



The
NOW-A-DAYS
FAIRY
BOOK

by
ANNA
ALICE
CHAPIN

Pictured by
JESSIE WILLCOX SMITH



Class 35

Book Fairy Tales

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THE NOW-A-DAYS FAIRY BOOK

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By
ANNA ALICE CHAPIN

“There are just as many Fairies now-a-days” . . .
What Grandmother always said

With Illustrations in Color
By JESSIE WILLCOX SMITH



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THE GAME OF LOOKING FOR FAIRIES

In the Now-a-days World are as many Fays
As ever there were in the olden days!

They steal the milk in the dead of night,
And dance in the light
Of the crescent white,
And tread their various Fairy ways;
Only most people now are so stern with Elves
That they have to be shy about showing themselves!

In the Fairy Wood sleeps the Princess still,
And the Wee Men lodge in the Fairy Hill;
There's a Magic Tower by a Fairy Moat:
In a little boat
The Fairies float,
And Witches work their wicked will!
And the Beast is kind, and Beauty fair,
And the Blue Bird chats with the Talking Bear!

But though these things go on the same,
The Fairy creatures are grown less tame;
They hide and hasten, they creep and fly,
They are shy, and sly,
And you and I
Must play, to see them, a Fairy Game!
*But, if with our very whole hearts we play,
We may see the Fairies any day!*

CHAPTER ONE

The Fairy Ring

"Come, follow, follow me,
You, fairy elves that be;

"On tops of dewie grasse,
So nimbly do we passe,
The young and tender stalk
Ne'er bends when we do walk;
Yet in the morning may be seen
Where we the night before have been."

—*Old Poem.*

CHARLIE was lost!

Nobody could think what had become of him, and all Wildwood was much upset because of his disappearance.

"No sooner do we set foot in the place," wailed the children's old Irish Nurse, "but one of thim gets into mischief! It's meself was the goose to come off with the lot of thim, to a house like this, which is over-run with bogies and hobgoblins, as *anny* one knows!"

Grandmother was still asleep when Jarvis, her maid, came knocking on the door, with the news that her youngest grandchild was missing.

"Dear me!" said the old lady, when she was really awake. "I asked to have the children spend the summer with me because I wanted something to occupy me. I truly believe that I am going to have it. My cap, Jarvis—I will get up!"

Robin and Saidie, the two older children, were scrambling into their clothes in the two big nurseries. This was their first morning in Grandmother's country place, Wildwood, and it was much more exciting than they had expected. They had come to spend their vacation with their Grandmother, and had never seen the splendid old house before. All three of them had looked forward eagerly to the visit, and talked it over a

hundred times in advance. And now, the very first morning, they had awakened to find "Little Brother," as they sometimes called him, gone!

His clothes and his white hat with the yellow bow were also missing; so evidently he had dressed before going out. It must have been quite an undertaking, for Charlie was only four, and not used to dressing himself. And he must have started out very early, for Robin had waked at half after six, and Charlie's side of the bed was all crumpled up, but empty!

While they are dressing, I must just tell you something about the three Goodman children, for I want you to know them very well.

To begin with the missing Charlie, who for the moment appears to be the most important:—he was very small and plump, and looked like a cherub out of a picture. The two older children called him the Baby, and often laughed at him, and hurt his little feelings; but they were really proud of him in their hearts, and thought that there was no small boy on earth like their young brother. He was the most fanciful of all of them, and, better than anything else, he loved dreams, and Fairies, and making up stories.

"If any one of us is ever lucky enough to see a Fairy," Saidie sometimes said wistfully, "I am sure it will be Little Brother!"

All her life Saidie had longed to see a Fairy. She had hunted and hunted for the path or door into Fairyland, and tried to "dream true," but she had been quite unsuccessful. Now she had come to live in the country for the first time, she could not help wondering if it would be easier to find elves in Grandmother's country place than in their town house.

In her heart Saidie would often have liked to play the sort of games that Charlie played—games in which make-believe beings and story-book people played, too; but, of course, she could never entirely forget that she was Ten! At Ten, one was supposed to be almost beginning to think about being some day Grown Up!

As for Rob, he considered himself a Big Boy now, being nearly nine. And he liked regular "boy things"—real games that you could play with

marbles, or balls, or baseball bats, or strings, or paper, or something else solid and practical. When he felt very fanciful indeed, he "made believe" that the nursery bureau was a "fortress," and acted out his stories of adventure behind it.

Rob and Saidie looked a little alike, with light brown hair, that sometimes looked almost golden, and dark blue eyes. Rob was fairer than his sister, and, of course, ruddier and sturdier; but both were fresh, happy, nice-looking children. Little Charlie was much darker than the others.

Rob, Saidie and Charlie had never even seen their Grandmother until the evening before. They had lived in a city house, and gone to school and kindergarten and dancing class; and had only known the fun of country life when they had stayed at the seaside or in the mountains for a month or two. This new and unfamiliar Grandmother of theirs had for many years been living abroad, and had only just re-opened her old country house—Wildwood. Mr. and Mrs. Goodman, their father and mother, had gone to stay with their aunt, who was ill, and the three Goodman children had come to spend a long, sweet summer in the woods and fields of Massachusetts.

When the children were dressed they ran down stairs, without waiting for Nurse or any one to come for them. The house was very big—larger, they thought, than they had realized in the darkness of their arrival the night before; though, of course, not half so shadowy and creepy, now that they saw it by the comfortable warm light of the sun.

"What funny, echo-y stairs!" whispered Saidie, as they went down into the lower hall. Everything was wide open, for the maids were searching for Charlie. The sweet summer air was blowing in through the long French windows; and such a delicious scent as there was of lilacs and apple-blossoms! It was May, you see; and somehow the country smells are more wonderful then than they ever are during the later months.

Out on the broad veranda they ran into Nurse, who was ringing her fat hands, and every now and then wiping her eyes on her beautifully white and clean apron. She looked relieved when she saw them.

“So ye’ve gotten down by yerselves!” she said. “Faith! I’m not cerrrtain that I’d ever have remembered to come and fetch you! I’m that flustered!— The darling! Losted, the firrrst thing; and me aslape, if you plase! And the poor lamb went and dressed himself, and all! Whatever was the dear thinking of?”

Poor Nurse had been with their Mother when the latter was a little girl, and these three children were nearly as dear to her as though they had been her own. She was a big, plump, hot-tempered woman from Killarney, and she could tell the nicest fairy tales in the world—when she liked. Of course, she believed in the Little People. What true Irishwoman doesn’t?

The neatly trimmed green lawns of Wildwood stretched down from the veranda in a smooth, gentle slope, cut only by the winding ribbon of the white gravel driveway. On one side was the rose garden, and just beyond a long grape arbor, which hid a path leading to the kitchens; and beyond that glittered a lovely blue Lake!

At the bottom of the lawn was the stone wall that edged the place on that side, and which was hidden for the most part by flowering shrubs, mostly lilacs. To the left all the Wildwood grounds lay like an unexplored country to the children’s eyes. First came a fringe of trees, and beyond, a daisy field that stretched as far as one could see—up, up to the brow of a hill. And still farther to the left, reaching away back of the house and grounds, the fringe of trees grew thicker and thicker, until they were a regular forest; and that appeared to go back ever and ever so far toward the distant blue hills.

“Oh, Nurse,” begged Saidie eagerly. “Mayn’t we go and hunt Little Brother, too? You know he can’t have gone far.”

“And have you get yerselves losted, too!” exclaimed Nurse. “In-dade, and you’ll do nothing of the kind!”

“I expect he’s only gone about a bit, to look things over,” said Rob comfortably. But Nurse shook her head.

“Wherever you go,” she declared, “I’ll go, too—Heaven help us all!”

The three of them went across the lawn, to follow the wall from one

end of the grounds to the other. They skirted the lilacs, and the rose-gardens, and lots of tiny flower-beds, and prettily trimmed box-hedges. At last they came to the edge of the great field of daisies.

It was shady under the trees; and, anyway, the sun was not very high nor hot as yet. Down in this hollow it was cool, and still wet with dew. The grass was full of gay yellow dandelions, looking like little suns; and there were ever so many sheeny-shiny cobwebs. From where they stood they could look back at Wildwood itself. It was a dear, rambling house, very, very old. And behind it were lovely blue glimpses of the Lake.

Nurse was so anxious that she did not say a word when they plunged through the wet grass; so they had the fun of getting their feet thoroughly drenched for the first time in their lives. You see, although they were worried about Charlie, they did not believe that anything could really have happened to him. And they could not help being excited—this first morning in a strange place!

They stood at the edge of the big, billowy meadow, made of long, thick grass and lovely white-and-gold daisies, and wondered what was going to happen next! Who could tell what was beyond that lovely field that rose in such a long, wind-ruffled slope to meet the bright blue sky?

Suddenly, Saidie gave a little gasp, and pointed excitedly, crying: "Oh, Nurse! Oh, Rob!—Look, look, look!"

On the grass, among the nodding, starry daisies, his white hat crumpled into a lump under his head, and his stockings unfastened and trailing down almost to his stubby shoe-toes, lay the Little Brother, fast asleep!

"Oh, the blessed lamb!" cried Nurse. Saidie was already on her knees beside the small figure.

"Brother, what are you doing here?" she asked very gently.

Charlie waked with a jump, and opened his big, brown eyes.

"Oh, Sai-dee!" he cried. "Oh, Nur-see! Did you see her, too?"

Robin—did you see her?"

“See who?” demanded Saidie and Robin in one breath. And even Nurse exclaimed, almost impatiently: “Do talk a bit more sensibly, Master Charlie, dear!”

After anxiety is over, nearly everybody is cross with the person who has caused the worry.

“How can we tell what you mean?” went on Saidie. “Who is it you have seen?”

“Surely not Grandmother as early as this,” said Rob.

Charlie shook his head.

“She *promised* to come and see me again if I was vevy good,” he declared earnestly, sitting up in the grass. “She was a *luffy* person, and she said, if we was all vevy good, she would come again. And she said ve flowers is her fwiends. And”—

“Bless us and save us, is the child sick?” cried poor old Nurse. “I never herrrd him talk like this before—did you, me darlings?”

“He’s not awake yet,” said Saidie.

“Perhaps,” suggested Rob, “if we rolled him in the dew a bit he’d stop dreaming.”

At this lack of sympathy Charlie began to cry.

“She *said* you’d call it a dweam!” he sobbed. “And it weren’t a dweam! It were weal! And she won’t ever come again, unless you are vevy good. *I* will be good anyway,” the Little Brother proclaimed; “but you will have to be good, too!”

“Well, I like that!” said Rob.

“Stop crying now, dearie,” coaxed Nurse. “Tell us who it was that said the flowerrrs were her frinds, and that we would be saying it was a drame, and—and the rest of it?”

Charlie looked from one to the other of them, his cheeks still wet, but a great and excited importance in his small face.

“She were a Faiwy Person,” he said. “A little girl sort of Faiwy Person; and she said vat—vat I had caught her, ’cause I was beside ve Faiwy Wing!”

"Oh, wisha!" muttered Nurse, looking frightened. "Is that it, sure?"

"Nurse, what is a Fairy Ring?" asked Saidie eagerly.

"Faith," said Nurse, "'tis long since I've heard of one; but, as I recall, 'tis a place where the Little Men in Green do be having their bit o' dancing by night."

Saidie and Rob looked at each other.

"But what does it *do* to you?" said Rob. "I mean, if you are beside it—or in it—or something——"

"Whisht, dear! 'Tis that the Good People have a sort of power over the spot; and I have heard say that if a human child sleeps in one, 'tis put under some spell or other, and is kin to the Fairy Folk henceforward."

"I should think that would be fun!" said Saidie.

"Whisht!" said Nurse again, looking anxious. "'Tis no luck, sure, for flesh and blood to be tied to the Little People, or under their power. 'Tis pranksome, troublesome spalpeens they are—may they forgive me for saying it!"

"Who is abusing the Little People here?" asked a merry, sweet voice behind them. "Have a care they don't pinch you in your dreams to-night, Nurse Molly!—— So my little grandson is safe and sound, after all. Crying? Dear, dear! Has something frightened you, my love?"

It was Grandmother, who had followed the others out to look for Charlie. She stood leaning on her cane, just behind them; and she was smiling, though a little pale, for she had been really worried.

Grandmother was the daintiest of little old ladies—quite like a Fairy Godmother, Saidie thought. Rob declared that she looked like a picture out of a book. She was quite small, with a great deal of snow-white hair. She dressed in soft, colored old-fashioned silk gowns, trimmed with lace ruffles. And she leaned on a polished black ebony stick with a silver top. And as she smiled her face crinkled up like a faded flower. She was the prettiest and most charming Grandmother any children ever had. When you came near her you noticed that her clothes smelled of lavender and dried rose leaves and lemon verbena.

“What are you crying for, little grandson?” she went on, smiling at Charlie.

“He’s been dreaming, sure, Ma’am,” explained Nurse, after a curtsy. She and Grandmother were both old-fashioned in their ways, and liked the little forms and courtesies of an older day. “He keeps talking of a Fairy Ring, Ma’am—though where he’s ever hearrd of one is more than I can say!”

“A Fairy Ring!” repeated Grandmother, looking at the little boy gravely. “What about the Fairy Ring, my dear?”

“Nothing,” returned Charlie simply; “only the Faiwy Person said I was beside it. *Vat* was why I saw her ’fore she could get away!”

“He will keep talking like that, Grandmother!” cried Saidie.

“And, of course,” added Rob, “we know that he’s been fast asleep and dreaming!”—

“Yes,” said Grandmother quietly. “But you don’t know what he may have dreamed, nor whether his dreams were true!”

“Grandmother!” exclaimed Saidie wonderingly.

Grandmother took a step forward, and pointed with her black stick. When they looked where she pointed, they saw that just in front of them was a faint circle on the grass, as though some one had pressed down the green blades and dainty daisies, patting them flat with gentle touches. The dew lay as brightly there as elsewhere; the circle, whatever it was, had evidently been made over night.

“I say,—” began Rob, in amazement.

“It’s a Fairy Ring!” whispered Saidie.

Grandmother held out her hand to Charlie, and he ran to her, and leaned against her affectionately.

“And this little person has been asleep almost on the edge of it!” said Grandmother. “I am glad he was not inside it; but as it was, it’s not odd that he should have had Fairy Dreams!”

CHAPTER TWO

Fairy Talk

“When at home alone I sit,
And am very tired of it,
I have just to shut my eyes,
To go sailing through the skies—
To go sailing far away
To the pleasant Land of Play;
To the fairy land afar,
Where the Little People are . . .”

—Robert Louis Stevenson.

SAIDIE and Rob looked at each other once more. Grandmother and Nurse had gone back to the house, for it was past breakfast-time. The children were following more slowly.

“Do you suppose,” the little girl began. Rob broke in.

“Now, you know,” he said severely—“you *know* that he was asleep and dreaming. I dare say we all had queer dreams last night!”

But Charlie grew quite cross at this.

“Vis,” he declared, “was a diffewent kind of a dweam. *I know!*”

“Well,” said Saidie briskly, “let’s pick some daisies, anyway, and then hurry home to breakfast. I’m as hungry as can be; aren’t you, Rob?—Take care, Charlie! *Don’t* go near that Fairy Ring!”

She pointed to the green circle, which seemed to be growing fainter in the morning light—less clear as the sun rose. Her little brother regarded it gravely.

“Vat,” he said dreamily, “was where she was standing!”

Saidie gave him a gentle little shake.

“Oh, Charlie!” she exclaimed. “Do stop being so—so *creepy!*”

They picked as many daisies as they could carry, but lost most of them going home.

Charlie insisted on telling fortunes with nearly all his daisies: "She loves me—she loves me not," he repeated over and over again. Only he said: "She *lufs* me—she *lufs* me not!" because Charlie's "V's" were always in the wrong places. He repeated the silly little phrase in a sing-song voice, until Saidie lost patience.

"Oh, dear!" she sighed. "Please stop saying that silly thing. Who 'lufs' you and 'lufs' you not?"

"My Faiwy Person, of course!" said Charlie in an aggrieved way. "She is a lufly person, and she says all ve flo-wers is her fwiends! I's talking to ve daisies about her!"

And he began pulling another white-and-gold blossom to pieces.

"What started you off this morning?" asked Rob curiously, as they walked back across the lawn.

"Don't know what," answered his small brother. "Somefin."

"Tell us about it, Little Brother!" begged Saidie quite meekly. After all, Charlie had come nearest of any of them to having an adventure!

He could not tell them anything clearly. Something, he could not tell what, had aroused him in the early dawn, and urged him to get out of bed and go hunting Fairies by himself. He had always had faith in the Little People, had Charlie, and had been sure that if they wanted him to find them, they would find means to point out the way to him.

And the Good People, you know, unlike mortals, *always* reward those who have confidence in them!

A dozen times Charlie found a sign showing him what direction to take. Sometimes it would be a gust of wind blowing a leaf along before him, and seeming to almost carry him with it; sometimes it would be a sudden, quick bird-note, inviting him to go around a corner; sometimes a handful of apple-blossoms scattered on the grass to right or left by an unseen hand. And the little boy had followed obediently, until he had found himself close to the daisy-field—at the edge of the Fairy Ring. . . . After this his story grew strange and confused. He could not tell whether he had gone to sleep in the early morning shadows, or whether what he

had seen had been truly a Fairy Vision. Anyway, he had had an adventure, and he was extremely proud of it!

For that matter they all felt that they were in the beginning of an adventure, or series of adventures. It was a queer, delightful feeling—a sense of excitement, of uncertainty, of wondering what was going to happen next. And in all this world, let me tell you, there is nothing so thrilling as that Feeling. Big, brave men fit out ships and go hunting treasure, just to know it for a while; and explorers risk their lives because it is too strong for them; and writers spend years trying to put it into books. . . . Grown-Ups sometimes call it the Spirit of Adventure; but that is a poor little phrase to describe a very wonderful thing.

“Nurse,” whispered Saidie, as she was helping Nurse Molly to unpack later in the day, “do you suppose that it was really a Fairy Ring?”

“How can I tell, Miss Saidie, darling?” said Nurse. “Sure, there’s always been quare things about Wildwood, and that’s a fact!”

Grandmother was the most delightful Grandmother in the world they decided. She seemed to understand everything, and take an interest in everything. She hunted up a wonderful old picture-book for Charlie; promised to show Saidie how to make *pot-pourri* as soon as the roses bloomed; and ordered old Haines, the head gardener, to see about putting up a swing without delay.

The first day passed like enchantment. Before they knew it, dusk had come, and they were sitting around the open window in the bigger of the two nurseries, listening to the tree-toads and whip-poor-wills, and drinking in the smell of the sweet, damp country evening.

The nursery clock struck eight, and they all jumped.

“I suppose Nurse will be coming any minute now to put us to bed,” complained Saidie.

“Oh, dear!” sighed Charlie.

“Our bed-time at home isn’t till nearly nine,” protested Rob.

“But Mother told us that Grandmother believed in early hours in the country,” said Saidie. “Anyway, it’s queer and creepy here at night. I’d

rather go to bed, I think. I know I am going to be afraid of these big halls and staircases in the dark!"

"*I'm* not," said Charlie unexpectedly. "I like ve dark. It seems like Faiwies!"

"Good, little grandson!" said a voice behind them. "That is the way to feel about the dark—it's just a place for Fairies!"

Grandmother was standing there with a lighted candle, which shone on her face and showed that she was smiling merrily at them. She had an odd way of slipping up behind one like that, had Grandmother; only one never minded, she was—as Saidie said—"such a Dear!"

She put the candle on the table, and sat down among them.

"Well," she went on, cheerfully, "we were talking about Fairies."

"Grandmother," said Saidie timidly, "this morning, and again just now, you spoke as though—as though it were not silly to—to believe in Fairies."

"Silly!" said Grandmother. "Bless me! If it's silly, I have been silly for sixty years!"

"Do you mean that you really believe in them?" asked Saidie eagerly.

"Nonsense, Saidie!" cut in Rob. "Of course, Grandmother doesn't!"

"But, of course, Grandmother does!" cried the dear little old lady.

The children looked at each other in wonder.

"There are just as many Fairies nowadays," went on Grandmother, "as ever there were in the days the story books tell about. I know a lot of Fairies myself. There are the good sprites of Laughter, and Love, and Generosity, and Patience; and the bad elves, Temper, and Cowardice, and Pride and Hard-Heartedness; and a great many more, good and bad!"

"But the—the regular kind?" questioned Saidie.

Grandmother's eyes twinkled.

"Oh, they are around, too, if you will only look for them!"

"But I have looked," said Saidie, sadly.

"Have you?" said Grandmother. "And where have you looked, my love?"

"Oh, everywhere!" said Saidie, largely.

"Have you looked in the clock?" demanded Grandmother. "And among the strawberry plants, and under the ruffle of your new party dress? And up the chimney? And in the toy-closet? The Little People choose all sorts of odd corners for their hiding-places now-a-days, you know. Two or three hundred years ago you could see them any clear night, by moonlight, at the stroke of twelve. But now they have to be more secretive, so they chose queer times, and unlikely places. Why I, myself, have seen plenty and plenty of elves by candle-light. I confess they *do* like candles better than electric light!—Though I saw one once under an arc light in New York. Poor dear, it *did* look so lonely and homesick!"—

"Grandmother!" said Saidie, reproachfully, "you're laughing at us!"

"Am I, my dear?" said Grandmother, smiling. She looked very kind—like a gentle and sweet old fairy herself. "Well, even if I were—Laughter is one of the very nicest Fairies I know! Now, it is getting late. But before Nurse shoos me out, and hustles you off to bed, I want to propose a Game—a Game we can all play, all the time. It is the Fairy Game!"

"The Fairy Game!" repeated all three children, quite mystified.

"Yes. We all like fairies; now, why not make it our business to look up as many of them as we can, and see how many of the old fairy tales come true in our every day lives?"

"Oh, Grandmother, how lovely!" sighed Sadie, rapturously.

"How do you like it, Rob?" asked Grandmother.

He grinned rather shyly.

"It's all right," he confessed. "Just as—as a *game*, you know!"

"Aha!" laughed Grandmother. "You are afraid it is rather a babyish sort of play for a big boy like you, Master Rob! Nonsense! Big men, and good men, and wise men, have all been glad to play it before now! Come, I'll make you the leader, because you are named for the most famous Fairy in the world—one that Shakespeare wrote about."

“But he was named Puck,” said Robin, who had read Lamb’s Tales.

“Yes, for short! Think a minute. You are named Robert Goodman: it doesn’t need much changing to make it Robin Goodfellow!”

Saidie clapped her hands, and even Rob looked pleased, or a little shame-faced. There might be more in the Fairy Game than he had at first supposed.

Grandmother happened to glance at Charlie. He looked as though he were going to cry. As usual, his brother and sister had forgotten him!

“As for Charlie,” went on Grandmother, “we shall call him ‘Prince Charming’ from now on, because there has to be a Fairy Prince in every fairy tale, and I believe they are *all* called Charming!”

Charlie—or Charming, as we must now call him, for they began to play the new game immediately—smiled his delight, and cuddled up against Grandmother’s skirts.

“And, as for Saidie,” said Grandmother, “her name, Sarah, means Princess, or so I have been told; and, anyway, Saidie sounds as if it came from Scheherazade, who was a famous lady in the most wonderful Fairy Book ever written. So you see you have all been given fairy-tale names without knowing it! We must take that as a sign of good luck. Perhaps it will please the Good People—that is what the elves like best to be called, you know.”

“But why,” asked Robin Goodfellow, “do *you* have to play the ‘Fairy Game’? I should think that you, Grandmother, could see Fairies—I mean the Good People—whenever you liked.”

“You see,” Grandmother explained, very seriously, “Wildwood used to be full of Fairies—quite a Headquarters for the Little People, in fact. But in those days children lived here! We were a big family; for this was when I was young, my loves! And, of course, we saw any number of Fairies then. In fact, we saw them every day, I do believe, and every night too! But those good days were not to last. My own children only lived here for a few years, and they saw the Little Folk less often. Then,

one by one, they grew up, and there were no more children at all left at Wildwood. And so there was an end of the Fairies! “For many years, there have been no little people, mortal or elfin, in this house; I confess I have missed both kinds. But now—well, who knows, my loves? There are children once more at Wildwood. Soon—yes, I am sure, quite soon—there will be Fairies, too!”

CHAPTER THREE

The Story of the Four Elfin Princes

“. . . Elfiline enclosed it in a golden wall.

“His sonne was Elfinelle, who overcame
The wicked Gobbelines in bloody field;
But Elfant was of most renowned fame,
Who all of crystall did Panthea build:
Then Elfar, who two brethren gyaunts kild,
The one of which had two heads, th’ other three;
Then Elfinor, who was in magick skild;
He built by art upon the glassy sea
A bridge of brass. . . .”

—*Edmund Spencer.*

THE next evening Grandmother came to the nursery again, and this time the children begged so hard for a fairy story that she consented to tell them the tale of the Four Elfin Princes.

“This,” Grandmother explained, “is not a regular kind of fairy story; it is a bit of fairy history.”

“Is it in a history book?” asked Robin Goodfellow.

“No,” said Grandmother. “There are unfortunately no books of fairy history or fairy geography.”

“Did ve Faiwies tell it to you?” asked Charming in an awed whisper.

“No,” said Grandmother again. “A man named Spencer wrote something about it in a poem. I think it’s very likely that the Fairies told it to *him*. He knew them a good deal better than most people do.”

“Fairy history!” murmured Saidie. “It sounds heavenly, Grandmother! Do begin!”

“King Elfiline,” began Grandmother, “was Emperor of Elfland, and monarch of the Fairy World. He was a great and respected ruler. He built a golden wall around his domains, and reigned very gorgeously for

many centuries. He had, it is said, four sons—Elfinelle, Elfant, Elfinor and Elfar. Later, they all four reigned over the Fairy Countries.”

“All at once?” demanded Robin.

“No; one after the other.”

“But do Fairies die?” asked Saidie.

“No, indeed! But when one has done all he can do for the Elfin people, he gets into a cockle-shell, and sails over the Sea of Wonders to the Rainbow Country, where he stays always.”

“And what is *that* like?” they wanted to know.

“Nobody has ever come back from there,” said Grandmother. “So nobody has ever told.”

Charming wriggled impatiently, and begged: “Go on wiv ve sto-ree!”

So Grandmother went on:

“Elfinelle, the oldest of the four Princes, was a great soldier, and loved fighting. He had whole battallions of trained beetles and snails for his artillery, and some of the most remarkable war-June-bugs in the world. These strongly armored and daring creatures could be sent on the most dangerous missions, and when Prince Elfinelle introduced them into the Fairy Army it was a great day for military progress in Elfland.

“Elfant, the second brother, was fond of beautiful things, and became quite an artist. He painted many beautiful pictures and designed a number of fine buildings, and altogether was a most superior and talented person. He was the first Elf to think of bringing great blocks of crystal from the Sea of Glass with which to make buildings and statues. You may imagine how beautiful the glittering crystal houses and monuments looked, when the sun was reflected upon them from the Golden Wall!

“Prince Elfinor, the third brother, was a student and a dreamer. He liked best to study Magic, and he was exceedingly clever at it. He was, indeed, an accomplished Wizard, and was said to know nine million and seventy-one spells by heart!

“Elfar was the youngest brother, and he could not do anything—at least, not anything startling. But, though he was not especially brilliant

nor handsome, he was the most popular of all the Fairy Princes. He used to make friends with the common Elves, and was not at all stuck up. As he had no battles to fight, works of art to accomplish, nor deep books of Magic to master, he had plenty of time in which to be kind and generous to every one who was in trouble. No one ever appealed to him without receiving help of some sort. He was a very nice sort of person, was Prince Elfar.

“Now these four young Elves were so much interested in their own affairs that they never thought of their future duties to the Kingdom. At last one day King Elfiline sent for them, and they all four went to the Throne Room to see him.

“Court was always held in the inside of a hill, and they went into it through a hollow thorn-tree. You must know, by the bye, that the thorn has always been a fairy growth. The entire Throne Room was hung with draperies, woven of purple flower-petals—violets, and lilacs, and irises, and hyacinths, and pansies, and heliotrope, and wistaria, and lavender, and mauve sweet-peas, and passion-flowers, and morning-glories, and myrtle, and the little fairy flower called ‘Love in Idleness,’ which you will read about some day. And, as the hangings had been woven on fairy looms, the flower-petals kept their sweetness, and—can you fancy what a perfume it must have been that was made out of the scents of lilacs and violets and hyacinths and heliotropes, all mixed together?

“The lights were purple, too—the violet tints taken from bubbles, rainbows, and the prisms made by raindrops in the sun. The columns of the hall were carved out of amethysts and the purple parts of exquisite shells.

“On the Throne, which was made out of a great purple diamond, brighter than any number of stars, sat the mighty King and Emperor, Elfiline the Great, and his Fairy Consort, Queen Elfeora, the mother of the four Princes.

“The King was dressed in one straight but sumptuous robe of crimson and silver, made of red rose-leaves, sewn together with threads of

shimmering frost. On his head was a crown of pearls and icicles, with a single golden star which had been brought at tremendous expense from the Sky World.

“Elfeora had been a delicate little moonbeam Fairy, and she always dressed in white. Her frock was made of the most exquisite moonshine, woven with lily-petals and hawthorn, trimmed with sea-foam, and perfumed with white rose-leaves.

“While the Royal Elves talked, four thousand and forty-two little sprites, in pale blue, sang a song in praise of them—very softly, so as not to disturb them.

“‘My cherished sons—Princes of the Fairy Realm,’ said the King impressively, ‘I have summoned you here to-day to tell you that I wish you to marry.’

“‘All of you,’ added Queen Elfeora, sweetly.

“The Princes looked at one another in dismay.

“‘Must we?’ asked Elfinelle, the Fighter.

“‘I can’t see why!’ muttered Elfant, the Artist.

“‘It’s such a waste of time!’ sighed Elfinor, the Student.

“‘Whom do you want *me* to marry?’ asked Elfar, the Nothing-in-Particular.

“His father addressed himself to him, since he was the only one of the four who seemed to take any personal interest.

“‘I have sent,’ he said, ‘for four Princesses—one for each of you. They are the daughters of four extremely influential monarchs, and they are shortly expected at Court. You will marry them as soon as possible. That’s all.’

“‘But,’ added pretty Queen Elfeora, who was tender-hearted, ‘we hope that you will all be very happy—all eight of you!’

“With this the audience was at an end, and the four Princes departed to talk the matter over among themselves. They did not want to marry any one; but after all, they agreed, what did a Princess more or less matter compared with the approval of their father and king? They

decided to make no protest until they had seen what kind of young ladies the four Princesses proved to be.

“They went about their work and play as usual. Elfinelle drilled his fairy soldiers, and introduced a new kind of reed-sword in which he was interested. Elfant worked at the plans for a new crystal building, which he meant to call the Panthea. Elfinor sent for a delightful book on Gnome Magic, which had just been brought over the border of Fairyland. As for Elfar, the Nothing-in-Particular Prince, he went to a number of very pleasant balls, for he was passionately fond of dancing.

“In a little while they were all four told that they were once more wanted at Court. They put on their best clothes, and went. Elfinelle was dressed in scarlet, because it was the color of war; Elfant in white, because it was the hue of marble buildings, plaster statues, and drawing-paper; Elfinor in blue, because it was said to be the tint of learning; and Elfar in green, because his friends, the common fairies, wore it—also because it was becoming!

“The Throne Room was very gorgeous, and there was much light, and much music. A number of new and brilliant stars had been purchased from the sky for the occasion; and the orchestra was the best that the Singing-Schools of Elfland could provide. The mixed perfumes from the flower-hangings made one quite dizzy. And there was a truly remarkable banquet spread upon a huge mother-of-pearl table, in readiness for the guests.”

Robin interrupted the story for the first time.

“What did they have to eat?” he wished to know.

“Dear, dear!” said Grandmother, as though trying to remember. “I can’t recall exactly. You see, another friend of the Fairies, a man called Herrick, has given us an excellent list of the sorts of things Fairies are fondest of eating; but I doubt if I can remember much of his description. Let me see—there were a few loaves of Fairy bread; every loaf a single grain of wheat, thoroughly parched in moonlight. Then there was dew which had been kept in violets long enough to be full of the violet flavor.

There was the sweet sap from the rush, and nut-meats, and honey strained direct from roses, and pollen-cake, and milk from the milk-weed. And there were wild berries, each roasted, and eaten as we should eat baked apples; and all sorts of strange little vegetables, almost too tiny for us to see when they were growing; and——”

“Don’t the Fairies ever eat meat or eggs or puddings?” asked Robin, who liked solid foods!

“Or porridge? Or jam?” put in Charming.

“Or candy?” added Saidie, “Or ice-cream? Or tea?”

“Mr. Herrick *says*,” answered Grandmother, “that they had emmets’ eggs, roast moth, and so on. But most writers think that Elves are fonder of more delicate fare. Whatever they ate in Elfiline’s Court, we may be sure that it was the very best and daintiest that could be obtained in Fairyland.

“Well—to go on with our tale—after the first formalities were over, the Princess Gorgonia was announced.

“She was the daughter of the King of the Goblins, and she was a terrible little dwarf, with a wicked temper. She was dressed in a dreadful gown, made of the skins of lizards, with trimming of snail-shells.

“‘This is the bride of my son Elfinelle,’ said the King.

“Elfinelle looked at Gorgonia and nearly fainted. But, trying to be polite, he bowed low, and said: ‘Madam, I hope you like our Court.’

“Gorgonia, who had no ideas at all of politeness, but a very great idea of the importance of the Goblins, snapped: ‘I think it is horrid!’

“‘Then I shouldn’t think you would want to live here!’ said the Prince, hastily.

“Gorgonia was beside herself with fury.

“‘I’ll go home! I’ll go home!’ she shrieked. ‘Why, you silly, ugly, useless, insignificant little Prince, you ought to be *grateful*——’

“‘I shall be if you *will* go home!’ said Prince Elfinelle, who did not like being abused. And so, there was the end of *that* match!

“‘Now I suppose I shall have to go to war with the Goblins!’ said poor King Elfiline. ‘Oh, dear! Oh, dear! Oh, dear!’

“‘I’ll kill them for you,’ Prince Elfinelle assured him, comfortingly. ‘Anything to escape Gorgonia!’

“The second Princess to be announced was the Princess Salamanda, of the Fire Spirits. Her Father was Old King Coal (the name is usually mis-spelled Cole), and her fire-red dress was all trimmed with sparkling black bits of coal. As she was dark and handsome, the costume was becoming. She was cheerful and warm-hearted, but her temper was as fiery as that of Gorgonia. She was the sort of girl who must have every one agree with her and make much of her; in short, Salamanda was disgracefully spoiled.

“Prince Elfant was told that this was the lady chosen for him; and he was not particularly displeased, for he thought that she would make an excellent model for a picture he was painting. He told Salamanda so, and she was rather flattered. She thought that he must consider her very beautiful to want her for a model. So she said: ‘Oh, your Fairy Highness, you embarrass me! What is the picture to represent?’

“‘Vanity,’ said the Prince, innocently enough. For that really *was* the figure he was painting. It was to be decoration for his new building. But, of course, you may imagine how offended the Princess Salamanda was at being chosen for the model for a picture of Vanity! She was so angry that, in a few moments, Elfant grew angry, too, and told her that he had had no idea how really well suited she was to pose for that picture! Never, he said, had he met so vain a person.

“The Princess went home, declaring wrathfully that never, never, never would she speak to that horrid, impertinent Prince again!

“‘Now I’ve got the Fire Spirits on my hands also!’ complained the King. ‘Why can’t you boys get on with these ladies better? Oh, dear! I don’t want to fight the Fire Spirits; I’m too old!’

“Elfant hated fighting himself, so he considered the matter seriously.

“‘Maybe I can make up with her!’ he said at last. For he rather

liked Salamanda, in spite of her airs and her peppery temper. So poor old Elfinline cheered up a wee bit.

“Then the third Princess appeared. She was the shy little Princess Flutterfly—one of the charming wee Flower Fairies, and a truly exquisite small creature, attended by a train of beautiful moths. One would have expected her to be dressed in flower-petals; but so many Elves had taken that up that it was no longer strictly fashionable, and Flutterfly was one of the absolute leaders of style in the Mystic Universe. Her gown was composed of millions and millions of dew-drops, strung together: and it rippled about her like silver mail. The fire of a thousand glow-worms had gone to make her tiara.

“When the Queen Elfeora saw this gorgeous little person approaching, she burst into tears, and declared that if Flutterfly came to Court *she* herself would pine away from sheer vexation. Elfeora had been a social leader in Elfland so long that she simply could not bear to have so magnificent and fashionable a little lady for a daughter-in-law. Poor Elfeora was jealous!

“‘Your Fairy Majesty seems upset,’ said Flutterfly, sweetly, and the Queen choked down her sobs.

“‘Not at all!’ she snapped. ‘I am overcome, your Fairy Highness, by the splendor of your appearance!’

“‘This is just a simple little frock I wear at home,’ said Flutterfly, opening wide her small sparkling eyes. ‘I thought that, as this was merely an informal family gathering, I would not put on anything *really* nice!’

“‘I hope that you won’t,’ gasped Elfeora; ‘I am sure that our humble Court could not bear it!’

“Then they both had hysterics, and Princess Flutterfly left in tears, supported by her moths.

“‘And I was particularly anxious to keep on good terms with the Flower Fairies!’ said Elfinline, almost crying himself. ‘They are *very* influential neighbors. . . . Oh, dear! This is not a lucky occasion for me!’

“Remained Elfar, the youngest and least important Prince; and the fourth Princess was the young Giantess Hidiosa, as ugly and dreadful as her name. Her family, that of the powerful and prosperous Giants, owned large territories; and it would have been a fine alliance for the Prince, if he had not been so terrified by the very sight of the lady chosen for him.

“Hidiosa was so big that she could not get into the hollow hill by means of the thorn-tree. They had to send for a regiment of Gnomes to dig a passage-way wide enough for her. She could just squeeze into the entrance of the Court Room; and had to sit down at once, so as to take up as little room as possible. She was dressed in cloth of gold, and diamonds, and rubies, and sapphires, and emeralds, and pearls, and every other precious stone ever discovered by either man or Fairy. And nothing on earth was ever so ugly as she!

“She was attended by four hundred lovely waiting-maids—little sprites who had been taken prisoner by the Giants, and made into Hidiosa’s servants, and whom she treated very cruelly. The four fairies who carried her bouquet and fan—they were such large articles that two fairies could only just stagger under each—were called Golden and Silver, and Pearl and Gem. Each was prettier than the last; and, when the Prince Elfar saw the little maid Gem, he lost his heart, and made up his mind to marry her, whatever his father and the Princess Hidiosa might say.

“Hidiosa was worse than any of the other three Princesses—worse-looking, worse-tempered, worse-mannered, and with less intelligence. She abused her poor little maids until they were all in tears; and when Pearl and Gem dropped the heavy bunch of flowers, she turned upon Gem, who was nearest, and boxed her ears.

“At that point Elfar drew his sword. He was no fighter, like his elder brother, but he could not bear cruelty; and, besides, he had fallen in love with the maid Gem. He looked behind the Princess and her ladies to where her body-guard of huge Giants waited, crowded about the narrow door. And he drew the sword.

“‘What are you doing, sir?’ demanded King Elfaline. ‘Drawing on our guests and your future bride?’

“‘No, honored King and parent,’ said Elfar, pleasantly. ‘Not on, but for, my future bride!’

“Then he took the tiny hand of the Fairy Gem, and, leading her up to the Throne, bowed low. Gem was one of the very small Elves, and she always dressed in fairy green. She was as pretty as a flower, and, for the time being, extremely frightened.

“‘This is my Princess, your Fairy Majesties,’ he said to his father and mother.

“Elfeora leaned forward, for, though she was silly, she had a kind heart. ‘I will take care of her,’ she said. ‘Come up here to me, child!’

“Gem stumbled up the steps, and fell at the Queen’s knees, weeping.

“But Elfiline, the King, was in a passion of anger, and told Elfar that if he married the waiting-maid, he would have to leave Court, and never return to it.

“‘Certainly, sir,’ said Elfar, very nicely, for he was always respectful. ‘There’s a delightful hazel-nut cottage, which I saw was to let, close to the best clearing in the West Wood. We shall live there and give balls!’

“‘You are forbidden to give balls!’ shouted the King, in a tremor of rage. ‘If you give a ball I will turn you both into purple snails.’

“‘Oh, I don’t believe that for one moment, sir!’ smiled Elfar. ‘But, anyway, I don’t see how you are going to know it.’

“Then he took Gem and left the Throne Room, with the nicest and most agreeable bows to everybody. And the King nearly had a fit, just from annoyance and disappointment. As for Hidiosa, she was in such a passion of anger that she could not walk, and had to be dragged home; she was too big, of course, to be carried. It took more than a week to pull her back to the Land of the Giants.

“Well, within a fortnight, poor King Elfiline was at war with the Goblins, on Princess Gorgonia’s account; with the Fire Spirits, through Princess Salamanda; with the Flower Fairies, because of Princess Flutter-

fly; and with the Giants, at the prompting of Princess Hideosa. He told the four Princes that they would have to do something about it at once.

“‘I am perfectly willing to go and fight the Goblins,’ said Elfinelle. ‘But they live on the other side of the Black Mountains, and my soldiers can’t cross them; their armor and weapons are too heavy.’

“‘Nice, useful army you’ve got!’ said Elfar, cheerfully. ‘That’s what you have been doing with your beetles and bugs, eh? Fixing up an army that can’t move more than two feet at a time! Why not use a few common, ordinary, every-day Elves?’

“‘They don’t like me,’ said Elfinelle. ‘And they don’t like my army. They won’t fight with my bugs and beetles.’

“‘I don’t blame them!’ said Elfar. ‘What self-respecting Fairy would fight side by side with a bug? But they like *me*. I’ll send an army of volunteers across the Black Mountains that will wipe out the last inch of Goblin Land!’

“‘Can you?’ asked the King, impressed; though he had not yet forgiven Elfar for his marriage.

“‘I certainly can! Now for the next difficulty.’

“‘The next difficulty,’ said Elfiline, ‘is with the Fire Spirits. They want to burn up my Kingdom! So *unkind* of them!’

“‘Can’t *you* settle it somehow?’ said Elfar, looking at Elfant. The latter shook his head.

“‘Salamanda is still offended with me,’ he said, mournfully. ‘She can’t forgive me for wanting to paint a picture of her as Vanity!’

“‘Tell her you want to paint her as the Spirit of Gentle Modesty,’ said Elfar, chuckling, ‘and that you want to hang it in your new crystal building. And give her the building as a wedding present.’

“‘I’ll try it!’ exclaimed Elfant, cheering up.

“‘Now, as to the Flower Fairies,’ said the King, who was brightening somewhat himself. ‘They live on the other side of the Sea of Glass, you know; and they won’t let Flutterfly come over here again, unless we send for her. And you know yourself that the Sea of Glass is one

of the things that my Elves cannot cross. My power ends on this side.'

"What do you want to send for her for?' asked Elfar.

"I don't!' said the King crossly. 'But Elfinor insists; and he is so obstinate!'

"Elfinor had, in fact, fallen in love with the gorgeous little Flower Princess, and had even persuaded his mother to consent to receive her at Court—if they could get her!

"Well,' said Elfar, 'I don't see what use all your Magic is to you, if you can't do a little thing like crossing a Sea of Glass!'

"Elfinor pondered. 'I suppose it *might* be done by Magic!' he murmured.

"Might!' repeated Elfar scornfully. 'Why, it's the simplest thing in the world. You just combine some of your special spells into one, and make a new one, and then you cross the Sea!'

"I think it's possible!' exclaimed Elfinor. 'I'll do it!'

"He rushed off to look up spells. And needless to say he soon found one.

"Well,' said King Elfiline. 'And how about the Giants?'

"Elfar sighed. 'I'm sorry to say, sir,' he said, 'I'm afraid I shall have to go and attend to them myself.'

"You can't do it,' said the King sadly.

"Why not?' demanded Prince Elfar.

"Because the Giant King has two heads, and his eldest son three.'

"They don't fight with their heads,' said Elfar, hopefully.

"The King shook *his* head defeatedly.

"There are too many Giants, and they are too big,' said he. 'You'd better go home, and leave my wars alone. Only *don't give any balls!*'

"I'll go and end the wars first,' said Prince Elfar in the best of humours, 'and then I'll give a really *big* ball afterward!'

"Then he started off to the Country of the Giants.

"It took him a year to finish with the Giant King, fighting all the

time; and two years to cut off each of the heads of the Giant Prince. And Hidiosa did *her* best to put an end to *him*. But after a while he got the Giants to beg for peace, and came home.

“He found the Kingdom rejoicing over his victories, and getting ready for a double wedding. Acting on his advice, his brother Elfant had made up with Princess Salamanda, and Elfinor had succeeded in building a Magic Bridge across the Sea of Glass, and brought Flutterfly back on it.

“Elfinelle had conquered the Goblins with the aid of the common Fairies, and had decided to keep them as a standing volunteer troop. Every one was delighted to see him, especially Gem, who had been very lonely and anxious while he was at war. The Fairy people were overjoyed to see their favorite Elfar again, and there was such a shouting that the Old Woman who lived in the House of the Sky put her head out of the window to wonder what it could be!

“‘Will you come to my ball, your Fairy Majesties?’ Elfar asked his father and mother.

“‘Certainly, my boy!’ said the King, beaming. ‘And you *must* tell me about that last fight with the Giant Prince!’

“The ball was very nice. Just as they were going home in the dawning, the King pointed out to Elfar the delicate circle traced upon the grass and marking the place where they had been dancing.

“‘When I was so angry with you, my son,’ he said, ‘and had commanded you not to give another ball, I gave directions to the grass to keep an impression of every dance held in the Kingdom. I knew no one but you would give any without my permission!’ He laughed. ‘Many’s the rage these circles have put me into, Elfar, when I was worrying about my wars, and you were having parties!’

“He never changed his orders to the grass, though there was no longer need for a record to be kept of the balls given in the Kingdom. He was an inquisitive old Fairy, was the King, and I have heard that he often used to go poking about in the early dawn, to see what entertainments had been given during the night!

“And it is those shadowy records of the Fairies’ balls upon the grass that we call Fairy Rings today!”

Grandmother stopped. The candles had nearly burned away.

“Is that all!” said Saidie. “It’s a *lovely* story, Grandmother!”

“Yes,” said Robin. “It isn’t that the *story* is so very much, Grandmother,”—

“Thanks!” she laughed.

“It’s the way you tell it,—quite seriously, as though it were all quite, quite true!”

“May be it is!” said Grandmother.

CHAPTER FOUR

“The Three Bears”

“. . . Now the Three Bears had gone out to walk. . . . They were the Big Bear, and the Middle-Sized Bear, and the Little Bear.”—*Old Fairy Book.*

“**R**UN out and play, my dears!” said Grandmother cheerily, from behind the tea-tray at luncheon. “You have not half explored Wildwood.”

“Haven’t we?” asked Robin with interest. “We have been all through the grounds, and the daisy-field, and the rose garden, and—and ever so many other places.”

“You might go to the woods today,” suggested Grandmother. “You have not been there yet, and you know they are part of the place.”

“Grandmother!” exclaimed Saidie, with sparkling eyes. “Is that lovely forest below the daisy-field part of Wildwood?”

“Yes, my child; at least, a portion of it is. If you should go *very* far into the ‘forest,’ as you call it, in the course of time you would find a wire fence; that is the end of my property. But I hardly believe that you will get to the fence today.”

“And may we really go there this very afternoon?” asked Robin, eagerly. Exploring always interested him keenly.

“Certainly; it is quite safe. There are no cows, nor lions, nor rattlesnakes, nor hunters, nor other dangerous beasts!” And Grandmother laughed. “You would better start soon after luncheon, and be back well before sundown. Get Jemima to put you up a little basket of cakes and sandwiches.—And do take your poor Teddy Bears along!” she added seriously. “You haven’t had them out of the nursery since you got here, and I’m *sure* that they need fresh air!”

The children raced off to get ready.

“What a *dear* Grandmother is!” panted Saidie, as they ran up-stairs.

“She’s a very good sort!” said Robin, in an extremely grown-up way. He loved to copy a young uncle of his, who used a great deal of slang.

“I *luf* her!” cried Charming, with shining eyes.

Jemima, the fat and smiling cook, filled a small basket with delicious bread-and-butter sandwiches, and little round tea-cakes, still warm and good-smelling from the oven. Then she put in a little bottle filled with milk, and covered it all up with a nice white napkin.

Saidie tied fresh ribbons on the Teddy Bears while Nurse found their hats. Then they started gaily off for the woods, and Grandmother waved to them from the shady, vine-covered veranda.

It was the very loveliest afternoon that you can imagine. They found it almost too warm in the sun, but deliciously cool when they got into the shadow of the trees. The wood,—“Grandmother’s Wood,” as Saidie called it,—was really beautiful. Never, anywhere else, they decided, were there so many lovely mossy banks, and winding paths, and groups of queer-coloured toad-stools, and beds of pale forest flowers, and old stumps filled with feathery, elfin-looking plants. It was a real Fairy Wood, and the children felt that they could have gladly wandered through it forever, they found it so pleasant.

Of course they talked about Fairies. They could not help hoping that almost any day they might meet and talk with the Little People themselves. Already Charming had seen the Fairy Child,—or dreamed that he had. At any moment his older brother and sister might have other and even more thrilling experiences. So far, nothing had happened to them. Of course, they had *felt* things, several times,—seen shadows, heard whispers and faint, unexplained noises, and been fairly certain that elves of some sort were near them. But nothing had *happened*.

Robin, although he was “Robin Goodfellow” and leader of them, was a wee bit ashamed of even half believing in Fairies. While they were in the wood Saidie and Charming kept up a great chatter about magic,

and Wee Men, and such things, but Robin pretended to think it all silly.

They had brought the three Teddy Bears to play with. There was the Big One with the yellow ribbon belonging to Saidie, which she declared was the Mother Bear; and the Middle Sized One with the violet bow which really belonged to Robin but to which he never by any chance paid the slightest attention; and the Little Baby Bear—adorned with a knot of bright red—which was the joy of Charming's heart. Robin looked disgustedly at his foolish sister and brother as they settled contentedly down upon the soft moss to play with these ridiculous creatures. *He*—so he told them—was going for a walk!

“Don't get lost in the wood!” called Saidie. And that made him crosser than ever. The idea of thinking that a Big Boy of Nine and a Half could by any possibility get *lost*!

He rambled off through the woods by himself for some time without anything that suggested an adventure.

It really *was* a nice wood!

There were jack-in-the-pulpits, and feathery green ferns, and partridge berries, and red columbines. There were blackberry blossoms and pale wild roses and purplish-pink wood geraniums, and all sorts of delicate mosses. Robin did not know the country well, and forest things were strange to him. He found it all very new and very delightful. He saw several squirrels, and one shy gray rabbit with trembling ears and a little white tail; and birds flew out of the underbrush with a great flurry as he passed.

The wood-path was very narrow and over-grown, and turned and twisted as though it had been made in the first place by crafty wild creatures that didn't want to be too easily followed.

Suddenly one of the twisty turnings brought him to a dear little gurgling stream, flecked with sun and shadow. And at the edge of the rippling water sat a little girl in a white dress!

She was bending over, and Robin was almost certain that she was



playing with something—perhaps some toys or small pet animals. But as he walked nearer, she gave a start and sat up straight. She was quite alone; there was no toy, there was no animal. There was nothing in the clearing that he could see except herself. Was it entirely the boy's fancy that he heard a faint scurrying sound in the bushes, as though something were running away?

He and the little girl stared at each other. He had never seen her before, and he thought her very odd and very pretty.

She was a very fair little girl, with hair the colour of wheat in the sun, and big gray eyes. Though she wore no hat, and seemed used to being out of doors, she was not tanned. Her skin was very delicate, yet she looked healthy enough. She had a quaint, attractive little face, with a mysterious, yet merry, expression. She appeared to be secretly amused and delighted about something all the time.

“Hello!” said Robin.

The little girl stared at him, but did not speak.

“Thought I saw you playing a minute ago,” he went on.

Still she stared, and not a word would she say. Robin felt a wee bit offended. It was rather hard making conversation with a girl who wouldn't talk back at all.

“You weren't playing alone, were you?” he ventured with a glance about.

The little girl suddenly laughed. It was a pretty laugh, sweet and merry. Her eyes sparkled, and she shook her head from side to side until her fair hair bobbed about in a tangle of curls. The idea of her having been playing alone seemed to strike her as very funny indeed. Robin smiled a little, too, out of sympathy, though he could not guess what she was laughing at.

“I say!” he exclaimed suddenly. “It is the queerest thing, but—I've just remembered who it is you look like. You look like Grandmother!”

With a peal of laughter, the little girl jumped up, turned quickly, and ran away like a hare through the wood. Robin could see her white dress

flitting, flitting, off among the trees. Farther—farther—one last glimmer, and it was gone. She had disappeared completely. And she had not spoken a single word!

Robin felt quite cross. The merry little stream seemed to be laughing at him.

He began to retrace his steps. In a few moments he met Saidie and Charming, very hot and crestfallen.

“Oh, Robin!” exclaimed his sister. “We’ve lost the Teddy Bears!”

“They wented away!” declared Charming solemnly.

“Nonsense!” said Robin. “How could you lose them?”

“Of course it does sound like nonsense,” admitted Saidie doubtfully.

“But we only turned our backs for a moment, and they were gone!”

Robin thought of the mysterious little girl in the white dress. She had looked as though she might be mischievous. Could she have hidden the bears, as a joke?

He told the others about finding her, and about her sudden disappearance.

“But you say she went *that* way,” objected Saidie pointing. “And we lost the bears in quite the opposite direction.”

“Well, we’ll go back and look for them again,” said Robin crossly.

“That is, if you really want the silly old things.”

“*I want vem,*” said Charming with a quivering lip. “*I luf ve bears!*”

The twisty-turny path seemed crookeder than ever, as they followed it once more.

“Isn’t it a funny wood?” said Saidie. “I truly do think it must be a sort of fairy forest, or”—

She stopped short.

“Why, I don’t remember *this* place before,” she began much surprised.

“O, hush!” whispered Charming. “*Vere* is ve bears! Don’t you see vem?”

They were looking into a beautiful little green glade, the sweetest and

most fairy-like place you could fancy. At the foot of a big tree stood the three lost Teddy Bears, leaning against the trunk; and at the opposite side of the little clearing stood the mysterious child in the white dress whom Robin had seen a short time before. She did not seem to notice them; she was looking at the Bears.

After a moment she walked up to the big tree and dropped down on her knees. Then she stared at the Bears as though she were thinking deeply.

The three toys stood stiffly, yet rakishly, erect, their brown plush arms and legs at queer angles, and their black shoe-button eyes very calm and indifferent. Mother Bear was wearing her yellow bow under her chin. The Baby Bear's red one was back of one ear. Only the superior Middle-Sized Bear had his ribbon properly tied.

The Little Girl raised her small forefinger, still looking gravely at the Bears. . . . Suddenly Saidie gave a little gasp.

"Oh, Robin!—Robin Goodfellow!" she exclaimed breathlessly. "The Big Bear has taken the Little Bear by the paw!"

They rubbed their eyes. It seemed as though they must be dreaming. Only Charming refused to be surprised.

"I knowed that somefing nice was going to happen!" he said triumphantly. "'Cause the Faiwies *is* at Wildwood now!"

The Little Girl turned in their direction and smiled. Evidently she had heard them talking. She beckoned, and they came rather shyly out into the little clearing. For the first time they heard her speak.

"Your Bears," she said, in a slow, careful way, as though she were not used to talking much—"your Bears want to invite you to a party!"

"A party!" repeated Saidie hardly able to believe her ears.

"The *Bears* want to invite us!" exclaimed Robin.

"I tolded you!" shouted Charming. "The Faiwies *is* at Wild—"

"Oh, look!" cried Saidie. "They—are—coming—to—*life!*"

The Three Bears took two stiff and awkward steps forward.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Toys' Holiday

SONG OF THE TOYS.

“ Oh, children kind,
Pray keep in mind,
The while you play to-day,
That Toys, like you,
Grow bored and blue,
And, oh, so tired of play!

“ Let us be free
Occasionally,
If you would have us thrive;
Let us be gay,
And run away
To dream we are alive!

“ OH, LOOK!” cried Charming.

“ What in the world ”—began Saidie staring.

“ Well, I never saw anything like *that!* ” said Robin.

Into the tiny green glade was pouring a mass of little objects, brightly painted and oddly-shaped, which moved jerkily, as if on wheels, and springs, and hinges.

“ What are they? ” whispered Saidie.

“ I—I’m fwightened! ” complained poor little Charming.

“ Don’t you see? ” exclaimed Robin, who was beginning to be really excited. “ They’re *toys!* ”

And that is just what they were! Toys—big and little, new and old, costly and common, pretty and ugly—every sort and condition of toy. They rattled and squeaked their way over the moss, seeming, in a curious

way, to be lively, yet not alive; able to move about, yet never able to forget that they were toys. And as they came into the glade they sang, in queer, creaky, squeaky voices.

At first the children could not hear what the song was about; but, in a minute, as their ears grew used to the sound, they were able to make out the words:

“Now look and see,
The Toys are free.
Just watch them all arrive!
For one short hour,
'Tis in our power
To *think* we are alive!”

“What do they mean?” asked Robin of the Little Girl.

“On one day in the year,” she answered, “all the toys in the world are free for an hour to run away to the woods for a holiday, and to pretend that they are alive. You have happened to come to the wood on that day. It is a Holiday of the Toys.”

“But how can they all have the same holiday?” demanded Robin, who was nothing if not practical. “Suppose I wanted to play with *my* toys to-day? Or suppose”—

“Ah, but you wouldn't want to!” said the Little Girl. “I don't know how it comes about, but the playthings are all free for one hour a year. It's a different hour each year; so you needn't try to figure it out and plan for it!” she added with a twinkle.

“Now, look at that!” exclaimed Saidie, pointing, in high excitement.

A number of Rubber Balls of all colours were bounding and rolling into the clearing. As they slid and bounced about, the children could hear a wheezy, whistling song rising from them:

“Oh, isn't it fun,
When work is done,
And we have been quite good,
To roll away,
And free, and gay,
Go bouncing in the wood!”

There was a sharp, clicking noise in the bushes:

“Click, clang! Click, clang! Click, clang!” Then a wee voice, like the squeak of a mouse, seemed to be giving tiny orders. Into the glade marched a regiment of Toy Soldiers! They dropped their leaden weapons, and stretched themselves on the moss, breaking at once into a lazy chorus:

“Though made for drill,
We've had our fill
Of brave and glorious fray;
The word ‘Rest arms!’
Has many charms
On a summer holiday!”

A number of coloured Blocks were piling themselves up in a wonderfully high and slender tower. Higher and higher they built themselves, till the children held their breath, expecting the toppling structure to tumble down every moment.

“They are building a fairy turret!” said the Little Girl. “They love to do it—poor dears! Children nearly always use them to make houses and fortresses and railroad-bridges; and they *do* get so bored!”

The song of the Blocks was rapped out in a dry and choppy manner:

“They use us for walls,
And forts, and halls,
Until this holiday hour,
When we *use ourselves*
In the land of elves,
And build a fairy tower!”

There was a sudden whirr of wire springs, and a snap of wooden lids, as dozens and dozens of Jumping-Jacks shot out of their boxes:

“To jump all day
Is far from gay
For even a jumping toy;
But while we are free
Like this, you see,
We really jump for joy!”

The clearing by this time was full of toys; and now they began to sing together:

“This Feast of Cheer
Will keep each year,
Whatever may arrive;
We'll all be gay
For one short day,
And dream we are alive!”

“But what is that noise?” said Robin. “Listen!”

Just outside the clearing they could hear a sound of weeping. The Little Girl laughed unsympathetically.

“Oh, those are the Dolls!” she explained. “They have to keep this Holiday like the others, but they hate it! They are silly creatures, and they do not feel happy nor comfortable out of doors. They are more at home in the nursery!”

The Dolls approached with lagging steps, and expressions of disgust on their wax and china faces. They tried to hold up their lace and silken skirts, but several had been already badly torn by the brambles. This is what they sang:

“*You* find your freedom cheerful,
You like to run and roam;
We think your Forest fearful;
We wish we were at home!

“We miss our clothes and laces,
We miss our brush and comb,
We know just what *our* place is;
We wish we were at home!”

“*You* like to go a-dancing
Upon the moss and loam;
Dolls were not made for prancing:
WE WISH WE WERE AT HOME!”

They sat down in a group by themselves, and cried bitterly from sheer vexation. None of the other Toys, however, took the slightest notice of them.

“What is the matter with the Rocking Horses?” asked Robin. “They look lonely.”

“They don't join in the fun very much,” said the Little Girl. “They are great thinkers and dreamers, and keep to themselves.”

“And do they always rock like that?”

“Always. This is the only day of the whole year when they can rock themselves. They are pretending that they are crossing mountains, and galloping at the head of battle-charges!”

The Rocking Horses began to sing:

“We are patient and strong, we are mild and good,
As any horses there are;
But we cannot stir from our rockers of wood,
And we always stay where we are.

“In our painted heads, 'neath our bristly manes,
We dream our horsey dreams;
And canter and trot on highways and plains,
And ford the rushing streams!

“In our dreams we come of Arabian stock,
That can gallop both fast and far;
And we rock, and rock, and rock, and rock,
But always stay where we are!”

“Poor darlings!” said Saidie, who was quite touched. “I didn't know that Toys were ever unhappy.”

“Oh, some of them are much more unhappy than the Rocking Horses!” returned the Little Girl. “Your Teddy Bear, for instance. Didn't you ever think how horrid it must be to be made like a big, fierce, strong, splendid animal, and to be only able to make people laugh at you?”

The children's toy bears had been making friends with a number of strange Teddies in the clearing. At this point they all began to sing, very sadly:

“We were made in the image of bears!
In our souls is the yearning to prow!
We long for our dens and our lairs,
And we'd ardently love to growl!

“We are funny, and stiff, and sedate,
But we try to pretend we are brave!
In the nursery corner we wait,
And we try to pretend it's a cave!

“Though we'd never do any one ill,
We'd *love* to give people a scare;
But they laugh in our faces still:
'It is only a *Teddy* Bear!’

“With shame and with woe we are full;
Our legs are quite *bowed* with our cares!
We are nothing but jokes stuffed with wool,
Though made in the image of bears!”

“I shall always be kinder to the poor Teddies after this!” said Saidie.
“I hope I haven't often hurt their feelings!”

“*Now* what are they going to do?” demanded Robin. For the Toys appeared to be moving away as rapidly as they had arrived.

“They are off to Fairyland!” answered the Little Girl, jumping up. She had been kneeling all this time, looking on.

“Come!” she cried to the children. “If you care to follow them, perhaps you can catch a glimpse of Fairyland yourselves!”

“Fairyland!” repeated all three in wonder.

“Have *you* ever been there?” asked Saidie.

The Little Girl laughed and ran on with the Toys.

The crowd of playthings was moving away now very fast. It stretched far, far ahead along the winding path. The shrill little voices echoed through the woods, the painted and gilded curves and angles showed up brightly against the soft-toned grass and moss. It was the strangest sight that mortal children ever saw.

"Come!" cried Robin to his brother and sister.

The three caught hands, and ran after the Toys. The Little Girl had disappeared.

". . . Oh, magic joy,
For every Toy,
To dream it is alive! . . ."

piped the queer little things. And the forest echoes caught up the last line over and over:

". . . We dream we are alive. . . .
. . . We dream we are alive. . . ."

"Now we are going to find Fairyland at last!" cried Saidie, happily.

"Don't be too sure!" discouraged Robin, who was often something of a wet-blanket.

The army of Toys was moving faster and faster.

"Oh, *hwwwy!*" panted Charming.

"I say!" exclaimed Robin, stumbling as he ran. "We'll never be able to catch up with them if they keep on at this rate!"

"Look!—They are going faster than ever!" cried his sister. Her sash was untied, she had lost her hair-ribbon, and her hair was blowing about her face and getting into her eyes. She put up an impatient hand to brush it away—stumbled over the trailing sash-end—and tumbled headlong!

"Oh, dear!" she gasped, sitting up very breathless.

"Oh, Sai-dee, you isn't hurted?" cooed little Charming, sympathetically.

Robin took her hand and pulled her on to her feet. Saidie gave a little shriek.

"The Toys!" she cried. "Where are they?"

They looked from right to left, ahead—even behind them! There was not a sign of the many-colored, stiffly-moving troop of playthings. Not a stray animal remained; not an odd Building-Block, not a single Doll, not

a forgotten Rubber-Ball. They had all jumped, and rolled, and rocked, and bounded into Fairyland, and the children were left behind.

Charming sat down on the ground and burst into tears.

"Isn't we ever going to Faiwy-land?" he wailed. "An—I—wants—my—Bear!"

"That's so!" exclaimed Robin. "Our Bears have gone off with the rest! This *is* a funny adventure!"

"Let's walk along after them a little way anyhow," suggested Saidie. "Our Bears might be kinder and more thoughtful than the rest, you know. We may meet them coming back!"

They trudged along among the growing shadows. Evidently it was getting late; the sun must be low. Whether they found the Bears or not, they must soon be starting for home, or Grandmother would worry.

Suddenly the winding path turned sharply, and—

They were looking into the very little glade which they had just left!

Either they had been walking in a big circle, or the wood was even more magical than they had supposed. There was the green clearing which a minute before had been filled with the escaped Toys. And—most wonderful of all,—there was the Little Girl, who seemed to be so very intimate with the playthings, and so at home in the forest! She was once more kneeling on the moss, her tumbled fair hair hanging on her shoulders, and her small forefinger once more gravely raised. And in front of her leaning against the trunk of the big tree—stiff, lifeless, yet somehow wearing a very knowing and superior look—stood the Three Teddy Bears!

"How do you do?" said the Little Girl, nodding to the children and speaking as though she were meeting them for the first time that day. "Aren't these your Bears? You'd better take them home with you."

The children could not tell whether or not she was laughing in her sleeve. They only knew that they felt most bewildered and rather tired. Silently they walked into the clearing and picked up the Big Bear, the Middle Sized Bear and Little Bear.

They and the Little Girl bowed politely to each other.

"We're much obliged," said Robin brusquely—whether for the Bears or the adventure he did not explain.

The Little Girl smiled very prettily, and again she bowed. Robin decided that she *was* laughing at them a little!

Then they went away and left her sitting in the wood by herself.

"Now, was it all a dream?" said Saidie.

"No!" said Robin shortly. "Look in that basket!"

There was not a particle of luncheon left,—not a bread crumb, not a bit of cake-frosting, not a drop of milk! And *they* had not had even a taste!

And as they stared at each other and at the empty basket, Charming held out the littlest Bear without a word. The red bow under the brown plush chin was full of cake crumbs. On the muzzles of all three beasts was a fleeting expression of greedy triumph.

The children gasped.

The Three Teddy Bears had eaten up their luncheon!

CHAPTER SIX

The Shadow Room

“ . . . Shadows of things, shadows of souls,
Shadows of roses and ancient days;
A shadow of song that faintly tolls
Back from the past with its ancient ways.

“Shadows of childhood, shadows of fate,
Painted there in the mirror’s gleam;
Fairy tales early, memories late,
A shadowy past that is fled like a dream” . . .

The Mirror.

THE next day Grandmother took them to an unused wing of the house, and let them rummage among ancient spinning wheels and carved chests and cabinets full of quaint old curiosities, most of which had been brought from the East by their great-great-grandfather. There were odd bits of ivory and silver, and lumps of dull-coloured green stone set in roughly beaten gold, and little figures of porcelain and ebony. There were many more of these curious and valuable things in the great drawing-room down stairs, of course, but Grandmother liked to keep a few of her treasures where no one but herself could see them. They were not the most costly ones, but for her they were rich in memories.

She also showed them ball-dresses which *her* grandmother had worn at Colonial parties, yellowed satin slippers and delicate old fans and many things which she had saved to remind her of her own childhood and girlhood.

“[And now,” she said, unlocking the last door, “you must see my dear, dear Shadow Room!”

The Shadow Room was under the roof. It was long and low with a ceiling that sloped down on one side almost to the floor. It was papered

with a strange, old, faded paper that was covered with ghostly trees. To look at it was exactly like looking through a misty orchard. The tree-design was of no particular colour—it all blended with the shadows.

The windows were small and somewhat dusty and the light fell in queer patterns on the floor. There were pieces of furniture old and heavy, and curtains of faded flowered cretonne, and everywhere there were shadows. It seemed almost as though they were moving shadows as well as still ones—shadows that walked about, and slipped in and out of chairs, and joined each other, and stood in dim corners waiting. Oh, it was a *very* queer room—a room that made you want to talk in whispers.

“What a funny mirror!” exclaimed Saidie.

“It is very old,” returned her Grandmother. “It has been in this room ever since I can remember. My poor Lucy used to say it was a Fairy Mirror. She loved to sit here with her sewing, and she always insisted that she could see all sorts of pictures in that looking-glass.”

“Who was Lucy?” asked Saidie timidly.

“My little niece, dear, the daughter of my beloved sister who died. She spent her childhood here with my own children. That was thirty years ago.”

“And she used to look at herself in that very Mirror,” murmured Saidie.

The Mirror was high and narrow with a plain heavy frame of dark wood, and a square panel at the top which had a prim little landscape painted on it. There was a thin line of worn gilding, and the mirror itself looked dull and lifeless as though it were weary of reflecting only shadows.

“How funny!” cried Saidie peering into it. “You can hardly see yourself in this looking-glass!”

“It’s the light, I expect,” said Robin. “Probably there are certain hours when the room is bright enough to see clearly.”

“Right, Puck!” said their Grandmother smiling. “I believe that it is true that there are only certain hours when you can look into the Mirror in the Shadow Room.”

“Grandmother,” said Saidie shyly, “I simply *love* your calling it the Shadow Room! It sounds just like a story-book place!”

“Perhaps it *is* a story-book place,” responded Grandmother. “There have been a great many stories lived here.”

“Tell us one!” suggested Robin with interest.

“My dears,” answered Grandmother gently, “it would make me very sad to tell you. The stories that have been lived in this room, the things that I remember when I come here, are things that happened in my own life, a great, great many years ago. And some of them are very sorrowful.”

She hesitated a moment, then sat slowly down in an old, faded, damask rocking-chair, and looked about her.

“Will one of you open that chest, my loves?” she said. “The big one there in the corner where Charming is playing.”

Saidie and Robin hastened to lift the lid; a very, very faint smell of lavender rose from the inside. Grandmother shaded her eyes with her hand.

“What is lying on top?” she said. “I forget . . . You see, it is nearly thirty years since I packed that chest.”

“Grandmother!” they exclaimed in wonder; then fell to examining the contents of the old box.

Everything in it seemed to have belonged to a child and was dainty and pretty and very gaily coloured. There were many garments of bright red, and some simple jewelry. And there were some teacups wrapped carefully in tissue paper, and a number of playthings—chiefly toy animals. The children were much amused by one enormous monkey made of stuffed brown velvet, with the most ugly and foolish face they had ever seen. Their Toy Bears were handsome and bright-looking compared to it!

Grandmother smiled when she saw it!

“Poor Lucy!” she said, “how devoted she was to that awful monkey! Your Grandfather bought it for her as a joke, for she had always said that most toy animals were not nearly big enough!”

“Were these things all ‘Lucy’s?’” asked Robin.

“They all belonged to your little Cousin Lucy, dears. I want some of them to belong to you.”

“Grandmother,” said Saidie, hesitating a trifle, “did she—die?”

“She disappeared, my dear,” replied Grandmother quietly. “I do not know whether she is living or not. But I fear that she must be dead.”

“Disappeared!” they repeated. “*Disappeared*, Grandmother!”

“We never knew what became of her. There were Gypsies in the neighborhood; and they, too, vanished during the night on which we lost her. But we never could find a trace of her, and I have mourned for her all these years, as though she had been one of my own little girls.”

How strange it seemed to the children! They had heard of such things, but had not known that they ever really happened to people. They looked at the clothes and toys with new interest.

“And now,” went on Grandmother, more cheerfully, “let us pick out our keepsakes from the chest! Take that scarlet cloak with the hood for yourself, Princess Saidie!”

Saidie put on the bright and pretty garment with delight. She had never owned anything so brilliant before, and, though she was rather a quiet little girl in her tastes, she was quite pleased to find herself wearing something truly gay.

“Little Red Riding Hood!” said Grandmother smiling. “Charming, I think you must have one of these pretty cups for your cocoa and cambric tea. It was a Valentine to Lucy from her cousins—see, it has red hearts painted on it! And, Robin, would you like that unfortunate-looking monkey?”

The three children took the presents, gratefully—though Robin had not much opinion of Cousin Lucy’s monkey! The fact that they had belonged to their mysterious lost cousin made them seem very interesting and precious things to have.

“I am sure that they are, every single one, *magical* things!” declared Saidie seriously. “And I know that she—Cousin Lucy—was right—about

the Mirror, you know. It *is* a fairy one! I am sure that *we* can see pictures in it, too, some day."

"They say," remarked Grandmother, "that a very old Mirror always has the power to show pictures of the past—things that have been reflected in it in times gone by. Perhaps Lucy's Mirror is like that!"

But she laughed gently, as though she did not quite mean what she said.

"It feels close here," she went on, rising as she spoke, "and I think it smells musty, too. Children, will you put the things away?—And then come to me in the garden. I am going to cut some roses."

She went out, leaning on her cane, and they began to lay poor Lucy's belongings back in the old chest. Then they hurried off to the nursery to leave their presents there, safe in Nurse's care.

"Did she take ye to that room, the dear soul?" said Nurse, with tears in her eyes. "Faith, 'tis many a long day since she could bear to go near it! I remember Miss Lucy well—a wild slip of a thing, and blond as the corn-silk! Eh—well, that is thirty years gone, and I was a young nursemaid. And now I am tending the children of the children I cared for thin! Och, 'tis a quare world! Run off, dears. An' have a care," she added solemnly, "how ye go trapsing into that room by yourselves, sure! I'm thinking there may be ghosts living there now!"

As the children were on their way to the rose-garden, Robin suddenly remembered that they had not closed the lid of the chest. He went back to shut it, and the others insisted on going, too; for, in spite of what Nurse had said, they were longing to get another peep at the Shadow Room.

It seemed more mysterious than ever on this second visit. Saidie gave a little shiver.

"It's—it's creepy!" she declared.

"Pooh!" said Robin, "it's just the way it was a minute ago, when we were here with Grandmother!"

"I don't care," his sister insisted. "It *is* creepy!"

They shut the chest, and turned to go. Suddenly, Charming caught hold of Saidie's dress, with a little cry, and they all stood rooted to the floor.

"Look!" whispered Saidie excitedly. "Robin, look! *The wall-paper is getting real!*"

. . . It *was* an odd effect! The orchard-pattern on the wall seemed, before their very eyes, to change, and grow, and become distinct. . . . Between the shadowy trunks and branches a rosy light was shining. It was not quite like a sunrise nor a sunset, yet it suggested both. It was a faint light, yet very clear, and the children were all quite certain that they could see the trees on the wall-paper move lightly in an unfelt wind. . . .

The next moment they *did* feel it! A breath, fresh and cool, as though it had blown through a grove, touched their faces. They felt drowsy, as though they were sitting out of doors on a summer day. . . . They forgot all about being in the Shadow Room; they felt exactly the way one does in a dream—contented and interested, with a queer, heavy feeling about the feet, and a queer, light feeling about the head.

"Robin," breathed Saidie, her eyes as round as saucers, "I've the funniest feeling!"—

"So have I," said her brother.

"*I fink,*" declared Charming, with an expression of complete and unterrified delight, "I fink vat it's *luffy!*"

"Do you know," Saidie went on, "I believe—that now—this minute—if we should look in the Mirror"—

With one accord they all three turned, and fixed their eyes upon the dim and shadowy surface of the old looking-glass. . . .

And they did not see their own reflections there!

. . . Instead, they saw like a picture in a frame, a little girl. But this picture was not like other pictures: it moved. For the little girl was sewing. It was rather as if they gazed through a window, and saw without being seen.

The little girl looked somehow familiar, though the children did not

remember where they could have seen her before, and they were certain that they had never seen a dress quite like hers. It was a bright red plaid, with a short full skirt, and pretty little white pantalettes showing beneath it. It was cut with a low neck and short sleeves; and the little girl wore a round gold locket on a thin chain, and a tiny pin in the shape of a bird. She had white stockings and black slippers, and the latter had double straps that crossed over the insteps and buttoned around the ankles.

Her face was round and fair, and her hair was very light, indeed—as light as that of the Little Girl in the Wood. Only the flaxen locks of the Little Wood Girl hung in disorder about her neck, while this quaint child had hers neatly and smoothly parted, and braided into two tight yellow pigtails, which were doubled up on each side of her head, and tied behind each little ear with trim bows of scarlet ribbon.

As the little girl sewed, she held her work away from her from time to time, regarding it critically with her head on one side. They saw that it was a small canvas sampler, with some stiff little trees worked on it, and the beginning of a name. The children could make out the letters: “Lucinda Charlo”—and the beginning of a “t.”

They looked at each other, almost too excited to breathe. The little girl who was embroidering her name on the sampler must be “Cousin Lucy,” who had been stolen away by the Gypsies thirty years ago! The Magic Mirror was showing them pictures of the past!

CHAPTER SEVEN

“Snow-White and the Magic Mirror”

“. . . So the wicked Queen, who had some knowledge of witchcraft, went to Snow-White’s door, and knocked for the third time. . . ‘I may not let you in!’ said Snow-White. ‘But only see what I have here!’ cried the witch. ‘It is the prettiest thing you ever saw!’ . . . Then poor little Snow-White opened the door, and let her in”

Old Fairy Book

SUDDENLY they saw that there was a second figure in the Mirror—that of a tall woman, dark and foreign-looking, who was evidently speaking to the child, and smiling as she talked. She was dressed in bright colours and wore much coarse jewelry, and though she was quite young, she looked as though she might grow into a witch some day!

She carried a string of odd-looking beads, of every tint in the rainbow. She showed them to the little girl, who stopped sewing to look at them. She must be a funny little girl, the children thought, for though she seemed interested in the pretty necklace, she did not put her hand out for it, nor even seemed to want to touch it.

“She’s not like most girls!” said Robin out loud, as though it were all real,—as perhaps it was!

“It reminds me—it reminds me—” murmured Saidie, knitting her brows—“What *is* it that it reminds me of?” . . .

The woman disappeared from the Mirror, and the little girl was left alone sewing on her sampler.

“It’s some sort of story,” said Robin, also trying to remember.

“Some sort of fairy story, I think,” went on Saidie. “Isn’t it, Charming? You usually remember”—

Robin touched her arm, and she stopped.

The witch-like woman had re-appeared in the Mirror, and was smiling

in the most friendly way possible at the little girl. This time her hands were full of some new, strange kind of flowers, as blue as the sky. The little girl clapped her hands, and dropped her sampler. She seemed to be begging the dark woman to give her some of the flowers, but the woman shook her head and laughed. She began to move away, and the little girl gazed after her pleadingly, but did not attempt to follow her.

“What was the story,” muttered Saidie, still trying to remember, “when the wicked witch comes and tempts the princess to let her in with one pretty thing after another?”

“There was a stepmother in it,” said Robin.

“And an apple,” added Saidie.

“It was ‘Snow-White and ve Magic Miwwor,’” declared Charming, who knew all there was to know about fairy tales. “And look! Ve Dweadful Person is coming back!”

This third time, the woman moved very slowly, and her face was rather fierce, the children thought. In her arm she carried something very small and gray—what was it? At first they could not see, for she held a fold of her cloak about it. But suddenly the cloak fell back. And there was a little gray squirrel, hurt or sick. They could see its bushy tail, and its tiny bright eyes.

“Poor little thing!” said Saidie pitifully. “How pretty it is!”

The little girl in the Mirror ran to the woman and began to stroke the squirrel. She seemed to be asking questions. Although they could not of course hear anything, they felt that they could tell perfectly what the two were saying. The little girl was begging to be let to take the squirrel and cure it, and the woman would not give it up. The little girl evidently explained that she knew what to do for sick animals. The woman seemed doubtful, but at last showed plainly that she wanted the little girl to come with her and show her what to do for the squirrel. Then the Dreadful Person, as Charming called her, turned and walked away—and this time the little girl followed her!

The woman moved slowly, but she did not stop nor turn, and the child

hurried after her with outstretched hands. And suddenly they were no longer in the Mirror. The glass looked dull and misty once more, and as they stared they saw, like people awaking from a dream, that their own faces were now reflected there instead of the pictures of the past. With one accord, they wheeled around, and looked behind them, but there was nothing to be seen. The Shadow Room was quite empty.

"That was the way they went!" said Robin pointing.

"No, it was the other way," exclaimed Saidie.

"Vey was standing *vere!*" declared Charming.

He indicated with a chubby forefinger. And sure enough, there on the floor, close to the wall, lay an unfinished, much faded sampler, with the words "Lucinda Charlot" worked upon it.

They looked at each other.

"Of course," said Saidie rather shakily, "*we must* have left it on the floor, and not noticed it before!"

"Of course!" agreed Robin stoutly. "And the trees look all right, again now, don't they? The wall seems solid enough at present!"

He hit the wall lightly with his fist. To his amazement it gave way under his hand, and they found themselves looking through a narrow open doorway, into a very dark and dusty passage-way only just wide and high enough to hold a single person, and not a very large person at that!

"Oh, Robin!" whispered Saidie. "Just think! It must have been this way that poor little Cousin Lucy went, when the Gypsies coaxed her to go away!"

They started down the passage-way, and found it very dark and dusty, and full of cobwebs. Charming stopped once with a surprised and enquiring face.

"Vat spider speaked to me!" he announced with certainty. But no one else heard anything at all.

It was cold, too, as though the passage had been shut up for many years, but it was very short. While they could still see the light from

the Shadow Room, they found themselves at the top of a tiny crooked staircase.

Charming gave a little crow of pleasure.

“Isn’t vis *lufly*?” he exclaimed.

“Like a book,” said Robin.

“I think it is nice, but—creepy!” said Saidie, falling back on her pet word.

They went down the stairs, which creaked and squeaked in the most alarming way, and at the bottom they found a small, narrow door about the size of the secret one upstairs in the Shadow Room. There was a rusty, dusty key in the lock, and with much straining of muscle, Robin managed to turn it. The door opened stiffly, but it did open, and outside was the lovely June day, warm and sunny. They seemed to have come out at the back or side of the house and were facing a part of Wildwood which they had not seen before.

They found themselves in the queerest little garden in the world. It was *very* small—no bigger than the littlest back yard in a city, but it was neat and carefully tended. There was not a weed to be seen, and all the vines and creepers, just starting their new shoots, had pegs and strings up which to climb. The brick wall was warm and sunny, waiting to be covered by green tendrils. Geraniums and hyacinths, heliotrope and mignonette were already making the narrow borders gay; the grass was young and fresh. The children recognized the big flat leaves—those of nasturtiums round and slightly scalloped, and those of morning-glories in the shape of hearts. Altogether it was a dear little garden, and so beautifully trim and dainty that a fairy might well have tended it!

There was not a soul in sight, and the stillness and loneliness of the little garden frightened them.

They imagined that they heard faint footsteps behind them and stirrings all about them, and they found themselves willing to give up their curiosity, because of their fear. They quickly found a gate in the neat stone wall, and ran through, leaving it blowing in the wind.

A moment's racing down the side of the old house brought them to the rose-garden. There they found Grandmother, with a big pair of gardening shears and a basket, cutting the beautiful pink and yellow and white and crimson blooms for the rose bowls in the parlour.

"Where have you been, chickens?" she asked pleasantly, as they rushed up to her breathless and excited. "Bless me, what madcaps you are! You certainly were made for country life, my loves."

"Grandmother!" exclaimed Saidie. "You were telling us about—about—Lucy—I mean Cousin Lucy"—

"Yes," chimed in Charming. "Lu-cin-da Char-lot— Oh, Grandmother! Wasn't I called for her *middle* name?"

"And, Grandmother," Robin went on, "you were quite right about its being Gypsies who stole her away!"

"And we know *how* they stole her!" added Saidie.

"Oh, wait—wait!—" exclaimed poor Grandmother. "Let me see—what was it you asked me first?"

"About Cousin Lucy and the Gypsies," prompted Robin.

Grandmother looked from one to the other of them and then went on quietly:

"We always supposed that the Gypsies enticed Lucy away by showing her something strange or lovely. She was very fearless and trusting, and loved pretty things!"

"It was a Animal!" said Charming promptly. "A Animal vat was wery ill. An' ve woman—ve Dweadful Person, you know—showed him to Lu-cin-da—Char-lot—"

"*Charming!*" said Grandmother looking frightened. "What can you mean? And what do you know of Lucinda Charlotte?"

"It was your niece, you know, Lucy," explained Robin. "The one you were telling us about, Grandmother!"

"But I am sure—yes, I am quite sure—that I did not say that her name was Lucinda Charlotte. I only called her Lucy."

"It—it was on the sampler," said Saidie.

She knew that it was a stupid way to tell Grandmother what they had seen; but it was all Charming's fault—blurting it out in one breath. . . . It was all *some one's* fault, anyway—not hers!

“Oh, was there a sampler in the chest?” said Grandmother, still mystified, but a trifle relieved. “I didn't remember one.”

This was too much for Charming.

“It weren't in ve chist!” he said frowning. “It were in ve Looking-Glass!”

Grandmother sat down suddenly on a garden bench.

“The Looking-Glass!” she repeated in a whisper. “Are you talking of the Mirror in the Shadow Room? Have you been there all this time?”

“Oh, yes, Grandmother!” exclaimed Saidie eagerly. “And the paper got real—and we looked in the mirror—and we saw her quite plainly—and she had on a red dress”——

“Sarah!” said Grandmother almost sharply. “Talk clearly and sensibly! Every one of you children begin at the wrong end of a story and tell it backward!”

Not quite clearly and sensibly, but at least more intelligibly than heretofore, her grandchildren managed to tell her what they had seen in the Shadow Room. Grandmother listened intently.

“Was that the way they induced her to go away?” she murmured. “My poor little Lucy!—her heart was so tender! She never could bear to see an animal in distress.” Then she seemed to rouse herself with a start. “My dears,” she said gently, “perhaps you imagined what you saw, or dreamed it, or perhaps— Well, who knows what strange power may lie even in an old mirror? There are a great, great many things we can not understand yet. Don't think about them, my loves, but run away and play. Only don't play in the Shadow Room! Not for a little while, at any rate!”

“Grandmother,” questioned Robin curiously. “Of course, you knew all about the secret door and the little passage-way?”

“Yes; the door was covered with paper, just like the rest of the room.

Lucy loved to use the tiny passage. She said it was so romantic! Did you go through it?"

"Oh, yes," said Robin. "And it brought us out at the queerest place, a sort of little garden with high walls, at the back of the house."

"It was Lucy's garden," said Grandmother. "The three rooms opening on to it, on the other side of the staircase, were play-rooms, where she and my own children used to play."

"And are they never used now?" said Saidie. "They looked quite deserted!"

"They were shut up entirely for many years. But I opened them again this spring, oddly enough. I wanted a place to put the woman Roma and the little girl who is with her, and those rooms are just what they need."

"Roma!" repeated Robin, to whom the name was new.

"Who is Roma, Grandmother?" asked Saidie.

"A very peculiar person—foreign, I think—who asked me for work. She is supposed to be quite a remarkable gardener in her way, and is as strong as a man. She has come here for the summer to help old Haines. I told her she could bring the child. She has promised that the little thing will give no trouble, and certainly she has been quiet enough so far! I have hardly seen her, in fact. You children must be kind to her."

"Oh, it will be nice having another little girl here!" cried Saidie, enthusiastically. "Of course we shall be kind to her, Grandmother, dear!"

"What is she like?" asked Robin. All the Goodman children, as you may have noticed, had a gift for putting questions!

Grandmother smiled, and turned to look across the rose-beds. Two figures, a tall and a short, were walking quickly over the lawn to the grape-arbour which led to the back of the house.

"There they are now," she said. "Look quickly before they are out of sight!"

The taller figure was that of a large, heavy woman, extremely old, but

walking erect still. She was dressed in a long, brown cloak, and had a dark red handkerchief twisted about her iron-gray hair, and big ear-rings showing brightly against her wrinkled brown skin. She was as withered as a dead leaf or a piece of dried bark, but her eyes were brilliant and crafty. She carried a basket filled with green stuff, and a heavy stick.

Before her flitted a little girl in a white dress—a little girl with a very fair skin, and masses of tumbled light hair.

“Oh! *Oh!* How funny!” exclaimed the children, with one voice.

For she was their Little Girl of the Wood!

CHAPTER EIGHT

“*Beauty and the Beast*”

“. . . Beauty began to feel pity for the poor Beast. ‘Dear!’ said she, ‘what a sad thing it is that he should be so very frightful, since he is so good-tempered!’ . . .”

—*Old Fairy Book.*

“**I** REALLY do think,” said Saidie, “that that monkey is the ugliest thing I ever saw in my life!”

She was gazing in a fascinated way at the large brown-velvet ape which Grandmother had given Robin from the contents of Cousin Lucy’s chest. The unfortunate and hideous toy was sitting on a chair staring into space, and Saidie was sitting opposite, with a gaze almost as fixed as the monkey’s. The poor thing had so far been anything but a success in the present-day Wildwood nursery. Robin, its rightful owner, scorned it, declaring it to be a silly thing, not a bit like a real animal, and “too big to lug about, anyway!” Charming was frankly afraid of it, for even his tender heart could not get used to its expression of feeble-minded ugliness.

Saidie was the remaining last hope of the monkey! She did not like it; indeed, at times it seemed to her that she disliked it more violently than she would have thought it possible to dislike a toy. It fascinated her in a funny way, *because* it was so homely; but most of all it irritated her. She wished heartily that Grandmother had never given it to them, and that it had never belonged to poor Lucy. Then they might have lost it on purpose! But as it was, Grandmother’s feelings would be hurt if they did not take good care of it.

All this was trying enough. What made it worst of all was that “the Beast,” as the children called it, seemed to have taken a great fancy to Saidie!

All this may sound very crazy to *you*, but even thoughtless Robin noticed it, and spoke of the toy as “Saidie’s Animal.”

“Look at the Beast!” he would say. “He is looking at Saidie as though he were a dog!”

Saidie was indignant when he said this.

“How can you, Rob! The idea of comparing that ugly, horrible thing with a dear, live, lovely human dog!”

“A human dog!”—This a jeer from Robin. “I like that!”

Charming sighed heavily.

“Ve Beast,” he declared, “did come in f’om ve uvver woom by himselluf just now.”

“That’s nonsense, of course,” said Robin. “But you know I *did* think he was in the back nursery when we went down stairs to luncheon.”

“He was,” said Saidie briefly. “Ugh!—You ugly thing!” She made a face at the motionless toy. “Following me about like that!”

Of course they never could be certain that the Beast did follow her around. Naturally they did not *see* him walk about, and they never remembered, “certain sure” whether one of them had not carried him from place to place. But it was rather queer and weird, and did not make them any fonder of their new and most ungainly toy.

On the occasion when the Beast and Saidie were sitting opposite each other, and she was meditating on his extreme ugliness, rather an odd thing happened. The Beast suddenly over balanced himself and fell sideways, leaning on the arm of the chair, in the funniest kind of imitation of Saidie’s own position.

“Sai-dee!” gasped Charming. “Ve Beast, he does look eggsackly like you!”

“Charming!” wailed poor Saidie. “How can you be so unkind? I am sure I can’t be as ugly as that!”

“Nobody could!” Robin agreed. “But all the same Charming’s right. There’s the same look about you both. I think he’s trying to copy you;—maybe he means it as a compliment!”

From that day Saidie's troubles increased a hundredfold. The Beast did seem to be mimicking her. Like a great many little girls, she had a few foolish airs and graces, silly ways of tossing her head, and fiddling with her fingers. Robin often said that he would recognize Saidie's way of drinking out of a tea-cup if he only saw her shadow on a blind. And some of these little personal tricks (mannerisms, grown-ups call them) were now faintly noted in the attitudes of the Beast.

Accidentally, as it were, he would fall into poses that were strikingly like Saidie's; his ugly head would tilt stiffly to one side like hers; he would seem to be trying to arrange his shapeless paws the way she held her hands. Of course he could not move—at least not while they were looking at him—but whenever they would leave him alone a minute and then return they would find him sitting primly up, in the most absurd imitation of Saidie when she was trying to put on airs!

It was perhaps good for the little girl, for it showed her how ridiculous she often made herself. But oh! how she hated it! And how doubly and trebly she hated the Beast!

One day she found one of her best ribbons knotted awkwardly about the monkey's neck.

"Did *you* do this, Rob?" she demanded almost tearfully.

"Not I!" returned her brother crossly. "You must have done it yourself—I'm sure Charming wouldn't touch the thing with a poker!—You must have! Unless—" he added, "the Beast did it himself, dear thing!"

"I can't see how you can joke about it," said Saidie wearily. "Here, Beast!—do please stop looking at me!"

She plumped the big toy down on the garden seat opposite, and turned its head away from her. One of its stiff brown arms instantly flew up so that the flat, stitched hand rested bashfully against its mouth, giving it the most idiotic simper imaginable. Robin shouted with laughter.

"He's shy!" he declared. "Give him some tea, and make him feel at home!"



It was four o'clock, and they were having “tea”—consisting of milk-and-water and cakes—on one end of the veranda. They loved to do this, and Grandmother encouraged it, for she approved of their being out of doors as much as possible.

Somehow the Beast had gotten there too. They did not know who had brought him, but there he was smirking at them with glassy eyes. Robin, still laughing, put a cup of cambric tea in front of him, and though the Beast naturally could not drink it, he swayed over until one wobbly arm rested on the tea-table, and seemed to enjoy feeling that he was one of the party!

As Saidie, very depressed and sulky, drank *her* cambric tea, she came to a slow but certain decision. She could not and would not stand the Beast another day! *She would lose him!* He belonged to Robin, to be sure, but Robin would not care what became of him. And as for Grandmother—Saidie knew that Grandmother would be sorry to see anything happen to her gift, but she felt desperately that she could not help that. She could not endure the Beast, and he must go forever!

She had just come to this conclusion when Grandmother herself appeared

“Your tea looks pleasanter than mine!” she said. “Dear me! There is Lucy’s monkey! Really—” and Grandmother put her glasses on and stared—“really the creature looks quite natural!”

She dropped the glasses and went on.

“I came to bring you an invitation, my loves! Mrs. Crandall, of Cranberry Farm, is giving a party for her little daughters to-morrow, and you are all asked!”

There was much delight over this. They had not been to a party since they came to Wildwood. Saidie, being a girl, was particularly pleased.

Grandmother further explained that she must take with her her best dolly in its best dress, for Mrs. Crandall was offering a prize for the prettiest and most daintily dressed doll!

“I will give you a piece of old brocade which was part of one of my

dresses fifty years ago," dear Grandmother promised. "And Nurse will help you make your little doll-lady a new gown. Let me see, the best one is Louisa, isn't it?"

"How sweet of you to remember!" said Saidie gratefully. "Yes, Grandmother, darling,—her name is Louisa Geraldine Frances Valentina"—

"That's *quite* enough!" exclaimed Grandmother laughing. "Don't tell me any more of her names!"—

"Those *are* all, anyway," said Saidie.

"I wonder," queried Grandmother, "whether the monkey would like to go to the party?"

"I bet he would!" exclaimed Robin. But Saidie cried hastily—"Oh, *no*, Grandmother! I'm sure he would feel out of place."

Grandmother laughed and left them.

The last suggestion had really terrified Saidie. The Beast was bad enough at home. She simply *could not* go to a party with him! He must indeed be lost; and what was more, he must be lost at once—now, without a single hour's delay!

She thought the matter over quickly and desperately. Down by the large west garden was a stone wall, over which one could just see the country road, where the farm wagons rattled by every day, and herds of peaceful cattle were driven home at sunset. The wall was almost hidden, at one point, by lilacs and syringa bushes. The Goodman children rarely played there; and there Saidie decided to leave the troublesome Beast to his own devices. Perhaps some adventurous tramp or bird-nesting school boy would climb over and carry him off. At any rate, he—even he! could not travel from there back to the house, all by himself!

Watching her opportunity, she seized the monkey when no one was looking, and slipped away in a panic of haste. She felt horribly guilty as she scurried along the edge of the lawn, dragging the heavy and cumbersome monkey after her. She sighed with relief when she reached the shadow of the lilac bushes.

She had a dreadful feeling that the Beast was grieved and hurt because

she was treating him so heartlessly. One part of her brain told her that he was only a toy, and that he could not feel anything; but the other part insisted that she was a bad, cruel girl, and ought to be ashamed of herself. She was able, however, to put a stop to this second inner voice, and she bore the Beast into the darkest and best hidden part of the thick shrubbery that edged the garden wall. There she sat him down, leaning against the roots of a syringa bush.

She left him without a backward glance (she dreaded the reproachful stare of his beady eyes!) and fled guiltily back to the house.

An odd thing happened on her way back. She wondered a little about it at the time, but soon forgot it; later she remembered it.

She heard some one singing in the apparently empty rose garden as she passed near it. It was a soft little voice, but not small enough to be that of a Fairy. It might be a little girl, or a *very* little boy. And this—or something like it—was the song:

“Human children cry
 And sigh,
 Bearing bothers without end;
 If the skies are black or fair
 Shall I care?
 I am the Fairies’ Friend!

“Human children sulk
 And skulk,
 Lessons to learn, and things to mend;
 If the days turn cross or kind,
 Shall I mind?
 I am the Fairies’ Friend!”

Saidie had no time to listen longer; and, anyway, the garden looked dark and ghostly, and she ran on as fast as she could to the house. Just before she reached it she was almost sure that she saw a small white figure flit around a corner.

“I do believe that is the queer Little Girl!” thought Sadie. “I wonder if it was she who was singing in the garden?”

She said nothing about it to any one, however, for she did not want the others to know what she had done with the beast. And she never told a soul where she had been.

That night it rained, and Saidie hardened her heart as she thought of the poor Beast getting slowly soaked among the shrubs. Perhaps by this time some boys or fairies or tramps or gypsies or *some one* had found the creature and carried it off. Anyway she made up her mind not to think of it any more.

"Where's your friend, the Beast?" demanded Robin at tea.

"I must have left him outside!" answered Saidie truthfully.

"Maybe he's lost!" suggested Robin, who was always hopeful.

Charming sighed a patient little sigh.

"Oh, I *hopes* he is losted!" he murmured wearily. He had bitterly disliked the Beast.

Nobody else spoke of him. Nurse did not even seem to notice his disappearance; and Saidie, as she curled herself up in bed that night, told herself with satisfaction that she had succeeded in getting rid of the Beast for good.

The next morning, the day of the party at Cranberry Farm, it was still raining; but Grandmother telephoned to Mrs. Crandall in the morning, and found that the guests would be expected that afternoon just the same, no matter what the weather might be. The competition of pretty dolls would take some time, and there would be indoor games, and tea, and a candy-pull.

Saidie spent an exciting morning getting Louisa Geraldine Frances Valentina ready for the contest. The doll seemed to understand how important she was that day, and there was an anxious expression about her fixed, pink-and-white smile. Grandmother had hunted up a lovely bit of flowered silk—all cream and roses and little bows of blue ribbon—and Nurse had helped dress Dolly with all the interest and enthusiasm in the world. The pretty doll looked like a little dame of olden times; and at Grandmother's suggestion, Saidie wrote carefully on a tiny envelope:—My

name is Mistress Louisa Geraldine Frances Valentina Goodman, and I am a Lady of Colonial Days”—and pinned the envelope to the hem of Louisa’s puffed-out skirt.

The children were all three dressed in white, and looked very nice. Robin rather hated being “fixed up,” as he called it, and Charming felt a little frightened, for he had been to very few parties in his short life; but Saidie was radiant in her best frock, and they were all prepared to enjoy themselves. When the time came, they were eager enough to tumble into the carriage with Grandmother.

It had stopped raining, but the trees were still drenched, and the bay horses splashed through a great deal of mud as they trotted along the country road. To her own great disgust, Saidie found herself thinking about the Beast, and wondering whether he had really minded the storm very much, and whether he could be uglier wet than he had been dry!

And then, suddenly, *she saw him!*

She nearly fell out of the carriage with the shock, for it actually was the Beast, and he *was* uglier than ever!

He was in the clutches of three dirty, horrid-looking little boys, who seemed to be fighting for his possession. He was so battered and soaked that his appearance was no longer merely funny—it was sad. And his legs and arms stuck out wildly, as though in helpless protest. Saidie felt indignantly remorseful as she recalled that one of her hopes had been that some stray ragamuffin might climb the wall and steal the poor thing. It was to this fate that she had left him! For the first time she felt honestly sorry for the hideous, and now shabby toy.

“Oh, Grandmother!” she cried breathlessly. “Please stop the carriage! They’ve got our monkey, and I must get it back!”

“Our monkey!” repeated Grandmother bewildered, fumbling for her glasses. “Bless me!” she exclaimed as she looked. “I do believe that it is that creature of poor Lucy’s!—Jonathan, stop a moment!” As soon as the carriage came to a standstill, Saidie sprang out, party dress, Mistress Louisa and all, and ran to the rescue of the Beast.

The grubby small boys, fighting over it, were surprised to see an excited little girl, in a pretty white dress, rushing toward them. Under one arm she clasped a large doll, and with the other she pointed wildly at the toy they held, as she cried:

"You bad boys! You'll pull that poor toy to bits if you drag it about like that! Give it to me this instant!"

By this time Robin, amazed but willing to help, had reached his sister's side, and the boys had stopped fighting to stare.

"What do youse want it fer?" demanded the biggest of them sullenly.

"Because it's ours," said Robin. "I don't know how you got it, but"—

"*I do,*" faltered Saidie with tears in her eyes. "It was my fault—and I meant some one to get it—but—I'm very sorry—and—and—and"—

The boys had let the monkey slip to the ground, and Saidie caught it up with a cry of relief: "Oh, my poor, dear Beast! I shall never try to lose you any more!"

When they were all back in the carriage, and driving on once more, Saidie discovered two things. One was that the muddy toy had utterly spoiled her party frock, and the other was that this time she had lost, not the Beast, but beautiful Louisa Geraldine Frances Valentina—her best, her very best, her altogether bestest doll!

Grandmother was sympathetic; but perhaps she felt that these disappointments were a sort of lesson to poor little Saidie, for she said very little; merely expressed her sorrow for the lost dolly, and helped to get as much mud as possible off the front of the white gown.

Well, they were a little late for the party, but that made no difference; and Saidie went in carrying the ugly, muddy toy monkey, instead of her lovely doll that she had especially dressed for the occasion. But she was too glad to have the Beast back to be sorry for anything else.

They had a very nice party, and played every delightful game you can think of: " Hunt the Slipper," and " Hide and Seek," and " Blind Man's

Buff,” and “Musical Chairs,” and at least two dozen more. And they had a delicious supper of chicken, and sandwiches, and strawberries, and ice-cream, and cake, and lemonade, and candy, and other good things. And they made some beautiful chocolate fudge and molasses candy, and ate a great deal. And at last they had the Doll’s Competition of Beauty.

Saidie sat in the corner, holding the Beast, and I think she felt a little pang of regret when she remembered her own prettily dressed Colonial lady, which should have been there among the gaily-clothed dollies which Mrs. Crandall was arranging upon the Judge’s table.

. . . Suddenly she had her second great shock that day. She sat up very straight and scowled, for she simply could not believe her eyes or her ears at first.

Mrs. Crandall was holding up a charming doll in a flowered silk dress, with a very full skirt, and she was announcing:

“The first prize is a dolls’ tea-set, and it has been won by Mistress Louisa Geraldine Frances Valentina Goodman, a Lady of Colonial Days!”

“Grandmother,” said Saidie, as they were driving home that evening, “how do you suppose Louisa ever got there?”

She had Louisa on her lap as she spoke; also the Beast and the new tea-set.

“Why,” said Grandmother doubtfully, “I suppose one of those boys must have brought her.”

“They didn’t look like that sort of boy!” declared Robin, who had prejudices.

“And how did they know where to take her?” persisted Saidie.

No one made any answer to this, until Charming settled the matter.

“Well,” he remarked wisely, “she comed, anyhow!”

“Charming is right,” said Grandmother smiling. “She did come, and that is the main thing. Let us say that the good fairies brought her as a reward to Saidie for rescuing the Beast!”

Then she added gently: "You don't want to get rid of the monkey any more, do you, Saidie?"

"No," said Saidie. "It's a nice Beast, and we'll keep him always, and take better care of him. I think I wanted to get rid of him mostly because he was so ugly, and for following me about and mimicking me."

Grandmother couldn't imagine what she meant, of course, so Saidie went on quickly: "But I don't hate him any more. And I think—yes, I really do think that I like him better for being a little ugly!"

And, after that, though the Beast remained ugly, he never mimicked her again, but behaved like other toy beasts, and was a real comfort to them all.

CHAPTER NINE

“The Old Woman Who Sweeps the Cobwebs from the Sky”

“There was an Old Woman who lived on high,
And swept all the cobwebs out of the sky;
The clouds were too many, and her brooms were too few,
And she had so much housework she didn’t know what to do! . . .”

“OH, DEAR!” complained Saidie looking out of the window.
“What a horrid day!”

“And I had planned to try the new swing Haines has put up in the garden!” grumbled Robin.

“I fink it’s *lufly* when it wains!” said dear little Charming cheerfully. He was very sweet-natured and easily satisfied, and often made them feel ashamed of their bad temper.

“Charming, you’re a lamb!” exclaimed Saidie impulsively. “I’ll think it is ‘lufly,’ too, if Nurse will tell us a story!”

Nurse laughed, as she swept the hearth and put on another log. Although it was summer, the pouring rain had brought a sharp chill to the air, and they were glad to have a fire in the nursery. The golden, crackling flames looked and sounded very comfortable. Outside it was dark and dull. The lake was almost hidden from view, and the trees and shrubberies dripped and dripped, as though they were all crying.

“What sort of a story is it you’re wantin’?” asked Nurse, settling herself in the rocking-chair.

“Something about fairies!” was Saidie’s request.

“Somefing about wain!” said Charming, suggesting the first thing that he thought of.

“Something about spiders!” maliciously demanded Robin, who knew that his sister and brother hated them.

“Whist, then! Maybe I can tell you a bit of all three!” laughed

Nurse, who had a true Irish fancy. "Would ye like to know, now, how the cloudy, bad days first came about?"

"Oh, yes!" they assured her eagerly.

"'Tis a roundabout story," said Nurse slowly, as though thinking aloud. "I'll have to begin at the other end of it, I'm guessin'.—No matter; it all comes out the same. Sit down, now, the three of ye—and don't you interrupt!"

They sat down on the hearth rug, and settled themselves to listen, while the rain poured on the roof, and the wind shook the window-panes, and the little fire snapped and flickered in the merriest and most friendly way.

"'Tis said," began Nurse—who dearly loved a story herself in her heart of hearts—"tis said that when the Good People (that's the fairies, of course, my dears!) wanted to add to their domains, spread out a bit, and settle more roomy like, they up and ordered a cloud-storm. Faith, you nor I wouldn't know how to do that same; but the fairies knew! They picked out an honest messenger, and sent him up in the air, to hunt up the Ould Woman as Swapes the Cobwebs from the Sky."

"'The Old Woman who Sweeps the Cobwebs from the Sky!'" repeated Saidie. "Oh, yes, I've heard of her; but I didn't know she could make cloud-storms.—Do go on, Nursie!"

"She swapes and she swapes—this ould woman does—clanin' the cobwebs off of the moon and the stars, and"—

"And the sun?" suggested Robin helpfully.

"No, indade! Sure, the sun is too hot by half;—'twould burrn up her broom!—Well, as I was sayin', she does her house-clanin' up there, by night and by day"—

"But if she doesn't touch the sun," Robin interrupted, "what does she do by day?"

"Rubs up the sky, of course—and gets rid of the untidy bits of cloud-stuff lyin' about!" said Nurse rather impatiently. "You ask too many questions entirely, Master Robin!"

“Never mind him!” said Saidie soothingly. “Does she really find any cobwebs up in the sky?”

“There you go as bad as him!” scolded Nurse. “Of course there are cobwebs in the sky! What else should the clouds be—what we call clouds, leastways? Sure, they’re big spider webs spun by the Monster Gray Spider as lives in a blue comet on the other side of the moon!”

“Horrible!—Ugh!” shuddered Saidie.

“But a comet doesn’t stay in one place,” objected Robin.

“This one does!” declared poor Nurse crossly. “And I’ll stop telling the story if you don’t stop your questions, Master Robin—I will so!”

“A Gray Spider in a Blue Comet sounds interesting, doesn’t it, Charming?” said Saidie.

“Lufly!” murmured Charming, his big eyes fixed expectantly upon Nurse.

“Well ’twas this way,” said Nurse. “When the worrld was yet new, as it were, and there weren’t too many human beings about, the Good People had a plenty of room. In fact they owned a large part of the earth in those days, and made morrtals hop about pretty much as they plased. If they liked the look of a house, sure, they’d turrn out the folks as lived there, and move in thimsilves. And all that was very pleasant ye see, and proper enough no doubt.

“But after a bit, humans got rampageous and set-up like. They wouldn’t abide no longer being ordered about by the Wee Men, and when they built thimsilves houses, they were proud and ugly about them, and set store by living and dying in them. So—what were the Little People to do, I ask ye? The counthry was gettin’ smaller and smaller, what with the spread of the cities, and the startin’ of the big farms and such like, and the Elf Men were afear’d to take up risidince in the grounds of the counthry places, lest the poachers would trap or shoot them in mistake for game. ‘Twas a harrd case!”

“I read a story about it last summer,” broke in Robin the irrepress-

ible. "It was about how the fairies left England in a boat from a place called Dim—Dum"—

"Dymchurch," corrected Saidie. "That was *quite* different, Rob—don't be stupid! What did *your* fairies do Nurse, dear?"

"They decided to colonise!" said Nurse impressively.

"And what's that?" asked Saidie.

"It's what counthries always do whin there gets too *manny* people about—pick up other littler counthries where there is plinty of land, and sind some of the extra people to go and live there."

"But how do they pick up other countries?" Robin next wanted to know.

"Faith, there's always counthries lying around to be had."

"And all countries do that?" said Saidie. "I mean real countries as well as Fairies?"

"Every counthry that's worrth its keep does it!" said Nurse, not very clearly but with much warmth. "Why else would we be wanting the Philippines?"

"Well, go on," said Robin. "How did they get the other countries to send their extra Fairies to?"

"They sint the fairy that had the strongest wings up—up—up into the sky to see the Ould Woman up there. And it chanced that she was gettin' ready to swape out her biggest blue ball-room for a dance that the younger stars were goin' to have that noon."

"That *noon!*" even Saidie could not help exclaiming. "But surely the stars don't dance at noon, Nurse—in the daylight?"

"And what other time could they dance, faith? In the dark ye could see thim twirlin' about and it wouldn't be dignified in thim. What would ye be thinkin' now, if ye were to see a sky-full of stars all spinnin' and hoppin' about like so manny crazy fire-flies? 'Twould be upsettin' to the whole worrld, and that's a fact. And *annyway*, the stars have no wish for to be spied upon whin they're amusin' of thimsilves! No, No! They hould their balls in the high, bright light of noon, and no one on earth is a whit the wiser!"

“Well, the Fairy Messenger?”

“What was his name?” demanded Charming, who liked particulars.

“Bless us, do I know? His name” (Nurse’s eye twinkled) “isn’t in history! *Anyway*, he knocked on the Ould Woman’s door.”

“You mean the door of the ball-room where she was sweeping,” said Robin.

“*No!*” said the exasperated Nurse. “I mane her own door. ’Tis all in the same place, mind ye—the House of the Sky. She was gettin’ ready a fine new besom, which is a broom of sorts, and a pail of mist to wash with, when the Fairy Messenger came in.

“‘The top of the mornin’ to you, Mother!’ says he.

“‘The same to you, little man!’ says the Ould Woman. ‘Take care of yoursilf,’ says she, ‘or ye’ll drown in me big pail,’ says she. ‘Is it a bite or a sup ye’ll be havin’?’ says she. ‘’Tis a long pull from the earrth I’ve heard!’

“‘Why, I’m a trifle dry, since you ax me,’ says the Fairy. ‘If you had a drop of dew, now—’

“For he was only acquainted with fairy food, d’ye see—with that, and with the cream he’d stolen from house-wives’ milk pans time and again.

“‘We’ve no dew up here, sure,’ says the Ould Woman, wipin’ her hands on her apron—which was made out of a worn-out rainbow she’d no further use for. ‘But we’ve junket from the Milky Way and moonlight wine, and a sherbet of frozen sunset, and—’

“‘It has a sound of fair fairy food!’ says the Messenger. ‘I’ll take anny or all of it, Mother, and thank ye!’

“She got him out a flagon of wine—’twas brewed from the purest moonbeams, and was clear as crystal—and a bowl of fine creamy curds, and the sherbet—which was pinker and sweeter than the best strawberry ice-cream in the worrld, so it was—”

Charming nearly wept when he heard of all these delicious things which he could never, never taste!

"And thin," went on Nurse, "whin the Fairy had aten and drunk his fill, they got to business.

"'Me frinds the Elves, Mother,' says he, 'are growing crowded, down beyant. They wants more terri-tory!' says he, very grand with his long worrds. 'They wants to ex-pand,' says he. 'And since earrth-grround and cloud-grround is all one to thim, they're after sindin' me up to ax you to furnish us with a new cloud Kingdom, ma'am—if ye're agreeable.'

"'H'm!' says the Ould Cobweb Lady, considering. 'Is that what they wants, eh? 'Tis a good enough notion, little man,' says she, 'but I'm not over-partial to clouds mesilf. Me enemy the Big Gray Spider spins thim a dale too fast to suit me as it is, and it kapes me busy swapin' thim clare ivery day of me life!' And she sighed.

"You see, dears, thim was in what is called the Goulden Days, whin ivery mornin' was a sunny one, and the sky was always blue and cloud-less. The Big Spider spun his cobwebs, but the Ould Woman got thim clared away in double quick time, and there was harrdly a speck of cloud dust or star dust in all the House of the Sky! So 'twas harrd hearin' to the good lady to find that she'd be expected to encourage the clouds after discouragin' thim for so long—since before the worrld was made at all, in fact!

"'I haven't enough clouds of me own, annyway—' she says to the Fairy Messenger. 'I'll have to ax the Gray Spider to spin a few and help me out—and faith! I hate to do that—we've been enemies so long,' she says 'but the Fairy Folk is kin o' mine,' she says, 'and if they wish for to col-onise,' she says, 'why, 'tis I must be helpin' thim, sure—and may good luck prrosper them!' says she. For she was a worrthy ould crature, was the Woman of the Sky.

"Well, with that she got out her biggest ridin'-broom, and got herself onto it, and away she went to visit the Big Gray Spider. And the Fairy Messenger, who was rested by that time, flew along behind.

"They soon came to the Blue Comet back of the moon. 'Twas whirrlin' around in space, in a cirrcle, as though 'twas tied up and wantin'

to be free! And on a big pillow of bright blue light sat the Gray Spider spinnin’. And he was as big as this house, and his web would have covered a square mile, so it would!

“‘Good-day to ye!’ says the Ould Woman. ‘We’ve been enemies for some millions of years,’ says she, ‘bein’ as how you make the clouds, and I swape thim away!’ says she. ‘So since we’re acquaint so long,’ says she, ‘will you just be after axin’ me in to set down a piece?’ says she.

“‘The pleasure is mine!’ says the Spider, very po-lite. And he folded up the mile-long cloud he was spinnin’ and rolled it into a nice cushion for her to rest on. And the two of them settled down, easy and civil, to a chat.

“They talked a good bit about the weather, for you see ’twas what concernned them most! And by this and by that they come to the business in hand.

“The Spider was wishful to oblige, but he tould the Ould Woman that she must give over swapin’ so much, if she wanted him to make enough clouds for a new Fairy Kingdom.”

“‘Come mornn, come night,’ says the Spider, ‘ye are clanin’ up after me, ma’am, and well I know ’tis a pleasure to ye, and ’tis not mesilf would be deprivin’ ye of that same. But no spider—no, not aven I—can get forrarder with me wurrk, under the cirr-cum-stances,’ says he. ‘If ye want me to spin your clouds for ye, ye must lave me be, and give your besoms and dust-pans a rest!’ says the Spider.

“This was sore hearin’ to the Ould Woman, for swapin’ up clouds was her business and her j’y in life: and she mistrusted she’d be lonely like with nothin’ of the sort to do. So they argued the thing, and by this and that they come to a sorr’t of understandin’.

“The Big Gray Spider would agree to spin enough new clouds to kape the Fairy Folk well supplied with land to live on and to travel to; and the Ould Woman would *lave* him spin, without hindrance. Only, on cerrtain days—to be settled by frindly agreement later—the Spider would stop spinnin’ altogether, and lave the Ould Lady attend to her swapin’ and house-clanin’ in pace! Which is why sometimes for days on end there’s

no clouds to be seen at all, at all. And the same again is why there'll come a time whin the sky is that untidy, it must go to the Ould Woman's hearrt to suffer it!

"But the Fairies got their new terri-tory. And from time to time, when they nade more land still, the Ould Woman who Swapes the Cob-webs shuts her door, and takes a long nap. And the Big Gray Spider in the Blue Comet behind the moon spins and spins and spins, until there are enough fresh clouds to make, maybe, a bit of an island—like that now!"

Nurse pointed through the window.

The rain had stopped, but the storm-clouds were still rolling low down, and seemed almost to lie upon the dull, gray surface of the lake. Almost—yes, quite! At one point the leaden bank of fog touched the water. And to their fanciful eyes the vapour seemed to take the shape of a small island, with misty trees and rocks, a picture as delicate as a shadow or a dream.

"It *is* an island!" exclaimed Robin.

Nurse nodded.

"Yes, a cloud island," she said. "The Spider has been busy, ye see, all day."

The children felt a thrill of wonder as they looked.

"Will ve island always be vere?" asked Charming, in rather an awed way. "And will we always see him?"

"Only whin it's rainy, sure! On days like this, now. Or maybe at twilight ye'll catch a glimpse of it by chance. But 'tis made, annyhow, and it'll be there, faith—whether we see it or not."

"I wish we could go to it!" sighed Saidie.

"I like to *look* at him!" said the contented Charming.

"Maybe we will go there some day!" said Robin, who was ever hopeful.

"Maybe you will—in your drames!" said Nurse, with a little smile. "And manewhile, sure, the Fairies have a new Island!"

CHAPTER TEN

The Mist Island

“ . . . And sometimes passing Fairy Isles,
I saw mysterious shining piles,
Temple and palace, spire and dome;
And still I sped through sparkling foam.

“ . . . Mysterious moved, nor wind nor sail
Impelled me, but the viewless gale . . .

* * * * *

. . . Then I knew we sped
Where the sweet winds with songs were fed,
From Fairy Islands hidden deep . . .”

Thomas Lake Harris.

THERE was no doubt about it in the children's minds—Nurse had spoken the truth. There was a Mist Island on the Lake. When the clouds were low, or when the fog was just breaking, they could see it plainly enough—rocky slopes and little feathery woods reaching down in puff on puff of mist to the edge of the gray water.

From the nursery window they could watch it gradually melt away as the sun came out. By the time the fog had entirely cleared the island had utterly vanished. But, let the clouds roll up again, and cast shadows on the Lake, and like a shadow itself the misty isle would reappear faintly—sometimes only for a few minutes.

“How I wish that we could go there!” Saidie and Robin would exclaim.

Oddly enough, though Robin was more practical than the others, it was he who most longed to find his way to the Fairy Island. He had always wished to be an explorer; and what could be more exciting than discovering a piece of land never even seen by mortals before—a piece of

land which, according to most people's views, could truly be said not to exist at all?

"I tell you," he declared to the others, "I believe that if one took a boat and rowed out there in a fog, one could find it!"

"'Twouldn't be there!" Saidie was sure. "It would be like the mir-age; that green-y, tree-y thing you see on a desert, and then find it's never been there at all."

Robin was obstinate.

"The reason," he insisted, paying no attention to her objection, "that people don't find more things of this sort is that they can't get to them in time—now, right away, while the thing is still there! The mirage is ever so far away; and of course it has gone by the time they reach it! If it had been nearer they could have caught up with it; at least, that's my idea, you know! Now, this island is near—quite, quite close to us, in fact—and there's no reason that *I* can see why we shouldn't go right over and land!"

He felt extremely proud of his reasoning; and indeed it did sound as though there were something in it.

"Then you would really not be afraid to go to the Island?" said Saidie nervously.

She had more imagination than he, and the idea of exploring the mysterious Elfin country frightened her. Who could tell what dreadful and strange and "creepy" things were to be found there? But Robin was not at all bothered with such fancies.

He stood looking intently out of the window for some moments, and then he exclaimed:

"There's a fog coming up now, and if it holds on to-night, I honestly believe that I'll try to make that Island before morning!"

And he felt as thrilled as though he had been Columbus and Vespucci and Nansen and Peary, and twenty other famous explorers all rolled into one!

The fog did come up, growing steadily thicker and colder and whiter as it settled down over the Lake. It shut out the moon and stars, and

made the trees so soaking wet that they dripped moisture, just as though it were raining.

“I’m going!” whispered Robin to Saidie triumphantly. “I’m going to-night!”

“Oh, Robin, go to bed!” she returned crossly, for of course she never dreamed that he meant it.

Nurse seemed to feel that night that there was something in the air, for she went into the boys’ room after they were in bed, and fussed about for some minutes, raising the window-shade and pushing back the curtains to let in more air.

“Faith it’s a bad, black night entirely!” she muttered. “As still as a churchyard, and a sky as thick as a feather bed!”

“Can you see the Fairies’ new Island, Nurse?” asked Robin from the bed.

“’Tis too dark to see anything!” she said. But as she spoke the clouds suddenly parted, and a faint beam of moonlight shone down through them, making the mist look silvery, and showing the foggy island in its most fairy-like guise.

“Faith, ’tis there as plain as a picture!” exclaimed Nurse with awe. “A picture, said I? ’Tis a vision of Hivin! Look, Master Robin, dear— isn’t that a true home for the Little People?”

Robin sat up in bed and looked.

“It must be clearing up,” he remarked, a little disappointed. For if it cleared up he could not hope to get to the Island that night. He should have to wait for the next fog.

“Not yet a bit, it won’t clear,” said Nurse, arranging the curtains. “But I’ll lay ’twill be fair by the morning. Eh, ’tis a close night, my lambs! . . . Good-night to ye, and pleasant drames!”

In spite of his intention to lie awake and bide his time, Robin went to sleep as quickly and soundly as usual, and slept a long time.

Suddenly, without knowing what had aroused him, he found himself sitting up in bed. Everything was still—or was it so still, after all? The

clock, for one thing, seemed ticking more loudly than ever before, and he could hear a creaking sound somewhere, and the scurry of a mouse in the wall.

It was very dark—yet, was it indeed quite dark? Through the half-drawn curtains a dim, silvery light was stealing. By leaning far out of bed he could see the level moonbeams streaming from under a low, moving cloud.

It was very hot; yet there was a faint stirring and rustling in the trees and ivy outside, as though a wind had risen in the night.

Robin felt quite odd—sleepy and yet excited. He rubbed his eyes, and tried to wake up more completely. . . . Then, very softly, he slipped out of bed and went to the window. Was the Island there still? He nearly gasped when he saw it. If it had been fairy-like before, it was a thousand times more magical now. The mist was rolling away in great shining clouds under the moon. The Island would soon be gone, too; but for the moment it was as lovely as a dream. Not only could Robin see rocks and woodlands on its misty shores, but he thought now that he could catch glimpses of houses—delicate towers and spires glimmering like pearls in the moonlight.

Somewhere in the house one of the big clocks struck three. Robin drew a deep breath. If he hurried he could get to the Island before the mist had gone!

You see, although he was rather a sensible, practical little boy in many matters, he had not considered how he should get back from the Island, supposing he could reach it; nor what would happen to him if it should chance to melt away while he was on it!

. . . In a very few moments he was down on the shores of the Lake, with the little soft waves washing at his feet, and the racing, shining clouds overhead. Instead of growing dimmer, his Island was gleaming more and more brightly. It seemed to Robin that he could hardly wait to get to it.

There was a row-boat hitched to a little ten-foot pier. Jonathan, the coachman, had taught Robin to row fairly well with a pair of very light

small oars, and Robin did not dream that he would have any trouble about that. So, in great haste and excitement, he ran along the pier and let himself drop gently down into the boat that was bumping and splashing there. Then he untied the rope—the “painter,” he remembered that Jonathan called it—and felt himself float lightly and silently out of reach of the little pier.

Then he started to take up the sculls, or oars; and then came a dreadful shock! They were Jonathan’s own oars—the big ones, and far too heavy for Robin even to lift! The little ones that he could use himself were not in the boat at all!

He looked at the shore—already it was thirty feet away! The wind, or something else which he could neither see nor feel, was carrying the small boat quickly and gently out on to the Lake. The lightest and sweetest warm wind was blowing; the moon was brilliant; the Island looked exquisite and very distinct. But he—the Explorer, the Captain, the Leader—he, Robin Goodfellow—was adrift, with no oars, in the middle of the night! . . . What was he to do?

Robin was only a small boy, but he was not a coward; and when he found that there was nothing to be done, he sat up very straight indeed, and told himself sternly that, whatever happened, he must not be frightened.

But you can’t sit up straight forever—all by yourself in a wobbly boat, at three o’clock in the morning. After what seemed a long while, the gliding—gliding—gliding over the smooth water made him drowsy. In a few minutes more he had slipped down into the bottom of the boat. . . . It was very warm and sweet. The clouds over his head seemed to come down closer and closer as he stared up at them from under heavy eyelids. . . . In another moment—just as you have guessed he would be—he was once more sound asleep.

. . . For the second time that night he awakened with a start.

Bump!

That was what had roused him. Bump—bump—bump!

The boat was bumping against something—not hard bumps, but little

soft, cushiony bumps. There were tiny splashes, too, like that wee, lapping sound of small waves back on the shore at Wildwood. It seemed to be darker, and there was a rich smell of trees; and he fancied that he could hear a sound of sighing branches.

He sat up and looked about him. Yes! Over his head swayed big, shadowy trees, almost black against the moonlit sky. Yet, stay! was it moonlight? He stared harder than ever. The clouds had vanished; the moon had vanished. There was no sun; there were no stars. The light was neither moonshine nor daylight, but a soft, clear brightness, different from anything he had ever seen. . . .

He seemed to be in a little harbour, quite new and strange to him. There were large and beautiful trees leaning far out over the water, where his boat was bumping peacefully upon the sand. And there was a delicious warm, woodsy scent, and the breath of flowers as well.

The shore sloped up to a green wood, which seemed to be enclosed by a very fragile fence; made, or so it appeared, of the most delicate carved silver. In the middle of this fence was a glowing archway and Gate, and over the Gate were bright letters, that seemed to change from blue to pink, from pink to green, from green to golden, from golden to purple, and from purple to blue again.

Robin climbed hastily out of the boat and raced up the shore. When he got nearer he could read what the rainbow-letters spelled:—

“THIS IS THE KINGDOM OF PLAY.”

As he stood gazing at the Gate, he heard a sweet voice singing inside. He was eager to see the singer; so he ran to the Gate, and tried to open it. It was locked; but immediately he heard some one call:—

“Who knocks at the Doorway of Play?”

For a moment Robin was too startled to answer, and the voice cried again:—

“Who knocks at the Doorway of Play?”

“It’s—it’s I!” stammered Robin, feeling very shy.

“And who is ‘I’?” demanded the voice, with a little laugh.

“They call me Robin Goodfellow!” faltered the little boy. For really, at that moment, he could not for the life of him remember his own true name!

There was a little soft chorus, that sounded like wonder or excitement, from a number of voices.

“You are very welcome, Puck!” cried the first voice. “We have not seen you lately! But why did you not spread your wings and fly over the fence?”

The gate swung open, and there stood a group of the most lovely ladies that Robin had ever seen. They wore different-coloured robes, and little crowns, and their hair floated about their faces in the breeze. When they saw Robin standing there they cried out with surprise and disappointment. Then one voice exclaimed:—

“Why, it’s nothing but a little boy!”

“A mortal!” cried another disdainfully.

“Why did you say you were Robin Goodfellow?” demanded a third as sternly and indignantly as she could, considering the softness of her voice.

“Oh! if you please,” gasped poor Robin, feeling more embarrassed than ever, “Grandmother *does* call me that! I know I’m not a real Fairy; but, oh! I did so want,” he ended sadly, “to find the Fairy Island!”

“But this *is* the Fairy Island!” said one of the beautiful ladies, looking at him not at all unkindly.

“Really?” cried Robin delightedly. “The one made out of mist?”
The lady laughed.

“So you know that, too?” she said. “You seem quite a nice, intelligent, well-informed little boy. What do you say, sisters—shall we let him in?”

“He can’t do any harm,” said one doubtfully.

“He may laugh at us,” objected another. “Children are so stupid and superior, nowadays.”

“Do you suppose he knows how to play?” said a third.

“No mortal knows how to play!” declared a fourth.

“Would you like to come in and learn to play?” asked yet another.

Robin nodded speechlessly.

“Oh, let him come in!” exclaimed one who had not spoken before.

So Robin went into the Kingdom of Play, and they closed the silver gates after him.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

The Seven Playing Princesses.

“You may join in the Fairies’ playing,
That delicate, dainty crew,
At their feet all your fancies laying,
As they airily tread the dew;

“You may drowsily loiter, staying
With dolls that have eyes of blue;
You may go with the wild deer straying,
And romp with a bear or two!

“You may sport for a fair day’s Maying
With flowers that in Elfland grew;
You may stroll in the woods delaying,
You may dream of rare deeds to do;

“But staying, or straying, or Maying,
Let this be our lesson to you:
The Splendid Secret of playing
Is to know that the Play is true!”

What the Seven Playing Princesses Sang.

“**D**O YOU mind telling me who you all are, please?” he asked very timidly and politely, gazing in wonder at his lovely new friends.

They all laughed merrily, and answered him all together:

“We are the Seven Playing Princesses!”

When their voices had died away, they stood and looked at Robin, and laughed.

“Well?” said one. “Aren’t you very glad to know us? Are you afraid of us, little human boy?”

“If you please,” ventured Robin, “I think I *am* a little afraid of you all together. I don’t think I should mind you quite so much if there was only one of you at a time!”

At that there was a perfect whirlwind of musical laughter, and then a swirl of flying draperies of rainbow colours. . . . The next moment he found that they had all disappeared except one. Robin rubbed his eyes.

"Where are the Princesses?" he asked.

"I'm one of them!" she said. "You are going to have us one at a time, you see! I'm going to give you your first lesson in playing!"

She was a very young little princess, though quite grown up, and she was as pretty as she could be. She was fresh-looking and rosy, and she had soft brown hair and very bright blue eyes. She smiled delightfully, and all together Robin thought her decidedly jolly and friendly. She was so kind and young that, though he still felt a bit shy, he could not really be *much* afraid of her.

"Thank you very much," he answered politely, "but I know how to play already!"

The Princess laughed gaily.

"Oh, no, you don't!" she cried. "I never yet saw a mortal child who did! In this Country we do nothing else, so we really do know all there is to know about playing!—Of course," she added regretfully, "I don't know nearly so much as my sisters!"

"Would you mind telling me your name?" said Robin.

"I am the 'Princess Who Only Plays With Toys,'—but they call me 'Toy' for short," she replied. "Naturally it's very sad only to be able to play with toys, but then I play with them *very* well! Do you think I am pretty?" She asked this quite anxiously. "And *do* you like my frock?"

Robin had hardly noticed her dress. Now he saw that it was bright scarlet, with a queer flowery pattern of white over it, like some sort of damask. It hung in stiff folds to her ankles, and she wore a belt of carved gold, and golden sandals on her pretty feet.

"I think you are beautiful!" said Robin truthfully. "And your dress is beautiful, too."

The Princess shook her head, but she seemed pleased.

"Oh, no!" she exclaimed, "not beautiful! Only a few of us are really

beautiful. My sister Dreams, now, is perfectly lovely, but we are all a little afraid of her. And Flower is charming. But *I* am just a silly little thing. Oh, I *am* silly!" She sighed lightly. "Come and see my Toys!"

She caught his hand and they ran together down a little path. It was as straight as though it had been made with a ruler, and at the end of it they could see a speck of white. As they came nearer this turned out to be a small white house, with a red roof just the colour of the Princess's dress. It was a funny little cottage, with wee, stiff trees in front of it, evidently made of painted wood, and there was a yellow china dog on the doorstep.

"This is my house!" announced Princess Toy proudly. "Isn't it a nice one?"

Inside everything was as dainty and prim as a little china closet—indeed it was not unlike one. The walls were lined with shelves, and on the shelves were all sorts of small toys. There did not seem to be any large playthings. Everything was tiny and delicate like the house itself. There were glue pots too, and paint-boxes, and bottles of gold and silver paint, and varnish, and tacks, and a little work bench with tools for mending toys. There were, however, no dolls. This odd fact Robin noticed and spoke of at once. The Princess Toy's face fell.

"There," she said, "you've noticed it first of all! I said to myself that you surely would!" She looked ready to cry.

"But why is it?" asked Robin, much interested.

"Because," said Toy sadly, "my sister Dolly—the 'Princess Who Plays With Dolls,' has carried all my dear dolls away! She insists that as long as she can play with nothing but Dolls, she ought to have them *all* in *her* house! Isn't it selfish of her?"

Robin considered. "She might at least leave you one," he said.

The Princess clapped her hands, and gave a little chuckle. "Don't tell any one!" she whispered. "But I *have* kept one, hidden away! It's on the top shelf in a box; and I take it down and play with it sometimes, when I am sure that no one can be looking!"

She looked so triumphant that Robin said civilly that he was very glad to hear it if it was any comfort to her.

“Oh, it is!” sighed the Princess Toy. “I do dearly like to play with a doll! Though, naturally, I *can* play with any sort of toy. I like the small playthings best; don’t you? I think those silly rocking-horses and things are too clumsy for a little house like mine. Besides, they are so absent-minded and stuck-up; don’t *you* find them so? But come and choose what you would like to play with first!”

Then they began to play with the toys. And Robin thought that never was there such wonderful playing. He found himself so interested that he even forgot his wish to find out what else was on the island—forgot everything except just the fun of the moment. And the Princess taught him that the great secret of playing with toys was to make *them* play with *you*!

“You must humour them,” she explained. “Treat them with a little consideration and tact. They do love that; and if you just find out their weaknesses and make allowances for them, and are pleasant and nice and patient, and don’t expect everything in the world all at once—why, there’s nothing they won’t do for you! Now, there’s that little yellow china dog of mine. He likes to sit at the door, and hates being turned around so he has to face the room. It embarrasses him. At first I tried to break him of it; so, of course, he simply loathed me for it! Now I let him do as he likes, and he makes a splendid watch-dog!”

When they had played for some time, the Princess took her one precious doll down from the shelf to show Robin. To tell the truth, it wasn’t much of a doll. It had a crack across its face, and its dress was old and faded; but Princess Toy seemed to think it a thing of which to be proud, and so Robin was polite about it.

Suddenly, while they were looking at the doll, there came a strange little knocking noise from the door, and the Princess turned pale. The yellow china dog was jumping up and down in wild but silent excitement.

“That’s the way he warns me of danger!” gasped Toy, clasping the doll to her breast. “He doesn’t know how to bark! Oh! what can it be?”

The next moment the china dog toppled over on to his side, and a figure came flying into the room. It was one of the other Princesses, and she was evidently very angry indeed.

She was prettier than Toy, and had a lovely complexion, and long, fair hair that fell in ringlets to her waist. Her dress was pale blue, and was trimmed with garlands of pink and white flowers. She wore one rose tucked into her hair under her little gold crown.

“You wicked Sister Toy!” she cried. “I always suspected you of keeping back one of my rightful dolls, and now I actually find you playing with it!”

“One of *your* dolls!” exclaimed Toy indignantly. “It isn’t yours—it’s mine!”

“It can’t be yours!” returned her sister. “All the dolls in the Kingdom of Play are mine! Give it to me at once!”

“Oh, Sister Dolly!” cried Toy reproachfully. “Would you take my only doll? Please, please let me keep this one doll!”

But Princess Dolly was firm. “I want her!” she declared. “But”—and she relented a trifle—“you may have her for half an hour on Saturdays, if you are good!”

She took the doll in her arms and turned to Robin.

“You are to come with me next!” she said, smiling so charmingly that Robin agreed willingly; and they hurried away together, leaving the poor Princess Who Played with Toys weeping in her little room.

It seemed only a moment before they were at the door of a second tiny house. This was not so toy-like as the first; it was more on the order of a quaint, old-fashioned cottage, and was surrounded by pretty, bright-hued gardens. The windows were like those in old pictures, and like some of those in the upper rooms in Wildwood—with numbers of little diamond-shaped panes set close together, and opening out like glass doors. When they went inside they were in the most charming of rooms, with

old-fashioned furniture, and the prettiest of flowered chintz curtains, quite like Grandmother's own.

The air smelled of sachet powder, and the whole place was filled with dolls. The dolls were beautifully dressed for the most part, though there were some shabby old things among them. Many more of their clothes were hanging up on hooks, and lying in neat piles. There were dolls' tea-sets by the score; dolls' trunks, dolls' hats, dolls' parasols, and comb-and-brush sets, and necklaces, and fans, and shoes! Never were there such numbers of things for dolls. And ranged about the walls were dozens and dozens of dolls' cradles.

"I am the 'Princess Who Plays with Dolls,'" said Robin's new hostess. "But, of course, nobody *thinks* of calling me anything but Dolly!"

Then they sat down and played. And, though Robin was a little boy, and had never taken much interest in dolls before, he had a very nice time indeed.

The Princess Dolly could tell the pleasantest stories in the world, and she told them in a soft, low voice, as soothing as music. They were not fairy tales, nor exciting stories of adventure; they were simple little histories of simple little doings—happy or sad events in the lives of dolls and toy animals: The envy of a rag doll for a lovely Parisian masterpiece; the faithful friendship of two wooden soldiers; the sorrowful fate of a broken and deserted doll, left on the shelf for years because she was no longer pretty. The stories, Robin thought, might just as well have been about people as dolls. Though they were commonplace and simple, they were every one of them interesting.

On the hearth was a comfortable little fire, and the Princess and Robin sat in front of it, as she told her stories, and the dolls seemed to listen just as closely as the little boy.

The Princess sang lullabies to the dolls too—sweet little soft songs that one could not hear without growing sleepy. And as she sang, all the cradles in the house began to rock gently in time to the lullaby.

"But do you only play with dolls?" said Robin.

“That is all—*But*,” added the Princess with some pride—“I can make a doll out of *anything*! See!”

She picked up the hearth-broom and taking it on her lap pretended to dress it in imaginary clothes and shoes and cap. As her hands moved about the broom Robin could almost see a real doll being dressed. Indeed—for one moment—he was sure that he *did* see it!

“It’s quite simple, you see!” said Princess Dolly, putting the hearth-broom back at the fireplace—“it’s all a matter of knowing how to play. And *that* is all a matter of believing in what you are playing—believing hard!”

Just then a loud clear cry, rather like a school-boy’s shout, came freshly in through the window.

Dolly frowned slightly, and shook her flaxen head in disapproval.

“There is Anima!” she said. “*Such* a tomboy as the child is! I simply dread her visits, fond as I am of her. She always messes things up so!”

“Is she another of your sisters?”

“Yes, my dear; she is the ‘Princess Who Plays With Animals’. She is a dear girl with a heart of gold, but oh, dear—with such romping ways.”

The door banged open as though it had been blown by a great gust of wind, and in rushed a truly delightful looking Princess. Hair, eyes and frock were of russet brown, with a glint of gold in it; about her waist was knotted a scarf of flaming orange, her sandals were of brown leather, and she had a tanned and glowing skin. She was altogether lovely, and when she spoke her voice was full and musical.

“You’ve had the little mortal too long as it is, Dolly!” she declared. “He’s a boy, and what does a boy care for your dolls? Pouf!”

She laughed scornfully, and caught Robin up in her brown slender arms, holding him high above her head. He could not have believed she was so strong. Then she laughed louder than ever.

“Aha!” she cried. “You don’t like to be carried about like a baby.”

Robin felt himself whirled away in those strong arms, out of Princess Dolly’s cottage, and through a wilderness of sweet-smelling leaves and a rush of warm but boisterous wind.

CHAPTER TWELVE

“*The Sleeping Beauty*”

“. . . In the Wood was a palace. . . . And there he found a little sleeping Princess, so fair that she seemed to belong to another world”

—*Old Fairy Book.*

SUDDENLY he was set down lightly on soft and fragrant grass, and sat there dizzy with the speed of his journey, while the Princess Anima laughed down at him merrily.

They were on a green slope at the mouth of a cave, and about them was sitting a circle of small animals and birds—some of them familiar and some of them various species of nonsense beasts.

“Is this where you live?” asked Robin, in wonder.

“Yes. We are each allowed to live in the sort of house we like best, and have the things we love most around us. *I* think a cave is a thousand times nicer than stuffy rooms, with ceilings and windows and four walls and silly furniture that nobody wants!”

“And are these your—your friends?” asked Robin rather shyly, gazing at the furry and feathered things about him. All of them seemed to stare back with interest quite as keen as his.

“These are my friends, and my playthings, and my subjects!” answered Anima, patting a fuzzy little opossum on the head. “At least these are the little ones. Here, for instance, is B’rer Rabbit, you see; and here are Rikki-tikki-tavi, and the Cheshire Cat, and Old Dog Tray. Of course, the big beasts are exclusive, you understand; Baloo and Bagheera and Black Beauty and White Fang and Bob, Son of Battle, and the rest of them, are back there in the Wild Forest.” She pointed to a dense and mysterious woodland at their left. “My sister of the Woods is particularly fond of them, and keeps them near her.”

She called all her little creatures by name, and introduced them one by one to Robin. Then they all had a delightful romp together, chasing each other in and out of the cavern, and playing hide-and-seek among the low spreading trees at the edge of the Wood.

Suddenly came a sound of two voices—one weeping and the other seemingly comforting.

Anima stamped her foot.

“Those two silly girls!” she exclaimed. “They go mooning about together, crying over each other’s wrongs!”

“Is that the Princess Toy?” asked Robin, who remembered that they had left Toy lamenting.

“No, no! The one who is making such a foolish noise is my sister Flower. She does not care for me, and I have no patience with her! The other is my sister Forest, to whom I am devoted—only she will sympathize too much with that stupid Flower!”

The two new Princesses came out of the Wood, one weeping bitterly, the other walking with her arm around her.

Flower (the “Princess Who Plays with Flowers”) was robed in palest rose-pink, with flame-coloured butterflies fluttering about her as she moved, and dew-drops glittering on her skirts. Her hair was ruddy gold, and she was very slender and fragile in appearance.

Forest (the “Princess Who Plays In the Woods”) walked beside her. She looked older, and was very beautiful, indeed. Her hair was as black as night, and she wore trailing garments of deep bright green and misty gray, caught up with leafy wreaths and veils of dew-silvered cobwebs.

“Oh, Anima!” sobbed the Princess Flower. “Your bad, horrid, naughty, cruel, mischievous, *wicked* Fuzzy Bear has eaten up all my best and prettiest tulips!”

“Well,” returned Anima, “you shouldn’t leave your precious tulips about if you don’t happen to want them eaten! Dear Fuzzy simply loves tulips. He says they have *such* a flavour!”

“He eats all my nicest flowers!” wailed the pink-robed Princess.

“Just think—the tulips to-day, and six tiger-lilies yesterday, and a dozen poppies”——

“The poppies made him ill,” remarked Anima reflectively.

“I’m glad of it!” responded Flower, with temper. “He’s a horrid, greedy, thieving Beast!” And she flashed such an angry look in the direction of the woolly little bear, sitting at the mouth of the cave, that he scuttled out of sight without delay, and Robin did not see him again.

“Come, come!” interrupted the Princess of the Forest in a low, sweet, grave voice. “You must not quarrel. I love you both! And all your subjects—both animals and flowers—love me. I will punish Fuzzy by forbidding him to play in my woods for a whole week! And you, dear Flower, shall have a dozen of my loveliest wild columbine plants, to take the place of the tulips you have lost.”

Anima looked sulky, but she loved Princess Forest; so she agreed to this punishment of her pet bear. And as for Princess Flower, she was all smiles in a moment. Never was there such a change! She laughed, and glowed, and even began to hum softly, under her breath—a gay little song, all about blossoms and sunshine, of course!

“Good-bye!” said Anima to Robin. “My sisters are going to carry you off, I see. They will spoil you if they can—with their tears and their fancies and their poetry! But don’t forget me; and be good to animals for my sake!”

“I always am!” declared Robin indignantly. For he loved all dumb creatures.

“I’m sure you are!” said the Princess Anima, smiling at him charmingly. “Good-bye!”

The other two Princesses led Robin into the Wild Forest. They spent a really wonderful hour playing with the lovely growing things, chasing the little shadows and flecks of sunlight between the waving trees, and hiding from one another behind shrubs and bramble-bushes. The Princess Who Played In the Woods was quieter and a little sadder than the

Princess Who Played With Flowers; but both were gentle and beautiful, and both taught Robin marvellous things.

The Princess Forest showed Robin her home, which was a natural arbour of wild grape vines with clusters of fruit hanging fragrantly upon it. There the Four Winds came to rest whenever they were tired, Forest explained. The North Wind in white, the East Wind in gray, and the West Wind in green, were asleep in the shadows when Robin peered within. Their sister, the yellow-robed South Wind, was just awake, and preening her golden wings for a short fly.

Then the Princess Who Played With Flowers took Robin to her rainbow workshop, where she repaired the blossoms which storms had damaged, and painted the finishing touches on the wings of butterflies. All about the room were huge jars made of some sort of opalescent material like mother-of-pearl, and in these jars were her magic paints.

"I get most of my colours from the sky," she told him. "I fill my paint-pots at sunrise, at high noon, at dusk, and by moonlight. You see, I have quite a variety!"

The next moment she gave a cry of vexation.

"My sister Madcap!" she exclaimed. "That wicked girl has upset my sunset red again! How thoughtless and unkind she is, to be sure!"

A merry ripple of laughter answered her. A girl in a gown of sky-blue, shot with changing, rainbow colours, and trimmed with delicate, glittering gold came into the workshop with dancing steps. She seemed to be always tripping, skipping and flying—never walking like other people. And she was always laughing. Her hair was bright red, and her eyes were as green as the sea in the sun.

"Who is she?" Robin asked in a whisper.

"She is 'the Princess Who Plays With Everything'— even with my dear paint-pots!" replied Flower petulantly. "She is the most feather-brained and mischievous of all the Playing Princesses, and we call her Madcap!"

The Princess Madcap danced about the work-bench, and her floating

robe swept a tray of magic paint-brushes onto the floor. "So sorry," she laughed. "And so sorry about the pot of red! So sorry about everything! Poor Flower! you are always in trouble, aren't you? You shouldn't take things so seriously. Look at me! I never worry about anything. I have come for that little human boy of ours. It must be my turn with him, and I'm sure he needs a bit of excitement!"

"Good-bye," Flower said to Robin. "I hope she doesn't lose you, or break you, or forget you, as she does most of the things she plays with! Good-bye!"

The Princess Madcap whisked him out of the flower work-shop before he had time for another breath. It was curious; when his hand was in hers, Robin seemed to move as quickly and lightly as she did, and could not feel the earth under his feet at all. In another moment, he and she were running races in a great field of poppies. The poppies were white and scarlet and orange-coloured, and they nodded and waved under the breeze.

A flock of bright blue birds came wheeling down to them, uttering clear, sweet notes as they flew, and Robin and Madcap chased them till the little boy was out of breath. Then they gathered poppies and made wreaths of them, and blew thistledown, and strung red berries into necklaces, and braided grass, and climbed the trees that edged the poppy field, and did a dozen other delightful things. But, just as they found themselves going deep into the wood once more, Madcap stopped suddenly in the middle of their play, and ran off alone among the trees. Evidently she had forgotten all about him for the moment! You see, she played with everything, even little boys, just as Flower had said. I think perhaps that this particular little Princess played too much.

Robin felt bewildered and lonely, but he was still brave. He did not know how to get out of the Wild Forest, for by this time he seemed to be in its very depths, and could see no pathway at all. But he hoped that if he kept on he would find one of the other kind Princesses, who perhaps could tell him how to get home. So he started off by himself to find

some sort of a way through the wood; and almost immediately he found himself in front of a very splendid marble palace, with gigantic roses growing on either side of the great doorway.

In the doorway stood a lady, ten times more beautiful than the other Princesses. She was dressed in long, shimmering, purple robes, and her crown was of silver, with a bright little star in the front of it. Her hair was as white as snow, but her face was young and very lovely. She smiled at Robin, and he thought he had never seen anyone so sweet-looking.

“Are you a Princess too?” he asked shyly.

“Yes,” she answered, in a low, beautiful voice. “I am the Princess Who Plays With Dreams.”

She took his hand and looked at him kindly as she spoke.

“You have learned many sorts of play,” said the Last of the Seven Princesses. “You have learned how to play with toys understandingly. You have seen that the true spirit of play can turn a hearth-broom into a doll. You have made friends with the little beasts, and you have discovered what comrades are to be had in the flowers and the green things of the forest. You have learned how to take joy in simple, passing things like thistledown and blowing leaves and chains of flowers. You have learned to play from my six sweet sisters. Now look at me, and tell me what you can learn from me.”

She bent over him, and, as Robin looked up, her eyes seemed to be like two great stars. They grew bigger and brighter as he gazed. And, as he looked, he seemed to see all sorts of pictures in those strange eyes—pictures of odd and wonderful and thrilling things that he and all other little boys have longed so often to do, or see, or be. . . .

He saw fine ships sailing through terrific storms; he saw white mountain peaks with men climbing them; and plains with horses galloping over them; and crowds of people, and magnificent buildings and aeroplanes; and flags, and smoke, and shining swords. . . . And then the pictures faded, and—

The lovely lady with white hair was smiling down at him, and her

kind, grave, star-like eyes were smiling, too. At last she stooped down and kissed him on the forehead.

“I am the Princess of Dreams, you know!” she said softly. “You will know me much better one of these days. And then I shall teach you the joy of playing with dreams.”

Just then they heard Madcap singing. Round a corner of the palace she came dancing, her arms filled with roses. The wind blew the petals about her like pink snow.

“And now are you ready to go home, little mortal boy?” she asked laughing.

Robin considered. “Have I seen all the Princesses there are here?” he said gravely.

The others smiled.

“There is still an Extra Princess,” said Madcap. “Shall I show him the Extra Princess, sister?”

“Yes,” answered the white-haired lady. “She is in the large rose-garden now, resting after her play. This child might be the one destined to lift the spell—who knows?— Good-bye, little boy.”

“Good-bye, beautifullest Princess,” said Robin regretfully. He loved this Princess, and wished that he could stay with her much longer.

She smiled at him very tenderly; then turned away, and went slowly into the white marble palace, her draperies trailing behind her like waves of purple mist.

Then he followed the madcap Princess to an exquisite rose-garden, which, like everything in this strange country, seemed to be just around the corner.

He had never seen nor imagined so many roses. There were roses white, and roses pink, roses that were lightest yellow, and roses that were deepest crimson; roses of brilliant red, and delicate, pale-hued tea-roses; roses that smelled faintly sweet, and roses that overpowered with perfume; bold, gay roses; shy, soft roses; big roses, little roses; roses that were hardly more

than buds; roses ripely flushed and full-blown; roses already shedding their petals: all the species and shades and sizes and spirits of roses ever grown in the world.

In the centre of the Garden was a marble fountain, and beside it lay a little girl asleep.

She was the fairest and most beautiful little girl that Robin had ever seen. Her hair was like sunshine, and her face was like a rose itself. But she wore a simple little white frock, and would have looked quite as much like a mortal child as a fairy princess, if it had not been for her magical loveliness.

"This," said Madcap, in a low voice, "is the Extra Princess—the Princess Who Plays By Herself. Hush! Do not wake her; she plays so hard, and gets so tired! We do not know her name, but we think her so, so sweet!"

The little girl lay motionless; she hardly seemed to breathe in her sleep. "She—she looks almost as though she might be just like any little girl, only prettier," whispered Robin. "Is she a real fairy person? A really, truly Princess?"

"I have heard," the Princess Madcap whispered in return, "that she is really a mortal, who comes from time to time to visit the fairy folk. She does not always stay in the Kingdom of Play. Sometimes I think she actually spends part of her time among human beings—if you can believe *that!* But we know nothing about her for certain."

"Then she doesn't always sleep like that?" said Robin. "She plays?"

"Oh, yes, she plays. Sometimes she smiles, and she picks the roses occasionally. . . . My sister Dream says that she is under a spell, and that she is waiting for some one to lift it. Oh, look!"

The little Extra Princess moved drowsily and sighed.

"When she wakes will she go away?" asked Robin softly.

"Perhaps."

"And you don't know where it is she goes to, when she goes away?"

"No; we don't know. She just goes away" . . .

Robin went quite close to the little girl, and gazed at her, trying to remember where he had seen her before. She was, of course, far lovelier than any mortal child; yet to him she seemed oddly familiar. He looked and looked and looked. . . .

Suddenly he was conscious that the Princess Madcap had left him, and that it was growing dark. He and the little Extra Princess were alone in the big rose-garden, and it seemed as though all the light were going out of the world. He began to feel terribly frightened, as one does in a nightmare. Instinctively he gave a cry, and put out his hand to catch that of the little girl. She stirred, and raised her head, but he could not see whether or not her eyes were open; it was too dark. . . .

Everything was pitch-black now, and the air was full of singing and of a rushing noise like the wind, or big winds. Then he seemed to hear the voices of the Seven Playing Princesses, all talking together in low, confused murmurs. The hand of the little girl was no longer in his. . . . He seemed to be falling, falling—not fast, but quietly; even comfortably. For a long, long time he dropped down and down and down. . . .

Then the light was suddenly blazing into his eyes, and he was sitting up in his own bed in Wildwood, blinking in the glare of the morning sun. Nurse had just opened the curtains wide, and was looking out at the perfect summer day.

“There now!” said she. “Didn’t I tell ye that the Island would be gone by the mornin’?”

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Roma's Story

“Once in days of yore a little Princess . . .
Found herself, at eve, disporting in a fairy ring of green.
* * * * *
. . . The king of all the fairies to the childling thus 'gan say—
'Lovely mortal! wilt thou, wilt thou quit with us thy childhood's bowers
And in our enchanted Eden wander through a world of flowers?'"

—*Philip James Bailey.*

“WE HAVEN'T even tried,” said Robin, “to see that little girl Grandmother told us about—the one that lives with the gardener-woman who helps Haines.”

“I have,” retorted Saidie. “I went around yesterday to the queer little garden place, but she wasn't there.”

“Did you see the woman—what's her name?”

“Roma, they call her. Yes, she was there, pottering over some big flower pots with little green shoots coming up in them.”

“Old Haines says she's a wonder at making things grow,” remarked Robin.

“She looked like a Witch!” said Saidie, with a shiver. “Old, and wicked, and such bright black eyes, like a wild bird—quite creepy, really. Well, *anyway*, as Nursie says, I asked if her grand-daughter was there. You know I supposed naturally she was the little girl's grandmother. But she scowled at me, and said, ‘Neither chick nor child have I ever had. But if you want the lass, she's away!’ Then she went into the house and slammed the door.”

“Sounds bad-tempered enough!” was Robin's comment. “So you haven't seen the little girl herself at all?”

Saidie shook her head. “Not since that once when we were telling

Grandmother about the Shadow Room," she said. "Nurse and Jemina say that she's scarcely ever at home. She runs about out of doors all day, 'like a leprechaun,' Nursie said. That's some sort of Irish fairy, I think."

At this point Charming the unexpected joined in the conversation.

"I knows ve little girl," he remarked amiably. "I knows her vevy well. She showed me a lark's nest ve uvver day."

"How did you get to know her?" demanded Robin and Saidie, much surprised.

But Charming would say no more. He smiled cheerfully by way of answer, and then sat down on the grass to retie the ribbon on the Littlest Bear's wobbly neck.

"I'll tell you!" suggested Robin. "Suppose we all go around to the little garden now, and see if she's there? It must be getting on for their supper-time—that is, if they really eat, like other people!"

It was about six o'clock, but still of course quite bright when they looked into the odd little garden where Cousin Lucy had tended her flowers thirty years ago.

The nasturtiums were all out now, and a few other gaily tinted blossoms. And by good luck, there was the Little Girl herself; dressed as usual in white, and bending affectionately over the flowers as she wielded a watering pot almost as big as herself.

The Little Girl was talking to the nasturtiums as though they were alive.

"You dear, pretty things!" she murmured. "You are just the colour of the Princess Madcap's hair!"

Robin jumped. He could hardly believe his ears. Princess Madcap! Then she, too . . .

"What does she mean, I wonder?" asked Saidie innocently. But he ran forward excitedly.

"Oh, then, have *you* been on the Island too?" he cried.

The Little Girl turned a pair of startled gray eyes upon him: then hung her head in silence. Evidently she did not intend to answer.

Robin suddenly felt that he had been rather abrupt and rude. "I beg your pardon!" he muttered, flushing with shyness. "We are the—we came to"—

He stopped, amazed. For, even while he was speaking, the Little Girl had slipped away, and had darted out of the Garden with the light-footed haste of a wild animal or bird.

As they stared after her they heard some one say: "Good-evening to you, my little lady and gentleman!"

It was the woman Roma, who was standing at the open door of the old play-room. The woman's eyes were as bright and fierce as those of a wild hawk, and the children could not help feeling very much afraid of her.

"So the little lass has left you?" she went on in a harsh voice. "She's an odd creature, and has no sort of manners! What did you want of her, if I may make so bold?"

"We only wanted to ask her to play with us," said Saidie, whose feelings had been somewhat hurt by the Little Girl's rudeness.

The woman shook her head.

"She won't play," she said; "not with other children, leastways. She's off by herself, day—and night, too. It's not natural, not human—it isn't. But there! Why should I expect her to be natural or human, she that is no human child at all?"

"No human child!" repeated Robin and Saidie with one voice.

The woman shook her head again. "Nay!" she said. "She has been taken into the Fairy Tribes, as any one can see. She is a changeling!" She sighed, and looked very mysterious.

"What did you say she was?" asked Robin curiously. Not even Nurse had been able to cure him of his taste for asking questions.

"She is a changeling—a Fairy Changeling, little master!" answered the woman. "And that is as certain as that I am named Roma!"

It was Saidie's turn for a question.

"What—if you please—is a Fairy Changeling?" she asked timidly.

Roma looked surprised.

"Eh! Eh! What's that? What's that?" she cried. "Three fine young gentry, of the true quality, with schooling and all that—and yet you must ask old Roma what a Changeling is!"

The children felt a trifle ashamed of their ignorance, but waited eagerly for her explanation.

"Come, come!" cried the old woman. "Come, my pretty miss, and my handsome little masters both—come and sit you down by Roma; and I'll tell you about the Changelings, and how it came about that this wild Fay of mine is one of them!"

She sat down on the step leading to her doorway, and leaned forward, looking from one to the other of them with sly, brilliant eyes as she spoke. She reminded Saidie of the Witch in a Christmas pantomime they had once seen.

"Did you ever hear of a Fairy Ring?" began Roma. "Ah! I see that you have! You know, then, that it is a strange and a dangerous thing. You know, without doubt, that it is magic ground, and that the child that falls asleep within it is at the mercy of the Little People? You know all that?"

She seemed to expect them to answer; so Saidie said: "We've heard something about it, but not much."

"Ah, well!" said Roma, lowering her voice, and nodding her head. "Pay close attention, and I will tell you what I can.

"When Fay was a very little girl she had a strong wandering habit; of course, 'twas natural enough—Gypsy life is made up of wandering, no less"—

"Gypsy!" repeated Saidie eagerly, her mind flying back to Cousin Lucy and the kidnapping and the Magic Mirror. "Are you Gypsies, then?"

Roma looked suddenly very crafty.

"In a manner of speaking—perhaps!" she said, with a sly smile. "My people were all of the road. They never lived under roof-tree nor bed-curtains!"

The children were not sure that they understood her; but what they saw clearly enough was that she was sorry she had admitted she was a Gypsy.

And suddenly they all three thought of the same thing, and exchanged startled looks. She was just exactly like the Dreadful Person they had seen in the mirror! Could it have been Roma herself who kidnapped Cousin Lucy?

She went on, as though she had not been interrupted:

"We called her Fay because she was like a Fairy—so light and quick, and as timid as a wood-bird! She was forever getting lost through following the squirrels and visiting the field-mice. A love of all such things was in her blood. But, in spite of her wild, roaming ways, she was a loving creature as an infant, and affectionate as one could wish.

"Well, one night we could get no trace of her. High we looked and low we searched, in brambles and under vines, but it was early dawning before we found her. And when we came upon her, my little lady and small masters, the pretty child was lying asleep in the middle of a green ring of dewy grass—grass that was pressed flat, as though little animals had made it by playing ring-around-a-rosy!"

She paused impressively.

"Oh, do go on!" begged Saidie. "She was all right, wasn't she? She wasn't hurt?"

"No!" said Roma solemnly. "She wasn't hurt—not in body. She was only—gone!"

"Gone!" they echoed, dumbfounded.

"Yes, gone in spirit and nature. Her body was there, but her soul had been changed. That is what I believe. And I," said Roma, "am a Witch, and ought to know!

"From that day she was like a stranger. She seemed happy enough—too happy to be natural. As though in a dream, when I questioned her, she told me what had happened. You'll not get Fay to tell it to you now, I'll promise you! But she told me then—I, who found her; and 'twas a strange tale enough!

“She had been gathering hawthorn—you know the thorn is a fairy plant, and grows, as a rule, near the Little Folks’ own Places. Sundown came, but she hardly noticed it, until she found herself straining her eyes to see her way, and stumbling right and left in a part of the forest that seemed new to her. And she felt half dizzy with the smell of the hawthorn she still had her arms so full of. Dark and cool it was; and, what with the dusk and the scent, she grew drowsier and drowsier, till it seemed she could hardly hold up her head.

“Well, after a bit, she found she had made her way, very heavy-footed indeed, to a secret still place in the heart of the wood, where there were no trees at all, and the first light of a sickle-moon slanted down as white as milk on the grass. And she was so sleepy that she just lay down where she was, and went to sleep; and the big bundle of hawthorn made a pillow for her.

“It was deep in the night when she awoke, and she was wet with dew and stiff from lying so still. A house-reared child must have been sick from it; but you will remember that ’twas not the first, nor yet the second, time that Fay had slept on the naked ground. And for the rest, she had never lain under a house roof in all her days!

“She started to sit upright, but she found that, for the life of her, she could not! Something held her stock-still as she lay; she could not even open her eyes.

“As her senses cleared a bit, she heard voices. She told me next day what they had said; but she declares now that she scarce recalls it! The voices went on like ‘Question and Answer’ for a space; as to who she was, and how old, and of what temper, and so on. Then the talk settled down to something of this measure:

“‘Is she fit for the Fairy Kinship?’

“‘Far beyond most mortal children who have placed themselves in our power.’

“‘Tell what you know about her!’

“‘She loves the things that grow, the things that creep, the things that fly, and the things that run by night!’

“‘Not enough!’

“‘She can understand what the owls say when they hoot, what the fishes say when they jump, and what the stars say when they fall!’

“‘What else?’

“‘She cares deeply for no human creature, and would rather wander by herself than with the most entertaining of comrades.’

“‘*That* is best; and *that* is enough! She shall play with Us! She shall be companioned by the Wee Folk! She shall find paths for her wanderings, and adventures for her entertainment, in the countries made and peopled by the Fairy People!’

“Then, as Fay lay, she felt light touches on her eyelids, and straightway they opened of themselves. She saw a wonderful sight!

‘Around her circled a stream of little Beings dressed in green. ’Twas strange, she told me: they had so exactly the colours of the grassy ground they trod, that one moment she could not frankly swear that their circling was not the wind playing in the blades of grass; the next instant, she saw them plain as possible in the moonlight . . . again, they were gone!

“And after two minutes, maybe, of glimpsing and then losing them, she felt her eyelids droop again; and once more that night she was fair heavy with sleep. But just before she dropped off, she heard a voice, clear and plain in her ear:

“‘You are Kin of the Fairy People; you are a Fairy Child! You are what mortals sometimes call a Changeling! You will be our Friend; you will have the power, and the sight, and the understanding that comes mostly with Fairy Blood. All this will be while you love us best on earth. The day that you put anything mortal, whether it be place or person, above the Fairies in your heart, that day we will take from you the Magical Kinship of the Elves, and you shall be a Fairy Child no more!’

“Then she slept again, and slept on until the morning. At dawn-breaking we found her, and there, circling her about, was a fresh-made Fairy Ring!

“After that she was different. She would play by herself, and laugh

and sing odd songs that never one of us had taught her. But she never gave a loving word to any one—never more after that night! She seemed to have lost the warm heart out of her breast,—or else gained a strong key to it! And so, little lady and gentlemen, has she been ever since. She is bewitched!” declared the Gypsy mysteriously. “She is a Changeling—a Fairy Child!”

There was a little pause, and then Charming said dreamily: “Ve flow-ers is her fwriends!”

“Yes,” said Roma. “The flowers are her friends—all of them. But she’s particularly set on daisies!”

Across the minds of Saidie and Robin flashed the memory of Charming, standing by *their* Fairy Ring, repeating “She lufs me! She lufs me not!” to daisy after daisy, and chattering about the Faiwy Person whom he insisted he had seen. Startled, they stared at one another a moment, thinking almost exactly the same thing. And they were neither of them really surprised when Charming said:

“I saw her in ver daisy-place ve vewy firstest morning.”

“Oh, you did, eh?” exclaimed Roma, looking at him sharply.

“Yes; and I knowed she were a Faiwy Person. I telled you so!” And Charming smiled confidently at his sister and brother.

“Charming!” said Saidie. “Are you sure that it was the *same* little girl”——

“‘Course I is sure!” declared Charming rather wearily. “I sawed her evey day here. And I knowed her wight away!”

So the Little Girl in the Wood, and Roma’s Changeling, and the Fairy Child were all the same small person! It seemed very strange to the children. They could not guess how much stranger would be their discoveries yet to come!

“And there she comes now!” exclaimed the old woman. Her quick ears, before theirs, had heard the sound of light steps. Fay crossed the garden quickly in the growing dusk. When she saw that the three children were still there, she stopped short, and stood looking at them.

"Ah! 'Tis a queer lass!" said the old Gypsy. "Will you not speak to the little lady and gentlemen of quality that have come to visit you? I'll warrant not!"

And she laughed harshly.

"I—I think we will have to go back now anyway!" said Saidie hastily. Evidently Fay did not intend to make friends easily, and poor Saidie felt ready to cry. She had never been so unkindly treated by any child before, and she was disappointed.

They said good-night to Roma politely, and started to go. A sudden impulse made Saidie go up to the strange little girl, and put out her hand.

"Won't you let us play with you sometimes?" she said timidly, but kindly.

Fay looked at her with apparent doubt. Then she gave her hand—quickly, as though obeying a sudden strong impulse. The little light touch made Saidie feel as if a bird had brushed her fingers with its wings. Then this very odd child drew her hand back as quickly as she had given it. Seemingly overcome by shyness or some other feeling, she turned abruptly, and ran into the house.

"What a funny girl!" said Saidie, staring after her.

"I think she's afraid of people," said Robin wisely. "Probably she'd be just like anybody if she weren't so much alone."

"She lufs me—she lufs me not!" chanted Charming.

The old Gypsy woman smiled her crafty smile.

"You like my little lass—eh, my small master?" she said.

"I lufs her!" returned Charming simply, but fervently.

Robin raised his clear eyes to Roma's.

"Why do you call her your 'lass,' please?" he asked, civilly enough. "I mean"—he added, smiling in his own nice, frank way—"you said, you know, that she wasn't your granddaughter, and"—

Roma stooped a little to peer at him.

"Maybe," she said harshly, "maybe she's a foundling as well as a Changeling!"—

She seemed to be scowling heavily in the dusk. She turned and went into the house, closing and latching the door.

"I guess she *must* be a Witch!" remarked Saidie with certainty. "Do you suppose it could have been she whom we saw in the Magic Mirror?"

"She's disagreeable enough!" Robin agreed. "And she has the same look. Older, of course."

Even Charming found nothing particularly pleasant to say about Roma, the Gypsy. "I does not luf *her!*" he said.

They left Cousin Lucy's little garden-close in silence. When they got back to the veranda Nurse was calling that it was already bedtime. Just as they were going into the house Robin said suddenly:

"All the same, I'm glad you spoke to the Little Girl, Saidie. She—I think she liked it."

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

“*Little Red Riding Hood*”

“She was at first a little afraid at hearing the gruff voice of the wolf; but she thought that perhaps her grandmother had got a cold, so she answered: ‘It is your grandchild, Little Red Riding Hood!’”

—*Old Fairy Book*

THE children had taken a fancy to Fay, whether she liked them or not. And they went every day to the little garden. Sometimes she was away in the woods, but often she was at work among her flowers and vines. And as time went on the children thought that she was oftener at home when they came; that she had become less fond of her lonely wanderings, and that she even looked forward, in a shy way, to their visits.

They never liked Roma, nor stopped being afraid of her. And they suspected that she was not very kind to Fay.

Saidie asked the little girl about it once. They were weeding the mignonette bed—Saidie eagerly and interestedly, as she did everything; Fay deep in her usual silent dreams. Through the half-open window Roma’s dark face looked out at them from time to time.

“She looks wicked!” murmured Saidie, with a shudder, turning her back so she need not see the peering face. “She looks like a Witch!”

“She is,” returned Fay with grave simplicity.

“A really *truly* Witch?” whispered Saidie with awe.

Fay nodded, as she carefully dug around the root of a baby mignonette plant.

“Oh!” sighed Saidie. “How *lovely* to live with a Witch!”

Fay said nothing, but Saidie thought that she saw an odd look in her eyes.

“Or— isn’t it?” she asked under her breath, glancing back cautiously toward the house. For the moment the dark woman had disappeared.

Fay hesitated; then she said: “Roma is not pleased, because she cannot make me a Witch, too!”

“Wouldn’t you like to be?” asked Saidie.

“Oh, no! I don’t like Black Magic. And, anyway, Roma goes out at night, and kills Toads and Owls and things. I could never do that. They are my friends.”

This started Saidie on a new train of thought.

“Nearly all the animals are your friends, aren’t they?” she said.

“Yes. You see,” Fay explained slowly, as though she were not used to expressing herself, “a great many of them are not just animals. Sometimes they are Fairies pretending to be beasts and bugs and birds and things. It’s only a disguise.”

“How lovely! I wish I could talk with a Fairy; or even an animal!”

“I dare say you will some day,” Fay said encouragingly.

“Can you”—Saidie paused, with another wary glance about. “Can you—*feel* Fairies?”

Fay nodded, but looked surprised.

“So can I!” whispered Saidie triumphantly. “I’ve never seen a real Fairy yet; but I often know when they are near me—really I do!”

“Of course!” said Fay. “You would *have* to feel them here. The place is full—oh, quite full of them!”

“Of course it is! And isn’t it odd that we’ve never seen any of them yet? Oh, I wish I knew how to go about it!”

“What part of the place do you feel them most?” asked the other.

“In the Shadow Room!” whispered Saidie.

“Well, I’ll tell you just how it is,” said Fay. “It’s very, very hard to say exactly what makes you able to see Fairies. Sometimes it’s only in special places; and sometimes it’s something you do or say without know-

ing it. Sometimes something you wear or carry has magic about it. And"—

"Fay!" exclaimed Saidie. "Do you really mean that things one wears have anything to do with it?"

"Lots."

"Because I have a cloak—a little red cloak and hood, which came out of the Shadow Room—that's a real Fairy place, you know! It—the cloak, I mean"—(Saidie grew mixed up when she was excited)—"belonged to a little girl who was lost there a long time ago—no, I don't think she was lost *there*"—

"And was she a friend of the Fairies?"

"Yes!—No!—I don't know. Oh, yes, I think she must have been! But there are lots of Fairy things in that room, anyway. And Charming thinks his cup is *rather* a magic one. Besides, there was the Beast"—

Fay listened as gravely as if Saidie had been talking connected sense. Then she said: "Have you worn the cape yet?"

"No, but"—

"Wear it," advised Fay, "and see what happens."

"Oh, look!" cried Saidie, "isn't that the biggest green grasshopper you ever saw? Or is it a katydid?"

The huge green insect whirred out from under her hand as she spoke, and lighted on Fay's sleeve. The little girl picked it up gently, and looked at it. Then she glanced at Saidie with a funny little laugh. The queer, buzzy thing flew away—a flash of green and noise.

"Didn't you really see what it was?" asked Fay quietly, going on with her weeding.

"No," returned Saidie. "I don't know much about bugs."

Fay laughed again. "That was a very funny kind of bug!" she said. "It was one of the Musical Goblins from the Singing Trees of Fairyland!"

"A Fairy!" gasped Saidie, ready to cry with disappointment. "Do Fairies look like that? Oh, to think I missed it!"

"What *did* it look like?" asked her little friend.

“Oh, dear!” wailed Saidie, “I don’t know! I don’t believe I looked at it at all. Oh, dear! And it was right under my nose!”

She ran off to try to find the green, whirry thing again, but it had flown quite away.

“It’s gone,” said Saidie, kneeling down among the mignonettes again, and sighing deeply. “What are the Singing Trees, Fay?”

“I’ve never heard them; but I believe that they are the Fairies’ singing schools. They are trees that make music all the time, and the Fairies go to them to learn singing.”

There was a short silence, broken by another enormous sigh from Saidie.

“You know so many wonderful things!—If only I could just once see a”——

“Try wearing the red cloak that came out of the Fairy Room,” said Fay. Then Roma called her, and they talked no more that day.

That very evening Saidie got the little red cape from the closet, shook out its folds, and brushed it herself. It *was* pretty—such a delightful warm colour, and so soft and smooth to the touch. When she put it on, and saw herself in the mirror, she thought she looked very nice

“Little Rid Ridin’ Hood!” said Nurse smiling.

When Robin saw her he too cried: “I say, you *are* like Little Red Riding Hood!”

And Charming echoed: “’ittle Wed Widing Hood! I wants to be ve Wul-ulf!”

Saidie was rather pleased; it made her feel more than ever that she was in a fairy story. She wore the red cape all the evening, and was quite disappointed when bedtime came and nothing had happened.

“Well,” she said to herself consolingly, just as she was falling asleep, “I don’t suppose I could expect it to work all at once!”

She did not even have fairy dreams, but woke up after a sweet, deep sleep, to find the room full of sunlight, and still no sign of the Little People.

The Fairies were driven out of her mind by what Nurse told them before they were up. Grandmother was ill! She was going to stay in bed all day, and the Doctor was coming to see her later. She had a very bad cold, Nurse said, and must be kept quite quiet.

This news made the children very unhappy. Somehow the delicious breakfast of oatmeal, and toast, and eggs, and honey, and raspberries, and milk did not taste half so good as usual. And nobody seemed to take much interest in making plans for the day. They were all truly devoted to dear Grandmother, and the whole house seemed under a cloud when she was ill.

After breakfast Robin and Charming went off together to play ball in the daisy-field. Charming could never learn either to throw or catch the ball without tipping himself over, and Robin was going to try to teach him.

Saidie went around to the little garden; but neither Roma nor Fay was there. She wandered about the place in rather a depressed frame of mind, and finally decided to go down to the blackberry patch and fill a basket for luncheon.

The berries were splendidly ripe, and so big and black and sweet and juicy that Saidie simply *had* to eat some of them, though she was not supposed to "nibble between meals." She picked busily until the basket was full; and, oh, how tempting and nice it looked! A sudden delightful thought came to her: She would take the basket of blackberries to Grandmother!

She decided that she would not give them to Nurse nor to Grandmother's own maid, but would carry them herself. Surely, if she took care to be very, very quiet, she would not disturb dear Grandmother any more than they would! She was so interested in this plan, that, though she was wearing the red cape again to-day, she quite forgot it, and did not give the Fairies one single thought. Holding the basket carefully, she ran into the house and up the stairs. In the upper hall she tiptoed along so cautiously that the very sickest person would not have been bothered.

And at last, without having met a soul, she found herself at the door of Grandmother's room. It was ajar; and, after tapping very lightly and receiving no answer, she pushed it open, and softly stole in.

Grandmother's room was old-fashioned, sweet-scented and lovely, like herself. The walls were covered with small-flowered paper; the furniture was all of shining dark mahogany, and in the centre of the room was a big four-poster bed, with figured chintz curtains.

Just now the curtains were closed tightly. Saidie knew that Grandmother loved fresh air, and seldom shut it all out like that. She must feel very, very ill indeed!

Saidie approached the bed timidly, carrying the basket of blackberries. For some reason she felt frightened and excited.

"Grandmother!" she whispered.

She heard a queer little cough, hoarse and yet high. Then a voice—it did not sound a bit like Grandmother's—said: "Draw back the curtains, my dear!"

Saidie went to the window to let in the sunshine and air. Then she returned to the bed to draw back those curtains also.

"How hoarse and queer your voice is, Grandmother!" she said.

"It's a good enough voice to talk to you with, Little Red Riding Hood!" replied the occupant of the four-poster, with a cackling laugh. And at that Saidie pulled back the bed-curtains, and found herself staring at the big, white, empty bed!

But no! it wasn't empty, either!

In the centre of it, nearly hidden by the white counterpane, was lying a tiny black creature, in a wee night-gown and ruffled night-cap! Saidie gasped aloud, and shrank away. Was it an animal? Or a toy? Or a Fairy? It was shaped like a wolf, but it was no bigger than Saidie's hand. It lay back against the huge plump, white pillow, and grinned up at her.

"Sit down!" it commanded. "And give me those blackberries. I hurried off this morning without my breakfast, all on your account!"

"But these," faltered Saidie, "were for dear Grandmother"—

“If you give them to me,” promised the little Wolf solemnly, “they will do Dear Grandmother much more good than if she ate them herself! Hand them over, my sweet child!”

Hesitatingly, Saidie set the basket down on the bed. The little creature fell upon it with much appetite, and devoured every blackberry there.

“Thanks!” it then remarked, licking its small black snout. “Now I can talk. You aren’t sitting down, Red Riding Hood. Are you afraid I may forget myself, and eat you for dessert?”

Saidie sat down timidly on the edge of the bed.

“So you are the little girl,” went on the wee creature, “who wanted to talk with a Fairy or an animal?”

“Y-yes,” stammered Saidie, frightened, but fascinated. “Wh-which are you, if you please?”

“I am both!” returned the midget. (Saidie fancied that it smiled!)

“When I am at home I am a Fairy. For the moment I am a wolf!”

“I see!” said Saidie. “But”—

“Don’t you think I make a good Wolf?”

“Oh, a *very* good Wolf!” Saidie assured it. “But—do you mind telling me where you do live, when you *are* ‘at home’?”

“Under the woodbine that grows on the outside of Fay’s garden wall,” it replied. “You thought I was a grasshopper yesterday!—Ha, ha, ha!” And it chuckled squawkily.

“I’m afraid it *was* rude of me,” began Saidie. But it interrupted her by saying very graciously, “Don’t mention it! *Anyone* might make the same mistake!”

“What—what is your name?” asked the little girl, after a pause.

“My first few names are Catamondius Lurentagorio Mondorolos Axafelderth Pumpkin! And my second three names are—”

“Oh, please don’t!” begged poor Saidie. “I—I never could remember *any* of that!”

“Of course not!” said the creature cheerfully. “My family name is Fatum—which means Fairy, by the bye—and we are a race made famous

in history and literature—ahem!” And it cleared its throat importantly.

“Oh, please go on!” she begged.

“With pleasure,” it said politely. “My great-great-great-great-grandfather was a page in the service of the Emperor Elfeor, and later his younger brother Elfinan; and *his* father—”

“Oh, gracious me!” exclaimed Saidie, “it gets worse and worse! I mean— What am I to call you?”

“You should always say what you mean!” it informed her, pleasantly enough. “If you have to call me something easy, you may call me Kexie.”

“Kexie!” repeated Saidie, thinking it the most extraordinary name she had ever heard.

“Yes; my father was a Kelpie and my mother was a Pixie; so that makes me a Kexie. Do you see?”

Saidie was too bewildered to say anything, and as a matter of fact it did not seem to care whether she answered it or not. It proceeded, in a very talkative manner—

“Fairies aren’t made in sets you know, like tin soldiers or china. We’re mostly a little different. Now, my mother, as I told you, was a Pixie, and her mother was a Nixie, and her mother was a pale green Goblin Bat!”

Saidie felt a little dizzy.

“And on your father’s side?” she prompted feebly.

“My father’s family was exceedingly distinguished. Although a mere Kelpie himself, he was descended on one side from a Kobold, and on another from a Leprechaun, and on another from—”

“A Leprechaun! Then you are partly Irish?” cried Saidie.

“I’m partly Irish, but mostly Scandinavian, and half Early English, and slightly Oriental, and a trifle South American, with a soupçon of Basque—”

“You must have a wonderful memory,” said Saidie, “to remember *what* you are! You are so *many* things!”

“I am millions of things,” said the Kexie proudly, “and I remember them

all! I have the most wonderful memory in the world. I remember things before they happen! I remember things that happened before there *was* anything to happen! I remember many, many, many things that never happened at all!"—

"Hark!" interrupted Saidie. "What is that?"

The Kexie listened too. It was the sound of wheels coming up the drive.

"It's the Doctor!" exclaimed Saidie. "He's come to see Grandmother. But—but—where *is* Grandmother?"

And suddenly recollecting where she was and why she had come, she looked about her, thoroughly bewildered.

The little Wolf grinned.

"How do you think the Doctor would like to treat me instead?" it suggested.

"Shall you really be here when he comes upstairs?" asked Saidie doubtfully.

"Bless you, no!— And as I hear a step upon the landing, I'll just take myself off! Will you be so very good as to put me in that basket, and then throw it out of the window?"

"But won't it hurt?"—Saidie was beginning.

"Don't argue!" snapped the Kexie. "Do as I say! If you really want your Grandmother to be better—throw me out of the window and be quick about it!"

Saidie hastily picked it up, and put it into the empty blackberry basket.

"A thousand thanks!" said the Kexie. "The blackberries were excellent. Yes, *out* of the window, please—not down on the sill. Throw me this instant, I tell you!—Ah—so! Thank you *so* much!"

As Saidie flung the basket from the window, the wind caught it and carried it soaring away above the garden. The little Kexie-Wolf was grinning over the side. . . .

A step behind her made Saidie turn quickly around. Instead of the Doctor, there stood dear Grandmother herself!

“I felt so tired of the house,” she explained, kissing her granddaughter, “that I drove over to see the Doctor myself. The air must have done me good, or our friends the Fairies, or something! I feel a thousand times better than when I started. Thank you, dear, for coming in to see me!”

Then she stopped and glanced around her. “How odd!” she said. “There’s such a delicious scent of wild blackberries in the room! I really think I should like some for luncheon.” . . .

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

The House Goblins

“. . . The pictures on the wall . . . seemed to be all alive, and the very clock . . . had got the face of a little old man, and grinned. . . .”

—*Alice Through the Looking Glass.*

CHARMING was devoted to his cup and saucer with the red hearts on it—the one which Cousin Lucy had called her Valentine Cup. He would not even drink his milk out of anything else; and, though in most matters he was generous with his things, he hated to have any one else drink out of his cup.

“Why do you like it so much, Charming?” Saidie asked him.

“’Cause,” he told her solemnly, “it makes me dweam fings!”

Saidie was rather impressed.

“Maybe it’s a Magic Cup,” she suggested.

“It doesn’t look it!” said Robin, chuckling. He was in rather a prankish, mischievous mood. “I’ll tell you what, Charming,—I’ll drink out of it to-night at tea!”—

“No, no!” objected Charming, stormily.

“And we’ll see if I ‘dweam fings’!” went on Robin.

“No!” whimpered the generally unselfish Charming, “I likes to dweam vem myselluf!”

The others were somewhat surprised.

“Isn’t there enough magic to go ’round?” laughed Robin.

“Don’t be a pig!” Saidie said to Charming reprovingly.

But that small person was firm. He would not give up his precious cup, even for a few minutes, without a real struggle. Robin teased him about it all through tea. Charming grew crosser and crosser; and finally Robin, exasperated by his unreasonable selfishness, and giving way to a

streak of thoughtlessness which was in him somewhere, seized the Cup, and ran off with it.

Charming shrieked with rage and grief, and Nurse hurried in to comfort him.

"Now *you're* being a pig!" called Saidie angrily, as Robin dashed out of the room with the Valentine Cup. "A pig—a pig—a pig!"

Robin laughed heartlessly, and scurried down the stairs. He had no intention of really making Charming unhappy. He fully meant to bring him back the cup in a few minutes; he was only teasing. For even very nice boys will tease their little brothers without meaning a bit of harm. And it would be all very well if they could always be certain that they would not go farther than they meant to. The trouble is that when we have other people's belongings in our hands we are more than apt to have something happen to them. And so poor Robin found out, as you will soon see!

Grandmother was old-fashioned enough to like to have her dinner early—almost as early as the children had their nursery tea. The dining-room door was open as Robin came down stairs, and Grandmother was just finishing her after-dinner coffee.

"Is that you, Puck?" she called. "Would you like some fruit?"

She often let the children come to the dining-room for dessert, and did not insist on too great strictness in that or in any other every-day matter.

She put down her coffee-cup as she spoke, and rose.

"Help yourself, Robin," she said. "I am going into the drawing-room at once, as the rector is calling this evening. You may have one helping of anything left on the table—just one, mind!"

And she hastened into the next room. The maids had not come in to clear the table; and Robin put the Valentine Cup down on the table, and settled down to feast. As he began Grandmother reappeared for a second.

"Take the little dish of candies to the others, Robin," she said. "You must never be content to enjoy anything quite alone!"

Then she closed the doors between the two rooms.

There was some half-melted water-ice in the dish before Grandmother's place, and Robin took some of it, and liked it very much. Then he thought, for fun, he would drink something out of Charming's wonderful cup! All he could find was pudding-sauce; so he poured a little of that into the cup and tasted it. It was thick and sweet, and he put the cup down almost at once. Then he took an orange out of the fruit-dish, and two or three nuts, and one little wee cake with frosting. Robin nibbled away like a mouse at a bag of corn. He wondered what effect the magic cup would have upon him. . . . It was odd, but he *was* really beginning to feel sleepy! He put his head down on his arm, and shut his eyes. The clock in the corner seemed to be ticking louder than he had ever heard it before. "Tick-tock!—Tick-tock!" it went, louder and louder and *louder*. . . . Then suddenly it did not sound like ticking at all, but like words—dry, crackly, measured words, like the soul of the Clock itself speaking: "Tick-tock!—Tick-tock!—Look, Puck! Look, Puck!"

Robin started up, thinking for the minute that Grandmother had called him. And, with a heart full of dismay, he found himself looking down on the broken pieces of Charming's Valentine Cup, which he had carelessly swept off the table on to the floor!

"Tick, tock! Look, Puck!" said the Clock.

"*I am* looking!" said Robin crossly, "but I think it's horrid to talk so much about it! Oh, dear! I wish I hadn't broken Charming's cup! I wish I hadn't taken it at all!"

"Yes," murmured a small, sad voice close to him. "Isn't it dreadful? What are you going to do about it?"

Robin stared and rubbed his eyes, and stared again. The white tablecloth was dotted with tiny men, each only two or three inches high, dressed in dark blue, with wee green caps. They had the most melancholy faces in the world, and the most whining voices.

"What on earth are you?" demanded Robin, thoroughly bewildered.

"We are one branch of the House Goblins," said one of the tiny creatures. "We are the Wish-I-Hadn'ts."

"And why do you dress in blue?" asked Robin.

"Because it's such a lovely sad colour. That's where the expression, being 'blue,' came from, you know."

"But who are *they*?" said Robin, pointing. Across the table was scampering a many-coloured army of tiny men, no bigger than the first. One group was dressed in gray, one in yellow, and one in bright red. The latter stopped in front of Robin, and chanted in high and rather pleasant little tones: "We are the Glad-I-Did-Its!" They sounded like so many chirping crickets.

Behind them trotted the band of gray-dressed pygmies. These explained querulously that they were the Don't-Want-Tos. They were followed by the cheerful company, arrayed in gay yellow, who were the Put-It-Rights, and most agreeable little men! All of them wore the green caps, and all of them scampered about like spiders or mice, or some other variety of tiny animal.

"Tick-tock! Look, Puck! How do you like the House Goblins? Tick—tock!"

Robin glanced at the Clock, and saw that it had become alive, and was grinning down at him.

"Who are *you*, if you don't mind telling me?" asked Robin politely.

"The Old Man of the Hours," said the Clock. "I'm the only Goblin in the world that nobody can ever get away from! Tick, tock!"

As Robin looked about the room he saw that nearly everything in it had become alive. The Dresden figures on the mantelpiece were bowing and curtsying sedately to each other; a stag in a picture on the wall turned its head from side to side looking out at the room; the brass griffins that formed the andirons twisted about and made uncanny faces. Robin noticed an ugly black Goblin sitting on the top of the Calendar.

"That's Monday," said the Old Man of the Hours.

"Monday?" repeated Robin.

“Yes, the Goblin of the Calendar. Beastly disagreeable fellow! Don’t you know how disgusting Monday morning is? You either have to go to school, or if you are grown up you must pay bills, and—oh, well, it’s nearly always horrible on Monday. *He’s Monday!*”

The black Goblin raised a discordant voice and sang in dreary tones:

“When you wake feeling cross and grumpy and blue—
It’s nearly always Monday;
With a lot of detestable things to do—
Oh, isn’t it horrid on Monday?
There are buttons to sew, and lessons to say,
And it’s awfully apt to rain that day,
For that is the dreary, weary way
Of Monday!

“There are other troubles and other days
Besides this wretch of a Monday;
But somehow they haven’t the wicked ways
That have always belonged to Monday;
When you tear your clothes, and bruise your knees,
And some people scold you and others tease,
You may be just as certain and sure as you please,
It’s Monday!”

“Why, *this* is Monday!” cried Robin.

“Of course it is!” said the black Goblin. “Never run about carelessly with other people’s things on Monday. Something *always* happens to things on Monday.”

Robin had for a moment forgotten Charming’s cup. Now he remembered it, and hung his head. It seemed to him that all the queer half-alive things in the room were staring at him reproachfully and accusingly, and he suddenly exclaimed rather irritably—“I don’t care anyway!”

Crack! Bang! Up jumped a dreadful Demon in a dark corner.

“Gracious!” gasped Robin, greatly startled. “What can that be?”

“Tick, tock!” ticked the Old Man of the Hours. “That is Don’t Care. He is the nastiest Goblin we have. Tick, tock!”

Don't Care was a terrifying monster with a humped back and web-feet. He snorted and puffed, and his face was hideous enough to frighten babies into fits.

"And are these all House Goblins?" asked Robin. The Fairy Man in the Clock answered him:

"Yes; every house is full of Goblins and Fairies, only as a rule you cannot see them. They flit about slyly, and make you do all sorts of things that you don't mean to!"

"But don't you have any good Goblins?"

"Dear me, yes; of course! There's Good Humour;—and the Joker,—he's the Elf that makes you see the funny side of things. And the Mending Man you will meet in a minute; and"—

"And who is *that*?" cried Robin, staring at the window.

A little girl was sitting on the sill swinging her feet and singing to herself. Robin recognised her at once. It was Fay, whom Charming called the Fairy Child.

"So she *is* a Fairy Child, after all!" he said to himself. Fay heard him, and chuckled softly.

"I didn't think you'd know who I was!" she said. "You know you are a little stupid about that sometimes!"

"I don't see why you say that!" exclaimed Robin indignantly. "When did I ever—"

"Think!" said Fay, laughing more merrily than ever.

"Let me see," considered Robin, looking at her carefully. "I saw you first in the Wood, didn't I?"

"Right!" said the Little Girl.

"And then crossing the lawn with Roma—"

"Right again!"

"And then in the Little Garden"—

"Wrong! Wrong!" cried Fay, clapping her hands.

"Do you mean to say that I saw you between times?" he asked, thoroughly puzzled.

"Don't you remember," said the Fairy Child, "a big garden of roses, and a fountain, and Princess Madcap?"

"Oh!" gasped Robin. "Were *you* the Little Extra Princess that Princess Dream said was under a spell?"

Fay nodded. She did not laugh now, but looked quite serious and dreamy.

"Roma told you about my being taken by the Fairies as their friend," she said. "Well, it was all quite true; I can go anywhere I like in the Fairy World. Of course, I can only go at night, in what other people call dreams. You are in one now."

"Am *I* dreaming?" asked Robin wonderingly. "Dreaming now?"

"Yes, in a way; just as you were dreaming when you went to the Kingdom of Play. But it's better than being awake, isn't it?"

"Do you go often to the Kingdom of Play?" asked Robin.

"Oh, yes. I love it there. Isn't the Princess Who Plays with Dreams *beautiful*? But she says that I shall not always be a Fairy Child. If I ever get to care for human beings more than for the Fairies and the Dream People I shall have to be like other mortal children and leave off visiting Fairy countries, and doing lovely things like that."

"I wonder if that will ever happen?" said Robin.

"I'm sure I don't know!" said the little girl indifferently. "Good night! I'm going to a party the Frogs are giving down by the Marsh!"

She sprang up onto the window sill, and seemed to jump out into the darkness. It looked almost as though she had flown away. Anyway, she was gone!

Robin now noticed that the armies of little House Goblins, red, gray, blue and yellow, were hurrying about the big dining-room table in much confusion. It looked like a kaleidoscope, he thought.

"What are they going to do now?" he asked in a whisper.

"Tick, tock! You'll see. This is all on your account!"

"*My* account!"

“Tick!—Of course!—Tock!”

The Put-It-Rights looked like an army of yellow ants. They scampered wildly over the table among the dishes and candlesticks, and chattered at the tops of their piping voices all the time. To Robin's surprise they began to pick up the bits of Charming's broken cup. It took half a dozen wee men to carry a single piece, and even then they had to lug and strain like dreadfully overloaded horses!

At last with infinite toil and effort they collected all the pieces, and brought them to the middle of the table. Then out of the confusion of little squeaky cries Robin made out: “The Mending Man!” Where is the Mending Man? What can have happened to him? Oh, dear! Just when we needed him too! Mending Man! Mending Man!”

They shouted this over and over, and soon a clear, chiming voice like a bell joined in: “Mending Man! Mending Man! It was the Old Man of the Hours, and for the moment his voice did not sound tick-tocky a bit. Robin noticed that the Clock was just striking.

Suddenly the little Goblins absolutely squealed with excitement: “Oh, there he is. There's the dear, sweet, nice, pleasant, darling Mending Man! Hello, dearest Mending Man!”

Robin looked all about him, expecting to see another tiny creature running over the table, but instead he saw a man—yes, quite an ordinary sized man much bigger than he was, standing at the door of the dining-room. He was dressed in shabby brown clothes, very old-fashioned in style, and he had long, straggling white locks, and a ragged white beard. But in spite of the badly trimmed hair and beard and the worn-out clothes, he was a beautifully neat old gentleman, with a kindly and grave expression. He wore a pair of enormous spectacles, and he carried a much-patched brown canvas bag, which rattled as he walked.

He smiled pleasantly at Robin, and sat down in one of the big dining-room chairs.

“Are you the Mending Man?” asked the boy.

“Yes,” said the amiable old fellow. “That is my name!”

"Tick, tock! How are you, Brother?" ticked the Clock, which had stopped striking.

"Well, thank you, well and busy!" quoth the new arrival, opening his bag and taking from it a number of queer-looking tools, and brushes, and bottles, and wire spools, and files, and leather—and even a supply of thread and needles, and a pot of mucilage!

"What do you mend?" asked Robin, with deep interest.

"Everything!" replied the Mending Man. "There is one of my trade in every really old house. Human beings could never keep things in order without our help."

"But do human beings generally know that you mend their things?"

"Dear me, no! They think that the things haven't needed mending, or else that one of themselves has had it done and forgotten! We don't get any thanks, but what a pride we do take in our work!"

"And what sorts of things do you mend?" Robin persisted.

"Roofs, and china, and torn pinafores, and damaged violins, and dolls, and tapestries, and floors, and necklaces, and old books, and leaks, and point lace, and smoky chimneys, and occasional bruises."

And the old man smiled kindly as he uncorked a tiny bottle of white cement.

"But do you always mend everything that needs mending?" said Robin.

"No," said the Mending Man regretfully. "We are not allowed to mend everything!"

"Why?"

But the old man shook his head, and would only repeat, "We are not allowed to mend everything!"

The Put-It-Rights had dragged up the pieces of the cup for his inspection, and he fitted them together carefully as he talked.

"Are you sure that you are allowed to mend this cup?"

"Yes; because it is dear to your little brother, and it is not his fault that it is broken. Also, it is said to have once belonged to someone who was beloved by the people of the Unreal World."

“Do you just say a charm or something, and make it whole again?” asked the boy.

The Mending Man appeared quite shocked.

“We are not allowed to do anything so lazy! We have to work just like real people; and *you* have to do your part, too!” he added, suddenly peering at Robin over his big spectacles.

“I—I’m quite willing!” stammered the little boy. “Only you see—I don’t believe—I—know—exactly—how”—

“Have you anything which you are *very* fond of, which we could use to mend this cup?” asked the Mending Man.

“China?”

“No; anything:—rubber, steel, wood, cloth, or silver. Anything. Only you must be fond of it, and you must give it freely.”

“Cloth—or steel—or wood—to mend the *cup*?”

“Yes; the material makes no manner of difference. In that way we *are* different from real people, after all. It’s all a matter of feeling with us. You are sorry you broke the cup, aren’t you?”

“Of course I am sorry! But”—

The Wish-I-Hadn’ts, in their sombre blue clothes, trotted up in a battalion, and ranged themselves in front of Robin.

“Which of all your belongings do you like best?” demanded the Mending Man.

And the Old Man in the Clock ticked a loud echo: “Which of all your belongings—tick, tock—do you like best?—Tick, tock!”

Robin thought a moment.

“My air-gun!” he answered.

He had a delightful toy rifle, which an uncle had given him. He adored it.

“Get it!” commanded the Mending Man, speaking not to Robin, but to the Wish-I-Hadn’ts. They trooped off in a blue whirlwind.

“Oh, but really”—protested Robin, in dismay. But by that time the Goblins had gone.

“You’ve got to give up what you like—tick!—if you want to put things right—tock!” ticked the Clock Man. “You can’t do mending without something to mend with—tick, tock!”

Already the strange little Goblins in blue were back in the dining-room. They certainly must have gone and come with the aid of magic! They were lugging the toy gun!

The Put-It-Rights rushed forward to help them—a cloud of yellow mites. Between them they got the gun on to the table, and Robin felt his heart sink when he saw the Mending Man take it up.

“I *wish* you wouldn’t”—he began.

With a shrill moan, the Don’t Want Tos, who had been sulking in a corner, scuttled across the table, and sat down in front of him in rows on rows of little huddled gray shapes.

“He doesn’t want to—he doesn’t want to!” they complained. “Boo-hoo-hoo-hoo!” And they lifted up their voices and howled like so many extremely small hounds.

“*Horrid* little boy!” ticked the Fairy in the Clock, reprovingly. “Selfish, heartless, disagreeable, *wretched* little boy! Tock!”

“Don’t you really want me to mend this cup?” said the Mending Man earnestly. “Just think how your little brother will cry when he finds that you have broken it!”

In his mind’s eye Robin could see Charming’s face when he would learn that his beloved cup had been shattered and lost forever. He hesitated, while the unhappy chorus of the lamenting Don’t-Want-Tos rose upon the air.

At last, with a quick feeling of shame, he put out his hand and pushed them away. They scattered right and left with angry mutterings.

“I do want to!” cried Robin. “You may use my air-gun or anything else to mend Charming’s cup! I *do* want you to!”

He leaned forward eagerly. . . . The Mending Man was smiling at him; so was the Clock Fairy of the Hours.

“Good! Good!” said the Mending Man.

“Tick, tock! *Good* boy! Tick, tock!” said the Clock.

Over the table the merry little Glad-I-Dids, in their pretty scarlet dress, came scampering.

Robin felt suddenly rather queer and sleepy again. He kept his eyes open with an effort, and tried to fix them upon the Mending Man’s work.

“How do you mend it?” he asked drowsily.

“It is all done!” said the Mending Man. “See!”

He held out his hands. In them Robin saw the cup and saucer—whole and sound once more!

The air-gun had disappeared.

. . . “Good boy!” ticked the Fairy Man in the Clock. “Good boy!” . . . And, as he repeated the words, the ticking changed ever so little from “Good boy” to “Good-bye—good-bye—good-bye.” . . . Then there were no words at all; nothing but “Tick, tock!—Tick, tock!—Tick, tock!” . . .

And Robin opened his eyes and sat up.

He was still in the chair by the dining-room table. And Charming’s cup and saucer, as good as new, stood at his elbow.

“Well, and is *that* where you are?” said Nurse’s voice from the doorway. “Faith, and it’s past your bed-time. Come now, and don’t stumble all over. You’re that sleepy, you can harrddly hould up yer head!” . . .

Robin gave Charming back his Magic Cup; but he never told him how near he had come to losing it altogether!

He never saw the air-gun again. The others often asked him what had become of it.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

The Witch Night

“All round the house is the jet-black night;
It stares through the window pane;
It crawls in the corners, hiding from the light,
And it moves with the moving flame.

“Now my little heart goes a-beating like a drum,
With the breath of the Bogie in my hair;
And all round the candle the crooked shadows come
And go marching along up the stair.”

Robert Louis Stevenson.

IT WAS two o'clock in the morning, and a wild storm was raging. The winds screamed around the house, and the thunder crashed and echoed among the hills. Never was seen such blazing lightning, mirrored in purple and blue upon the Lake; never could such a flood of rain have been imagined.

Even the children were kept awake by the racket, and Nurse went back and forth between the nurseries arrayed in a red flannel dressing-gown and a night-cap with wide white frills around her plump face. As she shuffled about she muttered prayers for those at sea, and expressed a hope that there were no Witches riding down the chimney on the mad gale. She carried a candle, and her shadow looked like a monster dancing along behind her.

“Hark!” cried Saidie, who was sitting up in bed. “What was that noise?”

“Faith!” exclaimed Nurse, “who can tell what anything is a night like this? It might be a mouse, acushla, and it might be a thunderbolt! Maybe we're as well off for knowing no more about it!”

"Oh, Nursie!" whispered Saidie. "Do you really suppose there are Witches about?"

"How can I say?" said Nurse, shaking her frilled head. "All I do know is that they couldn't have a night better suited to them!"

"Suited to what?" demanded Robin, who had wandered in from the next room with his little blue wrapper around him. Charming, sleepy and scared, followed and went to cuddle up beside Saidie for companionship and comfort.

"Witches!" said Saidie mysteriously. "That's what we are talking about!"

"Vey isn't coming here?" Charming begged to know.

"Bless us, no!" Nurse exclaimed cheerfully

"Listen to that smash!" exclaimed Robin as a big thunder clap shook the house.

"Get back to bed, the lot of you!" said Nurse. "You'll get your death running around like this!"

"'Tisn't cold!" Robin declared. "Nurse, tell us a story."

"Story!" snorted Nurse, snuffing the candle. "It's a fine hour entirely to be wanting stories! Get to sleep and you'll have no need for stories!"

"Phsaw!" said Robin rather rudely, sitting down in the rocking-chair, and curling up his bare feet under him. "Nobody's likely to sleep while this jolly row is going on!"

"Don't say 'jolly row,'" said Saidie primly. "Grandmother hates slang. Nursie, darling, it would be awfully nice if you *would*"—

Nurse grumbled a great deal, but she knew that they were none of them likely to sleep till the worst of the storm was over. So, after closing the window in the other nursery, and seeing that all three of the children were warmly wrapped up, and the candles burning clearly and out of reach of any draught, she sat down and began:

"There once was a bad, ugly ould Witch, and she lived by herself in the bottom of a dry well. Whin she wanted to get out, she climbed up the rope like a beetle crawling up a string. She was one hundred and

ninety years ould, and her face looked like a rotten walnut. For deviltry and evil ways there was no matching her, and that's a fact. Whin I say that she lived by herself, I'm not counting the cats. There was eight dozen of thim."

"All in the well?" said Sadie.

"Of course!"

"It must have been a very *large* well," remarked Robin with interest.

"It was. It was a mile deep."

"Was ve catses *nice* catses?" demanded Charming.

"Faith, now would ye be expectin' a Witch to have nice cats? No, sure; they was well-nigh as bad as she was! At night when the moon shone down in to the well the cats yelled like—like—like the wind there that ye hear howling this minute. Then all the farmers used to run for their lives, and say 'twas ghosts or bogies!

"Now the only difficulty that the Witch had was in feeding her cats. Sure the brutes were finicky-like, and would only relish tasty food. And, as ye might guess, that was none so aisy to come by in a mile-long well! Whin the cats couldn't get what they fancied they'd bite the Witch!

"The ould lady would have many a fierce scrrrap with the bastes, for strong as she was, and wicked as she was, and cliver as she was, there was ninety-six to one, which to say the laste of it, is to be a bit outnumbered!

"One night things got as you might say desperate.

"Bring me some whipped crame!" howled the biggest of the cats, a huge white Tom with yellow eyes.

"And where is me crab-mate?" squawled a little brown tabby with mincing ways.

"You've forgot that rabbit pie," squawked a Maltese.

"And how about that tenderloin steak I orrrdered?" meowed another.

"And the shrimp salad?"

"And the Spanish omelette?"

"And the lamb chops with grane peas?"

“‘And the broiled lobster,’—

“The Witch put her hands to her ears. ‘Pace to the lot of ye!’ she cried out angry-like. ‘I’ll bring ye the eleven course male ye’re after asking for, but I hope with all me sowl,’ says she sourly, that ivery mouthful chokes ye!’

“Then she went crawling, crawling up the well-rope like a beetle, till she reached the earrth level. And there she set down and thought it over a while. She was tired sick of the cats and their domineering, greedy ways—and well she might be, bad as she was! And finely would she have liked to be rid of the lot of thim, d’ye see?”

Robin interrupted to ask “why she ever had them in the first place.”

“Because they was all wise, cliver cats, and she had collected thim firrst to hilp her with her witchcraft and Black Magic. She used to sind thim off on sacret errands in the dead o’ night; and at the beginning they were a hilp and a credit, and well earned their keep. But after that they got lazy and greedy, and thought of nothing but their food, and bit and scratched their mistress like so many ungrateful spiders or rats. And so she was wishful to get clane rid of thim all.

“She sat on the well-curb, and thought, and thought, till her last remaining hairs fell out with the effort. And thin she was uglier than iver!

“Now it happened that a young man was passing by, and saw her sitting there. He was riding a lame horse, and his doublet was in rags, but he had a light heart and a pleasant way with him.

“‘What’s amiss with ye, Mother?’ he says, pulling up.

“‘Ninety-six cats!’ says the Witch, gloomy like.

“The young man made sure she was a bit out of her head; so he laughed, and says he: ‘Maybe there’ll be ninety-five fewer the nixt time you look for thim, Mother!’ says he. ‘Or aven a few less than that!’ says he.

“‘If ye could bring about that same,’ says the Witch, ‘I’d give ye a new horrse and a purse full of gold!’

“‘Faith!’ says the young man, a bit surprised, ‘you don’t look like a lady of private means, Mother!’

“‘Niver mind about me and me means!’ says the Witch, says she. ‘You get rid of me ninety-six cats, and I’ll make ye a rich man!’ she says.

“Well, annyhow, by questioning and answering, and by this and by that, he hearrd the whole of the difficulty, and he agreed to get the Witch out of her throuble.

“‘Go ye down, now,’ says he, ‘and tell your lords and ladies the pussy-cats,’ say he, ‘that they’re all bid to a grreat Feast at the Inn, over beyant. Kin they get up the rope?’ says he.

“‘They kin get up a broke spider’s web if they’re so inclined,’ says the Witch. ‘But they’re that lazy, I doubt not they’ll make me carry thim all!’

“Down she slid into the well, to gather up her cats. They made a great to-do about climbing out of the well; but they were hungry, and she described the Feast till their mouths watered. So they made her carry thim up the rope, two at a time. It took her all one night to get the lot of thim up.

“Thin they set off at a cat-trot for the Inn; and, as they got nearer and nearer, they smelled the good things cooking, and they hurried up a bit, and ran as fast as iver they could, and their wicked whiskers stood on end with greed!

“Whin they got to the Inn there was the young man to welcome his guests; and in the dining-room of the tavern was spread such a ban-quet as niver ye saw! The tables fairly groaned under the weight of the grrand food! And the Witch’s cats licked their lips, and meowed with joy whin they saw as well as smelled.

“But what they did not see was a fine big tub of water, set in front of the door, filled with howly water—that is, water which had had a prayer or two said over it by a howly man, and which no wicked spirit could bear to touch.

“‘Walk in, ladies and gintlemin!’ says the young man to the cats. ‘There’s a-plinty to ate; hilp yersilves!’

“With that the cats made a rush for the table.

“Well, ’twas a wonderful and a terrible thing to watch! Ivery one of thim pussies wint into the tub, one after the other; and just as soon as one touched the howly water, there was a hiss and a sputter and a puff of smoke and thin a fiery-eyed demon would go bounding off through the window or up the chimney! All the cats were wicked spirits, d’ye see? And the howly water changed thim to their true demon forms; and so off they all wint, shooting up into the air, with fire and steam, and niver, niver did they turn up in thim parrts again!

“‘I’m much obleeged to ye!’ says the Witch, who had been a-watching with her ugly mouth wide open. ‘Here’s yer gold!’ says she; and she give him a heavy, fat purse. ‘I’ll see about your horrrse,’ says she, ‘for I’m a woman of me worrd!’” says she.

“‘Wouldn’t ye step in and have a bite yerself?’ says the young man, his eyes a-twinkling.

“‘Many thanks—not I!’ says the Witch, backing away from the tub. ‘I’m not over-fond of howly water meself!’

“‘Oh, plase!’ mewed a little screechy voice. ‘Won’t you help me out?’

“And there in the tub, swimming around in the howly water, was a little black kitten!

“The young man pulled it out in a hurry, and it sat down and licked itself dry.

“‘And how did you get there?’ says the Witch, staring.

“‘If you plase, I’m one of yer cats, ma’am,’ says the kitten, meek-like. ‘Only, ye see, I’m a rale cat, and not a demon,’ it says; ‘so the howly water didn’t hurt me!—Though, to tell ye the truth, I didn’t like it much!’ says the kitten, washing its face.

“‘H’m!’ says the Witch, and studied it. ‘Would ye like to be a horse?’ she says.

“‘N-N-Not much!’ says the kitten, looking scared. ‘Not unless I have to, if you plase!’

“The Witch sighs. ‘I could have turnd ye into a very pretty horrrse,’

she says, regretful-like. 'But maybe I can use ye as ye are. As for you, young man, I'll give ye one of the Enchanted Horses that are in the Stables of Storm,' says the Witch. 'They're a fast breed, and spirited!'

"And that's the way it come about that a young mortal man became the owner and rider of the finest Storm Horse in all the world. You can hear him riding it about on any wild night like this. Hark now!"

In the rushing wind there did indeed seem to be the echo of galloping hoofs. The children listened with a little thrill. Suppose he were really out there, the young man who had won the gift the Witch's horse—the magical steed from the Stables of Storm. . . . Galloping, galloping, galloping—was it really only the wind, after all? . . .

"What becomed of ve kitten?" queried Charming.

"Sure the Ould Woman took it back with her, and made it into a fine, black Witch Cat. I've hearrd she grew quite attached to it, and—Hark, there! That was a door or something, down stairs!"

They all listened. The storm crashed and whistled, and the whole house seemed echoing and creaking, full of mysterious voices and footsteps.

"I told you there was something!" exclaimed Saidie.

"Hush!" cried Robin. "It sounds like"—

"I hear somefing in ve hall!" whimpered Charming. "Oh, it *isn't* ve Witch, is it?"

"Nonsense!" said Nurse briskly, but she looked disturbed. "There's nothing wrong. It only sounded to me like a bit of a step"—

Saidie slid out of bed, greatly excited.

"It *is* something!" she cried. "It is in the hall. Oh, Nursie! It's coming in!"

The door opened. And there, clinging to the knob, and swaying limply as the door swayed, was a small dripping figure! It was Fay, and she looked half dead with rain, fatigue and terror.

"Oh, quick!" she gasped. "Get somebody! Tell somebody! They are going to rob the house!"

She sank down in a little heap, and began to cry.

“*Who* are?” demanded the startled Nurse. “There, there! Whist, poor child! Let me get that wet shawl off of ye. . . So! Now, darlin’, set on this chair, and tell us about it! Bless us, the little thing’s near drowned! Now thin, dearie!”

The child forced herself to speak quietly and carefully as usual between her sobs.

“They—they—Gypsies—friends of Roma’s—have been planning for a long time to rob this house. To-night they thought it was safe; you wouldn’t hear in the storm. . . . They’ll break in some time during the next hour. I listened . . . I know!”—

“Is this truth?” asked Nurse gravely.

“Oh, of *course* it is!” cried Saidie, who was kneeling beside Fay, hugging her.

“Wait a bit!” said Nurse, in her steady way. “Were these robbers—Gypsies—what ye like—were they your friends?”

“I was brought up with them,” said Fay wearily. “I never used to care what they did. . . . But I couldn’t let them rob you. Oh, I couldn’t!”

“Oh, why should she have come to warn us if she had not wanted to help us?” sobbed Saidie, looking reproachfully at Nurse.

“I should not have come to warn you,” said Fay, quietly, even tenderly, “if I had not loved you all so much better—than—any one in the world!”

Nurse looked at her, and her kind face grew even more gentle than usual.

“That’s pleasant hearing, my dear!” she said. “Now I’ll just go and ring a bell or two. There’ll be no robbery to-night, my lambs!”

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

A Gypsy Princess

“A shadowy highway cool and brown,
Alluring up and enticing down. .
* * * * *
“An open hand, an easy shoe,
And a hope to make the day go through—
* * * * *
“By marsh and tide, by meadow and stream,
A will-o'-the wind, a light-o'-dream,
* * * * *
“A jack-o'lantern, a fairy fire”. . . .

Bliss Carman

FAY'S warning had been in time, and the evil Gypsy robbers were frightened away before they had a chance to do any harm to anyone. They escaped in the night and storm, and made no further trouble for Wildwood nor its inhabitants. The whole strange crew vanished as though they had ridden away on the winds. I think that Roma *must* have been a Witch!

Fay was so nervous and upset that she had been hurried to bed with Saidie after all the excitement was over on that eventful night, and no one had questioned her. But when the morning came the Goodman children were absolutely bursting with curiosity. Roma had gone, Fay was left to them, and now that she had slept and rested, they simply must ask her some questions.

They waited, according to Grandmother's express orders, until she had finished a very light breakfast, and then they plunged in with desperate haste and feverish eagerness:—

“Fay,” said Saidie, in a tone of awe, “were you really brought up among the Gypsies?”

"Yes," answered Fay, smiling faintly. "My father was a Gypsy, you know."

"What was he like?" asked Charming.

"He was ever so splendid, and handsome, and good," said the little girl. "And he was the King, you know!"

"The Gypsy King!" exclaimed Robin, much impressed.

"Yes, the chief of all the Romany tribes."

"Why, then, Fay, you are a Princess!" cried Saidie. "How thrilling!"

"Only a Gypsy Princess!" said Fay, smiling again.

"You don't look like a Gypsy," declared Robin, regarding her carefully.

"Gyp-sees is all black!" said Charming in a tone of disgust. He was snuggled up close to Fay, and seemed devoted to her.

"My mother wasn't a Gypsy, you see," she said.

Saidie gave a long, deep sigh of thorough pleasure.

"It's better than a *story-book* story!" she said, settling herself comfortably on the floor, with her legs crossed. "Now, Fay, darling! Please begin at the beginning, and tell us everything you can remember about yourself, and the Gypsies, and your father, and your mother, and the Fairies—and *everything!*"

Shyly at first, but soon speaking more freely and naturally, Fay described to them her life among the Gypsies, and her three listeners thought that they had never heard anything so interesting.

She told them how she had slept on a bundle of clothes by the roadside, with the stars above her head and the cool winds blowing over her; how, when she was tired, she had ridden on a tiny, rough, gray donkey, to which were tied the pots and pans and plates and cups for their cooking; and how, on chilly evenings, her father had wrapped her in a brightly coloured blanket, and let her sit, warm and comfortable, near the fire, where their supper was boiling.

These suppers were delicious, Fay declared—rabbits and quail and partridge and wild herbs, all stewed in a big pot, until the very smell made

one hungry And there were fresh berries, too—all they could eat of them—and new milk, which they begged or bought at farmhouses by the way.

They made baskets of sweet-grass, and strung acorns and shells, and fashioned partridge-berry necklaces, and filled bags with pine-needles and balsam, and collected pretty fir-cones and bits of silver-satin birchbark; and all these things they sold, and sold well, too! And Roma, who was one of the cleverest and one of the wickedest of them all, would tell fortunes with cards, and read people's palms, and explain to them what their dreams meant. And with the money they made in these ways, the Gypsies would usually buy gay clothing and odd jewelry, for they dearly loved bright and startling things to wear.

In the evening they would tell stories and sing songs—very long, and often very sad. And sometimes they would dance wildly, until they were so tired that they would lie down just where they were and go to sleep there until morning.

They hardly ever stayed more than two or three nights in the same spot; often it was a different place every evening! This suited Fay, for she was restless and wild by nature, and loved wandering. Indeed, she was very happy with the Gypsies during her father's lifetime.

He was the Romany King, and every one obeyed him; but in their hearts they hated him. He would not let them steal nor fight nor kidnap, nor do any wicked, lawless things. He was honest and kind; and they would have better liked a King who was as bad as themselves, and who would have encouraged them to break laws, and have a wild time.

When the good Gypsy King died they let their joy be plainly seen. Though, of course, Fay was now their rightful Queen, they refused to acknowledge her as such. Instead of that, they treated her unkindly, and even threatened to shut her up somewhere for the rest of her life, so that she could not be a trouble to them.

Roma, in spite of her wickedness and her works of Magic, was fond of Fay, and she protected her against the other Gypsies; and after a while,

when she saw that they would not treat the little girl properly, she took her away from the Gypsy tribe.

They ran off together one dark night, and did not see the Gypsies for a very long time. Roma had such a wonderful knowledge of flowers and all growing things that she was easily able to get work wherever gardeners were employed; and in time they found their way to Wildwood, where they were soon engaged, and where they had remained ever since.

Everything had gone well until a few weeks before, when some of the travelling Gypsies had found where they were, and had made up their minds to rob the house. Roma had been so glad to see her old companions that she had helped them in every way she could. But Fay, who had come to care tenderly for the Goodman children, simply could not bear to be dragged into their cruel and dishonest schemes. She had determined to warn them, and had luckily done so in time.

Fay asked, shrinking a trifle from the answer, whether anything had been heard from Roma. She was told that, along with the other Gypsies, the old woman had disappeared in the night. The child seemed quite sad when she heard it.

“You weren’t really fond of her, were you, Fay?” asked Saidie.

“No,” said the little girl sadly. “I never was fond of any one but my father—that is, before I knew you three. Roma, like all the others, seemed wicked to me, and dishonest. But she *did* take care of me when nobody else would!”

The mysterious Gypsy woman was never seen in the neighbourhood again. She vanished off the face of the earth as completely as though she had been wiped out by magic. Country people were questioned, every precaution was taken, but Roma and the rest of her flock of night-owls and birds-of-prey had vanished for all time.

“But I never thought she was even good to you!” said Saidie sympathetically.

“I think,” said Fay, in her quaint little grown-up way, “that Roma was as good to me as she knew how to be. She was a Witch, you see, and

of course she could never entirely forgive me for not wanting to become one too. And she was a Gypsy, and most Gypsies are—are—well, they don't like to be shut in, nor made to feel that anyone can stop them from anything that they want to do! . . . But she used to give me the nicest things to eat that she could find, and—and—she saved me from the others when they wanted to be unkind to me!". . .

"It's funny," said Saidie—"I can't think of you as a Gypsy. Tell us something about your mother's family."

Fay shook her head.

"I don't know anything about my mother," she said. "I only know that she was kidnapped when she was a little girl like me, and grew up among the Gypsies. And when my father became Romany King, he married her, and loved her very much. That's all."

"Fay," demanded Saidie in a whisper, "aren't Gypsies sort of Fairy people, really? I've always imagined that they were!"

"Some of them are," answered Fay. "You see, we live out of doors so much that we have to be a little different from the people who live in houses and eat with forks and sleep on mattresses. And some of the very, very old Romany crones know a great deal about magic. And nearly all Gypsies can understand the talk of animals and birds. But it's not quite like being Fairy people themselves!"

Her eyes looked dreamy.

"You—" Saidie hesitated—"you are a real Fairy person, are you not, Fay?"

"Tell about it!" crooned Charming.

Fay hesitated.

"It's funny," she said, in a shy, embarrassed little way. "I myself would be willing enough to tell you about that. But when I start to speak of it, something seems to stop me. I *did* fall asleep in the Fairy Ring, you know, just as Roma told you; and I *did* see a lot of Fairies while I was there, and they *did* tell me some of their secrets, and promised to be friends with me as long as I loved them best in the world. But if I tell about any of it, the

words just stop. I—can't. . . . I think perhaps they don't like me to tell things I found out while I was one of them."

Indeed this seemed reasonable enough.

"But aren't you one of them now?" demanded Robin.

"I—I am afraid not," said Fay, looking a little troubled. "You see, I was only to be one of them while I loved them the best."

"And you don't luf vem ve best now?" said Charming.

Fay put her arm around him shyly.

"No," she said with a timid little smile. "I love you best now—you three; best in the whole world!"

"And yet," murmured Saidie, "you used [to be a friend—a real friend—of the Fairies! . . . Isn't it wonderful, Robin?"

"You must know a great deal," said Robin seriously.

Fay shook her head once more.

"I know how to find my way through a wood by feeling," she said. "I know how to tell the time by the sun, and how to tell the North with my eyes shut. And I know how to make a call like night owls, and what wild herbs are safe to eat and what are not!"—

"There!" said Saidie. "Didn't I say so?"

—"But," went on Fay, "I don't know how to read or write or count. . . . Oh, I *do* so wish I could learn things like other little girls!"

Her big gray eyes looked very wistful. Charming flung his arms around her.

"You darling!" Saidie cried impulsively. "You shall go back to New York with us and have lessons with us! I know Mother and Father will let us have you with us!—Aren't you sure they will, Robin?"

Robin didn't say anything, but that was because he was ashamed of showing how touched he was by poor little Fay's humble longing to be like other children. Of course he could not entirely understand it. To him, as to his sister and brother, she seemed very wonderful; and that they could not and would not grasp that so far as book-education went she was still very ignorant.

. . . .“Happy, my dears?” said Grandmother’s cheery voice behind them.

She smiled at them all, including Fay, whom she regarded with a little puzzled, kindly, *remembering* look.

Fay glanced up gratefully.

“Oh, yes, thank you!” she said in her pretty gentle way. “I have never been so happy before!”

“I am glad, my dear!” said Grandmother, her sweet old eyes a trifle moist. “Little people should be happy; . . . I am afraid that you have known a great deal of trouble already, my love!”

Fay said nothing.

“We’ve been asking Fay about her mother,” said Saidie, who wanted Fay to talk and to feel at home with Grandmother. “But she doesn’t know anything about her—except that she was kidnapped.”

“Kidnapped!” repeated Grandmother sharply, and sat suddenly down on a chair. She was very white and she was staring at Fay as though she were a little ghost.

“Will you tell me all that you can remember of your mother?” she asked as calmly as she could.

“I don’t remember her at all,” replied Fay. “I was a little baby when she died. But my father said I was like her. She had light hair.”

“You are sure that she was—kidnapped?” went on Grandmother slowly.

“Oh, yes. Roma kept the dress she wore when they took her away. I always thought perhaps Roma had something to do with it. . . . I used to want to wear it when I was littler, but she wouldn’t let me!”

“What was the dress like?” asked Grandmother. She was rising to her feet now, and seemed to be growing paler than ever.

“It was a red and white plaid,” began Fay. And then the children cried with one voice: “Cousin Lucy!” . . . They could once more see the Magic Mirror, and the little fair-haired girl, in her red-and-white checked dress, working on her sampler.

"Tell me," said Grandmother in a trembling voice, "have you anything about you—anything at all—that belonged to your mother?"

In silence Fay felt in a fold of her white dress. Fastened in securely, but in such a way that one could never have seen it without looking closely, was a little gold pin.

"I hid it from them," she explained simply. "I did not want Roma or the other Gypsies to have it."

Then she unpinned it and held it out.

Grandmother took the little pin, which was in the shape of a tiny gold bird, and gazed at it a long, long time without speaking. . . . When she looked at Fay the tears were rolling down her cheeks. She put out her arms and drew the little girl into them.

"And your mother's name?" she whispered.

"It was Lucinda Charlotte," answered the child.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

“Good-Bye”

“The coach is at the door at last;
The eager children, mounting fast,
And kissing hands, in chorus sing:
Good-bye, good-bye to everything!”

—Robert Louis Stevenson.

“FIVE o'clock!” said Saidie.

“The carriage was to be there about five I thought!” said Robin, who was walking restlessly back and forth.

“Do sit down!” begged Saidie. “Why are you in such a hurry? One would think you were not a bit sorry to leave dear Wildwood, and dear Grandmother, and”—

“I *am* sorry!” declared Robin indignantly. “And I’m sorry to leave Fay’s ‘dear’ Fairies, too! . . . And my Mist Island, and—and lots of other things. Only—you’re a girl, so I suppose you can’t understand. I can quite easily be sorry to stop doing one thing, and yet glad to begin doing something else! You can’t always be doing the same thing.”

“*Well,*” said his sister decidedly, “I should like to do the same thing always, if the same thing meant living in the country, and having adventures.”

“*Well,*” said the boy even more decidedly, “I shouldn’t! And I’m jolly glad I’m going back to town to begin school again.”

“You won’t be so ‘jolly glad’ when you have to go over your arithmetic lesson three times!” said Saidie spitefully.

“Well, I’m glad *now!*” said Robin Goodfellow, obstinately cheerful. “And I think it will be great fun, too, showing Fay new things, and helping her study, and”—

“Fay hasn’t gotted her wubbers on!” said Charming suddenly.

He had cried himself sick at the thought of leaving; but now, at the last moment, being very little indeed, he had gotten entirely over his grief, and was most content and interested.

"I don't *want* to wear rubbers!" said Fay, rather sharply for her.

"You'll have to, I expect," said Robin. "It may be raining in New York. We always wear them travelling."

"Well, I won't wear them at all!" said their small cousin crossly.

"Why not?" asked Saidie wondering.

"Indoor people wear rubbers!" said Fay disdainfully. "I am a Gypsy!"

"Well, you'll have to stop being a Gypsy," said Robin laughing. "Sit down, and put up your foot!"

Fay hung her head sulkily, but did as he told her, and he rather clumsily pulled the two little overshoes on to her feet.

"Oh, Robin," cried Saidie. "You look like the Prince putting on Cinderella's slipper!"

They all laughed.

"Funny s-slippers!" lisped Charming.

"And a mighty funny Prince!" added Robin, standing up. "But—you know—" he paused, and then said a little shyly: "I think Fay is a wee bit like Cinderella. Her name—Lucinda—Cinderella—in the first place, and then—other things. She—she's sort of—well, coming into her kingdom, you know!" finished Robin with a rush, and flushing a little.

"Is the chicks ready, sure?" called a cheery but breathless voice.

Nurse appeared, loaded down with bags, and wraps, and packages. No matter how many trunks dear old Nurse Molly had in which to pack, there were always a dozen things left out, which had to be wrapped up at the last minute. She never travelled anywhere without numberless bundles of different sizes. She was smiling and serene, however, and swept them all before her like the chickens to which she likened them, to wait on the verandah for the carriage.

The first autumn red was showing on the leaves, the grass was getting

a shade brown, the air was fresh and crisp, and there were no flowers left in the garden.

Fay stood on the verandah, looking toward the russet and gold woods, beyond which the sky glowed red.

“What is it, Cinderella?” gently said Grandmother, coming behind her.

The beautiful little old lady was all in white to-day—her way, she said, of going into mourning for the summer.

Her fichu and cap were of exquisite white lace, and she looked like a lovely old picture as she stood there, leaning on her silver-topped cane. “What is it my dear?” she repeated.

Fay looked up at her with a wistful light in her gray eyes.

“I was saying good-bye to my woods,” she said, “where I have so often played with the Gypsies and with the Fairies. And I was wondering whether some day I should not be homesick.” . . .

The carriage came rolling up to the door, and the children piled in, shouting loving good-byes to Grandmother.

“Good-bye, my darlings!” she called, smiling and waving. “Come back next spring to Wildwood! The Fairies will be lonely. . . . And so shall I!” said dear Grandmother.

ENVOY

A shadowy little person
Dropped softly from a shelf;
They said it was a spider;
I know it was an Elf!
—The wisest kind of Goblin Sprite,
With Second or Two Hundredth Sight,
That spins out dreams all through the night—
That's what I think myself!

I saw a lovely creature,
With shimmering emerald wings,
The bravest and the brightest
Of little summer things;
They said it was a dragon fly
That swift and splendid darted by,
But a Messenger it was, say *I*,
From the mighty Fairy King!

I think I've guessed at something
That's rather queer, you know;
I think that there are Fairies,
Wherever we may go!
The Everyday's that quietly range,
With just the *littlest* kind of change,
Are something magical and strange,
If only we could **know!**

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