

GENERAL EDITION

**Michael
Fairless**

***The
Gray
Brethren***

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The Grey Brethren and Other Fragments in Prose and Verse by Michael Fairless [Margaret Fairless Barber]

The Grey Brethren

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The Grey Brethren

Some of the happiest remembrances of my childhood are of days spent in a little Quaker colony on a high hill.

The walk was in itself a preparation, for the hill was long and steep and at the mercy of the north–east wind; but at the top, sheltered by a copse and a few tall trees, stood a small house, reached by a flagged pathway skirting one side of a bright trim garden.

I, with my seven summers of lonely, delicate childhood, felt, when I gently closed the gate behind me, that I shut myself into Peace. The house was always somewhat dark, and there were no domestic sounds. The two old ladies, sisters, both born in the last century, sat in the cool, dim parlour, netting or sewing. Rebecca was small, with a nut–cracker nose and chin; Mary, tall and dignified, needed no velvet under the net cap. I can feel now the touch of the cool dove–coloured silk against my cheek, as I sat on the floor, watching the nimble fingers with the shuttle, and listened as Mary read aloud a letter received that morning, describing a meeting of the faithful and the 'moving of the Spirit' among them. I had a mental picture of the 'Holy Heavenly Dove,' with its wings of silvery grey, hovering over my dear old ladies; and I doubt not my vision was a true one.

Once as I watched Benjamin, the old gardener – a most 'stiff–backed Friend' despite his stoop and his seventy years – putting scarlet geraniums and yellow fever–few in the centre bed, I asked, awe–struck, whether such glowing colours were approved; and Rebecca smiled and said – «Child, dost thee not think the Lord may have His glories?» and I looked from the living robe of scarlet and gold to the dove–coloured gown, and said: «Would it be pride in thee to wear His glories?» and Mary answered for her – "The change is not yet; better beseems us the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit.

The 'change from glory to glory' has come to them both long since, but it seems to me as if their robes must still be Quaker–grey.

Upstairs was the invalid daughter and niece. For years she had been compelled to lie on her face; and in that position she had done wonderful drawings of the High Priest, the Ark of the Covenant, and other Levitical figures. She had a cageful of tame canary-birds which answered to their names and fed from her plate at meal-times. Of these I remember only Roger, a gorgeous fellow with a beautiful voice and strong will of his own, who would occasionally defy his mistress from the secure fastness of a high picture-frame, but always surrendered at last, and came to listen to his lecture with drooping wings.

A city of Peace, this little house, for the same severely-gentle decorum reigned in the kitchen as elsewhere: and now, where is such a haunt to be found?

In the earlier part of this century the Friends bore a most important witness. They were a standing rebuke to rough manners, rude speech, and to the too often mere outward show of religion. No one could fail to be impressed by the atmosphere of peace suggested by their bearing and presence; and the gentle, sheltered, contemplative lives lived by most of them undoubtedly made them unusually responsive to spiritual influence. Now, the young birds have left the parent nest and the sober plumage and soft speech; they are as other men; and in a few short years the word Quaker will sound as strange in our ears as the older appellation Shaker does now.

This year I read for the first time the Journal of George Fox. It is hard to link the rude, turbulent son of Amos with the denizens in my city of Peace; but he had his work to do and did it, letting breezy truths into the stuffy 'steeple-houses' of the 'lumps of clay.'

«Come out from among them and be ye separate; touch not the accursed thing!» he thundered; and out they came, obedient to his stentorian mandate; but alack, how many treasures in earthen vessels did they overlook in their terror of the curse! The good people made such haste to flee the city, that they imagined themselves as having already, in the spirit, reached the land that is very far off; and so they cast from them the outward and visible signs which are vehicles, in this material world, of inward graces. Measureless are the uncovenanted blessings of God; and to these the Friends have ever borne a witness of power; but now the Calvinist intruder no longer divides the sheep from the goats in our churches; now the doctrine of universal brotherhood and the respect due to all men are taught much more effectively than when George Fox refused to doff his hat to the Justice; the quaint old speech has lost its significance, the dress would imply all the vainglory that the wearer desires to avoid; the young Quakers of this generation are no longer 'disciplined' in matters of the common social life; yet still they remain separate.

We of the outward and visible covenant need them, with their inherited mysticism, ordered contemplation, and spiritual vision; we need them for ourselves. The mother they have left yearns for them, and with all her faults – faults the greater for their absence – and with the blinded eyes of their recognition, she is their mother still. «**WHAT Advantage then hath the JEW?**» asked St Paul, and answered in the same breath – «**MUCH Every**

way, Chiefly Because that unto them were committed the oracles of GOD.» What advantage then has the Churchman? is the oft repeated question today; and the answer is still the answer of St Paul.

The Incarnation is the sum of all the Sacraments, the crown of the material revelation of God to man, the greatest of outward and visible signs, «**THAT Which we have heard, Which We have seen with our eyes, Which We have looked upon and our hands have handled of the word of LIFE.**» A strange beginning truly, to usher in a purely spiritual dispensation; but beautifully fulfilled in the taking up of the earthly into the heavenly – Bread and Wine, the natural fruits of the earth, sanctified by man's toil, a sufficiency for his needs; and instinct with Divine life through the operation of the Holy Ghost.

«In the sweat of thy face thou shalt eat bread.»

«Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood ye have no life in you»

«And the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.»

From Genesis to the Revelation of the Divine reaches the rainbow of the Sacramental system – outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual grace:–

The sacrament of purging, purifying labour, to balance and control the knowledge of good and evil:–

The sacrament of life, divine life, with the outward body of humiliation, bread and wine, fruit of the accursed ground, but useless without man's labour; and St Paul, caught up into the third heaven, and St John, with his wide-eyed vision of the Lamb, must eat this bread and drink this cup if they would live:–

The sacrament of healing, the restoring of the Image of God in fallen man.

The Church is one society, nay, the world is one society, for man without his fellow-men is not; and into the society, both of the Church and the world, are inextricably woven the most social sacraments.

Herein is great purpose, we say, bending the knee; and with deep consciousness of sins and shortcomings we stretch out longing welcoming hands to our grey brethren with their inheritance of faithfulness and steadfastness under persecution, and their many gifts and graces; and we cry, in the words of the Song of Songs which is Solomon's: «O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely.» «Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone.»

A Song of Low Degree

Lord, I am small, and yet so great, The whole world stands to my estate, And in Thine Image I create. The sea is mine; and the broad sky Is mine in its immensity: The river and the river's gold; The earth's hid treasures manifold; The love of creatures small and great, Save where I reap a precious hate; The noon–tide sun with hot caress, The night with quiet loneliness; The wind that bends the pliant trees, The whisper of the summer breeze; The kiss of snow and rain; the star That shines a greeting from afar; All, all are mine; and yet so small Am I, that lo, I needs must call, Great King, upon the Babe in Thee, And crave that Thou would'st give to me The grace of Thy humility.

A German Christmas Eve

IT was intensely cold; Father Rhine was frozen over, so he may speak for it; and for days we had lived to the merry jangle and clang of innumerable sleigh bells, in a white and frost–bound world. As I passed through the streets, crowded with stolidly admiring peasants from the villages round, I caught the dear remembered 'Gruss Gott!' and 'All' Heil!' of the countryside, which town life quickly stamps out along with many other gentle observances.

«Gelobt sei Jesu Christ!» cried little Sister Hilarius, coming on me suddenly at a corner, her round face aglow with the sharp air, her arms filled with queer–shaped bundles. She begs for her sick poor as she goes along – meat here, some bread there, a bottle of good red wine: I fancy few refuse her. She nursed me once, the good little sister, with unceasing care and devotion, and all the dignity of a scant five feet. «Ach, Du lieber Gott, such gifts!» she added, with a radiant smile, and vanished up a dirty stairway.

In the Quergasse a jay fell dead at my feet – one of the many birds which perished thus – he had flown townwards too late. Up at the Jagdschloss the wild creatures, crying a common truce of hunger, trooped each day to the clearing by the Jager's cottage for the food spread for them. The great tusked boar of the Taunus with his brother of Westphalia, the timid roe deer with her scarcely braver mate, foxes, hares, rabbits, feathered game, and tiny songbirds of the woods, gathered fearlessly together and fed at the hand of their common enemy – a millennial banquet truly.

The market–place was crowded, and there were Christmas trees everywhere, crying aloud in bushy nakedness for their rightful fruit. The old peasant women, rolled in shawls, with large handkerchiefs tied over their caps, warmed their numb and withered hands over little braziers while they guarded the gaily decked treasure–laden booths, from whose pent–roofs Father Winter had hung a fringe of glittering icicles.

Many of the stalls were entirely given over to Christmas–tree splendours. Long trails of gold and silver **Engelshaar**, piles of candles – red, yellow, blue, green, violet, and white – a rainbow of the Christian virtues and the Church's Year; boxes of frost and snow, festoons of

coloured beads, fishes with gleaming scales, glass-winged birds, Santa Klaus in frost-bedecked mantle and scarlet cap, angels with trumpets set to their waxen lips; and everywhere and above all the image of the Holy Child. Sometimes it was the tiny waxen Bambino, in its pathetic helplessness; sometimes the Babe Miraculous, standing with outstretched arms awaiting the world's embrace – Mary's Son, held up in loving hands to bless; or the Heavenly Child–King with crown and lily sceptre, borne high by Joseph, that gentle, faithful servitor. It was the festival of Bethlehem, feast of never-ending keeping, which has its crowning splendour on Christmas Day.

A Sister passed with a fat, rosy little girl in either hand; they were chattering merrily of the gift they were to buy for the dear Christkind, the gift which Sister said He would send some ragged child to receive for Him. They came back to the poor booth close to where I was standing. It was piled with warm garments; and after much consultation a little white vest was chosen – the elder child rejected pink, she knew the Christkind would like white best – then they trotted off down a narrow turning to the church, and I followed.

The Creche stood without the chancel, between the High Altar and that of Our Lady of Sorrows. It was very simple. A blue paper background spangled with stars; a roughly thatched roof supported on four rude posts; at the back, ox and ass lying among the straw with which the ground was strewn. The figures were life-size, of carved and painted wood: Joseph, tall and dignified, stood as guardian, leaning on his staff; Mary knelt with hands slightly uplifted in loving adoration; and the Babe lay in front on a truss of straw disposed as a halo. It was the World's Child, and the position emphasised it. Two or three hard-featured peasants knelt telling their beads; and a group of children with round, blue eyes and stiff, flaxen pigtails, had gathered in front, and were pointing and softly whispering. My little friends trotted up, crossed themselves; it was evidently the little one's first visit.

«Guck! guck mal an,» she cried, clapping her fat gloved hands, «sieh mal an das Wickelkind!»

«Dass ist unser Jesu,» said the elder, and the little one echoed «Unser Jesu, unser Jesu!»

Then the vest was brought out and shown – why not, it was the Christchild's own? – and the pair trotted away again followed by the bright, patient Sister. Presently everyone clattered out, and I was left alone at the crib of Bethlehem, the gate of the Kingdom of Heaven.

It was my family, my only family; but like the ever-widening circle on the surface of a lake into which a stone has been flung, here, from this great centre, spread the wonderful ever-widening relationship – the real brotherhood of the world. It is at the Crib that everything has its beginning, not at the Cross; and it is only as little children that we can enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.

When I went out again into the streets it was nearly dark. Anxious mothers hurried past on late, mysterious errands; papas who were not wanted until the last moment chatted gaily to each other at street corners, and exchanged recollections; maidservants hastened from shop to shop with large baskets already heavily laden; and the children were everywhere, important with secrets, comfortably secure in the knowledge of a tree behind the parlour doors, and a kindly, generous Saint who knew all their wants, and needed no rod **This** year.

One little lad, with a pinched white face, and with only an empty certainty to look forward to, was singing shrilly in the sharp, still air, «Zu Bethlehem geboren, ist uns ein Kindelein,» as he gazed wistfully at a shop window piled high with crisp gingerbread, marzipan, chocolate under every guise, and tempting cakes. A great rough peasant coming out, saw him, turned back, and a moment later thrust a gingerbread Santa Klaus, with currant eyes and sugar trimming to his coat and cap, into the half-fearful little hands. «Hab' ebenso ein Kerlchen zu Haus',» he said to me apologetically as he passed.

I waited to see Santa Klaus disappear; but no, the child looked at the cake, sighed deeply with the cruel effort of resistance, and refrained. It was all his Christmas and he would keep it. He gazed and gazed, then a smile rippled across the wan little face and he broke out in another carol, «Es kam ein Engel hell und klar vom Himmel zu der Hirten Schaar,» and hugging his Santa Klaus carefully, wandered away down the now brilliant streets: he did not know he was hungry any more; the angel had come with good tidings.

As I passed along the streets I could see through the uncurtained windows that in some houses Christmas had begun already for the little ones. Then the bells rang out deep-mouthed, carrying the call of the eager Church to her children, far up the valley and across the frozen river. And they answered; the great church was packed from end to end, and from my place by the door I saw that two tiny Christmas trees bright with coloured candles burnt either side of the Holy Child.

A blue-black sky ablaze with stars for His glory, a fresh white robe for stained and tired earth; so we went to Bethlehem in the rare stillness of the early morning. The Church, having no stars, had lighted candles; and we poor sinful men having no white robes of our own had craved them of the Great King at her hands.

And so in the stillness, with tapers within and stars alight without, with a white-clad earth, and souls forgiven, the Christ Child came to those who looked for His appearing.

A Christmas Idyll

THE Child with the wondering eyes sat on the doorstep, on either side of her a tramp cat in process of becoming a recognised member of society. On the flagged path in front the brown brethren were picking up crumbs. The cats' whiskers trembled, but they sat still, proudly virtuous, and conscious each of a large saucer of warm milk within.

«What,» said the Child, «is a symbol?»

The cats looked grave.

The Child rose, went into the house, and returned with a well-thumbed brown book. She turned the pages thoughtfully, and read aloud, presumably for the benefit of the cats: «In a symbol there is concealment yet revelation, the infinite is made to blend with the finite, to stand visible, and as it were attainable there.» The Child sighed, «We had better go to the Recluse,» she said. So the three went.

It was a cold, clear, bright day, a typical Christmas Eve. There was a carpet of crisp snow on the ground, and a fringe of icicles hung from every vantage-point. The cats, not having been accustomed to the delights of domesticity, trotted along cheerfully despite the chill to their toes; and they soon came to the forest which all three knew very well indeed. It was a beautiful forest like a great cathedral, with long aisles cut between the splendid upstanding pine trees. The green-fringed boughs were heavy with snow, the straight strong stems caught and reflected the stray sun rays, and looking up through the arches and delicate tracery and interlaced branches the eye caught the wonderful blue of the great domed roof overhead. The cats walked delicately, fearful of temptation in the way of rabbits or frost-tamed birds, and the Child lilted a quaint German hymn to a strange old tune:—

«Ein Kind gebor'n zu Bethlehem. Alleluja! Dess freuet sich Jerusalem, Alleluja! Alleluja!»

The Recluse was sitting on a bench outside his cave. He was dressed in a brown robe, his eyes were like stars wrapped in brown velvet, his face was strong and gentle, his hair white although he looked quite young. He greeted the Child very kindly and stroked the cats.

«You have come to ask me a question, Child?»

«If you please,» said the Child, «what is a symbol?»

«Ah,» said the Recluse, «I might have known you would ask me that.»

«The Sage says,» went on the Child, «that it is concealment yet revelation.»

The Recluse nodded.

«Just as a mystery that we cannot understand is the greatest possible wisdom. Go in and sit by my fire, Child; there are chestnuts on the hearth, and you will find milk in the brown jug. I will show you a symbol presently.»

The Child and the two cats went into the cave and sat down by the fire. It was warm and restful after the biting air. The cats purred pleasantly, the Child sat with her chin in her hand watching the glowing wood burn red and white on the great hearthstone.

«The Recluse generally answers my questions by showing me something I have seen for a long time but never beheld, or heard and never lent ear. I wonder what it will be this time,» she said to herself.

The grateful warmth made the Child sleepy, and she gave a start when she found the Recluse standing by her with outstretched hand.

«Come, dear Child,» he said; and leaving the sleeping cats she followed him, her hand in his.

The air was full of wonderful sound, voices and song, and the cry of the bells.

The Child wondered, and then remembered it was Christmas night. The Recluse led her down a little passage and opened a door. They stepped out together, but not into the forest.

«This is the front door of my house,» said the Recluse, with a little smile.

They stood on a white road, on one side a stretch of limestone down, on the other steep terraces with gardens and vineyard. The air was soft and warm, and sweet with the breath of lilies. The heaven was ablaze with stars; across the plain to the east the dawn was breaking. A group of strangely-clad men went down the road followed by a flock of sheep.

«Let us go with them,» said the Recluse; and hand in hand they went.

The road curved to the right; round the bend, cut in the living rock, was a cave; the shepherds stopped and knelt, and there was no sound but the soft rapid breathing of the flock. Then the Child was filled with an overmastering longing, a desire so great that the tears sprang hot to her eyes. She dropped the Recluse's hand and went forward where the shepherds knelt. Once again the air was full of wonderful sound, voices and song, and the cry of the bells; but within all was silence. The cave was rough-hewn, and stabled an ox and an ass; close to the front a tall strong man leaning on a staff kept watch and ward; within knelt a peasant Maid, and on a heap of yellow straw lay a tiny new-born Babe loosely wrapped in a linen cloth: around and above were wonderful figures of fire and mist.

The infinite, visible and attainable.

The mystery which is the greatest possible wisdom.

* * * * *

«Come, Child,» said the Recluse.

The fire had burnt low; it was quite dark, save for the glow of the live embers.

He threw on a great dry pine log; it flared like a torch. The cats' stretched in the sudden blaze, and then settled to sleep again. The Child and the Recluse passed out into the forest. The moon was very bright and the snow reflected its rays, so that it was light in spite of the great trees. The air was full of wonderful sound, voices and song, and the cry of the bells; and the Child sang as she went in a half-dream by the side of the Recluse:—

«In dieser heil'gen Weihnachtszeit, Alleluja! Sei, Gott der Herr, gebenedeit, Alleluja! Alleluja!»

and wondered when she would wake up. They came to the old, old church in the forest, and the pictured saints looked out at them from the lighted window; through the open door they could see figures moving about with tapers in their hands; save for these the church was still empty.

The Recluse led the way up the nave to the north side of the Altar. The Child started a little; she was really dreaming then a kind of circular dream, for again she stood before the cave, again the reverend figure kept watch and ward over the kneeling Maid and the little Babe. The sheep and the shepherds were not there, but a little lamb had strayed in; and the wonderful figures of fire and mist – they were there in their place.

«Little one,» said the Recluse softly, «here is a symbol – concealment yet revelation – the King as servant – the strong helpless – the Almighty a little child; and thus the infinite stands revealed for all of us, visible and attainable, if we will have it so. It is the centre of all mystery, the greatest possible wisdom, the Eternal Child.»

«You showed it me before,» said the Child, «only we were out of doors, and the shepherds were there with the sheep; but the angels are here just the same.»

The Recluse bowed his head.

«Wait for me here with them, dear Child, I will fetch you after service.»

The church began to fill; old men in smock frocks and tall hats, little children wrapped warm against the cold, lads, shining and spruce, old women in crossed shawls and wonderful bonnets. The service was not very long; then the Recluse went up into the old grey stone pulpit. The villagers settled to listen – he did not often preach.

"My brothers and sisters, to-night we keep the Birth of the Holy Babe, and to-night you and I stand at the gate of the Kingdom of Heaven, the gate which is undone only at the

cry of a little child. 'Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter.'

"The Kingdom is a great one, nay, a limitless one; and many enter in calling it by another name. It includes your own hearts and this wonderful forest, all the wise and beautiful works that men have ever thought of or done, and your daily toil; it includes your nearest and dearest, the outcast, the prisoner, and the stranger; it holds your cottage home and the jewelled City, the New Jerusalem itself. People are apt to think the Kingdom of Heaven is like church on Sunday, a place to enter once a week in one's best: whereas it holds every flower, and has room for the ox and the ass, and the least of all creatures, as well as for our prayer and worship and praise.

"'Except ye become as little children.' How are we to be born again, simple children with wondering eyes?

"We must learn to lie in helpless dependence, to open our mouth wide that it may be filled, to speak with halting tongue the language we think we know; we must learn above all our own ignorance, and keep alight and cherish the flame of innocency in our hearts.

"It is a tired world, my brethren, and we are most of us tired men and women who live on it, for we seek ever after some new thing. Let us pass out through the gate into the Kingdom of Heaven and not be tired any more, because there we shall find the new thing that we seek. Heaven is on earth, the Kingdom is here and now; the gate stands wide to-night, for it is the birthright of the Eternal Child. We are none of us too poor, or stupid, or lowly; it was the simple shepherds who saw Him first. We are none of us too great, or learned, or rich; it was the three wise kings who came next and offered gifts. We are none of us too young; it was little children who first laid down their lives for Him; or too old, for Simeon saw and recognised Him. There is only one thing against most of us – we are too proud.

«My brethren, 'let us now go even to Bethlehem, and face this thing which is come to pass, which the **Lord** hath made known unto us.'»

The lights were out in the church when the Recluse came to fetch the Child. She was still kneeling by the creche, keeping watch with the wonderful figures of fire and mist.

«Was **This** a dream or the other?» said the Child.

«Neither,» said the Recluse, and he blessed her in the moonlit dark.

The air was full of wonderful sound, voices and song, and the cry of the bells.

The Manifestation

GOD said; «Let there be light»; and in the East A star rose flaming from night's purple sea – The star of Truth, the star of Joy, the star Seen by the prophets down the lonely years; Set for a light to show the Perfect Way; Set for a sign that wayfarers might find; Set for a seal to mark the Godhead's home. And three Kings in their palaces afar, Who waited ardently for promised things, Beheld, and read aright. Straightway the road Was hot with pad of camel, horse's hoof, While night was quick as day with spurring men And light with flaring torch. «Haste, haste!» they cried, «We seek the King, the King! for in the East His star's alight.»

Bethlehem

THE Angels

Soft and slow, soft and slow, With angels' wings of fire and snow, To rock Him gently to and fro. Fire to stay the chill at night, Snow to cool the noonday bright; And overhead His star's alight.

Pale and sweet, pale and sweet, Maid Mary keeps her vigil meet, While Joseph waits with patient feet. Mary's love for soft embrace, Joseph's strength to guard the place. Lo! from the East Kings ride apace.

Gold and myrrh, gold and myrrh, Frankincense for harbinger, Myrrh to make His sepulchre. Roses white and roses red, Thorns arrayed for His dear Head. Hail! hail! Wise Men who seek His bed

Joseph

Little One, Little One, Saviour and Child, Father and Mother, my Husband and Son; Born of the lily, the maid undefiled, Babe of my Love, the Beatified One.

Little One, Little One, Master and **Lord**, Kings of the Earth come, desiring Thy Face; I, Thy poor servitor, lowly afford All that my life holds, for all is Thy Grace.

Little One, Little One, GOD over all, Earth is thy footstool, and Heav'n is Thy throne: Joseph the carpenter, prostrate I fall; Praise thee, adore Thee, and claim Thee mine own.

Maid Mary

Babe, dear Babe! Mine own, mine own, my heart's delight, The myrrh between my breasts at night, My little Rose, my Lily white, My Babe for whom the star's alight.

Babe, dear Babe! Mine own, mine own, GOD'S only SON, Foretold, foreseen, since earth begun; Desire of nations, Promised One When Eve was first by sin undone.

Babe, dear Babe! Mine own, mine own, the whole world's Child! Born of each heart that's undefiled, Nursed at the breast of Mercy mild, And in the arms of Love asiled.

Babe, dear Babe! My crown of glory, sorrow's sword, My Maker, King, Redeemer, Lord, My Saviour and my great Reward; My little Son, my Babe adored.

THE Three kings

Hail! Hail thou wondrous little King! To Thy dear Feet Our offerings meet With bended knee we bring; O mighty baby King, Accept the offering.

First King

Lord, I stoop low My head of snow, Thus I, the great, hail Thee, the Least! And swing the censer for the Priest, The Priest with hands upraised to bless, The Priest of this world's bitterness. As I stoop low My head of snow, Bless me, O Priest, before I go.

Second King

Behold me, King! A man of might, Who rules dominions infinite; Strong in the harvest of the years, And one who counts no kings as peers. O little King, Behold my crown! I lay it down, And bow before Thy lowly bed My all unworthy uncrowned head, For I am naught and Thou art All. And Thou shalt climb a throne set high, Between sad earth and silent sky, Thereon to agonize and die; And at Thy Feet the world shall fall. Stretch out Thy little Hands, O King, Behold the world's imagining!

Third King

Out of the shadow of the night I come, led by the starshine bright, With broken heart to bring to Thee The fruit of Thine Epiphany, The gift my fellows send by me, The myrrh to bed Thine agony. I set it here beneath Thy Feet, In token of Death's great defeat; And hail Thee Conqueror in the strife; And hail Thee Lord of Light and Life. All hail! All hail the Virgin's Son! All hail! Thou little helpless One! All hail! Thou King upon the Tree! All hail! The Babe on Mary's knee, The centre of all mystery!

All Souls' Day in a German Town

THE leaves fall softly: a wind of sighs Whispers the world's infirmities, Whispers the tale of the waning years, While slow mists gather in shrouding tears On All Souls' Day; and the bells are slow In steeple and tower. Sad folk go Away from the township, past the mill, And mount the slope of a grassy hill Carved into terraces broad and steep, To the inn where wearied travellers sleep, Where the sleepers lie in ordered rows, And no man stirs in his long repose. They wend their way past the haunts of life, Father and daughter, grandmother, wife,

To deck with candle and deathless cross, The house which holds their dearest loss. I, who stand on the crest of the hill, Watch how beneath me, busied still, The sad folk wreath each grave with flowers. Awhile the veil of the twilight hours Falls softly, softly, over the hill, Shadows the cross:— creeps on until Swiftly upon us is flung the dark. Then, as if lit by a sudden spark, Each grave is vivid with points of light, Earth is as Heaven's mirror to—night; The air is still as a spirit's breath, The lights burn bright in the realm of Death. Then silent the mourners mourning go, Wending their way to the church below; While the bells toll out to bid them speed, With eager Pater and prayerful bead, The souls of the dead, whose bodies still Lie in the churchyard under the hill; While they wait and wonder in Paradise, And gaze on the dawning mysteries, Praying for us in our hours of need; For us, who with Pater and prayerful bead Have bidden those waiting spirits speed.

Rivers and Streams

Running water has a charm all its own; it proffers companionship of which one never tires; it adapts itself to moods; it is the guardian of secrets. It has cool draughts for the thirsty soul as well as for drooping flowers; and they who wander in the garden of God with listening ears learn of its many voices.

When the strain of a working day has left me weary, perhaps troubled and perplexed, I find my way to the river. I step into a boat and pull up stream until the exertion has refreshed me; and then I make fast to the old alder—stump where last year the reed— piper nested, and lie back in the stern and think.

The water laps against the keel as the boat rocks gently in the current; the river flows past, strong and quiet. There are side eddies, of course, and little disturbing whirlpools near the big stones, but they are all gathered into the broad sweep of the stream, carried down to the great catholic sea. And while I listen to the murmur of the water and watch its quiet strength the day's wrinkles are smoothed out of my face; and at last the river bears me homeward rested and at peace.

There are long stretches of time for me when I must remain apart from the world of work, often unwilling, sometimes with a very sore heart. Then I turn my steps towards my friend and wander along the banks, a solitary not alone. In the quiet evening light I watch the stream 'never hasting, never resting': the grass that grows beside it is always green, the flowers are fresh; it makes long embracing curves — I could cross from point to point in a minute, but to follow takes five. The ways of the water are ways of healing; I have a companion who makes no mistakes, touches none of my tender spots.

Presently I reach the silent pool, where the stream takes a wide sweep. Here the fair white water—lilies lie on their broad green leaves and wait for their lover the moon; for then they open their silvery leaves and bloom in the soft light fairer far than beneath the hot rays of the sun. Then, too, the buds rise out of the water and the moon kisses them into bloom

and fragrance. Near by are the little yellow water–lilies, set for beauty against a background of great blue–eyed forget–me–nots and tall feathery meadowsweet. The river still sweeps on its way, but the pool is undisturbed; it lies out of the current. They say it is very deep – no one knows quite how deep – and it has its hidden tragedy. I gaze down through the clear water, following the thick lily–stalks – a forest where solemn carp sail in and out and perch chase each other through the maze – and beyond them I cannot see the bottom, the secret of its stillness; but I may watch the clouds mirrored on its surface, and the evening glow lying at my feet.

I think of the fathomless depths of the peace of God, fair with flowers of hope; of still places wrought in man; of mirrors that reflect, in light uncomprehended, the Image of the Holy Face.

I go home across the common, comforted, towards the little town where the red roofs lie glimmering in the evening shadows, and the old grey church stands out clear and distinct against the fading sky.

* * * * *

One of the happiest memories of my childhood is the little brook in the home field. I know it was not a very clean little brook – it passed through an industrious manufacturing world – but to me then this mattered not at all.

Where it had its source I never found out; it came from a little cave in the side of the hill, and I remember that one of its banks was always higher than the other. I once sought to penetrate the cave, but with sad results in the shape of bed before dinner and no pudding, such small sympathy have one's elders with the spirit of research. Just beyond the cave the brook was quite a respectable width, – even my big boy cousin fell into mud and disgrace when he tried to jump it – and there was a gravelly beach, at least several inches square, where we launched our boats of hollowed elder–wood. Soon, however, it narrowed, it could even be stepped over; but it was still exciting and delightful, with two perilous rapids over which the boats had to be guided, and many boulders – for the brook was a brave stream, and had fashioned its bed in rocky soil. Further down was our bridge, one flat stone dragged thither by really herculean efforts. It was unnecessary, but a triumph. A little below this outcome of our engineering skill the brook widened again before disappearing under a flagged tunnel into the neighbouring field. Here, in the shallows, we built an aquarium. It was not altogether successful, because whenever it rained at all hard the beasts were washed out; but there was always joy in restocking it. Under one of the banks close by lived a fat frog for whom I felt great respect. We used to sit and gaze at each other in silent intercourse, until he became bored – I think I never did – and flopped into the water with a splash.

But it was the brook itself that was my chief and dearest companion. It chattered and sang to me, and told me of the goblins who lived under the hill, of fairies dancing on the

grass on moonlight nights, and scolding the pale lilac milk–maids on the banks; and of a sad little old man dressed in brown, always sad because his dear water–children ran away from him when they heard the voice of the great river telling them of the calling of the sea.

It spoke to me of other more wonderful things, not even now to be put into words, things of the mysteries of a child's imagination; and these linger still in my life, and will linger, I think, until they are fulfilled.

* * * * *

I have another friend – a Devonshire stream. I found it in spring when the fields along its banks were golden with Lent–lilies. I do not even know its name; it has its source up among the old grey tors, and doubtless in its beginning had a hard fight for existence. When it reaches the plain it is a good–sized stream, although nowhere navigable. I do not think it even turns a mill; it just flows along and waters the flowers. I have seen it with my bodily eyes only once; but it has left in my life a blessing, a picture of blue sky, yellow bells, and clear rippling water – and whispered secrets not forgotten.

All the Devonshire streams are full of life and strength. They chatter cheerily over stones, they toil bravely to shape out their bed. Some of them might tell horrible tales of the far–away past, of the worship of the false god when blood stained the clear waters; tales, too, of feud and warfare, of grave council and martial gathering; and happy stories of fairy and pixy our eyes are too dull to see, and of queer little hillmen with foreign ways and terror of all human beings. Their banks are bright with tormentil, blue with forget–me–not, rich in treasures of starry moss; the water is clear, cool in the hottest summer – they rise under the shadow of the everlasting hills, and their goal is the sea.

* * * * *

There are other times when I must leave the clean waters and the good brown earth, to live, for a while, in London: and there I go on pilgrimage that I may listen to the river's voice.

I stand sometimes at a wharf where the ships are being unloaded of the riches of every country, of fruits of labour by my unknown brothers in strange lands; and the river speaks of citizenship in the great world of God, wherein all men have place, each man have his own place, and every one should be neighbour to him who may have need.

I pass on to London Bridge, our Bridge of Sighs. How many of these my brethren have sought refuge in the cold grey arms of the river from something worse than death? What drove them to this dreadful resting–place? What spectre hurried them to the leap? These things, too, are my concern, the river says.

Life is very grim in London: it is not painted in the fair, glowing colours of grass and sky and trees, and shining streams that bring peace. It is drawn in hard black and white; but the voice of its dark waters must be heard all the same.

* * * * *

I would not leave my rivers in the shadow. After all, this life is only a prelude, a beginning: we pass on to where «the rivers and streams make glad the city of God.» But if we will not listen here how shall we understand hereafter.

Spring

Hark how the merry daffodils, Fling golden music to the hills! And how the hills send echoing down, Through wind-swept turf and moorland brown, The murmurs of a thousand rills That mock the song-birds' liquid trills! The hedge released from Winter's frown Shews jewelled branch and willow crown; While all the earth with pleasure trills, And 'dances with the daffodils.'

Out, out, ye flowers! Up and shout! Staid Winter's passed and Spring's about To lead your ranks in joyous rout; To string the hawthorn's milky pearls, And gild the grass with celandine; To dress the catkins' tasselled curls, To twist the tendrils of the vine. She wakes the wind-flower from her sleep, And lights the woods with April's moon; The violets lift their heads to peep, The daisies brave the sun at noon.

The gentle wind from out the west Toys with the lilac pretty maids; Ruffles the meadow's verdant-vest, And rings the bluebells in the glades; The ash-buds change their sombre suit, The orchards blossom white and red – Promise of Autumn's riper fruit, When Spring's voluptuousness has fled. Awake! awake, O throstle sweet! And haste with all your choir to greet This Queen who comes with wakening feet.

Persephone with grateful eyes Salutes the Sun – 'tis Paradise: Then hastens down the dewy meads, Past where the herd contented feeds, Past where the furrows hide the grain, For harvesting of sun and rain; To where Demeter patient stands With longing lips and outstretched hands, Until the dawning of one face Across the void of time and space Shall bring again her day of grace. Rejoice, O Earth! Rejoice and sing! This is the promise of the Spring, And this the world's remembering.

A Lark's Song

Sweet, sweet! I rise to greet The sapphire sky The air slips by On either side As up I ride On mounting wing, And sing and sing – Then reach my bliss, The sun's great kiss; And poise a space To see his face, Sweet, sweet, In radiant grace, Ah, sweet! ah, sweet!

Sweet, sweet! Beneath my feet My nestlings call: And down I fall Unerring, true,
Through heaven's blue; And haste to fill Each noisy bill. My brooding breast Stills their
unrest. Sweet, sweet, Their quick hearts beat, Safe in the nest: Ah, sweet, sweet, sweet! Ah,
sweet!

Sweet, sweet The calling sky That bids me fly Up – up – on high. Sweet, sweet The
claiming earth; It holds my nest And draws me down To where Love's crown Of priceless
worth Awaits my breast. Sweet, sweet! Ah, this is best And this most meet, Sweet, sweet!
ah, sweet!

'Luvly Miss'

Nobody thought of consequences. There was a lighted paraffin lamp on the table and
nothing else handy. Mrs Brown's head presented a tempting mark, and of course Mr Brown's
lengthy stay at 'The Three Fingers' had something to do with it; but nobody thought of Miss
Brown, aged four, who was playing happily on the floor, unruffled by the storm to which
she was so well accustomed.

Mrs Brown ducked; there was a smash, a scream, and poor little Miss Brown was in a
blaze. The shock sobered the father and silenced the mother. Miss Brown was extinguished
with the aid of a table– cover, much water, and many neighbours; but she was horribly burnt
all over, except her face.

* * * * *

I made Miss Brown's acquaintance a few days later. She was lying on a bed made up on
two chairs, and was covered with cotton wool. She had scarcely any pain, and could not
move at all; and the small face that peered out of what she called her «pitty warm snow»
was wan and drawn and had a far–away look in the dark eyes.

Miss Brown possessed one treasure, her 'luvly miss.' I suppose I must call it a doll,
though in what its claim to the title consisted I dared not ask; Miss Brown would have
deeply resented the enquiry. It was a very large potato with a large and a small bulge. Into
the large bulge were inserted three pieces of fire– wood, the body and arms of 'luvly miss';
legs she had none.

How Miss Brown came by this treasure I never heard. She had an impression that it
«fled froo the winder» – I fancy Mr Brown had a hand in the manufacture in one of his
lucid moments; but it was a treasure indeed and the joy of Miss Brown's life. She held long
conversations with 'luvly miss' on all familiar subjects; and apparently obtained much
strange and rare information from her. For example, Miss Brown and 'luvly miss' in some
previous stage of their existence had inhabited a large chimney–pot together, «where it was
always so warm and a bootie 'mell of cookin'.'» Also she had a rooted belief that one day she

and 'luvly miss' would be «hangels wiv' black weils and basticks.» This puzzled me for some time, until I discovered it to be an allusion to the good deaconess who attended her, and whom Mrs Brown in gratitude designated by this title.

Alas for little Miss Brown and her 'luvly miss'! their respective ends were drawing near. I went in one Friday, a week or so after the accident, and found Mrs Brown in tears and despair, and Miss Brown with a look of anguish on her poor little pinched face that was bad to see. 'Luvly Miss' was no more.

It was Mr Brown again; or, to trace back the links of occasion, it was the action of 'The Three Fingers' on Mr Brown's frail constitution. He had come in late, seen 'luvly miss' on the table, and, with his usual heedlessness of consequence, had chucked her into the dying embers where – alas that I should have to say it! – she slowly baked. Little Miss Brown, when the miserable truth was broken to her, neither wept nor remonstrated; she lay quite still with a look of utter forsaken wretchedness on her tiny white face, and moaned very softly for 'luvly miss.'

I came face to face with this state of things and I confess it staggered me. I knew Miss Brown too well to hope that any pink– and–white darling from the toy–shop could replace 'luvly miss,' or that she could be persuaded to admit even a very image of the dear departed into her affections. Then, too, the doctor said Miss Brown had but a few days at the most, perhaps only hours, to live; and comforted she must be.

All at once I had an inspiration, and never in my life have I welcomed one more. I knelt down by little Miss Brown and told her the story of the Phoenix. I had not reckoned in vain upon her imagination: would I «yerely and twooly bwing» her «werry own luvly miss out of the ashes?» I lied cheerfully and hastened away to the dust–bin, accompanied by Mrs Brown.

In a few minutes we returned with a pail of ashes, the ashes, of course, of 'luvly miss' mingled with those of the cruel fire which had consumed her. I danced solemnly round them, murmured mysterious words, parted the ashes, and revealed the form of 'luvly miss.' Love's eyes were not sharp to mark a change, and little Miss Brown's misplaced faith in me was strong. Never shall I forget the scream of joy which greeted the restored treasure, or the relief with which I saw an expression of peace settle once more on Miss Brown's face.

I saw them again next day. Little Miss Brown was asleep in her last little bed, still wrapped in the «pitty warm snow,» and 'luvly miss' lay beside her.

Four Stories Told to Children

The Story of the Dreadful Griffin.

MY Dear children, – I am going to tell you a really breathless story for your holiday treat. It will have to begin with the moral, because everyone will be too much exhausted to read one at the end, and as the moral is the only part that really matters, it is important to come to it quite fresh.

We will, therefore, endeavour to learn from this story:–

If we fly at all, to fly **High**. To be extremely polite. To be kind and grateful to cats and all other animals.

All the trouble arose one day when the Princess (there is always a Princess in a fairy–tale, you know) was playing in the garden with her ball. She threw it up in the air much higher than usual and it never came down again. There was an awful shriek, like ten thousand steam–engines; all the ladies–in–waiting fainted in a row, the inhabitants of the place went stone–deaf, and the Captain of the Guard, who was in attendance with a company of his troops, seized the Princess, put her on his horse, galloped away followed by his soldiers to a castle on the top of a hill, deposited the Princess in the highest room, and then and only then, told her what had happened.

«Miss,» he said, for he was so upset he forgot Court etiquette, «Miss, your ball must have hit the Dreadful Griffin in the eye (I noticed he was taking a little fly in the neighbourhood), and that was the reason of the awful shriek. Well, Miss, the Dreadful Griffin never was known to forgive anybody anything, so I snatched you up quick before he could get at you and brought you to the Castle of the White Cats. There are seventeen of these animals sitting outside the door and twenty–seven more standing in the courtyard, so you're as safe as safe can be, for the Dreadful Griffin can't look at a white cat without getting the ague and then he shakes so a mouse wouldn't be afraid of him. And now, Miss, I must go back to your Royal Pa, so I will wish you good–morning.»

Having made this long speech the Captain suddenly remembered the Court etiquette, became very hot and red, went out of the room backwards, and instantly fell over the seventeen cats who all swore at him, which so confused the poor man that he rolled down the stairs and out into the court where the twenty–seven cats were having rations of mouse–pie served out to them; and the Captain rolled into the middle of the pie, scalded himself badly with the gravy, and was thankful to jump on his horse and ride away with his soldiers to report matters to the King.

The King was so pleased with his promptitude that he made him the General of the Flying Squadron, which only fights in the air, and conferred on him the medal of the Society for the Suppression of Superfluous Salamanders, whereat the Captain was overjoyed.

But this is a digression, and I only told you because I wanted you to see that virtue is always rewarded.

Now for the poor Princess.

Well, she cried a little, of course, but the cats brought her some mouse-pie, which she found very good, and she was soon quite happy playing with some of the kittens and nearly forgot all about the Dreadful Griffin; but he did not forget about HER, oh dear no! He flew after the Captain when he galloped away with the Princess, but when he saw the White Cats he shook with ague so fearfully that his teeth rolled about in his mouth like billiard balls and he had to go and get a new set before he could eat his dinner. Well, he was in a perfect fury, and how to get at the Princess he did not know. He swallowed several buckets of hot brimstone, rolled his head in a red flannel petticoat, put his tail in a hot sand-bag, and went to bed hoping to cure the ague, which he did completely, so that he was quite well next day and more anxious to eat the Princess than ever.

Now next door to the Dreadful Griffin (that is, a hundred miles away) there lived a Wicked Witch, and he went to consult her as to how he might get at the Princess. When the Wicked Witch heard what a sad effect White Cats had on the Griffin's constitution she said that she would have expected a Griffin of his coils to have had more sense.

«Any slow-worm knows,» said the Wicked Witch, «that cats love mice better than Princesses; therefore get a large sack of fat mice, let them loose a little way from the castle, and when the cats see them they will run after them, and you can eat the Princess.»

The Dreadful Griffin was so pleased with the Wicked Witch that he presented her with a pair of fire-bricks and a hot-water tin, and then flew away to the Purveyor of Mice, who lived in a town about seventy miles away. He bought twelve hundred dozen fat mice of the best quality, all the Purveyor had in stock that were home-grown, and flew on with them to the castle. When he was a little way off he let the mice out, expecting all the cats to arrive at once; but not a cat appeared. They **Heard** mice and they **Smelt** mice, but not a cat moved, for they were on their honour; so they kept guard and licked their lips sadly. When the Griffin saw the last of the twelve hundred dozen mice disappearing down the road with never a cat after them, he was in a tremendous temper and flew away to the house of the Wicked Witch, only stopping to pick up a steam engine which he dropped through her roof, and then went home to bed. Next day he remembered a friend of his called the Grumpy Giant, who lived six doors away, that is, about a thousand miles, so he flew to ask his advice. When the Giant heard his story, he said in the gruffest voice you ever heard, «Mice is common, try sparrers» (by which you can see that he was quite an uneducated person), and then he turned over and went to sleep.

The Dreadful Griffin at once flew away to the Sparrow Preserves, bought eleven thousand, and then proceeded to let them fly close to the castle. Still not a cat moved. As the cats' copy-book well says, «Honour is dearer to cats than mice or birds,» and all the kittens write this in round-hand as soon as they can do lessons at all, and never forget it.

Well, I really dare not describe the state of mind the Griffin was in; but he made the air so hot that all the people put on their thinnest clothes, although it was the middle of winter. He flew home puffing and snorting, and on the way he passed the house of the Amiable Answerer. He went in and told his story, and his voice shook with rage. The Amiable Answerer gave him a penny pink ice to cool him down, and then said gently:—

«I think, dear Mr Griffin, that green spectacles would meet your case. Then the cats which are now white would appear to you green and . . . »

But the Griffin was already half-way to a Watchmaker's where they sold glasses. He burst into the shop, frightened the watchmaker so that he fell into the works of the watch he was mending and could only be got out with the greatest difficulty, seized twelve pairs of green spectacles, put them on all at once and flew towards the castle.

Now the Dreadful Griffin was one of those creatures who do not stop to think, consequently he came to grief. White cats gave him the ague, but green dogs made him cough most fearfully; and a little way out of the town he met thirteen white poodles taking a walk, who of course all looked bright green to the Dreadful Griffin. He coughed so fearfully that all the twelve pairs of spectacles fell off his nose and were smashed to bits, and his plan was spoilt once more.

No, I am not going to tell you what the Dreadful Griffin said and did then, it is too terrible to speak of, but he had to keep in bed for a week, and drink hot tar, and have his chest ironed with a steam roller, and his nose greased with seven pounds of tallow candles; but all his misfortunes did not cure him of wanting to eat the Princess. When his cough was better, he went for a walk in the wood near which he lived, to think out a new plan. Suddenly he heard something croaking, and saw the Fat Frog sitting under a tree. Now the Dreadful Griffin was so low in his mind that he wanted to tell someone his troubles, so he told the Fat Frog.

«Don't come near me,» said the Fat Frog when he had finished, «for I hate heat. If you look under the fifth tree from the end of the wood you'll find a thin packet. Put it in sixteen gallons of water and pour it over the cats, only mind you shut your eyes first, and for goodness sake don't come into this wood any more, you dry up the moisture.»

The Griffin quite forgot to thank the Fat Frog, he was a Griffin of NO manners, but he didn't forget to take the packet. It was labelled 'Reckitt's,' and when he put it in the water all the water turned bright blue. Then he took the pail in his claw, flew to the castle, shut his eyes and poured some of the contents of the pail over the cats in the courtyard.

When he opened his eyes there were twenty-seven bright blue, damp, depressed cats; and he passed them without any difficulty. He shut his eyes, wriggled up the stairs, poured the remaining mixture over the seventeen cats, who all turned as blue as the rest, and then he

burst open the door of the Princess's room. Fortunately there was a kind Fairy flying over the castle at that very moment, who, seeing what was happening, changed the Princess into a flea so that the Dreadful Griffin couldn't see her anywhere.

No, if I couldn't tell you before, I certainly must not attempt now to describe the Griffin's behaviour when he found the Princess thus snatched from his jaws. He went grunting and bellowing and screaming along; and just as he was stopping to take breath he heard someone roaring with laughter, and saw a little yellow man sitting on the top bough of a tree.

«Are you laughing at ME?» said the Dreadful Griffin (he was so angry that he was quite polite). And the little man said quite as politely that he certainly WAS.

«Why?» said the Dreadful Griffin, still fearfully polite.

«Because you're such a green Griffin,» said the yellow man; and he screamed with laughter again – «I know all about it, you've blued the cats and now the Princess has greened you. She's turned into a flea, and you still want to eat her, and it never occurred to you, you green old grampus of a Griffin, that fleas like **Cats**. I suppose the Princess flea wouldn't jump on to a tabby kitten, and you couldn't swallow the kitten – oh dear, no – of course not . . .»

But the Griffin was gone. He went to the Zoo, found a tabby kitten, though they are rare in that country, and flew back with it to the Princess's room.

He waited half an hour and then swallowed the kitten at one gulp; but he instantly burst in four pieces, for the fluffy kitten tickled his digestive organs so much that they cracked his sides and he died; and the flea and the kitten came out quite unhurt, only a little damp.

Then a wonderful thing happened. The tabby kitten changed into the little yellow man who had laughed at the Griffin. He grew, and grew, and in a few minutes he was a handsome prince. His name was Prince Orange Plushikins. One day a cruel witch whom he had offended had changed him into an ugly yellow man, and had sworn that he should only regain his shape if he was eaten by a Griffin when under the form of a tabby kitten; which you know was precisely what happened. Well, Prince Orange Plushikins at once asked the Princess flea to marry him, and the minute the flea said «Yes,» the Princess reappeared. She and the Prince were married next morning; and all the cats went to the steam laundry and were washed and bleached and had their tails crimped and their whiskers starched; and they danced at the wedding, and everybody lived happily ever after.

The Discontented Daffodils.

They had the very loveliest home you can imagine, with beautiful soft moss and grass to grow in, trees to form a cosy shelter from the wind, and a dear little babbling stream to water them.

There were lots of daffodils in this pretty place, and nobody ever discovered the nook to gather them. They rejoiced in the spring sunshine and gentle breezes, the greeting of the birds, and the musical chatter of the brook; then when their brief visit to the upper world was over they nestled happily down in their warm mossy beds and slept till April came again to wake them.

A little apart from the rest were four daffodils growing at the root of a gnarled oak tree, and one fine sunshiny morning three of them took it into their silly little heads that they were dull, the place was dull, the other daffodils were dull, and they wanted a change.

It was mainly the fault of the cuckoo, for he was a grumbling, mischief-making bird and used to spend a good deal of time talking to the daffodils. This particular spring he had taken up his abode in the oak tree, and was fond of talking of all the grand things he had seen, and a great many he had not seen, for the cuckoo is a bird of fine imagination; and at last, as I have already said, three of the daffodils made up their minds that to be a flower and live in a wood was a very dreadful thing, and not to be put up with any longer.

Now the cuckoo had told many strange tales about creatures with two legs and beautiful coloured leaves which grew in an odd way, and feathers only on their heads. They could not fly, but they could run about from place to place, and dance and sing; and at last the daffodils decided that they wished to be like these curious creatures, which the cuckoo called **Girls**.

Then there were sad times in that sweet little nook under the oak tree.

The naughty daffodils cried and quarrelled and bewailed their lot all day long, till they made themselves and everybody else extremely wretched. Their little sister shook her head at them, and scolded and said that for her part she was not meant to have legs; but it was all no use, the daffodils would not be quiet.

One day the Fairy Visitor who looked after the flowers in that part heard the silly blossoms crying, and stopped to ask what was the matter. When she heard the story she told them they were very foolish and discontented, and that the cuckoo was a most mischievous bird and liked to get people into trouble; but the daffodils would not listen. So knowing there is nothing so likely to cure silly flower as to give them their own silly way, she said – «Very well, my dears, you want to be girls, and girls you shall be.»

With that she waved her wand over the three daffodils and in a twinkle they were gone; in their places stood three tall pretty maidens dressed in soft yellow silk frocks with green

stockings and shoes. For a minute they were too much astonished to speak, then clapping their hands they laughed and skipped for joy, and wanted to kiss the old fairy because they were so pleased at getting their own way; but the fairy would not look at them, and stooped over the little flower now growing all alone, saying kindly:—

«Well, little one, don't you want to be a pretty maiden, too?»

But the daffodil shook her head with great determination:—

«I don't want legs and I won't have legs. I was meant to be a flower and a flower I will be, but if you could keep that meddling, chattering cuckoo away from this tree for a time I should be much obliged.»

And the fairy laughed and promised.

Meanwhile the three pretty maidens had set off hand in hand to seek their fortunes.

They went singing and dancing over the meadows in the soft afternoon sunshine, and thought how wise and clever they were to be girls instead of little unnoticed flowers growing in a wood.

Presently they came to a house and stopped to ask whether they could have a lodging for the night. There was no difficulty about it, for that is a happy country where there is no money and everything belongs to everybody, so the people of the house – an old man and woman – were delighted to see the beautiful maidens and made them heartily welcome, and the daffodils went to bed that night very happy and quite content with the result of their experiment. When they came to undress, however, they received a severe shock.

They were girls, real proper girls, they could chatter and eat and sleep, for the fairy was not one to do things by halves; but when they pulled off the dainty green shoes and stockings, they discovered that although they had the prettiest little legs and feet and toes in the world, they were quite green, the colour of daffodil leaves.

There wasn't anything said about a «dear, darling, kind old fairy» then, I can assure you.

The first daffodil said she was a wicked old witch. The second said she was a horrible old woman; and the third said she knew the fairy meant to pay them out, and she would like to scratch her. Then they all set to work arguing and quarrelling and crying like silly babies, when suddenly a familiar «Cuck-oo!» sounded in their ears, and they saw our old acquaintance perched on the window sill.

He looked at the six little green feet, and his eyes twinkled; but before he could speak the three angry maidens all began scolding him at once, for they were delighted to have

somebody fresh to find fault with.

The cuckoo, being in some respects a philosopher, did not attempt to interrupt, but when they were quite exhausted he said he really could not see any reason for their distress. No one would ever wish to see their feet, and they could always wear stockings. He added that he had great news, and had come on purpose to bring it.

«The King of Silverland,» he said, «is coming with all his court to hold high revel close to this place and celebrate the coming of age of his three sons. These princes were all born at once; and the king has decided to divide his kingdom into three equal parts and leave his sons to rule while he retires to his country place to study science. Now these Silver princes desire to marry three princesses, sisters born at once like themselves; but they are very hard to find, and the king is advertising everywhere for triplets. When I heard this I set off at once to tell you.»

The three maidens were so much interested and excited that they forgot their troubles and began to sing.

The cuckoo was pleased with his success, but told them they must go to bed and to sleep, and he would fetch them in the morning to show them the way to the King of Silverland's court.

Next morning, although he arrived quite early, the maidens were up and ready for him, looking very pretty in their yellow frocks. The kind people of the house were quite sorry to part with their guests and begged them to come again, and the daffodil maidens set off in high spirits, following the cuckoo as he flew slowly ahead across the sunlit meadows. About noon they came in sight of the king's court. The gorgeous tents were of cloth of silver fastened with silver ropes; fountains were playing in the open spaces, and flags flying everywhere. The daffodils attracted a great deal of attention as they made their way, blushing and a little frightened, through the crowds of soldiers, court ladies and attendants. At the door of the largest and most gorgeous tent stood three beautiful princes dressed in silver.

When they saw the maidens approaching, hand in hand, they gave a cry of joy and ran forward to greet them.

«Dear beautiful princesses,» they cried, «welcome to our court! May we ask your names and the country you come from?»

The cuckoo, perched on a tent-pole hard by, answered for them. «These are the Princesses Daffodil, daughters of the great King of Goldenland. They have come very many days' journey to be present at your revels.»

Think of the cuckoo telling such a dreadful story and those naughty daffodils not contradicting him!

When the princes heard the cuckoo's words they were almost beside themselves with joy, for, as it happened, there was a real King of Goldenland (but the cuckoo did not know it), and he had three daughters of the same age whom the Silver princes were anxious to see. They dropped on one knee, kissed the maidens' hands very prettily, and then led them, blushing and delighted, into the royal tent.

The king was out, but the queen received the daffodils very graciously.

«Triplet,» she said significantly, and it was the princes' turn to blush.

Then the young people visited all the beautiful tents, and the great ballroom where there was to be a ball that night, and the princes whispered to the maidens that they would dance with no one else. When they had tasted the cowslip wine from the fountains and eaten lots of wonderful sweets the daffodils declared they were quite tired; so the princes put them into hammocks with little monkeys to swing them, and the happy hours wore on until the evening.

The maidens had had a beautiful tent assigned to them by the queen, and they found lovely dresses of cloth of gold with shoes and stockings to match, all ready for them. They looked so beautiful when they were dressed that the colour of their feet did not seem to matter at all.

All that night they danced with the princes, and everyone was charmed with their beauty and grace, especially the king, who had not received a single answer to his advertisement. At the great banquet which followed the ball the betrothal of the Silver princes to the Golden princesses was solemnly announced, and their health drunk amid great rejoicing.

The dawn was red in the east before the festivities were over, and the daffodils went to bed happier than they had ever been before, happier than they ever would be again. A new and awful trouble of which they had never dreamt was about to befall them.

When the princes came to meet their betrothed next morning the maidens noticed that, although very affectionate, they were downcast and somewhat silent. At last, after a great deal of questioning, the reason came out. The king and queen had both had exactly the same curious dream, and this strange occurrence had upset their majesties very much. They both dreamt that one of the princesses, as they believed them to be, had six toes on each foot; and as no monstrosity could ever share the throne of Silverland they demanded to see the princesses' little feet with their own eyes, so as to be quite sure they all had only the right number of toes.

When the princes with many blushes broke this news to their lady-loves, they each gave a short loud scream and fainted.

Their lovers, of course, put this down to extreme modesty, and were much affected by such proper conduct; but when they succeeded in restoring them to consciousness they were not a little disturbed to find that the maidens positively refused to show their feet.

Imagine the grief of the poor princes! The king had said quite positively that not one of the princes should marry till he, the queen, and the councillors of the kingdom, had seen the bride's feet; and the maidens now declared that they would never never show them.

Matters were in this awkward state when the cuckoo appeared on the scene. He had as usual contrived to find out what was going on, and now announced that he had a private message for the Golden princesses, if they would take him to their tent.

When they were alone the daffodils began to cry their eyes out, and the cuckoo to try and comfort them.

«Green feet,» he said, «are very uncommon and would no doubt be welcomed as a great rarity.»

But the maidens sobbed on.

«The princes love you so much they will think your little feet the most beautiful colour in the world.»

But they would not listen.

«I heard the king and queen say that green was their favourite colour,» he remarked next.

This was pure invention on the cuckoo's part, but the daffodils were somewhat cheered, and after a great deal of talking the cuckoo persuaded them to give in and consent to show their feet, as they could not possibly marry the princes without. Besides, perhaps when the king found their toes were all right he would think the colour rather ornamental than otherwise. So the princes were told to their great joy that the princesses had consented to show their feet; and the king and queen, on being informed, summoned a Cabinet Council for the next morning so that their ministers might be present at the counting of the princesses' toes.

Meantime the real Goldenland princesses had arrived near the camp; but as they and their suite were very tired they resolved not to visit the Silver king till the next day, and commanded that no one should mention their arrival.

That night the daffodils never slept, for fear once more took possession of them. They scrubbed their feet, but the fairy's dye would not come off; then they scraped them, but that hurt very much and did no good. Finally they chalked them, but that was no use at all; so they had to give it up in despair, and hope for the best.

Next morning two of the court ushers came to escort them to the Cabinet Council. Poor daffodils! Their eyes were red with weeping, and they could scarcely stand for terror when they entered the tent where the examination was to take place.

In the middle on a raised dais sat the king and queen, on their right stood the three princes, on their left the councillors in their robes of state. Three chairs were placed for the maidens, and they were politely but firmly requested to take off their shoes and stockings.

Blushing crimson the daffodils slowly and unwillingly took off their shoes. Then they cried a little and said they really truly couldn't, but it was no use, and the stockings had to follow, and six little green feet were exposed to view.

«They wear two pairs, I see,» said the queen, who was a little short-sighted. «Very sensible, I'm sure, in this damp place. Take off the other pair, my dears.»

But the daffodils only hung their heads and wept.

Then one of the councillors cried out, in a horrified tone – «Their feet are green! They are monstrosities!» and at that very moment heralds were heard outside announcing the arrival of the Princesses of Goldenland.

Now the king was a shrewd old gentleman, and the true state of affairs suddenly flashed upon him. «They are impostors!» he cried, rising to his feet, «turn the deceitful minxes out.»

At that the maidens rose and fled. They never stopped for shoes or stockings, but ran like hunted hares out of the tent across the fields; and when the people saw their little green feet a great shout of laughter went up, in which the king and the princes joined. As for the daffodils, they ran and ran and ran, not daring even to look behind them, till they suddenly stopped for want of breath; and where do you think they were? Why in their old home under the oak tree. Most of the daffodils had gone to sleep, but a few were left, and among them their little sister. At her side stood the fairy.

«Well, my dears, do you like being girls?» and there was a twinkle in her eye as she spoke.

But the daffodils were sobbing too bitterly to answer, and the fairy had a kind heart and did not press the question. «Would you be content to be daffodils again?» she asked, and smiled at them sweetly.

They murmured a thankful «Yes»; the fairy waved her wand, and in a trice the maidens were gone and there were three more flowers, very pale faded ones, growing under the gnarled oak tree. Poor discontented daffodils! They had to pay a heavy price for their folly.

The cuckoo came back time after time, and never wearied of teasing them; and their little sister made many very true but disagreeable remarks on the extreme silliness of being discontented with one's surroundings.

Perhaps by next spring things may be better; but of this you may be quite sure, no amount of cuckoos will ever persuade the flowers in that nook to be anything but what nature intended them to be – sweet little daffodils.

The Fairy Fluffikins

THE Fairy Fluffikins lived in a warm woolly nest in a hole down an old oak tree. She was the sweetest, funniest little fairy you ever saw. She wore a little, soft, fluffy brown dress, and on her head a little red woolly cap; she had soft red hair and the brightest, naughtiest, merriest, sharpest brown eyes imaginable.

What a life she led the animals! Fairy Fluffikins was a sad tease; she would creep into the nests where the fat baby dormice were asleep in bed while Mamma dormouse nodded over her knitting and Papa smoked his little acorn pipe; and she would tickle the babies till they screamed with laughter and nearly rolled out of bed, and Mamma scolded, and Papa said in a gruff voice – «What a plague you are, you little dorsi; go to sleep this minute or I will fetch my big stick.»

And then the babies would shake, for they were afraid of the big stick; and naughty Fairy Fluffikins would dance off to find some fresh piece of mischief.

One night she had fine fun. She found a little dead mouse in a field; and at first she was sorry for the mouse, and thought she would bury it and plant a daisy on its grave; but then an idea struck her. She hunted about till she found a piece of long, strong grass, and then she took the little mouse, tied the piece of grass round its tail, and ran away with it to the big tree where the Ancient Owl lived. There was a little hole at the bottom of the tree and into it Fairy Fluffikins crept, leaving the mouse outside in the moonlight. Presently she heard a gruff voice in the tree saying –

«I smell mouse, I smell mouse.» Then there was a swoop of wings, and Fairy Fluffikins promptly drew the mouse into the little hole and stuffed its tail into her mouth so that she might not be heard laughing; and the gruff voice said angrily –

«Where's that mouse gone? I smelt mouse, I know I smelt mouse!»

She grew tired of this game after a few times, so she left the mouse in the hole and crept away to a new one. She really was a naughty fairy. She blew on the buttercups so that they thought the morning breeze had come to wake them up, and opened their cups in a great hurry. She buzzed outside the clover and made it talk in its sleep, so that it said in a cross, sleepy voice – «Go away, you stupid busy bee, and don't wake me up in the middle of the night.»

She pulled the tail of the nightingale who was singing to his lady– love in the hawthorn bush, and he lost his place in his song and nearly tumbled over backwards into the garden. Then to her joy she met an elderly, domestic puss taking an evening walk with a view to field–mice.

Here was sport. Fluffikins hid in the grass and squeaked; and when the elderly cat came tearing up she pulled his whiskers and flew away (I forgot to tell you that she had little, soft wings), and the elderly cat jumped and said –

«Mouse–traps and mince–meat! Fancy a cat of my age and experience taking a bat for a mouse! But by my claws I heard a mouse's squeak.»

Fairy Fluffikins often met the poor elderly cat, and always led him some dreadful dance, now and then taking a ride on his back into the bargain, till he thought he must have got the nightmare.

One day Fairy Fluffikins was well paid out for some of her naughtiness. She was flying away from a tree where she had just wrapped a sleeping bat's head up in a large cobweb, when she heard the sweep of wings, felt a sharp nip – and in less time than it takes to tell found herself in the nest of the Ancient Owl.

«My wig!» said the Ancient Owl, much surprised, «I thought you were a bat.» And he called his wife and three children to look.

Now when Fairy Fluffikins saw five pairs of large round eyes blinking and staring at her she lost her head and cried out – «Please, please, Mr Ancient Owl, don't be angry with me and I will never play tricks with mice any more,» and so told the Ancient Owl what he had never even suspected before.

Then the Ancient Owl was **Most dreadfully angry** and read Fairy Fluffikins a long sermon about the wickedness of deceiving Ancient Owls. The sermon took two hours and a half; and when it was over all the owls hooted at her and pecked her; and Fairy Fluffikins was very glad indeed when at last Mrs Ancient Owl gave her a push and said –

«Go along, you impertinent brown minx,» and she was able to go out into the night.

Even this sad adventure did not cure Fairy Fluffikins of getting into mischief – although she never teased the owls any more, you may be sure of that – she took to tormenting the squirrels instead. She used to find their stores of nuts and carry them away and fill the holes with pebbles; and this, when you are a hard-working squirrel with a large family to support, is very trying to the temper. Then she would tie acorns to their tails; and she would clap her hands to frighten them, and pull the baby-squirrels' ears; till at last they offered a reward to anyone who could catch Fairy Fluffikins and bring her to be punished.

No one caught Fairy Fluffikins; but she caught herself, as you shall hear.

She was poking about round a haystack one night, trying to find something naughty to do, when she came upon a sweet little house with pretty wire walls and a wooden door standing invitingly open. In hopped Fluffikins, thinking she was going to have some new kind of fun. There was a little white thing dangling from the roof, and she laid hold of it. Immediately there was a bang; the wooden door slammed; and Fluffikins was caught.

How she cried and stamped and pushed at the door, and promised to be a good fairy and a great many other things! But all to no purpose: the door was tight shut, and Fluffikins was not like some fortunate fairies who can get out of anywhere.

There she remained, and in the morning one of the labourers found her, and, thinking she was some kind of dormouse, he carried her home to his little girl; and if you call on Mary Ann Smith you will see Fairy Fluffikins there still in a little cage. They give her nuts and cheese and bread, and all the things she doesn't like, and there is no one to tease and no mischief to get into; so if there is a miserable little Fairy anywhere it is Fairy Fluffikins, and I'm not sure it doesn't serve her quite right.

The Story of the Tinkle-Tinkle.

Once upon a time there lived a Tinkle-Tinkle. I cannot tell you what he was like, because no man knows, not even the Tinkle-Tinkle himself. Sometimes he lived on the ground, sometimes in a tree, sometimes in the water, sometimes in a cave; and I can't tell you what he lived on, for no man knows, not even the Tinkle-Tinkle himself.

One day the Tinkle-Tinkle was going through a wood, when he heard a piteous weeping. He stopped, for he was a kindly Tinkle-Tinkle, and found two small dormice sobbing under a tree because they had been cruelly deserted by their parents. He wiped their eyes tenderly and took them to his cave home; but I cannot tell you how he went, for no man knows, not even the Tinkle-Tinkle. However, when he got there he put the dormice to bed in his grandmother's boots, for which he had never found any use before, and fed them on periwinkles and tea, and was very kind to them; and when they grew older he bought them caps and aprons, and they became the Tinkle-Tinkle's housemaid and parlourmaid.

Now I must tell you that it was a great grief to the Tinkle–Tinkle not to know what he was, or how he lived, or where he was going to; and it often made him depressed, but he always concealed it from the dormice, appearing a most cheerful and contented creature.

One day he found a poor green bird lying on the ground with its leg broken. Fortunately Tinkle–Tinkle had his grandmother's black silk reticule with him which had never been of any service to him before. He gently placed the green bird in the bottom and carried it to the cave.

The dormice laid the poor sufferer on a soft bed and put the broken leg up carefully in plaster of Paris; and they nursed the green bird with the greatest attention so that it was soon well enough to hop about on crutches; and it sang so beautifully that all the inhabitants round gave it money, and its fame spread abroad; but it was so tenderly attached to the Tinkle–Tinkle and the dormice that it would not leave them.

Now it happened on a certain evening that the Tinkle–Tinkle was travelling over the sea, when suddenly in the depths he caught sight of a most beautiful Creature. It was all sorts of colours – white, rosy pink, and deep crimson, and pale blue fading into white and gold. It had no face but a bright light; and it had quantities of beautiful iridescent wings, like the rainbow; and the most lovely voice you ever heard, like the sighing of the waves in the hollow of the sea.

The Tinkle–Tinkle was so astonished and entranced that he stopped, and the beautiful Creature cried out to him, and its voice made Tinkle–Tinkle remember a dream he had once had of sunshine, and forest trees, and the song of birds; and the Creature said, «Ah, Tinkle–Tinkle! you are lonely and perplexed and sad, and you do not know whence you came nor why you are here; but the dormice know and the green bird knows, and I know, and we are glad for your being. Go on, Tinkle–Tinkle, and do not sorrow, for some day you shall come back to me, and I will wrap you in my wings and take you where you belong, and then you will understand.»

When the Tinkle–Tinkle heard this he was glad with a new strange gladness, and he went back to his cave; but not alone, for the spirit of hope went with him.

The Tinkle–Tinkle had one gift – he could sing – how, no man knew, not even the Tinkle–Tinkle himself; and this is how he discovered his gift.

One day in a secluded spot in the forest he found a dying stag, and the Tinkle–Tinkle was moved with great compassion and yet could do nothing.

The great stag's head drooped lower and lower till even the sun melted in a mist of pity, and the trees sighed, and the breezes hushed their voices. Then suddenly the Tinkle–Tinkle crept close and began to sing, why or how he knew not. As he sang, the birds and the stream

were silenced and the breezes ceased, and the great stag's breathing grew less and less laboured, and his eyes brightened, and presently he rose slowly to his feet and paced away to join the rest of the herd, and the Tinkle–Tinkle went with him.

When the stag's companions heard the story, they wept for all that had befallen their leader, but rejoiced also and blessed the Tinkle–Tinkle; and he sang once more for them, and the Star–spirits leaned out of their bright little windows to listen, and the night was glad.

Many were the adventures of the Tinkle–Tinkle, and countless the creatures he cheered and helped, yet he never fancied himself any use or knew why he was in the world. He brought home a poor old crab without a claw, and the green bird and the dormice found a hook and screwed it in, and the poor old crab used to carry parcels for the neighbours; but he still lived with the Tinkle–Tinkle.

Another time it was a snail with a broken shell; for him they built a beautiful little house, and he made little rush brooms and sold them to the passers–by; but he lived ever after close to the Tinkle–Tinkle's front door.

So it went on till all the Tinkle–Tinkle's homes were full of strange occupants, and he began to feel very old and worn and weary. Then he remembered the promise of the beautiful Creature, and went slowly over the sea hoping the time had come for it to be fulfilled, and it had. The beautiful Creature stretched out its lovely rose and purple wings and wrapped the Tinkle–Tinkle in their warm soft greatness, and bore him down and down through the depths till they came to the Great Gate. At the beautiful Creature's voice it swung slowly back, and they passed down the Blue Pathway, which is all ice, cut and carved into lovely pinnacles and spires, very blue with the blue of the summer sky and the southern seas. The Tinkle–Tinkle could just see it from between the beautiful Creature's wings, stretching away in the blue distance, and at the end one star.

Presently – and though the time had been one thousand years it had not seemed long to the Tinkle–Tinkle – they came out into a beautiful place that was nothing but light, and the beautiful Creature set the Tinkle–Tinkle down; he looked around him and saw many other Tinkle–Tinkles, and he knew them for what they were and loved their beauty; and the Creature gently swept one of its purple pinions across him, and the Tinkle–Tinkle took form. He had many, many little soft, strong hands and many little white feet, and long sweeping wings and a face which shone with something of the light of the beautiful Creature; and the Tinkle–Tinkle saw and understood and sang for joy.

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