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RED CAP

A Play for Children in Two Acts

By
MARY WILLARD KEYES

PLEASE NOTICE

All amateur clubs or others who give stage presentations of this play must pay the author \$5.00 royalty for each performance. Address on this subject MARY WILLARD KEYES, Wilton, Hillsboro Co., N. H. Professional rates on application.



BOSTON
WALTER H. BAKER & CO.

1916

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RED CAP

CHARACTERS

- ALICIA, *a girl of fourteen.*
- NANCY, *about the same age.*
- FATHER MOUNTAIN.
- LYCINTHIA, *a water nymph.*
- FARAEI, *guardian of the birds.*
- DORIAN, *guardian of the little wild beasts.*
- DRYAD OF THE BEECH.
- DRYAD OF THE WHITE BIRCH.
- DRYAD OF THE PINE.
- MIRABEL } *flower fairies.*
- BRIAR ROSE }
- FUNGUS DOD } *elves.*
- FUNGUS TOD }
- FIRE SPRITE.
- BREEZE.

More dryads, elves and fairies can be introduced if desired ; or, by making slight alterations, the play can be given with only one of each. Some of the parts can be taken by either boys or girls.



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COSTUMES

ALICIA. Blouse and skirt.

NANCY. Something that is too dressy to be suitable for mountain wear.

FATHER MOUNTAIN. Ample gown and head covering of gray or purple.

LYCINTHIA. Clinging draperies of pale green and white. Hair unbound.

DRYADS. Scant, sleeveless gowns of shades resembling the color of the bark on their several trees. Hair loosely tied or dressed in classic style with fillets. Each should wear a twig or branch from her own tree. Sandals.

FAIRIES. Short gowns of leaf green or white; small white wings; flower caps of pink; pink sandals, wands.

ELVES. "Green jacket, red cap, and white owl's feather." Pointed shoes.

DORIAN. If this part is taken by a boy he may wear shirt and knickerbockers, and wide sash, all of brown; if by a girl, a tabard of burlap reaching to knees. A cape, sandals laced to knees, long slender staff tipped with pine cone. Cap.

FARAEI. Similar costume of bluebird blue or any colors that suggest birds. Quill in cap. Staff tipped with quills as an arrow is feathered.

BREEZE. If a boy, shirt, knickerbockers and full cape; if a girl, tabard and cape. White and red would be effective coloring.

FIRE SPRITE. Long orange slip with flowing thin white draperies, long and full enough to be flung high and wide. Attach draperies to little fingers by tapes so they can be extended like wings.

DANCE OF DRYADS AND BREEZE

Study the motions of the trees in a high wind and try to imitate them. The Dryad of the White Birch, for instance, might extend both arms to the right at shoulder height, droop head to right, and dropping her fingers keep them in rapid motion to simulate the quivering of birch leaves, at the same time swaying slightly from the waist. The Dryad of the Beech might make motions from the wrists, while the Pine could sway her arms. Whichever one Breeze is nearest at any given moment should be the most active. Breeze should at times be very gentle and by fits very boisterous, especially with the Fire Sprite.

AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED

*to the members of the original cast: Doris, Edith,
Almus, Marion, Leonard, Howard, Florence, Grace,
Adele, Ruth, Helen, Sydney, Charles, Emily and Joan*

PLEASE READ CAREFULLY

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Red Cap

ACT I

SCENE.—*The scene is a small clearing on a mountainside. If possible there should be a white birch or a beech tree conspicuous at the rear. There is a spring at right centre. This can be made by sinking a pailful of water in the ground, and arranging plants around the edge. There is a bird's nest on a branch of a tree to the left. At left front is a small stool made in semblance of a toadstool and driven into the ground. At left rear is a bank or rock large enough to lie on. The music for the song near the end of the play is found in the "St. Nicholas Song Book," under the title, "Little Maid Margery," page 30. For production indoors, branches and evergreens should be used, or a set of sylvan scenery. Red and yellow electric lights give the effect of a camp-fire. Caution.—It is not possible to use too much care in regard to the fire.*

(FUNGUS DOD seated on giant toadstool, a row of small toadstools before him. He chants singsong, touching each toadstool with little finger of left hand. LYCINTHIA asleep near spring.)

FUNGUS DOD.

Spring from mud,
And spring from mould ;
Pale and rose
And tawny gold ;
Dainty flutings underneath,
Scatter spore-dust in a wreath ;
Best-made parts are out of sight ;
Spring in thousands in a night.

Enter FUNGUS TOD.

FUNGUS TOD.

I've scattered only forty thousand more
Since yesterday. We need a three days' rain.

LYCINTHIA (*waking*).

Did you say rain, my little brother?

ELVES (*bobbing before her*). Greetings!

FUNGUS TOD.

Dear lady water nymph, I said we need
A soaking. But the spirits of the clouds
Have flown so high along the sun's hot rays
That I've not seen a single one on earth
For these three weeks. No! not since June came in.

LYCINTHIA.

Since June came in? Why, then, elf, this must be,
Or else to-morrow, our Midsummer Day.

FUNGUS TOD.

Midsummer Day it is.

ELVES (*capering and turning somersaults*). Hooray! Hooray!

LYCINTHIA.

There's magic in the very air to-day,
And soon the spirit of the mountain old
Will visit us, beloved guardian;
And my companions, fairies, dryads, nymphs
Will gather here, even as oft of old.
Four times a year our council meeting comes;
Midsummer Day, mid winter, spring and fall
When Grandsire Sun crosses the equinox.

Enter DORIAN, unperceived, at rear.

Ah! well I love December. Then my streams
Flow full, and chant sonorous symphonies
Muffled to any ears but water nymphs'.
And then I dance i' the moonlight on the snow, (*Dances.*)
And wear a gown jewelled with patterned frost,
And shake the spangling icicles, and laugh,
For merry is December on the mountain.

DORIAN (*coming forward*).

Merry it is, but summer is more safe.

LYCINTHIA.

Yes, for your little beasts leave then no track
When to my spring they come.

DORIAN.

You are their friend.

You never let it freeze.

LYCINTHIA.

Their little paws

Make dainty characters upon the snow
And hither all tracks lead. Winter is fair,
But many of my friends are sleeping then —
And I do love my friends. Lo! here come two!

Enter the flower fairies, MIRABEL and BRIAR ROSE.

Welcome, dear fairies!

(They trip up to her and she puts an arm around each.)

FAIRIES.

Hail! beloved nymph!

LYCINTHIA.

How does the laurel bloom, and the wild rose?

MIRABEL.

Pale in the shade, but rosy in the sun
And very full and free my laurel blooms.

BRIAR ROSE.

The fragrance lives in leaf and petal still
But all my plants are clamoring for rain.

LYCINTHIA.

Whatever I can spare from spring and brook
You and your friends shall have.

FAIRIES.

They give you thanks.

(A crashing in the branches. FARAEL swings down from a branch, goes toward DORIAN and assumes threatening attitude.)

FARAEL.

Your beasts have been marauding everywhere
And plundering nests of nestlings and of eggs.

DORIAN.

I'm sorry, Farael. They have to feed
But yet I wish they did not need to hunt.
Truly, I'm sorry —

FARAEL.

What will you *do* beside being sorry, then?
That is the point. What are you going to *do*?

DORIAN.

As hitherto, I'll drive them from the nests;
I'll show them forage of another sort;
I'll punish them—admonish them, but still —

FARAEL.

But still the thefts and murders will go on
You think —

DORIAN.

Which of my creatures harms the most?

FARAEL.

Weasels and snakes are veritable pests
But squirrels are the worst. There're more of them.

DORIAN.

I know. But just remember 'twas not I
That gave their natures to them.

FARAEL (*taking from his cap a nest*).

Look you here.

Last night a mother bird nestled in peace
Over her four blue eggs, the second brood.
The first had hatched, but 'fore they flew away
Some crafty brute of yours had feasted there.
Then patiently she wove another nest,
Again she brooded over precious eggs,
But e'er they chipped the shell the birdlings four
Were found by snake or weasel. That's but one
Out of a thousand cases. Woe is me!

DORIAN (*taking nest*).

Poor mother robin! True as I'm a king
I would my subjects made not war on yours.
But tell me, Farael, how can you be sure
'Twas not a hawk or jay that robbed this nest?

FARAEI.

I've seen no hawk on the mountain. For a week
They've kept away. Squirrels are here in scores.

DORIAN.

And let me tell you this. Your birds of prey
Live on *my* baby squirrels and field mice.
Let's call it quits.

FARAEI.

No! for the balance swings
Too heavily on my side, loaded with wrongs.
Each year my birds grow less —

DORIAN.

Even so my beasts.

FARAEI.

And some there were that visited of old
That never seek my kingdom nowadays;
So much less melody, so much less joy,
So much less beauty on the mountainside.
There's not a bird that flies within my realm
So loathsome as a snake.

DORIAN.

Poor unloved snakes!
'Tis not their fault they're made to glide and coil,
And have no pretty feathers, nor soft fur.
'Tis *not* my snakes that kill your birds by scores:
It's men, and cats harbored by men, that steal
Thousands of nestlings, hundreds of parent birds;
And cats do not beneath my sceptre come.
Watch you your owls that prowl i' the dark, and rob,
Your butcher birds and eagles, hawks and jays,
And keep them from my little hungry beasts.
Teach all your song birds how to build their nests
Like orioles and tanagers. Should a snake
Glide piously away from tempting feasts
That meet him in the grass? Will famished fox
Sniff and pass by the little home i' the bush?
Go to! You shall not slander my dear beasts.
When you can tell me that your birds have learned
To live on seeds alone, and never prey
On winged insect, fish, or furry mouse,
Then will I prison all my wild, shy things
And fatten them on grain. Till that time come
I beg you cease to scold.

(FARAEI starts to strike DORIAN with staff. DORIAN guards himself. Fairies MIRABEL and BRIAR ROSE interpose their wands and elves FUNGUS DOD and FUNGUS TOD seize antagonists by their capes.)

Enter FATHER MOUNTAIN.

FATHER MOUNTAIN. My children, cease !

(They stop instantly and kneel.)

We'll have no brawling on Midsummer Day,
Nor any day o' the year. I scarce recall
A spectacle like this since men arrived
And moose went northward to the wilderness
Battling no longer on our mountainside.
What was the cause ?

FARAEI. Dear Father, 'twas my fault ;
And now my wrath has given place to shame
And I deserve no less than banishment
From our midsummer council, since I've spoiled
The happiness of all with my complaints.

DORIAN. No, Father, pray you, do not banish him,
For then our happiness were spoiled indeed.
His heart is very sore for that his birds
Do dwindle in their numbers year by year.
And finding a mother robin only now
The second time this year bereaved of young
He blamed my squirrels, and for aught I know
The little rascals red deserved the blame.

Enter quietly the THREE DRYADS.

If Mistress Beech would teach her twigs to bear
Nuts in the spring each year, then would the nests
Be safer.

DRYAD OF BEECH.

Would I had such power, indeed !

FATHER MOUNTAIN.

Tell me now, Farael, in the days of old
Before men came, had you more subjects then ?

FARAEI.

Yea, many, many more, your worship knows.

FATHER MOUNTAIN.

The little beasts, perhaps, had other food ?

FARAEI.

The little beasts preyed then, as now, tho' more,
For they, too, have diminished.

FATHER MOUNTAIN.

Is it fair

For you to quarrel at this latter day
For what has been their nature since all time ?

FARAEI.

Nay, sire, it was ill done.

FATHER MOUNTAIN.

Then join your hands.

(They clasp hands.)

Forbear recrimination for the wrongs
Unsanctioned wrought in one another's realms,
And 'gainst your common enemies make league.
Now fairies, elves, and nymphs, and dryads all,
We'll have our council by the light o' the moon
Since Luna is full-orbed to-night. To-day
Busy yourselves along the paths of men.
Exert your charm. Reveal your loveliness,
And make them feel the magic of the woods.
Beauty and love our only weapons be,
For when they love enough they'll cherish too.
Still, if a dull and wanton soul come nigh
Grasping our treasures but to cast away,
Then, children, hide your wealth, confound his steps,
Disgust and weary him. So he the less
Shall feel desire to venture here again.
But if by chance a kindred spirit come
Among you, make your welcome warm, and give
The freedom of the mountain. On this day
You may unseal his eyes, and evermore
He more than mortal vision shall retain.
In three days rain will come and drench the soil,
So be of cheer. All's well. Give notice round
To all your comrades of the council hour,
Here by the spring. Till evening then, adieu !

ALL.

Hail, sire, and farewell ! We will obey.

(FATHER MOUNTAIN goes out, followed by DORIAN and FARAEI, their arms over each other's shoulders, and the two elves mimicking them. LYCINTHIA gives water into the hands of the FAIRIES, who sprinkle it around.)

Enter BREEZE, who drifts languidly across the stage, causing the DRYADS to sway their arms and bodies.

DRYAD OF BEECH.

Dear brother Breeze, stay with us for a while.

BREEZE.

I may not now, but soon will pass again
And bring you coolness from the upper air. [Exit.

DRYAD OF BEECH.

I wish some mortal child would come this way.

DRYAD OF WHITE BIRCH.

I fear them, I.

DRYAD OF PINE.

Why so?

DRYAD OF WHITE BIRCH.

They strip my bark.

DRYAD OF PINE.

Shameful!

DRYAD OF BEECH.

And you the fairest of us all.

MIRABEL.

I dread them, too, for thoughtlessly they tear
My fragile blossoms with their greedy hands,
Or pluck up rarest orchids by the roots
So leaving none to gladden us again.

BRIAR ROSE.

Not seldom, too, do they so little prize
The flowers they have picked they cast them down
And let them wilt in the sun.

DRYAD OF WHITE BIRCH.

I've seen it done.

DRYAD OF BEECH.

But yet not all will wantonly destroy.
I've seen a child —

Enter the ELVES in haste.

FUNGUS DOD. I've seen a *child*.

FUNGUS TOD. A girl!
She's coming to the spring to get a drink.

DRYAD OF BIRCH.
Which sort is she?

FUNGUS DOD. You'll see, for here she comes.

Enter NANCY, running and gasping. Throws down a heap of flowers and flings herself on the ground, tossing her hat aside. She neither hears nor sees the others.

NANCY. That nasty little snake and that horrid bee! I perfectly loathe snakes and bees and I wish I'd killed them, but the snake wriggled away so fast I couldn't catch him.

Enter DORIAN and FARAEL from opposite sides.

FARAEL.
'Twas I, young miss, that helped him to escape.

DORIAN.
You, Farael? I thank you from my heart.

FARAEL.
Oh, after all, the birds and snakes are cousins.
'Twas naught.

NANCY. I thought there was a spring somewhere near here. Where can it be?

(She walks around trying to find it, but LYCINTHIA stands always between her and it. One of the ELVES trips NANCY up. All laugh silently.)

DRYAD OF WHITE BIRCH.
Well done, my elf!

DRYAD OF BEECH.
'Twas nimbly done!

DRYAD OF PINE. 'Twas rare!
For such as she cannot too seldom come.

(NANCY finds the spring.)

NANCY. Oh, here is that old spring. What a little bit of water in it. (*Drinks.*) I wish Allie would hurry up. How that sting does burn! (FUNGUS TOD *steals up and pulls a single hair.*) Ow! there's another bee! I don't see him anywhere, and it's stopped stinging, so I guess it was something else. I hate the woods in June. They're so full of creeping things and crawling things, and buzzing things and stinging things. (FUNGUS DOD *pinches her leg.*) Ow! (*Jumps up.*) I said so! (*The ELVES tickle her with grass from time to time.*) Botheration! I wish I had a chocolate sundae. What perfectly elegant birch bark! (DRYAD OF WHITE BIRCH *clasps her hands to her breast in alarm.*) While I'm waiting for Allie I'll just cut my initials on that.

(*She jumps up, FUNGUS TOD trips her, FAIRIES catch her skirt with briars, DORIAN places branch in her way, DRYAD OF WHITE BIRCH kneels and clasps her tree. NANCY goes to further side of tree and pretends to be cutting her initials. The DRYADS mourn, ELVES and two GUARDIANS shake their fists at NANCY.*)

DRYAD OF BEECH.

Dear sister, are you faint?

DRYAD OF WHITE BIRCH. Only a little.

She is not cutting deep. I do not bleed.

I shall not suffer injury—only scars.

DRYAD OF PINE.

Alas! how can the child disfigure so

Your beautiful smooth bark? And did you mark

Another child comes soon?

FUNGUS DOD.

She shall not come.

I'll hinder her. Now for some pranks and fun!

(*He capers off. NANCY comes forward, takes out an orange and sucks it, throws rind to one side. DORIAN picks up her hat, examines the wing with which it is trimmed, removes the wing and hands it to FARAEL and deposits hat among bushes.*)

NANCY. My! how hot it is. Where on earth did I drop my hat? (*She searches for it.*) Well, if I've lost it, it will be perfectly rotten. I don't see the fun of going all alone up on a mountainside. I wish Allie would come. A-li-cia!

ECHO. Licia!

(They call back and forth five or six times.)

NANCY. Some echo!

DRYAD OF BEECH.

The child that I have seen here many times,
The one I was about to tell you of,
I think her name's Alicia.

DRYAD OF PINE.

Is it so?

Is she like this one here?

DRYAD OF BIRCH.

You soon can judge.

I think that all of you have seen her, too.

(NANCY spies bird's nest.)

DRYAD OF WHITE BIRCH. All on guard!

NANCY. Oh, I say! There's a bird's nest with something in it. If they're eggs, I'd like to take one. Alicia said it was against the law, but who'd ever know? I wonder if I can't shin that tree? *(DORIAN and FARAEL stand on opposite sides of tree. NANCY starts to climb. DORIAN pushes her foot so that it slips off. She repeats the attempt, and persists until she seems about to succeed. Then FARAEL suddenly hoots like an owl, and she falls, hurting herself. DORIAN, from a short distance, snarls like a fox. NANCY is very much frightened.)* See here. I can't stand this. I'm going to get out.

(As she runs off the FAIRIES bewilder her by crossing branches before and behind her. She goes from side to side and finally disappears at R. FUNGUS TOD follows. DRYADS, FAIRIES and WATER NYMPHS chant.)

FAIRIES AND WATER NYMPHS.

Alas the day
When mortal child
Wilful and wild
Our haunts defiled
In dull, unloving, wanton way.
Her eyes are sealed,
She comes to jeer,
She's ruled by fear,
And greed is here.
Nature and love are not revealed.

(BREEZE enters and flits across the scene. FAIRIES sway from the ankles, DRYADS from the waist. LYCINTHIA ripples her hair. This continues for three minutes. Reënter FUNGUS DOD.)

FUNGUS DOD.

This is a child of quite another kind.
I lured her from the path to Gambol Brook
And straightway felt ashamed. She fell in love
With Ferny Dell and lingered there. Indeed,
I scarce could tempt her back into the way.

DRYAD OF WHITE BIRCH.

And are you sure she will not gash our bark?

FUNGUS DOD.

I'll vouch for her.

FARAEEL.

Nor rifle any nests?

FUNGUS DOD.

That she will not. I've seen her here before
And so have you, and if you find I'm wrong
In what I think of her, why, take your wand
And change my mushrooms into toadstools. Look!

Enter ALICIA. She turns as if gazing off at view.

ALICIA.

I think I never saw the mountainside
So beautiful. I've never come in June
When all the leaves and mosses were so green.
This is the nicest birthday that I've had.

DRYAD OF PINE.

Her birthday! We will make it full of joy
If she——

DRYAD OF BEECH.

Oh, don't say "if." You need no "if."
A happy, happy birthday, dear Alicia!

ALICIA.

This little pine with budded twigs like candles
For all the world is like a Christmas tree.

(She sees nest.)

And here—upon my word—here is a present !

(FARAEL whistles, and BIRD, from behind ALICIA, cries,
“ Chick—chirr.”)

A nest ! Brave mother bird, don't be afraid.
You mustn't think that I would hurt your babies.

MIRABEL.

A happy, happy birthday, dear Alicia !

ALL.

A happy, happy birthday, dear Alicia !

FUNGUS DOD.

Did I not tell you ?

MIRABEL.

Sisters, did you note
She speaks in verse like us ?

BRIAR ROSE.

I noted it. She does not know she does
But harmony is in her soul to-day ;
She cannot help express the rhythm there.

ALICIA.

I feel as if I had a pair of wings.
I wonder why it is ? Oh, lovely world !
Oh, dear old mountain ! Pretty Lady Birch,
I want to talk to you.

(*She throws her arms around the trunk of the birch tree
and lays her cheek to the bark.* DRYAD OF WHITE BIRCH
gently puts her arms around ALICIA.)

DRYAD OF WHITE BIRCH. I'm here, my child.

ALICIA.

I think you are a princess, and I want
To be your little maid-in-waiting, please.

DRYAD OF WHITE BIRCH.

You are my little friend, and I am yours.

ALICIA (*feeling where NANCY has cut, and going around*).

Oh, what is this ! Oh, dear ! Oh, Nancy !
How could you carve your name on Lady Birch !
That's a shame, dear princess.

(*She looks around, picks up orange peel, places flowers in the spring.*) It's easy to see who's been here. This is where we agreed to have lunch, and for my part I'm getting hungry. I wonder where she is? Nan-cy!

ECHO. Cy!

(*They repeat the calls at intervals while ALICIA spreads a cloth, unpacks a few dishes, and decorates all with ferns. She may sing a camp-fire song. BRIAR ROSE leads and coaxes her gently to one side, then parts the ferns to display flowers.*)

ALICIA. Oh, how sweet! One-flowered pyrola! Like three little white stars. (*She smells them.*) I believe I'll just not tell Nancy, for she would be sure to want to pick them, and then they'd wither long before we were home, like the others, and maybe there wouldn't be any next year. Nan-cy!

NANCY (*from a distance*). Hi, there! I'm coming.

Enter FUNGUS TOD, and turns somersault. ALICIA gathers fuel.

FUNGUS TOD.

Such sport! Such sport! Ha, ha! She's mad clear through.

I led her to the hemlock tangle yonder
And there she fumed, and puffed, and tore her clothes;
And then in mischief I beguiled her steps
Into the spongy ground.

FUNGUS DOD.

What rare delight!

(*Aside.*) Only I'd rather be Alicia's guide.

FUNGUS TOD.

But then I heard this maiden call to her,
And Nancy, in her anger, could not hear.
So I relented.

BRIAR ROSE.

And so here she comes.

Enter NANCY, disheveled.

NANCY. My gracious, Alicia, you were awfully slow. What was the matter with you?

ALICIA. Nothing, Nancy. But I saw ever so many pretty things, especially a ledge covered with polypody, near the brook. I don't see why I never happened to find it before. I'll show it to you on the way down. Aren't you hungry?

NANCY. You bet I am. *(She takes a piece of cake and eats it while ALICIA is lighting fire and getting eggs ready to boil. ALICIA sings the camp-fire song, "Burn, Fire, Burn," or any appropriate song.)* You're the greatest for saying poetry and singing. Do you know——? *(Name any popular song.)*

ALICIA. No. What birds did you see?

NANCY. Only that one up there. I'm no bird fiend like you.

ALICIA. Or flowers?

NANCY. Those in the spring. I don't know their names, but they're nothing special, I guess. I don't care about that sort of thing.

ALICIA. What are the things you do care about?

NANCY. Good shows—movies—parties. Give me something doing.

ALICIA. I like those things once in a while, but I like other things, too.

NANCY. I want to know I'm alive.

ALICIA. I should think the best way for a person to find out if he was alive or not would be to go off alone for a while in the country. If he stays in a whirl the whole time he can't tell whether he's alive himself or just being roused up by all that's going on around him.

MIRABEL.

It's plain to see that you're alive, Alicia.

Alive to Nature's beauty and its power.

BRIAR ROSE.

She has some spirit, too.

DRYAD OF PINE.

She's not all dreams.

DORIAN.

I like to see a tidy little maid.

While t'other sits with empty hands and mind

She builds a fire well.

MIRABEL.

And let us hope

That she'll be careful to extinguish it.

NANCY (*who has been steadily eating*). Well, I've had all I want. Let's go home.

ALICIA. Oh, Nancy! When it's so beau —

NANCY. So bee-u-tiful, so heavenly, so wonderful! Trees, and trees and trees, and snakes and wasps and bugs!

ALICIA. But you know papa won't come to meet us until five, and I think it's nicer up here where we can look off than down in the pasture, don't you?

NANCY (*very much bored*). I don't know that it makes much difference.

ALICIA. Let's carry the dishes to the brook to wash.

NANCY. Have we got to wash them?

ALICIA. I think I will, anyhow.

NANCY. All right! I'll come along. I might as well.

(*They pick up lunch baskets and march off, NANCY singing a popular song.*)

CURTAIN

ACT II

SCENE.—*Same as in Act I*

(FIRE SPRITE *comes forward sleepily. Enter BREEZE. FIRE SPRITE dances, remaining nearly in one spot, waving her draperies and leaping. The fire begins to spread along carefully prepared lines. Great caution must be used with real flame. It is better to use electricity as suggested at opening of Scene 1. Part of the time BREEZE and FIRE SPRITE dance together, the former whirling the latter, and waving her draperies. After about three minutes enter FATHER MOUNTAIN. He frowns.*)

FATHER MOUNTAIN.

A three weeks' drought,—a careless child—a breeze,
And all my subjects, even Lycinthia,
Leaving their posts unguarded. Peril is here
Of conflagration that no power could stop.
'This were indeed a sad Midsummer Day
If all my fays and dryads lost their homes,
And I a blackened, lonely ruin kept.

(*To BREEZE.*) Be off with you! (*Exit BREEZE.*) And
Fire Sprite, subside.

(*FIRE SPRITE becomes quiet, and droops a little.*)

Yet I'll withhold my hand from further act
And watch a while. Perhaps they will return.

Enter ALICIA, out of breath. She extinguishes fire. FIRE SPRITE sinks on the ground, drawing a gray veil over herself. FATHER MOUNTAIN smiles and goes out.

ALICIA. What a dreadful thing for me to do. I'm trembling all over.

Enter NANCY.

NANCY. What's the matter with you?

ALICIA. The fire was beginning to spread. It might have caught the bushes and set the woods on fire. I thought of it just as I started back.

NANCY. Was that what made you tear off all of a sudden as if the goblins were after you?

ALICIA. Yes.

NANCY. Well, I don't see that it had done much harm.

ALICIA. No, it hadn't. But it might have very soon. I am so thankful.

NANCY. Well, I won't tell on you. And of course no one could blame *me*, for I'm not used to camping.

ALICIA. Of course I shall tell papa. (*Pause.*) But I don't believe I shall ever again forget.

(*All the SPIRITS, except FATHER MOUNTAIN, encircle the stage.*)

NANCY (*yawning*). What on earth are we going to do for the next two hours?

ALICIA (*timidly*). I have an idea. It's a sort of game I made up that I play sometimes.

NANCY. What's the game? You didn't bring a pack of cards in the basket, did you?

ALICIA. It's not that kind of a game. Did you ever read that if you put ripe fern-seed in your shoes you become invisible?

NANCY (*laughing*). That's a good one.

ALICIA. Let's get the fern-seed and play that we are invisible.

(*SPIRITS clap their hands softly, and the ELVES caper.*)

NANCY. I didn't know ferns had any seed. That's only a fake, isn't it?

ALICIA. No, indeed. They really do have seed. I'll show you. (*Picks several ferns.*) This is a brake and this is a lady fern. That's the seed. It's just ripe on this one. (*ALICIA takes off a shoe. NANCY watches her, smiling a little contemptuously, but presently follows suit. The SPIRITS whisper among themselves. LYCINTHIA speaks to each one, last of all to FUNGUS TOD. He creeps behind ALICIA. Just as she reties her second shoe, having dropped fern-seed inside, FUNGUS TOD drops his little red cap on her head and hides. The SPIRITS withdraw a little. ALICIA rises.*) There! Now I'm invisible. You must pretend you can't see me, Nancy.

NANCY (*with one shoe off, looks up, then frightened, jumps to her feet; ALICIA is invisible to her*). Alicia, where are you?

ALICIA (*standing close beside her*). You said that splendidly, Nancy. It couldn't have been more natural.

NANCY. But I *can't* see you. Alicia! Alicia! Come back quick. (*She runs about looking behind trees.*)

ALICIA (*aside, while dancing about*). I never dreamed she could do it so well. (*To NANCY.*) Nancy! Nancy! Where art thou? Let's make believe a tired traveler is coming up the path. We'll help him with his load, and all of a sudden we'll set a cup of water before him. (*NANCY, in a panic, throws herself down and begins to cry. It is only gradually that ALICIA realizes the crying and fright are genuine. She then runs up, and while leaning over NANCY the little cap falls onto the ground.*) Nancy dear! You aren't really crying, are you?

NANCY. I think it's very unkind of you to play me such a trick.

ALICIA. What do you mean? I'm right here. I've been right here all along.

NANCY (*holding her tight*). If you're such a prig as you pretend to be about being truthful I shouldn't think you'd talk like that.

ALICIA. I don't understand.

NANCY. No, nor *I* don't understand.

ALICIA. It can't be true, about being invisible.

NANCY. Of course it can't.

ALICIA. Besides, I saw *you* the whole time. (*She sees the little cap and picks it up.*) Now what in the world can that be?

NANCY (*screaming*). Oh, now you're doing it again. Please don't.

(*ALICIA, a look of wonder dawning in her eyes, drops the cap.*)

ALICIA. Can you see me now?

NANCY. This is too uncanny. Yes, I do.

ALICIA. Please don't be frightened. Watch me. I think I shall disappear again. (*Puts on cap.*) Do you see me?

NANCY (*grabbing hold of her*). Alicia! I feel you, but I can't see you. Isn't this awful! It makes me dizzy. Now you're here again.

(*NANCY sits like a statue, eyes starting and mouth open, while ALICIA continues alternately putting on and off the cap. After half a dozen times FUNGUS DOD creeps behind NANCY and stands up just as ALICIA makes a motion to put cap on NANCY's head. He snatches it.*)

ALICIA. Now it's gone. Nancy! There must be fairies here!

NANCY (*humbly*). Maybe there are. It makes me feel so creepy, Alicia. I never believed in such things. I shall always feel different now.

Reënter all the SPIRITS. FUNGUS DOD reaches over and presses cap into ALICIA'S hand, then stands visible before her, one finger held up in warning, the other laid on his lips. She sees him and starts. MIRABEL and BRIAR ROSE approach and wave wands over NANCY. ALICIA sees them also.

ALICIA. You aren't afraid, are you, dear Nancy?

NANCY. No, but I feel so sleepy, Alicia. I think I'll take a nap.

(Her head droops and eyes close. DORIAN and FARAEL come forward, lift and carry her to a bank at left rear, where she sleeps with her head on her arm. LYCINTHIA comes forward and puts her hand on ALICIA'S shoulder.)

LYCINTHIA.

We are your friends, Alicia. Have no fear.
For, ever since you were a tiny child
And climbed here first, holding your father's hand,
We've watched you lovingly. No harm could come
To you upon the mountain.

ALICIA.

All these years!
How wonderful! Dear—fairy, and how kind.

LYCINTHIA.

I am a water nymph, and all the brooks
And all the springs upon the mountainside
Are mine, or else my sisters'. (*They sit down.*)
You may come,

And though you see me not, be very sure
That you are ever welcome to my streams.
Refresh yourself as often as you will
From my cool fountains; tread the mossy bank
With pink-veined sorrel and with gold-thread strewn;
Make friends with trout and minnows, caddises
Whose houses I have seen of masonry
Jeweled with quartz and garnet; plunge knee-deep

Into my cooling pools, or where the stream
 Spreads fanwise over a broad, mossy rock
 Let your feet splash and play. In winter time
 Come back to know me in my snowy garb,
 But most of all, come often, dear Alicia.

(She fills a leaf cup with water from spring.)

Take from my hand this cup and drink the draught.

ALICIA *(drinking)*.

Oh, I *will* come, dear water nymph !

LYCINTHIA.

These two

Value your friendship. This is Farael
 Guardian of the birds. His brother here
 Is guardian of the little beasts. His name
 Is Dorian.

ALICIA *(rising)*.

Farael and Dorian. I love your birds
 And little furry beasts. I wish I knew
 Them better.

FARAEI.

So you shall.

DORIAN.

Your eyes we touch

And quicken them, though they were keen before.

(FARAEI and DORIAN touch her eyelids.)

Now shall your eyes descry the shyest beasts
 And gaze on them, and never frighten them.
 Owls in the daytime you shall catch and hold,
 And find raccoons in hollow trees asleep ;
 Play with the foxes' young while mother fox
 Looks on without alarm ; touch porcupines
 Who will not drive their quills into your hand ;
 Track the wild weasels, feed from your own hand
 Rabbits, and members of the squirrel tribe.
 All this with one request I give to you ;
 Wear not their pretty pelts, but keep you warm
 With fleeces that their owners never miss.
 And for adornment —

FARAEI.

That she little needs.

DORIAN.

Choose what will cost no pain to living thing.
Think you that you can promise?

ALICIA.

Yes, I do.

FARAEL.

I, too, can give you much, and in return
I ask your help and loyalty, for I
Sorely need friends.

ALICIA.

Oh, let me be your friend!

FARAEL.

A hundred years ago these forests rang
Both night and morning with the songs of birds.
By many fold their numbers greater were
Than they are now. Their natural enemies
Flourished as now, and war was waged as now
'Twi'x't Dorian's subjects and my own, but yet
From year to year their numbers scarcely changed.
Then men came, swept the face of all this land,
Destroyed our forest homes, brought hordes of cats
And let them hunt unchecked, stealing by night
Fledglings unnumbered in the nesting time.
Now when my flocks fly south in autumn days
I know that thousands never will return,
Slaughtered by men for feathers and for food.

ALICIA.

Ah! what a shame! Tell me what I can do.
A little girl like me cannot do much,
But all I can, I will.

FARAEL.

More than you think.

The nests you find you faithfully can guard;
And you can tell your friends how we will help
To free their crops of pests. They need us now
As much as we need them, for only we
Can really save the fruit and grain for them.
Instead of tens we should have thousands here.
But most of all, arouse in other hearts
The love and thoughtfulness you feel yourself.

ALICIA (*shaking her head*).

That isn't always easy, but I'll try.

FARAEI.

So shall you know the songs and cries of birds,
And shall divine where nests are hidden close;
By shape, and flight, and twinkling flash of wings
You'll name the bird that passes; and your lore
Shall ever be as health and joy to you.

ALICIA.

Oh, what a present! This is better far
Than any *thing* that I could buy or own.
A thousand, thousand thanks, dear Farael.

LYCINTHIA.

Here are the dryads of the trees you love,
Alicia.

ALICIA. There are truly dryads, then!

DRYAD OF BEECH.

I am the beech.

DRYAD OF WHITE BIRCH.

And I the birch.

DRYAD OF PINE.

And I

Am sister Pine.

DRYAD OF BEECH. Sleep in our summer shade
And find the gift of peace. Your whole life long
Whenever you are weary, come to us
For soothing and refreshment. We will weave
Soft spells above you with our leaves and boughs
And fill your mind with pictures.

ALICIA.

So you do.

When I am in the city, many times
I think of your great trees, and long for them.

LYCINTHIA.

Here are two little friends you know so well
I almost think that they your playmates be.
Can you not guess their parts?

ALICIA.

I think I can.

Are you not the fairies of the flowers?

FAIRIES.

Truly, we are.

BRIAR ROSE. My name is Briar Rose.

MIRABEL.

And Mirabel is mine. We are but two
Of a large sisterhood, and many more
Dwell in the fields and meadows down below.
And some there are who have been banishèd
To distant swamps, and secret unknown dells.
For all their blossoms here, by human hands
Were rifled, and they fled to mourn afar.

BRIAR ROSE.

Our sister Mayflower is one of these.
Though other fields she has, the fairies hope
Her kingdom here will be restored to her,
They long to see her so. Is it not strange
To seize and so destroy the thing one loves?

(*They glance at NANCY.*)

ALICIA.

When they do that they never really love.
I'll help your sisters as I help the birds,
For there is not a single flower that grows
That is not beautiful. I love them all.

FUNGUS TOD (*turning a handspring*).

Toadstools and mushrooms! Fungus is *my* name.

FUNGUS DOD.

Mushrooms and toadstools! I am his brother!
Fungus is my name, too. (*Stage whisper.*) That's
just for fun!

(*They play leap frog, leaping once between remarks.*)

FUNGUS TOD.

'Twas I gave you my cap.

FUNGUS DOD.

I led you here
When you were almost lost.

FUNGUS TOD.

He lost you, first.

FUNGUS DOD.

We are not pretty.

FUNGUS TOD.

But we do our work.

BOTH.

Perhaps they'd miss us if we went away.

ALICIA.

I'm sure I should for one. I've always liked
Your funny toadstools and your droll mushrooms.
I thank you, little brothers, for to you
I owe the happiest day in all my life.

(The ELVES bob.)

FAIRIES, DRYADS AND LYCINTHIA.

A happy, happy birthday, dear Alicia!

FARAEEL, DORIAN AND ELVES.

And many happy birthdays after this.

ALICIA.

You're all so kind, so *kind*.

LYCINTHIA.

Hush! here he is.

(They part to sides. Enter FATHER MOUNTAIN and comes to centre of stage. All make obeisance.)

The spirit of the mountain cometh here,
The father of all dryads, nymphs and elves
And truest friend to mortal children.

ALL.

Hail!

FATHER MOUNTAIN.

I greet you all! I see that you have found
A kindred spirit in this mortal child.

(To ALICIA.) Alicia!

ALICIA.

Father Mountain!

FATHER MOUNTAIN.

Come to me!

(She approaches and kneels. He raises her.)

I knew you when you were a tiny child
Smaller than Fungus here. Your father, too,
Clambered my rocks when he was but a boy
As once his father and his mother did,
A merry, thoughtful pair, searching the ledges
For giant blueberries in late July.

Three generations more I count behind,
 All ancestors of yours, and friends of mine.
 It is not strange, Alicia, if you love
 My mountain old.

ALICIA. Oh! more than I can say!

FATHER MOUNTAIN.

'Tis but a day to me since white men came,
 And but a span I knew the Indian.
 For I am *old*; I know both cold and heat;
 Cold of the glacier, heat of primal fire.
 Lonely it was in those long ages past,

(He takes LYCINTHIA'S hand and draws her to his side.)

Ere my first daughter came to dwell with me,
 But lonely now no more. *(Pause.)*

Alicia!

This is Midsummer Day, a magic hour
 You fell upon to come among us here.
 No other time could we unseal your eyes
 And let you gaze upon us. You have seen
 What ne'er a one has seen before, save one,
 A little Indian maid, three hundred years
 Gone from our sight. Recall her, Daughter Beech.

DRYAD OF BEECH.

Quequisquitch¹ was a quiet, happy child,
 Merrier than Indian children wont to be.
 She wore a gown of deerskin, soft and brown,
 With beads and fringes gay. Her forehead smooth
 Was bound with a broad band of wampum white
 And purple. She could take the shredded bark
 And kindle with her rubbing sticks a fire
 Ere a thrush sang thrice. Baskets could she weave,
 And string a bow, cook cakes of golden corn,
 Concoct a savory broth, or thread a trail.
 She was the apple of her father's eye —
 A medicine man of mighty power, he —
 The comfort of her mother, and the joy

¹ Robin.

Of all who heard her sing or saw her smile,
 Around the camp-fire of Souhegan's tribe.
 To her, as now to you, we give for gift
 The freedom of the mountain.

ALICIA. I will try
 To use it like that little Indian girl.

FATHER MOUNTAIN.

The gift we give you do not misconceive.
 I' the scheme of things 'tis not allowed to us
 That we appear to mortals when we will.
 Save you come here Midsummer Day by chance
 Your eyes will not behold our forms again.
 Nor will your mind remember what has been,
 For never mortal child could long endure
 Life in two worlds at once. But you'll not lose
 The power we bestow, but more and more
 Learn Nature's ways and moods, and more and more
 Take joy and comfort from her. You will teach
 Others to love her, too. (*Pause.*) Have you a wish?

ALICIA.

I wish that you could magic Nancy's eyes
 So that she, too, could see and feel such things.

FATHER MOUNTAIN.

Alas! we cannot enter at closed doors.
 You are the one to show her, and not we.

BRIAR ROSE.

Be not disheartened!

MIRABEL.

Persevere!

FUNGUS DOD.

She'll learn!

FATHER MOUNTAIN.

Bring here Alicia's crown.

(MIRABEL brings wreath she and BRIAR ROSE have been
 working on. ALICIA kneels.)

Tho' jewels rare
 And precious metals sleep within my rocks,
 'Tis not with such I crown your girlish brows.
 This wreath is but a token, for you spoke

And hinted at a wondrous truth but now ;
 That no possession ever can compare
 With any power of the mind or soul.
 To know, to see, to feel, to think, to love,
 A thousandfold are better than "to have."

ALICIA.

I'm sure that is the truth. I wish that I
 Knew how to speak my love and thanks to you.

FATHER MOUNTAIN.

We understand. My children, sing a song.
 This once our music may be heard by her.

(He places his hand on ALICIA'S head. She begins to drowse.)

Enter BREEZE and FIRE SPRITE. SPIRITS join hands, and in stately, graceful steps circle around FATHER MOUNTAIN and ALICIA.

SONG.

Dryads and water nymphs, fairies and spirits all,
 Come to the council on Midsummer Day.
 Over the mountainside hasten to father dear,
 Brothers and sisters, from work and from play —
 Brothers and sisters, we gladly obey.
 Ring all the flower bells, tune the bird choruses ;
 Breeze, in the branches sigh undertones deep.
 Sing to this mortal child music of fairyland,
 Sing to Alicia and lull her asleep.

(ALICIA falls sound asleep and sinks on the ground. FAIRIES pass out, humming the tune softly, leaving the two girls and FATHER MOUNTAIN. After half a minute NANCY wakes, sits up, and rubs her eyes.)

NANCY. After all, it's rather a lark to come up here on the mountain. I wouldn't mind staying and sleeping here to-night if we had the things. The sunrise would be awfully jolly. Somehow it makes town look pretty flat and dirty. I guess I will stay another week. There's something in getting used to a place. I can't live up to Alicia's ways, but she isn't stupid ; I'll say that for her. *(Finds flowers in spring.)* These are nice and fresh to take home, no thanks to me. There's that

bird still on the nest. She's a brave little thing. I admire her grit. I wonder if I hadn't better wake Alicia. (*Gives ALICIA several gentle pokes.*) Alicia! Don't you think we'd better be scrambling?

ALICIA. Yes, Nancy, I suppose so. I must have been asleep.

NANCY. I had a nap, too.

ALICIA. Thank you for this pretty wreath, Nancy.

NANCY. I don't remember making it, Alicia. I must have done it in my sleep.

ALICIA. Are you ready?

NANCY (*lingering*). Ye-es. Do you know, I believe I like it up here after all. I almost hate to go down. I don't seem to have that alone feeling any more. And I like the trees and things.

ALICIA (*skipping about*). I'm glad! I'm glad! If you feel that way we can come again and I can show you ever so many things—all my loveliest secrets; birds' nests and flowers and hollow trees. Only you must never do the least bit of harm to any of them.

NANCY. I promise. I wish now that I hadn't cut my initials on that birch tree. How silly they look! Can't I do anything to hide the place?

ALICIA. I'm afraid not.

NANCY. It'll grow over again and be all right, won't it?

ALICIA. No, never! But I think Lady Birch will forgive you if you never do it again.

NANCY (*impulsively stretching out her arms to the birch tree*). Forgive me, Lady Birch.

DRYAD OF BIRCH (*from behind*). Forgiven, dear!

NANCY (*turning to nest*). Forgive me, mother bird!

FARAEI (*from behind*). She does forgive.

NANCY. Forgive me, pretty flowers, for picking you and throwing you away.

BRIAR ROSE (*from grass at R.*) We do!

MIRABEL (*from grass at L.*) We do!

ALICIA. I think we'd better go now.

NANCY. All right! I'm coming.

ALICIA (*looking back*). I'm going to come here again next year for my birthday.

(*A soft clapping of many hands from behind the scenes.*)

FATHER MOUNTAIN smiles and extends his hands in bene-

diction. The girls take hands and run off, skipping and waving their baskets. FATHER MOUNTAIN follows slowly.)

(If the play is given indoors, or with a curtain outdoors, before the close all the non-human characters may reënter and dance around FATHER MOUNTAIN, who stands at C. Each should dance in accordance with his or her character; the DRYADS, FARAEL, and DORIAN with dignity; BREEZE and FIRE SPRITE madly; FAIRIES merrily, and ELVES turning somersaults and playing leap frog.)

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