

Prince Lazybones and Other Stories eBook

Prince Lazybones and Other Stories

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Contents

Prince Lazybones and Other Stories eBook.....	1
Contents.....	2
Table of Contents.....	6
Page 1.....	7
Page 2.....	8
Page 3.....	10
Page 4.....	12
Page 5.....	14
Page 6.....	16
Page 7.....	18
Page 8.....	20
Page 9.....	21
Page 10.....	23
Page 11.....	25
Page 12.....	27
Page 13.....	29
Page 14.....	31
Page 15.....	33
Page 16.....	35
Page 17.....	37
Page 18.....	38
Page 19.....	40
Page 20.....	42
Page 21.....	44
Page 22.....	46



[Page 23.....48](#)

[Page 24.....50](#)

[Page 25.....52](#)

[Page 26.....54](#)

[Page 27.....56](#)

[Page 28.....58](#)

[Page 29.....60](#)

[Page 30.....62](#)

[Page 31.....64](#)

[Page 32.....66](#)

[Page 33.....68](#)

[Page 34.....70](#)

[Page 35.....72](#)

[Page 36.....74](#)

[Page 37.....76](#)

[Page 38.....78](#)

[Page 39.....80](#)

[Page 40.....82](#)

[Page 41.....84](#)

[Page 42.....86](#)

[Page 43.....88](#)

[Page 44.....90](#)

[Page 45.....92](#)

[Page 46.....94](#)

[Page 47.....96](#)

[Page 48.....98](#)



[Page 49..... 100](#)

[Page 50..... 101](#)

[Page 51..... 103](#)

[Page 52..... 104](#)

[Page 53..... 106](#)

[Page 54..... 108](#)

[Page 55..... 110](#)

[Page 56..... 112](#)

[Page 57..... 114](#)

[Page 58..... 116](#)

[Page 59..... 118](#)

[Page 60..... 120](#)

[Page 61..... 122](#)

[Page 62..... 124](#)

[Page 63..... 126](#)

[Page 64..... 127](#)

[Page 65..... 129](#)

[Page 66..... 131](#)

[Page 67..... 133](#)

[Page 68..... 135](#)

[Page 69..... 137](#)

[Page 70..... 139](#)

[Page 71..... 141](#)

[Page 72..... 143](#)

[Page 73..... 145](#)

[Page 74..... 147](#)



[Page 75..... 149](#)

[Page 76..... 151](#)

[Page 77..... 152](#)

[Page 78..... 154](#)

[Page 79..... 156](#)

[Page 80..... 158](#)

[Page 81..... 160](#)

[Page 82..... 161](#)

[Page 83..... 162](#)

[Page 84..... 164](#)

[Page 85..... 165](#)

[Page 86..... 166](#)

[Page 87..... 168](#)

[Page 88..... 170](#)

[Page 89..... 172](#)

[Page 90..... 174](#)



Table of Contents

Section	Page
Start of eBook	1
CHAPTER I	1
CHAPTER II	3
CHAPTER III	6
CHAPTER IV	9
CHAPTER V	12
CHAPTER VI	15
CHAPTER VII	18
CHAPTER VIII	20
CHAPTER IX	23
PAZ'S STORY	24
CHAPTER X	26
PAZ'S SECOND STORY	27
CHAPTER XI	30
PHIL'S FAIRIES	34
CHAPTER I	34
CHAPTER II	36
CHAPTER III	40
CHAPTER IV	43
CHAPTER V	45
CHAPTER VI	47
CHAPTER VII	52
CHAPTER VIII	54
CHAPTER IX	57
CHAPTER X	59
CHAPTER XI	62
CHAPTER XII	65
CHAPTER XIII	69
CHAPTER XIV	72
FLORIO AND FLORELLA	74
CHAPTER I	74
CHAPTER II	77
CHAPTER III	80
BOREAS BLUSTER'S CHRISTMAS PRESENT	83
CHAPTER I	84
CHAPTER II	87
CHAPTER III	88



Page 1

CHAPTER I

Of all the illustrious families who have shone like gems upon the earth's surface, none have been more distinguished in their way than the Lazybones family; and were I so disposed I might recount their virtues and trace their talents from a long-forgotten period. But interesting as the study might prove, it would be a difficult task, and the attention I crave for Prince Leo would be spent on his ancestors.

Of princely blood and proud birth, Leo was a youth most simple-minded. He knew that much was expected of him, and that he was destined to rule; yet so easily was he satisfied that his greatest happiness was to lie all day basking in the sun or dawdling through his father's park with his dog at his heels, the heels themselves in a very down-trodden state of humility, watching with languid gaze the movements of the world about him.

And the world just where he lived was very beautiful. On a fertile plain, surrounded by mountain-peaks of great height, threaded by silver streams, and so well watered that its vegetation was almost tropical, was the estate of Leo's father, Prince Morpheus Lazybones. It had been in the family for ages, and was so rich in timber and mineral resources that none of its owners had cared to cultivate the land. Timber was cut sparingly, however, because the market for it was too distant, and the minerals remained in their native beds for much the same reason.

The family thrived, notwithstanding, and were well supplied with all manner of delicacies, for the servants were many, and there was never a lack of corn or wine.

Leo was most fair to see. To be sure, his drooping lids half concealed his azure eyes, and his golden locks sometimes hid his snowy forehead; but his smile was charming; his face had such an expression of calm satisfaction, such a patient tranquillity, that his smile was as the sudden sunshine on a placid lake. It was the smile of the family, an inherited feature, like the blue hood of a Spanish Don. And then it was given so freely: the beggar would have preferred it to be accompanied with the jingle of a coin, but as the coin never came and the smile did, he tried to think that it warmed his heart, though his wallet went empty.

There were those who said a smile cost nothing, else it would not have been bestowed. It had a peculiarity of its own which these same critics also objected to—it nearly always ended in a yawn.

But Leo heard none of these ill-natured remarks, and, if he had, would not have minded them any more than he did the burs which clung to his garments as he rambled through the woods. Poor fellow! he would gladly have shared his coppers with a beggar, but he had none to share.



Page 2

Morpheus Lazybones never seemed to think his son required anything; so long as the boy made no demands, surely nothing could be wanting, and every one knew *he* was not equal to any exertion. For years he had lived the life of an invalid, shut up in his room most of the time, venturing from it only in the sunniest weather, and then with great caution. He had no particular malady except that he was a poet, but surely that was burden enough. To have to endure the common sights and sounds of this earth when one is composing poetry is indeed a trying and troublesome thing. So Morpheus found it, and therefore he frequently stayed in bed, and allowed his fancy to rove at its own sweet will.

They lived in what had been a monastery. There had been houses and farms on the Lazybones property, but the money not being forthcoming for repairs, they had been each in turn left for another in better condition, until the monastery—what was left of it—with its solidly built walls, offered what seemed to be a permanent home.

Here Morpheus lined a cell with tapestries and books, and wrote his sonnets. Here Leo slept and ate, and housed his dogs. The servants grumbled at the damp and mould, but made the chimneys roar with blazing logs, and held many a merry carousal where the old monks had prayed and fasted. The more devout ones rebuked these proceedings, and said they were enough to provoke a visit from the Evil One; but as yet the warning had no effect, as the revels went on as usual.

Besides being a poet, Morpheus was conducting Leo's education. Undertaken in the common way, this might have interfered with the delicate modes of thought required for the production of poems, but the Lazybones were never without ingenuity. Morpheus so arranged matters that Leo could study without damage to his father's poems. The books were marked for a month's study, and Leo's recitations consisted of a written essay which was to comprise all the knowledge acquired in that time. Thus writing and spelling were included, and made to do duty for the higher flights of his mind.

I do not tell how often Leo made his returns, neither do I mention how many papers Morpheus found no time to examine, but I may urge that Leo's out-door exercise demanded much attention, and that his father's excursions in Dream-land were equally exacting. But Leo, though he hated books, did not hate information. He knew every feathered thing by name as far as he could see it. He knew every oak and pine and fir and nut tree as a familiar friend. He knew every rivulet, every ravine, every rabbit-burrow. The streams seemed to him as melodious as the song-birds, and the winds had voices. He knew where to find the first blossom of spring and the latest of autumn, the ripest fruit and most abundant vines. He could tell just where the nests were and the number of eggs, whether of the robin or the waterfowl. He knew the sunniest bank and shadiest dell, the smoothest path, with its carpet of pine-needles and fringe of fern, or the roughest crag and darkest abyss. He could read the clouds like an open page, and predict fine weather or the coming storm. He knew where the deer couched and

where they came to drink, and when the fawns would leave their mothers, and no trout was too cunning for him.



Page 3

But he did not know the use of a rifle. He had all sorts of lures for the creatures he wanted to tame, but no ways of killing them. For why should he kill them? There was always food enough; he was seldom hungry, and these were his friends. He liked to look them in the eyes; he liked to win them to him, soothe their fears if they had any, and then watch their pretty joy when their liberty was regained. And how could he have done this if their blood had been upon his hands? How could he have quieted the throbbing little hearts if murder had been in his own?

Thus Leo spent his time, delightfully and innocently. If life were only a summer's day! But already winter was approaching. Discontent was brewing on the estate. Taxes were unpaid; tenants were grumbling at high rents; laborers were threatening and their wives complaining.

Frequently, in the very midst of composing a poem, Morpheus would be called to adjust a difficulty, settle a dispute, or revise an account. This so disturbed his delicate nerves that illness, or the appearance of it, was sure to follow. He would then take to his bed, refuse all but a little spiced wine, allowing no coarse food to pass his lips, and strive to remember the beautiful words of which he had intended to make verses; but, alas! the words had flown, as well as the ideas which had suggested them, like so many giddy little butterflies.

CHAPTER II

The monastery had been a grand old pile in its day; it was not one simple building, but a cluster of habitations which had grown with the growth and resources of the order which founded it. Like all feudal structures it had its means of defence—its moat and drawbridge, its tower of observation, and in its heavy gates and thick walls loop-holes and embrasures for weapons.

But grass grew now in the moat and birds nested in the embrasures, while Leo's dogs bounded through chapel and refectory and cloister, parts of the latter being converted into a stable.

Many of the walls had tumbled in hopeless confusion, but those of the buildings yet in use had carved buttresses and mullioned windows, on which much skill had been displayed.

Leo knew, or thought he knew, every nook and cranny of his home, for when it rained, or heavy fogs hung threateningly about, his rambles were confined to the various quarters of the monastery.

On such days the stone floors and bare walls were very inhospitable, but he would sometimes find a new passage to loiter in or a window-ledge to loll over and look from



as he watched the rain drip from the carved nose of an ugly old monk whose head adorned the water-spout.

I don't know whether it ever occurred to Leo that this world is a busy one. The very persistence of the pouring rain might have suggested it, as well as the beehives down in the kitchen court, where some of his many friends were storing their winter provision, for bees as well as birds were familiar to him; but he had the true Lazybones instinct of not following a thought too far, and so he looked and lolled and yawned, wishing for fine weather, for a new lining to his ragged old coat, or soles to his slipshod shoes, but never once supposing that any effort of his own could gain them.



Page 4

When it was cold the kitchen was apt to be his resort. It was a long and low apartment on the ground-floor, and its wide fireplace, with stone settle beside the hooks and cranes for pots and kettles, had doubtless been as cheery a corner for the old monks to warm their toes after a foraging expedition as it was for Leo, who liked to smell the savory stews.

On the day of which I write the rain had fallen incessantly, and Leo had been more than usually disturbed by it, for cold and dreary though it was, the servants had turned him out of the kitchen. They would not have him there.

"Idle, worthless fellow!" said the cook; "he lolls about as a spy upon us, to repeat to the master every word he hears."

This was quite untrue and unjust, for Leo rarely conversed with his father, and seldom saw him since Morpheus took his meals as well as his woes to bed with him, as he had done at the present moment.

But the household was in revolt; the uneasiness from outside had crept within, and there was quarrelling among the servants.

"What shall I do?" said Leo to himself. "The rain is too heavy, or I would go out in it; but I have no place to get dry when I become soaked, and I can't go to bed in the daytime, as my father does. I wonder what he'd say if I went to him? Probably this: 'You have given wings to the finest of rhymes, and spoiled the turn of an exquisite verse; now, sir, what atonement can you make for so great an injury? It's the world's loss, remember.' That's the way it always is when I disturb him. Heigh-ho! what a dull day!"

"A very dull day indeed, your highness."

Leo started, his yawn ending abruptly, and he turned more quickly than he had ever done in his life towards the sound which saluted him. Surely he had been alone. Who ever came to this corridor? He looked up and down its dingy length, but saw no one. He must have been mistaken. Then he listened. The wind swept wailing through its accustomed approaches; shutters and windows shook with the blast, but no footfall was to be heard. He turned to the diamond-paned lattice, and again watched the drops trickling from the nose of the water-spout. No one had spoken. Again he yawned prodigiously, but brought his jaws together with a snap which might have damaged his teeth; for, to his great surprise, a voice said,

"I think I could amuse you."

"And pray who are you?" asked Leo, feeling very queer, and as if he were talking to himself.

"That is of little consequence, so long as I do what I have proposed," was the reply.



“Very true,” said Leo; “but I never before heard of a ghost in the daytime.”

“I am no ghost, your highness; I’d scorn to be such a useless thing.”

“What are you, then, and where are you?”

“You will find out what I am after a while; and as to where I am, why, I am here beside you. Do you suppose you human beings have all the world to yourselves?”



Page 5

“Not quite, to be sure; the birds and beasts have their share. But one can see them.”

“So could you see me if your vision were not imperfect. How about all the living things you swallow every time you drink?”

“I have heard of something of the kind, but it was too much trouble to understand it.”

“Poor boy! It’s a pity some old ghost of a monk could not interest himself in your education; but, as I said before, ghosts are absurdly useless, except to scare people whose consciences are bad, and nothing more is needed to make me doubt their existence than the fact of your living here in what should be their stronghold, and they never raise hand or foot to help you. It’s quite in keeping with their ridiculous pretensions. Believe in ghosts? No, I never did, and I never will.”

The voice, small and weak though it was, grew quite angry in tone, and it seemed to Leo as if it were accompanied by the stamp of a foot; but he saw nothing, not so much as a spider crawling over the stone corridor.

It was very peculiar. He pinched himself to see if he was awake. Yes, wide-awake, no doubt of that; besides, he seldom dreamed—indeed, never, unless his foot had slipped in climbing a crag to peep into a nest, when the fall was sometimes repeated in his sleep. Who was this speaking to him? As if in answer to his thoughts, the voice went on:

“So far from being a good-for-nothing old ghost, I am one of the founders of the S.P.C.C., a very old society—much older than people of the present day imagine.”

Leo was quite ashamed to be so ignorant, but he ventured to ask,

“What is the S.P.C.C.?”

“Is it possible you have never heard of it?”

“Never,” replied Leo, still feeling as if he were talking to the walls.

There was a queer little gurgling “Ha! ha!” which was at once suppressed.

“Well, how could you know away off in this remote region?”

“I am sure I don’t understand you at all,” said Leo.

“No, I see you don’t; and it’s by no means remarkable. You live so entirely alone, and are so wretchedly neglected, that it is a wonder you know anything.”



Leo began to be angry, but it was too much of an effort; besides, what was there to be angry at—a voice? So he remained sulkily silent until the voice resumed, in a changed tone:

“I beg your highness’s pardon; I quite forgot myself. I am very apt to do that when I am much interested; it is a great fault, for I appreciate fine manners. But to explain. In the faraway cities where people live like ants in an ant-hill, all crowded together, there is often much cruelty and oppression, as well as vice and poverty. Now for this state of things they have laws and punishments, means of redress; but they relate principally to grown people’s affairs; so the kind-hearted ones, noticing that little children are often in need of pity and care and protection, have an association called the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. It is as old as the hills, but they think it a modern invention. I am one of the original founders of that society, little as they know me; but human beings are so vain.”

Page 6

“Indeed!” said Leo, lazily; he was already tired of the whole matter.

“Yes, vain and pretentious. Look at your father and his poems; he thinks his doggerel verses a mark of genius.”

“What has my father done to you that you attack him so rudely?” asked Leo, angrily.

“Ah! you are aroused at last. I am glad. What has your father *not* done, you had better ask. But I acknowledge that I am rude, and I won’t say more than just this: Your father has failed to prepare you for your duties. Trouble is coming, and how are you to meet it?”

“Don’t know, and don’t care,” came out with characteristic Lazybones indifference.

“Ah! my dear Prince, do not speak so; it is quite time you knew and cared. Do you study geography?”

“Sometimes.”

“All surface work, I suppose?”

“Probably.”

“Now my plan of study comprehends an interior view of the earth’s formation.”

Leo gave a tremendous yawn, and said,

“Oh, please don’t bother any more; I am awfully tired.”

“So I should think. Well, do you want to be amused?”

“No; I don’t want anything.”

“Come with me, then.”

“Where?”

“No matter where; just do as I bid you.”

“How can I, when I don’t even see you?”

“True. It will be necessary to anoint your eyes; shall I do it?”

“Just as you please.”



Leo felt a little pressure forcing down his eyelids, and the pouring of a drop of cool liquid on each.

When he opened his eyes again there stood before him the quaintest, queerest being he had ever beheld.

CHAPTER III

Leo had heard of kobolds and gnomes and elves, but in all his wanderings over the Lazybones estate in the brightness of noon, the dewy dawn, or dusky eve, or later when the moon bathed every shrub in silver, he had never so much as caught a glimpse of fairy folk.

Here, however, was a real elf—a most peculiar person. He was extremely small, thin, and wiry, about two and a half inches high, and his costume a cross between that of a student or professor and that of a miner, for on his bushy head was a miner's cap with a lantern, and on his back was a student's gown, while his thin legs were incased in black silk stockings, and his feet in rough hobnailed boots. Slung over one shoulder was a leather bag, and in his hand was a curious sort of a tool.

"The Master Professor Knops has the honor of saluting Prince Leo Lazybones," was the way in which this extraordinary person introduced himself, making at the same time a deep bow and a military salute, but with no raising of the cap from which the little lantern gleamed with a bright blue flame. Leo returned the salutation with a lazy grace, smiling curiously upon the queer little object before him, who proceeded to say:

Page 7

“And now let us go; I lead—you follow.”

“Forward, then,” responded Leo, rising from his lounging attitude.

The elf went nimbly down the corridor, as if accustomed to it, and paused before a door which led to a flight of stone steps.

“Are you going down cellar?” asked Leo, who knew where the stairs led.

“I am,” replied Knops; “but these huge doors and heavy hinges bother me. Be so good as to open and close them for me. By-the-way, you may get hungry; shall we find food down here?”

“Perhaps so,” said Leo, following, and doing as requested.

They went down step after step, and it was wonderful how much light came from that little blue flame.

On skipped the elf, his gown puffing out, his nailed boots pattering over the stones, and Leo found himself quite breathless when they reached the cellar, so unused was he to any rapidity of movement.

“Suppose we meet some one,” said Leo.

“And what have we to fear if we do? No one can see me, and if you are afraid of a scullion or house-maid you are not the Prince I take you for. Tut! tut! don’t be afraid—come on.”

The cellar was damp, and great curtains of cobwebs, like gray lace, fell over the empty bins and wine-vaults. From a heap of winter vegetables Leo filled his pockets with apples and turnips.

They came at last to a door which Leo remembered having opened once, but finding that it led to a passage which was dark, dismal, and unused, he had not cared to explore it. He now followed the elf through it, but not without misgivings, for as he groped along he stepped on a round object which, to his horror when the little blue flame of the elf’s lantern revealed its empty sockets and grinning jaws, proved to be a skull.

Knops turned with a smile when he saw Leo’s agitation, and said, blandly,

“You are not interested in this form of natural history, I see.” Then taking up the skull, he placed it in a crevice of the wall, saying, “Here is another proof that there are no ghosts about. Do you think any one would be so careless of his knowledge-box as to leave it



to be kicked around in that way? Oh, those old monks were miserable house-keepers; the idea of stowing away their skeletons so near their kitchen closets!”

Leo smiled faintly, and went on after Knops, who every once in a while gave a tap on the walls with his tool, starting the echoes.

“There!” said he, “do you hear that? This is the way we make old houses haunted. I don’t do it for fun, as do the elves of folly. I have a sensible purpose; but they like nothing better than to frighten people, and so they make these noises at all hours, and get up reports that a house is bewitched; but even a common insect like the cricket can do that, human beings are such ridiculous cowards.”

Leo made an effort to assume the courage which he did not feel, and asked his guide how much farther he intended to lead him.



Page 8

“Now,” said Knops, stopping, and putting on an air of intense gravity, as if he were about to deliver a lecture, “I must beg you, my dear Prince, to place perfect confidence in me. I promised not to harm you. As a member of the S.P.C.C., I am pledged to protect you; besides, you have no idea how much I am interested in you; this expedition has been planned entirely for your benefit. Trust me, then, and give yourself entirely up to my control. Ask as many questions as you wish, provided they are useful ones. Just say, without ceremony, ‘Knops, why is this?’ or ‘Knops, what is that?’ and I, in return, if you will be so good as to allow me, will say, frankly, ‘Leo, this is this,’ or ‘that is that.’ But here is the entrance to our habitations. You will have to stoop a little.” Striking again with his tool, a panel slid open in the wall, through which they crept.

It was still dark, but the air had changed greatly; instead of the musty dampness of a vault, there was a soft warmth, which was fragrant and spicy, and a beam as of moonlight began to illuminate the passage, which broadened until they stood at its termination, when Leo found himself on a ledge or gallery of rock, which was but one of many in the vast cavern which opened before them.

On its floor was burning an immense bonfire, which flashed and flamed, and around which was a bevy of dwarfs, shovelling on fuel from huge heaps of sandal-wood. Every gallery swarmed with elves and dwarfs in all sorts of odd costumes, but all bore little lanterns in their caps, and tools in their hands. Some were hammering at great boulders, others with picks were working in passages similar to the one Leo had left, and others seemed to be turning lathes, sharpening knives, cutting and polishing heaps of brilliant stones. Every once in a while a party of queer little creatures much smaller than Knops would trundle in wheelbarrows full of rough pebbles, and dumping them down before those employed in cutting and polishing, would be off again in a jiffy for another load.

Leo was so astonished that he stood perfectly silent, gazing now at the flashing fire which reflected from all sides of the brilliant quartz of the cavern, and now at the tier upon tier of galleries full of busy little people.

“This is one of our workshops,” said Knops, “but not the most important. Now that you have rested a moment I will take you to that.”

Line upon line of red and green in rubies and emeralds were at the base of the grotto, and then he found that the emeralds sprang up into long grasses, and the rubies into flaming roses, and on slender spears were lilies of pearls and daisies of diamonds, and blending with these were vines of honeysuckle and strawberries, gleaming with sapphires and topaz and amethysts, wreathing and flashing up to a ceiling of lapis lazuli blue as a June sky. The floor was a mosaic of turquoise forget-me-nots on a turf of Egyptian jasper.

Page 9

When Leo had looked at all this bewildering beauty, Knops pushed open the mica door again, and they began to traverse the galleries of the rock cavern. He was surprised that none of the elves noticed him, nor even looked at him, and he asked Knops the reason.

“I have rendered you invisible to them, my dear Leo, for two reasons: one is that you may be undisturbed in your examination of their work, and the other is that they may not be interrupted; for of course your presence would be a source of lively interest to them, and yet any stoppage of work would necessitate punishment.”

“Punishment?” repeated Leo, questioningly.

“Oh yes; most of our hardest workers are elves of mischief and it is only by keeping them thus constantly employed that we prevent disorder. You have no idea what pranks they play.”

“And what is your authority among them?” asked Leo.

“I am one of our King’s cabinet; my title is Master Professor. My learning qualifies me to decide upon the plans of work, where to search for precious stones, and how best to prepare them for man’s finding. Nothing is more amusing than the wonder and surprise men exhibit at what they consider their discoveries of minerals and gems, when for ages we have been arranging them for their clumsy hands.”

“How do you do this?”

“Ah! it’s a long story. Here you see the result of our long searches, and were it not for the processes we conduct none of these stones would ever be found. We can penetrate where man has never been; we can construct what man has in vain tried to do. Come with me to our diamond-room: we do not make many, preferring to find them; but as an interesting scientific experiment we have always liked to test our ability.”

So saying, Knops turned down a little lane lighted by what looked like small globes of white fire.

“Electric light,” said Knops, with a gesture of disdain, as he saw Leo blinking with wonder—“the commonest sort of a blaze; and yet men have nearly addled their brains over it, while we made it boil our kettles. It’s the simplest and cheapest fuel one can have; but having utilized it so long, I am on the lookout for something new. Here, this is the way;” and again he opened a mica door.



CHAPTER IV

Blow-pipes and retorts, crucibles and jars, porcelain and glass vessels, of all odd sorts and shapes, confronted them on tables and shelves, and seated before small furnaces, with gauze protectors for their faces and metal ones for their knees, and queer little rubber gloves for their hands, were the very queerest of all the elves Leo had yet seen. They were thinner and much less muscular than the miners and stone-polishers, with eyes too large and legs too small for their bodies, so that they resembled nothing so much as spiders.

“See how in the pursuit of the beautiful one can lose all beauty,” said Knops, confidentially.



Page 10

“How hot it is here!” said Leo, gasping for breath.

“Yes, my dear fellow, there’s no doubt of that; the heat is tremendous. Now some of your thermometers go no higher than one hundred and thirty, while ours can ascend to three and four hundred; that is, for the common air of our dwellings. Of course the heat demanded by many of our experiments is practically incalculable; for instance—”

“Oh, get me out of this!” entreated Leo.

“Here, step into this niche, put your mouth to this opening”—and Knops pointed to one of many silver tubes which projected near them—“now breathe. Is not that refreshing?”

“Yes,” said Leo, reviving, as he took a long draught of fresh cool air. “How do your people endure such heat?”

“They are used to it; besides, they can come to these little tubes, as you have done, whenever they please.”

“Where does this air come from?”

“It is pure oxygen; we manufacture it, and here is a lump of pure carbon which we also manufacture,” and he laid in Leo’s hand what looked like a drop of dew. It was a diamond of exquisite lustre.

As Leo looked with surprise and admiration at it, an elf came staggering up to the niche. After breathing the oxygen he turned to Knops with a heart-rending cry.

“I have lost it—lost it, Master Knops.”

“Lost what, Paz?”

“The finest stone I ever made, and I have been years at it.”

“How did that happen?”

“Burned it too long—look!” and he produced in his spidery hand a small mass of charcoal.

“Never mind, Paz; better luck next time,” said Knops, kindly.

“No, I am no longer fit for the profession; such a mistake is inexcusable. I cannot hold up my head among the others. I meant that diamond for our King’s tiara or the Queen’s necklace—bah! Please, Master Professor, put me among the miners, or take me for your valet. I care not what I do.”



“You are depressed just now; wait awhile.”

“No, I must go. I have broken my crucible and put out my furnace. I will not stay to be scorned.”

“Come with me, then, and I will see what I can do for you.”

“He may be useful to us,” said Knops to Leo, adding, “we never allow these diamonds to be put in the quartz beds; they are all reserved for our own particular uses. It takes so long a time to make them that only elves of great patience and a certain quiet habit of mind are trained to the task. Look!”

He pointed towards what appeared to be a glittering cobweb hanging from a projection on the wall. It was composed of silver wires, on which were strung numbers of small but most exquisite gems, each of which sparkled and flashed with its imprisoned light.

“In the same way,” he resumed, “all the pearls we use are of our own cultivation, if I may use the term. We secure the oysters and insert small objects within the shells, generally a seed-pearl of insignificant size, leaving it to be worked upon by the living fish; when enough time for the incrustation has elapsed we find our pearls grown to a remarkable size, of rarest beauty and value. These processes are not unknown to man, but men are so clumsy that they seldom succeed in perfecting them.”



Page 11

Leo by this time was quite exhausted both by what he had seen and by what he had heard, and he begged Knops to allow him to rest.

“Certainly, certainly, my dear,” said Knops. “Pardon me for wearying you. I am more scientific than hospitable. Come to our sleeping apartment. I think I shall allow Paz to see you, for, as he is so unhappy, it will divert him to serve you while you remain with us, and perhaps, too, he can suggest something suitable for your food. I ought to have thought of this before.”

Leo had, with three or four bites, disposed of an apple, and had already begun on a turnip, when Knops, giving Paz a peculiar sign, the spidery little fellow reached up and snatched the turnip from Leo’s hand.

“What’s the matter now?” asked Leo, too tired to regain it, easily as he could have done so.

“I can’t see anybody eat such wretched stuff as that; wait till I cook it,” said Paz.

“Well, Paz, I am glad you can help me out of my difficulty,” said Knops. “I really am puzzled what to do for Prince Leo’s hunger. My breakfast is a wren’s egg; for dinner, a sardine with a slice of mushroom is enough for four of us; for supper, a pickled mouse tongue. How long could you live on such fare, Leo?”

“Not long, I fear.”

“So I supposed. Well, here is the dormitory; by pushing up a dozen or more beds, you can stretch out awhile. Meanwhile I can attend to some professional duties, after I have despatched Paz for your food. What are you going to do with that turnip, Paz?”

“An elf who can make diamonds from charcoal can perhaps produce beefsteak from a turnip,” said Leo.

“Ah! don’t remind me of my bitter humiliation, kind sir,” said Paz, in a sad tone. “I will do what I can for you. Do you like soup?”

“Immensely.”

“And roast quail?”

“Delicious!”

“Apple tart?”

“Nothing better.”



“Adieu, then, for an hour.”

Knops too departed, leaving Leo to look about him, with curious eyes, upon rows of little beds, each with a scarlet blanket, and each having its pitcher and basin conveniently at hand. But he soon was fast asleep.

While all this was happening to Leo, at the monastery there was great confusion. The servants had gone in a body to Prince Morpheus’s bedroom to demand their wages. With tearful eyes and wailing voice he had protested that he had no money, that his life was hanging by a thread, and that his brain was on fire. They loudly urged their claims, declaring they would instantly leave the premises unless they were paid. As they could not get a satisfactory reply from their master, who hid his eyes at the sight of their angry faces, and put his fingers in his ears to keep out their noisy voices, they concluded to go; so, packing their boxes and bags, and pressing the mules and oxen into their service, they one by one went off to the nearest village.

Page 12

One old woman, who had never known any other home, alone remained, and when the storm subsided and the house was quiet, Morpheus, being hungry, crawled down to the kitchen fire to find her boiling porridge.

“Where is my son?” asked Morpheus.

The old woman was deaf, and only muttered, “Gone—all gone.”

“Alas! and has my son also deserted his father?” cried Morpheus.

The old woman nodded, partly with the palsy, and partly because she knew of nothing to say. Morpheus smote his forehead with a tragic gesture, and allowed himself to fall—gently—upon the floor. When he had remained in an apparent swoon long enough he was revived by some hot porridge being poured down his throat, and his hair and hands sprinkled with vinegar. Rousing himself as if with great effort, but really with great ease, he stood up, and finding the kitchen warmer than his cell, concluded to remain there; but the old woman was too stiff with rheumatism to wait upon him, so he had to ladle out his own portion of porridge, get his books and candle for himself, and finally bring in some fagots for the fire.

When he sat down to study he found himself in a more cheerful mood than he had been in for many a day, though he could not help wondering what had become of Leo. As he went on thinking where the boy could be he was inspired to write what he called a sonnet upon the subject. Here it is:

“My boy has fled his father’s home,
No more he treads these halls;
In vain my voice invokes his name,
In vain my tears, my calls.
The night winds sigh, the owlets cry,
The moon’s pale light appears,
The stars are shivering in the sky—
I tremble at my fears.
Has then the Knight of Shadowy Dread
My Leo forced away
From his fond parent’s loving heart
In Death’s grim halls astray?
I bow reluctant to my fate;
’Tis mine to weep and mine to wait!”

He counted the lines over carefully; the eighth and tenth seemed short, but it scanned after a fashion. On the whole it suited him, and was rather better done than many of his verses, so with soothed nerves he sought his pillow.



The old woman had slumbered all the evening in her chair. Indeed her snoring had been even and regular enough to act as a measure in marking the time for the musical cadences of the sonnet.

Morpheus, having a pretty good appetite, ate some bread and cheese and drank some ale before retiring.

CHAPTER V

Leo was awakened by being rudely jostled about and tumbled upon the floor. When he opened his eyes the cause was apparent. The elves had found their beds in disorder, and not being able to see him, had, in their efforts to restore order, pitched him out. Hardly had Leo reached the floor when in came Paz to the rescue.

“I beg your pardon, sir, for being so long absent,” he said, “but the hunters had not come in with any game, and the cooks had use for all the skillets, so that I was obliged to go to the laboratory for a vessel large enough to hold your turnip. Soup is made in great quantities for our work-people, and by adding a few sauces I hope I have made it so that it will please you. If you come with me now I think you may relish your meal.”

Page 13

Leo followed Paz to a small cavern hung with a velvety gray moss, on which were clusters of red berries. A small electric light burned in a globe of crystal, set in bands of turquoise, and shone upon a table which, like the bed he had used, was composed of several small ones, covered with a cloth of crimson plush, over which was again spread a white fabric of the thinnest texture and edged with lace. On this was laid a dinner service, so small that it was evidently more for ornament than use. Plates of crystal were bordered with gems, and jars and cups of embossed metal glittered with precious stones. He was obliged, however, to eat his soup from the tureen, and the turnip, now cooked in a sort of *pate*, was presented on a silver platter. Slices of smoked rabbit, with salted steaks of prairie-dog, were offered in place of the quail, which had not come; but Leo, having a fondness for sweets, saw with wonder one tart made from about a quarter of an apple. This proved to be such a sweet morsel that he kept Paz running for more until he had eaten a dozen. No wine was offered, but ices which looked like heaps of snow with the sun shining on them were dissolving in glass vases, and water as pure as the dew filled his goblet. Rising refreshed from his meal Leo met Knops coming towards him. He had exchanged his dress for what looked like a bathing suit of India rubber.

"Are you rested?" he inquired, kindly.

"Oh yes, very much, and I must thank you and Paz for so good a dinner," responded Leo.

"Don't mention it. If I had not acted on the spur of the moment, when the impulse to amuse you seized me, I would have been better prepared. We use many things for food which you would disdain, but I might have secured antelope meat or Rocky Mountain mutton, and by way of rarity something from Russia or China. Have you ever tasted birds' nests?"

"Never."

"But I suppose you know why they are thought so great a delicacy?"

"No."

"It is merely the gluten with which they are fastened together, so to speak, by the birds, which renders them agreeable. The Chinese like rats, and in this we agree with them. Well dressed, stuffed with chestnuts or olives, and roasted, they are delicious."

Leo made a wry face.

"Ah! you are not cosmopolitan."

"What is that?"



“A citizen of the world, a person free from national prejudices. Ah, these words are long for you; I will try to be simple: you have not learned to eat everything that is good.”

“But rats are not good; they are vermin.”

“Bah! yes, because you let them feed like your hogs on anything. We do better; we pen them, and give them grain until they are fat and sweet, and make them eatable.”

Leo could not disguise his dislike, so Knops, shrugging his shoulders, did not attempt any longer to convince him, but said,

“Are you interested in what I have shown you?”



Page 14

“Certainly I am,” said Leo, with more spirit than he had ever put into words.

“And you care to go on?”

“Very much.”

“Prepare then for great exertion. As you are so large it will be necessary for you to creep through many passages. I am going to take you to see our water-work. The visit may be tiresome, but I think you will be repaid. It is generally supposed that giants have greater power than we. It may be that it is true, but I think it is doubtful. But you may wonder why I speak now of giants. It is because they have originated the opinion among men that the great water-falls and cataracts, such as those of the Nile and Niagara, are entirely of their producing, but we all know the familiar adage, ‘Great oaks from little acorns grow.’ I am going to show you where the little springs and rivulets have their rise.”

Leo’s attention had flagged during this speech—he was so unaccustomed to many words—now his interest revived.

“Do you remember a certain shady spot about half a mile from the monastery, beneath a group of birch-trees, and overhung with alders?” asked Knops.

“Do I not, indeed?” responded Leo, eagerly. “It is the sweetest, coolest water on the estate. The moss around that spring is just like green velvet. Many a time I have plunged my whole head in it. The birds know it too, and always come there to drink. I sometimes find four or five of them dipping in at once; it is a pretty sight to see them bathe; they throw the water up under their wings until they drip, and then they are hardly satisfied.”

“Well,” said Knops, “we have the supplying of that spring.”

All the time they had been talking, Knops had been leading the way through long passages and down steep steps, of which Leo’s long legs had to compass several at a stride.

Now they came to a low tunnel through which Leo had to creep for what seemed to him miles. Strange to say, the weariness which so often compelled him to rest or doze seemed to be leaving him. He felt an altogether new impulse, a desire to explore these recesses, and a great respect for Knops’s learning also made him desirous of conversation, which was something he had always avoided by answering questions in the shortest possible way.

The tunnel was not only long and low, but it was dripping with moisture, and the air oppressive with what seemed to be steam. Leo heard wheezing and groaning sounds,



which, though not frightful, were very peculiar, and then the thump-thump, as of engines.

Very glad was he when the tunnel opened into another large cavern, at the bottom of which was a lake. He could not have seen this had it not been for the electric fluid which blazed like daylight from a great globe overhead. On the margin of the lake were all kinds of hydraulic machines, small as toys, but of every conceivable form; derricks and wheels and screws and pumps, and all under the management of busy little elves, who panted and puffed and tugged at ropes and wheels and pipes as they worked, and kept up a constant chant not unlike the song of the wind on a stormy night.



Page 15

Leo watched them intently. Once in a while one restless little sprite would turn a hose upon his companions, when the chant would stop long enough for the rest to dip his head and heels into the lake, which had a very quieting effect. Leo noticed great numbers of pipes running up the sides of the cavern in all directions, but Knops soon opened the door of what he called “the model-room,” and here were new wonders displayed.

CHAPTER VI

The model-room of the elves’ water-work department was a grotto of salt—glittering, dazzling, sparkling, and flashing—divided into two equal parts, or as if a huge shelf had been placed across it.

On the top of the shelf was a tiny park or forest, with all the natural differences of the ground exactly represented by grasses, plants, flowers, rocks, and trees, living and growing, but on a scale so small that Leo was forced to use a microscope to properly enjoy its beauty. Even the herbage was minute, and the trees no larger than small ferns, but as his eyes grew accustomed to the glass he was amazed to find the hills and dales of his home here reproduced in the most familiar manner.

It was truly an exquisite scene. Field upon field dotted with daisies, woodland as dense and wild as untrained nature leaves it, and hill upon hill clambering over one another, all so minute and yet so real, and dashing down from the tiny mountains was a stream of foaming water, winding about and gathering in from all sides other tributary brooks, so small that they would hardly have floated a good-sized leaf.

And now Leo understood the meaning of it all, as he looked underneath the shelf where tiny pumps and rams were forcing up the water for this stream.

Knops touched a spring and set a new series of wheels in motion, when, instantly, a gushing fountain flowed up in a small stone basin beneath a rustic cross; then a little lake appeared, on which were sailing small swans; and finally a rushing, roaring flood started some mill-wheels and almost threatened destruction to the tiny buildings upon its banks.

“This,” said Knops, “shows you how we use the power of our reservoirs, but it can give you no idea of the immense trouble we have in laying pipes for great distances. Some of our elves find it so difficult that they beg for other work, and many run off altogether and live above-ground, inhabiting the regions of springs and brooks, and so muddying them and filling them up with weeds that men let them alone, which is just what they desire.”

“Do fish ever clog your pipes?” asked Leo.



“Never. We have none in our lakes; the water is too pure and free from vegetable matter for fish. It is doubly distilled. Taste it.”

Leo took the glass which Knops offered, and confessed he had never tasted anything more delicious.

“We sometimes force carbonic gas into mineral springs, but that, as well as the salts considered so beneficial, is left to our chemists to regulate. Paz, do you know anything about this?”



Page 16

“Not much, Master Knops. I have seen iron in various forms introduced, but think that is usually controlled by the earth’s formation.”

Leo sighed at his own ignorance, and vowed to study up these matters; but Knops, seeing his look of dejection, asked, “How would you like a bath?”

“Delightful. Where? Surely not in the lake; it looks so cold and glassy I should not dare.”

“Oh, no, no,” laughed Knops. “Do you think I’d let you bathe in a reservoir? Never! We are too cleanly for that, begging your pardon. Here is our general bath. It’s quite a tub, isn’t it?”

“I should think so,” said Leo, surveying quite a spacious apartment, about which were pipes and faucets, clothes-lines and screens.

Here his friend left him, and he was glad to doff his garments for a plunge. He found that he could make the water hot or cold at will, and so luxurious was it that he would have stayed in any length of time had not a crowd of elves come chattering in, and with whoop and scream surrounded him. Though they could not see him, they were conscious of some disturbing force in the water, and in an instant a lot of them had scrambled on his back, and were making a boat of him. They pulled his hair and his ears unmercifully, and because he swam slowly, with their weight upon him, they whacked and thumped him like little pirates. But he had his revenge, for with one turn he tumbled them all off, and sprang from the bath, leaving them to squirm and squabble by themselves.

Laughing heartily at their antics, he rejoined Knops and Paz, whom he found poring over some maps spread out before them.

“We have been discussing the length of a journey to the Geysers of Iceland, also to the hot springs of the Yellowstone, but I am afraid either would require too much time. Was your bath agreeable?”

“Very,” said Leo, describing how he had been pummelled.

“Those were the fellows from the steam-rooms—stokers probably. Rough enough they are. Do you care to have a glance at them at work?”

“Don’t care if I do,” said Leo, in his old drawling manner; then, correcting himself, he added: “If it suits your convenience, I shall be very happy to take a look.”

“That is all it will be, I promise you,” said Paz; “the heat is awful.”

Leo thought as much when Knops, having tied a respirator over his mouth, opened another door. Such a cloud of vapor puffed out that he could but dimly discern what seemed to be a tank of boiling, bubbling water, resting on a bed of soft coal, about which stark little forms were dancing and poking with long steel bars until flames leaped out like tongues of fire.

“Oh,” said Leo, as he quickly turned from his place, “how do they endure it? It is dreadful!”

“They are used to it; they all came from Terra del Fuego,” replied Knops, calmly. “And now, as a contrast to them, look in here.”

Page 17

A hut of solid ice presented itself. Long pendants of ice hung from the ceiling, snow in masses was being formed into shapes of statue-like grace by a company of little furry objects whose noses were not even visible, and others were tracing out, on a broad screen of lace-like texture, patterns of every star and leaf and flower imaginable.

Leo was so delighted that, although shivering, he could not bear to leave them, but begged Knops to lend him a wrap.

Taking from a pile of furs in a corner several small garments, Paz pinned them together and threw them over Leo's shoulders, and as he continued to watch the beautiful work Knops explained its character.

"This is our place for working out designs for those who are unskilled in frost-work. Frostwork is something too delicate for human hands, but in it we excel. Have you never seen on your window-pane of a cold winter morning the picture of a forest of pines, or sheets of sparkling stars and crystals? I am sure you have. Well, we do all that work on your windows, not with artificial snow and ice such as you see here, but by dexterous management we catch the falling flakes and mould them to our will, sometimes doing nothing more than spangling a sheet of glass, and again working out the most elaborate and fantastic marvels of embroidery. But in art our productions are almost endless. We color the tiniest blades of grass and beds of strawberry leaves until the moss upon which they rest look like velvet with floss needlework. We polish the chestnuts till they appear as if carved of rosewood. We strip thistles of their prickly coat, and use the down for pillows. The milk-weed, as it ripens its silken-winged seeds, serves us for many beautiful purposes. We tint the pebbles of a brook till they compare with Florentine mosaics. We wreath and festoon every bare old boulder and every niche made barren by the winds. Indeed, the list of our works would fill a volume."

Leo listened and looked, though his feet were getting numb and his fingers nearly frozen. Many a time he had seen just such cappings to gate-posts and projections as were here being moulded, and just such rows of pearly drops on a gable's edge; but when, as if to specially please him, the busy workers carved a little snow maid winding a scarf about her curly locks, he clapped his hands in admiration, making such a noise that each little Esquimau dropped his tool in alarm.

"Gently! gently!" said Paz and Knops; "they are easily frightened. Though they do not see you, their instinct is so fine that they can nearly guess your presence."

"I am sorry if I have frightened them," said Leo. "Can't you say something to soothe them? Tell them how lovely their things are. I long to try and imitate them."

Knops said a few words in a language Leo did not comprehend, and the little people gathered up their trowels again. But it was time to go, and Leo had to follow his guides and leave the snow people with more reluctance than anything he had yet seen.



Page 18

CHAPTER VII

Knops now led Leo through so many places full of machines and contrivances which the water-power kept active that he was glad when they went up a long inclined plane, and came out into a wide gallery lined with mother-of-pearl, and paved with exquisite sea-shells.

Here was a luxurious couch of beautiful feathers, the plumage of birds he had never beheld, and he was not sorry to see Paz bringing out another dozen of tarts for his refreshment. As he ate them, he asked of Knops, who was peeling a lime, "Have you no women and children among your elves?"

"Oh yes," said Knops, smiling; "but they are not to be found near our workshops."

"Where, then, do they live?"

Knops put on an air of mystery as he replied: "I am not permitted to reveal everything concerning us, dear Leo. Our private life is of no public interest; but I may tell you that our children are bred entirely in the open air. Many an empty bird's nest is used as an elf cradle, for so highly do we esteem pure air, sunshine, and exposure as a means of making our children hardy, that we even accustom them to danger, and let them, like the birds, face the fury of the weather."

"And do they all work as you do?"

"They do, not at the same employments, nor is all our labor done by hand, as you might suppose. The songs which you hear are not all sung by birds or insects, the crying child has often a pretty tale whispered in his ear to soothe his grief or passion, and your garden roses are witness to many a worm in the bud choked by the hand of an elf. But we have many tribes, and the habits of each are different. I do not conceal that much trouble is made by some of them. But look at the Indians of North America and the Afghans of Asia."

Leo was yawning again fearfully, when a little "turn, turn, turn," came to his ears, and as Knops ceased speaking a band of elves, habited as troubadours in blue and silver, with long white plumes in their velvet caps, climbed over the balustrade and began to play on zithers.

The music was a gentle tinkle, not unlike a rippling brook, and appeared to be in honor of Master Knops, who listened with pleased attention, and dismissed them politely.

Then came a message for Knops. A council was awaiting his presence; so, leaving Leo to Paz, with promise of a speedy return, he departed.



“How do you get about so fast?” asked Leo. Paz took from his pocket a tiny pipe, curiously carved from a nut; then he opened a small ivory box, showing Leo a wad of something which looked like raw cotton sprinkled with black seeds.

“One whiff of this, as it burns in my pipe, and I can wish myself where I please.”

“Let me have a try,” said Leo, taking up the pipe.

Paz smiled. “It would have no more effect upon you than so much tobacco—not as much, probably, for tobacco makes you deathly sick, does it not?”



Page 19

“Yes,” said Leo, listlessly, disappointed that he could not go to the ends of the earth by magic.

Paz noticed the disappointment, and said, by way of diversion, “Where do you like best to be?”

“At home I like the kitchen,” said Leo, with a little shrug.

“Good! Come, then, to one of ours: we can be back by the time Master Knops returns.” So saying, he started off, and Leo followed.

Paz trotted down a winding staircase that made Leo feel as if he were a corkscrew, and in a little while ushered him into a place where jets of gas gave a garden-like effect, sprouting as they did from solid rock in the form of tulips and tiger-lilies, but over each was a wire netting, and from the netting were suspended shining little copper kettles and pans of all sorts and shapes.

Busily bending over these was a regiment of cooks, but instead of paper caps on their heads, each wore a white bonnet of ludicrous form, which they could tip over so as to shield their faces from the heat. It gave them a top-heavy appearance which was extremely funny.

In the centre of the kitchen was a long table, before which were seated a number of elves testing each compound to see if it were properly prepared, and examining the cooked dishes as they were brought in that all should be served rightly.

“I had an idea,” said Leo, “that elves and fairies lived on rose leaves and honey, and that you never had to have things cooked.”

“The truth is,” answered Paz, “we do both; it all depends on what are our employments, whether we are living in the wild wood or down in these caverns. I would ask nothing better than to dine off honeysuckle and a bird’s egg, or fill my pockets with gooseberries; but I must adapt myself to circumstances, and while toiling here have to share the more solid food provided for us.” As he said this he handed Leo a pudding of about three inches in the round, iced on the top.

Leo swallowed it down with such zest that Paz asked him to dispense with ceremony, and help himself to anything he saw. The tasting-table was full of puffs and tarts, and in a twinkling Leo had eaten two or three dozen of them. They were really so light and frothy that they were hardly equal to an ounce of lollypops such as an ordinary child could devour, but Paz cautioned him, telling him that the sweet was so concentrated he might have a headache.

While he was doing this, Leo watched with interest the bringing in of some squirrels and rabbits, skinned and ready to be roasted. It took six elves to bear the weight of an



ordinary meat dish on which these were; then they trussed and skewered them, and put them in small ovens.

“How do you kill your game?” asked Leo.

“We trap everything, and then have a mode of killing the creatures which is entirely painless.”

By this time Knops would have returned, so Paz hurried Leo off, not, however, without first filling his pockets with goodies. Up they clambered, until it seemed as if they might reach the stars by going a little farther, and now Leo was really so tired that when he sank down on the feathery couch in the sea-shell corridor he was asleep before he could explain to Knops the cause of his absence.



Page 20

He must have slept a very long while—a time quite equal to an ordinary night, if not longer—for when he awoke he was thoroughly rested and refreshed, and ready for any exertion he might be called upon to make; but he found himself entirely alone.

At first this did not affect him, for he supposed his elfin friends had taken the opportunity to rest themselves, but after minutes lengthened into hours he began to be uneasy. What should he do if they never came back? How would he ever find his way out of these caverns? The thought was frightful, and to relieve his fears he began to call. His calls became shouts, yells, and yet no answer came; nothing but echoes responded.

CHAPTER VIII

After a long and impatient listening the echoes of Leo's calls seemed to prolong themselves into musical strains, which, faint and far away at first, gradually came nearer and nearer.

Soft as the sighing of the wind was this elfin music, but swelling into mimic bursts of harmony and clashing of small cymbals.

Leo leaned over the balustrade of the corridor, and gazed down into the depths of a cavernous abyss. Instantly the space seemed filled with sprites in every conceivable attire. Some were dressed in the party-colored habits of court pages, some in royal robes of ermine, others as shepherds with crooks, and again others as cherubs with gauzy wings; but all were whirling like snow-flakes to the strains of the music.

Leo looked in vain for Paz or Knops. Indeed, so many were the fantastic forms, and so rapidly did they move, that it was like watching a snow-storm, and this effect was heightened by misty wreaths, upon which were borne aloft the more radiant members, who danced and flashed as heat-lightning on the clouds of a summer's night. The light, instead of being a bright glare, was soft and mellow, and fell from crescent-shaped lanterns on the staffs of pages, who moved in a measured way among the throng, producing a kaleidoscopic effect.

Leo watched them with eager eyes. Beautiful as the sight was, he yet was oppressed with fear, for he knew not how to reveal himself to these sportive beings, and he could not imagine how he should ever be released from his imprisonment.

Suddenly the dancers fled as if pursued, the music became martial, and the steady tramp of a host of elves was heard. They were clad in mail, with helmets and shields of flashing steel, and armed with glittering lances; half of them had blue plumes and half had crimson. And now began their mimic warfare. Ranged line upon line, facing each other, with shouts and drum beats and bugle blasts, they fell upon each other in the fury of combat. Swords clashed, javelins were hurled, and the slain fell in heaps; but still the



leaders charged, and still the martial blasts were heard; and over and over were repeated the manoeuvres of the advance, the retreat, the parrying of blows, the redoubled ardor of assault, until Leo's breath came short and hard with the excitement of the scene. It seemed a veritable battle-field, and to add to the glamour rays as of moonbeams, shone now and again clouded by the shadows of an approaching storm.



Page 21

Gradually the rage of the combatants subsided. Those who were able withdrew with those of their companions who were disabled, leaving the prostrate forms of the dead and dying.

And now the music portrayed the rising of the wind, the falling of rain, the roar of thunder. This was succeeded by low, plaintive strains, as of people weeping, and a party of elves in the garb of monks headed a procession bearing lighted tapers and carrying biers, upon which they placed the inanimate forms of the warriors. Slowly they paced about, chanting in low tones, and constantly accompanied by the funeral dirge of the musicians.

And now to Leo's almost overtaxed vision came a picture of a lonely graveyard in the mountains, where the procession stopped. Even as he looked it faded away; the sun streamed forth, shining upon a field of grain where merry reapers swung their scythes and sang with glee. Trees sprouted from fissures in the rock, birds flew about and perched undismayed, and little hay-carts, piled high with their loads, came creaking along, led by peasant elves, who were also seated on top of their fragrant heaps of hay. Then the sun beamed upon a party of drovers—elves in smock-frocks or blouses, driving flocks of sheep and horned cattle, while the bleating of the sheep and the blowing of the cattle were well imitated by the music. All this was succeeded by vineyards, grape trellises, and arbors, with busy elves gathering the fruit which hung in purple clusters, and beneath the arbors other elves rattling castanets, beating tambourines, and dancing.

Again the scene changed. Snow fell; the birds disappeared; the tree boughs were glittering with ice, and were bending over a wide field of the same glassy substance. On it were elves in bright costumes, merrily skating. They glided about, cutting curious figures, pausing to bend and bow to each other, or to warm themselves at bonfires blazing on the banks.

Then night came again, and the darkness was only broken by twinkling stars. The music became softer and more plaintive; it sounded like little flutes.

A church tower loomed up, and then a blaze of light issued from its arched doors. Two by two, in white array, came forth the elves, and from the floating veils Leo saw that it was meant to represent a bridal procession. Garlands were on their arms, and ribbons fluttered from their caps. Roses were strewn in their path.

Again, these were followed by a company of elves in the habit of nuns and Sisters of Charity. The music became a hymn. The church grew dark and vanished. The space filled again with shadowy forms, as if all the little actors had poured in. The sound of their coming was like that of a bevy of birds with wings fluttering. Suddenly a starry cross appeared; it flashed and flamed with a light which was as if it were composed of myriads of gems, and then a clear radiance streamed from it, revealing the whole

multitude of elves kneeling in devotion. This lasted but a few moments, and again all was still and dark, and Leo was alone.

Page 22

But he was no longer afraid. His mind was filled with the beautiful scenes he had witnessed, his imagination stirred to activity. Why might he not behold these things again as a reality, instead of only a semblance of it? How grand it would be to travel and see novel and beautiful sights, to learn also wonderful things! And as he quietly thought, he heard the click, click of little boots, and Knops was beside him, followed by Paz. Leo greeted them warmly.

“Did you suppose that we had deserted you?” asked Knops, sitting down by his side on the couch as if exhausted.

“Yes, I was a little alarmed; it was so strange to find myself alone in such a place, for of course I had no idea which way to turn or what to do.”

“You were so soundly asleep that I had not the cruelty to disturb you, and it was necessary for Paz to go with me. From what you have witnessed you may guess how we have been employed and how much we have had to detain us; but you may rest assured that nothing would keep me from finishing what I have undertaken. You have now had a Vision of Life and a Vision of Labor, for such I call our two pantomimes. Am I wrong in supposing that they have pleased you?”

“No, indeed,” said Leo, quickly, his usual drawl giving place to a tone of bright animation. “I thank you a thousand times for your entertainment and instruction. I have been so pleased and delighted that I can hardly express myself as I ought to do. I am afraid I seem a very good-for-nothing fellow to you.”

“Indeed you do not. Don’t suppose I would waste time on a good-for-naught. Paz can tell you what attracted me to you—can’t you, Paz?”

“Yes, sir; the Prince Leo’s kindness of heart is the secret of his power with us.”

Leo blushed as he looked up and asked, “How did you know I was soft-hearted?”

“By your kindness to animals and all living things. Ah! we are close observers, are we not, Paz?”

“Necessarily, Master Professor.”

“Our powers of observation have revealed to us many of the mysteries which man longs to solve. There’s the Gulf Stream, for instance. But you are not up in science yet. No matter. You have time enough before you if you will only apply yourself. Has anything you have seen made you anxious to know more?”

“Oh, don’t mention it!” exclaimed Leo. “I am so awfully ashamed of my ignorance that I would do anything to get rid of it. I want to know all about those curious things.”



“Good! the seed is sown, Paz,” said Knops, complacently, with the nearest approach to a wink Leo had seen on his grave little countenance. “Now you must rest again before we start for home.”

Leo would have been very willing to do without more rest, remembering his alarm, but he could not be so selfish as to deprive his companion of it; so he at once assented, tempted to ask only that he might not be left quite so long again alone. But fearing this would imply distrust, and being really no coward, he said nothing. He was relieved, however, to hear Knops command Paz to remain with him.



Page 23

CHAPTER IX

Leo tried to go to sleep; but after doing everything he could think of, such as imagining a flock of sheep jumping a fence, and counting a hundred backward and forward, he gave it up as useless. All the strange things he had seen would come back, and his eyelids were like little spring doors that bobbed open in spite of his attempts to close them. As they lifted for the hundredth time he saw Paz doubled up in a heap, with his knees drawn up to his chin, his elbows resting on them, and his face in his hands. He was intently watching Leo.

“Hallo!” said Leo, “can’t you go to sleep either?”

“No need at present.”

“Why not?”

“I was going through a formula in D.”

“What under the sun is that?”

“Something relating to my pursuits. Don’t trouble yourself to try and find out everything. In my opinion Master Knops has crammed you too hard. What do you say to my telling you a story or two?”

“Splendid! I’m ready when you are.”

“No, you are not; you’re hungry. You must have a bite first; what shall it be? Oh, no matter; I’ll get you something if you promise not to ask any questions.”

“All right,” said Leo, inwardly cringing at the thought of stuffed rats.

Paz was gone but a little while. When he came back he was carrying a basket, from which he produced a small flask of a very sweet, fruity sirup, a dish of something that looked like little fish swimming in golden jelly—salt and savory Leo found them—and a sort of salad garnished with tiny eggs. These were followed by nuts of a peculiar flavor, and small fruits as exquisite to look at as they were delicious to taste.

When Leo had done ample justice to all these things Paz looked relieved, as if he had feared they might not suit.

“Never ate anything better in my life,” said Leo.



“I am glad to hear it; tastes differ so. Now these things come from all parts of the world—the fish from Spain, the eggs from Africa, the nuts from Italy, the fruits from France, and the sirup from Portugal.”

“Oh dear!” said Leo, wondering how their freshness was preserved.

“Yes, I suppose you have no idea of our canning business.”

“None in the world.”

“I presumed as much,” said Paz, wisely, “nor am I going to bore you with any more information.”

Leo looked quite shocked.

“Oh, well,” said Paz, profoundly, “there’s a limit to all things, and I’m not a Knops.”

“But have you been to all parts of the world?” asked Leo.

“Oh, yes,” answered Paz, carelessly. “I have wandered far and wide in my time. Until I caught the diamond fever I was used as an envoy.”

“Indeed!” said Leo, having but a faint idea of what an envoy was. “What did you do?”

“I went on errands of importance.”

“Who for, and where did you go?”



Page 24

“I was sent generally to carry messages from our King to the Queen of the Wind Fairies or the Herb Elves, or the Sylphs, sometimes to warn them of trouble or danger, sometimes to tell them that imps were rampaging or giants were about to make war, but oftener to inform them of some plan for assisting man, or some good to be done for a child: in these things we delight.”

“How kind!” said Leo.

“Kindness has so much power, if people only knew it. But you are waiting; I must not detain you.” So, without further preface, thus began

PAZ’S STORY

“It was a time of trouble to mankind—a year of strange events, and yet so stupid are ordinary mortals—begging your pardon—that none were making preparations either to meet or to avoid disaster. The King of the Kobolds had been negotiating with our King for the purchase of some immense tracts of iron ore, and in the course of conversation said he had received news from Italy that there would soon be a volcanic outbreak, that the giants there were quarrelling fiercely, and had not hesitated to declare that unless matters were arranged to suit them they would bid Vesuvius pour forth its death-dealing fires.

“Now on the side of that well-known mountain were living some friends of our King—two children, a girl and a boy, Tessa and Tasso, daughter and son of an Italian peasant.

“In their little vineyard one day our King’s son, an infant, was swinging in his leafy cradle; it looked like a bird’s nest, and so I suppose they thought it, but a rude playmate of theirs tried to tear it down from its airy height, and would have succeeded had not both Tessa and Tasso resolutely opposed him.

“First they sought to make him stop by appealing to his feelings, asking him how he would like to have his cottage ruined, his home desolated; but at this he only mocked and jeered. Then they urged that birds had the same right to live and rear their young as had human beings; which having no more effect, they openly forbade his attempt, saying that the ground was theirs, the birds were their friends, and they should defend them. Blows followed, Tessa and Tasso bearing their part bravely, and compelling the young ruffian to take himself off. Little did they know whom they were defending.

“Our King heard of the occurrence, and vowed unending friendship; so when the King of the Kobolds told him of the danger impending at Vesuvius I was at once sent for to convey the information, and do what I could to save the lives of Tessa and Tasso. It took but a whiff of my pipe to bring me to the desired place, but so calm and bright and peaceful was the scene that I found it hard to believe in the threatening evil. Never had



I seen a bluer sky reflected in a more silvery mirror than were the clouds and bay of Naples that day. The people were merry and careless, tending their cattle, gathering their fruit, singing their songs, and as indifferent to their old enemy as if he had never harmed them.



Page 25

“How should I approach the object of my mission? how put fear into the hearts of joyous innocence? Their father had bidden them go to the city with a load of oranges. These were to be conveyed in large baskets, or panniers, on the back of a faithful donkey. If I could keep them away from home, delay them by some pretext from returning for at least a day, I might aid them. So with this determination I proceeded to act.

“At every place or with every person to whom they offered their fruit I whispered objections, asked if their prices were not very high, or if the fruit were not picked too early. So well did I succeed that I had nearly upset my own plans, for poor Tessa, becoming discouraged, wanted to return home at once, but Tasso stoutly declared he would sell every orange before going back—that his fruit was good and ripe, and it should be appreciated. I was pained to see Tessa’s tears, but what could I do? Already thick smoke was pouring down the mountain’s side, and so many were the rumbling sounds that although these children were accustomed to such disturbances, fears began to assail them.

“They were now well away from home, and had paused at the roadside to eat their bread-and-cheese. People were becoming unusually numerous. Excitement was prevailing, and Tessa saw with alarm women and children hurrying past. At that moment a travelling carriage appeared. One could see at a glance from its neat compactness that it was English. I put my head in the window, and whispered something. At once a gray-haired lady leaned out, and beckoned to Tessa, who tremblingly obeyed.

“‘My child,’ said the lady, kindly, ‘I want some oranges. Can you give them to me quickly? You know we have no time to spare.’

“‘Yes, madame,’ said Tessa. ‘But what is the matter? You and every one look so anxious.’

“Instantly, as she spoke, there was a terrible quivering of the earth, which made every one shudder. The driver could scarcely hold his horses; they plunged and reared and trembled.

“‘Ah! we cannot wait,’ said the lady; but seeing the terrified looks of the children, she paused to ask, ‘Are you children alone?’

“‘Entirely so, signorina.’

“‘And where are you going?’

“‘Home, to the mountain.’

“‘You cannot go there; it is too late.’ Then with a sudden resolution she turned to the maid beside her. ‘We will take them with us; their load is too heavy for them to get on

fast enough. Quick! quick! Leave your donkey; he is tired; every one is so frightened he will not be stolen if he escapes. Come in here,' pushing open the carriage door.



Page 26

“Tessa turned irresolutely to Tasso, who was also uncertain what to do; but the tone was imperative; they were accustomed to obey. Crowds were now jostling them; women were crying; children were pushed hither and thither, their little toys trodden underfoot, more a grievance to them than the quaking earth. With a regretful glance at the donkey, Tessa and Tasso jumped into the carriage, which drove away as fast as the frightened horses could get through the throng. Miles and miles away they went until the horses could go no farther. Then they stopped for the night at a little inn overflowing with strangers, where they heard that Vesuvius was pouring forth lava, and where they could see the lurid glare of its flames reddening the evening sky. They were saved. My mission was fulfilled.”

Paz stopped; but Leo was unsatisfied.

“And what became of them? Did they ever go home again? Were their father and mother killed?”

“No; their parents escaped, but their home was buried in ashes. The children were cared for by the English lady until it was safe to return. All that was left them was the one poor donkey which, unharmed, strayed back to the place of its past abode, and with it they began a trade in lava which proved very remunerative.”

“Trade in lava?” repeated Leo, inquisitively.

“Yes; the people pour melted lava in moulds before it cools, and so fashion ornaments out of it—perhaps they also carve it. I know they color it beautifully, for I have had to carry bracelets made of it to various people with whom we are on friendly terms, and they were blue as a bird’s egg or turquoise.”

“How curious!”

“No; they were not remarkable, not half as singular as coral formations.”

“What are they?”

“Don’t tell me you know nothing of coral!”

“I believe I have seen it, but that is all.”

“Coral is made by wonderful little animals who live and die in its cells until their structures are big enough for islands; but I will leave that to Knops: my plan is not to cram.”



CHAPTER X

“Well,” said Leo, “you are not going to stop, I hope.”

“Oh no,” said Paz, cheerfully, “I can spin yarns with any sailor. What will you have now?”

“Something funny.”

“I wish I could oblige you, but fun is not my strong point. I went from Greenland to the South Seas one day in search of a laugh, but I failed to find it; indeed I came near doing worse, for in getting into the hoop of a native’s nose-ring for a swing—just by way of a new sensation—I forgot to make myself invisible, and he caught me, thought I was a spider, and would have crushed me, had not a baby put out its little hands in glee to play with me. I can assure you I was for a time averse to trying new sensations.”

“How did you get out of your scrape?”

“I travelled down that baby’s back in a hurry, and hid in an ant-hill; he poked about with his little black fingers for a quarter of an hour, but he did not find me. Ah, those were the days of my youth!”



Page 27

“Do you ever have anything to do with witches?”

“Mark my words, ghosts and witches live only in the imagination of silly human beings. We useful people scorn them. Now imps might be said to belong to the same family were it not for the proofs we have of their existence. They are everlastingly getting children into trouble by suggesting things to them they never would have thought of—”

“Such as what?”

“Do you suppose I am going to tell you? No, indeed; they can do it fast enough for themselves. Persons who take too much wine are their most constant companions; they pounce upon them and twitch and tease and torment them until the poor wine-bibber trembles from head to foot. They won't let him sleep or eat or think, and fairly drive him crazy. Oh, imps are really to be dreaded! But I must now begin my second story.”

PAZ'S SECOND STORY

“There was to be a grand birthday festival among the Fays, who inhabit the tropics. The wind fairies had brought us news of it as well as urgent invitations for our royal family to be present; but so deeply engrossed was our King at that moment in supplying the oil wells of Pennsylvania with petroleum that he could not absent himself. The Queen never goes from home without her liege lord.

“The princes and princesses were all too young, and could not be allowed to leave their lessons; so the regrets were inscribed on lotus leaves, and sent by special messenger—a bird of the Cypselina family. He was a great sooty-black fellow, with a tinge of green in his feathers, strong, well able to fly, as his family generally do from America to Asia. But the gift could not be intrusted to him. I was chosen as bearer of that.

“Much discussion had taken place as to what this gift should be. It was desirable that nothing ordinary should be offered, for the Fays are, as a rule, fastidious. Gems they possess in abundance. Flowers are so common that their beds are made of them. Their books are 'the running brooks,' and their art treasures hang on every bough. The Queen had woven a veil of lace with her own fingers; it was filmy and exquisite, but my heart sank within me when she declared that nothing less than a wreath of snow-flakes must accompany it. To obtain this wreath and carry it to the Fays as a birthday gift was to be my duty.

“How should I accomplish it? I dared not suggest the difficulties, for at once I should have been displaced, and another elf chosen for the performance of this arduous task. Besides, if it could be accomplished by any one, I must be that person, having always been unwilling ever to allow difficulties to deter me from any duty. Pride of the right sort



is a great help. I went to the frost-workers and told them what I wanted. They said they could imitate any flower; but the Queen had expressly said that the wreath must be of snow-flakes. Now the fantastic impulse of a snow-storm is well known, but it is not so generally known that there is a scientific accuracy even in the formation of snow-flakes.”



Page 28

Here Paz stopped, shook his head, smiled, and said, "I do believe I am as bad as Knops."

"Please go on," said Leo.

"Well, you must forgive me, for I shall have to tell you that the frost-workers said there were no less than a thousand different forms among the crystals of which snow-flakes are made.

"Now how could I tell what pattern to choose? It was impossible; so I told them I should have nothing to do with the pattern. 'Make the wreath,' said I, 'box it, and I will carry it, or die in the attempt.'

"They did so. The crystals were more beautiful than diamond stars. They put it in a solid square of ice, which was packed in charcoal and straw, and then cased in cocoa matting. To this I attached cords, and slung it about my neck. The veil, in a satin case half an inch square, was in my wallet.

"I started in the track of the marten that carried the despatches, but changed my course many times, striving to keep in cold currents. Finding, however, that as I neared the Equator this was impossible, I took to the sea, and went down to its highway. Of course I had on garments impervious to water—that is to say, water-proof—and my wallet was as dry as a bone; but not being in the habit of travelling under ocean, my eyes were a little affected by the salt, and I became conscious that I was being followed.

"Fishes, you know, are not down on the hard rocky bed of the sea, and I had passed the homes of mermen, so I was puzzled to know who could be my enemy. I would not so much as betray my fears by looking behind, and I had enough to do in looking forward, for at every other step there were fissures which had to be leaped, deep abysses to be avoided, chasms to be crossed, and sands which might engulf me.

"Still, as I struggled on, I could hear the sound of other feet following mine, now nearing me, now farther away, as my speed asserted itself. It made me shiver to think what might be my fate, and I can honestly say that the thought of failing to fulfill my errand bore as heavily upon me as the sense of personal dangers; for it is a great thing to be trusted, to be looked upon as honest and true, and deemed capable of transacting affairs even of small moment.

"But this was not a trifling matter. The neglect to deliver this gift could bring about serious trouble. The Fays were our friends, and friendship is never to be slighted. It is not kind to allow selfish matters to stand in the way when we are bidden to a joyous celebration, and had not our King felt that the claims of man were more urgent than those of the Fays he would have attended this feast in person. As he could not, the gift was to represent him. I trust I have made it clear to you."



“Quite so,” said Leo. “But I am crazy to know who was following you.”

“So was I at that time, and I resolved to get into the first empty shell I could find where I might hide. There was soon an opportunity. A heap of cast-off shells presented itself, and I popped into an enormous crab cover, where I waited for my unknown companion to overtake me.



Page 29

“As the steps came near I peeped carefully out, and what should I see but an ugly South American river-wolf, about three and a half feet long, with a short, close fur of a bright ruddy yellow. I could not imagine what had brought him after me, but the ways of the wicked are often difficult to explain. There he was, and if once he could get me within reach I was lost. On he came, snuffing and barking like a dog, making my very hair stand on end. I waited for him to pass, but I think his instinct must have told him I had paused, for he began to turn over the shells with his ugly nose, as if searching for something. My single weapon was a small dirk, as we kill only in self-defence.

“Bracing myself against the wall of my slight shelter, I stood in expectation of an assault, and I had not long to wait. With an angry cry he rushed upon me. His size seemed to me enormous, but my little knife was a trusty blade, and with a great effort I drew it across his dreadful throat.

“I will not dwell on these particulars. I had overcome my enemy. I resumed my journey, and soon came to a region of the most beautiful water-plants growing in greatest profusion. I knew by these that I was not far from the home of the Fays.

“I neglected to tell you that before starting out the chief frost-worker had given me a small vial of clear liquid, which, in case of any danger from heat, I was to use for the preservation of the snow-wreath. In my tussle with the wolf this vial must have become partly uncorked, for I became aware of a strong odor diffusing itself about me, and an overpowering sleepiness getting the better of me. I had drawn the bottle out, recorked it, and put it away again; but this was no sooner done than I fell in a sleepy swoon on the roadside.

“I have no idea how long I slept: there is neither day nor night down there, only a dim sort of twilight, which at times becomes illuminated by the phosphorescent rays of fishes, or the fitful gleam of ocean glow-worms. I was startled from my swoon by a rattling, dragging noise, and came very near being scooped up by an uncouth-looking iron thing which was attached to a cable. It flashed upon me, stupid as I was, that this must be a deep-sea dredge; and as I was not at all inclined to be hauled up on shipboard, in a lot of mud and shells as a rare specimen of the sea, I got as quickly out of the way as possible.

“But it was now time for me to get on *terra firma*, as Knops would say, or dry land, as I prefer to put it. Among the beautiful vermilion leaves or tentacles of the curious half animals and half flowers I observed a vine not unlike the honeysuckle, only of tougher fibre. On this I clambered up to take a look about me, and discovered that I was much nearer shore than I supposed. Hardly had I done this when, to my horror, I saw the arms of an octopus stretching towards me, its horrid beak projecting from between its ugly eyes. More alarmed than at any previous danger, I strove to retain my self-command, but the fearful creature was already touching me. Remembering, with wits sharpened by distress, the effect of the drug in my little bottle, I drew out the cork, and

making a sudden lunge, dashed the ether in its face—if you can so call any part of its disgusting head.



Page 30

“Instantly it lost all power over its members, curled up in a writhing, wriggling mass, and I with a bound reached the sandy shore.”

CHAPTER XI

Paz, taking a long breath, and looking at Leo to see the effect of his narrative, went on:

“It was quite time for me to be on land, for in the moonlight, which bathed everything in silver, were to be seen troops of fays hurrying to the festival. Some sailed along the shore in mussel shells, others were on the backs of black swans whose bills looked like coral, and others were skimming along with their own gauzy wings, or lolling luxuriously on the feathers of flamingoes.

“I joined the ones on foot, and with them reached the plantation, which presented a scene of great brilliancy. Gold and silver ferns hedged the rose-leaf path which led to the bower of beauty; on every leaf were myriads of fireflies, and glowing from higher plants bearing many-hued flowers were Brazilian beetles. Plunging into the thicket, I made a hasty toilet at a brook-side, and then rejoined the advancing guests. The bell-bird could be heard clearly summoning our approach, while sweetest warblers poured out their melody. The throne was formed of the Santo-Spirito flowers, and beneath the wings of its dove-like calyx was the lovely fay in whose honor was all this gayety, surrounded by her young companions.

“Approaching quickly, I unstrapped my package, took the satin case from my pocket, and fell upon my knees in the customary manner; perceiving which, the beautiful being motioned for me to rise, and with the most unassuming grace received my burden. As she unfolded the lace from its silken cover a cry of delight escaped her, and shaking out its gossamer folds she threw it over her head. With all the care I could use I had laid bare the block of ice, which shone like silver in the moonbeams, and now with a sudden blow of my dagger I cleft the ice, and lifted out the wreath, placing it as I did so on the head of the fay.

“There was no time for ceremony. Had I waited to pass it from hand to hand of the attendants it would have been gone. There was a hush over all as I crowned the fay. Each snowy star stood out in perfect beauty. She alone could not see its peerless charm. But I had provided for this. Chipping off a thin layer of the ice-block, I laid a silver-lined leaf from a neighboring bough behind it, and held this mirror before the fay’s wondering eyes. Never have I seen anything so beautiful or so fleeting. Even as I held the reflected image before its reality, drops as of dew began falling over the lace, and in a moment the wreath was gone.

“Like a little child robbed of a treasure, the look of wonder and delight gave place to one of bewildered disappointment. She turned a questioning gaze upon me.



“Alas!’ said I, ’most sovereign lady, ’tis not in elfin power to reproduce this wreath; it was the emblem of human life, as brief, as fleeting. My Queen desired me to bring it. I have met with great difficulties in so doing, but none has saddened me like your disappointment.’



Page 31

“With eager sweetness she bade her cavaliers respond. They assured me of her gratitude and delight, and bade me welcome. The warbling birds again started their liquid strains, and a mazy dance began which resembled a fluttering band of snowy butterflies tangled in a silvery web. Slipping off, I came to the side of a lake on which were boats and Indian canoes of the moccasin flower. Here I rested, watching the measures of the dance, and taking little refreshing sips of cocoa-nut milk. A swift-winged night-hawk having been placed at my disposal, I had a safe and speedy journey home.”

“And is that all?” inquired Leo.

“Yes,” said Paz, “for here comes Master Knops.”

Leo thanked Paz warmly, and turned towards Knops, who, with hat in hand, stood gravely waiting to speak.

“Is it the wish of Prince Leo to make further explorations, or will he now return to his father and his home?”

With some self-reproach at having quite forgotten that he had a father and a home, Leo said he was ready to return.

“And may his humble servants, the distinguished savant Paz and the Master Professor Knops, have the pleasant assurance of Prince Leo’s satisfaction at this visit?” asked Knops, still in the most formal manner.

“I cannot thank you half as I should like to do,” replied Leo, “but I hope to be able to show you that your entertainment and instruction have not been wasted.”

“Come, then, we will go.”

“Adieu,” said Paz. “Look out for me some fine frosty night when you are skating. You may think you see some of your furry friends startled out of their winter sleep, but just give a whistle, and say ‘Paz,’ and I will be with you.”

“Good-bye,” said Leo. “I hope it will be soon that I shall see you.”

But Knops was off and he had to follow. Away they went, climbing and clambering, slipping and sliding, crawling and jumping, through forests of coal, over mines of iron, and beside walls glittering with silver. Presently, however, Leo found himself where they had started from, viz., his own cellar door, and Knops preparing to leave him. Dropping his ceremonious manner, he said:

“I am sorry to bid you farewell, my dear boy; I have become heartily interested in you and your welfare. The only souvenir I have to offer is this little compass; it is a mere



trifle, but the needle has the power of finding precious metals. Learn how to make it useful. Good-bye.”

Leo found himself alone. He pushed open the cellar door, and mounted the steps to the kitchen. It was early morning, and the cocks were crowing lustily. The one old deaf woman was striving to make a fire burn, but the wood was wet and she found it difficult.

“Where are all the people?” shouted Leo in her ear, for he well knew her infirmity.

“Gone—all gone,” she answered.

“And my father, where is he?”

“In bed yet, and he had better stay there, for I’ve no breakfast for him.”



Page 32

Leo suspected what was the matter. Taking a basket from a peg, and a bowl from the dresser, he went out into the fields. Everything was sodden with the rain, but the birds were singing with all their might; those that were not were repairing the ravages of the storm.

“Even the birds are busy at their nests,” thought Leo; “everything, every creature, has its work to do. Shall I alone be idle? Never.”

Putting aside the wet boughs, which sprinkled him well, he sought an old tree-trunk for its store of honey. Filling his bowl with this, and his basket with fresh eggs, he returned to the monastery. Here he helped the old woman with the fire, and between them they soon had the kettle steaming. The tray with his father’s breakfast was made ready, and with his own hands he took it to him.

“Leo, my long-lost son,” exclaimed Morpheus at sight of him, “where have you spent the night?”

“In Dream-land,” was Leo’s reply; and then, without preface, he asked of his parent the privilege of looking over his accounts, and doing what he could to assist him in his difficulties. Morpheus smiled indifferently, but gave Leo his keys, with permission to do as he pleased.

All the morning Leo puzzled his brain examining books and papers, with little result. Then he saddled his horse, rode into the nearest town, and sought a lawyer whom his father knew. To him he related their grievances, telling him that he was sure their property, well managed, could be made to yield handsome returns, and informing him of his wonderful compass, which could indicate the presence of minerals. The lawyer was not very sanguine, but he put a young clerk in charge of the matter, who, becoming much interested, looked up his residence at the monastery, and went to work with diligence. Under his guidance Leo studied and strove to regain their former prosperity. Laborers were eager to resume their duties as soon as they saw the prospect of payment. Crops became abundant. By the aid of Leo’s compass—which was only a scientific novelty yet to be discovered—mines were opened and vast wealth displayed.

And Leo had become a different lad. No longer idle and careless, with slow and lingering tread, he was now alert, vigorous, and manly. The servants were glad to return and obey his wishes. The monastery was rebuilt and repaired. Lawns and gardens were in trim array. Warm tapestries and curtains lined the bare walls and windows, while ivy and rose clambered without.

Even Morpheus, roused from his invalidism, rewrote his poems, sent them to a publisher, and favored all his friends with copies bound in blue velvet, with his monogram in silver on the covers. His pride in his son became so great that at Leo’s request he undertook to renew the library, and the time that he had spent in bed was



devoted to the step-ladder. It was in this way he discovered that their name had been incorrectly written. For his own part he did not care to make any change, but he insisted that Leo should use the portion omitted, which an old copy of the Doomsday-book had revealed to him, and sign himself in full, "Leo Sans Lazybones."



Page 33

Christmas was approaching; not a green Christmas, but an icy, snowy, frozen one, with holly wreaths on his shoulders and a plum-pudding in his hands.

The monastery was full of guests, relatives of Morpheus. These guests were all poor—in one way—but they had a wealth of their own which made them delightful to Leo. They were poets and painters and scribblers, and as merry as larks; and as they all admired each others productions, there was no end of cheerful nonsense. The children, however, were the brightest of all. Each child was as merry as it was lovely, and the painters were almost frantic in their efforts to make Christmas cards of them, while the poets cudgelled their brains for rhymes.

To prevent too much industry in that way, Leo had induced them all to put on their skates on Christmas-eve, and glide over the frozen ponds, while he made ready the tree which stood in the great hall.

It was an immense spruce, all powdered with silvery fringe, and Leo had only to tie on the little gilt tags numbered to correspond with the packages of gifts, which were heaped on surrounding tables, and fasten on the candles of red and blue wax. When this was done he put on his own skates, for it was yet too early to light the tree, and away he went skimming after the shouting, laughing crowd of friends and relatives.

Suddenly a squirrel darted from its hole, and went scudding across the river. Leo started in pursuit, giving a low whistle. Instantly it stopped, sat upon its haunches, threw off its skin, and out stepped Paz.

“Good-evening, my dear Prince, good-evening; we are well met; just in time to exchange Christmas greetings. I have been looking for you lately, but you seemed always so occupied that there was no chance for me. You have no idea how pleased Knops is to hear of your prosperity. He has sent for me a dozen times lately merely to express his satisfaction; and he wants me to ask a favor of you, which I know already you will grant.”

“Anything in my power, dear Paz,” replied Leo, eagerly.

“Of course; and we know how good a use you make of your power. Times are greatly changed. You are benefiting every one about you; I hear it on all sides. We are proud to be your friends. All that Knops asks is that in clearing up your property, and cutting down all the rank growth of weeds, you will spare a patch of wild-flowers here and there, and all the empty birds’ nests. Leave these for the use of our children, and we will be greatly obliged.”

“But that is a mere nothing; can I in any other way serve you?” asked Leo.



“No,” said Paz, “not that I know of. I am on my way now to see some new minerals supposed to be similar to those of the moon. I haven’t much faith in them.”

“How about the diamonds?”

“Don’t mention them. I shall never try my hand at those again; and you, if you are wise, will be contented to let Nature remain her own chemist. Adieu. A very merry Christmas to you.”



Page 34

"The same to you," echoed Leo, but Paz was already muffled in his furs and running rapidly away.

PHIL'S FAIRIES

CHAPTER I

THE WIND HARP

"Oh, Lisa, how many stars there are to-night! and how long it takes to count just a few!" said a weak voice from a little bed in a garret room.

"You will tire yourself, dear, if you try to do that; just shut your eyes up tight, and try to sleep."

"Will you put my harp in the window? there may be a breeze after a while, and I want to know very much if there is any music in those strings."

"Where did you get them, my darling,"

"From Joe."

"Joe, the fiddler?"

"Yes; he brought me a handful of old catgut; he says he does not play any more at dances; he is so old and lame that they like a younger darkey who knows more fancy figures, and can be livelier. He *is* very black, Lisa, and I am almost afraid of him; but he is so kind, and he tells me stories about his young days, and all the gay people he used to see. Hark! that is my harp; oh, Lisa, is it not heavenly?"

"I don't know," said poor, tired Lisa, half asleep, after her long day's work of standing in a shop.

Phil's harp was a shallow box, across which he had fastened some violin strings rather loosely; and Phil himself was an invalid boy who had never known what it was to be strong and hardy, able to romp and run, or leap and shout. He had neither father nor mother, but no one could have loved him more or have been any gentler or more considerate than was Lisa—poor, plain Lisa—who worked early and late to pay for Phil's lodging in the top of the old house where they lived, and whose whole earthly happiness consisted in making Phil happy and comfortable. It was not always easy to do this, for Phil was a strange child; aside from the pain that he suffered, he had odd fancies and strange likings, the result of his illness and being so much alone. And Lisa



could not always understand him, for she lived among other people—rough, plain, careless people, for whom she toiled, and who had no such thoughts as Phil had.

From the large closet that served as her bedroom Lisa often heard Phil talking, talking, talking, now to this thing, now to that, as if it were real and had a personality; sometimes his words were addressed to a rose-bush she had brought him, or the pictures of an old volume she had found on a stall of cheap books at a street corner, or the little plaster cast that an image-seller had coaxed her to purchase. Then, again, he would converse, with his knife and fork or plate, ask them where they came from, how they were made, and of what material. No answer coming, he would invent all sorts of answers, making them reply in his own words.

Lisa was so used to these imaginary conversations that they did not seem strange to her.



Page 35

Phil had, too, a passion for music, and would listen intently to the commonest strains of a hand-organ, and Lisa had given him a little toy harmonica, from which he would draw long, sweet tones and chords with much satisfaction.

Old Joe, who blackened boots for some of the lodgers, had heard the child's attempts at music, and had brought his violin and played for him. One day, happening to leave it for a while on the window-ledge, Phil's quick ear had detected a low vibration from the instrument. This circumstance, and something he had read about a wind harp, had given him the wish to make one—with what success he was anxious to find out, when Lisa laid it in the open window for him.

A soft south wind was blowing, and, as Phil spoke, it had stirred the loose strings of the rude Aeolian harp, and a slight melodious sound had arisen, which Phil had thought so beautiful. He drew his breath even more softly, lest he should lose the least tone, and finding that Lisa was really asleep, propped himself up higher on his pillows, and gazed out at the starlit heavens.

He often talked to the stars, but very softly and wonderingly, and somehow he could never find any answers that suited him; but to-night, as the breeze made a low soft music come from his wind harp, filling him with delight, it seemed to him that a voice was accompanying the melody, and that the stars had something to do with it; for, as he gazed, he saw a troop of little beings with gauzy wings fluttering over the window-ledge, and upon the brow of each twinkled a tiny star, and the leading one of all this bevy of wee people sang:

“Come from afar,
Here we are! here we are!
From you Silver Star,
Fays of the Wind,
To children kind.”

“How lovely they are!” thought Phil. “And so these really are fairies. I never saw any before. They have wings like little white butterflies, and how tiny their hands and feet, and what graceful motions they have as they dance over my harp! They seem to be examining it to find out where the music comes from; but no, of course they know all about it. I wonder if they would talk to me?”

“Of course we will be very glad to,” said a soft little voice in reply to his thoughts.

“I was afraid I would frighten you away if I spoke,” said Phil, gently.

“Oh no,” replied the fairy who had addressed him; “we are in the habit of talking to children, though they do not always know it.”



“And what do you tell them?” asked Phil, eagerly.

“All sorts of nice things.”

“Do you tell them all they want to know?”

“Oh no,” laughed the fairy, with a silvery little voice like a canary-bird’s. “We cannot do that, for we do not know enough to be able to: some children are much wiser than we. I dare say you are.”

“Indeed I am not,” said Phil, a little sadly; “there are so many things that puzzle me. I thought that perhaps, as you came from the stars, you knew something of astronomy.”



Page 36

“What a long, long word that is!” laughed the fairy again. “But we are wind fairies; and yet the Father of the Winds is called Astraeus: that sounds something like your long word, does it not?”

“It sounds more like Astrea, and that means a star.”

“Why, where did you learn so much?”

“I saw it in a big book called a dictionary.”

“Another long word. Doesn’t your head ache?”

“Sometimes, not now. I have not any books now, except picture-books.”

“Did you ever have?”

“Oh yes; when papa was living we had books and pictures and many beautiful things; but there was a great fire, and all sorts of trouble, and now I have only Lisa. But Lisa does not understand as papa did; it was he showed me that word in the dictionary.”

“Oh, don’t say that great ugly word again! Shall I tell my friends to make some more music?”

“Yes, please.”

The wind fairy struck her little hands together, and waved her wings. In a moment the little white troop danced over the strings of the harp, and brought out sweet, wild strains, that made Phil nearly cry for joy. They seemed to be dancing as they did it, for they would join hands and sway to and fro; then, parting, they wound in and out in graceful, wreath-like motions, and the tiny stars on their foreheads flashed like diamonds. Up and down they went, the length of the strings, then across, then back again; and all the time the sweet wild music kept vibrating. “How lovely! how lovely!” said Phil, when there was a pause.

“I am so glad you like it! we often make music for people, and they hardly hear it,” said the fairy.

“I do not see how they can help hearing,” said Phil.

“Why, I’ll tell you how: we frequently are in the tree-tops, or whirling about low bushes; every soft breeze that blows has some of our music in it, for there are many of us; and yet very few people pay attention to these sounds.”

“When the wind screams and roars in winter, is it you, then, who does that too?” asked Phil.



“Oh no,” said the fairy, rustling her wings in some displeasure. “We are of the South Wind only, and have no such rude doings; I hope I may never have any work to do for the North Wind, he is so blustery. Now it is time you went to sleep, and we cannot stay longer, for if the moon rises we cannot see our star-beams, and might lose our way. We will just fan you a little, and you will soon be in Dream-land.”

As she spoke, Phil saw her beckon to her troupe, and they all flocked about him, dazzling him so with their starry coronets that he was forced to shut his eyes, and as he closed them he felt a gentle wafting as of a hundred little wings about his forehead, and in another moment he was asleep.

CHAPTER II

PHIL'S NEW FRIEND



Page 37

Old black Joe had not always been either a boot-black or fiddler. In his youthful days he had been a house-servant, and had prided himself on his many accomplishments—his dexterity at dinners, his grace at evening parties, the ease and unconcern with which he could meet embarrassing emergencies at either. But times had changed for him: his old employers had died, a scolding wife had made his home unhappy, he had lost the little money he had saved, and he was no longer the bright, cheerful young fellow he had been. Age and rheumatism had made him crusty; but beneath the outward manner, which sometimes was very cross, he had a tender heart and a pitiful nature.

Of late years he had picked up enough for his support in the many little ways incident to city life. He could whitewash, sweep chimneys, run on errands—or rather walk on them, and that, too, very slowly. He shovelled snow and carried coal, sawed wood and helped the servants at whose homes he was employed.

His occupations took him about to many houses, but he always irritated the people with whom he came in contact by invariably assuring them that their masters and mistresses were not of the real stuff that ladies and gentlemen of *his* day were made of; that fine feathers did not make fine birds; that people nowadays were all alike, and had no manners.

He made one exception only, in favor of a maiden lady whose parents he had known, whose servants were kind to him, and whose retired and dignified way of living quite suited his fastidiousness.

This was a Miss Schuyler; and nothing pleased Joe more than to have this one person, whom he regarded with unqualified admiration, send for him to bestow the monthly allowance she was in the habit of giving him. On the day that he expected this summons he always gave an extra touch to his toilet, exchanged his torn coat for a patched one, his slouch hat for a very much worn beaver adorned with a band of rusty crape, and out of the pocket of his coat, but never upon his hands, was to be seen an old pair of yellow kid gloves.

In the course of Joe's wanderings he had chanced to, hear of the invalid boy Phil, who liked to listen to his fiddle, and it did not take long to strike up an acquaintance between them.

Often on a rainy day, or when work was dull, Joe would spend an hour or two with Phil, relieving his loneliness, soothing his pain, and cheering him with his music and his rambling talk about "old times" and the people he had seen.

It was the latter part of May, and had been very warm; but Joe buttoned up his best coat and donned his beaver, for his pay was due at Miss Schuyler's. She lived in a large house, rather imposing and handsome, and in the gayest part of the city; but she was by no means imposing or gay in her own person. A little figure, simply dressed, a kind

face without beauty, a gentle manner, and a certain gracious kindness and familiarity had endeared her to Joe. On this

Page 38

day she was not, as usual, sitting with her work in the library, where the sun poured in on the bronzes and richly bound volumes, on the old engravings and the frescoed ceiling—for Miss Schuyler liked light and warmth and color—but she was away up in the top of the house, directing her maids in the packing of blankets and woollens and furs, preparatory to leaving her house for the summer. Joe had mounted stair after stair seeking her, and by the time he reached her was quite out of breath; this, and the odor of camphor and cedar-wood, made him sneeze and cough until Miss Schuyler said to one of the maids in a whisper, “The poor old soul would have been black in the face had he ever been white.”

To Joe himself she said, very kindly, “My good old friend, you need not have taken so much trouble to see me; I could have come down to you.”

“Laws, Miss Rachel, I knew you was busy, and nuffin’s ever a trouble to do for you; I go to the tops of houses often—just come from one where poor Phil’s a-groanin’ with pain. That chile’ll die if somebody don’t do suthin’ fur him soon.”

“What child?” asked Miss Schuyler, whose tender point was her love of children. “You haven’t any grandchildren, Joe, have you?”

“No, Miss Rachel, de Lord nebber trusted me with any chil’en.”

“Well, who is Phil?” said Miss Schuyler, absently; adding, to one of her maids, “Take care of that afghan; wrap it in an old linen sheet; it was knitted by a very dear friend, and I do not want it moth-eaten; I had rather lose a camel’s-hair shawl.” Which evidence or regard seemed very extravagant to the girl who was obeying instructions, but which Joe thought he appreciated.

“Haven’t I tole ye about Phil, Miss Rachel?”

“I don’t know. I don’t think you have. But come down to my room, Joe, and then I can listen to your story.”

Giving a few more directions, Miss Rachel led the way to a lovely sunny room, with flower-baskets in the windows, soft blue draperies, and delicate appointments. Seating herself at a desk and pointing Joe to a chair, upon which the old man carefully spread a silk handkerchief lest his clothes should soil the blue cushions, she counted out the money due him, and placed it in an envelope, saying as she did so, “Now tell me about that child.”

“It’s a white chile, Miss Rachel.”



“Well, I like white children, Joe, though I must confess the little colored ones are much more interesting,” said Miss Rachel, smiling.

“I thought you liked my people, Miss Rachel; but this poor Phil’s a gentleman’s son, very much come down far’s money goes. He is too young to know much about it, but the girl who takes care of him was brought up in his family, and she says they was well off once.”

“But what about the boy?” asked Miss Schuyler, a little impatiently.



Page 39

“He’s a great sufferer, but he’s a wonderful chile. He loves to have me play for him, and then he tells me the thoughts that come to him from the music. I’s no great player, Miss Rachel,” said Joe, modestly, “but you’d think I was, to hear him talk. He sees fairies and he dreams beautiful things, and his big brown eyes look as if he could a’most see ’way up into heaven. Oh, he’s a strange chile; but he’ll die if he stays up in that garret room and nebber sees the green fields he’s so hungry for.”

Miss Rachel’s eyes were moist, but she took a card and pencil from her desk. “Where does he live—in what street and what number?”

“I’m sorry, Miss Rachel—You jess go up the Avenue, and turn down the fourth or fifth street, and up a block or two, and it’s the fust house with a high stoop and green shutters. I allers go in the alleyway, so I forgit numbers.”

Miss Schuyler bit her lip to keep from smiling, thought a moment, scribbled a memorandum, rang the bell, and gave some more directions; left the room, and came back with her bonnet on. “Can you show me the way to Phil’s house, Joe?”

“Course I can, Miss Rachel,” replied the old man, delighted that his words had aroused his listener’s sympathies.

“It’s not very far; he’s all alone, ’cause Lisa has to be away all day. And I shouldn’t wonder”—here he dropped his voice to a whisper—“if sometimes he was hungry; but he’d nebber say so.”

This latter remark made Miss Schuyler bid Joe wait for her in the hall, while she went to a closet, found a basket, in which she placed a snowy napkin, some biscuit, some cold chicken, and a few delicious little cakes. In her pocket she put a little flask of some strong cordial she had found of service on her many errands of charity.

How proud Joe was to be her escort! but how meekly he walked behind the lady whose footsteps he thought were those of a real gentlewoman, the only one to whom he would accord this compliment, although he passed many elegant dames in gay attire.

The little gray figure, with its neat, quiet simplicity, was his embodiment of elegance, for somehow Joe had detected the delicate perfume of a sweet nature and a loving heart—a heart full of Christian charity and unselfishness.

They walked for some distance, and the day was so warm that Miss Schuyler moderated her usual rapid pace to suit the old man’s feebler steps. Off the Avenue a long way, up another, down a side street, until, amid a crowded, disagreeable neighborhood, Joe stopped.

“You had better lead me still, Joe. The boy might be frightened or annoyed at seeing a stranger: I dare say he’s nervous. Go up, and I will wait outside the door while you ask



him if I may come and see him. Wait, there's a flower-stall a little way from here; I will get a bunch. Take my basket, and I will be back in a few moments. I am glad I thought of the flowers; children always like them."



Page 40

She hastened off, while Joe leaned on his cane and muttered blessings upon her; but some rude boys beginning to chaff him, he turned on them with his usual crustiness, and quite forgot his beatitudes.

Miss Schuyler came back in a few minutes with a lovely bunch of bright blossoms embosomed in geranium leaves.

“Now, then, Joe, this shall be my card; take it in, and tell Phil I am coming.”

“God bless you, Miss Rachel!” was all Joe could reply.

Miss Rachel had her own way of doing things. It was nothing new for her to carry flowers and dainties to the sick poor. She had been much with sick people, and she knew that those who have no luxuries and few necessaries care for the things which do not really sustain life quite as much as do those who can command both.

CHAPTER III

PHIL HAS A VISITOR

Phil was alone, as indeed he was always, except on Sundays, or the few half-holidays that came to Lisa. Once in a while Lisa begged off, or paid another woman for doing an extra share of work in her place, if Phil was really too ill for her to leave him. The hot sun was pouring into the garret room, though a green paper shade made it less blinding, and Phil was lying back in a rocking-chair, wrapped in a shawl. On a small table beside him were some loose pictures from a newspaper, a pencil or two, and an old sketch-book, a pitcher of water, and an empty plate.

The boy opened his closed eyes as Joe came in, after knocking, and looked surprised.

“Why, Joe, what is the matter?” he asked. “You do not come twice a day very often.”

“No,” said Joe, “nor are you always a-sufferin’ as you was this mornin’. I’ve come to know how you are, and to bring you *that*,” said he triumphantly putting the nosegay before the child’s eyes.

The boy nearly snatched the flowers out of Joe’s hand in his eagerness to get them, and putting them to his face he kissed them in his delight.

“Oh, Joe dear, I am so much obliged! Oh, you darling, lovely flowers, how sweet you are! how delicious you smell! I never saw anything more beautiful. Where did they come from, Joe?”

“Ah, you can’t guess, I reckon.”



“No, of course not; they are so sweet, so perfect, they take all my pain away; and I have been nearly smothered with the heat to-day. Just see how cool they look, as if they had just been picked.”

“It’s a pity the one who sent ’em can’t hear ye. Shall I bring her in?”

“Who, Joe—who do you mean?”

“Joe means me,” said a soft voice; “I sent them to you, and I am Miss Rachel Schuyler, an old friend of Joe’s. I want to know you, Phil, and see if I cannot do something for that pain I hear you suffer so much with. Shall I put the flowers in water, so that they will last a little longer? Ah, no! you want to hold them, and breathe their sweet fragrance.”



Page 41

Miss Schuyler had opened the door so gently, and appeared so entirely at home, that Phil took her visit quite as a matter of course, and though astonished, was not at all flurried. He fastened his searching gaze upon her, over the flowers which he held close to his lips, and made up his mind what to say. At last, after deliberating, he said, simply, "I thank you very much." His thoughts ran this way: "She is a real lady, a kind, lovely woman; she has on a nice dress—nicer than Lisa's; she has little hands, and what a soft pleasant voice! I wonder if my mother looked like her?"

Miss Schuyler's thoughts were very pitiful. She was much moved by the pale little face and brilliant eyes, the pleased, shy expression, the air of refinement, and the very evident pain and poverty. She could not say much, and to hide her agitation took up the sketch-book, saying, "May I look in this, please?"

Phil nodded, still over the flowers.

As the leaves were opened, one after the other, Miss Schuyler became still more interested. The sketches were simply rude copies of newspaper pictures, but there was no doubt of the taste and talent that had directed their pencilling.

"Have you ever had any teaching, Phil?" she asked.

"No, ma'am," answered Joe for Phil, thinking he might be bashful. "He hasn't had no larnin' nor teachin' of anythin'; but it is what he wants, poor chile, and he often asks me things I can't answer for want of not knowin' nuthin' myself."

"And what is this?" said Miss Schuyler, touching the box with violin strings across it, which was on a chair beside her.

"Please don't touch it," answered Phil, anxiously; then fearing he had been rude, added, "It is my harp, and I am so afraid, if it is handled, that the fairies will never dance on it again. You ought to hear what lovely music comes out of it when the wind blows."

Phil spoke as if fairies were his particular friends. Miss Schuyler looked at him pitifully, thinking him a little light-headed. Joe nodded, and looked wise, as much as to say, "I told you so."

Just then Phil's pain came on again, and it was as much as he could do not to scream; but Miss Rachel saw the pallor of his face, and turning to Joe, asked:

"Does he have a doctor? Is anything done for him?"

"Nuthin', Miss Rachel, that I knows of. I never knew of his havin' a doctor."

"Poor child!" said Miss Rachel, smoothing his forehead, and fanning him. Then she tucked a pillow behind him, and did all so gently that Phil took her hand and kissed it—it



eased his pain so to have just these little things done for him. Then she poured a little of her cordial in a glass with some water, and he thought he had never tasted anything so refreshing. She sent Joe after some ice, and spreading her napkins out on Phil's table, set all her little store of dainties before him, tempting the child to eat in spite of his pain.



Page 42

Phil thought it was all the fairies' doing and not Joe's—poor pleased Joe—who looked on with a radiant face of delight. Phil would not eat unless Joe took one of his cakes, so the old fellow munched one to please him.

Meanwhile Miss Schuyler gazed at the boy with more and more interest; a something she could hardly define attracted her. At first it had been his suffering and poverty, for her heart was tender, and she was always doing kind deeds; but now as she looked at him she saw in his face a likeness to some one she had loved, the look of an old and familiar friend, a look also of thought and ability, which only needed fostering to make of Phil a person of great use in the world—one who might be a leader rather than a follower in the path of industry and usefulness. The grateful little kiss on her hand had gone deeply into her heart. Phil must no longer be left alone: he must have good food and medical care and fresh air, and Lisa must be consulted as to how these things should be gained. So while Phil nibbled at the good things, and Joe chuckled and talked, half to himself and half to Phil, Miss Schuyler wrote a note to Lisa, asking her to come and see her that evening, if convenient, explaining how her interest had been aroused in Phil, and that she wanted to know more about him, and wanted to help him, and was sure she could make his life more comfortable, and that Lisa must take her interference kindly, for it was offered in a loving spirit. Then she folded the note, and gave it to Phil for Lisa, and arranging all his little comforts about him, bade him good-bye.

Phil thought her face like that of an angel's when she stooped to kiss him; and after Joe, too, had hobbled off, promising to come again soon with his violin, he took up his pencil, and tried to sketch Miss Schuyler. Face after face was drawn, but none to his taste; first the nose was crooked, then the eyes were too small, then the mouth would be twisted, and just as Lisa came in, with a tired and flushed face, he threw his pencil away and began to sob.

"Why, my dear Phil," said Lisa, in surprise, "are you so very miserable to-night?"

"No, I am not miserable at all," said Phil, between his tears; "that is, I have had pain enough, but I have had such a lovely visitor!—Joe brought her—and I wanted to make a little picture of her, so that you could see what she looked like, and I cannot. Oh dear! I wish I could ever do anything!"

"Ah, you are tired; drink this nice milk and you will be better."

"I have had delicious things to eat, and I saved some for you, Lisa. Look!" and he showed her the little parcel of cakes Miss Schuyler had left. "And see the big piece of ice in my glass."

"Some one has been kind to my boy."



“Yes; and here is a note for you; and you must dress up, Lisa, when you go to see our new friend.”

Lisa looked down at her shabby garments; they were all she had; but she did not tell Phil that her only black silk had been sold long ago. She read the note, and her face brightened. There seemed a chance of better things for Phil.



Page 43

"I will go to-night, if you can spare me."

"Not till you have rested, Lisa; and you must drink all that milk your own self. Did you ever hear of Miss Schuyler?"

"I don't know," said Lisa, meditating; "the name is not strange to me. But there used to be so many visitors at your father's house, Phil dear, that I cannot be sure."

"She is so nice and tender and kind—Have you had a tiresome day, Lisa," added Phil, quickly, fearing Lisa might think herself neglected in his eager praise of the new friend.

"Yes, rather; but I can go. So Joe brought her here?"

"Yes; and see these flowers—yes, you must have some. Put them in your belt, Lisa."

"Oh, flowers don't suit my old clothes, child; keep them yourself, dear. Well, it is a long lane that has no turning," she said, half to herself and half to Phil. "Perhaps God has sent us Miss Schuyler to do for you what I have not been able to; but I have tried—he knows I have."

"And I know it too, dear Lisa," said Phil pulling her down to him, and throwing both arms around her. "No one could be kinder, Lisa; and I love this old garret room, just because it is your home and mine. Now get me my harp, and when you have put it in the window you can go; and I will try not to have any pain, so that you won't have to rub me to-night."

"Dear child!" was all Lisa could say, as she did what he asked her to do, and then left him alone.

CHAPTER IV

A PROMISE OF BETTER TIMES

When Phil was alone again, he waited impatiently for the long twilight to end in darkness, and the stars to come out. It seemed a very long time. Once in a while a faint murmur came from his harp, but it was a mere breathing of sound, and he turned restlessly in his chair. Then he closed his eyes and waited again, and his waiting was rewarded by a small voice in his ear whispering,

"Here we are! here we are!"

"Oh," said Phil, "I thought you never would come again."



“Tut, tut, child, you must not be so doubtful,” said the little voice again, and the starry coronet gleamed in his eyes. “I have brought you some sweet odors of wild-flowers, and spicy breath of pine and hemlock, for I thought you needed a tonic.”

Phil smelled something exquisite as she spoke, but all he said was,

“What is a tonic?”

“Something the doctors give when children are pale and thin, and do not have enough fresh air. I don’t pretend to know what it means, but I often go to see sick children in hospitals, and so I hear about such things.”

“Hark! is that my wind harp?—why, it sounds like water dropping and gurgling over stones.”

“It is the song of a mountain brook that my friends are singing as they dance over your harp. Look!”

Phil looked, and saw the flock of fairies like white butterflies swarming again over his harp, and heard the soft, sweet singing which kept time to their steps.



Page 44

“Oh, how beautiful! how beautiful!” said Phil.

“When you hear a brook singing, you must remember us,” said the fairy.

“Indeed I will; but I am afraid I shall never hear one: only the hoarse cries of the street and the rumbling of wagons come to me here.”

“Ah, better times are coming; then you will not need us.”

Phil lay still in his chair, listening intently; the white figures glanced in shadowy indistinctness across the window, only the starry ray from each little brow lighting their dance. They swept up and down, and swayed like flowers in a breeze, and still the little clear notes of their song fell like dripping water in cool cascades. Now it flowed smoothly and softly, again it seemed to dash and foam among pebbly nooks.

“Does it rest you? are you better?” asked the one little fairy who did all the talking.

“Oh, so much!” said Phil.

After a while the song stopped, and the fairies drew all together in a cluster, and were quite still.

“What does that mean?” asked Phil.

“They are disturbed; there is a storm coming. We shall have to return.”

“I am so sorry! I wanted to know more about you, and to see what you wear.”

“Mortals must not approach us too nearly. We may draw near to you. See, I will stand before you.”

“You seem to be all moonshine,” said Phil.

“Yes,” said the fairy, laughing merrily; “these robes of ours are of mountain mist, spangled with star-dust so fine that it makes us only glisten. We have to wear the lightest sort of fabric, so that we are not hindered in our long flights.”

“Do you know flower fairies?”

“Yes; but we are of a very different race. I suppose you thought we dressed in rose-leaves and rode on humble-bees, but we do not; we are more—now for a long word—more ethereal.” And again the fairy laughed.

“Ether means air,” said Phil, quite proudly. “Do you know any fairy stories?” he asked.

“Yes; shall I tell you one next time I come?”



“Oh do, please. So you *will* come again.”

“Yes, if I can. Now I must go. I thought I heard distant thunder. We must fly so fast—so fast! Good-bye—good-bye.”

There was a long rumbling of thunder far off in the distance, and a cooler air in the hot, close room. Phil lay and dreamed, wondering how long it took the wind fairies to reach their home. Then the sweet, spicy odors came to him again, and he lifted the languid flowers Miss Schuyler had brought him, and put them in his glass of water.



Page 45

He dreamed of fair green fields and meadows, of silent lakes bordered with rushes, out of which sprang wild-fowl slowly flapping their broad wings; of forests thick and dark, where on fallen trees the green moss had grown in velvet softness; of mountains lifting their purple tops into the fleecy clouds, and of long, shady country roads winding in and out and about the hills; of lanes bordered with blackberry-bushes and sumac, clematis and wild-rose; of dewy nooks full of ferns; of the songs of birds and the chirp of insects; and it seemed to him that he must put some of all this beauty into some shape of his own creation—picture or poem, song or speech; and then came a sudden sharp twinge of pain, and the brightness faded, and the room was dark, and he was hungry, and only poor little Phil, sick and sad and weary and poor.

CHAPTER V

LISA VISITS MISS SCHUYLER

“So you are Phil’s good friend Lisa?” said Miss Rachel Schuyler, sitting in her cool white wrapper in the dusk of this warm May evening. “I want to hear more about Phil. The dear child has quite won my heart, he looks so like a friend of mine whom I have not seen for many years. How are you related to him, and who were his parents?”

“I am not related to him at all, Miss Schuyler.”

“No?” in some surprise. “Why, then, have you the care and charge of him?”

“I was brought up in his mother’s family as seamstress, and went to live with her when she married Mr. Randolph, and—”

“Who did you say? What Mr. Randolph?”

“Mr. Peyton Randolph.”

Miss Rachel seemed much overcome, but she controlled herself, and hurriedly said, “Go on.”

“There was no intercourse between the families after the marriage, for Mrs. Randolph was poor, and they all had been opposed to her. I suppose you do not care to hear all the details—how they went abroad, and Mr. Randolph died there; and while they were absent their house was burned; and there was no one to take care of Phil but me, for Phil had been too sick to go with his father and mother; and Mrs. Randolph did not live long after her return. I nursed them both—Phil and his mother; and when she was gone I came on to the city, thinking I could do better here, but I have found it hard, very hard, with no friends. Still, I have pretty steady work now as shopwoman, though I cannot do all that I would like to do for Phil.”



Miss Schuyler was crying.

“Lisa, you good woman, how glad I am I have found you! Phil’s father was the dearest friend I ever had.”

“Phil’s mother gave the child to me, Miss Schuyler.”

“Don’t be alarmed. I do not wish to separate you. How can I ever thank you enough for telling me all this? And what a noble, generous creature you are, to be toiling and suffering for a child no way related to you, and who must have friends fully able to care for him if they would!”



Page 46

"I love him as if he were my own. Sometimes I have thought I ought to try and see if any of his relatives would help us, but I cannot bear to, and so we have just worried along as we could. But Phil needs a doctor and medicine, and more than I can give him."

"He shall have all he needs, and you too," said Miss Schuyler, warmly.

At this Lisa broke down, the kind words were so welcome. And the two women cried together; but not long, for Miss Schuyler rose and got Lisa some refreshing drink, and made her take off her bonnet and quiet herself, and then said:

"Now we must plan a change for Phil, and see how soon it can be accomplished. And you must leave that tiresome shop, and I will give you plenty of work to do. See, here are some things I bought to-day that I shall have to wear this summer."

She opened the packages—soft sheer lawn and delicate cambric that gave Lisa a thrill of pleasure just to touch once more, for she loved her work. "I shall be so glad to sew again, and I wish I had some of my work to show you."

"Oh, I know you will do it nicely. I am going out of town in a few days, and I want you and Phil to go with me. Do you think you can?"

"I am a little afraid," said Lisa, hesitating, "that we are not fit to; and yet—"

"I will see to all that. Now I suppose you cannot leave Phil alone much longer—besides, there is a shower coming. To-morrow I will bring a doctor to visit the dear boy, and we will see what can be done"; and she put a roll of money in Lisa's hand, assuring her that she should be as independent as she pleased after a while, and repay her, but that now she needed help, and should have it, and that henceforth Phil was to be theirs in partnership.

Lisa hurried away with a light heart. She had indeed toiled and suffered, striven early and late, for the child of her affections, and this timely assistance was a source of great joy.

She was too happy to heed the dashing shower which was now falling. Herself she had never thought of, and her dear Phil now was to be helped, to be cheered, perhaps to be made strong and well, and able to do all that his poor weak hands had tried to do so ineffectually.

She opened the door softly when she reached her room. A little shiver of sweet, sad sounds came from the wind harp. She lighted a candle, and looked into the pale face of the sleeping child as he lay in an attitude of weariness and exhaustion, with hands falling apart, and a feverish flush on his thin cheeks.

“My poor Phil! I hope help has not come too late,” she whispered, as she began her preparations for his more comfortable repose.



Page 47

The next day Miss Schuyler came, as she had promised, and brought a physician—a good, kind surgeon—who examined Phil, and pulled this joint and that joint, and touched him here and there, and found out where the pain was, and what caused it, and said nice, funny things to make him laugh, and told him he hoped to make him a strong boy yet. And then they whispered a little about him, and Joe was sent for, and a carriage came, and Phil was wrapped in a blanket and laid on pillows, and taken out for a drive alone with Miss Schuyler, who chatted with him, and got him more flowers; and when they came back there was a nice dinner on a tray, and ice-cream for his dessert, and Joe was to stay with him until Lisa came home; and before Lisa came there was a nice new trunk brought in, and several large parcels. And Phil thought he had never seen such a day of happiness. After his dinner and a nap, and while Joe sat and played on his violin, Phil sketched and made a lovely little picture of flowers and fairies, in his own simple fashion, to give to Miss Schuyler. And then Lisa came home, and the parcels were opened; and there were nice new dresses for Lisa, and a pretty, thin shawl, and a new bonnet; and for Phil there was a comfortable flannel gown, and soft slippers, and fine handkerchiefs and stockings; and Phil found a little parcel too for Joe with a bright bandanna in it, and the old man was very happy.

“It seems like Christmas,” said Joe.

Phil thought he had never seen quite such a Christmas, and said, “It seems more like Fairy-land, and I only hope it will not all fade away and come to an end, like a bubble bursting.”

“To me,” said Lisa, “it is God’s own goodness that has done it all, for it was He who gave Miss Schuyler her warm, kind heart.”

“And, Joe,” said Phil, “we are to go to the country, and you are to go with us; is not that nice?”

“Very nice, Phil. I’m glad Miss Rachel’s found out your father was her friend.”

Then Joe took up his violin again, and played “Home, Sweet Home,” and “Auld Lang Syne”; and Phil fancied the violin was a bird, and sang of its own free-will, and thinking this reminded him how soon he would hear the dear wild birds in the woods, and he wondered if the fairies would come to him there.

Then Joe went home, and Lisa had errands to do, and again she put the wind harp in the window, and left Phil alone, keeping very still in expectation of another visit from his fairy friend.

CHAPTER VI

THE FAIRY’S STORY



“I promised you a story,” said the little voice, to his ear again.

“Yes, I know you did; can you tell it now?”

“To be sure I can, if I only have time. I did not bring any of my people to-night; they are helping some of the herb elves. It is a little late in the season, and some blossoms have been slow in opening, so that we have to urge them.”



Page 48

“How?” asked Phil.

“By coaxing and persuasion for some of them; others we have to blow upon quite forcibly.”

“I am ready for the story when you are,” said Phil.

“It is a wild affair, and one that all children might not care to hear; but to you, I fancy, nothing comes amiss.”

“No, I like almost everything,” said Phil.

“I shall begin just as my grandmother used to. Once upon a time, in the days of enchantment, there was a dreadful old ogre—”

“Do not make him too dreadful, or I shall have bad dreams,” interrupted Phil.

The fairy laughed and flapped her little wings. “Now you must not be afraid; it will all come out right in the end. When I said the ogre was dreadful, I meant he was ugly-looking; we fairies like everything beautiful. Shall I go on?”

“Oh yes, and please forgive me for stopping you.”

[Illustration: *The approach of the swanlike boat*]

“This ogre was ugly, with a shaggy head, a shaggy beard, and fierce eyes, and he lived all by himself in a great stone castle on the shore of a large lake. His principal pleasure consisted in tormenting everything and everybody he came near; but if he had any preference, it was for boys; to tease and ill-use them had the power of affording him great happiness. Lazy, loitering little fellows were in especial danger, for he would catch them quite easily by throwing over their heads the nets he used in fishing, drag them off to his castle, and keep them in a dungeon until there would be no chance of discovery, and the boys’ parents would think them lost forever. Thus he would gain a very useful, active set of laborers for a stone wall he was building, for so afraid were they of his displeasure, and so fearful that they might be starved, since the only food they received was dried and salted fish, that these boys worked like bees in a hive, only it was a sullen, painful sort of working, for they never sang or shouted, whistled or talked, and they were thin and wretched, and more like machines than boys.

“Now in this lake, on the shore of which was the ogre’s castle, was an island, where lived a Princess whom the ogre had bewitched, but who had also regained her liberty, and near whom the ogre could never again come; even to land on her island or bathe in the water near would at once change him into a shark.



“This Princess, passing the ogre’s castle in her beautiful swan-like sailing-boat, had seen the unhappy little boys at work on the stone wall; her sympathies had been aroused at so sad a sight, and she determined to wait her chance, and do what she could to relieve them. The chance came one day when the ogre had gone on a fishing excursion, from which he would not return till night. He had given the boys their rations of salt fish, and had commanded them in the gruffest tones to be sure and do an unusual amount of work in his absence, or they should all have chains on again; for when they were first caught he always chained them for fear they might try to escape; but they so soon lost all spirit and all desire for freedom that their chains were removed to enable them to work more easily.



Page 49

“He had no sooner disappeared in his great clumsy craft, laden with seines and harpoons, and baskets and jugs, than a whispering began among the boys, a sad sort of sighing and crying, almost like the whispering of wind in the tree-tops, which changed again to looks and glances of surprise as a beautiful vessel with silken sails floated up to the wharf, and a lovely, gracious-looking lady clothed in white stepped from the boat, and came rapidly towards them.

“‘Boys,’ said she, addressing them in a very soft, sweet voice, ‘I have come to release you from this cruel bondage; will you trust me, and go with me?’

“‘Yes, yes,’ came from more than a dozen little tongues.

“‘Come, then, at once. Drop your work, get into my boat, and we will be off. We have no time to lose, for your cruel master might possibly change his course and overtake us; then we should be in great danger.’

“The boys crowded about her, and with a wild cry followed her to her little vessel, and almost tumbled into it in their delight. It was with some difficulty that she kept them balanced, and prevented their falling out; but once packed, there were so many of them that they could not move. The vessel seemed to start of itself; its sails swelled out and spread themselves like wings, and away they dashed over the rippling waves, which rose and fell and hurried them on their way. The ogre’s castle was quickly left far behind, and the tired boys breathed more freely as it disappeared entirely from their view. In another minute they fell fast asleep, and did not waken till the motion of the boat ceased, and they found themselves gliding into a quiet harbor, fringed on each side with lovely shrubs that dipped their beautiful flowers into the calm water. Then the lady bade them follow her as she stepped from the boat on to the soft grass, and led them past fruits and flowers, and winding walks and fountains, up to the dazzling crystal palace in which she lived. Here the boys were halted while she made them this little speech: ‘Boys, this is my home, these are my gardens; for a while you will have to remain here. We may have trouble with the ogre, but I want you to have no trouble among yourselves. Kindness, good-humor, pleasant looks and words, must prevail. There must be no envy, no selfishness, no desire to get the better of each other in any way. I demand obedience. If I receive it, all will be well; if I do not, you will have to suffer the consequence. Now I have said all that I need. These flowers, these fruits, are yours to enjoy in moderation.’

“As she ceased speaking she clapped her hands, and a troop of servants appeared. They led the boys to marble baths, where waters gushed and flowed in liquid beauty, and groves of orange-trees made a dense thicket about them. Here each boy was made sweet and clean, and provided with a suit of white clothes. When they emerged from the baths, they saw before them on the lawn tables filled with tempting food—roasted meats, broiled birds, pitchers of milk and cream, biscuits and jellies and ices.



Page 50

“The utmost order prevailed. Starved as the poor boys were, the grace and beauty of their surroundings made them gentle and patient. At each plate was a tiny nose-gay held in the beak of a crystal bird, the body of which was a finger-bowl. Every plate was of exquisite workmanship. Some had birds of gay plumage; some had fierce tigers’ heads or shaggy-maned lions; others bore designs of tools or curious instruments; but that which most delighted the boys was a dish of crystal, an exact imitation of the *Swan*—the *Fairy Swan*—in which they had sailed to this lovely island. It was laden with choice fruits. While the boys feasted as they had never before, strains of sweet music became audible; they could also hear the soft splash of the waves on the shore, or the dripping of fountains, as the waters sparkled and fell in their marble basins.

“After they had feasted, the boys wandered off in most delightful idleness to all parts of the island. They climbed the trees, which bore blossoms, fruits, and nuts, all at the same time; they fished in the little coves; they waded in the shallow basins; and nothing would have marred their happiness had not one tall boy, with unnaturally strong and keen vision, declared that he saw the ogre’s sail coming in the direction of the island.

“This was terrible, and had the effect of bringing all the boys together from their various amusements, just as chickens run from a hovering hawk. Together they crowded for a moment in mute dismay, unable to speak, to even hide, waiting the approach of their cruel foe.

“Nearer came the sail, and now they could all discern it. Its great clumsy shape, its heavy lumbering action, were not to be mistaken.

“What should they do?

“‘Run for the Princess,’ said one.

“‘Too cowardly, that,’ said another; and indeed their good, abundant meal had begun to put strange courage in their little hearts.

“‘Let’s meet him, and fight him,’ said one.

“‘Let’s upset his boat,’ said another.

“‘How?’

“‘By pelting him with stones when he comes near enough.’

“‘Good!’ cried they all; and they began gathering all the bits of rock and pebbles they could find.

“Now came a roar of ogreish rage from the boat as it neared them.



“I’ll have ye again!’ screamed the ogre.

“Then began the attack—a volley of small stones, nuts, fruits, anything they had in their pockets.

“One of the ogre’s eyes was closed, so certain had been the aim of the tall boy who acted as leader.

“But the boat came nearer, and they were very much afraid the ogre would leap from it, when one of the boys whispered, ‘I’ll go out to tempt him. Once get him in the water, and he’s a goner. He’ll be bewitched.’

“So he off with his jacket, and out he waded, while the others looked on in breathless admiration.



Page 51

“The ogre looked with his one eye in eager derision; then forgetting his danger, and regarding the boy much as he might do an unwary fish that he would gobble up, he sprang from his boat into the shallow water, preparing not only to snatch the one boy, but to seize them all in a great seine he dragged after him, when suddenly the waves from the centre of the lake began hissing and seething, a tremendous swell set in towards the shore, driving the brave little fellow who had gone out to tempt the enemy completely off his legs, and obliging him to swim to the land, which he had no sooner reached than a great shout from all the boys made him look back, when, lo and behold! there was no ogre, only a great shark, with open jaws and a shining row of teeth, floundering about, and dashing himself in angry transports against the sides of the ogre boat, which he vainly attempted to board. And now could be seen swarms of little fish attacking the great one, darting hither and thither, now at his head, now at his tail, but keeping well away from his open jaws. And the waves began to be colored with the shark’s blood. At last, wearied and wounded, with an angry snap of his jaws he dived down, and was seen no more.

“Then the boys gave another loud huzza, when, like a broad flash of sunshine, the lovely Princess came among them.

“‘Boys,’ said she, ‘you have proved yourselves brave youngsters. The ogre can never again trouble you. He will be a shark for three thousand years, and he will not care to stay in these waters, with so many enemies about him. Now, when you have regained your good looks and strength, I will take you all home. Here is the key to my sweetmeat closet. Run off, now, and have a good time.’

“The sweetmeat closet was a large enclosure where grew sugar-almond trees, candied pears, candied plums, and where even the bark and twigs of trees and bushes were of chocolate. In the centre was a pond of quivering jelly. Mounds and pyramids of jumbles and iced cakes abounded. They were too tempting to be long looked at without tasting, and the boys helped themselves gladly.

“A long, sweet strain from a bugle called them away from this delightful spot, and on a broad, smooth field they found bats and balls, tenpins and velocipedes—in short, everything a boy could want to play with.

“After this they supped in simple fashion, each boy with only a great bowl of bread and milk. Then to more music they were marched to their beds—downy white nests, in a great room arched with glass, through which they could see the moon and stars shining, and where the dawn could awaken them with its early light.



Page 52

“Such was their life for two of the most happy weeks of their lives, and never did boys thrive better. They grew fat and rosy; they sang, they danced, they played. Every time the Princess came among them they shouted with glee, and nearly cracked their young throats in doing her honor. But all fine things come to an end some time. Once more they were packed in the *Fairy Swan*, and away they sailed for the land of reality and for home. The Princess gave them each a beautiful portrait of herself, of the island, and of the *Swan*. And each boy promised that whenever he had a chance to perform a kind action he would do it in remembrance of the gentle courtesy of the Princess. And so ends my fairy story. Good-night, Phil.”

“Good-night. Oh, how nice it was! I thank you so much!” and sleepy Phil turned to see the little white butterfly wings skimming out of the window, while a long, sweet sigh came from his wind harp, sounding like, “Good-night—good-night,” again.

CHAPTER VII

FAREWELL TO THE CITY

A day or two later, Phil, wrapped in shawls, was carried by Joe to a carriage, and the carriage rolled away to a wharf where puffed numerous steamboats; and here he was taken on board one of the river-steamers, and safely placed in the midst of a heap of pillows on deck, where he could see all the busy life about him—see the newspaper boys and the orange women, and the hurrying hacks and the great teams, and all the stir and tumult of the city’s busiest hours. Miss Schuyler, in her cool gray suit, was on one side of him, and Lisa, looking tranquil and thoroughly glad and grateful, on the other, and Joe, just the happiest darkey in the world, sat at his feet, ready to take charge of all and everything.

They sailed and they sailed, away from the city and its many roofs, from the factory chimneys and the steeples, from the cloud of smoke which hung between the sky and house-tops, until they came to the hills and dales of pasture-lands and villages. Then they landed, and were whirled away in the cars, and Phil enjoyed it all, even the fatigue which made him sleep; and Joe carried him about as if he were a baby.

It was quite dark when, after a drive over a rather rough road, they reached the lake-side cottage which was Miss Schuyler’s summer home, and Phil was glad to be put in bed, for the old pain had begun again.

When he opened his eyes the next morning, it was with a strange feeling of wonder at his new surroundings. Birds were twittering out-of-doors, and there was a soft lapping of water on the shore. The green boughs of a cherry tree almost brushed against the window-panes. He was no longer in his old garret room, but in a pretty apartment, with bunches of rosebuds on the walls, and scent-bottles on the toilet-table, and muslin



curtains, and a bright carpet, and pretty book-shelves, and brackets, and lovely child-faces in the engravings; and on a broad table was a little easel, and a paint-box, and drawing-paper; and here too was his old box with the violin strings.



Page 53

“Oh,” said Phil, softly, “I wonder if heaven is any better than this!”

He had closed his eyes as he said it, and went over his usual morning prayer of thankfulness; and when he opened his eyes, there was Lisa with his breakfast-tray—poached eggs and toast, and a goblet of milk.

“Lisa, Lisa, is not this too nice for anything?” asked Phil.

“Yes, indeed, dear, it is nice. Miss Schuyler says you must hurry and get strong, so that you can make the acquaintance of the hens that laid these eggs for you, and the cow whose milk is to do you so much good.”

“What is the cow’s name, Lisa?”

“I don’t know,” said Lisa.

“It is Daisy,” said Miss Schuyler, coming in to say good-morning. “She’s a lovely little Alderney, and her milk is like cream. Oh, you will soon be strong enough to row my boat for me.”

“A boat! Have you a boat?”

“Yes, and you are going out on the lake in her this very morning.”

“It is just too much happiness, Miss Schuyler.”

“Well, we will not overpower you. For a day or two you must rest, and do nothing but breathe the sweet air. I have to be busy getting things in order and looking after my garden. Lisa will take her work on the piazza, and you can lie in one of the easy-chairs. Joe is to wait on you, and do a little weeding, and keep the paths in order, and bail out the boat; and the old man seems to be very much at home already. So that is the order of the day. Now good-bye, and don’t do too much thinking.”

“One moment, Miss Schuyler; do you believe in fairies?”

“Just a little,” said Miss Schuyler, with a quizzical smile.

“Well, I believe in them,” said Phil, “and I think you are one of the best of them.”

“Oh no, I am very human, dear Phil, as you will find out. And now I must go look after my strawberry-beds. Good-bye.”

“Good-bye,” said Phil, waving her a kiss. “Only think, Lisa, we will actually see strawberries growing! It is quite fairy-land for me.”



After that he was carried down to the easy-chair on the piazza, where he could see the lawn sloping down to the lake, and watch the birds lighting on the rim of a vase full of daisies and running vines. He could see that the cottage was low and broad, and painted in two shades of brown; and that there were arbors covered with grape-vines on one side, and on the other he knew there were flower-beds and fruit-trees, for every once in a while Miss Rachel was to be seen emerging from there in a broad straw hat and with buck-skin gloves, trailing long bits of string or boughs of green stuff, with scissors and trowel and watering-can.

Lisa had her work-basket, and with deft fingers and a little undertone of psalmody was fashioning a pretty summer garment. Then Miss Rachel came and tossed a basketful of early roses and syringa down beside Phil, and put a little table beside him, with some slender glass vases and a pitcher of water, and asked him to arrange the flowers for her. This he was glad to do, and made the bunches up as prettily as his nice taste suggested. But he was really wearied with great happiness. It was all so new, so charming, every sense was so satisfied, that at last he closed his eyes and slept.



Page 54

It seemed to him only a little while, but when he opened his eyes again Lisa was beside him with his dinner; and after dinner he slept again, and when he awakened the lawn was in shadow, and the sun low in the sky, and the birds were twittering and seeking their nests, and Miss Rachel was telling Joe to put cushions in the boat, the *Flyaway*; and presently Phil found himself floating gently on the lovely water of the lake, and the cottage and lawn and arbors were looking like a pretty bit of landscape he had seen in books.

He dipped his fingers in the clear water, and looked down at the pebbly bottom, and listened to the even dip of the oars, as old Joe rowed farther out from shore.

“It must be fairy-land,” thought Phil, but he said nothing; he was too happy to talk. And so the day ended—the first day in the country.

CHAPTER VIII

THE NEW COMPANION

Miss Schuyler was a very active, industrious lady, and her time was fully occupied. She had her house and grounds to attend to, her business affairs, her domestic duties, and her poor people—for paradise or fairy-land, whichever Phil chose to call his present abode, was not without its poor—and so, during the day, Lisa was mostly with Phil; but he and Miss Rachel had always a pleasant chat after breakfast; and in the evening many a long talk made known to Miss Rachel more of Phil’s character than he had any idea of; and the more she knew of the boy, the warmer her heart became towards him, and the more thankful she was that she had been able to do for him just what was wanted, and just at the right time.

Already there was a little color in his pale cheeks, and an eagerness for his meals. He could endure more fatigue, and he suffered less pain. Indeed, Dr. Smith, who lived half a mile off, had promised to send his son, a lad of twelve, down to see Phil in his stead. “For,” said he, “Graham does not know one bone from another, and will soon help Phil to forget all about his, or whether they ache or not.”

And so Graham Smith, a ruddy-cheeked fellow, full of life and spirit, came to see Phil.

It was a warm June day when they first saw each other.

Phil was sketching, and Lisa was sitting beside him sewing. Joe was Phil’s model, standing patiently by the hour to be made into studies of heads, arms, trunk, or the whole man.



Suddenly there was a loud bark of welcome from Nep, the Newfoundland dog—who greeted tramps with growls—and Graham Smith came up the garden path, followed by Nep, leaping frantically upon and about him.

He nodded in a brusque way to Lisa and Phil, and without a word bent down over the sketch, gave a long, low whistle, and said, “Isn’t that bully?”

“If I knew what bully meant, I could answer you, perhaps,” replied Phil, gazing up with admiration at the brown and red cheeks, the clear blue eyes, and the tough, hardy-looking frame of his new acquaintance.



Page 55

"I'm not sure I can tell you; only you can beat all the boys I know at this sort of work," said Graham. "Where did you learn how to do it?"

"Oh, I have not learned yet; I am only just beginning."

"Haven't you had any lessons?"

"No; it comes naturally to me to draw. I wish I could do it better, that's all," said Phil, with a little sigh.

"I wouldn't want to do any better than that," said Graham.

"Oh yes, you would," replied Phil, very much pleased, however, with such heartfelt admiration of his drawing.

Just then Nep made another leap upon Graham, and the two, after a friendly tussle, had a race down to the lake, where Graham tossed a stick, and sent the dog after it.

"That is something / cannot do," said Phil, as the boy came up to him again; "and yet you do it as easily as I draw."

"What—shy that stick off on the water? Then you don't play ball?"

"I don't even walk," said Phil.

Graham seemed both astonished and sorry, so he turned it off with, "But you are going to, you know, when you get well—and you can do more than any of us now. Let's go out on the water. May we?" he asked, turning to Lisa.

"Oh yes," said Lisa; and Joe was glad to get the *Flyaway* ready for a start.

Phil was placed in the stern, where Graham promised to show him how to steer. Phil was an apt scholar, and delighted to be of use. Joe addressed Graham as "Captain," and complimented him on the fine feathering of his oar. The lad was a good oarsman, and made the boat respond to her name.

"Where shall we go, mate?" asked Graham of Phil.

"The Captain must give orders," was Phil's reply.

"Have you been down to Point of Rocks?" asked Graham, directing Phil's eyes to a distant promontory.

"No, I have not been so far yet."

"There are lots of water-lilies there."



“Oh, do go there, then! I want some to copy.”

“All right. Pull on your starboard oar, Joe; there, that will do. Now we will soon reach it.”

It was a lovely little nook where grew the lilies, after they had turned around the jutting stones which gave a name to the spot, and Phil soon had his hands full of fragrant buds. The water was so clear that he could see their long green stems away down to the black mud from which they sprang. They moored the boat, and Graham got out to ramble, returning with ferns and mosses and wild-flowers for Phil.

“Now,” said he, “if you don’t mind, I’m going to have a swim just around the rocks here where the water is deeper and not so full of weeds. I wish you could come.”

“So do I,” said Phil, watching with admiration every movement of his lively companion. Besides admiration, too, there was a twinge of envy, which he really did not know to be that hateful fault; but it passed in a moment, and he laughed loudly to see Graham’s antics in the water.



Page 56

The bath over, they turned homeward. Miss Rachel was entertaining guests in the parlor. Lisa had gone off for a walk. Graham had to go home, but promised frequent visits; and as Phil was tired, Joe carried him up and laid him on his bed, putting his mosses on the table, and the water-lilies in an oblong vase which was usually filled with fragrant flowers. The wind harp was there, too, and as Phil, with closed eyes, was resting in the half-twilight made by shut blinds, there came from it a little murmur, which grew into a long, sad monotone. He dared not move, and would not speak, but between his eyelids, partly raised, he thought he saw the familiar little winged creature who had comforted and entertained him in his wretched city home.

“How little people know what they are doing when they pull up ferns and mosses in the woods!” said the soft voice. “I was sleeping soundly on the nicest bed imaginable, having travelled far for just a whiff of water-lily odor that I thought might refresh a poor little hospital patient tossing with fever in the city, when with a violent wrench I found myself borne off from my sheltered and dusky resting-place, and tossed into a boat in the blinding glare of the sun. Fortunately, I had wrapped myself in some broad grape-vine leaves, and was mistaken for a moth cocoon; else, dear Phil, I had not been here.”

“I am so glad, so very glad, to see you again!” murmured Phil, softly.

“And I am so glad you are in the country! You could not have lived long in the city. What are you doing now?”

“Getting well, they tell me.”

“Do you ever think of the ones who cannot do that?”

“No, I do not,” said Phil, in some surprise.

“Ah, there are so many. I see them often—little creatures who are friendless and helpless. You should not forget them.”

“It is not that I forget, I do not think of them at all. I suppose I would if I saw them.”

“Well, you must think of them, and do something for them. Oh yes, I know you do not believe you can, but the way will come if you try. All that I do is to whisper soft songs in their ears, or give them a little waft of summer freshness, but it sometimes stops their painful tossing, and brings sleep to their tired eyes.”

“I will think; I will try,” said Phil.

“That is right,” replied the fairy. “Now I will call some of my friends, the flower fairies, hidden in these water-lilies, and you shall see them dance.” She clapped her hands softly together, and out of each lily crept a tiny shape of radiant whiteness and lily-like grace, so pure, so exquisite, that they did indeed seem to be the very essence and spirit



of the flower. And now began another of those fantastic movements which Phil had before witnessed. Now in wreaths, now apart, and again in couples, they swayed about in an ecstasy of mirth, and the wind harp gave out strains of wild and melodious sound. They nodded to each



Page 57

other in their glee, and Phil could hardly tell whether they really were fairies or flowers, for they looked just as the flowers might when blown about in a breeze. As he gazed, his eyelids began to droop. He was very tired. The music grew fainter and fainter. He seemed to be again in the boat, listening to the water lapping its sides, and Graham seemed to be with him, reaching out for lilies; and then all faded, and Phil was fast asleep.

CHAPTER IX

A VISIT FROM THE YOUNG DOCTOR

“Now, Phil,” said Miss Rachel, “I am not going to be so busy for a while, and though you cannot study yet, for the doctors say you must not, I shall read aloud to you a little every day. Graham has promised to come often to visit you, and with our boating and driving, and pleasant friends coming to stay with us, I think we shall have rather a nice summer. What do you think?”

Phil’s face lighted up with a grateful smile, which grew into rather a sober expression.

“I think it is all delightful; but—”

“But what, my dear; are you not contented?”

“Oh yes, more than that: I am as happy as I can be; but—”

“Another but.”

“Miss Rachel, what becomes of all the poor sick children in the city who have no such friend as you are to me?”

“They suffer sadly, dear Phil.”

“Then don’t you think I ought to remember them sometimes?”

“Yes, in your prayers.”

“Is there no other way?”

“I am not sure that there is for a child like you. Perhaps there may be, and we will think about it; but you must not let such a thought oppress you; it is too much for a sick child to consider. Be happy; try to get well; do all you can to make everybody about you glad that you are here, by pleasant looks and good-nature. There, that is a little sermon



which you hardly need, dear, for you are blessed with a sweet and patient temper, and are far less troublesome than many a well child.”

“I suppose I do not deserve any praise if I was made so,” said Phil, laughing.

“No, not a bit; the poor cross little things who fret and tease and worry are the ones who should be praised when they make an effort not to be disagreeable. But I am not going to preach any more. I am going down-stairs to make some sponge-cake for the picnic you and Lisa and I are going to have to-morrow.”

“A picnic! a real one in the woods?”

“Yes, and here comes Graham with a basket. I wonder what is in it. Good-bye. I will send him up to you.”

Graham came up in a few moments with the basket on his arm.

“Guess what I have here, Phil.”

“How can I?”

“Oh yes, you can—just guess.”

“Something to eat?”

“No, little piggy; or rather yes, if you choose.”

“Well, chickens or eggs?”

“No, neither.”



Page 58

“Fruit?”

“Guess again.”

“Medicine for some of your father’s sick people?”

“No.”

“Flowers? Oh no, one cannot eat flowers if they choose. I give it up.”

“Well, then, watch,” and lifting the cover slowly, three cunning white rabbits poked their little twitching noses over the edge of the basket.

Phil gazed at them delightedly. “And you call those little darlings something to eat, do you?”

“If you choose, yes.”

“As if any one could choose to be such a cannibal! What precious little beauties they are! Oh, how pretty they look!”

“They are for you.”

“Really! Oh, thank you, Graham. But you must ask Miss Schuyler.”

“I did, and I am to build them a hutch. Until I do, there is an empty box in the barn where they can stay.”

“And you can build—handle tools like a carpenter? How nice that must be!”

“Oh, that’s nothing; all boys can do that.”

Graham forgot that Phil was one boy who could not, but seeing the shade come over his friend’s face made him repent his hasty speech.

“I beg your pardon,” he said, in a low voice.

“No, you need not, Graham. I must get used to being different from other boys. Well, these are just the loveliest little things I ever saw. What do they live on?”

“Almost any green thing; they are very fond of lettuce. When you are able you must come and see my lop-ears.”

“Have you many rabbits?”



“Yes, quite a number. Let me see: there’s Neb (he’s an old black fellow—Nebuchadnezzar), and Miss Snowflake, Aunt Chloe (after the one in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*), Fanny Elssler (because she jumps about so), and Mr. Prim—he is the stillest old codger you ever saw.”

“What other pets have you?”

“I’ve lots of chickens, three dogs, two cats, a squirrel, and a parrot.”

“A large family.”

“Yes, almost too large; they will have to be given up soon.”

“How soon?”

“In the fall, I suppose; I am going to boarding-school.”

“What fun!”

“You would be amused with Polly. She is a gay old thing—laughs, sings, and dances.”

“Oh, Graham, can she do all that?”

“Indeed she can; sometimes she sings like a nurse putting a child to sleep, in a sort of humming hush-a-by-baby way; then she tries dance-music, and hops first on one foot, then on the other—this way,” and Graham began mimicking the parrot, and Phil laughed till the tears came.

“She screams out ‘Fire!’ like an old fury, but she is as serene as a May day when she gets her cup of coffee.”

“Is that your parrot, Graham?” asked Miss Schuyler.

“Yes, ma’am, that’s our green-and-golden Polly.”

“We will have to pay it a visit. Can you join our picnic to-morrow? it is Phil’s first one.”

“Really! why, he has a good deal to learn of our country ways.”



Page 59

“Yes, and I have a little plan to propose in which you may help us. Promise you will come.”

“Oh, I am always ready, thank you, Miss Schuyler. Shall we go by boat?”

“To be sure, to Eagle Island.”

“Then we will go early, I suppose, as it is quite a long pull. What must I bring, Miss Schuyler?”

“Only your arms, Graham, for alone Joe will perhaps find the rowing a little too much in the warm sun. I am Commissary-General for the party. That means, Phil, that I furnish the provisions: a Commissary-General has to see that his troops are well fed.”

“There is no danger about that, I am sure,” said Graham, gallantly, “if Miss Schuyler leads us.”

“Well, then, to-morrow at nine, before the sun is too high—earlier would not do for Phil. And now be off with yourself: and your bunnies, Graham, leave them in the barn; and tell your good, kind father that you are an excellent substitute for himself, that Phil is improving even faster with your visits than he did with his.”

“Good-bye, then, Phil; good-bye, Miss Schuyler. To-morrow at nine.”

CHAPTER X

THE PICNIC

It was a perfect morning. Blue sky, with pure little snow-drop clouds, as if the angels had dropped them from their baskets as they tended the flowers in the heavenly gardens. The lake sparkled and glistened in the sunshine, and every wave seemed to leap joyously as it broke in soft foam on the shore. In one end of the *Flyaway* sat Phil, on a pile of shawls; in the other were stowed a large basket, a pail of ice, and a pail of milk, and in between were Miss Rachel, Lisa, Joe, and Graham. Phil had twisted up a little nosegay for each, and had pinned a broad wreath of grape-leaves around Joe's straw hat, making the old fellow laugh at his nonsense. They were just pushing off, when a sudden rattling of chain and some impatient barks from Nep showed that he began to feel neglected.

“I thought we could get away unnoticed,” said Miss Rachel, “but I find myself mistaken.”

The boys pleaded for Nep. “Ah, let him come, please let him come.”



Nep's leaps becoming frantic, Miss Rachel yielded, and Graham soon had him loosened. He jumped at once into the boat, and crept under Phil's feet, making a nice warm mat.

"Poor Nep," said Phil, patting him, "he felt neglected"; and the big tail wagged thankful thumps against the boat.

The morning air was sweet with all manner of herbage yet fresh from the morning dew. The trees were in their most brilliant green, and every leaf seemed newly washed.

Graham began a boating song, and Miss Schuyler joined in the chorus. Old Joe chuckled and grinned; even quiet Lisa hummed a little as the song rose louder; and Phil, dipping his hands in the clear water, imagined that the fishes were frisking a waltz in their honor. They glided past Point of Rocks, past huge beds of water-lilies, past lovely little coves and inlets, and spots where Graham said there was excellent fishing; finally Eagle Island became more distinct, and its pine-trees began to look imposing.



Page 60

“Here we are!” said Graham at last, bringing the *Flyaway* up nicely on a pebbly beach, in good boating style.

Graham and Joe made a chair with their hands and arms, and so carried Phil very comfortably to the place under the trees which Miss Rachel had chosen for their encampment.

“Now,” said Miss Rachel, as she brought out Phil’s portfolio, a book, her own embroidery, and Lisa’s sewing, “I propose that Graham, being a more active member of society than we are, go off with Joe and catch some fish for our dinner.”

“Just the thing!” said Graham; “but I did not bring a line.”

“Joe has everything necessary—bait and all,” said Miss Schuyler.

“Now,” said Miss Rachel, when the fishermen had gone, seeing Phil’s longing look, and knowing well how much he would have liked to go with them, “we must go to work too, so that we may enjoy our play all the more afterwards. I could not let you go with Graham, my dear Phil; it would have fatigued you too much; but I want you to try and draw me that drooping bush on the edge of the water, and while you draw I will read aloud for a while.”

Miss Schuyler read, explained, talked to Phil about his drawing, and gave him the names of the trees about him.

The time flew fast, and it seemed a very little while when Miss Schuyler said to Lisa, “I think I hear oars; we had better be getting our feast ready.”

They brought out the basket and pails, spread a nice red dessert cloth down on a smooth patch of grass, laid broad green leaves down for the rolls and biscuits; golden balls of butter were in a silver dish of their own, and so were the berries in a willow basket, around which they put a few late wild-flowers.

“Now we want a good flat stone for our fireplace, and—Ah! here come our fishermen just in time.”

Graham and Joe now appeared with a few perch, but plenty of catfish. They went to work with zeal, and soon had enough brush for the fire, which they built at a good distance. And while Graham fed it, Joe skinned his catfish, salted the perch, and laid them on the stone.

Then they all sat around their grassy table, and Joe served them in fine style, bringing them their fish smoking hot on white napkins.



How merry they were over the good things, and how eager Graham was to cook fish for Joe, and serve the old fellow as nicely as he had done all of them! And Phil cut the very largest slice of cake for Joe.

“It is just the jolliest picnic I ever was at,” said Graham, helping to wash and clear away, and re-stow spoons and forks.

“Of course it is,” said Phil. “There never can be another quite so nice: it is my first one, you know.”

“Yes; just think of it, and it’s my fiftieth, I suppose; but then you must not think all picnics like this. It is something really remarkable to have everything go off so smoothly. Why, sometimes all the crockery gets smashed, or the fire won’t burn, or if it does, you get the smoke in your eyes, or your potatoes get burned, and your lemonade gets in your milk, or somebody puts your ice in the sun, and, to crown it all, down comes a shower.”



Page 61

“Dear, dear, what a chapter of accidents, Graham!”

“Are you listening, Miss Rachel?” said Graham, with a quizzical look. “I was only letting Phil know how much better you manage than most people.”

“Well, when you and Phil are ready, I want to tell you about something else I should like to manage. Come, put away all the books and work, and listen to my preaching.”

Miss Rachel sat on a fallen tree, leaning against some young birches. “Phil was asking me, yesterday,” said she, “what becomes of all the poor sick children in the city, and he seemed to think he ought in some way to help them; so I promised to think about what he had been considering, and a little plan came into my head in which I thought you could help us, Graham.”

Graham looked up with a pleased face, and nodded.

“It is just this. In the city hospitals are many sick children who have to stay in bed almost all the time. Now Phil and I want to do the little that we can for them, and it seems to me it would be nice to send fresh flowers and fruit—all that we can spare from our gardens—once or twice a week to some of these sick city children. What do you think, boys?”

“It would be lovely, Miss Schuyler,” said Phil, “only I do not see how we could help; it would all come from you.”

“Not all, dear child. I mean to give you both a share of the work—you in your way, and Graham in his. Are you interested? Shall I go on and tell you?”

“Yes, indeed,” both exclaimed.

“I propose that we set aside a certain part of our flower-garden and our fruit-trees, you and I, Graham (for I know you have a garden of your own), which we will call our ‘hospital fruits and flowers,’ and Phil is to assist in making up bouquets, hulling berries, and packing to send away; besides that, he is to make some little pictures, just little bits of sketches of anything that he fancies—a spray of buds, a single pansy, Joe’s old hat and good-natured face beneath, a fish, or a bit of vine-covered fence—and we will sell them for him, and the money shall help pay the express charges upon our gifts to the sick children, so that Phil will really be doing more than any of us. How do you like my plan?”

The boys were pleased, and had begun to say so, when a shout came from the other part of the island from Joe, and Nep set up a violent barking.

“Hi! look up dar, Miss Schuyler!” called out Joe.



“Quick, Phil!” said Graham; “look! there’s an eagle. How fortunate we are! There he goes, sailing away in all his glory”; and sure enough, the great bird floated farther and farther up in the blue sky.

Still Nep kept on barking, and Graham ran down to see what was the matter. He came back with something dangling from his hand, Joe and Nep following.

[Illustration: “LOOK! THERE’S AN EAGLE”]

“A black snake—oh, what a dreadful creature!” exclaimed Lisa.



Page 62

“Yes, indeed, ma’am,” said Joe; “and if Nep hadn’t barked so, the drefful cretur would have bitten me sure. That dog knows a heap; you’d better allus take him with you in the woods, Miss Rachel. I was lyin’ off sound asleep, with this critter close beside me, when Nep come up, and barked just as plain as speakin’. ‘Take care,’ says he, ‘ole Joe, you’re in danger,’ an’ with that I woke in a hurry, an’ jist then I saw that big eagle come soarin’ overhead, and then Marsa Graham come and give that snake his death-blow.”

“How did you do it, Graham?” asked Phil, excitedly.

“Oh, I pounded him on the head with a stone as he was making off. He is a pretty big fellow, and he must have swum from the main-land, Miss Schuyler.”

“Yes, I never saw a snake on this island before.”

“Come here, Nep,” said Phil, “dear old fellow; good dog for taking care of Joe. Your head shall be my first picture for our sick children.”

CHAPTER XI

A PAIR OF CRUTCHES

Aunt Rachel’s plan was entered into most heartily by both boys, and Graham became so much interested as to act as express agent on his own account, going to the city with what he called his first load of berries and flowers; but on his return was so silent and uncommunicative that Phil asked him if anything had gone wrong.

“Don’t ask me to tell you what I saw,” said he, in reply; “it was more than I could stand.” Then, as if sorry for his short answer, he added, “It was the most pitiful thing in the world—such a lot of little pale faces all together! and when I came to give them their share, as the lady in charge told me to do, I cried right out like any baby—there, now! But you have no idea how they brightened up, and how glad they looked when they took the posies. I don’t want to go again, though, unless Miss Rachel asks me to. I shall see those poor wizened little things as long as I live. I am going to sell all my pets this fall and give the money to St. Luke’s Hospital, and I shall sell every egg my chickens lay, for the same purpose.”

After that Phil asked no more questions, but worked harder than ever at his drawings, and as the season advanced, and flowers and fruit grew more abundant, they were able to despatch a basket twice a week.

Every day was filled with new life and pleasure. Increasing strength alone would have been a source of happiness, but in addition to this Phil had the benefit of Aunt Rachel’s loving-kindness, Lisa’s nursing, Joe’s good offices, and Graham’s pleasant, friendly

attentions. Then he was learning constantly something new, with eyes and ears, from the book of nature, with all its wonderful pictures, and from the other books allowed him.



Page 63

Driving behind old Slow Coach and floating on the lake in the *Flyaway* were some of the delights, and when more visitors came, and two charming young cousins of Aunt Rachel made the house resound with melody, Phil thought his happiness complete. But a new surprise was in store for him when, after repeated consultations and measurements and whisperings, a huge parcel was brought to his room, and Aunt Rachel and Lisa took off the wrappings. Neither of them looked particularly joyful as a pair of stout crutches made their appearance, but their faces changed wonderfully when Phil gave a cry of glee, and said, hilariously, "Now I can walk! now I can walk!"

He was eager to use his new helps, but it took a longer time than he had imagined to get accustomed to them, and it was many weeks before he could go down the garden paths (followed by Nep with much gravity, as if Phil were in his especial care) with desirable ease.

Coming in from one of these rather tiresome attempts one warm morning, and hearing music and voices in the parlor, Phil strayed into the dining-room, which was darkened and cool, and fragrant with fresh flowers. He lay down on a lounge, with his crutches beside him, and was listening to the pretty waltz being played in the other room, when he thought he saw a tiny creature light upon one of his crutches. Supposing it, however, to be a butterfly, he watched it in a sleepy, dreamy fashion, until it approached more nearly, and these words startled him:

"You do not know me?" said a tiny voice, rather reproachfully.

"What! is it you, my dear little wind fairy?" he asked. "I never dreamed that I should see you again. How did you get here?"

"Blown here, to be sure, as I always am, only I have to pilot myself, or what would be the use of having wings? I came on some thistle-down this time, for I wanted to have another peep at you, and I have had hard work to follow you in here, I assure you; but the vibrations of that lovely music helped me, and here I am. Do not talk—let me do it all. I never have much time, you know, and I want to thank you for your goodness in taking my advice, and helping some of my little sick friends. You do not begin to know what good you have done—nobody does; but doing good is very like the big snowballs that children make in winter—a little ball at first, but as they roll, it grows bigger and bigger, almost of itself, until it is more than one can manage. So it has been with your kind action: many have imitated it, and flowers come now to the hospitals by the bushel. Not only children, but grown people, sad with suffering, have been cheered and benefited. And you too are growing strong: how glad I am to see it! Your cheeks are tinged with just a delicate bloom, and you have grown taller. Ah, the country is the place for you children! I saw one of your sketches in the hospital the other day, hung under a little cross made of moss; it was



Page 64

a water-lily, and out of it was stepping some one who looked like me. The child who owned it said it came to her tied to some roses. She did not know I heard her; she was telling a visitor, and she said it made her happy every time she looked at it. That was a pretty thought of yours. This is my last visit for a long while. I am to be sent off to fan her Royal Highness, the Queen of Kind Wishes, when her coronation takes place. She lives in her palace of Heart's Ease, in a far-away island. I am to sail part of the way in a nautilus—one of those lovely shells you have seen, I dare say.”

“No,” said Phil, “I never saw one. And so you are going away—”

“Never saw a nautilus!” interrupted the fairy, as if afraid Phil was going to be doleful over her departure. “It looks like a ship, for all the world, and it *is* a ship for me, but it would not hold you—oh no! not such a gigantic creature as a boy”; and the fairy laughed aloud.

“Dear me,” said Phil; “no more visits, no more fairy stories. What will I do?”

“Shall I tell you just one more story before I say good-bye?”

“Please do.”

“Well, shut your eyes and listen.”

Phil obeyed, and the fairy began:

“In the days when fairies had much more power than they now have, there lived in a little house on the edge of a wood haunted by elves and brownies a boy named Arthur. He was a bright, handsome lad, but a little lazy, and much more fond of pleasure than of work; and he had a way of flinging himself down in the woods to lounge and sleep when his mother at home was waiting for him to come back with a message, or to do some little promised task. Now the fairies knew this, and it displeased them; for they are as busy as bees, and do not like idleness. Besides, as one bad habit leads to another, Arthur, in his lounging ways, would often do great damage to the fairies' flower-beds, switching off the heads of wild-flowers in the most ruthless fashion, and even pulling them up by the roots when he felt like it.

“One day he had been indulging this whim without any motive, hardly even thinking what he was doing, when he began to feel very strangely: a slight chill made him shiver; his eyes felt as if they were coming out of his head, his legs as if they were getting smaller and smaller; he had an irresistible desire to hop, and he was very thirsty. There was a rivulet near, and instead of walking to it he leaped, and stooping to drink, he saw himself reflected in its smooth surface. No longer did he see Arthur; no longer was he a mortal boy. Instead of this, a frog—a green speckled frog, with great



bulging eyes and a fishy mouth—looked up at him. He tried to call, to shout, but in vain; he could only croak, and this in the most dismal manner. What was he to do? Sit and stare about him, try to catch flies, plunge down into the mud—charming amusements for the rest of his life! A little brown bird hopped down for a drink from the rivulet; she stooped and rose, stooped and rose, again and again.



Page 65

“A great green tear rolled down from the frog’s bulging eye, and splashed beside the bird’s drinking-place. She looked up in alarm, and said, in the sweetest voice imaginable, ‘Can I do anything to assist you?’

“‘I am sure I don’t know,’ croaked Arthur, hoarse as if he had been born with a sore throat.

“‘But what *is* the matter?’ persisted the little brown bird, as more green tears splashed beside her.

“‘The matter is that I am a frog, I suppose,’ said Arthur, rather rudely.

“‘Well, what of that?’ still said the little bird. ‘Frogs are very respectable.’

“‘Are they, indeed; then I’d rather not be respectable,’ said Arthur.

“‘You shock me,’ said the bird.

“‘I don’t wonder; it has been a great shock to me,’ responded Arthur.

“‘What has?’ said the bird.

“‘Being a frog,’ replied Arthur.

“‘Have you not always? Oh no; I presume you were once a tadpole; all frogs are at first.’

“‘Indeed I never was a tadpole,’ said Arthur, indignantly; and then, it seeming somewhat a funny idea to him, he began to laugh in the hoarsest, croakiest *kerthumps*, which brought him to his senses again. Then he added, to the little brown bird which fluttered about him in some agitation, ‘No, I never was a tadpole—I was a boy named Arthur a few moments ago.’

“‘Aha!’ twittered the little brown bird, ‘I see now: you have been bewitched.’

“‘I suppose so,’ said Arthur, ‘and I would gladly be bewitched into a boy again, if that would do any good.’

“‘I must try and see what I can do for you. I am very busy repairing my nest—it was injured in the last storm; but I will go as soon as I can to see one of the herb elves, and find out what is to be done. You must have displeased them very much.’

“‘You are very kind,’ replied Arthur, taking no notice of the latter words.

“‘Oh no, not at all; it is a pleasure,’ said the little brown bird.



“Can I do anything for you?’ asked Arthur, roused into politeness by the pleasant manners of his little friend.

“You might gather some twigs or moss. Oh no, it would be all wet, and I should have great bother in drying it,’ said the little house-keeper. ‘I am equally obliged, but you had better just stay quiet and keep cool till I return’; and she flew softly away.

“I can keep cool enough,’ repeated Arthur; ‘when one’s legs are in the water, it would be pretty hard to do anything else.’

“It seemed dreadfully long to wait, when all he could do was to wink and yawn and gobble flies, and yet lounging in the woods and killing flowers had never seemed tedious when he was a boy. He tried to go to sleep, but was in too great a bewilderment to quietly close his eyes in slumber, so he gazed at the brook, and wondered when the little brown bird would reappear.”

CHAPTER XII



Page 66

THE FAIRY'S STORY CONTINUED

“Sooner than he had supposed, Arthur heard the soft little twitter of his new friend.

“I have flown really quite a distance, and had the good-fortune to see the elf who has charge of these woods. He is very much vexed with you, and will not listen to any excuse; though knowing so little about the matter, I hardly knew what to offer. I pleaded your youth, however, and made bold to promise your good behavior in the future, and while I was speaking one of the lesser elves twitched my wing a little, and whispered,

““Promise him something he likes as a ransom, and perhaps he will answer your request.”

““But I do not know what he likes,” I replied. “Can you suggest anything?” I added, in the same whisper.

““He is very much in need of some sea-weed. I heard him say the other day that he wanted some iodine, and that he would have to send a party of us off to the sea-shore to get sea-weed, from which we make iodine. Now, if your friend can get it, he would be so much pleased that I am sure he would be willing to forgive him, and restore him to his proper condition.”

““After hearing this, I made the offer in your name, and received a favorable reply. You are to get two pounds of sea-weed in less than a fortnight. It is to be laid on the large flat rock which you will see lower down the stream, under the chestnut-tree. You are to leave it there, and by no means to remain there, but return here, and your reward will await you.’

“Arthur thanked the little bird warmly, but inwardly despaired of accomplishing anything so difficult.

“The little bird hopped restlessly about. ‘You will try to do this, will you not?’ she asked.

“‘Of course I will try,’ said Arthur, rather ashamed, and striving to put a bold face on the matter. ‘I will try, but I do not know exactly what to do first.’

“‘Streams run into rivers, and rivers to the sea,’ twittered the bird.

“‘Yes; but I hardly think frogs swim in deep water. I will have to contrive a boat or a float of some sort.’

“Just then a huge trout sprang up after a fly and missed it. Quick as a flash the little bird darted up, caught the fly, dropped it into the trout’s open mouth, and twittered something unintelligible to Arthur. He heard, however, a curious sound of words from the trout.



“Jump on my back, jump on my back, and be off, alack!”

“Go,” said the bird, quickly.

“Arthur made a bound, and found himself on Mr. Specklesides’s back in an instant.

“Good-bye,” sang the little bird, loudly, for already the trout had flashed away into a dark pool beneath a cascade, where the falling waters made a deafening noise. In another instant he made another dart, and quick as lightning they were in broad, shallow water. Again they were whirled from eddy to eddy, and already the stream had widened into a little river. The bending trees, the weeds, and grasses, were mirrored in its cool depths, as now with long, steady stroke the trout swam on.



Page 67

“Suddenly another shape darkened the glassy surface of the water. It was the figure of a man in slouched hat and high boots, and long tapering rod in hand. He seemed to be quite motionless, but far out near the middle of the stream, just where the trout was swimming, danced a brilliant fly. A leap, a dash, and then began such a whirling mad rush through the water that Arthur knew he would be overthrown. The trout had seized the fly, and the fisherman, rapidly unreeling his line, waited for the fish to exhaust himself. Before this was done, however, Arthur was thrown violently off the trout’s back, and by dint of desperate efforts reached the shore, where for a long while he lay motionless.

“When he revived he found himself in long sedgy grass, well shielded from observation. The trout was nowhere to be seen, and Arthur knew that it was idle to search for him. Poor fellow! his fate had found him, and no doubt he was lying quietly enough now in the fisherman’s basket.

““Streams run into rivers, and rivers to the sea,” and I must look for some other method than the trout’s back.’

“He hopped about wearily, ate a few flies, and then, quite worn out, fell fast asleep. When he awoke it was dark. Fire-flies flashed about him brilliantly; stars beamed so brightly that they seemed double, half above in the sky, and half below in the water. From some overhanging boughs came a dismal hooting.

“‘Hush!’ cried Arthur, impatiently. ‘Why do you want to spoil the night with such wailing?’

“‘I have lost three lovely little owlets,’ was the response. ‘Darling little fluffy cherubs! Never had an owl-mother three such beauties!’

“‘Where are they?’ asked Arthur.

“‘Devoured by a horrible night-hawk,’ sobbed the owl.

“‘Where has the night-hawk flown?’

“‘Far down the river after prey.’

“‘Why do you not go after him and punish him?’

“‘It is too far, and I am too sorrowful.’

“‘You have no spirit. I would peck his eyes out were I in your place.’

“‘Ah! you are young and strong and brave.’

“‘Take me on your back, and we will fly after him.’



“Come, then, and do battle for me, noble friend.’

“Down flew the owl, and up jumped Arthur quickly on its back, inwardly wondering how a frog could be a match for a night-hawk, but quite resolved to aid the poor owl if he could. With a delightful sense of freedom and glorious liberty, such as he had never before even imagined, they rose high above the tree-tops.

“The moon had now risen, and the air seemed transparent silver.

“Keeping near the border of the river, which had greatly widened, they emerged from one forest only to enter another.

“The wild cries of loons saluted them; herds of deer, cooling themselves in the water, glanced up with startled gaze as they passed.

“A dark bird flapped low over the water as a fish leaped from the waves.



Page 68

“It is my enemy,’ whispered the owl.

“Pursue him,’ returned Arthur.

“My heart sinks within me; the memory of my owlets subdues all revengefulness. Though I should make him suffer, it would not return to me my children.’

“But if we kill him he can do no further mischief.’

“True, true; but he is a fearful fellow. What weapons have you with which to meet him?’

“None but my eyes and legs; a frog is a poor despicable wretch under such circumstances. Our weight together might sink him. You must fly at him with one tremendous blow, get him down in the water, and all the fish will assist to punish him, for all owe him a grudge. Or stay: fly close to him, and I will leap upon him; the weight will surprise and annoy him, and you must then make a dash for his eyes. Pluck them out if you can; it will be worse than death for him.’

“Barbaric torture! But the memory of my owlets hardens my motherly heart; it pulsates with tremendous force; their loss is the world’s loss. I hasten to the combat.’

“They swept down low as the hawk swooped for fish; Arthur sprang upon its back; the owl darted at the creature’s eyes, and with a furious blow, first at one then at the other, made her enemy sightless. The hawk, with a cry of pain, fell into the water. Instantly an enormous fish dragged him beneath, and it was only by wonderful dexterity on the part of the owl and of the frog that the latter was unhurt. He nestled once again among the owl’s soft feathers, and they sought the shore.

“Now how shall I repay you, my brave friend?’ asked the owl, as Arthur leaped upon land.

“I do not wish for any reward,’ replied Arthur.

“Nevertheless, you will not refuse to grant a sorrowful and stricken mother the little balm which her grateful spirit seeks in the return or acknowledgment of so vast a favor as you have conferred upon me.’

“Arthur thought a moment, and then told the owl of his journey and errand to the sea-shore. ‘Perhaps, as you are so famous for wisdom, Mother Owl, you may be able to give me some advice which will assist me to get the sea-weed, and return as speedily as I can,’ he said, as he finished his narration.

“I will consider,’ replied the owl, bending her searching gaze towards the earth. After a few moments’ reflection, in which she rolled her luminous and cat-like eyes about, ruffled her feathers, and uttered a few soft ‘to-whit to-whoos,’ she murmured, ‘I have it.



Seldom do I require to deliberate so anxiously, but parental anguish has clouded my active brain; the recent combat, also, has exhausted my nervous system. I have the happy thought at last, though, and you shall be assisted. We will fly to the nest of an old friend, a celebrated kingfisher. He lives not far from here; he knows the coast well, and will aid us. Come, mount upon my willing back, and we will fly at once.'

"This was no sooner said than done. They flew swiftly over the now broad expanse of water, rolling in a powerful stream, bordered by a wild and harsh-looking forest. A few tall and leafless trunks in a cluster contained, high among the bare boughs, a huge nest. From it, aroused from his sleep, sullenly flapped a large bird.



Page 69

“Wait a moment, my friend,’ called the owl, in her most beseeching manner. ‘I have a favor to ask. I wish to appeal to your intelligent geographical, topographical, and comprehensive intellect for guidance. You know the coast; lead us to it before the dawn of day.’

“A most unwarrantable request, upon my word,’ was the answer, in a gruff voice. ‘Why should you thus disturb my slumber, and demand of me this journey in the night?’”

CHAPTER XIII

THE FAIRY’S STORY CONCLUDED

“The owl replied softly, telling her errand, praising the bravery of the frog, and evidently pleasing the kingfisher with the news of the death of his enemy the night-hawk.

“I will go,’ he answered. ‘I do not pretend to be chivalric; I should prefer to sleep; nevertheless, I will go. Rise, follow-me. I expected to breakfast at home; now we will get some seafood.’

“He is always thus,’ whispered the owl, as Arthur and she rose high in the air. ‘He is a wonderful naturalist, a student of ichthyology, has a vast and profound fund of knowledge, but a great gourmand, always considering what he will eat; but he is reliable; we may trust him.’

“They sailed now high, now low, over ravines and gulfs, until the continuous murmur which had accompanied them deepened into the steady, solemn roar of the ocean. Great crags, broad sands, and huge waves tossing their white crests now met their eyes.

“The soft faint gray of early dawn lit the heavens. The kingfisher perched himself on the top of a rock, and watched the seething waves with a steady and keen outlook. The owl fluttered down to the long line of breakers, and bade Arthur notice the immense quantity of sea-weed fringing the rocks in all directions.

“Now how to carry it back is the question,’ said Arthur, rather dolorously.

“My friend, have no fear,’ said the owl. ‘Go to work bravely, and gather all you can, then we will arrange to transport it. Hasten, however, as much as you can.’

“Arthur hopped about zealously. He was half deafened with the thunder of the waves, half blinded with the dashing spray, half drowned with the salt-water pouring from every cliff and cranny of the rocks. Still he tore and clutched at the sea-weed, dragging it in masses larger than his own frog body to where the owl waited for him on the beach, in a sort of grotto hollowed out by the waves. There they piled it until they both were



assured they had the proper quantity. Then the owl flew to a promontory and hailed the kingfisher. Arthur, quite worn out, fell asleep. When he awoke, he found himself most strangely placed.



Page 70

“So soundly had he slept that the owl and kingfisher, having completed their arrangements for the removal of the sea-weed, had removed Arthur also, and he woke to find himself on the back of an enormous sturgeon, with sea-weed under him, over him, and about him. Tightly about the sturgeon was bound an old rope, which the kingfisher had procured from the remains of a wreck on the rocks, and in which he had entangled the sturgeon; this rope the owl and kingfisher took turns in holding, keeping the sturgeon near the surface of the waves by its check upon his movements, which were very bold and rapid. Thus, by the double force of flying and swimming, Arthur was carried with immense speed into the quiet waters of a bay from which they had emerged on arriving at the ocean.

[Illustration: MAKING THE STURGEON USEFUL]

“From the bay they sailed up into the river, and were coursing rapidly on to its narrower surface, when the sturgeon suddenly gave a great leap, very nearly throwing Arthur and his precious load off his back.

“The owl screamed, the kingfisher shouted hoarsely, but tightened his hold upon the rope, while the sturgeon dashed madly on.

“Again he made another frantic leap, whereupon the kingfisher gave him a thrust with his beak, to which the sturgeon replied,

“‘The current is becoming too shallow; I can go no farther. I *must* have air. How can you expect me to go up this trout stream? have you no mercy for such a beast of burden as you have made me?’

“‘Forward again!’ shouted the kingfisher, tightening the rope once more.

“Arthur felt the sturgeon shiver, and was conscious that his movements were weaker. Another leap, and he burst the rope; but as he jumped he tossed his load of sea-weed high in the air; it fell, and Arthur with it, on a rock.

“The owl gave a long, dismal cry, the kingfisher swept madly away after the sturgeon, and Arthur, bruised and sore, lay panting on the rock. For a long while he could do nothing. The owl went off in search of food, promising to return at nightfall. The day wore on. Arthur, weak with hunger, tried to devour some of the sea-weed. It was too bitter and salty. Leaning over the edge of the rock, he saw a shoal of tiny fishes playing hide-and-seek in the eddies of the stream. He clutched at one of them and devoured it. Never had he tasted a sweeter morsel. He caught another, and another, until his hunger was fully appeased. Evening came again; the moon shone early; Arthur was awakened from a long nap by the hooting of the owl, which said,

“‘Here I am again, my distressed friend.’



“At the same moment the kingfisher swooped down on them, and stood tilting and flapping his wings on a corner of the rock. ‘Now,’ said he, ‘as I am a bird of my word, and have promised to help you, we will proceed to business. This sea-weed is dry, as you see, and very much lighter. You, Mrs. Owl, can easily carry it, while I will take your young friend Mr. Frog. Let us be off at once, you, madam, directing the flight.’



Page 71

“The kingfisher and Arthur then heaped the sea-weed upon the owl, and Arthur, clambering on the rather oily back of the kingfisher, was once again going over the tree-tops.

“Before morning they had reached the desired spot, the flat rock under the chestnut-tree, placed the sea-weed upon it, and, hardly waiting for thanks, the kingfisher left them.

“Arthur thanked the owl warmly, assuring her of his deep gratitude. To which the owl replied, ‘You have done me quite as good service, and my thanks are quite as due to you. I return to my empty nest a desolate mother, but never shall I forget your generous sympathy. Possibly I may find consolation, but should I ever raise another brood, it could never equal the beauty of my lost darlings. Alas! we feathered creatures have great trials: we toil diligently for our families, build nests at great cost of time and effort, often to see them swept away by the winds; or, our nests lasting, and unattacked by enemies, many a young bird is thrown to the earth by the violence of storms, and comes to an untimely end through starvation. Sympathy, therefore, we appreciate; it helps us to bear our sorrows with becoming fortitude. Never shall I forget your gallantry, my friend; the thought of it will cheer many a solitary hour when all the world is asleep. I bid you farewell.’ So saying, the owl flapped her wings and was gone.

“Arthur hopped away from the chestnut-tree to the place where he had lost himself. It was early morning, but he was wearied, and slept in spite of all his anxiety. When he awoke he was no longer a frog, but a very hungry boy. The noonday sun was shining, and at his side hopped a little brown bird. It twittered gladly, as if congratulating him, but not one word could he understand. Before this adventure he would have probably frightened it away, but now he reached out his hand softly and stroked its feathers, then seeking berries, he placed them where the little creature could feast upon them. It peered at him with its bright little eyes, and even perched upon his shoulder. Never again did Arthur idly destroy any living creature of the woods—not the humblest weed or flower, bright-winged insect or speckled egg. Nor did he loiter again when sent upon errands. The elves thereafter left him in peace.”

“Good-bye, dear Phil; I am off now. This is my last story.”

“Where am I? Has the music stopped? Was it my wind harp—my poor little wind harp?”

“Why, Phil, your wind harp is broken. Did you not know that it fell from your window last night?” said Lisa, coming into the dining-room.

“No. I wonder if I shall ever see the wind fairy again?”

“Dreaming again, Phil?” said Lisa.



“You always think I dream, Lisa, whenever I speak of fairies.”

“Do I, dear? Well, you must get ready now for Graham; he is coming to take you out on the lake. Miss Schuyler will not be home to dinner, and we three are to have ours on Eagle Island.”



Page 72

Phil went up-stairs and gathered together the broken pieces of his wind harp. He folded each piece up carefully in paper, and put them all away. "No more fairy stories," he said to himself. "Well, I suppose I am getting beyond them, and must put up with sober facts; but they are not half so nice," he said, with a sigh—"not half so nice." Then he took out his sketch-book and pencils, and prepared for work.

CHAPTER XIV

PLANS FOR THE WINTER

Summer had gone. Visitors had gone. Graham had gone to school. The banks of the lake were red and yellow, brown and purple, with autumnal foliage. Aunt Rachel was superintending the making of preserves. Lisa was at work on the piazza. Phil was sketching.

Slowly up the garden path came old Joe. He took off his hat and stood still a moment waiting for Phil to speak.

"Well, Joe, what is it?" said Phil, hardly looking up, he was so busy.

"This is just as fine as ever the garden of Eden was, but old Adam had to go, you know, Massa Phil." He had lately, of his own accord, put the Massa before Phil's name.

"What are you driving at, Joe?" asked Phil, absently.

"I mean I's a-gwine home, Massa Phil."

"To the city?" said Phil, surprised into attention.

"Yes, back to New York. I wants to go to work."

"Have you not enough to do here?"

"No," said Joe, with a chuckle. "It's all play here—no real hard work sich as I's customed to."

"It is time you took it easy, Joe," said Phil.

"True nuff, but I's not one of the easy sort. Besides, who knows, Massa Phil, but there may be other chillen—poor sick chillen—waitin' for to hear my fiddle an' be comforted?"

Phil looked up hastily; a bright look of gratitude and love came into his eyes.



Just then Miss Schuyler appeared, with a glass jar of jelly in her hand; the maid was following with a trayful.

“Joe wants to go to the city, Aunt Rachel,” said Phil.

“I dare say,” was the ready response. “He wants a little gossip over the kitchen fires, and he wants this nice jar of jelly for his bread-and-butter when he has company to tea; and as we all are going home next week, he may as well wait for the rest of us.”

“Aunt Rachel!” said Phil, in dismay. Going home to the city seemed like going back to poverty and illness, and the garret room he so well remembered.

Aunt Rachel divined it all. “You belong to me now, Phil. Lisa and I are partners henceforth; and while you and I travel in search of health, study, and improvement, Lisa is going to keep house for us in her own nice, quiet way.”

“Travel!—where?—when?” said Phil, eagerly.

“The doctors suggest our going abroad—to a warm climate for the winter—where we please; in summer, to the German baths.”

“Oh, Aunt Rachel!”



Page 73

This was enough for Phil to think of and wonder about all the rest of the happy days at the lake. He could walk now with comparative ease, not of course without crutches, and the gold and scarlet glory of the autumn leaves was a perpetual delight to him. He gathered them for wreaths and bouquets; he pressed them and ironed them and varnished them, and tried every method suggested to him for keeping them; and when it came packing time it was found necessary to get an extra trunk to contain all the woodland treasures.

The happy summer had ended, and not without a lingering look of regret that it could not last longer was the farewell said to the house and lake and every pretty graceful tree or plant that adorned them.

They found the city house all in nice order for them, for Aunt Rachel was always wise in her forethought and provision for future comfort.

Phil's little room near her own had been especially attended to, and he found it, in all its arrangements, as complete and satisfactory as the lovely summer nook he had vacated.

In three weeks' time they were to start for Europe. The days were spent in preparation. Phil must have a steamer-chair, plenty of clothes, wraps, and contrivances. All Aunt Rachel's thoughts were for Phil's comfort; but it did not spoil him nor make him selfish; he had the happy faculty of receiving kindness gracefully, as if glad to be the means of making others happy by his gratitude, not as if it were his due in any way. And in his turn he was thoughtful and considerate for others, in trifles light as air, but nevertheless showing by the gentle, tender manner that he meant them as evidences of his affection. He knew Lisa dreaded parting from him, so before her he was quite silent as to his expected pleasures, although his imagination was constantly picturing the details of an ocean voyage. His sketch-book was getting full of yachts and craft of all sorts and sizes—some that would have astonished a sailor very much. Whenever he met Lisa he kissed her, whether with hat on she was hurrying out on some errand for Miss Schuyler, or on her return, with arms full of bundles, she was hastening through the hall.

He was necessarily left much alone, and thus had the chance to draw a charming little picture for Lisa, and frame it with acorns, lichen, and red maple leaves. He hung it in her room one day when she was out, and, to his surprise, the next day it was missing. He had expected some recognition of it, but none coming, he kept still, wondering what Lisa had done with it. The secret came out in due time.

A day or two before their departure Lisa came to him with tears in her eyes and a little package in her hand.

"Open it, dear; it is for you."

It was a tiny leather purse with four dollars in it.



“Lisa, you must not give me all this.”

“Yes, it is yours—your own earnings. I sold your little picture, and bought this purse with part of the money, so that you might have something to spend just as you pleased.”



Page 74

"Oh, Lisa!" was all Phil could say, for though grateful, he was yet disappointed that Lisa had not kept his picture.

"Now, dear," she said, "you can buy some little trifle for Joe, and any one else you want to make a present to."

"Thank you, Lisa; yes, I will. It is a very nice purse," he replied; but as soon as he could find Miss Schuyler he unburdened his heart.

"After all the pains I took with that little picture, Aunt Rachel, to think of Lisa's selling it! Oh, how could she?"

"Hush, dear Phil; Lisa is the most unselfish creature in the world. Has she not given you up to me? And for the pleasure she supposed it would give you to have money of your own earning, she was willing to part with even a thing so precious as a picture painted by you for her. Do not question her motive for a moment. Take the money, and buy her something useful. Come, we will go get a pretty work-basket; she will find it even more to her taste than a picture."

So they went out and bought a light, nicely shaped basket, with little pockets all around it, and Aunt Rachel made it complete with a silver thimble, a strawberry emery cushion, a morocco needle-book, and an ample supply of silk, thread, needles, pins, and buttons.

Lisa was delighted; but Phil could not be satisfied until he had painted another little picture, and made Lisa promise that no one else should ever have it.

Joe was made happy with some new bandanna handkerchiefs in brilliant yellows and reds, a pipe, some tobacco, and a suit of clothes from Miss Schuyler.

It was a tranquil, lovely day in the fall when the steamship sailed with Aunt Rachel and Phil on board. All the bay sparkled in the sunshine, and boats of every shape and size danced upon the blue water. After the bustle and confusion of getting off, the leave-takings, the cries and shouts of sailors, the blowing of whistles and ringing of bells, they sat quietly down to watch the receding shores, and look out upon the glittering water.

"Aunt Rachel," said Phil, "it all seems like another fairy story to me, and we are sailing in a nautilus to the island of Heart's Ease."

"Yes, dear child, so it does. And let us hope that we shall find that beautiful island, and never wish to leave it."

FLORIO AND FLORELLA

A CHRISTMAS FAIRY TALE



CHAPTER I

There was once a child named Florio, who had neither father nor mother, uncle nor aunt, and so it happened that he was adopted by a witch. He might have had a fairy godmother if anybody had remembered to ask one to the christening, but as no one took enough interest in him for that, it was neglected, and poor Florio became the property of a hideous, hateful old hag, who was never so happy as when she was making trouble. Of course Florio was compelled to do her bidding. Naturally inoffensive and gentle, he was continually obliged to do violence to his conscience by obeying the witch.



Page 75

For instance, the witch—who was known by the name of Fussioldfuri, and lived in a miserable cavern when she was not travelling about—had great delight in spoiling any one's innocent amusement or upsetting his or her plans; she even started children quarrelling and disputing; indeed, she found this one of her particular pastimes when she was not engaged in annoying older people.

It was among children that she made Florio particularly useful—so useful, in fact, that he never had a friend. If she found him amusing himself with a happy little company, she made him do some selfish or ugly thing which at once put a stop to all the cheerfulness; and often, before he knew what he was about, he would be struggling and kicking and screaming and flinging himself upon one or the other of his comrades, while Fuss—as we must call her for convenience—laughed till she shook, and tears of joy ran down her ugly leathery cheeks. Then Florio, ashamed, miserable, and unhappy, would creep off to a corner and weep as if his little heart would break.

It was after one of these dreadful occurrences one day that Florio, hiding in the woods, heard a strange rustling among the bushes. He was so used to wandering about after old Fuss, and living anyhow and anywhere, that he was more like a little creature of the woods himself than anything else, and it took a good deal to frighten him. Patter, patter, patter it went. What could it be? He peered in and out and under the bush, but he saw nothing except a nest full of little blue eggs, which he would not touch for the world; no, he knew too well how pleased old Fuss would be to have him disturb this little bird family, and he concealed it again. As he did so, the sweetest little voice said,

“That's right.”

Florio jumped as if a wasp had stung him.

“Yes,” continued the voice, “you couldn't have pleased me better.”

“But who are you? where are you?” asked Florio, to whom kind words were unknown, but on whom they had the effect of making his heart beat with a new and strange emotion.

“I cannot tell you anything just now very well, but if you will meet me here in the moonlight this evening, Florio, I will be glad to see you.”

“To-night?” questioned the boy, who did not like the darkness.

“Yes, child; have no fear. I am the fairy Florella. Adieu.”

The days were generally too short for Florio, who hated the nights in the dismal cavern, when Fuss pulled his hair and pinched his nose and tripped him up over her staff by way of amusement; but now he longed for the night to come, although it must be confessed he was not without fears. Fuss was uglier than usual, but this did not affect



Florio as it might have done had he not had something unusual and exciting to think of. Soon as the witch tumbled down on her heap of straw for the night, and showed by her heavy breathing and frightful snoring that she was asleep, Florio crept softly from the cavern.



Page 76

It was a beautiful evening, soft and balmy, but to leave the bright roadway and enter the dark woods demanded some courage, for ill-usage had rendered Florio timid in the darkness, though, as I have said before, he did not fear wild animals. Indeed, when a young fox came cautiously out of the thicket, and glanced about, Florio approached near enough to touch his bushy tail.

It was somewhat difficult to find the precise spot of the day's occurrence, but he noticed that whenever he went in a wrong direction a crowd of fire-flies would start up and show him the right way, and thus he was enabled to find the sweet-brier bush. As he reached it he heard the same patter, patter, patter on the leaves of the bush, and looking up he saw what caused the sound. Troops of tiny creatures were fluttering from leaf to leaf. Each had little silvery wings like butterflies, and each carried sprigs and sprays of blossoms, while following them came elves of most grotesque appearance, bearing platters of fruit and wild honey. In a moment they had formed a circle on the grass, and danced about, singing as they went, while the elves arranged a feast.

When all was in readiness, one—of largest size and of apparent superiority—beckoned to Florio to come near. Afraid to disobey, yet equally fearful of treading upon them, Florio approached, and in a moment he was surrounded, and with gentle pressure obliged to take their various offerings. One gave him grape leave cups and baskets woven of perfumed grasses, another filled them with honey and fruit, while all laughed to see what appeared to them the enormous quantities necessary for one so large.

“Florio, you have done well to obey me,” said the same sweet voice he had heard in the daytime. “This, added to your consideration for the bird's-nest to-day, has pleased me, and your evident misery has aroused my compassion. FussioIdfuri is an enemy of ours, and I never expected to see one trained by her show a pitiful or kind spirit. It proves to me that there must be something in you worth cultivating. Are you willing to be guided by me? Do you want to leave old Fuss, and become one of my servitors?”

Florio was not quite sure that he fully understood all that was said to him, but he was delighted at the idea of leaving Fuss, and said so.

Florella smiled upon him, and continued, “It may not be so easy as you imagine; those who serve me have to stand a test of faithfulness, energy, and courage. Our life seems one of careless mirth, but it is not so. We, of course, are happy, and enjoy ourselves; but we have many duties, and are not altogether free, as would be supposed. I am at the head of this little band. We are Flower Fairies, cousins to the Wind Fairies and Herb Elves. I am familiar with every wild-flower that grows, and I am now desirous of getting for our forests some seeds of the Swiss Edelweiss. If you can procure them for me I will reward you handsomely.”



Page 77

Poor Florio heard this speech with consternation. He had never in all his life known one flower from another. Where, when, how could he go? And if he went, how should he escape Fuss? These thoughts made the poor child falter and grow pale. It would have been so much easier to say he could not do it, and have done with the matter; but the remembrance of his horrible slavery, and the thought that Florella believed in his ability to aid her, stimulated his courage, and he said,

“I know nothing of flowers, dear lady; I am a very ignorant fellow; but if you will direct me, and tell me where to go, I am ready to try.”

“Spoken well, my lad,” said the fairy. “I do not expect impossibilities. We are the only ones who can do what seems impossible to man. The Edelweiss is a mountain flower, growing on the highest Alps, and many a man has lost his life striving to pluck it for one he loved. It is much esteemed for its rarity, and because of the often great difficulty of getting it. See, here is a dried blossom;” and she put in his hand a small white flower like an immortelle, though Florio thought that it looked as if it were made of flannel, it was so soft and woolly.

“This you must keep; see, I will put it in this case of birch-bark, and you had better place it in your bosom. Now I must tell you about the journey. To leave FussioIdfuri immediately might make the task more difficult. She is about starting for the mountains, and if you keep with her a while longer you will be able to find the place you need much sooner than if you went alone. But when you reach Geneva you are to leave her. Can you remember that?”

“Oh yes, the rhyme will help me:

“When I get to Geneva,
Then I must leave her.”

“Exactly; and then you are to seek the Edelweiss, and when you have gathered the seeds you are to meet me here in this forest, whether it be winter or whether it be summer. Adieu.”

The fairy vanished, and with her went her band—nodding, waving, and kissing their finger-tips.

Oh, how dreary the woods seemed without the little troop! The wind sighed in the pines, and the moonlight cast fearful shadows from the gnarled and knotty boughs.

Florio rose with a sigh and stretched his limbs, wondering if it was worth while to try and do the fairy's bidding when he had to go back to hear the dreaded voice of old Fuss. Then he made sure of the birch-bark case, and again with the aid of the fire-flies found the road. Fuss was sound asleep still when he laid himself down on his bundle of straw



in the farthest corner of the cavern. One thing he did not notice, and that was the young fox whose bushy tail he had touched going into the woods. It had followed him home, and crept in under the straw beside him.

CHAPTER II

High up in the Swiss mountains a storm was brewing. On their cloud-capped summits nothing could be seen but snow—dazzling, blinding white snow, and wreaths of vapor which congealed as it fell. All day the people of the hamlets had been preparing for the visitor, knowing full well that they should be housed for weeks after its descent, and as Christmas was approaching, it was needful that much should be done.

Page 78

As the day grew darker, each hurried to complete his or her work, and none essayed more eagerly to do this than young Franz, the goatherd; but try as he would, the heedless, wanton little flock were constantly escaping from him, and if it had not been for Jan, the great mastiff of the famous St. Bernard breed, he would have been still more troubled. As it was, he found one goat missing when he went to house them, and again he had to take his alpenstock and try what he could do.

By this time the storm was indeed upon them, and between the wind and the snow, the icy atmosphere and the darkness, Franz had about concluded to let the goat go, when Jan began to sniff about and bark, and show by signs as easily read as print that he was seeking something. Franz thought it must be on account of the goat, but just then old Nan appeared with her customary capriciousness, and made no resistance to the cord with which Franz bound her.

Still Jan kept up his scratching and sniffing and barking, and Franz knew only too well that there was no use in opposing him, although his fingers and toes were half frozen.

As soon as the dog saw that Franz recognized the necessity of following him he quieted down, and with a zealous industry nosed the path from side to side, as if in search of something; nor did he have to go far, for they presently descried what seemed like a big snow-heap on one side of the now undiscoverable path.

Here Jan halted and looked intently; then he began scratching and whining again, and Franz saw a bit of cloth. Soon an arm appeared, and next a leg, and after vigorous work from both Franz and Jan, the whole figure of a child, clasping something in its arms, was uncovered. Dead or alive, Franz knew not which it was; but very well he knew what it was the child carried, for its big bushy red tail showed it to be a fox, and it too was as motionless and lifeless as the child.

The goatherd had braved the dangers of the mountains all his lifetime, and knew how to be cool and decided in the presence of danger. He had his knife and drinking-cup beside him, and his horn slung over his shoulder. In a moment he had made Nan stand still while he milked her, and then he pried open the stiff lips of the lad, and forced the warm liquid within. As he did so, the child revived and swallowed, for he had not been long unconscious. Then putting him on Jan's back, and driving Nan before him, Franz made his way home as best he could.

It was late when tired Franz, whose mother was in the door-way looking anxiously for him, arrived. All the children were within, and the fire was burning brightly. On the table the soup was steaming. An exclamation of surprise arose from all as Jan and his burden marched in.

"Who is it?" "Where did he come from?" "Where did you find him?" "What was he doing all alone in the storm?" burst from all their lips.

“So, so; slowly, please,” answered the cool and courageous Franz. Then he told them his adventure.



Page 79

“A stranger lad, lost on the roadside,” murmured the mother, as she took the boy from Jan and carefully undressed him, the children meanwhile attending to the nearly frozen fox.

“Poor child! poor child! he shall be welcome. A sorry Christmas it is for him.”

“Not when he fell into your hands, good mother,” said Franz, ladling out the soup.

“No indeed—no indeed,” said one and all.

But the mother’s words seemed to be the truth, for though the child revived, and was able to take nourishment, a fever set in, from which he did not rally. Day by day he lay in the little curtained recess where he could see them all with his great wondering eyes, watching them carve their beautiful toys—for this was their winter work—but saying nothing, for he knew not their language, and only one word had he uttered which they could understand.

This word was simply “Edelweiss.” “Edelweiss,” he muttered, when the fever was at its height, and “Edelweiss” he softly whispered when dreaming.

The children called him “Little Edelweiss,” and fed his fox, which lapped their hands and brought a sweet smile to the face of the little sufferer.

Christmas-eve would be on the morrow, and all were busy dressing the room with boughs of evergreen. The tree stood in the corner, waiting for its glittering fruit. Outside the sheaf of grain had been tied to a pole for the snow-birds. All had some trifling gifts prepared for a joyful keeping of the day, Franz only seemed to be uneasy. He would glance at the pale face of his little foundling, and then he would look out to see if the weather was fine, and at last he reached up for his thickest wrap and staff, and away he went up the mountain-side. Nothing could be seen up that way but the red roof of a convent, and peak after peak of ice piercing the blue sky.

It was late when he returned and put something carefully behind the tree. All were waiting for their supper, for they were anxious to go to bed that the dear Christmas might the sooner come.

His mother scolded a little, but the stranger boy put up his thin hand reprovingly, as if he could not bear to have Franz rebuked, and then they all laughed, for they all loved Franz.

But soon they were sleeping quietly, and the moon shone upon happy faces—only the little guest tossed and murmured “Edelweiss.”

The morrow came, and with it many a merry greeting. And now they could hardly wait for the day to pass. Long before dark the table was set with its sausages and spice-



cake, and beside each plate a mysterious packet—for the tree bore only glittering trifles. And when the girls in their pretty scarlet bodices and whitest chemisettes sat down, and the mother reverently asked God's blessing on their food, all broke into a joyful carol. Then they examined their gifts, and the little stranger was given his share of the good things.

But just then Franz arose and brought from behind the tree a curious looking box. Tearing off the papers a small but hardy plant was revealed, and putting it in the hands of the invalid, Franz pointed to its buds and said one word, "Edelweiss."



Page 80

A cry of joy burst from the boy's lips, and he clasped his treasure as if it had been indeed a flower from paradise.

"Edelweiss! Edelweiss!" was all he could utter, but the sweet and grateful tone thanked Franz better than a thousand other words could have done.

"Why, Franz," they all asked, "where did you get it at this season? It does not grow in winter."

"No," said Franz, "I know that it does not, but I have often found it in summer, and I just happened to remember plucking some by the roots last spring for Father Glueckner up at the convent—he is always gathering roots and herbs for the sick, and he has a great curiosity to transplant wild-flowers that he may see what they will produce under cultivation. See; this plant already has flowers—months too soon. He has several others, so he gave me this quite willingly."

While they were talking, the little stranger had drawn a small case of birch-bark from his pocket, and was earnestly comparing the faded and pressed flower it contained with the blooming one beside him. His face glowed with happiness, and from that moment his restoration to health began.

CHAPTER III

Again the summer-time had come, with all its warmth and beauty. The fairies were thronging all the wildwood one lovely summer evening, when a tall, handsome lad, with light, quick tread and merry glancing eyes, entered the woods, followed by a red fox, and boldly shouted, "Florella! Florella!" making the woods ring with his voice.

You would not have supposed that this could be the same boy whose sobbing aroused Florella's compassion—the poor, trembling little creature, spiritless and unhappy, who had hardly dared to say his name was Florio. But so it was; and when he called so loudly in his cheery voice, Florella quickly came forth from the sweet-brier bush and stood before him.

Doffing the cap which covered his curly pate, and bending on one knee, Florio presented without words the small plant which he had guarded with the utmost care.

A look of gracious sweetness came into the fairy's face, and she examined the flowers with the eye of one accustomed to look at things closely. Having assured herself that it was the desired plant, she turned to her assistants and invited them to examine it also. All agreed that it was the far-famed Edelweiss, and there was a great fluttering of wings, and soft exclamations of delight and excited surprise, until Florella, with a gentle wave of her hand, commanded silence.



“Now, young knight of our fair domain,” she said, addressing Florio, “give me some account of your journeying, for not only have you done all that I desired, but more: here are not only seeds, but flowers and root. I pray you be seated while I listen.”

Florio had learned to be mannerly, so with cap in hand he only leaned against a beech-tree, and began:



Page 81

“When you bade me depart with that dreadful old Fuss, dear lady, my heart failed me entirely, and I thought I should not be able to do your bidding. So long had I been used to her cruel power that the thought of opposing her filled me with alarm; but curiously enough the very night I hastened from you to the miserable cavern we called home, a young fox followed me, and unknown to me slept by my side. When I awoke the witch was preparing for her journey, for on her back and by her side she carried bags of all shapes and sizes, with everything in them that could do mischief. In one was snuff, in another was pepper, and in a third was mustard, and in all were flinty pebbles and bits of glass. Some of these were for people’s eyes and some for their feet, and she had hardly room for the mouldy old crusts and pieces of cheese which furnished us with food.

“As soon as she saw the fox, which I was petting with delight, she made a pass at it with her stick, which I am sure would have killed it had I not caught the blow. The little fellow sprang from my arms and bit her heel, which made her so very angry that I had to run for my life—but, strange to say, after that he was my only protection.

“Although she bade me drown him, and although I, remembering your commands, disobeyed her, she did not dare come near me when I had him in my arms. Day after day he followed me, night after night he slept beside me, and though I had fewer beatings, old Fuss watched me closely; she seemed to know that I wanted to get away from her.

“We toiled along on the roadsides, begging from house to house.

“At last one day we came to a beautiful sheet of water, blue and sparkling in the sunshine. Everywhere I went I had gathered flowers—sometimes they were only weeds, such as dandelions and daisies, but here on the banks of this lovely lake I found the sweetest blossoms. From every one I had tried to learn the names of the plants, but it was a very difficult matter, for half the time they misunderstood my signs, and supposed I was only making game of them; besides, when Fuss came up with her horrible jargon, every one was so disgusted that he would have nothing to do with me.

“But every day I repeated as a lesson the one word ‘Edelweiss,’ and whenever I had the chance I would say this to a stranger. Generally they took no notice—sometimes they would smile, and point to the mountain-peaks before us.

“The day we reached the lake Fuss was in one of her ugliest moods: she had not received a penny from any passer-by, and she had not been able to make a young boatman quarrel with his companions, although she had sprinkled pepper about until they were all sneezing as if they were crazy. I was weary and disconsolate, sitting paddling in the water, and the fox was not by me, having run after a rat that had crawled from the wreck of an old unused craft. Without a word of warning Fuss came up behind me and gave me a push.



Page 82

“Over I went into the water, head and heels both submerged. Strangling, puffing, battling for my life, I rose to the surface. I had fallen just where the water was shallow, but where grasses and water-plants so entangled my feet that I could not swim, and should certainly have been drowned had not one of the boatmen thrown me a rope and drawn me to the shore.

“‘Hang her!’ ‘Drown her for an old witch!’ were the exclamations I heard from the rough by-standers, and also, ‘Take her to the jail at Geneva.’ This aroused me. Now I knew the name of the fine town towards which so many were wending their way.

“‘When you get to Geneva,
Then you must leave her.’

“Oh, joy! Then I need no longer follow my dreadful guide! And there were people about who spoke English.

“As soon as I could discover who these English people were I made inquiries of them, and found they were servants of some persons travelling in their own conveyance. Tattered and dragged and wet, I dared not do more than run after the carriage at a respectful distance, with my fox in my arms, and so fearful was I of being overtaken by old Fuss that I darted into the woods whenever a wayfarer approached. But my fears were needless, for so alarmed had the witch been at the threats of the boatmen that she disappeared suddenly. Some said they saw her flying over the woods on a broomstick, with all her wretched rags and tags fluttering behind her like the tail of a kite.

“After this I toiled on, often hungry, always weary, but frequently meeting with kindness. I only wanted to find some place of shelter from the cold until the warm weather should return again, and I could renew my search for your flower.

“At last, one bitter day, striving to reach a convent where I had found out they received poor people like myself, I fell, during a blinding storm, and had neither the courage nor the wish to make the effort to rise. Gradually a heavy sleep came on. I forgot my woes, and dreamed of a garden of roses, among which floated brilliant butterflies and golden bees.

“I was aroused from this sleep by a barking and scratching, and the forcing open of my mouth to make me swallow some warm milk. A goatherd had found me, and putting me on the back of his great dog, carried me home. From that moment my troubles ended. Franz, the boy who found me, had a warm heart. His home became mine. I was ill, but all did what they could to make my sufferings less. I had only the one word, ‘Edelweiss,’ at my command, and but the one hope—that of procuring the flower.

Page 83

“Christmas-day came. All were rejoicing, all were happy; but none could appreciate my joy when the noble Franz put this plant in my possession, his Christmas gift to me. I recovered immediately, and happiness so inspired me that I learned their language, and was enabled to tell them my story. All agreed that I must return to you, but must wait till I was strong for the journey. While with my friends I watched them carve their beautiful toys, some of which I have brought you, and learned to do their exquisite work myself. I also went often to the convent, and learned much from the celebrated Father Glueckner about herbs and flowers. See; I have brought these packets of seeds, and a good collection of remarkable specimens. And all the time my little fox has been my pet, my companion, my solace. Accept, then, dear lady, these proofs of my obedience.”

So saying, Florio finished speaking. As he stopped, his cheeks flushed with pleasant emotion, a nightingale poured forth a warbling stream of melody. The fairy drew her band around her and thus spoke:

“Happy mortal, thus to have achieved success. Your faithfulness and courage shall be well rewarded. Look! this is your home, this we have prepared for you. Our emissary, the young fox, had warned us of your approach, and we have all in readiness.”

Saying this, she led the astonished Florio to a cottage of twisted vines and roots, built by herself and her attendant elves. The walls were brilliant with innumerable glow-worms and fireflies, which sparkled like living gems; the floor was soft with scented rushes. Garlands of roses festooned the rooms, in one of which was a table filled with fruit. Smiling with glee, Florella watched her young friend’s admiration, which ended in complete astonishment when from an adjoining apartment came Franz and Rosa, the goatherd and his sister. His joy was now complete, but when he turned to thank Florella she was nowhere to be seen.

Thus it came to pass that we know of the famous gardener and seedsman Florio, whose plants are of boundless celebrity, and whose cultivated blossoms outrival the famous exotics of the world. In this forest he lived, and raised from season to season every flower that grows. No frost seemed to touch them, no drought withered them, for Florella was true to her promise of reward, and in addition to giving Florio a home, gave him also health and wealth and fame.

The elves were always on guard against moles and injurious worms, the fairies sprinkled the seeds and protected the young buds, and basking in the sunshine outside the cottage door was always to be found Florio’s pet, the red fox, whom Florella for a time had chosen to be his guardian. Franz and Rosa also induced their family to leave the Alpine snows for the beautiful land of flowers.

BOREAS BLUSTER'S CHRISTMAS PRESENT

"Tis an ill wind that blows no good."



Page 84

CHAPTER I

It had been a hard, cold, cruel winter, and one that just suited old Frozen Nose, the Storm King, whose palace of ice was on the north shore of the Polar Sea. He had ordered Rain, Hail, and Snow, his slaves, to accompany Lord Boreas Bluster on an invasion of the temperate zone, and when they had done his bidding he harnessed up his four-in-hand team of polar bears and went as far south as he dared, just to see how well they had obeyed him. How he roared with laughter when he found nearly all vegetation killed, and the earth wrapped in a white mantle as thick as his own bear-skins piled six feet deep! There was no nonsense about that sort of work.

“Catch any pert, saucy little flowers sticking up their heads through such a blanket!” said Frozen Nose to himself. “No, no; I’ve fixed ’em for a few years, anyhow. They’re dead as door-nails, and Spring with all her airs and graces will never bring them to life again. Ugh! how I hate ’em and all sweet smells! Wish I might never have anything but whale-oil on my hair and handkerchiefs for the rest of my life!”

“There’s no fear but what you will, and stale at that,” said the ugliest of his children, young Chilblain, giving his father’s big toe a tweak as he passed, and grinning when he heard Frozen Nose grumble out,

“There’s the gout again, I do believe!”

But Boreas Bluster, coming in just then, saw what was going on, and gave Chilblain a whack that sent him spinning out of the room.

To tell the truth, Boreas was not as hardhearted as he looked. He was the most honest and straightforward of all Frozen Nose’s friends. To be sure, he had to obey stern commands, and do many things that required a show of fierceness, but in the course of his travels he often yielded to a kind impulse, and restrained his fury when to indulge it would have pleased old Frozen Nose mightily.

This very day he had met with a strange adventure, which had been the occasion of a hasty return to the palace, and had so stirred his heart that the whack he gave young Chilblain was but the safety-valve to his feelings—a sort of letting off of steam which otherwise might have exploded and burst every block of ice in the realm.

In the many furious storms which had occurred of late Boreas had seen the destruction of numerous forests, and had even assisted in laying waste the country. But one night an avalanche had buried a hamlet from which only one living soul had escaped, and that was a young child—a mere sprig of a girl, with hair like the flax and eyes like its flowers, a little, timid, crying child—whom B.B. had actually taken in his arms and carried all the way out of the woods, over the mountains, and finally into Frozen Nose’s own palace by the Polar Sea.



Page 85

Never had such a thing happened before. Never had the tones of a child's voice pierced his dull ears, and made that big sledge-hammer of a heart positively ache with its throbs. It was a new and even a dangerous feeling; for though he made young Chilblain's impertinence the pretext of an outburst, he might just as readily have given a cuff to the hoary-headed Prime-minister, Sir Solomon Snow-Ball—and then there would have been a revolution. But happily for the peace of the Polar Sea palace, B.B. was satisfied with Chilblain's howl of rage, and in another moment had sunk down into his favorite arm-chair of twisted walrus tusks, and was lost in thought.

It was a curious scene, these three old men half asleep in their bear-skins, smoking long pipes of smouldering sea-weed. No fire danced on the hearth, no lamp shed its lustre, but the moon's pale beams gleamed on the glittering walls and lit the ice-crystals with its silver rays. B.B.'s thoughts seemed to be of a troublesome nature, for he sighed heavily, almost creating a whirlwind, and at last, looking cautiously at his companions, and seeing they were asleep, he rose and went softly from the room. In the hall was a huge pile of furs, among which B.B. gently pushed until he found the object of his search, which, lifting carefully, he bound about him with thongs of reindeer hide. Then pulling on his immense snow-shoes, and drawing his cap closely about his ears, he went out into the night.

B.B. was aware that it would be impossible for him to keep his little Flax-Flower any longer in Frozen Nose's dominions; indeed, he had only hidden her in the hall until he could decide what course to pursue, for he knew only too well that Chilblain, in seeking revenge, would be sure to discover his secret, and do all he could to injure him. Personally he had little to fear, but the punishment for mortals entering Frozen Nose's realm was death, and Flax-Flower was mortal.

With the speed for which he was so celebrated, Boreas slid over the ground in a southerly direction, never stopping until he had come upon what seemed to be a river which led down to a dark forest of pine-trees.

He was now at least three thousand miles from the Storm King's palace, and could afford to rest. Wiping his brow, and panting still with his recent efforts, Boreas drew a corner of the bundle of furs away from the face of Flax-Flower, and looked at the sleeping child. As he did so a thrill of tenderness made him long to kiss her, but he knew that his rough caress would chill her with fear. So, softly wrapping her up again, he plunged into the pine forest. Stopping again when in the middle of it, he gave a shrill whistle, which was responded to by one fainter and farther away, and presently a dwarf in the garb of an Esquimau emerged from the dusky gloom, and bending low, said,

"What will you, my master?"

"I would see thy lord, the good St. Nicholas—the Storm King's enemy. Is he at home?"



Page 86

“He is at home, but he is no man's enemy. What message shall I bear him?”

“Tell him that Boreas, of the Frozen Noses, awaits him.” The dwarf vanished, and returned.

“My lord bids thee enter, but entreats thee to be gentle, and remember the manners of his court.”

“That was a needless charge, considering my errand. Never has my mood been more peaceful. But it strikes me as passing strange thus to dictate terms to one of my station,” responded Boreas, proudly.

“Pardon,” answered the dwarf, “but we are no sticklers for ceremony, and recognize no rank save goodness. Follow me if it be thy wish to enter.”

Pushing aside the heavy boughs on which the snow lay in icy masses that rattled and clashed like bolts and bars, he uncovered a low-arched opening into what seemed a vast snow-bank. Through this tunnel he and Boreas made their way to a broad court, which was as airy as a soap-bubble, round in shape, with pillars and dome of glass, through which streamed rays of light softer than sunshine and brighter than moonbeams.

From this court a broad, low stairway led to another apartment, which was as free from any show or splendor as the kitchen of a farm-house, and, indeed, in its suggestion of homely comfort and hospitality it was not unlike that cheery place. A Saxon motto, meaning “Welcome to those who hunger,” was carved in the wooden frame of the fireplace. The floor was sanded, the tables and chairs were of oak, blackened by age, as were also the timbers of the ceiling, and cut and carved with curious devices.

On a big settle by the fire sat an old man, whose twinkling eyes could but just see through the shaggy and snowy brows which overhung them, and whose white beard fell in a flowing mass upon his breast. What could be seen of his face bore a kind expression.

“Ho, ho, old Bluster!” he cried, in a clear and merry voice, drawing up and around him the sheepskin mantle which was beside him, “what new freak is this of yours to enter our peaceful dwelling? Methought you were so sworn to do the Storm King's bidding that no power other than his rough sway could compel your presence. Come you on your own account or on his? Be it either, you are free to partake of our bounty. Ho, there, Merrythought! heave on more logs and heat the poker, that we may thrust it fizzing into our tankards: 'tis always bitter cold when Boreas is abroad.”

The dwarf skipped quickly to his task, assisted by a dozen others, and Boreas, unstrapping his bundle, drew little Flax-Flower, still sleeping, from the furs.



“Mine is a strange errand, good Claus—so strange, that I hardly know myself to be myself. Rough and stormy as I am ever, a child’s misery has made me once gentle. You know my mad career, my furious passions, and that they indeed are the strength of the Storm King’s realm. Too well I knew that I should be but the sport of mocking derision if I appealed to his mercy in behalf of this



Page 87

suffering child. Mercy, did I say? He knows none. Death alone could have met this little creature, whose cries have aroused within me the deepest feelings I have ever known. To be honest, I have not always been the fierce being I appear. Many and many a time, unknown to you, I have followed you on your errands of love and pity, and watched with admiration the course you have pursued. This has induced me now to come and ask your favor for my treasure. Wake, little Flax-Flower, wake!" he continued, gently kissing the child's eyes, who, so stirred, rubbed her sleepy lids with rosy little fists, and looked around in astonishment.

"Ha!" said the good St. Nicholas; "this is indeed a strange story for you to tell, friend Bluster. Ho, there, Merrythought! send for Mrs. Christmas, my house-keeper. The child may be frightened at our grim faces. But what a pretty little dear it is!" said Claus, in the kindest tones, putting out his big fat hand to caress her. To Boreas's surprise Flax-Flower did not shrink from his salute, but with a bright smile bounded into the old man's arms and kissed him.

Turning away with a pang of jealousy, Boreas muttered, "She wouldn't kiss *me*; but no matter. That settles it. She's in the right place, and I'll leave her. Farewell, Claus; I'm off. No, no; I've no time for eating and drinking. Frozen Nose will be thundering at my absence already. There's a storm brewing even now; I feel it in my bones." So saying, he tramped noisily out of the apartment, nearly knocking over a fleshy dame in ruffled cap and whitest apron, whose rosy cheeks were like winter apples, and who bore in her hands a huge mince-pie in which was stuck a sprig of mistletoe.

CHAPTER II

"Come mother, cease thy spinning, and look at the lovely tree that Olaf has brought thee; it stands as straight as himself in the best room. Surely thou wilt deck it to please him."

"Ah, Fritz! how can I?" said the forester's wife, rising from her wheel, with a sad but sweet smile, in obedience to her husband's wishes.

"But there is surely no reason for longer indulging thy grief. Our child is too happy in heaven to wish her return to earth, and whatever the good God sends of pleasure or innocent mirth we should take with thankfulness. Look at the tree; it is the very image of Olaf's own strong youth. Make it pretty to-night, and he will be glad. A good friend is he for two lonely beings like us to possess."

"You are right, Fritz," said the wife, wiping a tear from her eyes. "For Olaf's sake I will dress the tree and bake a cake." So saying, she tidied up her best parlor, and took from



a brass-bound chest the gay ribbons and trinkets which had not been used since the Christmas eve her little one last spent on earth.



Page 88

Very lonely and sad would these two people have been but for Olaf, the son of their nearest neighbor. It was he whose clear ringing voice might be heard in the forest when returning from his work, and Fritz said that it made labor light but to hear him. It was he, too, who, when Fritz had been lamed by the fall of a tree, had borne him home on his strong young shoulders; so it was no wonder that the good wife was grateful to him. Often at evening he made their fireside bright with his songs and merry stories, and now it was but just that they should shake off their sorrow for his sake; so the good wife drew out her spotless board, and kneaded spice-cakes, and spread her best damask, and set out the fine china.

“Ah, if I had my little one!” murmured the good woman. “But God knows best,” she quickly added, as she remembered many blessings.

“Here comes Olaf!” shouted Fritz from below. “Come quickly, lest he think thee tardy.”

“Yes, yes, I come. I see him,” was her reply. “But what is that he carries—something he has picked up on the way?”

“A Christmas gift for thee,” was the merry answer from Olaf’s ringing voice, as he laid a strange bundle in her arms.

CHAPTER III

Little Flax-Flower had been with St. Nicholas a whole long week. In that time she had been in every nook and corner of his dwelling. She had seen all his elves and dwarfs at work manufacturing every known toy to be found in the world. She had watched the dolls’ dress-makers; she had ridden the toy horses; she had blown the brass bugles and beaten the drums until Mrs. Christmas had to put cotton in her ears.

Now all this was very delightful, and made Santa Claus laugh long and loud. He would not have cared if she had brought the house down on his ears, so long as she had a bright smile and a kiss for him. But when Boreas Bluster stopped to see how his young ward was getting on, he shook his head gravely and told Mrs. Christmas he feared she was spoiling Flax-Flower. But Mrs. Christmas laughed just in the same manner that Santa Claus had done, and declared that the child must have all she wanted.

Unfortunately, Flax-Flower went into the kitchen one day, and finding all the cooks busily making sugar-plums, helped herself so largely to taffy that she was made very ill; she ate, besides, quite a menagerie of lemon-candy elephants, camels, and kangaroos, which disagreed with themselves and with her; so that her head ached, and she had to be put to bed, with a hot-water bottle and a mustard draught for companions. This happened just as Boreas had stopped in to inquire about his pet, and he shook his head



gravely when Mrs. Christmas related the incident. But Santa Claus only laughed till the air seemed full of merriment.

“Ah, my dear Claus, I see you have too easy and gentle a nature to deal with wilful little mortals in an every-day way; besides, you have to think of so many that it unfits you for the care of a single one,” said Boreas, in his least gruff manner. “I shall have to find another home for Flax-Flower.”



Page 89

“Well,” replied St. Nicholas, “I confess I can refuse nothing to a good child. Children to me are all like so many empty stockings—made to be filled. But I have had some doubts about keeping Flax-Flower. Mrs. Christmas and I are afraid it will make the others jealous; it is that, and not the stuffing down lollipops, that makes me think you are right. Now her feast-day comes soon—I mean Mrs. Christmas’s day,” said Santa Claus, with a nod—“and if you will just give my sleigh a lift, I think I can tuck in Flaxie and carry her to some people I know—some people who will appreciate her and be kind to her; yes, and even cross in a wholesome way, seeing that’s what you approve of.”

Here Santa pretended to be very gruff himself, but Boreas saw through it. He knew that St. Nicholas, on the whole, believed that Flaxie would be better off without so much amusement and without so many temptations to do nothing but play all day long, and this was the way the matter ended.

Just before Christmas day Santa Claus’s sleigh was brought out into the beautiful court I have described; eight lively young reindeer were harnessed to it, and thousands of toys were packed in it; furs were wrapped around Flaxie, who was now quite well, and Mrs. Christmas herself made up a box of delicacies for her to eat on the way.

“Think of us often, dear child,” she whispered, “and give my love to *everybody*.”

Then the dwarfs gave the sleigh a push from behind, the bells of the harness rang out a merry peal, the reindeer pranced, Santa Claus snapped his whip, and away they flew, with Boreas behind them on his snow-shoes.

“Now, Flaxie,” said Santa Claus, after they had skimmed over the snow with lightning speed for hours, “before you go to sleep, as I see you are doing, I want to speak to you. I want you always to remember this visit to my house with pleasure, and tell all the children you may meet how much I love them, how much it pleases me to know that they are good, and how it really distresses me when they are not; tell them, too, that as long as Mrs. Christmas lives we will do all we can for their happiness, and all we ask in return is a grateful spirit. Do you think you can remember all this? Well, as you say you can, tell them also to hang up an extra stocking, whenever there is room by the chimney, for some little waif that hasn’t a stocking to hang up for himself. Now go to sleep as soon as you please, and may your dreams be sweet!”

Cuddled down in the comfortable furs, Flaxie knew nothing more till she found herself awake and in the arms of a tall young fellow whose name was Olaf, and who carried her into the brightest, nicest little parlor, and set her down in front of a fine Christmas-tree, saying,

“There, Mistress Kindheart, see what Christmas has brought you. I found her in the forest, and a great bearded giant told me to bring her to you.”

“Oh, Olaf, it is my little Lena come back, I do believe!” cried the woman, while tears of joy ran down her face.



Page 90

“Nay, mother, nay,” said her husband; “but she shall take our lost one's place. Come, little one, tell us who thou art and from whence thou art come.”

Then Flaxie told the story of her visit to St. Nicholas, while Olaf, Fritz, and his wife listened in amazement.

Much as Flax-Flower had enjoyed all she had seen and done, it was delightful to be again with people of her own flesh and blood, and learn to say the sweet word “Mother.”

That Christmas was a merry one, but no merrier than the many which came after, for Flax-Flower became a dutiful daughter to the kind people who gave her a home. She and Olaf were like sister and brother to each other, and they were known throughout all the country-side for their kindness to the poor and unfortunate, especially at Christmas-time.

Frozen Nose still reigns in his palace on the Polar Sea, and it is mainly owing to him and his wicked son Chilblain that nothing more is known of that still unexplored region; but Boreas Bluster spends much of his time with good St. Nicholas and Mrs. Christmas. He tires of the severity of his life, and likes a snug corner where he can relate the story of his finding Flax-Flower, whom he still loves very tenderly. Often on an evening he ventures down to take a peep at her in her happy home, and little does she suspect that the cooling breeze at the close of a warm day is Boreas's gift of thoughtful kindness.