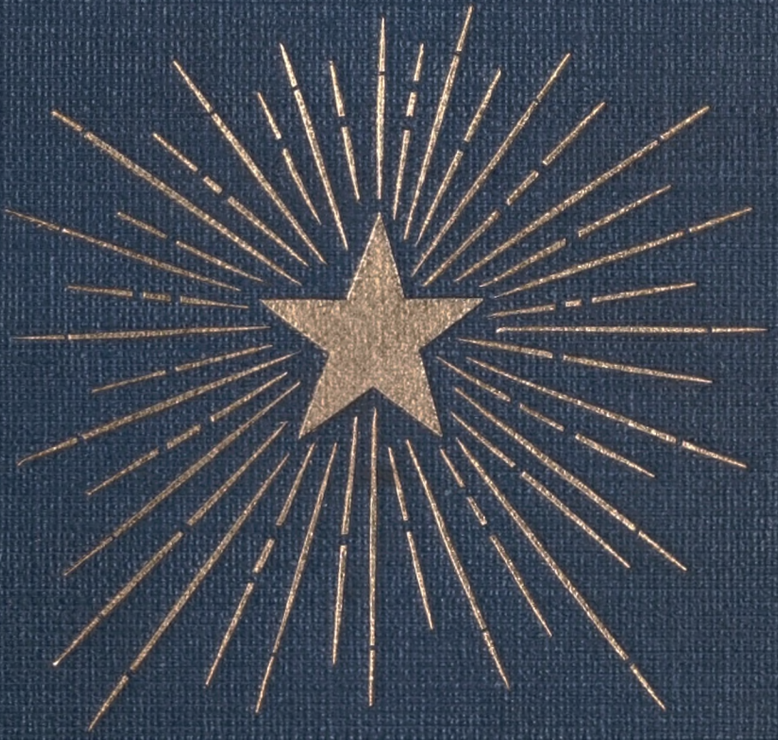
Lady Rumdidoodledum's Children



S. B. Dinkelspiel

LADY RUM-DI-DOODLE-DUM'S CHILDREN

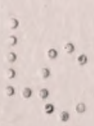
John and Mary leaned forward and saw in the glass hundreds of lovely colors. (Page 126.)

LADY RUM-DI-DOODLE-DUM'S CHILDREN

BY

S. B. DINKELSPIEL

Which is Dedicated to My Mother, Your Mother and Lady Rum-Di-Doodle-Dum, Who is the Mother of all the Bald-Headed, Pug-Nosed Little Baby Creatures in the World, and to the Child-Person for whom Lady Rum-Di-Doodle-Dum winked one evening when I asked her to do so.



New York
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PREFACE

(TO BE READ)

THE Dictionary says that a Preface is something spoken before. Usually it gives the author an opportunity to talk about himself. Some authors talk very much, especially about themselves, in their Preface. Mr. George Bernard Shaw writes more Preface than Book, and Théophile Gautier simply uses the Book as an excuse for the Preface. But you do not need to worry, as you will not read either of them for a very long time.

My Preface is going to be different. It is about something that comes at the end and not the beginning; furthermore, I am not going to talk about myself.

Of course you do not know what in the world I am driving at; I will come at once to the point. I had all but finished the stories of Lady Rumdidoodledum's children when I received the following letter. I have a pretty good idea that "L. H. D." is no other than the Child-Person for whom Lady Rumdidoodledum winked.

"MR. S. B. DINKELSPIEL,

"DEAR SIR,——

"I have the honor to inform you that Mrs. Sherman is the mother of a lovely new baby daughter, born this evening. She is to be christened 'Margaret,' but will be known to her friends (of whom I trust you will be among the number) as 'Midge.' Liza and Martha Mary are delighted over the new arrival—the boys have not yet seen the little lady.

"Hoping that she will prove as welcome to you as to the rest of her very devoted family, I am, sir,

"Your very obedient servant and humble collaborator,

L. H. D."

The Planet Venus.

A day or so later, a thick envelope came through the mail for me.

"Is it," said I to myself, "another of my stories rejected by a heartless editor?"

It was not! It was the story of "Midge," written by "L. H. D.," and it came just in time, for I had been having a miserable hour seeking a last chapter for the book, and here one fell—I might say—out of the sunny sky.

S. B. DINKELSPIEL.

San Francisco, California.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

IN WHICH WE MEET FLIP, ALTHOUGH HE WAS SUPPOSED TO BE A SECRET

DOWN on the edge of the Poppy Field there is a very large, wide lake; the largest lake you have ever seen. Of course there are deeper lakes across the mountains where you have never been, but Poppy Lake is quite deep enough. When you turn your back and lean down and look between your legs so that everything is upside-down, it looks still larger; almost as big as the sky and just as blue. Right on the shore, tied to a willow tree, is a wonderful green boat with two oars when you wish to go exploring alone, and four if you intend to take a crew with you.

John usually went alone, because crews never know their place and want to be Captain if they are men, or always talk about fairies and husbands and silly trifles if they are women. There is of course only one woman and she is Martha Mary;

you see, Liza is only three years old and can't really be called a woman. The fact is, John prefers traveling with Liza to any of the others. She respects John very much and will not mind anyone else—not even Nurse Huggins. John is quite a famous traveler; there have been times when he would sit at the helm of his good ship and Liza would sit on the deck on her legs and fold her arms and watch the Captain with very large, grey eyes. Then John would cough and bow to her and say in a voice almost as loud as Butcher Levy's:

"Where does your Ladyship desire to sail to-day?"

Liza would say, "Yes," which is not an answer at all.

Then John would pick up the oars and row with all his might, just as though the ship were not tied to the willow tree. Right into the ocean they would go. Sometimes they could travel almost as far as England before Nurse Huggins called them to come to tea. Nurse Huggins always called just as they were about to get somewhere.

Martha Mary thought it silly for John to play with Liza so much; you see, John was at least twelve and Martha Mary was ten, so they were much more fitted for each other than John and Liza. So Martha Mary would come down to the Lake and call to John and he would put his hands to his ears and shout:

"I can't hear you. I'm miles and miles away."

Then Martha Mary would stamp her foot, and go away to find Edward Lee Sherman, who was seven years old and her youngest brother, and Walter, who was eight and almost Edward's twin. You see, the Sherman family was quite a large one; first, there was John and then Martha Mary; then Walter and Edward Lee, and then Liza. But that wasn't all. Nurse Huggins was a very important member of the family, and there was Agnes, the cook, and Dawson, the gardener, and Mother Dear, who looked almost like a girl herself, sometimes, and Father, who was terribly old and had brown whiskers and the softest grey eyes, just like Liza's. And I almost forgot Hermit. He was the huge St. Bernard and next to Mother

Dear, the most important member of the household. No one knew just how old Hermit was. But Captain John was quite sure that the very first thing he heard when he opened his eyes in this world was Hermit's welcoming bark. That was twelve years ago, and twelve is old for a dog.

And—there was one other. He was supposed to be a secret, but I never could keep a secret and, as long as I have told about Hermit and Hermit found him, I might as well tell. He was Flip. That wasn't his real name, but Liza could not say Philip, so she called him Flip. And after a while everyone else did, too. This is the way we found him. You see, Hermit did not come home for dinner one night and everyone was very much frightened. They went all over the poppy field calling him, but he didn't come. It grew so late that the stars came out, so Mother Dear put Liza and Edward Lee to bed. She was very quiet and not at all smily when she tucked them in, because she was worried about Hermit. For hours and hours John and Father and Gardener Dawson hunted with yellow lanterns; they called

and whistled, but Hermit did not come. So they went to bed, and Father said:

"Leave the old boy alone. He is sure to come back."

Father always did know everything!

The first thing next morning, all the family hurried out to the garden, but there was no Hermit. Father went East and John went West and all the others scattered in different directions, leaving Liza all alone to take care of Mother Dear. But Mother Dear was not at all good company; she wouldn't crawl on the floor and she wouldn't smile, so Liza slipped away, very unhappy. She took her Nigger Doll, Samuel, and walked way, way off, down into the Lily Place where the frogs live. And right there, perfectly happy and grinning, was Hermit—all muddy and with his tongue hanging out as though he had been running and was out of breath. Next to him, sprawled out on the grass, with one foot stuck up in the air and a cap on his toe, was a man and he was talking to Hermit. Liza did not pay any attention to him; she just jumped on Hermit's back and rubbed her face in his

neck. The man was very much surprised. He sat up, brushed the dirt off of his trousers, and said:

"Good morning."

Liza laughed at him and pulled Hermit's tail.

"I said 'Good morning,'" said the man. "Can't you talk?"

That sort of frightened Liza, so she jumped up and ran off to find John, with Hermit bounding after her. Just then John came through the trees, followed by Edward Lee and Walter and Martha Mary. They hugged Hermit to show how glad they were to see him, and then Liza took them to the new man.

"Hullo!" he said. "Are you the whole family?"

"We are the Shermans," said John.

"Yes," said Edward Lee, "and we wish you would go away so that we could play."

"Edward Lee!" Martha Mary whispered. "You mustn't be impolite."

The man laughed. "Please," said he, "may I play, too?"

"You are too old," said Walter.

"No, I'm not."

John did not mean to have any unfairness. "How old are you?" he asked.

The man held his fingers to his lips. "It's a secret. Folks say I'm twenty-three," he said. "But they really don't know. The fact is I'm only twelve."

"Swear it and hope to die?" demanded John.

"I swear."

"And hope to die?"

"Do I have to?"

"No," said Martha Mary. "If you want to be twelve, we will let you. Please, what can you play?"

"Everything."

"That is lovely," said Martha Mary. "We'll play 'Robinhood.'"

"And I'll be Robinhood," said John.

"And I'll be Little John," said Walter.

"I'm Little John," said Edward Lee.

"You're not. I am."

"All right," said Edward Lee. "Then I don't want to play."

The man frowned. "See here," he said. "You

can't both be Little John. Suppose we play something else. Suppose I tell you a story."

"Do you know any?" Martha Mary asked.

"Dozens of them."

"How nice! I think I shall like you. What is your name?"

"Philip."

"Flip," said Liza, and that is how he got his name.

Meanwhile Mother Dear had joined Father. They hunted high and low for Hermit and for the children, too, for by this time Mother was growing really and truly frightened. All of a sudden they heard Edward Lee laughing. To the Lily Place they ran, and there—through the trees—guess what they saw! There was Flip leaning against a fat old oak tree, with one leg up in the air and his cap on his toe. Liza was sitting on the knee of the leg that wasn't up in the air, while Martha Mary was lying on the ground on her stomach, weaving buttercups. John and Walter were sitting up in the tree; Edward Lee was on Hermit's back, and Flip was telling his

story. So Mother Dear sat down very quietly and pulled Father after her. She leaned against his shoulder and closed her eyes, while Father smoothed her hair. And they listened to the story, too, and this was it:

CHAPTER II

IN WHICH PETER SPILLS THE DEW OUT OF HIS POCKET AND IT CAUSES A GREAT DEAL OF BOTHER, BUT MR. SMITH, WHO IS THE KING OF FAIRIES, PUTS AN END TO THE TROUBLE

"PETER sat on a blade of wheat and swung backwards and forwards and up and down in the wind, till his feet were higher than his head and all the dewdrops spilled out of his pocket. I don't suppose you have ever seen Peter. He is about this big—that is, as big as a red-headed match—and he has little thin wings made out of the fuzz that grows on the cowslips. Peter has red hair, too, just like the match, and he is freckled, but one can never see the freckles because they are so small. In ways, Peter is a very wonderful boy. You see, he can carry dewdrops in his pocket (when he doesn't spill them) and he skips around the garden just before the stars go to bed putting a dewdrop on every flower, just as a mother

cat would bathe her kitten. Peter likes his work; he knew that every boy has to do something worth while, so he chose the work that was the most fun. Of course it is fun to bathe flowers. They look so bright and sunshiny when they have their drop of dew, just as your face does when Nurse What-do-you-call-her——"

"Nurse Huggins, please," said Martha Mary.

"Nurse Huggins rubs soap on it and in your eyes. So on this particular May morning Peter sat on the piece of wavy wheat and waited for the biggest and loveliest Mother star, Mrs. Rumdidoodledum, to go away, so that he could go to work.

"Finally, when Mrs. Rumdidoodledum had gone to bed and the sky grew pink like the eyes of Fluffytail, the white rabbit, Rosemary, who was the queen of the flower fairies, came out and clapped her hands to set all the morning elves to work. First, Mr. James, the butler fairy, appeared and pulled all of the dark-cloud curtains out of the sky. Then a hundred and three golden fairies tied daisy ropes to the sun and pulled him up over the hill. Lastly Nurse Agnes, the fat-

test fairy you ever saw, went around and opened all the flowers' eyes. Then everyone stood still and waited for Peter to come down and wash them. Of course the stupid Peter couldn't, because he had swung too high and spilled all the dewdrops. At this, Queen Rosemary was terribly angry—which wasn't very bad, because the fairies have all been well trained and never lose their tempers. But she said Peter would have to be punished. What do you think Queen Rosemary did? She led Peter down to the red rosebush, tied him to it with a piece of green grass, and left him there for ever and ever so long. Next morning, when Nurse Agnes had opened all the flower children's eyes, they waited for Peter to come and wash them, but he couldn't, because he was tied up. The flower children were glad, because they didn't very much like to be washed, either; it was such a nuisance to get the dewdrops in their eyes and have them burn. You see, flower children are just as silly as other children when they are silly, and just as pretty and happy when they are bright. So they went without wash-

ing all that day, and when Mr. James, the butler, pulled the cloud curtains into the sky that night the children were all tired and in bad humor, just like you when you are dirty. They didn't sleep very well and they had queer dreams, and Midge, the violet baby, woke up and cried three times and kept everyone else awake. Then, the next morning, when the hundred and three small wood sprites went to pull up the sun, he came up frowning. He looked at all the flower children and it spoiled his pleasure to see how dirty and cross they were. So he simply refused to shine at all, but went behind a miserable black cloud that Butler James had forgotten. There he sulked all day. When they had no sun to brighten them, the flower children all fell sick and faded; even sulphur and molasses would not help them, for in that way they were different from you. You see, things were in a very bad way in the flower garden. The flower children were so sickly that the bees would not come to them for honey, because it had become too thin. The sun hid away day after day and refused to shine and there were large black clouds that frightened everyone. The

ground got hard and stiff and squeezed the flowers terribly.

"Then Rosemary became very much worried, because she had to keep the flower children well and at the same time punish Peter. So she thought and thought and could not make up her mind what to do. Then along came Mr. Smith. You know, of course, that Mr. Smith is the king of the fairies and he rides on the Southeast Wind. He said to his wife:

"'The flower children look very sickly and the sky is dark. What is the trouble, my dear?'

"She told him all the confusion she had had, but he laughed, because he was a man, and such things never bother men. He jumped on the Southeast Wind again and rushed up, up, right into the clouds and broke them to small pieces. Of course, when the clouds were all broken, the rain fell out of them and all over the flower children. And then—it was just like eating chocolate cake, it was so nice. The flower children were washed and became bright; the sun came out because he was glad; the bees came buzzing around again, and all the world was happy. Then

Queen Rosemary, on her throne in the sweetpeas, was pleased, so she forgave Peter for spilling the dewdrops. She told him, though, that whenever he was bad in the future she would tie him up, because she could count on the Southeast Wind to bring rain and do Peter's work.

"And so you see, whenever the sky grows black and the flowers look sickly and the sun hides, you may know that Peter has been misbehaving and cannot wash the children. But you must not mind, because the rain is sure to come to do his work, and there is always sunshine after the rain."

When Flip had finished his story Mother Dear hugged Father and whispered, "Who in the world is this wonderful boy?"

She did not say it very loud, but Flip heard her and got up, with his cap in his hand, and almost spilled Liza. He bowed and said:

"It isn't really wonderful. Stories like that always happen."

"Ridiculous!" said Father, in a very stern way. "Who are you? Where did you come from?"

"I'm Flip, Liza says," was the answer, "and so I must be."

"Please, Mother Dear," said Martha Mary. "He is nice, and Liza found him. Do you think he might stay for tea?"

"And tell more stories before bedtime," said Walter.

"And he found Hermit," said Liza.

Mother Dear whispered something to Father that no one else heard. Then Father said:

"Children, go up to the house and wait for us. We will ask Flip if he will stay this evening."

The children went rather slowly, for they were anxious to hear what was going to happen. It must have been exciting, for ten minutes later Mother Dear came to the veranda smiling, and Flip's eyes were all shiny, and Father was in the best of humor.

"Babes," said Mother Dear, "would you like Flip to stay here?"

"All evening?" asked Edward Lee.

"No. Much longer. As long as he wishes to. Perhaps always."

You should have heard the children shout. They hugged Mother Dear and hugged Father till his hair was all mussed and danced about Flip until he was all red; but Flip was easily embarrassed. Finally Father said:

"Silence," in an awesome tone, and added: "Philip is going to stay to work about the place and do chores and care for the flowers—AND tell you stories when you are half-way good and he feels like it. So you had better be good."

Away went the children to tell the wonderful news to Nurse Huggins, all excepting Martha Mary, who was rather curious.

"Mother Dear," she said. "Please, who is Flip and how did you get Father to let him stay?"

"Flip is a very fine boy," said Mother, "and he has aspirations."

"What are aspirations?" asked Martha Mary.

"You explain to her, Father," said Mother Dear.

"Well, it is this way," said Father. "Aspirations are like—like—now let me see—you know—— Oh! You tell her, Mother."

"Why, it is simple, Dear," said Mother. "Aspirations—— Flip! Explain to Martha Mary what aspirations are."

But Flip had followed the other children, to be introduced to Cook and Nurse Huggins, so Martha Mary did not find out for ages and ages why Flip had aspirations or what they were.

CHAPTER III

IN WHICH WE BEGIN TO REALIZE HOW CONVENIENT IT IS TO HAVE A PERSON LIKE FLIP ABOUT THE PLACE, ESPECIALLY WHEN THERE IS NOTHING MUCH TO DO; ALSO WE HEAR OF MR. MORIARITY AND THE FAIRY WHO DID NOT HAVE A RED CHIN BEARD AND A BALD HEAD

It was really quite surprising to learn how easily Flip could be depended upon. When it rained, Martha Mary would only need to say:

"Please, do you think we might have a story?" And Flip would lead the way to the fireplace and, before you half knew it, you were in the middle of a delightful story. Or Liza might tumble into the ash can and hurt her nose. She would cry dreadfully—and Flip would cure the damage with a story. John might go sailing on the lake Ocean and leave no one to be Captain of the land army. Away the army—Martha Mary, Walter, Edward Lee, and Liza—would go

to Flip for sympathy—and Flip's sympathy would be a story. Best of all were the stories he told in the Runaway Place where the poppies grew, lying on a small stack of hay, with his cap on his toe. There were so many told there that I hardly know which to tell to you first. Perhaps you would like the one about Mr. Moriarity.

"Of course you know," said Flip, "that every child has a fairy just as there is a fairy for every flower. But what I am going to tell you is much more surprising than that. Every grown-up, no matter how big or important he may be, has just as nice a fairy in charge of his affairs. The fairies of the grown-ups do not show themselves nearly as often as flowers or children fairies. You see, grown-ups have not the time to think of such things. Furthermore, they are usually ashamed to recognize them, and of course the fairies are proud and will not go where they are not wanted. Would you believe that Father has a perfectly lovely fairy and there is another little, golden-winged one that belongs to Mother Dear? Well, there is! I have never seen them, but there must be. You see, Fairies are dreams,

and everybody has dreams; even Mr. Moriarity, the green grocer.

"Mr. Moriarity's fairy was the prettiest little fairy you have ever seen. Guess why? Because fairies do not take after their owners' looks. If they did, Mr. Moriarity's fairy would have to be a little red-faced creature with a red chin beard and watery blue eyes and a bald head. But fairies take after their owners' dreams, and this was Mr. Moriarity's dream: He wanted to be a great musician and play music that would make all the world glad. He had always loved music; in the olden days in Kerry County, when he was no larger than John, he used to creep out of his bed at night, tiptoe into the barn, and hide in the straw to listen to Tim, his big brother, sing about a girl called Kathleen Mavourneen, and Peggy Machree, and The Low Back Car to the cows and pigs. The cows would moo and the pigs would squeal their applause, and then Mr. Moriarity, who was called Andy in those days, would tiptoe back to his blankets and hide his head and sing Peggy Machree in a tiny voice. It was not at all good music, but it made him feel good. So he dreamed

about the day that he should be a great musician and all the people would clap and the pigs squeal and the cows moo when he played. He wanted to play the violin because it sounds like the wind singing in the heather, but violins cost a great deal of money and lessons cost more, and Andy's father was only a poor vegetable grower near the bogs. So it looked as though Andy would never be rich enough to have his dream. His fairy became unhappy and pale, because music fairies are the frailest, most delicate little things, and lovely melodies are sunshine for them.

"One day Andy was out in the heart of the moor listening to the wind in the purple heather and singing a song that he had made all himself. His fairy was sitting on a wild rosebush listening to the music. I know I have a perfectly awful voice, but this is the song he sang:

"'The wild rose is my fairy love, my lady love, my pretty love.
The wild rose is my fairy love and I don't care who knows it.
She dances for the moorland green, the Irish green, the hillside green,
And smiles and smiles and smiles upon the breeze that blows it.'

"Now, what do you think happened as he sang? Across the moor came a large, fat man with a violin case under his arm, and a smile upon his face. He hid in the heather until Andy had stopped singing, then came out and sat down in front of him, and the big man and the small boy talked about music. Then the big man took out his brown old violin and put it to his chin and began to play. Andy leaned back and closed his eyes and discovered the strangest thing! He could see just as well with his eyes closed as with them open. And this is what he saw! First the heather commenced to quiver as though the breeze were blowing from all four sides; then the twigs parted and out came his own fairy, all dressed in brown and gold. She danced a skipping dance on the twigs, then stamped her tiny foot rather impatiently and clapped her hands. The twigs parted again and out came another fairy, a boy fairy, dressed in grey and gold, and he took her hand and they danced together. Then the boy fairy sang the very same song that Andy had sung, and down from the East Wind came a whole world of little fairies, all gold and silver, with

spiderweb wings and dresses of every color. They danced here and there and everywhere, the wildest, loveliest dance there ever was. Up and down and backwards and forwards, in circles and fairy rings they swung and then the heather began to sway and the wild rosebush to bend and the green grass to wave and all the fields danced to the fairy measure. Andy jumped up, threw his brown cap into the air, and crowed like a rooster. He folded his arms then and danced with them, a dance that was a jig and a hornpipe and a reel and a minuet all in one. The big man laughed as though he were ashamed and put away his violin and would play no more. But Andy told him how much he loved music, and what do you think? The wonderful man was so pleased that he told Andy to come to him every night and he should learn to play on the violin that was two hundred years old. Andy was so excited that he forgot to feed the pigs that night and hardly ate any bread himself. Off he skipped after dinner to the house across the moor for his first lesson. But when he played it did not sound at all nice. The big man said time would change things, and it was

time that spoiled things, after all. Andy learned the C scale and the F sharp scale pretty well. But scales were not the kind of music he had dreamed of and he became tired of practicing. That ended things. He never practiced nor even learned the octave stretch. This was all his own fault, because his fingers were very lively and long, but that would not do any good without training. Finally, one night the big man became discouraged and said there was no use wasting time with a boy who would not help himself, so Andy's music lessons ended.

"Many years passed and Andy came to California and became a green grocer. His music fairy hated money and business so much that she almost died. One evening in the Spring Andy came home, cross and tired from selling lettuce, and would not talk to his wife or five children at all. He went out into the poppy field and lay down and went to sleep. And there he dreamed the very same dream that had come to him when the big man had played on the moor. Down on the sea breeze came the gold and silver and many-colored fairies and they skipped and

danced and bowed and pirouetted in a perfect dance of Spring. Up jumped old Moriarity, forgetting all about his rheumatism, and he danced with the fairies just as he had done when he was a boy. Right in the middle of it, when his face was all red and his eyes burning, out came Mrs. Moriarity and she held her hands on her hips and stared. But all of a sudden she caught Andy's eye and he laughed, so up she pulled her skirts to her knees and commenced to dance with him, singing at the top of her voice all about Paddy Dear. She made such a noise that out came the five Moriarity children and they could hardly believe their eyes, for they had never seen their mother and father act that way before. But there was no need of worrying; out into the poppy field they skipped and there, by the light of Lady Rumdidoodledum and a million other stars, danced Mr. Moriarity and Mrs. Moriarity and the five little Moriaritys, with oodles and oodles of fairies. All of a sudden Mrs. Moriarity felt a stitch in her side and she stopped and took Mr. Moriarity by the ear and led him into the

house. Moriarity's fairy was so happy that she laughed and wept all night.

" So now, whenever things go a little bit wrong, Moriarity throws aside his vegetable bag, calls his wife and children, and out to the fields they go to dance in the evening light. Moriarity sings Kathleen Mavourneen and Peggy Machree and The Low Back Car, and out come all the fairies and dance, too. Of course, Mr. Moriarity's voice is still pretty bad, so the cows all moo and the pigs all squeal, but the poppies smile and the wild rose bows and the fairies are happy as happy can be."

CHAPTER IV

IN WHICH MARTHA MARY INVADES THE CASTLE, AND FATHER PROVES THAT HE CAN DO OTHER THINGS BESIDES WRITING BUSINESS IN BIG BOOKS. ALSO SOMEONE ARRIVES

FATHER was very busy in his den, with the blinds all drawn and the small log fire lit and a huge stack of papers on his desk. So Martha Mary was rather afraid when she tapped at his door; you see, the Den was Father's private property, just like a castle, and no outsiders, not even the children, went in very often.

"Who is there?" called Father.

"Please, it is me," said Martha Mary.

"Who is 'me'?" demanded Father.

"Martha Mary, and may I come in?"

Father shoved the big pile of papers aside and opened the door.

"Well, Sister," he said, "what is the trouble? Has Liza fallen in the lake?"

"Father! No! Liza never does."

"Then what is the trouble?"

Martha Mary put her arm about Father's waist just as she always did when she wanted to ask him a favor. Father always would grant the favor then.

"Please," she said. "Do you think you could do something for us?"

"Depends what, Sister."

"Well, Mother Dear has gone to town and Flip has driven her to the train and we have played everything and don't know what to do. So we thought, as long as Flip wasn't here, you might be able to tell us a story. Do you think you could?"

Father laughed. "The fact is," he said, "I'm afraid my stories would not interest you. You see, I don't know anything about fairies. But I might try, I suppose——"

Before he had finished what he supposed, Martha Mary had danced down the hall and back she came with the whole Sherman family, including Hermit. It only needed Mother Dear and Flip to make the invasion of the den com-

plete. Hermit was the oldest, so he chose the rug before the fire and Liza lay down by his side. Walter and Edward Lee each sat on an arm of Father's Morris chair, Martha Mary sat on the floor with her head on Father's knee, and John lay on his stomach before the fire and pulled Hermit's tail.

Father took some time to commence, so Martha Mary, who knew it would be hard work for him, tried to help him along.

"You don't need to tell about Fairies," she said. "Kings and queens will do, or even every-day people. And Flip never begins with 'once upon a time.'"

"Is that so?" asked Father. "Well, I am going to be different. My story is going to commence with 'once upon a time' and it isn't going to be about Kings or Queens or Fairies, or not even every-day people."

"I know," said John. "It's about pirates."

"It is not."

"About ice cream," said Liza.

"Sorry, Butterfly. Not even ice cream."

"I give up," said Edward Lee, although he hadn't been guessing at all.

"You would never guess," said Father. "So be quiet and I'll tell you. It happened ever and ever and ever so long ago—I mean once upon a time."

"When was that?" asked Walter.

"A long time ago. Now, if you are going to interrupt, I will not go on. It happened once upon a time, in the year eighteen hundred and sixty-four. There was a small boy—oh, about nine years old—and his name was Leonard. Of course people did not call him that; everybody has to have some short name. It would never do to call him Lenny, because that sounded girlish, like Jennie, so they called him Mick; you see, he had red hair and freckles just like a little Irishman."

"Was he?" interrupted Martha Mary.

"Certainly not! He was an American. And he lived on a large farm and didn't have much to do all day but build forts and shoot peas in a willow gun and fight heaps and heaps of make-believe enemies. His Father was a soldier, gone

away to fight the Southerners, and the only reason he wasn't perfectly happy was because he was not old enough to go to war himself. So he used to make-believe and he beat the Southerners almost every day. One morning he was in the chicken yard, fighting the hens with a wooden sword, and all at once he heard—— Guess what?"

"His Mother calling."

"No, he heard real music, with fifes and drums and horns playing the most wonderful tune he had ever heard. He jumped up and rushed across the field as quickly as his short legs would carry him, stumbling all the time, because it was the kind of music a person tries to keep in step with. Down to the fence at the edge of the farm he went and way off down the road he saw a cloud of dust, coming nearer all the time, while the music grew louder and louder. It was so exciting that he became all hot and red and he cut his legs all up climbing on to the stone fence. There he sat until the cloud of dust came right across the field and he saw it was thousands and thousands of soldiers. But they weren't like what he

thought they would be; not at all like the way his Father looked when he marched away to war. They had no brass buttons or gold braid and their swords didn't shine at all. They were all dirty and tired and hungry, but they walked just as lively as though they were on a picnic, and they danced—some of them—and cheered and sang the song that goes 'while we were marching through Georgia.'"

"I know it," said Martha Mary.

"I wish you would keep still," said John. "This is a wonderful story."

"Mary should know it," said Father. "It's a fine song. And so they tramped along, singing as loud as they could, and if you had heard them you wouldn't have been able to keep still, either. Well, Mick was very much excited. He jumped up and down on the stone wall, waving his hat and almost crying, he was so happy. Then, what do you think? He jumped so much that he tumbled off the wall and right into the road. It hurt awfully, too, but he couldn't cry, because all the soldiers would see him and he was a soldier's son. He just lay still and bit his

lower lip. Then the most wonderful thing happened. A big man rode along and saw Mick, and he swung his sword above his head so it shone in the sun, even if it was all rusty.

"'Halt!' he shouted, and all the soldiers stood still.

"The big man jumped off his horse and picked up Mick and said:

"'What's the matter, Son?'

"Mick just scowled and said, 'Nothing.'

"'Does it hurt much?' asked the man.

"'No,' said Mick. He was determined not to cry.

"The big man winked to one of the soldiers and said:

"'I know what will fix it. Swing him up.'

"The soldier saluted and said, 'On your horse, General?'

"'Certainly,' said the General. So the soldier picked Mick up and put him on the neck of the big brown horse and the General swung up behind him.

"'Now,' he said, 'give your orders!'

"'What shall I say?' asked Mick.

"'You are the commander,' said the General. 'What are your orders?'

"At first Mick couldn't believe his ears. Of course it sounded too good to be true, so you could hardly blame him. But he wasn't going to lose the chance, so he swung around and faced the thousands of soldiers and shouted just as loud as he possibly could:

"'Forward, march!'

"Then he remembered something Tom, the farmhand, had once shouted, so he shouted it:

"'Down with the rebels! We'll eat them alive! Forward!'

"You should have heard the soldiers shout. They cheered and shouted and called, 'Eat 'em alive!' and down the road went the whole army, with Mick leading them.

"He did not mind the way he bounced on the horse; he didn't mind anything, excepting that he was a real soldier and commanding the most wonderful army. On and on the army marched, singing 'Bring the good old bugle, boys,' and Mick sang with them. He didn't know the words so he just shouted, but that didn't make any difference,

because everyone was making such a noise that no one could hear what he was singing. Tramp, tramp, they marched and you could hear the bugles and almost hear the cannon if you closed your eyes and made-believe. And so they came to the end of the stone wall and the General whispered to Mick:

"'Command them to stop!'

"Mick shouted, 'Halt!'

"Then the General jumped down from his horse and lifted Mick off and gave him a whole pocket of empty cartridges. He saluted him just as though he were a grown-up soldier and said:

"'Have you any further orders, Sir, before we leave you?'

Mick thought a moment, then said: 'Yes. Go ahead and beat all the rebels and eat 'em alive.'

"Again the General saluted him, and he saluted the General, and the General said:

"'What is your name?'

"'Mick Leonard Sherman. What is yours?'

"'That's queer,' said the General. 'Mine is Sherman, too. Now we are going to march ahead,

all the way to the sea, and we'll beat all the rebels.'

"Then he sprang to his horse and shouted, 'Forward!'

"Down the road and around the turn went the whole army, while Mick sat on the fence and watched till the very last soldier was out of sight.

"That was the last Mick ever saw of them. But the soldiers, all cheered by their song and by the brightness of their flag of red and white and blue, marched on. Days and days they tramped, building bridges across the rivers they came to, helping one another when they grew very tired, capturing spies that they met, and winning all battles. Oh, but they were wonderful fighters! For miles and miles away you could hear their cannons roaring and every shot of their guns brought them nearer to victory and peace. For you know after all, Chicks, they had to fight, as every true American would fight, to help his country, but they longed for peace. They didn't at all enjoy killing their enemies. But right was on their side and so they fought, on and on, and

always their flag went on before them, and all enemies were swept away. Of course they had to win, because the last command Mick Leonard Sherman had given them was to beat all the rebels and eat them alive.

"And that is all."

"That *was* a story," said John.

"And I knew all the time," said Martha Mary.

"Knew what, Sister?"

"It was General Sherman marching from Atlanta to the sea."

"You're right."

"And I knew," said Edward Lee.

"What did you know, Son?"

"Mick was Uncle Leonard."

"Again right. And that is not all. Guess where Mother Dear has gone!"

"Give up!" they all shouted together.

"She has gone to the City to meet Uncle Leonard and bring him here."

Even as he said it the do-si-do cart rolled into the garden and out rushed all the children to greet the wonderful uncle who had commanded General Sherman's army years and years ago.

He laughed and got red, because he didn't know why they were all so very glad to see him. They almost forgot Mother Dear, all excepting Liza, and she was too young, anyway, to care very much about soldiers and Generals and fighting for the Stars and Stripes.

CHAPTER V

IN WHICH FLIP TELLS MY FAVORITE STORY, AND IF YOU DO NOT LIKE IT VERY MUCH, FLIP KNOWS SOMEONE WHO WILL

"SMUDGE was asleep; very peacefully asleep for so huge a personage."

"What's a personage?" asked Walter.

"A very important person. Now, don't interrupt! Smudge was asleep at the sunset end of the valley. There was a bald spot on his head, all grey and cold, and grey spots climbing up him, and dark grey-blue corners that the firs shaded. You see, Smudge was the biggest mountain you can possibly imagine. About the feet of him grew oaks that were grey and they hid a very world of little folk. Smudge had sat at the sunset end of the valley for several years; ten thousand years, the owl says, and he knows. So, of course, there were many flower folks hiding about, for in all of the ten thousand years there

had been many children born in the world beyond the valley and you, Butterfly, and everyone else knows that every time a child creature is born in the world beyond the valley there is another flower creature, sometimes a gloriously bold California poppy, more often a rather silly little violet, born in the flower world. As I told you, Smudge, all grey and cold, was sleeping at the sunset end of the valley. As he slept, a bird, somewhere in the trees, piped a morning song. Smudge shivered and a cool, shivery breeze came through the groves. Again the tree creature piped and then the stupid bald spot of grey on Smudge's nice old head took on a strange flush. As he flushed the sky in the other end of the valley grew the color of a baby rose; the grass in the valley stirred, and a rabbit-person with an adorable bunch of white cotton for a tail sat up and cocked two pink ears. And Smudge, sleepy, ten-thousand-year-old Smudge, yawned, and his stirring sent a family of meadow larks dancing into the grey sky. They sang a song, all golden and gay, and the grey-pink sky grew golden, and the fir tops blushed and ripples of crimson laughter

skipped on the silver-grey stream in the valley. The Poppy folk bestirred themselves and stretched wide their arms; the boldest of the violets peered above the frail maidenhair and a Brown-Eyed-Susan sat up to greet Smudge. And lazy Smudge slept on. But the morning would not have it so; down from the bald spot and over the lazy creature's body crept the dawn-flush, painting bits of red below his eyes and golden tan in the many-year-old wrinkles; the beard of cypress trees shook out their branches and the stream that danced about Smudge's mouth became boisterously happy. And STILL Smudge slept.

"Out of the pussy willows, with a flutter of wings, came a butterfly-person, so very yellow that the glow that was the sun hid in dismay for a moment—only a moment—behind a copper cloud. Up to the heights darted the butterfly, a spot of gold against the huge mountain of grey-pink. It soared and danced an undignified minuet, then floated down and tickled Smudge on the lips, and Smudge smiled in his sleep. The golden butterfly snapped its eyes, for it was very much provoked; up into the sky of blue it went again

and flitted its wings, then came down and again tickled the old creature, this time, most wisely, on the nostril, and, just as you might expect, Smudge sneezed and woke up.

"Then it was very wonderful—it came like a wondrous burst of love music. The sun poured over the world and all the Flower folk and bird creatures and every rabbit and field mouse and worm danced out into the morning sunshine and sang a lovely morning prayer that I, stupid creature, have forgotten every word of. Smudge grunted and wiped the sleep from his eyes and grinned and saw the golden yellowbird butterfly.

"'Good morning, Loveliness,' said Smudge.

"'Good morning, Old One,' said the disrespectful yellow bird. Then she danced on Smudge's lip and tickled his ear. When he bent branches to capture her she darted away and came back to laugh and impudently put her fingers to her nose. Sentimental old Smudge sighed and whispered:

"'Oh, Loveliness! I wish you were more serious so that I could love you the more.'

"Indignantly, Loveliness flew away, down into

the valley and flirted with a baby daisy. Smudge laughed indulgently, in the manner of the aged, and called to him his counselor. Can you guess who his counselor was, Butterfly? It was a man-baby, a tiny pink one, with just a bit of sunny hair on his head and funny, fat little wrinkles on his baby body. He was the counselor because he was Youth, and only Youth and Smudge could live forever. Smudge became dignified and said:

"'Oh, Wise One, what is the business of the day?'

"The baby-being laughed and caught a grasshopper and said:

"'The Blackbird.'

"'The Blackbird?' stormed Smudge. 'What have I to do with her? Day and day again I have said that she is nothing to me; poor, somber bit of ebony. I want sunshine and the crystal's colors and dancing and happiness; not blackness.'

"The man-baby laughed and stuck a blade of grass in the grasshopper's ear and whispered:

"'Silly, silly! If the Blackbird loves you so much, then you must have to do with her, for

her love makes her more precious than all your other subjects.'

"Smudge sneered and made a nasty remark about the words of infants.

"Then, Children, what do you think happened? A whole thousand years and a half passed and there came another sunrise. Smudge sat up and yawned and became frightened, for there was no golden flush in the sky and no poppy color in the fields. He shivered and called the man-baby, and the man-baby came riding on the back of a jack-rabbit, pulling its tail.

"'Good morning, Lord Smudge,' said the man-baby. 'You look as though you needed medicine.'

"'Don't be impudent!' shouted Smudge. 'Where is the sun and the golden Butterfly bird?'

"'Please,' said the man-baby. 'The sun has rheumatism and the golden bird has gone away with an eagle.'

"'So!' screamed Smudge, just like a peevish giant. 'What am I to do all day alone?'

"'Please,' said the man-baby. 'There is the Blackbird.'

"Smudge yawned. 'All right,' he grumbled. 'Call the Blackbird!'

"The man-baby stood up on the jack-rabbit's back and galloped down into the valley, into a cradle of violets and cream-cups. There he found the Blackbird and said to her, 'Come!' The Blackbird hopped to the jack-rabbit's tail, and the three galloped back to Smudge.

"'Good morning,' grumbled Smudge, ungraciously. 'So you've come at last to give me a day of blackness and creeps?'

"The man-baby giggled so that he tumbled right off the jack-rabbit and spilled into a wild rosebush. There he lay and you could hear him snickering.

"'Well,' shouted Smudge. 'Why don't you speak?'

"The Blackbird hid her head and whispered, 'I love you.'

"'Silly child,' said Smudge. 'Come out and let me see you!'

"He sat up so he could see better and then, Children, he almost fell right out of his valley bed. For the Blackbird was sitting on a branch

of a willow tree, and right on each of her black wings was a large ruby of lovely crimson, brighter—oh, very much brighter than the brightest flower you have ever seen.

"'Loveliness,' shouted Smudge, using the same name he had used for the golden butterfly bird (men always do), 'I thought you were black and somber.'

"'I was,' said the Blackbird, and her eyes became all teary.

"'But the sunlight on your wings and the valley of green of your eyes and the rainbow of your neck! Where did they come from, Loveliness?'

"'I love you,' said the Blackbird-with-the-crimson-wings. 'I have loved you for more than a thousand years, more years than there are buttercups on the hill. And so, with thinking of you and longing to have you love me, how could I help but grow the way you wished?'

"'Loveliness, Loveliness,' Smudge whispered, in a very gruff, choky whisper. The man-baby fell from a willow tree and bumped his nose on Smudge's toe and sat up and laughed. Then all the valley grew golden and the sky was glory

bright; the meadow larks sang as they sat on the twigs, and the violets and wild pansies and buttercups and golden cups and poppies and brown-eyed-susans and forget-me-nots and daisies danced a lovely, happy dance that frightened away the very grey old owl, and another day was born."

CHAPTER VI

IN WHICH EDWARD LEE AND WALTER GO ON THE WARPATH BECAUSE THEY DON'T KNOW WHAT ELSE TO DO, AND ON ACCOUNT OF THEM JOHN AND MARTHA MARY MISS HEARING THE MELODRAMA

Edward Lee and Walter were on the warpath. The warpath leads through the orchard to the power-house where the big engine pumps water that irrigates all the farmland, even to Levy's place. The cause of the two warriors' fighting mood was this; they were bored with Life; bored with lessons, and bored through and through with the stories of fairies and other silliness that Flip always told. So, they went on the warpath, armed with all the clothes-line they could find in the laundry, and two wooden swords. The first victim, luckily for them, was John. He was seated on a wheelbarrow outside of the power-house, trying to smoke dried magnolia leaves. This made

him feel cold and wobbly and not at all in fighting trim. So it was a simple matter for Edward Lee and Walter to jump on him from the rear, tie him in approved warrior fashion, gag him with a handkerchief, and lead him into the power-house. There they held a council of war; John was convicted of innumerable offences, including kissing Uncle Mick, and condemned to spend the afternoon in confinement, tied to the power engine. He struggled manfully when they tied him to his post, but it was no use; the magnolia leaf smoke had made him too sick to fight, and in short order he was a helpless, speechless prisoner. Then the warriors planned the strategic stroke that would trap Martha Mary. Up the warpath the two men marched boldly and to the door of Martha Mary's sun-room. She was seated on a small trunk, painting red violets all over a cake-plate.

"Madame," said Walter, "we have been sent by the King to bring you into his presence. You are to come at once, but you must be gagged and blindfolded because you mustn't see the way to the Royal Palace. Are you ready?"

Of course Martha Mary knew that John was the king, and she was flattered that he had sent for her. So she allowed herself to be bound and gagged and blindfolded and led down the war-path. She knew all the time where she was going, because the power-house always was the Palace. But she didn't know what was going to happen, so you can imagine her surprise when she found herself tied to the wall and then tried and convicted of crying at Flip's last story and condemned to spend the afternoon, just like John, in solitary confinement. She didn't know John was there already, and he could not tell her because he was gagged. So the warriors tied her to the wall next to John and then locked the power-house door and went off to find Flip. He was busy making a new bridle for Peggy, the Shetland pony, and as he did not work with his mouth the warriors knew that he would have no excuse for not telling a story. They jumped on his back when he didn't expect it and refused to get off until he had agreed to tell them a tale that had no women or fairies in it at all. Flip agreed but first he rolled Walter and Edward Lee off his

back and on to the floor to prove to them that he wasn't beaten.

This is the story he told them, and although there is one woman in it, if the girl listeners do not like it they don't have to listen because it is not intended for them anyhow.

"'Doughnuts and Crullers,' swore the pirate chief as he wiped a quantity of blood off his throat-ripper on to his red sleeve. 'Doughnuts and Crullers! I have an idea!'

"'Yoho, yoho,' shouted all the pirate band gathered about. 'The Chief has an idea.'

"'A marvel-l-lous idea,' quoth the Chief.

"'Marvelous,' shouted the band.

"'Doughnuts and Crullers,' shrieked the Chief, although he knew lots of other cusses, too. 'You've made such a noise that I have forgotten it.'

"Then the Chief frowned and his temper became terrible because he seldom had ideas and he hated to lose them when they did come. He became so furious that he shouted:

"'Bring out Red Blood Ike, the one-eyed Swede!'

"Immediately a dozen valiant pirates sprang into the black tent and came out with the one-eyed Swede. He was a terrible looking person. One eye was gone, altogether, and the other one was pink. But that wasn't all. He had only one arm—the right one—and only one leg—the left one. His mouth was black as coal. That came from his habit of eating fire; he really could, just like drinking water or anything else. And he liked it. He said it tasted like fried spinach.

"'Orange Marmalade,' he shouted, for that was HIS favorite cuss. 'What do you want with me? I was dreaming of cutting off the fingers of all Republicans and you have disturbed me.'

"'Ike,' said the Chief, 'I had an idea and I lost it.'

"'Yes, yes,' said Ike.

"'That is all,' said the Chief. 'Only now I feel so badly that unless you can give me a plan my whole day will be spoiled. And I wanted it

to be a nice day. I have not killed anyone for a long time.'

"Red Blood Ike bit his mustache, which was a habit he had when he was thinking. It kept him cool and steady-nerved which is the way all true pirates must be.

"'Perhaps,' he said, 'if someone sings to me a sad, sweet song, I will be able to help you. You know, Chief, I can always think best when someone sings sad, sweet songs.'

"'It is a good suggestion,' said the Chief, 'nothing is as soothing to the mind as sad, sweet songs, unless it be killing people or fighting Indians. Call out our singer, you lazy dogs!'

"They called out Hairslip Charles, the baritone of the gang. He sat on a whisky barrel and sharpened his throat-ripper and sang Ike's favorite song: the one about the Pigs and little Fishes:

"There was me and Captain Harry in the Port of Monterey.
Sing, you pigs and little fishes in the moonlight.
Oh, the stars they all was shining and a-dancin' on the bay.
Sing, you pigs and little fishes by the moon.

There was rum on Harry's whiskers and was rum in
Harry's eye.
Sing, you pigs and little fishes in the moonlight.
So I sticks him with my sticker and was glad to see him
die,
And they ups and makes me Captain by the moon.

Then I dumps ex-Captain Harry in the Port of Monterey.
Sing, you pigs and little fishes in the moonlight.
And we 'as a solemn funeral and for the body pray.
Sing, you pigs and little fishes by the moon.

Next we sails from Monterey in the sinking of the night.
Sing, you pigs and little fishes in the moonlight.
And we heads across the waters and an island heaves in
sight
In the sickly, pale blue shining of the moon.

And on the shore was cannibals and all they wore was hair.
Sing, you pigs and little fishes in the moonlight.
And my mate he winks his winker and he ses he doesn't
care
If they stays right where they are by the moon.

But we lands and has a battle and we takes the Zulu band.
Sing, you pigs and little fishes by the moonlight.
And the blood it flew like water and it stained the island
sand
In the Pale blue, sickly shining of the moon.

Then we builds a roarin' fire and some water we did boil.
Sing, you pigs and little fishes in the moonlight.
And we ups and eats the cannibals we'd boiled in old shark oil—
Oh, you hungry, hungry fishes by the moon.

And now we all are cannibals and live on human meat,
Sing, you pigs and little fishes in the moonlight.
And we've grown so strong and mighty that we never can be beat.
Singing, singing, singing, singing by the moon.

"The tears poured down Ike's cheeks as Hair-slip Charles sang, and when the song was through Ike raised his hand and said:

"'I have it.'

"All the pirates sprang to their feet.

"'He has it,' they shouted.

"'Proceed,' commanded the Chief. I forgot to tell you that his name was Mr. Smith, but they usually called him Blue Murder Smith.

"'This is my plan,' said Ike. 'We will send our bold men out to capture three prisoners. We will tie them to a stake and then, with threats of endless terrors, make each of them give us an idea. The one who has the best idea will be

granted anything he wishes and then set free; the other two must——'

"'Die,' roared the band.

"'Die,' said Ike.

"Mr. Blue Murder Smith was delighted with the idea. He sent his men out to find three prisoners and they rode miles across the mountains until they came to the stage road. Down the road came a coach drawn by six huge horses. Ike, who was leading the assaulting party, hid in the bushes with his men until the coach came by; then they sprang out and Ike put his ten-inch gun to the driver's head while the gang held the horses. Then Shivering Sam threw open the door of the coach and commanded the people in it to come out. There were exactly three. The first was a traveling man who sold underwear when business was good. He got out, moaning and praying for them not to take his samples. The next was a handsome officer with gold braid on his uniform and a bold look in his eye. And the third was the loveliest, most golden-haired girl you have ever seen. The pirates tied them together and drove them back to the

camp, leaving the coach-driver bound to a tree. For all I know he may still be there. They came into camp and Blue Murder Smith arose, twisted his mustache and greeted his prisoners. His orders were that they be fastened to stakes and then given a chance to tell the three ideas. The traveling salesman was the only one who struggled; he had an appointment with a customer at seven o'clock and he knew his firm would be furious if he didn't keep it. So they gave him the first chance to tell an idea. After much thought, this is what he said:

"'I am supposed to be in the next town tonight to sell a carload of underwear—W. & W. quality, selling at fifty per cent. off, I recommend that you gentlemen use it. If I don't get there my firm will be in danger of losing a good customer and I of losing my position. So you let me go ahead and I'll sell my bill and get the money for it; then I'll take the stage back tomorrow, you can hold us up again and take the money away from me and then let me go. As long as I don't lose the customer the firm won't be so angry that the money was stolen.'

"'Bah!' sneered Shivering Sam. 'That is a poor idea. We'll send to your customer and take the money away from him and keep you, too, and probably roast you. And we'll make new flags for our fleet out of the underwear if it is red.'

"'Right-O!' said Mr. Blue Murder Smith. 'Now let's hear the soldier's idea.'

"They tied the salesman up again and dragged the soldier out and got his lovely uniform all mussed. As they pulled him he clutched the fingers of the golden-haired girl and kissed them, and she looked so sad that tears came into the single pink eye of Red Blood Ike. But he was a pirate's son and had to be hard of heart.

"The soldier looked very frightened. He bowed politely to the pirate band and told his idea and it was even worse than the salesman's plan.

"He wanted the pirates to let him go if he would sing them a song. Now, you know they were musical pirates and liked music, so they were inclined to accept his offer. But when he began to sing in a heart-breaking tone, 'Darling, I am growing old, Silver threads amongst the

gold,' they all began to hoot and shriek to drown his simply awful voice. Then they led him away without further words.

"Mr. Blue Murder Smith smacked his lips and shouted, 'Doughnuts and Crullers! Have out the woman!'

"She didn't seem to be at all frightened. She shook hands with Hairslip Charles and asked Mr. Smith how all the little Smiths were, although there were none at all because Mr. Smith never had time to be married. Then she told her plan, and you can be sure it was exciting. This was it:

"She said that way down in the Southern Seas there was an island inhabited by a tribe of one-legged negroes. They lived on cocoanuts and whisky; they were very gentle and had no cannibalistic habits (which means that they were not cannibals). A long time ago, nearly ten years, a ship had been wrecked off the island with a cargo of Spanish gold and fruit cake. Also a brand new crown that had been made in Paris for the Island King. When the ship was on the rocks two sailors had swum ashore with the chests

of gold and the crown. Then the weight of the fruit cake sunk the leaking ship. The two sailors had dragged the treasure way up on the island and buried it. But it would be quite easy to find. You landed and walked right to the very center of the island, then wet your finger and held it up in the air. The side of the finger that was coldest was the direction you had to dig and you were sure to find the treasure.

"'Orange Marmalade,' cussed Ike. 'This sounds good. But how do we know you are speaking the truth?'

"'Here,' said the golden-haired girl, 'is a piece of the gold. You see my father was one of the sailors who was saved.'

"She held out her hand and sure enough there was a piece of the gold, all yellow and shiny. Smith bit it and said it was all right. Then the pirate chief took a vote and found that the girl's idea had been the only good one, and that, as they had agreed, she should be given anything she wished and allowed to go free.

"'Please,' said the girl, 'may I have anything I really and truly wish?'

"'Absolutely anything,' said Smith, and then he got frightened for the golden-haired girl said:

"'Oh, you lovely, lovely pirate,' and tried to kiss him.

"'Well,' shouted Smith. 'What do you want?'

"'If I can have anything,' said the girl, and looked with soft eyes at the soldier, 'I want you to hold these two prisoners for just two days so that I can have prayers said for them before they die.' Her eyes twinkled; she looked at the salesman and said to Smith:

"'And please, when you roast this man, put in plenty of salt.'

"'We will,' said Smith, and 'We will,' shouted his men.

"Then they brought a horse and lifted the girl on to the saddle. As she leaned over to kiss the soldier good-by, she whispered something in his ear that no one else could hear, but Smith didn't bother because he thought it was just a good-by. It wasn't, though, as you soon shall hear.

"Down the road the girl went at a gallop, as fast as her horse could carry her. All afternoon she rode and just before sunset came into the soldier's camp. Up to the General's tent she cantered and then stood before him, all breathless. She told him everything that had happened and begged him to take his men and save the soldier, and the salesman, too, if he wished, although she didn't mind so much about him. The General scratched his white beard and said:

"'Why should I do this?'

"'Oh, Sir,' she said, 'the soldier is your son.'

"'Murder and Death,' roared the General. 'I'll have their heads; the villains!'

"He ordered out a whole company of cavalry, and jumped on his own horse and down the road they went, led by the golden-haired girl. They rode all night as fast as the wind, and came in sight of the land pirates' camp just before sunrise.

"'We must go slowly,' said the General. In a loud whisper he ordered his men off their horses and then, with guns in hand, they crept into the camp on their hands and knees. The first thing

they heard was the soldier prisoner snoring. He was making such a noise that the golden-haired girl thought he would wake the pirates, so she crept up and put her fingers over his lips. He dreamed someone was trying to poison him and bit, just as hard as he could. Of course the girl screamed, and out came the whole company of pirates. Then, how they fought! You never heard such a racket in your life; there was screaming and shouting and firing of guns and blood all about, and over all you could hear Blue Murder Smith cussing:

"'Crullers and Doughnuts.'

"And Ike shrieking, 'Orange Marmalade.'

"They fought for hours and hours. That is, all but the salesman. As soon as the General cut his ropes, he grabbed his samples and ran like the wind.

"The others fought on, and the first thing you knew, every last pirate was stretched cold and dead on the hard, hard ground. And then the soldier held out his arms and the golden-haired girl came into them and the cavalry all cheered and the General blessed them (I mean the girl and

her soldier) and—they, no doubt, lived happily ever after."

"Phew!" said Edward Lee.

"Phew!" said Walter.

"Orange Marmalade," shouted Edward Lee. "Here come the pirates." Down the road he charged straight into the arms of Mother Dear, almost knocking her over.

All afternoon Edward Lee and Walter were soldiers and pirates and they attacked everybody on the place before dinner. Even then they did not want to go in, but Father insisted.

"And by the way," said Father. "Where are Martha Mary and John?"

Edward Lee looked at Walter and Walter looked at Edward Lee and then they remembered. Down to the power-house they rushed and there were the prisoners, all pale and tired and wobbly in the legs. Edward Lee really felt badly. He kissed Martha Mary and begged her not to care. He offered to shake hands with John, but John wouldn't shake. As for Walter, he got a laughing fit and wouldn't stop until Father ordered

him off to bed without any dinner. Later Martha Mary sneaked up the back stairs with a tray for him and no one knew it. Then Mother Dear felt worried and said it wasn't wise to let him go to sleep without eating, so she took him another tray and found Martha Mary's. And still later, when he thought no one would notice, Father tiptoed up the back stairs with still more, and Walter had a gorgeous time. And Father laughed and spanked him and then hugged him.

CHAPTER VII

IN WHICH LIZA GOES UNDER THE SIDEBOARD; WALTER AND EDWARD LEE FIX THE CAT, AND FLIP PROVES THAT THE CITY FOGS ARE NICE

It was Liza who discovered the secret. She was hiding from Hermit, and the best place to hide is under the sideboard, because Hermit is too large to crawl there. She was very quiet; so quiet that no one knew she was there at all. When Mother Dear and Father came in to put flowers on the table, she lay still as still could be and heard everything they said. Then she went right off to tell John although it was supposed to be a secret. John was busy taking an alarm clock apart, but he stopped when Liza came, and kissed her nose.

"Hullo, Big Sister," he said. "Which way is the wind blowing?" John always asked Liza interesting things. He didn't act at all grown-upish with her like he did with the others.

"John," said Liza, "what do you think?"

"Lots of things," said John.

"It's a secret," said Liza.

"What?" said John.

Then Liza told him. The whole family was going to the City on Saturday and Uncle Captain Mick was going to take Martha Mary and John to the theater. The others were to go to the Cliff House and have lunch on the beach with waffles and peanuts.

John pretended not to be very much excited. Even with Liza he was annoying and superior when anyone was so happy that they could hardly keep still. But the others acted differently when they heard. Edward Lee and Walter had to do something big. So Walter put the white and black cat in a bucket of whitewash and Edward Lee put ink on the whitewash to make the black spots again. They always did queer things when they were glad. As for Martha Mary—she sought out Flip to tell him the news and there the rest of the younger part of the family, which was of course the most important part, found her, an hour later.

"Cities aren't so much," said John.

Flip thought they were. He had lived in San Francisco years and years ago.

"But you can't do interesting things there, like rowing and such," said John.

"You certainly can," argued Flip.

"And anyway," said John, "it's always foggy and cold, and things aren't alive there like the trees and hills and things in your stories."

"You are mistaken," said Flip. "I remember perfectly well——"

"It's a story; isn't it, please?" said Martha Mary.

"Well, not exactly a story."

"Please," said Martha Mary, and rubbed her soft, pink cheek against Flip's forehead. So what could Flip do but tell the story?—the story of the Things that are alive in the City.

"You see, John really doesn't know anything about it. There are just as many dreams and fairies and sprites in the City as there are right here in our own garden. Only everyone has to attend to business in the City and can't always remember these things. Why, the fairies that

dance on Tamalpais are the most gorgeously happy fairies, I think, in all the world."

"Who's Tamperpies?" Liza wanted to know.

"Tamalpais is the biggest, oldest mountain you have ever dreamed of anywhere."

"Just like Smudge?"

"Exactly, only not quite so silly and spoiled as Smudge. It is a very dignified old mountain even if it is so lovely, and it sits right at the North Star corner of the bay and rules all the country for miles and miles around. But old Tamalpais is not the same as it used to be. When it was younger—oh, about twenty years ago—it was all covered with nice, tall trees; some of them so high that one would think the blue sky was resting on them. There were red berries, too, and vines and tremendously big ferns and the green things grew so thickly that one could hardly walk through them. There were wild things there, too; bears and deer and wild cats and heaps of squirrels and more singing birds than there are hairs on Hermit's tail.

"Right across the sunset water was the loveliest city; a city that rambled over a half-dozen queer

old hills, up and down, twisting about like a regular jig-saw puzzle. And oh, it was a proud City, just as haughty and conceited as it could be. Of course it had lots to be conceited about, for there never was such a happy city of people before. They had wonderfully good times in such a perfectly nice way, and were so lively and busy that of course they couldn't help being proud.

"More than any of these things, the City was proud of its lovely mountain across the bay, and what do you think? The trees and flowers were so thick on the mountain sides that it could never see through them and had no idea that the City was there at all. The City grieved at this because she loved the mountain so much and wanted it to love her. She used to send messengers over to it on Sundays and holidays; boys and girls by the dozen, in old tramping clothes, and they would take their lunch along, and sit in the fields and pick the poppies and violet-blue Lupin to bring back and put in vases and jugs in the City homes. One Sunday,—the sunniest, brightest Sunday you ever saw,—one of the messengers lay down in the grass under a bay tree and lit

his pipe and thought. I don't know what he was thinking; it must have been something uninteresting, for little by little, his eyes closed, and the first thing you knew, he was sound asleep. The pipe fell out of his mouth and right into some dried leaves. Then it was awful; the grass caught on fire and before the messenger awakened the flames had eaten way out into the forest. The messenger awoke and tried to fight the fire alone, but it was useless. He cried for help and people came rushing from all sides to do what they could, but it was no use; on and on the fire spread till all the trees and bushes on the mountain were burned away. All night the flames raged and the sky was red, like a sunset, and smoke poured over the bay. And in the morning the mountain lay, all bare and black, and oh, the City mourned to see it. But you know, when anything unpleasant happens, something nice happens, too. In this case all the growth of green being gone from Tamalpais, he could look about him for miles and the very first thing he saw was the wonderful City—and—it was a case of love at first sight!

"Well, the Mountain and the City loved each

other for years and years and years. Every morning, the soldiers in the City would fire a cannon to welcome the sun and that would awaken Tamalpais. He would yawn and look across the water; then he would smile and when he smiled it was like oceans of sunshine. Then the City would smile an answer and the day would begin. The hours were so short until dark, one hardly noticed them pass. In the evening, millions of lights would come out in the City like the loveliest diamond necklace of a fairy queen. Only fairies wear dewdrops and not diamonds. Tamalpais would gaze and gaze at the lights and the City would see the huge, black form standing out against the night sky, and so—just like a couple of children—they grew so interested watching each other that they forgot to go to bed at all. That would never do, you know. First the North Wind scolded the City; then the Lady Moon gave the mountain an awful lecture, but it didn't do any good. Tamalpais began to have wrinkles because he did not sleep, and the City became rather ill-humored. So the North Wind went to the Sun and asked him what he thought they had

better do. Of course the Sun had a good idea; he always does seem to manage things somehow. He waited until late in the afternoon, then the very last thing, just before bedtime, he went west, out into the ocean, and drew the water up in the sky to make lovely white clouds of it. Then the North Wind came over so gently. He took the white clouds through the Golden Gate and heaped them just like hills and hills of white, soft pillows, all over the City, and the mountain too. That night no one could sleep; the Mountain grieved because it couldn't see the City, and the City was lonely because it couldn't see the black form of Tamalpais. But that was only the first night. After a while they grew rather used to it and learned to watch for the ocean of white clouds. Then they would go to sleep, and it was always more exciting for them to wake up in the morning and see each other. Of course sometimes they would wake up and the clouds would still be there. Then the Mountain would grumble and the City would shiver, and down would come the North Wind to carry the clouds away again—and there would be sunshine.

"Now, every night, when the bugles in the Presidio sound 'Taps,' which is the soldiers' song when they go to sleep, the North Wind hears the soft, whispering music and brings in arms full of white clouds so that Tamalpais and the City by the Golden Gate can go to sleep."

Edward Lee laughed when Flip had finished the story.

"That is very impolite of you," said Martha Mary. "I liked Tamalpais and you shouldn't laugh."

"Wasn't laughing at that," said Edward Lee.

"What was it, then?" asked Martha Mary.

"It's Liza," said Edward Lee. "Look at her. Someone has been putting white clouds over her."

Sure enough, Liza was sound asleep with her arms about Hermit's neck.

Hermit was asleep, too, with his mouth open and his tongue hanging out, although it is very bad to sleep with one's mouth open.

But, you see, Hermit is only a dog and dogs can't understand everything.

CHAPTER VIII

IN WHICH MARTHA MARY HAS A WONDERFUL DAY AND LEARNS THE LOVELIEST OF SECRETS AND FLIP'S ASPIRATIONS ARE EXPLAINED

It was Martha Mary's birthday; the brightest, happiest birthday she could remember. But, of course, the last birthday a person has always seems the nicest. Everyone had presents for her. From Father and Uncle Captain Mick there were oodles of books and ribbons and things for a sewing-basket. John borrowed fifty cents from Levy, the butcher, and bought a perfectly good spy-glass. Martha Mary could use it, he said, to spy out the rest of the family when she wanted company, or Liza when she got lost. Personally, I think he expected some pretty good times with it himself. Walter and Edward Lee sold forty bottles to the rags-bottles-sacks-man for fifteen cents, and with the aid of a nail managed to get eleven cents more out of their penny-bank. They bought five

molasses sticks, one for each of the children, which left just a penny over. Mother's presents were the nicest of all. First there was a white linen cushion to be embroidered with golden poppies; then there was a book of the Secret Garden and a perfectly beautiful edition of Peter Pan. Best of all! Guess what! There was a corset! It wasn't a really and truly corset because Mother Dear did not approve of them, not even for grown-up women, but it had whalebone all up and down it like the strait-jacket they keep prisoners in.

Martha Mary went under the trees with all her presents, and John was particularly nice and not at all grown-upish. He built a throne on the stump of the old oak tree and Martha Mary sat there, surrounded by the trees and flowers and birds, and John made her a wreath of buttercups and a daisy chain. Then he tooted a blast on the cook's dinner-horn and called all the court to do homage to Queen Mary.

Flip was out in the field planting alfalfa. When he heard the horn he stopped work, although he was quite sure it was not lunch time.

Still, he wasn't going to take any chances because he certainly did like to eat. Across the lawn he came and there he saw the queen, surrounded by all her subjects.

"What is this?" asked Flip. "Why the celebration?"

"Please," said Martha Mary, a little bit choky, "you have forgotten, Flip, and I did not want you to forget."

"What did I forget, Ladykin Dear?" asked Flip.

Martha Mary would not tell because she did not want him to feel badly. Neither would John.

"You tell me, Butterfly," Flip coaxed Liza.

"It's her birfday," said Liza, "and there is going to be cake with candles for tea."

Well, at first Flip felt so badly that he couldn't talk at all; then he got an idea.

"Queen Mary," he said, "I did forget and it was hateful of me. But there was a reason for my forgetting. You see I have a secret, too, and I've been thinking and thinking about it and almost forgot everything else. Will you forgive me?"

"Please," said Martha Mary. "Yes, but I should like to know the secret."

Flip bit his lip. He really wanted to tell but did not know if he had the right. You see when people know nice things it is much more fun to tell them to everybody. So he agreed. He said the secret was only for Martha Mary, so the boys and Liza would have to go away for ten minutes. Martha Mary raised her willow branch scepter and ordered them away. Then Flip lay on the grass and rested his head against Martha Mary's knees and closed his eyes.

"Please," said Martha Mary. "I am waiting."

"It's hard to tell, Silly," said Flip.

"But you promised."

"Well," said Flip, and got all red. "I'm in love!"

"Flip!" said Martha Mary, so surprised that she almost tumbled off her throne. "Only grown-ups fall in love."

"But I am grown-up. I'm more than twenty-four years old."

"Is that old enough?"

"Yes, if the person you love is more sensible than you are."

"Is she? And is she nice?"

"Nice! Martha Mary, let me tell you about her. In the first place, she is very small for such a grown-up person. She looks no more than fifteen, but she is all of twenty years old. And she is so fine—and really very pretty, Ladykin. She has oodles and oodles of brown hair and the kindest, softest brown eyes and the dearest funny little nose and a strong, mannish jaw. You couldn't help liking her. And she likes nice things; birds and flowers and books—and fairies, too. And she likes me!"

"Now I know," said Martha Mary.

"What?"

"You told Mother Dear when you came that you had aspirations. Mother would not tell me what aspirations were, but now I know. She is it."

"Not exactly," said Flip. "But she has to do with them. Shall I tell you all about them?"

"Please," said Martha Mary.

"Well, it began years and years ago. I lived

in San Francisco with a splendid father and a mother as lovely and fine as Mother Dear. My best friend was a little, brown-haired girl. Her name was Janet, but that was too grown-up and old-fashioned, so we called her Jane although that is rather old-fashioned, too. But, you see, Jane was an old-fashioned girl. We played the nicest games, Martha Mary, and when we were tired I would tell Jane stories just like I tell you. One day a man came to Jane's house. He stood behind the door and listened to one of my stories. Later he made me tell him others. When I had finished he said that when I was older I would be an author and write books. That became my aspiration. I made up my mind to be an author; not a great one who would try to change the world, but just a simple, quiet one who could tell stories that would make people just a little more happy. Then, Ladykin, one night something awful happened. I will not tell you much about it. There came a terrible earthquake. I don't like to talk about it. A brick chimney fell right on my mother and father's bed and killed them. It was awfully lonely then.

I had learned to love Jane meanwhile but I was quite poor and so I had to go away. I couldn't make money writing stories because my work was not good enough and I was not known. So I decided to work on a farm and write when I found the time. And here I am. Now, Martha Mary, guess what!"

"What?" asked Martha Mary.

"I have been working very hard every night on my stories all the time I have been here. Did you see the envelope the postman brought for me this morning?"

"Yes."

"It was from the publishers who print books. They have really and truly bought my stories and sent a perfectly good check and—I am an author."

Martha Mary's eyes were all watery. "Flip," she said, "I am so happy I have to hug you." She hugged him and then remembered about her birthday.

"I forgive you and excuse you altogether for forgetting," she said. "Your secret is the nicest thing that has happened to-day."

"But that is not the secret."

"Flip. Is there more?"

"There is."

"Tell me, please."

"I was so excited when my letter came that Mother Dear said when she heard of it—guess what!"

"I give up."

"She said I could 'phone to Jane and tell her to come right down so that she could tell me how happy she is."

"And will she?"

"Will she! I should just say so! She is on her way now and will be here in an hour."

"Oh!" said Martha Mary; "I didn't know that so many wonderful things could happen in one day. Now I want to call the children."

Flip blew the horn and across the lawn came all of the queen's court.

"I want to know the secret," said John.

"Can't tell," said Martha Mary. "But it is nice. Someone is coming."

"Captain Mick," shouted Walter.

"Not at all. It is a girl-person."

"Do we know her?"

"No, but you will and you will like her," said Flip. "Her name is Jane."

"I wish an hour was not so long," said Martha Mary.

"Perhaps," said John, "if you told us a story, Philip, it wouldn't seem so long."

"Perhaps," said Flip. Then because it was a birthday and Martha Mary was queen, he told a queen story with Kings and Knights and Ladies. This was it:

CHAPTER IX

IN WHICH IS TOLD THE STORY OF ALFRED OF THE LOW COUNTRY, AND JANICE, WHO LOVED THE QUEEN'S PAGE

"In the days of the good and splendid King Arthur there was an old letter-writer named Baudin. He lived in a small garden below the Castle wall, and the loveliest hollyhocks and jasmine grew about the door of the cottage. He had everything he desired and that was not a great deal. His business was to write letters; love letters and business letters for the Knights and Ladies who had never been to school and could not write for themselves. His daughter was a very pretty little sunshiny girl who kept his house in order and cooked his meals. She sang as she worked and was always happy."

"Please, what was her name?" asked Martha Mary.

"Her name? Why, I have really forgotten."

"Was it Jane? I should like it to be Jane."

"Jane? Now, perhaps, it was. Or Janice. I think it must have been Janice in those days. So we will call her that. Janice used to do her work early in the morning so that she might spend the afternoon sewing or caring for the garden flowers. Next to her father she loved flowers more than anything else in this wide, wide world. They were happiness, just as the song of the birds and the shining of Lady Rumdidoodledum and the other stars is happiness. Janice was so very happy that she never wished to have things changed. She wanted to go on for ever caring for her father and living in the cottage by the Castle wall. True, at times, she thought of the lad who hoped to marry her some day, but he does not come into the story for a long time.

"One day, as Janice was sitting under a cypress tree, a handsome Knight came down the road, mounted on a splendid black horse. The stranger wore a blue satin jerkin, black knee-breeches, and stockings of blue. There was gold braid on his suit and a golden tassel dangling on his hat. From the brim waved a lovely grey-

blue plume. Very straight he rode, and dignified, looking neither to right nor left. As he passed the cottage Janice looked up and saw that the black horse was very tired.

"'Kind Sir,' she said, and blushed at her boldness, 'your horse is worn with the heat. May I fetch him water?'

"The Knight looked down and when he saw lovely Janice he swept his plumed hat to his breast.

"'Lady,' said he, 'your kindness well becomes your fairness. If you will but show me to the well I shall thank you and carry the water myself.'

"Janice curtsied and led him through the ivy-covered gate, bringing a bucket to the trough for him. When he had filled it and would carry it out she took it up.

"'Good Sir,' she said, 'you may spill it and harm your beautiful suit. I will bear it for you.'

"The Knight bowed. 'Our Good Lady would be annoyed,' said he, 'were I to appear before her in disarray. It were best that I do not soil myself.'

"So Janice took the pail and smiled to her-

self at the conceit of the good Knight. While the horse drank the girl rubbed its silky coat and patted its neck. Then the Knight bowed again and sprang to his saddle. Janice curtsied and went in to darn her father's sox.

"You may think she would be excited at having aided a Knight of King Arthur's Round Table, but she was not at all. She thought much of the splendid black horse but not at all of its conceited master. With him, however, it was different. When he had ridden away he could not forget the girl's beauty and he saw her face wherever he went. He became very unhappy, then, for he found himself very much in love, and a Knight of Arthur's Court could never marry the daughter of a letter-writer. Every day he rode by the cottage and saw Janice under the trees, sewing or trimming flowers. He would sweep his hat to his breast and she would bow without smiling, although often she came out with a pail of water for the horse. Naturally the more the Knight saw her the more he loved her, and the more miserable he became.

"On the birthday of Guinivere, Arthur's

Queen, there was a royal tournament planned, with fencing and lance bouts and dancing on the oak lawns. Tents were raised and they flew the Queen's colors: a pavilion was built with a canopied box where the Queen sat surrounded by her Ladies and attendants. All morning there were gaming and May dances. In the early afternoon the Queen's Herald blew a blast on his silver trumpet and announced the Queen's bout in which all Knights might compete. The prize was to be a crimson ribbon from Guinivere and the granting of any request in her power that the winner might make. Again the Herald blew a blast and out from the tents came the Knights astride the finest of Arabian and Russian horses. Their lances were under their arms; their Ladies' colors on their sleeves. To the center of the oak lawn they charged where the din of fighting and the crashing of lances against shields became so uproarious that one could scarcely hear the cheers of the spectators. For an hour they fought until Alfred of The Low Country—(that being the name of the Knight who loved Janice)—and Herbert of The Blue Feather, were left. Again and again

they charged—lance met shield and shield glanced off lance, till suddenly, Alfred's horse reared and Knight Alfred slid to the ground. He sprang up and struck the animal across the haunches with his lance, so that the horse dashed away across the field. Then Alfred threw down his lance and drew a dagger, all shiny and sharp. Immediately Knight Herbert sprang to the ground with his dagger drawn and they fell to fighting again.

"Meanwhile Alfred's horse, freed of his rider, whinnied a moment, then stampeded toward the further edge of the oak lawn where the villagers and their wives and daughters were gathered to see the sports. Right into the center of them he rushed, directly at Janice, who stood terrified at the side of the old letter-writer. The crowd cried out in fear when, just as the horse reached and would have trampled Janice to the ground, a page boy, who had stolen away from his place by Queen Guinivere, dashed forward, grasped the horse by the mane, and stopped his rush. Only a moment the animal hesitated, then turned his head and sprang forward into the field again with

the boy clinging to his mane with all his might. The steed plunged and reared and finally, just as he was captured by guards who rushed forward, he shook the boy off. The page lay where he had fallen, his head buried in his arm. Past the guard and out to him, Janice rushed and sank down and took his wounded head on her knee.

" Meanwhile, across the field, the combat had continued as though nothing else had happened. But King Arthur had seen all and determined to reward the boy.

" Thrusting and sparring, Alfred of The Lowland and Herbert of the Blue Feather fought, till suddenly Alfred's dagger pierced his opponent's side and Herbert fell, bleeding. Alfred was winner of the tournament.

" To Guinivere he came, flushed and happy, and kneeled before her. He kissed her hand, offering her, at the same time, his victorious dagger. She smiled and took the weapon, then pinned to Alfred's sleeve the red ribbon she wore at her heart.

" ' Arise, Sir Conqueror,' she said. ' Ask of me

what you will and if it be in my power I shall grant it.'

"'My Lady,' said Alfred, 'all things are in your power; the very birds sing when you smile upon them.'

"'Flatterer,' said Guinivere. 'You frighten me, I fear you are going to ask a very great favor of me.'

"'For me,' said Alfred, 'it will be greater than vast estates. For you, Dear Queen, it will be little more than a spoken word. I ask that you raise Janice, daughter of Baudin, the letter-writer, to my rank, so that I may marry her.'

"'Your wish shall be granted,' said the Queen. 'You may go to your love, and tell her my pleasure.'

"Across the field, on his black horse, went Alfred, to find Janice on her knees, bathing and bandaging the page's head. She rose as Alfred approached. He bowed proudly and sprang to the ground. Before all the gathered villagers, he spoke, saying to Baudin, the father:

"'Good man, the Queen, knowing the love that is in my heart for your daughter, has or-

dained that she be raised to my rank so that I may make her my wife.'

"Old Baudin became so embarrassed that he could hardly speak.

"'The honor you do us is great, Good Knight,' he said. 'It is very wonderful tidings, you bring. Janice, my child, what say you?'

"'Verily, we are deeply honored,' she said. 'And we thank you and beg you to ask the forgiveness of my Lady, the Queen, but I do not love you, Sir Knight; I would ask that you do not demand that I marry you.'

"'Great Saints!' shouted Alfred. 'Am I to understand that you refuse a chance to marry with one of my station and bearing? Strike me, but you are a proud one and the more to be desired. Sir, what say you of the girl's nonsense? Command her to rise up and go to the Queen that she may be made of high rank and a fitting bride for me!'

"'Sir Knight,' said old Baudin, now very proud and calm, 'I am the father of my child's happiness, not the keeper of her heart. Her wish is my wish ever. She will thank our good Queen

for her graciousness and beg to decline the honor.'

"'We shall see,' said Alfred. 'Come, I shall lead you to the Queen. Perhaps her Gracious Self will be able to drive this stupidity out of your head.'

"Janice put her fingers in his and allowed him to lead her to the Queen's box. At Guinivere's feet sat the page, his head bandaged, his chin in his hands.

"Janice kneeled and bowed her head.

"'Oh, kindest of queens,' she whispered. 'I thank you for your favor. I am honored more than my dreams had ever hoped for. But I beg, Dear Lady, that you will not demand my acceptance.'

"'I do not understand,' said Guinivere.

"Then Janice told her that she did not love the Knight; that she loved the page who had saved her and who had loved her long and secretly. She went on:

"'Dear Queen, on this, your birthday, when you are trying to make all the world happy, do not force me to accept the kind offer of this good Knight. Let me go back to my father's garden.'

"As she spoke, Knight Alfred had become red and furious. He spoke, finally, saying:

"'I take back my request, O Queen. I could never take to wife a hussy who would bestow her love upon a page. I do not wish her; I ask no other prize than your red ribbon and your kind thoughts.'

"'Sir,' said Guinivere, 'your request shall be granted. And,' she said, turning to the page, 'you, sir. Do you love this girl?'

"'As I love the music of the winds and the birds and your voice,' said the page.

"'Then,' said Guinivere, 'for your bravery you may have her and make her your wife.'

"The page kneeled, first at the feet of the Queen and then before Janice. She rested her trembling fingers on his shoulders and kissed him upon the brow.

"Then arose King Arthur.

"'Lad,' said he, 'you have pleased me twice to-day: firstly in saving, secondly in loving this child. Therefore, I shall grant you whatever you wish. Think well! What does your heart most desire?'

"'Sire,' said the page, rising and bowing humbly, 'I am allowed to serve the fairest queen and the bravest king in the world. I am loved by the dearest maiden in the kingdom. I have nothing to ask; there is no more I desire of Life but to live and die for you.'

"'Well spoken,' said Arthur, the King. Then he turned to Janice.

"'I know not which of you is the more fortunate,' he said. 'Life should hold much for you. Go, then, with your husband, and remember that Arthur ordains that you shall honor, respect, and ever love him, and be happy, both of you, always.'

"And they were!"

"Of course they were," said a strange voice when Flip had finished. "If they loved each other they couldn't help but be happy always."

The children all jumped up and looked through the trees. There was a girl standing there; a brown-haired girl with laughing eyes and a jaw just like a man's. Martha Mary knew who it way right away. It was Jane. Even if you

weren't sure you could tell by the color of Flip's face. He stood up, all red, and said:

"Hullo, child," and shook hands with her, just like a couple of almost strangers would do. Then he introduced her to the children.

"Jane, this is John Sherman, by far the most important member of the family. John, this is Jane. And this, Jane, is Martha Mary, but we will call her Sister. These are the almost twins: Edward Lee who dips cats in whitewash, and Walter, who puts new spots on them with blue ink. This is Liza alias Elizabeth alias Butterfly. And this, if you please, is Hermit. You know he was really the one who discovered me."

Hermit, when he heard his name, got up and yawned, then wagged his tail and smiled as politely as could be.

"Please," said Martha Mary, when they were all introduced. "It's my birthday and we should like you to stay and help me celebrate."

"But Jane has—er——" Flip started to grumble.

"Jane has nothing, Young Man," said Jane. "I know you are all on edges to show me the

proofs of your book and tell me how wonderful you are, but you will have to wait. I'm going to celebrate."

"All right," said Flip. "Then I'll go jump in the lake—or eat a snail or something."

It was John who saved the day. "Last one to the stable is it and a nigger-baby," he shouted.

Away rushed all the children, and Jane would have followed, but her skirts were too tight. So she sat on the haystack next to Flip and when Martha Mary turned around just once, she saw—but Martha Mary would not tell us what she saw.

CHAPTER X

IN WHICH JANE STAYS LONGER THAN SHE HAD EXPECTED TO AND WE ENTERTAIN HER. AS USUAL, FLIP TELLS A STORY

EVERYONE was rather anxious to see how Mother Dear would receive Jane. Mother did not take to strange women as a general thing, but, as Flip explained later, Jane was hardly a woman, so it made matters easy. Flip was the only one who was embarrassed. He almost ruined his hat, twisting it out of shape, as he said:

"Mrs. Sherman, this is Jane Houghton. I hope you will like her."

Mrs. Sherman shook hands with Jane, and the grip of the two women was like the grip of two men. Jane was not at all ill-at-ease. Then Mrs. Sherman put her two hands on Jane's shoulders and suddenly kissed her on the forehead.

Walter giggled and turned a handspring.

And so, instead of taking the afternoon train

back, Jane was invited to stay as the Shermans' guest until Monday. Of course, Mother Dear explained that it was because Martha Mary had asked it and it was her birthday, but I think Mother was romantic and liked to see Jane and Flip together. You can never tell what these grown-ups are thinking!

Saturday afternoon, Flip hitched up the do-si-do-cart and in piled all the children, with Jane and Flip, and they went on the loveliest picnic they had ever had. Parts of it were a surprise. For example, they had had no idea that Mother Dear and Father were invited, but when they reached the Cypress trees near the ocean beach, at sunset, the first thing they saw was Mother standing near a campfire that Father had built. There was the most wonderful smell in the air; it was like fried bacon, and fried bacon it was. There was green corn, too, roasted in the fire, and chicken cooked on a forked stick, and watermelon and pancakes and heaps of doughnuts. Everyone ate as much as they could, and then Father lit his pipe and Mother sat on the ground next to him and the Children all lay on their

stomachs on the sand, with Jane and Flip, to watch the moon come up over the ocean. Once, when he thought no one was looking, Flip kissed Jane on the ear, but Edward Lee caught him, and for punishment Flip had to tell a story. He grumbled and said it was too nice a night to spoil with his nonsense, but when Jane said:

"Please, Dear," he couldn't help it.

"This is to be a story of the trees," said Flip.

John sniffed. "You always tell about things that are not alive," he said. "Father doesn't. Neither does Captain Mick."

"But, John," said Martha Mary, very much surprised, "the trees are alive."

"They can't talk."

"They could, once," said Flip. "And they still do talk in their own language, but of course you cannot understand them."

"Can Father?" asked Edward Lee.

"I don't think so," answered Father.

"Can you, Flip?"

"No, but I know what they mean to say. Listen, now, and I will try to finish the story before anyone interrupts again. Elizabeth, stop

sticking things in Hermit's ear! Now—where was I?"

"You hadn't started," said Martha Mary.

"All right; then I'll start with once, years and years ago. It was in a large forest, way up in the mountains, where there are only wild things and no men. The trees grow very tall and straight there; the branches are heavy and the trunks all covered with grey moss, and everything else is green. The forest, many years ago, was ruled by a lovely princess. Her name was Shade of the Mountain Lake and she was a large, lovely, blue crane. The trees just called her 'Princess,' because that was easy to say when the wind hummed in the branches, and 'Shade of the Mountain Lake' was much too long. Princess ruled her tree land for many years and the wood-folk were glad that they had chosen her, because she was so wise and graceful and lovely. You see, her soft breast feathers were colored with the blue of the sky of a Spring morning, and the grey of her slender neck was taken from the shaded spots near an old mountain. The green of her eyes once belonged to two splendid emeralds,

and when the emeralds lost their color they became priceless diamonds. So how could Princess help but be beautiful?

"She was very proud of her kingdom; of the tall green trees and the blue-green lake and the very blue sky. All day she would fly over the hills, smiling on her people, sailing here and there, down and up, sometimes almost to the sun. One day, when she was very high in the Heavens, she saw, way off across the valley, a spot of red. That was a color that was not known in the mountains, so she flew with the wind, out across her valley and another valley until she came to a land where men lived. And there, what do you think she saw? Fields and fields and fields of the loveliest wild flowers, all golden and purple and pink, and gardens with red, red roses, and sweet-smelling lilacs climbing over the stone walls, and soft-colored fruit blossoms—there were more flowers than days in a hundred years. All afternoon she flew over the gardens, smelling the perfumes and always finding something new to surprise her. When night came she flew back to her kingdom in the mountains. But she was very

sad, for she had thought her land the loveliest in the world and now she knew that it had none of the wonderful flowers that grew in the man's world. All night she grieved and in the morning called her council to her—a branch of a pine and a branch of a redwood and a branch of the single oak that grew at the foot of the mountain. She told them how she had spent the day and how very, very much she wished her land to have all the colors and not only the green in Spring and the brown in Autumn. Then the branch of the single oak spoke and said:

"'Let me help you. The Pine has always been the most plentiful tree in the mountains and the Redwood has been the tallest. I have been out of place and able to do but little save giving shade. Now I think I can help.'

"She whispered her idea to Princess, and when Princess heard she was so pleased that she soared high into the sky and sang to the morning sun. Then down again she flew, and told the silver stream her secret. And this is what she did:

"First she went to the single oak and took from it several fine, green branches, all covered

with fresh leaves. These she carried one at a time up the side of the hill and laid them side by side on the grass. Then she called to the sun and he came over the treetops and warmed the oak leaves with his golden light. When they were all glowing Princess called to the clouds and asked for just a little rain. Down it came, so very quietly that not even the sun went away. And so the drops, falling through the sunshine to the oak leaves, formed a lovely rainbow. Then the rain stopped, but the rainbow remained, coloring the oak leaves with blue and red and gold and amber and violet. Princess was so happy, then, that she could hardly wait to carry the beautiful colored sprays into the forest to plant them at the foot of the tall trees. All the wood folk—the rabbits and the snakes and the silly young bears—came out to watch her as she worked. When her task was through she called all her subjects to her and introduced them to the new color she had brought into the mountains, and she called it Child of The Oak.

"Child of The Oak grew very much in a short time. She had the form of a clinging vine; up

over the branches of the other trees she crept, just like a really and truly baby. Her colors were the loveliest you have ever seen. Just think of leaves that were golden red as the loveliest poppies and green as the wildest hillside and violet like the softest field flowers and blue like the morning sky. She was so beautiful that all the trees grew to love her in a very short time.

"Then, one day, the most awful thing happened.

"It was early morning in the month of May. Across the further valley and right through the Valley of Shade of The Mountain Lake and up the hillside and into the mountain land, came a whole school of children, to the place where no man had ever been before. It was very nice at first. They sang songs about Angels and Fairies and the one that went like this:

"I'll sing you a song of the fields in the Spring
With a chatter of birds in the tree tops,
And the poppies and daisies will dance as I sing
And the birdlings will warble and flutter a wing
And the sleepy, fat owl will wake up, the old thing!
As I sing to the birds, the gay happy birds,
The silly young birds in the tree tops.

"Then they tied ribbons to the tallest pine and took hold of the ends and danced a May dance, and their pink and white dresses, with their baby cheeks all flushed, and their golden hair waving, they looked just like the South Wind.

"But of course such nice things could never last. Pretty soon one of the children found a spray of Child of The Oak and plucked it and carried it to the awfully awesome person who was in charge of the party. She said it was:

"'Remarkably beautiful and most ethereal,' and, although I haven't an idea what that means, I know by the way she said it that it must be something hateful. Back she sent the children to gather as much as they could find. They rushed about tearing Child of The Oak up by the roots and it hurt just as much as though someone were to pull Liza's hair. The tall trees all hung their heads so they wouldn't see Child of The Oak suffer and the Mother Oak moaned and held out her arms, but of course no human being could understand her. It was so pitiful,

so unfair, and no one knew the least thing to do. And then, what do you think? Guess what, Edward Lee! What do you think, Walter? Oh, you never can guess!

"Down from the top of the mountain came the North Wind. Princess went to him, weeping, and, 'Father Wind,' she cried, 'can't you help Child of The Oak?'

"'Certainly,' said North Wind. Down to the May party he swept and blew deep breaths of the pollen that grows on dryads' wings all over the Child of Oak branches. The pollen that grows on dryads' wings is deadly poison, you know. So, as soon as the children touched it, they became ill; they found spots of red on their arms, and their faces became swollen as though they had mumps. They itched simply miserably, and all went home sick, and had to be put to bed with salves all over them. And so, they never dared touch Child of The Oak again, because the North Wind had put the poison on her to protect her. When the men came to the mountains they never touched the lovely colored leaves, for they called them 'Poison Oak.'

"But Princess did not mind, because she knew that the real name was Child of The Oak and that Child of The Oak was the loveliest child in all the hill world."

CHAPTER XI

IN WHICH WALTER DOES NOT WANT NINE EIGHTS TO BE SEVENTY-TWO; AND MARTHA MARY FEELS SO BADLY FOR HIM THAT SHE GOES TO SEEK ADVENTURE. SHE FINDS IT

It all happened because Walter couldn't learn how many times eight was seventy-two. The eight tables are hard enough, but when it comes to dividing by eight even John made mistakes at times. Walter insisted that eight sevens were seventy-two. Mother Dear said they were not, but Walter said he knew best. Mother Dear looked sorry and said if Walter were quite positive he was right, then she supposed he must be, but she had learned that nine eights were seventy-two.

"They're not," said stubborn Walter.

"What are they then, Dear?" asked Mother.

"Don't know," said Walter. "But I won't have them seventy-two."

Then Mother Dear almost lost her patience.

"Very well, Walter," she said. "But, if you cannot believe your mother, I hardly think it worth while helping you, so you may leave the room."

Walter lost his temper altogether and went out, slamming the door and kicking his feet. Later, Martha Mary, who felt as badly for him as she did for Mother Dear, although she knew Mother was right, found him in the hayloft, with a miserable look in his eyes and a smudge of dirt where tears had been.

"Please, Mr. Brother," she said, "don't feel badly."

"Go away," said Walter. "I hate you."

"Walter," pleaded Martha Mary, "you shouldn't. It hurts when you are that way. Please come play."

"Won't," said Walter. "Get out of here; I hate you."

Really miserable and almost crying herself, Martha Mary crept away to find the rest of the family. Father was busy writing Things in a large book. Mother Dear was bathing Liza; John was rowing Edward Lee on the lake Ocean.

"Don't bother me," he called. "I can't hear you. I am miles away."

More unhappy than before, Martha Mary walked down the gravel path to the gate. Then she opened it, a thing she rarely did, and went out. It was rather dusty on the county road, and the wind was blowing, and it fluffed her hair all about her face. It felt good—the wind always does. Almost immediately Martha Mary became more cheerful, and as soon as she became cheerful she had an idea. They always come when one is happy. She made up her mind to have an adventure; she didn't know exactly what it would be, but an adventure she would have. She had never had a really and truly one all to herself; John had them; so did Walter and Edward Lee, like whitewashing and inking the cat, or finding a bird's nest in the old straw hat in the hayloft. But nothing had ever really happened to Martha Mary and she didn't know just how to begin. She thought for a long time; then a brown squirrel popped up in the middle of the road, cocked its ears, and scampered into the poppy field.

"I'll follow 'him,'" decided Martha Mary, "and see what happens. Perhaps it will be like Alice in Wonderland."

Away the two of them went, lickety-split, down a hillside and up another to the crest and over it. Right there, just on the other side—— Guess what! There was a group of children, at least a dozen, all of the boys in blue jumpers and the girls in blue Kate Greenaway dresses, and they were gathered around one of the boys who was a little bigger than the others; even bigger than John. He was talking quite excitedly, and Martha Mary stood, fascinated, watching him and quite forgot little Mr. Squirrel, who had by this time completely disappeared up a tree. Finally the big boy saw Martha Mary and took off his hat and said, "Hullo!"

"Hullo!" said Martha Mary.

Again the boy said, "Hullo!" and looked at the tips of his shoes; then suddenly he smiled a perfectly good smile and said:

"Perhaps you could tell us?"

"Please, what?" asked Martha Mary.

"We are hunting for wild violets and there

don't seem to be any. Do you know where they grow?"

Of course Martha Mary knew. There were oodles and oodles of them on the Sherman Place, just at the edge of the lake Ocean. She thought it would be lovely to bring all of the children home to pick them and perhaps, if there was enough, to have tea.

"Wouldn't your Mother care?" asked the big boy. "Or are you like us? Haven't you one?"

Martha Mary could hardly believe her ears. "Haven't any of you mothers?" she asked.

"Nope," said the boy. "Nor fathers, either."

"How awful!" said Martha Mary. "Where do you live? Who takes care of you?"

"We live at the Charity," said the boy. "We take care of ourselves, excepting at meal-time or lessons."

"How nice!" said Martha Mary. "Can anyone live there?"

"Yes," said the boy, "if you are an orphan. But it's not nice. No one takes an interest or anything in you. The only excitement is when

ladies with eyeglasses on sticks come from the Affiliated Charities to pat you on the head and say, 'Dear little shaver,' and make you want to run away."

"And they look to see if your ears are clean," said one little girl.

"And ask if you are good and say your prayers," said another.

"And of course we say 'Yes,'" said the big boy, "and then they give us pennies and tell us to save them and we will be rich when we grow up."

"It's not true," said Martha Mary. "You always spend them before you grow up. Things are very expensive! I know!"

Then they remembered the violets, so down the hills and to the road they scampered, Martha Mary at the head of the lot (to be exact, there were six boys and eight girls). Through the gates and up to the house she took them to introduce them to Mother Dear, who was still feeling pretty badly at the way Walter had behaved. When she saw Martha Mary with all her company she dropped her sewing and said:

"What in the world has the child done?"

Martha Mary told her as quickly as she could all about their being orphans and about the violets and the affiliated ladies who gave them pennies to save. Mother Dear's eyes grew soft in the way they have and she kissed Martha Mary and shook hands with the children, no matter how dirty they were. She told Martha Mary to take them to the violets by the lake and not let them fall in, for some of them were quite small and liable to. Martha Mary promised, then called Edward Lee and John and they brought along Walter, who was now in a sensible frame of mind. John was inclined to be standoffish until Martha Mary, who knew him like a book, told him that the biggest little boy liked men better than women, and then John became quite nice.

In a little while Martha Mary had learned the names of all the orphans, and I'll tell them to you, although you'll no doubt forget.

First there was the biggest little boy; he was called "Slats," because he was thin. The Home name for him was Thomas Dorne. Then there was the biggest little girl, Helen Dolittle, and then

Reddy Smith and Sammy O'Reilly and Sue Patience Grey and John Shaw and Margaret something—her parents had died before she was able to find out what the last name was—and Pansy and Amy Rebecca Isaacs and Skinny Dawson and Patrick O'Harahan, and finally the most adorable little golden-haired girl I have ever seen and her name was awful. It was Dolcerina Vennicci, but they called her "Piffy."

Away went the eighteen children to the edge of the lake, where there were so many violets under the green leaves that everyone fell to picking and became too busy to talk. After a while, when hats and arms and aprons were full of flowers, Martha Mary said:

"Let's play."

"Play skin the Fox," said Skinny Dawson.

"Ich tee goo," said Piffy. "Ich tee goo" means something like "Oof" or "Horrid" or "Dirty" or "Creepy" or "Slimy." So you could tell what she meant, although I confess it's hard to find the word that explains it.

"We'll play ring around a rosy," said Amy Rebecca.

"Sissy game!" said Slats.

"I have an idea," said Martha Mary. "We'll have a story."

"Can you tell them?" asked Sue Patience.

"No—not exactly, but Flip can. Perfectly wonderful ones!"

"Who is Flip?" they all wanted to know.

"I'll show you," said Martha Mary. Away she rushed and in a moment she was back, dragging Flip after her and he holding in his hand the pages of a letter from Jane that he had not had half time enough to read twice.

"Hullo, You!" he said to them all, without waiting for an introduction. You see, Mother Dear had told him that they were there and that he must be nice.

"What do you want?"

"We want a story!" they all shouted.

Flip turned to Martha Mary and struck a pose like an old-time actor.

"Alas! Madam," he said, "my fame precedes me. I fain would accommodate you, but it wearies me to ever seek new plots."

"Don't be hateful," said Martha Mary.

"'Tis well," said Flip. "What nature of story do you desire?"

They all shouted at once: "Pirates—dolls—fairies — ghosts — love — shipwreck — creepy — bloody——" until you couldn't tell who was talking.

"Wait!" roared Flip. "You can't expect me to think if you don't be quiet. I'm going to tell just the kind of a story I wish and, if you don't like it, you can go jump in the lake and drown. But I hope you won't, because then I'll be insulted."

This is the story he told them:

CHAPTER XII

IN WHICH ANOTHER JOHN AND ANOTHER MARY WANDER FURTHER FROM HOME THAN THEY EVER HAVE BEEN BEFORE, AND FIND A MARVELOUS BALL OF GLASS, IN WHICH ONE SEES THE STRANGEST THINGS

"WAY off in the furthest corner of San Francisco, just where the sun comes over to light up the bay, there is a hill. Of course there are many other hills in San Francisco, but none of them quite so important as Russian Hill. You see, the families who live there are quieter and happier and more old-fashioned than those in other parts of the city. I don't know why; they just are. Right at the steepest part of the hill, and you can believe me when I tell you the Hill is steep, there is a Spanish Castle; not a really and truly one, but just exactly as nice as though it were. No one lived in it, nor had for several years, excepting an old, white-haired caretaker; a splendid

man. He liked children. That is why John and Mary were allowed in the Castle so much. John was a rather spoiled, selfish boy who lived in the Mansion next to the Castle, with his married sister. Mary was his best friend. She had freckles and you would have liked her. They played nice games up on the Hill; dozens of fascinating make-believes that you never would have thought of. They fought pirates—oodles of them—and baked potatoes in ovens under the rock and did other things just as nice.

"But, just like other children, they grew tired of these things at times and wanted something new. So one day, when there were no potatoes left, Mary suggested going down the Hill. John did not like to; he hated to go where there were other people. Mary laughed at him and told him he was a sissy, although he wasn't really. He became ashamed of her taunts, so down the Hill they went. First you go down some lovely old steps cut right in the stone, then you come to another hill so steep that it is easier to lie down and roll than to walk. They must have gone at

least six blocks when, all at once, Mary said to John:

"'We are not in San Francisco any more.'

"'Where are we, then?' asked John.

"'We are in China.'

"They were not really; they were in China-town, but it looked like another city, altogether. There were hundreds of Chinamen shuffling along the street, with long pig-tails and funny, large pipes in their mouths. They talked in a queer sing-song, the funniest language you have ever heard. There were Chinese women with gold jewelry and green jade in their hair, and the most adorable little Chinese babies, who looked like dolls, dressed in splendid colored silks. Up on a balcony, where there were a dozen brightly lighted lanterns, a Chinese musician was playing upon an instrument that sounded like dying pigs and broken drums and tin whistles. In the shop-windows there were white lilies and flaming oriental silks and queer toys. Also there were skinned pigs and skinned chickens and strings of bacon hanging from nails.

"John and Mary became so interested that they

forgot all about going home. Before they knew it, darkness had fallen, lanterns on the balconies were lighted, and Chinatown looked like Fairyland.

"Down the street came a tall, fine-looking Chinaman, in loose, blue silk trousers and a blue silk coat with black embroidery. He seemed very much surprised to find two American children in Chinatown at that time of night. He came to them and said, in even better English than I use:

"'I assume that your small selves are lost. Is it not so?'

"'Not exactly,' said Mary, who was always the spokesman. 'You see, we came for a walk and just sort of stumbled into Fairyland and now we don't want to go home.'

"'But your August Parent? Will he not be worried?'

"'Yes,' said Mary, 'although John's sister will not mind.'

"'So,' said the Chinaman. 'Well, perhaps, if we were to 'phone to the August Parent, he might feel relief. Then we could perhaps have tea and ginger before returning.'

"'That would be lovely,' said Mary, and, 'Great,' said John.

"So the Chinaman stepped into a store and 'phoned to Mr. Devine, Mary's father.

"'This is Fong Kee, Doctor of Law of the Hong Kong University,' he said. 'I have just found young John and Mary enjoying the sights of Stockton Street. I beg that you will have no worriment, as I shall give them tea and bring them home at an early hour.'

"John and Mary could not hear what Mr. Devine said, but it must have been satisfactory, for Mr. Fong Kee came out of the booth, smiling, and took a hand of each of the children.

"'Now,' he said, 'we shall visit my worthy friend, Fong Charles.'

"They went down a flight of narrow steps into a dark basement. There was an odor of punks, like one uses on the Fourth of July, and the strong breath of China Lilies. In through a latticed door went Fong Kee, with Mary and John clinging to each other's hands, just the least bit frightened.

"The room they came to was decorated in beau-

tiful golden scrolls of carved wood. At the end of the room was a queer wooden man, and at his feet was a bowl from which came a long ribbon of beautiful blue smoke. On a wooden couch another Chinaman was resting, smoking a small bronze pipe.

"Fong Kee spoke to him in Chinese and he arose and shook hands with John and Mary. Then he struck a metal bell and a Chinese slave girl appeared. He ordered her to bring tea and ginger. Then he turned to John.

"'I am the old Fong Charles,' he said. 'More years I have lived in San Francisco than there are hairs on an old pig's tail. I welcome you.'

"'You look pretty old,' said John. 'What do you do? Are you a cook?'

"'No,' smiled Fong Charles. 'I am a philosopher. I dream—and smoke my pipes.'

"'I like nice dreams,' said Mary.

"'So!' said Fong Charles. 'Then, perhaps, while we await Sanka, my servant, who is as slow as the race of the turtles, I might tell you a dream or two.'

"He lifted John and Mary to a black wood

table, where they sat, cross-legged, like tailors. Then he put between them a small black pedestal, on which rested a large, round ball of glass.

"'So,' said Fong Charles. 'Into the dream glass you must look and the dreams you shall see.'

"John and Mary leaned forward and saw in the glass hundreds of lovely colors, as though the rainbow had broken in it. Then the colors divided and circled about like a fairy dance. Softly, oh, so very softly! Fong Charles began to speak, in his sing-song voice, stopping only to draw at his pipe and blow a bit of smoke into the curtains above his head. And as he spoke, little by little, figures became clear in the glass until John and Mary could see the dreams, just as Fong Charles told them. There were three dreams he told, all quite short and strange:

The Dream of The Girl's Gift

"Out of Ta Chung Sz, which is, August One, the Temple of the Bell, came Tchi Niu, the Bell-maker.

"'Those of you who are pure of heart,' he

called, 'bring to me your metal mirrors that I may make of them a new bell. Come, my children.'

"They came, many of them and gladly, the daughters and the mothers, bearing in their arms the mirrors that showed their beauty, for it was honorable to give, and what more worthy gift could be made than a new bell for the temple?

"Tcho-Kow came last and slowly. On the mound of mirrors she placed hers and stood aside. Then, as the torch was carried to the fire builded to melt the mirrors, her heart grew sad, for the mirror she had brought was the mirror that had been in her mother's family and her grandmother's family, and the family of many generations before that. And so she grew cold with grief and cried out.

"Slowly the flames crept up and slowly the mass of metal melted into a river of shining gold. But the mirror of Tcho-Kow would not burn.

"'How now,' said Tchi Niu. 'The gift burns not; you have brought disgrace on your house, oh, daughter of a Thousand Lilies, by not giving your heart with your gift. How, then, will you

redeem yourself in the eyes of Dong, the Great Bell?'

"Then was Tcho-Kow smitten with a great repentance and she longed for the goodwill of Dong. So she thought and thus made her gift worthy. As the flames crept up about the mass of metal, she cast aside her dress and saying:

"'Gladly I give myself as gift,' she stepped into the flames and disappeared. Then did the flames burn joyfully and the mirror of Tcho-Kow melted with the others and Dong was appeased.

"Now hangs the bell in Ta Chung Sz, and when it is rung to call its song to the world:

"'Ko-gnai, Ko-gnai, Ko-gnai,' it calls, and thus renders thanks to Tcho-Kow for her gift."

The Dream of Hoa-Tchao

"Kiang-Kow-Jin, who dwelled in the body of a stork in the Pearl River, was the God of Children. He ruled for a million years and was beloved by all the race of River Men. He ruled well and happily and knew no worry. Came a year, then, when the Children of the River grew

few and Kiang-Kow-Jin grieved. So to him he called Chung Li, the girl child, and said to her:

"'I grieve because your companions are few. What then, Daughter of Wisdom, am I to do?'

"Chung Li knew all things.

"'Go to Ta Chung Sz, The Temple of the Bell, and pray,' she said, 'that many flowers shall grow.'

"To Ta Chung Sz went Kiang-Kow-Jin and prayed, and when he came out of the Temple all the fields were glad with myriad wondrous colored flowers.

"'It is Hoa-Tchao, the Birthday of A Hundred Flowers,' he said. Then he sought his home and slept.

"When he had slept and awakened he came again to the fields. There played Chung Li with many new children. And so Kiang-Kow-Jin learned that children are flowers."

The Dream of Bo

"Bo is the God of The River Fish. His home is of glass and seaweed. Yearly came the

River Men to make gifts to Bo, for Bo was of great greed. One year, with the other Men of The River, came Fong Soy, the silk merchant.

"'Bountiful Bo,' said he, 'this year I have no gift. The rains have been few and I have sold no silks. I have no wealth or fruits to bring to you. So, that you will bear well with me, I have brought that which I treasure more than Life itself.'

"He opened the folds of his dress and out stepped Fong Sing, his oldest son. Fong Sing, garbed in red, stepped into the waters and disappeared. Then, though parted from his dearest possession, Fong Soy returned to his home and learned that his wife had given him two sons and they were visaged as Bo, the God of The River."

"Slowly the forms in the crystal ball disappeared and Fong Charles stopped speaking. John and Mary shook themselves as though they had been sleeping. Down from the black table Fong Kee lifted them, and there, on a small stand, was very

black tea in lovely transparent cups. Mary tasted it, but it was bitter, so she did not drink. Then Sanka, the slave girl, brought dishes with cakes and candied gingers and strange fruits and almonds. Fong Charles filled the children's pockets, and then Fong Kee led them away. Slowly they climbed their Hill and to the door of the Mansion. There stood John's sister and Mary's Father to welcome them, and you may believe they were relieved when the children appeared. They shook hands with Fong Kee and made him promise that he would come again to the Hill to visit them and perhaps, some time, take them again to Fong Charles to look in the round glass again."

"Gee, that was a queer story," said Slats, when Flip had finished.

"Yes," said Piffy. "It made me sleepy."

Martha Mary was afraid that the children would hurt Flip's feelings if they said more, so she raced them up the lawn to the house, and there on the veranda Mother Dear had placed pitchers of lemonade and enough cake for six times eighteen children. And so they ate till they could eat no

more and then, with their wild violets in their arms, went back to the Charity, with Martha Mary's promise that she would come to play with them whenever Mother Dear gave her permission.

CHAPTER XIII

IN WHICH FLIP USES NEEDLESSLY LONG WORDS, BUT, TO WIN OUR GOOD-WILL AGAIN, HE TELLS A REAL OLD-FASHIONED FAIRY TALE

For a perfectly good story-teller Flip had some rather queer ideas. He didn't believe in fairy tales: that is, the kind that told about witches and Godmothers and Princes and such. He said he could not explain just why—it had something to do with inefficient education. Of course we do not know what "inefficient education" is, but Father and Mother Dear know, so it must be all right. Nevertheless, everyone knows that real fairy tales are nice even if they are not efficient education, so one night, about an hour before bedtime, when the children were all in the living-room before the fire, Martha Mary asked if, please, Flip would tell one. Flip was in a particularly good humor; there had been a thickish letter from someone during the day, and of course

the someone was Jane. So he agreed. Only he was rather annoying; he started by using needlessly long words that no one understood. He said they would have to "create the right atmosphere." John said he would, although he didn't know what it meant. But Flip didn't alone. He put out all the lights so that there was only the log fire to keep people from bumping. The flames really looked like a witch's fire, only there were no witches in the story. Then he heaped cushions on the floor for Martha Mary to sit on; Flip had been very polite to Martha Mary since Jane's visit. Walter and Edward Lee lay on their stomachs on a rug. Liza was the only one who was not there. Flip piled some lovely-smelling pine cones on the fire, which sputtered and flamed like a blacksmith's forge, only didn't smell at all the same.

"Once, in the days before Mother Dear was born, or Mother Dear's Grandmother, or her Grandmother's Great Grandmother's Great Grandmother, which was many years ago," said Flip, although everyone knew that, "there lived a King whose lands were so great that it took

the birds a whole month to fly across them. He was the richest king who lived in the days of the fairies. His chests were of the finest gold, lined with purple satin, and in them were so many beautiful emeralds and rubies that it would hurt your eyes to look at them. In his garden grew the rarest of flowers; roses that had been brought from England and yellowish brown and purple orchids from Brazil; iris, lilac, cherry blossoms, and St. Joseph's lilies were there, too, from all the four corners of the earth. In his stables there were Arabian horses and splendid dogs: deerhounds and greyhounds, and had there been St. Bernards in those days, he no doubt would have had some of them, too. In the Palace there were wonderful ancestral paintings, beautiful furniture, table service of pure gold, and glass of the rarest cut. Best of all, there was his very dear Queen Wife and the little prince who would be King when he grew up. It was the sunniest of days when the prince came. The Queen Mother had longed for a son and heir for a very long time. She dreamed one night that when the King had grown to love her very

much she would be given a son; you know, there can only be children where there is love. The dream made her more pure and lovely than ever; her thoughts and her ways so delighted the King that he learned to love her more than he thought a mortal could love. And so, just as the rose-bush grows until it is lovely and old and wise enough to be a mother, and then the seed develops in it under the petals and finally wins strength and goes away on the breeze to take root for itself and become a rose child, so the seed was born within the Mother Queen. While it was gaining strength within her, she kept her thought cheerful and clean, so that when her child came he would be cheerful and clean always. Then came the sunniest of days; just the day for a Prince's birth, and early in the morning the King was allowed to come to his wife's room and there, beside her, on a soft little cushion, was his son, the Prince.

"You can well believe that the King was filled with gladness. He went to the balcony of the Palace with the tiny baby in his arm and held it up so that all the subjects could see it. They

cheered and the bronze church bells rang and there was gladness throughout the kingdom.

"From the wisest of the courtiers, guardians were chosen for the Prince. There was the chief astrologer to teach him the knowledge that was in books. The grey-haired old Lord of The Park taught him the beauty of flowers and the song of the bird, and the Master of The Whip showed him the correct way to trot a horse and the manner in which a King's son should hold his sword. So, surrounded by wealth and the dearest of parents and the wisest of teachers, Prince Winfred grew strong and wise. At the time of my story he was about ten years old, the finest young prince you have ever seen, only of course you have never seen a prince.

"You would think that, with all his wealth and splendor, he would be perfectly happy, but he wasn't. You see, one day he was riding down the Park road on his white horse and he saw through the Castle gates a farmer's boy pass by on a burro. It was a perfectly good, young grey burro with a collar of wild flowers and tinkling bells hanging from it. As soon as Winfred saw

it he knew that he did not have everything in the world. He made up his mind that he wanted a burro very much. He told his wish to old Esau, the astrologer, but Esau raised his hands in horror and said it would be disgraceful and undignified for His Grace to ride a burro. He would speak to the Master of The Whip, he said, and order new horses. That was not what the Prince wished for; he had plenty of horses already. He did not know just why he wanted a burro; personally, I think I can guess. There was something simple and modest in the small creature that would have been a welcome change from the show and pomp of the Castle. So Winfred went to the Lord of The Park and told him his desire; that proud official sneered rather disrespectfully and said:

"'Perhaps Your Highness desires a goat, too, to milk when you tire of the burro.'

"Winfred almost lost his temper, but he remembered that Princes had to be dignified, so he went to his father, the King, and in a most proper fashion, said:

"'Your Majesty, I have a request to make.'

"It pleased the King to be asked favors by

his son, and so he smiled and demanded what it might be.

"'If it please you, Sire,' said Winfred, 'I would like a burro.'

"'A burro?' said the King. 'What will you do with a burro?'

"'Ride him,' said Winfred.

"At first the King laughed at the idea of seeing his son and heir astride a donkey, but when he found that the boy was serious he went into a rage and Winfred crept away, miserable and frightened. Out into the Park he went and lay down under a large oak, where he wept in a most unprincely manner. He wept until the tears were smeared all over his silk collar and ran down his neck. You should have seen him; one would never have guessed that it was a prince sprawled there, for all the world like a badly trained baby. He really was unhappy, though, so you could not blame him altogether.

"He cried and cried until he heard a rustling above him in the tree. He looked up, and perched on a branch just above his head was a small person, not a great deal larger than a pocket-knife.

It was a girl-person, dressed in bright green, with the tiniest of green hats on her bit of sunny hair. She looked down at Winfred and frowned.

"'What do you want?' demanded Winfred.

"'Stop crying,' said the girl-person.

"'You are disrespectful,' said Winfred. 'I am the Prince.'

"'I don't care who you are,' said the girl-person. 'I wish you would stop crying.'

"Winfred was so surprised at her lack of respect that he forgot to cry for a moment, but he soon began again.

"'Stop it, I say,' said the little thing. 'Stop it! I hate you when you do that.'

"Winfred cried on.

"Then the girl-person commenced to coax. 'Please,' she said, 'stop and I will give you any wish you ask of me.'

"'Why should I stop?' asked Winfred. 'And who are you that you can grant wishes to a prince?'

"'You should stop,' said the girl-person, 'because I hate tears, and I can grant wishes, because I am a fairy.'

"'That is very nice,' said Winfred. 'I've always wished to meet a fairy. Are they all like you?'

"'Silly,' said the fairy. 'Of course not. I am the laughter fairy; I go about the world collecting children's smiles and giving them to solemn grown-ups. I'm much nicer than most of the fairies; I think I am the nicest fairy there ever was.'

"'You conceited creature,' said Winfred. 'You are not at all nice.'

"The fairy laughed and reached down a tiny foot and kicked Winfred in the nose.

"'Don't be stupid,' she said. 'I didn't really mean that. There are other fairies as nice—almost—as I am. And I'm not a creature and I wish you wouldn't call me one. I'm a fairy and my name is—guess what?'

"'Christine,' guesses Winfred.

"'How silly! Christine is not a fairy name at all. Christines are always fat and good cooks. My name is Merrylip. Do you like it?'

"'Pretty well,' said Winfred. 'What does it mean?'

"'Nothing. It's just a name, and names never mean anything.'

"'Oh!' said Winfred.

"All at once Merrylip commenced to laugh; laughed so hard that her little foot got tangled in a spider web and she almost ruined the web getting loose.

"'Stop it,' said Winfred. 'I can't see anything funny.'

"'You are funny,' said Merrylip.

"'Why?' demanded Winfred, and showed signs of remembering that he was the King's son and entitled to respect.

"'Because,' said Merrylip.

"'Because what?'

"'Because I asked you to stop crying and I talked to you a little and you had to stop.'

"'Didn't. I stopped because you said you would grant me a wish.'

"'I forgot,' said Merrylip. 'What do you want?'

"In a flash Winfred remembered what he wanted more than anything else in the world.

"'Please—a burro,' he said.

"'A burro?' said Merrylip, much surprised. 'Why in the world do you waste a good wish on a burro? There are much nicer things than that to ask for. Wish, why don't you, for heaps of money, and then you can buy anything!'

"'I have plenty of money,' said Winfred. 'And all the treasures I want. But a burro is different. You can't just buy them; you have to be born not a prince to have one. I wish I was a train-engineeer or a policeman or a farm-hand. A prince has so many duties that it is tire-some. When I am King I shall have a whole stable full of burros.'

"'Then you won't enjoy them at all,' said Merrylip. She was really wise for such a small fairy. 'You'll get tired of them. People always do when they have finally got what they wanted very much.'

"'I wouldn't,' said Winfred. 'I am different.'

"'I bet you,' said Merrylip.

"'Bet what?'

"'Bet I will show you something nicer than a burro; even nicer than two burros. You'll be

perfectly happy for two hours—then you'll want to be a prince again and forget everything else.'

"'You just say that because you are a girl,' said Winfred. 'Girls never understand boys.'

"'I'll prove it,' said Merrylip. 'Come under my cape.'

"'I can't,' said Winfred. 'I'm too big.'

"'That is easy,' said Merrylip. 'You must kiss me on my ear, then see what happens.'

"'Kisses are horrid,' said Winfred. Still he was not going to take any chances of not having his wish, so he reached up and just put the smallest kind of a kiss on Merrylip's ear. It tasted like marshmallows. As soon as he touched her, Winfred began to grow small. You have never seen a boy as small as he became—about so big. Then he climbed up and drew Merrylip's cape over him and away they went. Up over the very tops of the trees, out across the Castle wall, down into the valley, pop over a stream, high again so as not to bump into a fat old oak, and—before you knew it—they were right above the city. Far below them were the people, walking about, and

they didn't, any of them, look larger than Merrylip.

"'Now,' said Merrylip. 'Be ready!'

"Down they swooped right to the middle of the street, where a whole dozen children were playing London Bridges. They were rather dirty children; their clothes were not at all nice and their hair was mussed. As soon as the Prince's feet touched the cobblestones, he became his natural size. Merrylip disappeared altogether, but Winfred heard her buzzing about his ear, telling him what to do.

"You can imagine how surprised all the children were when they found that a strange boy had popped up out of nowhere. They gathered around him and shouted, 'Who are you?'

"Winfred was going to say, 'The King's Son,' but Merrylip whispered in his ear, so he just said, 'Winfred.'

"The children didn't care very much who he was, after all. You see, Merrylip had touched his clothes with her lavender stick and they had become old and dirty just like those of the others. They decided that they would start another game:

Rum-ba-loo-pum-ba-loo. The oldest of them counted out loud:

"'Eny, meny, miny, mo. Catch a fairy by the toe. If he hollers let him go. Fairy, meny, miny, mo. O-U-T spells out, with the Old Mother Witch's hat turned in—side—out.' And Winfred was out.

"'But I don't know how to play,' said Winfred.

"'It's perfectly easy!' they shouted. 'You know, the one who is out is It.'

"'How can you be It if you are Out?' asked Winfred.

"They couldn't explain, but that was the way it was played. The one who was Out was It, and he or she was called Mrs. Rumbaloopumbaloo. She had to be the old witch and live on a stump of a tree. That was all the home she had. Then the children came up and said:

"'Mother Rumbaloopumbaloo, what are you thinking of?'

"Rumbaloopumbaloo would say the first letter of the word. If it was ice cream, she would say 'I'; if it was music, she would say 'M,' and so on. Then, if one of the children guessed right,

Mother Rumbaloopumbaloo would chase them all and the one who was caught was It.

"Up to Winfred came the children and said:

"'Mother Rumbaloopumbaloo, what are you thinking of?'

"'It begins with B,' said Winfred.

"'Books,' said one.

"'Nope.'

"'Bells?'

"'Nope.'

"'Beans?'

"'No.'

"Then a little girl, whom no one had noticed before, said:

"'I know. It's a burro.'

"'Uhu!' shouted Winfred, and chased them down the street. He caught the little girl who had guessed rightly and whispered to her:

"'How did you know?'

"'Silly, silly,' said the girl, for it was Merrylip, grown big.

"They played for a very long time, and Winfred was never so happy before.

"'Isn't this nicer than a burro?' asked Merrylip, and Winfred said:

"'A thousand times nicer.'

"After a while they all were tired and didn't think the game was fun any more, so they took up their hats and started for home.

"'You can come home with me for lunch if you want,' said one of the boys to Winfred. Winfred whispered to Merrylip, and she said he might, so they went. Only Merrylip made herself small again and hid in the Prince's pocket. They came to a small hut, and the boy, whose name was Michael, rushed in with Winfred after him. They threw their hats on a chair and shouted, and in came a woman, all fat and grey, with a gingham apron. Michael jumped into her arms and shouted: 'Mother, I've brought a boy to lunch. His name is Winfred.'

"The fat Mother kissed Winfred; then they sat down in the kitchen and had oodles of beans and black bread.

"'Isn't this nicer than burros?' whispered Merrylip.

"'A thousand times nicer,' whispered Winfred.

"'And nicer than dinner at home with servants all about?'

"'A thousand times nicer.'

"When they couldn't eat any more, the old Mother went to sleep in her chair, and Winfred said good-by to Michael and went out.

"'Where now?' he asked Merrylip.

"'Now the best of all,' she answered.

"Down the road they went to a large field, where a grey burro was eating grass.

"'Get on,' said Merrylip. Winfred patted the burro on the nose, then climbed up. Away they went, much faster than burros usually travel, rushing across the fields till the wind hummed about Winfred's ears like music. They galloped up across the hills and down into new grass valleys that Winfred had never seen before.

"'Isn't this nice?' shouted Merrylip.

"'There is nothing nicer in the world!' Winfred shouted back.

"'Silly,' said Merrylip.

"On and on they rode until Winfred grew tired.

"'Please,' he said, 'I would like to stop, now.'

"Immediately the burro disappeared and Winfred was standing under a tree, with Merrylip next to him.

"'Where do you want to go now?' she asked.

"'I'm hungry,' said Winfred.

"'Shall we go to the old Mother's and have more beans?'

"'I'd rather have fried chicken and strawberries,' said Winfred.

"'But the old Mother only eats beans.'

"'I can eat at home,' said Winfred.

"'I'm tired of burros.'

"'Don't you want to go back and play with the children?'

"'No, they were dirty and disrespectful.'

"'You are horrid,' said Merrylip. 'But I knew you would be this way.'

"She thought a moment, frowning the tiniest, most adorable frown.

"Then, 'I hate boys,' she said, 'especially selfish ones. I am going to punish you for growing tired so quickly of the things you wanted more than anything else in the world.'

"All at once there came a rush of wind, and

Winfred was alone, and, to his horror, as tiny as a string bean.

"'Merrylip!' he called. 'Don't leave me alone! I am frightened.'

"But there was no answer.

"Again he called: 'I can't go home if you don't come! My feet are so small and my legs so tiny that I never would get there!'

"Still there was no answer.

"So how do you think he got home?"

None of the children could guess.

"Well," said Flip, "it is nine o'clock and you all ought to be in bed. So I'm not going to tell you another word, and there will be a second chapter to-morrow night."

"Please, please!" the children all shouted. "We want to know now."

"Not a word," said Flip.

Then suddenly Walter sprang on to Flip's stomach and Edward Lee sat on his face and Walter shouted for help. John got a rope, and with the aid of Martha Mary they tied Flip to the leg of the library table. The noise was some-

thing terrific. In rushed Mother Dear and Father.

"Here, here!" said Father. "What is the noise about?"

"Please," said Martha Mary, "Walter is a hero and Flip is a villain."

Then Mother Dear laughed, and when Mother laughs Father always laughs, too. It really is quite funny to see Mother laugh. She is becoming just the least bit stout. Well, when Father laughed, the children jumped on him, too, and tied him to another leg of the table. Father tried to look scandalized, but you could see a laugh lurking out of the corner of his mouth.

Said he, "I consider this very undignified."

"No," said Walter, "it is jail. You have to give bail before you can get out."

"And may I ask how much the bail is?" asked Father, digging his hand into his money pocket.

"It's not that kind of a bail," said Edward Lee. "Mother Dear, what shall the bail be?"

Mother Dear had a splendid idea. "We'll punish Father," she said, "by making Flip sing, and punish Flip by making Father sing."

Father did not want to, but the children would

not let him go, so he sang in an awful, awful voice:

"There once was a silly old whale
Who drowned himself in a pail.
Amongst folks it is said
There was room for his head,
But not the least bit for his tail."

"Oh, oh!" moaned Flip. "Spare me, spare me!"

So they spared him, but made him sing to torture Father. Then it was the most surprising thing. He sang in the softest, nicest voice, a voice that just seemed to fit in with the firelight and the "atmosphere":

"Way up above the blackest trees that tease the sky at night
A million young star children dance a merry, fairy dance.
The fat old moon comes through the clouds and giggles with delight
To see the myriad youngsters as they skip and hop and prance.
Then, when the night is growing old and skies are fading grey
A mother star comes softly out a lullaby to hum.
She warns the dancing children of the coming of the day,
For a very careful Mother is Mrs. Rumdidoodledum."

Then the children looked out of the window and, sure enough, Lady Rumdidoodledum was just appearing, big and bright, above the pine trees.

"Flip," coaxed Martha Mary, "don't you think you could tell us just a bit of how Winfred got home?"

"To-morrow night," said Flip, and so everyone said good night and went to bed.

CHAPTER XIV

IN WHICH WINFRED IS GIVEN THE MOST WONDERFUL WISH IN THE WORLD, AND I ADVISE YOU ALL TO READ IT AND LEARN WHAT IT IS, SO THAT IF, SOME DAY WHEN YOU ARE LEAST EXPECTING IT, A FAIRY COMES AND OFFERS YOU A WISH, YOU WILL KNOW FOR WHAT TO ASK

THE following day came a surprise for the children. While they were at their lessons Mother Dear constantly looked at her watch and then gazed out of the window. Martha Mary was sure something was going to happen, but she could not for a moment imagine what it was to be. Finally Mother Dear could keep the secret no longer.

"Babes," she said, "you may all put away your books, and then I have something to tell you."

"Is it nice?" asked Edward Lee.

"Yes—and no," said Mother. "I want you to be happy about it and be nice to Flip. You see——"

Martha Mary's lips began to tremble. She came to Mother and hid her face in her lap so that the boys could not see her eyes. Mother Dear smoothed the long curls that fell over Martha Mary's shoulders and patted her cheeks, just as you would a baby's. The boys did not know what to think.

Finally Martha Mary looked up and smiled the most unhappy little smile imaginable, because it was hard to make-believe.

"I know," she said. "I just knew it had to happen."

"What, Dear?" asked Mother.

"He is going away; I am sure he is."

Mother Dear's eyes were all watery. "Yes," she said, "but you must not be selfish. Flip is going to be very, very happy."

"I suppose it is the Jane-person," grunted John.

Mother Dear frowned a little and then smiled a perfectly good smile.

"It is the Jane-person," she said, "and I am happy as happy can be. You see, Flip has received a great deal of money for his book and so

the publisher wants him to come to New York to discuss the work he is to do from now on. And so Flip is going—going in a few weeks, but first he is going to the City and he and Jane are to be married, and John and Martha Mary are going with Father and myself to the wedding. So, you see, it is to be nice, after all."

"And," said Liza, "isn't my Flip ever, ever going to come back no more?"

"Certainly, Butterfly! In much less than a year he will return."

"And live here?"

Mother smiled. "I'm afraid not. But he is to have a lovely cottage just a short distance down the road and—— Ssh! Flip is coming. I want you to be very nice to him and not say anything about what I have told you."

Flip came in with a perfectly happy smile. Immediately he saw that something was wrong. The children were always more noisy when he came. But he looked at Mother Dear and she nodded, so he pretended to notice nothing.

"Well, I'm here," he said. "Supposing we find out now what happened to Winfred."

"Yes!" the children shouted, forgetting for the moment that it might be the last story he would tell them in a long time. (Personally, I know that it wasn't.)

"Well," said Flip (he always said "Well" when he started to speak), "I'll tell you, and please, Martha Mary, will you sit on my knee just this once while I tell it?"

Martha Mary came and climbed to his knee just like a baby and hid her face in his big coat, because she was afraid of crying. Then Flip coughed to clear his throat and told the second chapter of Winfred's story:

"Now, let me see! Winfred was standing in the middle of the field, alone, and he was no larger than a string bean. Every time a small breeze came along it picked him up, just like a leaf, and carried him to another part of the field. That was rather good fun at first, but after a while it was unpleasant to have to fly whether you would or not. So Winfred crept under a wild rosebush and hid in the leaves, where he could think without being disturbed. But thinking did not do any good, for that would not make him

large again. He sat with his tiny face in his hands and frowned. Then the sky grew dark and it was night. Lady Rumdidoodledum and thousands of star children came into the sky and the moon appeared like the largest gold plate you have ever seen. Soon voices were heard in the field—voices of people calling and shouting, 'Prince Winfred!' They were the guards seeking the lost boy. They tramped here and there and everywhere and could not hear when Winfred answered them, for his voice was as small as his body. Once a guard came along, swinging a blue lantern, and he almost stepped on Winfred. Finally they said he could not be in that field, so they went ahead, the men shouting and blowing trumpets, and the women calling and moaning. Last of all came the Queen Mother. She did not speak or cry, but walked with her head bowed and tears in her eyes. Winfred held out his arms and called, 'Mother Dearest!' but she could not see or hear him. And so she passed out of sight with the others. Then Winfred crept out from the wild rosebush and commenced to climb the hill. It was a hard climb for his short

legs and he was very much out of breath when he reached the top. He rested a moment and then looked down. Far below him he saw the ocean, grey and cold, and very great, reaching all the way to the shores of Japan. Along the beach the huge waves splashed like white horses. The winds came skipping across the waters, mussing them in all directions. Winfred gasped, for he had never seen the ocean before. Then, suddenly, he remembered—(and this is true, I assure you) the first time you see or do anything, such as eating the first grape of the season, or seeing the first firefly, or anything like that, if you make a wish it is sure to come true. So Winfred reached out his arms to the sea and whispered:

"'Oh, ocean blue, oh, ocean grey,
I've never seen you before to-day.
Grant to me, oh, grant, I pray,
The wish I wish to you to-day.'

"Out of the wildest of the waves skipped a tiny veil of blue, waving and swaying across the sky like a bit of smoke. Straight to Winfred it came and fluttered to his feet. Then he saw that

it was a sprite, a tiny blue one, no larger than himself. The water sprite was dressed like a Queen's page, all golden and blue, and he carried the smallest imaginable trumpet in his hand. He took off his hat and bowed.

"'Prince Winfred,' he said, 'I have come from the salty sea with a message for you.'

"'I saw you coming,' said Winfred. 'I should think you would lose your breath when you travel through the water.'

"'One does,' said the sprite, 'if one keeps one's mouth open. But I breathe through my ears. Why don't you try it?'

"Winfred tried, but he couldn't.

"'Please,' he said, 'what is your message?'

"'I am Lovelight, the messenger of King Neptune who rules the ocean,' said the sprite. 'King Neptune' (he said 'King' like 'kink') 'heard your wish and he says that he will grant it, because he likes to have people believe in him. What will you wish?'

"'I wish——' said Winfred.

"'Wait!' said Lovelight. 'Don't be silly and

wish for something that is not worth while. And, for Goodness' Sake, don't wish for a burro!'

"'How did you know about that?' asked Winfred.

"Why, as soon as Merrylip left you she came straight to the sea to tell all the waves and collect laughs from them. When they heard that a King's Son had asked for a burro, they laughed so hard that the sailors all thought a storm was coming up.'

"'I could choke Merrylip,' said Winfred, although he laughed himself. 'But,' said he, 'I do not know how to make a worth-while wish.'

"Lovelight came close and put his lips to Winfred's ear.

"'There is one wish,' he said, 'that is more wonderful than anything else in the world. Shall I tell it to you?'

"'Please do!'

"'Well, wish that any wish you make at any time, as long as it is sensible, will come true. You see, that is really only one wish.'

"'And will it come true?'

"'Certainly.'

"So again Winfred looked out to the sea and said:

"'Oh, ocean blue, oh, ocean grey,
I've never seen you before to-day.
Grant to me, oh, grant, I pray,
The wish I wish to you to-day!'

"Then he added: 'I wish that any wish I make at any time will come true as long as it is sensible.'

"When he stopped, a golden light ran across the waters.

"'You see,' said Lovelight, 'Neptune is smiling. He says he will grant your wish. Try once!'

"'All right,' said Winfred. 'I wish that Merrylip would come back.'

"Almost immediately Merrylip came skipping through the grass, with her golden hair waving in the moonlight. Winfred put his arms about her and kissed her on the nose. 'Please,' he said, 'I wish, Merrylip, that you would not think me hateful any more.'

"'Smile, Silly!' said Merrylip. 'And I won't.'

"So Winfred smiled and that part of his trouble was ended.

"'Now,' said Lovelight, 'I must return to King Neptune.'

"'I wish you a pleasant journey back,' said Winfred.

"'Thanks,' said Lovelight, and skipped into the sky.

"'I wish you would give the King my regards,' Winfred called after him, and Lovelight had a pleasant journey and gave the King Winfred's regards as soon as he arrived.

"'Now,' said Merrylip, 'I don't suppose you will have any more to do with me.'

"'But I will,' said Winfred. 'I don't suppose you will have any more to do with me.'

"He didn't really mean it to be a wish, although he wanted it very much, but he forgot that every time he said 'I wish' it would come true. So Merrylip stayed and that is why, even when he grew up and was King, Winfred always smiled.

"'Next on the programme is Home,' said Winfred. 'I wish I was my regular size and was

sitting on Mother's lap and she was singing to me, and Merrylip was hiding in my pocket, and things were just as though I had never gone away at all.'

"Almost before he had finished the very long sentence, it came true. Winfred found himself on his Mother's knee (although he was a pretty big boy to be held that way) and she was pressing her lips on his hair and humming him a Queen Song. In his pocket slept Merrylip and no one knew it excepting Winfred, because she was so tiny that, even when she sneezed, people could not hear her. And so everything came out well, after all, you see.

"Later, Winfred grew to be King, and with his wonderful wish made his people the happiest on earth, for when anything sensible had to be arranged he needed but to wish and it would come true. As a matter of fact, it was fortunate that Merrylip was always there, for often he thought of silly wishes and then Merrylip would pinch his ear and he would not make them. And this is all."

"Well, it is a relief to know that he got home

all right," said John. John was forming the habit of using long words. It would have been just as easy for him to say "glad" as "relief."

Then Martha Mary climbed off Flip's knee, and he held her hands and she leaned forward and whispered in his ear:

"I'm sorry as sorry can be, Flip Dear, that you are going away, but I am happy because you and Jane will be happy."

Flip smiled and gazed out of the window, and then took Martha Mary into his arms and kissed her, and the boys all shouted, and Martha Mary rushed from the room, all red and happy.

And so Flip told the last but one of his stories before he went to New York, and, as you shall see, the last one I had nothing to do with.

CHAPTER XV

IN WHICH, FOR THE FIRST TIME IN A LONG TIME, I DO NOT TALK AT ALL, BUT AM WELL CONTENT TO SIT QUIETLY BY AND LISTEN TO THE LOVELY NEWS THAT L. H. D., WHO, YOU WILL REMEMBER, I TOLD YOU ABOUT IN THE PREFACE, HAS BROUGHT

ONE gloriously sunny morning Liza opened her grey eyes wide, yawned, and decided that she would really stay awake and consider the business of the day. She sat up in her little crib, looking adorably pink and white and very huggable, with her tousled golden curls playing hide and seek with each other on her neck. Across the room, in her own bed, still sound asleep, lay Martha Mary.

"Sister Lazy Bones," thought Butterfly, and wondered how anyone could want to sleep when Mr. Cock Robin was singing such a splendid song in the vines at the windows. Liza looked

around the room expectantly, then the corners of her mouth drooped pitifully, and a big tear rolled down her cheek. For where was Mother Dear this beautiful morning? Never before, as long as Liza could remember, had she failed to find Mother bending over her when she awakened, with a big kiss waiting in the corner of her mouth for her baby daughter.

Just at that minute, luckily, Nurse Huggins came in, smiling, oh, so happily! Liza, of course, just couldn't help smiling, too, though she had not any idea at all why she was so glad.

"Please," said she, "where's my Muvver Dear?"

(She never took time to say Mother quite distinctly, though she really could if she wanted to.)

Nurse just laughed mysteriously, in the annoying way that grown-ups sometimes have, kissed the little Butterfly, and bade her get quickly into her wrapper and slippers. By this time Martha Mary was awake, too, and following Liza's example. In another moment the two children were standing before Mother Dear's door, which was very

quietly opened from the inside by a brown-eyed lady, dressed all in white, whom they had never seen before. Mother lay in the big, four-poster bed, looking a little pale and a little tired, but oh, so "smily." Right next to her was a little cradle, all blue lace and ribbons, and inside—Guess what! There was a baby, a teeny, tiny bit of a one, all red and wrinkled, and not half so big as Liza's doll. At first Martha Mary could only look from the big bed to the cradle and then back again. Then, when they realized what a wonderful present Mother Dear had given them, they nearly smothered her with kisses. No one said a word, because, you see, when a person is really and truly happy they can't talk much because of the choky feeling in their throat. But after Martha Mary and Liza had each touched the crumpled rose-leaf hands of the new baby, and looked into its tiny face,

"Please," said Mary, "is it a sister or a brother?"

Mother laughed, then,—she just couldn't help it. How silly she had been not to have told them!

"It's a sister, Ladykin Dear," said Father, who came into the room just in time to hear the question. "And she is just as glad to see you as you are to see her, only she sleeps so much that she hasn't time to tell you so, herself."

While Father was speaking Liza's eyes had grown very wide indeed, for the tiny sister had yawned, then opened her eyes, and was looking straight at Liza.

"Muvver Dear! Father!" said she excitedly, "she is going to talk to me." Then Butterfly's golden curls, which just reached to the top of the cradle, bent over anxiously toward the little bald head of the new baby. No one spoke for at least a minute, which was evidently long enough for Miss Little Sister to deliver her message, for at the end of that time, away flew Liza across the room like a little sunbeam, dancing and singing,

"I know a secret I won't tell you,
Sister told me and it is true."

No amount of begging on the part of Martha Mary could persuade Liza to tell what the little stranger had said. I am sorry to say that Mary

felt just the least bit jealous, for she didn't see why Liza should be the only person in the family to know such wonderful things. Just as the two children were leaving the room, Liza went over to the big bed, took Mother Dear's hand and kissed it.

"Baby says her name's 'Midge,'" said Butterfly. "That is part of the secret."

Everyone smiled and was glad.

"Well," said Father, "Midge it shall be, although her really, truly name is to be 'Margaret,' just like Mother's."

Liza's eyes fairly danced with delight at the news, and Martha Mary had to keep a very tight hold on her lips, so as not to shout how happy she was, and so awaken Miss Midge.

No one could seem to eat any breakfast that morning, though there were delicious berries from the garden, with mush, and new-laid eggs, and the thickest cream that Cow Bess could give. The boys had been introduced to Miss Margaret Sherman, the second, while Liza and Martha Mary were dressing, so it was small wonder that with the new addition to the family to discuss the

importance of such an everyday occurrence as breakfast faded to almost nothing.

"She's not so much," said Walter, with a rather disgusted look, while he balanced a raspberry on the end of his fork. "Little bit of a red thing without any hair at all! and, do you know, it hasn't even a single tooth."

"Well, supposing it hasn't," said John, his pride very much hurt at the idea of a sister of his not being perfect, "it's much happier without them, I'm sure. Doesn't have to bother with any old dentist."

"John! Walter! How can you?" said Martha Mary, almost in tears. "You are simply hateful to talk like that about the loveliest baby there ever was. You ask Miss Mason if she isn't. I heard her tell Father that Midge was a 'perfectly normal child,' and although it sounds awful, he looked so happy that I know it must be something nice."

"But where did she come from, my Sister Midge Margaret?" said Liza, who had been perfectly still ever since she had left Mother Dear's room. No one knew, but Edward Lee suggested

that they find Flip, and perhaps he could tell them. So away they all scampered, but not a trace of him could they find. Just as they were about to give up, Liza spied him way down in the sunken garden, his arms full of baby roses which he had gathered for the baby in the house who looked so like a rose herself. The children had never before seen him look so happy, except the day that Jane came and his book was accepted. So, of course, they knew it would be easy to get him to tell a story. Martha Mary took his hand and patted it and said:

"Please, Flip, we would like a really and truly story about Margaret." Flip was delighted and said he had intended to tell one, anyway, and was coming to look for them.

"For," said he, "I am very, very happy to-day, Ladykin Dear, so you shall have the nicest story I know how to tell."

And this is what he told them—the story of Little Sister Margaret:

"Did you ever wonder, Children," he began, "when you look at the sky at night, and see the millions of fairy stars twinkling and dancing up

there, just why they are so bright and happy? Well, I'll tell you the reason. It is the most wonderfullest secret there ever was, and the only people who are allowed to know it are the ones who love the star-children very much."

"I do," said Liza. "Please tell me!"

"Me, too—and Me—and Me—and Me," came in chorus from the others.

"Now," Flip continued, "you all know that everybody and everything in the world must have some use, no matter how little it may be. It is just the same in Star-land, though most silly people never think what the little twinkling lights are for. Do you know that every single one of them, down to the teeniest, tiniest baby, that you can hardly see, is a world of loveliness all by itself? There is the Rose Star, where gloriously deep red roses, and little shy yellow buds and pink lady-roses grow, and the air is sweeter than the sweetest perfume you can imagine. Then there is the Forget-me-not Star, all covered with the little blue flowers that look like Sister Margaret's eyes; and the Violet Star, and Pansy Land, and Sun Flower Place (very large and im-

portant) and heaps and heaps of other flower stars whose names I have forgotten. Of course there is Fairy Story Star, too, where Puss in Boots, and Little Red Riding Hood, and Cinderella, and Jack the Giant Killer, and all the rest of them live. Right near IT is the Grown-Up Book Star, where there are so very many people that they never get time to know each other. But the most important star, outside, of course, of the Music Land Star and the Bird Star where the loveliest of songs come from, and really, even more important than them, is—guess who! Butterfly Dear!"

"Lady Rumdidoodledum," said Liza, without even stopping to think.

"Right," said Flip, "and that is just whom I am going to tell you about."

"But I thought it was to be about baby sister," said Martha Mary, rather disappointedly, for she really could think of nothing else this morning.

"It is about them both, Impatient," answered Flip.

"You see, since Lady Rumdidoodledum is the

biggest and brightest and happiest star of them all, she must of course have something very nice to make her so glad. Now, what do you suppose it would be that is even lovelier than all the loveliest flowers or books, or birds, or anything else that you can think of?"

"Give up," said Walter, although everyone was much too busy listening to Flip to pay any attention.

"I know," said Martha Mary, her eyes shining. "It's Babies."

"Exactly, Ladykin Dear," answered Flip. "Lady Rumdidoodledum is the Baby Star, and she shines specially for little children all over the world. I must tell you about her. There are oodles and oodles of babies living there, creeping and laughing and cooing all day. They are happy as happy can be, for they have the most adorable little playmates that you ever saw. They are little fairy creatures, scarcely as large as Martha Mary's finger-nails, and they live in the soft, silky green centers of eucalyptus blossoms. When a Mother down here on the earth wants a little boy child or girl child very badly, she

goes out into the woods and picks a eucalyptus blossom. Then, if she is very wise she opens it, whispers her wish, and lets out the tiny creature inside, who flies away up beyond the clouds in the gentle arms of the Southeast wind, straight to Lady Rumdidoodledum. There, the first thing the little fairy-person sees is a big silver cloud. She goes right through it, for she is both a fairy and a dream and can do many wonderful things. Right there, who do you think is waiting? A smiling Mother-person who looks like your Mother Dear, as well as every other Mother in the world.

"'Happy Day, Little Dream,' she says, which is Rumdidoodledum for 'How do you do?' The little creature whispers the message of the Mother who sent her from earth, then flies back to tell her that all is well, and her wish will be granted.

"Well, one lovely evening, several months ago, just after the sun had set and the sky was all rosy and gold in the west, your Mother Dear went out for a little walk in the garden with Father. Lady Rumdidoodledum had just come out and was shining very brightly over the top

of the big eucalyptus tree. Mother Dear saw her first; she always does, you know. So, she wished very, very hard for another little daughter, at the same time opening the eucalyptus blossom that she held in her hand. There was a little breeze at that moment, and away flew the tiny creature. When she reached the Baby Star, she stayed a very, very long time indeed. For she was most particular for so small a personage and wished to find just the very sweetest of all the Rumdidoodledum babies to be Margaret Sherman. So she searched and searched but none of them suited exactly, until way off in a corner she found what she was looking for: an adorable little golden-haired mite with eyes that danced and were the color of forget-me-nots. Then the fairy person knew that she had found the right little sister for John, Martha Mary, Walter and Edward Lee and Liza, so she flew off, happy as happy could be.

"Ever since, Mother Dear has been waiting, waiting for her dream to come true. This morning, just as Lady Rumdidoodledum was fading from the sky, the Baby-person arrived, for all

the world as lovely and pink as the dawn that brought her.

"That, Butterfly Dear, is the story of Little Sister Margaret, the dearest of all Lady Rumdidoodledum's children. And that, you see, is the reason that Mr. Cock Robin sang so happily outside your window this morning and the flowers were all so gay and the sky so blue and bright. You see, all the world is happy at the sound of a baby's voice.

"Listen, there she is, calling now, for someone to come and love her."

"I do," said Butterfly Liza. "And I—and I—and I—and I," sang all the others.

FINIS