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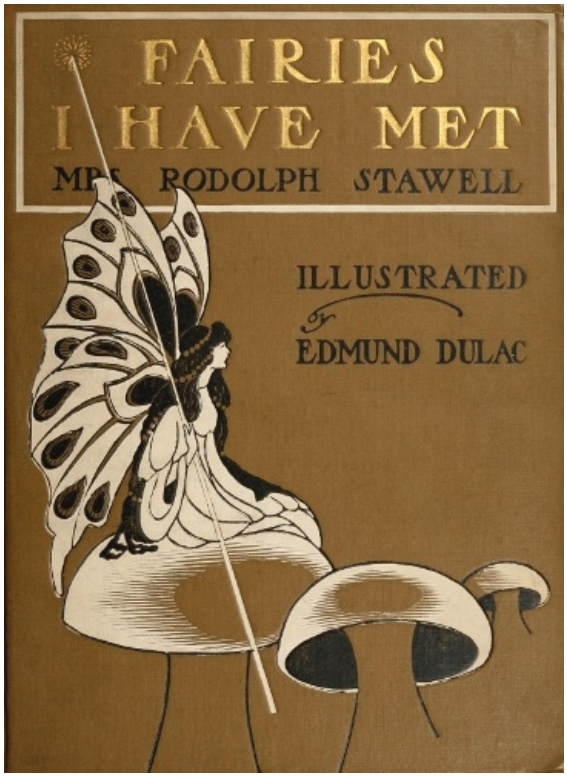

FAIRIES I HAVE MET

"PLEASE," SHE SAID, "I WANT TO BE A NIGHTINGALE"

F A I R I E S

I HAVE MET

BY MRS. RODOLPH STAWELL

ILLUSTRATED IN COLOUR BY

EDMUND DULAC

HODDER AND STOUGHTON

NEW YORK AND LONDON

DEDICATION

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BEFORE Penelope could toddle she lived far away among the oleanders. The sunbeams who came down to see the oleanders saw Penelope too. She sat on the grass and played with them, and they loved her very much.

One day the sunbeams were sad.

"Penelope is going to England," they said to each other.

"I am going to England with her," said Sunbeam the First.

"How?" asked the others.

"I shall hide in her hair," said Sunbeam the First.

"Then," said Sunbeam the Second, "I shall go too. I shall hide behind her eyelashes."

"And I," said Sunbeam the Third, "shall hide in her heart."

So Penelope went to England, with one sunbeam in her hair, and one in her eyes, and one in her heart.

When she was old enough to talk she spoke to the sunbeams.

"Shall you always stay in my hair?" she asked Sunbeam the First.

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"That is more than I can say," he answered. "Perhaps when you are old I shall be obliged to go away."

Then Penelope asked Sunbeam the Second—

"Shall you always stay in my eyes?"

"I hope so," said Sunbeam the Second; "but perhaps if you are unhappy I shall be obliged to go away."

Then the corners of Penelope's mouth began to droop a little.

"Dear Sunbeam," she said to Sunbeam the Third, "shall you be always in my heart?"

"Yes, if you keep me there," said Sunbeam the Third.

"How can I keep you there?" asked Penelope.

"You must love the fairies," said the sunbeam, "and understand them when they speak to you. If you love the fairies even when you are old, I shall stay in your heart always."

These stories have been written for Penelope, so that she may love the fairies, and keep the sunbeam always in her heart.

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THE BIRD OF SHADOWS AND THE SUN-BIRD

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LITTLE Agatha lived in the days when castles were as common in the land as cottages are now, and when there were plenty of magicians always ready to help people out of difficulties.

One of the castles was Agatha's home. It stood on a hill and was surrounded by a dark wood. Agatha was a lonely little girl: she had no sisters or brothers to play with. She used to stand at the narrow window in the castle tower and look out into the wood, and long to run about with other little girls. If you had seen her you would have thought her a very funny figure in her long gown reaching nearly to the ground, and a close cap over her curls.

In the evening Agatha could see very little when she stood at the window, but still she stood there and looked at the dark wood. It was then that the nightingale, the Bird of Shadows, sang to her; and this was what she liked better than anything else. She thought the nightingale's voice was lovely to hear, and she wondered why it was so sad.

Evening after evening the lonely little girl looked out through the tower window listening to the nightingale, till she felt that he was her friend. Sometimes she spoke to him.

"How much I should like to fly out of the window and be a nightingale too!" she said. "Then we would play together in the wood, and I should have a voice like yours—ever so sweet and ever so sad."

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Sometimes she tried to sing, but she found her voice was not in the least like the nightingale's.

Every day she became more anxious to be a nightingale, until at last she thought about it always, and yet seemed no nearer to her wish. She hoped sometimes that her curls might turn into feathers; but after several weeks of wishing she saw that the curls were still made of yellow hair. She began to be afraid she would never be anything but a little girl.

One day she heard some of the maids talking together. They were speaking of the Wise Man, the Magician, who lived in the dark cave on the side of the hill, and could do the most wonderful things. In fact, they said, there was hardly anything he couldn't do; you had only to tell him what you wanted most and he could manage it for you.

"Perhaps he could turn me into a nightingale," thought Agatha. "I'll go and ask him, anyway."

So while the maids were still talking she slipped out of the castle, and through the wood, and down the hill, till she came to the dark cave. Her long frock caught on the brambles as she went, and her hands were a good deal scratched, and once she tripped and fell. But of course she did not mind anything of that kind, because she was thinking all the time about the nightingale.

Agatha walked into the cave without knocking, and found the Magician at home. I dare say you know that all good Magicians have kind faces and long white beards. This one was a good Magician, so he had a kind face and a long white beard. Agatha was not in the least afraid of him. She told him at once why she had come. [Pg 17]

"Please," she said, "I want to be a nightingale."

"A nightingale, my dear?" said the Wise Man. "That is a very strange thing for you to want to be! Don't you know that the nightingale is the Bird of Shadows, who sings by night and is very sad?"

"I shouldn't mind that a bit," said Agatha, "if I could only fly about and sing with a beautiful voice."

"Well, then," said the Wise Man, "if you don't mind being sad, this is what you must do. Every day you must come here to see me, and each time you must bring me one of the pearls from your necklace."

Agatha clasped her hands tightly round her neck, as if to save her pearls. She wore them in a chain, and the chain was so long that it passed twice round her neck and then fell in a loop that reached nearly to her waist.

"Oh, must it be my pearls?" she asked eagerly. "Would nothing else do instead? I have some very nice things at home—really nice things. I have some lovely toys, and a gold chain, and a pony, and—oh, lots of things. Wouldn't you like some of those?"

"No," said the Wise Man, "I must have the pearls if

you want to fly about and sing with a beautiful voice. Nothing else will do. For every pearl you bring me I will give you a feather from the nightingale, the Bird of Shadows."

Agatha went home slowly, still clasping her pearls tightly in her hands. She liked them better than anything she had. She liked to watch the soft lights and shades on them, and to think of the wonderful sea they came from. She did not feel sure that it was worth while to give them up, even for the sake of being a bird and learning to sing.

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But in the evening, when she stood by the tower window as usual, and listened to the nightingale, she had no longer any doubts as to what she should do. To be able to sing like the nightingale was more important than anything else, she felt. And besides, if she were going to be turned into a bird, the pearls would not be of much use to her in any case. She was pretty sure that nightingales never wore pearl necklaces.

The next day she slipped one of the pearls off her chain, and then she ran out of the castle and through the wood and down the hill, till she came to the dark cave.

The Wise man smiled when he saw her.

"Here is——" she began, and then she could say no more, because of the lump in her throat.

The Wise Man looked rather sorry for her, but he took the pearl without speaking. Then he gave her the feather he had promised her, and she went away again. As she climbed the hill and ran back through the wood to the castle, she tried to feel glad that she had the feather instead of the pearl.

For a long, long time the same thing happened every day. Every day Agatha slipped a pearl off her chain, and then ran out of the castle and through the wood and down the hill, till she came to the dark cave; and every day she brought home a little feather instead of her pearl.

The long loop of the chain grew shorter and shorter. The time came when it was not a long loop at all, but fitted closely round Agatha's neck as the other loops did. By-and-by the time came when the chain would only pass twice round her throat; then the time came when it would only go round her throat once; then it grew too short to reach round her throat at all, and she was obliged to turn it into a bracelet. Then it

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became too short for her wrist, and she made it into a ring. And all the time her store of feathers was growing larger and larger, till it seemed to her that there were enough to make at least ten nightingales; but this was because she did not know how many feathers a nightingale likes to have. When there were only two pearls left, the Wise Man said to her—

"When you bring me the last pearl you must bring me the feathers too; and after that you will be able to sing with a beautiful voice and to fly wherever you like."

So when Agatha left the gloomy old castle for the last time she was not able to run through the wood, because she was carrying a big bag of feathers as well as the pearl.

She was feeling very much excited when she gave the bag of feathers to the Wise Man.

He put the last pearl carefully away with the others; and then he took the bag of feathers and emptied it over Agatha's head. As he did so he said some of the strange long words that Wise Men use.

And then——

Agatha was there no longer. There was nothing to be seen of her except a little heap of yellow curls, which the Wise Man kept to give to the next person who asked him for gold.

But out of the cave there flew a happy bird. It flew far, far up into the sky, singing with a beautiful voice. It flew higher up into the sky than any nightingale ever flew. [Pg 20]

For the Wise Man had done more than he had promised. The bird's beautiful voice was not the voice of the nightingale, the Bird of Shadows; but the voice of the lark, the Sun-Bird, who is never sad.

THE SEA-FAIRY AND THE LAND-FAIRY, AND HOW THEY QUARRELLED [Pg 23]

THE sea-fairy's name was Laughing Sapphire, and he lived in a nautilus-shell: the land-fairy was called Sweet-of-the-Mountain, and his home was a tuft of heather. One day Sweet-of-the-Mountain went for a stroll on the sea-shore, and there he met Laughing Sapphire, just at the edge of the ripples. It was then that the quarrel began.

"I am really sorry for you," said the sea-fairy. "It must be very unpleasant to live up on that cliff. It is so dangerous too. You might be blown down at any moment!"

"Ha-ha, how very amusing!" laughed the land-fairy. "Unpleasant, did you say? Dangerous? Not at all, not at all. Now, *your* life is something too horrible to think of. I am glad it is not my fate to wander for ever on the sea. And as for danger—well, every one knows that the sea is full of dangers."

"I never heard such nonsense," said Laughing Sapphire indignantly. "The sea is perfectly safe if you know how to manage your shell."

"But think of the discomfort of it," said Sweet-of-the-Mountain. "You never have any peace."

"And *you* never have any change," answered Laughing Sapphire.

"There's not much change in always looking at the sea—a great dull stretch of water!" [Pg 24]

"Dull!" cried Laughing Sapphire angrily. "Dull, did you say? Not half so dull as being mewed up on a rock!"

"Why," said Sweet-of-the-Mountain, "you've no flowers, and no bees, and no——"

"And you," interrupted Laughing Sapphire, "have no glittering spray, and no forests of seaweed, and no creamy foam."

"You've no heather," said the land-fairy, as if that settled the matter.

"As for you," cried the sea-fairy, "I can't think of anything you *have* got! So there!"

They went on quarrelling in this way for some time, getting more and more angry. At last they agreed upon a very good way of settling the dispute. And this was their plan. Each of them was to go away for a certain length of time. On a particular day they were to meet again on the shore, at the edge of the ripples. Laughing Sapphire was to bring with him three treasures of the sea; and Sweet-of-the-Mountain was to bring three treasures of the land. The fairy whose treasures were the best would be the winner in the quarrel.

"But who will decide which are the best treasures?" asked the land-fairy.

"My friend the sea-anemone lives near here," said Laughing Sapphire. "As he is partly on land and partly in the sea, he will be able to judge fairly between us. He shall decide."

HE HELD OUT THE LITTLE SHELL IN THE BEAM OF COLOURED LIGHT

Then the sea-fairy sailed away in his nautilus-shell, and the land-fairy flew home to the heather on the cliff. [Pg 25]

Hardly had Laughing Sapphire left the shore when he saw a huge curling wave rolling towards him. The hollow of the wave was like a great green cavern, lit up with magic light; the top of it was sparkling spray. A sunbeam was shining straight down through the spray, and gleaming with every colour you can think of, so that it seemed as if a piece of rainbow had fallen from the sky.

The fairy laughed happily, and steered right into the hollow of the wave, for he knew that his nautilus-boat was safe. In his hand was a little shell. As his boat rode smoothly over the crest of the wave and through the rainbow, he held out the little shell in the beam of coloured light. There was a wonderful change in the shell after it had passed through the rainbow; it was lined with mother-o'-pearl!

The fairy laughed again for joy when he saw the rainbow colours of the little shell.

"They've nothing like that on shore!" he said.

Then the nautilus-boat sailed on and on across the sea.

The next thing that Laughing Sapphire found was a glowing piece of red seaweed. As he pulled it, dripping, out of the sea, it looked like a bit of broad crimson ribbon; except that no ribbon ever had so much colour and so much light in it. It was so

transparent that you could see the sunlight through it, and yet it was as strong as a rope.

As the fairy coiled it round and round he smiled.

"That should please them, I think," he muttered.

The third thing that Laughing Sapphire found was the best of all. To find it he was obliged to leave his nautilus-boat and dive down to the bottom of the sea. I must not tell you now of all the wonders he saw there, for it would take me too long, and it would be very difficult for me to stop. But when he came to the surface again he was clasping a splendid pearl tightly in his hand. [Pg 26]

"If this doesn't persuade them," he said, chuckling, "that the sea is the best place in the world, *nothing* will!"

Meanwhile the land-fairy had been busy too.

First he flew to a beautiful garden, full of roses and verbena and everything sweet. It was a garden he often visited, for many of the flower-fairies there were friends of his. So he knew exactly where to find the sweetest lilies. There were great clumps of them —tall, white lilies with drooping heads and hearts of gold. Sweet-of-the-Mountain crept into one of them, and came out with a big, heavy drop of honey. The scent of it was so strong that all the fairies in the garden sniffed joyfully. Then Sweet-of-the-Mountain flew over the wall, and away and away till he came to a wood.

In the wood there was perfect silence. If you had walked there your footsteps would have made no sound, for the ground was soft and springy with moss. There was moss everywhere: moss on the tree-stems and on the stones, and carpets and cushions of moss on the ground. The fairy picked a piece of it—a piece like a soft green feather—and flew off with it out of the wood.

Then he went back to his own hills, where the heather grew right up to the edge of the cliff; for he knew that the best thing of all was to be found there. He saw the hills far away, purple and blue, with here and there a streak of crimson where the sun was shining on the heather. As he came nearer and nearer he grew happier and happier, for a fairy is always happiest in his own country. He picked a sprig from his own tuft of heather; and then he flew down to the shore to meet the sea-fairy at the edge of the ripples. [Pg 27]

He found the nautilus-boat lying on the sand, and Laughing Sapphire sitting on a rock talking to the sea-anemone. The fairies nodded to each other.

"This," said Laughing Sapphire to the sea-anemone, "is the fairy I was speaking of. He declares that it is better to live on land than on the sea. Of course I know better than that! So we have each brought three treasures to show you, that you may decide which of us is right."

The sea-anemone answered in a very sleepy, drawling voice: for when you spend all your life fastened to the same rock your mind moves rather slowly.

"Very well," he said, "go on."

Then Laughing Sapphire showed them his mother-o'-pearl shell.

"This shell," he said, "is lined with a bit of rainbow."

The sea-anemone waved all his arms about wildly to show that he was pleased.

"And this," said Laughing Sapphire, unrolling the crimson seaweed, "is a bit of the ribbon that mermaids use for tying their hair."

"Beautiful!" murmured the land-fairy.

"And this," went on the sea-fairy, showing them the pearl, "is one of the lanterns that the moonlight-fairies use when they dance on the sea." [Pg 28]

"Beautiful—beautiful!" said the sea-anemone and the land-fairy together.

Then Laughing Sapphire turned to the land-fairy with an air of triumph.

"Let us see your treasures now," he said a little contemptuously.

Sweet-of-the-Mountain held out a flower-cup with the drop of honey in it.

It was so sweet that the sea-fairy could not help exclaiming: "Oh, how delicious!"

"That," said the land-fairy, "is the sweetness of the garden."

Then he showed them the little green feather of moss.

"That," he said, "is the quietness of the woods."

Then he threw down the sprig of heather.

"That," he said, smiling, "is the glory of the hills."

The two fairies looked at each other silently. Each felt certain that his own treasures were the best.

The sea-anemone's arms were all waving furiously. He was very much excited, because he knew that the time had come for him to decide which of the two fairies had brought the most beautiful things; and as I told you before, he was not very quick in making up his mind.

"Well?" said Laughing Sapphire impatiently. "What do you think? Is it best to live on the sea or on the land?"

"I think," said the sea-anemone very slowly, "that the sea is the best place for a sea-fairy."

"Yes, yes," said the sea-fairy, "of course it is!" [Pg 29]

"But then, you know," the sea-anemone went on, "I can't help thinking that the land is the best place for a land-fairy."

Then he drew in all his arms and became a little knob of red jelly.

"It is possible," said Sweet-of-the-Mountain thoughtfully, "that there is some sense in what he says. And yet"—he sniffed happily at his cup of honey—"and yet I don't believe you have anything at sea as sweet as this."

"It is certainly a very nice scent," agreed Laughing Sapphire, "but I do think it would be improved by a little salt."

PRINCESS ORCHID'S PARTY [Pg 33]

A FAIRY whose name was Hedgeflower once lived in a wild rose at the corner of a field. One day he went out to search for adventures, for most fairies have a great wish for adventures.

He wandered on for a long time, sometimes walking and sometimes flying, and sometimes stopping to talk to friends, for the wild-rose-fairies have a great many friends. He crossed several fields in this way, and then he came to a high hedge. He was just thinking of going home when he heard a great buzzing of voices on the other side of the hedge, and

as the voices were fairy-voices he was interested at once. Perhaps, he thought, he would find the adventure he was looking for on the other side of the hedge. So he spread his pink-and-white wings and flew over.

It was not surprising that he had heard a great many fairy-voices, for he found himself in a beautiful garden, and all beautiful gardens are, as you know, full of fairies. In this garden there were not only the sorts of fairies that one meets every day, such as rose-fairies and lily-fairies and the quiet little ones that live in mignonette, but there were also all kinds of smartly dressed fairies belonging to strange and splendid flowers. They all seemed to be getting on very well together, for they were all talking loudly about something that interested them very much.

As Hedgeflower dropped down into the middle of the group he felt a little shy. But fairies are as a rule kind and friendly, so a good many voices called out Good-morning to him as he sat down under the shade of a large purple pansy. Then a butterfly whom he had met once or twice before came rustling up to him and began to talk. [Pg 34]

"I like this place," said the butterfly. "One meets so many different kinds of fairies. But don't sit there. Come and let me introduce you to some of my friends." Then as they moved away he lowered his voice and went on—

"Those little pansy-fairies are good little things, but they are a bit too thoughtful for me. I find them just a trifle dull, you know. But here is a cousin of yours; I must introduce you."

Hedgeflower looked round and saw that a beautiful rose-fairy was standing near. She wore flowing robes of two shades of pink, and her appearance was full of dignity.

"Madame La France," said the butterfly, "may I introduce to you a cousin of your own?"

"A very distant cousin, I am afraid, Madame," said Hedgeflower, bowing low.

Madame La France smiled kindly and asked Hedgeflower if he had often been in the garden before. He told her that this was his first visit.

"Then," she cried, "you must come to the party—you must certainly come to Princess Orchid's party. She lives over there in the glass house, and she has asked all the fairies in the garden to a party this

afternoon. We have been talking about it all day. You must come with me; the Princess will be glad to see any cousin of mine."

Hedgeflower was delighted. He thought it would be great fun to tell the fairies at home all about it: Meadowsweet, and that cheeky little Eyebright, and Buttercup who stared at everything one said, and all [Pg 35] the honeysuckle-fairies, who were such friends with the wild-rose-fairies because their families had lived close together for so long. Hedgeflower thought that to go to a Princess's party with his beautiful cousin was a nicer adventure than anything he had expected when he set out for his walk.

Meanwhile all the fairies in the garden were making their way towards the glass house.

"You must keep close to me," said Madame La France kindly. "The flower in which the Princess lives is some way from the door, and you might be lost in the crowd."

In another moment Hedgeflower found himself in a scene of the greatest splendour. The glass house was full of flowers, and every flower had of course its own special fairy, and nearly all of them were magnificently dressed and were quite different to any fairies that Hedgeflower knew. The greatest crowd was of course round the beautiful flower in which the Princess Orchid lived, and Hedgeflower and his cousin found it quite difficult to get near the Princess without crushing their wings. They were obliged to walk so slowly that Hedgeflower had plenty of time to look about him. He saw numbers of his cousins the rose-fairies, and tall lily-fairies, and fern-fairies dressed all in green. The pansy-fairies were there too, with their sad little faces and their splendid purple-and-gold dresses. Quite close to him there was a fuchsia-fairy, dressed in a stiff white petticoat with a pointed overskirt of scarlet; and standing beside her were several fairies whose crimson tunics were so fine that Hedgeflower asked who they were.

"They are the young Prince Begonias," said Madame [Pg 36] La France. "The Princess, being a foreigner herself, has a great many foreign friends. The Begonias think a good deal of themselves, but I think myself that our own family has more reason to be proud. But come, we can speak to the Princess now."

Princess Orchid was standing on a drooping petal of the beautiful flower in which she lived. Her long robes of mauve and white swept over the flower as if

they were themselves petals. Her hair was golden, and her face was the loveliest that Hedgeflower had ever seen. She smiled at him very graciously when he was introduced to her, and after he had seen that smile he took no interest in anything else that was going on. He never glanced again at any of the fairies who had seemed to him so splendid a short time before: he just sat down in a nice shady clump of ferns and watched Princess Orchid. He had been to a great many parties in his own hedge where the wild-roses grew, but he had never seen a fairy or even a butterfly receive her guests with so much sweetness and graciousness. He sat there for a long time and wished it could be for ever. Then he remembered that perhaps he would never see Princess Orchid again, and that made him sad.

A fairy party is never dull. Fairies are full of fun and enjoy everything very much. There was a great deal of talking and laughing and sipping of dew flavoured with sunshine, which is the drink fairies like instead of tea. The fairies of the Canterbury Bells had brought their music too, and gave a great deal of pleasure. It seemed as if the party were going to be a great success, when unfortunately a disaster happened which was talked about for many a day afterwards. [Pg 37]

SHE SMILED AT HIM VERY GRACIOUSLY
WHEN HE WAS INTRODUCED TO HER

On the roof of the glass house, just above the Princess's head, there was a large spider who was very busy spinning his web. He was so busy that he did not look where he was going, and when people forget to look where they are going it is a very common thing for accidents to happen. The spider came lower and lower, spinning all the time, while Princess Orchid was talking very kindly to a shy little violet-fairy and was not noticing anything else. Lower and lower, nearer and nearer, came the

spider.

Suddenly a shrill little voice was heard to cry out—

"Take care, Princess, take care!" and Hedgeflower, flying from his clump of ferns, flung himself against the great spider. He was too late. *Flop!* The spider fell with all his weight upon the flower in which the Princess lived!

No flower could bear the weight of such a monster, and to the horror of all the fairies the beautiful mauve orchid trembled and drooped, and then slowly fell to pieces, petal by petal. The Princess spread her dainty wings and flew safely to the ground. Then she turned and looked sadly at the ruin of her home. It lay bruised and crushed and shapeless on the earth, and if once a fairy's flower-home falls to pieces it can never be put together again.

There was a great commotion in the glass house. All the fairies flew about in a fuss, chattering angrily and trying to find the spider who had done the mischief. But he had quickly climbed up the rope that he had been spinning, and was hiding behind a leaf, so he was never found.

Now, it is a very uncommon thing to find a fairy who is not kind and anxious to help other people, so all the Princess's guests crowded round her and begged her to come and stay with them. The fuchsia-fairies declared they knew of the loveliest little fuchsia-bud which was in want of some one to take care of it: it would really be a charity if the Princess would live there. Prince Begonia objected to this, because, he said, a fuchsia-bud was not a fit place for the Princess to live in; the right home for her was in one of his magnificent palaces. The lily-fairies cried out that this was all nonsense, because any one could see that the Princess would feel more at home in a white flower than in a red one, after living so long in the pale orchid. [Pg 38]

While all this talking was going on the Princess did not seem to be paying very much attention to it, though of course she bowed and smiled and thanked the fairies very prettily, as was only right. She looked round several times, as if she wanted some one who was not there. At last she said—

"Where is the little fairy with the kind face, who tried to save my home?"

Several fairies pushed Hedgeflower forward. He felt and looked very shy.

The Princess smiled at him, and then she held out her hand.

"I will go with you," she said, "and be a wild-rose-fairy."

Hedgeflower dropped on one knee before her.

"My home is in a common hedge," he said, "and there are thorns round it. But there is no glass between me and the open sky. I think, Princess, that a fairy should be always under the open sky and the sunshine." [Pg 39]

"That," said the Princess, "is exactly what I think myself."

So Hedgeflower and the Princess spread their wings and took each other's hands and flew away out of the window of the glass house, and across the garden and over the hedge. They flew on and on, across field after field, till they came to the hedge with the wild roses.

There the Princess Orchid made her home, among the honeysuckles and the meadowsweet. She was no longer a princess with sweeping robes, but a quiet little wild-rose-fairy in a pink-and-white frock. But there was no glass between her and the sunshine.

THE CLOUD THAT HAD NO LINING [Pg 43]

THERE was once a cloud that had no lining. You have often, I dare say, heard grown-up people say that every cloud has a silver lining, and so you will understand that a cloud without a lining is a very uncommon thing.

The fairies who lived in the cloud found it very uncomfortable, because, you see, it let the rain come through.

"If only our cloud had a lining," they said, "the rain would not come through, and that would be very nice for us."

"We must really have it lined," said one.

"What with?" asked another.

"Why, with silver, of course," said a third. "Every one knows that a cloud ought to be lined with silver."

"But we have no silver!"

"Then we must get some. It is ridiculous to go on living in this state of dampness. Other fairies have comfortable clouds over their heads, and why should we be always drenched? And all for want of a simple silver lining!"

"Where does one find silver?" asked one of the fairies.

"There are a good many kinds of silver," said a fairy who had been about the world a great deal. "There is the kind that is dug out of the earth,—but that is a common kind of stuff, and no use for lining clouds with. Then there is the silver stream that you can see [Pg 44] far below, winding through the fields and shining white in the sun. That is a much better kind of silver than the other. Then, of course, moonshine makes beautiful silver: you can see it glittering on the sea whenever the moon shines. But I really don't know what would be the best kind of silver to line clouds with."

"We must try them all, and see which is the best," said another fairy.

They went on talking about it for some time, because such an important matter could not be settled in a hurry. At last it was arranged that three of them should fly away and look for some silver to line their cloud with. The names of the three fairies were Pearlywing, and Skybright, and Mist-of-the-Morning.

Now, all the time that the fairies were talking, Pearlywing was looking down at the silver stream far below, winding through the meadows. It was so white and shining that he felt sure the silver of it would make a beautiful lining for the cloud. So when he was told to fly away and look for some silver, he lost no time in wondering where to go. He spread his wings—the soft grey wings that cloud-fairies have—and he flew down and down, away from the cloud to the meadows where the silver stream was shining. The nearer he came to it the more it sparkled. He felt sure it must be made of the very best silver.

But how could he carry it? A fairy's cap is not very large, and he had nothing else.

"I must just carry up a capful at a time, and empty it, [Pg 45] and come back for another. I must go on till there is enough silver to line the cloud with," he said to himself.

So he filled his tiny cap with the silver of the stream, and flew up again to his cloud, carrying the cap very

carefully for fear of spilling the silver. Then he went round to the back of the cloud where the lining ought to have been, and poured the silver out of his cap.

Now, as I dare say you have guessed, the silver of the stream was really nothing but water. So when it was poured out of the cap it fell right through the cloud, and made the fairies on the other side much wetter than they had ever been before! I need not say that they were very much annoyed. They made so much commotion, spluttering and grumbling and scolding, that Pearlywing heard them through the cloud, and went round to see what was the matter.

"What we want," said one of them angrily, shaking the water off his wings, "is something to keep us dry, not something to make us wet!"

"I am so sorry!" said Pearlywing; "but I thought it was such good silver! And now, I suppose, you don't want any more of it."

"Certainly not!" said all the fairies very quickly.

"It is most unfortunate," said Pearlywing. "I can't understand it at all. The silver looked so *very* nice."

He was not a very clever fairy, I am afraid.

"I hope Skybright will have more sense," grumbled the wet fairies.

Skybright meanwhile was waiting on the sea-shore, far below the clouds. He was waiting for the moon to rise above the sea. He had to wait a long time, but he did not mind that, because there are always such nice fairies to talk to on the sea-shore. [Pg 46]

At last the big round moon sailed slowly up into the sky. At the same moment a hundred thousand moonshine-fairies rushed out across the sea towards Skybright, flying and dancing on the water, and turning it into a sheet of silver as they came. For the moonshine-fairies carry silver with them wherever they fly, and scatter it as they go.

This was the moment that Skybright had been waiting for.

"Please, pretty moonshine-fairies," he cried, running to the water's edge and holding out his arms, "give me some of your silver to line my cloud with, and keep the rain from coming through!"

Then the moonshine-fairies danced towards him across the sea, with their tiny hands full of silver.

"Take our silver, little cloud-fairy," they said, "and line your cloud with it, and dip your wings in it, and scatter it over the earth as you fly, for everything is made more beautiful by our silver."

Then they poured the silver out of their hands into his, and because the silver of the moonshine-fairies is very light he was able to carry a great deal of it. He filled the pockets of his pretty grey coat with it, and he filled his cap, and took a quantity of it in his hands. And he said Good-bye to the moonshine-fairies, and flew away up to the clouds.

AND BECAUSE THE SILVER OF THE MOONSHINE-FAIRIES IS VERY LIGHT HE WAS ABLE TO CARRY A GREAT DEAL OF IT

When the other cloud-fairies saw the beautiful silver he had brought with him they were delighted. They all set to work to line the cloud with it, spreading it out carefully and making it nice and tidy at the edges. When the lining was finished it looked lovely, and the fairies were much pleased with it. They sat down under the cloud, feeling quite safe from the rain.

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But unfortunately their satisfaction did not last long. Presently it began to rain. The fairies smiled and nodded at each other, and agreed that it was very pleasant to be safe from a wetting. Then a big heavy drop fell right through the cloud and lining and all—and another—and another, and soon the fairies were as wet and uncomfortable and cross as if the cloud had never been lined. It was really very annoying.

The truth is that the silver of the moonshine-fairies is rather thin—altogether too thin to keep the rain out, and of very little use for lining clouds with.

"It is really too bad!" cried the poor cloud-fairies, wringing the water out of their nice little grey coats. "What are we to do? Any one would have thought

that such beautiful silver would keep the rain out!"

"Perhaps," said one of them who liked to be cheerful, "Mist-of-the-Morning may bring us a better kind of silver even than this."

So they decided to grumble no more till Mist-of-the-Morning came home.

Now, when Mist-of-the-Morning started out to look for silver he did not fly down to the earth at all.

"Every cloud but ours has a silver lining," he said to himself; "so the best way to find the right kind of silver will be to ask the fairies who live in the other clouds."

He saw the clouds all about him, each with a bright rim round it, which was the edge of its lining. He went to the nearest one and spoke to the fairies that lived in it. [Pg 48]

"Brother fairies," he said, "where can I find silver to make my cloud a lining as beautiful as yours?"

And the fairies answered—

"Go to the sunbeam-fairies. Their silver is the best for lining clouds with."

Then Mist-of-the-Morning went to one cloud after another, and asked all the fairies that lived in them the same question. And they all answered—

"Go to the sunbeam-fairies. Their silver is the very best."

So Mist-of-the-Morning flew away to the nearest sunbeam. It was crowded with fairies, who were all hard at work, for the sunbeam-fairies have more work to do than any others. As they worked they were laughing and singing, for the sunbeam-fairies are always happy.

"Please, kind sunbeam-fairies," said Mist-of-the-Morning, "I want some silver to line my cloud with. It must be the very best silver, and every one says that none but yours is good enough."

Then all the sunbeam-fairies shouted out—

"Quite right, little cloud-fairy, quite right! It is waste of time to line a cloud with any silver but ours. Our silver is the very best!"

While they were speaking they all rushed to the end of the sunbeam, and before Mist-of-the-Morning knew what they were going to do, they had cut off a

great piece of it. There it lay in a shining heap! Mist-of-the-Morning had to shade his eyes, because its silvery brightness dazzled him. [Pg 49]

"Sunbeam silver!" sang the fairies. "Sunbeam silver is the best of all!"

Then Mist-of-the-Morning spread his wings and flew home, trailing the sunbeam after him. And all the fairies in his own cloud welcomed him with shouts and singing, because they saw at once that sunbeam silver was the best of all.

They made their cloud a beautiful thick lining of it, with the silver shining all round the edge. And the rain never came through any more.

Now that I have told you this story I hope you will not forget that it is waste of time to line a cloud with any kind of silver except the kind that sunbeams are made of.

THE FAIRIES WHO CHANGED PLACES [Pg 53]

THIS story is about something that happened long, long, and ever so long ago, before the fairies had really settled down to their work.

There was then a little fairy called Starblossom, whose business it was to take care of the earliest Spring flowers; and there was also a fairy called Drop-of-Crystal, whose work it was to make snowflakes. These two fairies were great friends.

One day Starblossom had not very much to do. She had finished sharpening the little green spikes of her flower-leaves, and had even made ready one or two white buds. But when she saw that Drop-of-Crystal was very busy making heavy drops of snow, she thought to herself that there was no need for her to be in a hurry about the Spring flowers. They would be much more comfortable underground if Drop-of-Crystal were going to fling snowflakes all over them. So she carefully covered up her buds and went off to watch the snow-fairy at work.

Drop-of-Crystal was too busy to speak. He was making an enormous quantity of snowflakes. Starblossom was silent for some time, but at last she asked—

"What are they all for?"

"For a snow-storm, of course," said Drop-of-Crystal shortly.

"Are they all to be used in one storm?" asked Starblossom. "It will be a very big storm, I'm afraid."

"It will," said Drop-of-Crystal—"very big. You'd better take care of those flowers of yours, or they'll be hurt." [Pg 54]

"There are not many of them above ground," Starblossom answered. "I saw what you were doing. But in any case my flowers are not likely to be hurt by the snow-fairies so much as by the frost-fairies."

Drop-of-Crystal said nothing to this, but went on working busily.

Presently Starblossom spoke again.

"It seems to me that snowflakes are very easy to make. Your work is really much easier than mine. It is very difficult to make flowers nicely. One has to be so particular about the shape of them."

"I don't agree with you at all," said Drop-of-Crystal rather crossly. "My work is much harder than yours. I have to make thousands and thousands of snowflakes for the very smallest snow-storm. You can take quite a long time arranging the shape of your flowers, but I have to work in a hurry, or the storm would run short of snowflakes. And that would be very serious."

"Not half so serious as it would be if the Spring were to run short of flowers," said Starblossom indignantly.

"Look here," said Drop-of-Crystal, losing his temper, "if you like my work so much I wish you'd do it! You can set to work and make a few thousand snowflakes while I take a rest."

"I shall be delighted to do such easy work," said Starblossom; "but of course if I make your snowflakes you must make my flowers. That is only fair."

DROP-OF-CRYSTAL WAS TOO BUSY TO SPEAK

"Very well," said Drop-of-Crystal, "I don't mind. After all, work of that kind is just the same as resting." [Pg 55]

So he flew off to the place where Starblossom's flowers were beginning to show their spiky leaves above ground. He had never made a flower before, and did not know how to set about it, but he was much too proud to ask Starblossom how it ought to be done. So he did the best he could by himself.

It was a long time before he had finished a flower-bud. When the first one was done he thought it looked rather odd.

"There is something peculiar about that flower-bud," he said to himself. "It is really more like a big drop of snow than a flower! I suppose that comes of making snowflakes for so long. I must try again."

So he tried again, and again, and again. But every time the flower-bud was exactly like a big drop of snow.

"I can't help it," he said at last. "They *will* keep on being like drops of snow. But, after all, there is no reason why a flower should not be like a drop of snow. They are dear little flowers, anyway, and I shall go on making them like this."

So he went on for a long time making flowers that were like drops of snow, and dear little flowers they were.

In the meantime Starblossom was hard at work making snowflakes. She knew no more about making snowflakes than Drop-of-Crystal knew about making flowers, but, like Drop-of-Crystal, she determined to do the best she could without asking for help. She took a long time to make the first snowflake, because she was accustomed to finish her flowers very [Pg 56]

carefully, and she liked everything she made to be pretty. She laughed to herself as she put down the first finished snowflake.

"That is what comes of making nothing but flowers," she said. "That snowflake is exactly like a flower!"

She was quite right. The snowflake was like a delicate, starry flower, light as air, and clear as crystal, and glistening in the sunshine.

"I like that kind of snowflake," said Starblossom. "I shall make some more."

So she made a great number of snowflakes, and they were all like feathery flowers, all different in shape, but all beautiful.

"I should like to go on making snow-flowers always," she said to herself.

At that moment Drop-of-Crystal flew up to her in a great hurry.

"Oh, do come and see my nice new flowers," he cried. "They are quite a new kind, and they are so pretty—just like drops of snow!"

"And my drops of snow are just like flowers!" cried Starblossom. "And I want to go on making them always, because they are so beautiful."

"Well then," said Drop-of-Crystal, clapping his hands, "suppose you and I change places! You shall go on making snowflakes, and I'll go on making flowers!"

So that was the way they settled it.

And because Drop-of-Crystal was a snow-fairy, the flowers he made were always like drops of snow; and because Starblossom was a flower-fairy, the snowflakes she made were always like flowers. [Pg 57]

That is the reason why, to this day, the first flowers of Spring are like drops of snow, and the snowflakes are like beautiful, starry flowers. You must often have noticed it yourself.

THE MAKING OF THE OPAL [Pg 61]

THE opal was the last of the precious stones to be made. And this was how it happened.

Long, long ago—so long ago that no one had ever seen a ruby or a sapphire or an emerald—there was

a Princess who had a great many friends among the fairies. Because they loved her they called her the Dear Princess, and the country in which she lived was known as the Crystal Mountain. It was the delight of the fairies to do her bidding, to fly and fly over hill and dale to fetch her anything she wished to have. Sometimes she wished to have very curious things, because all the ordinary things that Princesses like to have had been brought to her long ago by the fairies. If she wanted things that no one had ever heard of before, the fairies would set to work to make them for her. One day she said—

"Oh, Fairies dear, I am going to be married. I am going to marry the Prince of the Far Land over the Hill, and the wedding is to be the grandest ever seen. My dress is lovely: it was cut out of a rainbow on purpose for me, and trimmed with the edge of a sunset cloud. But what *am* I to wear in my hair?"

Now, the Princess's hair hung over her in dark waves, like a long cloak.

"Flowers!" cried the fairies. "Quick—quick—let us fly for flowers to twist in the Dear Princess's hair!"

So they all flew away, some in one direction and some in another, while the Dear Princess of the Crystal Mountain sat and waited, with her cloud of hair hanging round her. [Pg 62]

Very soon she saw them flying back, some from gardens and some from orchards, and some from the hills where the heather grew, and some from country lanes where the flowers were very sweet, and some from hothouses where the flowers were very rare. Wherever they came from they were all laden with flowers. Some brought roses, red and white and yellow; some brought heavy white lilies; some brought long trails of honeysuckle. Some were carrying great bundles of forget-me-nots; others had strange flowers from distant countries; others had bunches of golden daffodils. They crowded round the Dear Princess, and laid the flowers in great heaps beside her.

"Wear my roses!" cried one. "See how the crimson of them glows in your dark hair!"

"Wear my daffodils!" cried another. "See how they shine like gold!"

"Wear my lilies!" cried a third, "for they match your lily-face!"

Then they all held up the flowers against the

Princess's dark hair, to see which looked the best; red, or yellow, or white. The Princess herself found it very hard to make up her mind, because they were all so beautiful that she would have liked to wear them all. First she chose one, and then another, and then she thought that, after all, a third would look the best.

This went on for so long that at last the flowers died.

"Ah, look," said the Princess, "the flowers are dead!"

"Oh dear, oh dear!" cried all the fairies together. [Pg 63]
"The flowers are dead! What shall we do now?"

The Princess sat down among the dead flowers, and thought.

"I must have something that will not die," she said at last, "something stronger than flowers. In my dark hair I must have something that will gleam and sparkle. I must have colour that will not fade, a dewdrop that will not melt, a spark of fire that will not go out."

"Dear me!" said the fairies; and they said no more for some time, for they were thinking that the Dear Princess wanted a good deal.

After a time three of them began talking together all at once, as if a very good idea had suddenly come into their heads.

Then these three spread their wings and flew away. They flew far away from the Princess and her palace, far from the other fairies, up and up to the heights of the Crystal Mountain. Then each of them chipped off a little piece of the rock at the top of the mountain, and each, as he did it, laughed aloud gleefully. Then each little fairy tucked his chip of rock under his arm; and they all nodded to each other, still laughing, and spread their wings again, and flew off in different directions.

The first of the three, with his chip of rock under his arm, flew straight to the sea-shore. On the shore, close to the shining blue sea, there lived a very nice mermaid who was a great friend of the fairy's. So he flew to her with the bit of crystal rock and said—

"Mermaid, mermaid, here is a chip from the Crystal Mountain. Take it for me, and dip it into the darkest [Pg 64]
and deepest deep of the blue sea."

So the mermaid took the crystal chip and dived down with it into the darkest and deepest deep of the blue

sea.

Now, it is well known that whatever is touched by the deepest deep of the sea is changed by it for ever, and becomes itself a part of the sea. And so, when the mermaid brought the chip of crystal back to the fairy it had become like a chip of the sea—shining and gleaming and deep, deep blue.

And that was the first sapphire.

And when the second fairy left the Crystal Mountain with his little bit of rock under his arm, he flew to the great forest where the wood-pixies lived.

"Pixies, pixies," he called to them, "here is a chip from the Crystal Mountain. Take it for me into the darkest and deepest deep of the green forest, and do not bring it back to me till the green of the forest has sunk into its very heart."

Of course you must have noticed that the wood-pixies have the gift of making things green; for every one knows that in the forest where they live everything is green—the trees and the grass and the soft moss. And the shade under the trees is dark, dark green, and here and there where the sun peeps through, the green is very bright. So the pixies took the chip of crystal away with them into the darkest deep of the forest and laid it in the green moss where the green shadows were darkest under the green trees. And after a time the magic of the pixies began to work, and the greenness of the forest sank into the very heart of the crystal. Then they carried it back to the fairy, and he saw that the greenness of the deep shadows had sunk into the heart of the crystal, and because the sunshine had peeped through the trees there was a glint of light in it.

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And that was the first emerald.

When the third fairy left the Crystal Mountain with his little bit of rock under his arm, he flew away to that other mountain where the fire-gnomes worked underground. At the top of the fire-mountain there was a great hole, and when the fairy stood at the edge and looked in he could see the gnomes at work, keeping the fire alight that warms the world. So he called out to them—

"Fire-gnomes, fire-gnomes, here is a chip from the Crystal Mountain. Take it for me into the hottest and deepest deep of the fire, and keep it there until its heart is glowing red."

So the fire-gnomes took the chip of crystal and

carried it down, down into the deepest deep of the fire that warms the world. And the fire sparkled and glowed and wrapped it round. And before very long the crystal began to glow too as it lay in the fire, for of course a fire that is hot enough to warm the world is hot enough to warm a chip of rock. So the fire-gnomes picked it up again and carried it back to the fairy who was waiting at the edge of the great hole; and he saw that the heart of the crystal chip was crimson and glowing like a fire.

And that was the first ruby.

Then he flew away from the fire-mountain with the ruby safely tucked under his arm, and went back to the Dear Princess. At the same moment the fairy with the emerald arrived from the forest, and the fairy with the sapphire came back from the sea. They flew to the feet of the Dear Princess, and held out the beautiful stones to her. [Pg 66]

The Princess clapped her hands and cried—

"Oh, how splendid, how splendid they are! The blue is like a bit of the dark sea, and the green is like the shade of the forest with the sun peeping in, and the red is like the red heart of the fire!"

Then the first fairy laid the sapphire against her dark hair.

"You must wear it on your wedding-day," he said.

But the second fairy held up the emerald and said—

"No, no, this is what you must wear!"

And the third fairy laughed and cried—

"How silly they are! Any one can see that red is the colour to wear in your dark hair!"

The Princess looked from one to the other and was puzzled. She thought all the stones were so beautiful that she would have liked to wear them all; but she did not think they would look really nice all together.

"What am I to do?" she said, puckering up her forehead. "How can I choose when they are all so beautiful?"

Then there was a very long discussion about it. Each of the three fairies wished his own stone to be worn, and the Princess could not tell what to do.

"Each of them is quite beautiful," she said, "but, dear fairies, I am obliged to say that I do *not* like the look of them all together!"

All this time a very small fairy had been sitting quietly in the corner, saying nothing, but thinking a great deal. He came forward now and spoke. [Pg 67]

"Give the stones to me," he said, "and I will settle the question."

So he took the three stones and flew away, far up into the sky, above the Princess's dark head, above the houses and the trees, above the Crystal Mountain even, into the misty sunshine behind the clouds.

Then he called to the sun-fairies—

"Sun-fairies, sun-fairies, melt me these stones in your furnace. Melt them, and mix them, and make them into one stone. And soften their colours with mist of sunshine, so that my Dear Princess may wear them all together in her hair."

So the sun-fairies carried the three stones away, and melted them all into one, and mixed them with mist of sunshine, and it lay over the colours like a cloud. And then there was only one stone, but it was a great big one, and as beautiful as all the others put together. For, you see, that was just what it was.

The small fairy took it carefully into his tiny arms and flew down again through the clouds, past the Crystal Mountain and past the tops of the trees, to the feet of the Dear Princess.

He held up the great gleaming stone to her, and she thought she had never seen anything so beautiful. For the blue of the sea was in it, and the green shade of the forest, and the red heart of fire. And over the colours the mist of sunshine lay like a veil.

And that was the first opal. [Pg 68]

Of course the Dear Princess of the Crystal Mountain wore the great opal on the day that she was married to the Prince of the Far Land over the Hill. And when she was an old, old Princess, with white hair instead of dark, she often showed the opal to her grandchildren, and told them how it was made of blue sea, and green shadows, and fire, melted all together by the fairies and mixed with mist of sunshine.

OF COURSE THE DEAR PRINCESS ...
WORE THE GREAT OPAL ON THE DAY
THAT SHE WAS MARRIED

THE BIG SPIDER'S DIAMONDS

[Pg 71]

THE sun-fairies were hiding behind a black cloud; but in the middle of the cloud there was a hole, and through this hole the sun-fairies peeped.

In this way they were able to see everything that went on in the garden where the Big Spider lived. If the Big Spider had looked up at the sky he could have seen the sun-fairies peeping through the hole in the black cloud; but he did not look up, because he was thinking of other things. He was in an excited state of mind.

Quite lately the Big Spider had spun a most beautiful web for himself, and had slung it between two tall blades of grass. He was very proud of it, for it was the nicest web in all the garden, being of a lovely and difficult pattern, and made with great skill. And now something had happened in the night to make it still more beautiful. While the Big Spider was asleep the dew-fairies had crept up from the grass, and had hung hundreds of sparkling diamonds on the strings of his web. He knew it must have been done by the dew-fairies, because they only keep the very best diamonds.

"Dear me, this is most kind of them," he said to himself. "They must have noticed that my web was the best in the garden; otherwise they would not have done it so much honour."

As a matter of fact, the dew-fairies had been hanging diamonds that night on the webs of all the spiders in the garden; but the Big Spider was so much

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occupied in admiring his own web that he had no attention to spare for the others.

"Good morning," he said pleasantly to a fly who was passing. "Have you seen my diamonds? They look very well there, don't they? They show off the pattern of the web. Won't you come a little closer? You can hardly see them properly at that distance. One really sees them best when one is inside the web. Can't you come in this morning?"

"No, thank you," said the fly firmly; for his mother had told him that the Big Spider was not a nice friend for little flies.

Then he flew away, and the Spider went on admiring his diamonds. He looked at them first from the right, and then from the left, and then he stepped backwards and looked at them again. If you have ever seen a person who paints pictures you will know exactly how he behaved.

All this time the sun-fairies had been peeping through the hole in the black cloud and watching the Big Spider. They could not help laughing at him.

"Ridiculous creature!" cried one. "Look at him admiring his web, as if it were the only one that had ever been hung with diamonds!"

"If he would look about him a little bit," said another, "he would see that the whole garden is blazing with diamonds this morning."

"The very grass is all twinkly and shiny with them," said a third, "but the grass-fairies are not behaving in that absurd way."

"No fairy would be so silly," said a fourth.

Suddenly a little sun-fairy began to clap his hands. [Pg 73]

"I've got an idea," he cried.

As his ideas were generally full of mischief and very interesting, all the other fairies stopped talking.

"It's a lovely idea," he went on, chuckling. "This is what we'll do. We'll wait till that silly old Spider goes to sleep or is busy, and then we'll rush down—quick as quick—and *steal his diamonds*!"

Then all the sun-fairies laughed and clapped their hands so loudly that the hole in the black cloud grew a good deal larger. They thought it was a grand idea.

They had not long to wait. Presently the Spider became rather tired of admiring his diamonds all by

himself, so he set to work to send out invitations for a fly-party. He asked all the flies in the neighbourhood to come and see how nice his web looked when it was hung with diamonds. As soon as the sun-fairies saw that he was busy they took each other's hands, and with a little run and a big jump they all burst through the hole in the black cloud. Then they flew softly down to the garden where the Big Spider lived.

"How nice and warm it is getting!" thought the Spider.

Presently he said to himself—

"My diamonds must be sparkling beautifully in this sunshine. I'll just take a look at them."

He turned round, expecting to see the pattern of his web delicately outlined in sparks of light. You will not be surprised to hear that he saw nothing of the kind. He saw his web, it is true, looking like filmy lace against the green of the grass; but there was not one single diamond hanging upon it! [Pg 74]

Then the rage of the Big Spider was terrible to see.

He stamped with all his legs, and he rolled himself round and round, and he used all the most dreadful threats in spider-language.

"I don't care who the thief is," he said; "I shall think no more of eating him than if he were a fly!"

At that moment he heard the sweetest little laugh just behind him. This made him so angry that he spent a long time in looking for the person who laughed. While he was still searching the sun-fairies flew up again to the black clouds, carrying the diamonds with them.

"There," they said, as they threw the diamonds down on the cloud, "he won't find them there!"

They had forgotten for the moment that, hidden in the black cloud, there were a great number of rain-fairies. Now the rain-fairies never enjoy themselves so much as when they are annoying the sun-fairies: and in the same way there is nothing that pleases the sun-fairies so much as a good quarrel with the rain-fairies. This does not prevent them from being very friendly when they are not quarrelling.

The rain-fairies had seen all that had happened. They pretended to think that the sun-fairies had behaved very unkindly to the Big Spider.

"It's too bad," they said, "to steal the poor thing's diamonds. It's not fair. Let's throw them down to him."

Then a great fight began between the sun-fairies and the rain-fairies for the diamonds, and the fight lasted a long time, and all the time that it lasted the Big Spider was in a rage. [Pg 75]

THE WEB AND THE DIAMONDS AND THE BIG SPIDER HIMSELF ALL FELL TO THE GROUND

At last the rain-fairies won the fight, and went off with the diamonds in their arms.

"Now we'll throw them to the Big Spider," they said, "and we'll see how glad he is when his web is hung with diamonds as it was before."

They forgot that the dew-fairies, when they had trimmed the web with the diamonds, had crept up softly and touched the strings with gentle fingers. But the rain-fairies are rather rough.

They flung out their little arms and threw the diamonds down out of the black cloud. Down dropped the diamonds, and down, and down, till they reached the garden where the Big Spider lived, and the web that the Big Spider had made. But instead of hanging on the web in rows, like little lighted lamps, they dropped into the middle of it with a crash and a dash and a splash, and broke it into a great many pieces, so that the web and the diamonds and the Big Spider himself all fell to the ground.

And by the time the Big Spider was standing on all his legs again the diamonds had disappeared into the grass.

The truth is that the dew-fairies had found them and had taken them home. I expect they will keep them till the Big Spider has made a new web.

CHRISTABEL was a little girl who read a great many books. She noticed that the girls and boys in the books were not altogether like the girls and boys who played with her in the Square and came to tea with her. The children in the books were wonderfully brave and clever; and when they were having their magnificent adventures they always did exactly the right thing at the right moment. They never had a dull minute, and they never said anything silly. The girls and boys who came to tea with Christabel were not like this, and Christabel knew that she herself was not like this. She never had any adventures, and she knew that even if she ever did have one she would not behave at all bravely or cleverly. And she was often so dull that she drummed with her fingers on the window and said—

"What on earth shall I do?"

Now, Christabel had a Big Sister who wrote books.

One day she said to her Big Sister—

"How I do wish I were a little girl in a book! Nothing ever happens to little girls in real life. It is so dull!"

The Big Sister went on writing, and said nothing.

"It's no use talking to her," thought Christabel, "because she always goes on writing."

A few days after this Christabel began to feel rather strange. A kind of stiffness came into all her limbs, so that they would not do what she told them. And sometimes she found herself saying things that she had not intended to say at all. This puzzled her and [Pg 80] made her very uncomfortable. She wondered if other people noticed that there was something wrong with her. She even thought of speaking to her Big Sister about it, but the Big Sister was so busy writing that it was no use to try and make her hear.

This went on for some time. Christabel grew stiffer and stiffer, and more and more uncomfortable; and her Big Sister went on writing busily.

At last one day Christabel understood what had happened. She woke up and found that everything round her had changed; the people and the place and everything. She was frightened at first, and then the truth suddenly flashed into her mind. A most remarkable and unusual and unexpected thing had happened: her Big Sister had put her into a book!

"So I really am a little girl in a book, after all!" she said to herself.

She tried to say it aloud, but she found she couldn't. The words were not in the book, you see.

"Now I am going to enjoy myself," she thought, "and never be dull any more."

There was not much chance of her being dull, for the book was full of adventures and narrow escapes, and other delightful things.

First she was captured by pirates; and after having a terrible time with them she was saved from them by a shipwreck. The shipwreck did not do her much good, however, for she at once fell into the hands of the most dreadful savages. So you will understand that she was not at all likely to be dull.

[Pg 81]

Christabel was delighted to find that she behaved, like other little girls in books, with the greatest courage and cleverness. Whenever an adventure was going on she always managed to get out of every difficulty, and she saved the lives of several of the other people in the book by her bravery. The strange thing was that she found it quite easy to be brave; while she was a little girl in real life she had not found it easy at all.

"I do hope the book has a happy ending," she thought sometimes.

She wished very much that she could peep into the end of the book, as she used to do when she was a little girl in real life. Meantime every chapter was more exciting than the last. Of course Christabel did not know whether she would escape from the savages at all. Perhaps they were going to eat her. That would not be a happy ending to the book, she felt.

After a great many terrible dangers, she managed to escape; for a ship sailed into the bay at the right moment, and took her home to England. This was the end of the book. The person who was reading it shut it up with a bang—and Christabel went to sleep.

By-and-by, some one else took up the book and began to read it. Then Christabel woke up and found herself at the beginning of the story. After so many adventures she was rather tired, and did not feel inclined to begin them all over again. But that was just what she had to do. Being captured by pirates is not nearly so exciting when you know you can only escape from them by a cold, wet shipwreck; and

when you are shipwrecked you are not very anxious to scramble ashore when you know there are a large number of fierce savages waiting for you! [Pg 82]

"This is rather tiresome," thought Christabel.

She was very glad when the person who was reading the book shut it up again, and she was allowed to go quietly to sleep.

But her sleep was not long. Every time any one began to read the book poor Christabel was obliged to wake up and go through all her troubles again. She soon became horribly tired of being shipwrecked.

"Have I got to spend the rest of my life with pirates and savages?" she asked herself in despair.

It was especially annoying that they were always the same pirates and savages, who said always exactly the same things. Christabel soon knew the whole book by heart. She wished sometimes she could be one of the pirates for a change, instead of being always a little girl.

"I suppose I shall never even be grown up," she thought sadly.

The most unpleasant thing of all was that she was never able to say what she wished to say: she was always obliged to say what was in the book. Sometimes she opened her mouth to say what was in her mind, and then found herself speaking words that had nothing to do with her thoughts.

"It is simply hateful not to be able to say and do what one likes," she thought.

She made up her mind to try and be drowned at the very next shipwreck. Of course it was useless for her to try, for the book said she was saved by a big wave which flung her up on a rock. It was uncomfortable for her to be saved in this way, but she could not avoid it. The shipwreck happened in the usual way, in spite of her efforts to be drowned; and then, as usual, she met the savages on the Island, and soon afterwards came the end of the book. [Pg 83]

THE OTHER PEOPLE IN THE BOOK
LOOKED AT HER IN SURPRISE

Now, it happened this time that the person who was reading the book did not shut it up at all, but handed it at once to some one else who wished to read it. This was really too much for Christabel's temper. She had had no sleep, and she was determined not to begin all over again without a rest. It suddenly struck her that this was her only chance—now, before the beginning of the first chapter.

She lost no time. She knew she ought to be standing up—the book said she was standing up. Finding to her great joy that she was able to move of her own accord, she calmly sat down and folded her arms. The other people in the book looked at her in surprise.

"It's no use looking at me like that," she said; "I'm tired of this. I'm not going on any more saying the same things over and over again. If there's any pirate who would like to change places with me I don't mind being a pirate for a bit. But I'm not going on being the little girl."

Then there was indeed an outcry. All the people in the book began speaking at once. Just at that moment—before the beginning of the first chapter—they were all able to say what they chose.

"Make her stand up!" cried one.

"I never heard such nonsense!" said another.

"Why can't she behave as we do?" asked a third angrily. [Pg 84]

"The idea of wanting a change!"

"She'll have to behave like other people in the end."

"So discontented!"

"So very odd!"

So they went on, while Christabel still sat calmly, with her arms crossed.

"I'm not going to begin all over again," she repeated firmly.

"But that poor boy is waiting to begin the book," said some one; "and we can't go on while you are behaving in this silly way."

"I can't help that," said Christabel; "I'm tired of saying things I don't a bit mean."

Before she knew what was going to happen Christabel found herself in the middle of a terrible turmoil. All the people in the book seemed to be rushing at her.

Far away she heard a voice saying—

"There's something very queer about this book. It seems all in a muddle, somehow!"

Then there was silence, and Christabel realized that the people in the book had turned her out! She was no longer a little girl in a book, but a little girl in real life. She looked round and saw her Big Sister, still writing.

"I don't want to be in a book any more," said Christabel. "Real life is nicer. In real life one can at least say what one thinks one's self, instead of always saying what other people think."

"Don't be too sure of that," said her Big Sister.

THE FAIRY WHO WAS LOOKING FOR A HOME

[Pg 87]

LITTLE Fairy Flitterwing had no home. Whenever he settled down in a place something happened to turn him out. If he found a comfortable rosebud some one would come and pick it, and then it died and he was homeless again. If he chose a pink-edged daisy to live in, the gardener would mow the lawn at once. He grew very tired of wandering about the garden, and he determined at last to go out into the world in search of a home.

It was quite a small garden, in the middle of a town. Flitterwing felt rather afraid of venturing into the streets, because he knew there would not be many

fairies there, and not many nice places for a fairy to live in. So he was a little sad and anxious as he flew over the high brick wall of the garden and looked about him. He found himself in a queer little yard, not nearly as nice as the garden, with a pavement of round stones and an ugly brick house at one end of it. There never was a more unlikely place for a fairy to find a comfortable home. Flitterwing was on the point of flying back again over the garden wall, when he caught sight of something green at the further end of the courtyard. Some grass had grown up among the stones.

"The very place for me!" said Flitterwing to himself. "No one is likely to disturb me here, and I can fly across to the garden whenever I feel lonely."

So he found a cosy corner between two stones, where the grass was thick and soft, and there he made up his mind to stay. It was not, of course, the very best kind of place for a fairy, but, after all, it was quiet and near his friends, and he was terribly tired of moving about from rose to rose and from daisy to daisy. So he thought he would make the best of it. [Pg 88]

Very soon he felt quite at home in the grass-patch at the end of the yard. Every morning, of course, he had to attend to the grass and see that it was always fresh and green, for it is the business of every fairy to take care of the place he lives in. He does it instead of paying rent. Then, after polishing his wings nicely and making them shine like opals, he would fly across the brick wall and have a chat with the grass-fairies and flower-fairies in the garden.

His life went on in this quiet and comfortable way for some time.

But one morning poor Flitterwing received a great shock. He was very busy cleaning the grass with a dewdrop, and thinking how strong and tall the blades had grown since he first began to take care of them. They were a good deal taller than himself now, and he was not able to see over them. So, when he heard a heavy footstep clattering across the yard, he peered between the blades of grass to see who was coming.

"Oh dear, oh dear," he cried, "here's that dreadful gardener! I'm sure he's going to turn me out!"

He quickly dropped the crumpled cobweb soaked in dewdrop with which he was rubbing the green blades, and folding his wings closely round him he

hid himself in the grass, and waited to see what was going to happen.

The gardener was carrying a basket in one hand, and in the other a tool with dreadful prongs. He was going to pull up the grass that had grown among the stones! Poor Flitterwing's nice new home was going to be spoilt! [Pg 89]

One by one the tufts were dragged up by the roots, while the sharp prongs clinked against the stones and the gardener's fingers crumpled up the blades of grass that had looked so green and fresh a few minutes before. Flitterwing was terribly frightened.

"The sooner I get out of this the better," he said to himself, skipping away from the gardener's big fingers. Then he spread his wings and flew up and away, over the wall and over the garden and on and on. He went on flying, flying, till all his friends were left far behind and he came to strange streets such as he had never seen before. Still he went on flying, flying. You see he was extremely anxious to be very far away from the gardener with the big fingers and the terrible, sharp prongs.

At last he became dreadfully tired. It would be impossible, he felt, to go on flying much longer, so he looked about him for shelter. He saw an open window, and beyond it a large cool room. Here was shelter at all events, so he flew straight in. There were a number of tables and chairs in the room, and at each table a man sat writing; but Flitterwing was too much frightened to see anything. He only wanted to find a place where he could hide and rest. A large ink-pot stood on a table, and just inside the ink-pot was a little ledge where a fairy might rest comfortably. Flitterwing lost no time; he darted into the ink-pot and sat down on the ledge. In a few moments he folded his tired wings about him and fell fast asleep. [Pg 90]

Now, the room into which Flitterwing had flown was a place where a great deal of business was done. Every day a number of men sat there adding up figures and writing letters about dull things that neither you nor I could understand. If you have done many sums, you will agree with me that no sensible man could really like spending all his time in adding up pounds, shillings, and pence. Very few of the men in this big room really liked it. Some of them wanted to be playing cricket or golf, some would rather have been reading books or listening to beautiful music; and every one of them was longing to be in the

country among the flowers and the fairies. And there was one among them—a little man with a pale face and a thin coat—who wished above all things to be making poetry. There were two good reasons against his doing this. In the first place, he was obliged to earn money, and this is more easily done by adding up figures than by making poetry; and in the second place, he did not in the least know how poetry ought to be made.

On the sunny morning when Flitterwing took refuge in the ink-pot the Man in the Thin Coat was very busy. There were rows and rows of figures waiting to be added up, so that there seemed to be no end to them. A large sheet of paper was before him on which he was doing these sums, and the figures were arranged in terribly long columns—and no doubt you know how unpleasant that is. Suddenly something glittered in the air for a moment and then disappeared. It was so bright that it caught his eye and made him lose his place. He thought it was some beautiful kind of insect with the sunshine caught in its wings. [Pg 91]

"It was like a messenger from the summer!" he said to himself.

Then he dipped his pen in the ink-pot and went back to his sums.

He had been working busily for some time when he noticed something very curious. His pen was not writing figures at all! He was thinking about figures, and he wished to put figures on the paper, so it was a very strange thing that his pen was writing words all the time. The words were arranged in short lines with a capital letter at the beginning of each line.

"Dear me, how annoying!" he said to himself. "What can I have been thinking of? This will never do."

So he took a fresh sheet and began again.

He imagined that he was copying all the figures on to the clean sheet of paper, for that was what he intended to do. He wrote the figures very quickly, as he thought, because he wanted to make up for lost time. Then he glanced at what he had written—and threw down his pen angrily.

There were no figures at all on the paper; nothing but line after line of words. He began to think he must have got a sunstroke.

"This is really terrible!" he muttered. "I must pay more attention to what I am doing."

So he took another clean sheet of paper and began again.

It was no use; the pen refused to make a single figure.

Then the Man in the Thin Coat was in despair. He [Pg 92] pushed the paper away from him and threw himself back in his chair.

"There is something very serious the matter with me," he said to himself. He did not notice that another man had come up to the table and was gathering together the sheets of paper that lay on it. This was the person who paid the Man in the Thin Coat for doing his sums for him. He had a round face and a big waistcoat.

"Come, come! what's this?" he said, looking at the sheets of paper. "Poetry, I declare! So you're a poet, are you? That's all very well, but I don't pay you to write poetry."

The poor Man in the Thin Coat looked very much disturbed. When you come to think of it, it is a disturbing thing to find you are writing poetry when you imagine you are doing sums.

"I couldn't help it," he said meekly.

"Yes, yes, that's the excuse they all make," said the Man with the Big Waistcoat. Then he took up the papers and began to read. There was silence in the room while he was reading the poem that the Man in the Thin Coat had written by mistake; every one left off working, and watched with great interest to see what would happen. The silence lasted for some time.

"Dear me!" said the Man with the Big Waistcoat at last. "This is a very beautiful poem!"

Then he began to read aloud.

The poem was about the summer; about the sunshine and the blue sky and the singing larks that were far away from that ugly room. It seemed as [Pg 93] though the far-off fields and the glory of the sun had been really brought there, to the tired men who sat listening. And to each man as he listened came a dream of the thing he loved best. To one man the room seemed to have turned into a garden; the scent of a thousand roses was in the air, and the colours of a thousand flowers. Another man thought he was in a field, lying under a tree and looking at the pattern of the leaves against the sky. And another saw the

sunshine sparkling on the dear sea, and the little ripples running races on the sand. But the Man in the Thin Coat saw more things than any of them.

And while they were all listening to the beautiful poem about the summer, little Fairy Flitterwing slipped out of the ink-pot and flew off to play with a sunbeam on the window-sill. The sunbeam showed him a very comfortable scarlet geranium that was growing in a window not far off, so Flitterwing went to live in it, and found a safe home at last.

And the Man in the Thin Coat went back to his sums. He was happier than he had ever been before, because he had written a beautiful poem. He was never able to write any more poetry, and he thought this was rather odd until, years afterwards, his little daughter guessed the truth. He had just finished reading to her his poem about the summer.

"Why, Daddy," she said, "there must have been a fairy in your ink-pot when you wrote that!"

THE BOX OF DREAMS

[Pg 97]

LONG ago there lived in a far country a little girl called Gretel, whose mother was dying. Before she died she said to Gretel—

"I am very poor, and I have no money to leave for you after I am gone. I have nothing to give you but this box. It was given to me when I was a child by some one who was wise and good. You must be very careful of it, for it is full of Dreams, and they are hard to keep safely. You must never open the box except when you are alone, or the Dreams will fly away. But keep them safely till your hair is grey, and something will happen to surprise you."

Gretel took the box and hid it safely, and said nothing about it to any one. Her mother died a few days afterwards, and then Gretel was sent away to be a little servant, and to work very hard. She had to get up early, and light the fire, and feed the pigs, and she had to wash the dishes and scrub the floor, and do a great many other things, so that there was very little time for anything but work. All the time her box of Dreams was hidden away upstairs in her little trunk, underneath her Sunday frock. Often, when she was working in the kitchen, or in the farmyard among the hens, she was thinking of her box of Dreams; and sometimes when she was quite

alone she would open it and look inside. The first time she opened the box she felt a little bit frightened, for she had never seen any Dreams before, and she was not sure what they were like; but when she saw them, soft and pink and downy, like lovely sleeping birds, she was not frightened any more.

[Pg 98]

"Oh, but they are pretty things!" she said to herself. "How I hope I shall be able to keep them safely till my hair is grey! They look as if a breath would blow them away, out of the window and over the hill!"

For a long time she was very careful not to let any one see her pretty rosy Dreams. Indeed, she never spoke of them; and the old farmer's wife, whose servant she was, little guessed that anything so strange as a box of Dreams was hidden upstairs in the garret, underneath Gretel's Sunday frock.

The farmer and his wife had a son about the same age as Gretel. His name was Eitel. He was a big, clumsy sort of boy, and not very clever; but Gretel had very few friends, so when Eitel was kind to her and talked to her over the fire in the evenings she was very glad. Sometimes he carried the big bucket for her when she went out to feed the pigs, and sometimes in the summer they made hay together in the field on the hillside. In this way they became great friends. Gretel told Eitel everything that had happened to her since she was a little child; and one day she told him about her box of Dreams.

"Let me see them, Gretel dear," said Eitel.

"Oh, but I mustn't!" said Gretel. "No one must see them till my hair is grey. If any one sees them they will fly away, out of the window and over the hill."

"What are they like?" asked Eitel. "And what are they for?"

[Pg 99]

"They are lovely," said Gretel, "but I don't know yet what they are for."

"Come, let me see them," said Eitel coaxingly. "I believe I see a grey hair on your head, Gretel."

It was really a bit of white thread, but Gretel thought her hair must be growing grey, so she ran upstairs and fetched the box of Dreams down to the kitchen. She opened the box very carefully, and Eitel peeped in.

Pouf! Pouf! Half-a-dozen soft rosy Dreams fluttered out from under the lid, and hovered in the air for a

moment like wisps of pink mist. Gretel shut the box with a snap, and tried to catch the floating Dreams with her fingers. But it was too late. They floated higher and higher, farther and farther, out of the window and over the hill.

"Oh, Eitel," cried Gretel, sobbing, "I have lost my Dreams—so many of them—so many of them!"

"Well," said Eitel, "I don't see that there's much to cry about. They were only pink fluff after all! I wouldn't cry about pink fluff if I were you!"

So Eitel went out of the house whistling, and thinking that girls were sometimes very silly; while Gretel carried her box upstairs, crying, and thinking that boys were often very unkind. As soon as she was in her room she opened her box again, and found to her great joy that it was still half full of beautiful Dreams.

She soon made friends with Eitel again, but she never spoke to him any more about her box of Dreams.

As the years went by Gretel became first a big girl and then a grown-up woman, and still she had to work for her living. She lived in a good many different places, sometimes with nice people and sometimes with people who were not kind to her; but wherever she lived she had to scrub and sweep, and get up early and go to bed late. She still kept her box of Dreams safely in her little trunk, hidden under her Sunday frock. Since the time that she had lost so many of her Dreams she had never opened the box except when she was alone. She was afraid of losing some more; and, besides, she did not like it when Eitel laughed at her and called her pretty Dreams "nothing but pink fluff." So she made up her mind to wait till her hair was really grey.

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It seemed to her sometimes that this would never happen! Her hair was browner than other people's, she thought, and was not going to turn grey at all. But though the time seemed so long to her, she was as a matter of fact still a young woman when she discovered that there were two grey hairs growing among the brown ones. She was combing her hair at the time, and the moment she saw the grey hairs she dropped the comb, and clapping her hands for joy ran quickly to get her box of Dreams out of her little trunk. She was so much excited that her trembling fingers could hardly undo the fastenings of the box.

When the box was at last open she was still more

excited. Her mother had promised that she should be surprised, but she had not expected such a strange and delightful and altogether wonderful surprise as this! You could never guess what had happened! Her pretty rosy Dreams had all turned into jewels more splendid than any you ever saw or heard about! Every kind of precious stone was there—emeralds and pearls and fiery opals, glowing rubies and sea-blue sapphires, besides a great many strange stones whose names you have never heard.

[Pg 101]

Gretel gasped.

She sat on the floor beside the box, and stared and stared. She could hardly believe that the glittering things were real, and she could not believe at all that they belonged to her. At first she expected every minute that they would disappear, and she was afraid to touch them; but presently she took courage and lifted them out of the box one by one. Then she took them to the light, and they looked still more beautiful than before.

As Gretel sat on the floor near the window, with the many-coloured jewels glimmering and shimmering in her lap, she came gradually to understand that when her mother gave her the box of Dreams she gave her great riches.

Gretel lived to be very old, but she never lost her jewels. She was able now to show them to all the world without any danger of their flying away, and as time went on the people flocked to see her and her jewels. Eitel admired them as much as any one, but he could never be persuaded that the fluffy pink things he had once seen had really turned into these shining and wonderful stones.

THE FAIRY WHO HAD ONLY ONE WING

[Pg 105]

I AM going to tell you now about a fairy who lost one of his wings. His home was in a white rosebud, which one would imagine to be a nice, safe, comfortable home for a fairy to have. And yet it was while he was in the white rosebud that the terrible accident happened which left him with only one wing.

All would have been well if he had stayed in the country. But one day a man came with scissors and snipped the white rosebud off the tree, and packed it

in cotton-wool, and sent it off to London. Of course the fairy had to go too, and a very uncomfortable journey he had. There were a number of other flowers packed in the same box, and in each flower there was a fairy; so they were all able to grumble together. But you can't grumble with any real comfort when you are packed very tightly, and have to talk through a good deal of cotton-wool.

At last the journey was over, and the rosebud was taken out of the cotton-wool and put in water. Then the fairy crept up from the heart of the rosebud, and put his head over the edge of the petals and looked about him.

There were flowers all round him: flowers in pots, flowers in glasses, flowers lying on the table, flowers in baskets, and great bunches of flowers in the big window. The truth was that the rosebud was in a flower-shop, but he did not know this. He only knew that it was very pleasant to be again in a place that was full of flowers and fairies. [Pg 106]

He thought he was going to enjoy himself; but that was because he did not know how cruelly fairies are sometimes treated in flower-shops. The people who arrange the flowers have a horrible way of trying to kill the fairies; and this is what they do. They take a dreadful, sharp piece of wire and poke it through the very heart of the flower, and then fasten it tightly round the stem! You will see at once that nothing is more likely to hurt a fairy than this. Indeed, he would certainly be killed, if it were not almost impossible to kill a fairy.

The little rosebud-fairy was lying comfortably curled up, deep down among the white petals of the rose, when suddenly he saw coming through the walls of his home a sharp glittering point!

"Oh dear!" he cried, trying to scramble out of the way.

But that was no use, the glittering point came nearer and nearer.

"Oh dear—oh dear!" he cried again. "Where is it coming to? Oh—it's coming this way—the horrible thing. *Oh—oh—oh!*"

It was no wonder that he cried out. The dreadful wire had caught one of his beautiful gossamer wings, and dragged it, and torn it, till there was nothing left of it but some little shreds of fluttering gauze.

"What shall I do?" he wailed. "How can I fly with only

one wing, and what is the use of a fairy that can't fly? What shall I do?"

He picked up the torn pieces of his wing and [Pg 107] wondered if he could mend them. But he soon saw that it was impossible, so he folded them up carefully and laid them inside the rose-petals; and ever afterwards there was a faint tinge of pink deep down in the heart of the rosebud.

For a long time, long after the rosebud had been tied up with a sprig of fern and put in the window, the poor little fairy went on moaning and sighing over the loss of his wing. He was still sighing when a little girl came into the shop. If the fairy had not been hiding among the petals of his rosebud he would have seen at once that she was the kind of little girl that the fairies always love; a little girl with bright eyes and a laughing face—altogether a very nice little girl. She pointed to the white rosebud and said —

"I want to buy that rosebud, please, for Granny's birthday."

In another minute she was walking along the street with the rosebud in her fat hand.

Then the fairy crept up from the heart of the rose and looked over the edge of the petals. The little girl saw him at once and was not at all surprised.

"There you are!" she said. "I wondered when you would look out. Of course I knew there was a fairy in the rosebud, or I wouldn't have bought it. It would have been no use, you see."

"What a very nice little girl!" thought the fairy. "She seems to have a great deal of sense."

The little girl went on: "Poor thing, I see your wing has been torn off. That nearly always happens to the fairies that come from flower-shops. But I dare say [Pg 108] Granny won't mind. She sees very few fairies. I am going to leave you at Granny's house because it is her birthday. Now remember, you're to be very nice to Granny, because she sees so few fairies."

By this time they had reached Granny's house. Granny lived all alone in a very splendid house in a great square. The house had a great many fine things in it: handsome furniture and valuable china and grand silks and brocades. But there was not a single fairy in it, and a house that has no fairies in it is a very dull place.

Granny was sitting alone on her birthday. She looked round the great drawing-room and thought there were a number of empty chairs and sofas in it. That made her feel very lonely. No one had been to see her on her birthday; she had had no presents or letters; no one had noticed her birthday at all. If there had been any fairies in the house Granny would not have felt so lonely, because the fairies are always good company. But poor Granny had quite forgotten all about the fairies; it was so long since she had seen any.

Then a footman brought the white rosebud into the room, with a message from the little girl with the bright eyes and the nice laughing face.

Granny sat for a long time with the white rosebud on her knee. She felt happier than she had been all day. She sat so still that the fairy thought he might safely peep out and see what was going on. To his great surprise Granny noticed him at once; he had not thought it at all likely that she would see him, for she was not the kind of person who often sees fairies. Probably she would not have seen him if she had not been so sad and lonely. [Pg 109]

"Why," she said, "it's a fairy! It is years since I saw a fairy. I thought I should never see one again."

When the fairy saw that Granny was glad to see him, he crept out of the rosebud and sat on her wrinkled hand, and talked to her.

"Poor little thing," said Granny, "you have lost one of your wings. Well, it was not likely that any but a one-winged fairy would find his way in here."

Then she sighed. So the fairy, to cheer her up, told her all about the lovely garden he had left behind him in the country—the garden where he had lived before the man with the scissors came to cut the rosebud. He told her about the other roses and the fairies that lived in them, and the tall hollyhocks whose fairies were so prim and old-fashioned, and the sweet, shy love-in-a-mist whose fairies always wore veils when they went out, and the sunflower-fairies who had never been taught that it was rude to stare, and the dear unselfish verbena fairies who made the world so sweet for other people and never thought of themselves. Then Granny remembered all sorts of things that she had forgotten for years—fairies she used to know when she was a little girl, and the stories they used to tell her. She told some of the stories to the rosebud fairy, and they talked together for a long time. Granny was happier that

evening than she had been for a great many evenings. She said to herself that her birthday had been a very nice one after all.

"Won't you come and live with me?" she said.

The fairy looked round the room. [Pg 110]

"Well," he said, "I should like to stay very much, but I really don't see any place here for me to live. My rosebud will soon die and be thrown away."

"But if I were to keep the rosebud always, even when it was dead? Would you stay then?"

The fairy thought for a moment.

"I tell you plainly," he said, "that I don't like the idea of living in a dead rosebud. But I know it's done sometimes, and one mustn't be too particular when one has only one wing."

"I'll ask the little girl who brought you here to come and see you often," said Granny, "and you and I will go out to-morrow and buy some picture-books for her, and some chocolates, and then we shall all three enjoy ourselves together."

The fairy nodded happily.

"That settles it," he said. "I'll stay."

THE LITTLE BOY FROM TOWN [Pg 113]

IF you spend all the year in a big town it is a fine thing to have a summer holiday near the sea. Otherwise you never have a chance of making friends with the sea-fairies or the mermaids, who are the most delightful playmates in the world. You may know all kinds of other fairies, and be quite intimate with them, but as long as you live nothing can ever make up to you for not knowing the sea-fairies.

Little Michael was eight years old, and he had never met a sea-fairy, for he lived in a great town. Then at last his father and mother and he went off for a whole month to the seaside. There were sands there, very hard and yellow and good to make castles with; and there were lonely caves with dripping walls; and there were heaps of slimy, green seaweed, and shells, and rocks for climbing on. Best of all, there were plenty of fairies. Michael made friends with all the fairies of the sea and shore; but his greatest and best friend was a Mermaid who lived in a cave.

The roof of the cave was wet and green, and its floor was pebbly, with here and there a rock. Every day Michael came and sat on one of the rocks and listened to the Mermaid's stories, and to the soft, lapping sound of the little waves. The Mermaid told him such stories as he had never heard before, for she had not always been in that cave, but had swum in deep seas and lived on many shores. She told Michael of places where the sea was warm and green, and the rocks were made of coral, and palm-trees shaded the mermaids when they played upon [Pg 114] the sands. She told him too of bitter seas that were made of ice, so that no mermaid could swim in them; and of towering icebergs shining in the sun; and of white mist-fairies, who turned the hair of mermaids into a shower of icicles. Then she told him of sailors who had been her friends, and how some of them were sailing far away, and some of them were drowned, and how all of them were good playmates.

While Michael listened to these stories his eyes were very round and wide open, and often his mouth was open too. He had never enjoyed anything so much before, and he thought it would be dreadful when the day came for him to leave the dancing sea-fairies and the Mermaid's cave, and go back to the big town where he hardly ever saw any fairies at all. One day he said—

"Mermaid dear, I want something to take back to town with me; something to make me remember the sea-fairies and you, and to make me think of the sea for ever and ever."

"Tell me what you want," said the Mermaid, smiling; "and if I can get it for you, I will."

"Well," said Michael, "it's rather a big thing I was thinking of. Perhaps it's too big to ask for. But you see the Bay is full of white-horses to-day. Do you think you could possibly catch one for me? I think if I could take home a white-horse from the Bay, I should remember the sea for ever and ever."

The Mermaid slipped off her rock and dived into the deep water. A few moments afterwards Michael saw her far out in the Bay, with her hair floating in the wind, and her tail glittering under the waves. There [Pg 115] were a great many wind-fairies playing about that morning, and that was the reason that the Bay was full of white-horses, for when the wind-fairies are playing on the sea they always ride white-horses.

Michael climbed a high rock and stood on the very top of it, and watched the Mermaid. It was grand to

see her gliding through the water, chasing first one white-horse and then another, diving and darting and dodging, and enjoying herself all the time.

"Quick, quick!" cried Michael. "You nearly had him that time!"

But she was not quick enough, for the white-horse was far out of reach even as she threw out her white arms to catch his mane.

The chase lasted a long time, for though mermaids can swim better than most people, a white-horse on the sea is one of the hardest things to catch. At last, however, Michael clapped his hands and shouted—

"She's got him, she's got him! Hurrah—now I shall have a white-horse to take home with me, and to make me think of the sea for ever and ever!"

If it had been a fine sight to see the Mermaid chasing the white-horse across the Bay, it was far finer to see them come prancing back again. The Mermaid was not swimming this time, but riding on the back of the angry white-horse, who plunged and galloped across the Bay, tossing his long mane. And the Mermaid tossed her golden hair and laughed, because she was enjoying her ride. Michael laughed aloud too, because when the white mane and the golden hair streamed up together upon the wind they were very beautiful to see. [Pg 116]

And now a very curious and unfortunate thing happened. The wind-fairies suddenly grew tired and went to sleep, every one of them. Now when the wind-fairies go to sleep, the white-horses always dive down below the sea and go to sleep too. Before the Mermaid had reached the shore she was swimming again, for her white-horse had suddenly disappeared and left her with nothing to ride. He had gone to sleep below the sea until the next time the wind-fairies wanted to play.

"Oh, Mermaid dear," cried Michael, "what have you done with my nice new horse?"

"I am very sorry to tell you," said the Mermaid, lying down on the sand to rest herself, "that he has gone below the sea to sleep. It is really most unfortunate, but when a white-horse wants to sleep you can't stop him."

"Oh dear, oh dear," said Michael piteously, for it was a great disappointment. "I did so much want to have a white-horse to make me think of the sea for ever and ever."

"Wouldn't anything else do instead?" asked the Mermaid, who was very kind.

Then Michael noticed that every time a little wave reached the shore it broke on the rocks in a shower of coloured jewels. He pointed to them.

"Bring me some of those, please, Mermaid dear," he said.

So the Mermaid took a large shell, shaped like a saucer, and waited on a rock till a little wave came in and sprinkled the rock with jewels. She held out her shell to catch the jewels, but as soon as they touched the shell they changed into water.

[Pg 117]

"Look," she said to Michael, "the jewels have melted."

"Oh dear," said Michael, "what am I to do? I am going back to town to-morrow, and I have nothing to remind me of the sea!"

"Do you really and truly wish to think of the sea for ever and ever?" asked the Mermaid.

"Of course I do," said Michael.

"Then I will sing you the Sea Song," said the Mermaid, "and after that there will be nothing that can make you forget the sea."

So while Michael sat on the rock and looked at the sea, the Mermaid sang him the Sea Song, which mermaids have sung to sailors ever since the first ship was built. It is a song that no one ever forgets. It is like the voice of the sea calling, calling; and there are many people who hear it always, even in their dreams. If they are people who have to live in towns, or in country places far from the sea, they are not very happy.

When the Mermaid had finished singing, she said—

"Now I have given you something that will make you think of the sea for ever and ever."

The next day Michael went back to town. He took with him the sound of the Sea Song; and for ever afterwards he heard the voice of the sea calling, calling, even in his dreams.

That was why he became a sailor when he was old enough.

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Two printer errors have been corrected:

1. On page 26 a missing hyphen was added in the phrase: "Sweet-of-the-Mountain."

2. On page 48 a missing hyphen was added in the phrase: "Then all the sunbeam-fairies shouted...."

In all other cases, the author's original spelling and punctuation have been left intact.

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