a very great lord indeed.

“He's just the same Koto all the time, and isn't puffed up or proud, and if he is rich he doesn't look it, and he doesn't order people about at all.”

“That is because he is truly noble at heart as well as by birth,” said the doctor, “and that is the best thing any of us could be.”

After some months, they heard from him in his home in Tokio, and he told the doctor to tell the

children that he was sending them a box of some truly Japanese things that would seem almost as if they were from Fairyland, but they were real and not make-believe, and were to be played with every day. Now, if you can imagine what pretty things might be sent from Tokio to four happy children, why, you may be able to guess pretty well what they found in that precious box. The children talk about it to this very day, and they never weary of telling their little friends about the Apple Tree Inn and the guests they entertained, as well as the dinners Dorothy cooked, which showed that she knew almost as much as the teacher at cooking school.

“But the strangest of all were Koto’s stories, and the birds he made sing to his music in the woods that day,” said Dorothy, one evening during the winter.

“Do you suppose,” said Bob dubiously, “that Koto made us hear and see them just as he made us see that rooster? Maybe he conjured them.”

“I think we all must be conjured,” said Mildred, candidly, “’cause Bob is so polite and Dorothy is not stuck up, and Lydia is as nice as can be, and I——”

“Yes, and you?” teased Bob.

“I try not to think of candy every minute, and I think we had better stay conjured, so we will be invited to the Beach Farm next summer, too.”

And so they did, and to us, who know them very well, they seem to have remained conjured in a most delightful way.

THE END

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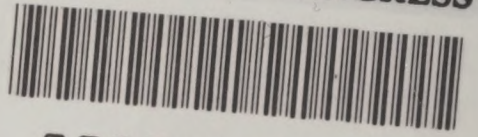
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