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A LITTLE MAID IN TOYLAND

BY
ADAM LOUISE
SUTTON.





**THE SLEIGH DREW UP BESIDE A LARGE SHEET OF CLEAR GLASS,
LIGHTLY SPRINKLED WITH SNOW POWDER SO THAT IT WAS NOT
TOO SLIPPERY FOR ROLLER SKATING**

A LITTLE MAID IN TOYLAND

BY
ADAH LOUISE SUTTON

AUTHOR OF
"MR. BUNNY, HIS BOOK," "THE TEDDY BEARS," ETC.



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CHAPTER I

THE WALKING HOUSE



HE doll's house stood in the most convenient corner of the nursery, having, like Noah's dove, found rest only after a somewhat varied and tempestuous experience. Sally had not been at all able to make up her mind just what location suited her best, and the house had patiently traveled, or, in other words, had been propelled by the united efforts of Bob and Sally—"The corporal pushed and the sergeant pulled"—the one dragging, the other pushing, from corner to corner and from side to side of the spacious room. Not a piece of furniture but had been moved out of the way that the doll's house might stand in its place, and was as methodically moved back again when the building resumed its travels. Never did it remain in one place for longer than twenty-four hours, much to the disgust and terror of its inmates, who were frequently joggled from their chairs and tilted out of bed as their domicile renewed its pilgrimage. They concluded by naming it the Walking House, which certainly seemed appropriate enough under existing circumstances.

Finally, when the Walking House had traveled around the nursery, Sally decided that the very best position was the one it had at first occupied, a sunny spot between two windows, and at night lighted from above by a bracket from which depended four electric bulbs. To be sure, the dresser, to which this post of vantage had originally belonged, became very sulky at being deprived of her rights, and purposely twisted off one of her castors while in transit to the other side of the room. But as nothing in the world was easier than for John, the man of all work, to screw another castor in its place, nobody really minded it the least little bit.

A great man by the name of Ruskin once said that "Architecture is frozen music." Now the architecture of the Walking House was no description of music at all, and I have no doubt that the gentleman who admired Grecian architecture would have held up both hands in dismay at mentioning architecture and the Walking House in the same breath. Truth to tell, the building had been designed by Sally herself, and had been elaborated by John's handy fingers from a number of good-sized boxes procured from the grocery man. The boxes diminished in size as the house soared upward, the whole terminating in a peaked roof under whose roomy gable Sally had planned and consummated an attic for her beloved dollies that would have put to shame the garret of many a grown-up housekeeper.

All the rest of the rooms had been papered by the children's deft fingers in neat little designs procured from Mr. Brouse, the gentleman with a wooden leg who lived three blocks away and then around the corner and up one flight, as he himself was wont to describe it. And although he really did live up one flight as far as eating and drinking and sleeping were concerned, the shop was in reality only up one step—that most fascinating shop, from whose mysterious recesses might be procured rolls of the most delightful wall paper, which was surely invented and designed simply and solely for the decoration of doll houses.

Mr. Brouse was an old soldier, according to his own account, and indeed was familiarly addressed as "Captain" by his intimate cronies. He had lost a limb in a mysterious battle, the name of which, as spoken by himself, Sally had never been able to discover in any one of several histories of the United States through which the little girl had patiently toiled in search of it. However, Sally had unbounded faith in her hero, for such she considered him to be; and her admiration was returned with interest by the retired "Captain" who, with his own hands—that, as Bob seriously remarked, had once wielded a sword—carried to the nursery a large pail of paste and assisted in hanging the wall paper, and many a difficult corner he had arranged with neatness and despatch. He had even tacked up tiny mouldings made from the slender strips of which wee gilt frames are fashioned. In fact, his work was a masterpiece of art, and Sally appreciated it hugely, making a shy return in the way of fat pin-cushions and sprawling penwipers, and even a gorgeous silk needlebook, mysterious of design and most difficult of access as regarding certain wobbly strings and buttons, which, when once fastened, could never be persuaded to open themselves again, and behind whose secret fastnesses the needles comfortably and aimlessly rusted.

So much for the papering of the rooms. When it came to finishing the attic, why, that was quite another thing. Sally calmly but firmly declared that it *must be plastered*, and plastered it was, but altogether without the assistance of Mr. Brouse, who declared that matters were growing altogether too complicated for him. And he politely retired, forgetting his pail of paste, however, into which nurse presently fell, much to the detriment of her best gloves which she had put on in order to appear unusually fine on her afternoon out. Nothing daunted, Sally flew to the cellar and routed out John, who was taking a bit of a nap in a cosy little den he had fixed for himself in the furnace room. John was surely an exception to most people, who are usually cranky at being wakened. He bobbed up smiling, and readily agreed to attend to plastering the attic of the Walking House. And in a much shorter time than Sally had really expected, the whole job was finished and the little room with its peaked ceiling looked exactly like a really truly attic.



The "Captain" assisted in hanging the wall paper.

The house, as before described, was built of good-sized boxes, neatly put together with narrow cleats to hide the joinings, and the whole was painted a delicate gray, only the sloping roof being moss green. John had covered this roof with tiny shingles, and the effect of the whole was extremely attractive. It was divided in the middle by a broad hall, at the back of which was a wide stairway. John had rather demurred at the stairway, foreseeing that the making of it would be a troublesome piece of business. But Sally had stoutly insisted thereon, for how on earth could a doll descend from upper stories to lower without stairs? She would be forced to hurl herself out of the front windows,—called so by compliment since the whole front of the house stood open in one generous space—a proceeding extremely detrimental to china limbs. Sally was a matter-of-fact little soul, albeit she possessed a brilliant imagination. But she certainly builded better than she knew when she insisted on that staircase. John, as usual, gave in and the stairs became an accomplished fact.

The lower floor of the Walking House consisted of a spacious dining-room on one side of the hall and a kitchen and laundry on the other. On the next floor were the drawing-room, library and music-room. On the third floor were three bed-rooms and a bath-room, and above all, the attic.

On one side of the house and running across the front on the lower floor, John had built a veranda, on which a doll might enjoy coolness and comfort on the hottest of days, while all the way up the other side ran a tiny fire-escape, which finally disappeared in a scuttle in the sloping roof.

Bob, just then much interested in electricity, wired the whole house and connected it with the electric light chandelier which hung above it, so that every room was brilliantly lighted with electricity, and an electric bell at the front door gave notice whenever a friendly doll dropped in for afternoon tea.

Sally's one regret was that there was no cellar. The child had dreamed of a wee furnace and a fruit closet filled with jars of jam and jelly put up over a tiny electric stove. But the stove had been utterly impracticable, John had declared that it would be impossible to dig down through the floor of the room for the cellar, and practical nurse had pointed out the fact that nowhere could one find preserve jars tiny enough for the purpose. So Sally had given up the project, not without a sigh however. She had very, very realistic ideas, had Sally.

One of her pet projects, confided to her governess, Miss Palmer, not without misgivings, had been to build a revolving house, one that could be "swung around" as the child, knowing nothing of pivots, had expressed it. This idea she had conceived to be applied not only to doll houses, but to real dwellings.

"You could always have the sunshine wherever you wanted it," she had explained. "And wouldn't it be fine to have it always right here in the nursery?"

Miss Palmer had hesitated a little before replying. Indeed Sally's theories often caused her to hesitate. However, she finally explained that the idea would be quite impossible, as all buildings

of any size require a firm foundation. And she thereupon proceeded to explain the nature of the pivot, considering the opportunity a very fitting one.

"Besides," she concluded, "wouldn't it be very selfish for us to keep all the sunshine on our side of the house all the time? What would become of Grandma and Bob?"

Sally was quiet for a moment, thinking.

"I didn't mean to be selfish," she whispered, snuggling her peachy cheek against her teacher's shoulder.

"I'm sure you didn't, my dear," returned Miss Palmer.

And so it fell out that no architect, not even John, was ever requested to draw plans for a house that might revolve on a pivot.

CHAPTER II

THE HOUSE IS FURNISHED



HE furnishing of the doll's house proved a keen delight to Sally, and the infection spread from the little girl to the other members of the household, even Papa Doctor often emerging from his carriage with his arms full of mysterious, knobby parcels.

Mamma Wee, as Sally lovingly nicknamed Mrs. North, renounced pink teas and bridge parties and spent hours every day sitting bow-legged like a Turk or a tailor, while she arranged the fascinating little rooms, laid small carpets and tacked up tiny, ruffled curtains. For all the windows were real ones, with panes of glass let into the small sashes and with the cunningest little white blinds that opened in the middle and could be securely fastened with bolts at night. Sally, who, as Bob said, was "always thinking up something else," was already revolving in her own mind the propriety of demanding screens to head off imaginary flies and mosquitoes.

"Just fancy how perfectly *huge* a *real* fly would look to one of the dollies!" she said to herself as she thoughtfully pondered on the momentous question.

She scarcely liked to ask John if he would undertake such a particular job, he had done so much already. "Pernickety" he was sure to call it. So, after much mature deliberation, she concluded to drop the matter for the present, at least.

"What is the use of screening up the back and sides when the front is all open anyway?" Bob had exclaimed when Sally finally broached the subject to him.

"Oh, but we are imagining the front is just like that in any other house!" retorted Sally with some spirit.

"Well, then imagine that the flies can't come in," responded Bob. And that settled it.

Odd as it may seem, the attic was the very first room that Sally started to put in order. And a most delicious little place it was, with its raftered ceiling and neatly plastered walls. With the vision of their own immaculate attic in her mind's eye, the child proceeded to neatly range around the walls several doll's trunks, a tiny spinning wheel and two or three odd wooden chairs; also one of the many cradles that had been presented as offerings at the shrine of the doll's house. A spinning wheel and a cradle comprised, for the most part, what Sally denominated a "proper" attic.

From the rafters the child hung tiny bunches of good-smelling herbs, for which cook had been levied upon. To be sure, no such thing existed in city attics as a rule, but they did down at the farm. Sally suddenly recollected that they also had spiders and cobwebs in the attic at the farm. The very thought of a spider made her shiver, but she wondered if it would not be well to affect a few cobwebs, and privately concluded to request Miss Palmer, her beloved governess, to paint in a few with water-colors,—a scheme into which Miss Palmer heartily entered, adding on her own responsibility a fat, yellow spider, whose appearance was so realistic that Sally shrieked when she first discovered it. Bob promptly suggested that a few rats should be added. But rats, Miss Palmer declared, were beyond her powers of creation. They would require to be real, solid little beasts, and not simply painted flat on the wall. To this Bob readily assented, gravely adding that if they were only painted on the wall, of course they never could come down at night to bite the dolls. Bob concluded his remarks by making a grimace so fearfully suggestive of a prowling rat that Sally fled in anguish, and Miss Palmer, while she could not refrain from smiling, felt forced to request that he would cease from tormenting his sister.

From the attic to the kitchen is quite a long jump, at least it would have been without the staircase. But the kitchen was the next on the program, and thither were the forces of the furnishing party now directed. Never had a new kitchen been so liberally supplied with stoves, kettles, pans and pots, especially *stoves*. It really seemed as if everyone who had not sent a cradle had sent a stove. Every kind except an electric one, as Sally sadly reflected. But Miss Palmer consoled her by saying that she doubted very much if electric stoves came in so small a size. So Sally was presently very well content to see a most fascinating little cast-iron affair set up, on top of which was ranged an array of pots and kettles sufficient to prepare a dinner for the most particular of dolls, albeit of diminutive size.

Opposite the stove stood a neat dresser, filled with a most wonderful array of china and glass. To be sure, Sally had reserved the very best for the china closet in the dining-room, but the display in the kitchen was a goodly one. So also was the wooden and tinware that hung upon hooks and displayed itself on shelves all around the walls. But the article dearest to Sally's heart, and over which the child lingered longest in a perfect passion of delight was a miniature refrigerator, an almost exact reproduction of the big one downstairs. Lined with opal glass, its well-filled shelves were weighted down with all sorts of delectable edibles that dolls are presumed to delight in. Its upper compartment was filled with chunks of ground glass to represent ice. Sally lingered long in rapture over this delightful bit of furniture, and having at last located it entirely to her satisfaction, placed over against it a cute little three-cornered closet containing a collection of brooms and mops, and a wee carpet sweeper, whose tiny, revolving brushes really picked up any small bits of fluff and lint that happened to be about.

Surely never was a kitchen so perfectly and generously supplied with all things needful, from the shining yellow oil-cloth on the floor to the beautiful blue table and chairs, the gift of nurse,

who declared them to be exactly like those used in the "auld country." The whole shining region was presided over by a stiff, colored cook in turban and apron, who, alas! could never sit down on the beautiful blue chairs, as she belonged to the variety of dolls that does not bend in the middle.

Out of the kitchen opened the laundry, which was furnished quite as perfectly in its way, with a ravishing little laundry set which Mamma Wee had discovered in one of the big department stores. Everything was most complete and the whole family lingered in admiration over the shiny copper boiler that adorned the neat stove, the glittering flatirons and very tiny clothes-pins. The arrangement for heating the irons, a black, pointed kind of stove against the sides of which the irons stood up flatly, filled everybody with ecstasy. Sarah, the laundress, begged for a loan of it, declaring that she had never seen anything that could compare with it for heating real irons.



This joking pleased Sally immensely, and she invited Sarah to use the laundry for the family washing whenever she felt so inclined. Whereupon Sarah departed laughing and declaring that she had "never seen anything to come up to it, before nor since." "Before nor since" was a favorite expression of Sarah's, the meaning of which neither Sally nor indeed anybody else had ever been able to fathom. "Forevermore" was another expression over which the little girl pondered deeply. She was afraid to ask for information, lest she should give offense, for Mamma Wee had carefully trained her little daughter to be especially considerate of the feelings of all who were dependents in the household. Therefore Sally wondered in secret, and the mystery was never solved, as far as I know, to the end of the chapter.

The dining-room came next in the natural sequence of things, and an extremely imposing and spacious room it was, with floor and paneling polished to represent hard wood, while above the panels was displayed a gorgeous paper of a lively red pattern. The ceiling was raftered and studded with tiny electric light bulbs. A fine bow window occupied one whole end. In truth, 'twas a love of

a room and no mistake.

A lofty china closet contained all the fine glass and china, while a sideboard of newest pattern groaned under its weight of rich German silver. Everything was of the most novel and up-to-date pattern. The round table, the finely carved chairs, and the beautiful Persian rug that Grandma had knitted from ravelings of carpet, worked in with heavy crochet cotton, all went to make up a picture not easily to be rivaled in the annals of doll's houses.

The bow window was a delight in itself. All around it ran a wide seat which Sally piled high with tiny silk cushions, while crisp muslin curtains finished with wee ruffles shaded the panes. A couple of canaries hung aloft in their gilded cages. The whole effect was stunning, and the assembled family silently gloated over it and unitedly envied the dolls who were to enjoy such an ideal dining-room.

CHAPTER III

THE TEDDY BEARS TAKE A HAND



HE Teddy Bears, as one may well suppose, were no less interested in the furnishing and arrangement of the doll's house than the members of the family themselves. They had scarcely been able to sleep a wink for thinking and talking over the subject in hand, and Peter Pan himself had proudly brought gifts, not exactly gold, frankincense and myrrh, but something much more acceptable in the shape of a wee mail-box, the very counterpart of those that hang upon the telephone posts. It had been captured during one of his predatory night raids, during which he and Bedelia had ransacked a neighboring toy store, carrying off the mail-box as Peter Pan's share of the loot, while Bedelia joyfully abstracted a most delightful little workstand that could be shut up like a camp chair and stood against the wall if so desired, with a gorgeous yellow silk lining.

In justice to the bears, it must be said of them that they did not, in this case, break through and steal, for Peter Pan left upon the counter a piece of money, shaken down from his own little bank—a most beautiful bank in the shape of a mottled, earthenware pig, which Sally had presented to him without the smallest idea in the world that he would ever use it for legitimate purposes. But the very fact of ownership turned the Teddy Bear at once into an inveterate miser, and he hoarded like a magpie, levying on every pocketbook that his mischievous paws fell upon. He was, however, too cute to appropriate any but small coins, so that thus far nothing had been missed. Teddy Bears can scarcely be supposed to have any adequate idea of values, so when Peter Pan proudly deposited a nickel on the counter, he considered that he was paying very well for the articles chosen by himself and his wife. The piece of money was afterwards found by the shopkeeper, and as he never missed the small articles that had taken the fancy of the Teddy Bears, he considered himself a nickel in, and "As a man thinketh, so is he."

To extract the bit of money from the bowels of the pig had been a fearful piece of work, and had it not been for the end in view, the Teddy Bear would have given up in despair. To drop a nickel into the little slot in the creature's back, and then to listen to the delicious rattling it made in the cavernous interior was one thing, but to fish it out through that narrow aperture was quite another. Anyone who has ever tried the experiment will appreciate the dreadful quarter of an hour that ensued as the Teddy Bears, perspiring in every pore, struggled with that most niggardly of china pigs.

First they essayed to fish out the coin, using successively a hair-pin bent out straight and one end fashioned into a hook, a buttonhook, a pair of manicure scissors, ruining the curved points, a crochet needle, and nurse's best hat-pin. Nothing, however, availed. The pig, like his predecessor in the story that would not jump over the stile, would not give up the coveted coin. Finally Bedelia seized it by its head and shook it frantically, literally as the oft quoted terrier shakes the rat. But no nickel! To be sure, they could have smashed the pig, but in spite of his obstinacy he was the Teddy Bear's chief treasure, and Peter Pan loved his mottled exterior and gloried in his impossible snout and extremely unpiglike ears. He could not bring himself to sacrifice a thing so cherished, even on the altar of his love for Sally.

After a while the bears desisted from their efforts and held a council of war. Peter Pan had about come to the end of his tether when suddenly his eyes, roaming miserably about in search of some new weapon of offense, fell upon something that caused him to utter a little shriek of delight. And the article was nothing more nor less than a stick of chewing gum. Now the Teddy Bear knew all about gum. He had tried to chew some once and had been obliged to beg help from Sally, so closely were his jaws welded together. She had laughingly pried them open, and had advised him not to bite off more than he could chew in the future.

Peter Pan did not intend to bite off anything in this case. He put one end of the gum in his mouth and chewed on it till his jaws ached, and then passed it on to Bedelia, who repeated the performance. And in two shakes of a lamb's tail the end of the stick of gum was reduced to a mass of stickiness that rivaled fly-paper. Peter Pan now turned the bank, that is, the pig on its back so that the coins within it came rattling down over the opening. He next carefully inserted the chewed end of the gum, using the unchewed portion as a handle by which to propel it into the aperture, and presently drew it triumphantly forth with two dimes and a nickel sticking to the mass. Great were the rejoicings at the success of the trick, and Peter Pan, supposing that the nickel was much the more valuable as it was greater in size than the dimes, laid it aside while he returned the other coins to the bank. Afterward he explained the whole performance to Sally,



who was very glad indeed to hear it, for at first she had been somewhat doubtful as to the origin of her delightful mail-box.

Meanwhile the furnishing and arranging went merrily on, and Sally sighed in delighted rapture as she contemplated the work of her hands and found that it was very good.

Her drawing-room she thought was her especial delight, all done in red velvet, with a splendid red carpet and lace curtains at the windows, over which hung draperies of red silk. A tall pier glass stood between the windows, and on the mantel-shelf were a gilt clock under a glass case, and two gilt candlesticks holding real wax candles. Underneath, in the grate, a glowing flame of crimson tinfoil shone comfortably, tinfoil being the fuel universally accepted for grates in doll houses.

A fine center table, marble-topped, occupied the middle of the room. The chairs were luxurious, and Sally only wished that her size were compatible with nestling down on one of them.

Across the hall from the drawing-room was the music-room, all furnished in blue upholstered satin, and containing two pianos, a grand and an upright. Potted plants of the paper variety bloomed in the windows and a wee violin in a polished case lay atop of the music cabinet.

Sally had destined this apartment to be a living-room and music-room in one, and finally added a porch swing that hung in a frame and teetered delightfully when a doll sat in it; a couple of parrots in a gilt cage; and Bedelia's workstand. The effect was somewhat incongruous, especially in connection with blue satin chairs and sofas, while Bob remarked, quite gratuitously, that when once the parrots got started nobody could ever hear either the violin or pianos. However, as Sally was the only one to be pleased, no one took any notice of this remark.

With regret Sally turned from the bright little music-room, but was presently just as deeply engrossed with the library. Here was a peach of a room, to use her own expression—a room all furnished and upholstered in green, with sleepy hollow chairs and a roll-top desk in one corner. Around the walls ran shelves filled with tiny books, and a wee telephone hung in one angle of the wall, near the desk. At one end of the room was a big fireplace, over which rose a high mantel-shelf, and a grandfather's clock ticked, metaphorically speaking, in the corner.

Sally had desired that her library should be "restful" and to that end had worked out the scheme of furnishings on a somewhat subdued scale. However, she succeeded admirably in carrying out her design, an end which few grown-ups ever attain. Never was there a more charming haven of rest to which a doll might fly for refuge from the turmoil without than this dim, shadowy room, with its deep lounging chairs and bewitching tea-table drawn up at one side of the fire.

There was a tiny smoker's set, too, ranged on an oriental looking tabouret, a collection of tiny brass articles that would have delighted the soul of any lover of the weed. Want of space had compelled Sally to unite library and den, but the union of the two made a much more charming room than either one could ever have hoped to attain to by itself.

Bob had contributed to the library a distracting pipe rack, fashioned from the bits of a cigarbox and cunningly cut out with his jig-saw, an article whose usefulness promised to be unlimited as far as a doll's house was concerned. The rack was hung with tiny pipes picked up at one of the ten-cent stores at ten cents per dozen. Bob was proud of his handiwork and Sally considered it one of her chief treasures because Bob had made it.



On the third floor were the bed-rooms and bath-room. The bed-rooms, fascinatingly furnished with dainty patterns of cretonne, with fine brass beds, and ruffled curtains at the windows, were places of rest and delight. One of them was arranged for a nursery and contained two cunning little white enameled cribs. There was also, in this room, a most intricate folding bed for the nurse.

The bath-room was most elaborately appointed with shower and needle baths, as well as a fine, white enameled tub and a complicated system of plumbing. By means of this real water ran from a tank over the tub and furnished forth a liberal supply for the ablutions of all the dollies. To be sure, one was obliged to be very careful not to allow the tub to run over, for an overflow meant ruin and rout to ceilings below stairs.

Teddy Bears have no sense of ratio and no amount of explanation could ever convince Bedelia that she was of a size entirely out of proportion for the Walking House. Finally she made one valiant effort to establish herself therein, but was driven to retire, growling, as she could not force more than her big head and shoulders into any of the ordinary-sized rooms. There would not have been room even for Little Breeches, let alone for Bedelia's generous proportions.

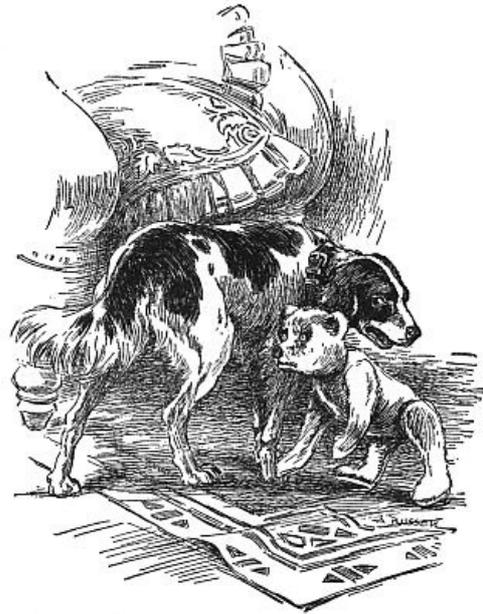
CHAPTER IV

BEDELIA GROWS A TAIL

BEDELIA was an extremely handsome bear, as Teddy Bears go, but for some time she had been plunged in inexpressible gloom because she possessed no tail. In vain her family expostulated with her, pointing out the fact that a bear with a tail would indeed be a freak and a monstrosity. Bedelia persisted in her notion, unreasonable as it was, and very nearly succeeded in driving Peter Pan to the verge of insanity. For although she led him a merry dance as a rule, he was extremely fond of her, and being of a chivalrous nature, made all sorts of excuses for her queer notions. Therefore he had very nearly arrived at his wits' end when Bedelia suddenly ceased her lamentations and became quite cheerful—a change which, had Peter Pan only read her aright, would have appeared ominous. However, the poor fellow was so delighted at seeing his wife once more like her former self that he suspected nothing, not even when Bedelia began to absent herself at intervals from the family circle.

Truth to tell, Bedelia had a great deal more sense than most humans and realized after a little that scolding and fretting would never attain the end in view. She wanted a tail, and a tail she meant to have, and immediately began to cast around in her fertile mind as to the means that she should use to accomplish her end. She was far too cute to ask advice from those who had so discouraged her, but waited with trembling anxiety for the inevitable something which is sure to turn up sooner or later. It is a long lane, indeed, that has no turning, but the further one progresses, the nearer it is to the end; and Bedelia helped along the somewhat tedious waiting by a series of experiments that would have filled the breast of the gloomiest with hysterical mirth.

The beautiful, feathery appendage of Rough House had at first attracted her attention as he held it aloft and waved it plume-like in the air. But somehow Rough House had been very rude and had nipped her smartly when she laid hold and began a series of heroic tugs. And she had retreated in disorder with a rip in her coat, made by the dog's gleaming teeth. Afterward she reflected that the tail was far too large and would not have matched her own fur anyway. This thought brought consolation and she proceeded to turn her attention and her energies in other directions. But try as she might, she could find nothing in the line of a tail that became her. She tried them all from every animal in the nursery, and nurse, finding them one by one lying on the floor, had shaken her head as she attached them successively to their original owners. She had her own ideas on the subject and they chiefly included rats, or perhaps little Rags who was getting his second teeth and might incline toward chewing things up. Sally alone suspected Bedelia, but was unable to catch her at her evil-doing, as she carried on her marauding chiefly in the silent night.



Having weighed in the balance and found wanting all the ready-made tails she could find, she looked about for something out of which to manufacture the right thing. Nothing, however, presented itself, and Bedelia realized that she could scarcely have formed so important an article with her own clumsy paws, even if it had. So for the time her occupation seemed gone, and she began to mope again, filled with chagrin that all her efforts should thus be foiled.

Meantime the summer waned and crisp nights began to suggest fall weather. One bright afternoon Bedelia had been sitting curled up on the broad window-seat on which she and her family kept house, pouting as usual and longing for something in the shape of mischief with which to occupy her rapacious paws. Sally and nurse were busy making doll clothes, as several occupants of the Walking House were still without suitable outfits. Suddenly nurse exclaimed,

"I believe it is soon going to be time for furs. Do you mind, darlin', the nice set your aunt, Miss Edith, gave me Christmas, with all thim little tails on the muff?"

Tails! Bedelia's ears were pricked up in a moment. Tails, and fur tails, too! Well she remembered the day in early spring when all the furs of the household had been aired and beaten and hung out in the sun before being laid away in boxes, liberally sprinkled with camphor and finally the covers all pasted up with strips of paper. They had been put away in the big store-room at the top of the house, and Bedelia knew exactly where they were. But she knew, also, that the store-room was always kept locked and she did not feel very sure where the key was kept.

She determined, however, to lose no time in looking for the bunch, and although it took nearly a week of investigation, they were found at last, and Bedelia lugged them off and hid them in a place whereof she knew, and which already contained a motley array of articles which at one time or other her fancy had prompted her to filch.

Several more days elapsed before a suitable opportunity to visit the store-room occurred. But

at last Bedelia found herself standing in front of it with the bunch of keys in her eager paws. Behind the locked door lay the darling wish of her heart, a tail, and in a moment she had, as if by magic, selected the right key and swung open the heavy door.

Now a new difficulty confronted her, one of which she had not even dreamed. There were at least a dozen boxes standing on the shelves, all neatly labelled, of course. But Bedelia could not read, and no good fairy appeared to tell her which box contained nurse's furs and the particular tail. So she stood gloomily gazing into the closet and at last concluded that much as she hated to take the trouble, there was but one thing to do and that was to open every box until she discovered the right one. This she at once set at work to do, tearing and ripping with a pair of scissors that she had brought along, emptying out furs and camphor in a promiscuous heap, dumping the contents of one box on top of another until the erstwhile orderly store-room presented the appearance of a rummage sale.



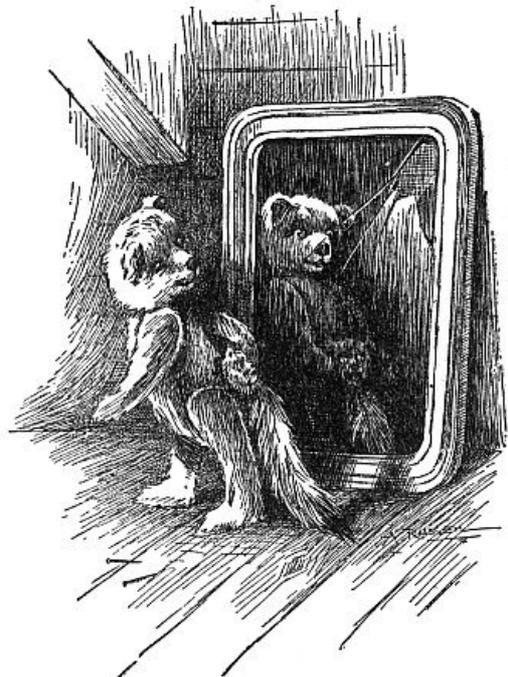
Now, had Sally been conducting the investigation, she would have known that the sets of furs were kept in the smaller boxes, while fur robes and so on were pinned in big bundles. But Bedelia, of course, never stopped to think of that so it fell out that nearly everything else in the closet was ripped open and flung out on the floor before she came across the box in which the coveted furs reposed. They were very respectable furs of a shade of brown that seemed to Bedelia just the proper one to harmonize with her own skin. And there were tails in plenty, more tails than Bedelia's wildest dreams had ever conjured. She felt that she could wallow in tails now if she chose, and it did not take her long to get possession of what she wanted. She nipped off half a dozen, taking them from the neckpiece to which they were attached by little, pointed heads, each one with its ferocious mouth wide open displaying a number of tiny, white teeth.

Gathering up her treasures, she hurried downstairs, having taken care to lock the door and replace the key where it had originally hung. Then holding fast to the bunch of stolen fur, she hurriedly sought a quiet corner in the attic, whither she often fled when for any reason she

wanted to be by herself.

A big, old mirror in a tarnished frame stood on the floor and after something of a struggle, for the thing was heavy, Bedelia arranged it so that she could see herself to full advantage.

Everybody knows that Teddy Bears have great facilities for looking over their shoulders. In fact, when built as a Teddy Bear should be, they can turn their heads all the way around. Consequently Bedelia found no difficulty in getting a full view of herself in the rear as she stood with her back to the glass, the tail in one paw and a couple of pins in the other. She had decided to leave the little head as it made an admirable finish for the tail, and really gave a very jaunty appearance to the whole. So she concluded after having clapped the whole into place and fastened it firmly with two large shawl pins. So delighted was she with the result that she stood before the mirror for a long time, craning her neck and twisting her head around while she admired her new ornament. To be sure, the head was in a place where no head ought to be, but it grinned jubilantly while the tail flopped joyfully as its owner walked. Finally, like Narcissus, satiated with the view of her own loveliness, she concluded to descend to the lower regions and show off the latest addition to her charms.



Down the stairs she trotted, trying to get used to the rather queer sensation of the tail flapping against her hind legs. Luckily she met nobody till she reached the nursery. Here her courage suddenly deserted her and she made a wild break for the window-seat, in the corner of which she at once threw herself and was making believe to be fast asleep when a most unforeseen event occurred. The head, which we have already recorded as being in a place where no head should be, objected to the full weight of Bedelia's plump body upon it, and proceeded to nip her so vigorously that she sprang up, shrieking.

Peter Pan, who had at first thought that to let her alone was perhaps the better policy, now flew to the rescue, but when he discovered the cause of the trouble, he rolled on the floor in convulsions of laughter. The head kept on nipping for pure viciousness, and poor Bedelia, half crazed with pain and mortification, raised a dreadful wail that brought all the members of her family to the rescue. Quite willing to be relieved of the source of her discomfort, she melted completely under her husband's affectionate caresses, and finally acknowledged that Teddy Bears really had no pressing need of caudal appendages.

CHAPTER V

MARY AND HER LITTLE LAMB AND SOME OTHERS



AMONG her most treasured dollies was one that Sally's Auntie Edith had dressed as Mary to be accompanied by her little lamb, the latter to be purchased from some toy store when Mary's wardrobe was completed.

Now, the Walking House had been built on generous lines so that the rooms were more airy and the dolls, in consequence, larger than those that inhabit most doll's houses. Mary, then, was a blond beauty, with the fluffiest of yellow locks, crowned by the most bewitching of shepherdess' hats, and the most delightful costume of pale pink and white, perfect in every detail from the fluffy paniers of the overdress to the long, slim crook which Bob had carved with his jig-saw and which Mary, unfortunately, could not carry owing to the fact that her china fingers, like those of most dollies, were straight and inflexible. A bit of very fine wire, neatly manipulated, however, produced the desired effect, and indeed Mary felt very little doubt in her own mind as to the fact that all the rest of the dolls were cunningly deceived by it.

So much for Mary. When it came to the lamb, that was quite another thing, for it seemed impossible to find anywhere a lamb of the correct proportions to fit in with those of the charming little Mary. Store after store was ransacked in vain, when suddenly Sally recollected that somewhere in the attic reposed the remains of a Noah's Ark which she had grown tired of and had put away some time before. To the attic, then, they flew and presently unearthed the Noah's Ark carefully tied up in brown paper and still in a very fair state of preservation. Out upon the floor pell-mell they emptied the animals, but no bleating or baahing lambkin rewarded their quest. It seemed as if there had been a general demand for mutton and that everything of the sheep variety had been swept from off the face of the earth. Thoroughly disappointed, Auntie Edith sat dropping the animals back into the Ark when suddenly she stopped with a little scream of delight and snapped up a small object that had fallen on the floor and been hidden under her skirt.

Not a lamb, however, as Sally at first supposed, but a goat that might have passed anywhere for a sheep except for its horns. It is very odd what a striking resemblance often exists between the animals of a Noah's Ark when really there is no relationship between them at all. So it was with this goat. The little curls of wool with which he was covered, his legs and hoofs, his long, meek face, everything except the sharp, curved horns resembled most intimately Mary's little lamb. And it took about five minutes to transform him into that very animal. Off came his horns, as quick as a wink their little stumps were covered with bits of cotton wool neatly glued in place. A blue ribbon was tied around his neck and finished with a graceful bow, and, lo and behold, the Lamb!

To say that Mary was hugely delighted at this outcome is to put it very mildly indeed. For she had been greatly troubled in mind, fearing that after all she would not be Mary but somebody else that did not require the continued attendance of a lamb. Somebody else, or perhaps nobody in particular! At this mournful conclusion a tear rolled silently down Mary's china cheek. But now it was all right, and she stood up right bravely on her little, high-heeled shoes, grasping her crook with one hand, while the other rested proudly on the Lamb's woolly back. A very delightful picture she made, and a very welcome addition to the family of the Walking House she proved to be. But of Mary and her Little Lamb we are destined to hear more hereafter.

Sally was very fond of arranging and re-arranging her doll's house, and on one particular morning was busily at work, this time at the kitchen that already shone with cleanliness. Sally was squatting on her heels, cleaning out the ice-box, which contained many plates holding delicious looking foods of all descriptions. To be sure, they were only make-believe, but they certainly looked good to Sally, who had not eaten much breakfast and consequently felt hungry. One in particular appealed to her fancy, a delicious looking cake, frosted and ornamented as if for a birthday. Really all it needed was an array of glittering candles to make it perfectly realistic.

Sally mechanically broke off a bit of the frosting and put it between her lips. To her astonishment, it tasted crisp and sweet, with rather a flavor of pineapple, and altogether like the real thing. She broke off another scrap and swallowed it. Another bit and another followed the first and then suddenly Sally began to experience a very queer sensation. She felt as if she were being screwed down and shrinking together like a pair of opera glasses. So quickly did the whole thing happen that before she knew it, she was standing in the kitchen of the Walking House with the black, wooden Dinah gravely regarding her.

"Oh dear! Oh dear! What would have happened if I had eaten the whole cake? And it's a wonder I didn't, it was such a little one!" exclaimed Sally.

Just then she happened to look up, and beheld Peter Pan and Bedelia regarding her with terrified glances. A great wave of loneliness swept over the child and she burst into tears. In a moment Peter Pan and Bedelia had each seized a fragment of cake and in less time than it takes me to tell it were rapidly following Sally's example. In about two minutes they were enjoying the distinction of being the smallest Teddy Bears on record.

Into the kitchen they scrambled after Sally, much to the bewilderment of black Dinah, who had never anywhere seen such creatures as Teddy Bears of that size, and was not at all sure that she liked them, especially when they walked into the house and took possession of her kitchen.

The first few days of Sally's sojourn in the doll's house were full of events and also full of interest, and the little girl experienced all the new sensations that always come with a change of scene and place. Sally's intimate and somewhat unique experience of nursery life had really taught her nothing relating to existence in the doll's house, and the mode of living employed by the little people to whose number she now apparently belonged.

She was, indeed, very much surprised to discover that in all respects they resembled very closely the human species, with all their little fads and fancies, jealousies and ambitions; and it was both amusing and astonishing to encounter among the dolls that she herself had bought for a few cents and dressed with her own hands in scraps obtained from the rag-bag, personalities as striking and characteristic, as distinguishing as those belonging to some of the famous people whose lives she had studied with Miss Palmer during her history lessons. At least so one would think from their own opinions of themselves.

The little girl was amazed to learn that all the dolls could read and write and that those who were imported spoke French and German fluently. In fact, one small Japanese doll who was rigged out in a paper kimono and wide obi of the same material, jabbered away in Japanese, with the result that none of the others could understand a word she said. She always presided at afternoon tea, however, which function they understood very well, as also the tiny cups of the fragrant drink which she brewed for their benefit. Sally secretly resolved to teach her English, which she later accomplished, much to the gratitude of the lonely little foreigner.

The dolls' handwriting was not at all like her own, as it did not take Sally long to discover. It consisted of a number of queer little hieroglyphics of infinitesimal size, which, as Sally afterward learned, were known only to dolls and were so small, to wit, that nobody would ever imagine that they were anything but foolish scrawling.

CHAPTER VI

THE LITTLE BACK DOOR



ALLY was busily bustling around the kitchen, clad in one of Dinah's clean gingham aprons and with a stiff and clean bandanna 'kerchief perched on her shining hair. For Dinah was ill, the result of an unfortunate accident, for which the little girl felt herself more or less responsible.

For some time the Little Lamb had been growing "grimy, grimier and grimier," as Sally said to herself, and the child had finally resolved, although not without some misgivings, that a bath would be the next best thing in the order of events. Having several old scores to settle, Mary joyfully offered to assist, and with such a backing Sally proceeded with her preparations in a resolute and hopeful frame of mind.

As the Little Lamb was indeed very dirty, Sally prepared a kind of shampoo, such as she had often seen nurse concoct for her own use. This was composed of tar soap, melted over the fire to a kind of jelly, and then beaten up with a couple of eggs and a dash of borax. When it was finished, it made a yellow, frothy compound, altogether nice and delectable looking. Sally had made a liberal quantity, owing to the area that had to be covered in the personality of the Little Lamb. She left it on the kitchen table, and hurried off to find that worthy who, scenting an impending conflict, had betaken himself to the attic. Entrenched behind Bedelia's screen, he firmly awaited the onslaught of the enemy.

Dinah had all this time been busy in the upper part of the house and now returning below stairs beheld the foamy, creamy mixture frothing over the pan on the kitchen table. It never entered into her wooden head to suppose that it was anything except some nice omelet or something of the kind that one of the dolls or perhaps Sally had knocked together for luncheon. Stirring it up with a spoon, she found it rather thin, and proceeded to thicken it with flour and finally decided that it would serve best as batter for griddle cakes. As she herself was extremely fond of lemon flavoring, she added a large dose of that, and then proceeded to bake the mess on the well-greased and sputtering griddle.



Now it must be confessed that Dinah was greedy, and the brown cakes certainly looked tempting. Besides, had she not planned something quite different for the dolls' luncheon? Just one nibble she took, and then, like other people who have hesitated, she proceeded to get lost. Her wooden palate certainly failed to detect the flavor of tar soap, and one brown and smoking cake speedily disappeared after another. Goodness knows when she would have stopped had not Bedelia, attracted by the odor of the baking cakes, suddenly appeared in the kitchen.

That worthy had been decidedly out of favor with Sally for several days, and consequently was in no enviable frame of mind. Without so much as a "by your leave," she now advanced on the greedy Dinah, snatched the plate of cakes from under her very nose, and proceeded to dispose of them with neatness and despatch. Her taste for eatables had been well cultivated, however, and she now discovered something decidedly peculiar in the flavor of the cakes. But she swallowed them all to the last crumb, more in order to spite Dinah than because she wanted them, pausing now and then between bites to utter a threatening little growl that served very effectually to keep Dinah at a distance, for the cook was dreadfully afraid of the Teddy Bears. It did

not take very long for the soap and borax to get in some very fine work, and soon Dinah and Bedelia found themselves companions in misery.

When Sally had hunted all over the house without being able to find the Little Lamb—and no wonder, for he was safely entrenched under Bedelia's bed in the attic—and came hurrying into the kitchen to look after her shampoo, she found two unutterably wretched individuals tied up in knots and rolling around on the kitchen floor. Had it been Bedelia alone, Sally would have suspected a trick, but Dinah's sufferings were too genuine to admit of suspicion.

Sally flew for help without waiting for explanations, and in a short time the sufferers were tucked up in their beds, feeling decidedly more comfortable and listening to a lecture on gluttony which they did not soon forget. Not but that this same lecture had to be administered in two sections, one to Dinah in her room and one to Bedelia in the attic, for Dinah would have died sooner than lie down in the same room with the Teddy Bear that she now regarded with more fear and dislike than ever.

Thus it happened that Sally was flying around the shining little kitchen, putting things to rights

and making ready to get together something for the dolls' luncheon. She smiled as she scoured and dried the tin pan in which the shampoo, whose ending had been so unusual, had been mixed. She wondered what had become of the Little Lamb, and could not help wishing that he, instead of Dinah and Bedelia, had been the one to gobble up the sickening cakes, for the stuff certainly had been intended for him in the beginning.

Sally was a born housekeeper, and as she had formerly played with her doll house, perpetually cleaning and straightening it, so she now worked in the bright little rooms until at last all was in order, the table laid for luncheon and a savory meal made ready. She was too much delighted with her work to ask for assistance from any of the dolls, and puttered around briskly, singing little snatches of a song half under her breath. "Puttering around" was one of Dinah's pet expressions, and while Sally had never been sure what it really meant, she felt quite certain that she could not be doing anything else while working in Dinah's kitchen. Vigorously, then, did she flutter Dinah's duster, seeking for dust where none existed, and merrily polishing the already shining window sills, on which stood stiff little pots of glowing scarlet paper geraniums. And then she suddenly became aware that she was standing in front of a little door, whose existence she had heretofore failed to observe.



The door was directly in the center of the back wall, and Sally could not but wonder that John should have built it in such a place, for the doll's house stood flat against the nursery wall, as any orderly doll's house always stands. Hence there was absolutely no use for a door in such a location. Sally meditated for a moment or two and then suddenly concluded that the best thing to do would be to open the door and do a little investigating. She seized the knob and pulled vigorously, but to no purpose. The door was locked sure enough, and her best efforts resulted in nothing. It seemed very odd that the door should be locked and no key anywhere about. Suddenly she remembered that hanging up in her room was a tiny golden key belonging to a chain bracelet that Papa Doctor had once locked upon Mamma Wee's pretty white wrist. For some inexplicable reason Mamma Wee had never unlocked the bracelet, but Papa Doctor always wore the key on one end of his watch chain until one day the slender golden ring from which it hung broke, and Sally had found the key lying on the floor. Papa Doctor had been called out of town for an important consultation just then, and had not yet returned. Therefore the key was hanging up in Sally's room, and thither the little girl hastened. Having possessed herself of the article in question, she hurried back to the kitchen, all on tip-toe with curiosity.



She did not hear the padding of velvet paws behind her, nor see the furry brown figure that came trotting stealthily in her wake. Having taken a good nap, Bedelia awoke feeling as good as new. After a few preliminary yawns, she bounced out of bed, much to the detriment of the Little Lamb who, too much scared by all the rumpus to run away, had finally fallen asleep under the bed with his head sticking out at the inner side where he had considered it quite safe, as the bed stood comparatively close to the wall. But with her usual perversity, Bedelia jumped out of that side of the bed, landing plump in the Little Lamb's face. Bedelia was no light weight, and the unhappy Little Lamb uttered a piercing shriek, at the same time hastily wriggling back into his place of concealment. Bedelia had been considerably shaken by her sickness and now, scared out of all her impudence by the queer thing that she felt moving under her feet, she uttered a shrill squawk and fled precipitately from the attic. She paused at the top of the stairs and peered down between the railings just in time to see Sally emerge from her room with the key in her hand.

In a moment the Teddy Bear was on the alert, trotting silently down the stairs, dreadfully tempted to take a slide down the polished rail of the banister, but equally afraid of being sent back if discovered. In the meantime, Sally hastened to the kitchen, clutching the golden key which was, of course, very much larger in proportion than in the time when she had found it lying on the nursery floor.

"How I do hope it will open the door!" the little girl said to herself as she thrust it into the lock and pressed against it very gently, for she was rather afraid of breaking off the golden handle. To

her surprise and delight, however, it yielded at once, and with a turn of the door knob Sally flung open the door and stepped outside, closely followed by the still unseen Bedelia.

CHAPTER VII

D. TABLET, ESQ.

IT was surprising enough to find that there was any outside, for Sally had fully expected to step down between the doll's house and the wall. But to find herself on a beautiful country road, flanked on either side by fields of emerald green that stretched away as far as the eye could reach, was far more astonishing still.

On either side of this road stood a row of tall, very stiff, very green trees. They literally *stood*, for they did not grow out of the ground, but rose out of flat, wooden stands that did not appear more wooden, however, than their shiny, brown trunks. Green and stiff also were the leaves that looked more like curled and painted shavings than anything else. Sally examined them curiously, remembering she had once possessed a toy farm that had contained just such trees as these. She laid her hand against the smooth, glistening trunk, wondering if a brisk breeze would not upset the whole business, and remembering how easily her own farmyard trees had been overturned. These, however, seemed steady enough, and Sally started off at a good pace, determined to investigate the queer country into which she had made so unceremonious an entrance.

As far as she could see, the road stretched ahead of her, glaring white in the noon sunlight, which seemed almost blinding after the subdued light of the doll's house. Only a moment did she pause to hang the precious golden key upon the string of gold beads that she wore around her neck. Somehow she felt that that dear talisman, the pledge of love between her parents, would be to her a safeguard in time of danger. A sudden fear of losing it assailed her, and she quickly tucked beads and all inside her dress.

Turning for a farewell look at the Walking House, she beheld Bedelia sitting demurely on the doorstep. The door she had closed behind her as she stepped out. Now she jumped up and ran to Sally, who was very much relieved to find the little bear was quite herself again, and slipped her hand affectionately inside Bedelia's arm. And the two proceeded joyously along the gleaming road.

It was quite warm, for the stiff up-and-down foliage cast little or no shadow, and there was no breeze stirring. Sally was grateful for this as she still felt rather doubtful concerning the stability of the trees. Bedelia, however, expressed it as her opinion that even if one of them did blow over, she and Sally would be well able to stand it up again. But then Bedelia had always been very self-confident.

The two companions trotted along together, stopping occasionally to examine some queer flower or a tree that looked a little different from the common run. Sally noticed that the flowers were all like those that ornamented the windows of Dinah's kitchen—of crimped and fluted paper, while the little blades of grass appeared to be fashioned from the same material. The whole thing seemed as if it might prove very monotonous, at least if it were going to exist for good and all.

Presently they came to a fine, large field that was fenced in all around, and Sally could not but notice that the fences were all wonderfully like those that had belonged to her own farmyard. In the field were grazing a number of beautiful, placid looking cows and also a good many sheep and goats. They were all wonderfully familiar in appearance. Sally could not understand, although she did later on, why everything she had seen so far suggested either the Noah's Ark or the farmyard. Both of them had long since been relegated to the dust-bin, defaced and broken beyond any kind of usefulness.

And then Sally spied not very far ahead of them a sign post, which, when they came up to it, exclaimed in a most affable manner, "Five miles to the Palace!" and gently waved one of its arms toward the cross road, on the edge of which it stood.

Sally was so much amazed at hearing a sign post speak that for the moment she failed to notice the absence of any painted directions upon its arms. However, Bedelia, who was as usual ready for anything, retorted somewhat pertly, "And where might the road that we are traveling on lead to?"

To which the Sign Post responded with the same cordial, although somewhat wooden tone and a most reassuring smile, "Five miles to the Palace," whereupon it subsided and stood quite stiff and straight, as if, perchance, waiting for another question, to which Sally felt quite certain it would have responded, "Five miles to the Palace!"

As there was nothing to be gained by asking questions that would obviously receive only the one answer, with a word of thanks the children proceeded on their journey, wishing it were not



quite so far to the Palace, for they were both beginning to feel tired and as she had taken no luncheon, Sally was decidedly hungry. Once she looked back and saw that the Sign Post was gazing after them, still wearing its affable smile. And the child fancied that she could hear a faint murmur, "Five miles to the Palace," while she was quite certain that the Sign Post waved its arms in a friendly adieu.

Sally now noticed for the first time that Bedelia was carrying a large paper bag which bulged out to such an extent that it seemed every moment as if it would burst. That it was weighty was vouched for by the fact that Bedelia frequently shifted it from one paw to the other. Truth to tell, the Teddy Bear, ever mindful of the inner man, had made a swift raid on the kitchen as she passed out of the house, and had swept into the paper bag every eatable that she could quickly lay her paws on. Sally was just on the eve of asking what the bag contained when suddenly its bottom gave way and there issued forth a perfect rain of fruit, sandwiches and cakes, besides a bottle of milk and a jar of pickles. Since the mystery had seen fit to unravel itself, Sally was only too glad to commend Bedelia's forethought. Having gathered up the scattered feast, the two sat gratefully down under the shadiest tree they could find and proceeded to feed in a most luxurious manner.



Unfortunately for Bedelia, her hunger overcame any remote idea she might have possessed concerning good manners, and she proceeded to gobble in so outrageous a fashion that Sally was about to remonstrate when suddenly the culprit was arrested by the sound of a small, querulous voice that seemed to come from her innermost being, and which exclaimed in jerky tones,

"Don't shovel things down so fast, for goodness' sake! How do you expect me to get any work done properly when you work me so fast? Oh, dear! Oh, dear! I shall never have anything in order!"

Bedelia distinctly felt a queer sensation as if something were hopping up and down at the very center of her little, round stomach. To say that she was terrified is putting it very mildly, while Sally was too astonished to move, even though she had by this time become used to queer happenings.

"Don't drink any more milk," continued the voice in a kind of exasperated squeak. "Everything down here is in a flood. I can hear your food splash as it drops in. There isn't a dry place for the sole of my foot."

Although she was scared, Bedelia resolved to preserve a bold front, and now replied with assumed calmness, "Whoever you are, come out here and let us see what you are like." And then she added saucily, "You needn't think you can prevent me from eating what I want!"

"What's that you say? What's that you say?" squeaked the voice, as if its owner were in a terrible rage. And the very next moment Bedelia felt a dreadfully choking sensation, and out of her mouth popped the queerest little figure that Sally had ever laid eyes upon.

He was not more than half an inch tall and he was pink all over, even his eyes and his hair and his long, flowing beard—bright pink like Bedelia's tongue. And there he stood, glaring at Bedelia as well as he could, for the bright sunshine made him blink dreadfully, and at the same time he bowed politely to Sally, whom he evidently regarded with approval. And Sally bowed gravely in return, although she could hardly keep from laughing outright at the queer little creature with his round, flat body, his thin, crooked arms and spindling legs, and above all his extremely pompous manner.

"In me you behold Tablet—D. Tablet," he remarked without further preliminaries.

He paused a moment, and Sally exclaimed impetuously, "I have heard of dyspep—" Here she stopped abruptly, afraid she had already given offense. "Dyspepsia tablet" she had been going to say.

But much to her relief, the little creature nodded affably and quickly continued, "Children like you, who eat in moderation and show some breeding while they eat, have no need of my good offices. Only creatures who stuff like pigs have to be reproved by me."

There was a slight pause and D. Tablet presently continued, evidently flattered by the attention of his audience, although he still glared at Bedelia out of his pink eyes which had now become accustomed to the sunlight.

"Know, then," he went on, "that your stomach and everybody's stomach is simply a storehouse



in which the food is put away on shelves in pantries and cupboards as fast as it is swallowed. Everybody who comes into this country has a D. Tablet in his stomach to attend to this business. He may not know it, but we are there all the same. Therefore when you pile in fifty different things at once and drown it all with oceans of liquid, how can we possibly get things in any kind of order? We don't, and then you are ill, as *you* were yesterday."

Bedelia jumped, so suddenly did D. Tablet wheel around upon her.

"And then when you don't chew your food, what do you think happens? A few moments ago you were gobbling exactly like a p-i-g. Do you know what that spells?"

"Perfectly, independent gentleman! And I don't care a snap what happens," impudently retorted Bedelia.

By this time she had decided that D. Tablet was a great bore, and being still hungry, was itching to get at her neglected luncheon.

At this D. Tablet turned pinker than ever with rage. His flat little body seemed to swell up until it was nearly as round as a marble. For a moment he stood shaking with anger, and then without another word suddenly vanished, but whither they were not able to see. Whether or no he had plunged down Bedelia's throat and once more assumed the endless task of setting her internal economy to rights, neither Sally nor the Teddy Bear had time to observe.

CHAPTER VIII

THE TALKING SIGN POST



“DON’T you think it was telling awful whoppers?” asked Bedelia, as she settled down comfortably upon her haunches and proceeded to dispose of a plump red banana with a rapidity that would certainly have called forth a rebuke from the personage to whom she referred.

Sally hesitated, not quite certain which side it devolved upon her to defend. She certainly had been somewhat impressed by D. Tablet. Had she not seen him come tumbling, frog-like, out of Bedelia’s throat? For aught that she could prove to the contrary, he had, perhaps, gone tumbling back again. Being thus cruelly torn between her fondness for Bedelia and her sense of justice, she wisely held her peace, while Bedelia, by this time well on the way with the second banana, mentally hurled defiance at her pink advisor.

“He was damp all over. He looked as if somebody had *licked* him!” she finally ejaculated, throwing away her banana skin and standing up preparatory to suggesting that they resume their journey.

At the same moment her face stiffened, while her eyes fairly bulged out of her head with amazement. Hurrying straight down the road toward them, and advancing by leaps and bounds was a long, lithe figure that they both recognized as it came nearer as the Talking Sign Post. It now came up at a brisk gallop, and exclaimed breathlessly as soon as within hailing distance,

“I was *so* afraid you would get lost without me!”

Thereupon it threw itself comfortably down on the greensward and beamed amiably at Sally. She felt very much like replying that if he had been a little more communicative in the beginning, the danger of going astray would have been smaller. However, she refrained, being dreadfully afraid of offending the Sign Post, who after all appeared to be very good-hearted. Not so Bedelia, who cocked her sharp, little, black eyes in a most inquisitive manner and hastily retorted,

“No thanks to *you* if we *did* get lost, with your ‘Five miles to the Palace’ and nothing else. How should we know which turning to take next?” And then she added hurriedly, “Why don’t you have things painted on you as they do in civilized countries?”

“If by *things* you mean directions,” replied the Sign Post gravely, “it would be altogether superfluous in a land where everything can talk. And as for turnings,” he added severely, “there aren’t any. All the roads in Toyland lead to the Palace, so you are sure to get there some time or other. To be sure, some roads are longer than others. In the event of your taking the longest one, you might consider yourselves lost.”

All out of patience with what she considered an extremely round-about explanation, Bedelia did not trouble herself to reply, but Sally hastened to smooth things over by offering the Sign Post some luncheon out of the paper bag, which they had managed to repair with some pins, and which now contained the remnants of their repast. This, however, he politely refused, having already lunched copiously on his usual diet of shavings which curious regimen agreed best with his wooden constitution. Sally was rather disappointed at this. She recollected once having been taken to the Zoo and having seen the ostriches fed with oranges. And she remembered how very queer it had appeared to her to watch the fruit as each piece traveled down the birds’ long, red throats, one chasing another until they finally vanished in the feathery region below. She could not help thinking that the Sign Post was very like the throat of an ostrich, only the resemblance continued all the way down. She could not but wonder where the luncheon would finally have located itself, as there were apparently no facilities for expansion in the general make-up of the Sign Post.

There was a short silence, during which Bedelia made ostentatious preparations for moving on.

Fond as she was of the little bear, at that moment it seemed to Sally that it could not exist in any sort of comfort without making somebody else miserable. So she said very gently,

“Would you kindly tell me what land we are in?”

She felt quite sure that the Sign Post was waiting for her to open the conversation.

An expression of surprise flitted over the mobile countenance of the Sign Post, but he replied



without further comment, "This is the wonderful country of Toyland," and then murmured in a reminiscent manner, "Five miles to the Palace. Five miles to the Palace." After a moment he added, "Perhaps it will be just as well for us to be moving without more delay. It is quite a long way for you to walk."

So all three got upon their feet and cheerfully resumed their travels.

The country, although very fresh and green, seemed to the little girl rather monotonous. The same cows, pigs and sheep, the same stiff little wooden houses, fenced in by the same stiff wooden railings. People seemed few, but as it was not far from noon, Sally concluded that they must all be eating their dinners. And a very sensible conclusion it was. The few folk that were encountered were of the wooden doll type, and they all appeared to be so very busy at their work in the fields that Sally forbore to hail them, although she would dearly have liked to stop long enough to pass the time of day with them.

So the three proceeded, chatting merrily, the Sign Post accommodating his long, swinging stride to the shorter steps of his small companions. An exchange of confidences was, of course, the natural thing, and Sally was soon giving a complete account of herself and Bedelia and of how they had happened to stumble into Toyland. The Sign Post listened with attention, and in return gave much valuable information concerning both himself and the country. He explained that there were many other Sign Posts like himself, that they were stationed at intervals of five miles, and that it was their duty to conduct as well as to direct strangers, should they so desire. He also explained that there was no night in Toyland, as it was a very difficult and expensive business to start up the sun, which in consequence was allowed to go on shining *ad libitum*.

"Whenever anyone feels in need of rest or *repairs*, he takes a trip to Sleepy Town. It lies just over there and adjoining our own country. There it is always night, the moon shines perpetually, and everything invites slumber."

Here the Sign Post yawned in so fearful a manner that Sally, gazing on his open countenance, decided that he might very well be a candidate for Sleepy Town.

Following the direction in which he had pointed as he described the location of Sleepy Town, Sally's glance discerned what appeared to be a faint, purplish haze hanging upon the horizon.

"You will find a great many Sign Posts there," said her companion so abruptly that Sally jumped, for she had fancied that he was still yawning, "on account of the darkness. For example, how would a stranger find Nid-Nod Street or Blanket Avenue, were there not someone present to inform him?"

And Sally, comprehending the weight of his argument, nodded gravely.

The trio had now accomplished half their journey, and about two miles and a half lay between them and the Palace. Sally did not feel particularly tired, as the road was very smooth and not at all dusty. Once an automobile passed them and Sally noted the fact that it was of exactly the same pattern as one that she owned and which now reposed in the nursery at home in a garage constructed by Bob of building blocks. It was of the wrought-iron variety, and was wound up with a key.



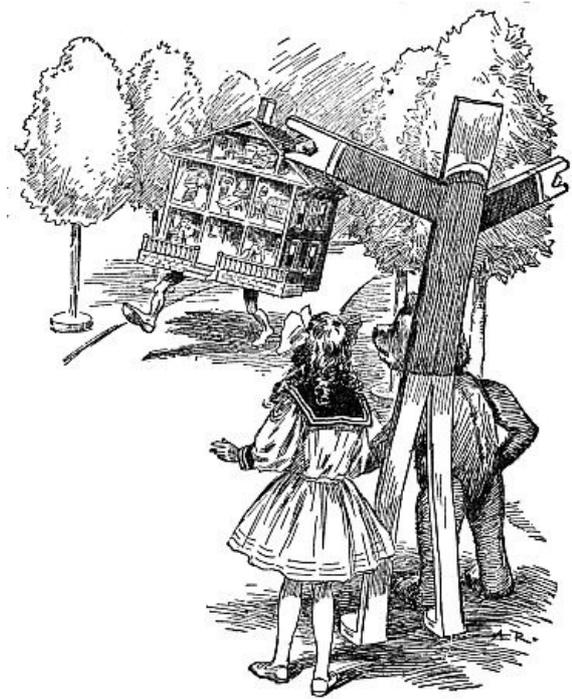
The auto which had spun merrily by suddenly stopped a few yards ahead of them and refused to budge an inch. Sally and her companions hastened their steps and, coming up with the auto, found that it had run down. As the chauffeur had forgotten to bring along the key, the party of lady dolls that occupied the car were plunged in the deepest despair and chagrin. Sally suddenly remembered her little golden key and hastily produced it. It was found to fit to perfection. With many thanks the party proceeded on its way, first having invited Sally and Bedelia to take seats in the car. The Sign Post was, of course, quite out of the question. However, Sally politely declined, as she really preferred very much to continue her walk with her lanky companion, to say nothing of Bedelia. This the Sign Post greatly appreciated, and presently stooped down and, gently lifting the little girl, he poised her aloft on his shoulders, and in this gallant fashion she rode for a mile or more, while Bedelia trotted behind, grumbling and growling at the discourtesy shown her. Although she had been very uncivil indeed to the Sign Post, Bedelia could see no good reason why she should not ride on his other shoulder.

Being completely rested—indeed, she had not been a bit tired in the beginning—Sally slid laughingly to the ground, quite in opposition to the wishes of the Sign Post, who would gladly have carried her till the end of the chapter. They had ascended a slight hill, and the city now lay in plain sight in the charming valley beneath them. Sally could not but observe that there was nothing at all imposing in its appearance. All the houses seemed planned after about the same pattern. Even the Palace itself seemed to be only a doll's house on a larger scale than the others. Sally's mental comparison of it with her own beloved Walking House was anything but favorable. The little girl presently paused, however, to reflect that being now in the country of dolls and toys, she could scarcely expect to find sky-scrapers. Bedelia

turned up her nose frankly enough, and, as was her custom, at once proceeded to express her opinions without let or hindrance. And what might have been the result had she been permitted to conclude as she began nobody knows, for the Sign Post was beginning to look very much put out.

But just at that moment their attention was attracted by a loud noise behind them, a fearful pounding and bumping. Looking around, they beheld advancing along the road at a high rate of speed a huge *something*—what they were at first unable to decide. But as it came nearer and nearer and finally swung into full view, they discovered that it was nothing more nor less than the Walking House, hurrying along at an astonishing pace, while from the interior issued a doleful voice which loudly repeated at intervals the entreaty, "Wait for me! Wait for me!"

All its windows glistened in the sun like blinking eyes, while the castors on which it originally stood had somehow turned into prancing feet that now hopped and skipped along with the greatest alacrity. On it came, bumping and bouncing, and all its terrified inhabitants bumped and bounced too, while they hung on for dear life to any available piece of furniture that they had happened to grasp. And nearly scared out of their wits was every mother's son of them, for only a colony of rubber dolls could have been in a comfortable frame of mind under such trying circumstances. Greatly relieved were all when the frisky house suddenly ceased its gyrations and came to a dead stop directly in front of Sally.



CHAPTER IX

JOYTOWN

IT was clearly a case of a runaway house, and before Sally had time to finish wondering how on earth it could have walked out of its own back door in order to step into Toyland, as she and Bedelia had been obliged to do, she was surrounded by all the inmates of the Walking House, who came scrambling down the stairs and out of the doors, thoroughly glad that their rough-and-tumble ride had come to an end.

Everybody crowded around Sally, and all sorts of experiences were exchanged. Finally the Sign Post reminded the little girl that it was growing late and if they wished to enter the city under his escort, it would be well to make a move, as he had already been a long time away from his post of duty. Accordingly the whole party set out, and soon descended the slight hill from which Sally had taken her first look at the city. After they were all safely at the bottom, the doll's house proceeded down very cautiously and *backwards*. For it was dreadfully afraid of spilling all its contents if it went down in its normal position. At length it was safely landed at the bottom, but Sally immediately discovered that it never would be able to get into the city as the gates were not particularly wide, and certainly had never been set up with a view to admitting strange houses that came galloping along, unceremoniously clamoring for entrance. Therefore after a brief consultation, it was decided that the house should remain outside the gates, which were never closed, as there was no night there; and that the family should make it their headquarters and return for rest and refreshment whenever they became tired out with exploring the new country. This matter having been arranged, Sally and the faithful Sign Post proceeded to lead the way into the city.

Over the gates was inscribed the legend:

THE CITY OF JOY

neatly painted in plain characters distinct enough for all to read. And with this most propitious name to greet them, the inhabitants of the Walking House advanced bravely up the principal street. Everything appeared to be extremely peaceful. People—who, of course, were all dolls and very much like their visitors in size and appearance—were going about the streets and in and out of the shops and offices.

Sally rather wondered at the absence of policemen, but upon remarking on this to the Sign Post, quickly found herself obliged to explain what she meant. The word was unknown in Toyland, and such a word as crime had never entered its vocabulary. The Sign Posts were the nearest approach to anything in the nature of "the force," and they were only for general guidance and information. The little girl marveled greatly at such a state of affairs, and hoped most devoutly that Bedelia would behave herself while sojourning among such peaceful folk. That worthy, trotting along with her paw clasped in Sally's hand, looked the very picture of innocence. Sally had seen her look like this before, and at such seasons usually prepared for the worst.



The main street upon which they now were walking led straight to the Palace, which towered aloft above the other houses in the very center of the city. Upon closer acquaintance, Sally quite altered her previous opinion and found the building a very fine one indeed, even in comparison with the Walking House. She could not help wondering if it also possessed feet in embryo that might develop and run away with it at any unexpected moment. She was rather afraid that the dwellings in Joytown, having noted the example of the Walking House, might perchance take a notion to follow the same. There was, however, nothing whatever to cause apprehension in the dignified attitude of the staid and stationary dwellings of the chief city of Toyland. Sally felt that all quite depended upon their powers of observation, and whether or not they had noticed the antics of the Walking House. For is not example more effective than precept? Sally feared that it might be so. However, she had no time for reflection, as all the party were anxious to make a tour of the city, and the dinner hour was rapidly approaching. It was too late to visit the Palace, so after a walk, during which they covered a good deal of territory, they retired to their own dwelling.

The soft, golden twilight which took the place of night, now commenced to fall, and Sally observed many parties of the residents leaving the city and starting in the direction of Sleepy Town. The Sign Post, who, at Sally's earnest solicitation, had obtained permission from headquarters to remain with the child and her party during their stay in Toyland, now informed

Sally that the twilight was brought about by draping the sun with many veils of delicately tinted gauze.

"You see there really is no necessity for it at all, except that having the day all the time becomes rather monotonous," he went on. "And besides that, there would be no sense in having such a long day. One could not continue at work for more than six hours, the time laid down by the trade unions."

This seemed a remarkably short day to Sally, and she now inquired what the Sign Post meant by veiling the sun. But that worthy immediately assumed an air of mystery and replied,

"It was entirely the idea of the Polly-nosed Saphead. You must ask of him, for he alone understands the nature of the occult rite."

"And who, pray, may be the Polly-nosed Saphead?" demanded Bedelia, who was hopping along on the other side of the Sign Post, very demure and highly interested in all that was taking place.

At this the Sign Post shook his head solemnly.

"He is the high priest of all Toyland," he replied. "Few are permitted to enter his august presence."

He shook his head again, and was silent. And Sally and Bedelia both solemnly shook their heads, and were silent also for the space of at least a full minute.

However, there did not appear to be any use in standing still and shaking their little craniums over the Polly-nosed Saphead. Accordingly Sally and Bedelia cordially thanked the Sign Post, who promised to join them early the next morning, and made their way toward the Walking House. They would gladly have invited their companion to enter, had he not been entirely too tall for any of the rooms, or even to get in at the door. As the Sign Post was very well used to standing out-of-doors, he patiently took up his stand close to the house, there to await the coming of the morning. To be sure, it seemed very queer to him not to be saying "Five miles to the Palace," he had been saying it for such a very long time. In fact, he had never before in all his existence been called upon to quit his post, as he was a comparatively new Sign Post. But a very pleasant business he found it, especially when acting as escort to such a delightful little girl as Sally.

Meantime Sally and Bedelia had entered the house, where they found the rest of the family awaiting them. After a short consultation, it was decided to observe the general rules that had governed them before they had arrived in Toyland. Because other people never went to bed was really no reason why they should not if they found it necessary. Therefore the shades were drawn down, the lights extinguished, and the whole household soon wrapped in refreshing slumber.

Once Sally wakened and, peeping out between the curtains—for the window was close to her bedside—beheld the long and lanky form of the Sign Post standing patiently at his place. His countenance still bore its affable smile and the child fancied she could hear him murmuring, "Five miles to the Palace. Five miles to the Palace."



**Sally felt a great longing to tip over the gorgeous little
Colonel.**

“Only it couldn’t be five miles, because it isn’t any miles at all,” murmured the child, as she slipped away into dreamland. “He’s right at the very door of the Palace.”

Sally slept late, and as soon as she awoke sprang out of bed and rushed eagerly to the window. There was the Sign Post, nodding and smiling at her, and waving good-morning, to which she responded in like manner, and then made haste to dress and ran down to the kitchen, where she found Dinah busily preparing breakfast. All the dolls had been up all night, putting the house to rights, as it had suffered a terrible shaking up during its journey, and there was not a piece of furniture in the whole place that had not bumped and bounced and slidden, so that it all presented a very much tumbled-up appearance when at last the house came to a standstill. However, the dolls had worked busily, and by the time Sally descended everything was in fine shape.

After a toothsome breakfast, a short council was held as to the best methods of procedure. It was decided to go forth in several small parties, as their number would make one single group rather too large. The Sign Post had managed to take part in the conference by stooping down and poking his head in at the window, and now hastened off to summon others of his kind. Presently returning with them, they all set off on their explorations.

Sally and Bedelia, with their faithful guide, formed a party by themselves and very gaily they set forth, though it must be confessed that Bedelia looked a bit solemn. Having eaten a huge breakfast, she was beginning to experience certain sensations which caused her to apprehend that D. Tablet, Esq., might once again be on the rampage. These disagreeable feelings, however, gradually wore away, and the little bear was presently padding along as merrily as any of the others.

Beautiful indeed was the Imperial City, with its bustling business section and its lovely residence portion, its symmetrical parks and gleaming lakes. And high above all, as if keeping guard over the peaceful city, the lofty Palace, which stood on a slight eminence and was therefore rendered extremely prominent by its position as well as its size and distinctive style of architecture.

Sally did not know very much about architecture. Most of her knowledge on the subject was included in the somewhat mixed-up style of the Walking House. Neither she nor Miss Palmer had ever been able to decide whether it was Grecian or Roman, ancient or modern. To be sure, Miss Palmer had been anxious to spare John’s feelings on the subject, and therefore had been slow in offering an opinion. And Sally was now plunged in quite the same perplexity with regard to the Palace. She could not help wondering if it had been designed by the Polly-nosed Saphead, who, since he appeared to be such a great personage, might well be a great architect also.

The Palace stood in the midst of a beautiful park, filled with the usual types of trees that Sally had noticed as peculiar to Toyland, and was approached by a lofty flight of steps, guarded on either side by a whole regiment of lead soldiers, “The Royal Guards,” as the Sign Post explained in a rather awe-struck manner. Sally felt a great longing to tip over the gorgeous little Colonel, as she had often done with her lead soldiers at home, and send the whole rank and file toppling over, one upon another. But she suddenly recollected that she was now not the least bit bigger than the soldiers themselves. And so she meekly followed the private who was detailed to conduct them to the presence of Royalty.

CHAPTER X

SALLY AND BEDELIA ARE PRESENTED AT COURT

RECEDED by their guide, Sally and Bedelia passed between the great doors of the Palace and into a mighty circular hall that was lighted from above by a huge dome of golden colored glass, which cast a soft and sunshiny radiance over everything. In the center of the hall rose a wide and winding spiral staircase, heavily carpeted with deep yellow velvet, whose bordering melted away into soft browns and russets. Sally thought she had never seen anything more lovely than the color scheme of this imperial hall, with its rich woodwork of carved golden oak, and the golden light flooding everything.

Twelve great doors opened out of the hall and they were now ushered with great ceremony through the one directly facing the wide entrance and were received by a splendidly dressed court page, while the private promptly saluted and went about his business.

When Sally, with heart thumping in a most uncomfortable manner, ventured to lift her eyes from the pavement of tessellated marble, she beheld a most magnificently appointed apartment of regal size, thronged with courtiers and ladies-in-waiting, all in splendid court dress; while at the further end rose a gorgeous throne upon which were seated two of the handsomest dolls she had ever seen. She suddenly felt herself very plain and insignificant in the midst of all this splendor.

But there was no time for personal criticism, for she was being rapidly conducted up the hall by the gorgeous page, who was at the same time loudly announcing her name and that of her companion. The child felt herself blushing to the roots of her hair as she dropped her prettiest curtsy, and dreadfully aware in the midst of her embarrassment that Bedelia was attracting attention from all directions. In fact, that personage possessed most strikingly original ideas of court etiquette and, having made a most extraordinary bow, proceeded to lick the hand of royalty which had been most graciously extended to be kissed. This performance gave birth to a ripple of laughter, which at once broke the ice. The courtiers crowded around Sally and Bedelia, while the King and Queen descended from their throne and proceeded to make themselves most agreeable to the strangers.

The Queen was a most beautiful blond, with large, blue eyes—Sally noticed that they had real, black lashes—and a bewildering wealth of golden curls, which she wore floating over her shoulders and whose luster put to shame her golden crown. She wore a splendid gown of white satin, embroidered with threads of gold, over which opened a robe of purple velvet lined with ermine. A splendid court train swept far behind her, and she was, furthermore, adorned with all the family rhinestones, which made a prodigious sparkling and glittering and appeared very magnificent indeed.

The King was a very tall and finely-built doll, with very dark hair and eyes. His dress was of royal purple velvet, slashed with white satin. He, also, wore a crown of fine gold and a splendid signet ring set with a large ruby, upon which Bedelia gazed with suspicious interest. Noticing her interested expression and following the direction of her glances, Sally began inwardly to quake, and resolved that the mischievous little bear should be separated as far from the King as possible. An unkind fate, however, willed it otherwise, for the Queen, who felt rather afraid of Bedelia, promptly linked her arm in Sally's and the two walked slowly down the long hall, leaving the King to follow with the little bear. Truth to tell, Her Majesty was extremely curious with regard to this new kind of doll, which was neither made of china nor stuffed with sawdust, and she pressed Sally's hand and patted her arm, consumed with curiosity, although disliking to ask of what material she could possibly be made.

Sally was destined to have her ideas concerning royalty turned topsy-turvy. Indeed, all her previous notions, obtained from well authenticated books, pictured kings and queens as quite the reverse of what she was really finding them. The idea of a king promenading arm in arm with a Teddy Bear, or with any kind of a bear, as far as that went! She could not help smiling to herself to think how angry Bedelia would be could she know of what she herself was thinking. For Bedelia had always considered herself a most important little personage, and quite good enough society for kings and queens, too.

While these thoughts were chasing each other through Sally's brain, the Queen was interestedly, if furtively examining the little girl's dress and her beautiful, lustrous braids which reached below her waist. Much was her secret astonishment to discover that the latter were not glued on, as were her own golden tresses. This she could not fail to consider a serious detriment, for she was the proud possessor of numerous wigs, and simply exchanged one for another as soon as it became mussed up, a proceeding which she considered vastly superior to having the tiresome combing and curling done with one's own head for a foundation, which must be the case with Sally, of course.

In fact, the Queen was rapidly coming to the conclusion that Sally was a most delightful problem and one very worth while solving. To this end she informed the pages that no one else would be given audience, and insisted that Sally and Bedelia should spend the rest of the day at the Palace.

In the meantime Bedelia had been amusing the King, who found himself highly entertained by this entirely new species of toy animal. He had never before beheld anything like her, although

very well acquainted with every specimen in his kingdom. Toyland was destitute of Teddy Bears, a fact that greatly astonished Bedelia, who did not know whether to be mad or glad on account of it, and concerning which she later on demanded an explanation of the Sign Post. However, he declared with a solemn shake of his head that a question of such momentous import must needs be referred to the Polly-nosed Saphead, a personage concerning whom Bedelia was already burning with curiosity.

However, the King declared Bedelia to be very good company for the time being. And, though Sally was shaking in her shoes for fear of what she might next consider it proper to do, she behaved herself in such a bright and comical manner that His Majesty declared he would immediately find out why none of her species had ever before penetrated into Toyland.

Bedelia privately decided that she would herself find out before he did, or know the reason why. However, she intimated nothing of the kind, and as the Queen just then suggested that they make a tour of the Palace and grounds, the subject was dismissed for the time at least.

The Queen now threw her long train over her arm and settling her golden crown a little more firmly on her golden curls, she caught Sally's hand and the two moved towards the door, followed by the King and Bedelia. The latter had, as a matter of course, taken the King's arm, and now marched along with her nose in the air, greatly to the astonishment of the scandalized court ladies, very few of whom had enjoyed a like honor. His Royal Highness was too much amused and diverted to feel any embarrassment. Truth to tell, life in Toyland had been dull of late, the same thing happening every day without change or variation, and the King was beginning to be horribly bored. Bedelia had dropped from the sky, as it seemed, in the very nick of time.

The quartet proceeded through the crowd of respectfully bowing courtiers to the big doors at the lower end of the room and passed through them into the outer hall. The royal automobile was in waiting, and after a general tour of the Palace the party stepped into it and started for a ride through the charming country.

As they reached the edge of the town, they beheld the Walking House patiently awaiting developments and, both King and Queen desiring to look it over, the party descended at once and proceeded to examine it. The position of guide was, of course, snapped up by Bedelia, whose fluency of speech fitted her very well for such work.

The King inspected everything with the greatest interest, noting many improvements unknown in Toyland, Both King and Queen insisted on being introduced to all the dolls, and made themselves most delightfully agreeable.

The little bear now noticed for the first time the absence of Peter Pan, a fact which she had hitherto passed by, owing no doubt to the very good time she was enjoying. Squatting on her haunches in the kitchen while she devoured a big, red apple—for she considered that the claims of the inner man preceded even those of royalty—she revolved the matter in her mind, finally coming to the conclusion that there could be but one reason for Peter's absence: that after their disappearance from the doll's house, he had discovered some means of returning to his original size, and had availed himself of it, probably finding the society of the doll's house uncongenial minus Sally and Bedelia, and preferring that of his cubs. Bedelia devoutly hoped that he had preserved a portion of the "restorer," as she mentally styled it, for herself and Sally. Greatly as she was enjoying herself, she certainly had no intention of remaining as she was for the term of her natural life. Playing at being dolls was all very well for a season, but was scarcely satisfying enough for a perpetual diet. Besides, there was her family. She wondered how Tom and Jerry and Little Breeches were getting along without her. It was something of a consolation to feel that Peter Pan was with them in her absence.

Bedelia's brain worked quickly, if it was made of silk ravelings! And she had firmly settled the whole matter in her own mind long before she had finished the red apple.

When she had taken the last bite and had carefully extracted the seeds, of which, squirrel-like, she was extremely fond, she dropped the core into the coal scuttle, wiped her paws and muzzle on Dinah's best apron which happened to be freshly done up and airing before the fire, and betook herself upstairs to find out what had been going on in her absence. As she passed the basement door, she saw the Little Lamb scurrying out of it, but thought nothing of the incident and sped upstairs to the drawing-room from which issued the sounds of lively conversation.

The King and Queen had explored every nook and corner of the Walking House, and now expressed a most lively desire to see it walk, a request with which the House stubbornly refused to comply. Firmly planted upon its pedal extremities, which had to all intents and purposes turned themselves back into castors again, it stoutly resisted all coaxing and persuasion; and the project was finally abandoned, much to the disappointment of their Royal Highnesses and the chagrin of Sally.

The Queen declared it high time to be on the move, as they had brought along an elaborate luncheon which was to be served wherever they felt like stopping, and it was already along toward noon. Therefore they all climbed into the auto and presently rolled away, waving good-bye to the dolls, who were assembled in front of the house to see them go.



A second auto with the servants and luncheon followed at a convenient distance. There was no dust to take for the roads were all neatly covered with velvet carpet whenever the King and Queen went abroad. The automobile having been wound up just before it left the garage, there was no fear of its running down, and even if it had, Sally felt quite sure that her golden key would have been quite sufficient to start it up again.

The child could not but think that the King and Queen looked exceedingly comical automobiling in their royal robes and jeweled crowns. The long train of the Queen was dreadfully in the way, and was always overflowing the sides of the auto and having to be re-arranged, while her golden crown wobbled to such an alarming extent that she was obliged to hold on to it with both hands, a proceeding which was not at all comfortable. Nor was the King any better off, but rather worse, for the Queen's long and carefully dressed hair admitted of hat-pins and formed a much better receptacle for a crown than did his own short and curly locks.

However, the little party was a very merry one in spite of wobbly crowns and inconvenient court-trains. And great was the fun and laughter as they sped gaily along through the charming country. Presently they crossed a rustic bridge and turned into a beautiful strip of woods, and here the Queen declared that their luncheon should be served. It was, indeed, a lovely location. A silvery stream rippled by and formed a charming cascade, the water having been turned on from headquarters for the benefit of the royal party. A number of birds of brilliant plumage hopped about among the green branches, most of them warbling sweetly. That they had all been wound up for the special occasion Sally did not for a moment doubt, but she was already so well accustomed to this sort of thing that she did not in the least mind it or consider it queer. As for Bedelia, she had never noticed the difference.

Just then the servants who had been approaching, bearing the big hamper in which the lunch had been packed, suddenly dropped it and retreated with every semblance of terror. Sally's heart sank into her boots, and she glanced nervously over her shoulders to ascertain if Bedelia were missing. But the little bear was close behind and with the rest of the party rushed forward to see what on earth ailed the royal servants. The hamper lay upon the ground, while in one side yawned a great hole. And within appeared a long, solemn face, terminated by a considerable growth of beard. For Mary did not always find it quite convenient to shave her Little Lamb as often as was really necessary. The goat's beard had sprouted, although the horns had not, and was proving a great nuisance to everybody concerned.

In a moment the solution of the whole thing burst upon Bedelia. She remembered having seen the Little Lamb skipping out of the basement door and surmised that he must have hidden himself in the automobile until they were all under way and had then chewed a hole in the side of the hamper, as he could not unfasten the lid, and finally managed to squeeze himself in by dint of throwing out a number of articles utterly valueless to goats but considered quite indispensable to royalty. Of course all this had taken place behind the backs of the servants, who evidently had never once looked around.

Poor Sally, who recognized at the first glance the countenance of the Little Lamb, felt that it would have been a huge relief had the ground opened and made one mouthful of her. She was too much scandalized, as well as too honest, to join in the terrified exclamations of the royal couple, who, however, had but short space in which to express their emotions. Not seeing any good reason why he should remain in his rather cramped quarters, which he would have deserted much sooner had he not feared to jump from the rapidly moving auto, the Little Lamb suddenly wriggled out through the hole in the hamper's side and taking nimbly to his heels, scampered

away and disappeared among the trees, leaving the royal party to mourn over its departed feast.

CHAPTER XI

THE POLLY-NOSED SAPHEAD



NOBODY ever was awakened in Sleepy Town, but everyone slept just as long as they chose. Consequently the morning was well advanced before the King and Queen awoke, and sat up yawning and stretching in a very unregal manner. In fact, it was just like the awakening of ordinary folks. And when they had gotten through with this performance, they stood up and arranged their robes and put on their crowns which they had carefully hung up on a nearby poppy bush. Sally was also awake. She and the Sign Post had already taken a walk down to the lake where the little girl had looked eagerly for the Leap-Frog. But the queer little animal was nowhere to be seen, so the two had retraced their steps, after Sally had bathed her face and hands in the cool water. They were very glad to find the King and Queen and Bedelia waiting for them and eager to take the homeward way.

As they walked towards the gates, Sally noticed quite a number of Flussies perched on the bushes, their heads under their wings, fast asleep. The Sign Post remarked that they were the carrier-doves of Toyland. Here and there a furry bat, hooked on some convenient branch by his little claws, slept peacefully. Sally remarked how pretty and downy they were, just like little winged mice. She had always wondered why people feared them, knowing how senseless and cruel are the superstitions regarding the timid little creatures.

"He prayeth best who loveth best
All things both great and small,
For the dear God who loveth us
He made and loveth all."

She repeated the lines half dreamily to herself, wondering if they included the Little Lamb and others of his ilk, as they walked along towards the entrance, where they could already see the motor car, which had just been freshly wound up, waiting for them.

The King and Queen climbed into the back seat, Sally and Bedelia sprang up with the chauffeur, and with the Sign Post racing ahead on his long, lath-like legs, they set out at a merry pace for Joytown.

It was nearly noon when they reached the palace, and after luncheon, the Queen proposed that they should pay a visit to the Polly-nosed Saphead, the Wizard who really controlled more or less all the affairs of state. As Sally was only too eager to go, they hurried away without ceremony as soon as might be, in order to have a good long afternoon. This rather offended all the other members of the court, who were decidedly inclined to feel aggrieved and neglected since Sally and Bedelia had come a-visiting to the palace.

The Polly-nosed Saphead lived in a great, round tower about half a mile from the palace. He had been advised of the advent of royalty by means of the wireless telegraph, which has always existed in Toyland. In fact, he claimed to be the inventor of it. But be that as it may, he received the message from the King all right, and was on hand to receive the royal party in his big audience room on the first floor.

When they entered the hall he was discovered sitting in his big chair of state, his shrunken little body wrapped in a loose robe of crimson covered with queer black figures and lined with white fur, while his two pet gargoyles sported about at his feet. Sally saw with astonishment that he was not a doll, but a real little man, or, more properly speaking, a little dwarf, with a great head as bald as a billiard ball. This defect was partially concealed by one little tuft of hair or scalp lock, which had a dreadful habit of lifting itself straight up in the air whenever it did not agree with the sentiments expressed by its wearer. As for the back of his head, it was as smooth as the palm of your hand, a fact which had long ago firmly convinced its owner that it was extremely impolite ever to turn his back on anyone. He had, in consequence, acquired a reputation for great courtesy, and was pointed out as a kind of Chesterfield to the rising generation of Toyland.

Great, flapping ears stuck out on either side of the Wizard's little weazened face, while his big, bulging eyes were shaded by brows and lashes that, naturally white, were always carefully dyed to match the scalp lock, which, if the truth must be told, was dyed too. After a time the dye gradually wore off and grew lighter in color, so that when the great man neglected to visit his barber at proper intervals, his hair, not to mention his lashes, became gradually of a delicate green hue, having worked successively through every known shade of brown before it reached this undesirable tint. When in good condition, it was of a rich and glossy brown, shading upon black. "Streaky," Bedelia cruelly declared it, the moment she laid eyes upon it.

But the most astonishing feature belonging to the Polly-nosed Saphead was his large, beak-like nose that, shining and fleshless, rose determinedly from the surrounding level of his countenance like the bill of a poll-parrot, and imparted to his general appearance an air of forever wishing to peer into mysteries. Never did question mark more continuously uprear a perpetual interrogation than did the great man's inquiring nasal organ. Hence his name "The Polly-Nosed" which, far from being a term of ridicule, was on the contrary, a title of great respect. For were not parrots the wisest birds in all Toyland? Whatever the rest of the name meant in the general language of Toyland, we will not now pause to explain.

A real parrot of most brilliant plumage hung upside down on the back of the wise man's chair,

suspended by its claws and evidently fast asleep. While the gargoyles that Sally had at once perceived with great astonishment upon entering the hall, frisked about their master's chair.

The little girl had never considered these queer creatures in any other position than close up under the eaves of a church. And she had always supposed that their chief occupation was to spout a great deal of water out of their huge mouths. These specimens, however, judging from their disorderly conduct, had never heard of such a place as a church. In fact, they were just then engaged in trying to swarm up the sides of their master's chair, in order to pull down the parrot. That wise old fellow, knowing that in spite of their clumsy wings, they would never be able to reach him in his fastness without first wallowing all over their master, slept peacefully on, upside down as he was, and never paid any attention to them at all.

They certainly were remarkably hideous looking creatures, having apparently been left off when not more than half finished, for they possessed only a head and shoulders, with great front paws and strong, cruel looking claws. In addition to these, they each sported a pair of dragon-like wings. They had great mouths that very nearly met around at the back of their necks, and huge, bulging eyes, and altogether were anything but pretty pets.

However, they crouched on the floor at a gesture from the Wizard, who now hurriedly got himself up out of his big chair, and came forward, bowing and scraping with the most effusive courtesy. He had big eyes that stuck out dreadfully and gave them a ridiculous resemblance to the gargoyles, and so fearfully did they wiggle and roll about that Sally began to fear they would hop out of their sockets altogether before he had finished his profuse greetings.

He seemed especially glad to see Sally, whom he at once perceived to be of his own kind, and quite different from the inhabitants of Toyland.

Everybody having greeted everybody else with much politeness and warmth, the King announced that he would be greatly pleased if the Wizard would show Sally the wonders of his tower, especially the Department of the Sun, in which they were all greatly interested.

At this the Wizard appeared greatly flattered and begged them to excuse him for a moment. He hastened to the far end of the room where the gargoyles had briskly renewed their efforts to get at the parrot, seized that still soundly sleeping bird, and proceeded to hang him up by his claws on a high bracket that had originally served to support his own cage. Polly slept serenely and the Wizard, having tethered the gargoyles to the legs of his great chair, returned to the waiting party. This greatly displeased the gargoyles for by this time they had discovered Bedelia, and were quite willing to lose the parrot if they might get at her. It must be confessed, Bedelia did not like their looks at all and hung to Sally's protecting arm, although she had held up her head and looked back over her shoulders with a provoking grin as the whole company left the hall and began to ascend a narrow and winding flight of stairs that led to the top of the tower.

Up and up they went, finally stepping out upon a wide platform or veranda that ran all around the tower, and Sally saw that the great round sun—which she perceived at a glance to be nothing more nor less than a big electric light within a dazzling globe of cut-glass—hung directly over the tower. The child understood at once that the Wizard's great power lay in his knowledge of electricity. However, she made no comment, nor even hinted at the fact that she had ever heard of such a thing.

She was not at all surprised that the Wizard offered very few explanations. In fact, he was very jealous of his methods of working, and feared continually that somebody else might discover them. As there was no patent office in Toyland, the best thing he could do was to keep his secrets to himself, which he accordingly did to perfection.

The Sign Post, still in faithful attendance, whispered to Sally that the great surface of the sun was kept clean by hundreds of tiny elves who were known as the Sunshine Fairies and who spent all their lives rubbing and polishing the glittering cut-glass surface.

"Once in the beginning," he said solemnly, "they grew weary and fell asleep, and the face of the sun became dark and dusty for want of rubbing, so that we had an eclipse."

Sally smiled, thinking it a great deal more likely that something in connection with the electric plan had gotten out of order. However, she offered no comment but nodded and smiled.

"Since then," continued the Sign Post, "the elves have been divided into two companies, and at stated times they are sent off to Sleepy Town for rest. Then when they return the others go. It is a plan that works very well."

"Much better than having eclipses all the time," broke in Bedelia sharply. She was not very sure what an eclipse was, but had come to the conclusion that it must be something unpleasant and disagreeable.

Sally now perceived myriads of the little Sunshine Fairies slipping down the cold and glittering sunbeams, and right jolly creatures they seemed to be. Each one had two pair of hands and arms so that when one pair grew tired of rubbing and polishing, the other might come into play.

Sally was not surprised to find the sunbeams cold, as the moonbeams in Sleepy Town had been warm and quite springlike in their temperature. However, she did feel curious concerning the manner in which they were regulated, as the sunlight at noon was ever so much brighter than it was at morning or evening. Accordingly she inquired of the

ever ready Sign Post, as she had a vague idea that the Wizard rather disliked being questioned.

It was immediately explained to her that the light was regulated by means of many folds of soft gauze, which were operated by means of ropes and pulleys and in as many thicknesses as were required. They were also in various shades of yellow, pink and violet and soft gray, so that a most beautiful twilight could at any time be had for the asking by simply arranging the gauze in appropriate color and thickness.

It all seemed so simple that Sally was beginning to think the Wizard had won his fame very easily. That personage, who had of course felt obliged to give the most of his attention to the King and Queen, now led the way down the narrow and winding stairs, a journey which the Sign Post made in about half as many steps with his long legs.

Very shortly they were back again in the big audience hall. Everything was just as they had left it, the parrot still asleep and hanging up like a bat by his claws, and the gargoyles both dozing, one under the Wizard's great chair and the other upon it, each with one eye open.

Sally, who had noticed Bedelia's somewhat hostile attitude, was relieved to find all the creatures asleep. But they were not long to remain so, for the noise made by the party in returning speedily woke them. The parrot, with a shrill cry, flew straight to her favorite perch on the back of her master's chair. Being still half asleep, she did not perceive the dear little pet that occupied it until a lusty tug at her tail and the dreadful consciousness that she had parted company with several of her best tail feathers caused her to fly to the floor, squawking and chattering.

Immediately both the gargoyles gave chase, but Polly, far from retreating, turned boldly to face her tormentors. In a moment Bedelia had thrown herself into the thick of the fray and there ensued a very bad quarter of an hour for everybody all around. Fur and feathers flew and Polly, reinforced by Bedelia, would have scored a signal victory owing to the fact that the gargoyles were tied up, while the parrot, after delivering a series of blows with beak and claws, could always get out of the range of their jaws. Finally the Wizard, whom none of them seemed to mind the least bit, succeeded in restoring order. The gargoyles were driven off to a far corner where they were tied up in disgrace, and Polly, minus her tail feathers, was shut up in her cage, squawking and protesting every step of the way.



Meantime, Bedelia quickly secured the bone of contention, namely the brilliant tail feathers, and stuck them into her fur behind her ears, where they stood up impudently, giving her rather the aspect of an Indian squaw.

Peace having been restored, afternoon tea was brought in and served by a number of jumping-jacks, who were in fine livery and powdered wigs. The jumping-jacks were exclusively in the service of the Wizard and very fine servants they proved to be. To be sure, one of them would occasionally collapse and fall in a limp heap on the floor, scattering tea and cakes all over the place. But as jumping-jacks usually do collapse and sprawl on the ground unless properly held up by the string that always grows out of the tops of their heads, nobody seemed to think anything of it, or to mind it in the least.

It seemed rather a shame to Sally that they should be compelled to wear powdered wigs, thus covering up forever that most important string. The poor creatures could never be quite sure when they were going to collapse. Besides, what a quantity of tea and cakes was always being wasted! She could not exactly figure it all out and confided her dilemma to the Sign Post. He remarked that even were the powdered wigs

dispensed with, there would be nobody to hold up the strings.

While this was very true, it did not help Sally in the least, and she was rather glad when the Queen declared that it was time to leave, and the whole party, having bade good-bye to the Wizard, with thanks for the pleasant if somewhat strenuous visit, returned to the palace.



CHAPTER XII

THE WEATHER PROPHET



ALTHOUGH there was no night in Toyland, a species of twilight prevailed after a certain hour, not dark enough to require lights, but it still proved deliciously restful after a day of perfect and brilliant sunshine.

These twilights were, of course, engineered by the Wizard from his tower, and by means of the gauze arrangements that the Sign Post had explained to Sally, were blue, pink, yellow, green, and so on, according to the fancy of the magician.

It was quite the fad to give afternoon teas that matched the twilight in color, and as a bulletin was posted each morning at the Wizard's front door announcing the shade of the twilight to come, the rest was an easy matter. As soon as the diminishing sunlight proclaimed the approach of evening, myriads of fireflies were let loose in all the rooms of the palace, furnishing all the light that was necessary. Indeed, Toyland knew nothing of lamps or candles, gas or electric light. The cooking was all done with fuel, the secret of whose preparation was known to the Wizard alone. It was non-explosive and burned without consuming away, so that one good-sized chunk would last forever. In fact, when a person went to invest in fuel, he first had his cook stove measured and then ordered to be sent home a block of exactly the right dimensions. When he wanted it lit all he had to do was to use the bellows that hung by the side of every stove. This started the fire at once, and an occasional application kept it going. When the bellows was hung up for good, the fuel went out. In every kitchen was employed a boy who did nothing but blow the fire with the bellows. With such a state of affairs, conflagrations were unknown and, in fact, unheard of. To be sure, there were plenty of iron fire companies who appeared at intervals with other toys from the world of human beings, but their occupation was gone forever, and they were obliged to seek other pursuits, usually being given a place in the standing army, a position for which their brilliant uniforms easily fitted them.

On this particular evening after returning from the Wizard's palace,—it was a pink evening, by the way—it was announced much to Sally's delight that the Weather Prophet had declared snow for the following morning. If Sally was pleased, she was just as much astonished, for the weather was warm and the month she was quite sure was June. However, as the Wizard managed the Weather Prophet, who was only his mouth-piece, nobody ever knew, it appeared, what sort of weather might be expected within the next few hours. The Queen suspected that snow had been ordered for Sally's benefit, and said so with a smile; while the King suggested that they should all go over to visit the Weather Prophet, as there was nothing especially amusing laid out for the evening. This was readily agreed to by everyone, and as soon as dinner was over they all started forth to walk to the house of the personage who ruled the weather.

The evening was beautiful. A rosy flush rested upon everything, while every wayside tree was filled with fireflies. To be sure, Bedelia declared that the pinkish glow made them all look as if they had scarletina. But as nobody in Toyland had ever heard of such a thing as scarletina, her joke fell very flat indeed.

A short walk brought them to the house of the Weather Prophet. At one period of her life Sally would have called it a glass box, set up on end. And that was certainly what it did look like. They caught a glimpse of a mass of fluffy drapery within and then Bedelia exclaimed in a tone of disappointment and chagrin, "Why, it's nothing but a paper doll!"

Sure enough, a paper doll it was, and a lady doll at that. Sally had seen just such dolls hung upon her Christmas trees year after year. In fact, she had often helped to make the fluffy skirts of plaited crêpe paper.

The Sign Post here whispered that the skirts were really the most wonderful thing about the Weather Prophet, as they changed color with the changes of the weather.

Sally now observed hanging over the door a glass sign on which was printed in large, golden letters

WHEN I WEAR PINK, A STORM IS DUE,
WHEN SKIES ARE CLEAR, MY SKIRTS ARE BLUE.

In fact, the glass sign began to repeat the stanza in a very loud voice as soon as the party was within hailing distance, and kept repeating it over and over until the Weather Prophet angrily ordered it to be quiet, whereupon it became so sulky that it clouded itself all over and became quite dim.

As soon as the Weather Prophet could make herself heard, she greeted her guests with the greatest affability, and when questioned concerning the impending storm replied by pointing with a smile to her draperies, which certainly were as pink as could be.

"As there never is any rain here," she explained, "a storm usually—in fact, as a rule—means a snow storm." Then with a friendly nod at Sally, she added, "In your country, where I once lived, you have many kinds of storms."

To this Bedelia promptly responded before Sally had time to answer, "Snow storms, hail storms, rain storms, thunder storms and brain

storms!"

"We have thunder storms here, too, but never any rain," replied the Weather Prophet.

She was very pretty, and confided to Sally that she was the Wizard's wife, but that as she had to remain where her draperies could be influenced by the weather, she seldom went to the tower.

"Besides which, I cannot abide his horrid gargoyles," she added, with a contemptuous sniff.

Sally remembered how stuffy the big hall in the tower had been and did not at all blame the pretty doll for preferring her own bright and airy glass house with its many ventilators and the gay, striped awnings that could be spread out when the sun was too glaring.

As the neat, gold paper watch that the Weather Prophet wore at her belt now pointed to the hour of nine and Sally was beginning to look tired, they all took leave of their charming hostess and wended their way back to the palace, where the Queen with an affectionate kiss dismissed Sally that she might seek the rest that she so greatly needed.

"What on earth would nurse think if she could see us going to bed at ten o'clock?" exclaimed the child, as she cuddled close up to Bedelia, already half asleep on the dainty linen pillow.

"What would she think if she could see any of it, especially the gargoyles?" returned the little bear sleepily.

Sally burst out laughing, remembering nurse's dismay at sight of one small mouse. But before her merry laugh had ceased to echo through the room, her eyelids fell drowsily. She was fast asleep.

They slept long and soundly, and were at last awakened by the scraping of shovels and the sound of carts and horses in the street below. Quickly Sally sprang out of bed, followed by Bedelia, who fell all over herself and very nearly upset Sally in her anxiety to get to the window.

A strange sight met their eyes. In the street below were moving back and forth a myriad of little carts, each drawn by one horse, and presided over by a jumping-jack. But wonderful to relate, instead of shoveling up the snow and carrying it away, the drivers were unloading it as fast as they could and spreading it over everything. Down the road and as far as she could see, the child beheld a company of Sign Posts that were mounted on huge ladders and busily engaged in sprinkling the snow over the tops and branches of the stiff little trees. They also hung numbers of glittering icicles on the boughs and twigs.

Without waiting to see any more, Sally dressed with the greatest possible haste and flew to find her own especial Sign Post. Him she found waiting patiently in the hall below, and in response to her eager queries, he explained that, as Sally already knew, the temperature in Toyland never varied. Therefore there was neither rain nor real snow. The snow that now lay thickly spread over everything was manufactured by the Wizard, who alone knew how to make it.

"So you see," concluded the Sign Post, "we can have winter whenever Their Majesties wish for a sleigh ride."

They were walking along the garden path by this time, the crisp snow crunching under their feet. Sally thought that Toyland had never looked so beautiful as now, with every tree and roof sparkling with the glittering snow crystals. The child picked up a few icicles and put them carefully into her pocketbook for future reference. She felt very much puzzled to see such a topsy-turvy state of affairs as existed in Toyland. The idea of snow being shoveled out of carts instead of being shoveled into them! She could but reflect, however, that a snow storm in the nursery must have been planned and executed under very nearly the same circumstances.

"To be sure, they are only a lot of dolls," she said to herself. "No wonder that the Wizard is able to deceive them in so many ways."

"What becomes of all this stuff?" just then demanded Bedelia. She had been digging down into the snow with much vigor and had promptly discovered that it was neither cold nor wet.

"The snow," replied the Sign Post with dignity, "is the property of the Wizard. When it has lain here for what he considers a proper length of time, his servants gather it up and cart it away and it is stored up for future use."

Just then a great jingling of bells was heard and a huge sleigh came swinging up the driveway. In it was seated no less a personage than the Polly-nosed Saphead himself, wrapped in furs and evidently in a great state of pleasurable excitement.



The poll parrot was perched on the back of the seat, while much to Sally's dismay the ugly heads of the two gargoyles appeared poking up from among the fur robes.

"Come for a sleigh ride," cried the parrot before the Wizard had time to move or speak. "Come for a sleigh ride, a sleigh ride, a sleigh ride!" and she would no doubt have kept on repeating the invitation indefinitely had not one of the gargoyles suddenly reared up on the back seat and made a grab for her brilliant tail. Whereupon the Wizard felt obliged to interfere and it was some time before peace was restored and the great man descended with as much pomp and ceremony as the circumstances permitted.

He was such a bundle of furs that had it not been for his big head, which was crowned with a large fur cap, it would have been almost impossible to find his little shrunken body at all. He greeted Sally with great warmth and announced that he had come to take her and the royal party for a sleigh ride. Here Bedelia remarked in a stage whisper that had the "royal party" been present, he would not have put Sally first in his invitation. Nobody heeding her, however, she proceeded to devote her attention to the parrot, the gargoyles having been left outside in the sleigh.

While feeling rather doubtful about riding in the same vehicle with the ugly beasts as well as Polly and Bedelia—for she knew very well that they would all have to go along—Sally felt obliged to accept so pressing an invitation, especially when offered by such a mighty personage. And word was accordingly sent upstairs to the King and Queen who presently came hurrying down, all ready for the ride.

In the excitement everyone had forgotten about breakfast, that is, everyone but Bedelia. She now dived below stairs and made a swift raid on the dining-room, whence she shortly returned with every evidence of having restored exhausted nature with a great number of cookies, judging from the crumbs that adorned her fur.

As there was no further reason for delay, the whole party climbed into the big sleigh. The Queen and Sally were on the back seat with Bedelia between them, the King and the Wizard on the front seat with Polly perched on the back of it directly behind her master. The gargoyles were perched up in front with the driver, much to the dismay of that dignified personage, who disliked them heartily. Besides, he considered, and with some reason, that their presence detracted in no small degree from his own liveried dignity. However, he was too much afraid of them to vent his displeasure as he might have done had they not been such ugly looking customers. The footman, too, felt very much aggrieved at having his quarters curtailed by the admission of such passengers. However, there was no help for it, and each one being finally settled in his place, the sleigh started off with a great jingling of bells and waving of plumes that stood up stiffly on the heads of the mettlesome steeds and also reared themselves aloft on the pillars of the high dashboard.

The Wizard remarked that he had invited his wife to come along but that as she objected to so much live stock, she had preferred to remain where she was. Sally wondered where the Weather Prophet would have roosted had she accepted the Wizard's invitation, as there did not appear to be a square inch of unoccupied room. However, she said nothing and the sleigh sped merrily along, finally leaving the city and swinging out into the open country.

Here also winter fair and sparkling prevailed in all its dazzling splendor. The King remarked that there would be fine skating to which the Wizard replied that he had caused several pair of skates to be brought along and that they would try the skating pond when the ladies had had enough of the sleigh.

This proposition was hailed with delight by all concerned. Sally could not help wondering where they were going to find any ice. Her curiosity was presently satisfied when the sleigh drew up beside a large sheet of clear glass, which had been lightly sprinkled with the snow powder, so that it was not too slippery for roller skating. Roller skating it was to which the Wizard now invited his guests. And in a few moments they were all speeding merrily along, each one trying to outstrip the others. Even the gargoyles each buckled a pair of skates on his front and only paws, and joined the merry company. And by dint of balancing themselves with their wings, they managed very well indeed.

The Queen was highly delighted as the skating pond was something entirely new, and the whole party remained circling round and round until the Wizard, looking at his watch, suddenly declared that it was high time for twilight and that although it greatly grieved him to stop so delightful a diversion, he really must hasten back to his tower in order to attend to the same. He added that his wife desired the party to take tea with her and that it would be a lavender tea.

Everybody now took off the roller skates and piled into the sleigh, the homeward way being taken by a different route in order that they might lose none of the beauties of the scenery.

As they approached the spot on which the pretty little glass house of the Weather Prophet had stood, a cry of dismay broke from the lips of all,—at least all but those of the Wizard. The house was gone, and not the smallest trace of either house or Prophet remained to tell the tale. Neither did the most systematic search reveal anything. The baffled Wizard retired to his tower to consult the stars, as he declared, while the rest of the party hurried to the palace to get their own lavender tea.

CHAPTER XIII

A MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE



REAT was the hue and cry raised over the disappearance of the Weather Prophet, and dire the dismay of the general public, that had daily flocked to the pretty little glass house to learn the very latest advice from the weather bureau. They greatly feared there could now be no further predictions concerning sun and storm, for there never had been but one Weather Prophet within the memory of anyone, even the oldest of all. Even the Wizard knew nothing concerning the material of which his wife's magic skirts were made. A weather prophet she had been, although badly in need of repair, upon her arrival in Toyland, and her like had never been seen, would never be seen again.

Queerer even than her disappearance seemed to Sally the vanishing of her glass house. Perhaps, like the Walking House, it had found feet and eloped, carrying off its owner, whether willing or not. Even the loquacious glass sign was gone, which proved conclusively to the logical mind of the Wizard, or at least he so expressed himself, that the house had run away with the lady, and that at that very moment she was no doubt placidly following her profession of prophesying in some far distant region.

Bedelia, as usual, had her own opinion concerning the matter, and went about looking mysterious. Sally, who greatly feared that the little bear was planning mischief, was much relieved when she finally spoke her mind.

"I believe that bald-headed old terror knows where his wife is," she declared one morning while the two were wandering through the palace greenhouses. "She had two pet Flussies and they are gone, too. Now, even if she was carried off by her glass house against her will, she could have sent them back with a message. Anyway, it isn't likely that she went of her own accord, for she is so well known all over Toyland that wherever she went, the Wizard would be sure to find it out and bring her back. Besides that, she had no reason for running off. Everybody liked her and made a fuss over her."

"Well, then, whatever do you suppose has become of her?" inquired Sally breathlessly. The child had had her own misgivings, remembering the pretty doll's dislike for her husband's pets. "You don't suppose the gargoyles could have *eaten* her?" she added hurriedly.

"No, and I don't believe the Polly flew away with her," retorted Bedelia scornfully. "I believe she is hidden somewhere within a very short distance from here. The Wizard has some motive for getting her out of the way. You know he said she had refused to go sleighing with the rest of us. He probably said that just for effect."

"But what could he have done with the house?" demanded Sally.

"Oh, that could easily have been taken to pieces and moved away. He had those imps of gargoyles to help him," replied the little bear. Then after a moment's thought, she added reflectively, "As you know, the King and Queen have gone away on business for a couple of days. Suppose we try to unravel this mystery all by ourselves. I am sure the Sign Post will help us. He can run very fast, besides being so tall he can get at almost anything. Of course we won't mention what we are doing to anyone. It may be that I am on quite the wrong scent. But there's no harm in trying."

And Sally having given her delighted consent, Bedelia trotted off to find the Sign Post, singing at the top of her voice

"The owl, and the eel, and the warming pan
They went to call on the soap-fat man;
The soap-fat man he was not within
For he'd gone for a ride on his rolling-pin;
So they all came back by way of the town,
And turned the meeting-house upside down."

This ancient classic somehow, it seemed to Sally, applied to the situation in hand, only it was Sally and the Sign Post and Bedelia instead of the owl and the eel and the warming-pan.

A bright idea suddenly struck the little girl, and she could scarcely wait until Bedelia returned with the Sign Post to announce it to them.

"Bedelia, dear," she exclaimed, "if we are going to be real detectives, we shouldn't use our own names, because real detectives never do. Let us call ourselves the Owl and the Eel and the Warming-Pan. It will be so lovely and mysterious!"

Bedelia clapped her paws with delight at this proposition, while the Sign Post beamed approval from his lofty height.

"With capitals, of course," continued Sally. "And now which of us shall be which?"

After some discussion, it was decided that Sally should be the Owl (with a capital), Bedelia the Eel, while the long and lean Sign Post should be the Warming-Pan.

This mighty problem having been settled, they proceeded to hold a council of war and finally

decided to set forth at once upon their mission. They concluded to go on foot and, if it were not possible to return each night to the palace, to remain wherever they could find lodging. The Sign Post, while he had no opinion of his own at all concerning the disappearance of the Weather Prophet, was glad to fall in with the plans of anyone who had, and Sally perceived with delight that he was going to be a most valuable addition to their detective force.

By noon their simple preparations were completed and they set forth merrily enough, having concluded to go over the nearby ground first, then if they discovered nothing to proceed to regions more remote. Bedelia's idea that the subject of their search was hidden close by seemed sensible enough. She might be in the Wizard's tower for that matter. The disappearance of the house was what bothered all of them. What use could anyone have for a vanishing glass house? It was really most mysterious.

They walked on, discussing the subject that was so troubling them when suddenly the sound of heavy paws padding along behind them made them turn quickly. And they beheld hurrying along after them a big, white figure that Sally recognized at once as the large Polar Bear rug that lay at the side of the Queen's bed. He had come to life most beautifully and only flopped in a very small degree, considering his boneless condition. He came up panting a little and wagging his huge head amiably as is the fashion with Polar Bears.

"I was *so* afraid you would get away!" he said in a panting voice, as he linked arms with Sally and quickly fell into step with her. Then he added, "Aren't you surprised to see me? I never did such a thing before. Ever since I can remember, I have lain beside the Queen's bed. But this morning I felt that I had reached the limit. Do let me go along with you! I am thirsting for adventure."

"Do you think you could walk so far?" said Sally, eyeing his somewhat wobbly legs rather doubtfully. "Besides, what will the Queen say when she returns?"

"I shall not be there to hear," replied the Polar Bear solemnly. "And as for walking, I can go along with the best of you. Besides, you will find me very useful, for when you are tired, I will spread myself out and you can rest comfortably on my long, soft hair." He smiled so amiably as he said this that the others at once consented to take him along, and also informed him of the object of their journey.

This confidence ended, they proceeded more briskly than before, and soon the palace was left behind and they found themselves in the open country. At the edge of the town Sally saw a most peculiar looking tree whose queer leaves, some square, some oblong, no two of them alike, were white instead of green, and rustled with a sound like sweetest music as the wind whispered softly through them.

"Oh, what a queer tree!" she exclaimed, hurrying toward it.

"That, my dear, is a letter tree," said the Sign Post.

"A letter tree?" replied the child blankly. "Then you have no post-office in Toyland?"

"I do not know what a post-office may be," replied the other. "But here all our letters grow on trees. The loving thoughts of our friends to us, why should they not bloom and bear fruit, the fruit of the heart and brain?"

Much impressed by the eloquence of her companion, Sally was silent, but Bedelia remarked that she had heard of a brain-storm, but that brain-fruit was one too many for her.

The Sign Post, without condescending to notice the little bear's impertinence, lifted Sally in his long arms so that she might more closely examine the wonderful tree, which she did with the greatest curiosity. But although she sought all over it, there was no fruit bearing her name. She had not expected anything, yet she somehow felt disappointed. However, Bedelia was in the highest spirits, having been lifted up by the Polar Bear, with whom she had struck up the greatest friendship, and she could scarcely be restrained from appropriating a number of letters, albeit they were all addressed to other people.

Just as the Polar Bear was resolutely setting her down on her feet, she made a sudden grab and descended to the ground with a letter tightly

clasped in her mischievous paw.

"Oh, Bedelia, how could you!" cried Sally in distress.

"Well, it's for you, stupid!" retorted Bedelia saucily, as she thrust the envelope under Sally's



nose. Sure enough it was, and Sally had somehow overlooked it. It was addressed in a manner not to be mistaken:

To Sally,
Care of Her Royal Highness,
The Palace,
Toyland.

"How curious!" cried Sally as she eagerly tore it open.

It read thus:

DEAR SALLY:—

Here I am shut up in the tower by that horrid old Polly-nosed Saphead. He sent for me yesterday on the pretense that he wanted me to go sleigh-riding, and when he got me up here in the very top of the tower, he locked me in and went away. He has left the gargoyles outside the door and I can hear them scratching and fussing around. I don't know what he is doing this for, but anyway he has gone off on business with the King and Queen and I want you to bring help at once and let me out. I know how to get even with him. Do hurry, dear Sally.

Yours in prison,
THE WEATHER PROPHET.

"Didn't I tell you so?" exclaimed Bedelia after a moment of stupefied silence. And then she added briskly, "There's no use standing here staring like a lot of gawks. The thing to do is to hurry back home and get the Weather Prophet out of prison."

To this all eagerly assented, and Sally fancied that she heard the Sign Post murmur faintly, "Five miles to the palace." Whether or not this was true, they had come a goodly distance and were all more or less tired, so that rest and refreshment were really necessary before starting back on their homeward journey. Therefore they seated themselves under the beautiful letter tree and ate the dainty food that had been put up for them by the obliging cook before they left the palace. There were chicken sandwiches, deviled eggs, thin slices of cold ham and tongue, and a beautiful salad of lettuce and celery in a bowl. And for dessert was a fine strawberry tart covered with whipped cream and a number of most tempting little cakes. There was also a jug of lemonade.

The Sign Post, who had obligingly carried all these dainties dangling from one of his long arms, helped to spread the feast and then sat down contentedly to his own meal of shavings, which, as he now explained, constituted his regular fare. The only variety consisted in the fact that they were obtained from different woods, each of which possessed its own peculiar flavor.

The meal at last being ended, Sally and Bedelia cleared the remains of it away, and as all felt thoroughly rested, they concluded to start back at once to the palace. As all roads in Toyland lead to the palace, they simply proceeded on their way instead of retracing their steps. Sally and the Sign Post led the way, while Bedelia trotted contentedly along with the Polar Bear.

Presently through a break in the trees they caught a gleam of something that glistened like ice in the cold sunshine.

"The lake!" cried Sally. "If we only had our skates and plenty of time, what fun we might have."

To which the Polar Bear responded rather severely, "Whoever heard of a rescue party stopping to go skating?"

And as this was very true, Sally remained silent, although feeling rather hurt that the Polar Bear should have taken her up so suddenly.

They were now directly on the edge of the lake, and as she gazed down upon its glistening glass surface that gleamed with a hundred rainbow tints, Sally suddenly uttered a loud exclamation, "The Weather Prophet's glass house!" she cried excitedly. "The Wizard used it to make this lake. He carried her off and shut her up because he knew she would object to having it pulled to pieces and made into a lake!"

And indeed the truth of her assertion proved itself at once to the minds of all present, for the lake had been laid in sections and one could discern plainly enough where the top and sides of the house were joined so as to make one flat surface. Even the pretty striped awnings of red and white had been utilized in the construction of a tent, under which the skaters had rested when weary with their exertions.

Indignation at the meanness of the crafty old Wizard and sympathy for his pretty little wife was expressed by all, and they at once hastened forward, more resolved than ever to rescue her from the clutches of the Wizard, or to perish in the attempt.

They made very good time, the Sign Post carrying Sally and

Bedelia turn and turn about when either felt tired. But it was near the hour for twilight before the towers and gables of the royal palace came into view. Sally suddenly remembered that in the absence of the Wizard there would probably be no twilight, a fact that she had not before thought of. They would have to do their work in broad daylight. However, they hurried along and were soon in the grounds of the Wizards palace.

High up in the tip-top window of the lofty tower they saw fluttering a tiny white object that was evidently the handkerchief of the poor little prisoner, for having seen them she was waving it frantically.

All was silent and deserted. The Wizard had locked up everything securely and had given a holiday to his servants, fearing that they might notice the effort of his prisoner to make herself heard, which effort she was pretty certain to make. Consequently the little party had nothing to fear in the way of encountering guards. How to effect an entrance was, however, quite another matter, for everything was bolted, barred and padlocked. The problem was finally solved by the Sign Post, who stood on his very tiptoes and triumphantly boosted Bedelia in at the third story window, which had been left open as being too high up to offer a means of egress for the prisoner.



CHAPTER XIV

THE ECLIPSE



NCE inside, Bedelia quickly gave a hand to Sally and in a moment the little girl, lifted up by the Sign Post, stood beside the small bear. The Sign Post now swiftly swung himself up to the balcony, being assisted in no small degree by the Polar Bear, who for various reasons remained below. He was to keep watch and give notice if anyone approached.

It was now arranged that as the Sign Post was far too tall to navigate around inside of the house, he should climb from one balcony to another until he reached the top and if possible effect the rescue of the Wizardess from the outside. This seemed very satisfactory to Sally and Bedelia, neither of whom exactly liked the idea of encountering the gargoyles which they knew were wandering about, unfettered, in the dark halls.



Anxiously they waited, watching the long legs of the Sign Post as they trailed over the edge of the upper railing. Then they disappeared and all was painful suspense for what seemed at least a century. Then at a shout from the Polar Bear they both rushed out on the balcony. They beheld the Sign Post swinging himself swiftly down from balcony to balcony, which he appeared to do with the utmost ease and looking more like a big spider than anything else—all legs and arms. Clinging to his neck was the Weather Prophet, her fluffy skirts flying every which way in the fine breeze. Presently he had reached the ground and having gently set his fair burden down, he quickly scrambled back again and hastened to bring down Sally and Bedelia, who were beginning to feel a wee bit nervous as they had tried the door of the room in which they were and had found it locked on the outside. And right thankful they were to find themselves on the green grass below, comforting the little Weather Prophet, who was overjoyed to find herself at liberty.

Where she should go was the next question. The Wizard might return at any moment, and her own house was a house no longer. Suddenly an expression of delight flashed over Sally's face.

"Let us go to the Walking House!" she exclaimed. "You will be quite safe there and if anyone comes in pursuit, the house can easily escape with you."

To this the Weather Prophet gave a joyful assent.

"Let us go quickly, quickly!" she cried. "I feel it in my bones, in my skirts, I mean, that we are going to have something very unusual. In fact, according to the calculations, we are going to have an eclipse of the sun in about a quarter of an hour."

Here she winked at Bedelia with a gesture so comical that the little bear rolled over laughing.

"Come, don't let us delay," exclaimed the rescued one, and hand in hand they hurried away from the Wizard's tower, which was soon completely obscured from view by the thick trees that surrounded it.

At the edge of the park they paused and as the distance to the Walking House was several miles, The Sign Post suggested that he should procure a conveyance and also some wraps for the Weather Prophet in order that none might recognize her. Accordingly he disappeared swiftly and soon returned with one of the autos from the royal garage. As for Sally, Bedelia and the Weather Prophet, you could never have told one from the other in their coats and goggles, while the Polar Bear cuddled around their feet, thus keeping them nice and warm.

Away they flew, the Sign Post for once in his life perched next the chauffeur with his long legs doubled up as much as possible and the rest of them hanging over the dashboard. The chauffeur was an old oyster, who had been chosen for this capacity because he was *dumb*, and could not voice his suspicions provided he felt any.

As the Walking House stood on the very edge of the town, it took at least fifteen minutes to reach it, and although the chauffeur made good speed, just as they were drawing up in front of it, darkness, sudden, swift and ominous, fell upon Toyland.

It was altogether a hopeless darkness, for which the inhabitants of Toyland were totally unprepared. Lamps and candles were unknown and the people crouched in their gay little houses panic-stricken.

Only in the Walking House did lights appear, for in accordance with custom, candles and candelabra adorned mantels and tables, and it was the work of only a moment to light them all. Gaily Sally and her party hurried into the house, Sally racing downstairs to find Dinah, for they were all as hungry as wolves, while Bedelia escorted the guest of honor upstairs to remove her

wraps.

The Polar Bear stretched himself before the front door, making a very effectual guard in case of danger.



The dolls had come down into the parlor to be introduced to the new arrivals.

At Sally's suggestion, all the shades were drawn down so that no ray of light might pierce the outer darkness—darkness that covered everything like a muffling cloak, in which the inhabitants of Toyland were helplessly floundering about, and which was sure to last until the Wizard came back to set things straight.

"And a fine time he'll have doing it," remarked the Weather Prophet with a toss of her pretty little head. "He won't be able to see his hand before his face, and I took care to leave his old electric machines in such a muddle that he'll have his hands full—fuller than they've ever been with all the cares of state included."

Sally, who had suspected as much, tried to reprove her, but ended by laughing outright. The Weather Prophet was so very like Bedelia when in her impish moods.

As for Bedelia herself, the idea tickled her so that she laughed until she rolled off the sofa on which she had been sitting and proceeded to bounce up and down on the floor like a fat rubber ball. Then as soon as she was able to get her breath, she sat up, panting and rubbing the tears out of her eyes with both paws.

"My face is leaking! I must be turning into a gargoyle," she exclaimed, which of course started everybody laughing all over again.

By this time all the dolls had come crowding down into the parlor to be introduced to the new arrival. Sally did not consider it wise to introduce the Weather Prophet by her real name, feeling that if a strict investigation should be made, it would be safer if none of the dolls were aware of her identity. So it was that she was known to the inhabitants as Nellie, a name that had suggested itself to Bedelia.

Sally feared that her own disappearance and that of Bedelia would be connected with that of the Wizard's wife, and therefore resolved to take every precaution. The eclipse of course would retard any search that the Wizard might see fit to make. But what to do with the fugitive lady for the rest of her life was a question. She flatly declared she would never return to the Wizard and was wild with rage when she learned the use to which her pretty little glass house had been put.

While all the pleasant acquaintance-making was going on in the Walking House, an automobile containing a badly rattled Wizard was slowly picking its way along through the inky blackness. The old gentleman was shrewd enough to guess the cause of the eclipse, although he had been quite sure in the beginning that his wife was locked up too securely to be able to get at anything. He had started forth at once, greatly against the wishes of the King and Queen who, of course, could not understand the cause of his anxiety, and who much preferred to stay behind until the

sun shone again. But the Wizard had taken immediate flight, and was now hurrying back to his tower as rapidly as circumstances and the eclipse would permit. On the principle that all roads led to the palace, the chauffeur kept straight on through the pitch darkness, tooting his horn occasionally to prevent a collision with any other eclipse-belated wayfarer who might be floundering about on the same road.

The snow made it somewhat difficult and altogether the trip was anything but a pleasant one, and the Polly-nosed Saphead was glad indeed when he at last found himself in front of his gloomy tower. Instead of stopping there, however, he ordered the chauffeur to go on to the palace, much to the dismay of that personage, who considered that he had already traveled far enough. Nevertheless he put on speed and soon arrived at the royal residence.

Here the Wizard quickly alighted and hastened into the palace. He was gone some time and the chauffeur was growing very impatient when he at last reappeared, triumphantly bearing in his hands a large wicker cage in which were gleaming and glowing all the fireflies that were accustomed always to be liberated at twilight. He chuckled to himself as he was whirled back to his tower, and in a few moments was inside and hastening toward the room that contained his electric plant.

The gargoyles came hurrying down to meet him, and it was a very good thing that he carried a light, for had they caught him alone in the darkness, they would no doubt have made a meal of him. As it was, they recognized him at once and came flapping joyously along with hoarse growls of welcome. But the Wizard now had no time to waste on his pets. Pushing them roughly aside, he dove into his laboratory and after one look around, sank upon a chair with a groan that the gargoyles heard as they crouched against the door in the darkness outside, and to which they replied with sharp growls.

Everywhere reigned confusion worse confounded. Wires were cut, batteries disconnected, wreck and ruin faced him on every side. The Wizard smote his breast and fairly wept with rage.

"Call me the Wizard of Was," he ejaculated, "for nobody but a good-for-nothing old back number would have gone off and left that minx to get in her fine work here."

"The Wizard of Was! The Wizard of Was!" a mocking voice cried out of the darkness. And the terrified Wizard jumped to his feet, while a peal of unearthly laughter rang through the room. The next moment he sat down again, much relieved. The parrot had fluttered in after him quite unobserved, and, perched on the high mantel-shelf, was imitating her master at pleasure. Hearing the familiar voice, the gargoyles began to scratch and snarl at the door. They considered it very unfair that the parrot should be allowed inside while *they* were banished to outer darkness.

"Shut up!" he commanded, fiercely throwing his words at the parrot like shots from a gun. And then, "Lie down there, will you?" this accompanied with a vigorous slap applied to the top of his head, for his scalp-lock had suddenly lifted itself erect and was standing straight up in the air.

"You don't like the looks of things, hey? Well, I don't either. But just mind your own affairs. I'll attend to the rest." Then pulling himself vigorously together, he set to work to repair the damage as best he could, although he foresaw plenty of hard work ahead of him before the sun could shine out again. Right well he knew that his reputation as a wizard would be gone forever did the present state of affairs continue for any length of time, and while he worked, he concocted a story which he intended to give out to the public on the morrow.

As far as his wife was concerned, he had no doubt that she was wandering about in the upper darkness at the very top of the tower, for it never occurred to him that she could have escaped. He supposed that she had merely climbed out of one window and into another, and so effected an entrance to his rooms where was kept all the electric machinery with which he manipulated the sun.

While he was fussing and fuming, raging at the parrot and scolding the gargoyles, his pretty little wife was in close confab with Sally and Bedelia.

"I don't exactly understand about that letter tree," Sally remarked, as she softly scratched the little bear's fuzzy ears and at the same time gently patted Nellie's little hand that lay upon her knee.

The three were stretched cosily on the Polar Bear rug in front of the glowing grate, having put on kimonos and let down their back hair—at least, all but Bedelia who wore her usual fur costume.

"Well, my dear," replied the Weather Prophet, "you see we have no postal system such as



yours, and indeed it is quite unnecessary. Whenever we want to communicate with anyone, we simply think our message just as hard as we can, and very shortly our thoughts burst forth into buds and blossoms on one of our letter trees. There are quite a good many of them in Toyland."

"And how does your friend know?" inquired Sally.

"Oh, one's friend always has an impression that a letter is waiting. You had one, although you didn't know it, or you would not have taken the road to the letter tree," replied the Weather Prophet.

"How very wonderful!" exclaimed the child, while Bedelia, who had been rubbing her head gently against Sally, remarked that it certainly made a wonderful saving in stamps and stationery.

"And there is one thing I have to confess," went on the Weather Prophet, suddenly holding up a small, glittering object which Sally at once recognized as her little golden key. "Had it not been for this, I never could have gained access to all the private rooms and closets of the Wizard's tower, although I climbed out of my own window and in at his. The gargoyles, whom you know I fear and despise, were loose in the hall outside my door so I had to choose the other way."

"But how did you get the key?" demanded the little girl, as she smilingly hung it on her gold chain and replaced the two around her neck. "I never missed it," she added.

"You dropped it the day you were in my house, and I fancied, as soon as I saw it, that it was a magic key. Of course, I meant to return it the very next time I saw you, but no opportunity offered. Take good care of it, my dear. It is a wonderful little talisman."

Sally nodded assent to this and presently all three, being tired out with the day's adventures, tumbled into bed, Sally feeling delighted to be back once more in her own cosy little room.

CHAPTER XV

SALLY FINDS THE ENCHANTED WOOD

IT took nearly two days for the Wizard to get things in the tower once more into proper shape and during all that time the eclipse hung heavily over Toyland. The Wizard had worked feverishly with no light save that obtained from the fireflies that he had stolen from the palace. He was shaking in his shoes for fear the King and Queen should return and find that the only source of illumination had been cut off. As not even the wireless telegraph was working, he had been unable to communicate with Their Majesties, but feared that they must be very impatient by this time and that they might make their appearance at any moment.

It was difficult to get on with only the light afforded by the fireflies, and he chuckled grimly as he pictured the Weather Prophet, who had so reveled in the sunshine of her glass house, pining in the darkness in which he supposed she was locked up.

The room in which he had left her was on the opposite side of the tower, and he had only to cross the hall to reach it, but he savagely vowed to himself that he would not go near her, and that he didn't care if she starved to death. After a while, however, the extreme quiet got on his nerves, and he began to wonder how it was that no sound at all came to him from the room across the hall. Presently he tiptoed very softly to the door and listened. But all was still as could be—nothing moved or breathed.

He went back to his work, but a feeling of uneasiness possessed him. The Queen was very fond of his pretty wife, and he knew that he would be called to strict account should he be the cause of any ill befalling her. After a little while he went back again and listened, but still he could hear nothing. After a moment of hesitation, he opened the door and went in.

By the radiance afforded by the fireflies, he saw at once that the room was empty. Even the food that he had left there was untouched. A hurried visit to all the other rooms on the floor failed to discover the object of his search. Really terrified, he sat down to consider. Suppose she had thrown herself down from the balcony, and was at that moment laying on the ground below, dashed to pieces! He had not the courage to go and investigate. For like most people who brag a great deal about themselves, the Wizard was an arrant coward. He fled back to his work, stopping not for food or rest, with the result that on the morning of the third day the sun shone brilliantly once more over Toyland.

A great notice was posted at the gate of the tower, announcing that the sun had been swallowed up by an enormous dragon known to science as the Ictotherium; that the Wizard had engaged him, single-handed, and by his magic arts had compelled him to disgorge his brilliant meal and flee the country.

The bulletin went on to state that the Weather Prophet had been carried away by the dragon. Prompted by curiosity, she had exposed herself on the high balcony at the top of the tower, contrary to the advice of her husband. The notice concluded with the announcement that there would be a purple twilight that afternoon, beginning promptly at five-thirty and advising that violets would be a suitable adornment for the afternoon tea tables.

Great was the grief expressed by everyone when the fate of the Wizard's pretty little wife became generally known, for she had been a general favorite. Indeed, public sorrow almost outweighed public joy, delighted as everyone was that the sun shone once more. The Wizard shut himself up in his tower and refused to see anyone, and the general supposition was that he was prostrated with grief. To tell the truth, his jumping-jacks were scouring the country to see if they could discover any trace whatsoever of his wife, while he himself was nearly wild with anxiety lest she should suddenly pop up at some unlucky moment and give the whole thing away.

Early that morning Sally had started for the tower, as she knew that a bulletin of some sort would be posted. The little girl was glad to see daylight once more and also to be able to take a good long walk, and she skipped along in the bright sunshine, occasionally giving a little jump for sheer joy. The period of the eclipse had been a tedious one for her, as she despised being shut in the house. So now she made very good time along the highway, and so thoroughly did she manage to interest herself in everything and everybody that before very long she found that she had lost her way.

Now, of course in Toyland it is not such a very serious thing to lose one's way, for as everybody knows, all roads lead to the palace. However, Sally was greatly surprised to suddenly find herself in a little strip of woods, with no road at all visible in any direction, and without even a path to show the way that others had taken. She recollected having left the highway to run after a queer looking figure that had attracted her attention and which had kept just beyond her, dodging along behind trees and bushes. And then, just as she had come up to it, had vanished as completely as though the ground had swallowed it. And then she had awakened to the fact that she was lost.

"How provoking!" she said crossly to herself. "If I ever get hold of the animal that coaxed me in here, I'll show him what's what."

She had spoken out loud, and at the same time shook her little fist in a decidedly threatening manner.

"I'm no animal, I'll have you know," exclaimed a shrill, squeaky voice so close to her that she jumped at least a foot in the air.

And whirling around, she beheld just at her elbow the queerest little man that she had ever laid eyes on. He was white all over, with floppy arms and legs, and a squatty, flabby body and a head that wobbled. And he had a general appearance of being all tied up in knots. It was the creature that she had been following to her own undoing, and for a moment she glared at it as if she would fall upon it tooth and nail. The very next she fell to laughing as if she would burst.



"Oh, I know you! You are just tied out of a handkerchief."

"Oh, I know you!" she exclaimed breathlessly. "You are just tied out of a handkerchief. I have often made a lot of you at home to hang over the chandelier with long strings. And when I pulled the strings you danced."

"I do not know where home may be," returned the Handkerchief Man crossly, "but I do know that you never pulled any strings as far as I am concerned." Then he added, peering anxiously about, "Have you happened to see my brother, the Doughnut Man? He came here yesterday to pick buttons which he sells to the people in town who are too lazy to come out and pick them for themselves."

"To pick buttons?" ejaculated Sally, and then she added severely, "I don't believe he ever found this place while the eclipse was going on. Nobody could have found anything, not even himself."

"That's just it; he lost himself. Nobody ever finds this place unless he loses himself. That makes it even, you know. You're lost, I'm lost, my brother is lost, and the Peppermint Stick is lost. Everybody is lost."

Sally felt unable to contradict him, although she wanted to badly enough. Therefore she demanded with some asperity:

"What is the Peppermint Stick? It sounds good to me."

"You mean *who* is the Peppermint Stick. Well, he was a candy cane in his youth and hung on a Christmas tree. Oh, you'll be sure to like him, he's so sweet."

"If I happen to see a doughnut and a candy cane anywhere between here and next Christmas, I shall eat them," declared Sally firmly.

She drew up her pink lips in a hungry grin, showing all her sharp little white teeth.

The effect of her words on the Handkerchief Man was entirely unexpected, for after gazing at her for a moment as if fascinated, he exclaimed feebly, "Alas, my brother!" then threw up his wabby arms and fell over in a dead faint.

"Now, what would anybody do with a thing like that?" exclaimed Sally.

Picking up the Handkerchief Man, she shook him vigorously, but as he refused to revive, while every bit of him flopped unpleasantly, she presently propped him up against a tree and started off by herself, resolved to investigate the queer bit of woods which nobody ever found without first losing himself.

"The very idea of a handkerchief behaving like that!" she said to herself as she trotted along, keeping an eye open for the button bush concerning which she had already heard. But no sign of it appeared, neither did she find herself any nearer to the road. On the contrary, she seemed to be getting deeper and deeper into the woods. The trees grew closer and closer together, while the bushes seemed thicker and thicker. At last it seemed that there was no longer even a little path between the dense growths and that if she wished to proceed further, she must push her way through. As she paused for a moment to consider, something small and very hard struck her smartly on the nose. This blow was followed up by another and another. Thoroughly astonished, she stopped and picked up one of the missiles that lay shining directly at her feet. Then she uttered a little exclamation of joy:

"The Button Bush!" she cried excitedly.

"Yes, the Button Bush," retorted a voice above her head, and the Bush shook itself again indignantly, sending a shower of the buttons of all sizes and descriptions pelting over the little girl.

"If you please," began Sally rather timidly, "if you please, have you seen the Doughnut Man anywhere about?"

Just as she spoke a queer looking figure came swiftly around from the other side of the bush. Sally saw that its body was composed of large, puffy doughnuts, while his head and limbs were formed of the same edibles in smaller sizes. It was almost staggering under the weight of a great basket of buttons that it was lugging along, while its round eyes, which consisted of two plump raisins, seemed popping out of its head with the exertion.

"He looks good to me. I wonder how he tastes," said Sally to herself, involuntarily taking a step forward. But the Doughnut Man, holding his basket of buttons firmly in front of himself as if it were a shield, advanced smiling and not at all as if he had any idea of being devoured.

"I beg your pardon, but did you happen to see the Peppermint Stick anywhere hereabouts?" he inquired politely.

"No, but I found the Handkerchief Man. He fainted," returned Sally promptly. "I couldn't bring him to and I was afraid to shake him any more for fear he would come untied, and then he would have been nothing but a plain handkerchief. So I propped him up against a tree and left him. No doubt he is all right by this time. Would you like to go back and see?"

"Oh, no," returned the other quickly. "You see, we are both lost, you and I, or we shouldn't be here at all. So what is the use of looking for that peevish chap? He has very little backbone anyway. Very little backbone," he repeated sadly, while a tear rolled down his crisp, fried cheek.

"I don't see what that has to do with it," began Sally. But her companion interrupted her with a great want of manners.

"Oh, nothing has anything to do with anything else here, because everything is lost, more or less. As soon as anything finds itself, it gets away. So will you and so will I and so will the Peppermint Stick."

"Bless my soul, how very curious! Are you quite sure that you are not all crazy instead of being all lost?" exclaimed Sally saucily.

"Maybe *you* are crazy, although I don't know what that means," replied the other sadly.

"Well, I can't stop to explain now. It would take too long," returned the child smartly, "but if you ever come across it, you'll know. Anyway, if you had your brother here now, you could mop up your tears with him," and as she spoke, she dexterously flipped away a large, round one that hung trembling on the very end of the Doughnut Man's stubby nose.

"There you go again! Really, it's very upsetting when one doesn't understand a thing you mean. Then there's the Button Bush. She's mad again because I came for more buttons. What good are buttons on a bush, anyway? They've got to be picked while they're ripe or else they all go to seed. Really, it's very unreasonable."

"I suppose you have a good trade in buttons," suggested the little girl politely. "But who, pray, is the Peppermint Stick? Is he good to e—" She caught herself hastily, somehow feeling that the Doughnut Man would be displeased by what she had been on the verge of saying. Something under her apron warned her that it must be near lunch time, for her breakfast had been but a light one, and then she was *very* fond of peppermint.

"Yes, indeed, I have a very good trade," replied the Doughnut Man. "Only it would be more congenial if the Button Bush would quit giving herself such ridiculous airs. As for the Peppermint Stick, he isn't good for anything in particular as far as I know. Long ago he was a cane and was hooked on the bough of a Christmas tree. Nobody ate him and he had a bad fracture, the result of being dropped. So in the course of time, he drifted here and the Gloo-Gloos fixed him up. The only thing I don't like about him is that he is striped. Now I simply abominate stripes, although I

adore polka dots. But tastes differ. Perhaps you like stripes?"

"I don't mind them at all in peppermint," replied Sally. "And I would show him that I didn't if I only could get my teeth into him," she added to herself.

"Well, I suppose we had better try to find our way out of this," said the other after a short silence. He was evidently anxious to get back to town with his stock in trade and Sally was growing extremely hungry. Accordingly, the two started forth and after wandering along for some time at length discovered a little beaten track which gradually broadened until it finally became a footpath.

This, they felt quite sure, would conduct them to their desired destination. As they were hurrying along, they suddenly came upon a little cottage so completely hidden among the trees that it was scarcely discernible.

"Ah, now I know where we are! This cottage belongs to an old Codfish. He makes his living by weighing people at so much apiece."

"By weighing people?" cried Sally in amazement. "Does anybody ever come here?"

"Nobody," replied the other promptly. "But then he has the *scales*, and of course feels as if he should use them."

"Very scrupulous, I'm sure," said Sally gravely. She strained her eyes, hoping to catch a glimpse of the conscientious Codfish. But everything about the tiny cottage was tightly closed, and an air of desertion hung about the place. Over the door hung a small sign on which was inscribed in tall letters:

PEOPLE WEIGHED HERE.
C. FISH.

and below this was the picture of a Codfish standing by a pair of scales, while a crowd of people were advancing in the foreground, all apparently anxious to avail themselves of the opportunity.



As Sally and the Doughnut Man came abreast of the sign, the child was almost paralyzed with amazement to see the Codfish nimbly hop off, followed by the scales and all the people, and come running briskly towards them.

"I've stood up there vegetating long enough," cried the Codfish. "And I'm actually perishing for want of a swim. No one wants to be weighed anyhow. Why should they?"

He shot out the question with so impressive, not to say ferocious a manner that nobody cared to answer. Only one member of the crowd that had hopped off the sign protested feebly that he had been waiting for a long time. However, as nobody paid any attention to him, he soon relapsed into silence.

"If you know the way out of these woods, for goodness' sake show us," exclaimed the Doughnut Man.

To which the Codfish responded by beginning to sing in a very loud voice:

"The elephant sat on the railroad track,
By the light, by the light, by the light of the moon,
Picking his teeth with a baseball bat,
By the light, by the light of the moon."

"I don't see what that has to do with it," exclaimed Sally impatiently. Then turning to the Doughnut Man, she added severely, "You said just now that you knew where we were, and you don't at all."

"Oh, to be sure I do, and so do you. We are right opposite the Codfish's house," retorted the other. Then he added thoughtfully, "What seems so very queer to me is that we haven't come across the Peppermint Stick."

As nobody cared a snap about the Peppermint Stick and as Sally felt that there was no use in arguing with any of them, she suggested that they should make a move, and herself taking the lead, they started forth in Indian file.

"Idiots!" muttered the little girl to herself. "To think that they've lived here all their lives and don't know anything about the place!"

She hurried along at such a brisk pace that the others found some difficulty to keep up, especially the Doughnut Man, burdened as he was by his huge basket of buttons. After they had gone a mile or so, the little girl suddenly uttered a cry of joy, for she beheld an opening in the trees and saw that a few steps would bring them to the edge of the wood. Upon emerging from

the dense shadows of the trees, they found that it was already twilight and Sally no longer wondered at her ravenous appetite.

Once on the highroad, it was easy enough to find the way home, and hither she hastened, feeling glad enough when she beheld the lights of the Walking House through the shadows.

The Weather Prophet ran to meet her, her face sparkling with excitement.

“The King and Queen have been here,” she cried, “and they were so delighted to find that I was not devoured by a horrid dragon that they are going to take me to live with them at the palace, and build a beautiful crystal tower for my use exclusively.”

She then told Sally of the Wizard’s bulletin and added that, as he had humbly begged her pardon and promised never to interfere with her again, she had not betrayed him to the King and Queen.

“I guess that was the best thing to do,” said Sally, as she sat down to a substantial supper. “Nobody else understood about the sun and a perpetual eclipse would have been perfectly awful.”

“Quite so,” returned the Weather Prophet, and after a little, Sally having related the day’s adventures, they all went to bed.

Transcriber’s Note:

Obvious punctuation errors were corrected.

Page 139, “principal” changed to “principle” (principle that all roads)

Page 149, “hankerchief” changed to “handkerchief” (out of a handkerchief)

Page 159, “arguin” changed to “arguing” (in arguing with any of)

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK A LITTLE MAID IN TOYLAND ***

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