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FORTY GOOD-NIGHT TALES

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

FAIRIES AND CHIMNEYS
THE FAIRY GREEN
THE FAIRY FLUTE
FAIRIES AND FRIENDS
OLD-FASHIONED GIRLS
GAY GO UP
THE ROSE FYLEMAN FAIRY BOOK
A SMALL CRUSH
A GARLAND OF ROSE'S: COLLECTED POEMS
THE RAINBOW CAT
FORTY GOOD-MORNING TALES
THE ADVENTURE CLUB
A PRINCESS COMES TO OUR TOWN
TWENTY TEA-TIME TALES
EIGHT LITTLE PLAYS FOR CHILDREN
SEVEN LITTLE PLAYS FOR CHILDREN
LETTY
A LITTLE CHRISTMAS BOOK

FORTY GOOD-NIGHT TALES

BY

ROSE FYLEMAN

TENTH EDITION

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FORTY GOOD-NIGHT TALES

I

THE MOUSE WITH BOBBED WHISKERS

There was once a modest little mouse who was very good but not particularly beautiful.

One day she was trying to pick up a nice toasted crumb to take home to her old mother, who loved toasted crumbs, and she got too near the fire and singed her whiskers.

They were burned quite short.

She was very much upset, because she was invited to a fairy party that evening, and she was afraid she would look a dreadful sight.

She wanted to stay at home, but her mother wouldn't hear of that. She felt very sad though, to see her child go off feeling unhappy, and no sooner had she gone than mother mouse sat down and wrote a little note to the Queen, explaining everything and begging her to be kind to her unselfish little daughter. She sent off the note by swallow post.

When the little mouse got to the party, she stayed quietly in a corner and hoped no one would notice her; but one or two rude creatures stared at her and made remarks, and she grew more and more unhappy.

And then to her surprise one of the Queen's messengers came up to her.

"Are you Miss Bright-eyes?" he asked, politely.

The little mouse's heart thumped; she was quite frightened.

"Yes," she said, in a tiny squeak.

"Then please come with me," said the page. "Her Majesty wishes to speak to you."

So Bright-eyes was taken right up to the Royal throne, and the Queen talked to her most graciously. All the Court lords and ladies listened.

"And how charming your bobbed whiskers look," said the Queen. "I suppose that is the very latest thing."

"Charming, charming," murmured all the lords and ladies, and when the conversation was over every one crowded round the little mouse and asked her to dance.

She had a wonderful evening, and was so excited that she became quite frisky and gay, so that every one said: "Have you met the mouse with bobbed whiskers? She's delightful."

Her mother never told her about the letter she had written, but you can imagine how pleased she was at her daughter's success.

Bright-eyes set the fashion for bobbed whiskers in Fairyland.

It's rather interesting, isn't it?

If you see a mouse, you might look whether her whiskers are long or short.

II

A BAG OF GOODIES

(i) THE JUJUBE

There was once upon a time a king who had among his servants a confectioner. The confectioner's wife was also employed in the palace. She cleaned the gold and silver. She was very honest and trustworthy, and she even cleaned the king's crown and sceptre.

One day as she sat in the pantry rubbing up the crown, a big red ruby suddenly came out of its setting and rolled away through the pantry door. Jump, jump, jump, it went down the stairs and out into the yard; jump, jump, jump, into a sink and down the drain before she could catch it.

She was very much upset, and told her husband at once, for she was afraid to tell the king. Her husband was busy making beautiful red jujubes. "I know what we'll do," he said. "We'll put a jujube in the hole where the ruby was. No one will ever know."

So they put in a jujube, and it looked most beautiful, and nobody noticed.

A few weeks later the king and queen were playing in the nursery with their baby. The baby was only a year old, and presently he began to cry. So the king took off his crown and put it on the floor for the baby to play with.

All of a sudden the queen gave a dreadful scream.

"What's the matter?" said the king, in astonishment.

"Look, look," said the queen, "the great ruby has gone. The child must have swallowed it."

You never heard such a commotion as there was. The first court physician was sent for at once, but unfortunately he had gone out fishing and nobody knew where to find him, and of course no ordinary doctor could possibly do anything for the king's child. The baby seemed to be the only one who was not at all upset. He just lay in his bed and smiled—as well he might, for he had enjoyed the jujube immensely.

But when the confectioner and his wife heard what had happened, they went straight to the king and queen and told them about the jujube, for although they feared they might be punished, they felt that they must relieve the poor parents of their dreadful anxiety.

And the king and queen were so delighted to hear their child was in no danger, that they forgave them on the spot, and from that day to this there has always been a jujube instead of a ruby in the royal crown.

III

CAT'S TROUSERS

Have you heard people say that it won't rain if there's enough blue sky to make a cat a pair of trousers? And do you know where that saying comes from?

I don't suppose you do, so I'll tell you.

The cat was once invited to the Fairy Queen's party. He was very poor, and had no nice clothes. It was the Queen's birthday party, and every one was asked to wear blue, because that is the Queen's favourite colour.

The cat went to the weather-clerk on the morning of the party and asked him if he would give him a bit of sky to make a pair of trousers of. He had tried everywhere and was almost in despair.

"What will you give me?" said the weather-clerk, who is a rather mean old thing.

"I've just got all the clouds together for a good spell of rain, and they're so lazy and bad-tempered that if I unsettle them now I shall have the greatest difficulty in getting them together again."

"If you wait half-an-hour, I'll get you a bag of gold," said the cat.

So the weather-clerk promised to wait half-an-hour.

The cat rushed down the sky to the Fairy Queen's Major-domo, who arranges all her parties. "Look here," he said, "the weather-clerk's making a storm. The Queen's party will be ruined if it's not stopped."

"Dear, dear," said the Major-domo, and he wrung his hands. "I'd give anything for fine weather."

"Would you give a bag of gold?" said the cat.

"Of course," said the Major-domo.

So he gave the cat a bag of gold, and the cat rushed back to the weather-clerk.

"Here you are," he said. "Now what about my trousers?"

The weather-clerk found a tiny patch of blue between two clouds, and he pushed them a little farther apart.

"A little more," said the cat. "They mustn't be skimpy."

So the clerk pushed them a little farther.

"A little more," said the cat. "Trousers are worn longer than they used to be."

So the clerk pushed the clouds a little farther apart (though they grumbled at being moved) until there was quite a nice piece of blue showing.

"That will do beautifully," said the cat; and the weather-clerk gave him the piece of blue sky, and he hurried home with it and ran up a pair of trousers in no time.

But the lazy clouds were so angry at being moved that they wouldn't come back. They drifted slowly away in the directions in which they had been pushed, and took no notice of the weather-clerk's efforts to get them to come together again.

But the Queen got her fine weather, and the cat got his trousers, and the weather-clerk got his bag of gold, and what more do you want?

IV

THE DOLLS' HOUSE

(i) THE QUARREL

It was a very big dolls' house. There were six rooms, and a hall and staircase, and it stood in Molly's nursery.

The Smith family lived in it—Mr. and Mrs. Smith, four children, and a servant.

They lived a rather strange life. All day long they were more or less asleep. Even when Molly played with them they didn't really wake up. They only became quite awake at night. They were a peaceable family, but one night Mr. and Mrs. Smith had a quarrel.

They were standing on the little landing at the top of the stairs. I don't really know what they were quarrelling about. I believe it began with Mr. Smith's complaining that Mrs. Smith had upset the papers on his desk. Anyhow, it was a terrible quarrel, and they got so excited that their voices grew louder and louder, until you could hear them quite a long way off.

Molly was asleep in the next room, and at last they shouted so loud that they woke her up.

She couldn't make out where the noise came from, and she slipped out of bed and pushed open the nursery door.

Mrs. Smith's servant, who was in the kitchen, very much upset, heard Molly coming, and looked out of the window.

"Look out!" she cried. "Somebody's coming." And she turned all the lights out.

Mr. and Mrs. Smith got an awful shock.

Mrs. Smith was standing at the top of the stairs. She took a sudden step backwards and fell right down to the bottom.

Mr. Smith was leaning against the banisters. He lost his head completely and fell after her.

There Molly found them next morning, for she had gone back to bed when she found the nursery quiet.

"I can't think how they got there," she said to her mother, who was helping her to mend Mr. Smith's leg with seccotine and to patch up Mrs. Smith's chipped face.

"You must have pushed against the dolls' house when you walked about last night," said her mother.

Molly shook her head. "I wonder if you could tell me, Mr. Smith?" she said.

Mr. Smith stared straight in front of him with his china eyes.

He wasn't going to say anything. Not likely!

V

THE SHUTTLECOCK

There was once a shuttlecock who thought a great deal of himself. He gave himself such airs, indeed, that all the other toys in the cupboard where he lived disliked him intensely. He even snubbed the battledore, which was absurd, for, after all, what is a shuttlecock without a battledore?

"I can fly," he said. "None of you can do that but me."

One day, Molly, the little girl to whom he belonged, was playing with him in the garden.

There was a high wind. "I really am just like a bird," he thought, as he rose into the air. But the wind caught him and carried him high up into the branches of a tree. He stuck in the fork of a branch, and there he stayed.

Even Molly's father couldn't get him down.

"Never mind," he said. "I saw a beauty in a shop to-day, much finer than that one. Red and green. I will bring it for you to-morrow."

The shuttlecock didn't very much enjoy hearing that, but he soon had much worse to put up with.

He wasn't at all comfortable in the tree. The birds pecked at him. The rain came and drenched him through. He lost all his colour and most of his feathers.

Winter came on and he was cold and wretched.

He would have given anything to see the battledore's friendly round face.

He had one comfort. He heard the stories that the trees and the wind and the stars tell one another at night, and that the birds tell one another in the evening and early morning, and these are the most beautiful stories in the world. When spring came there was a terrific gale, and he fell to the ground.

Molly found him there. "Throw him away," said her mother. "He's no use at all."

But Molly couldn't bear to do that.

She put him carefully away in the cupboard with the other toys.

"Be good to him," she said to them.

They were all wonderfully kind, and the shuttlecock's heart was touched.

In time he became a great favourite.

He was a shabby little bit of a thing, and he couldn't fly; but that didn't matter at all.

He could tell the most wonderful stories, and, of course, if you can tell stories it doesn't matter what you look like. Does it?

VI

THE VAIN TEDDY

There was once a toy Teddy-bear who belonged to a little girl called Peggy. He was very big, almost as big as Peggy herself, and I am sorry to say that he was very vain.

You see, people always said when they saw him, "What a beautiful Teddy-bear!"

Peggy thought there was no one like him in the world. He always wore a blue bow, and she even made a blue silk cap for him, which he wore on the top of his head. It really made him look rather ridiculous, but it had a feather in it, and the vain Teddy thought it suited him beautifully, though he would have preferred pink.

"Pink is really my colour," he said to himself. "I wish Peggy would realize how well I should look in pink."

He grew more and more conceited every day. The other toys didn't like him at all. He used to sit in the corner and never join in their talk. If anyone spoke to him, he just said "Yes" or "No," in a proud voice, and stared at the ceiling.

But he was punished in the end.

One day Peggy's mother bought a packet of pink dye for Peggy's Sunday frock (which had faded very badly in the sun), mixed it in a great big pot, and left it standing on the kitchen table.

The Teddy-bear was sitting on the window-sill just over the table.

"How pretty that dye is!" he thought. "What a lovely colour! If only my cap were that colour, how handsome I should look!"

Then he had an idea. "If I lean over," he thought, "my cap will drop in, and then it will get dyed."

He leaned over.

"Mind! Mind!" sang the canary.

But he took no notice. He leaned over farther and farther. Suddenly—splash! splash! He had fallen right into the pot of dye!

You never saw such a comical sight as he was when they got him out. Pink all over! Peggy still loved him as much as ever, but his appearance was utterly spoiled.

"What a funny Teddy!" people said now. In time he got used to it, but he never really got over it. He was never known to squeak again.

VII

A BAG OF GOODIES

(ii) CARMEL

In a country far away from here there once lived a very rich and powerful prince. He was a bold and cruel man, and his wicked deeds made him a terror to the whole land. One day he stole away the little son of a neighbouring prince while he was playing in his father's garden, and refused to give him back.

The boy's father was not so rich and powerful as the bad prince Ali, and had not sufficient men to fight Ali's army. But brave men went singly, one after another, to try and get the boy back. They all met with a dreadful death, for he was kept on an island in the middle of a river which ran through Ali's land, and in the river was a great crocodile, who ate up every one who tried to get across.

Now there was in the land a young man called Jussuf, the son of a poor labourer, who was very clever and brave, and he was determined to rescue the boy.

So one dark night he set forth all alone, taking nothing with him but his sword and a bag of caramels!

When he came to the river-bank, he moved softly about among the rushes, and the crocodile came swimming quickly to the spot, for he thought he was going to have a fine meal.

But Jussuf put the bag of caramels down on the bank and went a little way off to see what would happen. The crocodile sniffed and sniffed. "This smells very good," thought he, and he opened his great jaws and got his teeth into the caramels. Then Jussuf came boldly to the bank with his sword. The crocodile tried to open his mouth to swallow him up. But you know what caramels are! He couldn't get his jaws apart, not an inch, and Jussuf was able to kill him quite easily. Then he swam across the water and rescued the prince's son, and swam back with him and delivered him safely to his father. You can imagine what rejoicings there were. And Jussuf got a splendid reward and was honoured and admired for the rest of his life for his cleverness and courage.

VIII

JORO AND THE ELEPHANT

In a country so far away that I don't think you'd even find it on a map, there lived a boy called Joro, who was so fond of reading that he could think of nothing else. He read all day long, and he'd have read all night too if they'd have let him. His mother became greatly troubled about it as he grew older. "He must learn a useful trade," she said. "Nobody will want to employ a lad who always has his nose in his book."

One day, as Joro was walking in the town, reading as usual, he walked right through the gates of the king's palace.

There were great doings at the palace that day, and the guards were so busy guarding the gate that they never noticed Joro.

He went up the drive and into the middle of the great courtyard where everyone was assembled. The king and queen sat on a golden throne on one side, and there was a big space in the middle where some one was about to make a speech.

Joro walked right into the centre of this space, still reading. There was quite a commotion, and the soldiers were just going to seize him when a terrible uproar arose. One of the king's elephants had broken away from its keepers in a fit of rage and came tearing into the courtyard.

Everybody rushed about, shrieking with terror. But Joro stood quite still, reading.

The elephant came straight towards him, and, picking him up in his trunk, waved him about in the air.

Joro kept on reading.

The elephant was so astonished not to see him kicking and struggling that he forgot all about his rage.

"This must be some great magician," he thought. And he put him gently down and stared at him with his little wise eyes, and presently went quietly back to his stable, thinking deeply. But the king was so grateful to Joro for saving so many lives that he found him a place as chief librarian at the palace.

Joro is perfectly happy now.

He can read all day and every day, for there are enough books in a king's library to last a lifetime.

IX

MRS. MOODLE

(i) THE WHIRLWIND

There was once a dear old lady whose name was Mrs. Moodle. She had a pet poodle, and the poodle's name was Troodle.

It does seem an odd thing that their names should rhyme, doesn't it?

But there it is.

One day Mrs. Moodle went out for a walk and took Troodle with her on a lead.

She (Mrs. Moodle I mean, of course) wore a very full skirt made of beautiful shiny black satin, with little frills all the way up it, a trim black bonnet with a pink rose on one side and a neat little bow tied under her comfortable chin.

She held her umbrella open over her head.

The sun wasn't shining, nor was it raining or snowing.

"But it might, any minute," said Mrs. Moodle. Which was perfectly true, you know.

All of a sudden there came a great whirlwind, and before you could say "Jack Robinson" it whirled Mrs. Moodle right up into the sky. Every one stood open-mouthed, staring at this remarkable sight. Mrs. Moodle kept hold of the lead, so that Troodle went up with her into the air, with his four legs all spread out and his tail streaming behind him. She kept the open umbrella in her hand, too. Up, up, up they went. They got smaller and smaller. It looked as if they would presently be as high as the clouds.

Then the whirlwind stopped whirling as suddenly as it had begun. Now of course you would have thought that Mrs. Moodle would have fallen down to earth with a terrible crash, and been smashed into little pieces. But no such thing happened.

The skirt spread out all round her like a balloon, and her open umbrella acted like a parachute, so that she floated quite gently down to earth again, and was very little the worse for her extraordinary adventure.

Ever since that day she has always gone about with an open umbrella. It is not very likely that the same thing will happen to her again, but, as she very rightly says, it might, any minute.

X

THE GREEN PAGE

The Fairy Queen once had a little page who was most wonderfully quick in getting about.

He wore a neat green suit, and he had the nimblest legs imaginable. Instead of flying or walking like the other fairies, he got over the ground by jumping. You never saw such jumps as he took. But he had one very bad fault. He was horribly greedy. I really think he loved his food better than anything else in the world, and he got a dreadfully big mouth with eating so much, while his eyes looked as if they were about to come right out of his head.

Besides, it made him slack over his work. He would forget all about an errand if he got hold of something good to eat, and would have risked anything sooner than go without a meal.

The Fairy Queen got annoyed at last.

"I shall have to punish him," she said, "if he doesn't give up his greedy ways."

One day she wanted a very important message delivered at once, and she sent word to the Green Page's house that she desired him to come to her immediately.

He was at his dinner.

"I'm not going to leave my good food," he said. "Her Majesty will have to wait a few minutes."

And he gobbled and gobbled in a tremendous hurry.

In a very short time he had eaten his dinner all up, and he started off for the place where the Fairy Queen was waiting for him. But when he arrived there, what with the food he had eaten so hastily, and the jumping, he had a terrible hiccough.

There he stood, hiccoughing and hiccoughing and quite unable to speak.

Now every one knows that it is considered a perfectly dreadful thing for anyone to hiccough in the presence of the Queen.

"I will stand this no longer," she said. "Your greediness shall be punished, sir."

She waved her wand over the Green Page and he was immediately changed into a little green frog with a great big mouth and bulging eyes. Haven't you heard the frogs at night all hiccoughing in the fields and marshes?

Now you know why it is.

They are all descended from the greedy Green Page.

XI

THE MAGIC SKIPPING-ROPE

There was once a little girl who had a magic skipping-rope given to her. It was a wonderful rope. You took hold of the handles, which were bright red and green, with little bells on them, and you said:

"Standing's dull and walking's slow,
Skipping's best—and off we go!"

And then you did go off.

You just kept on skipping and skipping. The rope turned by itself; you only had to hold the handles, and it never caught in your feet or in your clothes. It always went on, and you went on too.

When you'd had enough you said:

"Stop, stop, skipping-rope do,
That's enough for me and you."

And then it stopped.

And one day the little girl forgot the rhyme that made it stop. I think the skipping-rope must have got annoyed about something. I'm sure it could have stopped if it had tried.

The little girl's father came and tried to take the rope away when he saw what had happened, but the strange thing was, that as soon as he touched his little girl he began skipping too, jumping up and down, though he had no rope. His wife came and took hold of him, and she immediately started also; so did the servant, who tried to stop her mistress; so did their little dog, which jumped up at them. There they all were, bobbing up and down and looking very foolish indeed.

They might have been skipping to this day had not a friend come in. The friend happened to be a poet.

"We've forgotten the rhyme that makes the skipping-rope stop," gasped out the father.

"I'll make another for you," said the poet. "One rhyme's as good as another, and better."

And this is the rhyme he made:

"Stop your tricks and off you pack,
Run away and don't come back."

The skipping-rope stopped at once, but only for a minute. It jerked itself out of the little girl's hand as if it were in a rage, and then started off again. It skipped down the stairs and out of the house and down the street and out of sight. They didn't try to stop it. They were thankful to be rid of it.

But now you see how useful it is to have a poet for friend!

XII

THE TWINKLES

(i) ANNA'S ADVENTURE

I wonder if you've ever met the Twinkle family? There's Mr. Twinkle and Mrs. Twinkle and the baby, and they live...no I don't think I'll tell you where they live because you'd be sure to want to call, and they're rather shy. But they're a most interesting family, and they *do* have adventures.

They have some rather queer pets: a tortoise called Georgie and a marmoset called Porgie, and a very nice little pink pig who lives in the house and sleeps in a basket lined with blue silk. The pig's name is Anastasia (Anna for short). They have some other pets, but I can't tell you about them to-day, as I want to tell you one of their adventures.

Last week Mrs. Twinkle went into town to do some shopping.

Mr. Twinkle kindly stayed at home to look after the baby.

Anastasia wanted to go too.

"Don't be absurd," said Mr. Twinkle. "You can't go, Anna. Mrs. Twinkle is going to the West End."

Anna looked sulky and disappeared.

Presently Mrs. Twinkle set off in her best hat and her new pink jumper. She took Mr. Twinkle's carpet bag, because she wanted to buy a lot of things.

She went to a smart shop in Bond Street and bought a bonnet for the baby, a chest-protector for Mr. Twinkle, a carpet-sweeper, a jar of pickles, six beautiful green blankets which were going cheap, and a little bottle of lavender water.

You wouldn't have thought you could get all that in a Bond Street shop, would you? But, you see, Mrs. Twinkle is an exceptional woman.

"Shall I send them up?" said the shopman.

"No, thank you," said Mrs. Twinkle. "I want them all at once. I'll take them." She opened her bag, and What do you think was inside?

Anastasia, looking a little ashamed, but quite calm!

The shopman was very much surprised. So was Mrs. Twinkle. So would you be if you saw a little pink pig at the bottom of a carpet bag. Anastasia got a good scolding, and had to walk all the way home and go to bed without any supper. But wasn't it naughty of her?

And nobody has ever found out from that day to this how she got inside the bag!

XIII

THE DANCING KITTEN

Once upon a time there lived a kitten who could think of nothing but dancing. She danced with the leaves on the lawn, she danced with the straw in the barn, she even danced with her own shadow. "I shall be a dancer when I grow up," she said. Her old mother used to get very cross with her.

"You'll have to catch mice for a living when you grow up," she said. "It's time you started learning."

One evening the kitten was dancing with the wind in the garden, and the goblin in the gooseberry-bush said to her:

"Would you like to dance all day long from dawn to dusk?"

"Rather!" said the kitten.

So the goblin gave her a leaf which he had plucked at midnight from the aspen-tree on the Windy Wold.

"Put that under your pillow to-night," he said, "and you will dance all day long."

So the kitten put the leaf under her pillow, and, sure enough, she kept on dancing the whole of the next day, and the day after, and the day after that.

She soon got very tired of it and wanted to stop. But she couldn't keep still for a moment until the sun had gone down, and as soon as day broke she started again.

Her mother was very distressed.

"What shall I do?" she asked the fairy who lives in the red-currant bush.

"Go at midnight to the Solemn Silent Pool at the foot of the Deep Dark Rocks and fill an acorn-cup with water," said the fairy. "If you sprinkle it on her toes while she is asleep your child will be freed from the spell."

The old cat did as she was told. I don't know how she did it. It was a dreadfully difficult business for a pussy-cat. But she managed it somehow, and the next morning the kitten was quite cured.

She grew up into a steady, sober cat, and learnt to catch mice like her mother, but she never quite lost her love of dancing.

On moonlight nights she sometimes goes out and practises a few steps on the lawn. But she's careful not to overdo it, and she never so much as *looks* at the goblin in the gooseberry-bush.

XIV

THE PROUD FOXGLOVE

There was once a foxglove growing in a clearing in a wood among a lot of other foxgloves.

It was a rather fine and strong one, and soon grew taller than all the rest.

And because it was so tall and fine it became proud. "I am the most beautiful flower in the whole wood," it used to say. "No other can come near me."

It grew so proud that at last it wouldn't even speak to the others, and so they didn't try to grow big, but preferred to remain small, so that they could all be comfortable and happy together, and not see too much of their haughty neighbour.

It grew taller and taller. People passing through the wood often stopped to look at it. "What a magnificent foxglove!" they would say. "Have you ever seen such a beauty?"

And this, of course, made it prouder than ever.

Soon after this it happened that the fairies and gnomes were holding their evening revels in that part of the forest. Presently it began to rain. "Come! Come!" called out the foxgloves. "Creep into our bells. There is a nice little room for each of you to shelter in, and we will sway you to sleep by-and-by."

Only the proud foxglove said nothing. It thought itself far too fine to give shelter even to a darling little fairy.

The fairies all crept gladly into the other foxglove bells, but the little gnomes were anxious. "A big storm is coming on," they said. "The owl told us. How shall we make the fairies safe?"

They ran into the forest and gathered up broken twigs, and these they stuck into the ground round each foxglove where the fairies were housed, tying the flowers to the supports with ropes of bindweed and bands of twisted rushes.

The wind howled and raged all night, but the fairies slept sweetly in their little pink rooms, swaying lightly in the storm.

They woke up next morning to find the skies blue and the whole forest shining in the sun. But the proud foxglove lay flat on the ground. The wind had caught his high head and his back was broken.

THE NAUGHTY GOBLIN

(i) THE NAUGHTY GOBLIN AND THE VILLAGE SCHOOL

There was once a little goblin who was up to all manner of naughty tricks.

He once dressed himself up as a little boy and went to a village school.

It was a big school, and in the first room to which he came there was a class of children having a singing lesson.

They were learning to sing "Rule, Britannia."

The goblin crept into the very middle of the class and started singing "Pop goes the Weasel."

He had a good strong voice, and presently the children near him began singing "Pop goes the Weasel" too; they couldn't help it. Gradually more of them joined in, and in a very short time the whole class was singing it.

The teacher was very much annoyed, as well she might be, and she stopped the singing and started over again.

But the same thing happened as before, and as the naughty goblin kept moving about, it was difficult for her to find out who was upsetting the class.

But she discovered at last that there was a strange little boy in the room, and she made him come and stand in the front.

"What's your name, and what are you doing here?" said the teacher.

"My name's Tilly-Willy-Billy Funny-Bunny-Wunny," said the goblin, "and I've come here with my grandmother, the Lady Gee-winks."

"And where is your grandmother now?" said the teacher.

"Oh, I've hung her up on one of the pegs in the hall," said the goblin. "*She's* all right."

"You heartless child," said the teacher; and off she went to unhook the poor old lady.

But no sooner was she safely out of the door than the goblin jumped on to the window-sill and out into the yard.

"Good-bye. Good-bye," he shouted to the class.

"Good-bye," they said, and all crowded to the window, for never had they seen such strange behaviour.

Presently the teacher came back, angrier than ever, for of course there was no grandmother in the hall.

The children started "Rule, Britannia" over again, but when they came to a soft bit they could distinctly hear "Pop goes the Weasel" floating in on the wind.

The teacher shut the window with a bang, and the children went on singing, though it seemed rather dull.

But far away over the fields the goblin went on his way, cheerfully shouting "Up and down the City Road," and jumping a hedge every time he came to "Pop."

XVI

FOOLISH MABEL

Mabel wasn't a little girl. She was a nice little motor-car—dark-grey with bits of shining metal trimming here and there and a neat bonnet. (They *do* have bonnets, you know.)

She went very nicely indeed, and her owner was very proud of her. "Mabel's splendid," he used to say. "She really runs by herself. *I* don't have to do anything."

And Mabel heard him say this so often that in time she began to believe that it was indeed true, and that she was quite able to do everything by herself. One day her owner had gone into a house to see some friends. There was a tiny slope in the road where Mabel stood, and no sooner was he inside than she thought she would go for a little run alone. She started off very gently. "Ah," she said to herself, "I can do it beautifully. It is quite true, I need no one to help me." She went a little faster. She felt very proud, and was only sorry that there was no one to see her, for it was a very quiet street.

Faster, faster—she began to feel a little breathless. "I am going too quickly," she puffed. "I must slow down." But she found that this was not so easily done; she went faster than ever. The houses whirled past her; everything was a bright jumble.

The road made a sharp turn at the bottom, and there was a big iron gate facing her.

"You can't come in here," shouted the gate, rattling all its bars excitedly. "This is private." But Mabel couldn't even hear. She dashed into the gate and crashed right through, and then collapsed in the drive. When she came to herself her owner was standing over her. "Oh, Mabel," he said, "I should have thought you'd have known better."

Mabel gave a sad little rattle and shed a few petrol tears. She was a pathetic sight, battered and bruised and broken, and oh, so different from her former smart self.

She had to spend a month at a garage hospital, and she was never *quite* the same after.

But she had learnt her lesson. She never tried to run by herself again.

XVII

THE DOLLS' HOUSE

(ii) THE PARTY

You remember the Smith family who live in Molly's dolls' house? Well, they had a party the other night. Evangeline, their eldest child, had a birthday, and the party was for her.

It began at eleven o'clock at night (for our night is their day, you know), and was a very grand party indeed.

All the nicest toys were invited, and those who couldn't get inside the house were entertained on the hearthrug outside.

Molly's toy piano was moved on to the floor, and the younger people were delighted at the idea of a dance.

The Teddy-bear had a new bow. Louise, the French china doll, looked lovely in pink silk, with a pearl necklace and turquoise earrings. Even the little china girl and boy from the mantelpiece forgot their stiffness for once and became quite jolly.

It would all have gone off splendidly if the Golliwog hadn't got so excited. It was when the Teddy-bear sat down to the piano and began to play a very lively tune that the Golliwog seemed to lose his head. He climbed on to the balcony and danced there; he climbed on to the roof and began capering about; then he slid down the side of the house, seized Mrs. Smith, who was having a little chat with the battledore, and began whirling her round and round.

"Faster, faster," he cried to Teddy. Teddy got worked up too. He sat at the piano with his head up in the air and his blue bow cocked under one ear, playing away and singing in a loud, gruff voice. Round and round went the Golliwog, more and more wildly.

Mrs. Smith's hair came down; her red cheeks were redder than ever; it was astonishing to see how nimbly she stepped out. But all of a sudden her foot caught in a crack in the floor. Down she went, with Golliwog too. There was a jug of milk standing on a little table near the window. It had been left there by Nurse the night before. The Golliwog fell with a bang against the table leg, and the jug went over. A white stream of milk poured on to the floor. Oh, such a mess!

They managed to mop it up somehow, but of course the party was spoiled. Mrs. Smith behaved wonderfully. But then every one knew she was a perfect lady. She shook hands with all the guests, even with the Golliwog. But when they'd all gone, Mr. Smith said, "We'll never ask *him* again."

Next morning, when Nurse came into the nursery, she found the overturned empty jug. "Just think of it," she said to Cook. "A strange cat got in at the nursery window and knocked over the milk-jug and drank up all the milk. Did you ever?"

But you and I know better. Don't we?

XVIII

THE SINGING COMPETITION

There was a great singing competition going on in the farm-house kitchen. It was a warm summer afternoon, and the house was empty. Every one had gone down to the fields to help with the hay.

The barometer was the chief judge. They're always very wise creatures. They even know what the weather is going to be like. The looking-glass was helping him. She was clever too; it came from so much reflecting.

The canary was the first competitor. He was sure he was going to win the prize, and certainly he had a good loud voice. "A little shrill," said the judges. The canary looked quite huffy; he was accustomed to praise.

The sewing-machine came next. Her song was not very interesting, but she got quite good marks, and she seemed pleased.

"I'm just a useful body," she said. "I haven't much time to think about accomplishments."

The grandfather clock did very well. He asked to be allowed to come on at the hour, and he made a very fine sound. "I think I ought to get a prize," he said. "I keep such good time."

The little cricket who lived behind the hearthstone was so shy that he wouldn't come out, but he sang a beautiful little song from where he sat.

The cat contributed a nice little quiet tune, and the churn, who lived in the dairy next to the kitchen, could be quite distinctly heard through the open door.

"She's no good," said the bellows in a breathy whisper to the poker. "Very dull, very dull."

The meat-jack was the last to perform. He had a funny little voice; crack, crack, crack, it went. Every one was inclined to laugh. But the barometer looked very cross, and when they saw his hand go round to *stormy*, there was silence at once.

But neither he nor the mirror seemed able to decide as to who was the best singer, and they were almost quarrelling over it when the farmer came in with his wife and threw himself on to the settle. "I'm dying for my tea, mother," he said; and she bustled about and had the kettle on the fire in a minute.

Presently the kettle began to sing.

"That's the prettiest music in the world," said the farmer. "Nothing to beat it."

The barometer looked at the mirror and the mirror winked at the barometer.

There was no need for any further discussion.

The farmer had settled it.

XIX

TELEGRAPH POTS

Have you ever put your ear against a telegraph-pole and heard the humming it makes? It's not the telegrams, as you might perhaps think. The telegrams go along quite silently. It's the fairies. At least, not exactly the fairies themselves, but their cooking-pots. You know those little white things on the top of the poles?

The fairies use them for cooking in.

They make the most delicious things—toffee, and jam, and the loveliest goodies of all kinds. They're busy with something or other all the year round. And the electricity in the wires cooks the things. It's very convenient.

The humming noise is made by the stuff singing in the pots as it boils.

You can't see the fairies doing all this, it's so high up, but those men who climb up to look after the wires have very interesting times.

There was once a man called Jo Martin, who went up quite often.

The fairies got to know him.

"Good morning, Jo," they used to say, and they used to give him little tastes. He told his little girl all about it, and she was always begging him to bring home one of the fairy cooking-pots.

And one day he did take one away, without even asking permission.

The fairies were *so* angry when they found out that a pot was missing!

And what do you think they did? They sent a message along all the wires: "Where is our cooking-pot?"

You can't think what confusion it caused in the post-offices!

All sorts of people got the message—prime ministers, and stockbrokers, and hotel-keepers, and newspaper editors, and heaps of ordinary fathers and mothers. Nobody could make it out. Everybody was talking about it, and Jo Martin got so frightened that one night he climbed up the telegraph-pole from which he had stolen the pot and put it back. He was never quite sure whether the fairies knew that it was he who had taken it.

But he still says "Good morning" to them, and they still say "Good morning" to him, and give him little tastes. So, even if they did know, they must have forgiven him.

A BAG OF GOODIES

(iii) THE SUGAR COCK

A sugar cock once stood on a stall at a fair. He was striped pink and white, and was fastened to the top of a stick.

It was a very big fair. There were stalls of all descriptions and wonderful shows and roundabouts.

The sugar cock caught glimpses now and then of glorious chariots whirling round and round. He thought it would be the loveliest thing in the world to go for a ride on a roundabout.

There was an Aunt Sally close to his stall. She wasn't very beautiful. How could she be when people kept throwing balls at her all day? But she was very wise. She knew things other people didn't know.

The sugar cock was sorry for her. He hated to see her knocked about, and because she was so wise she knew his thoughts. On the second day of the fair she leaned over to speak to him during the dinner-hour, when things were quieter.

"You shall have your wish," she said. "To-morrow you shall ride on a roundabout."

The cock was surprised and very pleased. He thought it so clever of Aunt Sally to read his thoughts, and he was sure she knew what she was talking about.

On the third and last day of the fair a man came along with his little girl. The little girl caught sight of the sugar cock.

"Oh, Daddy," she said, "do buy him!"

The cock was in despair. "She will take me home and eat me," he thought, "and I shall never get my wish." But he saw Aunt Sally smiling and nodding at him as he was carried off, and this gave him fresh hope. Sure enough, when they came to the biggest roundabout, the one with golden dragons, the little girl begged to go on once more.

"Shall I hold cocky?" said her father.

But she wouldn't hear of that; and so the sugar cock's wish was granted.

Round and round he went, up and down. The music played, the fair was one glorious coloured blur.

He was so excited that he began to melt.

"It's been too much for him," said the man, when the ride was over. "You'd better eat him up." But the sugar cock was past feeling or caring. He had had his wish, and nothing else mattered.

XXI

THE BOLD GIANT

There was once a giant who had a very bad habit of stealing. He used to steal the stars and put them on his mantelpiece for decoration.

Then he grew bolder and tried to steal the moon. But the moon was cold and slippery, and he dropped it on the way home. It rolled back into its place in the sky, but it got a bit dented. You can see the dents if you look.

There came a day when he was feeling so spirity that he decided to steal the sun. "It would look splendid," thought he, "hanging up in the front hall." He took with him a stout paper carrier with ice in it, for the sun, as you know, is very hot, and he popped the sun into the bag and started joyfully off home.

But the sun melted the ice in the bag and the water came dripping through.

People on the earth looked up. "A nice warm shower," they said.

The giant took the sun out, and just as he was wondering what to do, who should come up but the Great Wonderful Wizard of the sky! The giant was very frightened of this powerful person, and not knowing what else to do, he slipped the sun into his trousers pocket.

"Good morning," said the Wonderful Wizard.

"Good morning," said the giant, trying to look pleasant, which was difficult, because the sun was burning him.

"A curious smell of singeing!" said the Wizard, sniffing.

"Yes," said the giant; "I had my hair cut and singed just now. It's astonishing how the smell lingers."

The Wizard sniffed again.

"I believe something's burning," he said.

"I shouldn't wonder," said the giant. "I saw the weather-clerk's wife ironing the rainbow just now. My wife says she's a careless body."

By this time the giant was dancing with pain.

"Take the sun out of your pocket at once, you thief," said the Wizard suddenly, with great sternness, "and don't let me have any more of your wicked tricks."

So the giant took the sun out of his pocket (and very glad he was to do so, I can tell you), and the Wizard rolled it back into its place.

He didn't punish the giant, because he knew very well what a bad burn he would have in his leg. Indeed, he was so badly burned that he was lame for the rest of his life, and of course he dare not steal any more, because he could no longer run away.

MRS. MOODLE

(ii) BOODLE AND THE BOTTLES

It's a curious thing, but Mrs. Moodle, who has a poodle called Troodle, you know, engaged a new servant the other day, and the servant's name was Boodle. And Boodle, I don't mind telling you, was rather a noodle.

Soon after Boodle came, Mrs. Moodle put on her bonnet with the pink rose in it and went for a walk with Troodle, for the weather was fine and warm. She didn't forget her umbrella, of course; she always took that after the day of her whirlwind adventure.

She left Boodle in charge of the house.

Presently a rag-and-bone man came round. "Any empty bottles?" he said when he saw Boodle busy sweeping down the area steps. "I'll give you a penny apiece for 'em—any kind."

"That's very good of you," said Boodle, "but I'm afraid we haven't any empty bottles."

"You'd better empty some," said the rag-and-bone man.

"That's a splendid idea," thought Boodle. "What a kind and clever man he seems to be."

So she asked him to be so good as to come back again in about ten minutes, and she went all over the house collecting bottles.

"For," thought she, "a penny's a penny, and the more the merrier." She found all sorts of bottles with all sorts of things inside them: medicine, and scent, and paraffin, and vinegar, and furniture-polish, and Worcester sauce, and ammonia, and ink, and capers, and hair-tonic, and salad-dressing, and port wine, and many other things.

And she emptied them all down the sink.

There were twenty-four altogether, and Boodle was delighted when the rag-and-bone man gave her a nice new two-shilling piece.

"Do come again some day," she said. "I dare say I shall be able to find a few more for you." And she put the two-shilling piece on the mantelshelf till Mrs. Moodle should come back.

"She *will* be pleased," said Boodle to herself. But when Mrs. Moodle came in she was not at all pleased; in fact she was very much annoyed.

"Boodle," she said, "you really are a noodle."

And I think you'll agree that she really was!

XXIII

THE KING AND THE QUEEN

There once lived a king and a queen who grew rather tired of ruling.

So one day they suddenly decided to go away. They put their crowns in a drawer and hung up their ermine robes in a cupboard and slipped out of the back gate and went to the next-door country. They stayed in a little village where nobody knew them, and they behaved so like ordinary people that no one found out who they were, which shows that kings and queens are not so different from other folk as you might think. But when they had been away for a fortnight they got rather worried.

"I do hope they're getting on all right at home, with no one there to rule them," said the queen.

"Well, my dear," said the king, "I must confess I was getting a little uneasy myself. Supposing we go back!"

So they decided to go home, and indeed they were growing a little tired of the quiet life they were leading. But they found everything going on much as usual. In the marketplace people were busy buying and selling, and in the pleasure-gardens they were chattering and laughing just as they always did. Nobody even noticed the king and queen, for, of course they were wearing quite ordinary clothes.

"It almost looks," whispered the queen to the king, "as if we were superfluous." Which sounds a grand word, but only means—not wanted. They went on to the council-chamber and peeped in. It was very quiet in there. Small wonder—all the councillors were asleep. So the king and queen walked on to their palace, and went quietly in at the back door and up to their apartments. And when they got there they looked at one another rather sadly. "*We are* superfluous," said the queen.

Just at that moment there was a noise in the courtyard. A big burly man had ridden in on a big burly horse and was talking to the porter in a big burly voice. "I want to see the king," he said.

"The king's out, I believe," said the porter, "but I'll send some one to see."

"Oh, my dear," said the queen, "they didn't even know we were away." But the king quickly put on his crown and stuck his head out of the window.

"What's the matter?" he asked.

"It's like this, your Majesty," said the burly man. "I've got a cow in the orchard at the bottom of my garden. It's been a very hot summer, as you know, and there have been more flies than usual. And the cow has been flicking away the flies with its tail. And my neighbour's wife sits in their orchard just over the fence, and she says that she can't bear the noise the cow's tail makes when it swishes about. And her husband says I must tie a brick to the cow's tail to stop it. And I say it's absurd. And we've been to the lawyers and they say there's no law about it, and we've been to the council and *they* say there's no law about it. So will your Majesty please make a law at once to let people know about cows' tails?"

"Certainly," said the king. And he got out his seal and his pen and sat down to make a law immediately.

The queen gave a sigh of relief and put on her state robes.

"What a good thing we came back," she said. "You see, dear, we weren't superfluous after all."

XXIV

THE TWINKLES

(ii) THE SAUSAGE ADVENTURE

I wonder if you remember my telling you about Mr. and Mrs. Twinkle and the baby, and their tortoise Georgie, and their marmoset Porgie, and their nice little pink pig Anastasia (Anna for short)?

I told you that they had some queer adventures.

Well, Mr. Twinkle's had one this time.

He went to post a letter at the corner of the Square one evening.

There is a piece of grass in the middle of the Square, with a few shrubs scattered about, and railings round it.

There's a padlocked gate, and no one has ever been seen to go inside except an old, old gardener who comes to tidy up.

But on that particular evening, as Mr. Twinkle passed down the Square, he smelled a delicious smell of hot sausages.

The smell came from inside the railings; he was sure of that.

So he looked over, and sure enough, in the middle of the grass he could see a little round table, and on the table a dish, and on the dish six smoking hot sausages.

Mr. Twinkle is fond of sausages, and, without waiting, he took one big jump and landed in the middle of the grass.

There was no one to be seen.

"Very queer," said Mr. Twinkle to himself.

The sausages looked too delicious for words; he couldn't resist them.

He picked up the dish, and with another neat jump reached the pavement again, and rushed home.

Everybody had a sausage for supper—Mr. and Mrs. Twinkle, the baby, Anastasia, Georgie, and Porgie—and when they woke up next morning *they all had green hair*. All except Georgie, the tortoise, for tortoises have no hair.

Wasn't it dreadful?

Mr. Twinkle and the baby weren't quite so bad, because they were rather bald. But Mrs. Twinkle looked a terrible sight; so did Porgie, the marmoset; so did Anastasia, who had quite a lot of nice golden hairs on her little pink skin.

Fortunately the colour wore off in time, but they couldn't go out for ages.

Goodness knows to whom the sausages belonged!

Georgie went out to look at the place the next day, but there was nothing to be seen.

But now you know why those places are always locked up.

I dare say if you watched carefully you'd see some queer sights.

But don't go jumping over the railings, will you?

XXV

MICHAEL

(TO H.B.)

There was once a white cat called Michael who was really a fairy cat. The people to whom he belonged didn't know this, although they knew he was very wise and wonderful.

He grew very fond of them, so much so that he really wasn't quite sure which he liked best, his fairy home or his human one.

He used to go off to Fairyland two or three times a week, for he pulled the Queen's coach when she drove in the one made of mother-of-pearl and ivory.

One day Helen, the little girl where he lived, had a party.

"Michael," she said, "you mustn't run away to-day, it's my birthday, and we want you to be at the party." The party was from 4 to 9, quite a grand one. And at six o'clock a fairy came to Michael's home with a message. "The state carriage is to be used this evening," she said. "Will you please come, Michael?"

"We're having a party here," said Michael. "I'll come in half-an-hour; we're just going to have tea."

In half-an-hour the fairy came again and whispered to Michael. "They are waiting to put on your silver harness," she said.

"I'll come in half-an-hour," said Michael. "We're just going to have a little dancing."

In half-an-hour the fairy came again. "Everything is ready," she said. "The coach is waiting, the Queen is almost dressed. Come at once, or it will be too late."

"Wait five minutes," said Michael. "We've all got prizes for finding things. I must just wait for my prize."

But it was another half-hour before he got away, and when he arrived in Fairyland he was too late. The Fairy Queen had ordered a white rabbit to pull her coach, and Michael wasn't even allowed in—he was in disgrace.

So he went back again to the house where he lived, and settled down, and never went back to Fairyland at all.

But sometimes at night, when the fairies come and dance in the moonlight in his master's garden, Michael stands on the window-sill and looks out. He doesn't go, though. I think he's a bit afraid. And sometimes, when he thinks no one is about, he does a little fairy dance all by himself.

Oh, he knows all about fairy ways, does Michael, but he won't tell; at least he won't tell me, though I have an idea he's told Helen a good deal. But she won't tell either.

XXVI

THE PILLAR-BOX

A pillar-box once stood at the corner of a quiet square in a big town. It was round and red and respectable.

It had to be.

It often had charge of valuable and important letters.

It would never do for a pillar-box to be flighty!

But one midsummer-night the pillar-box suddenly took it into its head that it would like to go for a walk just for once, and see what changes had taken place in the town during the twenty years which had gone by since it had been brought to the square.

"Nobody ever posts letters between two and three in the night," it said to itself, and went off for its walk. It met very few people, and when it did see anyone it stood still on the pavement and pretended to be in its proper place.

Quite close to where the pillar-box usually stood there lived a Mr. Obadiah Brown. He had a rather severe wife, and he was a bit frightened of her.

That night he sat up playing Patience till two o'clock. Mrs. Brown had fallen asleep over a book.

She woke up suddenly.

"Obadiah, have you written that birthday letter to Aunt Lizzie?" she said.

Mr. Brown had forgotten all about it.

"You just write it now," said Mrs. Brown. "It will catch the early five o'clock post."

So Mr. Brown wrote it and went out to post it, and Mrs. Brown said she'd wait up till he came back. He was very much astonished when he found that the pillar-box had gone.

He ran along three streets to the next one.

Mrs. Brown was very much annoyed at his being so long.

"Where *have* you been?" she said.

Mr. Brown explained.

"What nonsense," said Mrs. Brown. "Who ever heard of a pillar-box disappearing? Dreaming as usual! I suppose you've been dancing a Highland schottische round the square?"

"You'll see in the morning," said Mr. Brown.

In the morning, of course, the pillar-box was there just as usual. It had enjoyed its adventure, and was quite content to stay where it was for another twenty years.

Mrs. Brown only snorted, but poor Mr. Brown didn't know what on earth to make of it all.

XXVII

A BAG OF GOODIES

(iv) PEPPERMINT AND PEAR-DROPS

There once lived a Prince and Princess who loved one another dearly. But the parents of the Princess wanted her to marry some one else.

The Princess was very fond of peppermint and the Prince was very fond of pear-drops, and they always sent them to one another on their birthdays. But the mother and father of the Princess were so determined that their daughter should not marry the Prince that they sent her away into a distant part of the country and fastened her up in the dungeon of a great tower; and there she sat all day sewing and reading and thinking of the Prince, with nothing to console her but a large tin of peppermints which he had sent her for her last birthday.

And the Prince was so miserable when he heard she had gone away that he wandered all over the country with nothing to console *him* but a packet of pear-drops which the Princess had given him on *his* birthday.

He carried them in his satchel and ate one now and then in order to keep up his spirits.

And one day he came by chance to the foot of the very tower where the Princess was imprisoned.

And as he passed by, the wind carried a whiff of pear-drops (you know how strong they are) through the high window into the dungeon where sat the Princess.

Hope sprang up in her heart.

"Can it be my Prince come to seek me?" she thought. The window was, as I have said, very high up, and it was heavily barred, so that she could not see out of it; but she quickly wrapped up a peppermint in her handkerchief and managed to throw it out. The Prince saw something white fall into the bushes, and wondered what it could be. Suddenly a whiff of peppermint reached him. "Can it be," he thought, "can it be that my Princess is near?" He searched in the bushes until he found the peppermint in the handkerchief, and then he knew for certain that the Princess was in the tower. He dared not shout, for fear he should be heard by the guards; but he waited till night fell and then came again with a ladder and a stout file. He climbed up the ladder and filed through the bars and got the Princess out and carried her away, to his own land, where they lived happily ever after.

But if it hadn't been for the peppermints and pear-drops he might have been searching for her to this very day.

XXVIII

THE ROBBER CHIEF AND THE TREACLE PUDDING

There was once a robber chief who was very fond of treacle pudding. As a matter of fact, he was much too fond of it. He was greedy over it, and he used to get the treacle into his hair and moustache and beard. He even got it into his eyebrows, which, as he was a robber chief, were, of course, very thick and bushy.

One day he went for a walk, after having eaten a whole big pudding for his dinner. As he walked down a quiet lane he caught sight of a poor old lady shaking a feather-bed out of her cottage window. He thought it looked a very nice bed and that he would like to take it home.

So he seized hold of it by the two bottom corners. But the old lady wouldn't let go, and they pulled and pulled until it came in two. The feathers all came out, and because he was so treacly they stuck in the robber chief's hair and beard, and indeed all over him, for the more he tried to get them off the stickier he became.

At last he started off home in a great rage, all covered with feathers. His wife saw him coming from the window. She didn't recognize him in the least and was much alarmed.

"This is some terrible monster come to devour me," she said, and she seized her husband's gun and took aim from the window.

The robber chief tried to hide behind the pump, but eating so much pudding had made him fat, so that he stuck out beyond it on either side and got a good peppering of shot in his body.

It didn't kill him, but he was laid up for quite a long time, and it was a terrible warning to him, firstly against greediness, and secondly against stealing from the poor.

He never took treacle pudding again so long as he lived, and though he didn't give up being a robber chief, I am told that he did give up robbing old ladies.

XXIX

THE NAUGHTY GOBLIN

(ii) THE GARDEN PARTY

One day when the naughty goblin was feeling very naughty indeed, he came to the gates of a large house. The large house belonged to a large lady called Lady Bigairs. They were having a great garden party. It was a very grand party. There were lots of Lords and Ladies, and Professors with beards and spectacles, and Bishops in queer hats, and a real Princess, who was very pretty and just *like* a Princess.

The goblin climbed quietly into the house by a drain-pipe and dressed himself up like a little girl with some clothes which he found in a cupboard. Then he went downstairs. He crept into the library first and wrote out a notice on a piece of paper and stuck it up on a bush on one of the garden paths.

"THIS WAY TO THE WATERFALL," it said. And when you got to the end of the path there was nothing but a water-tap turned on full. People were quite annoyed. "What a silly joke," they said. "I'm surprised at Lady Bigairs!" But Lady Bigairs knew nothing about it, you see!

The goblin next went to the tea-tent and put salt into all the sugar-basins instead of sifted sugar, so that when people put it on their strawberries they had a dreadful time over the first mouthful.

Next he got a coco-nut from the "Aunt Sally," and hiding behind a bush, he rolled it hard against the ankles of a bishop who was standing at the edge of the lily-pool talking to the Princess. The coco-nut knocked him off his feet and he tumbled right into the lily-pond. You never saw such a mess as he was in. He had to go home.

The Princess didn't mind so much as you'd have thought. She wanted to speak to some one else rather badly, and the bishop *would* not stop talking.

Nobody knew who did all these dreadful things.

Nobody thought it was the pretty little girl who wandered so quietly about the garden and answered so politely when she was spoken to.

People began to get really annoyed at the silly tricks that were being played on them, and a general search was made to find the mischief-maker. The goblin thought it was about time to get away. He stole into a summer-house and took off his white frock and pink sash. Suddenly the Princess came strolling up and saw him just about to make off.

"You naughty boy," she said. "It's you, is it? You're caught."

The goblin made a very penitent face.

"Please let me off," he said. "Please, dear Princess."

"How do you know I'm a Princess?" she answered.

"Because you're so pretty," said the goblin.

The Princess smiled. "Where do you come from?" she asked. "I don't believe you're a little boy any more than a little girl. Tell me who you are."

"I can't tell you that," said the goblin. "But if you'll let me go I'll tell you a charm to keep you young and beautiful for ever."

So the goblin gave the Princess the charm and she let him go. She told people she had found the little girl's clothes in the summer-house, and everybody thought the tricks had been played by a village lad.

But the Princess is still young and beautiful, and all this happened quite a long time ago.

THE DRAGON

Once upon a time there was a dragon who lived in a cave in a wood—as dragons do—with his wife and children.

He had been pretty fierce in his youth, but he grew milder as he grew older, and had at last become quite gentle.

Of course, the real old-fashioned dragons have quite gone out now; nobody goes about killing them. He was, as a matter of fact, the last of that sort.

He used sometimes to breathe fire out of his mouth to amuse his children, and, when they were naughty, would whisk his scaly tail about and say, "Gr—r—r." But they didn't really mind; they knew he wouldn't hurt them.

But one day a knight came riding through the forest. He was in love with a beautiful maiden, and he wanted to do all sorts of fine things to prove how brave he was.

He thought if he could kill a dragon it would surely please her very much, and he rode all over the land trying in vain to find one. When at last he came to the wood where this one lived and saw a notice up, "BEWARE OF THE DRAGON," he was delighted.

The dragon was snoozing by the fire inside, but one of his children was sitting at the opening of the cave, and saw the knight riding through the trees.

"Wake up, Daddy," he cried. "There's a knight coming."

But the dragon only grunted and turned over.

The knight rode up to the entrance.

"If there be a foul dragon within," he said "let him come out. I challenge him to mortal combat." For that is the way knights used to speak in those days. They don't talk like that now.

"Oh dear," said the dragon, stretching himself, "what a tiresome person! I don't in the least want to fight him."

But since the knight would not go away, he pulled himself together and came out, making a dreadful noise and breathing out fire with all his might.

The knight felt rather nervous when he saw the dragon, but he was determined to see the thing through.

"I challenge thee to mortal combat," he said again.

The poor old dragon didn't like to refuse, it seemed so cowardly, but he didn't in the least want to fight either.

Just, however, as he was about to make the best of a bad job and hurl himself upon his challenger, who should appear upon the scene but the maiden with whom the knight was in love!

She had found out that he had heard of a dragon at last, and she had been so afraid he would be killed that she had come after him post-haste.

"Spare him, spare him!" she cried to the dragon, and threw herself upon her knees in front of him.

The dragon was very much relieved.

"Lovely maiden," he said, "I can refuse thee nothing."

And so they didn't fight after all.

The knight began to feel a little vexed when the excitement was all over. "You know, dear," he whispered to the maiden, "I might have killed *him*."

But the maiden thought otherwise.

"He was a noble, noble creature," she said. "I can never be grateful enough to him."

And years after, when the dragon died, she had a statue put up to his memory.

You can see it any day at Temple Bar if you care to go and look.

XXXI

A BAG OF GOODIES

(V) ACID-DROPS

(*T O S. D.*)

There was once a witch who lived in a hole on a moor. There was heather growing round the hole, so that you couldn't see it. But when she heard footsteps she used to put out her hand and catch at the feet of people passing by, threatening to drag them into her hole unless they gave her their money. And this they always did, because they were so frightened. And she spent all the money on acid-drops, for she loved them better than anything else in the world. One day a man was walking over the moor. He was big and strong and not very easily frightened.

The witch caught him by the ankle. He was very much surprised, but he didn't struggle.

"Who are *you*?" he said, peering down into the hole.

"Never mind who I am," said the witch. "I've got you, and I want your money."

"Very well," said the man. "If you won't let go, you may as well have some. I can't stay here all day."

He began feeling in his pockets, and while he did so he talked to the witch.

"What do you want money for?" he said.

"I want it to buy acid-drops with," said the witch.

"Well, I never!" said the man. "If that isn't a funny thing! Do you know what my business is? I'm an acid-drop maker. I make tons and tons of them. And look here, old woman, I'll tell you what. If you'll let go of my leg, I'll set you up with a little stall, and you can sell acid-drops to other people and eat as many yourself as you want. How would you like that?"

The old witch was delighted. She wasn't really a bad old thing. So the acid-drop maker sent her a big sackful the next day, and now she sells them to people in little packets.

They're very pleased to buy them, for it is hot on the moor, and acid-drops are most refreshing. If you go that way you'll see her. Give her my love, will you? And you might bring me home an acid-drop, please. I love them too.

THE FRIENDLY ROBIN

There was once a little girl who lived with her mother in a cottage in a wood.

Her mother fell ill, and the little girl worked hard to keep the house clean and neat. It was not easy, for she went to school every morning and did not get home till tea-time; but she did her very best.

Her mother had a rich old aunt who lived some way off. The aunt was a very particular old lady. She used to look round the house with her sharp eyes when she came to call.

If the place was speckless, she nodded her head until her earrings shook.

"Clean and neat deserves a treat," she used to say. And the next day a hamperful of good things would arrive. But if there was a speck of dust anywhere, she said nothing, and no hamper arrived.

One day the little girl had to go off to school without doing the cleaning. She had been so tired the night before that she slept late, and only had time to see to her mother's comfort before she left. She hoped the aunt would not call that day.

Living in the cottage garden was a friendly robin, to whom the little girl gave crumbs every morning.

As soon as she had gone out he flew to the aunt's house, in order to see if she were coming that day, and there, sure enough, he found her making preparations to call on her niece.

He flew quickly into the forest and called all his friends together. He asked the rabbits to come too, and they all bustled off to the little house in the wood.

The robins hopped about the floor and picked up every crumb and scrap. The rabbits dusted the furniture with their tails and rubbed against the brass ornaments on the mantelpiece and dresser until they shone like gold. In less than an hour the kitchen and parlour were spotless.

When the little girl came home at tea-time, she heard her aunt's voice through the open window and her heart came into her mouth.

But what do you think she was saying?

"Clean and neat deserves a treat."

But the little girl never knew who had done the work.

XXXIII

THE DOLLS' HOUSE

(iii) THE PRESENT

Molly had been very busy all day spring-cleaning the dolls' house. She did it most thoroughly. She had all the furniture out and all the carpets up. And she put nice clean curtains into all the windows.

"I really think," said Mrs. Smith, when Molly had gone to bed and she and Mr. Smith were able to get about, "I really think *we* ought to do something for Molly, she's done so much for us."

"I think she's rather a nuisance," said Mr. Smith. "I can't find any of my things."

"That's just like a man," said his wife. "I think it looks beautiful." And so it did.

"How would it be if I made her some nice little sweeties?" said Mrs. Smith.

So she sent Mr. Smith to the grocer's shop at the other side of the nursery to buy sugar and caraway-seed, and she made the most beautiful little pink comfits you ever saw, and Mr. Smith, who was very clever with his fingers, made a neat little box of cardboard, and Angelina, who was a talented child, painted a little picture to put on the top.

After a great deal of consultation, they put the little box on the bottom shelf of Molly's toy cupboard in such a way that the cupboard door wouldn't shut properly.

Next day Nurse noticed the open door. She tried to shut it, but of course it wouldn't shut.

"I think you'd better tidy your own cupboard to-day," she said to Molly. "It's so bad that you can't even shut the door."

So Molly tidied the cupboard, and very soon came across the little box of comfits.

There was a little card inside with "A present from us," written on it, and there was a picture of the dolls' house with Mr. and Mrs. Smith and Angelina looking out of the window and smiling.

"Look, look, Nurse," said Molly, "I've got a present. It's from the dolls' house. How nice of them."

Nurse looked at it. "It's one of your Christmas presents that you've forgotten," she said. "See, here's the card."

"It's no good trying to explain," thought Molly.

But when Nurse had gone out of the room she went across to the dolls' house and opened the door.

Mr. and Mrs. Smith were sitting in the drawing-room.

"Thank you very much indeed," said Molly. "The comfits are lovely. Please do try them."

She put two on the table in front of Mr. and Mrs. Smith and one on Angelina's pillow in the bedroom.

They were gone next morning. So there you are!

HERBERT JONES, P.C., AND THE FAIRY

Herbert Jones was a policeman. He was a very good policeman. He had medals, and good-conduct stripes, and all the things good policemen do have.

But he had one great trouble. He was very fat, and he kept getting fatter and fatter.

His uniforms had to be let out continually, and he had to have new ones quite often, because you can't let out a uniform for ever.

He did all he could. He left off porridge for breakfast; he left off beer; he tried to do without puddings. But, after all, nobody can work without food, and it's quite hard work being a policeman.

At last he was told that if he got any fatter they really couldn't have him for a policeman any longer, which was a truly terrible blow.

One day, soon after this, when he was on duty in the city, a fairy came up to ask his help. She had an appointment to meet some friends on the top of the Albert Memorial, and she had lost her way.

Mr. Jones was very kind about it.

"I shall be off duty in a few minutes," he said. "If you don't mind my just putting you in a safe corner till then, Miss, I could take you part of the way."

So he put her on a ledge till he was ready, and then he went with her all the way to Hyde Park Corner.

From there, of course, it was plain flying.

But before she left him she begged him to let her know if she could do anything for him, and he told her his troubles.

"Oh, I'm sure we can help you," said the fairy. "Let me see, games night's on Friday. Can you get off on Friday nights?"

Fortunately he could.

"Well, then," said the fairy, "I'll send some one to fetch you next Friday, and you'll see what you will see."

So now every Friday the policeman goes off to Fairyland and plays games.

He does cloud-chasing and butterfly-racing, thistledown-catching, and lots of other things, and, of course, there's always dancing. He loves it. And, what's more, he's getting thinner. His clothes have to be taken in now.

His wife's beginning to be rather worried about it, but I don't think he'll ever give up games night; he enjoys it too much.

SNAP-DRAGONS

Years and years and years ago there used to be dragons on the earth. I dare say you have heard of them.

They were quite nice creatures to begin with, but as time went on they grew fierce and wild, and at last became a real nuisance to every one.

So the Fairy Queen took the matter up and invited them all to a party in order to give them a good talking-to. They nearly all came, but they behaved very badly indeed, and would not even promise to try to mend their ways.

And, because the fairies were so small, they thought they were weak too, and began snapping and snarling and lashing their tails about.

The Fairy Queen was very angry at their behaviour, and she turned them all into flowers.

They were called "Snap-dragons," and people used to pull off their heads and pinch them to make them open their mouths.

"They look just like dragons," they would say. They didn't know that they *were* dragons.

But in time the Snap-dragons improved through having to bear their trials patiently. And each year, when they were allowed to return to their old shape for a night and go to the Queen's annual party, as all the flowers do, they behaved better and better; until at last they were quite pleasant and amiable, and became most popular and had a very happy time at the parties.

And so they grew more and more attractive. And by now they have become so beautiful that people think a great deal of them and love to have them in their gardens.

And they are no longer called "Snap-dragons," but have a grand new name—"Antirrhinum," and nobody pulls their heads off, for nobody would like to spoil such pretty things.

XXXVI

A BAG OF GOODIES

(vi) BARLEY-SUGAR

There was once an old woman who lived in a little house and earned a living by making and selling sticks of barley-sugar.

But in those days the barley-sugar sticks were all straight.

She had a son who was both clever and handsome, but he was a dreamer and did not make much money. He loved his mother dearly, and helped her whenever she needed help.

And one day the king's daughter passed by the cottage.

She saw the son of the barley-sugar-maker standing in the door, and because he looked so handsome she smiled at him.

She had the most lovely golden ringlets, and he fell in love with her on the spot.

He could think of nothing but the Princess and her golden curls, so much so that when his mother asked him to make the barley-sugar into sticks, he twisted them all into ringlets without quite realizing what he was doing.

When his mother saw what he had done, she wrung her hands. "You have spoiled all the sticks," she wailed. "I have no more sugar."

Her son was very sorry, but there was nothing to be done.

However, when people came to buy the barley-sugar, they were delighted with the new shape. "How pretty!" they said. And everybody in the town came to buy, so that very soon there was none left, and they had to set to and make more at once.

In the end it became so popular that people came from all over the country for it, and the old woman and her son became quite rich.

And one day the Princess again passed by the house; but by this time it had been altered and enlarged and had become a fine mansion. The handsome young man was again standing at the door, for he often watched there in the hope that he might see her. And this time when she smiled at him he came down the steps and asked her whether she would deign to accept a casket of barley-sugar. "For it is to you," he said, "that we owe all our fortune."

And when he told her how he came to make the barley-sugar twists, she laughed and blushed and was not ill-pleased.

And in the end they were married and lived happily ever after; but from that day to this barley-sugar sticks have been twisted.

THE GNOME WHO BECAME A LITTLE BOY

There was once a little gnome who wanted to become a real little boy. He'd seen one playing in the woods with a red tam-o'-shanter and green trousers. He had some peppermints in his pocket and dropped one in the forest.

The gnome ate it, and found it very good.

The little boy had a picture-book too.

The gnome peeped through the ferns at the pictures. He thought they were lovely. So one night he went a-sailing and skimmed a sackful of silver starshine from the water and took it to the Wise Woman under the hill.

"I will give you all this," he said, "if you will turn me into a little boy."

"Very well," said the Witch. "But you won't like it."

But he thought he would.

So she turned him into a little boy, and he went off. He walked a long way until he came to a farm-house, and as the door was open, he went in and sat down by the kitchen fire.

"My goodness," said the farmer's wife, when she came in from the dairy. "Where do you come from?"

"From the woods," he replied.

The farmer's wife was a kind woman. She had no children of her own, so she thought she would keep the little boy from the woods.

She gave him a bath before he went to bed.

He didn't like it much. He'd never been soaped before. He was very disappointed, too, not to have peppermints for supper—only bread-and-milk.

The next day the farmer's wife took him to the village school. He didn't like that either. The books hadn't nice pictures in them like those he had peeped at in the wood.

As soon as school was over he went straight back to find the Wise Woman under the hill.

"I want to be a gnome again," he said.

"What did I tell you?" she replied. "Well, I'll change you back, but this time I must have gold." So he went a-sailing on the river in the sunlight, and gathered up the sun-sparkles in his tam-o'-shanter and took them to the Witch, and she changed him back again into a gnome.

But what the farmer's wife thought I know not.

XXXVIII

THE TWINKLES

(iii) PORGIE'S ADVENTURE

"Timothy," said Mrs. Twinkle to her husband one lovely day in summer. "Timothy, it's time we had a day's outing. Let's all go to Hyde Park and take dinner with us."

Mr. Twinkle was quite agreeable; so they took the perambulator with the baby at one end, and Georgie the tortoise, Porgie the marmoset, and Anastasia the little pink pig at the other, and all set off for the Park. Mr. Twinkle carried the basket of provisions and Mrs. Twinkle wheeled the perambulator. They strolled about the Park and enjoyed looking at the flowers, and at half-past twelve they all sat down on the grass under a tree and had a very good meal. After that Mr. and Mrs. Twinkle both snoozed off, though they didn't really mean to.

When they woke up they found that Porgie had disappeared!

They were very much upset, as you may imagine. They were a long way from home; besides, they were afraid he might have got into mischief. They rushed about the Park, getting hotter and hotter (for the perambulator was heavy), and not daring to ask a policeman. But they could find no trace of Porgie for a long time.

At last they got to the Albert Memorial. This, as many of you know, is a big statue of Prince Albert, who was Queen Victoria's husband. He sits in a chair high up in a little stone house open on all sides and with a roof over it.

There are steps leading up to the place where he is, and when the Twinkles came up they saw crowds of people on these steps, all staring up at the statue; and when they were quite close they saw, to their horror, *Porgie, sitting on Prince Albert's knee*, cheerfully cracking nuts out of a paper bag and throwing the shells down on to the people below. Wasn't it dreadful?

Goodness knows how he got there. I suppose he must have climbed up when nobody was looking. Mr. Twinkle pushed his way to the front of the crowd, where two policemen were anxiously consulting as to what they should do.

"If you please," said Mr. Twinkle, very bravely, for he was afraid of what would happen to him, "it's mine."

"Then how on earth does it come to be there?" said the policeman.

"I'm sure *I* don't know," said poor Mr. Twinkle. "I'm afraid it escaped while we were asleep."

"Can you get it back?" said the policeman. "We've got a ladder."

"I'll try," said Mr. Twinkle.

So they put the ladder against the Memorial and he climbed up it and got hold of Porgie and brought him down.

And the people in the crowd cheered like anything.

There's no law about marmosets climbing up statues, so they let Mr. Twinkle take him home, with a warning to be more careful in future.

But Porgie got a dreadful scolding and had no sugar in his tea for a whole week.

THE FAIRY WHO FELL INTO A LETTER-BOX

There was once a fairy who got into a letter-box by mistake. She was rather inquisitive, and was trying to look inside, when some one posted a big letter, which pushed her down into the box. It's not easy to get out of a letter-box, and she had, moreover, broken one of her wings when she fell in.

The letters were not very nice to her.

"You've no business to be inside here," said a fat blue one with a red seal on him. "It's not allowed. They're very strict."

"I'm very sorry, Sir," said the fairy. "I couldn't help it."

"I don't know what the postman will say when he sees her," said a pale pink envelope, highly scented.

"You come and sit here near me, Miss," said a bulky newspaper. "I'll look after you. You'll be getting hurt."

So the fairy went and sat near him, and he protected her from the letters which came tumbling in.

He soon found out what a nice little thing she was, and tried to think of a way for her to get out.

"What about that damaged wing of yours?" he said. "Can't it be mended?"

"I can get it done at home," said the fairy. "The spider mends beautifully. But it's a big hole, and I can't possibly fly with it."

The newspaper thought hard.

"One of my stamps is rather loose," he said. "Would that do?"

"Oh, yes," said the fairy. "But can you spare it?"

"Well, as a matter of fact, there's a ha'penny too much on," said the newspaper. "Can you get it off?"

This was pure kindness. He knew his stamps were right, and all letters hate not being properly stamped. It makes people who get them so cross.

But he liked the little fairy, and wanted to help her.

She got the stamp off with his help and advice, and stuck it over the hole in her wing. She was most grateful. It looked rather odd, but she was able to fly away the minute the postman opened the box. "It's a funny thing," he said to his wife that evening. "I believe there was a butterfly in one of my boxes to-day."

"Well, I never! What things happen!" said his wife.

But if you get a newspaper not properly stamped, don't be annoyed. It may be the one that gave its stamp to the fairy.

XL

THE RHYMING PRINCE

Once upon a time there lived a prince who could only speak in rhyme. (I'm doing it too. Did you notice?)

He used to come down to breakfast and say this sort of thing:

"Good morning, mother; good morning, father,
I couldn't get the soap to lather."

Or—

"Yes, please, I'll have some tea,
Kindly pass the toast to me."

He was just the same over his lessons.

"Two and two make four,
Neither less nor more,"

he would say. It used to make his teachers very vexed. But he couldn't help it; he was made like that.

Of course, it was a very awkward state of things, and his parents were much distressed about it.

At last a Wise Woman told his mother that if her son could once say a whole sentence without a rhyme in it, he would be cured.

"But how is it to be done?" said his mother.

"Well, what will you give me if I manage it?" said the Wise Woman.

"Anything you like," said the queen.

"In reason," added the king, who was a cautious person.

"The birds tell me it's to be a cold winter," said the Wise Woman. "I'd like three nice woolly blankets, one for my nose, one for my toes, and one where I chose." (Which showed that she wasn't as good at rhyming as the prince, for of course she really meant "choose," and it was a poor way of getting out of it, I think, don't you?)

The queen promised her the loveliest, warmest, fluffiest, softest blankets to be found in the kingdom, and the Wise Woman said that if the prince would come to see her the next day she would undertake to cure him.

So he came the next afternoon, and the Wise Woman gave him a very nice tea, and after tea got out a pretty little wooden box.

"This is my snuff-box," she said. "I don't suppose you've ever had a sniff at a snuff-box, have you? You must have a little sniff at mine."

"Thank you very much indeed,..." began the prince politely.

Of course, he was going on to make a rhyme, but I can't tell you what it was, for the Wise Woman thrust the snuff-box under his nose before he could finish, and he immediately gave an enormous sneeze. He kept sneezing and sneezing, and although he tried hard to speak, he couldn't get out a single word. And when he was just beginning to get over it, and was anxiously feeling for his handkerchief in order to wipe his streaming eyes, the Wise Woman slipped hers into his hand; and as she had sprinkled another good pinch of snuff over that also, the poor prince started afresh and sneezed and sneezed again and again. Altogether he sneezed for a good ten minutes.

By the time he had recovered he had forgotten all about his sentence and was very glad to go home. And sure enough he

was cured of his rhyming and became quite like other people.

The Wise Woman got her three beautiful blankets and had the cosiest winter she'd known for years and years and years.

Many of these tales have already appeared in the London *Star* and one or two in the Scottish magazine *Greatheart*.

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Transcriber's Note:

Several corrections to punctuation were made without comment; in some instances, these may have been due to problems of character recognition.

[End of *Forty Good-Night Tales* by Rose Fyleman]