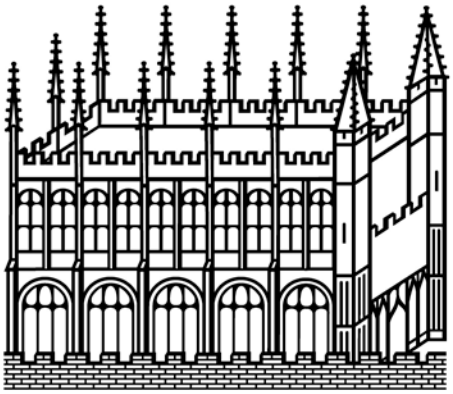

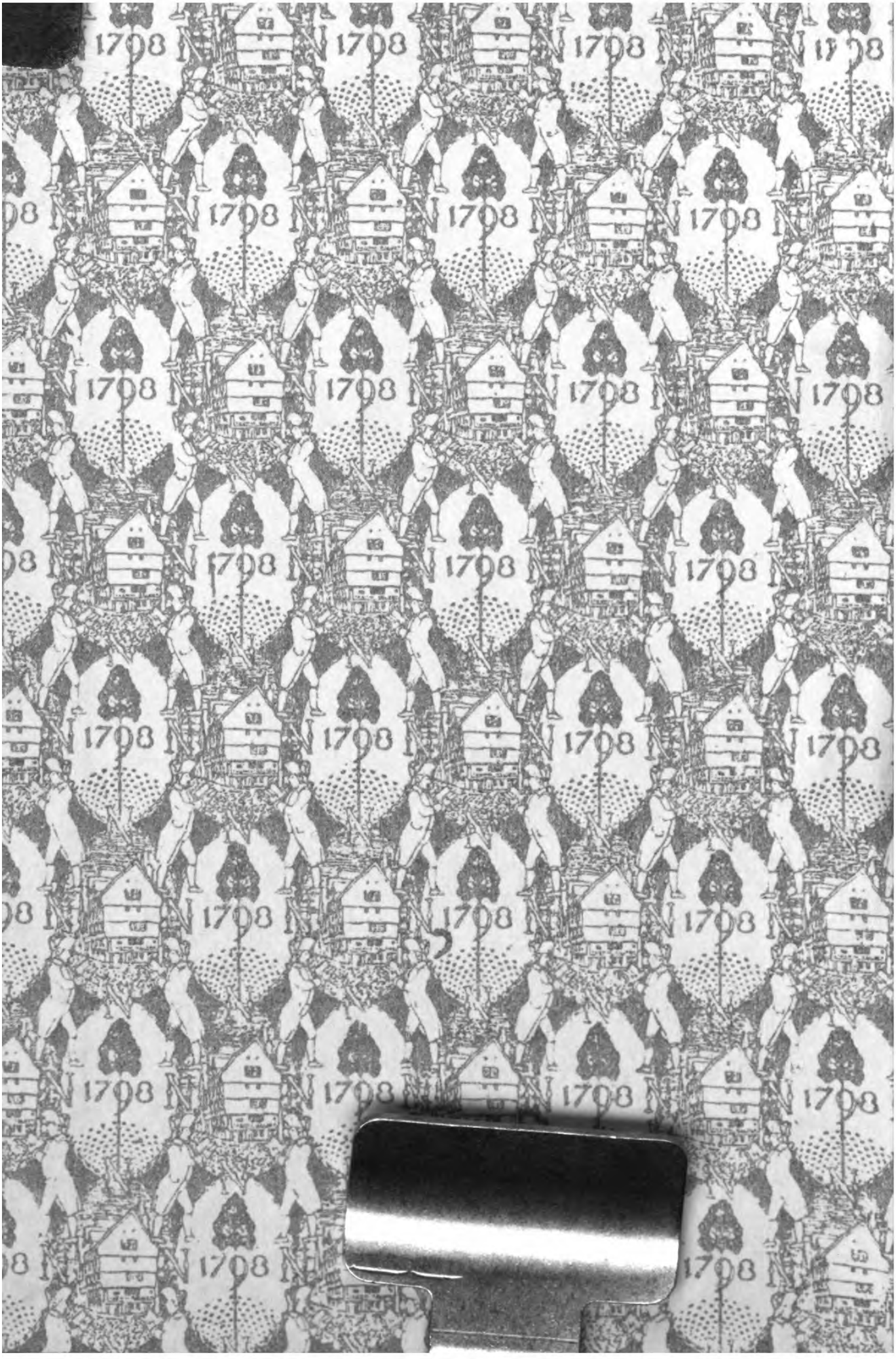
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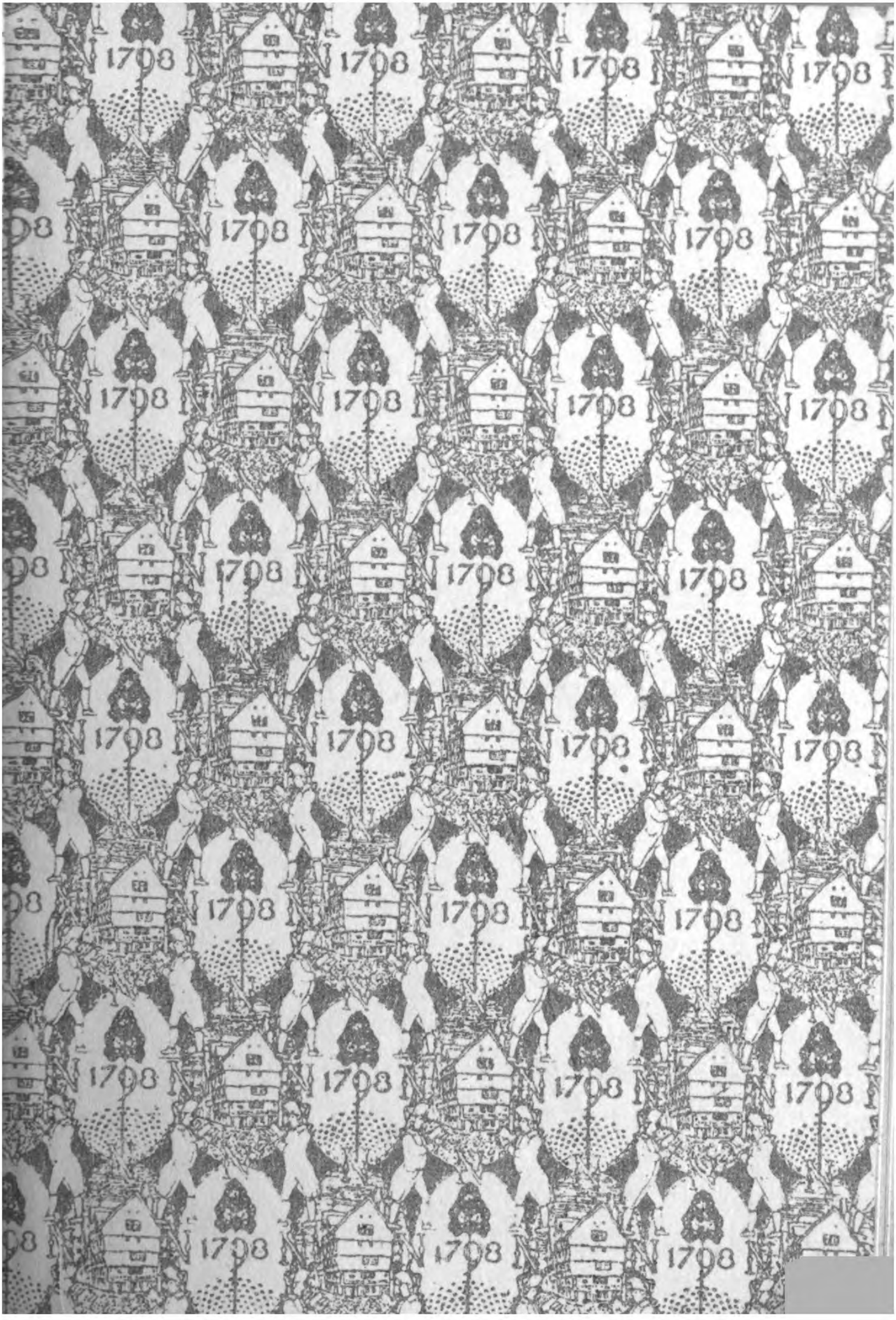
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The "Teaching of English" Series

General Editor—SIR HENRY NEWBOLT

THE LAND OF LOST TOYS

AND

AMELIA AND THE DWARFS

No. 187

"The wood-work gave way with a crash, and I fell" (page 43).

THE LAND OF LOST TOYS

AND

AMELIA AND THE DWARFS

By

MRS. J. H. EWING

Author of "Jackanapes," "The Story of a Short Life"

Etc., etc.

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CONTENTS

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AN EARTHQUAKE IN THE NURSERY

IT was certainly an aggravated offence. It is generally understood in families that "boys will be boys," but there is a limit to the forbearance implied in the extenuating axiom. Master Sam was condemned to the back nursery for the rest of the day.

He had always had the knack of breaking his own toys; he not unfrequently broke other people's; but accidents will happen, and his twin sister and factotum, Dot, was long suffering.

Dot was fat, resolute, hasty, and devotedly unselfish. When Sam scalped her new doll, and fastened the glossy black curls to a wigwam improvised with the curtains of the four-post bed in the best bedroom, Dot was sorely tried. As her eyes passed from the crownless doll on the floor, to the floss-silk ringlets hanging from the bed-furniture, her round rosy face grew rounder and rosier, and tears burst from her eyes. But in a moment more she clenched her little fists, forced

back the tears, and gave vent to her favourite aphorism, " I don't care."

That sentence was Dot's bane and antidote ; it was her vice and her virtue. It was her standing consolation, and it brought her into all her scrapes. It was her one panacea for all the ups and downs of her life (and in the nursery where Sam developed his organ of destructiveness there were ups and downs not a few) ; and it was the form her naughtiness took when she was naughty.

" Don't care fell into a goose-pond, Miss Dot," said nurse, on one occasion of the kind.

" I don't care if he did," said Miss Dot ; and as nurse knew no further feature of the goose-pond adventure which met this view of it, she closed the subject by putting Dot into the corner.

In the strength of don't care, and her love for Sam, Dot bore much and long. Her dolls perished by ingenious but untimely deaths. Her toys were put to purposes for which they were never intended, and suffered accordingly. But Sam was penitent and Dot was heroic. Florinda's scalp was mended with a hot knitting-needle and a perpetual bonnet, and Dot rescued her paint-brushes from the glue-pot, and smelt her india-rubber as it boiled down in Sam's waterproof manufactory, with long-suffering forbearance.

There are, however, as we have said, limits to everything. An earthquake celebrated with the whole contents of the toy cupboard is not to be borne.

The matter was this. Early one morning Sam announced that he had a glorious project on hand. He was going to give a grand show and entertainment, far surpassing all the nursery imitations of

circuses, conjurors, lectures on chemistry, and so forth, with which they had ever amused themselves. He refused to confide his plans to the faithful Dot ; but he begged her to lend him all the toys she possessed, in return for which she was to be the sole spectator of the fun. He let out that the idea had suggested itself to him after the sight of a moving Diorama, but he would not allow that it was anything of the same kind ; in proof of which she was at liberty to keep back her paint-box. Dot tried hard to penetrate the secret, and to reserve some of her things from the general conscription. But Sam was obstinate. He would tell nothing, and he wanted everything. The dolls, the bricks (especially the bricks !), the tea-things, the German farm, the Swiss cottages, the animals, and all the doll's furniture. Dot gave them with a doubtful mind, and consoled herself, as she watched Sam carrying pieces of board and a green table-cover into the back nursery, with the prospect of the show. At last, Sam threw open the door and ushered her into the nursery rocking-chair.

The boy had certainly some constructive as well as destructive talent. Upon a sort of impromptu table covered with green cloth he had arranged all the toys in rough imitation of a town, with its streets and buildings. The relative proportion of the parts was certainly not good ; but it was not Sam's fault that the doll's house and the German farm, his own brick buildings, and the Swiss cottages, were all on totally different scales of size. He had ingeniously put the larger things in the foreground, keeping the small farm-buildings from the German box at the far end of the streets, yet

after all the perspective was extreme. The effect of three large horses from the toy stables in front, with the cows from the small Noah's Ark in the distance, was admirable ; but the big dolls seated in an unroofed building—made with the wooden bricks on no architectural principle but that of a pound—and taking tea out of the new china tea-things, looked simply ridiculous.

Dot's eyes, however, saw no defects, and she clapped vehemently.

"This, ladies and gentlemen," said Sam, raising his hand towards the rocking-chair, "is the great city of Lisbon, the capital of Portugal——"

At this display of geographical accuracy Dot fairly cheered and rocked herself to and fro in unmitigated enjoyment.

"—— as it appeared," continued the showman, "on the morning of November 1st, 1755."

Never having had occasion to apply Mangnall's questions to the exigencies of every-day life, this date in no way disturbed Dot's comfort.

"In this house," Sam proceeded, "a party of Portuguese ladies of rank may be seen taking tea together."

"*Breakfast*, you mean," said Dot, "you said it was in the morning, you know."

"Well, they took tea to their breakfast," said Sam. "Don't interrupt me, Dot. You're the audience, and you mustn't speak. Here you see the horses of the English ambassador out airing with his groom. There you see two peasants—no ! they are *not* Noah and his wife, Dot, and if you go on talking I shall shut up. I say they are peasants peacefully driving cattle. At this moment a rumbling sound startles every one in the

city "—here Sam rolled some croquet balls up and down in a box; but the dolls sat as quiet as before, and Dot alone was startled,—"this was succeeded by a slight shock "—here he shook the table, which upset some of the buildings belonging to the German farm.—" Some houses fell."—Dot began to look anxious.—" This shock was followed by several others "—" Take care," she begged—" of increasing magnitude."—" Oh, Sam!" Dot shrieked, jumping up, " you're breaking the china!"—" The largest buildings shook to their foundations,"—" Sam! Sam! the doll's house is falling," Dot cried, making wild efforts to save it: but Sam held her back with one arm, while with the other he began to pull at the boards which formed his table.—" Suddenly the ground split and opened with a fearful yawn "—Dot's shrieks shamed the impassive dolls, as Sam jerked out the boards by a dexterous movement, and doll's house, brick buildings, the farm, the Swiss cottages, and the whole toystock of the nursery, sank together in ruins. Quite unabashed by the evident damage, Sam continued—" and in a moment the whole magnificent city of Lisbon was swallowed up. Dot! Dot! don't be a muff! What's the matter? It's splendid fun. Things must be broken sometime, and I'm sure it was exactly like the real thing. Dot! why don't you speak? Dot! my dear Dot! You don't care, do you? I didn't think you'd mind it so. It was such a splendid earthquake. Oh! try not to go on like that!"

But Dot's feelings were far beyond her own control, much more that of Master Sam, at this moment. She was gasping and choking, and

when at last she found breath it was only to throw herself on her face upon the floor with bitter and uncontrollable sobbing.

It was certainly a mild punishment that condemned Master Sam to the back nursery for the rest of the day. It had, however, this additional severity, that during the afternoon Aunt Penelope was expected to arrive.

AUNT PENELOPE

AUNT PENELOPE was one of those dear, good souls, who, single themselves, have, as real or adopted relatives the interests of a dozen families instead of one at heart. There are few people whose youth has not owned the interest of at least one such friend. It may be a good habit—the first interest in some life-loved pursuit or favourite author—some pretty feminine art, or delicate womanly counsel enforced by those narratives of real life that are more interesting than any fiction: it may be only the periodical return of gifts and kindness, and the store of family histories that no one else can tell; but we all owe something to such an aunt or uncle—the fairy godmothers of real life.

The benefits which Sam and Dot reaped from Aunt Penelope's visits may be summed up under the heads of presents and stories, with a general leaning to indulgence in the matters of punishment, lessons, and going to bed, which perhaps is natural to aunts and uncles who have no positive responsibilities in the young people's education, and are not the daily sufferers by the lack of due discipline.

Aunt Penelope's presents were lovely. Aunt Penelope's stories were charming. There was generally a moral wrapped up in them, like the

motto in a cracker-bonbon; but it was quite in the inside, so to speak, and there was abundance of smart paper and sugar-plums.

All things considered, it was certainly most proper that the much-injured Dot should be dressed out in her best, and have access to dessert and the dining-room, and Aunt Penelope, whilst Sam was kept upstairs. And yet it was Dot who (her first burst of grief being over) fought stoutly for his pardon all the time she was being dressed, and was afterwards detected in the act of endeavouring to push fragments of raspberry tart through the nursery keyhole.

"You GOOD thing!" Sam emphatically exclaimed, as he heard her in fierce conflict on the other side of the door with the nurse who found her—"You GOOD thing! leave me alone, for I deserve it."

He really was very penitent. He was too fond of Dot not to regret the unexpected degree of distress he had caused her; and Dot made much of his penitence in her intercessions in the drawing-room.

"Sam is so very sorry," she said; "he says he knows he deserves it. I think he ought to come down. He is so *very* sorry!"

Aunt Penelope, as usual, took the lenient side, joining her entreaties to Dot's, and it ended in Master Sam's being hurriedly scrubbed, and brushed, and shoved into his black velvet suit, and sent downstairs, rather red about the eyelids, and looking very sheepish.

"Oh, Dot!" he exclaimed, as soon as he could get her into a corner, "I am so very, very sorry! particularly about the tea-things."

He heard her in fierce conflict on the other side of the door.

" Never mind," said Dot, " I don't care ; and I've asked for a story, and we're going into the library." As Dot said this, she jerked her head expressively in the direction of the sofa, where Aunt Penelope was just casting on stitches preparatory to beginning a pair of her famous ribbed socks for papa, whilst she gave to mamma's conversation that sympathy which (like her knitting-needles) was always at the service of her large circle of friends. Dot anxiously watched the bow on the top of her cap as it danced and nodded with the force of mamma's observations. At last it gave a little chorus of jerks, as one should say, " Certainly, undoubtedly." And then the story came to an end, and Dot, who had been slowly creeping nearer, fairly took Aunt Penelope by the hand, and carried her off, knitting and all, to the library.

" Now, please," said Dot, when she had struggled into a chair that was too tall for her.

" Stop a minute ! " cried Sam, who was perched in the opposite one, " the horsehair tickles my legs."

" Put your pocket-handkerchief under them, as I do," said Dot.—" *Now*, Aunt Penelope."

" No, wait," groaned Sam ; " it isn't big enough ; it only covers one leg."

Dot slid down again, and ran to Sam.

" Take my handkerchief for the other."

" But what will you do ? " said Sam.

" Oh, I don't care," said Dot, scrambling back into her place.—" Now, aunty, please."

And Aunt Penelope began.

THE LAND OF LOST TOYS

"I SUPPOSE people who have children transfer their childish follies and fancies to them, and become properly sedate and grown-up. Perhaps it is because I am an old maid, and have none, that some of my nursery whims stick to me, and I find myself liking things, and wanting things quite out of keeping with my cap and time of life. For instance: anything in the shape of a toy-shop (from a London bazaar to a village window, with Dutch dolls, leather balls, and wooden battledores) quite unnerves me, so to speak. When I see one of those boxes containing a jar, a churn, a kettle, a pan, a coffee-pot, a caldron on three legs, and sundry dishes, all of the smoothest wood, and with the immemorial red flower on one side of each vessel, I fairly long for an excuse for playing with them, and for trying (positively for the last time) if the lids *do* come off, and whether the kettle will (literally, as well as metaphorically) hold water. Then if, by good or ill luck, there is a child flattening its little nose against the window with longing eyes, my purse is soon empty; and as it toddles off with a square parcel under one arm, and a lovely being in black ringlets and white tissue paper in the other, I wish that I were worthy of being asked to join the ensuing play. Don't suppose there is any

generosity in this. I have only done what we are all glad to do. I have found an excuse for indulging a pet weakness. As I said, it is not merely the new and expensive toys that attract me; I think my weakest corner is where the penny boxes lie—the wooden tea-things (with the above-named flower in miniature), the soldiers on their lazy tongs, the ninepins, and the tiny farm.

"I need hardly say that the toy booth in a village fair tries me very hard. It tried me in childhood, when I was often short of pence, and when 'the feast' came once a year. It never tried me more than on one occasion, lately, when I was revisiting my old home.

"It was deep Midsummer, and the feast. I had children with me of course (I find children, somehow, wherever I go), and when we got into the fair there were children of people whom I had known as children, with just the same love for a monkey going up one side of a yellow stick and coming down the other; and just as strong heads for a giddy-go-round on a hot day and a diet of peppermint lozenges, as their fathers and mothers before them. There were the very same names, and here and there it seemed the very same faces I knew so long ago. A few shillings were indeed well expended in brightening those familiar eyes: and then there were the children with me. Besides, there really did seem to be an unusually nice assortment of things, and the man was very intelligent (in reference to his wares). Well, well. It was two o'clock P.M. when we went in at one end of that glittering avenue of drums, dolls, trumpets, accordions, workboxes, and what not; but what o'clock it was when I came out at the

other end, with a shilling and some coppers in my pocket, and was cheered, I can't say, though I should like to have been able to be accurate about the time, because of what followed.

" I thought the best thing I could do was to get out of the fair at once, so I went up the village and struck off across some fields into a little wood that lay near (a favourite walk in old times). As I turned out of the booth, my foot struck against one of the yellow sticks of the climbing monkeys. The monkey was gone, and the stick broken. It set me thinking as I walked along.

" What an untold number of pretty and ingenious things one does (not wear out in honourable wear and tear, but) utterly lose, and wilfully destroy, in one's young days—things that would have given pleasure to so many more young eyes, if they had been kept a little longer—things that one would so value in later years, if some of them had survived the dissipating and destructive days of Nurserydom. I recalled a young lady I knew, whose room was adorned with knick-knacks of a kind I had often envied. They were not plaster figures, old china, wax-work flowers under glass, or ordinary ornaments of any kind. They were her old toys. Perhaps she had not had many of them, and had been the more careful of those she had. She had certainly been very fond of them, and had kept more of them than any one I ever knew. A faded doll slept in its cradle at the foot of her bed. A wooden elephant stood on the dressing-table, and a poodle that had lost his bark put out a red-flannel tongue with quixotic violence at a windmill on the opposite corner of the mantelpiece. Everything had a story of its own.

Indeed the whole room must have been redolent with the sweet story of childhood, of which the toys were the illustrations, or like a poem of which the toys were the verses. She used to have children to play with them sometimes, and this was a high honour. She is married now, and has children of her own, who on birthdays and holidays will forsake the newest of their own possessions to play with ' mamma's toys.'

" I was roused from these recollections by the pleasure of getting into the wood.

" If I have a stronger predilection than my love for toys, it is my love for woods, and, like the other, it dates from childhood. It was born and bred with me, and I fancy will stay with me till I die. The soothing scents of leaf mould, moss, and fern (not to speak of flowers)—the pale green veil in spring, the rich shade in summer, the rustle of the dry leaves in autumn, I suppose an old woman may enjoy all these, my dears, as well as you. But I think I could make fairy jam of hips and haws in acorn cups now, if any child would be condescending enough to play with me.

" *This* wood, too, had associations.

" I strolled on in leisurely enjoyment, and at last seated myself at the foot of a tree to rest. I was hot and tired; partly with the midday heat, and the atmosphere of the fair, partly with the exertion of calculating change in the purchase of articles ranging in price from three farthings upwards. The tree under which I sat was an old friend. There was a hole at its base that I knew well. Two roots covered with exquisite moss ran out from each side, like the arms of a chair, and between them there accumulated year after year

a rich, though tiny store of dark leaf-mould. We always used to say that fairies lived within, though I never saw anything go in myself but wood beetles. There was one going in at that moment.

"How little the wood was changed! I bent my head for a few seconds, and closing my eyes, drank in the delicious and suggestive scents of earth and moss about the dear old tree. I had been so long parted from the place that I could hardly believe that I was in the old familiar spot. Surely it was only one of the many dreams in which I had played again beneath these trees! But when I reopened my eyes there was the same hole, and, oddly enough, the same beetle or one just like it. I had not noticed till that moment how much larger the hole was than it used to be in my young days.

"'I suppose the rain and so forth wears them away in time,' I said vaguely.

"'I suppose it does,' said the beetle politely; 'will you walk in?'

"I don't know why I was not so overpoweringly astonished as you would imagine. I think I was a good deal absorbed in considering the size of the hole, and the very foolish wish that seized me to do what I had often longed to do in childhood, and creep in. I *had* so much regard for propriety as to see that there was no one to witness the escapade. Then I tucked my skirts round me, put my spectacles into my pocket for fear they should get broken, and in I went.

"I must say one thing. A wood is charming enough (no one appreciates it more than myself), but, if you have never been there, you have no idea how much nicer it is inside than on the

"I tucked my skirts round me, and in I went."

surface. Oh, the mosses—the gorgeous mosses! The fretted lichens! The fungi like flowers for beauty, and the flowers like nothing you have ever seen!

"Where the beetle went to I don't know. I could stand up now quite well, and I wandered on till dusk in unwearied admiration. I was among some large beeches as it grew dark, and was beginning to wonder how I should find my way (not that I had lost it, having none to lose), when suddenly lights burst from every tree, and the whole place was illuminated. The nearest approach to this scene that I ever witnessed above ground was in a wood near the Hague in Holland. There lamps, like tiny glass tumblers holding floating wicks, are stuck in the trunks of the fine old trees, at intervals of sufficient distance to make the light and shade mysterious, and to give effect to the full blaze when you reach the spot where hanging chains of lamps illuminate the 'Pavilion' and the open space where the band plays, and where the townsfolk assemble by hundreds to drink coffee and enjoy the music. I was the more reminded of the Dutch 'bosch' because, after wandering some time among the lighted trees, I heard distant sounds of music, and came at last upon a glade lit up in a similar manner, except that the whole effect was incomparably more brilliant.

"As I stood for a moment doubting whether I should proceed, and a good deal puzzled about the whole affair, I caught sight of a large spider crouched up in a corner with his stomach on the ground and his knees above his head, as spiders do sit, and looking at me, as I fancied, through

a pair of spectacles. (About the spectacles I do not feel sure. It may have been two of his bent legs in apparent connection with his prominent eyes.) I thought of the beetle, and said civilly, 'Can you tell me, sir, if this is Fairyland?' The spider took off his spectacles (or untucked his legs), and took a sideways run out of his corner.

"'Well,' he said, 'it's a Province. The fact is, it's the Land of Lost Toys. You haven't such a thing as a fly anywhere about you, have you?'

"'No,' I said, 'I'm sorry to say I have not.' This was not strictly true, for I was not at all sorry; but I wished to be civil to the old gentleman, for he projected his eyes at me with such an intense (I had almost said greedy) gaze, that I felt quite frightened.

"'How did you pass the sentries?' he inquired.

"'I never saw any,' I answered.

"'You couldn't have seen anything if you didn't see them,' he said; 'but perhaps you don't know. They're the glowworms. Six to each tree; so they light the road, and challenge the passers-by. Why didn't they challenge you?'

"'I don't know,' I began, 'unless the beetle ——'

"'I don't like beetles,' interrupted the spider, stretching each leg in turn by sticking it up above him, 'all shell, and no flavour. You never tried walking on anything of that sort, did you?' and he pointed with one leg to a long thread that fastened a web above his head.

"'Certainly not,' said I.

"'I'm afraid it wouldn't bear you,' he observed slowly.

"'I'm quite sure it wouldn't,' I hastened to

reply. 'I wouldn't try for worlds. It would spoil your pretty work in a moment. Good-evening.'

"And I hurried forward. Once I looked back, but the spider was not following me. He was in his hole again, on his stomach with his knees above his head, and looking (apparently through his spectacles) down the road up which I came.

"I soon forgot him in the sight before me. I had reached the open place with the lights and the music; but how shall I describe the spectacle that I beheld?

"I have spoken of the effect of a toy-shop on my feelings. Now imagine a toy-fair, brighter and gayer than the brightest bazaar ever seen, held in an open glade where forest trees stood majestically behind the glittering stalls, and stretched their gigantic arms above our heads brilliant with a thousand hanging lamps. At the moment of my entrance all was silent and quiet. The toys lay in their places looking so incredibly attractive that I reflected with disgust that all my ready cash except one shilling and some coppers had melted away amid the tawdry fascinations of a village booth. I was counting the coppers (sevenpence halfpenny), when all in a moment a dozen sixpenny fiddles leaped from their places and began to play, accordions of all sizes joined them, the drumsticks beat upon the drums, the penny trumpets sounded, and the yellow flutes took up the melody on high notes, and bore it away through the trees. It was weird fairy-music, but quite delightful. The nearest approach to it that I have heard above ground is to hear a wild dreamy air very well whistled to a piano accompaniment.

"When the music began, all the toys rose. The

dolls jumped down and began to dance. The poodles barked, the pannier donkeys wagged their ears, the windmills turned, the puzzles put themselves together, the bricks built houses, the balls flew from side to side, the battledores and shuttlecocks kept it up among themselves, and the skipping-ropes went round, the hoops ran off, and the sticks ran after them, the cobbler's wax at the tails of all the green frogs gave way, and they jumped at the same moment, whilst an old-fashioned go-cart ran madly about with nobody inside. It was most exhilarating.

" I soon became aware that the beetle was once more at my side.

" ' There are some beautiful toys here,' I said.

" ' Well, yes,' he replied, ' and some odd-looking ones too. You see whatever has been really used by any child as a plaything gets a right to come down here in the end; and there is some very queer company, I assure you. Look there.'

" I looked, and said, ' It seems to be a potato.'

" ' So it is,' said the beetle. ' It belonged to an Irish child in one of your great cities. But to whom the child belonged I don't know, and I don't think he knew himself. He lived in the corner of a dirty, overcrowded room, and into this corner one day the potato rolled. It was the only plaything he ever had. He stuck two cinders into it for eyes, scraped a nose and mouth, and loved it. He sat upon it during the day, for fear it should be taken from him, but in the dark he took it out and played with it. He was often hungry, but he never ate that potato. When he died it rolled out of the corner, and was swept into the ashes. Then it came down here.'

" ' What a sad story ! ' I exclaimed.

" The beetle seemed in no way affected.

" ' It is a curious thing,' he rambled on, ' that potato takes quite a good place among the toys. You see rank and precedence down here is entirely a question of age ; that is, of the length of time that any plaything has been in the possession of a child ; and all kinds of ugly old things hold the first rank ; whereas the most costly and beautiful works of art have often been smashed or lost by the spoilt children of rich people in two or three days. If you care for sad stories, there is another queer thing belonging to a child who died.'

" It appeared to be a large sheet of canvas with some strange kind of needlework upon it.

" ' It belonged to a little girl in a rich household,' the beetle continued ; ' she was an invalid, and difficult to amuse. We have lots of her toys, and very pretty ones too. At last some one taught her to make caterpillars in wool-work. A bit of work was to be done in a certain stitch and then cut with scissors, which made it look like a hairy caterpillar. The child took to this, and cared for nothing else. Wool of every shade was procured for her, and she made caterpillars of all colours. Her only complaint was that they did not turn into butterflies. However, she was a sweet, gentle-tempered child, and she went on, hoping that they would do so, and making new ones. One day she was heard talking and laughing in her bed for joy. She said that all the caterpillars had become butterflies of many colours, and that the room was full of them. In that happy fancy she died.'

" ' And the caterpillars came down here ? '

"'Not for a long time,' said the beetle; 'her mother kept them while *she* lived, and then they were lost and came down. No toys come down here till they are broken or lost.'

"'What are those sticks doing here?' I asked.

"The music had ceased, and all the toys were lying quiet. Up in a corner leant a large bundle of walking-sticks. They are often sold in toy-shops, but I wondered on what grounds they came here.

"'Did you ever meet with a too benevolent old gentleman wondering where on earth his sticks go to?' said the beetle. 'Why do they lend them to their grandchildren? The young rogues use them as hobby-horses and lose them, and down they come, and the sentinels cannot stop them. The real hobby-horses won't allow them to ride with them, however. There was a meeting on the subject. Every stick was put through an examination. "Where is your nose? Where is your mane? Where are your wheels?" The last was a poser. Some of them had got noses, but none of them had got wheels. So they were not true hobby-horses. Something of the kind occurred with the elder whistles.'

"'The what?' I asked.

"'Whistles that boys make of elder sticks with the pith scooped out,' said the beetle. 'The real instruments would not allow them to play with them. The elder whistles said they would not have joined had they been asked. They were amateurs, and never played with professionals. So they have private concerts with the combs and curl-papers. But, bless you! toys of this kind are endless here. Teetotums made of old cotton

"The young rogues use them as hobby-horses, and lose them."

reels, tea-sets of acorn cups, dinner-sets of old shells, monkeys made of bits of sponge, all sorts of things made of breastbones and merrythoughts, old packs of cards that are always building themselves into houses and getting knocked down when the band begins to play, feathers, rabbits'-tails——'

"'Ah! I have heard about the rabbits'-tails,' I said.

"'There they are,' the beetle continued; 'and when the band plays you will see how they skip and run. I don't believe you would find out that they had no bodies, for my experience of a warren is, that when rabbits skip and run it is the tails chiefly that you do see. But of all the amateur toys the most charming are the boats. We have a lake for our craft, you know, and there's quite a fleet of boats made out of old cork floats in fishing villages. Then, you see, the old bits of cork have really been to sea, and seen a good deal of service on the herring nets, and so they quite take the lead of the smart shop ships, that have never been beyond a pond or a tub of water. But that's an exception. Amateur toys are mostly very dowdy. Look at that box.'

"I looked, thought I must have seen it before, and wondered why a very common-looking box without a lid should affect me so strangely, and why my memory should seem struggling to bring it back out of the past. Suddenly it came to me—it was our old toy-box.

"I had completely forgotten that nursery institution till recalled by the familiar aspect of the inside, which was papered with proof-sheets of some old novel on which black stars had been

stamped by way of ornament. Dim memories of how these stars, and the angles of the box, and certain projecting nails interfered with the letter-press and defeated all attempts to trace the thread of the nameless narrative, stole back over my brain; and I seemed once more, with my head in the toy-box to beguile a wet afternoon by apoplectic endeavours to follow the fortunes of Sir Charles and Lady Belinda, as they took a favourable turn in the left-hand corner at the bottom of the trunk.

"'What are you staring at?' said the beetle.

"'It's my old toy-box!' I exclaimed.

"The beetle rolled on to his back, and struggled helplessly with his legs: I turned him over. (Neither the first nor the last time of my showing that attention to beetles.)

"'That's right,' he said, 'set me on my legs. What a turn you gave me! You don't mean to say you have any toys here? If you have, the sooner you make your way home the better.'

"'Why?' I inquired.

"'Well,' he said, 'there's a very strong feeling in the place. The toys think that they are ill-treated, and not taken care of by children in general. And there is some truth in it. Toys come down here by scores that have been broken the first day. And they are all quite resolved that if any of their old masters or mistresses come this way they shall be punished.'

"'How will they be punished?' I inquired.

"'Exactly as they did to their toys, their toys will do to them. All is perfectly fair and regular.'

"'I don't know that I treated mine particularly badly,' I said; 'but I think I'd rather go.'

"'I think you'd better,' said the beetle. 'Good-evening!' and I saw him no more.

"I turned to go, but somehow I lost the road. At last, as I thought, I found it, and had gone a few steps when I came on a detachment of wooden soldiers, drawn up on their lazy tongs. I thought it better to wait till they got out of the way, so I turned back and sat down in a corner in some alarm. As I did so, I heard a click, and the lid of a small box covered with mottled paper burst open, and up jumped a figure in a blue striped shirt and a rabbit-skin beard, whose eyes were intently fixed on me. He was very like my old Jack-in-a-box. My back began to creep, and I wildly meditated escape, frantically trying at the same time to recall whether it were I or my brother who originated the idea of making a small bonfire of our own one 5th of November, and burning the old Jack-in-a-box for Guy Fawkes, till nothing was left of him but a twirling bit of red-hot wire and a strong smell of frizzled fur. At this moment, he nodded to me and spoke.

"'Oh! that's you, is it?' he said.

"'No it's not,' I answered hastily; for I was quite demoralized by fear and the strangeness of the situation.

"'Who is it, then?' he inquired.

"'I'm sure I don't know,' I said; and really I was so confused that I hardly did.

"'Well, *we* know,' said the Jack-in-a-box, 'and that's all that's needed.—Now, my friends,' he continued, addressing the toys who had begun to crowd round us, 'whoever recognizes a mistress and remembers a grudge—the hour of our revenge has come. Can we any of us forget the treatment

"Burning the old Jack-in-a-box for Guy Fawkes."

we received at her hands? No! when we think of the ingenious fancy, the patient skill, that went to our manufacture; that fitted the delicate joints and springs, laid on the paint and varnish, and gave back hair, combs, and ear-rings to our smallest dolls, we feel that we deserved more care than we received. When we reflect upon the kind friends who bought us with their money, and gave us away in the benevolence of their hearts, we know that for their sakes we ought to have been kept longer and better valued. And when we remember that the sole object of our own existence was to give pleasure and amusement to our possessor, we have no hesitation in believing that we deserved a handsomer return than to have had our springs broken, our paint dirtied, and our earthly careers so untimely shortened by wilful mischief or fickle neglect. My friends, the prisoner is at the bar.'

"'I'm not,' I said; for I was determined not to give in as long as resistance was possible. But as I said it I became aware, to my unutterable amazement, that I was inside the go-cart. How I got there is to this moment a mystery to me—but there I was.

"There was a great deal of excitement about the Jack-in-a-box's speech. It was evident that he was considered an orator, and, indeed, I have seen counsel in a real court look wonderfully like him. Meanwhile, my old toys appeared to be getting together. I had no idea that I had had so many. I had really been very fond of most of them, and my heart beat as the sight of them recalled scenes long forgotten, and took me back to childhood and home. There were my little

gardening tools, and my slates, and there was the big doll's bedstead, that had a real mattress, and real sheets and blankets, all marked with the letter D, and a workbasket made in the Blind School, and a shilling Society of Arts paint-box, and a wooden doll we used to call the Dowager, and innumerable other toys which I had forgotten till the sight of them recalled them to my memory, but which have again passed from my mind. Exactly opposite to me stood the Chinese mandarin, nodding as I had never seen him nod since the day when I finally stopped his performances by ill-directed efforts to discover how he did it.

" And what was that familiar figure among the rest, in a yellow silk dress and maroon velvet cloak and hood trimmed with black lace ? How those clothes recalled the friends who gave them to me ! And surely this was no other than my dear doll Rosa—the beloved companion of five years of my youth, whose hair I wore in a locket after I was grown up. No one could say I had ill-treated *her*. Indeed, she fixed her eyes on me with a most encouraging smile—but then she always smiled, her mouth was painted so.

" ' All whom it may concern, take notice,' shouted the Jack-in-a-box at this point, ' that the rule of this honourable court is tit for tat.'

" ' Tit, tat, tumble two,' muttered the slate in a cracked voice. (How well I remembered the fall that cracked it, and the sly games of tit tat that varied the monotony of our long multiplication sums !)

" ' What are you talking about ? ' said the Jack-in-a-box sharply ; ' if you have grievances,

state them, and you shall have satisfaction, as I told you before.'

"'—— and five make nine,' added the slate promptly, 'and six are fifteen, and eight are twenty-four—there we go again! I wonder why I never get up to the top of a line of figures right. It will never prove at this rate.'

"'His mind is lost in calculations,' said the Jack-in-a-box, 'besides, he has been cracky for some time. Let some one else speak, and observe that no one is at liberty to pass a sentence on the prisoner heavier than what he has suffered from her. I reserve *my* judgment to the last.'

"'I know what that will be,' thought I; 'oh dear! oh dear! that a respectable maiden lady should live to be burnt as a Guy Fawkes!'

"'Let the prisoner drink a gallon of iced water at once, and then be left to die of thirst.'

"The horrible idea that the speaker might possibly have the power to enforce his sentence diverted my attention from the slate, and I looked round. In front of the Jack-in-a-box stood a tiny red flower-pot and saucer in which was a miniature cactus. My thoughts flew back to a bazaar in London where, years ago, a stand of these fairy plants had excited my warmest longings, and where a benevolent old gentleman whom I had not seen before, and never saw again, bought this one and gave it to me. Vague memories of his directions for repotting and tending it reproached me from the past. My mind misgave me that after all it had died a dusty death for lack of water. True the cactus tribe being succulent plants do not demand much moisture, but I had reason to fear that, in this instance, the principle

had been applied too far, and that after copious baths of cold spring water in the first days of its popularity it had eventually perished by drought. I suppose I looked guilty, for it nodded its prickly head towards me, and said, ' Ah ! you know me. You remember what I was, do you ? Did you ever think of what I might have been ? There was a fairy rose which came down here not long ago—a common rose enough, in a broken pot patched with string and white paint. It had lived in a street where it was the only pure beautiful thing your eyes could see. When the girl who kept it died there were eighteen roses upon it. She was eighteen years old, and they put the roses in the coffin with her when she was buried. That was worth living for. Who knows what I might have done ? And what right had you to cut short a life that might have been useful ? '

" Before I could think of a reply to these too just reproaches, the flower-pot enlarged, the plant shot up, putting forth new branches as it grew ; then buds burst from the prickly limbs, and in a few moments there hung about it great drooping blossoms of lovely pink, with long white tassels in their throats. I had been gazing at it some time in silent and self-reproachful admiration when I became aware that the business of this strange court was proceeding, and that the other toys were pronouncing sentence against me.

" ' Tie a string round her neck and take her out bathing in the brooks,' I heard an elderly voice say in severe tones. It was the dowager doll. She was inflexibly wooden, and had been in the family for more than one generation.

" ' It's not fair,' I exclaimed, ' the string was

only to keep you from being carried away by the stream. The current is strong, and the bank steep by the Hollow Oak Pool, and you had no arms or legs. You were old and ugly, but you would wash, and we loved you better than many waxen beauties.'

"'Old and ugly!' shrieked the dowager. 'Tear her wig off! Scrub the paint off her face! Flatten her nose on the pavement! Saw off her legs and give her no crinoline! Take her out bathing, I say, and bring her home in a wheelbarrow with fern roots on the top of her.'

"I was about to protest again, when the paint-box came forward, and balancing itself in an artistic, undecided kind of way on two camel's-hair brushes which seemed to serve it for feet, addressed the Jack-in-a-box.

"'Never dip your paint into the water. Never put your brush into your mouth——'

"'That's not evidence,' said the Jack-in-a-box.

"'Your notions are crude,' said the paint-box loftily; 'it's in print, and here, all of it, or words to that effect;' with which he touched the lid, as a gentleman might lay his hand upon his heart.

"'It's not evidence,' repeated the Jack-in-a-box. 'Let us proceed.'

"'Take her to pieces and see what she's made of, if you please,' tittered a pretty German toy that moved to a tinkling musical accompaniment. 'If her works are available after that it will be an era in natural science.'

"The idea tickled me, and I laughed.

"'Hardhearted wretch!' growled the dowager doll.

"'Dip her in water and leave her to soak on a

white soup plate,' said the paint-box; 'if that doesn't soften her feelings, deprive me of my medal from the Society of Arts.'

"'Give her a stiff neck!' muttered the mandarin. 'Ching Fo! give her a stiff neck.'

"'Knock her teeth out,' growled the rake in a scratching voice; and then the tools joined in chorus.

"'Take her out when it's fine and leave her out when it's wet, and lose her in——

"'The coal hole,' said the spade.

"'The hay field,' said the rake.

"'The shrubbery,' said the hoe.

"This difference of opinion produced a quarrel, which in turn seemed to affect the general behaviour of the toys, for a disturbance arose which the Jack-in-a-box vainly endeavoured to quell. A dozen voices shouted for a dozen different punishments and (happily for me) each toy insisted upon its own wrongs being the first to be avenged, and no one would hear of any one else's claims being attended to for an instant. Terrible sentences were passed, which I either failed to hear through the clamour then, or have forgotten now. I have a vague idea that several voices cried that I was to be sent to wash in somebody's pocket; and that through all the din the thick voice of my old leather ball monotonously repeated:

"'Throw her into the dust hole.'

"Suddenly a clear voice pierced the confusion, and Rosa tripped up.

"'My dears,' she began, 'the only chance of restoring order is to observe method. Let us follow our usual rule of precedence. I claim the first turn as the prisoner's oldest toy.'

"'That you are not, miss,' snapped the dowager; 'I was in the family for fifty years.'

"'In the family. Yes, ma'am; but you were never her doll in particular. I was her very own, and she kept me longer than any other plaything. My judgment must be first.'

"'She is right,' said the Jack-in-a-box, 'and now let us get on. The prisoner is delivered unreservedly into the hands of our trusty and well-beloved Rosa—doll of the first class—for punishment according to the strict law of tit for tat.'

"'I shall request the assistance of the pewter tea-things,' said Rosa, with her usual smile. 'And now, my love,' she added, turning to me, 'we will come and sit down.'

"Where the go-cart vanished to I cannot remember, nor how I got out of it; I only know that I found myself free, and walking away with my hand in Rosa's. I remember vacantly feeling the rough edge of the stitches on her flat kid fingers, and wondering what would come next.

"'How very oddly you hold your feet, my dear,' she said; 'you stick out your toes in such an eccentric fashion, and you lean on your legs as if they were table legs instead of supporting yourself by my hand. Turn your heels well out, and bring your toes together. You may even let them fold over each other a little; it is considered to have a pretty effect among dolls.'

"Under one of the big trees Miss Rosa made me sit down, propping me against the trunk as if I should otherwise have fallen; and in a moment more a square box of pewter tea-things came tumbling up to our feet, where the lid burst open,

and all the tea-things fell out in perfect order; the cups on the saucers, the lid on the teapot, and so on.

"'Take a little tea, my love?' said Miss Rosa, pressing a pewter teacup to my lips.

"I made believe to drink, but was only conscious of inhaling a draught of air with a slight flavour of tin. In taking my second cup I was nearly choked with the teaspoon, which got into my throat.

"'What are you doing?' roared the Jack-in-a-box at this moment; 'you are not punishing her.'

"'I am treating her as she treated me,' answered Rosa, looking as severe as her smile would allow. 'I believe that tit for tat is the rule, and that at present it is my turn.'

"'It will be mine soon,' growled the Jack-in-a-box, and I thought of the bonfire with a shudder. However, there was no knowing what might happen before his turn did come, and meanwhile I was in friendly hands. It was not the first time my dolly and I had sat together under a tree, and, truth to say, I do not think she had any injuries to avenge.

"'When your wig comes off,' murmured Rosa, as she stole a pink kid arm tenderly round my neck, 'I'll make you a cap with blue and white rosettes, and pretend that you have had a fever.'

"I thanked her gratefully, and was glad to reflect that I was not yet in need of an attention which I distinctly remember having shown to her in the days of her dollhood. Presently she jumped up.

"'I think you shall go to bed now, dear,' she said, and taking my hand once more, she led me

to the big doll's bedstead, which, with its pretty bedclothes and white dimity furniture, looked tempting enough to a sleeper of suitable size. It could not have supported one quarter of my weight.

"'I have not made you a night-dress, my love,' Rosa continued; 'I am not fond of my needle, you know. *You* were not fond of your needle, I think. I fear you must go to bed in your clothes, my dear.'

"'You are very kind,' I said, 'but I am not tired, and—it would not bear my weight.'

"'Pooh! pooh!' said Rosa. 'My love! I remember passing one Sunday in it with the rag-doll, and the dowager, and the Punch and Judy (the amount of pillow their two noses took up I shall never forget!), and the old doll that had nothing on, because her clothes were in the dolls' wash and did not get ironed on Saturday night, and the Highlander, whose things wouldn't come off, and who slept in his kilt. Not bear you? Nonsense! You must go to bed, my dear. I've got other things to do, and I can't leave you lying about.'

"'The whole lot of you did not weigh one quarter of what I do,' I cried desperately. 'I cannot and will not get into that bed; I should break it all to pieces, and hurt myself into the bargain.'

"'Well, if you will not go to bed I must put you there,' said Miss Rosa; and without more ado she snatched me up in her kid arms, and laid me down.

"Of course it was just as I expected. I had hardly touched the two little pillows (they had a

meal-baggy smell from being stuffed with bran), when the wood-work gave way with a crash, and I fell—fell—fell.

" Though I fully believed every bone in my body to be broken, it was really a relief to get to the ground. As soon as I could, I sat up, and felt myself all over. A little stiff, but, as it seemed, unhurt. Oddly enough, I found that I was back again under the tree ; and, more strange still, it was not the tree where I sat with Rosa, but the old oak-tree in the little wood. Was it all a dream ? The toys had vanished, the lights were out, the mosses looked dull in the growing dusk, the evening was chilly, the hole no larger than it was thirty years ago, and when I felt in my pocket for my spectacles, I found that they were on my nose.

" I have returned to the spot many times since, but I never could induce a beetle to enter into conversation on the subject, the hole remains obstinately impassable, and I have not been able to repeat my visit to the Land of Lost Toys.

" When I recall my many sins against the play-things of my childhood, I am constrained humbly to acknowledge that perhaps this is just as well."

* * * * * *

SAM SETS UP SHOP

"I THINK you might help me, Dot," cried Sam in dismal and rather injured tones.

It was the morning following the day of the earthquake, and of Aunt Penelope's arrival. Sam had his back to Dot, and his face to the fire, over which indeed he had bent for so long that he appeared to be half roasted.

"What do you want?" asked Dot, who was working at a doll's night-dress that had for long been partly finished, and now seemed in a fair way to completion.

"It's the glue-pot," Sam continued. "It does take so long to boil. And I have been stirring at the glue with a stick for ever so long to get it to melt. It is very hot work. I wish you would take it for a bit. It's as much for your good as for mine."

"Is it?" said Dot.

"Yes it is, Miss," cried Sam. "You must know I've got a splendid idea."

"Not another earthquake, I hope," said Dot, smiling.

"Now, Dot, that's truly unkind of you. I thought it was to be forgotten."

"So it is," said Dot, getting up. "I was only joking. What is the idea?"

"I don't think I shall tell you till I have

finished my shop. I want to get to it now, and I wish you would take a turn at the glue-pot."

Sam was apt to want a change of occupation. Dot, on the other hand, was equally averse to leaving what she was about till it was finished, so they suited each other like Jack Sprat and his wife. It had been an effort to Dot to leave the night-dress which she had hoped to finish at a sitting; but when she was fairly set to work on the glue business she never moved till the glue was in working order, and her face as red as a ripe tomato.

By this time Sam had set up business in the window-seat, and was fastening a large paper inscription over his shop. It ran thus :—

MR. SAM

Doll's Doctor and Toymender to Her Majesty the Queen, and all other Potentates.

" Splendid ! " shouted Dot, who was serving up the glue as if it had been a kettle of soup, and who looked herself very like an overtoasted cook.

Sam took the glue and began to bustle about.

" Now, Dot, get me all the broken toys, and we'll see what we can do. And here's a second splendid idea. Do you see that box ? Into that we shall put all the toys that are quite spoiled and cannot possibly be mended. It is to be called the Hospital for Incurables. I've got a placard for that. At least it's not written yet, but here's the paper, and perhaps you would write it, Dot, for I am tired of writing, and I want to begin the mending."

"For the future," he presently resumed, "when I want a doll to scalp or behead, I shall apply to the Hospital for Incurables, and the same with any other toys that I want to destroy. And you will see, my dear Dot, that I shall be quite a blessing to the nursery; for I shall attend the dolls gratis, and keep all the furniture in repair."

Sam really kept his word. He had a natural turn for mechanical work, and, backed by Dot's more methodical genius, he prolonged the days of the broken toys by skilful mending, and so acquired an interest in them which was still more favourable to their preservation. When his birthday came round, which was some months after these events, Dot (assisted by Mamma and Aunt Penelope) had prepared for him a surprise that was more than equal to any of his own "splendid ideas." The whole force of the toy cupboard was assembled on the nursery table, to present Sam with a fine box of joiner's tools as a reward for his services, Papa kindly acting as spokesman on the occasion.

And certain gaps in the china tea-set, some scars on the dolls' faces, and a good many new legs, both amongst the furniture and the animals, are now the only remaining traces of Sam's earthquake.

AMELIA AND THE DWARFS

AMELIA AND THE DWARFS

My godmother's grandmother knew a good deal about the fairies. *Her* grandmother had seen a fairy ride on a Roodmas Eve, and she herself could remember a copper vessel of a queer shape which had been left by the elves on some occasion at an old farm-house among the hills. The following story came from her, and where she got it I do not know. She used to say it was a pleasant tale, with a good moral in the inside of it. My godmother often observed that a tale without a moral was like a nut without a kernel; not worth the cracking. (We called fireside stories "cracks" in our part of the country.) This is the tale:

AMELIA

A couple of gentlefolk once lived in a certain part of England. (My godmother never would tell the name either of the place or the people, even if she knew it. She said one ought not to expose one's neighbours' failings more than there

was due occasion for.) They had an only child, a daughter, whose name was Amelia. They were an easy-going, good-humoured couple; "rather soft," my godmother said, but she was apt to think anybody "soft" who came from the southern shires, as these people did. Amelia, who had been born farther north, was by no means so. She had a strong resolute will, and a clever head of her own, though she was but a child. She had a way of her own too, and had it very completely. Perhaps because she was an only child, or perhaps because they were so easy-going, her parents spoiled her. She was, beyond question, the most tiresome little girl in that or any other neighbourhood. From her baby days her father and mother had taken every opportunity of showing her to their friends, and there was not a friend who did not dread the infliction. When the good lady visited her acquaintances, she always took Amelia with her, and if the acquaintances were fortunate enough to see from the windows who was coming, they used to snatch up any delicate knick-knacks, or brittle ornaments lying about, and put them away, crying, "What is to be done? Here comes Amelia!"

When Amelia came in, she would stand and survey the room, whilst her mother saluted her acquaintance; and if anything struck her fancy, she would interrupt the greetings to draw her mother's attention to it, with a twitch of her shawl, "Oh look, mamma, at that funny bird in the glass case!" or perhaps, "Mamma! mamma! There's a new carpet since we were here last;" for, as her mother said, she was "a very observing child."

Then she would wander round the room, examining and fingering everything, and occasionally coming back with something in her hand to tread on her mother's dress, and break in upon the ladies' conversation with—" Mamma ! mamma ! What's the good of keeping this old basin ? It's been broken and mended, and some of the pieces are quite loose now. I can feel them : " or—addressing the lady of the house—" That's not a real ottoman in the corner. It's a box covered with chintz. I know, for I've looked."

Then her mamma would say, reprovingly, " My *dear* Amelia ! "

And perhaps the lady of the house would beg, " Don't play with that old china, my love ; for though it is mended, it is very valuable ; " and her mother would add, " My dear Amelia, you must not."

Sometimes the good lady said, " You *must* not." Sometimes she tried—" You must *not*." When both these failed, and Amelia was balancing the china bowl on her finger ends, her mamma would get flurried, and when Amelia flurried her, she always rolled her r's, and emphasized her words, so that it sounded thus :

" My dear-r-r-r-Ramelia ! You MUST NOT."

At which Amelia would not so much as look round, till perhaps the bowl slipped from her fingers, and was smashed into unmendable fragments. Then her mamma would exclaim, " Oh, dear-r-r-r, oh dear-r-Ramelia ! " and the lady of the house would try to look as if it did not matter, and when Amelia and her mother departed, would pick up the bits, and pour out her complaints to her lady friends, most of whom had suffered many such

damages at the hands of this "very observing child."

When the good couple received their friends at home, there was no escaping from Amelia. If it was a dinner party, she came in with the dessert, or perhaps sooner. She would take up her position near some one, generally the person most deeply engaged in conversation, and either lean heavily against him or her, or climb on to his or her knee, without being invited. She would break in upon the most interesting discussion with her own little childish affairs, in the following style—

"I've been out to-day. I walked to the town. I jumped across three brooks. Can you jump? Papa gave me sixpence to-day. I am saving up my money to be rich. You may cut me an orange; no, I'll take it to Mr. Brown, he peels it with a spoon and turns the skin back. Mr. Brown! Mr. Brown! Don't talk to mamma, but peel me an orange, please. Mr. Brown! I'm playing with your finger-glass."

And when the finger-glass full of cold water had been upset on to Mr. Brown's shirt-front, Amelia's mamma would cry—"Oh dear, oh dear-r-Ramelia!" and carry her off with the ladies to the drawing-room.

Here she would scramble on to the ladies' knees, or trample out the gathers of their dresses, and fidget with their ornaments, startling some luckless lady by the announcement, "I've got your bracelet undone at last!" who would find one of the divisions broken open by force, Amelia not understanding the working of a clasp.

Or perhaps two young lady friends would get into a quiet corner for a chat. The observing

child was sure to spy them, and run on to them, crushing their flowers and ribbons, and crying—"You two want to talk secrets, I know. I can hear what you say. I'm going to listen, I am. And I shall tell, too." When perhaps a knock at the door announced the nurse to take Miss Amelia to bed, and spread a general rapture of relief.

Then Amelia would run to trample and worry her mother, and after much teasing, and clinging, and complaining, the nurse would be dismissed, and the fond mamma would turn to the lady next to her, and say with a smile—"I suppose I must let her stay up a little. It is such a treat to her, poor child!"

But it was no treat to the visitors.

Besides tormenting her fellow-creatures, Amelia had a trick of teasing animals. She was really fond of dogs, but she was still fonder of doing what she was wanted not to do, and of worrying everything and everybody about her. So she used to tread on the tips of their tails, and pretend to give them biscuit, and then hit them on the nose, besides pulling at those few, long, sensitive hairs which thin-skinned dogs wear on the upper lip.

Now Amelia's mother's acquaintances were so very well-bred and amiable, that they never spoke their minds to either the mother or the daughter about what they endured from the latter's rudeness, wilfulness, and powers of destruction. But this was not the case with the dogs, and they expressed their sentiments by many a growl and snap. At last one day Amelia was tormenting a snow-white bulldog (who was certainly as well-bred and as amiable as any living creature in the

kingdom), and she did not see that even his patience was becoming worn out. His pink nose became crimson with increased irritation, his upper lip twitched over his teeth, behind which he was rolling as many warning R's as Amelia's mother herself. She finally held out a bun towards him, and just as he was about to take it, she snatched it away and kicked him instead. This fairly exasperated the bulldog, and as Amelia would not let him bite the bun, he bit Amelia's leg.

Her mamma was so distressed that she fell into hysterics, and hardly knew what she was saying. She said the bulldog must be shot for fear he should go mad, and Amelia's wound must be done with a red-hot poker for fear *she* should go mad (with hydrophobia). And as of course she couldn't bear the pain of this, she must have chloroform, and she would most probably die of that ; for as one in several thousands dies annually under chloroform, it was evident that her chance of life was very small indeed. So, as the poor lady said, " Whether we shoot Amelia and burn the bulldog —at least I mean shoot the bulldog and burn Amelia with a red-hot poker—or leave it alone ; and whether Amelia or the bulldog has chloroform or bears it without—it seems to be death or madness every way ! "

And as the doctor did not come fast enough, she ran out without her bonnet to meet him, and Amelia's papa, who was very much distressed too, ran after her with her bonnet. Meanwhile the doctor came in by another way, and found Amelia sitting on the dining-room floor with the bulldog, and crying bitterly. She was telling him that

they wanted to shoot him, but that they should not, for it was all her fault and not his. But she did not tell him that she was to be burnt with a red-hot poker, for she thought it might hurt his feelings. And then she wept afresh, and kissed the bulldog, and the bulldog kissed her with his red tongue, and rubbed his pink nose against her, and beat his own tail much harder on the floor than Amelia had ever hit it. She said the same things to the doctor, but she told him also that she was willing to be burnt without chloroform if it must be done, and if they would spare the bulldog. And though she looked very white, she meant what she said.

But the doctor looked at her leg, and found it was only a snap, and not a deep wound ; and then he looked at the bulldog, and saw that so far from looking mad, he looked a great deal more sensible than anybody in the house. So he only washed Amelia's leg and bound it up, and she was not burnt with the poker, neither did she get hydrophobia ; but she had got a good lesson on manners, and thenceforward she always behaved with the utmost propriety to animals, though she tormented her mother's friends as much as ever.

Now although Amelia's mamma's acquaintances were too polite to complain before her face, they made up for it by what they said behind her back. In allusion to the poor lady's ineffectual remonstrances, one gentleman said that the more mischief Amelia did, the dearer she seemed to grow to her mother. And somebody else replied that however dear she might be as a daughter, she was certainly a very *dear* friend, and proposed that they should send in a bill for all the damage she

had done in the course of the year, as a round robin to her parents at Christmas. From which it may be seen that Amelia was not popular with her parents' friends, as (to do grown-up people justice) good children almost invariably are.

If she was not a favourite in the drawing-room, she was still less so in the nursery, where, besides all the hardships naturally belonging to attendance on a spoilt child, the poor nurse was kept, as she said, "on the continual go" by Amelia's reckless destruction of her clothes. It was not fair wear and tear, it was not an occasional fall in the mire, or an accidental rent or two during a game at "Hunt the Hare," but it was constant wilful destruction, which nurse had to repair as best she might. No entreaties would induce Amelia to "take care" of anything. She walked obstinately on the muddy side of the road when nurse pointed out the clean parts, kicking up the dirt with her feet; if she climbed a wall she never tried to free her dress if it had caught; on she rushed, and half a skirt might be left behind for any care she had in the matter. "They must be mended," or, "They must be washed," was all she thought about it.

"You seem to think things clean and mend themselves, Miss Amelia," said poor nurse one day.

"No, I don't," said Amelia rudely. "I think you do them; what are you here for?"

But though she spoke in this insolent and unlady-like fashion, Amelia really did not realize what the tasks were which her carelessness imposed on other people. When every hour of nurse's day had been spent in struggling to keep

She walked obstinately on the muddy side of the road.

her wilful young lady regularly fed, decently dressed, and moderately well-behaved (except, indeed, those hours when her mother was fighting the same battle downstairs); and when at last, after the hardest struggle of all, she had been got to bed not more than two hours later than her appointed time, even then there was no rest for nurse. Amelia's mamma could at last lean back in her chair and have a quiet chat with her husband, which was not broken in upon every two minutes, and Amelia herself was asleep; but nurse must sit up for hours wearing out her eyes by the light of a tallow candle, in fine-darning great, jagged, and most unnecessary holes in Amelia's muslin dresses. Or perhaps she had to wash and iron clothes for Amelia's wear next day. For sometimes she was so very destructive that towards the end of the week she had used up all her clothes and had no clean ones to fall back upon.

Amelia's meals were another source of trouble. She would not wear a pinafore. If it had been put on, she would burst the strings, and perhaps in throwing it away knock her plate of mutton broth over the tablecloth and her own dress. Then she fancied first one thing and then another; she did not like this or that; she wanted a bit cut here or there. Her mamma used to begin by saying, "My dear-r-Ramelia, you must not be so wasteful," and she used to end by saying, "The dear child has positively no appetite;" which seemed to be a good reason for not wasting any more food upon her; but with Amelia's mamma it only meant that she might try a little cutlet and tomato sauce when she had half finished her roast

beef, and that most of the cutlet and all the mashed potato might be exchanged for plum tart and custard; and that when she had spooned up the custard and played with the paste, and put the plum stones on the tablecloth, she might be tempted with a little stilton cheese and celery, and exchange that for anything that caught her fancy in the dessert dishes.

The nurse used to say, "Many a poor child would thank GOD for what you waste every meal-time, Miss Amelia," and to quote a certain good old saying, "Waste not, want not." But Amelia's mamma allowed her to send away on her plates what would have fed another child, day after day.

UNDER THE HAYCOCKS

It was summer, and haytime. Amelia had been constantly in the hayfield, and the haymakers had constantly wished that she had been anywhere else. She mislaid the rakes, nearly killed herself and several other persons with a fork, and overturned one haycock after another as fast as they were made. At tea time it was hoped that she would depart, but she teased her mamma to have the tea brought into the field, and her mamma said, "The poor child must have a treat sometimes," and so it was brought out.

After this she fell off the haycart, and was a good deal shaken, but not hurt. So she was taken indoors, and the haymakers worked hard and cleared the field, all but a few cocks which were left till the morning.

The sun set, the dew fell, the moon rose. It was a lovely night. Amelia peeped from behind the blinds of the drawing-room windows, and saw four haycocks, each with a deep shadow reposing at its side. The rest of the field was swept clean, and looked pale in the moonshine. It was a lovely night.

"I want to go out," said Amelia. "They will take away those cocks before I can get at them in the morning, and there will be no more jumping

and tumbling. I shall go out and have some fun now."

"My dear Amelia, you must not," said her mamma; and her papa added, "I won't hear of it." So Amelia went upstairs to grumble to nurse; but nurse only said, "Now, my dear Miss Amelia, do go quietly to bed, like a dear love. The field is all wet with dew. Besides, it's a moonlight night, and who knows what's abroad? You might see the fairies—bless us and sain us!—and what not. There's been a magpie hopping up and down near the house all day, and that's a sign of ill-luck."

"I don't care for magpies," said Amelia; "I threw a stone at that one to-day."

And she left the nursery, and swung downstairs on the rail of the banisters. But she did not go into the drawing-room; she opened the front door and went out into the moonshine.

It was a lovely night. But there was something strange about it. Everything looked asleep, and yet seemed not only awake but watching. There was not a sound, and yet the air seemed full of half-sounds. The child was quite alone, and yet at every step she fancied some one behind her, on one side of her, somewhere, and found it only a rustling leaf, or a passing shadow. She was soon in the hayfield, where it was just the same; so that when she fancied that something green was moving near the first haycock she thought very little of it, till, coming closer, she plainly perceived by the moonlight a tiny man dressed in green, with a tall, pointed hat, and very, very long tips to his shoes, tying his shoe-string with his foot on a stubble stalk. He had the most wizened of

At every step she fancied some one behind her.

faces, and when he got angry with his shoe, he pulled so wry a grimace that it was quite laughable. At last he stood up, stepping carefully over the stubble, went up to the first haycock, and drawing out a hollow grass stalk blew upon it till his cheeks were puffed like footballs. And yet there was no sound, only a half-sound, as of a horn blown in the far distance, or in a dream. Presently the point of a tall hat, and finally just such another little wizened face poked out through the side of the haycock.

"Can we hold revel here to-night?" asked the little green man.

"That indeed you cannot," answered the other; "we have hardly room to turn round as it is, with all Amelia's dirty frocks."

"Ah, bah!" said the dwarf; and he walked on to the next haycock, Amelia cautiously following.

Here he blew again, and a head was put out as before; on which he said—

"Can we hold revel here to-night?"

"How is it possible?" was the reply, "when there is not a place where one can so much as set down an acorn cup, for Amelia's broken victuals."

"Fie! fie!" said the dwarf, and went on to the third, where all happened as before; and he asked the old question—

"Can we hold revel here to-night?"

"Can you dance on glass and crockery sherds?" inquired the other. "Amelia's broken gimcracks are everywhere."

"Pshaw!" snorted the dwarf, frowning terribly; and when he came to the fourth haycock he blew such an angry blast that the grass stalk

split into seven pieces. But he met with no better success than before. Only the point of a hat came through the hay, and a feeble voice piped in tones of depression—" The broken threads would entangle our feet. It's all Amelia's fault. If we could only get hold of her ! "

" If she's wise, she'll keep as far from these haycocks as she can," snarled the dwarf angrily; and he shook his fist as much as to say, " If she did come, I should not receive her very pleasantly."

Now with Amelia, to hear that she had better not do something, was to make her wish at once to do it; and as she was not at all wanting in courage, she pulled the dwarf's little cloak, just as she would have twitched her mother's shawl, and said (with that sort of snarly whine in which spoilt children generally speak)—" Why shouldn't I come to the haycocks if I want to ? They belong to my papa, and I shall come if I like. But you have no business here."

" Nightshade and hemlock ! " ejaculated the little man, " you are not lacking in impudence. Perhaps your Sauciness is not quite aware how things are distributed in this world ? " saying which he lifted his pointed shoes and began to dance and sing—

" All under the sun belongs to men,
And all under the moon to the fairies.
So, so, so ! Ho, ho, ho !
All under the moon to the fairies."

As he sang " Ho, ho, ho ! " the little man turned head over heels; and though by this time Amelia would gladly have got away, she could not, for the dwarf seemed to dance and tumble round her,

and always to cut off the chance of escape; whilst numberless voices from all around seemed to join in the chorus, with—

"So, so, so! Ho, ho, ho!
All under the moon to the fairies."

"And now," said the little man, "to work! And you have plenty of work before you, so trip on, to the first haycock."

"I shan't!" said Amelia.

"On with you!" repeated the dwarf.

"I won't!" said Amelia.

But the little man, who was behind her, pinched her funny-bone with his lean fingers, and, as everybody knows, that is agony; so Amelia ran on, and tried to get away. But when she went too fast, the dwarf trod on her heels with his long-pointed shoe, and if she did not go fast enough, he pinched her funny-bone. So for once in her life she was obliged to do as she was told. As they ran, tall hats and wizened faces were popped out on all sides of the haycocks, like blanched almonds on a tipsy cake; and whenever the dwarf pinched Amelia, or trod on her heels, they cried "Ho, ho, ho!" with such horrible contortions as they laughed, that it was hideous to behold them.

"Here is Amelia!" shouted the dwarf when they reached the first haycock.

"Ho, ho, ho!" laughed all the others, as they poked out here and there from the hay.

"Bring a stock," said the dwarf: on which the hay was lifted, and out ran six or seven dwarfs, carrying what seemed to Amelia to be a little girl like herself. And when she looked closer, to her

horror and surprise the figure was exactly like her —it was her own face, clothes, and everything.

" Shall we kick it into the house ? " asked the goblins.

" No," said the dwarf ; " lay it down by the haycock. The father and mother are coming to seek her now."

When Amelia heard this she began to shriek for help ; but she was pushed into the haycock, where her loudest cries sounded like the chirruping of a grasshopper.

It was really a fine sight to see the inside of the cock.

Farmers do not like to see flowers in a hayfield, but the fairies do. They had arranged all the buttercups, &c., in patterns on the haywalls ; bunches of meadowsweet swung from the roof like censers, and perfumed the air ; and the oxeye daisies which formed the ceiling gave a light like stars. But Amelia cared for none of this. She only struggled to peep through the hay, and she did see her father and mother and nurse come down the lawn, followed by the other servants, looking for her. When they saw the stock they ran to raise it with exclamations of pity and surprise. The stock moaned faintly, and Amelia's mamma wept, and Amelia herself shouted with all her might.

" What's that ? " said her mamma. (It is not easy to deceive a mother.)

" Only the grasshoppers, my dear," said papa. " Let us get the poor child home."

The stock moaned again, and the mother said, " Oh dear ! oh dear-r-Ramelia ! " and followed in tears.

She was pushed into the haycock.

"Rub her eyes," said the dwarf; on which Amelia's eyes were rubbed with some ointment, and when she took a last peep, she could see that the stock was nothing but a hairy imp, with a face like the oldest and most grotesque of apes.

"—— and send her below;" added the dwarf. On which the field opened, and Amelia was pushed underground.

She found herself on a sort of open heath, where no houses were to be seen. Of course there was no moonshine, and yet it was neither daylight nor dark. There was as it were the light of early dawn, and every sound was at once clear and dreamy, like the first sounds of the day coming through the fresh air before sunrise. Beautiful flowers crept over the heath, whose tints were constantly changing in the subdued light; and as the hues changed and blended, the flowers gave forth different perfumes. All would have been charming but that at every few paces the paths were blocked by large clothes-baskets full of dirty frocks. And the frocks were Amelia's. Torn, draggled, wet, covered with sand, mud, and dirt of all kinds, Amelia recognized them.

"You've got to wash them all," said the dwarf, who was behind her as usual; "that's what you've come down for—not because your society is particularly pleasant. So the sooner you begin the better."

"I can't," said Amelia (she had already learnt that "I won't" is not an answer for every one); "send them up to nurse, and she'll do them. It is her business."

"What nurse can do she has done, and now it's time for you to begin," said the dwarf. "Sooner

or later the mischief done by spoilt children's wilful disobedience comes back on their own hands. Up to a certain point we help them, for we love children, and we are wilful ourselves. But there are limits to everything. If you can't wash your dirty frocks, it is time you learnt to do so, if only that you may know what the trouble is you impose on other people. *She* will teach you."

The dwarf kicked out his foot in front of him, and pointed with his long toe to a woman who sat by a fire made upon the heath, where a pot was suspended from crossed poles. It was like a bit of a gipsy encampment, and the woman seemed to be a real woman, not a fairy—which was the case, as Amelia afterwards found. She had lived underground for many years, and was the dwarf's servant.

And this was how it came about that Amelia had to wash her dirty frocks. Let any little girl try to wash one of her dresses; not to half wash it, not to leave it stained with dirty water, but to wash it quite clean. Let her then try to starch and iron it—in short, to make it look as if it had come from the laundress—and she will have some idea of what poor Amelia had to learn to do. There was no help for it. When she was working she very seldom saw the dwarfs; but if she were idle or stubborn, or had any hopes of getting away, one was sure to start up at her elbow and pinch her funny-bone, or poke her in the ribs, till she did her best. Her back ached with stooping over the wash-tub; her hands and arms grew wrinkled with soaking in hot soapsuds, and sore with rubbing. Whatever she did not know how to do, the woman of the heath taught her. At

first, whilst Amelia was sulky, the woman of the heath was sharp and cross; but when Amelia became willing and obedient, she was good-natured, and even helped her.

The first time that Amelia felt hungry she asked for some food.

"By all means," said one of the dwarfs; "there is plenty down here which belongs to you;" and he led her away till they came to a place like the first, except that it was covered with plates of broken meats; all the bits of good meat, pie, pudding, bread and butter, &c., that Amelia had wasted beforetime.

"I can't eat cold scraps like these," said Amelia, turning away.

"Then what did you ask for food for before you were hungry?" screamed the dwarf, and he pinched her and sent her about her business.

After a while she became so famished that she was glad to beg humbly to be allowed to go for food; and she ate a cold chop and the remains of a rice pudding with thankfulness. How delicious they tasted! She was surprised herself at the good things she had rejected. After a time she fancied she would like to warm up some of the cold meat in a pan, which the woman of the heath used to cook her own dinner in, and she asked for leave to do so.

"You may do anything you like to make yourself comfortable, if you do it yourself," said she; and Amelia, who had been watching her for many times, became quite expert in cooking up the scraps.

As there was no real daylight underground, so also there was no night. When the old woman

was tired she lay down and had a nap, and when she thought that Amelia had earned a rest, she allowed her to do the same. It was never cold, and it never rained, so they slept on the heath among the flowers.

They say that "It's a long lane that has no turning," and the hardest tasks come to an end some time, and Amelia's dresses were clean at last; but then a more wearisome work was before her. They had to be mended. Amelia looked at the jagged rents made by the hedges; the great gaping holes in front where she had put her foot through; the torn tucks and gathers. First she wept, then she bitterly regretted that she had so often refused to do her sewing at home that she was very awkward with the needle. Whether she ever would have got through this task alone is doubtful; but she had by this time become so well-behaved and willing that the old woman was kind to her, and, pitying her blundering attempts, she helped her a great deal; whilst Amelia would cook the old woman's victuals, or repeat stories and pieces of poetry to amuse her.

"How glad I am that I ever learnt anything!" thought the poor child: "everything one learns seems to come in useful some time."

At last the dresses were finished.

"Do you think I shall be allowed to go home now?" Amelia asked of the woman of the heath.

"Not yet," said she; "you have got to mend the broken gimcracks next."

"But when I have done all my tasks," Amelia said; "will they let me go then?"

"That depends," said the woman, and she sat silent over the fire; but Amelia wept so bitterly

that she pitied her and said—"Only dry your eyes, for the fairies hate tears, and I will tell you all I know and do the best for you I can. You see, when you first came you were—excuse me! —such an unlicked cub; such a peevish, selfish, wilful, useless, and ill-mannered little miss, that neither the fairies nor anybody else were likely to keep you any longer than necessary. But now you are such a willing, handy, and civil little thing, and so pretty and graceful withal, that I think it is very likely that they will want to keep you altogether. I think you had better make up your mind to it. They are kindly little folk, and will make a pet of you in the end."

"Oh no! no!" moaned poor Amelia; "I want to be with my mother, my poor dear mother! I want to make up for being a bad child so long. Besides, surely that 'stock,' as they called her, will want to come back to her own people."

"As to that," said the woman, "after a time the stock will affect mortal illness, and will then take possession of the first black cat she sees, and in that shape leave the house, and come home. But the figure that is like you will remain lifeless in the bed, and will be duly buried. Then your people, believing you to be dead, will never look for you, and you will always remain here. However, as this distresses you so, I will give you some advice. Can you dance?"

"Yes," said Amelia; "I did attend pretty well to my dancing lessons. I was considered rather clever about it."

"At any spare moments you find," continued the woman, "dance, dance all your dances, and as well as you can. The dwarfs love dancing."

" And then ? " said Amelia.

" Then, perhaps some night they will take you up to dance with them in the meadows above ground."

" But I could not get away. They would tread on my heels—oh ! I could never escape them."

" I know that," said the woman ; " your only chance is this. If ever, when dancing in the meadows, you can find a four-leaved clover, hold it in your hand, and wish to be at home. Then no one can stop you. Meanwhile I advise you to seem happy, that they may think you are content, and have forgotten the world. And dance, above all, dance ! "

And Amelia, not to be behindhand, began then and there to dance some pretty figures on the heath. As she was dancing the dwarf came by.

" Ho, ho ! " said he, " you can dance, can you ? "

" When I am happy, I can," said Amelia, performing several graceful movements as she spoke.

" What are you pleased about now ? " snapped the dwarf, suspiciously.

" Have I not reason ? " said Amelia. " The dresses are washed and mended."

" Then up with them ! " returned the dwarf. On which half a dozen elves popped the whole lot into a big basket and kicked them up into the world, where they found their way to the right wardrobes somehow.

As the woman of the heath had said, Amelia was soon set to a new task. When she bade the old woman farewell, she asked if she could do nothing for her if ever she got at liberty herself.

" Can I do nothing to get you back to your old

home ? " Amelia cried, for she thought of others now as well as herself.

" No, thank you," returned the old woman ; " I am used to this, and do not care to return. I have been here a long time—how long I do not know ; for as there is neither daylight nor dark we have no measure of time—long, I am sure, very long. The light and noise up yonder would now be too much for me. But I wish you well, and, above all, remember to dance ! "

The new scene of Amelia's labours was a more rocky part of the heath, where grey granite boulders served for seats and tables, and sometimes for workshops and anvils, as in one place, where a grotesque and grimy old dwarf sat forging rivets to mend china and glass. A fire in a hollow of the boulder served for a forge, and on the flatter part was his anvil. The rocks were covered in all directions with the knick-knacks, ornaments, &c., that Amelia had at various times destroyed.

" If you please, sir," she said to the dwarf, " I am Amelia."

The dwarf left off blowing at his forge and looked at her.

" Then I wonder you're not ashamed of yourself," said he.

" I am ashamed of myself," said poor Amelia, " very much ashamed. I should like to mend these things if I can."

" Well, you can't say more than that," said the dwarf, in a mollified tone, for he was a kindly little creature ; " bring that china bowl here, and I'll show you how to set to work."

Poor Amelia did not get on very fast, but she tried her best. As to the dwarf, it was truly

wonderful to see how he worked. Things seemed to mend themselves at his touch, and he was so proud of his skill, and so particular, that he generally did over again the things which Amelia had done after her fashion. The first time he gave her a few minutes in which to rest and amuse herself, she held out her little skirt, and began one of her prettiest dances.

" Rivets and trivets ! " shrieked the little man. " How you dance ! It is charming ! I say it is charming ! On with you ! Fa, la fa ! La, fa la ! It gives me the fidgets in my shoe points to see you ! " and forthwith down he jumped, and began capering about.

" I am a good dancer myself," said the little man. " Do you know the ' Hop, Skip, and a Jump ' dance ? "

" I do not think I do," said Amelia.

" It is much admired," said the dwarf, " when I dance it ; " and he thereupon tucked up the little leathern apron in which he worked, and performed some curious antics on one leg.

" That is the Hop," he observed, pausing for a moment. " The Skip is thus. You throw out your left leg as high and as far as you can, and as you drop on the toe of your left foot you fling out the right leg in the same manner, and so on. This is the Jump," with which he turned a somersault and disappeared from view. When Amelia next saw him he was sitting cross-legged on his boulder.

" Good, wasn't it ? " he said.

" Wonderful ! " Amelia replied.

" Now it's your turn again," said the dwarf.

But Amelia cunningly replied—" I'm afraid I must go on with my work."

"Rivets and trivets!" shrieked the little man.
"How you dance!"

"Pshaw!" said the little tinker. "Give me your work. I can do more in a minute than you in a month, and better to boot. Now dance again."

"Do you know this?" said Amelia, and she danced a few paces of a polka mazurka.

"Admirable!" cried the little man. "Stay"—and he drew an old violin from behind the rock; "now dance again, and mark the time well, so that I may catch the measure, and then I will accompany you."

Which accordingly he did, improvising a very spirited tune, which had, however, the peculiar subdued and weird effect of all the other sounds in this strange region.

"The fiddle came from up yonder," said the little man. "It was smashed to atoms in the world and thrown away. But, ho, ho, ho! There is nothing that I cannot mend, and a mended fiddle is an amended fiddle. It improves the tone. Now teach me that dance, and I will patch up all the rest of the gimcracks. Is it a bargain?"

"By all means," said Amelia; and she began to explain the dance to the best of her ability.

"Charming, charming!" cried the dwarf. "We have no such dance ourselves. We only dance hand in hand, and round and round, when we dance together. Now I will learn the step, and then I will put my arm round your waist and dance with you."

Amelia looked at the dwarf. He was very smutty, and old, and wizened. Truly, a queer partner! But "handsome is that handsome does;" and he had done her a good turn. So when he had learnt the step, he put his arm round

Amelia's waist, and they danced together. His shoe points were very much in the way, but otherwise he danced very well.

Then he set to work on the broken ornaments, and they were all very soon "as good as new." But they were not kicked up into the world, for, as the dwarfs said, they would be sure to break on the road. So they kept them and used them; and I fear that no benefit came from the little tinker's skill to Amelia's mamma's acquaintance in this matter.

"Have I any other tasks?" Amelia inquired.

"One more," said the dwarfs; and she was led farther on to a smooth mossy green, thickly covered with what looked like bits of broken thread. One would think it had been a milliner's work-room from the first invention of needles and thread.

"What are these?" Amelia asked.

"They are the broken threads of all the conversations you have interrupted," was the reply; "and pretty dangerous work it is to dance here now, with threads getting round one's shoe points. Dance a hornpipe in a herring-net, and you'll know what it is!"

Amelia began to pick up the threads, but it was tedious work. She had cleared a yard or two, and her back was aching terribly, when she heard the fiddle and the mazurka behind her; and looking round she saw the old dwarf, who was playing away, and making the most hideous grimaces as his chin pressed the violin.

"Dance, my lady, dance!" he shouted.

"I do not think I can," said Amelia; "I am so weary with stooping over my work."

" Then rest a few minutes," he answered, " and I will play you a jig. A jig is a beautiful dance, such life, such spirit ! So ! "

And he played faster and faster, his arm, his face, his fiddle-bow all seemed working together ; and as he played, the threads danced themselves into three heaps.

" That is not bad, is it ? " said the dwarf ; " and now for our own dance," and he played the mazurka. " Get the measure well into your head. Lâ, la fă lâ ! Lâ, la fă lâ ! So ! "

And throwing away his fiddle, he caught Amelia round the waist, and they danced as before. After which, she had no difficulty in putting the three heaps of thread into a basket.

" Where are these to be kicked to ? " asked the young goblins.

" To the four winds of heaven," said the old dwarf. " There are very few drawing-room conversations worth putting together a second time. They are not like old china bowls."

BY MOONLIGHT

THUS Amelia's tasks were ended; but not a word was said of her return home. The dwarfs were now very kind, and made so much of her that it was evident that they meant her to remain with them. Amelia often cooked for them, and she danced and played with them, and never showed a sign of discontent; but her heart ached for home, and when she was alone she would bury her face in the flowers and cry for her mother.

One day she overheard the dwarfs in consultation.

"The moon is full to-morrow," said one—("Then I have been a month down here," thought Amelia; "it was full moon that night")—"shall we dance in the Mary Meads?"

"By all means," said the old tinker dwarf; "and we will take Amelia, and dance my dance."

"Is it safe?" said another.

"Look how content she is," said the old dwarf; "and, oh! how she dances; my feet tickle at the bare thought."

"The ordinary run of mortals do not see us," continued the objector; "but she is visible to any one. And there are men and women who wander in the moonlight, and the Mary Meads are near her old home."

"I will make her a hat of touchwood," said the old dwarf, "so that even if she is seen it will look

like a will-o'-the-wisp bobbing up and down. If she does not come, I will not. I must dance my dance. You do not know what it is! We two alone move together with a grace which even here is remarkable. But when I think that up yonder we shall have attendant shadows echoing our movements, I long for the moment to arrive."

"So be it," said the others; and Amelia wore the touchwood hat, and went up with them to the Mary Meads.

Amelia and the dwarf danced the mazurka, and their shadows, now as short as themselves, then long and gigantic, danced beside them. As the moon went down, and the shadows lengthened, the dwarf was in raptures.

"When one sees how colossal one's very shadow is," he remarked, "one knows one's true worth. You also have a good shadow. We are partners in the dance, and I think we will be partners for life. But I have not fully considered the matter, so this is not to be regarded as a formal proposal." And he continued to dance, singing, "Lâ, la fă lâ, lâ, la fă lâ." It was highly admired.

The Mary Meads lay a little below the house where Amelia's parents lived, and once during the night her father, who was watching by the sick bed of the stock, looked out of the window.

"How lovely the moonlight is!" he murmured; "but, dear me! there is a will-o'-the-wisp yonder. I had no idea the Mary Meads were so damp." Then he pulled the blind down and went back into the room.

As for poor Amelia, she found no four-leaved clover, and at cockcrow they all went underground.

"We will dance on Hunch Hill to-morrow," said the dwarfs.

All went as before; not a clover plant of any kind did Amelia see, and at cockcrow the revel broke up.

On the following night they danced in the hayfield. The old stubble was now almost hidden by green clover. There was a grand fairy dance—a round dance, which does not mean, as with us, a dance for two partners, but a dance where all join hands and dance round and round in a circle with appropriate antics. Round they went, faster and faster, the pointed shoes now meeting in the centre like the spokes of a wheel, now kicked out behind like spikes, and then scamper, caper, hurry! They seemed to fly, when suddenly the ring broke at one corner, and nothing being stronger than its weakest point, the whole circle were sent flying over the field.

"Ho, ho, ho!" laughed the dwarfs, for they are good-humoured little folk, and do not mind a tumble.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Amelia, for she had fallen with her fingers on a four-leaved clover.

She put it behind her back, for the old tinker dwarf was coming up to her, wiping the mud from his face with his leathern apron.

"Now for our dance!" he shrieked. "And I have made up my mind—partners now and partners always. You are incomparable. For three hundred years I have not met with your equal."

But Amelia held the four-leaved clover above her head, and cried from her very heart—"I want to go home!"

The dwarf gave a hideous yell of disappoint-

Amelia cried from her very heart—" I want to go home ! "

ment, and at this instant the stock came tumbling head over heels into the midst, crying—" Oh ! the pills, the powders, and the draughts ! oh, the lotions and embrocations ! oh, the blisters, the poultices, and the plasters ! men may well be so short-lived ! "

And Amelia found herself in bed in her own home.

AT HOME AGAIN

By the side of Amelia's bed stood a little table, on which were so many big bottles of medicine, that Amelia smiled to think of all the stock must have had to swallow during the month past. There was an open Bible on it too, in which Amelia's mother was reading, whilst tears trickled slowly down her pale cheeks. The poor lady looked so thin and ill, so worn with sorrow and watching, that Amelia's heart smote her, as if some one had given her a sharp blow.

"Mamma! mamma! Mother, my dear, dear mother!"

The tender, humble, loving tone of voice was so unlike Amelia's old imperious snarl, that her mother hardly recognized it; and when she saw Amelia's eyes full of intelligence instead of the delirium of fever, and that (though older and thinner and rather pale) she looked wonderfully well, the poor worn-out lady could hardly restrain herself from falling into hysterics for very joy.

"Dear mamma, I want to tell you all about it," said Amelia, kissing the kind hand that stroked her brow.

But it appeared that the doctor had forbidden conversation; and though Amelia knew it would

do her no harm, she yielded to her mother's wish and lay still and silent.

" Now, my love, it is time to take your medicine."

But Amelia pleaded—" Oh, mamma, indeed I don't want any medicine. I am quite well, and would like to get up."

" Ah, my dear child ! " cried her mother, " what I have suffered in inducing you to take your medicine, and yet see what good it has done you."

" I hope you will never suffer any more from my wilfulness," said Amelia ; and she swallowed two tablespoonfuls of a mixture labelled " To be well shaken before taken," without even a wry face.

Presently the doctor came.

" You're not so very angry at the sight of me to-day, my little lady, eh ? " he said.

" I have not seen you for a long time," said Amelia ; " but I know you have been here, attending a stock who looked like me. If your eyes had been touched with fairy ointment, however, you would have been aware that it was a fairy imp, and a very ugly one, covered with hair. I have been living in terror lest it should go back underground in the shape of a black cat. However, thanks to the four-leaved clover, and the old woman of the heath, I am at home again."

On hearing this rhodomontade, Amelia's mother burst into tears, for she thought the poor child was still raving with fever. But the doctor smiled pleasantly, and said—" Ay, ay, to be sure," with a little nod, as one should say, " We know all about it ; " and laid two fingers in a casual manner on Amelia's wrist.

"But she is wonderfully better, madam," he said afterwards to her mamma; "the brain has been severely tried, but she is marvellously improved: in fact, it is an effort of nature, a most favourable effort, and we can but assist the rally; we will change the medicine." Which he did, and very wisely assisted nature with a bottle of pure water flavoured with tincture of roses.

"And it was so very kind of him to give me his directions in poetry," said Amelia's mamma; "for I told him my memory, which is never good, seemed going completely, from anxiety, and if I had done anything wrong just now, I should never have forgiven myself. And I always found poetry easier to remember than prose"—which puzzled everybody, the doctor included, till it appeared that she had ingeniously discovered a rhyme in his orders.

"To be kept cool and quiet,
With light nourishing diet."

Under which treatment Amelia was soon pronounced to be well.

She made another attempt to relate her adventures, but she found that not even nurse would believe in them.

"Why you told me yourself I might meet with the fairies," said Amelia reproachfully.

"So I did, my dear," Nurse replied, "and they say that it's that put it into your head. And I'm sure what you say about the dwarfs and all is as good as a printed book, though you can't think that ever I would have let any dirty clothes store up like that, let alone your frocks, my dear. But for pity sake, Miss Amelia, don't go on about it to

your mother, for she thinks you'll never get your senses right again, and she has fretted enough about you, poor lady; and nursed you night and day till she is nigh worn out. And anybody can see you've been ill, miss, you've grown so, and look paler and older like. Well, to be sure, as you say, if you'd been washing and working for a month in a place without a bit of sun, or a bed to lie on, and scraps to eat, it would be enough to do it; and many's the poor child that has to, and gets worn and old before her time. But, my dear, whatever you think, give in to your mother; you'll never repent giving in to your mother, my dear, the longest day you live."

So Amelia kept her own counsel. But she had one confidant.

When her parents brought the stock home on the night of Amelia's visit to the haycocks, the bulldog's conduct had been most strange. His usual good-humour appeared to have been exchanged for incomprehensible fury, and he was with difficulty prevented from flying at the stock, who on her part showed an anger and dislike fully equal to his.

Finally the bulldog had been confined to the stable, where he remained the whole month, uttering from time to time such howls, with his snub nose in the air, that poor nurse quite gave up hope of Amelia's recovery.

"For indeed, my dear, they do say that a howling dog is a sign of death, and it was more than I could abear."

But the day after Amelia's return, as nurse was leaving the room with a tray which had carried some of the light nourishing diet ordered by the

doctor, she was knocked down, tray and all, by the bulldog, who came tearing into the room, dragging a chain and dirty rope after him, and nearly choked by the desperate efforts which had finally effected his escape from the stable. And he jumped straight on to the end of Amelia's bed, where he lay, *thudding* with his tail, and giving short whines of ecstasy. And as Amelia begged that he might be left, and as it was evident that he would bite any one who tried to take him away, he became established as chief nurse. When Amelia's meals were brought to the bedside on a tray, he kept a fixed eye on the plates, as if to see if her appetite were improving. And he would even take a snack himself, with an air of great affability.

And when Amelia told him her story, she could see by his eyes, and his nose, and his ears, and his tail, and the way he growled whenever the stock was mentioned, that he knew all about it. As, on the other hand, he had no difficulty in conveying to her by sympathetic whines the sentiment " Of course I would have helped you if I could ; but they tied me up, and this disgusting old rope has taken me a month to worry through."

So, in spite of the past, Amelia grew up good and gentle, unselfish and considerate for others. She was unusually clever, as those who have been with the " Little People " are said always to be.

And she became so popular with her mother's acquaintances that they said—" We will no longer call her Amelia, for it is a name we learnt to dislike, but we will call her Amy, that is to say, ' Beloved.' "

* * * * * *

" And did my godmother's grandmother believe that Amelia had really been with the fairies, or did she think it was all fever ravings ? "

" That, indeed, she never said, but she always observed that it was a pleasant tale with a good moral, which was surely enough for anybody."

THE END

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