



THE DOLLS' JOURNEY

FROM
MINNESOTA TO MAINE

BY
LOJISA MALCOTT



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"So nice!" she whispered when the dolls were laid beside her.— *Frontispiece.*

THE DOLLS' JOURNEY

BY

LOUISA M. ALCOTT

AUTHOR OF "LITTLE WOMEN," "LITTLE MEN"
"PANSIES AND WATER-LILIES," ETC.

Illustrated

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THE DOLLS' JOURNEY FROM MINNESOTA TO MAINE

MR. PLUM lived in St. Paul, Minnesota, U. S. A. There were six little Plums, all girls, varying in ages from fourteen to seven, and named Kate, Lucy, Susy, Lizzie, Marjory, and Maggie. There was no mamma, but Mrs. Gibbs, the housekeeper, was a kind old soul, and papa did everything he could to make the small daughters good and happy.

One stormy Saturday afternoon the children were all together in the school-room, and papa busy at his desk in the library, with the door open because he liked to hear the pleasant voices and catch glimpses of the droll plays that went on there.

Kate lay on the sofa reading "The Daisy Chain" for the fourth time. Susy, Lucy, and Lizzie were having a select tea party in their own recess, the entrance to which was barricaded with chairs to keep out the "babies," as they called

the little ones, who were much offended at being excluded and sat up in the cushioned window-seat pensively watching the rain.

"If it had only waited till to-morrow we should have had time for our journey ; now we can't go till next Saturday. Flora is so disappointed she would cry if I had not taught her to behave," said Maggie with a sigh, as she surveyed the doll on her knee in its new summer suit.

"So is Dora. Just see how sweet she looks with her hat and cape on and her travelling-bag all ready. Could n't we play travel in the house ? It is such a pity to wait when the children are in such a hurry to go," answered Marjory, settling the tiny bag that held Dora's night-cap and gown as well as the morsels of cake that were to serve for her lunch.

"No," said Maggie decidedly, "we can't do it, because there is no room for carriages, and boats, and railroads, and hotels, and accidents. It is a long journey from Minnesota to Maine, and we could n't get it all into one room I'm sure."

"I don't think papa would mind our coming into the library, if we did n't ring the car bells very loud or scream much when the accidents happen," said Marjory, who hated to give up the plan they had been cherishing all the week.

"What is it, little ones? Come and tell me what is the matter," called Mr. Plum, hearing his name and the magic word "railroad," for he was the president of one and had his hands full just then.

Down jumped the little girls and ran to perch on either arm of his chair, pouring out their small tribulations as freely as if he had been the most sympathizing of mothers.

"We planned to take a long, long journey round the garden with our dolls to-day, and play go to Maine and see Aunt Maria. You know she asked us, and we looked out the way on the map and got all ready, and now it rains and we are dreadfully disappointed," said Maggie, while Marjory sighed as she looked at the red D. worked on the inch square travelling-bag.

"As you can't go, why not send the dolls to make aunty a visit, and she will send them back when they get homesick," proposed Mr. Plum, smiling, as if a sudden idea had popped into his head.

"Really?" cried Maggie.

"How could we?" asked Marjory.

"They could go and come by mail, and tell you all about their adventures when they got back," said papa.

Both children were speechless for a moment, then as the full splendor of this proposition dawned upon them they clapped their hands, crying eagerly :

“ We will ! we will ! Let 's do it at once.”

“ What ? where ? who ?” asked Susy, Lucy, and Lizzie, forgetting their tea party to run and see what was going on.

They were told, and in their turn exclaimed so loudly that Kate came to join in the fun.

After a great deal of talking and laughing, the dolls were prepared for the long journey. They were common wooden-headed dollies, a hand long, with stuffed bodies and stout legs ornamented with very small feet in red and blue boots. Dora was a blonde and Flora a brunette, otherwise they were just alike and nearly new. Usually when people go travelling they put on their hats and cloaks, but these pilgrims, by papa's advice, left all encumbrances behind them, for they were to travel in a peculiar way, and blue gingham dresses were chosen for the expedition.

“ It is possible that they may never come back. Accidents will happen, you know. Are you prepared for that ?” asked Mr. Plum, pausing with the brown paper spread out before him.

“ I am,” answered Maggie firmly, as she laid

Flora on the table, her black eyes staring as if rather alarmed at this sudden start.

Marjory hesitated a moment, clasping Dora to her bosom with a face full of maternal anxiety. But Susy, Lucy and Lizzie cried: "Let her go, do let her go, and if she is lost papa will give you a new doll."

"Good-by, my darling dear. Have a splendid time, and be sure you come back to me," whispered Marjory, with a tender farewell kiss as she gave up her child.

All stood watching silently while papa tied the dolls back to back with the ribbon Kate pulled from her neck, then folded them carefully in strong brown paper, leaving their heads out that they might see the world as they went along. Being carefully fastened up with several turns of cord, Mr. Plum directed the precious parcel to "Miss Maria Plum, Portland, Maine. With care." Then it was weighed, stamped, and pronounced ready for the post.

"I shall write and tell aunty they are coming, because she will want to be prepared for such distinguished visitors," said papa, taking up his pen with a glance at the six excited little faces round him.

Silence reigned while the letter was written,

and as he sealed it up, Mr. Plum said solemnly, with his hand on the parcel:

“For the last time, shall they go?”

“Yes!” answered the Spartan mothers with one voice, while the other sisters danced round them, and Kate patted the curly heads approvingly.

“Going, going, gone!” answered papa as he whisked on his coat and hat, and slammed the door behind him.

The children clustered at the window to see him set out on this momentous errand, and he often looked back waving his umbrella at them, till he vanished round the corner, with a re-assuring pat on the pocket out of which dear Do and Flo popped their heads for a last look at their sweet home.

“Now, let us take out poor old Lucinda and Rose Augusta to play with. I know their feelings were hurt at our leaving them for the new dolls,” said Maggie, rummaging in the baby-house, whither Marjory soon followed her to reinstate the old darlings in the place of the departed new ones.

“Safely off,” reported Mr. Plum, when he came in to tea, “and we may expect to hear from them in a week or two. Parcels go more slowly than

letters, and this is aunty's busy season, so wait patiently and see what will happen."

"We will," said the little girls; and they did, but week after week went by and nothing was heard of the wanderers.

We, however, can follow them and learn much that their anxious mothers never knew.

As soon as Flora and Dora recovered from the bewilderment occasioned by the confusion of the post office, they found themselves in one of the many leathern mail bags rumbling Eastward. As it was perfectly dark they could not see their companions, so listened to the whispering and rustling that went on about them. The newspapers all talked politics, and some of them used such bad language that the dolls would have covered their ears, if their hands had not been tied down. The letters were better behaved and more interesting, for they told one another the news they carried, because nothing is private in America, and even gummed envelopes cannot keep gossip from leaking out.

"It is very interesting, but I should enjoy it more if I was not grinding my nose against the rough side of this leather bag," whispered Dora, who lay undermost just then.

"So should I, if a heavy book was not pinching

my toes. I've tried to kick it away, but it won't stir, and keeps droning on about reports and tariffs and such dull things," answered Flora, with a groan.

"Do you like travelling?" asked Dora, presently, when the letters and papers fell asleep, lulled by the motion of the cars.

"Not yet, but I shall when I can look about me. This bundle near by says the mails are often sorted in the cars, and in that way we shall see something of the world, I hope," answered Flora, cheering up, for, like her mamma, she was of an enquiring turn.

The dolls took a nap of some hours, and were roused by a general tumbling out on a long shelf, where many other parcels lay, and lively men sent letters and papers flying here and there as if a whirlwind was blowing. A long box lay beside the dolls who stood nearly erect leaning against a pile of papers. Several holes were cut in the lid, and out of one of them was thrust a little black nose, as if trying to get air.

"Dear me! what can be in it?" said Flora, who was nearest.

"I'm a poor little alligator, going to a boy in Chicago, if you please, and I want my mother," sobbed a voice from the box, and there was a rap on the lid as of an agitated tail.

"Mercy on us! I hope we shall not have to travel with the monster," whispered Dora, trying to see over her shoulder.

"I'm not afraid. He can't be very dreadful, for the box is not any longer than we are. Natural history is very useful; I've heard mamma say so, and I shall talk with him while we rest here," answered Flo, nodding toward the eye which now took the place of the nose.

So the little alligator told her something of his home on the banks of a great river, where he was just learning to play happily with his brothers and sisters, when he was caught and sent away to pine in captivity.

The dolls comforted him as well as they could, and a pair of baby's shoes travelling in an envelope sympathized with him, while a shabby bundle directed to "Michael Dolan, at Mrs. Judy Quin's, next door to Mr. Pat Murphy, Boston, North Street," told them to "Whisht and slape quite till they came forninst the place."

"Such low people!" whispered Do to Flo, and both stood primly silent till they were tumbled into another mail bag, and went rattling on again with a new set of companions.

"I hope that poor baby will go safely and the boy be good to him," said Flora, for the little

alligator went with the live stock in some other way.

"Thank goodness he didn't go with us! I shall dream about that black nose and winking eye, I'm sure. The dangers of travelling are great, but we are safe and comfortable now, I think," and Dora settled down in a cosy corner of the bag, wondering when they should reach Chicago.

"I like adventures and hope we shall have some," answered Flora, briskly, little dreaming how soon her wish was to be granted.

A few hours later there came a bump, a crash, a cry, and then all the mail bags rolled one over the other with the car down an embankment into a river.

"Now we are dead!" shrieked the poor dolls, clinging together as they heard the splash of water, the shouting of men, the splintering of wood, and the hiss of steam.

"Don't be frightened, ladies, mail bags are always looked after," said a large envelope with an official seal and the name of a Senator on it.

"Any bones broken, dear madam?" asked a jaunty pink letter, with a scent of musk about it, evidently a love-letter.

"I think one foot is hurt, and my clothes are dripping," sighed Dora, faintly.

"Water won't hurt calico," called out a magazine full of fashion plates, adding dolefully, as its gay colors began to run, "I shall be in a nice mess if I ever get out of this. People will wear odd fashions if they follow me this time."

"Hope they will telegraph news of this accident in time for the evening papers," said a dingy sheet called the "Barahoo Thunderbolt," as it lay atop of the heap in its yellow wrapper.

"Be calm, my friends, and wait with fortitude for death or deliverance, as I do." With which philosophic remark "The St. Louis Cosmos" folded the pages which for the first time since the paper was started, were not dry.

Here the water rose over the topmost letter and a moist silence prevailed till a sudden jerk fished up the bag, and before the dolls could recover their wits they were spread out on the floor of a mail car to dry, while several busy men sorted and saved such papers and letters as still held together.

"Now we shall see something," said Flora, feeling the warm air blow over her as they spun along, for a slight accident like this did not delay the energetic Westerners a moment longer than was absolutely necessary.

"I can't see you, dear, but I hope you look

better than I do, for the yellow of my hair has washed into my eyes, and the red of my cheeks is quite gone, I'm sure," answered Dora, as her wet dress flopped in the breeze and the broken foot sticking up showed her that her blue boots were ruined.

"I don't care a bit how I look. It's great fun now we are safe. Pop up your head and see the wide prairie flying past. I do hope that poor baby got away and swam home to his mother. The upset into the river was quite to his taste, I fancy," said Flora, who was much excited by her adventure and eager for more.

Presently one of the men set the dolls up in the corner of a window to dry, and there they stood viewing the fine landscape with one eye while the other watched the scene of devastation within. Everything was in great confusion after the accident, so it is not strange that the dolls were not missed when they slowly slid lower and lower till a sudden lurch of the car sent them out of the window to roll into a green field where cows were feeding and children picking strawberries.

"This is the end of us! Here we shall lie and mould forgotten by everybody," said Dora, who always took a tragical view of things.

“Not a bit of it! I see cows eating toward us, and they may give us a lift. I’ve heard of their tossing people up, though I don’t know just how it’s done. If they don’t, we are in the path and some of those children are sure to find us,” answered Flora cheerfully, though she stood on her head with a bunch of burrs pricking her nose.

She was right. A bright-eyed little German girl presently came trotting along the path with a great basket full of berries on her head arranged in pretty pottles ready for the market. Seeing the red cow sniffing at a brown paper parcel she drove her away, picked it up, and peeped in at the open end.

The sight of two dolls in such a place made her feel as if fairies had dropped them there for her. She could not read the direction, and hurried home to show her treasure to her brothers and sisters of whom there were eight.

“What will become of us now!” exclaimed Dora, as eager hands slipped them out of the wrapper and smoothed their damp skirts in a room that seemed swarming with boys and girls of all sizes.

“Don’t worry, we shall get on nicely, I’m sure, and learn German of these young persons. It is a great relief to be able to stretch one’s

limbs, and stand up, is n't it?" answered Flora, undismayed by anything that had happened as yet.

"Yes, dear, I love you, but I *am* tired of being tied to you all day. I hope we shall live through this noise and get a little rest, but I give up the idea of ever seeing Portland," answered Dora, staring with all her blue eyes at the display of musical instruments about the room, and longing to stop her ears, for several of the children were playing on the violin, flute, horn or harp. They were street musicians, and even the baby seemed to be getting ready to take part in the concert, for he sat on the floor beside an immense bass horn taller than himself, with his rosy lips at the mouth-piece and his cheeks puffed out in vain attempts to make a "boom! boom!" as brother Fritz did.

Flora was delighted, and gave skips on her red boots in time to the lively tooting of the boys, while the girls gazed at the lovely dolls and jabbered away with their yellow braids quivering with excitement.

The wrapper was laid aside till a neighbor who read English came in to translate it. Meantime they enjoyed the new toys immensely, and even despondent Dora was cheered up by the admira-

tion she received; while they in their turn were deeply interested in the pretty dolls' furniture some of the children made.

Beds, tables, and chairs covered the long bench, and round it sat the neat-handed little maidens gluing, tacking and trimming, while they sang and chatted at their work as busy and happy as a hive of bees.

All day the boys went about the streets playing, and in the evening trooped off to the beer gardens to play again, for they lived in Chicago, and the dolls had got so far on their way to Aunt Maria, as they soon discovered.

For nearly two months they lived happily with Minna, Gretchen and Nanerl, then they set out on their travels again, and this was the way it happened. A little girl came to order a set of furniture for her new baby-house, and seeing two shabby dolls reposing in a fine bed she asked about them. Her mamma spoke German so Minna told how they were found, and showed the old wrapper, saying that they always meant to send the dolls on their way but grew so fond of them they kept putting it off.

“I am going as far as New York very soon and will take them along if you like, for I think little Miss Maria Plum must have been expecting her

dolls all this time. Shall I?" asked the mamma, as she read the address and saw the dash under "With care," as if the dollies were of great importance to some one.

"Ja, ja," answered Minna, glad to oblige a lady who bought two whole sets of their best furniture and paid for it at once.

So again the dolls were put in their brown paper cover and sent away with farewell kisses.

"This now is genteel and just suits me," said Dora, as they drove along with little Clara to the handsome house where she was staying.

"I have a feeling that she is a spoiled child, and we shall not be as happy with her as with the dear Poppleheimers. We shall see," answered Flora, wisely, for Clara had soon tossed the dolls into a corner and was fretting because mamma would not buy her the big horn to blow on.

The party started for New York in a day or two, and to the delight of Flo and Do, they were left out of the trunks for Clara to play with on the way, her own waxen Blanche Marie Annabel being too delicate to be used.

"Oh, my patience, this is worse than tumbling about in a mail-bag," groaned Dora, after hours of great suffering, for Clara treated the poor dolls as if they had no feeling.

She amused herself with knocking their heads together, shutting them in the window with their poor legs hanging out, swinging them by one arm, and drawing lines with a pencil all over their faces till they looked as if tattooed by savages. Even brave Flora was worn out and longed for rest, finding her only comfort in saying, "I told you so," when Clara banged them about, or dropped them on the dusty floor to be trampled on by passing feet.

There they were left, and would have been swept away if a little dog had not found them as the passengers were leaving the car and carried them after his master, trotting soberly along with the bundle in his mouth, for fortunately Clara had put them into the paper before she left them, so they were still together in the trials of the journey.

"Hullo, Jip, what have you got?" asked the young man as the little dog jumped up on the carriage seat and laid his load on his master's knee, panting and wagging his tail as if he had done something to be praised for.

"Dolls, I declare! What can a bachelor do with the poor things? Wonder who Maria Plum is? Midge will like a look at them before we send them along;" and into the young man's

pocket they went, trembling with fear of the dog, but very grateful for being rescued from destruction.

Jip kept his eye on them, and gave an occasional poke with his cold nose to be sure they were there as they drove through the bustling streets of New York to a great house with an inscription over the door.

"I do hope Midge will be a nicer girl than Flora. Children ought to be taught to be kind to dumb dolls as well as dumb animals," said Dora, as the young man ran up the steps and hurried along a wide hall.

"I almost wish we were at home with our own kind little mothers," began Flo, for even her spirits were depressed by bad treatment, but just then a door opened and she cried out in amazement, "Bless my heart, this man has more children than even Mr. Poppleheimer!"

She might well think so, for all down both sides of the long room stood little white beds with a small pale face on every pillow. All the eyes that were opened brightened when Jip and his master came in, and several thin hands were outstretched to meet them.

"I 've been good, Doctor, let me pat him first," cried one childish voice.

"Did you bring me a flower, please?" asked another feeble one.

"I know he's got something nice for us, I see a bundle in his pocket," and a little fellow who sat up among his pillows gave a joyful cough as he could not shout.

"Two dollies for Midge to play with. Jip found them, but I think the little girl they are going to will lend them for a few days. We shall not need them longer, I'm afraid," added the young man to a rosy-faced nurse who came along with a bottle in her hand.

"Dear no, the poor child is very low to-day. But she will love to look at the babies if she is n't strong enough to hold 'em," said the woman, leading the way to a corner where the palest of all the pale faces lay smiling on the pillow, and the thinness of the thin hands were feebly put up to greet the Doctor.

"So nice!" she whispered when the dolls were laid beside her, while Jip proudly beat his tail on the floor to let her know that she owed the welcome gift to him.

For an hour Flo and Do lay on the arm of poor Midge, who never moved except to touch them now and then with a tender little finger, or to kiss them softly, saying, "Dear babies, it is very nice

not to be all alone. Are you comfy, darlings?" till she fell asleep, still smiling.

"Sister, do you think this can be the Heaven we hear people talk about? It is so still and white, and maybe these children are angels," whispered Dora, looking at the sweet face turned toward her with the long lashes lying on the colorless cheek, and the arms outstretched like wings.

"No, dear, it is a hospital, I heard that man say so, and those are sick children come to be cured. It is a sweet place, I think, and this child much nicer than that horrid Clara," answered Flo, who was quicker to hear, see and understand what went on than Dora.

"I love to lie here safe and warm, but there does n't seem to be much breath to rock me," said Do, who lay nearest the little bosom that very slowly rose and fell with the feeble flutter of the heart below.

"Hush, we may disturb her," and lively Flo controlled her curiosity, contenting herself with looking at the other children and listening to their quiet voices, for pain seemed to have hushed them all.

For a week the dolls lay in Midge's bed, and though their breasts were full of sawdust, and their heads were only wood, the sweet patience of

the little creature seemed to waken something like a heart in them, and set them thinking, for dolls don't live in vain, I am firmly persuaded.

All day she tended them till the small hands could no longer hold them, and through the weary nights she tried to murmur bits of lullabies lest the dollies would not be able to sleep because of the crying or the moans some of the poor babies could not repress. She often sent one or the other to cheer up some little neighbor, and in this way Do and Flo became small sisters of charity, welcomed eagerly, reluctantly returned, and loved by all, although they never uttered a word and their dingy faces could not express the emotion that stirred their sawdust bosoms.

When Saturday night came they were laid in their usual place on Midge's arm. She was too weak to kiss them now, and nurse laid their battered cheeks against the lips that whispered faintly, "Be sure you send 'em to the little girl, and tell her — tell her — all about it." Then she turned her cheek to the pillow with a little sigh, and lay so still the dolls thought she had gone to sleep.

She had, but the sweet eyes did not open in the morning, and there was no breath in the little breast to rock the dolls any more.

"I knew she was an angel, and now she has flown away," said Dora softly, as they watched the white image carried out in the weeping nurse's arms, with the early sunshine turning all the pretty hair to gold.

"I think that is what they call dying, sister. It is a much lovelier way to end than as we do in the dust-bin or rag-bag. I wonder if there is a little Heaven anywhere for good dolls?" answered Flora, with what looked like a tear on her cheek; but it was only a drop from the violets sent by the kind Doctor last night.

"I hope so, for I think the souls of little children might miss us if they loved us as dear Midge did," whispered Dora, trying to kiss the blue flower in her hand, for the child had shared her last gift with these friends.

"Why did n't you let her take them along, poor motherless baby?" asked the Doctor, when he saw the dolls lying as she had left them.

"I promised her they should go to the girl they were sent to, and please, I'd like to keep my word to the little darling," answered Nurse with a sob.

"You shall," said the Doctor, and put them in his breast pocket with the faded violets, for everybody loved the pauper child sent to die in a hos-

pital, because Christian charity makes every man and woman father and mother to these little ones.

All day the dolls went about in the busy Doctor's pocket, and I think the violets did them good, for the soft perfume clung to them long afterward like the memory of a lovely life, as short and sweet as that of the flowers.

In the evening they were folded up in a fresh paper and re-directed carefully. The Doctor wrote a little note telling why he had kept them, and was just about to put on some stamps, when a friend came in who was going to Boston in the morning.

"Anything to take along, Fred?" asked the new-comer.

"This parcel, if you will. I have a feeling that I'd rather not have it knocked about in a mail bag," and the Doctor told him why.

It was pleasant to see how carefully the traveller put away the parcel after that, and to hear him say that he was going through Boston to the mountains for his holiday, and would deliver it in Portland to Miss Plum herself.

"Now there is some chance of our getting there," said Flora, as they set off next day in a new Russia leather bag.

On the way they overheard a long chat between some New York and Boston ladies which impressed them very much. Flora liked to hear the fashionable gossip about clothes and people and art and theatres, but Dora preferred the learned conversation of the young Boston ladies, who seemed to know a little of everything, or think they did.

"I hope mamma will give me an entirely new wardrobe when I get home; and we will have dolls' weddings and balls, and a play, and be as fine and fashionable as those ladies down there," said Flora, after listening a while.

"You have got your head full of dressy ideas and high life, sister. I don't care for such things, but mean to cultivate my mind as fast as I can. That girl says she is in college, and named over more studies than I can count. I do wish we were to stop and see a little of the refined society of Boston," answered Dora, primly.

"Pooh!" said Flo, "don't you try to be intellectual, for you are only a wooden-headed doll. I mean to be a real Westerner, and just enjoy myself as I please, without caring what other folks do or think; Boston is no better than the rest of the world, I guess."

Groans from every article in the bag greeted

this disrespectful speech, and an avalanche of Boston papers fell upon the audacious doll. But Flo was undaunted, and shouted from underneath the pile: "I don't care! Minnesota forever!" till her breath gave out.

Dora was so mortified that she never said a word till they were let out in a room at the Parker House. Here she admired everything, and read all the evening in a volume of Emerson's Poems from the bag, for Mr. Mt. Vernon Beacon was a Boston man, and never went anywhere without a wise book or two in his pocket.

Flo turned up her nose at all she saw, and devoted herself to a long chat with the smart bag which came from New York and was full of gossip.

The next afternoon they really got to Portland, and as soon as Mr. Beacon had made his toilet he set out to find little Miss Plum. When the parlor door opened to admit her he was much embarrassed, for, advancing with a paternal smile and the dolls extended to the expected child, he found himself face to face with a pretty young lady, who looked as if she thought him a little mad.

A few words explained the errand, however, and when she read the note Aunt Maria's bright

eyes were full of tears as she said, hugging the dilapidated dolls:

"I'll write the story of their travels, and send the dear old things back to the children as soon as possible."

And so she did with Mr. Beacon's help, for he decided to try the air of Portland, and spent his vacation there. The dolls were re-painted and redressed till they were more beautiful than ever, and their clothes fine enough to suit even Flo.

They were a good while doing this, and when all was ready, Aunt Maria took it into her head to run out to St. Paul and surprise the children. By a singular coincidence Mr. Beacon had railroad business in that direction, so they set off together with two splendid dolls done up in a gay box.

All that was ever known about that journey was that these travellers stopped at the hospital in New York, and went on better friends than before after hearing from the good Doctor all the pathetic story of little Midge.

The young Plums had long ago given up the hope of ever seeing Do and Flo again, for they started in June, and it was early in September when Aunt Maria appeared before them without

the least warning, accompanied by a pleasant gentleman from Boston.

Six kisses had hardly resounded from aunty's blooming cheeks when a most attractive box was produced from the Russia leather bag, and the wandering dolls restored to the arms of their enraptured mammas.

A small volume neatly written and adorned with a few pictures of the most exciting incidents of the trip also appeared.

"Every one writes or prints a book in Boston, you know, so we did both," said Aunt Maria, laughing, as she handed over the remarkable history which she had composed and Mr. Beacon illustrated.

It was read with intense interest, and was as true as most stories are nowadays.

"Nothing more delightful can happen now!" exclaimed the children, as they laid by the precious work and enthroned the travelled dolls in the place of honor on the roof of the baby-house.

But something much more delightful did happen; for at Thanksgiving time there was a wedding at the Plums'. Not a dolls wedding, as Flo had planned, but a real one, for the gentleman from Boston actually married Aunt Maria.

There were six bridesmaids, all in blue, and

Flora and Dora, in the loveliest of new pink gowns, were set aloft among the roses on the wedding-cake, their proper place as every one said, for there never would have been any marriage at all but for this Dolls' Journey From Minnesota to Maine.

SHADOW-CHILDREN

NED, Polly, and Will sat on the steps one sunshiny morning, doing nothing, except wishing they had something pleasant to do.

“Something new, something never heard of before, — would n’t that be jolly?” said Ned, with a great yawn.

“It must be an amusing play, and one that we don’t get tired of very soon,” added Polly, gravely.

“And something that did n’t be wrong, else mamma would n’t like it,” said little Will, who was very good for a small boy.

As no one could suggest anything to suit, they all sat silent a few minutes. Suddenly Ned said, rather crossly, “I wish my shadow would n’t mock me. Every time I stretch or gape it does the same, and I don’t like it.”

“Poor thing, it can’t help that; it has to do just what you do, and be your slave all day. I’m glad I ain’t a shadow,” said Polly.

“ I try to run away from mine sometimes, but I can't, ever. It will come after me, and in the night it scares me, if it gets big and black,” said Will, looking behind him.

“ Would n't it be fun to see shadows going about alone, and doing things like people ?” asked Polly.

“ I just wish they would. I'd like to see ours cut capers ; that would be a jolly new game, would n't it ?” said Ned.

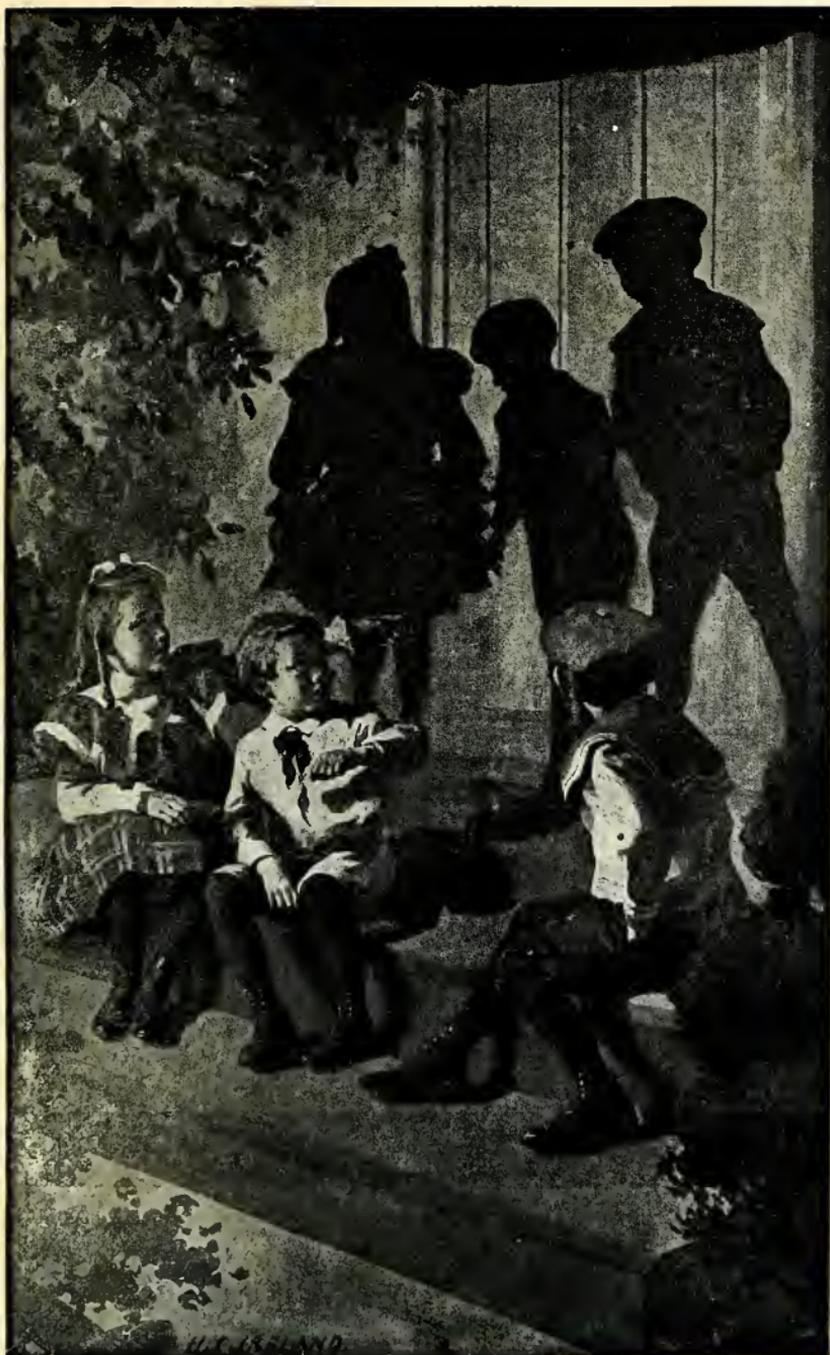
No one had time to speak ; for suddenly the three little shadows on the sunny wall behind them stood up straight, and began to bow.

“ Mercy me !” cried Polly, staring at them.

“ By Jove, that's odd !” said Ned, looking queer.

“ Are they alive ?” asked Will, a little frightened.

“ Don't be alarmed, they won't hurt you,” said a soft voice. “ To-day is midsummer-day, and whoever wishes a wish can have it till midnight. You want to see your shadows by themselves ; and you can, if you promise to follow them as they have followed you so long. They will not get you into harm, so you may safely try it, if you like. Do you agree for the day to do as they do, and so have your wish ?”



"Mercy me!" cried Polly. — Page 30.



“ Yes, we promise,” answered the children.

“ Tell no one till night, and be faithful shadows to the shadows.”

The voice was silent, but with more funny little bows the shadows began to move off in different directions. The children knew their own, for Ned’s was the tallest, and had its hands in its pockets; Polly’s had a frock on, and two bows where its hair was tied up; while Will’s was a plump little shadow in a blouse, with a curly head and a pug nose. Each child went after its shadow, laughing, and enjoying the fun.

Ned’s master went straight to the shed, took down a basket, and marched away to the garden, where it began to move its hands as if busily picking peas. Ned stopped laughing when he saw that, and looked rather ashamed; for he remembered that his mother had asked him to do that little job for her, and he had answered, —

“ Oh, bother the old peas! I’m busy, and I can’t.”

“ Who told you about this?” he asked, beginning to work.

The shadow shook its head, and pointed first to Ned’s new jacket, then to a set of nice garden tools near by, and then seemed to blow a kiss

from its shadowy fingers towards mamma, who was just passing the open gate.

“Oh! you mean that she does lots for me; so I ought to do what I can for her, and love her dearly,” said Ned, getting a pleasanter face every minute.

The shadow nodded, and worked away as busily as the bees tumbling heels over head in the great yellow squash blossoms, and getting as dusty as little millers. Somehow Ned rather liked the work, with such an odd comrade near by; for, though the shadow didn't really help a bit, it seemed to try, and set an excellent example. When the basket was full, the shadow took one handle, and Ned the other, and they carried it in.

“Thank you, dear. I was afraid we should have to give up our peas to-day; I'm so busy, I can't stop,” said mamma, looking surprised and pleased.

Ned could n't stop to talk, for the shadow ran away to the woodpile and began to chop with all its might.

“Well, I suppose I must; but I never saw such a fellow for work as this shadow is. He is n't a bit like me, though he's been with me so long,” said Ned, swinging the real hatchet in time with the shadowy one.

Polly's new mistress went to the dining-room and fell to washing up the breakfast cups. Polly hated that work, and sulkily began to rattle the spoons and knock the things about. But the shadow would n't allow that; and Polly had to do just what it did, though she grumbled all the while.

"She does n't splash a bit, or make any clatter, so I guess she's a tidy creature," said Polly. "How long she does rub each spoon and glass. We never shall get done. What a fuss she makes with the napkins, laying them all even in the drawer. And now she's at the salt-cellars, doing them just as mamma likes. I wish she'd live here, and do my work for me. Why, what's that?" And Polly stopped fretting to listen, for she seemed to hear the sound of singing,—so sweet, and yet so very faint she could catch no words, and only make out a cheerful little tune.

"Do you hear any one singing, mamma?" she asked.

"No, I wish I did." And mamma sighed; for baby was poorly, piles of sewing lay waiting for her, Bidy was turning things topsy-turvy in the kitchen for want of a word from the mistress, and Polly was looking sullen.

The little girl did n't say any more, but worked

quietly and watched the shadow, feeling sure the faint song came from it. Presently she began to hum the tune she caught by snatches; and, before she knew it, she was singing away like a black-bird. Baby stopped crying, and mamma said, smiling:

“Now I hear somebody singing, and it’s the music I like best in the world.”

That pleased Polly; but, a minute after, she stopped smiling, for the shadow went and took baby, or seemed to, and Polly really did. Now baby was heavy, and cross with his teeth, and Polly did n’t feel like tending it one bit. Mamma hurried away to the kitchen, and Polly walked up and down the room with poor baby hanging over her arm, crying dismally, with a pin in its back, a wet bib under its chin, and nothing cold and hard to bite with its hot, aching gums, where the little teeth were trying to come through.

“Do stop, you naughty, fretty baby. I’m tired of your screaming, and it’s high time you went to sleep. Bless me! what’s Miss Shadow doing with *her* baby?” said Polly.

Miss Shadow took out the big pin and laid it away, put on a dry bib, and gave *her* baby a nice ivory ring to bite; then began to dance up and down the room, till the shadow baby clapped its

hands and kicked delightedly. Polly laughed, and did the same, feeling sorry she had been so pettish. Presently both babies grew quiet, went to sleep, and were laid in the cradle.

“Now, I hope we shall rest a little,” said Polly, stretching her arms.

But no: down sat the shadow and began to sew, making her needle fly like a real little seamstress.

“Oh, dear!” groaned Polly. “I promised to hem those handkerchiefs for Ned, and so I must; but I do think handkerchiefs are the most pokey things in the world to sew. I dare say you think you can sew faster than I can. Just wait a bit, and see what I can do, miss,” she said to the shadow.

It took some time to find her thimble and needles and spools, for Polly was n't a very neat little girl; but she got settled at last, and stitched away as if bent on beating her dumb friend.

Little Will's shadow went up to the nursery, and stopped before a basin of water. “Oh! ah! ain't this drefful?” cried Will, with a shiver; for he knew he'd got to have his face washed, because he wouldn't have it done properly when he got up, but ran away. Now Will was a good child; but this one thing was his great trouble, and sometimes he could n't bear it. Jane was so

rough. She let soap get in his eyes, and water run down his neck, and she pinched his nose when she wiped him, and brushed his hair so hard that really it *was* dreadful; and even a bigger boy would have found it hard to bear. He shivered and sighed; but Jane came in; and, when he saw that the shadow stood still and took the scrubbing like a little hero, he tried to do the same, and succeeded so well that Jane actually patted his head and called him "a deary," which was something new, for old Nurse Jane was always very busy and rather cross.

Feeling that nothing worse could possibly happen to him, Will ran after his shadow, as it flitted away into the barn, and began to feed the chickens.

"There, now! I forgetted all about my chickens, and the shadow 'membered 'em, and I'm glad of it," said Will, scattering dabs of meal and water to the chirping, downy little creatures who pecked and fluttered at his feet. Little Shadow hunted for eggs, drove the turkeys out of the garden, and picked a basket of chips; then it went to play with Sammy, a neighbor's child; for, being a small shadow, it hadn't many jobs to do, and plenty of active play was good for it.

Sammy was a rough little boy and rather

selfish ; so when they played ball he wanted to throw all the time ; and, when Will objected, he grew angry and struck him. The blow did n't hurt Will's cheek much, but it did his little feelings, and he lifted his hand to strike back, when he saw his shadow go and kiss Sammy's shadow. All his anger was gone in a minute, and he just put his arm round Sammy's neck and kissed him. This kiss for a blow made him so ashamed that he began to cry, and could n't be comforted till he had given Will his best marble and a ride on his pony.

About an hour before dinner the three shadows and the children met in the garden and had a grand game of play, after they had told each other what they had been doing since they parted. Now the shadows did n't forget baby even then, but got out the wagon, and Miss Baby, all fresh from her nap, sat among her pillows like a queen, while Ned was horse, Polly footman, and Will driver ; and in this way she travelled all round the garden and barn, up the lane and down to the brook, where she was much delighted with the water sparkling along and the fine splash of the stones they threw in.

When the dinner-bell rang mamma saw four clean, rosy faces and four smooth heads at the

table; for the shadow-children made themselves neat without being told. Every one was merry and hungry and good-natured. Even poor baby forgot her teeth, and played a regular rub-a-dub with her spoon on her mug, and tried to tell about the fine things she saw on her drive. The children said nothing about the new play, and no one observed the queer actions of their shadows but themselves. They saw that there was no gobbling, or stretching over, or spilling of things, among the shadows; but that they waited to be helped, served others first, and ate tidily, which was a great improvement upon the usual state of things.

It was Saturday afternoon; the day was fine, and mamma told them they could go for a holiday frolic in the woods. "Don't go to the pond, and be home early," she said.

"Yes, mamma; we'll remember," they answered, as they scampered away to get ready.

"We shall go through the village, and Mary King will be looking out, so I shall wear my best hat. Mamma won't see me if I slip down the back way, and I do so want Mary to know that my hat is prettier than hers," said Polly, up in her little room.

Now Polly was rather vain, and liked to prink; so she got out the new hat, and spent some time

in smoothing her braids and putting on her blue ribbons. But when all was ready, and the boys getting impatient, she found her shadow, with a sunbonnet on, standing by the door, as if to prevent her going out.

"You tiresome thing! do you mean that I mustn't wear my hat, but that old bonnet?" asked Polly.

The Shadow nodded and beckoned and patted its head, as if it was all right.

"I wish I hadn't promised to do as you do, then I could do as I like, and not make a fright of myself," said Polly, rather sulkily, as she put away the hat, and tied on the old bonnet with a jerk.

Once out in the lovely sunshine she soon forgot the little disappointment; and, as they didn't go through the village, but by a green lane, where she found some big blackberries, she was quite contented. Polly had a basket to hold fruit or flowers, Ned his jack-knife, and Will a long stick on which he rode, fancying that this sort of horse would help his short legs along; so they picked, whittled, and trotted their way to the wood, finding all manner of interesting things on the road.

The wood was full of pleasant sights and

sounds ; for wild roses bloomed all along the path, ferns and scarlet berries filled the little dells, squirrels chattered, birds sang, and pines whispered musically overhead.

“I’m going to stop here and rest, and make a wreath of these pretty wild roses for baby ; it’s her birthday, and it will please mamma,” said Polly, sitting down on a mound of moss, with a lapful of flowers.

“I’m going to cut a fishing-pole, and will be back in a minute.” And Ned went crashing into the thickest part of the wood.

“I shall see where that rabbit went to, and maybe I’ll find some berries,” said Will, trotting down the path the wild rabbit had gone.

The sound of the boys’ steps died away, and Polly was wondering how it would seem to live all alone in the wood, when a little girl came trudging by with a great pail of berries on her arm. She was a poor child : her feet were bare, her gown was ragged, she wore an old shawl over her head, and walked as if lame. Polly sat behind the ferns, and the child did not see her till Polly called out. The sudden sound startled her, and she dropped her pail, spilling the berries all over the path. The little girl began to cry, and Polly to laugh, saying, in a scornful tone :

“How silly to cry for a few berries!”

“I’ve been all day picking ’em,” said the girl; “and I’m so tired and hungry, ’cause I didn’t dare to go home till my pail was full — mother scolds if I do — and now they’re all spoilt. Oh, dear! dear me!” And she cried so hard that great tears fell on the moss.

Polly was sorry now, and sat looking at her till she saw her shadow down on its knees, picking up the berries; then it seemed to fold its little handkerchief round the girl’s bruised foot, and give her something from its pocket. Polly jumped up and imitated the kind shadow, even to giving the great piece of gingerbread she had brought for fear she should be hungry.

“Take this,” she said gently. “I’m sorry I frightened you. Here are the berries all picked up, and none the worse for falling in the grass. If you’ll take them to the white house on the hill, my mamma will buy them, and then your mother won’t scold you.”

“Oh, thank you, miss! It’s ever so good. I’ll take the berries to your mother, and bring her more whenever she likes,” said the child gratefully, as she walked away munching the gingerbread, and smiling till there were little rainbows in her tears.

Meanwhile Ned had poked about in the bushes looking for a good pole. Presently he saw a willow down by the pond, and thought that would give him a nice, smooth pole. He forgot his promise, and down he went to the pond, where he cut his stick, and was whittling the end, when he saw a boat by the shore. It was untied, and oars lay in it, as if waiting for some one to come and row out.

"I'll just take a little pull across and get those cardinal-flowers for Polly," he said, and went to the boat.

He got in, and was about to push off, when he saw his shadow standing on the shore.

"Don't be a fool; get in, and come along," he said to it, remembering his promise now, but deciding to break it, and ask pardon afterwards.

But the shadow shook its head; pointed to the swift stream that ran between the banks, the rocks and mud on the opposite side, and the leaky boat itself.

"I ain't afraid, mamma won't mind, if I tell her I'm sorry; and it will be such fun to row alone. Be a good fellow, and let me go," said Ned, beckoning.

But the shadow would not stir, and Ned was obliged to mind. He did so very reluctantly, and

scolded the shadow well as he went back to Polly ; though all the time he felt he was doing right, and knew he should be glad afterwards.

Will trotted after the rabbit, but did n't find it ; he found a bird's-nest instead with four little birds in it. He had an empty cage at home, and longed for something to put in it ; for kittens did n't like it, and caterpillars and beetlebugs got away. He chose the biggest bird, and, holding him carefully, walked away to find Polly. The poor mother-bird chirped and fluttered in great distress ; but Will kept on till his little shadow came before him, and tried to make him turn back.

"No, no, I want him," said Will. "I won't hurt him, and his mother has three left: she won't mind if I take one."

Here the mother-bird chirped so loud it was impossible to help seeing that she *did* care very much ; and the shadow stamped its foot and waved its hand as if ordering the young robber to carry back the baby-bird. Will stood still and thought a minute ; but his little heart was a very kind one, and he soon turned about, saying pleasantly :

"Yes, it *is* naughty, and I won't do it. I'll ask mamma to get me a canary, and will let this birdie stay with his brothers."

The shadow patted him on the shoulder and

seemed to be delighted as Will put the bird in the nest and walked on, feeling much happier than if he had kept it. A bush of purple berries grew by the path, and Will stopped to pick some. He didn't know what they were, and mamma had often told him never to eat strange things. But they smelt so good, and looked so nice, he could n't resist, and lifted one to his mouth, when little Shadow motioned for him to stop.

"Oh, dear! you don't let me do anything I want to," sighed Will. "I shall ask Polly if I tar n't eat these; and if she says I may, I shall, so now."

He ran off to ask Polly, but she said they were poisonous, and begged him to throw them away.

"Good little shadow, to keep me safe!" cried Will. "I like you; and I'll mind better next time, 'cause you are always right."

The shadow seemed to like this, and bobbed about so comically it made Will laugh till his eyes were full of tears. Ned came back, and they went on, having grand times in the wood. They found plenty of berries to fill the basket; they swung down on slender birches, and got rolls of white bark for canoes; they saw all sorts of wild-wood insects and birds, and frolicked till they

were tired. As they crossed a field a cow suddenly put down her head and ran at them, as if she was afraid they meant to hurt her calf. All turned and ran as fast as they could toward the wall; but poor Will in his fright tumbled down and lay screaming. Ned and Polly had reached the wall, and, looking back, saw that their shadows had not followed. Ned's stood before Will, brandishing his pole; and Polly's was flapping a shadowy sun-bonnet with all its might. As soon as they saw that, back they went,—Ned to threaten till he broke his pole, and Polly to flap till the strings came off. As if anxious to do its part, the bonnet flew up in the air, and coming down lit on the cross cow's head, which so astonished her that she ran away as hard as she could pelt.

“Wasn't that funny?” said Will, when they had tumbled over the wall, and lay laughing in the grass on the safe side.

“I'm glad I wore the old bonnet, for I suppose my best hat would have gone just the same,” said Polly, thankfully.

“The calf doesn't know its own mother with that thing on,” laughed Ned.

“How brave and kind you were to come back and save me! I'd have been deaded if you had n't,” said Will, looking at his brother and

sister with his little face full of grateful admiration.

They turned towards home after this flurry, feeling quite like heroes. When they came to the corner where two roads met, Ned proposed they should take the river-road; for, though the longest, it was much the pleasantest.

"We shan't be home at supper-time," said Polly. "You won't be able to do your jobs, Ned, nor I mine, and Will's chickens will have to go to bed hungry."

"Never mind, it's a holiday, so let's enjoy it and not bother," answered Ned.

"We promised mamma we'd come home early," said Will.

They stood looking at the two roads, — one sandy, hot and hilly; the other green and cool and level, along the river-side. They all chose the pleasant path, and walked on till Ned cried out, "Why, where are our shadows?"

They looked behind, before, and on either side; but nowhere could they see them.

"They were with us at the corner," said Will

"Let's run back, and try to find them," said Polly.

"No, let 'em go; I'm tired of minding mine, and don't care if I never see it again," said Ned.

“Don't say so ; for I remember hearing about a man who sold his shadow, and then got into lots of trouble because he had none. We promised to follow them, and we must,” said Polly.

“I wish,” began Ned in a pet, but Polly clapped her hand over his mouth, saying :

“Pray don't wish now, for it may come to pass as the man's wish in the fairy tale did, and the black pudding flew up and stuck tight to his wife's nose.”

This made Ned laugh, and they all turned back to the corner. Looking up the hilly road, they saw the three shadows trudging along, as if bent on getting home in good time. Without saying a word, the children followed ; and, when they got to the garden gate, they all said at once :

“Are n't you glad you came ?”

Under the elm-tree stood a pretty tea-table, covered with bread and butter, custards, and berries, and in the middle a fine cake with sugar-roses on the top, and mamma and baby, all nicely dressed, were waiting to welcome them to the birthday feast. Polly crowned the little queen, Ned gave her a willow whistle he had made, and Will some pretty, bright pebbles he had found ; and Miss Baby was as happy as a bird, with her treasures.

A pleasant supper-time; then the small duties for each one; and then the go-to-bed frolic. The nursery was a big room, and in the evening a bright wood fire always burned there for baby. Mamma sat before it, softly rubbing baby's little rosy limbs before she went to bed, singing and telling stories meanwhile to the three children who pranced about in their long nightgowns. This evening they had a gay time; for the shadows amused them by all sorts of antics, and kept them laughing till they were tired. As they sat resting on the big sofa, they heard a soft, sweet voice singing. It was n't mamma, for she was only talking to baby, and this voice sang a real song. Presently they saw mamma's shadow on the wall, and found it was the shadow-mother singing to the shadow-children. They listened intently, and this is what they heard:

“Little shadows, little shadows,
Dancing on the chamber wall,
While I sit beside the hearthstone
Where the red flames rise and fall.
Caps and nightgowns, caps and nightgowns,
My three antic shadows wear;
And no sound they make in playing,
For the six small feet are bare.

“Dancing gayly, dancing gayly,
To and fro all together,

Like a family of daisies
Blown about in windy weather;
Nimble fairies, nimble fairies,
Playing pranks in the warm glow,
While I sing the nursery ditties
Childish phantoms love and know.

“Now what happens, now what happens?
One small shadow ’s tumbled down:
I can see it on the carpet,
Softly rubbing its hurt crown.
No one whimpers, no one whimpers;
A brave-hearted sprite is this:
See! the others offer comfort
In a silent, shadowy kiss.

“Hush! they ’re creeping; hush! they ’re creeping,
Up about my rocking-chair:
I can feel their loving fingers
Clasp my neck and touch my hair.
Little shadows, little shadows,
Take me captive, hold me tight,
As they climb and cling and whisper,
‘Mother dear, good night! good night!’”

As the song ended, the real children, as well as the shadows, lovingly kissed mamma, and said “Good-night;” then went away into their rooms, said their prayers, and nestled down into their beds. Ned slept alone in the room next that which Polly and Will had; and, after lying quiet a little while, he called out softly:

“I say, Polly, are you asleep?”

“No, I’m thinking what a queer day we’ve had,” answered Polly.

“It’s been a good day, and I’m glad we tried our wish; for the shadows showed us, as well as they could, what we ought to do and be. I shan’t forget it, shall you?” said Ned.

“No, I’m much obliged for the lesson.”

“So is I,” called out Will, in a very earnest, but rather a sleepy little voice.

“I wonder what mamma will say, when we tell her about it,” said Ned.

“And I wonder if our shadows will come back to us at midnight, and follow us as they used to do,” added Polly.

“I shall be very careful where I lead my shadow, ’cause he’s a good little one, and set me a righter zarmple than ever I did him,” said Will, and then dropped asleep.

The others agreed with him, and resolved that their shadows should not be ashamed of them. All were fast asleep; and no one but the moon saw the shadows come stealing back at midnight, and, having danced about the little beds, vanish as the clock struck twelve.

THE MOSS PEOPLE

“ Rain, rain, go away,
Come again another day,”

SANG little Marnie, as she stood at the window watching the drops patter on the pane, the elm-boughs toss in the wind, and the clover-blossoms lift up their rosy faces to be washed. But the rain did not go away, and, finding that mamma had fallen asleep over her book, Marnie said to herself :

“ I will go and play quietly with my fairy-land till mamma wakes up and cuts me some paper fairies to put in it.”

Marnie's fairy-land was as pretty a plaything as any child could wish for, and, as every child can make one in the summer time, let us tell what it was. The little girl firmly believed in elves, and was always wishing she could go to fairy-land. That rainy day, when she had longed for something to do, her mother said :

“ As you can't go to fairy-land, why don't you make one for yourself ? ”

Such a happy thought, and such a busy little girl as Marnie was, working away, forgetful of rain or loneliness! Mamma was so kind and helpful in suggesting ways and supplying means, that the new fairy-land really did seem to rise as if by enchantment.

A long, shallow box, filled with earth, which was covered with moss of all kinds, gathered by Marnie the day before; some green as grass, some soft as velvet, some full of red-brimmed cups, some feathery and tall, some pale and dry; marsh, rock, tree, and field had given their share, and out of this the little hands fashioned a dainty pleasure-ground for the elves. Ferns and spires of ever-green were the trees fencing in the garden, standing in groups, or making shady avenues. Silver-white mushrooms with rosy lining stood here and there like little tables, and mossy mounds or colored pebbles served for seats. Marnie's china bowl was sunk deep in the moss, filled with water, on which floated pea-pod boats with roseleaf sails. Acorn-cups, with blue and white comfits for eggs, were fastened in the trees, and toy birds brooded over their nests in the most natural manner. Dead butterflies, lady-bugs, and golden-green beetles from Marnie's museum hung here and there, as if alive. On a small mound stood a

pretty Swiss *châlet*, with some droll wooden men and women near it. One girl was churning, another rocking a mite of a baby, a man and his donkey were just going up the hill, and a family of wooden bears from Berne sat round a table eating dinner. A little marble hound with a golden chain about its neck guarded this child's paradise, and nothing was wanted to make it quite perfect but some of the winged paper-dolls with prettily painted faces that mamma made so nicely.

"I must wait till she wakes up," said Marnie, with a patient sigh, as she drew her little chair before the table where the box stood, and, leaning her chin on her chubby hand, sat looking admiringly at her work.

The ruddy glow of the fire shone warmly over the green hills and dales of fairy-land, the soft patter of the rain sounded like tiny feet tripping to and fro, and all the motionless inhabitants of the garden seemed waiting for some spell to break their sleep. Marnie never knew how it happened, but, as she sat looking at the Swiss cottage, she suddenly heard a rustling inside, and saw something pass before the open windows. She thought the chrysalis she had put in there had come to life, and waited, hoping to see a pretty butterfly pop its head out. But what a start she gave

when suddenly the little door opened and a wee man came marching out. Yes, actually a living, tiny man, dressed like a hunter in green from top to toe, with a silver horn slung over his shoulder and a bow in his hand!

Marnie held her breath lest she should blow him away, and peeped with all her eyes from behind the hemlock-boughs, wondering what would happen next. Up the steps ran the little man to the balcony that always hangs outside a Swiss *châlet*, and lifting his horn to his lips blew a blast so soft and clear it sounded like the faint, far-off carol of a bird. Three times the fairy bugle sounded, and at the third blast, swarming up from the moss below, dropping from the ferns above, floating on the ripples of the mimic lake, and turning somersaults over the mushrooms, came hundreds of lovely little creatures, all gay, all graceful, all in green. How they danced to and fro, airy as motes in a sunbeam! how they sung and shouted, as they peeped everywhere! and how their tiny faces shone as they rejoiced over the pleasant land they had found! For the same peal that brought the moss people from their beds woke up every inanimate thing in fairy-land.

The toy-birds began to sing, the butterflies and lady-bugs fluttered gayly about, the white hound

broke his chain and frisked away, the wooden maid began to churn, the mother set the cradle rocking, while the mite of a baby kicked up its wooden legs, and the man whipped the donkey, which gave such a natural bray Marnie could n't help laughing, it was so droll. Smoke rose from the Swiss cottage, as if fairy feasts were being cooked within; and the merry moss people, charmed with the pretty house, crowded it so full that every window showed half-a-dozen bright faces, the balcony quite creaked with the weight of them, and green caps came bobbing out at the chimney-top.

Dear me, what fun they did have! Marnie never saw such capital games before; and the best of it was, every one joined in them, — moss men and women, wee moss children, even moss grandfathers and mothers, as gray as the lichens from which they came. Delightful little folk they were, so lovely in face, so quaint in dress, so blithe and brisk in spirit, so wonderful and bewitching altogether that Marnie longed to call her mother, but did not, lest a word should frighten them away.

Presently she caught the sound of delicate noises, and, listening intently, she discovered that they were talking of her.

“Ha! ha! is n’t this a fine pleasure-ground for us this rainy day!” cried one merry moss boy, as he paused to settle his pointed cap, after turning somersaults till he looked like a leaf blown about by the wind.

“Hush, Prance,” whispered a pretty little moss girl, with a wreath of coral in her hair, “you will wake the child if you shout so loud, and then she will no longer see and hear us, which would be a pity; for we amuse her, as one may guess by the smile on her face.”

Now that surprised Marnie very much, for she was sure she was wide awake, and would have said so, if she had not remembered that it was not polite to contradict.

“What shall we do to thank this child for making us a pretty garden?” said Prance, skipping because he could n’t keep still.

“Let us put her baby-house in order,” answered little Trip, who was a tidy body.

“So we will, and play in it afterward,” cried all the moss children, whisking away to the corner of the nursery where Marnie’s toys were tumbling about. Such busy, helpful little people as they were! and such wonders as they worked with their fairy fingers! Marnie forgot to be ashamed of the disorderly baby-house in her delight at the change they soon wrought.

The boys mended broken chairs and tables, pots and pans, trundled the small furniture to its proper place, and attended to the wooden cows and horses in the topsy-turvy barn. The little maids swept and dusted, put the doll's clothes in order, ran about the kitchen, washing cups and dishes, or rubbed up the mirrors in the drawing room, which was a very fine apartment. Yes, indeed! for the curtains were of red damask, the sofa had real pillows, a tiny piano tinkled its six notes, and the centre-table held a vase of elegant wax-flowers, not to mention that there was a grate, gilt clock, two fine candlesticks, and portraits of all the dolls painted by mamma.

"There!" said Prance, when not a speck of dust remained, "now things look as they should, and I hope Miss Marnie will take the hint and keep her house tidy. Now what shall we play?"

"I've been thinking this would be a nice chance to try living like real people, as we have often wanted to. Let some be servants, some fine ladies and gentlemen, and all do as much like these persons in the house as we can."

As Trip spoke, all the moss children clapped their hands and skipped about, crying, —

"We will! we will!"

The dear little sprites had no idea that servants were not as nice parts to play as master and mistress; so one was Byelow the nurse, and put on a cap and shawl, and took some very young moss folk into the doll's nursery to play be the fine people's children. Another was cook, and clattered the pans about in the kitchen with a big apron on, and her little dress pinned up. A third was Dimity the maid, very smart indeed, and full of airs. A stoutish moss boy was coachman, and began to rub down the painted horses and furbish up the little carriages in the stable, while another with plump legs put powder on his head and played footman.

Prance and Trip took the hardest parts of all, for they said they would be master and mistress. There was no trouble about clothes, for some fashion-books lay on the table, and these queer little things only had to choose what costume they would have, when, lo and behold! there it was all made and on. Marnie did n't think them half so pretty in the fashionable finery as in their own simple green suits, and she laughed heartily at the funny mistakes they made in getting their furbelows and feathers properly arranged. Poor Prance quite gasped in his little broadcloth suit as he put on a tiny beaver, smoothed his gloves,

and shouldered a doll's umbrella, saying so like Marnie's papa that she quite started:

"Mrs. Prance, I wish to dine at three; don't be behind hand."

"Yes, dear," meekly answered Trip, who had whisked into an elegant morning-dress and cap, and nodded from the window as Mr. Prance went by to his office.

"What will you have for dinner, ma'am?" asked Skillet the cook, popping her head into the parlor where madam was playing read a novel on the sofa.

"Mercy on us! I'm sure I don't know;" and little Mrs. Prance ran down to see what there was in the pantry.

Mr. Prance was evidently not a good provider; for all she could find was a pea which came out of one of the boats, some jelly, sugar, milk, and cake which Marnie had been playing with, and a whole dinner in wood, painted brilliantly and stuck on to the dishes.

"It's a rainy day, and no one is likely to come to dinner, so we will have a pease pudding with jelly, and warm up these dishes, for everything is very high, — we must economize," said Mrs. Prance, shaking her head, just as mamma often did when she visited the kitchen.

“Very well, ma’am,” returned Skillet, retiring into the closet to eat cake and jelly, and drink the milk as soon as her mistress left the room.

“It’s time to dress, I suppose, for some one may call. Get out my blue silk and lace head-dress, Dimity,” said Mrs. Prance going up to her chamber, too busy about her toilet to mind the baby, who was crying in the nursery.

“Lace me tightly. I’m growing stout, I do believe, and my figure will be ruined if I allow it,” said madam; and Dimity squeezed her into such a tight dress that Trip got a pain in her side directly. “I can bear it a little while, but I don’t see how ladies can do it all the time,—it’s dreadful!” she sighed, as Dimity piled her pretty hair in a fuzzy bunch on the top of her head, and hung jewels in her little ears, after putting costly bits of lace here and there, and poking her tiny feet into high-heeled boots that made her totter when she tried to walk. These and her train nearly tripped her up, for, if Dimity had not caught her, Mrs. Prance would have tumbled downstairs.

Hardly was she safe in the parlor when the bell rang, and Buttons showed in several very fashionable ladies, who sat down and began to talk about dress, servants, gentlemen, and the

opera, so exactly like some of mamma's callers that Marnie wondered where the sly little moss people could have been hidden to know how to imitate them so well. As soon as one lady left, all the rest said sharp things about her; and when they got out, after saying good-by most tenderly, they all abused Mrs. Prance, who said to herself when alone:

"Tiresome, ill-natured creatures, I can't bear any of them; but I must return their calls as soon as my new bonnet comes from Paris."

By the time the last gossip was gone, it was past two, and Mrs. Prance was dying for her dinner, being quite exhausted. Imagine her dismay when her husband arrived with two gentlemen to dine. She clasped her hands and flew into the kitchen, where she found Skillet fuming over the little stove, and scolding because it was n't a range like the one she used in her last place. Everything was in confusion, and the prospect of dinner a gloomy one.

"We must have soup," cried distracted Mrs. Prance.

"No meat to make it of, ma'am," said Skillet, crossly.

"Boil two or three of these caraway-seeds in a pot of hot water, pepper it well, and add the leg

of that fly to give it a relish, then call it by some French name, and it will be all right," returned Mrs. Prance, who was suddenly inspired by this bright thought. "Dissolve some of the jelly for wine, and send up those nuts and raisins for dessert. Do your best, Skillet, and don't keep us waiting."

"I'd like to give you a week's warning, ma'am, the place don't suit me," said the red-faced cook, with her arms akimbo.

"Don't be impertinent, Skillet! You can go to-morrow, if you wish, but till then behave yourself," and Mrs. Prance retired with dignity.

Dressing her tired countenance in smiles, she went to welcome her undesired guests, and thank them for "this unexpected pleasure." Mr. William Wisp and Mr. Robin Goodfellow were two very elegant little gentlemen, with ruffled shirt-fronts, eye-glasses, and curled-up mustaches, quite splendid to behold. They chatted with their host and hostess in the most affable manner, affecting not to see that Mr. Prance's face grew more and more stern every minute, and that poor Mrs. Prance cast despairing glances at the clock, which plainly said "half-past three."

It really was becoming awkward, when Buttons announced, "Dinner, ma'am," and the cloud

lifted suddenly from the faces of all. Skillet had done her best, fearing she would n't get her wages if she did n't; and the first course did very well.

Greasy warm water, flavored with pepper, was so like a French soup no one knew the difference, and everybody took a few sips and pretended to like it; but to airy creatures, fed on sun and dew, it was n't nice, of course. There was no fish, for the tin ones melted in the frying-pan; and there was no time to get any more. The wooden leg of mutton got burnt in the oven, and the painted vegetables were not very satisfactory, though they looked quite fine. Mr. Prance frowned as he chipped away at the meat, and Mrs. Prance wanted to sob behind her napkin as he gave her a black look, saying sternly:

"Mrs. P., your cook is unbearable. I desire that you will dismiss her at once."

"I have, my dear," meekly answered his wife; and then good-natured Mr. Wisp struck in with a droll anecdote, while every one pecked at the painted feast, and was glad when the pudding came.

Here was another blow; for instead of leaving the pea in its skin, and sending it up a nice, round little pudding, Skillet had taken the skin off as if it was the cloth it was boiled in, and nothing re-

mained but a mealy ruin. Mrs. Prance groaned, and then coughed to hide the sound of woe, and served out her dish with the calmness of despair. The jelly did n't go round, the cook had eaten so much on the sly; and when the wine came, Mr. Prance looked disgusted, it was so weak. However, the nuts and raisins were all right; and after one sip of currant-water, in answer to the gentlemen when they drank her health, unhappy Mrs. Prance left the table, wishing that she never had been born.

Trip was a clever little sprite, and entered into the spirit of her part so heartily that she really dropped a tear or two as she sat alone in her fine drawing-room. Presently the gentlemen came to say good-by, for they were going to try Prance's horses. Tired Mrs. Prance wished her husband would ask her to join them,— a drive would be so refreshing; but he only nodded grimly, and went away without a word. Mrs. Prance immediately took to her bed, for she was to have a party in the evening, and feared she never would live through it if she did n't rest.

But very little repose did the poor lady get that afternoon, for the children acted as if possessed. Fliberty-Gibbet fell off his rocking-horse and broke the bridge of his nose. Midget set her lit-

tle dress a-fire and frightened every one out of their wits. Poppet ran out of the back gate, and was lost for a whole hour; while Weewee, the baby, had a fit, owing to Mrs. Byelow's giving him a pickle when he cried for it. If poor, dear Mrs. Prance was hustled off her bed once that afternoon, she was a dozen times, and at last gave it up entirely, whipped the children all round, scolded every servant in the house, had a good cry and a strong cup of tea, and felt better.

The gentlemen, meantime, had each lighted a tiny cigarette, made from one stolen from papa's box, and had driven off in great style. Mr. Prance had the tin gig with Silver-gray for a horse; Mr. Wisp took the straw chaise and yellow Bill harnessed with red; Mr. Goodfellow chose the smart dog-cart with the creaking wheels, and black Jerry, who had lost his tail, but was a fine beast nevertheless. With their hats on one side, and puffing their cigars, the little gentlemen drove gayly round the squares in the carpet, till Prance proposed a race from one end of a long seam to the other.

Away they went, with much cracking of whips, and crying out, "Hi, yar!" looking like three distracted bugs skimming along at a great rate. Prance would have certainly won, if, just as he

passed Mr. Wisp, the wheel of the gig had not run against a big knot in the seam, which upset Mr. Prance right in the way of Mr. Wisp, whose straw chaise turned over them all like an extinguisher, leaving nothing to be seen but yellow Bill's legs sticking straight up in the air.

Mr. Goodfellow passed the wreck, but soon returned in alarm to pull the wounded from the ruins. Prance was only shaken, but poor Mr. Wisp was so much bruised he could not rise, and when they looked about for a carriage in which to get him home, not one of the three could be had, for two were smashed, and Jerry had galloped off with the dog-cart, never pausing till he had reached the barn. With much difficulty they lifted the groaning Wisp on to a visiting-card, which fortunately lay on the floor, and bore him away to the residence of Mr. Prance.

The house had just subsided after the baby's fit, when this arrival set it all in confusion again. Wisp was put into the best bed, where, after a drop of arnica had been applied to his bruises, and a doll's smelling-bottle of hot water to his feet, he groaned himself to sleep.

Leaving his friend Robin to take care of him, Mr. and Mrs. Prance snatched a hasty cup of tea, and hurried to dress for their party.

Mr. Prance, I regret to say, was in a bad humor, for his dinner distressed him, his broken carriages annoyed him, and he did n't feel at all like seeing company. He pulled the bell down ringing for hot water, told the footman he was a "blockhead" because his boots were not blacked to his mind, and asked his wife "why the dickens the buttons were always off his shirts?"

Mrs. Prance was likewise out of sorts, and nothing went well. The new pink lace dress was not becoming. Dimity did n't dress her hair well, and she looked so pale and nervous that she was quite discouraged.

When master and mistress met at last in the lighted drawing-room, two crosser little faces were seldom seen. Trip threw herself into an armchair with a sigh, and put on her gloves in silence. Prance, who was a waggish moss boy, marched solemnly up and down the room with his hands in his pockets, and an air of offended dignity that made Marnie shake with laughter.

"Mrs. Prance, you gave us a very bad dinner today, and I was much mortified. If you can't manage better, madam, I shall give up house-keeping."

"I sincerely wish you would, my dear, for what with servants, and children, and company, I am

nearly worn out," and Mrs. Prance sobbed behind her lace handkerchief.

"I thought when I married you that you were able to look after things properly," said Mr. Prance, still marching up and down with a frown on his face.

"I never was taught to do anything but look pretty," sighed Mrs. Prance.

"Don't be a goose, my dear."

"You used to call me an angel."

Here the bell rang. Mr. Prance took his hands out of his pockets, Mrs. Prance dried her tears, and both looked quite gay and beaming when the guests appeared.

Such dashing little beaux and belles as did arrive, dressed in the most astonishing style, — the ladies with bits of bouquets and fans, satin slippers, and trailing skirts. The gentlemen had stiff collars, gay ties, wee boots and gloves, and twirled their eyeglasses as if they had been going to parties all their lives. Every one simpered and chatted, laughed and flirted, looked at each other's clothes, and whispered gossip round the room. Then a band of moss people, led by the green huntsman's horn, struck up the blithest dancing tune ever heard, and the little company began to spin round in couples like a party of tee-

totums. It was not the airy, graceful gambols Marnie had admired in her fairy-land, but it was the fashionable step, and therefore must be elegant. There seemed to be a good deal of romping, and the gentlemen twisted the ladies about till they looked quite flushed.

They kept up the dancing as hard as they could till supper-time, when every one ate as if exhausted. Where the supper came from, Marnie did n't know; but there it was — ice, salad, cake, coffee, oysters, and wine, all complete, and the company made themselves uncomfortable eating all sorts of stuff at that late hour. After supper, several of the young ladies sang, opening their mouths very wide, and screaming small screams without any music in them, while the little piano tottered under the banging it received. Then Misses Moth, Cobweb, and Peaseblossom gave an air from the famous opera of "Oberon," and every one said, "How sweet!" as they patted their gloves together and tried to look as if they knew all about it.

After a good deal of noise, there was dancing again, and Marnie observed that the company got more and more excited. Some of the gentlemen were very silly, but the ladies did not seem to mind it. Poor Mr. and Mrs. Prance were so tired

they could hardly keep their eyes open, and when at last their guests began to go they could scarcely hide their joy.

“Such a charming party!” “Had a most delightful time!” said the people, bidding them good-night; and then added as soon as the door was shut: “Was n’t it a miserable affair?” “Those Prances are very ordinary people, and I shall not go again,” — quite in the regular way.

I’m sorry to say that Mr. Prance was one of those who had taken too much wine; and when Mrs. Prance fell into a chair exhausted, he sat down upon the fender and began to sing:

“Where the bee sucks, there suck I,”

in a sleepy voice, nodding like an owl.

This was very trying to Mrs. Prance’s feelings, she lost her temper, and scolded him as well as she knew how. Marnie was quite frightened to hear the lecture she gave her naughty husband, who sat smiling and blinking till his little coat-tails took fire. The instant a bright blaze shot up behind him as he skipped off the fender, Mrs. Prance stopped scolding, and ran to put the fire out like a devoted little wife. But, oh! sad to tell, her dress caught, and in a minute two blazes flew about the room like a pair of lively Will-o’-

the-wisps. Every one screamed and ran, men and maids, Mr. Goodfellow and his patient, the children tumbled out of bed, and came scampering downstairs, and Weewee roared in his cradle as loud as if he tried to call "Fire! Fire!"

Marnie was so frightened at the idea of those cunning, tricky imps being burnt up, that she screamed also with all her might, and in a minute every sign of the moss people vanished. She rubbed her eyes, but all was quiet, — nothing stirred in fairy-land; the doll's house was topsyturvy as before, and all she saw were hundreds of motes dancing in the sunshine that now shone brightly on her face. Marnie was so sorry to lose her new playmates, that she would have cried about it if mamma had not waked up just then and asked what was the matter. When Marnie had told her all about it, she laughed at the funny dream, and then looked sober, as she said, with a kiss:

"If these sly rogues are going to come and imitate us to amuse our little children, we must be careful what we do that we may set them a good example."

"You and papa are not so bad as Mr. and Mrs. Prance, though you do some of the things they did. But the droll little moss boys and girls set

me a good example in one way, and I'm going to show them that I don't forget it," said Marnie, beginning to put her playthings in order.

"So am I," added mamma, laughing again as she put away her novel and took up her sewing, thinking to herself that she really would attend more to the comfort of home, and not care so much for fashionable society.

So you see some good was done after all by the merry little phantoms of a dream, for Marnie and mamma did not forget the moss people.

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