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Title: All the Way to Fairyland: Fairy Stories

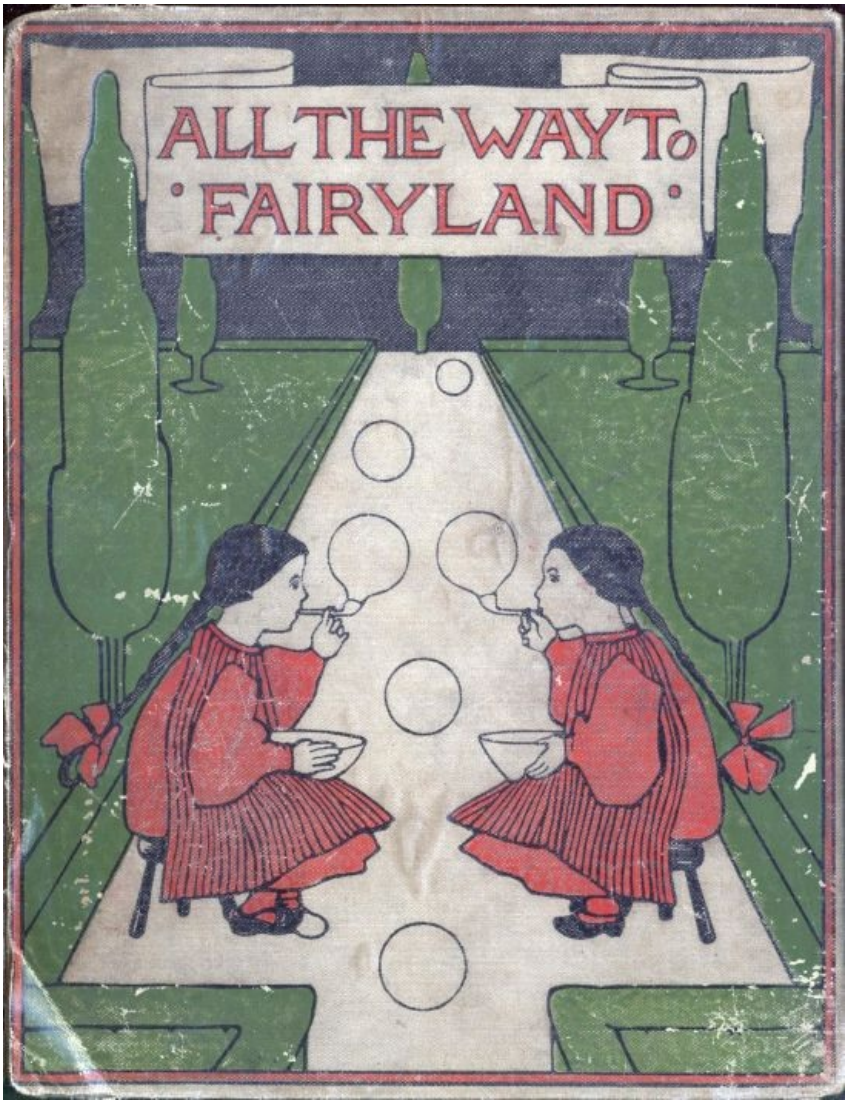
Author: Evelyn Sharp

Illustrator: Mabel Dearmer

Release Date: November 3, 2009 [EBook #30400]

Language: English

Credits: Produced by Al Haines



All the Way to Fairyland

Fairy Stories

BY

EVELYN SHARP

AUTHOR OF "WYMPS"

WITH EIGHT COLOURED ILLUSTRATIONS
AND A COVER BY MRS. PERCY DEARMER

JOHN LANE

THE BODLEY HEAD
LONDON AND NEW YORK
1898

FIRST EDITION

University Press:
JOHN WILSON AND SON, CAMBRIDGE, U.S.A.

By the Same author:

WYMPS: FAIRY TALES. With eight coloured illustrations by Mrs. Percy Dearmer.
THE MAKING OF A SCHOOLGIRL.
AT THE RELTON ARMS.
THE MAKING OF A PRIG.

THESE STORIES
ARE FOR
GEOFFREY AND CHRISTOPHER
TRISTAN AND ISEULT
MARGARET AND BOY
AND
EVERARD
AND ALL THE OTHER CHILDREN
WHO WOULD LIKE TO GO
ALL THE WAY TO FAIRYLAND

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BY MRS. PERCY DEARMER

The Country Called Nonamia

Ever so long ago, in the wonderful country of Nonamia, there lived an absent-minded magician. It is not usual, of course, for a magician to be absent-minded; but then, if it were usual it would not have happened in Nonamia. Nobody knew very much about this particular magician, for he lived in his castle in the air, and it is not easy to visit any one who lives in the air. He did not want to be visited, however; visitors always meant conversation, and he could not endure conversation. This, by the way, was not surprising, for he was so absent-minded that he always forgot the end of his sentence before he was half-way through the beginning of it; and as for his visitors' remarks—well, if he had had any visitors, he would never have heard their remarks at all. So, when some one did call on him, one day,—and that was when he had been living in his castle in the air for seven hundred and seventy-seven years and had almost forgotten who he was and why he was there,—the magician was so astonished that he could not think of anything to say.

"How did you get here?" he asked at last; for even an absent-minded magician cannot remain altogether silent, when he looks out of his castle in the air and sees a Princess in a gold and silver frock, with a bright little crown on her head, floating about on a soft white cloud.

"Well, I just came, that's all," answered the Princess, with a particularly friendly smile. "You see, I have never been able to find my own castle in the air, so when the West Wind told me about yours I asked him to blow me here. May I come in and see what it is like?"

"Certainly not," said the magician, hastily. "It is not like anything; and even if it were, I should not let you come in. Don't you know that, if you were to enter another person's castle in the air, it would vanish away like a puff of smoke?"

"Oh, dear!" sighed the Princess. "I did so want to know what a real castle in the air was like. I wonder if yours is at all like mine!"

"Tell me about yours," said the magician. "I may be able to help you to find it." Of course, he only said this in order to prevent her from coming inside his own castle. At the same time, a little conversation with a friendly Princess in a gold and silver gown is not at all unpleasant, when one has lived in a castle in the air for seven hundred and seventy-seven years.

"My castle in the air is much bigger than yours," she explained. "It has ever so many rooms in it,—a large room to laugh in and a small room to cry in—"

"To cry in?" interrupted the magician. "Why, no one ever thinks of crying in a castle in the air!"

"One never knows," answered the Princess, gravely. "Supposing I were to prick my finger, what should I do if there was n't a room to cry in? Then, there is a middling-sized room to be serious in; for there is just a chance that I might want to be serious sometimes, and it would be as well to have a room, in case."

"Perhaps it would," observed the magician, who had never listened so attentively to a conversation in the whole of his long life. "What else will you have in your castle?"

"I shall have lots of nice books that end happily," answered the Princess; "and they shall be talking books, so that I need not read them to find out what they are about. I shall have plenty of

happy thoughts in my castle, too, and lots of nice dreams piled up in heaps, and—well, there is just one thing more."

"What is that?" asked the magician.

"Well, I think I should like to have a Prince in my castle, a nice Prince, who would not want to be just dull and princely like all the princes I have ever danced with, but a Prince who would like my castle exactly as I have built it and would play with me all day long. That would be something like a Prince, wouldn't it?"

"You could not possibly have a Prince," said the magician. "If you allowed some one else even to look into your castle in the air, it would vanish away like a puff of smoke. I have lived in my castle for seven hundred and seventy-seven years, and I have never allowed any one to put a foot in it."

"Is it so beautiful, then, your castle in the air?" asked the Princess, wonderingly.

"I'm sure I don't know," said the absent-minded magician; "I don't think I ever noticed. I came to live in it, because it was the only place in which I could be left alone. That reminds me, that if you do not go away at once I shall be obliged to become exceedingly angry with you."

"By all means," said the Princess, who had the most charming manners in the world; "but I should like to have my castle first."

"I have n't got it here," said the magician, looking about him vaguely. "I know I saw it somewhere not long ago, but I can't remember what I did with it. However, if you ask the people of Nonamia, they will be able to tell you where it has gone. You will find that they are very obliging."

"Will they not be surprised?" asked the Princess.

"Dear me, no! The Nonamiacs are never surprised at anything," said the magician; and he drew in his head from the window. The Princess in the gold and silver frock sailed away on her cloud, and landed presently in the flat, green country of Nonamia.

"Have you seen my castle in the air?" she asked, very politely, of the first Nonamiac she met.

"What is it like?" asked the Nonamiac, without showing the least surprise.

"It is ever so large and ever so beautiful, and it is packed full of happiness, and there is a nice Prince inside," answered the Princess.

"Ah," said the Nonamiac; "then it must be the one I saw being blown along by the South Wind. But there was no Prince inside."

The Princess thanked him and hastened away in the direction of the South Wind until she met another Nonamiac, to whom she explained as politely as before what she wanted to know.

"Ah," said the Nonamiac, "that must be the castle I met just now as it was being carried off by the North Wind. But I saw no Prince inside."

The Princess turned round and hurried after the North Wind as fast as she could go. As soon as she met another Nonamiac, however, she had to turn round once more, for he told her that her castle had just been stolen by the East Wind; and when she had been walking quite a long time in the direction of the East Wind, she met yet another Nonamiac, who told her that it was the West Wind who had taken away her castle in the air.

"It is too bad!" said the little Princess, sitting down exhausted on a large stone by the side of the road. "Why should all the winds be playing with my castle in the air?"

"Castles in the air generally go to the winds," observed a traveller in a dusty brown cloak, who was sitting on another large stone, not very far off. She was quite sure he had not been there the moment before, but, in Nonamia, there was nothing remarkable about that. The Princess wiped the tears out of her eyes with a small lace handkerchief, and looked at the stranger.

"Mine is a very particular castle in the air, you see," she said. "It is ever so large and ever so beautiful, and it is packed with happiness and dreams, and *perhaps* there is a Prince in it, too."

"A Prince?" said the stranger. "What sort of Prince?"

"A nice Prince," explained the Princess, "who can play games and tell stories and be amusing. All the Princes I know can do nothing but dance, and they are not at all amusing. I am afraid, though," she added, sighing, "that I am going to have my castle without a Prince, after all."

"Would it do," asked the traveller in the dusty brown cloak, "if you were to have a Prince without a castle?"

"Oh, no!" answered the Princess, decidedly. "If you knew how beautiful my castle in the air is,

you would not even ask such a stupid question!"

Then she again took up her small lace handkerchief, and she brushed the dust from her gold and silver gown, and polished up her bright little gold crown, and made herself as neat and dainty as a Princess should be; for, in Nonamia, one never knows what may happen next, and it is just as well to be prepared. And, in fact, no sooner was she quite tidy than the West Wind came hurrying along with her castle in the air; and the Princess gave a shout of joy and sprang inside it; and the West Wind blew, and blew, and blew, until the castle that was packed full of happiness, and the little Princess in the gold and silver gown, were both completely out of sight. The traveller looked after them and felt a little forlorn; then he picked up his stick and walked on until he came to the magician's castle. This may seem a little surprising, as he had no wings of any kind and the magician's castle was in the air; but it must be remembered that it all happened in Nonamia.

"Dear, dear! Here 's another of them!" grumbled the magician, when he looked out of his window and saw the stranger standing below. After being alone for seven hundred and seventy-seven years, it was a little exhausting to have two visitors on the same day. Besides, a traveller in a dusty brown cloak is not at all the same thing as a dainty Princess in a gold and silver gown.

"Good-day," said the stranger. "Are you the magician who has given a castle in the air to a Princess in a gold and silver frock with a bright little crown on her head?"

"Very likely; but I cannot say for certain," said the absent-minded magician. "I believe there was something of the kind, now you come to mention it; but I could n't tell you what it was. However, I don't mean to give away any more castles in the air, so the sooner you leave me alone, the better."

"I don't want a castle in the air," laughed the stranger. "People who spend their lives in building real houses never have time to build castles in the air! *I* want to find the Princess, not the castle."

"That you will never do as long as she is happy in it," said the magician. "People who live in castles in the air are never to be found, unless they have grown tired of living in them."

"Oho!" chuckled the stranger. "Are *you* tired of living in yours, then?"

The absent-minded magician tried to determine whether he should be angry or not, when the stranger said this; but, by the time he had made up his mind to be angry, he had forgotten what there was to be angry about, and while he was thinking about it, the man in the dusty brown cloak walked away and left him.

Evidently, it was not very long before the Princess grew tired of living in her castle in the air, for the very next day, as the traveller was once more resting on the large stone by the side of the road, down she came, castle and all, and stopped just in front of him. Truly, there is no end to the wonderful things that happen in Nonamia!

"Hullo!" said the traveller, smiling. "What is it like inside your castle?"

"It is not half so nice as I expected to find it," said the Princess, popping her head out of the top window. "You see, there is no one to play with; and even if your castle is the most beautiful castle in the world, it is always dull when there is no one to play with, isn't it?"

"I don't know," answered the stranger; "I have never had any one to play with. What else is wrong with your castle?"

"Well," continued the Princess, "it is all very well to have a castle that is packed with happiness; but, when it is packed so tight that you cannot get it out without some one to help you, it is not much good, is it?"

"I don't know," answered the stranger; "my happiness has never been packed so tight as all that. Have you anything else to complain of?"

"A great many things," said the Princess. "It is all that stupid magician's fault. When I said, 'a small room to cry in,' I did n't really mean a room to *cry* in, did I? But every way I turn, there is always the room to cry in, staring me in the face! I am sure there is something seriously wrong with my castle in the air."

"No doubt about it," said the traveller; "and it is clearly the magician's fault."

"When you came to live in your castle in the air," continued the Princess, plaintively, "did you find that it was very different from the one you had built?"

The traveller in the dusty brown cloak burst out laughing.

"I have no time to build castles in the air," he said. "I build real houses for other people to live in, people who would, perhaps, have no houses at all if I did not build them. That is more important than building castles in the air for one's self."

"What are your real houses like?" asked the Princess.

"They are strong," answered the stranger, proudly. "All the four winds joined together could not blow them down. No one has ever built such strong houses as mine."

"Are they beautiful, too?" asked the Princess.

"I have no time to look after that," answered the stranger. "I build more houses than any one else in the world; and still, there are people who are waiting for houses to live in. I must build as fast as I can, day after day, year after year."

"Then why are you not building houses now?" asked the Princess. The great builder looked sorrowful.

"There is something wrong about my real houses, too," he confessed. "The people who live in them are never quite contented; and I have come away to think out a new plan by myself, so that the next houses I build shall be the most wonderful houses in the world."

The Princess leaned her chin on her hand, and looked quite thoughtful for a moment or two.

"May I come and help you to build real houses, for a change?" she said presently. "I am dreadfully tired of building castles in the air that do not turn out properly—though, of course, that was principally the magician's fault! Still, if you were to show me the way, I might be able to build something real that would turn out properly; and that would be ever so much more amusing."

"It is not at all amusing," said the traveller, shaking his head. "You would soon grow tired of it; besides, you would have no Prince to play with."

"I don't think I want a Prince to play with," said the charming Princess in the gold and silver frock. "He might turn out to be as dull as my castle in the air, especially if the magician had anything to do with it! I would much sooner come and help you to build real houses."

The traveller in the dusty brown cloak still shook his head.

"Little ladies in gold and silver gowns can only build castles in the air," he said.

"Do the people who live in your houses never build castles in the air?" asked the Princess.

"I never thought of asking them," answered the great builder. "I have been too much occupied in building their real houses."

"Then let us go and ask them now," said the Princess; and she came down from her castle in the air, and stepped once more on to the dusty road, and held out her little white hand to the traveller. Her castle in the air vanished like a puff of smoke the moment she stepped out of it.

"What would be the use of that?" asked the traveller, smiling. He took the little white hand, however, for no one could have refused that much to such a very charming Princess.

"Why," said the Princess in the gold and silver frock, "then we could make their real houses just like their castles in the air; and only think how packed with happiness they would be!"

The traveller looked at her in amazement. It was certainly astonishing that so great a builder as he should find out what was wrong with his houses, from a Princess with a bright little crown on her head who had never done anything but build castles in the air. Still, we must remember that it all happened in Nonamia; and that accounts for a great deal.

"You are quite right," said the traveller; "you know far more about it than I do. You shall come and help me to build real houses, and they shall be the most wonderful houses that have ever been built."

"All beautiful to look at, and packed with happiness inside!" cried the dainty little Princess, clapping her hands for joy. "And we won't let that stupid magician spoil our real houses, will we?"

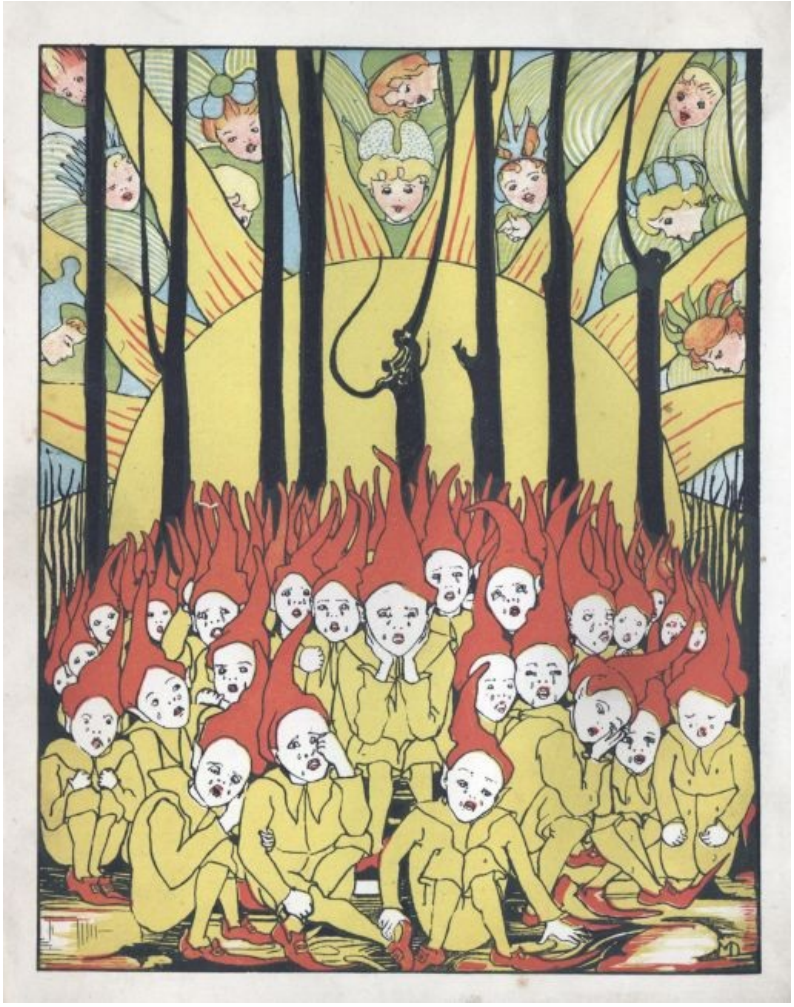
The magician was looking out of his window at nothing at all, when they came past his castle, hand in hand.

"We are going to build the most wonderful houses in the world," cried the Princess,—"ever so much more wonderful than the stupid castle in the air you gave *me*!"

This was not very gracious of her, for, after all, the magician had given her exactly what she had built for herself. However, as he had already forgotten both of them and could not think of anything to say, and as they were in too great a hurry to stay and help him, there is nothing more to be said about the magician, except that he is still living in his castle in the air and looking out of his window at nothing at all, which is a right and proper occupation for a magician who is absent-minded. As for the traveller and the charming Princess, they spent the rest of their days in building the most wonderful houses in the world for the people who had nowhere to live. And as for the people who had nowhere to live, it was only natural that they should all find their way to

the country called Nonamia, where a little lady in a gold and silver gown taught them to build a castle in the air, and a great builder in a dusty brown cloak made it into a real house that was packed with happiness.

It is a little difficult to believe that this is all true; but then, it must be remembered that it all happened in Nonamia, ever so long ago!



Why the Wymps Cried

The wymps and the fairies have never been able to agree. Nobody quite knows why, though the Fairy Queen, who is the wisest person in the whole world, was once heard to say that jealousy had something to do with it. The fairies say, however, that they would never dream of being jealous of people who live at the back of the sun and do not know manners; while the wymps say it would be absurd to be jealous of any one who lives at the front of the sun and cannot take a joke. All the same, the Fairy Queen is always right, so somebody must certainly be jealous of somebody; and it is well known that if the wymps and the fairies are invited to the same party, it is sure to end in a quarrel. It is really a wonder that the Fairy Queen has not lost patience with the wymps long ago; but people say that she has more affection for her naughty little subjects at the back of the sun than any one would imagine; and the Fairy Queen is so wonderful that it is quite possible to believe this.

Once, matters became so serious that there would have been a real war, if the Queen had not called an assembly of her subjects on the spot—which happened to be on the roof of a blacksmith's forge—and asked them what the fuss was all about.

"Please, your Majesty," said one fairy, half crying, "the wymps shut me up at the back of the sun for fifteen days, and they gave me nothing to eat, your Majesty; they said that if I couldn't take a joke I couldn't take anything. And I should never *wish* to take one of their jokes, please

your Majesty."

"Do not trouble about that," said the Fairy Queen, gravely. "For my part, I shall never expect you to take a joke from any one. Now, Capricious, what have they done to you?" she added, as another fairy with a round dimpled face came forward in a great hurry.

"Please, your Majesty," began Capricious, trying to make a very cheerful voice sound extremely doleful, "I found a wymp in the nursery, after the children had gone to bed; and he was quite upset because the Wymp King had made a joke and no one could see it; and he asked me to go behind the sun with him, so that I might help him to see the joke that the King had made. But when I got there, your Majesty, I said it was much too dark to see anything and I was not at all surprised that no one could see the King's jokes; and the King was so angry that he ordered me to be poked through the sun again; and here I am, please your Majesty."

Her Majesty smiled approvingly.

"You have made a joke worth two of the Wymp King's," she said; "and I shall appoint you as a reward to go to Wympland with a message from me. Do not trouble to thank me," she added, as the round dimpled face of Capricious grew a little crestfallen, "for there is no time. The sun is just going to rise, and the moment it is above the horizon you must go straight through it once more and tell the King that I invite him to breakfast in Fairyland. And now I must be off, for I have a smile to paint on the face of every child in the world before it wakes."

So the Fairy Queen flew away to paint a million or two of the most beautiful smiles in the world; and the other fairies popped down through the roof and did all the blacksmith's work for him and dropped a nice dream on his pillow just to show they had been there; and Capricious sat on the edge of the chimney-pot, until the sun came above the horizon and it was time for her to take the Queen's message to Wympland.

The Wymp King knew better than to refuse the Queen's invitation to breakfast; so he yawned three hundred and fifty-four times, rubbed his eyes to keep them open—for it is a well-known thing that the Wymp King is nearly always asleep—and started off in the direction of Fairyland. The Queen was as pleased to see him as if he had never been naughty at all; but, of course, she was far too much of a Queen to let him guess that he was really there to be scolded. So she made him sit next to her at breakfast, and gave him a cup of stinging-nettle tea to keep him awake, and allowed him to make as many jokes as he pleased. The Wymp King, in consequence, was extremely happy; and when the meal was over and the Queen began to look stern, he had to think very hard indeed before he remembered that he was nothing but a naughty little wymp after all.

"This state of things cannot go on," said the Fairy Queen. "What is the use of my being a Queen if I am not to be obeyed?"

"Your Majesty's chief use is to look like a Queen and to forgive your disobedient subjects," said the Wymp King, who had taken so much stinging-nettle tea that he was almost bristling with jokes.

"Ah," sighed the Fairy Queen, looking sideways at the Wymp King, "it is not at all easy to rule a country like mine."

"It is very fortunate for the country to be ruled by a Queen like you," said the Wymp King, who had not been so wide awake for a thousand years.

"Do you think so? Then Wympland shall have a Queen for a change, and you shall stay here instead and take a holiday," said her Majesty, promptly. The Wymp King saw that he was outwitted, but he would not have been a wymp if he had lost his temper about it; so he chuckled good-humouredly, and pretended not to see that he had really been cheated of his kingdom and was nothing but a prisoner in Fairyland. However, the Fairy Queen gave him very little time even to keep his temper, for she turned him into a tortoise and sent him to sleep under a flower-pot in the garden; and then she called for Capricious to come and help her to choose a Queen for Wympland. Capricious put her round, dimpled face on one side, and thought deeply for thirteen seconds and a half.

"There is Molly, the shoemaker's daughter," said Capricious, when she had finished thinking. "She is seven years old, and she is almost as fond of sleeping as his Wympish Majesty. She would make an excellent Queen for Wympland."

"I remember Molly," said the Fairy Queen, thoughtfully. "She has ruled the shoemaker and the shoemaker's wife and the shoemaker's customers for seven years and a half; doubtless, she will have no difficulty in ruling Wympland. So let no time be lost, Capricious, and see that Molly wakes up from her morning sleep and finds herself on the Wymp King's throne. She will look after the wymps for a time, and I shall have some peace. Besides," added the Fairy Queen with her wise smile, "if the wymps can only be made to cry for once in their lives, we shall probably have no more difficulty with them."

Capricious, who was just an ordinary little fairy and never thought about anything much except singing and dancing, was quite unable to understand the Queen's last remark.

"Shall I tell Molly what she is to do when she gets there, please your Majesty?" she asked in rather a puzzled tone.

"Do?" said the Queen. "The rulers of Wympland never have to do anything. If Molly will only keep her subjects amused, that is all they will expect from her."

That was how it was settled, and that was how Molly woke up from her morning sleep and found herself on the Wymp King's throne, with four little wymps standing in a row just in front of her. Molly stared at the throne on which she was sitting, stared around at the dimly lighted Land of the Wymps, and stared at the four little wymps who stood and laughed at her.

"Who are you?" she asked, opening her eyes as wide as she could. "Are you live dolls, or fairies, or just other children for me to play with?"

The four wymps laughed more than ever when she said this, and began to sing a funny little song all together, just to explain who they were. This was the song:—

"We are Skilful and Wilful and Captious and Queer,
There 's nothing to fright you and nothing to fear!
Four little wymps at the back of the sun,
Brimful of wympery, rubbish, and fun!

"You 'll find we are wympish; but then, we 're not bores,
Though we own to a weakness for wiping off scores.
Ah! Skilful and Wilful and Captious and Queer
Are never far off when mischief is near!

"Of Kings we 've had many, but never a Queen;
So bewymping a monarch we 've surely not seen;
And—Skilful and Wilful and Captious and Queer
Though we are, yet we know how to welcome you here!

"You 'll surely bewymp all the wymps you come near
Besides Skilful and Wilful and Captious and Queer;
By the time you have gone and your wymping is done,
The world will have changed at the back of the sun."

"Are you really wymps?" exclaimed Molly, when the four little fellows had finished explaining who they were; for, like every properly educated child, Molly knew quite well that the wymps lived at the back of the sun, although she had never been there before.

"To be sure we are," answered Skilful and Wilful and Captious and Queer. "And you are our new Queen."

"Am I?" said Molly. "Oh, what fun!"

"Of course it's fun," said Skilful. "Everything is fun up here."

"Except the King's jokes," said Wilful.

"And the Fairy Queen's commands," said Captious.

"And the interference of the fairies," said Queer.

"How do the fairies interfere?" asked Molly.

"They come without being invited," said Skilful.

"They don't play fair," said Wilful.

"They always expect to win," said Captious.

"They cry for nothing at all," said Queer.

"I cry sometimes," observed Molly.

"When?" asked all four, in a tone of alarm.

"When I 'm hungry," said Molly, "or tired; or sometimes, when I tumble down; or when I feel cross."

"You should never cry," said Skilful, in a superior tone. "It takes up so much time, and when you 've done crying you 've got exactly the same thing to cry about as before. If you are hungry, don't cry but get something to eat."

"And if you 're tired, don't cry but go to sleep. Nothing could be simpler," said Wilful.

"And if you tumble down, don't cry but pick yourself up again," said Captious. "If you know how to tumble down properly, it is the best fun in the world. We spend most of our time up here

in learning new ways of tumbling down."

"And if you are cross," added Queer; and then he stopped and looked doubtfully at the other three. "What is she to do if she feels cross?" he asked them. They shook their heads in reply.

"Nobody is ever cross in Wympland," they explained to Molly. "People who know how to make jokes, really *good* jokes, soon learn how to take them as well, and then there is nothing left to be cross about. You don't feel cross now, do you?"

Molly assured them that she did not feel in the least cross, and their faces brightened again.

"Perhaps, if you will tell us when you begin to feel cross we shall be able to do something for you," they said; "but, whatever you do, you must not cry in Wympland. It is only the fairies who do that, and they don't know any better. As long as the sun has had a country at the back of it, no wymp has ever been known to cry. Now, let us go and find somebody to tease!"

"I thought Queens could always do as they like," objected Molly, as they took her two hands and made her jump down from the throne without finding out whether she wished to come or not.

"Oh, no," said Skilful and Wilful and Captious and Queer. "You make a great mistake. The King always does as he is told in Wympland. So come along with us and see us tease somebody."

"I don't want to tease anybody," said Molly, decidedly. "I am going to be a real Queen. Real Queens do just as they like; it is only Kings who do as they are told. If you are not going to let me have my own way I might just as well have stopped at home, instead of coming all this way on purpose to be your Queen!"

The four little wymps looked very perplexed. "May she do as she likes?" they asked one another, and shook their four little heads doubtfully.

"She might order us about," said Skilful.

"Or laugh at us," said Wilful.

"Or expect us to obey her," said Captious.

But Queer turned three somersaults in the air, just to show that he did not care a bit if they did not agree with him; and then he bowed to Molly almost as gracefully as a fairy might have done at the front of the sun.

"She is a real Queen," he said; "and real Queens must be obeyed."

And when Molly declared that she should probably cry if they did not immediately allow her to have her own way, the other three wymps were obliged to follow Queer's example.

"You are a real Queen, and you may do as you like," they said in a resigned tone; and Molly clapped her hands with delight.

"Then please fetch me some plum-cake, and a large ice, and lots of barley sugar; I am so hungry," she said. Immediately, everything she asked for was lying before her on the King's throne, and they all sat down and enjoyed such a dinner as only a wymp or a real Queen would know how to appreciate. When they had finished, Molly said she should like to see the rest of Wympland, for nobody at the front of the sun had ever been able to tell her anything about it; so they led her all over it, which did not take them longer than the rest of the afternoon, for the world at the back of the sun is smaller than some people think, and that is a very good thing, for after all it is better to live on the right side of the sun if one is not a wymp.

"It is a very flat country," said the little Queen, as she trotted along with two wymps on each side of her.

"It has to be flat," explained Skilful. "If it were tilted ever so little we should roll into the sun and out at the other side, don't you see; and no true wymp ever wants to do that."

"It is rather dark, too," continued the little Queen.

"Of course," said Wilful, proudly. "It is always the same here. Now, when you get to the front of the sun you never know whether it is going to be light or dark. There are no surprises of that sort at the back of the sun."

"And where," asked Molly, "is the royal palace?"

"Wherever you like," answered Captious in an obliging tone. "Would you like it here, or will you have it a little nearer the sun? Of course it is warmer, near the sun, but you will find it much noisier because the stars are so fond of chattering."

"I should like it here, please," said Molly, who did not want to wait another minute for her palace. Hardly were her words spoken than a perfectly charming little palace appeared in front of her, just large enough for such a very small Queen to feel happy in. It was all made of rainbows

and starshine and dewdrops; every thing that is bright and sweet-looking had helped to make her palace, and from the very middle of it rose a tall, silvery bell-tower, from which peals of laughter were ringing merrily.

"Oh, oh! how beautiful!" exclaimed Molly. "But how is it that my palace is so bright while Wympland is so dull?"

"Ah," said Queer, softly; "we wished for the palace, you see, and the things we wish for are never dull."

"It is a dream-palace," added Wilful; "and dreams are never dull either."

"I hope it will not go away as my dreams do when I wake up in the morning," said Molly.

"Oh, no," they assured her. "It cannot disappear until we wish it to go away again; and that we shall never do as long as it induces you to stay with us."

"Do you always wish for what you want?" asked Molly.

"Dear me, yes," said Captious. "What is the use of having a lot of things lying about that you don't want? There is only just enough room in Wympland for the things we do want, so we wish for them as we want them, and that is much more convenient. You should try it."

"Everything you see here," added Skilful, "has been wished for, some time or another. Neither Wympland, nor the wymps, nor our bewymping little Queen would be here at all if somebody had not wished for them."

"And if we were all to wish hard at the same moment," said Wilful, "not one of us would be left standing here, nor would there be any country at all at the back of the sun."

"But we shall never wish that, now that we have a real Queen of our own," said Queer.

Then, for the first time, Molly noticed that this strange little country at the back of the sun had no people in it; for, ever since she had waked up on the King's throne, she had seen no one except Skilful and Wilful and Captious and Queer.

"Where are all the other wymps?" she cried.

"Ah," they said, mysteriously; "most people don't know it, but the wymps go through the sun every morning and spend the day in making fun for the people on the other side. That is how the people down in the world are taught to laugh instead of to cry. There would be no laughter at all at the front of the sun if it were not for the wymps."

"How strange!" said Molly. "I always thought it was wrong to make fun of people."

"So it is," said Queer; "nobody but a bad wymp would do such a thing. A true wymp makes fun *for* people, and that is a very different thing."

"A *very* different thing," echoed the other three. "We only make fun of people who have never learnt how to laugh, and very difficult it is to make them into fun at all. It's very poor fun when it is made, too,—most of it," they added, sighing.

Molly was just going to ask them how they managed to make people into fun at all, when a number of sounds like pistol-shots suddenly came from the direction of the sun, and the four wymps grew wildly excited and seized her by the hands and began to race over the ground with her as fast as they could.

"The wymps have come home!" they gasped breathlessly. "If we make all the haste we can, we shall be there in time to see them arrive."

It seemed to Molly that to run after her subjects was a curious thing for a real Queen to do. However, she was far too much out of breath to say anything, and the next moment they had reached the back of the sun; and there were dozens of little wymps, all tumbling through it, one on the top of the other, until they made a large heap of themselves at the feet of their new little Queen.

"They are bidding you welcome," whispered Queer, as the heap remained motionless at Molly's feet; and, except for the fact that a good many shouts of laughter were coming from it, no one would have thought it was made of wymps at all.

"Oh, please get up," implored their little Queen. "It is very nice of you to be so glad to see me, but I am sure it must be very uncomfortable to lie about on the floor like that."

Immediately, the heap dissolved itself into wymps again; and they crowded round Molly, tumbling up against her so clumsily and chattering and laughing so noisily, that she thought it was quite time to remind them that she was a real Queen.

"Do you think you could make a little less noise?" she begged them. "I don't like noise at all. If

you will only try to speak one at a time, I may be able to answer everybody."

The wymps were so amazed to hear that she did not like noise that they became silent for a whole minute in order to think about it. "You see," said Queer, apologetically, "we have never had a Queen before, so we are not quite sure what she does like. Kings always like plenty of noise; at least, it does not seem to wake them up, and that is the great thing."

"Yes, that is it!" cried all the little wymps together. "We have never had a Queen before, so we don't quite know how to treat her."

"Supposing," continued Queer, "that you were to tell us the kind of things that a real Queen would like us to do?"

"Yes, yes!" shouted all the other wymps, gleefully. "Tell us what a real Queen would like us to do!"

So Molly clambered up on the King's throne, and tried to look as much like a Queen as a very little girl, in a very short frock and a very pink pinafore, knows how to look; and the wymps stood in front of her, closely packed together; and she began to tell them some of the things that a real Queen would like them to do.

"First of all," said Molly, "a real Queen does n't like her toes trodden on, and her pinafore crumpled, and her hair pulled. She does n't like being screamed at, either; and she never allows herself to be ordered about by any one. She likes to order other people about instead, and she likes the other people to be very pleased when she orders them about, and not to go slowly and look disagreeable and grumble. She likes a new frock every Sunday, and a birthday every month; and she always drinks milk for supper. It is supper time now," added the little Queen, beginning to yawn.

All the wymps at once hurled themselves helter-skelter through the sun again, in search of milk for their new Queen's supper. But Queer ran faster than any of them, and he took the very milk that Molly's own mother had just milked into the pail for herself; and the strangest thing of all was that, although the pail became empty before her eyes and she had to go without any supper, Molly's mother was quite happy after that and did not worry any more about her little girl who had so strangely disappeared in the morning. That shows what the wymps can do when they forget to be wympish. And Molly drank her milk and went to sleep in her dream-palace, and was the happiest little Queen on either side of the sun; and the wymps—well, it is impossible to describe what the wymps felt like.

Molly was Queen of Wympland for a great many days, and there had never reigned such peace at the back of the sun, nor in the whole world of Fairyland either. It was so remarkable that the Fairy Queen sent for Capricious, one day, and asked her why nobody had anything to grumble about. Any one might have thought from the Fairy Queen's tone that she was not particularly pleased at so much contentment, but of course that could not possibly be the case.

"Please, your Majesty," said Capricious, who had been waiting anxiously to be asked this very question for quite a long time, "it is because the wymps are so much occupied in looking after their new Queen that they have no time to play tricks on us."

"Ah," said her Majesty, smiling wisely, "does she seem happy at the back of the sun?"

"Everybody is happy at the back of the sun, please your Majesty," said Capricious. "They play games all day long to amuse their new Queen, and they never quarrel except for the right to do things for her little Majesty. If she stays there much longer it will soon be impossible to distinguish a wymp from a fairy!"

"It is time she went home again," said the Fairy Queen, smiling wisely for the second time. "How do the shoemaker and his wife get on without her?"

"Their house is so quiet that the shoemaker has never made better shoes," answered Capricious. "The shoemaker's wife, though, can do nothing but sit out in the sunshine and wait, for she cannot bear the silence indoors. Even wympcraft cannot make her forget everything, your Majesty."

"Molly must certainly go home again," said the Fairy Queen; "and she must go to-morrow morning."

Capricious sighed dismally.

"Must she really go, your Majesty?" she ventured to say; "and will the wymps be free again to plague us with their tiresome wympish jokes?"

The Fairy Queen smiled wisely for the third time.

"Wait until to-morrow morning," she said. "You may have as good a joke against the wymps as they have ever had against you."

That night, Molly had a dream straight from Fairyland which reminded her that, although she

had a whole palace of her own and quantities of little subjects to do her bidding, she was really the daughter of the shoemaker on the other side of the sun. So, when Skilful and Wilful and Captious and Queer came to play with her in the morning, she told them she could not be their Queen any longer, as it was time for her to go back to the front of the sun. The four little fellows looked more dismal than a wymp had ever been known to look before, and so did all the wymps in Wympland as soon as they heard that their bewymping Queen was going away from them.

"Can we do nothing to make you stop with us?" they asked her. "Have we been too rough with you, after all? You must forgive us if we have, for we are not accustomed to Queens, at the back of the sun. If we try to be less noisy, will you not stay with us a little longer?"

"Dear little wymps," cried Molly; "you never tread on my toes now, nor crumple my pinafore, nor pull my hair. I do not want to go away from you, but it is time for me to go back to the other side of the sun. Will you please show me how to get there, dear little wymps?"

When they saw that she was quite determined to go, they led her very sadly to the back of the sun; and nobody made a single joke on the way, and there was not a smile to be seen in the whole of that sad little procession. There had never been so little laughter and so much dolefulness in the Land of the Wymps.

"How am I to get through that?" asked Molly, rubbing the tears out of her eyes and looking up at the back of the big round sun; "and shall I tumble all the way down when I get to the other side?"

"It is quite easy," explained Skilful. "You have only to shut your eyes and jump through it, and the sunbeams will catch you on the other side; and you can slide down the one that shines into the shoemaker's garden, where your mother sits watching for you."

Then Molly rubbed her eyes again, for there were still a great many tears in them, and the more she rubbed them away the faster they came again, until she was really afraid the wymps would see that she was crying; and that would never do, for she felt quite sure that a real Queen should never cry. So she kissed her hand to her sad little subjects and promised to come back again some day; and then she shut her eyes tight and jumped through the big round sun and slid down the sunbeam that shone into the shoemaker's garden. And as she sped down the shining, slippery sunbeam, she could hear Skilful and Wilful and Captious and Queer in the distance, singing their funny little song about her:—

> "You have surely bewymped all the wymps you came near,
> Besides Skilful and Wilful and Captious and Queer!
> And now that you 've gone and your wymping is done,
> The world has grown sad at the back of the sun."

Molly never knew what happened when they finished singing; but the fairies knew, because they were hiding all round the edge of the sun at the time. And it was the most remarkable thing that had ever happened in Wympland.

The wymps say that Queer began it; and this is extremely likely, for Queer was always a little different from the other wymps. Anyhow, they very soon followed his example; and so it was that all the wymps at the back of the sun sat down on the ground and cried, because their bewymping little Queen was no longer with them. And all the fairies who were hiding popped up their heads and peered over the edge of the sun and stared in amazement at what was going on in Wympland.

So the Fairy Queen was right, as she always is, and the wymps were made to cry for once in their lives; and the fairies have as good a joke against the wymps as the wymps ever had against the fairies. Perhaps that is why the wymps play so few tricks on the fairies, now; but the Fairy Queen only smiles when people say that, so she probably knows better.

The Story of Honey and Sunny

There was once a wonderful country in which everything was beautiful. All the trees, and the flowers, and the birds, and the animals were just as beautiful as could be imagined; and the shops, and the houses, and the palaces were the same. Of course all the little girls and boys were beautiful, too; but that is the same everywhere. Now, whether it was because of the beauty of his kingdom, or whether it was merely on account of his royal birth, it is impossible to say, but the King was so extremely nervous that his life was no pleasure to him.

"I cannot bear anything noisy," he said. "Noise is so very alarming." So when the baby Princess cried, he sent her away to another King's country, to be brought up in a village nobody had ever heard of, so that her royal father should not be disturbed. And when he heard that the Queen, his wife, had gone after her, he hardly raised his royal eyebrows. "She laughed too much," he observed, thoughtfully.

The palace grew quieter day by day. The ladies in waiting were forbidden to wear high heels because they made such a clatter on the marble floors; so everybody knew for the first time how short everybody else was. Every courtier whose boots creaked was instantly banished, and if he had a cough into the bargain he was beheaded as well; but the climate was so delightful that this very rarely happened. In time, everybody at court took to speaking in a whisper, in order to spare the King's nerves; and it even became the fashion to talk as little as possible. The King was immensely pleased at this. "Anybody can talk," he said; "but it is a sign of great refinement to be silent." After that, even the ladies in waiting were sometimes silent for quite half an hour. It is true that the King talked whenever he felt inclined, but that, of course, was necessary.

The silence of the court soon spread over the country. Laws were made to forbid the people to keep chickens, or pigs, or cows, or anything that was noisy; and the children were ordered, by royal proclamation, never to laugh, and never to cry, and never to quarrel, so that when the King rode out from his palace not a sound should meet his ears. But this was not all; for the birds were so frightened by the stillness of everything that they stopped singing altogether, and the leaves on the trees ceased to rustle when the wind blew; and even the frogs and the toads were startled at the hoarseness of their own voices and did not croak any more, which was the most remarkable thing that ever happened, for it takes a very great deal to persuade a frog or a toad that his voice is not charming. The only sound that broke the silence was the occasional humming

of bees, for the King still allowed the people to keep bees if they liked. "Bees are not noisy," he said. "They do not grunt, or bark, or croak. I can bear to listen to the humming of bees." Even the bees did not hum so much as bees generally do; for the sun soon found that nobody laughed when he was shining his very best, so he went behind a cloud in a temper and stayed there for years and years and years; and the bees could not do without sunshine, even if the King could. So the country grew less beautiful and more gloomy every year.

But the village without a name in the other King's country, where the little Princess was being brought up, was a very different kind of place. It was full of happy people, who made as much noise as they pleased, and laughed when they were glad, and cried when they were sad, and never bothered about anything at all. And the chickens ran in and out of the cottages with the children, and the birds sang all the year round, and the sun had never been known to stop shining for a single minute. It was the jolliest country imaginable, for nobody interfered with anybody else, and the King never made any laws at all, and the only punishment that existed was for grumbling. It is true that there was hardly any conversation, for everybody talked at once and nobody heard what anybody else said; but as it was not often worth hearing, that did not matter in the least. Everybody was happy and jolly, and that was the great thing.

Little Sunny the Princess grew up without knowing that she was a Princess at all; and nobody else knew that she was a Princess either; and even the Queen had almost forgotten that she was a King's wife. That was nobody's concern though; and they lived in the tiniest cottage of all, and Sunny romped with every girl and boy in the place and was loved by them all. They had called her Sunny because she could look straight at the sun without blinking, which was more than the boldest of them could do; and it was such a good name for her that she was never called anything else. Besides, nobody knew her real name, and as it is much too long to be mentioned here, and as the Queen had forgotten it long ago, it really is of no consequence at all.

One fine day, Sunny sat up in the chocolate tree, listening to one of the stories that Honey the gardener's son was so fond of telling her; and Honey the gardener's son lay on the grass below, and tried to catch the chocolate drops with which she was pelting him.

"Why are all your stories so much alike, Honey?" asked Sunny the Princess. "Why does the Prince always go out into the world to find a Princess? Why should n't the Princess go and find the Prince, for a change? I wish I was a Princess; I would start to-morrow. What fun!"

She laughed her very happiest laugh and found an extra large chocolate drop and threw it into his mouth. Honey laughed as well as any one could laugh with a chocolate drop in his mouth, and tried to think of an answer to her question. Honey was not his real name either, but it was the one they had given him because he knew the language of the bees, as, indeed, every true son of a gardener should.

"Perhaps the stories are wrong," he said. "I only tell them to you as I have them from the bees. Or perhaps none of those particular Princesses ever wanted to go out into the world to find anybody."

"Or perhaps," added Sunny, "they were just found before they had time to look for a Prince themselves. Do you think that was it? Anyhow, I don't want to wait for a Prince, for Princes never come this way at all; so I am going out into the world to seek my own fortune, and I shall start this very moment!"

She jumped down from the chocolate tree as she spoke, and danced round Honey, clapping her hands with excitement. Honey was not surprised, for nobody was ever surprised at anything in that country, but he was just a little bit sad.

"And I shall ask the first Prince I meet if he will come back with me," continued Sunny; "just as the Princes always ask the Princesses in the stories. He won't know I am not a Princess, will he? And you won't tell him, will you, Honey dear?"

"I shall not be there," said Honey the gardener's son. "I don't think I want to look for a Princess; and I certainly cannot leave my garden."

"Oh," said Sunny, and she was almost grave for an instant. "But I will come back some day, when I have found my Prince, and then you shall be my gardener," she went on consolingly. "And you don't mind my going without you, do you, Honey dear?"

"The Princes in the stories always went alone," answered Honey.

So that was how Sunny the Princess went out into the world, without knowing that she was a Princess. And of course everybody in the village missed her; but the Queen, her mother, and Honey, the gardener's son, missed her most of all. Before she went, however, Honey taught her a song which she was to sing if she ever found herself in trouble; and this was the song:—

"Friends of Honey,
Come to Sunny;
  Whizzing, whirring,
  Stillness stirring,
  Sunlight blurring;

Friends of Honey,
Fly to Sunny!"

and this she learned by heart before she started.

Now, she travelled a great many days without meeting with any adventures at all. It was such a delightful country that everybody was pleased to see her, and she never had any difficulty in getting enough to eat, for she had only to smile and that was all the payment that anybody wanted. But one day, as she was walking through a wood, a great change suddenly came over everything. Every sound was hushed, and the birds stopped singing, and the wind stopped playing with the leaves; there was not a rustle or a movement anywhere, and the sun had gone behind a cloud. In the whole of her short life the little Princess had never seen the sun go behind a cloud, and she felt extremely inclined to cry. The further she went, the darker and gloomier it grew, and at last she could not bear it another minute; so down she sat by the side of the road and wept heartily.

"Hullo! you must stop that noise or else you will be banished," said a voice, not very far on. Sunny was so astonished that she stopped crying at once and looked up to see a little old man with a white beard staring at her. He was a very sad-looking little man, and his mouth was drawn down at the corners as though he had been on the point of crying all his life and had never quite broken down.

"Why must I stop?" asked Sunny. "If you feel unhappy you *must* cry, must n't you?"

"Dear me, no," said the sad little man, in a tone of deep gloom. "I am always unhappy, but I never cry. The whole country is unhappy, but nobody is allowed to cry. If you cry, you must go away."

"What a funny country!" cried Sunny, and she at once began to laugh at the absurdity of it.

"Don't do that," said the little man, in a tone of still greater alarm. "If you go on making any fresh noises, you will get beheaded. Why can't you be quiet? You can do anything you like, as long as you do it quietly."

"May n't I laugh?" exclaimed Sunny. "What is the use of feeling happy if you may n't laugh?"

"It is n't any use," said the sad little man. "Nobody ever is happy in this country. Nobody ever has been happy since the King was bewitched and the sun went away in a temper, and that was sixteen years ago. Nobody ever will be happy again, unless the spell is broken; and the spell cannot be broken until a Princess of the royal blood comes this way, without knowing that she is a Princess."

"How absurd!" said Sunny. "As if a Princess could be a Princess without knowing she is a Princess!"

"Why not?" asked the sad little man, crossly. He had lived alone in the dark, silent wood for such a long time that he began to find the conversation tiring.

"Oh, because there are bands and flags and balls and banquets and cheers and Princes and lots of fun, wherever there is a Princess," replied Sunny.

The sad little man looked more sad than before.

"Then the spell will never be broken," he said, miserably; "because all that noise would be stopped at once. If you have done talking you had better go, or else we shall both be banished; and I advise you to take off those wooden shoes of yours, unless you want to be clapped into prison. But, first of all, tell me if you can look straight at the sun without blinking."

He always asked that of every little girl who came his way, in case she should happen to be a Princess; for he was really a very wise little man in spite of his sadness, and he knew that only eagles, and Princesses who did not know they were Princesses, could look straight at the sun without blinking. And he was so tired of feeling sad without being allowed to cry, that he longed to have the spell removed from the country, so that he need not keep back his tears any longer.

"Why, of course I can, if there is a sun," laughed Sunny. And to her astonishment the sad little man dropped straight on the ground, and put his fists in his eyes, and began to cry at the very top of his voice, just like any child in any nursery.

"Whatever is the matter?" exclaimed Sunny.

"Matter?" shouted the little man, who was shaken with sobs from head to foot. "I was never so happy in my life! I have been longing to cry for sixteen years."

There had certainly not been so much noise in that wood for sixteen years. For no sooner did the old man begin to weep, than the trees began to rustle, and the birds began to sing, and the frogs began to croak; and over it all came a faint glimmering of white light, as though the sun were beginning to stretch himself behind the cloud.

"What does it all mean?" demanded Sunny.

"Go on to the palace and see," sobbed the sad little man, and he pointed out the way to her between his tears. And Sunny set off running in her wooden shoes as fast as she could go, and there never was such a clatter as she made when she reached the town and ran straight through the gates and all along the streets; and on either side of her the people fell down in heaps, from sheer amazement at hearing such a noise after sixteen years of silence. So nobody tried to stop her; and she ran faster and faster and faster, and the light grew brighter and brighter and brighter, till at last she stood in the courtyard of the King's palace. There she saw beautiful ladies in magnificent court dresses creeping about on their bare feet, and handsome courtiers in elegant costumes walking on tiptoe in carpet slippers; and there was the Captain of the King's guard drilling the soldiers in whispers, and there were the soldiers pretending to fire with guns that had no gunpowder in them; and there was the head coachman making faces at the stable boy because he could not shout at him, and there was the stable boy standing on his head because he was not allowed to whistle. And into the middle of it all came the clatter of Sunny's wooden shoes, as she ran across the courtyard, and up the steps, and into the palace; and down dropped the ladies in waiting in graceful groups, and down dropped the courtiers just anyhow; and all the soldiers fell down in neat little rows, and the Captain of the King's guard sat down and looked at them; and the head coachman shouted as he had wanted to shout at all his stable boys for the last sixteen years, and the stable boy waved his cap and cried "Hurrah!" And Sunny went clattering along the great hall, past the page boys who were playing marbles with india-rubber marbles, and past the kitchen where the fires burned without crackling and the kettles never boiled over, and up the wide marble staircase, and along all the passages, until the sound of her coming even reached the King's ears.

Now the King sat on his throne with cotton wool stuffed in his ears, in case there should by accident be the least sound in the palace. But, in spite of that, he heard the clatter of Sunny's shoes coming closer and closer, and he began to feel terribly nervous lest there really was going to be a noise at last.

"What is that noise? Take it away and behead it at once!" he said to the Prime Minister, in his most distinct whisper. But the noise outside was now so great that the Prime Minister could not hear a word; and the next moment the door was flung open, and Sunny the Princess ran into the room. And the King looked so funny as he tried to make the Prime Minister hear his whispers, and the Prime Minister looked so funny as he tried to hear the King's whispers, that Sunny was obliged to laugh; and when she had once begun she found she could not stop, so she laughed and laughed and laughed; and when the poor, nervous old King turned again to the Prime Minister to tell him to behead some one at once, he found that the Prime Minister was laughing too; and immediately all the pages in the hall, and the courtiers in the courtyard, and the cooks in the kitchen, and the townspeople in the streets, and the children in the nurseries, were all laughing as heartily as they could. And when the sun heard all this laughter, he finished making up his mind immediately, and came out from behind the cloud and shone his very best once more. So there was the sunshine again, and there was everybody laughing, except the King.

Now, when the King found that no one was paying any attention to his royal whispers, he began to grow angry, and without thinking any more about it he shouted at the very top of his royal voice. And this was so remarkable, after sixteen years of whispering, that the laughter was instantly hushed; and even Sunny the Princess became grave, because she wanted to see what was going to happen next.

"Who are you?" demanded the King, pointing at her with his sceptre.

"I am Sunny, of course," she said, stepping up to the throne in quite a friendly manner. All the courtiers looked at one another and nodded.

"She is Sunny, of course," they said, just as though there could be no doubt about it whatever.

"She is the little Princess your daughter," said a fresh voice from the doorway. And there stood the Queen, who had not been able to stay by herself any longer and had just come after Sunny as fast as she could. When the King saw her, he quite forgot that she used to laugh too much, and he came down from his throne in a terrific hurry and he kissed her several times before the whole court; and Sunny kissed them both there and then; and all the ladies in waiting in the room kissed all the pages that were to be seen; and the courtiers stood in rows along the wall and never got kissed at all.

So that was how Sunny found out she was a Princess; and there were bands and flags and balls and banquets and cheers and Princes and lots of fun. For that evening the King gave a magnificent ball, to celebrate the return of his daughter Sunny; and all the Princes in the kingdom were invited to it.

"Now," said the Queen, as she carefully put on Sunny's beautiful new crown, "you will be able to find your Prince, as you said you would."

But Sunny shook her head and wondered why she felt so sad when everything seemed to be going so well; and when the Queen had gone downstairs to look after the supper, she went to the

open window and looked out into the garden. As she did so, there came a faint buzzing and humming close at hand, and three beautiful brown bees flew down and settled on her round white arm. And Sunny gave a cry of joy and knew all at once why she had been feeling so lonely; and she began to sing the song Honey the gardener's son had taught her:—

"Friends of Honey
Come to Sunny;
  Whizzing, whirring,
  Stillness stirring,
  Sunlight blurring;
Friends of Honey,
Fly to Sunny!"

She had not nearly finished singing it before there came a distant murmur in the still, warm air, and the murmur grew louder and louder until it would almost have deafened any one if there had been any one there to deafen. But the people in the palace were so occupied in dressing for the ball that a thunderstorm would not have made any difference to them; and as for Sunny, the sound only reminded her of the village without a name, where she had been so happy with Honey. So she leaned out of the window as far as she could, and waited until she saw a dense cloud coming gradually towards her, so large that it covered the whole of the setting sun. When it reached the palace it hung just above it, and she could see quite plainly that it was made of millions and millions of bees. Then the three bees which had dropped on her round white arm floated up into the air and flew round her head three times and went away to join the cloud of bees overhead. Sunny knew then that they were going to do what she wanted; and she clapped her hands and laughed, as the humming and buzzing began all over again, and the cloud moved away as quickly as it had come. "Hurry, hurry, dear little bees!" she cried from the palace window; and the next moment there was not a bee left in the whole kingdom, for they had all gone to the village without a name, in the other King's country.

Everybody wondered why the Princess was so disdainful to all the Princes who danced with her, that night. But nobody wondered any more when Honey the gardener's son arrived; and this really happened, only three days later. And he came, all in his gardener's clothes; and he walked straight into the palace, just as Sunny had done; and she met him in the great hall, where the King and the Queen and the whole court were having a reception to receive one another. And they both shouted with happiness and ran straight into each other's arms; and they kissed and kissed and kissed, and then they fell to talking as fast as they could; and they both talked at once for three quarters of an hour, before either of them heard a word. Then they sat down on the steps of the King's throne, just because it happened to be there, and Sunny told him everything that had happened to her. Nobody interfered, not even the Prime Minister, for Sunny had done so many curious things since her arrival that one more or less made very little difference.

"It is very dull being a Princess," said Sunny. "And I don't like palaces much, after all; they are such stuffy places! The people who live in them are rather stuffy, too. And there is n't a chocolate tree in the whole of the garden; did you ever know such a stupid garden? Oh, I am so glad you have come, Honey dear!"

"Have you found your Prince?" was all that Honey said.

"Princes are not a bit amusing," said Sunny. "There were fifty-two Princes at the ball, the other night, but I did n't like any of them. I am dreadfully tired of being a Princess. It is ever so much nicer in the village, under the chocolate tree."

"Of course it is," said Honey. "We 'll go back, shall we?" And nothing the King could say would make them see any other side to the question. Indeed, as the Queen pointed out to him, if he had not allowed the people to keep so many bees it might never have happened at all. So the end of it was, that the Queen stayed with the King; and Honey and Sunny were married that very same day and went back to live in the village without a name. And there they built a very small house in a very big garden, and they planted it with rows of chocolate trees, and rows of acid-drop bushes, and lots of almond rockeries; and the fairies came and filled it with flowers from Fairyland that had no names at all, but were the most beautiful flowers that any one has ever seen, for they never faded or died but just changed into something else when they were tired of being the same flower.

So no wonder that Honey and Sunny were happy for ever and ever!

The Little Princess and the Poet

There was once a Poet whom nobody wanted. Wherever he went, he was always in the way; and the reason for this was his inability to do anything useful. All the people in all the countries through which he passed seemed to be occupied in making something,—either war, or noise, or money, or confusion; but the Poet could make nothing except love, and that, of course, was of no use at all. Even the women, who might otherwise have welcomed him, could not endure the ugliness of his features; and, indeed, it would have been difficult to find a face with less beauty in it, for he looked as if all the cares and the annoyances of the world had been imprinted on his countenance and left it seared with lines. So the poor, ugly Poet went from place to place, singing poems to which nobody listened, and offering sympathy to people who could not even understand his language.

One day he came to a city he had never visited before; and, as he always did, he went straight to the part where the poorer people lived, for it was all about them that he wrote the poetry to which nobody listened. But, as usual, the poor people were so full of their troubles that they could not even understand him.

"What is the use of telling us we are unhappy?" they grumbled. "We know that already, and it does not interest us a bit. Can you not do something for us?"

The Poet only shook his head.

"If I did," he replied, "I should probably do it very badly. The world is full of people who are always doing things; the only mistake they make is in generally doing them wrong. But I am here to persuade them to do the right things for a change, so that you may have your chance of happiness as well as they."

"Oh, we shall never be happy," the people said. "If that is all you have to say, you had better leave us to our unhappiness and go up to the King's palace. For the little Princess has been blind from her birth, and her great delight is to listen to poetry, so the palace is full of poets. But none of them ever come down here, so we do not know what they are like."

The Poet was overjoyed at hearing that at last he was in a country where he was wanted; and

he set off for the palace immediately.

"Who are you, and what do you want?" demanded the royal sentinels, when he presented himself at the palace gates.

"I am a Poet," he replied. "And I have come to see the Princess, because she is fond of poets."

"We have never seen a poet like you," said the sentinels, doubtfully. "All the poets in the palace have smooth, smiling faces, and fine clothes, and white hands. Her Royal Highness is not accustomed to receiving any one so untidy as yourself."

The Poet looked down at his weather-beaten clothes and his toil-worn hands; and he stared at the reflection of his wrinkled, furrowed face in the moat that surrounded the palace; and he sighed in a disappointed manner.

"I am a Poet," he repeated. "How can a man be a poet if his face is smooth and his hands are white? No man can be a poet if he has not toiled and suffered and wandered over the earth, for the sake of the people who are in it."

Just then he heard a woman's voice speaking from the other side of the gates; and looking through them, he saw a beautiful, pale Princess, standing there all by herself, with a look of interest on her face.

"It is the little blind Princess," thought the Poet, and he bowed straight to the ground though he knew quite well that she could not see him. The sentinels saluted, too, for they were so accustomed to saluting people who never saw them at all that the blindness of the little Princess made no difference to them.

"Tell me," said the Princess, eagerly, "the name of the man with the wonderful voice, who is saying all those beautiful, true things."

"Please your Highness," said the sentinels, "he *says* he is a Poet."

"Ah," cried the little Princess, joyfully, "at last you have come; I have been waiting for you all my life! At last I have found a real Poet, and the Queen-mother will see now that all those people in there, who say the same things over and over again in their small, thin voices, are not poets at all. Come in, Poet; why do you stay so long outside?"

So the drawbridge was let down, and the sentinels saw what a mistake they had made and did their best to pretend that they had not made it at all; and for the first time in his life the Poet felt that he was not in anybody's way.

"Come with me, Poet," said the little Princess, holding out her small white hand to him. "If you will take my hand, I shall feel quite sure you are there."

So the little blind Princess and the Poet went into the palace, hand in hand.

"I have found a Poet," she announced to the whole court, just as it was sitting down to luncheon.

"What! Another?" groaned the King from the top of the table. "I should have thought five-and-forty were quite enough, considering the demand."

"This is a *real* Poet," continued the little Princess, still holding the Poet's hand. "I knew him by his wonderful voice. I am so glad he has come; and now, we can send away all the others, who are not poets at all."

Now, this was a little awkward, for the five-and-forty poets were all present; and being mostly the younger sons of kings, who had only taken up poetry as an accomplishment, they were also suitors for the Princess's hand, which made it more awkward still. So the Queen coughed uncomfortably, and all the ladies in waiting blushed uncomfortably, and the five-and-forty poets naturally looked uncomfortable into the bargain. But the little Princess, who could see nothing and never had been able to see anything, neither blushed nor felt uncomfortable.

"Will some one give place to the Poet?" she asked with a smile.

The Queen, who was generally full of resources, felt that it was time to interfere.

"Do not listen to Her Royal Highness," she said, soothingly, to the five-and-forty poets. "She is so terribly truthful that she does not know what she is saying. I have tried in vain to break her of it."

"Don't know where she gets it from," growled the old King, who had a great dislike to scenes at meal times.

The five-and-forty poets recovered their composure, when they heard that the Princess was rather to be pitied than blamed; and the Queen was able to turn to the cause of the disturbance.

"Will you be kind enough to go?" she said to the Poet. "My daughter did not know who you were because, unfortunately, she cannot see. She actually mistook you for a poet!"

"It is the first time," said the Poet, "that any one has made the mistake. However, you are quite right and I had better go. You will not like my poetry; I see five-and-forty gentlemen who can write the poetry that will give you pleasure; mine is written for the people, who have to work that you may be happy. Little lady," he added, turning to the Princess, "I pray you, think no more of me. As for me, I shall love you to the end of my days."

Then he tried to go, but the small, white fingers of the little blind Princess were round his own rough, tanned ones, and he could not move.

"I loved you before you came," she said, smiling. "I have been waiting for you all the time. Why are you in such a hurry to go, if you love me?"

The listeners grew more scandalised every moment. No one had seen such love-making before. To be sure, the five-and-forty poets had written love songs innumerable, but that was not at all the same thing. Every one felt that something ought to be done and nobody quite knew how to do it. Fortunately, the King was hungry.

"I think you had better say the rest in private, when we have had lunch," he said grimly, and the courtiers looked immensely relieved, and a place was found next to the Princess for the Poet; and the Queen and her ladies in waiting proceeded to make conversation, and lunch went on as usual.

"Now," said the King, with a sigh, for meals were of far greater importance to him than poetry, "you shall tell us one of your poems, so that we may know whether you are a poet or not."

Then the Poet stood up and told them one of his poems. It was about the people who lived on the dark side of the city, and it was very fierce, and bitter, and passionate; and when he had finished telling it, he expected to be thrust out of the palace and banished from the country, for that was what usually happened to him. There was a great silence when he sat down again, and the Poet did not know what to make of it. But the small, white fingers of the little Princess had again stolen round his, and that was at least consoling.

The Queen was the first to break the silence.

"Charming," she said with an effort, "and so new."

"We have heard nothing like it before," said the ladies in waiting. "Are there really such people as that in the world? It might be amusing to meet them, or, at least, to study them."

The King glanced at all the other poets and said nothing at all. And the five-and-forty kings' sons, who, if they were not poets, were at least gentlemen, rose from their seats with one accord.

"Her royal Highness was quite right," they said. "We are not poets at all."

Then they took leave of every one present and filed out of the room and rode away to their respective countries, where, of course, nobody ever suspected them of being poets; and they just remained Princes of the royal blood and nothing else to the end of their days.

"And you, little lady?" said the Poet, anxiously.

"It was wonderful," answered the little blind Princess. "But there was no love in it."

By this time the Queen had ceased to be impressed and had begun to remember that she was a Queen.

"We are quite sure you are a poet," she said in her most queenly manner, "because you have told us something that we did not know before. But we think you are not a fit companion for her royal Highness, and it is therefore time for you to go."

"No, no!" cried the Princess. "You are not to go. You are my Poet, and I want you to stay here always."

Matters were becoming serious, and every one set to work to try to turn the little Princess from her purpose.

"He is shockingly untidy," whispered the ladies in waiting.

"And *so* ugly," murmured the Queen; "there is nothing distinguished about him at all."

"He will cost the nation something to keep," added the King, without lowering his voice at all.

But the little Princess turned a deaf ear to them all and held out her hand again to the Poet.

"I do not believe a word they say," she cried. "You cannot be ugly, you with a voice like that! If you are ugly, then ugliness is what I have wanted all my life. Ugliness is what I love, and you

are to stay here with me."

In the end, it was the Poet himself who came to the rescue.

"I cannot stay with you, little lady," he said gently. "It is true what they say; I am too ugly to be tolerated, and it has been my good fortune that you could not see me. I will go away and put some love into my poetry, and then, perhaps, I shall find some one who will listen to me."

But the poor little Princess burst out sobbing.

"If I could only see," she wept, "I would prove to you that I do not think you ugly. Oh, if I could only see! I have never wanted to see before."

"Little lady," whispered the Poet, bending over her, "*I* am glad that you cannot see."

And then, he turned and fled out of the palace and out of the city and away from the country that contained the little Princess who had loved him because she was blind. And he wandered from place to place as before; but he told no one that he was a poet, for he had felt ashamed of his poetry ever since the little Princess had said there was no love in it. But there came a day when he could keep silent no longer, so he went among the people once more and told them one of his poems. This time, he had no difficulty in making them understand, for he told them the story of his love for the little blind Princess.

"Why," said the people, when he had finished, "the maid is easily cured, for it is well known among our folk that a kiss on the eyelids when asleep, from a true lover, will open the eyes of any one who has been blind from birth."

Now, when the Poet heard this, he was greatly perplexed. For to open the eyes of his little Princess was to kill her love for him; and yet, he could not forget how she had wept for the want of her sight, and here was the power to give it back to her, and it rested with him alone of all men in the world. So he determined to make her happy at any cost, and he turned his face towards the King's palace once more and arrived there at midday, after travelling for seven days and seven nights without ceasing. But, of course, that was nothing to a poet who was in love.

"Dear me," said the King irritably, when the Poet appeared before him; "I thought you had gone for good. And a pretty time we 've been having of it with the Princess, in consequence! What have you come back for?"

"I have come back to open the Princess's eyes," answered the Poet, boldly.

"It strikes me," grumbled the King, "that you opened everybody's eyes pretty effectually, last time you were here. You certainly can't see the Princess now, for she has gone to sleep in the garden."

"That is exactly what I want," cried the Poet, joyfully. "Let me but kiss her eyelids while she is sleeping, and by the time she awakes I shall have gone for ever."

"The Queen must deal with this," said the King, looking helpless in the face of such a preposterous suggestion. Her Majesty was accordingly sent for, and the Poet explained his mission all over again.

"It is certainly unusual," said the Queen, doubtfully, "not to say out of order. But still, in view of the advantage to be gained, and by considering it in the light of medical treatment—and if you promise to go away directly after, just like a physician, or—or a singing-master,—perhaps something might be arranged."

The end of it was that the Poet was taken into the garden, and there was the little blind Princess sound asleep in her hammock, with a maid of honour fanning her on each side.

"Hush," whispered the Queen. "She must not awake, on *any* account."

"No," echoed the poor, ugly Poet; "she must not awake—on *my* account."

Then he bent over her, for the second time in his life, and touched her eyelids with his lips. The Princess went on dreaming happily, but the Poet turned and fled out of the city.

"At least," he said, "she shall never know how ugly I am."

That day, every Prince who was in the palace put on his best court suit, in order to charm the Princess. But the Princess refused to be charmed. She looked at them all, with large, frightened eyes, and sent them away, one by one, as they came to offer her their congratulations.

"Why do you congratulate me on being able to see you?" she asked them. "Are you so beautiful, then?"

"Oh, *no*," they said in a chorus. "Do not imagine such a thing for a moment."

"Then why should I be glad because I can see you?" persisted the Princess; and they went

away much perplexed.

"Tell me what is beautiful," said the little Princess to her mother. "All my life I have longed to look on beauty, and now it is all so confusing that I cannot tell one thing from another. Is there anything beautiful here?"

"To be sure there is," replied the Queen. "This room is very beautiful to begin with, and the nation is still being taxed to pay for it."

"This room?" said the Princess in astonishment. "How can anything be beautiful that keeps out the sun and the air? Tell me something else that is beautiful."

"The dresses of the ladies in waiting are very beautiful," said the Queen. "And the ladies in waiting themselves might be called beautiful by some, though that of course is a matter of opinion."

"They all look alike to me," sighed the little Princess. "Is there nothing else here that is beautiful?"

"Certainly," answered the Queen, pointing out the wealthiest and most eligible Prince in the room. "That is the handsomest man you could ever want to see."

"That?" said the Princess, disconsolately. "After all, one is best without eyes! Can you not show me some ugliness for a change? Perhaps it may be ugliness that I want to see so badly."

"There is nothing ugly in the palace," replied the Queen. "When you get used to everything you will be able to see how beautiful it all is."

But the Princess sighed and came down from her golden throne and wandered out into the garden. She walked uncertainly, for now that she was no longer blind she did not know where she was going. And there, under the trees where she had been sleeping a few hours back, stood a man with his face buried in his hands.

"Little lady," he stammered, "I tried to keep away, but—"

Then the little Princess gave a shout of joy and pulled away his hands and looked into his face for a full minute without speaking. She put her small, white fingers into every one of his wrinkles, and she touched every one of his ugly scars, and she drew a deep breath of satisfaction.

"Just fancy," laughed the little Princess to the Poet; "they have been trying to persuade me in there that all those Princes and people are—*beautiful*!"

The Wonderful Toymaker

Princess Petulant sat on the nursery floor and cried. She was only eight years old, but she had lived quite long enough to grow extremely discontented; and the royal household was made very uncomfortable in consequence.

"I want a new toy," sobbed the little Princess. "Do you expect me to go on playing with the same toys for ever? I might just as well not be a Princess at all!"

The whole country was searched in vain for a toy that would be likely to please the Princess; but, as she already possessed every kind of toy that has ever been heard of, nobody succeeded in finding her a new one. So the little Princess went on crying bitterly, and the royal nurses shook their heads and sighed. Then the King called a council in despair.

"It is very absurd," grumbled his Majesty, "that my daughter cannot be kept amused. What is the use of an expensive government and a well-dressed court, if there are not enough toys for her to play with? Can no one invent a new toy for the Princess Petulant?"

He looked sternly at all his councillors as he spoke; but his councillors were so horrified at being expected to invent something straight out of their heads that no one said anything at all until the Prime Minister summoned up courage to speak.

"Perhaps, if we were to send for Martin," he suggested, "her royal Highness might consent to be comforted."

"Who is Martin?" demanded the King.

"He is my son," said the Prime Minister, apologetically; "and he spends his days either dreaming by himself or playing with the Princess Petulant. He will never be Prime Minister," he added sadly, "but he might think of a way to amuse the Princess."

So the King dismissed the council with much relief and sent for Martin to come and play with his daughter. Martin walked straight up to the royal nursery and found the spoilt little Princess still crying on the floor. So down on the floor sat Martin too; and he looked at her very solemnly out of his round, serious eyes, and he asked her why she was crying.

"I want a new toy," she pouted. "I am tired of all my old toys. Don't you think you can find me a new toy to play with, Martin?"

"If I do," said Martin, "will you promise not to be cross when I run faster than you do?"

The Princess nodded.

"And will you promise not to mind when I don't want to play any more?"

The Princess nodded again.

"And will you promise not to call me sulky when I don't feel inclined to talk?" continued Martin.

"Yes, yes!" cried Princess Petulant. "You won't be long before you find it, will you, Martin?"

"In four weeks from now," said the Prime Minister's son, "you will have me with you again."

"And I shall have my new toy," said the Princess Petulant, sighing contentedly.

Now, Martin was one of the few children who can see the fairies. He knew how to coax the flower fairies to speak to him, and how to find the wood fairies when they hid among the ferns, and how to laugh back when the wymps made fun of him; and, above all, he knew how to find his way to Bobolink, the Purple Enchanter, who knows everything. And he found his way to Bobolink, on the evening of that very same day.

Bobolink, the Purple Enchanter, sat on his amethyst throne in the middle of a grove of deadly nightshade. He was the ugliest enchanter any one has ever seen; and on each side of him sat an enormous purple toad with an ugly purple smile on his face. Even the sun's rays shone purple in the home of the Purple Enchanter; and Martin stared at him for a whole minute without speaking. For, although Martin was two years older than the little Princess Petulant, he was not a very big boy for all that; and there was something that made him feel a little queer in the purple face, and the purple hands, and the purple expression of Bobolink.

"Why don't you say something?" growled Bobolink, in just the kind of voice one would expect such a very ugly person to have. "What are you thinking about, eh? If it's anything about me, you 'd better say so at once!"

"Well," said Martin, as bravely as he could, "I was thinking that it must be very odd to be so purple as you are. Of course," he added politely, "I don't suppose you can help it exactly, because even the sun is purple here, and perhaps you have got sunpurpled instead of sunburned."

"May I ask," said Bobolink, rolling his purple eyes about, "if you came all this way on purpose to make remarks about me?"

"No, I did n't," explained Martin, hurriedly. "I came to ask you the way to the Wonderful Toymaker, who makes all the toys for Fairyland. I am going to fetch a new toy for the Princess Petulant."

"And how do you think you are going to get it?" asked Bobolink, with a chuckle.

"That is exactly what I want you to tell me," said Martin, boldly.

Now, Bobolink, the Purple Enchanter, was used to being visited by people who wanted to get something out of him, because, as I said before, Bobolink knows everything. But he had never come across any one who did not begin by flattering him; and he took a fancy to Martin from the moment he told him he was sunpurpled. So he smiled as well as he could,—which was not very well, for he had never done such a thing before and his jaws were extremely stiff,—and for the moment he hardly looked ugly at all.

"I like you," he said, nodding at the small figure of the Prime Minister's son; "and I am going to help you. Of course, I know quite well where the Wonderful Toymaker lives; but I have promised the pine dwarfs not to tell, because it is the only secret they possess, and it would break their hearts if any one were to hear it from me instead of from them. You see, when a person knows everything he must keep some of it to himself, or else there would be nothing left for anybody else to say, and then there would be no more conversation. That is the worst of knowing everything. But I can show you the way to the pine dwarfs; and if you keep perfectly quiet and speak in a whisper to them, they'll tell you all you want to know."

"Why must I keep perfectly quiet and speak in a whisper?" asked Martin.

Bobolink scowled, and became as ugly as ever again.

"Now you want to know too much, and that is n't fair," he complained. "I 'll tell you the way to the pine dwarfs, and you must find out the rest for yourself. Go straight ahead and take the hundred and first turning to the right, and the fifty-second turning to the left, then turn round seventeen times; and if that is n't good enough for you I 'll never help you again. Now, off you go!"

Martin saw that he was no longer wanted and set off as fast as he could. It took him a whole week to reach the hundred and first turning on the right; and it was the most anxious week he had ever spent, for he had to keep counting the turnings all the time and was dreadfully afraid of losing count altogether. And the fifty-second turning on the left was almost as bad, for his way took him through a large town, and he dare not stay to speak to any one for fear of overlooking one of the little streets. He left the town behind him at last; and after walking for two days longer, he reached the fifty-second turning on his left, and it led him to the middle of a vast sandy plain.

"How queer!" thought Martin. "Not a single tree to be seen! Surely the pine dwarfs don't live in a place like this? Perhaps old Bobolink has only hoaxed me after all."

However, he turned round seventeen times just to see what would happen; and the first thing that happened was that he became remarkably giddy and had to sit down on the ground to recover himself. When he did recover he found he was in a beautiful thick pine wood, with the sunshine coming through the branches, and flickering here and there over the ground, and painting the great big pine trunks bright red. Over it all hung the most delicious silence, only broken by the soft passage of the wind through the pine leaves. Martin had almost forgotten the warning Bobolink had given him, but, even if he had quite forgotten it, nothing would have induced him to speak loudly in such a stillness as that.

"Are you there, little pine dwarfs?" he whispered, as he looked up through the pine trees at the blue sky on the other side. No sooner had his whisper travelled up through the hushed air than all the branches seemed to be filled with life and movement; and what Martin had believed to be brown pine cones suddenly moved, and ran about among the trees, and slid down the long red trunks. And then he saw they were dear little brown dwarfs, who surrounded him by hundreds and thousands, and travelled up and down his boots, and stared at him with looks full of curiosity.

"Who are you, little boy, and where do you come from?" they seemed to be saying; and as they spoke all together their voices sounded exactly like the wind as we hear it in the pine trees. They were so gentle and kind-looking that Martin was not a bit afraid and asked them at once to tell him the way to the Wonderful Toymaker who makes all the toys for Fairyland. They were delighted to tell him all they knew, for it was their one secret and they were very proud of it; and so few people ever came that way that they had very few opportunities of telling it. So their honest little brown faces were covered with good-nature and smiles, as they crooned out their information.

"You must walk straight through the wood," they said, "until you come to a waterfall at the beginning of a stream; and you must follow the stream down, down, down, until it brings you to a valley surrounded by high hills; and in that valley is the toyshop of the Wonderful Toymaker, who makes all the toys for Fairyland."

"That is simple enough, I 'm sure," said Martin.

"Ah," said the pine dwarfs, wisely, "but it is not so easy to get there as you think; for the stream leads you through the country of the people who make conversation, and they try to stop every stranger who passes by, so that they can make him into conversation; and that is why so few people ever reach the Wonderful Toymaker at all."

"Make conversation! How funny!" said Martin; and he almost laughed aloud at the idea.

"It is more sad than funny," said the pine dwarfs, sighing like a large gust of wind that for the moment made Martin feel quite chilly; "for it gives *us* so much to do. You see, they make conversation, and we make silence; and the more conversation they make the more silence we have to make to keep things even. They are always ahead of us, for all that!" They sighed again. Martin looked puzzled.

"Still, your silence is so full of sound," he said. The pine dwarfs laughed softly, so softly that most people would have called it only smiling.

"Real silence, the best kind, is always full of sound; and of course we only make the very best kind," they explained proudly. "Anybody can make the other kind of silence by taking the air and sifting out the noise in it. Now, *we* take the air, and when we have sifted out the noise we fill it with sound. That's a very different thing. The worst of it is," they added, sadly, "there is so little demand for real silence. We have layers of it piled up at the top, of those pine trees, and nobody ever wants it. The other silence is so much cheaper, you see, and most people don't know the difference."

"When I am grown up and have a house of my own," said Martin, "I shall come and ask you to fill it with the very best silence for me."

The pine dwarfs shook their little brown heads incredulously.

"Wait till you are grown up," they said; "and then, if you will let us fill one room for you, we shall be quite satisfied. Now, set off on your journey; and if you want to escape being made into conversation, you must not speak a single word until you reach the valley where the Wonderful

Toymaker lives."

"Trust me!" laughed Martin. "It is only talking that is difficult; any one can keep silent."

"Very well; be careful, only be careful!" they sighed; and in another moment they had all gone back to their pine trees, and nothing was to be heard except the distant sounds with which they were filling the silence.

Then Martin walked on until he came to the rushing waterfall; and along by the side of the stream he trudged and thought it was the very noisiest stream he had ever come across, for it clattered over the stones, and splashed up in the air, and seemed bent on getting through life with as much fuss and excitement as it was possible to make. As he walked along by its side, he discovered that the noise it made was caused by millions of little voices, chattering and gossiping, quarrelling and laughing, as busily as they could.

"This must be the country where they make conversation," thought Martin. "Well, I must be pretty careful not to let them know I can talk." At the same time, the longer he walked by that talkative little stream the easier it was to forget the silence in the pine wood; and he began to think that, after all, one silent room would be quite enough in the house he was going to have some day. Presently, there were not only voices in the stream beside him but all around him as well, in the trees, and the flowers, and the grass, and the air; and they were not the pretty little voices of the fairies which he knew so well, but they were the harsh, shrill, unpleasant voices of unpleasant people, who must have spent their lives in chattering about things that did not concern them. Then the voices came closer and closer to him, and buzzed up round his head, and shrieked into his ears, asking him dozens and dozens of questions, until it was all he could do not to shout at them to leave him alone.

"Who are you? Where do you come from? What do you want? Where are you going? What are you doing here? Why don't you answer? How did you get here? Whom did you meet on the way? Did they tell you anything interesting? What is your name? How old are you? Who is your father? What is your mother like? Does she give parties? Does she invite many people? Do you know the King? Have you been to court? Does the Queen dress well? Do you like jam or cake best? What is your favourite sweet? Don't you think we are very amusing?" etc., etc., etc.

These were only a few of the questions they asked Martin, but they quite cured him of any wish to speak; and, instead of telling them anything about himself, he just put his hands over his ears and ran as fast as he could until he dropped down, very much out of breath, some way further along the stream. As he sat there, delighted at having escaped from all those impertinent voices, a curious little fish with a bent back popped his head above the water and nodded to him.

"Good morning," said the fish. His tone was so friendly that Martin forgot all about the warning of the pine dwarfs, and entered into conversation with him.

"This is a strange country," said Martin.

"It's a very busy country," answered the fish. "None of us get left alone for long; and as for me, I never get any peace at all. If I could only get my tail into my mouth, things would be very different."

"You look as though you had been trying a good deal," observed Martin. "I suppose that is why your back is so bent."

"Bent?" cried the fish, angrily. "Nothing of the sort! On the contrary, it has a most elegant curve. It's not the shape I complain about, it's the difference in the work. You see, if I could only get my tail into my mouth I should be a Full-stop; and Full-stops have so little to do nowadays that I should be able to retire at once. Being a Comma is quite another matter; it's work, work, work, from year's end to year's end. Hullo! What is it now?"

His last remark was addressed to another fish, who seemed to have succeeded in getting his tail into his mouth, and who spoke very huskily in consequence.

"Come along," he said to the Comma-fish; "you 've got to help me to make a Semi-colon."

"Oh, dear, oh, dear!" replied the other. "I do wish Colons were more used; it would at least give me a rest and use up some of you Full-stops for a change."

Martin was just going to sympathise with the poor little overworked Comma-fish, when the storm of voices he had left behind suddenly managed to overtake him; and there they were once more, buzzing round his head and shrieking in his ears, until he was almost deafened by the noise; while dozens of invisible hands were lifting him from the ground and carrying him along at a terrific pace.

"He has spoken, he has spoken!" the voices were shouting triumphantly, as they bore him along. "He is ours to make conversation of!"

Then they took him into a magnificent glittering palace, made of glass of a thousand colours; and invisible voices told him it was all his and he should be king over it, if he would only make

conversation for them. It was the most beautiful palace a king could possibly have wished for; and even the Prime Minister's son was dazzled by it for the moment. There was everything in it that a boy could want; if he pulled a golden cord, down fell a shower of chocolate creams; if he went to the strawberry ice room, there was a wooden spade for him to dig it out with, and a wheelbarrow in which to bring it away; if he wanted a present, he had only to turn on the present-tap and out came whatever he wished for. So he immediately wished for a six-bladed knife, a real pony, and a gold watch. For all that, he was not a bit happy. The incessant talking around him never ceased for a moment; the air seemed packed with people whom he never saw, but who asked him innumerable questions which he never attempted to answer. Besides this, all the furniture talked as well. When he opened the door it made remarks about the way he did it, which were not at all polite. If he sat on the arm of a chair, it pointed out to him in a hurt tone that chairs were not intended to be used in that way. When he cut his name on the mahogany dining-table, it shouted abuse at him until he had to paint over the letters to appease it. The windows chatted pleasantly about the weather when the wind blew, instead of rattling; and the fires gossiped when they were lighted, instead of crackling and smoking. He gave up riding his pony after it had told him the history of its childhood for the fifteenth time; and when he found that his gold watch was always telling stories instead of telling the time he had to get rid of that too. As for his six-bladed knife, it wearied him so much by telling him the same thing six times over that he threw it out of the window as far as he could. All this was excessively trying to a boy who had never talked much in the whole of his life; and the worst of it was that he was prevented by magic from running away; so the four weeks came to an end, and he had not found a new toy for the Princess Petulant.

Meanwhile, the little Princess had been waiting, and waiting, and waiting. In all the eight years of her life she had never waited so patiently for anything; and the affairs of the country went on quite smoothly in consequence. When, however, the four weeks were over and Martin did not return with her new toy, Princess Petulant grew tired of being good, and, once more, she lay on the nursery floor and sobbed; and, once more, there was consternation in the royal household. So the King called another council.

"Haven't you got any more sons?" he demanded crossly of the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister shook his head, and owned sadly that he had only one son.

"Then why do you lose him?" said the King, still more crossly. "Does no one know where the Prime Minister's son has gone?"

The councillors looked helplessly at one another. One thought that Martin had gone to Fairyland; another said it was to Toyland; and a third declared he must be with the wymps at the back of the sun. But, as nobody knew how to get to any of these places, the suggestions of his councillors only made the King more annoyed than before. At last, he asked the Queen's advice; and the Queen proposed that the little Princess should attend the council and explain why she was crying. However, when they sent up to the royal nursery for the Princess Petulant, there was no Princess to be seen; and the royal nurses were rushing everywhere in great confusion, trying to find her.

"It is a most extraordinary thing," cried the King, "that we cannot keep anybody in the place! What is the use of children who do nothing but lose themselves? There must be wympcraft in this!"

The Queen only said "Poor children!" and set to work to have the country searched for the missing pair, and sat down to cry by herself until they could be found.

What had really happened was quite simple. While the Princess Petulant was sobbing on the nursery floor, something came through the open window and dropped with a thud just in front of her. This astonished her so much, that she stopped crying and looked up to see what it was. There stood a little pine dwarf, holding his hands to his ears.

"Dear, dear!" crooned the pine dwarf in his soft voice. "What are you making such a noise for?"

"I am crying because Martin has not come back," said the Princess, sorrowfully. "He promised to fetch me a new toy, and he has never broken his promise before. I do wish he would come back. Even if he does n't bring me a new toy, I wish he would come back."

"Ah," said the pine dwarf, smiling, "now I think I can help you. But you must not cry any more; it is almost as bad as the noise they are making in the country where Martin is imprisoned."

"Oh!" cried Princess Petulant, clapping her hands; "do you *really* know where Martin is?"

"Come along with me and see," said the pine dwarf. The next thing the Princess knew was that she was gliding through the air in the most delicious manner possible; and she never stopped until she found herself by the side of the waterfall, that stands at the edge of the country where they make conversation.

"I cannot take you any further," said the pine dwarf; "because there is so much noise down there that it would blow me into little pieces at once. Follow the stream along until it brings you

to a glass palace, and there you will find Martin waiting for you. Whatever you do, though, you must not speak a word to any one until you find him. Do you think you can do this?"

The Princess was thoughtful for a whole minute.

"I can do it if I stop up my ears with cotton wool," she said. "I am quite certain I should speak if I heard any one talking to me."

The pine dwarf smiled again; and a linnet, who had overheard their conversation, kindly offered the Princess a piece of cotton wool from the nest he was making; and she thanked him as charmingly as a Princess should, and immediately stuffed it into her two little pink ears. Then she kissed her hand to the good little pine dwarf, and ran away along the stream; and she never stopped running until she reached the magnificent, glittering glass palace; and there she saw Martin right in the middle of it, sitting at the table with his head in his hands.

"I do believe he is crying!" thought Princess Petulant; and she very nearly cried too at the mere thought of it, for no one had ever seen the Prime Minister's son cry before. She picked up a stone instead, however, and sent it right through the glass wall of the palace,—for she was in far too great a hurry to go round to the door,—and she made a hole large enough to slip through; and into the room she bounded, where Martin sat thinking about her.

They kissed each other a great many times; and Martin pulled the cotton wool out of her two little pink ears, and told her all that had happened, and how miserable he had been because he could not keep his promise to her, and how dreadfully tired he was of conversation.

"Even now," he added, sadly, "I don't suppose they will let me go with you. Just listen to their stupid voices! I shall have to bear that for the rest of my life."

"Oh, no, you won't!" buzzed the voices in the air. "You can go away as soon as you like. It is quite hopeless to think of making you into conversation; you are the most unconversational prisoner we have ever captured. If the Princess had not put cotton wool in her ears we should have caught her directly; and what splendid conversation she would have made! Unfortunately, she is out of our power now, because she reached you without speaking a word; so you can go off together as soon as you like."

They did not wait to be told twice, but set off at once, hand in hand, and walked straight on until they reached the top of the hill that slopes down into the valley where the Wonderful Toymaker lives. Then they ran a race down the side of the hill; and of course Martin allowed the Princess to win, so she was the first, after all, to see the most wonderful toyshop in the world. It was so wonderful that she actually remained speechless with astonishment, until Martin caught her up; and then they stood side by side and stared at it.

To begin with, it was not a toyshop at all. The whole of the valley was strewn with toys: they lay on the ground in heaps, they were piled high up on the rocks, they hung from the trees and made them look like huge Christmas trees, and they covered the bushes like blossoms: wherever the children looked, they saw toys, toys, toys. And such toys, too! People who have never been to Fairyland can have no idea of the toys that are made by the Wonderful Toymaker; even Martin, who was a friend of the fairies, had never seen anything like them before. As for the Princess Petulant—her large blue eyes were open, and her little round mouth was open, and she could not have spoken a word to please anybody.

Then, suddenly, into the middle of it all stepped the Wonderful Toymaker. Any one who has lived for thousands and thousands of years might reasonably be expected to look old, but the Wonderful Toymaker looked young enough to play with his own toys; when he laughed, the children felt that they should never feel unhappy again; and when he came running towards them, turning coach-wheels on the way, they felt certain that he was only a very little older than themselves. For that is what happens when a man has been making toys for thousands and thousands of years.

"My dear children, how pleased I am to see you!" he cried joyfully. "At last, I shall have some one to play with! Come and look at my two new tops."

He took them by the hands and raced them across the valley to his workshop, which was strewn with gold and silver tools with handles made of rubies; and he took up a gaily painted top and set it spinning by blowing gently upon it three times. As it spun it began to hum a tune, and in the tune they could hear every sound that the world contains,—birds singing and wind whistling, children laughing and children crying, people talking and people quarrelling, pretty sounds and ugly sounds, one after another, until the children were spellbound with astonishment.

"Oh, oh!" cried Princess Petulant, as the top rolled over on its side. "I never heard anything so beautiful before."

"The top is yours, since you like it," said the Wonderful Toymaker, handing it to her with a bow. "Now listen to my other new top."

Then he took up another one, made of burnished copper, and gave it a twist with his fingers, and it began to spin with all its might; and as it spun round, the song it sang was one that could

never be described, for it was full of the sounds that do not exist at all, the sounds that are only to be heard in Fairyland when we are lucky enough to go there. It made the Princess Petulant feel sleepy; but Martin gave a shout of pleasure when it stopped spinning.

"I like that one much better," he said.

"It is the finest toy I have ever made," said the Wonderful Toymaker; "and it is yours because you know how to appreciate it. Now, we will play games!"

They had never played such games in their lives before, nor had they ever had such a delightful playfellow. He put such feelings of joy and happiness into their hearts that the little Princess wondered how she could ever have felt discontented, and Martin never once wanted to stop and dream. They played with toys that would not break, however badly they were treated; they chased one another over the rocks and through the bushes, without getting out of breath at all; and when they could not think of anything else to do, they laughed and laughed and laughed and laughed and laughed. Then they sat down on the grass to rest; and the Wonderful Toymaker sat between them and smiled at them both.

"Now, we will refresh ourselves by eating unwholesome sweets," he said, and he gave a long low whistle. Immediately, they were pelted from all sides by the most delicious, unwholesome sweets that were ever made; but, although they were ever so unwholesome, and although the children ate quantities and quantities of them, they were not in the least bit the worse for it; and when they had eaten all they could, the Wonderful Toymaker filled their pockets for them, and laughed again.

"Won't you stop here always?" he asked them.

The children shook their heads.

"I must go back to mother," said the Princess Petulant. "She must be wondering where I am, now."

"And I have got to be Prime Minister, some day," said Martin, with a sigh.

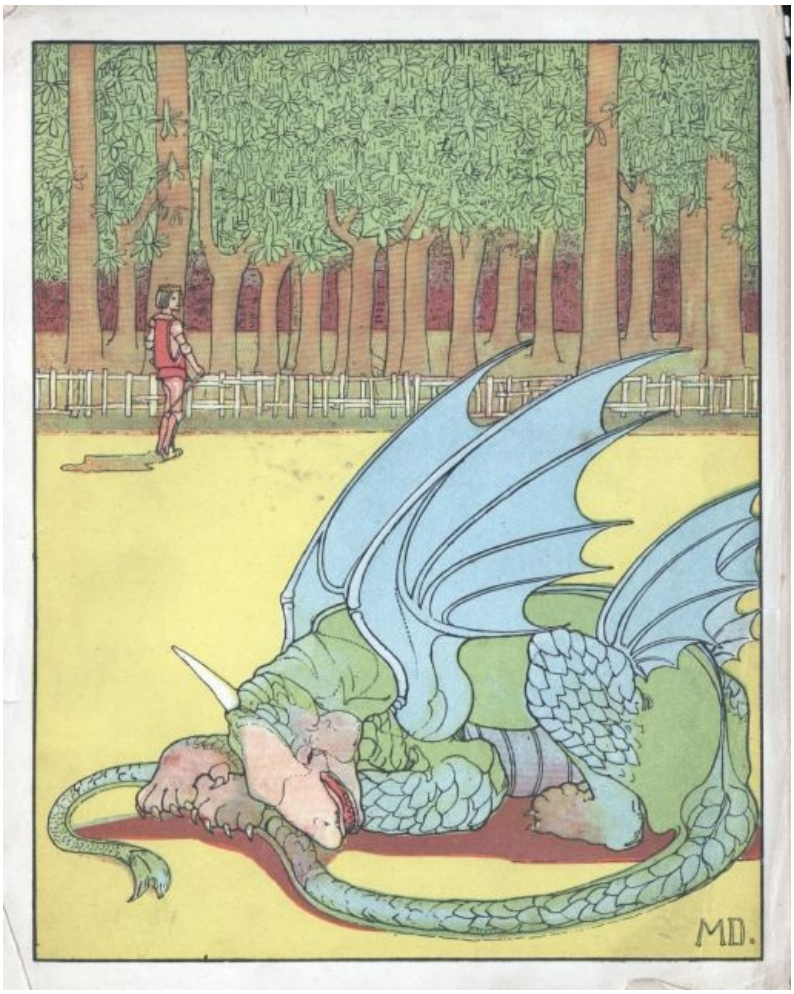
"You will never be Prime Minister," said the Toymaker, just as his father was always saying. "Why can't you both stay with me? Only think of all the games we can have, and the toys we can make, and the unwholesome sweets we can eat! Won't you really stay and play with me?"

However, when he saw that they were quite determined to go home, he made the best of it and asked them whether they would like to go by sea, or by sky, or by land. Martin wanted to go by sky, but when the Princess said she would much prefer to go by land as she had come most of the way by sky, the Prime Minister's son gave in at once and said that he had meant to choose the land road all the time. So the Toymaker fetched two beautiful rocking-horses and helped the children to mount them, and said he should never forget their visit for the rest of his life. He could not have said more than that, for of course he has been living ever since.

So they rode out of the valley and up the hill-side, and they waved their hands to the Wonderful Toymaker who stood looking disconsolately after them, and they wished they could have played with him just a little longer. They had very little time even to wish, however, for the rocking-horses rushed over the ground at such a pace that they could see nothing they were passing; so, after all, they would have been none the wiser if they had come by sky as Martin had wished. Then the townspeople came out of their houses and stared with amazement, as they saw their King's daughter and their Prime Minister's son racing past them on wooden horses; but they had no time, either, to make remarks on the matter before the children were out of sight again, for the wooden horses never stopped until they brought their riders to the palace gates; and then they disappeared and left Martin and the Princess Petulant knocking for admission.

Then there was a hullabaloo! The Queen dried her tears and hugged them both, one after another; and the King dismissed the council which had not helped him in the least; and the Prime Minister was more convinced than ever that his son would never be Prime Minister; and the two children span their tops before the whole court and told the story of their adventures. And it was at once written down, word for word, by the Royal Historian, and that is how it has got inside this book.

The two children never visited the Wonderful Toymaker again; and Martin never became Prime Minister. One day he became King instead; and it was all because he married the Princess Petulant the moment he was grown up. They thoroughly enjoyed life for the rest of their days, and so did everybody else in the kingdom, down to the Prime Minister and the Royal Historian; and this was all because they never lost the wonderful tops which had been given them by the Wonderful Toymaker.



The Professor of Practical Jokes

Years and years and years ago, in a country that has been long forgotten, there lived a king called Grumbelo. In spite of his extremely ugly name, which was certainly no fault of his, he was young, handsome, and talented; and this made it all the more remarkable that he had never thought of seeking a wife. He ruled his country so well that not a single poor or ill-treated person was to be found in the whole of it; and yet, it was the dullest country that has ever existed. The reason for this was plain; the King was all very well in his way, and to be well-governed no doubt has its advantages, but the people were unreasonable and they wanted more than this. They wanted court balls, and court banquets, and royal processions through the streets, with bands playing and flags flying; they wanted more play, and more holidays, and more fun; and all these things, as every one knows well, are only to be had when there is a Queen at court. The King, however, was so well satisfied with himself that it never occurred to him how dreadfully dull his kingdom was growing; and he was exceedingly surprised when a number of the courtiers, headed by the Royal Comptroller of Whole Holidays and the learned Professor of Practical Jokes,—who had been positively out of work ever since his serious young Majesty came to the throne,—waited upon him one morning, with the humble request that he should begin to think about finding a Queen.

"What more can you want?" asked the young King in astonishment. "Surely a King, or at least a King such as I am, is enough for my subjects! I am quite satisfied with myself: is it possible that the country is not equally satisfied?"

"The country is more than satisfied with your excellent Majesty," explained the Comptroller of Whole Holidays. "The country has never been so admirably governed before. It feels, however, that certain other things are almost as important, your Majesty, as wise laws and honest toil; such as—such as whole holidays, for instance."

"And practical jokes," murmured the learned Professor at his side.

His Majesty was silent. It seemed incredible that the country should want anything more than the excellent government of King Grumbelo; but he was fond of his people at heart,—in spite of the dulness to which he had brought them, and so he consented in the end to give them a Queen.

"Go and find me the most beautiful, the most silent, and the most foolish Princess in the world," he said to them. "She must be the most beautiful because I shall have to look at her, and the most silent because I am able to talk for both of us, and the most foolish because I can be wise for her as well as for myself. If you find me a Princess like this I will make her my Queen."

Not long after, the King held a reception for all the beautiful Princesses who could be collected at such a very short notice. There were a hundred and fifty altogether; but although they were without doubt both beautiful and foolish, they never stopped talking for an instant, and not one of them would King Grumbelo have for his Queen. So the Royal Comptroller of Whole Holidays and the learned Professor of Practical Jokes put their heads together once more, and in a few days' time they came again to the King.

"We have heard at last of the Princess who would suit you," they said to him. "She is so beautiful that the trees stop gossiping and the flowers stop breathing when she passes by; and she is so silent that if it were not for the wonderful expression in her eyes it would be impossible to hold any conversation with her at all."

"Ah," said King Grumbelo, nodding his royal head approvingly; "and is she very foolish as well?"

"That she must be, your Majesty," said the Comptroller of Whole Holidays, looking nervously towards the Professor of Practical Jokes, "because, your Majesty,—well, because—"

"Because she has refused to have anything to do with your Majesty," boldly interrupted the Professor.

"What?" cried the King, astounded. "She does not *wish* to be my Queen?"

"Not exactly that, your Majesty," stammered the Comptroller of Whole Holidays; "but she declares she could never marry any one who—who—"

"Who has so ridiculous a name as your Majesty!" said the Professor of Practical Jokes without a moment's hesitation.

King Grumbelo stepped down from his throne and merely smiled.

"That is of no consequence," he observed. "Evidently she knows nothing about me except my unfortunate name, and that I certainly did not give myself. Tell me at once where this wonderful Princess is to be found."

"That is exactly what we do not know, your Majesty," they confessed, reluctantly. "As soon as the Princess heard that your Majesty wished to make her a Queen she fled from the country, and we have not been able to discover where she has hidden herself!"

"No matter," said King Grumbelo, actually omitting to scold them for their stupidity; "it is never difficult to find the most beautiful Princess in the world! Bring me my horse at once; you can make ready for the royal wedding as soon as you please."

The country was very badly governed while the King was away; but it was certainly not dull. Every person in the kingdom was occupied in making preparations for the royal wedding, and it was going to be such a particularly grand royal wedding that the people were kept thoroughly amused by looking forward to it alone. When, however, the last touch had been put to the preparations, and there was positively nothing left for any one to do, the people began to grumble. It was clear that there could not be a marriage if nobody was there to be married, and no tidings had been received of King Grumbelo since he rode away to fetch his bride. There is no doubt that the discontent of the people would have ended in a revolution if the Professor of Practical Jokes had not hit upon a happy idea. "It is true that we cannot have a royal wedding," said the Professor of Practical Jokes; "but we can pretend to have one."

The Comptroller of Whole Holidays was only too delighted to fall in with the idea, and at once issued a proclamation to the effect that the country should take a whole holiday until further notice. After that, the people could not think of grumbling; they gave themselves up to general rejoicing, and pretended, day after day, that the King was being married, until they almost forgot that there was not even a king in the country.

Meanwhile, King Grumbelo was riding by night and by day in search of his beautiful, silent Princess. He rode for many months without discovering a trace of her; but instead of growing tired of his search he only became the more anxious to find her. One day, as he was riding through a wood, he came upon a sweet-smelling hedge, all made of honeysuckle and sweet-briar, so high that he could not climb it, and so thick that he could not see through it.

"Dear me!" thought King Grumbelo, "something charming must be hidden behind so pretty a hedge as this!" He rode along it with his mind full of curiosity until he came to two slender, pink-and-white gates, made entirely of apple-blossom; and through these he could see a fresh-looking garden with green lawns and gravel paths and bright flower-beds, and in the middle of it all a dainty little house made of nothing but rose leaves. The King was so impatient to know who was the owner of such a delightful little dwelling that he knocked at once on the gates for admission;

and a dragon with a singularly mild and harmless expression appeared inside, and asked him gently what he wanted. The King looked at him in surprise; for, although he was decidedly small for a dragon, he was certainly much too large and too clumsy to live in a house made entirely of rose leaves.

"Can you tell me who lives here?" asked King Grumbelo, politely; for, as every one knows, it is always wise to be polite to a dragon however small he may be.

"Oh, yes," answered the dragon, with a wave of his tail towards the house and the garden; "I live here."

"Nonsense!" said the King, forgetting in his surprise to be polite. "You could not possibly live in so small a house as that!"

"If you want to know who lives inside the house you should say so," answered the dragon, in an injured tone. "It is n't likely that a well-bred dragon would live inside anything. You should be more careful in the way you express yourself."

"Well, well," said the King, impatiently, "perhaps you can tell me to whom the house belongs?"

"No, I can't," answered the dragon, with a smile; "because it does n't belong to anybody, you see. It is here because it is wanted, and when it is n't wanted any longer it will cease to be here."

"What a curious house!" exclaimed the King.

"Curious? Not at all!" said the dragon, looking injured again. "It would be much more curious if it were to remain here when it was n't wanted. You should n't make needless remarks."

If King Grumbelo had not been so anxious to find out who did live inside the house he would certainly have ridden away, there and then; but the more he looked at the beautiful garden and the charming little dwelling of rose leaves, the more he longed for an answer to his question. So he kept his temper with difficulty, and turned once more to the aggravating dragon.

"Does anybody live inside the house?" he asked.

"Of course," answered the dragon. "Do they build houses in your country to be looked at? I suppose you can't help it, but I have never been asked so many senseless questions before."

"Answer me one more and I will go away," said King Grumbelo. "Does a beautiful Princess, the most beautiful you have ever seen, live inside the house over there?"

"There is no Princess in the place, be assured of that," answered the dragon, emphatically. "I should not be here if there were; it is a thankless task to keep guard over a Princess; it means nothing but spells and fighting and unpleasantness, and in the end the Princess complains that you have kept the right people away. Oh, no, nothing would induce me to take another place with a Princess. We 've nothing of *that* kind here."

"Then I 'll bid you good-day," said King Grumbelo, for he did not mean to waste any more time. Just as he was going to ride away, however, the door of the little house opened, and out of it stepped the sweetest-looking little lady the world has ever contained. She was so beautiful that as she walked down the path the flowers stopped breathing and the trees stopped gossiping; and she had such wonderful eyes that to look at them was to know everything she was thinking about. She glanced once at the King as he stood outside the gates of apple-blossom, and then she turned aside without speaking a word and passed out of sight among the flower-beds. Then the King knew that his search was over; she was beautiful and silent enough to please him, whether she were foolish or not; and he made up his mind on the spot not to search any more for the disdainful Princess who had run away from him.

"Who is she?" he asked the dragon, eagerly.

"The Lady Whimsical, to be sure," answered the dragon. "What a lot of questions you ask!"

"Then go and tell the Lady Whimsical that if she pleases I would like to speak with her," said King Grumbelo.

The dragon did not move.

"The Lady Whimsical never speaks," he observed. "It would really be much wiser if you were to go away."

"I am not going away," shouted the King, growing angry. "Go and ask her at once if she will receive me, or I will put you out of the way for good and all!"

"Very well," said the dragon, sighing; "I suppose I must. What name?"

"King Grumbelo," answered the King, proudly.

He fully expected that the dragon would fall flat on the ground at the mention of such an important name as his; but the dragon did nothing of the kind.

"It is not a bit of use expecting to come in here with a name like that," he complained. "The Lady Whimsical cannot bear anything ugly, and she has a particular horror of ugly names. I have strict orders never to mention an ugly name in her presence. You had really better go away."

"I am not going away," shouted the King once more. "Go and tell the Lady Whimsical that a great King, who has heard how charming and how gracious she is, would like to make himself known to her."

The dragon consented unwillingly to take this message, and ambled clumsily away among the flower-beds. When he came back, he found the King pacing restlessly up and down.

"Can't you keep still?" growled the dragon. "Your ridiculous name is enough to make any one giddy without—"

"What did the Lady Whimsical say?" interrupted King Grumbelo, impatiently.

"The Lady Whimsical never says," answered the dragon drowsily, as he curled himself up in the sun and closed his eyes; "but she will allow you to look at her for five minutes every morning, at two hours after sunrise."

Two hours after sunrise on the following morning, King Grumbelo was accordingly admitted into the garden beyond the pink-and-white gates of apple-blossom. There sat the Lady Whimsical on the doorstep of her rose-leaf dwelling, and in front of her stood the King.

"You are the most charming person I have ever seen," declared the King.

The Lady Whimsical smiled.

"I never thought I should find any one so charming as you are," said the King.

The Lady Whimsical smiled again.

"Nor so silent," continued the King.

The Lady Whimsical smiled for the third time.

"Nor so—" began the King, and then he paused, for he thought she might possibly object to being called foolish, though foolish she undoubtedly was if she did not wish him to stay longer than five minutes. As he hesitated, the Lady Whimsical burst out laughing and ran inside her little house of rose leaves, and banged the door in his face.

"Time's up," said the dragon, and King Grumbelo went away puzzled. He came back again, however, at the same time on the following morning; and there sat Lady Whimsical on the doorstep of her rose-leaf dwelling, just as though she were expecting him.

"I have thought only of you since yesterday morning," sighed King Grumbelo.

The Lady Whimsical smiled as before.

"I shall think only of you for the rest of my days," declared the King.

The Lady Whimsical smiled even more than before.

"Do you know why I have come all this way to find you?" demanded the King, growing bolder.

The Lady Whimsical shook her head at him, burst out laughing, and ran inside her rose-leaf house as she had done the day before.

Two hours after sunrise on the following morning, the Lady Whimsical was once more seated on her doorstep, and King Grumbelo was once more standing in front of her.

"You are so beautiful that I shall never tire of looking at you," said the King.

Again, the Lady Whimsical only smiled.

"You are so silent that you will always allow me to talk enough for both of us," continued the King.

The Lady Whimsical smiled once more.

"And since you are so foolish as to send me away every morning," said the King, "you must surely be foolish enough to be the Queen of so wise a King as myself."

The Lady Whimsical had never laughed so heartily at anything as she did at these words of King Grumbelo; and even after she had banged the door in his face, he could still hear her laughter as it floated out from the windows of the dainty little house of rose leaves. Now, all this

was very amusing for the Lady Whimsical, who was quite happy as long as she had something to make her smile; but King Grumbelo was not so well satisfied.

It was not amusing to carry on a conversation entirely alone, and he even began to wish secretly that the Lady Whimsical would not answer all his questions by laughing at them. However, the Lady Whimsical showed no signs of answering them in any other way, and at last the King determined that he would make her speak to him just once, and after that she might be as silent as she pleased. So, one morning, when the dragon opened the apple-blossom gates to him as usual, he strode up to Lady Whimsical with a resolute air.

"Lady Whimsical, I want you to come away with me and be my Queen," he said.

She shook her head and smiled.

"Why not?" demanded King Grumbelo.

She smiled again.

"Why not?" shouted King Grumbelo at the very top of his voice.

When the Lady Whimsical shrugged her shoulders and merely smiled again, the King lost his patience completely, which of course was an absurd thing to do, considering that he had come all this way on purpose to find some one who knew how to be silent.

"Will nothing induce you to speak just one word to me?" he exclaimed; and then he ran right away from her mocking laughter, and did not even wait to have the rose-leaf door banged in his face.

It was a very crestfallen King Grumbelo who knocked at the gates of apple-blossom on the following morning. But no one was sitting on the doorstep of the dainty little house of rose leaves; and King Grumbelo's heart gave a great jump.

"Where is she?" he demanded of the dragon, who had followed him along the path and was looking at him with his aggravating smile.

The dragon became reproachful.

"It is your fault," he complained. "I told you she never spoke; why did n't you listen to me? You have driven her away now by your endless questions; she has gone into her house of rose leaves, and the Wise Woman of the Wood alone knows what will bring her out again."

King Grumbelo looked up at the dainty little house of rose leaves, and thought he heard the sound of muffled laughter floating through the open windows. He turned once more to the dragon.

"Where does the Wise Woman of the Wood live?" he asked. But the dragon had curled himself up in the sun and was already half asleep.

"Don't ask so many questions," he mumbled sleepily; and King Grumbelo strode angrily out of the garden. He mounted his horse and allowed it to take him wherever it would, for he had no idea where the Wise Woman of the Wood lived, and one way was as good as another. Towards sundown, a blackbird hopped on to his horse's head and sang to him, and something in its song so reminded the King of Lady Whimsical's laughter that he put out his hand to caress it. No sooner did he touch it, however, than it turned into a squirrel, and scampered away from him so mischievously that he was again reminded of Lady Whimsical and of the way she, too, had run away from him. He put spurs to his horse and chased the squirrel until he overtook it, when it immediately turned into a field mouse and sprang into a large hole in the root of an old elm tree; and after it went King Grumbelo without a moment's hesitation. He left his horse outside, and threw his crown on the ground, and crept into the hole as humbly as though he had not been a King at all. The hole opened into a long, dark passage which grew smaller and smaller as it wound deeper into the earth, so that King Grumbelo could scarcely drag himself along on his hands and knees. It came to an end at last, however, and he crawled into a cavern lighted dimly by glow-worms. The field mouse was just ahead of him, but before he could catch it he found that it was no longer there, and in its place stood a tall witch woman, with a voice like a blackbird's, and eyes like a squirrel's, and hair the colour of a field mouse.

"Tell me," said King Grumbelo, eagerly, "are you the Wise Woman of the Wood?"

"Of course I am," said the witch woman. "Do you think any one else would have been so much trouble to catch? And now that you have caught me, what can I do for you?"

"I want you to remove the spell from the Lady Whimsical, so that she may be able to speak to me," said King Grumbelo. The witch woman laughed outright.

"There is no spell over the Lady Whimsical," she said. "She can talk as much as she pleases."

"Then why has she never spoken to me?" asked the King in astonishment.

"You wished for the most silent woman in the world," said the Wise Woman of the Wood. "Now that you have found her, why do you complain?"

For the first time in his life King Grumbelo felt distinctly foolish.

"I made a mistake," he owned. "I don't want a silent Queen at all."

"Then go back and tell her so," said the witch woman, promptly.

"Do you think that will make her come out from her house of rose leaves?" asked King Grumbelo.

"I should n't wonder," said the Wise Woman of the Wood; "but go and see for yourself. There is no need to thank me, for any one who takes the trouble to follow the Wise Woman of the Wood to her home is welcome to what he may find when he gets there."

Indeed, before he had time to thank her he found himself once more outside the tree, with his crown lying at his feet and his horse standing at his side. He was in such a hurry to get back to the Lady Whimsical, however, that he did not stay to pick up his crown, but rode bareheaded all through the night and reached the hedge of sweet-briar and honeysuckle precisely at two hours after sunrise.

"Dear, dear," complained the dragon; "do you mean to say you 've come back again?"

"I have some good news for you," said King Grumbelo, jovially. "There is no spell over the Lady Whimsical after all!"

"Of course there is n't," said the dragon, as he slowly unfastened the gates of apple-blossom. "Did n't I tell you she was n't a Princess?"

King Grumbelo did not stay to argue the point with him, but walked quickly up the path and stopped in front of the dainty little house all made of rose leaves.

"Lady Whimsical," he said, very gently and humbly, "will it please you to smile on me once more? I have discovered that you are the wisest person in the world, and that I am by far the most foolish."

When the Lady Whimsical looked out of her window and saw the King standing there so humbly without his crown, the tears came right into her wonderful eyes and stayed there.

"Oh!" she cried, "I am so glad you have come back! I was afraid you were never coming back any more."

She held out her two little hands, and the King kissed them. Then she came running down the stairs as fast as she could; and they sat on the doorstep side by side, and talked.

"I feel as though I should never stop talking again! Do you mind?" asked Lady Whimsical.

"I should like nothing better," said King Grumbelo. "But first of all I must confess to you that I have an extremely ugly name. Do you think you can bear to hear it?"

"I know it already!" laughed the Lady Whimsical. "Do you suppose I have n't coaxed it out of my dragon long ago? But I, too, have something to confess to you. Do you think it will make you angry?"

"I am quite sure I shall never be angry again," declared the King.

"Then," said Lady Whimsical, looking extremely solemn, "to begin with, I am not a Princess at all."

"As if I did n't know that!" laughed the King. "The dragon told me, ever so long ago!"

"He did n't tell you the rest, so stop laughing and listen to me," said Lady Whimsical, with severity. "I knew all the while who you were and what you wanted, and I pretended to be under a spell just to tease you."

"I know that, too," said the King, triumphantly. "The Wise Woman of the Wood told me."

"Did she tell you that I came and hid myself here on purpose, because I heard you were looking for a Princess and I wanted you to find me?" asked the Lady Whimsical, softly.

"Nobody told me that," answered King Grumbelo; "I guessed it for myself."

"What will the Professor of Practical Jokes say, when you come home without the Princess you went out to find?" she asked mischievously.

The King had no time to answer, for at that moment the Professor of Practical Jokes—whose profession always required him to arrive unexpectedly in places where he was not wanted—appeared at the apple-blossom gates and answered Lady Whimsical's question himself.

"There is nothing to say," he observed. "There never was a Princess for your Majesty to find, so of course your Majesty has n't found her."

"There never was anybody for you to find except me," added Lady Whimsical, who was nodding at the Professor as though she had known him all her life. "The other Princess was a practical joke, don't you see. Do you mean to say my dragon did not tell you *that*, too?"

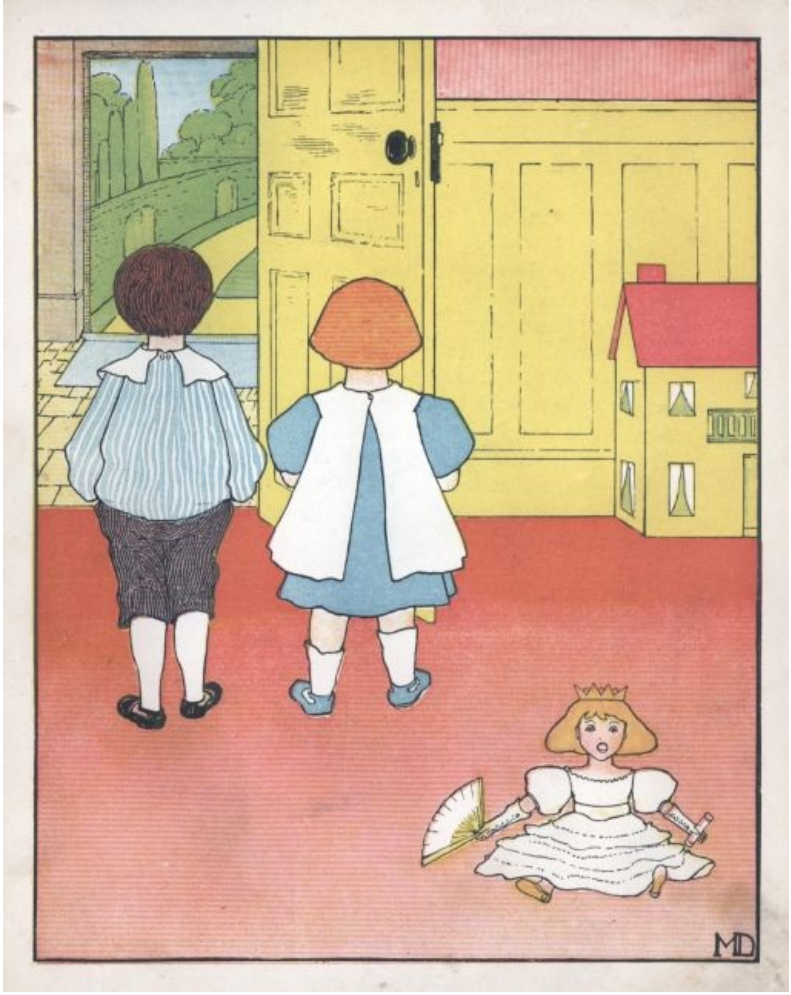
"Then, who are you?" asked King Grumbelo in bewilderment. The Lady Whimsical laughed, as she had laughed every day for a month when she banged the door in the King's face.

"Can't you guess?" she exclaimed. "Why, I am just the daughter of the Professor of Practical Jokes!"

And the King only wondered that he had not guessed it long ago.

As they went out through the apple-blossom gates, the dainty little house of rose leaves vanished away because it was no longer wanted, and so did the beautiful flower-garden, and the hedge of sweet-briar and honeysuckle, and the sleepy good-natured dragon. They had no trouble in getting home, for the Wise Woman of the Wood had a hand in the matter, and the road came racing towards them as fast as an express train; all they had to do was to stand quite still and wait until King Grumbelo's country came hurrying along, which was the most convenient way of travelling any one could possibly invent. When the city reached them they found they were just in time to be married, for the people were on the point of celebrating their wedding for the hundred and first time; so the King and Queen were married almost before they knew it themselves, and certainly before the people discovered that somebody was really being married at last. This, however, was not at all surprising, for the real wedding was very much the same as all the make-believe ones, except that it took a little longer because the King and Queen were not so used to being married as the people were to marrying them.

After that, every one was as happy as it was possible to be. The country had grown so accustomed to being frivolous that it never became serious again; and the King never made another law, because the people were so fond of Lady Whimsical that they did everything she told them, and therefore no laws were needed. The result of all this happiness was that nobody in the kingdom ever grew old; and the Lady Whimsical who sits and laughs on her throne at this very moment is the same Lady Whimsical who sat and laughed on the doorstep of her rose-leaf house, years and years and years ago.



The Doll that came straight from Fairyland

The country was celebrating the tenth birthday of the Prince Perfection. That particular country always celebrated the tenth birthday of its princes and princesses, but never before had it gone so completely wild with joy. The fireworks began punctually at sunrise, and so did everything else that was worth beginning; and the happy shouts of the people made conversation quite impossible, except in the royal family, which was fully accustomed to being shouted at whenever the country had a whole holiday. The Prince had five hundred and fifty-four birthday presents, and his Secretaries spent all their summer holidays in writing letters to acknowledge them; and every child in the kingdom who was of the same age as the Prince was allowed to come to the palace gates and receive a royal smile and a large box of barley sugar from Prince Perfection himself. In the afternoon, the Prince drove through the streets over a carpet of flowers and smiled without stopping; and by his side sat the little Princess Pansy, who was not smiling at all, for she had no birthday and no presents, and two years was a long time to wait before she, too, should be ten years old. Still, she was so fond of the Prince Perfection that she would not have let him guess for a moment that she felt envious of him, although this he was in no danger of doing, for he was so brimful of happiness that he had no time to think about his sister at all. Truly, it is worth while to be ten years old if one is a Prince! In the evening there was a banquet of a hundred and twenty courses, which was the exact number of months in the Prince's life; and the two children sat at the head of the table between their royal parents, and managed to keep awake until the moment arrived to cut the birthday cake.

That was when the catastrophe occurred. At the moment nobody suspected that it was going to be a catastrophe at all. It seemed the most fortunate thing in the world that the Prince's godmother, the Fairy Zigzag, should manage to arrive just in time to drink her godson's health. Most people would think that a catastrophe was far more likely to have occurred if the King and Queen had forgotten to invite the Fairy Zigzag. That only shows how little most of us know about fairy godmothers. The truth is that the Fairy Zigzag was not like other godmothers at all. She did not like banquets and she did not like noise; and she would much sooner have sent her present by post. It would never have done, however, to refuse the Queen's invitation, for that is what no fairy godmother has ever been known to do; so she came at the very last minute with a very bad grace, and she meant to go away again as soon as she could.

Bang! What a noise she made as she came down the chimney in a cloud of blue smoke! If she

had not been quite so cross she would have arrived through the window in her best chariot drawn by sea-gulls; but she was determined to take as little trouble as possible over the matter, and no one could take less trouble over anything than to come straight down the chimney.

"Oh!" said every one with a little scream; and the Prince was so startled that he cut an extremely crooked slice of cake. As soon as the blue smoke cleared away, however, and he saw that it was his fairy godmother, he recovered his good manners without any difficulty, and walked across the room to greet her.

"I am delighted to see you, dear godmother," said Prince Perfection with his best birthday smile, which he had been saving up all day on purpose. "Would you like to have a piece of cake?"

His parents beamed with pleasure at the charming manners of Prince Perfection; and the little Princess rubbed the sleep out of her eyes, and wondered how long it would take to live through two whole years, so that she might have a birthday party and a birthday cake, and a visit from her fairy godmother. The Fairy Zigzag, however, did not seem at all impressed by the charming manners of her godson.

"I never eat cake," she said, without giving so much as a look at the crooked slice of cake which the Prince was handing her on a real gold plate. Her godson put down the cake immediately, and took up a silver goblet filled to the brim with sparkling ginger-beer.

"You have come just in time, dear godmother, to drink my health," he said, just as politely as ever.

"I never drink healths," said the Fairy Zigzag, frowning. "I have plenty of my own, thank you. What's the matter with your health that you want every one to drink it up? You 'd better keep it: it may come in useful, later on."

This was such an entirely new view of the matter that a complete silence fell on every one in the room; and all the guests put down their glasses of ginger beer, and stared into them to see if the Prince's health was floating about on the top. In the midst of the pause, the Fairy Zigzag stalked to the table, nodded to the royal parents, and took the seat that had been reserved for her at the Queen's right hand.

"So good of you to come," murmured the Queen, nervously. "We never thought you would give us so great a pleasure."

"Oh, didn't you? Then, why did you invite me?" snapped the fairy godmother. The Queen said nothing, for she did not know what to say. The King did his best to put matters right.

"The Prince has been looking forward to your visit all day," he hastened to say. "The dear boy has hardly known how to wait until this evening."

"Rubbish," said the Fairy Zigzag, laughing most unpleasantly. "It is quite time for the dear boy to be in bed. What is that other child doing, over there?"

She pointed with her wand at the little Princess Pansy, whose eyes were now so full of sleep that she could hardly keep them open. When, however, she saw the Fairy Zigzag pointing at her, she instantly became wide awake, and grew quite pink with pleasure at being noticed. It was the first time any one had noticed her all that day; but of course, one must expect to be forgotten when it is somebody else's birthday.

"Oh!" cried Princess Pansy, holding out both her hands to the cross old Fairy Zigzag. "Are you really a fairy godmother? I have never seen a real fairy before, and I am so glad you have come!"

The King and Queen were horrified at the familiar way in which the little Princess was speaking to such an important guest as the fairy godmother. It was true that she was only eight years old, but it was quite time she learnt some of the charming manners for which her brother the Prince was so remarkable. If the Fairy Zigzag had turned her into a toad, or a marble statue, or something chilly like that, they would not have been in the least surprised. But the Fairy Zigzag did nothing of the sort. She just took the two hands the Princess Pansy held out to her, and looked her full in the face; and directly she did that all the crossness faded out of her own, and instead of being just a disagreeable old fairy she suddenly appeared quite good-natured and pleasant. This, indeed, was no wonder; for it would have been difficult to look at the little Princess without feeling happier for it. The King and Queen, however, mistook her silence for anger.

"Pray forgive her," they said, tremblingly. "She is so young, and she doesn't know any better. We have tried in vain to teach her good manners. Doubtless, when she is as old as the Prince Perfection she will have learnt to be as polite as he is."

"It is to be hoped not," said the Fairy Zigzag, turning once more to the royal parents. "And if I know anything about it, she will never be as polite as the Prince Perfection. That child is a real child, and none of us will ever make her anything else. Now, I don't mean to waste any more time; so come here, godson, and tell me what you would like for a birthday present."

The Prince Perfection did not know what to say. He longed to ask for a steamboat that went by real steam, or a cannon that would fire real gunpowder, or a balloon that would take him wherever he wished to go; but he felt that only an ordinary boy would have asked for such things as these, and Prince Perfection had always been told by his nurses that he was not an ordinary boy.

"Please give me whatever you like, dear godmother," he said, and hoped very much that it would be a steamboat with real steam.

"The dear boy does not like to appear greedy," said the Queen.

"Fiddlesticks!" said the Fairy Zigzag, and then she pointed again at the little Princess Pansy. "If I were to give *you* a present, do you think you would know what to choose?" she asked her, smiling.

"Oh, how beautiful!" exclaimed Princess Pansy, clapping her hands. To have a present without a birthday was more than she had ever believed possible.

"What will you have?" asked the Fairy, raising her wand. The Princess did not stop to think.

"I will have a wax doll, please, with blue eyes and yellow hair and pink cheeks, dressed in a white silk frock with lots of little frills," she said, rapidly. "And, if you *could* manage it," she added, glancing sideways at the Prince, her brother, "I think I should like one that doesn't melt when you put it near the fire."

"I think I can manage it," said the Fairy Zigzag, and down came her wand with a sharp tap on the table. Princess Pansy gave a cry of delight. In front of her lay the most beautiful wax doll any little girl of eight years old has ever possessed. She had blue eyes and yellow curls and pink cheeks; she was dressed in a white silk frock with rows and rows of little frills; she had a gold crown perched on her head, and she wore high-heeled shoes on her dainty feet; she had a real pocket with a real lace handkerchief sticking out of it; she carried a fan in one hand and a scent bottle in the other; and she actually possessed real six-buttoned gloves, which could be drawn on and off her little hands. Princess Pansy was breathless. She had never seen anything so beautiful before.

"You must thank the Fairy Zigzag," whispered the King and Queen. The little Princess gave a sigh and looked up; it seemed so stupid to say "Thank you" for such a superb dolly as hers. After all, she had to say nothing whatever, for the Fairy Zigzag was no longer there; she had gone away without a chariot, or a cloud of blue smoke, or even a bang!

"She has given nothing to her godson," said the courtiers to one another; and they fully expected that Prince Perfection would fly into a passion. However, Prince Perfection did not fly into a passion. He looked at the little Princess as she laughed with joy over her beautiful new doll; he thought just once of the steamboat that would have gone by real steam, and the cannon that would have fired real gunpowder, and the balloon that would have taken him wherever he wished to go; and then he remembered that he was ten years old and a Prince, and he flung back his head and began to whistle.

"It doesn't matter," he said, indifferently. "I have five hundred and fifty-four presents upstairs, and I don't care for dolls."

Little Princess Pansy had never been so contented in the whole of her life. The palace seemed a different place to her, now that it contained the doll that had come from Fairyland; and she immediately named her the Lady Emmelina, which was the most important name she could remember on the spur of the moment. From that day the Princess and her doll were never separated. When the Prince and Princess went for a drive, the Lady Emmelina sat up stiffly between them; when the Professors came to give the children their lessons, they found that they had to give them also to a little lady in a white silk frock with rows and rows of little frills, who stared at them solemnly with her large, impassive blue eyes, and never answered a word to any of their questions. Princess Pansy no longer wished to be ten years old; she no longer wished for anything: she had everything she wanted in the unchangeable Lady Emmelina. For the Lady Emmelina never varied; the Princess might have as many moods as she pleased, but the Lady Emmelina merely smiled. For a constant companion, it would have been difficult to find any one more delightful than the Lady Emmelina. The Prince Perfection, however, took a very different view of the matter. Thanks to the Lady Emmelina, he had no one to play with. He had never been left so much to himself in his life, and in spite of his excellent opinion of himself he found himself extremely dull. He could no longer play cricket, since the Princess was not there to bowl for him; it was no fun to play at soldiers if the Princess was not there to be on the losing side; he could not pretend to be the Royal Executioner if the Princess was not there to be executed. To be sure, he had five hundred and fifty-four birthday presents; but what consolation could they afford him when he was still without a steamboat that went by real steam? The Lady Emmelina was the cause of all his misfortunes, and he could not bear the Lady Emmelina. It was the Lady Emmelina who had come in the place of his real steamboat and his real cannon and his real balloon; it was the Lady Emmelina who had bewitched the little Princess, his sister, and robbed him of his best playfellow. And the Prince Perfection, whatever his faults were, was extremely fond of the little Princess.

"If you will come and play cricket with me, I will let you have the first innings," he said to her in despair one sunny afternoon.

"It is far too rough a game for the Lady Emmelina," answered Princess Pansy, shaking her head.

"Then choose any game you like, only do come and play with me," begged the Prince. He had never had to beg so hard for anything before, for the little Princess had been his willing slave as long as he could remember.

"We cannot possibly come this afternoon," answered Princess Pansy. "The Lady Emmelina is going to have a tea-party. I will ask her to invite you if you like."

The Prince, however, would have nothing to do with Lady Emmelina's tea-party. He went and sat by the pond instead, and thought how fine his steamboat would have looked if it had gone puffing across the water with real smoke coming out of the funnel. The mere thought of it made him dislike the Lady Emmelina so much more than before that he made up his mind to be revenged on her. Now, this was an extremely bold thing even to think about, for she had come straight from Fairyland, and it is never safe to meddle with toys that have come straight from Fairyland. For all that, the Prince crept into the nursery that very same night, when everyone in the palace was asleep, and prepared to have his revenge on the waxen Lady Emmelina. There she sat in all her magnificence on the nursery table, with both her gloves tightly buttoned, and both her pointed toes turned upwards. The very sight of her annoyed the jealous little Prince. He pattered across the floor on his bare feet, and seized the Lady Emmelina by the arm. She greeted him with a shrill and angry shriek.

"How dare you? Let me go at once!" she screamed. The Prince was so surprised that he dropped her on the table again. The Lady Emmelina, shaking all over with fury, began smoothing out her rows of crumpled frills.

"The idea of such a thing!" she gasped. "I declare, you have actually pushed my crown on one side, and there is no looking-glass in the room. I have a great mind to report you to Fairyland."

"You may do what you like," answered the Prince, who was no coward and had recovered from his astonishment. "You have bewitched the Princess Pansy, and I mean to hide you where no one will be able to find you."

No sooner had he uttered these words than the Lady Emmelina turned extremely pale. If he had tried to melt her at the fire or to cut off her head with the scissors, which was the kind of thing he usually did to his sister's dolls, she knew that she would have been safe; but he had threatened to do the one thing that even the fairies who protected her could not prevent him from doing. Her only hope was that he would hide her somewhere so that she should have time to escape before sunrise; for after sunrise all her powers of moving or speaking would desert her and she would be nothing but a wax doll again. She need not have been afraid, for the Prince did not mean to waste any more time than he could help; and the next moment she was being carried swiftly out of the room under his arm. Downstairs ran the little Prince, with his hand over the Lady Emmelina's mouth to prevent her from screaming; and along the marble passages he hastened, until he came to a little door that led into the garden, and this he unlocked with the diamond key that usually hung on the nail on the nursery wall. It is not pleasant to run without shoes along a gravel path, and Prince Perfection soon turned aside on to the lawn, and trotted over the grass in search of a hiding place for the Lady Emmelina. A large white stone lay in the middle of the lawn and gleamed in the moonlight. The Prince did not remember having seen it there before; indeed, it was not likely that the royal gardeners would have allowed it to remain in such a place for a moment. He stooped down and rolled it on one side, and found that it covered a neat round hole lined with green moss. It was the very place for the Lady Emmelina; and he laid her gently in the very middle of it.

"I hope you will not be very cramped," said Prince Perfection, politely.

Lady Emmelina lay motionless on the mossy ground, and stared at the moon. No one would have thought that she was the same dolly who had screamed so angrily in the nursery ten minutes ago.

"It is the nicest place I could have found in the whole garden," continued Prince Perfection a little anxiously. After all, she was a very beautiful doll, and she had come straight from Fairyland.

Still the Lady Emmelina stared intently at the moon, with her large blue eyes.

"I should never have thought of putting you anywhere if you had not bewitched the Princess," declared Prince Perfection, feeling still more uncomfortable. It was not easy to go on apologising to some one who persisted in staring at the moon just as though no one was speaking to her.

"Why did you bewitch the Princess Pansy?" cried the little Prince. "If you will promise not to bewitch her any more, I will take you straight back to the nursery."

But although he waited eagerly for her answer, not a word came from the Lady Emmelina; and the Prince ceased to feel sorry for her, and gave up apologising.

"It is your own fault, and I don't care a bit," he said, impatiently; and he rolled the large white stone over the hole, until the doll from Fairyland was completely hidden. It is a wonder the fairies did not interfere; but perhaps they had their reasons.

There was no peace for any one in the palace when the Princess discovered that the Lady Emmelina was gone; and she discovered it before breakfast the very next morning. It was in vain that the Prince offered to give her his five hundred and fifty-four birthday presents if she would only stop crying: the Princess wanted her doll from Fairyland, and nothing but her doll from Fairyland would console her. Every one who loved the little Princess—and that was every one in the palace—began looking for the Lady Emmelina; but no one succeeded in finding a trace of her. This, however, was by no means so surprising as it sounds, for the large white stone was no longer in the middle of the lawn, and the neat round hole lined with green moss had disappeared just as completely. The Prince was no less unhappy than his sister. Nothing was turning out as he had expected; for, instead of being ready to play with him again, the little Princess was far too miserable to think of playing at all. He tried all day long to coax her into a good humour; but bedtime came, and he had not won a single smile from her. It was then that he made up his mind to go out into the world and find the Lady Emmelina. So that night the Prince once more unhooked the diamond key from the nail on the nursery wall, and stole into the garden in the moonlight. This time, however, he had not forgotten to put on his shoes and stockings and his second-best court suit, for when a prince goes out into the world he must at least do his best to look like a prince. When he came to the lawn he stopped and stared with amazement; for there, in the moonlight, lay the large white stone under which he had hidden the doll from Fairyland. Overjoyed at reaching the end of his journey so soon, he ran forward and rolled the stone on one side. There, to be sure, was the neat round hole lined with green moss; but in the middle of it sat a large grasshopper, and not a sign of the Lady Emmelina was to be seen.

The Prince was so disappointed that he had the greatest difficulty in remembering that he was ten years old, and that crying was therefore out of the question. The grasshopper was winking at him as though he understood how he felt.

"I guessed you would come," he said, in a kind voice. "I just waited on purpose."

"Where has she gone?" asked Prince Perfection, dolefully.

"Ask me something easier than that," answered the grasshopper. "I didn't see her go. I happened to look in as I was passing; and when I found she was gone I thought I'd just wait and tell you she was gone, don't you see?"

"What is the good of waiting to tell me something I could have found out for myself?" asked Prince Perfection. "If you can't help me to find her, you might just as well not be there."

"I didn't say I couldn't help you to find her," said the grasshopper, looking hurt; "though if you are going to be cross about it I don't know that I will."

"Oh," cried Prince Perfection, "I will never be cross again, if you will help me to find the Lady Emmelina."

"Then why did you hide her in the first place?" asked the grasshopper. The Prince looked foolish.

"Because I had no one to play with," he said.

"If you do find her," continued the grasshopper, "do you think the Princess will play with you again?"

"Oh, no," sighed the Prince. "She will only want to play with the Lady Emmelina."

"Then don't try to find the Lady Emmelina," said the grasshopper, promptly.

"I must," said Prince Perfection. "Anything is better than seeing the Princess cry. I took her doll away, you see, and it is my fault that Pansy is so unhappy. I don't mean to go home again until I have found the Lady Emmelina."

"Right you are," said the grasshopper. "You're the man for me. I'll help you as far as I can, but you must come down here first; I can't go on shouting like this."

"Down there?" said the Prince. "The hole is much too small."

"Nonsense! Come and try," said the grasshopper, and indeed, before he tried at all, the Prince found himself inside the neat round hole, with the mossy walls reaching far above his head, and the grasshopper shaking hands with him.

"Feel all right?" asked the grasshopper. "Sit down and get your breath. These sudden changes are apt to be exhausting if you are not used to them."

"Are you used to them?" asked the Prince, when he had recovered enough breath to speak.

"Dear me, yes!" said the grasshopper with a chuckle. "When I get up in the morning I never

know how many changes I may not have to go through before the day is over. Don't think I am complaining though, for of course it is part of my profession."

"What is your profession?" asked the Prince.

"Chief Spy in Particular to the Fairy Queen," answered the grasshopper. "It's very hard work, I can tell you; some days I haven't a moment to myself. Of course, I find out a great deal that nobody else knows, which is always amusing. Yesterday, for instance, if I hadn't been a cockchafer, a doll's teapot, a garden seat, a rose tree and a nursery table, I shouldn't know as much as I do about you and the Lady Emmelina."

"Then please tell me what I must do in order to find the Lady Emmelina," begged the Prince.

"By all means," said the grasshopper, cheerfully. "Go straight on without turning to the right or the left; and whenever some one greets you, ask him politely to give you what he is thinking about, and then you will be able to find the Lady Emmelina."

It seemed rather a roundabout way of finding anything; but, as the grasshopper disappeared directly he had finished speaking, there was nothing to do but to follow his advice. The first part was easy enough, for just in front of him the Prince noticed a little door in the green mossy wall, which he was quite sure had not been there before; and through this he straightway walked. He immediately found himself in a blaze of sunshine on the sea-shore, with green waves stretching before him as far as he could see, and nothing on either side of him except the flat stony beach. "It's all very well to tell any one to go straight on, but how am I to get across the sea?" thought the Prince. He had never been afraid of anything in his life, however, so he ran down the beach and put one foot into the white foam at the edge.

"Good-day to you!" said a voice. "Who are you, and what do you want?"

"I am Prince Perfection, and I want what you are thinking about," answered the Prince, boldly, although he could not see who was speaking.

"That is a strange thing to want," said the voice; "for I was just thinking about a little steamboat that would go by real steam; and how you can possibly want such a thing as that is more than I can understand."

At that moment there was a faint puffing sound in the distance, which came nearer and nearer; and presently over the waves rode a most perfect little steamboat, with real smoke coming out of the funnel. It was just large enough for the Prince, and he stepped on board directly it came near enough, and put his hand on the little brass wheel.

"Thank you very much," he said as loudly as he could, in the hope that the owner of the mysterious voice would hear him. Nobody answered him; but he wondered why an old crab, who was shuffling along the beach, chose that particular moment to wink at him.

Certainly, no one has ever reached the shore on the opposite side of the sea so quickly as Prince Perfection in his real steamboat. It was a pleasure to hear it puff as it cut through the big green waves; and he stood like a real captain with his hand on the little brass wheel, and steered it right into a bay that seemed waiting on purpose for it. It was very sad that it should disappear directly he stepped out of it; but as it had come from nowhere at all because he wanted it, he could not complain because it went back to nowhere at all when he had done with it. So he sighed twice, and then walked straight ahead as before, up the beach and over a flat grassy plain, covered with yellow poppies and gorse bushes and purple heather. Nothing could have been easier than this; and Prince Perfection had not the slightest wish to turn to the right or the left, until he came suddenly upon a thick clump of gorse bushes which lay in the very middle of his path. He made two attempts to clamber over it; but, each time, he was caught in the gorse bushes and was scratched all over; and even if one is ten years old and a prince, it is hard to bear being scratched all over by a gorse bush. Prince Perfection began to wonder if it would be very wrong to follow the path to the right until he should come to an opening, but before he had time to decide such a difficult question a shrill voice broke the silence once more.

"Good-day to you," it said. "Who are you, and what do you want?"

"I am Prince Perfection, and I want what you are thinking about," answered the Prince, boldly.

"How ridiculous!" laughed the voice. "Why, I am thinking about a cannon, a real cannon that will fire real gunpowder. Surely, you can want nothing so useless as that?"

"Indeed, I do," said the Prince; and there stood the most perfect little real cannon, loaded with real shot, and in his hand was a lighted match ready to fire it with. He lost no time in pointing it straight at the clump of furze bushes, and the real gunpowder made a flash and a splutter, and the shot went right into the middle of the yellow gorse and blew it all away so completely that not a trace of it was left, except one small bush that the Prince had no difficulty in jumping over. The cannon went back to nowhere at all, just as the steamboat had done.

"Thank you very much," said the Prince Perfection as loudly as he could; and again no one

answered him. He was much surprised, however, when he looked back and found that the gorse bush had disappeared as soon as he had jumped over it. After that he walked on for a long way; and just as he was beginning to feel tired, and the sun was beginning to think about setting, he tumbled right up against a big iceberg. It is not usual for icebergs to drop down suddenly in the middle of the road, but that is what this particular iceberg did, and that is why the Prince tumbled against it.

"Dear me," sighed Prince Perfection, for even a prince's legs are not very long when he is only ten years old, and it is not pleasant to have to climb an iceberg at the end of a long walk. There was no help for it, however, for there was the iceberg waiting to be climbed; so the little Prince went straight at it as bravely as he could. Any one who is accustomed to climbing icebergs will at once know how difficult Prince Perfection found it; and he tried seven times without being able to get up a single yard of it.

"Good-day to you," said a voice, which sounded as though it came from the very middle of the iceberg. "Who are you, and what do you want?"

"I am so glad you have come!" exclaimed the Prince; although, for that matter, no one had come at all. "I am Prince Perfection, and I want what you are thinking about."

"There certainly is no accounting for tastes," observed the voice. "I was just thinking about a real balloon that would take me wherever I wanted to go; and what use that would be to you I cannot imagine."

The Prince did not trouble to explain what use it would be to him, for at that very instant the balloon floated down towards him, and he stepped into it as a matter of course. It was far more beautiful than anything he had ever been able to imagine, however; and the movement of it was so delicious that he fell sound asleep the moment it began to carry him upwards; and he could not keep awake long enough even to thank the sender of it. When he awoke, he was lying on the grass under a silver birch tree, and in front of him was a red brick fort with battlements and a drawbridge. It was so like the fort in which he kept all his tin soldiers in the nursery at home that he was not at all surprised when a sentinel without a head came out in answer to his knock. He remembered melting off the head of that particular tin soldier only two days before, and he was much relieved when he showed no signs of recognising him. As the poor tin fellow had no head, this was hardly to be wondered at.

"Make haste, and let down the drawbridge," said the Prince, banging away at the wooden gate with his fists; "I want to see if the Lady Emmelina is inside."

He thought he could do what he liked with his own property, but the soldier without a head was evidently of another opinion. He did not attempt to let down the drawbridge, and he answered the Prince in a rhyme which he seemed to have made up for the occasion:

"What a ridiculous clatter
Over *such* a small matter!
I was peacefully napping
When you came with your tapping;
You are vastly mistaken
If you think I've forsaken
My official position
Because no physician
Could give me a cranium
Like a pot of geranium.
And these are my orders—
No one passes these borders
Unless he is able,
In song, rhyme, or fable,
The real, true intention
Of his coming to mention!"

To be sure, it was not much of a rhyme, but it was not bad for a soldier who had no head. When he had finished it he went away again, and the Prince sat down disconsolately under the silver birch tree. He felt more convinced than before that the Lady Emmelina was inside the fort; but although he thought as much as most people would over an ordinary arithmetic lesson, he could not think of a single rhyme.

"Good-day to you," said a voice that seemed to come from the very top of the birch tree. "Who are you, and what do you want?"

"I am Prince Perfection, and I want what you are thinking about," answered the Prince, although he hardly hoped, this time, that he would get what he wanted.

"Do you really mean it?" remarked the voice. "I was just composing a song about a charming little lady in a white silk frock, who lives behind that drawbridge over there. It is not very likely you can want that!"

"Hurrah!" shouted the little Prince, standing on his head for joy. "Then, it is the Lady Emmelina!"

"The fact is," continued the voice, without noticing the interruption, "I always make poetry when there is nothing else to do. So does the tin soldier. He can't help it, poor fellow, because he has lost his head, you see. If you have lost your head you cannot be expected to make anything except poetry."

"Have you lost your head, too, may I ask?" said the Prince, as politely as he could put such an awkward question.

"For the time being I have no head to lose," answered the voice. "That is how I happened to be inventing a song just as you came by. Are you sure there is nothing else you would like better? A nightmare, for instance, or a thunder-storm?"

The Prince was sure he would like nothing better; and the voice in the birch tree sang him the following song, very softly:

"Here I've come as I was bidden
To seek the dolly you have hidden—
The dolly with the yellow hair,
With cheeks so pink and eyes so fair,
With hands that move and feet that stand—
The doll that came from Fairyland.

"Do you pretend you've never seen her,
The dainty Lady Emmelina?
I pray you let the drawbridge down,
I'm ten years old and I can frown!
I mean to find her—here's my hand!
I want the doll from Fairyland.

"The song I'm singing—let me mention—
Is not a song of my invention;
It comes like steamboats sometimes do,
Like real balloons and cannons too;
It comes like all that's real and grand,
All the way from Fairyland!"

"Why," said Prince Perfection, "one would almost think you had made up the song on purpose for me!"

What the birch tree thought about it has never been known, for when the little Prince looked up again it had gone away to nowhere at all.

The soldier without a head let the drawbridge down, when he heard the song that had come all the way from Fairyland. The Prince did not stop to thank him, but hastened into the fort and looked round anxiously for the Lady Emmelina. He had very little difficulty in finding her, however, for she occupied nearly the whole of the ground floor. She was sitting up against the wall, supported on one side by an ambulance waggon, and on the other by a camp-fire which, strange to say, had not even singed her elegant fan, although it burned with the brightest of red and yellow flames.

"There you are! Will you come home with me?" said the Prince, rather nervously; for he was not much bigger than she was, now, and he was a little afraid lest she should have unpleasant recollections of the neat round hole lined with green moss. To his relief, she seemed quite glad to see him.

"To be sure I will," said the Lady Emmelina. "I should not be fit to be seen if I stayed much longer in this dusty old place!"

So they went home together, and of course that did not take them long, for the way home is always the shortest way in the world. To begin with, the balloon was waiting for them as they came out of the fort; and it carried them all the way to the sea-shore before they had time to notice that they were in a balloon at all. When they reached the sea-shore they found that the steamboat was waiting for them, too; and the steamboat landed them on the opposite side of the sea even before they knew that they had stepped out of the balloon; and after that the Prince never knew what did happen, for the next thing he noticed was that he had grown to his proper size again, and was standing once more in the royal nursery with the Lady Emmelina tucked under his arm. There at the table in the middle of the room sat the little Princess Pansy, and in front of her was a large bowl of bread and milk.

"Oh! Oh! You have come back at last!" cried the Princess, jumping down from her chair. "I am so glad, I am so glad!"

"I thought you would be glad to see her again," said Prince Perfection, and he handed her the doll from Fairyland.

"I didn't mean *that*!" exclaimed the little Princess. And then, sad as it is to relate, they both forgot all about the Lady Emmelina; and the next minute, she found herself lying face downwards on the floor, while the Prince and Princess hugged each other. And it was of no use for the royal nurses to talk about bread and milk, for not a thing would the two children touch until they had talked as much as they wanted.

"You will not cry any more, now that you have the Lady Emmelina to play with, will you?" said Prince Perfection, who, strange to say, did not feel in the least bit jealous of the Lady Emmelina as long as she lay face downwards on the floor.

"I don't think I want to play with the Lady Emmelina much," answered Princess Pansy. "I think I would rather play with you. It has been so dull while you have been away." For, although the Prince did not know it, he had been away for a whole month.

"I am delighted to hear it," cried the little Prince. "Let us play at Royal Executioner, and *you* shall be executioner."

"Oh, no," said the little Princess. "I would *much* sooner be executed."

As they disputed the point politely, the grasshopper suddenly jumped in at the window and nodded at them.

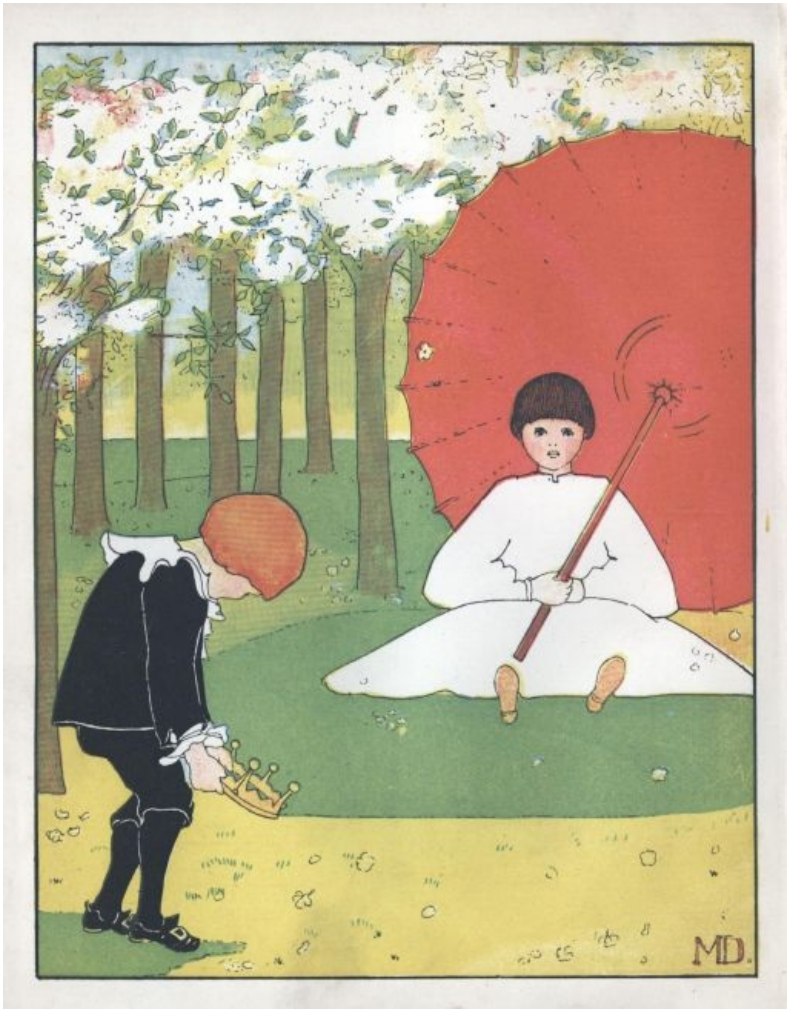
"Good-day to you," he said. "I was just thinking at that moment about a steamboat and a cannon and a real balloon. Strange, wasn't it?"

Immediately the Prince found a steamboat in his right hand and a cannon in his left; while outside the window floated a charming balloon, just large enough for himself and Princess Pansy.

"Wait a minute," cried the Prince, as the grasshopper jumped on to the window-sill again. "I want to tell you all about—"

"No need to do that," chuckled the grasshopper. "You don't suppose I've been a crab and a gorse bush and an iceberg and a silver birch tree for nothing, do you?"

That time he really hopped away to nowhere at all, and the children have never seen him since. This does not matter in the least, however, for they are not likely to want his help again; the Lady Emmelina is always kept in her proper place now, and the Princess is no longer bewitched by her. It is only reasonable to suppose that the Fairy Zigzag had something to do with the change in the Lady Emmelina, but the Fairy Zigzag says that she never troubled herself about it at all. However that may be, the children have never had an unhappy moment since Prince Perfection went out into the world to find the doll that came straight from Fairyland.



THOSE WYMPS AGAIN

There was great consternation in Fairyland, for it was suddenly discovered that the sun had been shining crookedly all the morning. It was consequently two hours later than anybody thought it was; and this, as it happened, was a very serious matter, for all the fairies had been invited to the christening of the little Prince Charming, and it would never do for them to arrive late. Of course, the wymps were at the bottom of it and the sun had no idea that he was not shining quite in his usual way; but no one in Fairyland had time to trouble about that, and, without waiting even for the butterflies to be harnessed, away flew all the fairies in a regular scurry. Now, even fairies are apt to do stupid things sometimes, especially when they are flustered and the wymps have been at work; so there may be some excuse for what they did on that particular morning. The fact is, they were so anxious to arrive in time to give their christening presents to the royal baby, that when they met a christening party coming along the road they never stopped to see whether it was the right christening party or not, but just flew down and presented their gifts to the baby, one after another, as fast as they could speak.

"I give you beauty," said one. "And I, thoughtfulness," said another. "And I, wisdom," said a third. "And I, patience," said a fourth. "And I, contentment," said a fifth; and so on, until all the gifts of Fairyland had been given to the baby in the nurse's arms. Then, when they had quite finished speaking, the poor, flurried little fairies discovered that the baby was the daughter of a poor peasant and his wife, while Prince Charming lived in quite another country, a very long way off. It was a great calamity, no doubt, but nothing could be done, for the fairies had no more gifts left; so they returned very sadly to Fairyland, and hoped that the wymps would not find it out. Of course, the wymps did find it out, for they had arranged the whole thing from the very beginning. Still, the wymps are not nearly so bad as they pretend to be; and when they had finished laughing over their joke they did their best to make things right again by going in large numbers to Prince Charming's christening. They behaved very noisily when they got there; and they ate every bit of the christening cake and ended in giving the baby Prince the only nice gift the wymps have the power to give; and that is the nicest gift in the world, for it is called Laughter. To be sure, there had never been such a topsy-turvey christening party before; but all the guests enjoyed it thoroughly, and that cannot be said of all the parties to which the fairies are invited. The Fairy Queen could not help smiling when she heard what happened. "Never mind!" she said. "Some day, Prince Charming shall have all the gifts of Fairyland, too. Meanwhile, he has something far

better than we should have given him."

The peasant's daughter grew up as beautiful and as wise as all the gifts of Fairyland could make her. Everything she did was as well done as the cleverest people in the world, all put together, could have done it; and everything she said was as wise as the contents of all the books in the King's library. When she cooked the Sunday dinner, she made it taste like a banquet of twenty courses; she had only to look at the flowers in the garden, and they bloomed as luxuriantly as though they had been brought straight from Fairyland. She helped all the village people when they were in a difficulty, for her advice was the very best that could be had; and they soon forgot that she was only a child, and they called her "Little Wisdom" instead of the ordinary name by which she had been christened. She loved to sit by herself in the cherry orchard, and she wondered how the other children could laugh and play when there was so much thinking to be done. She never laughed nor played herself, for the fairies had been so anxious to make her wise and beautiful, that they had not thought of giving her anything so ordinary as happiness. Every one envied her parents for having such a wonderful daughter; but for all that the peasant and his wife were not satisfied.

"It is a great pity," grumbled her father, "that all the gifts of Fairyland should have been wasted on a girl. If the child had been a boy, now, she would have made some stir in the world."

"For my part," sighed her mother, "I would gladly see her lose all the gifts of Fairyland if she would only laugh and cry like other children."

In the meantime the little Prince Charming was growing up without the help of a single gift from Fairyland. Never had the palace contained such an idle, careless little Prince; he laughed at everything that happened, morning, noon, and night; he played tricks on all his Professors instead of learning his lessons, and he could not keep grave long enough even to say the alphabet. He was so determined to look on the bright side of everything, that when people were angry with him he thought it was only their way of being amusing; and when they tried to punish him, he found it such a good joke that they very soon gave up the attempt. The people, one and all, loved the merry little Prince who laughed at life from his royal nursery and refused to grow any older; but the King viewed the matter in quite another light.

"What will become of the country," said his Majesty, "if the boy does not learn to be serious?"

"He is so happy," said the Queen, apologetically. "Is not that enough?"

The King evidently thought it was not nearly enough, for he despatched a page at once to fetch Prince Charming from the nursery. The Prince came whistling into the room, with his hands in his pockets, which was not a princely way of behaving, to begin with.

"You are eleven years old," began the King, solemnly.

"Everybody tells me that," said the Prince, smiling gaily. He supposed grown-up people could not help saying the same thing so often; at all events he did not mean to let it trouble him.

"It is time you learned to be serious," continued the King, still more solemnly.

"To be serious? What is that? Is it a new game?" asked Prince Charming, eagerly.

"Hush!" whispered the Queen, anxiously. "It is what every one has to be,—the Prime Minister, and the Head Cook, and everybody."

"Surely," laughed the little Prince, "if so many people are occupied in being serious there is no need for me to bother about it!"

"You cannot even read," said the King, frowning.

"No; but my Professor can," said Prince Charming. "He can read the longest words in the dictionary without taking breath. When any one in the kingdom can read so beautifully as that, it would surely be impolite to try to imitate him!"

"The poorest children in the kingdom know far more than you do," said the King, who was rapidly losing patience.

"Then there are plenty of people to tell me everything I want to know," smiled the Prince. "What is the use of knowing just as much as everybody else? There would be nothing left to talk about."

The King looked at the Queen in despair.

"It is not the boy's fault," said the Queen soothingly; "you see, the fairies did not come to his christening."

"And the wymps did," sighed the King. "I suppose that is why we have a stupid son without an idea in his head."

Prince Charming took off his crown and felt his head very carefully.

"What is an idea?" he asked. "And why have I no idea in my head? Have you got one in your head, father?"

The King was so angry at being asked whether he had an idea in his head, that he sent Prince Charming straight back to the nursery. However, as that was where the Prince liked best to be, he laughed more than ever and was not in the least bit ashamed of himself.

Now, Prince Charming was known to be so light-hearted and so careless, that all the flowers and all the animals told him their secrets; for it is always safe to tell a secret to some one who is not taken seriously by other people. And the Prince, for his part, delighted in talking to the flowers and the animals, because they never reminded him that he was eleven years old, nor told him to stop laughing as all the other people did, the people who were too clever to worry their heads about flowers and animals at all. So the Prince soon jumped out of the nursery window into his own little garden, where his name was written several times in mustard and cress, and where the tiger lilies fought with the scarlet poppies because they had been planted one on the top of the other, and where the guinea-pigs and the rabbits and the white mice ran wild and did what they liked. He took a very large watering-can and watered himself and a very small rose tree for the third time since sunrise, and then sat down and looked at the mould on his fingers.

"How funny everything is," said Prince Charming, laughing heartily. "I have done nothing but water my rose tree, and yet all my fingers are covered with mould! Now, the Prime Minister might water fifty rose trees and he would never get a speck of mould even on his shoe buckles. I suppose it is because the Prime Minister has learnt to be serious. Oh dear! I do wish I had an idea in my head!"

"What are you saying?" asked the rose tree, shaking off the effects of the Prince's overwhelming attentions. "Why do you wish to have an idea in your head?"

"Just to see what it would feel like," answered the Prince. "I don't even know what an idea is. Do you?"

"An idea," replied the rose tree in a superior tone, "is what somebody remembers to have heard somebody else say."

"I shall never have an idea, then," said Prince Charming; "for I never remember what anybody says. Is there no other way of getting an idea?"

"To be sure there is," answered the rose tree; "but very few people know of it. You can go to the Red Rock Goblin, if you like, and get a whole new idea for yourself. He has quantities of ideas, piled up in heaps; but very few people succeed in getting one."

"I shall never succeed, then," said the Prince; "for I am the stupidest boy in the world."

"That doesn't matter," said the rose tree. "The Red Rock Goblin does not care much about clever people, I fancy. Go and try."

"I think I will," said the Prince. "It is sure to be amusing, at all events. What must I do to get there?"

"It is of no use to do anything," answered the rose tree. "If you are the right sort of boy you will find yourself there, that's all."

Evidently, Prince Charming was the right sort of boy; for as he looked at the rose tree, it grew larger and larger, and redder and redder, until it was no longer a rose tree at all, but just a large, square, red rock. The little Prince was so amused at the transformation that he burst out laughing; and when he looked round and found that the garden and the palace had disappeared too, and that he was standing in the middle of nothing at all, he laughed even more than before at the absurdity of it all.

"Hullo!" said a voice from inside the square red rock. "What are you laughing at?"

"I am laughing at everything," said the little Prince. "I always laugh at everything; but that may be because I haven't an idea in my head."

"I am glad to hear that," said the voice. "Most of the people who come here have so many ideas of their own that I take good care not to let them steal one of mine. However, step inside, and you shall have one of my very best ideas."

The Prince could hardly be said to have accepted this invitation, for he had no time to move before he found himself transported to the interior of the rock; and there he stood in the middle of a large, square room, that hung dimly lighted by a red lantern from the roof. The Red Rock Goblin sat facing him, at a little round table. He had a bushy red beard that trailed on the ground, and in his mouth was a long pipe from which rings of red smoke slowly curled up towards the roof.

"Do you feel afraid?" asked the Goblin, blowing a particularly long thin line of red smoke into the air, which curled round and round the little Prince until he could hardly breathe. He could

still laugh, however; and directly he did that, the red smoke cleared away again and raced up to the roof, as though it were frightened at the very sound of the Prince's laugh.

"I'm not at all afraid, thank you," said Prince Charming. "My Professor says that I am far too stupid to understand the meaning of fear. Besides, what is there to be afraid of?"

The Red Rock Goblin waved his long, red, bony hand towards the shelves that covered the four walls.

"Those shelves are packed with new ideas," he said. "Most people are afraid of new ideas."

"How stupid of them!" said the Prince, beginning to whistle. "A new idea must be more amusing to play with than an old one, I should think!"

"Of course it is," answered the Goblin. "That is what new ideas are for. However, as you don't seem afraid, I will find you a new idea to play with."

He put his pipe on the table, and fetched a pair of steps, and climbed up to the highest shelf of all. When he came down again, he held a small bottle in his hand, which he uncorked; and from this he poured something into a red metal bowl on the table. Immediately a delightful smell of pine woods and strawberry jam and sea-air and hot cakes and chrysanthemums filled the air; and the Prince drank it in and laughed with pleasure.

"Ah!" he cried suddenly, putting his hand to his head, as the contents of the bottle fizzed and bubbled in the red metal bowl and the smell of pine woods and all the other things grew stronger. "So it is all because the sun shone crookedly on my christening day!"

"Just so," answered the Red Rock Goblin, looking intently into the red metal bowl. "That is why all the gifts of Fairyland, which ought to have been yours, were given to Little Wisdom. Now, if you were to go straight off and find Little Wisdom—"

"That's not a bad idea!" shouted the Prince.

"Of course it isn't," snapped the Goblin, drawing himself up indignantly. "It is a very good idea; one of the best I have ever made. If you want a *bad* idea, you had better go somewhere else for it."

There was nothing for it but to apologise, and this the Prince did as politely as he could, saying that if he had been a little more accustomed to receiving ideas he would have known better how to behave to this one. He then asked the Goblin to tell him the way to Little Wisdom's home, but the Goblin answered him just as the rose tree had done.

"There isn't a way," he said. "If you are the right sort of boy you will find yourself there, that's all."

There was again no doubt whatever that Prince Charming was the right sort of boy, for the walls of the square red rock fell down as flat as the walls of a card house, and he found himself walking in a beautiful cherry orchard, with bright green grass under his feet and showers of white blossoms falling softly from above, with a blue and grey sky overhead, and the sound of bees in the air. Under the largest cherry tree sat a solemn little girl in a stiff white frock, with a large red sunshade spread over her. The Prince looked at her doubtfully. If she had been an ordinary little girl in a pinafore, with a laugh in her voice, he would have asked her to play with him at once; but it was impossible to be as friendly as that with a little girl in a stiff white frock. What he finally did was what he always did when he was in a difficulty—he began to laugh. The little girl only stared at him more solemnly than before; and for the first time in his life Prince Charming felt that laughing was a little out of place.

"Will you come and play with me, Little Wisdom?" he said, taking off his crown and making her his best court bow.

"I never play," answered the little girl, who possessed all the gifts of Fairyland.

"That is a pity," observed the Prince, "for it is the only thing worth doing. What do you do all day if you don't play?"

"I think," answered Little Wisdom, gravely. "I think about everything in the world; and when I have come to the end I begin all over again."

"How queer!" said the Prince. "I have never thought about anything in my whole life. It is much better to laugh."

"Is it?" asked Little Wisdom, and she smoothed out the folds of her stiff white frock thoughtfully. After thinking all day long for eleven years it seemed as though it might make a change to learn to laugh.

"Do you know," continued the Prince, "that you have all the gifts of Fairyland? That is why I am the stupidest boy in the world."

"I know," said Little Wisdom without seeming at all surprised, which was, of course, only natural, for when one knows everything in the world there is nothing left to be surprised at.

"If the sun had shone straight on my christening day," said Prince Charming, "I should have had all the gifts of Fairyland instead of you."

"I know," said Little Wisdom again. It seemed to her very unnecessary to talk so much about things that she had always known without being told.

"And if I had all the gifts of Fairyland instead of you, I should have learnt to be serious," continued Prince Charming.

"Perhaps you would," said Little Wisdom. She was beginning to wonder if all stupid boys were as nice as this little Prince, who seemed to take it for granted that she wanted to go on talking to him.

"Of course," continued Prince Charming, "I should not think of depriving you of any of the gifts from Fairyland; but if you will come back to the palace with me and teach me how to be serious I will give you the wymps' gift in exchange. It is not a very nice present, perhaps," he added humbly, "because it makes everybody complain of you so much; but it is the only gift I have to offer you."

"And what is the wymps' gift?" asked Little Wisdom. She was quite interested now, for here at last was something that she did not know. The Prince answered her with a peal of laughter; and Little Wisdom began to feel decidedly odd. First of all, she felt a curious tickling somewhere at the back of her head, and then a widening out of the thinking lines on her forehead, and then a twitching sensation round the corners of her mouth, and then—but it is not difficult to guess what happened next. It takes all the fairies in Fairyland to make a little girl wise when she is only eleven years old; but even a stupid little Prince without an idea in his head can teach her to laugh!

Now, when the peasant and his wife heard their daughter laughing in the cherry orchard, they came hurrying out to see what could be the cause of such a wonderful event. All the people in the village came running too—men and women, boys and girls, one on the top of the other; and they stood round in a ring and stared, while the merry little Prince and the wise little girl in the stiff white frock laughed at nothing at all.

"What is the meaning of it all?" asked the good people. "Is it the fairies' doing?"

"Nothing of the sort," answered the Prince, again taking off his crown and making them all his best court bow. "It is only because the sun shone crookedly on my christening day. That is why I have come to fetch Little Wisdom. I really hope you have no objection?"

He said this so very charmingly that everybody felt it would be most impolite to object; besides, Little Wisdom had taken the Prince's hand and seemed to have settled the question already. As for her parents, they were overjoyed at the idea.

"After all," said her father, "the child will make some stir in the world." His wife laughed and cried at the same moment.

"We shall lose Little Wisdom," she said; "but, at least, she will learn to be like other children."

Prince Charming was as usual in a great hurry, for he could never endure to wait for anything except his lessons; so he turned to the nearest cherry tree and asked it to tell him the way home.

"If you don't know the way home without being told, you are not at all the right sort of boy," answered the cherry tree. Of course, as we know already, Prince Charming was the right sort of boy; and the very next minute he marched once more into the royal palace, and by his side tripped a sedate little girl in a stiff white frock.

"I have found Little Wisdom," he announced to his parents and the court in general, as they sat over their afternoon tea. "She is going to stay here and play with me for ever and ever. Isn't it fun?"

"The boy will never be serious," sighed the King, although he looked with approval at the solemn face of the little girl in the stiff white frock.

"I will teach him to be serious," said Little Wisdom, "because he has already taught me how to laugh."

But she never did teach him to be serious, for Prince Charming did nothing but laugh to the end of his days. This did not, however, matter quite so much as might be supposed, for when one plays all day long with some one who knows everything there is to know, one need not be so very wise oneself. And when the time came for Prince Charming to rule the country, the Queen who sat beside him on the throne was a wise and beautiful maiden in a stiff white frock. So the Prince laughed as much as before, and the country was governed with all the wisdom of the fairies.

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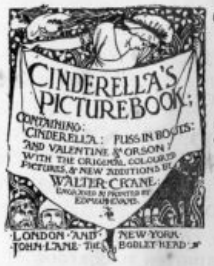

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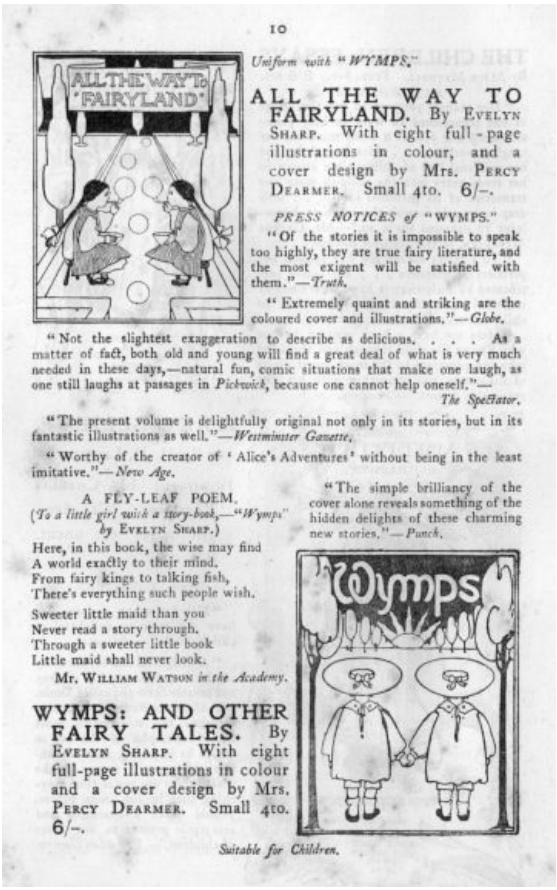

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