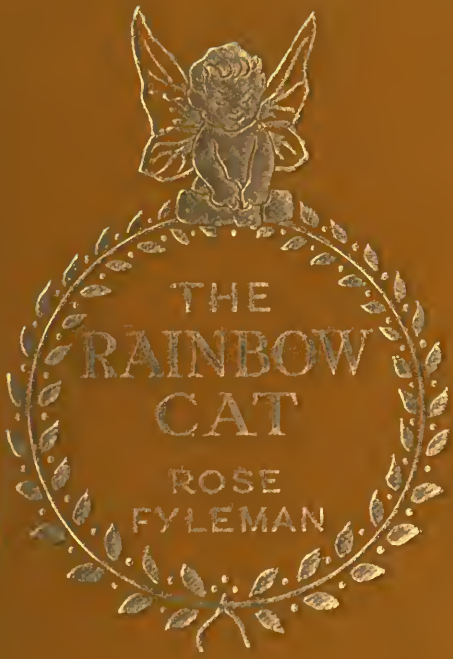

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# THE RAINBOW CAT
## AND OTHER STORIES

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FAIRIES AND CHIMNEYS

THE FAIRY GREEN

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# THE RAINBOW CAT
## AND OTHER STORIES

BY

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# THE RAINBOW CAT
## AND OTHER STORIES

### THE FIRST ADVENTURE OF THE RAINBOW CAT

THERE was once a cat which was not in the least like any cat you have ever seen, or I either, for the matter of that. It was a fairy cat, you see, and so you would rather expect it to be different, wouldn't you? It had a violet nose, indigo eyes, pale blue ears, green front legs, a yellow body, orange back legs and a red tail. In fact, it was coloured with all the colours of the rainbow, and on that account it was known as the Rainbow Cat.

It lived, of course, in Fairyland, and it had all sorts of strange adventures. I am going to tell you some of them, and I think you will

agree with me that it really had a very thrilling time, one way or another.

This is the first.

The Rainbow Cat was sitting quietly at the door of his house one sunny day. He felt rather bored. Fairyland had been very quiet lately. "I think it's time I set out on a voyage of adventure," he said suddenly. "I shall get fat and stupid if I don't do something of the sort." So he shut up his house, put a notice on the door to say that he hoped to be back some day, if not sooner, and that letters and parcels were to be thrown down the chimney, and started off on his journey with a nice little wallet of assorted oddments tied to his tail, together with a neat parcel containing his party bow and his dancing-slippers. "For one never knows," said the Rainbow Cat, "whom one may meet, and it is always well to be prepared for anything."

He went on and on until he came to the edge of Fairyland, where the clouds begin.

"I may as well pay the cloud-folk a visit," thought he, and he began climbing up the clouds.

The people who live in the clouds are quite

pleasant creatures. They don't do very much, but being idle doesn't seem to make them unhappy. They live in splendid cloud-palaces that are even more beautiful on the side which can't be seen from earth than on the side which can.

Often one may see them drifting across the sky in companies, or driving their pearly chariots, or sailing in their light boats. They live on air, and the only thing they are really afraid of is the Thunder Giant, who, when he gets angry—which he rather often does—goes stamping over the sky, shouting and knocking their houses about.

They greeted the Rainbow Cat kindly and were pleased to see him, for he was an old friend and they were always glad to welcome visitors from Fairyland.

"You have come just at the right moment," they said. "There is a grand party at the Weather Clerk's. His eldest son, the North Wind, is to be married to-day to Princess Pearl, the daughter of the King of the Enchanted Isles."

The Rainbow Cat was pleased that he had brought his party bow and his best shoes. His

bag of oddments might also come in useful, he thought.

It was a wonderful wedding.

Everybody went. Among the guests there was even a comet, and comets attend none but the smartest gatherings.

The Aurora Borealis looked magnificent, so did the bride's father, the King of the Enchanted Isles, who was there with his lovely wife, Mother o' Pearl.

There were one or two Bores present who had to be asked because they were connected with somebody or other, and another aged relation, Anti Cyclone, a most disagreeable old lady; but on the whole it was a charming affair.

Just as the merriment was at its height and they were all happily feasting and rejoicing, a friendly swallow came flying in with the news that the Thunder Giant was tearing across the sky in a terrible rage because a passing Trade Wind, who was in a hurry, had trodden on his toe.

"What shall we do?" said every one. "He'll spoil the party. He'll upset everything." And they all ran about in great confusion and distress.

But the Rainbow Cat remained quite calm. He was a very resourceful creature.

He retired under a table and opened his little bag and examined its contents, thinking hard all the time.

Presently he came out.

"I think I can manage the Thunder Giant," he said. "Pray go on with the party. I will go and meet him and see what can be done."

They were all greatly astonished at his courage and coolness, but they were delighted to think that their party might not be spoiled after all, and they crowded round to watch him go sailing off to meet the giant, whose shoutings and mutterings could by this time be clearly heard in the distance.

When the Rainbow Cat had gone some way and could already see the giant from afar, he stopped, opened his bag, and drew out a large black cloak. This he put on, pulling the hood well over his ears. He then sat down and appeared to be lost in deep thought.

When the Thunder Giant came up he stood still for a moment to look at this strange object all alone in the middle of the sky.

"Who are you, and what are you doing here?" he roared.

"I'm the celebrated wizard Mewpus," replied the cat in a very deep and impressive voice. "Mind my bag, there's black magic in it. I have heard of you, O great Thunder Giant." And he got up and bowed three times.

The giant felt rather flattered, but he was still very cross and his foot hurt.

"I don't think much of wizards," he said. "What can you do?"

"I can tell your thoughts, O Giant," was the reply.

"Oho!" laughed the giant, "and pray what am I thinking at this moment, Mr. Mewpus?"

"That is quite easy," said the Rainbow Cat. "You are thinking how your foot is hurting you, and how you would like to get hold of the person who trod on your corns." For the cat had heard all this from the swallow.

The giant was astonished.

"You're a rather wonderful fellow," he said. "It must be useful to be able to do that. Can't you teach me?"

"I dare say I might be able to," said the Rainbow Cat. "I'll see if you show any promise. Sit down, please."

The giant sat down and the Rainbow Cat walked three times round him, muttering to himself.

"Now, tell me what I am thinking," said he when he had done.

The Thunder Giant sat looking at him rather stupidly. He wasn't a very clever person.

"I suppose you're thinking what a fool I look, sitting here," he said.

"Wonderful—wonderful," said the cat. "You show immense promise, sir. I have never had such an apt pupil."

"May I try again?" said the giant, who began to think himself very clever.

"Certainly," said the Rainbow Cat. "What am I thinking of now?"

The giant tried to put on a very wise look and stared again at the Rainbow Cat with his stupid little eyes.

"Beefsteak and onions," he said suddenly.

The Rainbow Cat fell back and pretended to be lost in admiration.

"Perfectly right," he said. "How did you guess such a thing?"

"Oh, it just came into my mind," said the giant modestly.

"You know," said the cat seriously, "you ought to cultivate this gift. It's most unusual."

"How can I do it?" said the giant eagerly, for he thought it would be very delightful to be able to read people's thoughts. Which shows how stupid he was.

"Go home," said the cat, "and lie down for a couple of hours. Then take these three little pink comfits and lie down for another couple of hours. After that you may get up and have a cup of tea. But keep very quiet. Before going to bed eat this other little white comfit, and when you wake up in the morning you will be able to read people's thoughts."

The giant was all impatience to be gone, but he did not quite forget his manners.

"I am very much obliged to you," he said. "Can't I do anything for you in exchange, Professor Mewpus?"

The Rainbow Cat pondered for a moment.

"I should like a bit of lightning," he said, "a nice jumpy bit."

The giant put his hand in his pocket. "Here's a bundle of it," he said. "If you cut the string you can have quite a jolly little display at any moment."

The Rainbow Cat thanked him, and they parted most amicably.

The giant went back to his castle and did as he had been told. Ever since that day he believes he knows what people are thinking. This makes him feel very superior and it really doesn't do anyone else any harm.

The Rainbow Cat returned to the party with the bundle of lightning stowed carefully away in his bag. Every one was most grateful for what he had done, and he was quite overwhelmed with attentions. He enjoyed himself very much in Cloud-land, and stayed for seven days. At the end of that time he packed up his little bag and set off once more on his travels, and you shall presently hear what next befell him.

## THE PRINCESS WHO COULD NOT CRY

THERE was once a little princess who could not cry.

That wouldn't have mattered so very much, but the trouble was that she laughed at everything, often on the most unsuitable occasions, and this was an extremely vexing and awkward habit, especially for a princess.

Her parents were very troubled about it, and they called in a wise old fairy in order to get her advice. She went into the matter thoroughly, and finally told them that if the princess could only once be made to cry, the spell would be broken for ever and she would thenceforward be just like other people.

This wasn't particularly helpful, but it gave them some hope, and they immediately set about the task of making the princess weep. Of course it was a rather difficult matter,

because naturally they didn't want her to be really miserable, and they hardly knew how to begin. Finally they offered a reward of five hundred crowns to anybody who should succeed in making their daughter cry without doing her any harm.

Wise men came from all over the kingdom to see what they could do, and many things were tried, but all to no purpose.

One of them suggested that she should be shut up in a room by herself and fed on bread and water for a whole week. The queen thought this very cruel, but the king persuaded her to try it. She insisted, however, that at any rate it should be bread and *milk*. But every time they came to bring the princess her basin of bread and milk they found her laughing, and at the end of the week she was still as cheerful as ever.

"Look," she said, "my feet have grown so thin that I can't keep my slippers on." And she kicked her foot into the air and sent her slipper flying across the room, and laughed to see the scandalized face of the butler.

But her mother burst into tears. "My poor starved lamb," she said, "they shall not

treat you so any longer." And she rushed into the kitchen and ordered soup and chicken and pink jelly to be sent up to the princess for her next meal.

Another wise man came who said that for six months he had been practising pulling the most awful faces and making the most terrible noises imaginable, in order to be able to cure the princess. Children, he said, were so frightened by him that they had to be carried shrieking and howling from the room, and even grown-up people were so terrified that they wept aloud. He requested that he might be left alone with the princess; but the queen waited outside the door and listened.

She trembled with anxiety as she stood there, for the noises the wise man made were so blood-curdling that she could hardly bear to hear them herself, and it seemed dreadful that her child should be left alone to endure such a trial. But in a few minutes she heard peals of laughter coming from inside the room, and presently the wise man opened the door. He was quite done up, and blue in the face, with the efforts he had been making. "It's no use," he said rather crossly. "No use at

all," and went away looking much annoyed.

The princess came running out to her mother.

"Oh, he *was* a funny man," she said. "Can't he come and do it again?"

Another wise man suggested that all her favourite toys should be broken up. But when he went into the nursery and began smashing her beautiful dolls and playthings, the princess clapped her hands and jumped about and laughed more heartily than ever.

"What fun, what fun," she said, and she too began throwing the things about. So that plan had to be given up also.

Other wise men came, but as many of their suggestions were cruel and unkind ones, naturally the king and queen would not hear of them, and at last they began to fear that nothing could be done.

Now in a small village on the borders of the king's great park, there lived a widow with her little daughter Marigold.

They were very poor, and the mother earned what she could by doing odd jobs of washing, sewing, or cleaning for her neighbours. But she fell ill, and poor Marigold was in great

trouble, for she had no money to buy comforts for her mother.

Their little savings had to go for food to keep them alive, and every day these grew less and less.

Marigold knew all about the little princess at the castle. She had often heard speak of her, and had even seen her sometimes riding about the roads on her white pony. And one day as she was cooking the midday meal an idea came into her head.

As soon as dinner was over, she put on her hat and cloak and told her mother that she was going up to the king's palace to see if she could make the princess cry and so earn the five hundred crowns.

Her mother did her best to persuade her not to go.

"How can you hope to succeed," she said, "when so many clever people have tried and failed? You are my own dear little Marigold, but it is useless for you to attempt such a task. Give it up, my child."

But Marigold was determined, and when her mother saw this she said no more, but lay and watched her rather sadly as she set

bravely off for the castle with her little basket over her arm.

When Marigold came to the castle gates she felt frightened. The gates were so big and she was so small. But she thought of her mother and of the five hundred crowns which would buy her everything she needed, and she stood on tiptoe on the top step and pulled the bell handle so hard that she was quite frightened at the noise it made.

A very grand footman opened the door, and when he saw Marigold standing there in her woollen frock and cloak with her little basket, he said, "Back entrance!" in a loud, cross voice, and shut the door in her face.

So she went round to the back entrance. This time the door was opened by a red-faced kitchen-maid. "We've no dripping to give away to-day," she said, and she too was about to shut the door.

But the queen happened to be in the kitchen giving her orders for the day, and she saw Marigold through the window. She came to the window and called to her.

"What is it, my child?" she asked, for

Marigold stood there looking the picture of unhappiness.

"I've come to make the princess cry, please your Majesty," she said, and made a curtsey, for the queen looked very magnificent with her crown on her head and her lovely ermine train held up over her arm to keep it off the kitchen floor.

When the queen heard what Marigold had come for, she smiled and shook her head, for how could a little country girl hope to do what so many wise men had been unable to accomplish? But Marigold was so earnest and so sure that she could make the princess cry that at last the queen promised to let her attempt it.

"You won't hurt her?" she said. But she smiled as she said it. Marigold had such a kind little face; she did not look as if she could hurt anyone.

She was taken to the princess's apartments, and the queen went with her into the nursery and introduced her to the princess and explained why she had come.

The princess was delighted to see a nice little rosy-cheeked girl instead of the dull old men who so often came to visit her. The

queen shut the door and left them alone together.

By this time the news of the little village girl who had come to make the princess cry, had spread all over the palace; and presently a whole crowd of people were standing anxiously waiting outside the nursery door.

"It's such nonsense," said the Chamberlain to the Prime Minister. "A village child. I don't suppose she's ever been outside the village."

"Quite ridiculous," whispered the ladies-in-waiting to the court pages. "Do you think she knows how to make a correct curtsey?"

At last the king and queen could stand the suspense no longer. They quietly opened the door and peeped in. And what do you think they saw? The princess, standing at the table in the middle of the room with Marigold's basket in front of her, busily peeling onions as hard as she could go, while the tears streamed down her face all the while. She was crying at last!

The king and queen rushed in and clasped her in their arms, onions and all. The ladies-in-waiting stood with their perfumed handker-

chiefs pressed to their noses, the pages tittered, and the cook, who was standing at the bottom of the stairs, muttered to himself when he heard the news, "Well, *I* could have done that," while the Prime Minister rushed about the room with his wig on one side and shook everybody violently by the hand, exclaiming, "Wonderful, wonderful! And so simple! We must get out a proclamation at once. Where are my spectacles? Where is my pen?"

And so the princess was cured, and from that time she became like everybody else and cried when she was unhappy and laughed when she was glad, though I am pleased to say that she always laughed a great deal more than she cried.

As for Marigold, she got her five hundred crowns, of course, and was able to give her mother everything she needed, so that she was soon quite well. The king and queen were most grateful, and often invited her up to the palace to play with their little daughter, and loaded her with presents.

Because she was sweet and modest she didn't get spoiled, but grew up charming, kind and

beautiful. I did hear that in the end she married a king's son and that they had an onion for their crest, but I'm not at all sure about that.

## WHY PIGS HAVE CURLY TAILS

THERE was once a fairy who fell into a bramble-bush. It was a very closely-grown bush, and she could not get out. She was sadly scratched, and the thorns caught her tiny delicate wings and tore her pretty frail dress into shreds.

The bramble-bush formed part of a hedge which ran along the side of an orchard, and presently a horse came sauntering up to the hedge.

"Oh, please help me, sir," said the fairy. "I'm caught in a bramble-bush, and can't get out."

The horse came and looked at her. "That's a nasty place to be in," he said. "What will you give me if I get you out?"

"I'll give you a golden halter and a silver bit," said the fairy.

The horse shook his head. "It's not worth

it," he said. " I should scratch my face. My master loves me for my beautiful satin skin, and I really can't risk spoiling my appearance. Besides, I have some very nice harness of my own. He sees to that. Sorry I can't be of any assistance." And he ambled away.

A little later a robin perched on the bramble-bush. " Oh, please, Mr. Robin, won't you come and help me ? " said the fairy. " I can't get out."

" What will you give me," said the robin, " if I help you out ? "

" I'll give you a jacket of gold and slippers of silver," said the fairy.

" Thank you very much," said the robin, " but I don't think that's quite my style. I have a nice red waistcoat already and I should hate to look gaudy. Besides, I'm tremendously busy. I've got a young family to look after, and my wife doesn't like me to be away long." And he flew off.

There were sheep grazing in the field on the other side of the hedge, and one of them came munching close to the bramble-bush.

" Oh, please, Mrs. Sheep," said the fairy, " can you help me out of here ? "

" What will you give me if I do ? " said the sheep.

" I will teach you to sing as the fairies sing," said the fairy. " I will also give you wisdom." For she was getting more and more anxious, and she thought such lovely gifts would tempt the sheep.

But the sheep stared stupidly with her glassy eyes. " That's all very well," she replied, " but I happen to have a very nice voice naturally and can already sing rather well. As for wisdom, I don't quite know what that is, but I don't think it sounds very interesting. I'd help you gladly, but the thorns would tear my fine woollen coat, and that would never do. Surely a fine woollen coat is worth much more than wisdom." And she moved away.

The fairy was beginning to despair; she thought she would never, never be able to get back to Fairyland. But just as she had given up hope, a pig came wandering past, making ugly noises and staring about with his little blue eyes. He spied the fairy sitting in the midst of the bramble-bush with her head down on her knees.

"What's the matter?" said the pig.

The fairy raised her head and saw the pig's ugly pink snout poking in between the bramble-twigs.

"I think I can get you out," he said, when she had told him her trouble. "I'm not much to look at, but I've got a good tough hide, and at any rate I shan't be afraid of a few scratches spoiling my beauty." So with a good many snuffles and grunts he pushed his head and shoulders well into the middle of the bush and made a clear way for the fairy to get out.

She gave a sigh of relief when she found herself once more free and in the clear sunshine, and the pig stood and looked at her admiringly, for she was a dear little thing. He was so conscious of his ugliness beside her pretty grace that he turned away and started off down the orchard.

"Don't go—oh, don't go," said the fairy.

The pig turned round.

"You've not had your reward," said the fairy.

"I don't want any reward, thank you," grunted the pig, and moved on.

But the fairy persisted. She flew after him. "You must have a reward," she said. "I shall be most unhappy if you don't."

"But I don't want anything, thank you," said the pig. "I have been very glad to help you."

The fairy stood in front of him, anxiously pondering as to what she could possibly give him that might be of any use. Nobody seemed to want her fairy gifts. She looked him up and down.

"Wouldn't you like something—something to make you more beautiful?" she said.

She really meant less ugly, but she was so grateful to the pig that she was very anxious not to hurt his feelings, and so she put it that way.

"I'm afraid it's rather hopeless," said the pig, with half a smile. "You see, I'm such an ugly fellow. You'd have to alter me all over."

"But surely—a little something . . ." said the fairy, and she looked at him more thoughtfully than ever.

Now all this happened a very long time ago, when pigs had quite straight tails like most

of the other animals, and suddenly, looking at his tail, the fairy had an idea. "I know, I know," she said. "You shall have a curly tail. It will be an immense improvement, and *so* uncommon."

The pig looked rather pleased. "Well, have your own way," he said. "I can't see my own tail, in any case, but I dare say it wouldn't look bad."

So the fairy touched the pig's tail with her wand, and it instantly curled up into nice little rings.

Ever since that day pigs have had curly tails, and now you know how they came by this beautiful adornment.

## THE SECOND ADVENTURE OF THE RAINBOW CAT

THE Rainbow Cat went on and on until at last he came to the country of the Tree-goblins. The Tree-goblins are happy people; they live in the trees like birds, though they can't fly. They are indeed very friendly with the birds, and they understand the bird language, so that they are able to send one another messages without any need of the post—which is very convenient!

When winter comes the goblins go and live in their caves underground. It is a great change after the trees, and they are always delighted when spring returns again.

There are no animals in Tree-goblin-land, but the Rainbow Cat was an old friend here too, and was received as kindly as in Cloud-land.

The Tree-goblins are rather funny little creatures; they like to keep themselves *to*

themselves, as the saying goes, and there are not even any fairies living in their country. But they are on very friendly terms with the fairy folk, and their principal occupation is making fairy clothes.

These are the tiniest, finest little garments imaginable, and they are made of all sorts of pretty things. Spider thread, of course, and moonbeams, and softest silk from silk-worms, and flower-petals dipped in magic wells so that they cannot fade, and thistledown, and moss-velvet, and foam, and lichen—oh, there is no end to the things that are used to make clothes for the fairies.

And when they are finished the birds carry them to the fairies and bring back orders. Sometimes, when it's a very special occasion, the fairies come to be fitted or to choose the stuffs and the styles, but not often.

They are easy to fit and easy to suit, and the birds do the ordering most satisfactorily.

The Rainbow Cat liked being in Tree-goblin-land very much indeed.

He lived in a beautiful copper-beech. When the morning sun shone through the leaves his little house was filled with a lovely rosy light

which was most pleasing and becoming. Every morning a chorus of little birds sang songs to him for his delight, and every evening they lulled him to sleep with soft lullabies.

They thought him a very grand and beautiful person, and so indeed he was.

When he had been in Tree-goblin-land for two or three days the Chief of the Goblins came to see him one morning early. He was in great trouble.

The Queen of the Fairies had sent an order for rose-coloured shoes, dozens and dozens of pairs. She wanted all the Court to wear rose-coloured shoes at her next party, and her next party was to take place in three days.

"We could get the work done," said the Chief Goblin anxiously, "it isn't that. But we haven't got the material. You see, the roses aren't out yet. There's been a great run on pink lately and we've used up all the pink flowers and all our other stuffs of that colour. We've scarcely got an inch of rose-colour of any kind, and we ought to start at once. It'll take us all our time to get them made. It would be dreadful to disappoint the Queen. What are we to do?"

The Rainbow Cat was more than willing to help, but he felt that it was a difficult matter.

"How soon must you have the stuff?" he asked.

"This afternoon would be the very latest," said the goblin.

"I'll see what I can do," said the Rainbow Cat. "I have an idea or two. Don't worry, it'll be all right. Meet me here at noon, and I'll let you know what I've done."

The Chief Goblin went away feeling considerably relieved. The Rainbow Cat seemed so wise, just the kind of person to think of something helpful in an emergency.

And sure enough at twelve o'clock he came to meet the Chief of the Goblins with a cheerful twinkle in his dark blue eye.

"I've been making a few inquiries," he said. "But I want to make sure that my information is correct. Sit down, and let us have a little quiet talk."

The Chief of the Goblins sat down and waited eagerly. He felt more and more hopeful.

"Is it true," said the Rainbow Cat, "is

it true that the crooked hawthorn tree in the Weeshy Glen is very bad-tempered?"

"Quite true," said the Chief Goblin. "Nobody dares go near him, he's such a cross, cantankerous creature. Lots of the hawthorns are very nice indeed, and we're very fond of them. But he's unbearable. He'll give any one a nasty scratch if he gets half a chance, he's so spiteful."

"Is it true," continued the Rainbow Cat, "that he's jealous of the other trees because he can't grow tall and big like them, and reach up to the sky?"

"Quite true," said the Chief Goblin. "He makes everyone round him miserable with his grumbling and scolding."

"H'm," said the Rainbow Cat, and he folded his arms and sat lost in thought for a few minutes.

"Would the petals of the hawthorn tree do to make fairy shoes of?" he said at last.

"Beautifully," said the Chief Goblin. "But they're white." (For at that time all hawthorn blossom was white, both in Fairyland and everywhere else.)

"Quite true," said the Rainbow Cat. "Can you lend me a mandolin?"

"Yes, I think I can," said the goblin, and he ran off and came back very soon with a beautiful mandolin all inlaid with silver and ivory and mother-of-pearl.

"Thank you," said the Rainbow Cat. "I think that in half an hour or so I shall be able to let you have all the rose-coloured petals you want." And he hung the mandolin round his neck and set off into the forest.

Presently he came to the Weeshy Glen, sat down a little way off from the hawthorn tree where its thorns could not possibly touch him, tuned up his mandolin, and began to sing this little song:

"The oak tree raises his arms on high,
The pine tree reaches up to the sky,
The slender birch is a lady fair,
The poplar has a most elegant air.
But tell, oh tell me now, who is this
Small and stunted and all amiss?
Who can he be? oh, who can he be?
This squat little, odd little, strange little tree?"

It wasn't very kind of the Rainbow Cat, but the hawthorn tree was a very disagreeable fellow, you must remember, and nobody could

ever do anything to punish him because everyone was so afraid of his sharp thorns.

Anyway, by the time the Rainbow Cat had got to the end of the first verse, the hawthorn tree was very angry. He could hardly contain himself, and he trembled all over with the temper he was in.

The Cat hardly looked at him, but went cheerfully on with his song.

This was the second verse:

"The elm tree stands like a stately king,
The leaves of the alder dance and sing,
My lady beech is a courtly dame,
The chestnut's lamps are a shining flame.
But tell me, tell me, who can he be
That scarcely reaches up to their knee?
Hoary of head and crooked of limb,
What on earth is the matter with him?"

The hawthorn tree had grown more and more furious as the song went on. The Rainbow Cat finished up with a beautiful trill when he got to "the matter with him," but the hawthorn tree was in no mood to admire his fine singing. So great was his rage that he grew pinker and pinker and pinker, and he shook so violently that all his petals were shaken down. They fell all round him like a shower of rosy rain.

The Rainbow Cat waited no longer. He ran off as hard as he could to the Chief of the Goblins, still singing as he went, and told him that he would find all the stuff he wanted in the Weeshy Glen.

So the Queen got the rose-coloured shoes after all, and the Tree-goblins were most grateful to the Rainbow Cat, and begged him to stay with them as long as he liked.

But he thanked them and said he must continue his travels.

They wanted to load him with presents, but all he would take was a little bottle of water from the magic well. This water has fairy powers. If you rub it on your eyes you can see through stone walls, which is sometimes very convenient, and the Rainbow Cat was quite pleased to have some.

They also insisted that he should keep the mandolin. This he finally consented to do. And ever since that time there have always been pink hawthorn trees as well as white.

## MELLIDORA

THERE was once a young prince who wished to take a wife. So he went to consult his aunt, who was by way of being a Wise Woman.

"Next week," he said, "the King of the Land-on-the-other-side-of-the-Mountains is holding a great festival in honour of the coming of age of his son, and he has invited me to stay at the Court. There will be many beautiful ladies there, and I am hoping that I may be able to find a wife among them. But how shall I know which to choose?"

"You shall have my advice and welcome," said his aunt. "Choose a maiden who laughs when others cry, and cries when others laugh, and you will not go far wrong."

The prince thanked his aunt for her counsel and went back home. He thought the advice she had given him rather strange, but he had

great confidence in her wisdom. "And in any case," he said, "I can but go to the festival and see what comes of it."

There were indeed many lovely ladies at the Court of the King of the Land-on-the-other-side-of-the-Mountains. The prince was quite dazzled by their beauty and their wit. Each of them seemed more charming than the last.

On the second day of the fête a picnic had been arranged which was to take place in a woodland glade some little way from the palace.

The road thither was rough and very muddy, for there had been much rain the week before.

The princes and knights rode on horseback; the ladies were conveyed in carriages gaily decked with flowers and drawn by beautiful prancing horses.

But it so happened that the horses of one of the carriages became unmanageable. It turned over, and the six ladies who rode in it were all tumbled into the ditch at the side of the road.

It was a rather deep ditch, and there was water at the bottom of it, so that it was quite a business getting them all out, though

fortunately none of them was seriously hurt. The prince, who happened to be riding beside the carriage, helped to rescue them, and escorted them one by one, weeping, to a seat on the bank, where they presented a sorry spectacle with their pretty frocks all muddy and bedraggled and their pretty hats all on one side.

But when the prince came to the sixth lady he found her, to his great astonishment, sitting at the bottom of the ditch, laughing.

Her hat had come off, her hair had come down, she was bedaubed with mud from head to foot, and her poor little hands were covered with nettle stings.

But she laughed all the same.

"We must have looked so funny all tumbling into the ditch." she said. "I wish I could have seen it. We're still rather a funny sight, aren't we?"—and she looked down at herself and up at the weeping ladies on the bank, and laughed again.

There was so much mud on her face that the prince could not see what she really looked like, but he remembered the words of his aunt.

"What is the name of the sixth lady?" he asked, when they had all been bundled off home. "The one who laughed?"

"Her name is Mellidora," he was told.

So in the evening he sought out Mellidora and found that she was a most beautiful and charming person, so much so that he lost his heart to her forthwith.

"But I must do nothing in a hurry," he said to himself. "After all, there is the other half of my aunt's counsel to be considered. In any case, it would perhaps seem a little strange if I asked her to marry me quite so soon. We will see what happens to-morrow."

On the next day all the ladies and gentlemen who were staying in the castle were to go out riding in the early morning.

The prince had slept late, and he stood for a moment at his window looking down on the courtyard, where there was a great bustling and prancing and making ready.

Through the midst of all this an old peasant woman was making her way.

She had a basket of eggs on her arm, and carefully laid on the top of it was a round

flat cake, brown and spicy-looking, with a sugar heart in the middle of it, surrounded by pink and white sugar roses.

She had made it for a birthday gift for the King's son. But she was a little confused by all the bustle in the courtyard, and scurried hither and thither among the horses and people like a frightened hen.

Presently one of the King's servants pushed her out of the way. Her foot caught on the edge of a stone; she tripped and fell.

The eggs rolled out of the basket. Plop! Plop! they went on the stones.

There was a fine mess, and the beautiful cake lay in the midst of it, in fragments.

The old woman was so vexed and upset that she forgot everything but the misfortune that had befallen her, and she stood in the middle of the courtyard surrounded by her broken eggs, scolding away at the top of her voice and shaking her old umbrella at the whole gay crowd.

Everybody laughed; and indeed she was a rather comical sight as she stood there shouting and storming. Somebody threw her a gold piece, which was kindly meant. But a

gold piece wouldn't make her beautiful cake whole again.

Presently the whole party rode away through the courtyard gates—all excepting one, and that one no other than Mellidora.

She slipped down from her horse and went swiftly across to where the old woman sat upon the stone steps leading up to the big castle doors. All her anger was gone, but she looked the picture of misery.

The prince could see how Mellidora stooped to pick up the broken cake and tried to put it together again, and how kindly she put her arm round the old woman's shoulder, coaxing her with friendly words.

And when presently he came down into the courtyard to see what more might be done, the sun shone upon Mellidora's gentle face, and he saw that her eyes were full of tears.

Then the prince knew that he had indeed found the one whom he sought, for here was a maiden who not only laughed when others cried, but who also cried when others laughed.

The old woman was taken to the King's son, where she was so kindly received that she forgot all her troubles.

But the prince waited no longer.

That very same day he asked Mellidora to marry him, and as she loved him as much as he did her they got married very soon and lived happily ever after.

## THE MOON

THE moon, of course, is a big golden penny hung up in the sky. Every month when it is at the full the fairies stand in the fields and gaze at it and feel in their empty pockets. There are so many things they want to buy. Rainbow ribbon from the weather clerk for sashes, silken thread from the spider for weaving into shawls, pearl varnish from the snail for doing up their wings, and little red feathers from the robin for wearing in their Sunday bonnets.

At last they can bear it no longer. They all go flying into the sky and unhook the moon and carry it off to go marketing with. And when they're tired of spending they hang what is left of it up again in the sky and go home to bed. But the next night they fetch it again and spend a little more.

They go on doing this night after night for

nearly a fortnight, and the moon gets smaller and smaller, till at last there's nothing left of it at all. And when the fairies realize what they have done, they get frightened.

"We've spent all the moon," they say. "Suppose it never grew again! Wouldn't it be dreadful?" And they all hide away in the forest and don't come out for several nights.

But at last one of them takes courage and puts his head out, and he sees a little tiny bit of moon shining in the sky. Whereupon he gives a shout and claps his hands and goes running round to the houses of all the other fairies to tell them the good news.

"The moon's growing again," he says. "Come quick and look." And they all come out to look at it, and caper about and are as pleased as pleased can be.

"We'll never take it again," they say. "It might not grow next time." But at the end of a fortnight they have worn all their pretties a little shabby, and they want some more. And by that time the moon has grown so big that they feel that they *must* spend a little of it. And—would you believe it?—they end

up by doing all over again just exactly what they did before.

They've been going on like this for ages, and what's more, they're beginning to take it for granted that the moon will grow again, and so I don't suppose they'll ever get cured. But it's very tiresome of them.

We could quite well do with all the moon always. Besides, some day it really might not grow again. And what then . . . ?

## THE PRINCE AND THE BAKER'S DAUGHTER

THERE was once a prince who was very brave, good and handsome. He was quite young, too, and before he settled down to learning how to rule the kingdom which would one day be his, he was sent by his father out a-travelling into the world.

The king gave his son a beautiful white horse and a bagful of big gold pieces, and told him to come back when the money was all spent.

His mother made him a blue velvet mantle embroidered with silver, and she also gave him a hat with a blue feather in it.

"I want my son to look nice when he goes out riding into the world," she said.

He rode away on his white horse and turned to wave his hand to his mother and father before he went over the hill-top.

" How handsome he looks," said his mother, wiping away a tear or two.

" Well, that's nothing to cry about," said his father, and blew his nose. Then they went back into the palace and continued ruling.

The prince rode on and on.

Wherever he went people were very nice to him, even when he got beyond the borders of his own kingdom where he was no longer known.

It is not every day that a handsome prince comes riding along on a white horse, and moreover with a bagful of fine gold pieces to spend.

All the girls ran out to look at him as he passed, and when he stayed anywhere, even for a short time, people seemed to get to know about it at once and asked him to their houses and gave grand parties in his honour and made so much of him altogether that he was in some danger of getting thoroughly spoiled.

But he had been very well brought up, and he had a naturally amiable disposition.

Besides, he had always been told by his mother that if you are a prince you must try hard to behave as a prince should, and be modest, considerate, and very polite to everyone.

One morning close on mid-day, he came to a tiny village which he did not know at all.

He was rather hungry after his ride, and as he passed down the narrow little street he became aware of a delicious smell of new bread.

It came from the open door of the village baker's, and as he glanced in he saw a pile of beautiful, crisp new rolls heaped up in a big white basket.

He got down off his horse and went in.

"I should like to buy one of those nice little rolls," he said to the baker's daughter, who stood behind the counter.

She was very pretty. She had blue, shining eyes and fair smooth hair, and when she smiled it was like sunshine on a flowery meadow.

The prince ate up his roll and then another and yet another, and while he ate he talked to the baker's daughter. But no one can eat more than three rolls one after another, and at last he felt that the time had come to pay for what he had had and ride on his way.

But, as it happened, he had no small change, nothing but a gold piece such as those which he had in his bag.

The baker's daughter hadn't enough money

in the whole shop to change such a big gold piece, her father having set off that very morning with all the money in the till in order to buy a sack of flour from the miller in the next village.

She had never even seen so large a gold coin before. She wanted to give him the rolls for nothing, but of course he wouldn't hear of that, and when he said it didn't matter about the change she wouldn't hear of that either.

"Then there's nothing for it," said the prince, "but for me to stay in the village until I have eaten as much as my gold piece will pay for."

As a matter of fact he was really quite glad of an excuse to stay, the baker's daughter was so very pretty, and he was getting a little tired of travelling.

He pottered about in the bakehouse all the afternoon and watched her making the dough for her delicious rolls.

He even offered to help her.

His blue mantle got rather floury, but he didn't mind that in the least.

The baker's daughter was rather worried that such a fine gentleman should get in such a mess.

She didn't know he was a prince, otherwise she might have been more worried still.

In the evening, when the baker returned, the prince asked if he could put him up for a couple of nights.

The baker was a kindly and simple old soul. "Gladly, gladly," he said, rubbing his hands together and smiling, for the village was a small one and they were very poor, and he was glad to make a little extra money.

The prince stayed a whole week at the baker's house. By that time, what with the bread he had eaten—though he was careful not to eat much and always to choose the cheapest—and the price of his lodging, about half of the gold piece was spent, and the baker's daughter was able to give him the change from the money she had taken in the shop.

So he had no excuse for staying any longer, which grieved him because he had grown very fond of the baker's daughter and did not like leaving her.

But he had an idea that his mother and father would not think her a very suitable bride for him, for princes cannot always marry whom they please, and so he rode sadly away.

But the farther he went the sadder he became, and at the end of two months he could bear it no longer, and so one fine morning he turned his horse's head round and rode back again the way he had come.

"She is good and clever and beautiful," he said. "What more can one want in a wife? When my mother and father see her they will love her as much as I do and will be quite willing that I should marry her." Which really was very optimistic of him.

But alas, when he came to the village and sought the baker's shop, he was met by strange faces.

The baker had died a month since, he was told, and his daughter had left the village and gone out into the world to work for her living, for she could not manage the bakehouse by herself and there was none to help her now that her father was gone.

The prince was very, very troubled and unhappy. He tried to find out something more about her, but his efforts were fruitless; no one seemed to know what had become of her.

"I will search the world over till I find her,"

he said, " even if it take me the whole of my life."

He wandered on and on, always making fresh inquiries, always hoping to hear something of his lost love, but always in vain.

And at last he got back to his own kingdom.

When his mother and father saw him they were horrified to find how pale and thin he had grown.

" Travelling doesn't seem to suit you, my son," said his father, looking at him rather seriously and stroking his beard.

" The poor boy is tired out," said his mother. " He'll look better when he's had a good rest and some proper food. I don't suppose he's ever had a really wholesome meal in those foreign parts."

But the prince remained thin and sad and listless, and at last he told his father and mother the cause of his unhappiness. At first they were a little upset at the idea of his wanting to marry so humble a person as the daughter of a village baker—" But that of course," thought the prince, " is only because they don't know her."

And after a time, when they saw how unhappy he was and that all the distractions with which they provided him were unavailing, and that his one idea was to go out into the world again and search for the baker's daughter, they were so troubled that they felt they would be only too glad if he could have the wish of his heart fulfilled.

And then one day as the prince was sitting quietly at breakfast with his parents he jumped up suddenly with an expression of the greatest excitement and joy.

"What is it, my son?" said his astonished mother.

The prince couldn't speak for a moment. For one thing he was too excited, and for another his mouth was full of bread, and I told you before how well brought up he was.

But he pointed to the dish of breakfast rolls and kept on nodding his head and swallowing as hard as he could.

The king and queen thought at first that sorrow had affected his brain, but the prince was able to explain very soon. "The rolls, the rolls," he said. "Her rolls, *hers*. No one else could make them so good. She must

be here." And he rushed off to the kitchen without further ado.

And there, sure enough, he found the baker's daughter, peeling potatoes over the sink.

By the merest chance she had taken a place as kitchen-maid in the king's palace, though she hadn't the faintest idea, when she did so, that the king's son was the same person as the handsome stranger who had once stayed in her father's house.

And though she had been there a month she had never seen him. How should she? King's palaces are big places, and the kitchen-maids stay in the kitchen premises, so that she and the prince might never have come face to face at all if it had not happened that, owing to the illness of the royal roll-maker, she had undertaken to make the breakfast-rolls that morning.

When the king and queen saw how sweet and beautiful she was they made no objection to her as a bride for their son, and so he asked her at once to marry him, which she consented to do, for she loved him as much as he loved her.

"I don't know that I should have *chosen* a baker's daughter for our son's wife," said the queen to her husband when they talked it over that evening. "But she's certainly a charming girl, and quite nice people go into business nowadays."

"She'll make him an excellent wife," said the king. "Those rolls were delicious."

So they got married quite soon after. The wedding was a rather quiet one because the bride was in mourning for her father, whom she had loved dearly. All the same, it was a very nice affair, and everybody was most jolly and gay. The prince and his wife had a beautiful house not very far from the palace, and I think it is extremely likely that they lived happily ever after.

## THE CLOCK

THERE was once a little clock which had gone steadily for years and years.

It was a good, conscientious little thing, pretty too, but very modest, and it had always kept splendid time.

Then it stopped suddenly one day exactly at eleven. Its works were worn out, and the clockmaker to whom it was sent for repairs returned it with the message that it was not possible to make it go again.

The people to whom it belonged decided to leave it on the mantelshelf where it had always stood. "It's such a nice little thing," they said, "and some day we can have new works put into it." So there it stood without making a movement or uttering the faintest tick. But it was very unhappy. It felt that it was of no real use in the world.

The other things in the room weren't very

nice about it. They used to whisper to one another, and the little clock caught an unkind word now and then that made it unhappier than ever.

"I don't know why they keep it there. What on earth's the good of it if it doesn't go?" said the big grandfather clock. "It never was much use anyway. No chime, and a very poor tick. Of course it's got no constitution to speak of." And his brazen face grew even shinier than it had been before, and he gave a self-satisfied little cough and then sang out his quarters as loudly as ever he could.

The cuckoo clock, which lived in the hall, and used to join in the talk when the door was open, actually went so far as to make up a little rhyme about it.

"Cuckoo, cuckoo, cuckoo," it sang. "What's the use of you? What's the use of you? Cuckoo, cuckoo."

The chairs, which were Chippendale, and tremendously proud of the fact, were quite as rude.

"There's no doubt about it," they said, "quality is what tells. You can't expect a

thing to last unless it is really well made, inside and out. Perfect workmanship will wear practically for ever." And they held up their backs as straight as could be and curved their shapely arms and legs into the most elegant lines imaginable.

The little Chelsea flower-seller and flute-player, who stood on each side of the clock on the mantelshelf, were much kinder, and did their best to console it.

They had always been on friendly terms with it, and they used to peep round it and smile and wave to one another.

"The Fairy Queen is probably coming to see us soon," said the flower-seller. "Perhaps she may be able to help you."

The little clock felt happier; it would be wonderful to be introduced to the Fairy Queen, who had often been to see the Chelsea figures but had so far never taken notice of any of the other things.

You see, those two were old friends of hers. They came from Fairyland originally, but the tale went that a wicked witch had cast a spell over them which was to last for seven hundred and seventy-seven years. At the end of that

time they would be able to go back to Fairy-land, but meanwhile the Queen used to come and visit them now and then in order to cheer them up. Sure enough, the very next time she came, the flower-seller remembered about the little clock and told her how unhappy it was.

The Queen came and stood in front of it and stroked its face with her tiny hands and patted its pretty ormolu pillars.

Finally she sat down on the little green marble slab on which it stood, and asked it to tell her all its troubles.

And the little clock opened its heart to her and told her how miserable it was to think that it would never, never be able to tell the time again.

"But you *will*," said the Queen. "Every day and every night at eleven o'clock you will be exactly right. None of the other clocks"—she glanced round almost contemptuously at the grandfather—"can be quite sure of ever being perfectly right. But you will be. Why, it must be about eleven now." She pulled a tiny dandelion-clock from her pocket and began to blow and to count. "One, two, three,

four. . . ." The white darts floated away and went drifting about the room. At last only one remained.

At that moment the cuckoo clock was heard striking in the hall. The Queen stopped blowing to listen.

" He's fast," she said, and waited till he had finished. " Five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven," she went on, and, as she ended, the last white morsel of down rose in the air. She glanced at the little clock. " You see, you're quite right," she said triumphantly. " And to-morrow morning you'll be right again at eleven o'clock."

The little clock beamed, and it beamed still more when the Fairy Queen opened its glass door and gently clasped its hands in hers and said how much she looked forward to seeing it again.

Just then the grandfather cleared his throat and went through his pompous performance of chiming out the quarters and hour.

" You're five minutes slow," said the Queen, and she waved her hand and vanished through the ventilator.

## THE THIRD ADVENTURE OF THE RAINBOW CAT

WHEN the Rainbow Cat left the land of the Tree-goblins he travelled for some time until he came to a delightful country called the Bountiful Land.

It was a marvellous country.

There were deep forests there, and great meadows full of the loveliest flowers, such as only grow in gardens in other countries; the sky was nearly always blue, and the people who lived in that land were happy and contented. That is to say, they would have been but for one thing.

In the very middle of the country there was a great castle built high upon a rock, and in this castle—so the inhabitants of the place told the Rainbow Cat—there lived a cruel and wicked giantess who tyrannized over the people

and constantly took away their goods, sometimes even their children.

The Rainbow Cat did not meet with anyone who had actually seen the giantess face to face, but terrible tales were told of her doings and of her horrible appearance. She was three times the height of an ordinary man, it was said. Her hair was like knotted ropes, her eyes flamed fire; when she blew her nose, the sound was like thunder; when she sneezed, forests swayed as beneath a hurricane; when she stamped her foot, whole villages collapsed.

Besides being a giantess she was reported to be able to work magic, and that frightened the people more than anything else.

On dark nights she would come down from her castle, they told him, in a chariot drawn by six dragons, and when the people heard the noise of it they fled into their houses and locked the doors and barred the windows. From within they could hear their barns and granaries being ransacked, and the opening of the doors of sheds and stables, whence their best cattle and horses were carried off.

But sometimes a great voice would be heard

shouting in the dark, " Throw out your treasures or I will take your children." Then the terrified people opened their windows and threw out their treasures in fear and trembling.

And notices would mysteriously appear in the villages, threatening that unless certain things were delivered up at the castle gates, the giantess would come down and take a terrible revenge.

The things were conveyed up the rocky path by terrified villagers, who left them in front of the gates as commanded. They always came back with most alarming stories of what they had observed.

One man had seen the giantess's shoes being cleaned by a servant in the courtyard. They were as big, he said, as a hay waggon.

Another was so frightened by the sight of her washing hanging out on the line that he ran all the way home and did not get over it for weeks.

But the worst thing of all was that children who had wandered a little way from home disappeared and never came back.

Others who escaped would tell how an enormous cloaked figure had suddenly sprung

out from behind a tree, seized one of their comrades, and made off into the woods.

The thing had grown so bad that people dare not let their children out of their sight for a moment, and they were growing so afraid of the visits of the giantess that all happiness was rapidly vanishing out of the land.

The fame of the Rainbow Cat's wisdom had already reached this country, and the people were delighted to see him and implored him to come to their assistance. The Rainbow Cat felt that this was a very serious matter indeed, but he was exceedingly sorry for the people and promised to do all he could to help them.

So on the evening of the second day after his arrival, he took his little bag, which contained, among other things, the lightning which the Thunder Giant had given him and the bottle of fairy water from Tree-goblin-land, and quietly set off for the castle of the giantess.

He said nothing of his purpose to the kind folk with whom he was staying—he knew it would only make them fearfully anxious.

He just said he was going out for a little walk in order to think the matter over.

He climbed lightly and softly up the rocky path until he came right under the castle walls.

There were two immense stone towers, one at each end of the castle, and from the high chimney of one of them great clouds of evil-looking smoke were pouring forth—green and purple and black.

"Aha," said the Rainbow Cat to himself, "that's where she's busy at her horrible tricks, is it?"

So he sat down outside the tower, opened his bag, and dabbed his eyes with water from his little bottle, so that he was able to see right through the wall into the inside of the tower.

To his great astonishment, he saw no giantess, but a very nasty-looking old wizard with a long grey beard and an enormously tall hat, who sat in a large room in front of a great open fire.

All manner of strange and terrible-looking things hung upon the walls of the room or were stowed away in cupboards, and the floor and tables were piled with books of magic.

A great bunch of keys hung from the girdle of the wizard, who was busily stirring some-

thing which was bubbling over the fire in a big black pot, from which came the smoke that the Rainbow Cat had noticed pouring from the chimney.

The firelight shone on the labels of the keys, so that the Rainbow Cat was able to read what was written on them.

"Gold Chest—Silver Chest—Jewel Chest—Giantess's Room—Prisoners' Room—Giantess's Garden": these were some of the names he read on the labels, and he began to understand things a little better. But he thought he would make a few more investigations. So he picked up his little bag and walked softly off to the other end of the castle, sat down on the ground at the foot of the tower there, and again bathed his eyes with fairy water.

This time he found himself looking into a big room full of children.

They were all very busy.

Some of them were sorting strange-looking herbs, some of them were grinding queer substances with heavy stones, some of them were anxiously measuring out liquids drop by drop from one bottle into another.

They all looked pale and tired; they did

not laugh and talk over their work as one would expect children to do.

And then the door of the room opened and in walked—who but the giantess herself!

But imagine the surprise of the Rainbow Cat upon discovering that, although she was indeed immensely tall, she was otherwise by no means a terrible-looking person, but had, on the contrary, a sweet and charming face and beautiful golden hair.

The children all came running up to her as soon as she appeared, and seemed delighted to see her. She bent down and lifted some of them up into her arms, and was so gentle and sweet with them all that it was a joy to see her.

The Rainbow Cat lost no further time; he took his mandolin, and sitting there at the foot of the tower, he began playing a little tune.

He daren't play very loud for fear the wizard should hear him in the other tower, but fortunately the wind was in the right direction, and in any case he felt pretty certain that the wizard was too much taken up with his enchantments to pay attention to anything else.

But the giantess heard, for of course giantesses have very much larger ears than ordinary people and hear much better, and she put her head out of the window and saw the Rainbow Cat sitting there in the dusk and asked him who he was and what he was doing.

"I am a friend," said the Rainbow Cat. "Help me to come up."

So the giantess let down her ribbon waist-belt with the bag she kept her handkerchief in tied to the bottom of it, and this was so large that the Rainbow Cat was easily able to get into it together with his precious bag and mandolin.

The giantess hauled him up to the window-sill and asked him to come in and sit down and tell her what he was doing there and all about himself, for she saw that he was no ordinary creature. And when he had explained to her why he was there and what he had learnt in the Bountiful Country, she told him her own tale.

How the wicked magician had stolen her away from home when she was quite young and had brought her to this castle, and how he kept her shut up, while with his magic spells he did all sorts of evil things.

"I know the people think it is all my doing," said the poor giantess. "He can turn an old wash-tub and six beans into a chariot drawn by flaming dragons, and when he flies out he wears a great cloak over his tall hat, so that everyone takes him for me.

"He makes these poor children help him in his wicked work, and keeps them prisoners just as he does me.

"He does not even give us enough to eat. If we are not soon rescued we shall all die. He grows worse every day."

Big tears fell from the giantess's eyes.

Each one made a little pool where it fell.

"Don't cry," said the Rainbow Cat, "all will yet be well. My magic is stronger than his. When once I get at him I'll soon finish him off. Will you take me to him?"

But the giantess was afraid; she said she dare not disturb him. "Besides," she said, "he would never let you in, he is so suspicious."

"It's got to be done somehow," said the Rainbow Cat, "if you're to be set free."

He sat softly strumming on his mandolin and thinking, and suddenly the giantess had an idea.

"He loves music," she said. "He says it helps his brain to work. If you could pretend to be a wandering musician——"

The Rainbow Cat leapt with joy.

"The very thing, my dear," he said. "Have you by any chance got a peacock's feather to lend me?"

This the giantess was able to provide.

"Thank you very much," said the Rainbow Cat. "You will see; in an hour's time you will all be free. Good-bye for the present."

He was so excited that he jumped clean out of the window—mandolin, bag and all.

But he was quite all right.

You know, even ordinary cats are supposed always to fall on their feet, and of course a fairy cat—— !

When he reached the ground he wrapped himself in his cloak, pulled his hat well over his eyes and stuck the peacock's feather in the front of it.

"Now I look just like a wandering musician," he said, and he went boldly up to the door of the wizard's tower and pulled the bell.

The magician himself came to the door, but he opened it only the tiniest little bit.

"Who are you, and what do you want?" he said in a very gruff voice.

"I am a poor wandering musician," said the Cat. "May I come in and give you a tune?"

The wizard looked at him suspiciously. "What have you got in that bag?" he asked, giving it a kick with his foot, so that the bundle of lightning made a rattling noise.

"I've got all the major and minor keys in there," said the Rainbow Cat. "A bunch of them. That's what makes such a rattle. But I can't do without them."

"Sing me a song," said the wizard, "and then I'll see whether I'll let you in or not."

So the Rainbow Cat sat down on the doorstep and sang this little song, and the wizard stood just inside the door and listened.

## THE SONG OF THE GOOSE

'There once was a goose who lived on a green,
Gold was his beak and his feathers were clean,
A handsomer creature there never was seen,
Hey diddle ho, never was seen;
He lived on a green and he waddled about,
For he said, 'To be sure I don't want to get stout,
And, anyway, exercise keeps off the gout;
Hey diddle ho, keeps off the gout.'"

"I don't think much of that song," said the wizard.

"The next verse is very good," said the Rainbow Cat. "But I'm not going to sing it out here in the cold night air. I shall ruin my voice."

"Well, come in," said the wizard, for he wanted to hear the end of the song, and he let the Rainbow Cat in.

But no sooner were they inside the wizard's room than the Rainbow Cat opened his bag and pulled out the bundle of lightning and let it loose all over the place. You never heard such a commotion!

Meanwhile he threw off his cloak, leapt upon the table, and stood there with his hair all standing on end and his eyes darting green and blue fire, while the lightning flashed all round him and round the terrified wizard, who threw himself down on his knees, crying "Mercy, Mercy!"—for he had never seen anything like it before and he was anyway but a cowardly creature at heart.

Presently the wizard's attendants came running to see what was the matter.

They dare not come into the room, but stood trembling in the doorway.

"Tie him up," commanded the Rainbow Cat in a great loud voice.

The attendants were not at all fond of their master, but in any case they were so frightened of the strange and terrible creature on the table that they did not dare to disobey.

So the wizard was tied to the table, and the Rainbow Cat took all his wicked books and his pots and pans and the rest of his nasty paraphernalia and threw them out of the window on to the ground below, where they were burnt later on in a great bonfire.

By this time the news had spread all over the castle, and presently the giantess came in, with the children trooping behind her.

The wizard had grown black in the face with rage; he knew that even if he were set free he would be utterly powerless.

For he had lost all his magic books, and he was truly rather a stupid wizard and could do absolutely nothing without them.

As a matter of fact the gentle giantess didn't want him to be punished, and in the end he was conducted to the borders of the country and threatened with instant death if ever he returned. But that, of course, was later.

You can imagine what excitement there was in the land when the Rainbow Cat appeared the next day walking down the road from the castle with the giantess by his side and all the children running in front, and the wicked magician led behind in chains.

The Rainbow Cat, having finished his task, soon bade his friends good-bye and set out once more on his travels.

The giantess made him a present of the gold ring which she wore on her little finger. He would take nothing else. He wore it as a collar round his neck, where it was always greatly admired.

She herself soon became a great favourite among the people of the Bountiful Land. They loved her dearly and were very proud of her. But she always had to be very careful not to sneeze or stamp.

People even came from other countries to see her, so that in the end it grew quite embarrassing.

But, in time, a giant who had heard much of her beauty and gentleness travelled all the way from Giant-land to visit her, and he married her and took her away to his own home.

Her trousseau took some making, I can tell you!

All the women in the district sewed at it for six months—and even then she was able to have only six of everything.

## ALMOND BLOSSOM

LONG ago the leaves and blossoms of the almond-tree came out together like those on other trees. But now the blossoms come out first. Shall I tell you why?

One day in early spring the Fairy Queen was riding about the country.

"Oh dear," she said, "I'm so tired of this wintry weather. I wish the flowers were out. And next week is my birthday"—the Fairy Queen, you must know, has birthdays much oftener than ordinary people—"my first spring birthday this year, and there are still only a few primroses and violets. How I should love to see some pink flowers! I'm so fond of pink."

The little buds of the almond-tree heard her.

"Can't we manage it?" they said to their mother, the tree. "Can't we be out in time for the Queen's birthday next week?"

"You can try," said their mother. "But

what about your brothers, the leaves? You know how lazy they are. And you can't come out without them. You *would* look funny."

The little pink buds did all they could. They caught every bit of sunshine, they sucked up every drop of moisture, they grew and grew. But their lazy brothers would not bestir themselves. They kept tight folded in their winter jackets

"It's too cold," they said. "Br-r-r. Why should we hurry?" And so, when the Queen's birthday came, of course they were not ready, though the pink blossoms were all waiting to burst into bloom. Presently the Queen came riding through the forest on her white rabbit. The sun was shining and the sky was blue. She halted under the almond-tree and sighed a little.

"I've had some lovely presents," she said. "A necklace of dewdrops from the early morning, a blue velvet cloak from the night, and a basketful of perfumed kisses from the south wind, who came such a long, long way to bring them. I should be perfectly happy if only I had some pink flowers."

The buds of the almond blossom heard her and quivered with excitement. They could wait no longer. With one accord they all burst forth into full bloom. The scent of them was like the smell of honey.

The Queen looked up.

"Oh, you darlings," she said. "You darlings. I'll have my birthday party under your tree. It will be the prettiest spring party I have ever had."

And ever since that day the pink blossoms have always come out in time for the Queen's first spring birthday without waiting for their lazy little brothers. And every year the fairies hold their earliest revels under the blossoming boughs of the almond-tree.

## THE RONDEL

THERE was once a princess who dwelt in a castle in the midst of a great park. She lived hidden away from the world in her quiet home and was scarcely ever seen by strangers.

Rumours of her charm and loveliness, and of her wonderful golden hair, spread far and wide over the land, and she was always known and spoken of as Princess Golden-bright. But her real name was Gentle.

All round the castle were lovely pleasure-gardens in which were gay flower-beds and slender, dancing fountains. But the princess's favourite spot was a circle of ash-trees which stood in the park some small distance away from the castle on a little grassy hill with a path leading up to it.

It was called the Rondel.

In the middle of the circle of trees stood a

table with a seat running round it ; the ground was carpeted with soft moss, and the tree-trunks stood up straight and tall like marble pillars.

The princess loved nothing better than to sit in the Rondel in the warm weather with her books and embroidery.

It was like being in a little house with a high green roof to it.

Moreover it was a fairy place, and the ash-trees would often tell her the most delightful stories of what was going on outside the walls of the park, for they were so tall that they could see a long way.

They learnt many things, too, from the birds, who loved to perch among their branches and to chatter away to one another about their adventures in the big world.

The princess very rarely went beyond the walls of the park, for she was quite happy among the birds and flowers. But because the beauty of Princess Golden-bright was famed throughout the land, many princes sent to ask for her hand in marriage.

Some of them even came in person, but the

princess would have nothing to do with any of them.

"I am quite happy," she said; "I do not want a husband." However, when she was twenty years old, her fairy god-mother came to pay her a visit, and talked to her most earnestly upon this very subject of getting married, telling her that it was exceedingly foolish of her to refuse to see any of these suitors. "My dear Gentle," she said, "whoever heard of a princess who was an old maid? I don't say you need choose in a hurry, but I certainly think you ought at least to see these gentlemen. You may very possibly find one among them whom you like, and the ash-trees will help you to choose if you should be in doubt."

So the princess promised to do as her god-mother wished, and after her departure she made it known by proclamation that Princess Golden-bright was willing to receive any suitable person who might wish to pay her his addresses.

The day after this was done she went as usual to sit in the Rondel, and while she busied herself with her embroidery she talked

over this matter of the suitors with her beloved ash-trees.

"How shall I know whom to choose?" said the princess. "I have no experience at all. If I must have a husband I should like to be sure that he is the right one."

"Do not be afraid, dear princess," replied the ash-trees. "You know that whosoever stands beneath our boughs is bound to speak the truth. You need ask but one question of each of the suitors. According to his answer you will be able to judge of his suitability as a husband."

"What shall I ask him?" said the princess.

"Ask him," replied the ash-trees, "what he most desires in a wife. That will be quite sufficient."

So the princess sat and waited.

Presently she heard a whispering among the leaves over her head.

"There's one coming," they said. "We can see him riding along the high road."

"Oh, what is he like?" said the princess.

"He is a very fine-looking gentleman indeed," said the ash-trees. "He rides on a great black prancing horse, and a company of

twenty knights rides behind him. He wears shining armour. The harness of his horse is studded with jewels and the hilt of his sword blazes in the sunshine."

"It sounds very exciting," said the princess, and she put down her stitching and smoothed her golden hair and spread out the folds of her flower-embroidered gown, for naturally she wanted to look her best.

Before long the prince arrived at the castle gates, and a messenger came out into the park to tell the princess that he had come from a neighbouring kingdom to seek her hand.

"I will see him here," said the princess.

So the prince came riding through the park with his knights all jingling behind him, each of them bearing a golden casket containing a present for the princess.

When the prince reached the foot of the little hill on which the Rondel stood and saw the princess under the trees, he dismounted from his horse and came on foot to where she sat.

The knights waited at the bottom of the hill.

The princess received him graciously, and he stood before her in the shadow of the ash-trees and asked if she would marry him.

"I have a great kingdom," said he, "great riches and great power, and my enemies all fear me."

"I am much honoured," said the princess, "but I should like to ask you one question. What do you most desire in a wife?"

"Obedience," said the prince without an instant's hesitation, for he was obliged to speak the truth.

The princess smiled a little.

"And what would you do if your wife disobeyed you?" she asked.

"Whip her," said the prince.

"I am much obliged to you," said the princess, "but I am afraid that I might not always be obedient, and I should not like to be whipped. Good-day."

So the prince rode away home again with his knights, and the princess went on with her sewing.

Before long she again heard a whispering among the trees.

"Another suitor is riding along the road," they said.

"Oh, and what is *he* like?" said the princess.

"He rides on a white horse," said the ash-

trees, " and he wears a blue velvet cap with a white feather in it. He carries a bunch of roses in his hand, and behind him ride six gentlemen in gaily coloured mantles with guitars slung over their shoulders. He has auburn hair and blue eyes. They ride at the trot."

" He sounds rather pleasing," said the princess, and she picked a flower from the syringa bush which grew at the entrance to the Rondel and stuck it in her hair.

The blue-eyed prince was also bidden to come out to the Rondel, and he too dismounted from his horse at the foot of the little hill and came gaily walking up the path till he stood beneath the branches of the ash-trees.

He bowed low before the princess and laid his bunch of roses on the table in front of her.

She smiled graciously, for he was a comely young man, and he thereupon offered her his hand in exceedingly beautiful language.

" If you will marry me," he said, " I will spend my days making verses about you. They will be sung throughout my kingdom. I will make a whole book of them. It shall be called ' Songs of Queen Golden-bright.' "

The princess thought this sounded rather attractive. One does not so often come across a prince who is also a poet.

But the ash-trees rustled softly above her head, and she remembered the question that she was to ask.

"Will you tell me what you most desire in a wife?" she said.

"Beauty," said the prince promptly.

"But supposing," said the princess, "that your wife fell downstairs and broke her nose, so that her beauty was spoilt. What then?"

"Oh, then of course I shouldn't be able to make up any more verses about her," said the prince. "I should get very irritable. How could I bear to look at a wife with a crooked nose? She would certainly have to be most careful not to break her nose."

The princess laughed.

"I think you'd better get married to a waxen lady," she said. "If you kept her in a glass case out of the sun she would remain beautiful for ever, and there would be no fear of her nose getting broken. Thank you very much for coming. I fear that we are not quite suited to one another. Good-day."

The prince bowed low, picked up his bunch of roses, and rode off again through the park with his white feather streaming behind him in the wind.

" I'm sorry," said the princess. " He looked so very nice, and I'm sure he must make lovely songs. But I should always have been afraid of breaking my nose." And she laughed again and took up her embroidery.

Several more suitors came during the day to ask for the hand of the princess, but not one of them gave a satisfactory answer to the question.

One of them thought it above all things desirable in a wife that she should be able to make a good pudding ; another required that she should talk very little—" which I *certainly* couldn't promise," said the princess ; another considered it most important that she should have twelve bags full of gold pieces ! They all had to tell the truth when they stood under the branches of the ash-trees, and some of them really had the most curious ideas.

At last, just as the sun was going down, there came a prince riding on a chestnut

horse and attended only by one squire. He had come a long way, from a far-off country, and he had ridden hard, for he had heard much about the lovely Princess Golden-bright and was afraid that he might be too late.

In spite of his dusty and travel-stained appearance the princess was pleased with the look of him, for he was tall and slender and had dark curling hair and pleasant grey eyes, and she hoped very much that he would answer the question satisfactorily.

When he came to the top of the little hill and saw the princess he fell on his knee and could find no word to say, she was so much more beautiful than he could ever have imagined.

But she smiled kindly at him, and he took courage and told her how for a long time he had wanted to come to see her, and that now he feared he had come too late.

The princess asked him many questions, but she hesitated to ask the most important of all, for she liked him better every minute and was afraid he might not give the right answer.

The ash-trees rustled and rustled as if a

wind were blowing through them, and at last she felt she must wait no longer.

"Will you tell me," she said softly, "what it is that you most desire in a wife?"

The prince was perplexed; truly he had never thought about the matter. He looked down at the ground and then he looked up at the trees, and as he did so they all began to whisper softly. "Gentle, Gentle, Gentle," they said.

"Why, of course," said the prince, and he looked again at the princess and smiled. "There is one thing I desire above all else in a wife. *She must be Gentle.*"

And what better answer could he have given? For Gentle indeed she was.

The princess stood up and held out her hands to him. Her embroidery fell to the ground.

"He'll do, he'll do," rustled the ash-trees.

But the princess didn't even hear them. She had already made up her mind.

## JAN AND THE MAGIC PENCIL

THERE was once a little boy called Jan, who lived in a country village. One day he had the good luck to be able to help a fairy out of a ditch, where she had got stuck in the mud.

The fairy was very grateful to Jan, and promised him, as a reward for his kindness, that he should have what he most wished for in the world.

Jan was not a very clever boy, and at first he couldn't think of anything to wish for. His father was a farmer, and Jan had a good home and plenty to eat and drink; his only real trouble was that he was always at the bottom of his class at school. His father scolded and his mother wept, but Jan always stopped at the bottom. He wasn't so bad at reading and writing, but he simply could not

do arithmetic. His sums were always wrong, even the quite easy ones.

So when he had thought for a few minutes and the fairy was beginning to grow impatient, he decided that the best thing for him to wish for was that he might be able to get his sums right. The fairy accordingly gave him a magic slate pencil which possessed the power of being able to do any kind of arithmetic without ever making any mistake. You simply held it in your hand and it would write down the answer on your slate almost before you had time to read over the figures.

Jan was delighted with his present, which he put carefully away in his pencil-box. He could hardly believe that it would do such wonderful things ; but, sure enough, he found he could do all his sums without the slightest effort, and that every one of them was right.

Addition, Subtraction, Multiplication — it made nothing of them all. Even those dreadful Long Division sums were no trouble to the magic pencil : it danced nimbly down the slate without stopping even for a second, and the answers were always right. Jan's schoolmaster was astonished, so were his parents, and

delighted too, when by the end of the week Jan had risen to the top of the school.

"What a good teacher I am, after all!" said the schoolmaster to himself. "I have even been able to teach arithmetic to a boy who was so hopelessly stupid over it that he couldn't add up two and two correctly."

He was so proud of this that he actually invited the principal people in the neighbourhood to come in and see his wonderful scholar.

And so it happened that the doctor, the lawyer, the priest, the mayor and one or two other important folk from round about arrived at the schoolhouse one fine day, all agog to see the schoolmaster's wonderful pupil.

"Come here, Jan," said the schoolmaster, "and show these gentlemen what you can do." And he wrote out a long sum on the blackboard—an addition sum in twenty rows, all bristling with eights and nines. Poor Jan came forward in fear and trembling.

"I'd rather do it on my slate," he said.

But his schoolmaster wouldn't hear of that.

So Jan had to stand up in front of the

blackboard with a piece of chalk in his hand. Of course he couldn't do the sum at all. It took him a dreadfully long time and not one figure was right.

"The boy's nervous," said the doctor. "You've been overtaxing him."

The lawyer smiled and took a pinch of snuff. "I had an idea that our friend the schoolmaster was rather drawing the long bow," he whispered to the mayor. The priest came and patted Jan's head.

"Try again, my child," he said. "You'll do better next time."

But Jan did no better the next time. If anything, he did even worse. The schoolmaster was much annoyed. It made him look so foolish. When the visitors had gone he gave Jan a good caning and sent him home in disgrace.

His father and mother were very disappointed, too, when they heard what had happened.

"I always knew the lad was a dullard," said his father.

Jan wandered disconsolately out into the sunshine. It's not nice to be called a dullard,

particularly when you've been top of your school for a whole month. His mother came after him.

"You shall have a hot apple pasty for your supper," she said; "it's in the oven now."

But even apple pasty couldn't console Jan.

He went into the lane and sat down near the place where he had seen the fairy. He rather hoped he might see her again. Sure enough, he hadn't been there five minutes when he felt a light touch on his shoulder, and there she was perched on a swaying wild-rose spray in the hedge close beside him.

"Oh, come," she said when Jan had told her his trouble, "we can soon remedy that." And she gave him a piece of chalk to keep in his pencil-box together with his fairy slate pencil. "Now you will be able to do sums on the blackboard as well as on your slate," she said.

Jan thanked her and went home feeling quite happy, so that he was able thoroughly to enjoy his supper and his apple pasty.

Things went swimmingly for a while. Jan did more wonderful sums than ever, both on the blackboard and on his slate. The schoolmaster was more careful this time; but he called in first one person and then another to see what Jan could do, and now he was no longer disappointed. Even the lawyer had to acknowledge that the boy was indeed a marvel.

But alas and alas! After a little time Jan became so conceited that he was quite unbearable. He gave himself the most extraordinary airs. He would hardly condescend to speak to the other boys. He even patronized his own father and mother.

"No boy in the whole country is as clever as I," he said. "The King ought to see what I can do. I must certainly go to the Court. How they will open their eyes!"

And so one fine day he prepared to set off to the Court to show the King what he could do.

Now the King of that country was a rather cantankerous old gentleman, and made short work of anyone who displeased him. Jan's mother didn't very much like the idea of his going, but Jan would not be dissuaded.

"You will see, mother," he said, "I shall come home with a bagful of gold, and perhaps the King will want me to stay at his Court. When I am grown up I shall marry one of the Princesses, and you will be able to ride in a golden coach and to wear a mantle of blue velvet trimmed with ermine. All the neighbours will curtsey to you and call you Madam. Wouldn't you like that?"

His mother couldn't imagine that she would like that very much, but she thought it was rather sweet of Jan to think so much of his mother, and she gave him a kiss and one of his father's best linen shirts, and bade him be sure not to get his feet wet.

So Jan set off to the palace, and when he got there he sent in a message by the beautiful footman who opened the door that Jan, the Arithmetical Wonder, had come to show the Royal Family what he could do. It was a dull rainy afternoon, and it so happened that the King, Queen, and the two Princesses were sitting at home in their State apartments feeling rather bored. The Lord Chamberlain, who generally amused them on wet days by asking them riddles, had gone to bed with a

very bad cold in his head, and they had nothing to do.

"Shall we have him in?" said the King to the Queen.

"He sounds very dull," said the younger Princess, who was busy making pale blue rosettes for her bedroom slippers.

"Better than nothing," said her sister, who had just finished reading all the love-letters that had come by the morning's post, and was pasting the prettiest ones into an album which she kept for that purpose.

So Jan was ushered into the royal apartments, and he told the King and Queen of his attainments—how he could do any sum, however difficult, as quickly as it could be written down, almost more quickly, indeed. He was a nice-looking lad and he had no end of assurance, and brought with him, moreover, letters from all manner of important personages who had tested his wonderful powers.

An attendant was sent to fetch the great Court account tablets, which were made of ivory inlaid with silver, and the King offered Jan his own golden pencil with rubies and diamonds round the top.

"Thank you very much," said Jan, "I prefer a plain slate or a blackboard, and I always use my own pencil."

"*Prefer*, indeed," said the King, with a great black frown. "What business have you to prefer anything? Slates and blackboards! I'd have you know that this is the King's Palace and not a village schoolhouse. If a gold pencil and ivory tablets are not good enough for you, you can go and do your sums on the dungeon walls."

Jan was very frightened. He didn't at all like the idea of a dungeon, so there was nothing for it but to brave it out as best he might.

One of the lords-in-waiting was bidden to write down the sums, and poor miserable Jan wildly scribbled down the answers as fast as he could, with the eyes of the King, the Queen and of their two lovely daughters and all the lords- and ladies-in-waiting riveted upon him.

But as it happened, the only person at the Court who was any good at arithmetic was the Lord Chamberlain, and he, as you know, was in bed with a cold. It is much easier to put down sums than to work them out,

and not one member of the Royal Family had the faintest idea as to whether Jan's answers were right or wrong.

The King looked as wise as he could. "Very good, very good," he kept saying. The Princesses clapped their hands. *They* had never been able to get their sums right; but after all, what does it matter whether a princess can do arithmetic or not?

If one or two of the Court ladies and gentlemen had a suspicion that the figures were not quite correct they daren't suggest such a thing. If the King said the answers were right it was as much as their lives were worth to say they were wrong. But of course Jan knew nothing of all this. He wrote on and on, and all the time only one thought was in his mind.

"How wonderful, how wonderful!" he kept saying to himself. "I have grown so clever that I can do the sums by myself. I shall never need to bother again about the stupid old pencil and chalk. I really am the cleverest boy in the whole kingdom."

He did not stay very long at the palace, and he was a little disappointed to find that no

one offered him a post at Court and that he was not even presented with a bag of gold pieces.

Every one thanked him politely and he was given a good tea in the housekeeper's room, and the King and Queen shook hands with him and gave him a pretty silver brooch to wear in his cap, while the Princesses smiled pleasantly and wished him a good journey.

But he was buoyed up by his wonderful discovery. He went singing along the road, and when he presently came to a deep pond he threw his slate pencil and his bit of chalk into the middle of it, and continued gaily on his way.

You may imagine how badly he wanted them back again the next day, and for many, many days after: for of course he was as bad as ever at arithmetic, and went straight to the bottom of the class, where he stayed. Many times he went to the place where he had met the fairy, but she never came again, for if you once throw away fairy gifts you never, never get them back again.

## THE LAMB THAT WENT TO FAIRYLAND

THERE was once a fairy who took a great fancy to a tiny white lamb. He really was a dear little creature, and I don't wonder she fell in love with him. She used often to come and visit him in the meadow where he lived with his mother, and she was very anxious to take him to a fairy party some evening.

The little lamb was shy. "What do you do at the parties?" he asked.

"Oh, dance mostly," said the fairy.

But the little lamb explained that he didn't know how to dance.

"I will soon teach you," said the fairy.

So she came every evening when her day's work was done and showed the little lamb how to dance, and he soon learned to skip about quite nicely.

At last a day came when the fairy took him

off to the party, but his mother made him promise to come back the next morning. She knew the ways of the fairies.

He enjoyed himself tremendously.

All the fairies admired him very much. They thought his coat so beautifully white and soft, they loved his little black nose and quaint woodeny legs. He gave them all rides on his back in turn (even the Fairy Queen had one), and when the time for dancing came he did very well indeed and astonished them all with his pretty steps. When he left, the Fairy Queen presented him with a garland of daisies. "They are fairy flowers," she said. "They will never fade, and so long as you wear them you will remain young."

When the lamb got home he had great tales to tell about his happy adventures, so that he became quite a celebrity, and every one made such a fuss of him that he got rather proud and silly, and after a very short time would hardly speak to his friends.

Of course this vexed them very much, and the wicked old rat who lived in the mill-pond and was always ready to do anyone an ill turn, suggested a way to pay him out for his

pride. "While he is asleep I will gnaw through his gay garland that he is so proud of," she said, "and when he goes out walking he will lose it." All of which happened just as she had planned. And so the foolish lamb lost his fairy garland and grew older like any other lamb.

His friend the fairy did not come to see him for some time. She was very busy helping on all the spring things, and had no time for visiting. When she did come again she was very disappointed to find that the lamb had grown into quite a good-sized sheep, fat and comfortable. His wool was no longer downy and white, and he had entirely forgotten how to dance.

"Where is your magic garland?" said the fairy. And he had to confess that he had lost it.

The fairy went back to her friends. She really did not feel that a big solemn sheep would be very welcome at their revels. But every year in early spring when the new lambs are born, their mothers tell them the story of the lamb that was invited to Fairyland, and they all go skipping about in the meadows practising their dancing steps.

Each of them hopes that he may one day find the magic garland, and never grow old and staid, and be able to go a-visiting to Fairyland. After all, it must be lying about somewhere, so if you find it, you'll know what to do with it, won't you? But be sure to give it to a lamb with a black nose. They're so much the prettiest.

## THE MAGIC UMBRELLA

THERE was once a wizard who possessed a magic umbrella; and, being rather careless in his habits, he had the misfortune to leave it behind him in a small country town where he had had an appointment to meet a friend in the market-place at midnight. He left it standing against one of the wooden market stalls, and there it was found next morning by a farmer's wife who had come into town to sell her butter and eggs.

"That's a good, strong-looking umbrella," she said to herself; "if no one comes to claim it I shall keep it." No one made any inquiries, so she took possession of it, and when she went home in the evening, the umbrella went with her.

Now, as I said before, this was no ordinary umbrella, but was possessed of magic powers.

If you held it open in your hand and counted three and then stopped, you found yourself in your own house.

If you counted five, however, you found yourself where you most desired to be.

But if you counted up to seven, you were immediately carried away to the top of the nearest church spire.

Now of all this the farmer's wife was quite unaware, and you shall hear what befell her in consequence.

It chanced to be very wet on the next market day, and when presently the rain began to drip upon her bonnet through the canvas roof of the stall, she was very glad to be able to put up the umbrella and shelter beneath it.

It was about three o'clock in the afternoon and she had sold most of her eggs and butter.

A little boy came along and asked for three fresh eggs.

"There you are, my love," she said. "The last three."

She held the umbrella in one hand and with the other put the eggs into the boy's basket. "One, two, three," she said. And instantly

she found herself standing in the middle of her own pleasant kitchen, with her basket on her arm and the open umbrella still firmly held in her hand.

You can imagine how surprised and puzzled she was. She hadn't the faintest idea how she had got there, but she decided to say nothing about it to any one.

When presently her husband came in for his tea he asked why she had come home so early.

"I had a bit of a headache," she said. "I think the sun was too strong for me."

The farmer gave a great guffaw. "Come, come, mother," he said, "you must have been dreaming. There's been no sun to-day, neither in town nor country."

"Well, maybe it was the damp that got into my head," said his wife. "I think I'll go to bed and have a basin of hot gruel." So she went to bed and had the hot gruel, and by the next morning she had almost forgotten all about her queer adventure.

Nothing more happened for some time. The weather was warm and sunny, and the umbrella stood unused in the corner of the kitchen.

But one day the farmer's wife decided to go and see her daughter, who was married and lived in a village a few miles away. It was a very hot day and she thought it would be a good plan to take the umbrella with her to shade her from the sun.

After dinner she and her daughter went for a walk upon a neighbouring common, and when they had gone a little way they sat down for a rest on a warm dry bit of grass by the side of the road that ran across the heath, for they were hot and rather tired.

"What a lot of motor-cars there are on this road, to be sure," said the farmer's wife, who held the open umbrella over her head. "One, two, three, four, five. . . . I wish I was in one of them." No sooner had she uttered these words than she found herself plumped right into the middle of the nearest car, in which were sitting an old lady and gentleman and a fat spaniel, all fast asleep.

You can imagine what a scene there was. The dog barked, the old lady and gentleman were furious.

"Stop, stop," they cried to the chauffeur, who was driving on quite calmly and taking

no notice at all of the noise going on behind him.

As for the farmer's wife, she was so astonished that she could not say anything at all.

"What next?" stormed the old gentleman, foaming with rage. "What next, I should like to know? How dare you get into our car? How dare you, madam? What are we coming to? A pretty state of affairs when a man can't go for a ride in his own car without being molested by impertinent strangers! Scandalous, scandalous! I shall report it to the police."

The farmer's wife had by this time managed to get out of the car, but she was so bewildered that she was still unable to speak, and long after the angry gentleman had driven off with his wife and his dog, she stood silent and motionless in the middle of the road with the umbrella in her hand, wide open, and with her mouth wide open too. Her daughter, who came hurrying up, was also very much astonished.

"What on earth made you do that, mother?" she said. "I couldn't believe my own eyes."

But her mother could only shake her head.

She couldn't make it out at all. Never, never had such an extraordinary thing befallen her.

"I am afraid I can't be very well," she said at last. "I think I'll go and see the doctor to-morrow." So the next day she went to see the doctor. It was rather showery and she took the umbrella again, for she had never thought of connecting it with the strange things which had occurred. The doctor felt her pulse and looked at her tongue.

"You've got a touch of Thingumabobitis," he said. "You must be very careful. I'll write you a few prescriptions. You must take a pill every three hours, and a pink powder every two hours, and a blue powder half an hour before every meal, and you must never on any account let your nose get cold. It's not dangerous so long as you are careful. Come again next week."

By this time the sun had come out, and as she was much taken up with wondering how she was going to keep her nose warm, the farmer's wife forgot all about the umbrella. Next day, when she went to fetch it, it was gone. I don't know what happened to it, nor who has it now. But let me give you a

word of warning. If you come across a stray umbrella, pray be careful not to do any counting while you have it open in your hand. It wouldn't be very pleasant to find yourself suddenly hanging from the top of the nearest church steeple, now would it ?

## THE FOURTH ADVENTURE OF THE RAINBOW CAT

BY this time the Rainbow Cat was getting a little tired of travelling about, and decided that he would go home and have a good rest after his many exertions. But on the way back he had to pass through the Ever After country, and the people who lived there were most pressing in their request that he should spend a little time with them.

The Ever After country is inhabited by all the Fairy Tale and Nursery Rhyme people, who go to live there when their adventures are over.

Cinderella and her prince have a beautiful castle there, where the glass slipper is kept on a red velvet cushion in a little gilt cabinet, and shown to distinguished visitors. Cinderella never had another pair; she said they were very uncomfortable, and of course she

was always afraid some one might tread on her toes.

Her two disagreeable sisters have a little house of their own. They have taken to gardening, and keep bees and chickens, and are altogether immensely improved, so that everybody is quite fond of them.

They are rather sensitive about their past, and are both, alas! a little lame, because, as you will remember, they cut pieces off their feet in order to make them smaller.

Snow-White, too, lives in a castle with her husband. The seven dwarfs have a fine carpenter's shop on the estate, where they are kept very busy indeed.

They make the most lovely little chairs and tables for Snow-White's children, and do most of the work of that kind required by the dwellers in the Ever After land.

Red-Riding-Hood and her grandmother have a pretty cottage close to that of Cinderella's sisters. Red-Riding-Hood often runs in to have a chat with them, and they are very kind about sending in honey and eggs for the old lady.

Of course, there are many, many more

people. Jack the Giant-Killer, who has grown rather fat and lazy, but loves to talk about all his great fights; Little Miss Muffet, who is still a bit afraid of spiders; Boy Blue, Mother Hubbard, Aladdin—it would take me all day to mention half of them, but they are all there, not one is missing.

The Rainbow Cat stayed with Fatima, Bluebeard's last wife, who lives with the two brothers who saved her life by their valour.

Poor Fatima has never quite got over the dreadful shock she had when she discovered the other wives all hanging up, and she can't so much as bear the sight of a bunch of keys.

As usual, the Rainbow Cat was most kindly welcomed and was introduced to all the important people in the place.

They are always delighted to see strangers, as sometimes they feel that things are a little dull after the exciting adventures many of them have been through.

On the third day after his arrival he was invited to a great banquet at the palace of the Queen of Hearts.

It was a most wonderful banquet.

The Rainbow Cat wore his best bow, his

dancing-shoes, and the gold collar which the giantess had given him. He took his mandolin with him; it had been most useful to him on several occasions, and it seemed a pity to leave it behind.

He met a number of friends at the party.

Puss-in-Boots, for instance, and the Pussy-cat who went to London to visit the Queen.

Dick Whittington's cat was there too, but he gave himself great airs. It seems it wasn't really quite certain whether he was a fairy-tale cat at all. Some people thought he was real.

It was silly of him to be so stuck-up about it, but it only amused the Rainbow Cat.

They were about half-way through the banquet when there was a slight pause. The meat course was finished, and everybody was waiting for the sweets. At that moment a servant came quietly in and whispered to the Queen. She became deadly pale, and half rose in her seat.

"What is the matter, your Majesty?" said the Rainbow Cat, who sat in the place of honour at her right hand.

"He's done it again," said the Queen in a

low, horrified whisper, sinking weakly down again into her chair.

"Who has done what?" said the Rainbow Cat.

"The Knave—stolen the tarts!" said the Queen with an agonized look. "They're nowhere to be found. It's all my fault. He begged so hard to be taken on again that I gave him another chance. Oh! why did I trust him?"

"Isn't there anything else?" asked the Rainbow Cat.

"Nothing ready," replied the Queen. "You see, they're very special tarts. I make them myself. Every one thinks so much of them. What shall I do?"

"Don't worry," said the Rainbow Cat. "Send round to all the pastry-cooks' for anything they have ready, and meanwhile I'll sing a song to fill up the time."

The Queen was much relieved at this suggestion, and gave orders that messengers should be dispatched immediately to buy up all the available tarts in the place.

Meanwhile the Master of Ceremonies was bidden to announce that their distinguished visitor, the Rainbow Cat, had kindly promised

to sing a song, and wished to know whether the guests would like to hear it at this moment or later on.

This was a very clever idea, for of course people were bound in politeness to say they wished to hear the song immediately.

Thereupon the Rainbow Cat took his mandolin and prepared to sing, the whole company being requested to join in the chorus after each verse.

They were all delighted with this suggestion, and they all sang, whether they had any voice or not.

They enjoyed it so much that they quite forgot that they hadn't finished the banquet. At least they *almost* forgot.

Here is the song:

### THE RHYME OF THE GNOME WITH A SCOLDING WIFE

Once upon a time,
When guinea-pigs had tails,
And people talked in rhyme,
And rivers ran on rails,
There lived a little gnome
Who'd such a scolding wife,
At last he ran away from home,
He couldn't stand the life.

*Chorus.* There lived a little gnome, etc.

She scolded all day long
From morning until night,
And she was never wrong
And he was never right.
Oh! she could bake and bile,
And she could clean and mend,
But since she scolded all the while,
He left her in the end.

*Chorus.* Oh! she could bake and bile, etc.

He thought he'd found a way
At last to be at peace,
But still, to his dismay,
His troubles did not cease.
He didn't like his meals,
His washing wasn't right,
His socks were always out at heels,
His shirts a fearful sight.

*Chorus.* He didn't like his meals, etc.

By the end of the third verse the Queen was looking very strained and anxious, and the Rainbow Cat himself was beginning to feel rather nervous. His song had only four verses, and he wasn't at all sure that he would be asked to sing another. He was afraid that people would remember their unfinished dinner as soon as he stopped.

So he began the fourth verse very slowly. But before he had got half-way through, he saw three servants standing between the curtains of the great doorway of the banquet-

ing hall with enormous golden dishes piled up with most magnificent-looking tarts.

" My tarts," he heard the Queen murmur in an excited voice, and then he knew that everything was well.

So he finished his song at a great pace, and the last chorus was sung with much enthusiasm, for the other guests had also seen the waiting tarts, and were eager to begin on them.

This is the last verse of his song:

Assuredly," thought he,
" Her temper is a curse,
And yet it seems to me
That this is rather worse."
So home he went once more
In philosophic mood,
And though his wife still vexed him sore,
*He did enjoy his food.*

*Chorus.* So home he went once more, etc.

The song was very much applauded, and every one then fell upon the tarts with an appetite which the slight delay had pleasantly renewed.

It turned out afterwards that it was all a mistake about the Knave.

The head cook had put the tarts away on the top shelf of the larder for safety. But

he was a poet as well as a cook, and just before the moment arrived when the tarts should have been served up, a perfectly beautiful little verse came into his head, and he rushed off to a quiet spot to write it down, quite confident that the under-cook would be able to look after the rest of the banquet.

And that's how it came about that suspicion fell upon the poor Knave ; for when the tarts could not be found, every one naturally supposed that he had stolen them again.

When the cook had written down his verse and made a few little improvements in it, he returned to the kitchen and found everything in an uproar because of the missing tarts.

He arrived in the nick of time, for the messengers were returning almost empty-handed from the pastry-cooks' shops. They had made very little pastry that day because they knew that every one would be at the banquet and that they would have no sale for their wares.

Of course, later on, the cook had to give an explanation of his carelessness, and he was removed from his position.

But as his verses were even better than his

dishes, he was made Court Poet instead, and he liked that much better, though he occasionally lent a hand in the kitchen when they were very busy.

The Queen was most grateful to the Rainbow Cat for his timely help ; and every year, on his birthday, she sent him a box of tarts made by her own hands especially for him.

He stayed only a day or two in the Ever After land after the banquet. Then he packed up his belongings, bade good-bye to all his kind friends, and set off for his home.

He was glad to be back in his own little house, and delighted all his friends with his account of his travels.

But he had no intention of settling down for ever, and I hope to be able some day to tell you more of the adventures that befell him upon his further journeyings.

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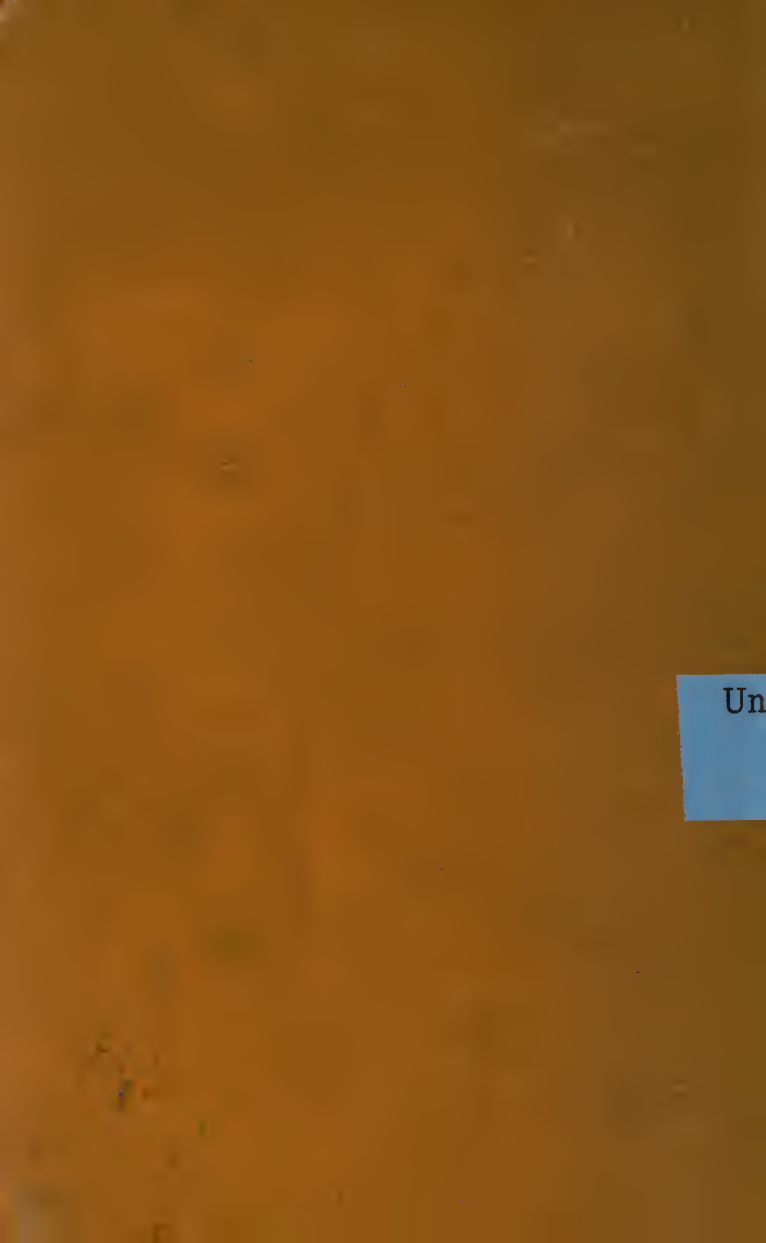
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