NAS
Brown

THE LUCKY STONE

"Every shepherd tells his tale
Under the hawthorne in the dale."

"Well, maybe we can break the spell," said Maggie eagerly

THE LUCKY STONE

BY
ABBIE FARWELL BROWN
Author of "The Flower Princess," "The Lonesomest Doll," Etc.

With illustrations by
REGINALD BIRCH

NEW YORK
THE CENTURY CO.

Published, September, 1914

TO

JOHN TOWNSEND TROWBRIDGE

Whose books were the treasure of my childhood,
whose friendship is the pride of these latter days.

CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

THE LUCKY STONE

THE LUCKY STONE

CHAPTER I

THE FAIRY BOOK

"Hence, loathèd Melancholy!"

FOUR flights up the rickety tenement staircase was a little room with the door shut tight. The key was turned in the keyhole on the outside. From inside came the sound of sobbing for any one to hear. But there was no one to hear; every one was too busy indoors or out on this beautiful June day. Every one who had work to do was doing it, over the hot stove, or at the shop or factory. The free children were romping or tumbling about in the alley; for this was Saturday morning, and there was no school.

Saturday morning in June! That suggests all sorts of pleasant things: parks, and flowers, and excursions on the water; birds, and green grass, and freedom to run and play out of doors. Free-

dom! But the key was turned in the lock outside the dingy tenement room, and there came the sound of sobbing from inside.

It was Maggie who cried. She lay on a cot-bed in the corner, crumpled up like a rosebud that has been left too long without water. The little girl's long, black curls were tangled, and her dress was torn and rumpled. Over her left eye was an ugly bruise, and one of her wrists was black and blue.

The room was bare and grimy. The only furniture besides the bed on which Maggie lay consisted of two broken chairs, a table, a cupboard, and a tumble-down stove. In the window, two pots of geraniums seemed struggling to look as cheerful as possible. But it was hard work; for though no merry sunshine came in at the window, the room was hot, very hot. And all the feeble efforts of the geraniums could not sweeten the air that came up from the alley.

Presently, Maggie sat up on the bed and looked around her with red eyes. "I want to get out!" she said aloud. Maggie had a habit of talking aloud to herself. And she talked in a language not quite like that of other tenement children; for once she had had a mother who taught her better, and she had not quite forgotten. "I can't bear this

place, it 's so hot. It 's Saturday, and I want to be outdoors!"

She ran to the door and banged on it as hard as she could with her small fists. It was not the first time she had done so that morning. "Open the door!" she screamed, thumping the panels with her knees. But no one came to release her. "They 're all busy somewhere," said Maggie, at last, turning away. "It 's no use. I 'll have to stay here till 'Tilda comes home. And goodness knows what will happen then!" She eyed her bruised wrist ruefully, and put her hand to her eye, which was painfully swollen. "If she hits me again, I don't know what I 'll do!" Maggie's lip trembled. "I guess I 've stood about all I can. And she ain't even my real sister. Oh, how I wish I had a home, and a mother to take care of me like I used to have!" She sank down in a chair beside the table and buried her face in her arms, sobbing wildly.

Suddenly she sat up, the tears still in her eyes. "It 's no use crying," she said; "but what 'll they think of me at the Settlement? What will Mr. Graham say? I missed the language lesson last night, the first time for six months. And this morning he was going to take us to the Park, but

I have n't reported. I bet the other children are starting now. My! How I 'd like to go with them and play outdoors this lovely day! Maybe he 'd tell us some more stories!" Her eyes brightened at the last word, and strayed to the pillow of the bed where she had been lying. Presently she crossed the room and pulled out from under the pillow a worn green volume. "I can read my book anyhow, and I can *pretend*," she said with a sigh. " 'Tilda does n't know, and she can't stop that!"

Curled up on the bed, Maggie was soon absorbed in the contents of the green book, and for the time she seemed to forget her troubles. Her pretty mouth lost its sad droop, and her pale cheeks took on a bit of color. But presently something in the text made her uneasy.

"I 'm so hungry!" she sighed. "I wonder if 'Tilda left me anything to eat?" She went to the cupboard in the corner and began to rummage among a clutter of empty boxes and bags, old clothes, and stray articles of all kinds. A few crackers and a bit of cheese rewarded her search. These she placed on the table in a cracked plate, and with her book open before her, sat down to eat her morning meal.

" 'The princess partook of a banquet, waited on by many slaves,' " read Maggie, grandly. " 'All kinds of delicacies piled the groaning board' (I wonder why she did n't have that board fixed), 'and a sparkling jeweled goblet was at her hand.' " Maggie reached for the cracked water-pitcher that stood across the table, half empty, and was about to drink elegantly, when her eye caught a new sentence in the book: " 'From the conservatory came the sweet odors of beautiful flowers.' " She glanced toward the window. "I had almost forgotten the conservatory," she said, and crossing the room with the stately tread of a story-book princess, she emptied the pitcher into the thirsty geranium pots. " 'There,' " quoted she, " 'the captive princess cared for the beautiful blossoms, and tended them herself, while the slaves watched admiringly.' (I know it by heart!) 'On the terrace the peacocks strutted in their showy feathers, and nibbled gratefully the crumbs which the princess tossed to them from the window.' "

Maggie returned to the table and gathered up the cracker-crumbs, which she scattered outside on the window-sill. Immediately, several sparrows came to quarrel over her hospitality. A single pigeon swooped down from a neighboring roof

and pecked daintily at the crumbs, cocking his head and peering at her with knowing little red eyes.

"What a pretty bird!" exclaimed Maggie. "Don't he look knowing? Perhaps he 's a fairy in disguise! Are you?" she asked, leaning forward eagerly. But at her sudden gesture, the pigeon and the sparrows fluttered away, and Maggie turned from the window with a sigh. "I wish I could fly like that," she murmured. "You bet I would n't stay long in this stuffy room. Not much! Oh, dear, I am so thirsty and hungry! Say, I wish the fairies would fetch me something tasty to eat and drink, the way they do in books. I wish the lucky stone would get busy and do something for me."

She drew from her pocket a little heart-shaped stone with a white stripe around it, and laid it before her on the table, looking at it earnestly.

"Of course, it did work from the very first, a little," she said to herself. "Was n't it funny how I just happened to see Mr. Graham pick it up on the street? And when he saw me stopping to watch what he was doing, I remember just how he said, *'Little girl, here 's a lucky stone for you. I wonder if a fairy put it*

there?' S'pose she did? S'pose the lucky stone made him say, *'I don't believe you know about fairies, little girl? Don't you want to come in and hear me tell some stories to the other children?'* "

Maggie was silent for some moments, thinking.

"Say, it was funny!" she went on with her soliloquy. "Just think; if I had n't hiked to the Settlement, I should n't have known about Saint George and the Dragon—where he got his name—nor about lots of other things. And Mr. Saint George would n't have been my Jimdandy friend, nor have given me the fairy book. And I guess I should n't have known what it was to be under a spell. And if I had n't known that, I don't believe I could have stood 'Tilda so long. Yes, I guess it was a lucky stone for me, all right! But, believe me, it is 'most time something else happened to break the spell. I do think it is 'most time my fairy got busy, and the lucky stone brought me some real, big luck. Mr. Saint George said he believed it would."

But what was that sound on the stairs? Boots were ascending, were creaking toward the door! They paused outside. Maggie's face went suddenly pale. In two flying leaps she was across the room, stuffing the fairy book into its hiding-place

under her pillow. Then she fell back against the wall and stood at bay, with her little fists doubled up before her, and her slight figure tense with dreadful expectation.

"It 's 'Tilda come back. It 's the wicked witch!" she whispered, with fearful eyes on the door.

Some one knocked. Maggie did not answer. Her heart was knocking, too. "Hello!" called a man's voice; "anybody in?"

Maggie bounded to the door. "Oh, Mr. Graham!" she cried; "I 'm locked in!"

"Locked in?" A hand fumbled with the key, and presently the door opened, and in came a tall, gray-suited young man with the kind of face that children like. But he was not smiling now. "Hello, what does this mean?" he said sternly, looking around the room. "Why are you shut up in this place when you ought to be out of doors with us?"

"Oh, Mr. Saint George! You have come to rescue me, have n't you? I am so glad to see you. I was afraid it was 'Tilda." Maggie ran up and clasped his hand eagerly. He put an arm around her, then held her off to look at her face.

"I should say *you* had met a dragon, all right!"

She fell back against the wall and stood at bay

he exclaimed. "How did you get that black eye? And what is the matter with your wrist?"

" 'Tilda," said Maggie, simply. "She came home again last night—queer—and in an awful temper. And because I wanted to go out, I had to catch it. That was why I didn't come to the Settlement for the lesson."

George Graham made a quick remark under his breath. "And why did she lock you in this morning?" he asked, frowning. "Whew! It is hot here!"

"She knew I wanted to go with you. But when I woke late—'cause I didn't sleep all night with my banged old eye—she had gone off and locked me in. And I couldn't tell you about it; that was the worst of all!"

"And she was going to keep you here all day?"

Maggie nodded. "She don't usually get home till late Saturdays." Again Mr. Graham made a sound with his lips.

"I guess it is about time to put a stop to this!" he murmured. "Have you had breakfast, Maggie?"

Maggie glanced at the window-sill, where the sparrows were nibbling the last of her crumbs. " 'The captive princess had a royal banquet,' "

she quoted, with a grin. "Crackers, Mr. Graham; about two crackers and a half. Only I gave the half to the peacocks," she giggled, as she saw his bewildered expression. "Oh, you know I play it 's all a fairy story," she explained, "like what 's in the fairy book you gave me. It helps a lot."

"Look here," said Mr. Graham, pulling a box from his pocket. "I have something ready, and you sit right down and eat it. We were going to have it for luncheon in the Park, you and I. But I guess it will never taste better to you than now. Miss Wilkes has gone on ahead with the other children. We 'll take a car and catch them up later, after I 've had a doctor look at your eye."

"My! Ain't it good!" commented Maggie, as she nibbled the sandwiches which Mr. Graham set out on the cracked plate. "Am I really going to the Park with you after all? What will 'Tilda say?"

"Never mind what she says! I 'll attend to that," said Mr. Graham, with a grim look about his jaw. "You 're going to the Park with me as soon as you have eaten your breakfast, and I 'll be here to explain several things when 'Tilda sees you again. But now I 've got something more to tell you. Are you prepared for a surprise?"

"A surprise?" Maggie stopped in the middle of a bite.

"You go on eating, and I 'll tell you. We 'll have just a little taste of green grass and flowers to-day. But how would you like to go to the real country and stay for a fortnight?" Maggie stopped eating altogether.

"Oh, Mr. Saint George! What do you mean? How can I?"

"You can, and you shall, if you want to. I have made all the necessary arrangements. What do you say?"

"Will 'Tilda let me?"

" 'Tilda will have to let you. I 'll see to that."

"But where is the country, Mr. Saint George? I never was there. What is the name of it?"

"How do you like the sound of Bonnyburn, Maggie?"

"Bonnyburn! Bonnyburn! That sounds like a fairy word," said Maggie. "Is it a real place, not just a name in a book?

"It 's a really, truly place, 'way up in the mountains, Maggie, where you will get fat and strong," answered Mr. Graham. "There is a farm at Bonnyburn where we get our Settlement potatoes and maple-sugar. I wrote to Mr. Timmins, the

farmer, about you. He has a little boy and girl of his own, and they got interested in you. They want you to come and visit them for a fortnight. I guess you will have a good time."

"Oh!" cried Maggie, clasping her hands, "the country! That 's where there are trees and grass and wild flowers. Mama used to say we 'd go there some day. She was born in the country. And it 's where the fairies live,—don't they, Mr. Saint George?"

"Well, Maggie," he laughed, "you will just have to go and find out. If there are fairies there, you will be sure to see them, they are such friends of yours. School closes next week. What do you say to going the week after?"

Maggie looked down at her poor dress. "My clothes are n't very good," she said, her cheeks turning crimson. "My mother used to dress me tidy and neat. But since she died and 'Tilda kept me, I—I don't ever look nice. My mother would be ashamed to have those country children see me like this;—what are their names, Mr. Saint George?"

"Bob and Bess Timmins," he answered; "and they 're about your age. Don't you worry about clothes, Maggie. We can fix you up at the Set-

tlement, I know. Now put on your hat and come along. The children will be growing anxious about us."

Maggie began to skip, all smiles and eagerness. "I shall take the fairy book with me to Bonnyburn, though I know it all by heart," she chuckled. "I don't dare leave it behind, for fear 'Tilda should find it. She 'd burn it up. Oh, Mr. Graham! If it had n't been for the fairies—Say!" a sudden thought seized her—"I guess your lucky stone is beginning to work. I guess I am going to be unspelled! Oh, *thank you,* Mr. Saint George!"

She gave him a big hug at the head of the crazy tenement staircase, and they clattered merrily down, hand in hand.

CHAPTER II

BONNYBURN

"From the side of some hoar hill,
Through the high wood echoing shrill."

FORTY-FIVE minutes late, the train panted up a steep slope into the heart of the mountains. It had left the big city eight hours behind, and the next center was still many miles away. There was a general relaxation among the hot and tired passengers; most of them had long ago ceased to look at the passing scenery, though it was well worth their attention. Hats and coats were abandoned, collars loosened; handkerchiefs were tied in rakish knots about fat throats; smutty red faces were pillowed on smutty red plush. The stale odor of orange and banana skins made the stuffy, hot air of the car still more unpleasant; and a baby cried fretfully. How tedious a long July day may be!

A brakeman came lazily down the aisle and stopped at a seat occupied by a little girl with

a shabby suitcase. Maggie's face was pressed closely against the window, and, absorbed in the wonderful moving picture outside, she knew nothing of the discomforts within. It was to her an enchanted journey, the first she had ever taken. The brakeman touched her shoulder.

"You get off at the next station," he said, nodding out of the window. "We are coming to Bonnyburn now."

Maggie raised to him big, eager eyes. "Oh!" she cried. "This is Bonnyburn! Ain't I glad!" She clutched her suitcase and started to her feet. The brakeman laughed.

"I 'll bet you 're glad!" he said. "It 's a long trip for a kid like you, all alone. But we are n't there yet. I 'll help you off when the train stops."

Maggie sank back again onto the seat, setting in place her new straw hat with its bright ribbon, and smoothing out the gingham dress which had been clean when she left home. Then she turned again to the window, with its panorama of towering peaks, green slopes dotted with white patches, and the silver burn threading the valley below. It was a fair and goodly land through which the train was toiling. To Maggie of the city tenement it seemed more.

"I 'm glad it 's *here!*" said Maggie to herself. "Ain't it beautiful? Look at the shining water and the grass and the white things without any tails to speak of; they must be lambs, I guess. Real lambs! Ain't it like the pictures in the book? And look at that lovely palace up there on the hill, all white, like frosting! My! I bet a fairy princess lives there!"

"Bonnyburn! Bonnyburn!" called the brakeman, as the train slowed up to a tiny station neighbored by a mere handful of houses. Maggie clutched her pocket-book and rose nervously. The brakeman seized her suitcase and pushed her before him to the door.

"Get a move on!" said he, not unkindly. "We don't stop here for refreshments!" For Maggie, a prey to sudden shyness, hesitated. There would be strange people to meet her. What would they do? What should she say to them?

The brakeman darted down the steps with her suitcase, and then fairly jerked Maggie from the train, setting her breathless on the platform. The conductor waved his hand, and the train puffed carelessly away.

Maggie stood looking about her, somewhat dazed. There was no one at the station to meet

her. The station-master came out, picked up the mail-bag, and vanished. She was quite alone. The place seemed entirely deserted; not a soul appeared in the neighboring houses, no one on the road. Maggie would have been glad to see even a dog. But apparently there was none in Bonnyburn; nothing alive. How different from the city it looked. And oh! how still it was!

Maggie's lip trembled, and her little pale face looked very pathetic and wistful. She sat down on the suitcase and lifted her eyes to the hills. The hills! A great, wonderful wall of them surrounded her. They peered at her over one another's shoulders, rounded in gracious curves and greenly clothed; and the green garments were full of pungent perfume.

"My!" said Maggie, "what big hills! They make me feel awful small. I didn't know the country was so big and kinder lonesome. I wonder if everybody is asleep, and if I 've got to go and wake 'em up, like the prince? Oh, I don't want to! I wish Mr. Graham was here. He 'd know what to do. And it 's so still!—I wish there 'd be a noise, or something!"

Hardly were the words out of her mouth, when there came a strange sound from somewhere be-

hind her. *"Ze-e-e-e!"* it shrilled, brassy, piercing, and wicked through the hot air. Maggie jumped up wildly and looked behind her; but there was nothing to be seen. *"Ze-e-e-e!"* it came again out of nowhere. It seemed like the taunting voice of some naughty spirit, glad to see her unhappy.

"It must be the un-fairies!" said Maggie to herself. "I never heard them speak before. Oh, what shall I do?" She looked about her despairingly. There seemed no place in which to hide; no one to help her in all this silent land.

Suddenly she had an idea. She thrust her hand into her pocket and grasped the lucky stone which Mr. Graham had given her. "I 'm glad I brought the lucky stone!" said she. "I 'll hold on to it tight, and I guess nothing can hurt me."

It seemed indeed as if the touch of the stone was helpful. For at that very moment there came other welcome sounds,—the rumble of wheels and a horse's trotting feet. Maggie turned eagerly, and spied a carryall hurrying to the station. In it were a man and two children, a boy and a girl, and they were all craning their necks and grinning. Presently, they drew up close to Maggie, and the man sprang out onto the platform. He

was tall and kind-looking, with red hair and whiskers, and twinkling blue eyes.

"Wall!" said he, with a good-natured drawl, "I guess you 're the little gal from the city, ain't ye? Maggie Price? They told us the train would be late, so we went to the store to do some errands for Mother. And then the train come after all. Wa'n't that too bad! Must have seemed kinder lonesome to ye." He had noted the channels of tears on Maggie's dusty face as he lifted her into the back seat of the carryall beside the little girl who sat there, bashful but eager. The boy on the front seat, who held the reins to the old white horse while his father stowed away Maggie's suitcase, turned around and stared at her with a broad grin. He was a year or two older than Maggie, and his merry blue eyes were like his father's.

"I was awful lonesome," confessed Maggie. "And I was scared by the horrid sound."

"Sound? What sound?" asked the farmer, in surprise.

"A loud, zippy sound that came just now. Oh, did n't you hear it? I think it must be something wicked." Maggie turned big eyes from one astonished face to another.

"I don't know what ye mean," said Mr. Tim-

mins, shaking his head. "I ain't heered any queer sound; and there ain't nothing wicked in this place, that I know of. I declare, I don't know what ye mean, child!"

Suddenly the same brassy "Ze-e-e-e!" pierced the air behind them. It seemed nearer than before.

Maggie jumped nervously, grasping the lucky stone in her pocket for safety. "There it is again!" she shuddered. "Oh, what can it be?"

"Why, bless ye! That 's only a locust!" said Mr. Timmins, laughing, and the children tittered.

"Did n't you ever hear a locust before?" asked Bess. Maggie shook her head.

"What is a locust? Is it a fairy?" she questioned. Bob burst into a roar of laughter.

"It 's a kind of a bug," said Mr. Timmins, shaking with mirth; "and it makes that noise with its wings."

"Oh!" cried Maggie, much relieved. "I suppose he tries to make a pretty song, poor thing, and can't; like Jacopo on the floor above us, who wants to sing in the opera, but who can't make the least little tune to save his life."

The children looked puzzled. They did not know what opera was. It was not the last time

Maggie puzzled them during their ride to the farm. For everything she said about the city, which they had never seen, was as strange to them as the country was to Maggie. And besides, they could not understand her queer way of talking about things of which they had never thought before,—things all around them everywhere; just common things.

"Well, anyhow, even if it was not the un-fairies that time, I am glad I brought the lucky stone with me," said Maggie to herself. "It is all so strange and different from what I expected! I am sure there are things going on everywhere in this queer place that these other children don't know about. I must keep my eyes open."

CHAPTER III

THE HILL

"Towers and battlements it sees,
Bosom'd high in tufted trees."

MAGGIE did, indeed, keep her eyes wide open as they drove through the little village of Bonnyburn and up the long, steep hill beyond it which led to the Timmins farm. At first she talked but little. They passed mysterious, wild woods full of chequered shade that gave her a delicious thrill. Maggie felt sure that all sorts of queer things were lurking in those woods. They rumbled over quaint little bridges, and Maggie had glimpses of shy, sparkling brooks leaping away down the hill. She craned her neck after them, and was strongly tempted to jump out and follow. The broad meadows, the fields of grain, the beds of fragrant fern all seemed very strange and wonderful to her. But nothing pleased her so much as the wild flowers that grew abundantly along the road.

"My goodness!" she cried at last. "Just look

at all those pretty flowers scattered about everywhere! I should think they would be afraid that somebody would steal 'em. The houses are so far apart, and there don't seem to be any policeman to take care of 'em."

"Why, they don't belong to anybody," said Bess. "You can pick all you want to; it ain't stealing. Have n't you ever been in the country before?"

Maggie shook her head. "No; only to the Park. And that ain't like this. The flowers all grow regular in rows. Folks won't let anybody touch them, or even smell. Say, can you really pick these, honest?"

"Sure!" volunteered Bob, swinging himself down over the wheel, as the old white horse stopped for breath. Presently he had gathered a sprawling bouquet of clover, heal-all, butter-and-eggs, and queen's-lace, which he thrust into Maggie's hands.

"Oh! Thank you!" she gasped. "Ain't they beautiful! And just think! I can find 'em myself, all I want, for a whole fortnight! Ain't it fairy-land!"

"Fairy-land!" echoed Bob, with a laugh. "No, it 's just Bonnyburn."

"I think Bonnyburn is fairy-land," insisted Maggie. "It looks just like the pictures. There are n't many houses, but there 's plenty of grass and flowers,—just what the fairies like. Did you ever see any?" She turned eagerly to Bess with the question.

"Any what?" queried Bess.

"Why, fairies." Bob and Bess looked at each other, and burst into roars of laughter. Mr. Timmins's shoulders were shaking also.

"Fairies!" said Bess, at last. "Why, we don't believe in fairies. Do you?"

Maggie's pale cheeks flushed. "Yes, I do!" she declared. "I *know* all about 'em! The folks that don't believe in 'em don't *know*. Mr. Graham says so. He tells me stories at the Settlement—such lovely stories!" She clasped her hands in rapturous recollection. "I 'll bet there 's fairies here. I saw a grand white palace from the train window. It was up on a hill, just like a picture in the fairy books. I am sure a princess lives there."

"A princess in a palace! Ho-ho!" said Bob, grinning. "She must mean the Park. You can see that from the train. It 's the only big white house in town. A fairy palace! Ho-ho!"

"Well, it is a fine house, I guess," Bess defended their guest. "And the Park is right near us, Maggie. At least one part of it is. It 's awful big,—acres and acres. Here 's one of the gates now, see!"

Indeed, just then they came in sight of an imposing gateway in the high wall which ran all the way up the hill on one side of the road. There was a high, white marble arch, with a coat of arms at the top, and gates of iron grill-work through which one had glimpses of lawns and big trees, with here and there a bed of rhododendrons. But what caught and held Maggie's attention were the enormous marble lions standing grandly one on either side of the gate.

"Oh!" said she, in a whisper, clutching Bess's hand eagerly. "Enchanted lions! It *is* a fairy palace!"

"Pooh, pooh!" snorted Mr. Timmins, giving the horse a flick which caused him to start from his creeping doze so suddenly that the little girls' legs flew up in the air and they nearly went out over the back seat; "your head is full of fancies, young one. Them lions are jest stone, and that there place belongs to Mr. Penfold, of Boston,

though he don't scarcely ever come here. And 't is a shame."

"Who does live there?" asked Maggie.

"Nobody," said the farmer, "except servants. There 's always been somebody to take care of the Park, but they won't let anybody else inside the gates. It 's a grand big house and pretty gardens, they say. It 's thirty years since he bought the place. But I 've never been inside. None of the townfolk has. The Penfolds hain't been here for ten years. They 've got half a dozen houses scattered round the hull world in different places; but they can't live in 'em all. 'T ain't right, I say!"

"There 's somebody staying at the Park now, Father," said Bob, unexpectedly. "I saw an automobile go in there last week."

"Who was in it?" demanded Bess.

"I dunno," answered her brother, carelessly; "two women that I never saw before. One of 'em wore a black veil so thick she looked as if she had n't any face."

"A veiled princess!" murmured Maggie, under her breath. "Oh, ain't it just like the Arabian Nights!"

"I guess it was some new servants," said Bess,

"Oh!" said she. "Enchanted lions! It *is* a fairy palace!"

practically. "There are always new ones coming and going, 'cause they get so lonesome. Mother says she don't blame 'em a mite. She says she would n't stay there for anything."

"Oh, how I 'd like to go inside!" said Maggie, clasping her hands.

"Wall, ye can't, young lady!" said Mr. Timmins, with a twinkle. "That 's one thing ye can't do while ye 're here with us. We 'll make ye as happy and comfortable as we can, to the farm. That 's what we promised Mr. Graham. We 'll fatten ye up with good milk and eggs and berries, and welcome. And we 'll let ye run wild as an Injun and do jest as ye please all over our place. But ye can't go into the Park. There 's signs up everywhere sayin' 'No Trespassin',' and I don't want nobody at my place to git arrested for trespassin'. Besides, you could n't git over the wall ef you tried. So that 's the end of it."

Bob and Bess laughed. They were used to their father's kind, blunt manner.

"Maggie won't have time to bother with the Park," said Bob, "we 've got so many things to show her, and such a lot to do. Why, two weeks is no time in Bonnyburn."

"It 's a long time in the tenement," sighed

Maggie, "but that does n't matter now." Thereupon the children began to ask her questions about her home. At the mention of it Maggie looked suddenly weary and the light went out of her eyes. Seeing this, kind Mr. Timmins cut short the children's questions. "There, there! Don't you bother her," he said, "Maggie is tired and hungry, and she don't want to talk any more till after supper, I know."

Bess and Bob looked ashamed. But presently they began again to prattle to their guest, telling her what fine things they had planned to do while she was in Bonnyburn. To all this Maggie listened eagerly, interrupting now and then with questions that set the others laughing. And so, after a merry ride, they came at last to the top of the hill, and turned into the homely dooryard of a cottage under two aged oaks, where hens and chickens were scratching busily, where a herd of patient cows waited behind bars to be milked, and where a motherly woman in a clean, white apron stood on the doorstep smiling a welcome.

"Well, you *are* late!" cried Mrs. Timmins. "Come right in, Maggie, and get washed up for supper. My! you must be tired and hungry, you poor child. Bess, take her right up to your room,

where she 'll find warm water and a clean towel. Come down as soon as you can, children, for I 've got hot griddle-cakes waitin' for you, and they 'll never be any better than they are now."

It was a cordial welcome, and Maggie's heart warmed to it. Bess pulled her little guest after her up the stairs to the clean, simple bedroom.

"Oh, ain't it sweet!" sighed Maggie, looking at the two little cots side by side. "Am I going to have a bed all to myself? I never did before. Won't it be grand!"

"But we 'll be near each other," said Bess, hugging her. "And you 'll tell me some of those fairy stories, won't you, Maggie?"

Maggie looked at her with shining eyes. "You bet I will!" she cried. "I 've got my fairy book in the bag here. But you don't need stories here the way I do at home, 'cause this place *is* a fairy tale. And I know I 'm in fairy-land; everything is so clean and sweet, and everybody is so nice."

CHAPTER IV

THE PRINCESS

"Where perhaps some Beauty lies,
The Cynosure of neighboring eyes."

ON the hot July day which brought Maggie to Bonnyburn, a young woman sat on the piazza of a great white villa overlooking the valley and watched the train creep like a tiny black worm out of the woods and across the open to the station. She was not interested in the train; she watched it merely because there was nothing else to do. She was not interested in anything.

Allegra was very beautiful, and she wore beautiful clothes, all white from top to toe. She sat in a long, wicker chair, with rosy pillows behind her head, and with a little table at her elbow on which were a bowl of pink roses, books and magazines, and candy. But all that afternoon she had not opened the books nor touched the candy. She had just sat there as she did every day, with her slender hands lying listlessly in her lap, looking

off over the valley with a shadow in her eyes, and with the corners of her pretty mouth drawn down into a sad crescent. She had a happy name; but she did not look happy. In fact, she thought that her heart was broken, and that the world was a very terrible place, which as you know is far from the truth.

In the background hovered a figure, also in white, with starched collar and cuffs. Presently Nurse Miggs came forward with a tray holding a tinkling pitcher and a glass, which she set on the table with a timid smile.

"Miss Allegra," she said softly, "I have brought you some nice cold lemonade which I made myself. I am sure it will taste good on this hot afternoon. Do have some!"

Allegra glanced languidly at the pitcher. "You are very good, Miss Miggs," she said, in a dull tone; "but I don't care about it."

"Shall I read to you?" queried Miss Miggs, patiently.

"No; I don't care about reading. I don't care about anything," answered Allegra.

"I know, I know," murmured Miss Miggs, lifting her eyebrows. "You have told me that before. And that 's why we came up here where

there is nothing especially to care for, is n't it? You thought, your father and mother thought, you might be happier here than at those places where so many people go."

"Happier!" Allegra gave a sad little laugh, and relapsed into gloom.

"Well,—less unhappy, then," said her companion. "But I must say, I don't agree with them. I believe you 'd be better off where there were more folks and more going on." Miss Miggs smiled insinuatingly. A week of Bonnyburn alone with Allegra and the servants in the Penfold villa had made her desperately homesick.

"It 's no use, Miss Miggs," said Allegra, dully. "I shall never be happy again. I might as well be here as anywhere. But that is no reason why you should stay here to be bored. I do not need you. I can get along quite well by myself, for I am not ill. I don't see why Mother and Father insisted on your coming here with me."

The nurse bit her lip and tried to answer jauntily. "I guess they thought you would be better off with some company besides the servants," she said.

"Oh, it would n't matter," sighed Allegra. "I

don't want much. I suppose I have to eat three times a day, so long as I can."

Miss Miggs stifled a sniff. She knew that so far as she was professionally concerned, there was nothing whatever the matter with Miss Penfold.

"If she was a poor girl," she said to herself, "she 'd have to go to work, whether she felt like it or not, and forget these heart-troubles that all of us have, sooner or later." Miss Miggs gave a wee sigh.

Allegra glanced languidly at the watch lying on the table beside her. "Half after four," she murmured, "the train is late again to-day. But what is that to me? All hours are just the same."

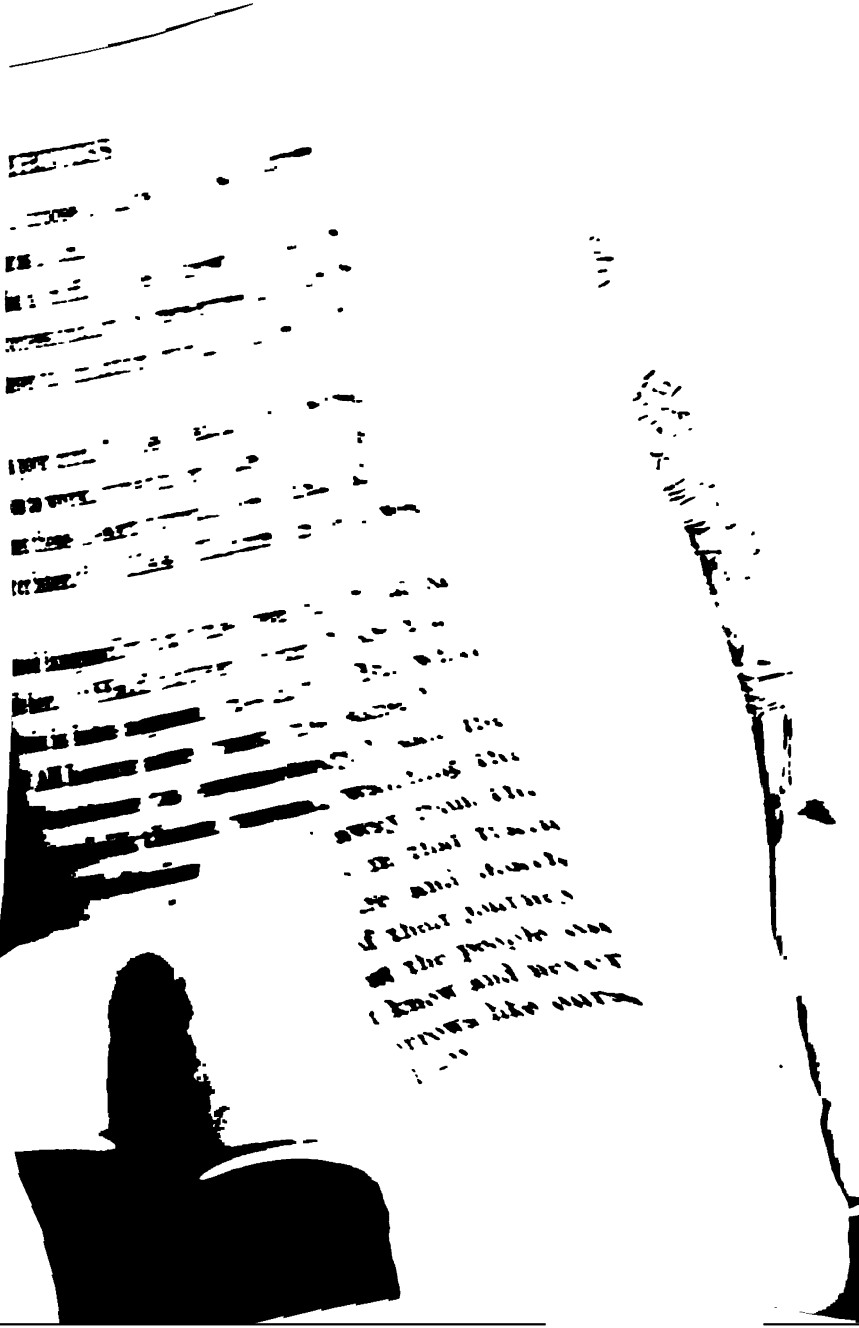
"I suppose it matters to somebody," said the nurse, with more spirit than usual, watching the puffs of smoke as the train pulled away from the station. "Just think of the folks in that train who are going on errands of life and death, maybe, anxious to be at the end of their journey. Sometimes I get to thinking about the people on the passing trains, that we don't know and never shall; folks with troubles and sorrows like ours, or more likely worse. And I feel—"

"I think I 'd like to be alone, Miss Miggs, if you don't mind," interrupted Allegra, wearily. "You need n't bother to come until dinner-time. Tell James to serve dinner out here. It will be cooler."

"Very well, Miss Allegra." The nurse retired with her head held high. "I think I can't stand it much longer," she said to herself. "The sulky, selfish girl! I 'm glad I never yet was so comfortable that I did n't know it!"

For a whole hour the princess of the white palace lay quite still, gazing blankly over the valley toward the green hills, bathed in glory. She did not see the hills, nor feel the glory. She was thinking only of herself and of how miserable she was; rebelling because wealth at her command could not buy the heart's desire.

From the piazza a broad path, bordered by rhododendrons and set at intervals with urns full of flowers, led down a series of terraces and was lost to view in the greenery of a maple grove. A wonderful butterfly with spots of blue and gold, hovered over the bowl of roses on the table. He paused there for a time, then fluttered about Allegra's head, and finally a-lighted on one of the hands lying so still in her lap. For some seconds



he rested, waving his wings like tiny fans. Then he fluttered away, but soon returned to alight on Allegra's dress.

Several times he flitted, always returning as if attracted by her dainty freshness. Allegra noticed him idly at first; gradually she began to watch his movements, to wonder where next he would alight. He was so beautiful! She had never seen so beautiful a butterfly. Suddenly he rose high in the air, hovered thrice about her head, and then instead of settling as before, flew away down the path.

Allegra followed his flight with her eyes. He paused now and then to greet the flowers in the vases. Impartially he visited the rhododendrons on each side of the path. Allegra found herself leaning forward the better to watch him. There was a fascination about him; his wings beckoned her. Finally he disappeared. Allegra rose slowly, and, leaning on the balustrade, peered down the path. Far away as her eye could see, through the maple grove, came the gleam of flowers in the sunken garden. He must be there.

Allegra turned to the table and picked up, she knew not why, the box of sweets that lay there. Then, trailing white draperies, she descended the

marble steps and followed the path which the butterfly had taken.

It was a beautiful path. Down a side of that same hill up which the old white horse had carried Maggie Price, it descended over the velvet terraces. Allegra passed the maple grove and came to the sunken garden, a sunburst of flower-jewels blazing in the light. In the midst of it was a pool where blue lotus and pink water-lilies were idly moored. At the farther end stood a sun-dial twined with rose-bushes, on which some blossoms yet lingered. The butterfly was resting there, upon the familiar motto,

"I Mark Only Sunny Hours"

As Allegra came up he rose lightly and fluttered away down a side path. For some reason she felt that she must follow.

It was a pretty little path; at first a grassy way between box hedges. As she went on, however, it grew narrower and more crooked, and wound gradually upward. Presently it became again a mere foot-path through the grassy slopes of what had once been wild pasture-land, before Mr. Penfold had walled it into the Park. It was not good

for her delicate dress and white shoes; but still she trailed on after the butterfly.

At last, through a tiny grove of pines, Allegra spied the Park wall and a gateway of solid oak where the path ended. There was a rustic bench beneath the wall, and there she sat down to rest. As she did so, the butterfly fluttered up from the ground at her feet and flew away over the wall. So, that was the last of the guide who had brought her here! He had deserted her, after all. Allegra stared after him, and then fell to brooding gloomily.

Suddenly, she heard voices beyond the wall; children's voices. They were talking apparently just outside the gate.

"Oh, Maggie! Did you see that big butterfly?" a little girl was saying. "He came right over the wall without any trouble. I wish we could fly like that. Don't you?"

"Yes, indeed! I always wanted to fly the worst way!" The second girl's voice was sweeter and deeper than the other. "Well, is that a sure-enough butterfly? Ain't he handsome! He 's the first one I ever saw, except in books. Oh, my! Perhaps he was n't really a butterfly at all, but a fairy messenger!"

"Oh, come along!" came a boy's impatient growl. "You girls don't want to stay here all day, do you? There ain't anything else to see; I told you so. This is only a back gate. There are lots of 'em; but this one is nearest to our place. Come along! I want to show Maggie the catbird's nest."

"Wait a minute," said the voice of Maggie. "I just want to be *sure* that butterfly don't mean something. They 'most always do, in the books. Suppose a fairy princess was over beyond the wall now, wanting to get a message to us; it would be awful to go away without trying to find out what she wants. I 'm sure Mr. Saint George would think so. I 'm holding on to the lucky stone he gave me. Let 's wait a minute and see if anything else happens."

There was silence outside the wall. Allegra had listened with languid interest to the children's prattle. Now she found herself wondering who they were, especially the little girl with the strange voice who talked so intimately about the fairies. Once Allegra herself had believed in fairies.— But, after all, who cared?

Presently, the silence was broken again by the voice of the child who had spoken oftenest. "O

Fairy Princess! If you are over there and can hear us, please give us a sign!"

"Oh, pshaw!" cried the boy's voice, disgustedly. "Come on. You girls are acting foolish."

At these scornful words something of opposition rose in Allegra's heart. She felt no especial sympathy for the little girl's appeal, but she resented the boyish tone of superiority. She rose, and, tiptoeing to the gate, tossed over the wall a handful of bonbons from the box which she carried.

There was a moment of astonished silence. Then a whoop of joy answered her. The scornful boy at least appreciated the omen.

"Oh, Bess!" said the eager voice of Maggie, "she *is* there. I felt she was. It is fairy candy! Did you ever see the like of it?"

"No!" whispered Bess, rapturously, "I never did. Ain't it lovely!"

"Oh, thank you, dear Fairy!" Maggie went on fervently. "Now we know you really are here. I wonder if this is your favorite place. Say, give us another sign,—shall we find you here again?"

"Yes, give us another sign!" Bess's tone was eager.

"Yep!" the boy's voice was greedy, and sounded as if from a full mouth; "giv 's 'nother!"

Allegra behind the wall hesitated. Why should she go on with this nonsense? And yet, why not? To do so would not commit her to anything further. Emptying the box, she tossed both hands high in the air, causing a generous shower of bonbons to fall on the other side of the wall.

Squeals of delight hailed this second manifestation, and Allegra smiled grimly to think how easy it was to make children happy.

"We 'll come to-morrow, all right!" cried the most interesting voice. "And then—perhaps you 'll let us see you, kind Fairy?"

At this, Allegra shrugged her shoulders and moved away from the gate. She had no idea of letting this farce go any further. She heard the children's voices faint and fainter as she retraced her way back to the sunken garden. Languidly she climbed the terraces to the house. Miss Miggs, anxious in gray silk, came down to meet her.

"Well, where in the world have you been?" she asked. "I could n't imagine what had happened, when I found you were not on the piazza where I left you."

"H'm! I think I may walk in my own garden, may I not?" said Allegra, somewhat tartly.

"Why, of course, Miss Allegra," returned the nurse, hastily. "I 'm only too glad to have you do so. But you might have told me. I hope you will do it again, it is so good for you."

"I do not expect to do it again," said Allegra, shortly. She sat down to the usual dreary meal, served on the veranda, with Miss Miggs opposite. But she kept thinking in spite of herself of that strange child who believed in the fairies, who thought the unseen Allegra herself was a fairy.

CHAPTER V

DRAGONS

"Hard-by a cottage chimney smokes
From betwixt two aged oaks."

THE cottage where the Timmins family lived was on the top of one of the highest hills in Bonnyburn. It was a very little cottage, and the two huge old oak trees standing one on either side of the front door, like sentinels, made it look still smaller. Maggie felt sure they were two wicked giants who had been changed into trees once upon a time.

She pointed out to Bob and Bess what they had never before noticed,—that the great branches which stretched over the cottage roof looked exactly like knotted arms; and the roots which braced the trunks, half buried in the ground, were like the giants' great, bare knees. She even made the other children recognize two weary, wrinkled faces, where they had before seen only rough brown bark. And certain knot-holes

ever afterwards peered through the leaves at them like the patient eyes of the enchanted monsters, who had been standing here on guard for centuries and centuries, as Maggie declared.

Poor old giants! Whatever they had done in the past, Maggie felt very sorry for them now; and when she went in and out of the cottage she often paused to give the great trunks a friendly pat and to whisper a kind word to the sighing branches.

But while the Timmins house was tiny, the barn on the opposite side of the road was to the same degree big. This was not so unfortunate as it seems. For in the house there lived but the one small family of Timminses. But the barn was the home of more kinds of creatures than Maggie could at first call by name; and some of these had big families of their own, too.

"Why, it 's like a tenement!" cried Maggie, the first time Bob and Bess took her to see the barn.

"I think it must be like the Ark," said Bess, her imagination stimulated by Maggie's stories. "I guess Noah built his Ark just like the biggest kind of a barn. Then there would be places for all the different kinds of animals,—pens and stalls and coops and stanchions, and cotes for the birds;

and a loft for hay, and grain-chests,—just like ours. But what about water? The animals would get thirsty, would n't they?"

"Oh!" cried Maggie. "That 's easy. They just had to put a long hose-pipe out of the window into the flood and the animals could take turns in sucking up the water; like me, the time Mr. Graham let me have soda with a straw."

Maggie had never seen a sheep at close range, or a calf, or pigs, or turkeys, or guinea-hens. She had never seen ordinary ducks and geese alive, but went into fits of astonished laughter over their funny feet and awkward ways.

"They are worse than Ikey Blumenthal, when he had his first try at folk-dancing at the Settlement!" she exclaimed. "They are n't acquainted with their own feet, and don't seem to know what to do with them."

Bob and Bess told her how the hens liked to steal their nests; Maggie had never heard of such a thing. She could not understand why the poor old hen had not a perfect right to her own eggs, and why she was not a good creature to hide them when she could, so as to give them a chance of becoming chickens and growing up, as other little creatures may.

"Oh shucks!" said Bob. "To-morrow morning you 'll have to come out with us and hunt eggs. And I guess you 'll be as tickled as we are when you find where the sly old lady has hidden them, Maggie."

Maggie shook her head. "It 's hide-and-seek all on one side," she declared. "I 'll side with the poor mother hen."

"I guess you would n't if you had to miss your breakfast on her account," said Bess pointedly.

"I 'm not used to eggs for breakfast," said Maggie. "I 'm not used to much of anything. At least, I was n't until I came here. This is so different! Just think of having eggs—and *pie* for breakfast!"

The second day of Maggie's stay in Bonnyburn it rained in torrents, which was a great disappointment to them all. There were so many things which they wanted to do out of doors. But after all, there was the barn to play in.

"Let 's play hide and seek," suggested Bob soon after breakfast. The others hailed the idea gleefully. Hide and seek in a country barn; could anything be greater fun for a city child than that? Maggie soon forgot her disappointment about the rain, and her desire to go back to the

gate of the Park. That could wait for another day.

Imagine it! Maggie had never before seen a haymow! Bob and Bess showed her how to climb a ladder and walk along the narrow beams like a rope-dancer. Maggie was not slow; soon she was jumping headlong into the fragrant hay as fearlessly as the country children. She discovered for herself how to make a tunnel down under the hay, and there she lay giggling for many delicious minutes while the others hunted for her high and low. They could hardly believe it possible that dinner-time had come when they heard the sound of the great bell across the barnyard.

All day long it rained, and all day long they spent in the barn. There was not a hole or corner into which Maggie did not poke her inquisitive little nose. She came upon all sorts of strange, spidery machines, some with teeth and some with wings, which the children tried to explain to her. But Maggie did not know what "plowing" and "reaping," and "haymaking" meant.

"I 'd rather play they 're dragons!" she said. "They look like dragons."

"What is a dragon?" asked Bess, eagerly.

"A dragon is a great big thing, something like an alligator, only bigger—"

"Where did you ever see an alligator?" interrupted Bob.

"Did n't you ever see one? We have them in the aquarium," said Maggie. "The biggest was as long as—as a cow. It was all covered with scales, and had a long spanking tail, and bright eyes that saw everything, and a mouth full of sharp teeth. They eat people sometimes."

"Oh!" shuddered Bess. "I 'm glad we don't have 'em here! I should be afraid!"

"But in the city they are shut up in pens and can't eat people," Maggie assured her. "You can go and look at them, and it 's quite safe. But I think there might be real dragons up in these hills! Nobody could shut them up in pens, they were so strong and fierce; twenty times as big as a cow! And fire and smoke came out of their great big eyes and mouths! And they roared and made horrid noises as they came clattering along!"

"Did they look like an automobile then?" suggested Bess.

"Well, something," agreed Maggie. "But they had wings, too, and could fly, and you never knew

when they would come swooping down on you. They were always carrying off princesses to their dens in the mountains. And then Saint George had to pitch in and rescue them. Mr. Graham's name is George. Say, Bob! you be Saint George and fight this dragon!"

"I don't know how," objected Bob. "You be Saint George, Maggie."

So Maggie showed him how to fight dragons. She seized a broomstick and attacked the mowing-machine with manly courage. "Saint George to the rescue!" was her battle cry. After a thrilling struggle, she slew the monster and saved the life of Princess Bess, who had been, it seems, in much danger. Bob looked on and laughed.

"You 're great at making up games, Maggie!" he said.

"Sometimes they get so real I believe in 'em myself!" said Maggie, as, flushed and disheveled, she leaned on her sword of broomstick.

Indeed, Maggie told her stories so vividly, with such an air of believing that they were quite true, that Bob and Bess found themselves half believing too. It was very queer, like Maggie's speech; for sometimes she talked like a gutter-child, sometimes like a story-book princess. Yet after the

adventure of Maggie's first day in Bonnyburn, they did not make fun of her fancies as they had done at first. But to-day it rained; and, if you remember your fairy books, you know that nothing mysterious ever happened on a rainy day.

CHAPTER VI

THE MESSAGE

"And then in haste her bower she leaves."

AFTER the first rainy day in Bonnyburn, the morning dawned bright and beautiful. When Maggie opened her eyes and lifted her head from the pillow she found Bess grinning at her.

"What shall we do to-day, Maggie?" she asked. "See, the sun is shining. We can go wherever we like, and there is such a lot to choose from!"

"Oh!" said Maggie. "So there is. But I would like most of all to see if we can find the fairy of the Park. Let 's go there first."

"Let 's!" agreed Bess.

But when they told Bob their plans he grumbled. "Oh, pshaw!" he said. "Who wants to do that? Let 's go and see the sugar-house instead."

"I want to see the sugar-house too," said Maggie, hesitating. "But it ain't polite to keep the fairy waiting, if she is expecting us, is it? I 'm

going to the little gate. You need n't come if you don't want to."

"I 'm going too!" echoed Bess. "You 'd better come along, Bob. 'Member the candy?"

Bob remembered the candy well. No, he was not going to be left out if there were any more such "signs" to be given! "Come on, then!" he said. "I bet you I 'll be there first!" And off he raced.

They ran down the lane behind the barn, through a maple grove and a sea of fern. They sped down a sloping pasture toward the high wall which separated the world of mystery from that of every day; toward the gate tantalizingly shut.

With eyes shining and hair streaming, Maggie's short legs flews over the ground in the wake of the sturdier country children. Sometimes her unaccustomed feet stumbled in unexpected hollows filled with bracken, and she fell headlong; but she did not care. Bob and Bess enjoyed the race for its own sake. But Maggie was imagining all sorts of things that might be going to happen.

What really did happen she had not foreseen. Bob brought up abruptly at the gate with a whoop of excitement. Bess dropped down on her knees beside him eagerly. And when Maggie came puff-

ing to them some seconds later, she found them marveling over something which they seemed to have found on the ground just outside the gate, in the very spot where they had received the "sign" the day before.

"What is it?" panted Maggie, out of breath.

"Something 's happened again!" was Bob's reply. "Gee! don't it look good! Of course they 're for us?"

" 'Course they are," echoed Bess, stretching out an eager hand toward the great basket of fruit: golden oranges, pineapples, bananas, nuts, figs, dates,—other fruits which the country children had seldom seen, and that Maggie had met only in books.

"Oh, how grand! Ain't there anything written?" asked Maggie, eagerly. "Yes, there is!" Her sharp eyes had spied a bit of paper sticking up from the midst of the luscious, fragrant mound. " 'To the little girl who believes in fairies,' " she read the written words slowly.

"It 's yours, Maggie," said Bess, drawing back her hand. "Ain't you lucky! I believe it 's all on account of your lucky stone!"

"She begins to get presents as soon as she gets

here," said Bob, wagging his head. "This ain't ever happened to *me*, and I 've lived here all my life!"

"That 's because you did n't believe in things, Bob," said Maggie. "But now you do, don't you? It 's for us all, of course; not just for me. See, there 's three of everything."

"So there is!" said Bob, brightening; and being urged, he helped himself and so did Bess. The three sat in a circle, each sucking an orange, looking at one another, then at the basket, then at the wall behind which certainly lurked a mystery—a kind mystery.

"My! what wonderful trees there must be in that garden!" exclaimed Bess.

"Oh, I wish the princess, whoever she is, would come out!" cried Maggie. "I 'm going to invite her!"

"Oh, don't!" begged Bess, in a stage-whisper. "I—I 'm afraid, Maggie!" Bob looked a bit uncomfortable as he wiped his mouth on his coat-sleeve, but he said nothing.

"We 've got to thank her somehow, and I 'm going to ask her to come. She kind of promised she would the other day," said Maggie.

As Maggie walked up to the gate, Bob and Bess rose to their feet and stood ready to run at a moment's notice.

"What ho! kind Fairy!" called Maggie, sweetly, trying to talk like the story-book. "We thank you for being so good to us. May it please you to let us see you?"

She stepped back from the gate and gazed expectantly. The other two craned their necks; but nothing happened. "I guess she is invisible!" whispered Maggie to her partners. "Oh, Fairy," she went on, addressing space over the wall, "if you mean that we can't see you, won't you please give us a sign?"

There was a pause. Then over the wall came a little bouquet of flowers such as grew nowhere in Bonnyburn. Maggie caught and held it to her nose eagerly. "Oh! ain't they pretty! It 's a sign she is invisible!" she whispered. Bob and Bess drew nearer, their eyes fairly bulging from their heads. "Well," Maggie went on, "if we can't see you, won't you please let us come inside your wall and see the wonderful things there? It must be fairy-land!"

The children held their breaths, frightened at Maggie's daring. Presently, after what seemed a

long time, a great pink water-lily, the like of which they had never seen, came flying over the wall. Maggie lifted the flower reverently. "It is the most beautiful thing I ever saw," she said. "Just think, if it grows in the garden over there, what the place must be like! Oh, there are words written on it!" On one of the pink petals there was a faint tracery: *"Perhaps. To-morrow at ten."*

Maggie read the words eagerly. "To-morrow at ten! We will be here, sure!" she cried. The children waited no longer, but ran home with their basket of fruit and flowers, and told a confusing tale to the farmer and his wife.

"Wall, I swan!" ejaculated Mr. Timmins as they talked it over when the children were in bed that night. "What do ye think of it, Mother?"

"It sounds like one of Maggie's made-up stories," said she, shaking her head. "That child does beat all!"

"Them fruits and flowers did n't grow in no fairy tale!" commented the farmer. "They come out of the Park greenhouses, or I 'm a scarecrow. But who 's this 'fairy' they talk about? That 's what I 'd like to know."

"So should I," agreed Mrs. Timmins. "But let 's not bother the children about it. They 're

havin' the time of their lives with Maggie Price."

"All right, all right, so long as they don't git into mischief," said the farmer, doubtfully. "But Maggie was so set on gittin' into the Park,—I ain't allowin' trespassin', you know."

CHAPTER VII

THE QUEER OLD WOMAN

"Sometimes walking, not unseen,
By hedgerow elms, on hillocks green."

PROMPTLY the next morning the three children were standing in a row gazing eagerly at the little gate in the Park wall. When the far-off village clock struck ten, they expected certainly to see the gate swing open and—something happen. But the last faint stroke of the musical bells quivered into silence, and nothing occurred. The children looked at one another with drooping mouths.

"Nothing doing!" said Maggie, disappointedly. "Ain't it too bad!"

"Not even an apple to-day," grumbled Bob, searching the ground with greedy eyes.

"Oh, well! Let 's go home and play hide-and-seek in the orchard," suggested Bess, with a sigh.

"No, I 'm going to sit down and wait," declared Maggie, following her words with action.

"Well, I 'm not!" Bob turned on his heel. Bess hesitated. Just then, they heard a little noise behind them. Somebody was coming down the pasture along the wall. As the sound came nearer, they saw a little, bent old woman in a long, hooded cloak which covered her from head to foot. She was leaning on a cane and hobbling painfully. Under her arm she carried a black cat. They could not see her face clearly because of the hood and the long gray hair that straggled over her forehead.

Maggie grasped Bess's hand excitedly. "She looks like a really, truly witch!" she whispered. "And see her black cat!"

The old woman seemed to hear her. "I look like a witch, do I?" she said. "Well, my dears, you can't always judge by looks. And what are you doing here, may I ask?"

The other two looked helplessly at Maggie. "We 're—we 're waiting for some one," said Maggie, bravely. "Some one told us to be here at ten o'clock. But the clock has struck, and there 's nobody here."

"Am I nobody, then?" asked the old woman, tartly. "Ho! Children nowadays don't make much of old folks."

"Oh, are *you* Some One?" asked Maggie, eagerly. "Perhaps you are!"

"I should think so, indeed!" answered the stranger. "Though I may not be the one you expected to see, you would think me some one if you knew who I am. But I am not going to tell you. And now, may I ask who you are, and what you are all doing here?"

The children looked at one another sheepishly. At last Maggie spoke up. "We hoped the fairy would let us come into her Park. We want to see the wonderful things there."

"Humph!" croaked the old woman. "Aren't there any wonderful things outside?"

"Oh, yes!" cried Maggie, eagerly, "very wonderful to me, for I have never been in the country before. But I like the fairies best of all. And these kids are beginning to like them, too."

The old woman eyed the children in turn. "Who is this fairy you talk about?" she asked.

"We don't know," answered Maggie, quickly. "Do you?"

The question was so sudden that the old woman jumped. "Don't you ask questions!" she said sharply. "That is *my* business. Come, now; you say you have never been in the country.

Where do you live then? Tell me everything. And tell me no fibs, mind. For it 's not a good thing to tell lies to *me,* I assure you!" She sat down on a hummock of grass and took the black cat upon her knee, where it sat blinking its yellow eyes at the three.

Maggie flushed. "I don't tell lies to anybody," she said.

Bob and Bess shifted uneasily from one foot to the other. "Very well, then," said the old woman. "Now let me hear."

Maggie pouted and kicked the grass at her feet. The old woman eyed her keenly. "Don't be sulky," she commanded. "I want to be friendly. Perhaps I can help you to get sight of what 's inside there," she nodded over her shoulder toward the wall, "if you give me good answers."

Maggie looked up. "Can you help us really?" she asked. The old woman nodded mysteriously.

"Perhaps. But first you must tell me why you want to go in there so much. I know something about you already. You are Maggie, *you* are Bess, and that is Bob," she nodded her head at the three in turn.

The children stared. How did she know? This seemed magic indeed! "Tell me why you believe

in the fairies," said the old woman, turning to Maggie with a suddenness that startled her.

"Oh!" said Maggie, "I can't tell why, I just do. They have helped me so many times."

"How?" asked the old woman. "Tell me everything!" And two brown eyes looked through the gray elf-locks at the child so keenly that Maggie dropped her own eyes.

"Why, you see," said Maggie, faltering, "when things were the limit at home and I got grouchy, I only had to imagine that I was enchanted for a little while, and that I was really somebody else, living somewhere else in a fairy tale, and that some day it would all come out right; the way it always does in fairy tales."

"Ah, always comes out right—in fairy tales!" muttered the old woman under her breath.

"And I guess it was really true!" cried Maggie. "For here I am in this lovely place,—with fairies for neighbors,—and grand things happening all the time. And when I do have to go back again, it will never be so bad any more. For Bob and Bess are my friends now, and they will write to me all about what goes on here. I never had any one write to me in all my life! I never wrote a letter till I came here."

"And she 's coming up to visit us every summer. Father says so," interrupted Bob, forgetting to be shy.

"And Mother says she does n't know what we 'll do without her," chimed in Bess, fondly squeezing Maggie's hand. "And she 's been here only four days."

"Ah!" said the old woman, who had been very quiet during Maggie's story. "And now what have you two to say for yourselves? What do you want, trying to get into the Park? Don't you know it 's trespassing for any one but the owner to go there without permission?"

Bob and Bess hung their heads and looked guilty. "It 's all my fault," said Maggie, coming to their assistance. "I wanted to go in. These kids have always lived here and never thought of such a thing. You see, they did n't know much about fairies until I came. But they are mighty good to me. They want to do what I like to do. So we all want to go in, dreadfully!"

"H'm!" mumbled the old woman, "what do you expect to see?"

"We 'd—we 'd like to see the palace and the wonderful garden," answered Maggie, timidly. "And we 'd like to see the Princess, if we can."

"You can't!" said the old woman, gruffly.

"Why not?" Maggie dared to ask. "Is she enchanted, too?"

The old woman hesitated, then answered shortly, "Yes."

"Well, maybe we can break the spell," said Maggie, eagerly. "Generally in the fairy tales it is kids who help the most; kids or a fairy prince. Maybe there is a fairy prince?"

"Ho!" snorted the old woman, so crossly that the three started. "Don't talk of a prince *here!*"

"How is she enchanted?" asked Maggie, hastening to change the subject from princes. "There are lots of ways, I know. Is she turned into an animal or something like that?"

"She is changed," said the old woman, sadly. "She is so changed that she does not know herself. I cannot tell you how. But once she was the happiest lady in the world. Now she is the most miserable."

"Then it must be terrible!" cried Maggie, pityingly. "I 've seen some awful miserable folks in the tenement. But we kids will help her. I know we can. I wish Mr. Graham was here to advise us."

"It is hopeless," said the old woman in a

gloomy tone, though not unkindly. "But what is the use of talking? Here is a token that the lady means you well. Take these." She drew from her pouch three large nuts, and gave one to each of the children.

"Oh!" cried Maggie. "Magic nuts! I know about them." The old woman nodded.

"Crack them," she said. The children did as she bade them. And there, inside each nut, was a tiny gold ring.

"Put them on your right hands," said the old woman. They obeyed, wondering. "Now, come here to-morrow at this time—unless it rains," she continued; "wear your rings, and when you stand outside the gate say these words:

"Open, Gate, I pray,
And let me in to-day."

As you do so, you must rub your rings with your left hands and wish hard that the gate may open. There is much virtue in wishing, you know."

"Yes," said Maggie, eagerly, "I know."

"Wishes don't always come true," suggested Bess.

"Not always," said the old woman with a sigh. "But I think this one will if you wish hard

enough. Now I am going to ask you something. You are all to close your eyes tightly while Maggie counts fifty. Then you may open them. Do as I tell you, if you hope ever to gain your wish."

The children obediently closed their eyes and Maggie began to count aloud, "One, two, three—" When she had pronounced "Fifty!" the three opened their eyes. The old woman was nowhere to be seen.

"She was a witch," said Maggie, with conviction. "But I don't think she was a wicked one."

"I never saw her in Bonnyburn before," said Bob, wonderingly.

So that was the end of this adventure.

CHAPTER VIII

THE ANCIENT GUIDE

"Straight mine eye hath caught new pleasures
Whilst the landscape round it measures."

YOU must not fancy that nothing happened between visits to the "Fairy Tryst," as Maggie called the back gate of Mr. Penfold's Park. In Bonnyburn, something pleasant was happening all the time. It seemed to Maggie that she had never been so busy in all her life.

They visited all the children's favorite play-places: the sugar-house, where Mr. Timmins made maple-sugar in the spring; the corn-field, where lived the lonely scarecrow who went walking abroad every night, so Maggie declared. Then there was the big rock in the pasture where they played ship, sailing on an ocean of sweet-smelling fern; and there was the hollow tree, where Bess kept house for her dolls; and the spring in the meadow, where lived the old trout that nobody—not even Bob—could catch. The children told Maggie all their secrets, in exchange for hers; and

very good secrets they were, too. For the country has a fairy tale all its own, in the wonders of every day.

But it is not with these everyday doings that this story is concerned. This tells of the strange things that happened in the mysterious precincts beyond the Park wall.

Promptly at ten o'clock the next morning, the children, wearing their magic rings, were at the usual place outside the gate. When Maggie gave the signal, they all three rubbed their rings violently with their left hands, and recited the rune told to them by the mysterious old woman. They had been rehearsing it all the morning.

"Open, Gate, I pray,
And let me in to-day."

Hardly were the words out of their mouths, when the door creaked on its hinges, and swung open just far enough for the children to pass.

"Enter!" cried a voice from behind the gate. The children hesitated, eager but timid.

"Enter!" cried the voice again, more loudly. Bob and Bess pushed Maggie forward. Thus encouraged, she tiptoed in, and they followed. As they stood looking about them, an old man came

toward them from the gate, which he had just closed. He was a short old man—no taller than the witch of yesterday—clad in a long brown robe girt with a cord, with long, white hair curling over his shoulders, and a beard falling to his waist.

"Who are you," said he, "who know the magic spell that opens this gate? And what do you seek within?"

"We want to see the place," said Maggie, simply, "and help the Princess, if we can."

"The Princess!" said the old man, shaking his head. "Ah! you cannot see her! But what token have you that you may see the mysteries of this Park?" The children looked at one another blankly. Suddenly Bob had an idea. "I guess he means the rings," he whispered. The old man seemed to hear.

"Only the kernels of the magic nuts win entrance here," he said. "Show them to me." The three held out their right hands, on which shone the three gold rings. The old man bowed. "You have the tokens," he said. "Follow me."

Bob sprang forward eagerly. Bess and Maggie squeezed each other's hands. "It is just like your fairy stories!" whispered Bess. Suddenly the old man turned upon them.

"You are to keep close by me and not stray aside," he said solemnly. "For this is enchanted land, and ill may befall whoever disobeys the command." He looked steadily at Bob, whose eyes dropped before the keen eyes of the ancient, and who fell back beside the two girls. With open eyes and mouths, they followed their strange guide down winding paths, through groves of maple and other trees, to a beautiful, great garden. In the midst a fountain played, and all kinds of lovely flowers were growing, some of them taller than the children's heads.

"Oh!" cried Maggie, stopping short, "I never saw anything so beautiful, not even in the Public Garden at home on the Fourth of July! I bet the fairies go to bathe in that lovely fountain, and sail their flower boats on the water."

The old man, bending over his staff, watched her with half-shut eyes as she stood looking about her, flushed and happy. Now and then she stooped and caressed a flower with gentle hands. Bob and Bess were pleased, too, but not so excited as Maggie. Windows full of pale flower "slips" in tin cans were the popular form of garden in Bonnyburn, where land was cheap but time was precious. In respect of gardens the country farms were

not much better off than the tenements in the city.

At the farther end of the garden, something moved. Was it a bunch of gaudy flowers come to life, or a rainbow in motion? Presently it appeared to be a great bird with a fan for a tail.

"Gee!" cried Bob. "I never saw a turkey-gobbler like that before!"

"Oh, what is it?" asked Bess. "It looks as if it had eyes in its tail!"

"It is a peacock," said their guide. "There is another." And he pointed to the second. "Look, he has dropped three feathers for you. You shall each have one to wear in your hat." Stooping easily for so old a man, he gathered the beautiful feathers and handed them to the children, who took them with pleased wonder.

"Peacocks!" cried Maggie. "Oh, I know about them, but I never saw a real one before. The Princess feeds them, does n't she? And do they draw her ivory chariot?"

The old man shook his head and seemed to smile. "No," said he. "But she whom you call the princess has two white ponies for her carriage."

"Ponies!" cried Bob, eagerly. "I wish I could see them."

"Perhaps you may sometime; but not to-day," said their guide. "Come, we must be going."

They crossed the garden to the terrace, where the peacocks were strutting proudly up and down before a marble balustrade. Here the children gave a chorus of joyous cries. Far down below them, reached by a flight of marble steps, was a lovely little lake which had been concealed from sight till now. Beds of beautiful flowers grew around the lake, tall lilies were reflected in its mirror-like brightness, and there was a little wooded island in the midst of it. Three white swans drifted to and fro, arching their long necks and nibbling quaintly at the water. At the foot of the steps was moored a tiny green boat, with oars waiting in the rowlocks.

"A boat!" cried Bob. "Gee! how I 'd like to go in it! I did n't know there was a boat or a pond in Bonnyburn."

"There are many things you don't know," said the guide, solemnly. "Come." He began to descend the steps, and the children tripped behind him. When they were all seated amid the pretty

silk cushions, the old man took the oars and pushed away into the middle of the lake. The swans followed them idly, arching their necks. The old man rowed them several times around the lake, pulling lustily for his age. Bob wanted to take an oar, but he did not dare ask. The little girls snuggled on the cushions and dabbled their hands blissfully.

At last, the ancient headed the boat straight for the island, where a big rock made a landing-place. Without saying a word, he helped out the three children. Then, to their surprise he got back into the boat and pulled away, leaving them staring after him somewhat anxiously.

"I shall come back for you in just an hour," he called over the water, seeing their blank faces. "Until then, the island and all that is upon it are yours."

"It is like Robinson Crusoe on the desert island!" cried Maggie, clapping her hands. "Mr. Graham told us all about him at the Settlement. What fun!"

Already Bob had begun to investigate the place where they were marooned. He disappeared through the bushes, and presently a shout came down from the top of the little wooded

The old man took the oars and pushed away into the middle of the lake

hill. Although the island was so tiny, the girls could not see him because of the trees. But they scrambled up the path which led from the rock, and soon found the reason of Bob's joy. There he stood, jumping up and down in front of a tiny log hut, scarcely bigger than some doll-house. It had a real door and real windows, a chimney and a piazza.

Bess and Maggie ran up the steps in great excitement. "Oh, what a lovely house!" cried Maggie. "Who do you suppose lives here?"

"Dinner is ready on the table!" shouted Bob. "Come and see!" The girls peeped into the little doorway. Sure enough. In the cabin was a small table with chairs drawn up about it and places set for three persons; and on the table was the nicest little luncheon all ready to be eaten. Sandwiches, and cake, and lemonade; fruit, and candy. It looked so good, as the children stood staring at it, that their mouths watered.

"Um, um!" said Bob, "don't I feel hungry, though!"

"Whose dinner do you suppose it is?" asked Bess, longingly.

"Why, ours, of course!" cried Maggie, stepping into the cabin and taking a chair. "Didn't

the old man say the island and everything on it was ours? He meant we should find this. It is just like the house of the seven wee men in 'Snow White.' I wonder if the dwarfs really *do* live here. The house is just the size for them. How I wish it was mine!"

It did not take them long to finish the goodies. At the bottom of the dish of candy was a scrap of paper, on which was written, "Feed the crumbs to the swans. You will not be sorry."

"Enchanted swans!" gasped Maggie. "I suspected it, because there always are three of them in the stories, and these are so much bigger and whiter than the swans in the Public Garden, and have so much better manners. Probably they are princes cast under a spell. Come, let 's feed them."

She gathered up the crumbs carefully in one of the paper napkins, and ran down the path to the landing. The swans were already waiting there, as if expecting a treat. When Maggie held out her hand, they came quite close, and daintily picked the crumbs which she scattered on the water.

"What have they around their necks?" cried Bess. Sure enough! Each swan bore around

his neck a little canvas bag drawn up with a string.

"There is one for each of us," cried Bob, reaching to the nearest swan, who was not at all afraid of his touch.

"So there is!" Bess drew the string over the neck of the second swan, while Maggie took the third bag with some difficulty from the most timid of the flock. The bags jingled when they were lifted. "Oh, there 's money inside!" cried Maggie.

They opened the bags, and in each found ten-cent pieces and nickels, which they counted; and it turned out that each had just a dollar in change. They had never had so much money to spend in all their lives before.

"My, ain't it a wonderful place!" cried Bess, with shining eyes. "And to think that we never knew it was like this, Bob!"

"You bet it 's great!" cried Bob, jingling his money.

"And the best part of it is, that nobody knows what will happen next!" sighed Maggie, rapturously. They went back to the house and had a beautiful time playing in the funny little place. There were cupboards to hold the tiny dishes

which Bess and Maggie washed and set away nice and clean. There was a shelf of books on the wall, dog-eared by much handling, and Maggie had only to read the titles to know they were histories of all her old friends and Mr. Graham's.

"It is a fairy library!" said she. "I know the enchanted Princess comes here to read. I wish she would come now! If we could only see her, I feel as if we could help to get her back into her own form. I wonder what she is like? She might be one of the swans."

Suddenly, there came a shrill whistle from the lake below. The children stopped their play and listened. Again it sounded; then a third time.

"It must be the old man come back for us," said Maggie, starting down the path.

"Oh, is the hour up already?" cried Bess, regretfully. "I wish we could stay longer."

"We must do as he said," whispered Maggie, "or something might happen to us!"

When they reached the landing-place, they saw the old man rowing toward them across the water. He brought the boat alongside, and motioned them to take their places. At first they were silent, looking wistfully back at the lovely island.

"Well," said their guide, rather impatiently it

seemed, "how did you like the Island of Tiny Things?"

"Oh, it was beautiful!" sighed Maggie. "I should like to live there always."

"There was no bed to sleep on," said practical Bess. "And I should be afraid nights."

"I should n't," said Bob. "I could sleep on the floor. And I 'd kill any one who looked in at the door."

"No one but the fairies could come without a boat," declared Maggie. "And you could n't kill a fairy, if you wanted to. Mr. Graham said so. I suppose they come to the island, riding on the backs of the enchanted swans. Were the swans princes once?" She appealed to the guide, who shook his head.

"I do not know," he answered. "Perhaps so."

"And may we see the Princess to-day?" begged Maggie. "She has been so kind to us, we want to help her. Can you not tell us how to find her?"

Again the guide shook his head. "You cannot see her," he said. "She wishes to remain unknown to you. But come! I have one more thing to show you before you go home."

When they had disembarked at the foot of the marble steps, they followed the old man along the

shore of the lake and down a side path until they came to a grove of birch and hornbeam, where a spring bubbled up out of the ground into a rocky basin. Over it grew a rowan-tree with berries turning crimson. On a mossy ledge beside the fountain was a cup of pearly shell, reflecting as many colors as the peacock's tail.

"This is the wishing-well," said the old man. "I have brought you here so that you may each make your wish. These wishes will not come true immediately. Indeed, they may never come true, if you wish idly or wickedly. Drink of the pure water, and speak your wish aloud as you toss a few drops on the ground for the fairies' sake. You first," and she turned to Bob.

Bob dipped a cupful of the water and drank it slowly, while he thought what he wanted most. "I wish for a jack-knife," said he; "a jack-knife with all kinds of tools inside, like Jo Daggett's."

"Don't forget the fairies!" they had to remind him; and he tossed some drops of water on the ground, grinning as he did so. It was Bess's turn. She had her choice all ready.

"I wish for a new doll," she said. "One with real hair—and teeth," she added as an afterthought, scattering a shower of drops on the moss.

"Now what do you wish?" asked the old man, handing the cup to Maggie. She sipped the water thoughtfully. "I wish," she said slowly at last, "I wish that I may find a way to help the Princess." She sprinkled a generous share of water for the fairies, and looked up at the old man with a pleased smile. He was gazing at her steadily. "Oh, if only my wish comes true, how happy I shall be!" she said.

"And so shall I!" said the old man, quickly, in a gentle tone which he had not used before. "You are a good little thing!"

Suddenly the quiet of the place was broken by a loud barking. The old man raised his head and seemed startled. A great brown dog came bounding down the path toward them, snarling and showing his teeth. He was a terrifying sight. Bess and Maggie shrank instinctively to Bob, who picked up a stone and tried to look very brave. But the old man took a step in front of the three.

"Down, Cæsar, down!" he called. And his voice had strangely changed. It was low and thrilling, and full of command. The dog behaved queerly. It came on growling savagely, but cowering toward the feet of the old man. It acted puzzled

and dazed. Suddenly, sniffing at his robe, it gave a howl of pleasure, and leaping up tried to kiss his face.

"Down, Cæsar, down!" again cried the guide in the same odd voice; but he stretched out his hand and touched the dog on the head. Instantly it fell on all fours and looked up beseechingly. Maggie whispered to Bess,—

"Magic! Did you see him charm that dog?" And Bess nodded. The old man seemed not to hear; but holding up a warning hand he spoke to Cæsar again in the high, cracked voice which was usual with him.

"Do not hurt these children. Be good to them, do you hear?" The dog seemed to understand. He ran up and sniffed at the three in turn, then thrust his cold nose into Maggie's palm and looked up into her face.

"Come," said the guide, holding up his staff solemnly. "It is time to go." And with Cæsar at his side, he led them by a short path back to the gate at which they had entered. "Farewell," said he, opening the gate with the great key which he wore at his girdle. "And may your wishes come true!"

"Can't we come again?" asked Maggie, wist-

The dog behaved queerly, cowering toward the feet of the old man

fully. Bob and Bess listened eagerly for the answer. The old man pondered.

"Not to-morrow," said he. The children's faces fell. "But," he added, "you shall come the day after, if you promise to be obedient and to follow whatever instructions you may receive."

"We promise!" cried the children.

The old man closed the gate behind them. They looked at one another, and then Bess rubbed her eyes. "I feel as if I had been dreaming," she said.

"So do I!" exclaimed Maggie. "But it is n't a dream this time. It 's all true—a lovely thing, as true as the horrid things usually are."

Whereupon they all raced home as fast as they could go.

CHAPTER IX

THE LETTER

"With stories told of many a feat,
How faery Mab the junkets eat."

IT was a hot midsummer evening at the Settlement. George Graham sat in his office alone. Since early morning he had been occupied with every one's business,—every one's except his own. He had not even had time to get his lunch. Now every one else had gone,—the discouraged men who needed a job; the sad women who needed sympathy; the neglected children who needed to be taught something or other; the shiftless neighbors who needed friendly advice.

Every one who could do so had gone to seek fresh air somewhere. But there was little fresh air in this part of the city. The snowy curtains at the open windows of the Settlement House hung limp, unstirred by any breeze.

The Settlement House was clean and wholesome and attractive, in the midst of a neighborhood which was neither. The gray walls were hung

with famous pictures in black and white. There were many shelves of books; simple, cozy furniture, a piano, a pretty rug on the bare floor. Here and there stood vases of flowers which Mr. Graham himself had taken time to arrange that morning before breakfast. The flowers looked tired and wilted now, even as did Mr. Graham himself, who sat at his desk glancing over the mail which had been collecting during the day.

The truth was that he was sadly overworked and overworried. The other Settlement workers were all away on their vacations, and he was doing their work as well as his own. A single-handed fight with a continuous succession of dragons will tell at length even upon the strength and courage of Saint George himself.

He tossed aside a mass of magazines and printed reports, several typewritten announcements of clubs and classes and board-meetings; he hastily avoided certain formidable-looking envelopes which he knew contained bills. He merely glanced at numerous picture post-cards of enviably cool regions, sent by friends who were enjoying themselves abroad. On one fat envelope he recognized the correct, prim handwriting of his chief assistant, Miss Wilkes, and laid it wearily aside. He

knew too well that it contained a rapturous description of sea-shore joys and salty breezes.

"I can't bear that!" he groaned. "Is n't it bad enough to be stifling here alone, without their rubbing it in?—Hello!" Suddenly his eyes brightened as they fell upon a queerly scrawled, much blotted letter addressed to "Mr. Saint George Graham." "Maggie has written again, the good little thing!" Like Maggie, he was apt to talk aloud to himself, when no one was by. He tore the envelope eagerly and glanced over the closely-written pages with a smile. "It is a good long letter," he nodded. "I wonder how she likes the country, poor little Maggie! Let 's see." And he began to study the difficult characters.

Amid the excitements of Bonnyburn, Maggie had found time to write twice to her good friend. Her first letter was very short. That was not strange, for it was the very first letter she had ever written, and she had no one to help her. It merely said that she had arrived safely. This second letter was longer; but it too had cost her many a torn and blotted sheet of paper, and many a sigh. This is exactly what Maggie wrote, except that her spelling and her punctuation were more original.

Dear Mr. Graham:

Bonnyburn is lovely! The country is lots nicer than I thought. There is flowers and grass and cows and sheep and mountains that always look cool, even when you're hot. And there's mowing-machines and things with teeth that look like dragons. And oh! Mr. Saint George, there are fairies too! Bess and I think they are real fairies, but Bob says no. But he don't know about fairies the way you and I do; so it don't count, does it? Bob and Bess wished for a jack-knife and a doll. But I wished to help the Princess. I hope it will come true. She is magicked, Mr. Saint George, and we can't see her. Once she was the happiest lady in the world, but now she is the saddest, so she must be awful sad! I think some wicked person magicked her. Maybe there is a dragon too in the Park. I will tell you if there is, and then you will come and kill him, won't you? because your name is George. We have griddle-cakes for supper and lovely eggs, and the hen hides them in the hay, poor thing, but I know where to find them now, so I'm sorry for her. I want to see you awfully. I wish you would come up and see Bonnyburn, and your affectionate little friend,

MAGGIE.

PS. I mean the hen hides the eggs, not the griddle-cakes.

Mr. Graham laid down the letter with a smile and a sigh.

"Bless her heart! How I should like to be there and show the country to Maggie!" was his first thought. The dragon-slayer was sorely missing his little playmate and their hours of story-telling together, which had grown to be his greatest pleasure.

"What a good time the little thing is having!" he thought aloud. "It is mean to want her back again. Yet here am I grudging the days that are so precious to her. Only a week more for the poor mite! I must see if I can't manage to spin it out for her a bit. If I only had a little more money to do things with!—What 's this she says?" He read the letter over again.

" 'Mountains and flowers,'—that sounds good to me!" He mopped his beaded forehead. " 'Griddle cakes and fresh eggs!' Um! Um! 'Dragons,—and fairies,—and a Princess!' If there are any fairies in Bonnyburn Maggie would be sure to find them, for she is a sort of fairy herself, and I believe in her. I believe she could work a spell,—even here! I 'd like to try it!—But who is this enchanted princess she tells about? If I were going to take a vacation, I 'd like nothing better than to run up into those cool mountains and help my little girl with her fairy tale. But her poor knight has his dragons to fight here, and very little ammunition to fight them with! Whew! It 's hot enough for the most tropical of the beasts, I should say! Well, I 'll not do another stroke of work to-night for any one. Ouch!

How my head aches! I must get some dinner, in a minute."

Mr. Graham laid down Maggie's letter on his desk, and crossing his arms above it rested his aching head upon them.

"An enchanted Princess—and there are fairies too—and there may be a dragon—but I can't kill him—because—because—the hen hides the griddle-cakes—in the hay—"

His poor, tired thoughts trailed off into fairy-land. Saint George was asleep.

Ting! Ting! The telephone jangled cruelly in the sleeper's ears. With a gasp Saint George sprang instantly on guard against possible dragons. As Maggie had said to Bob and Bess, "One never knows when they may come swooping down on you." He seized the receiver at his elbow as if it were a weapon.

"Hello! Hello!" he called. "Yes. This is the Settlement. Yes, I am Graham. What is it?"

In answer he recognized the voice of Mr. Snooks, his lawyer.

"Well, Graham," said the voice, "I believe we 've got another job for you."

Mr. Graham propped his aching head on his

hand and groaned inwardly. But aloud he said, as cheerfully as possible,—"Well, fire away! What is it!"

"It 's about that woman 'Tilda Wilkins, you know; the step-sister of the little friend of yours about whom we were talking the other day."

"Yes, yes,—Maggie Price; what about her?" Mr. Graham was wide awake now, forgetting his aching head.

"Well, it seems the woman has been arrested and the Judge will probably have her sent away for a while. I happened to hear about it, by accident, and I thought you ought to know right away. You might want to see her."

"Good!" cried Mr. Graham, into the 'phone. "I certainly want to have a hand in the affair."

"So I told the Judge to-day," replied the voice of Mr. Snooks. "He was considering what should be done with the little girl, who will be quite homeless now. He thinks it is a case for the Associated Charities or the Society with the long name. But I told him you would need to be consulted first. Was that right?"

"Quite right. We 'll have to fix it up," answered Mr. Graham thoughtfully. "When shall I see the Judge?"

"Could you come to his house to-night, right away?" queried the voice through the 'phone. "The Judge starts for a month's vacation to-morrow morning."

"Every one has vacation but me!" thought Mr. Graham. "I 'll be there in half an hour, Snooks," he promised cordially, hanging up the receiver and seizing his hat. The heat and the aching head did not matter now. He looked at his watch.

"Nearly eight o'clock! I must have been asleep. No time for dinner. Well, I 'm not hungry anyway."

Saint George's busy day was far from ended. There was still some one who needed him.

"I must go to see that inconvenient 'Tilda before I go to bed to-night," he said. "Poor thing! I can't help being sorry for her too. But we must never let her get hold of Maggie again."

He hailed a passing tram which was to take him to the other end of the city.

" 'What shall be done with the little girl, who will be quite homeless?' " The words rang in his ears all the way to the Judge's house. "What shall be done with Maggie, away in the cool country playing with the fairies? I must get myself appointed her guardian, and I must try to get her

another week in Bonnyburn somehow," said Mr. Graham as he rang the door-bell. "After that, —we 'll see."

CHAPTER X

THE QUEST

"Meadows trim with daisies pied,
Shallow brooks and rivers wide."

TWO days elapsed before the children went again to visit the Park; two days packed with merry doings. Then came the morning which the old guide had appointed for their coming, and the sun smiled upon their eager approach to the Fairy Tryst.

"I wonder if we shall see the good old man to-day," said Maggie to Bess, as they stared at the gateway. "I hope so; he was awful kind to us." They had all been rubbing their rings and practising the charm as they ran along:

"Open, Gate, I pray,
And let me in to-day!"

But when they reached the gate, they found it already open, just wide enough to let them in. No one was inside to meet them except Cæsar. The great dog was apparently keeping guard over the

gate. He rose when they entered and came gravely forward, wagging his tail hospitably, and kissing Maggie's hand.

"There is a note tied to his collar," said she, taking it off. And she read aloud this message:

"Shut the door behind you. Follow the arrow, and obey."

"Follow the arrow!" cried Bess. "What does that mean, Maggie?"

"I don't know," answered Maggie. "We must find out. Let 's look around and see if we can find an arrow. That 's the way they do in the stories."

"Why don't they tell you what they mean?" said Bob. "It would save a lot of time. *'Time is money,'* " he quoted from his copy-book.

"Not in fairy-land!" declared Maggie. "They don't try to save time in fairy-land. You have all you want. And they *never* tell you things right out. It 's more fun the other way."

"Well," said Bob, practically, "this is Bonnyburn, and not fairy-land, and we must n't be late for dinner. So let 's hurry up!"

They looked up and around and down and under to find the arrow, Cæsar eying them kindly all the while, as if this was a sort of queer game and he

was in the secret. At last, Bob gave a shout—"Here it is!" He pointed to a tree just off the path. A red arrow was fastened to the bark. The children went in the direction to which it pointed, Cæsar following patiently at their heels.

"Do you suppose it will lead us to another picnic?" said Bob, smacking his lips.

"Oh, I do hope so!" wished Bess fervently. "Were n't those sandwiches good?"

"Maybe it will lead us to the Princess," said Maggie. "That is what I should like best."

"Here 's another arrow!" cried Bess, pointing. A second red streak on a birch-tree bade them turn abruptly to the left. Through berry-bushes and bracken they waded, until a third arrow pointed them into a thick grove of maples. They had to keep their eyes wide open to follow this trail, for there was no path.

"We are just like Indians trailing through the forest," said Bob, who knew his Cooper better than he did his Hans Andersen. "Ain't it fun? Whoop! I wish we could see a real Indian!"

"Oh, no!" cried Bess, shrinking. "He might scalp us!"

"Pooh!" said Bob. "There are n't any Indians here."

"How do you know?" retorted Bess. "You said there were n't any fairies; but whatever it is, there 's something queer, is n't there?"

A twig snapped in the underbrush not far away. Cæsar pricked up his ears and gave a snort of suspicion.

"I think some one is following us!" whispered Maggie. "I have thought so ever since we left the gate. But I don't mind. I 'm sure there is nothing dangerous in the good Princess's Park."

"Oh, I don't like it!" whimpered Bess, looking over her shoulder. "Let 's go home!"

"We can't," said Bob. "We got to go on."

"Yes," agreed Maggie. "Did n't we promise to do just what they said?"

"Come on!" urged Bob. "Here 's another arrow!" and he pushed through a thicket of scrub-oaks to a broad path.

"Ain't it pretty here!" cried Maggie. They had crossed several narrow paths in their trail. Now the arrow bade them follow this broad one. They heard the sound of water dashing over rocks. Presently they came in sight of the brook gleaming through the trees. An arrow pointed them to an opening in the bushes, where a path led to the bank of the stream. And here was a pretty water-

fall, sliding down over a cliff some twenty feet high into a roundish smooth basin bordered with ferns and wild flowers.

But what pleased the children most was a little tent pitched beside the fall, and a fire burning under an iron kettle hung on a tripod of oak saplings. A delicious odor rose with the steam from the kettle. Bob made one dash toward the camp. "It 's soup!" he cried. "Just smell it!"

"What fun!" shouted the girls. "An Indian dinner. Let 's play we are Indians."

Bob tended the fire. The girls investigated the tent. Inside were three bowls made of gourds, and a long-handled gourd ladle in which they could serve out soup. And besides this there were corn-bread and nuts and berries—just the sort of thing that Indians ought to like. They sat cross-legged around the kettle, supping the delicious broth, and feeling very wild and aboriginal.

When they had finished, they pulled off their shoes and stockings and waded in the pool, whose water was deliciously cold on this hot day.

Maggie was sitting on the moss beside the pool putting on her shoe. "Say, I hoped we should find out something about the Princess to-day, even if we did n't see her; but I don't believe we shall

now." She paused abruptly, her eyes as big as saucers, staring through the trees in front of her.

"What is it?" whispered Bess, grasping Maggie's hand timidly. Bob looked over his shoulder uneasily.

" 'Sh!" warned Maggie, still staring; "I saw something!"

"What was it?" begged Bess, trembling. "Was it Indians?"

"I don't know," whispered Maggie, following with her eyes something that moved swiftly. "Now it 's gone! What do you suppose it was?"

"What did it look like?" begged both the others.

"It looked like a beautiful boy, dressed in green and brown. He had a brown cap with a red feather pulled down over his face so I could n't see it very plainly. But his hair was curly, and he ran, oh, so lightly! I think he must have wings."

"Pooh!" said Bob. "I don't believe you saw anything."

Just then Cæsar came bounding back to them through the bushes. He seemed not at all excited. But when Maggie looked closely at him she saw that to his collar was fastened a piece of

paper, its folds held tightly by a red feather thrust through and through!

"A red feather!" she cried. "That is what the boy had in his cap! I saw it plainly." Bob seized the paper from Cæsar's collar, and this is what he read:

"Look behind the left tent-flap."

After this was scrawled a red feather.

Bob lost no time in following the directions. He lifted the tent-flap, and there pinned to the canvas he found a roll of birch-bark. The three bent their heads together and puzzled out the words scratched on the bark in queer letters. It looked like Indian writing, they thought.

"*If you seek an adventure,*" it read, "*cross the brook on the stepping-stones, and lift up the white stone beside the last of these.*"

"An adventure!" cried Maggie, clapping her hands. "Now I think we are on the way to find the Princess!"

"I 'd rather stay here," objected Bob; but the girls persuaded him to come with them. With many squeals and giggles, they crossed the brook on the ticklish stepping-stones, with the water running dizzily about. Once Bessie slipped and

slumped down almost to her boot-top. She shrieked mightily, for the water was cold, and she was a little coward. But when she found she was not drowned, she did not mind getting wet.

On the farther side of the brook they soon spied the white stone, smooth and round. Bob lifted it carefully. Under it was nothing but another piece of bark. But on this was scratched, above a red feather, these words: *"Look in the hollow tree twenty-five paces up the bank."*

"It 's like a game of 'hunt the thimble,' " said Bess, who had once been to a church sociable. Maggie had never had that experience, but she liked this game. She scrambled up the bank and began counting off twenty-five paces, as Bob was already doing. But there was no hollow tree to be seen. They looked and they looked, but it seemed of no use.

"Let 's go back and begin over again," said Bob at last. "Maybe we did n't start right."

"Let 's each go a different way," suggested Bess. And so they did. "Twenty-four, twenty-five,—here it is!" shouted Bess, presently. "My! It is a big hollow tree, big enough to hold a man."

"Perhaps the Princess is shut up in there, like Ariel!" whispered Maggie. But there was no

princess in the tree: only a little box with another scrawl of writing in it, signed with a feather. *"Look for the big mushroom that grows beside the tallest tree you can see from this opening."*

"Mushrooms! Oh, bother! I think they 're fooling us, whoever they are," said Bob, sulkily. "Why don't they tell us what they want, right out? I 'm going back to the wigwam. I 've had enough of this wild-goose chase."

"I think it 's fun!" laughed Maggie. "See, I 'll stand in the doorway of the tree and look."

There was an open field in front of them, with hawthorn bushes here and there; and as Maggie peered from the hollow stump, she saw one great tree stand up like a king among his fellows.

"That 's the one!" she cried, pointing. "Come on, you kids!" and she dashed down the slope, followed by Bess. Something white gleamed in the grass near the tree, and they made for it. It was not until they were on their knees poking at the great mushroom that they noticed Bob was not with them.

CHAPTER XI

THE CAVE

"... With many a winding bout
Of linkèd sweetness long drawn out."

FOR some seconds the two girls stared blankly at each other.

"Bob has gone back!" cried Bess at last in a scared voice, "and we 're all alone!"

"How did he darst to do it?" exclaimed Maggie. "They won't like it, I know. He ought n't to have gone. Let 's call him back."

They shrilled and called, but no one answered. "Let 's go and find him," suggested Bess; but Maggie objected.

"No, let 's send Cæsar," she said. "Here, Cæsar! Go find Bob!"

Away dashed the big dog; and the two girls were left alone in the meadow. "I don't know where we are, nor how to get anywhere," said Maggie. "We 've just got to obey them, or we shall be lost. Let 's see what the mushroom says."

Under the mushroom was a note which sent them to the tallest rosebush in the meadow; and from there they were directed to an empty bird's nest under the bank, which they had to hunt for very hard, for it was hidden in a garden of maidenhair ferns. A birch-bark note tucked in here directed them to a little path which they were mysteriously told led to *"the cave."*

"A cave!" exclaimed Bess. "Now I guess Bob would like to be here! But I 'm afraid he is lost!" and she began to cry.

"He can't be much lost," said Maggie, doubtfully, "but he ought n't to have disobeyed. A cave! Maybe there 's a dragon, too! Maybe the Princess is shut up there!"

"Oh, dear! I hope there is n't any dragon!" wailed Bess, remembering Maggie's terrible stories. Just then, there was a crackling in the bushes, and both girls screamed, they were so excited. Presently out dashed Cæsar, with Bob close behind him. His face was scratched and his clothes torn, and he looked scared.

"What has happened, Bob?" cried his sister.

"Nothing much," he answered briefly. "This is a queer place, sure enough!—I wish I knew

what it 's all about!" He whispered this last, looking over his shoulder, furtively.

"Something did happen, then? What was it?" begged Maggie. "Did you see a dragon?"

"Dragon nothing!" snarled Bob. "But I saw the little feller Maggie told about. He 's a boy about as tall as me, but his face looked more like a girl. He jumped out at me from a bunch of bushes, and made faces and danced up and down, and took out a little bow and arrow, and I thought he was going to shoot me. So I ran, and he ran too. I never saw anybody go so fast—just like a bird! Then I heard Cæsar barking, and I called, and when I turned around, the boy was n't anywhere. Was n't it funny?"

"I know it was a fairy," said Maggie, triumphantly,—"a fairy flying."

"You ought n't to have gone off and left us," said Bess, reprovingly. "Something awful might have happened, because you disobeyed."

"Pooh!" sneered Bob, very brave again now that the danger was past. "I went off because I saw something like a little white pony across the meadow. I want to see those ponies the old man talked about."

"I thought he was going to shoot me. So I ran"

"So do we," said Bess; "but now we must go to the cave."

"A cave!" cried Bob, pricking up his ears. "What do you think of that! Come on, then!"

They followed the path. Presently it narrowed and let through the ferny woods to a gray ledge of rocks in which there was a little opening.

"See if there 's a dragon first," whispered Bess, pulling Bob by the sleeve. But they could see nothing. Cæsar sniffed about the opening, then went in. The three children cautiously followed. They found themselves in a cave with a roof high enough to let them stand upright. At first it was so dark that they could not see anything. But as they grew used to the dimness, they looked around and saw that some one had been here before. A spade lay on the ground and beside it was a basket.

"There might be buried treasure here," said Bob, in an awed voice.

"I believe there is!" agreed Maggie. "Look at Cæsar!" The dog was sniffing and pawing in one corner of the cave where the soil was newly turned over.

Bob seized the spade. "Let me!" begged Bess, but Bob paid no attention and began to dig. The

three held their breaths. Presently the spade struck something hard. Bob fell to with added ardor. Suddenly he straightened up and handed the spade to Maggie.

"It 's your turn, Maggie," he said. "I guess we 've almost reached it now. You ought to have the fun of finding what it is."

Maggie stretched out her hand eagerly. Then she drew it back again. "Go on! Let Bess do it," she said. "Bess wants to awfully."

So it was Bess who actually unearthed a box about two feet long and half as wide. It was fastened with a lock.

"How shall we open it?" asked Bob.

"In the stories they always break it open," said Maggie, breathlessly. "Do you think you can do it, Bob?"

Just then, there was a slight noise behind them, and an arrow flew over Maggie's shoulder and fell at her feet. Tied to the shaft was a tiny key. All three turned to see whence the arrow had come; but nobody was visible.

"It 's the boy again!" whispered Maggie. With eager fingers she fitted the key into the lock, and as they all bent over the box, she lifted the cover. Though it was dark in the cave, they could see and

feel that it held a number of interesting things.

"Let 's take it out into the light," cried Bob. All three laid hands on the box and tugged it out where they could see better.

One by one they lifted out the buried treasures, —a wonderful store! There were toys and games, ribbons and handkerchiefs, a pocket microscope, a ball, several books. Last of all appeared a doll with real teeth and hair, beautifully dressed; and a jack-knife, upon which Bob pounced.

"I 've got my wish!" he cried, as he opened its wonderful blades and showed that it was a tool-kit as well as a knife.

"And so have I!" cried Bess, hugging the doll tenderly. Maggie stood apart, eyeing them rather wistfully.

"My wish was different," she said. "And it would n't be in the treasure-chest, anyway."

"You can have all the other things, Maggie," said Bess, generously; and Bob added: "You bet! They are all yours, Maggie."

"Oh, no!" said Maggie. "I don't want them all. We 'll divide them, won't we? But I do hope I 'll get my wish, too, and find the Princess."

Just then, another arrow came flying into the cave, and fell at Maggie's feet. To it was fastened

a note, saying, *"Time to go home! Follow the scent."*

"Follow the *scent!*" cried Bob. "Do they think we are dogs? Here, Cæsar!" But Cæsar had disappeared. At that moment they became conscious of a perfume that filled the cave, like the sweetest flowers they had ever smelled, so that they cried "Oh!" in delight.

"That must be the scent we are to follow!" cried Maggie. "Come, we must not disobey." Each carrying part of the treasure, they started for home. The sweet smell hung about the cave, but it became fainter after they were out in the open air. However, they found that by sniffing carefully they could trace it in a certain direction, like a path of perfume, and thither they followed. It was a new kind of fun, this following a scent through the woods. Bess sniffed like a little steam-engine, and set the others giggling. The scent guided them by broad paths through the network of crossing footways, so that it was easy going for them, burdened though they were with treasure-trove. At last, they came out at the familiar gate which they found open, with Cæsar wagging his tail beside it.

"What a wise dog Cæsar is!" exclaimed Mag-

gie. "Sometimes I think he knows too much for just a plain dog. Now, Cæsar!" She took something from her pocket which she had wrapped up carefully with paper and string, and bending over Cæsar, tied the little package to his collar.

"What are you doing, Maggie?" asked Bess, curiously.

"I am sending something to the Princess," said Maggie, bashfully. "She 's been so kind to us, I want to do something for her. It ain't much, but it 's all I 've got to give. It 's my lucky stone that Mr. Saint George gave me. He said it would bring me good fortune. I guess it has done that already. Now I want *her* to have it, and perhaps it will help drive away the wicked spell."

"You 'll lose your luck, Maggie, if you give it away," said Bess.

"Ho!" said Bob. "Whoever it is that 's been good to us, I guess they don't need any lucky stone. They can do most everything, I guess; whether it 's your fairy or not."

"You don't know!" declared Maggie, obstinately. "Sometimes the powerfulest magicians need aid. Sometimes the littlest creatures can help the biggest—like the lion and the mouse: Mr. Graham said so. At any rate, I 'm going to send

my lucky stone to her by Cæsar.—Go to her, Cæsar!"

The dog bounded away into the bushes and disappeared as the children banged the gate of the Park behind them.

CHAPTER XII

TRESPASSERS

"With wanton heed and giddy cunning
. . . . . through mazes running."

THE children had not been invited to visit the Park again. But somehow they took it for granted that what they had done they might continue to do. So the next morning found them again outside the mysterious gate, rubbing their rings and wishing.

"Open, Gate, I pray,
And let me in to-day!"

They said the now familiar words in chorus, and waited expectantly. But when nothing at all happened, they were much more surprised than they would have been at the wildest doings of any fairy tale. They had grown so used to mysteries and wonders that only commonplace things seemed strange. That is the way people are made. It is only because we are so used to waking up in the morning, that we forget how wonderful it is just

to be alive! But think how strange living would be if we had grown used to something less lively!

At any rate, Bess and Bob and Maggie were vastly astonished when nothing happened at ten o'clock, except all the wonderful things that always happen out of doors at ten o'clock. There was no sound; no sign from the mysterious folk who lived beyond the wall.

"I will knock," said Maggie, going up to the gate on tiptoe. She had just reached out her hand to the great knocker when she saw that the gate was open the tiniest crack. She wondered if it had been so all the time without their noticing it. "Do you suppose we ought to go in without being invited?" she asked the others.

"Of course!" said Bob. "Let 's push." So they put their shoulders to the gate and pushed it open. Then, half afraid of what they had done, they waited. Nothing happened. They poked their heads inside. There was nobody to be seen; not even Cæsar. Evidently they were not expected.

"Come on!" whispered Bob. "I 'm going in." The girls slipped after him timidly.

"I bet something will happen," said Maggie to herself. But there was a fearful excitement about

the adventure that made her eyes shine. Once inside the gate, they looked about, wondering where they should go first. In front of them were three paths. They remembered that the left-hand one led to the lake. Down the one in the middle, they had come from the cave. The third path, to the right, they had not yet tried. But as they stepped toward it, they saw that something like a great silver spider-web was stretched across it from tree to tree. And from this dangled a sign:

NO PASSING THROUGH

"We must not go there," said Maggie. "Which of the other paths shall we take? Shall we go to the lake, or shall we try to find the cave and the wigwam?"

Bob was still staring down the third path. "Bother!" he said. "I want to go down there. That must be the way to where the ponies are."

"We must n't, Bob!" said Bess, pulling him by the sleeve. "Maggie says something awful will happen if we disobey *Them*. Come, let 's find the lake and the swans. Perhaps we can go out in the boat."

Bob thought this was not a bad idea. So they began to follow the left-hand path. They soon

found the flower garden where the peacocks promenaded. But the birds had their tails neatly folded up, and refused to spread them for any coaxing. They descended to the lake where the island was. The swans came begging for crumbs; but this time there were no little bags around their necks. The children saw the boat across the lake, moored at the island. They looked at it wistfully, wishing they knew a way of calling it to them. It would have been quite like a fairy tale to ride over on the swans. But, as Bess pointed out, the children were too big and the birds too little for that. And though Maggie begged, she could not induce the creatures to go over and draw the boat back to them. They were not obliging like Lohengrin's swan, but acted very much like ordinary pets of the Public Garden.

The children wandered about the banks of the lake, but it was too deep to wade in, and there were no fish-poles, so they could not fish. The lake was very disappointing on this second visit.

"This is no fun," said Bess. "Let 's go back and try the other path. Perhaps we can find the wigwam and play Indian there, the way we did before."

They retraced their way to the gate, and started

anew on the second path. It wound and wound, but did not lead to any place that seemed familiar. Finally it turned into a great, open meadow and lost itself in the bracken.

"Oh, come on!" cried Bob, discontentedly. "There must be a lot of things to see in the Park, if we could only find them."

"Of course there are," said Maggie, "Goodness knows how many wonderful things. But I want most of all to see the Princess, and find out if my *wish* and the lucky stone have done any good."

"I want to see those ponies," insisted Bob. "Come on. Let 's go back to the gate." He started off on a run.

"Oh, Bob! What are you going to do?" cried Bess, her fat legs trying to keep up with him. But Bob said nothing. He seemed to have determined upon some plan of his own. When they reached the gate, he turned deliberately toward the forbidden path.

"Why, Bob, we must n't go there!" exclaimed Maggie. "We dasn't!"

"I dast!" said Bob. "I 'm going to try it. What 's the harm?"

He did not disturb the web which was stretched across the path, but squirmed around through the

bushes to one side, and was soon in the path beyond, looking back at the girls and beckoning slyly.

"Come on, Maggie," whispered Bess. "I 'm going if Bob does."

"Something dreadful will happen if we disobey," said Maggie, hesitating. "Don't you know it always does in the fairy tales?"

"Oho!" jeered Bob. "Cut out the fairy tale. I 'm tired of that game. I want to see real ponies."

Bess reached a hand to Maggie. "Let 's go," she said. "Maybe the Princess is down there. She must be—she is n't anywhere else."

That settled it. "All right!" said Maggie, scrambling through the bushes; and soon they were all three tiptoeing down the path. It was very exciting, maybe dangerous, and their hearts beat fast.

Presently the path was inclosed with high hedges of pungent box, over which they could see nothing but blue sky. It led to a pretty garden, with a pool of water in the middle, where floated the biggest pond-lilies the children had ever seen. "Oh, look!" cried Bob, pointing up the avenue which led from the garden by a flight of steps. "There 's the house!" Maggie looked eagerly; and there at

the end of the avenue, with flowers in borders and in marble urns up and down the whole length, was a beautiful white palace—the same one which she had seen from the window of the train.

"The palace where the Princess lives!" whispered Maggie. "How beautiful it is!" They craned their necks and stared with all their eyes.

"Let 's go closer," whispered Bob, and they crept nearer and nearer, until they had a good view of the whole great villa and of its broad veranda set with palms and hanging plants, and with pretty furnishings like an outdoor room. The figure of a lady in a trailing white dress came out of the door and glided to one of the long chairs. They could not see her face.

"Oh!" breathed Maggie. "I believe that is the Princess herself in her own form! I wish we could speak to her."

Maggie stole out from behind the big vase of flowers where she was crouching, and crept still farther up the avenue. Bess and Bob were close behind her. Suddenly a piercing voice very near them cried:

"Help! Thieves! Murder! Go away! Go away!"

The children jumped, and looked at one another

with scared faces. "Help! Help!" cried the voice again. It was a high, shrill voice, not quite like a real person's. Maggie immediately thought of fairies. But in a minute they saw what was speaking. On a perch in front of them a big red-and-green bird was fluttering his wings wildly and talking. Yes, he was talking, as the children had never known a bird could talk—except in story-books! A parrot was as great a stranger to Bonnyburn as to the tenement where Maggie lived. They all stared at this fellow with wondering, frightened eyes.

"Help! Murder! Fire!" screamed the parrot again, louder than before, while the children stood rooted to the ground as if fascinated.

"Come back, Maggie!" whispered Bess, and she and Bob began to retreat. Maggie, however, still held her ground, fascinated with horror.

"Hello! What 's all this? Who 's trespassing in me gardin?" cried a gruff voice, suddenly. "The parrot 's given yez away!"

A huge creature with a wicked-looking pitchfork in his hand appeared close to them. His beard was red as fire, and his eyes blazed angrily. He took a step toward them, brandishing his weapon and growling like an animal.

"It 's the ogre!" shrieked Maggie. At these fearful words they all turned and ran as fast as they could. Bob and Bess never stopped until they had reached the gate by the way they had had come in. When they were safe outside, breathless and trembling, they looked around for Maggie. She was nowhere to be seen.

"Oh, do you suppose the dreadful ogre caught her?" wailed Bess, who had heard all about ogres the night before in one of Maggie's tales.

"Ogre nothing!" muttered Bob. "But I hope he won't hurt Maggie!" They waited and waited, but Maggie did not come.

"Oh, what shall we do?" sobbed Bess. "It was all your fault, Bob!"

Bob hung his head. He knew she was right. "I don't know," he said sheepishly. "I wish I had n't run away and left her."

"Let 's go home and tell Mother," suggested Bess.

"Father will lick me when he knows," said Bob, hesitating. However, there seemed nothing to do but to report the loss of Maggie. So they turned their faces toward home.

CHAPTER XIII

THE OGRE AND THE VOICE

"'Mongst horrid shapes, and shrieks, and sights unholy!"

IN the meantime, frightened almost out of her wits by the terrible ogre who had doubtless laid his wicked spell upon the Princess, Maggie fled away as fast as her legs would carry her. Losing sight of Bob and Bess, she turned into a narrow path between high hedges of box, which she thought was the one by which she had come into the garden. But she soon learned her mistake. This path kept turning at sharp angles, doubling upon itself in the strangest way. It kept branching also into other paths exactly like it, so that she did not know which way to go. She seemed, indeed, to be going around in a circle without getting anywhere. And always she heard the ogre's terrible voice close to her, though she could not see him because the hedge was so high.

"Where are yez?" he called. "Where are yez, ye little villains?"

Maggie tried to go softly. But suddenly she tripped on a stone and fell headlong. It bruised her knees, and she could not help crying out a little. The ogre was just on the other side of the hedge, and heard her.

"Oh!" he cried. "So there yez are! Ye 're in the maze, and can't find yer way out now. I 've got yez then, caught like a mouse in a trap! Ho, ho!" he roared, with a terrible laugh.

Maggie was dreadfully frightened at his last words. She did not know what a maze was. But she did feel like a mouse in a trap. She ran on and on wildly, growing more and more breathless and tearful, and always hearing close by the growling voice of the ogre, whom she could not see.

She hesitated between two ways to go, and, choosing one, found herself presently in a little opening where there was a seat and a table under a tiny arbor. Panting and flushed, she fell upon the seat. Her strength was quite gone, and she felt ill. The high box hedge rose about her on every side. She could hear the ogre coming, but she could not escape. She was truly caught in a trap. Presently, the ugly face of the ogre appeared in the opening.

"Ah! There ye are!" he cried, brandishing his

pitchfork and grinning cruelly. "But where be the other two? There was a b'y. I wanted to kill him first! Where is he?"

"I don't know," gasped Maggie. "Please don't kill me!"

"G-r-r!" growled the ogre. "What do ye mean, then, trespassin' on private grounds? Don't ye know any better, ye spalpeen? It 's a thief ye are, come to steal the flowers and the fruit,—and other things, for all I know."

"I 'm not a thief!" said Maggie, with some show of spirit.

"G-r-r! How do I know that?" snarled the ogre. "You come along with me, and I 'll fix ye!"

"Oh, please!" begged Maggie, as he grasped her arm roughly, "I only wanted to see the Princess."

"To see the Princess, is it?" growled he. "And is that why ye come spyin' and pryin' about my lady's private gardin, gettin' wound up in her maze, and frightenin' her parrot? You come along, and we 'll see what we 'll see!"

The ogre kept tightly hold of her arm. *He* very well knew the way out of the maze; and in a few minutes they were in the garden, mounting the marble steps toward the perch where the parrot still sat, very much ruffled in temper.

"Caught! Ha, ha! Caught!" he mocked, as Maggie was led past him. "Oh, fie! No trespassing! Tut, tut, tut!" he clucked with his tongue in a most insulting manner. Maggie eyed him with awe and terror. How could a bird know so much, and talk about it, too? She concluded that he must be a human being changed into a bird.

As they came nearer the house, Maggie saw a white figure flash across the veranda and vanish within. She was sure it must be the Princess. The ogre dragged Maggie to the foot of the steps and paused. Then he gave a great cough: "Ahem! Ho, ho!"

Almost immediately a white-robed young woman with stiff cuffs and collar and an apron came out, and stood looking inquiringly at the two.

"I caught this young 'un after the flowers in the gardin," said the ogre, hoarsely. "There was three of 'em; another girl and a b'y, who got away. This one I trapped in the maze. He, he!" he chuckled maliciously.

"Well?" queried the woman, looking keenly at Maggie, "what does she say for herself?"

"Says she wants to see the Princess!" growled the ogre. "I dunno whatever she manes, but I 'll

turn her over to ye and ye can see what the lady says to it. But if I catch that b'y, I 'm going to skin and eat him!" When he had uttered these terrible words, the ogre turned away with his pitchfork over his shoulder.

"So you were stealing flowers, were you?" said the young woman, looking sternly at Maggie. "Well, are n't you ashamed of yourself?"

Maggie was about to deny this indignantly, when a little bell tinkled inside the house.

"You stay here till I come back," said the woman. "It 's no use your trying to run away, you know. He will catch you again, sure." She nodded toward the spot where Maggie could see the shoulders of the ogre moving behind some shrubbery, then she hurried away into the house. Maggie sank down trembling and weary on the step of the piazza, wondering what would happen next.

Presently, the woman returned. "Come along with me, child," she said, leading the way into the house.

It was a beautiful house, all white and cool and airy, with soft rugs covering a floor as smooth and slippery as ice. There were tubs and boxes and pots and vases of flowers everywhere. On the

"Caught! Ha, ha! Caught!" he mocked, as Maggie was led past him

walls were pictures and china-things, and mirrors; and against the walls stood tempting cabinets, which Maggie longed to stop and explore. She had a glimpse of a cool dining-room where a table was set with glittering silver and crystal; of a room where a piano seemed to live all by itself; of a staircase winding up and dividing into two parts quite wonderfully. The palace of the Princess was different from what Maggie had fancied; but was even more beautiful, because it was so homelike, and cheerful, and comfortable, as well as grand.

Her guide led Maggie into a room full of books, from floor to ceiling. Maggie had never seen so many books before in all her life; not even in the Settlement library. She wondered if among them there were any fairy books that she had not read. There were a table, a desk, and some chairs, and in one corner a tall screen with flowers and birds embroidered upon it. The woman led Maggie straight up to this screen, and then paused. A voice came from behind the screen. "You may go, Miss Miggs. Please shut the door after you."

The young woman went away, and Maggie was left alone in the room with the voice.

"You must not try to see me," said the voice

presently—such a sweet voice! Maggie almost fancied she had heard it before somewhere, though she could not remember; perhaps it was only in a dream. "I suppose you will obey *now*." The voice grew a trifle sterner.

"I did n't mean to disobey," said Maggie, quaveringly. She suddenly felt very weak and ill, and wanted to cry. "I did n't think it was very wrong—"

"Not wrong to trespass where you were not invited? Not wrong to disobey the sign 'No Passing Through'? It was put there to test you. We thought we could trust you." Maggie was silent, and the tears stood in her eyes. She had nothing to say for herself. The voice went on:

"You took everything that came your way; all the privileges, and the presents, and the good things. But you would not mind; you could not restrain your curiosity that once. Oh, we are disappointed in you, Maggie Price!"

A tear rolled down Maggie's cheek. "I did n't mean to do it," she said. "I 'm sorry."

"What did you want?" questioned the voice, more sharply. "They say you were found in the sunken garden stealing flowers or bothering the parrot. Were you stealing flowers?"

"Oh, no, I was n't stealing!" cried Maggie. "Bob wanted to see the ponies, and Bess did, too, and I—"

"And you?" the voice echoed questioningly.

"I wanted to see the Princess," said Maggie, simply. "I 've got to go back to the city in three days!"

"H-m!" The voice was softer, but it grew hard again. "You ought to know better than to trespass, and spy, and pry. These are private grounds."

"The gate was open," volunteered Maggie, with some spirit, though her knees were shaking.

"That was a test, too," answered the voice. "We hoped you would not try to come in to-day, as you were not invited. If you had been good children, there was to be such a nice treat to-morrow!"

Maggie sobbed audibly at this, but the voice was now quite cold, and went on without noticing the interruption. "We might have known how it would be. You cared only for what we could give you. You did not wish to please any one. You are like every one else, Maggie Price. Give you an inch and you take an ell. I 'm tired of it!"

Maggie said nothing, but stood with the tears

rolling down her cheeks, a picture of misery. If the owner of the voice could have seen her, surely she would not have spoken so harshly. But one could see nothing from behind the screen.

"There, you may go," said the voice, finally; and there was no sweetness at all left in the tones. "You will not be punished, except in one way. You shall never come to the Park again, neither you nor those other two ungrateful children. The game is ended."

A little bell tinkled behind the screen, and immediately Miss Miggs appeared at the door. "Take the child to the main entrance," the voice commanded, "and let her go home by the shortest way. She will not trouble us again."

Miss Miggs did as she was bid. She led Maggie through the house,—bigger than the tenement; big enough for twenty families—down the hall, wider than the alley in which Maggie played at home, to the great front door. Without any words they followed the avenue with its lovely flower beds and fountains to the entrance guarded by the marble lions. Here Miss Miggs drew the bolt and let Maggie pass through. "Do you know the way home, child?" she asked, not unkindly. Maggie nodded, and pointed up the hill.

"Ah, yes," said Miss Miggs. "You live at Mrs. Timmins's? I thought so. Well, good-by. You 'd better not be caught here again. They 're awful fussy about letting strangers see this place. Some might call it selfish,—but it 's no business of mine. Now run along. You look sick, child. Your cheeks are red as fire. Tell the folks to put you to bed as soon as you get home."

With one glance at the marble lions, who stared at her with stony sternness, Maggie turned and trudged slowly up the hill. She felt strangely tired,—and there seemed to be no bones in her legs.

"I feel almost as if I 'd been magicked!" she said wearily, as she went in at the gate of the farm. "I 've given away my lucky stone!"

CHAPTER XIV

THE SPELL

"Where brooding darkness spreads his jealous wings,
And the night-raven sings."

IT was a beautiful, bright morning in Bonnyburn. The whole air was sweet with the perfume of flowers in the various gardens of the Park. Even Old Nick, the parrot, on his perch in front of the veranda, was in an unusually pleasant humor, and made happy noises as he looked proudly down upon his coat of many colors.

Allegra Penfold lay in her chair just as she had done on the day when Maggie came to Bonnyburn. But this time no butterfly tempted her to wander out into the sunshine. Miss Miggs came out on the piazza singing, but stopped when she saw the occupant of the chair.

"Well, I declare!" she cried, "I did not know you were here, Miss Allegra. I thought you had gone to walk in the garden, the way you 've been doing 'most every morning this last week."

Allegra shook her head slowly. "No," she said, "I 'm tired of the garden. I shall spend the morning here, probably."

"Oh!" cried Miss Miggs, with a disappointed air. Her charge had been so much livelier and more human of late, that she had hoped the change was permanent, and that soon she herself might go away to where she was more needed. This relapse was very discouraging. "By the way," she said carelessly, "a big express bundle has come from Boston. What do you wish done with it?"

Allegra frowned. "It is of no consequence now," she said. "Have James take it up to the green room in the west wing."

"Yes, Miss." The nurse sailed away to execute this errand. The parrot cocked his malicious little eye at his mistress, and chuckled.

"He-he-he! Thieves! Trespassers! Fie!" he cried, as if he knew what she was thinking about at that moment. He began a series of monologues on the subject, varying the words but keeping to the original theme with maddening persistence. At last, Allegra could stand it no longer. She rose and went down the terrace to find Michael, the gardener, and have him remove the tiresome bird. Also, she wanted to have a talk with Michael about

the subject upon which Old Nick was so eloquent. Allegra walked with a step much lighter than it was a week ago; and before she knew it, she found herself at the great cobweb which barred the path to the gate. She tore it down pettishly, and went on. When she came to the gate, she paused. Cæsar was lying there, half asleep. He wagged his tail expectantly as she approached.

"I wonder if they took me at my word?" she thought. "Perhaps they will come, after all. I should like to know." She paused at the gate, listening. But there was no sound to break the stillness. Allegra drew a key from her pocket, and, inserting it, lifted the latch cautiously and peered outside. Cæsar also thrust out his head and sniffed. There was no one to be seen, up or down the pasture. Allegra sighed.

"It is too bad!" she said to herself. "There were many more things I could have done for them, if they had not been such ungrateful little creatures. Come in, Cæsar." She closed the gate and locked it irritably, then, almost without thinking, continued her walk. Cæsar stayed by the gate. Allegra came first to the garden of the peacocks, the lake, and the swans. Getting into the green boat, she paddled idly about the lake until

she tired of the exercise, and drew up at the little island. But, instead of landing, with a sigh and a yawn she dropped the oars and lay back on the cushions, letting the boat drift. Everything was dull and stupid to-day. She missed something that had been making life interesting of late.

"Oh, dear!" thought Allegra. "Why could n't they have been different? Why does every one disappoint me so?"

Restlessly she wandered over the Park; to the wishing-well, and the cave, and the wigwam,—all the places which the children had enjoyed on the different days of mystery. Finally, she returned to the villa. But instead of sinking back on the cushions of the long chair, she made her way through the hall and up-stairs to a little room in the west wing. It was the green room, where the Penfolds had stored away all the old toys, fancy costumes, and theatrical "properties" which a series of children had collected in years past. Over a chair hung a long, brown robe such as the children's old guide had worn one morning. Beside it were tossed green hose and russet doublet, a hat with a red feather, a bow and arrows. On the table lay several wigs; a witch-wife's long gray hair, an old man's snowy locks and beard, a boy's

short black curls. Allegra eyed them with disfavor. Finally she seized them impatiently, and began to stuff them into one of the trunks, the lid of which was raised.

As she shut in the folds of the Peter Pan costume, something fell from it upon the floor. It was a small stone, shaped like a heart, with a white stripe around it. Allegra picked it up and looked at it earnestly.

"Maggie's lucky stone!" she mused. "The little thing sent it to me to bring me luck. She said it was all she had. She did not seem like a selfish, grasping child. I wonder if I was too hard on her? Children are inquisitive, and I suppose that open gate and everything else was very tantalizing. Perhaps it was n't quite fair to tempt them so." She put the lucky stone in her pocket.

Behind the door stood a large express package, as yet unopened. Allegra set herself to undoing the fastenings, and strewed the contents carelessly about her on the floor. There were dolls, animals, mechanical toys, books and favors, gloves and pretty garments. Folded in a box by itself was the spangled dress and wand of a theatrical fairy. Allegra took this out carefully, and held it up with something like eagerness. "It is perfect!" she

murmured. "If only they could have kept up the game a little longer!—What geese!" And she shook the glittering dress, as if she would have liked to shake the children who had disappointed her.

Allegra sat down in the window with Maggie's lucky stone in her hand and with the fairy dress across her knees, and pondered.

"I can write to them," she said to herself. "I can have them find mysterious notes in some strange place. If I say the Princess has forgiven them, I believe they would come again. Maggie said she was to go home in a few days,—there is no time to lose. There might be rain, which would spoil everything. Yes,—I 'll write now."

Allegra laid the fairy dress carefully on a chair, went down to the library, and busied herself with pen and paper. To her there came Miss Miggs, with a stern look on her face and determination in her eye.

"If you please, Miss Allegra," said the nurse, standing before the desk at which Allegra sat, "you told me yesterday that I need not give notice, but could go any time I wanted to, for you did n't require me. And I think that is true. I 'd like to go at once, please."

"Why, what is the matter?" asked Allegra, looking up from her note with annoyed surprise at being thus interrupted. "Has anything happened?"

"Nothing important to *you,* Miss," said the nurse, with biting emphasis. "But there 's a child taken sick with scarlet fever, and I 'm going to nurse her."

"A child?" said Allegra, laying down her pen, "what child?"

"Nobody of any account to you, Miss," answered Miss Miggs, cruelly. "A child at Farmer Timmins's, up the road."

"Oh!" cried Allegra, half rising from her chair, "which child?"

"The little city girl called Maggie," replied the nurse, looking steadily at Allegra; "the one Michael caught trespassing, and that you sent packing home, crying as if her heart would break."

"Maggie!" exclaimed Allegra, clasping her hands. "Oh, I am sorry! The poor little thing!"

"She looked sick yesterday," went on the nurse in her professional manner. "I knew something was the matter. The doctor says she must have brought the infection from the city. She lives in a wretched tenement, it seems, and her folks are n't

good to her. She 's got to be quarantined from the other children, and I 'm going to nurse her through." Miss Miggs's determination was evident.

Allegra's mind moved rapidly. "Where can she be quarantined?" she asked. "There 's no suitable place in the village, is there?"

The nurse shook her head. "There 's a camp out in the woods that some men have just left,—a nice shack with everything all ready for the next tenant. Doctor Foster is going to fix us up there."

"But how inconvenient it will be!" cried Allegra. "No running hot and cold water—none of the things you are accustomed to."

"I can manage," said Miss Miggs. "It 's the best we can arrange. The country folks are so scared, she 's got to be taken to some place away from everybody in the village."

Allegra was silent for a minute, then she said: "There 's the east wing. It is all planned for a quarantine, just as it was when my brother John was sick, years ago; when I cried because they would not let me see him. We could put her there."

Miss Miggs gasped in amazement. "Miss Al-

legra! Do you mean it?" Her eyes shone eagerly.

"She can have the little pink bedroom," went on Allegra; "she would like that when she got better. And you had best move your things into the blue room next to it. I will telephone the doctor to have Maggie brought here directly, and I 'll tell the maids what they must do to make ready. You can get whatever you need at the village; or, if they are not supplied, I will send to the city."

Allegra bustled out of the room with more animation than she had shown for months, while the nurse stared after her with round eyes.

"Well, I never!" was all she said.

Two hours later, Bob with a scared face and Bess with tear-stained cheeks were sitting much subdued under a tree beyond the Timmins house, from which they had been temporarily banished.

"Poor Maggie!" sighed Bess. "The doctor says she 's awful sick. And she was going back to the city in two days! Was n't it strange, Bob, that she got sick just now? I told her she ought not to give away that lucky stone."

Bob shook his head without comment. "I be-

lieve it was the un-fairies' doings," went on Bess. "But why did n't they punish us? We were badder than Maggie was. Maggie did n't want to go."

"If that parrot had n't given us away, no one would ever have known," grumbled Bob. "He 's about the nearest to a bad fairy that I want to see!"

At that moment, before the astonished gaze of the two children, a carriage drove into the Timmins dooryard. Bess nearly screamed aloud, and Bob's eyes stuck out of his head. For it was a wee carriage drawn by two white ponies! On the box sat a coachman in livery, and inside was a nurse in a white cap and apron. But it was the team of tiny steeds that made the children stare.

"The white ponies of the Princess!" cried Bess, clapping her hands. "They have come for Maggie! It 's like Cinderella's coach!"

Bob said nothing, but gave a low whistle, and glued his eyes upon the fascinating turnout. Presently, down came the doctor, and bundled in his strong arms was Maggie. He put her upon the nurse's knees, with her head resting against Miss Miggs's sympathetic shoulder. The coachman touched up the ponies, and very gently

they drove out of the dooryard and disappeared in the direction of the Park.

"Well, I never!" said Bob, just as Miss Miggs had done.

"Oh, Doctor!" cried Bess, running up to him wildly, "where is Maggie going? Are the fairies taking her off?"

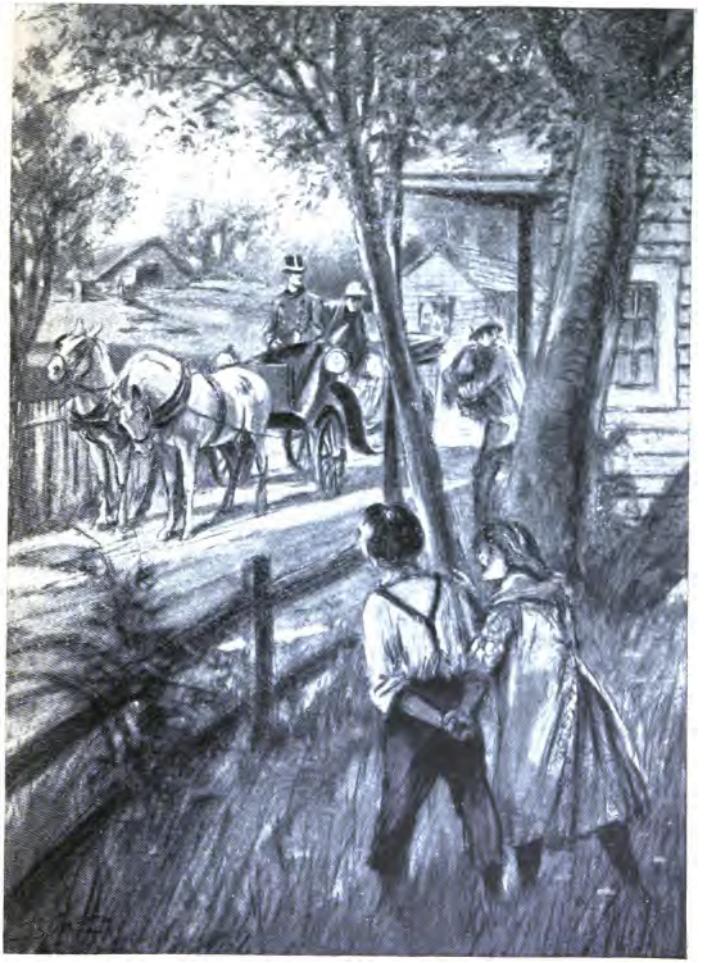
"Fairies? Nonsense!" said the Doctor, pretending to frown. "She is going to the Park to be taken care of. And a piece of luck it is for the little maid. She will be in fairy-land indeed, if you believe in such things. That lady is certainly behaving like a Princess!"

The children looked at one another. They did not understand all that he meant, but his words seemed to confirm Maggie's belief in the realness of the game which they had all been playing.

The Doctor went back into the house to give directions about fumigating. The children strayed disconsolately into the barn. It was strange how much they missed Maggie already!

"I hope she won't be gone long," sighed Bess. "It is so lonesome!"

"I 'd be willing to have scarlet fever myself," said Bob, "if I could go to ride with those ponies. Were n't they cute, though?"



"The white ponies of the Princess!" cried Bess

So the white ponies drew Maggie to the Park as an honored guest. It was a pity that Maggie was too ill to know anything about it, except in a hazy dream. But the white ponies and the gentle nurse, the beautiful lady who met them at the door, the pretty pink bedroom, and the round spectacles of the Doctor were all mixed up together in the ache of her poor, tired head.

CHAPTER XV

IN THE PALACE

"Golden slumber on a bed
Of heaped Elysian flowers."

THE day which was to have taken Maggie back to the city came and went, and she still remained in Bonnyburn. Letters were sent home telling of her grave illness and of the kind hands into which she had fallen; letters also went to Mr. Graham, who was much more concerned than was 'Tilda, sojourning at the Institution. He wanted to go straight to Bonnyburn and help take care of Maggie. But Dr. Foster and present duties at the Settlement forbade.

"However," he declared, in a letter to Miss Penfold, "I shall come up to fetch Maggie home myself, when she is well, the dear little thing!"

When she was well! At one time it seemed as if that day was never to be. Maggie was very ill indeed. She had ceased to be herself, and was like a strange little being under a spell. Sometimes she fancied herself back in the tenement with

'Tilda. That was when she was most ill. 'Tilda was cruel to her, it seemed. She said and did hard things that made poor Maggie shriek and sob, until the white presence by her bed sobbed too. Unconsciously Maggie betrayed more of her sad life than she had ever confided even to Mr. Graham. Allegra had never guessed how hard life could be for some poor little souls.

But all Maggie's dreams were not unhappy. She talked constantly of Mr. Graham and how good he was. Allegra listened eagerly; she heard about the Settlement and all it was doing for children like Maggie. And she heard about Mr. Saint George's fairy books, and how the fairies had helped Maggie, were helping her now. For had they not visited the tenement and made her hard bed soft, and the ugly room beautiful and bright?—How beautiful and bright it was! The fairies laid a soothing charm upon her, bruised and sore because of 'Tilda's unkindly hands, and turned the tenement crusts and water into delicious cool drinks and dainty mouthfuls.—Oh, how good that lemonade tasted! Almost as good as the ice-cream soda that Mr. Saint George had bought for her. Oh, the fairies! How kind they were! If only Maggie

could do something for them. She would give them her lucky stone! No, the lucky stone was for the Princess, who needed help. Bob and Bess and Maggie would help her. And Maggie would rub her little gold ring, saying feebly,—

"Open, Gate, I pray,
And let me in to-day."

It gave Allegra a pang to hear her; it seemed so likely that a gate was going to open for Maggie into a Park where little children were never called trespassers.

Through all the long hours of pain and delirium Maggie had a vision of a white presence who hovered near with sweet looks and a gentle hand laid on hers, often quieting her restless spirit and bringing the peace of sleep. Was it a kind fairy whose magic touch held her back from passing through the gate?

Allegra had much to think of as she watched by Maggie's bed or walked alone in her garden paths, where even the flowers looked sorry.

There came a day when Maggie turned the corner and began to mend. One morning while Miss Miggs was having her breakfast, Allegra looked up from the letter which she was reading to find

two great eyes fixed earnestly upon her. "Where am I?" whispered Maggie. Allegra laid down the letter, which was from Mr. Graham inquiring about his little friend, and going to the bed said smilingly,—

"Good-morning, Maggie!"

"Good-morning," answered Maggie, eyeing her wonderingly. They looked at each other in silence for some seconds. Allegra was saying over and over to herself: "She is going to get well! Thank God! She is going to get well!"

"Where am I?" asked Maggie again, glancing around the pretty room as if she saw it for the first time.

"You are in Bonnyburn, dear," said Allegra, almost afraid to speak.

"In Bonnyburn! Then it may be real, after all. I thought I was at home, and that this must be part of the story I made up."

"No," said Allegra, "it is real, Maggie. But you must not talk any more now. Close your eyes and go to sleep."

"I will," said Maggie, looking at Allegra adoringly for a moment before she obeyed.

Not long after this, when Maggie was stronger, came questions which could no longer be put off.

"This may be Bonnyburn," said Maggie, "but it is n't the Timminses' house." Allegra answered cautiously,—

"No. It is the house in the Park."

"The palace!" Maggie's eyes shone. "I suspected it," she confessed. "But how did I get here?"

"You came in a little carriage drawn by two white ponies, just like Cinderella!" laughed Allegra. But Maggie saw nothing to laugh at.

"The white ponies!" she cried. "Oh, I hope Bob saw them. He wanted to so much."

"Yes, he saw you go," answered Allegra.

"Oh, I wish Bob and Bess were here too!" exclaimed Maggie. "How Bess would like this lovely room!"

"They will come to see you as soon as you are a little stronger," promised her attendant. "They come to the Park to enquire after you every day."

"Oh!" cried Maggie, delighted. "Then the Princess has forgiven them? I hope she has forgiven me too?" she looked wistfully up at the face bent sweetly over her.

"You are all forgiven," declared Allegra, adding under her breath, "if there is anything to forgive."

"How good the Princess is!" murmured Maggie. "I wish Mr. Graham knew she was letting me stay at her lovely house. He would love her because she is kind, like him."

"Bless your heart! He knows all about it. Some one has written to him. Now you must hurry and get well and strong, to please your Princess, and then you shall play in the Park whenever you like."

Maggie was gazing at Allegra with puzzled eyes. "I wish I knew something," said she. "I think I must have been dreaming a lot of queer things that seemed very real. I thought the fairy Princess herself came here. I thought she came close to me and told me that I had broken the spell. Could that be true?"

"Your Princess did come, Maggie," said Allegra softly, as she bent to stroke the little girl's hair. "And it is true. You have broken the spell that bound her. She is her true self once more, thanks to you!"

"Then I have my wish, after all. Was it the lucky stone that did it?" asked Maggie eagerly.

"Indeed, I think so, dear," said Allegra.

"Then I am glad I gave it to her, though it did make me sick to part with it," cried Maggie.

"I don't think that," said Allegra cautiously.

Maggie went on speaking. "I should like so much to see her!" She gazed earnestly at the face above her. "But somehow, I don't care so much about that as I did, for now I can look at you!"

Allegra blushed at the compliment, and found nothing to say.

"I remember your face in a dream, too," said Maggie musingly. "And it was always getting mixed up with the kind Fairy's. Sometimes I thought you were the Princess yourself."

Allegra turned away her face. "You have seen her," she said, "though you did not know it at the time. Do you remember the old woman with the black cat?"

"Was that she?" asked Maggie eagerly.

"That was one of her disguises," said Allegra. "And the old man who guided you to the lake was a second. And the boy in green with the red feather was a third."

"And the Voice behind the screen, that was like your voice, only not so kind," suggested Maggie. "Who was that?"

"They were all the same person," said Allegra. "She always appeared as some one else, never like

herself. But now, thanks to you, the spell is broken and she is herself again. Now she can answer to a happy name, as she was born to do."

"What is your name, please?" asked Maggie suddenly.

"Allegra," was the smiling answer.

"Allegra! That sounds happy. That sounds like a fairy with gauzy wings and a wand and a crown," murmured Maggie drowsily. "You are my real fairy, anyway." She laid her cheek on Allegra's hand which held hers, and presently dropped asleep. But Allegra stood motionless with her hand under the child's cheek until Nurse Miggs came back half an hour later.

"My! you must be tired, Miss Allegra," said the nurse, noting the other's strained position as she bent over the bed. She moved Maggie deftly without waking her.

"I was afraid of disturbing her," said Allegra, straightening herself painfully. "What a dear little thing she is, and how lucky we are to have her getting well so fast!"

Miss Miggs stared after Allegra as she left the room. "Well, I never saw such a change in any one in my life!" she said under her breath. "It 's like one of those fairy-stories I used to read."

CHAPTER XVI

VISITORS

"And young and old came forth to play
On a sunshine holyday."

MISS MIGGS was an excellent nurse, and her little patient had the best of care. It was astonishing how fast Maggie improved, and in helping her to get well Miss Miggs's spirits rose to their usual height, as they had not done in the past easy weeks. She was not one of the persons who enjoy doing nothing. She was perfectly happy now that she was busy all the time. And she adored Maggie.

One morning Maggie was sitting in the long chair on the piazza, propped up with pink silk cushions. Cæsar lay half-asleep close by. On the porch near at hand Old Nick, the parrot, sat preening his feathers, making disagreeable remarks to himself, now and then. Maggie was never tired of watching the quaint bird and of listening to his conversation, when he deigned to talk with her.

Nowadays they were very good friends, in spite of their first misunderstanding.

Presently the parrot lifted his head and looked intently down the path. "Hello!" he cried. "Hello, hello! Good morning, pretty sweet lady!"

"Hush, you old flatterer!" laughed Allegra, running up the steps with her hands full of flowers.

"He 's an old truth-teller. 'Good morning, pretty sweet lady!' " echoed Maggie, holding out her hands eagerly.

Allegra tossed the posies into Maggie's lap and taking the little white hands bent and kissed the face that was growing less pale every day in the summer breezes.

"How well you look this morning!" she said. "Positively fat, I declare! Miss Miggs will soon be shooing you out to help me pick flowers, you are getting so strong. What is the program for to-day?"

"I walked all around the piazza yesterday," said Maggie proudly. "And Doctor Foster says I may go down into the garden to-day. Oh, I wish I could go *now!*"

"You can go now," said Allegra unexpectedly.

"Here is some one who will carry you as easily as he would a flower-pot. Here, Michael, I want you a minute."

A bulky form that had been moving behind some bushes close by now appeared, bowing and scraping, in the path before them. "Oh!" cried Maggie, shrinking a little. "It 's the ogre!"

"Nonsense, Maggie!" said Allegra, laughing, but flushing at the remembrance of a hateful day; "Michael is no ogre. He is my good gardener and he would not hurt you for anything."

"Then he 's changed," murmured Maggie, "like Old Nick."

"We are all changed, Maggie," smiled Allegra. "The spell is broken, I think. Here, Michael, I want you to carry Maggie down into the garden where the sun-dial is."

"All right, Miss," said Michael, showing jagged teeth in a smile that tried to look affable. But Maggie held back. "I 'd rather wait, if you please, till I can walk," she said.

"I 'll take ye as aisy as nothin', Missie," said Michael, bowing. "Ye 're only a wisp of a colleen. I 'm sorry ye 've had the faiver, I am. Did I scare ye so bad that day in the gardin? It 's troubled I 've been to remimber it."

"You did scare me," said Maggie truthfully. "But I suppose you were doing your duty."

" Ye 'd no call to be there," said Michael firmly, wagging his head. "Them was me orders, no one was to come in but her. But now everything 's changed. Ladies has the right to change their minds, sure," he bowed deprecatingly towards his mistress.

"They have indeed," she said, laughing. "Now Michael, you carry Maggie down to the garden, and if you see any other children there, don't drive them away. There are n't to be any more ogres in the Park."

"Yes, Miss," Michael took Maggie gently in his arms and carried her down the path to the garden where she had had her great fright. Cæsar kept close at their heels. Miss Miggs followed with a chair and cushions, and they fixed Maggie comfortably in a shady corner. Then Michael went back to fetch Old Nick to join the company; for the bird was complaining loudly at being deserted.

"Here we are! Here we are!" he squawked delightedly, when he was arranged at Maggie's elbow. "Now for some fun!"

"How I wish Bob and Bess could see me here

now!" cried Maggie. "It seems an awful long time since we were here, *trespassing!*"

"*Sh,* Maggie! Don't say that horrid word!" cried Allegra, laying her hand on Maggie's lips. "I 'm never going to have that word used on the place again. You said it so often when you were ill, dear, I shall never hear it without a shudder."

"So, that is changed too!" said Maggie, wondering. "How strange it all is!"

Suddenly the parrot began to shift uneasily on his perch, and then he burst into loud shrieks as Maggie had heard him do once before. Cæsar rose to his feet and looked intently before him. "Help! Thieves! Murder! Go away, go away!" shrieked the parrot.

"Be still, Nick!" cried Allegra, flapping her garden hat at the bird. "What does he see? Ah! I thought they would be coming!"

Up the path towards them came running two figures which the parrot had recognized first; Bob and Bess dressed in their Sunday clothes. Cæsar ran to meet them, wagging his tail.

"Oh, Bess! Oh, Bob! How glad I am to see you!" cried Maggie, clapping her hands. And the children seemed every bit as glad as she. Allegra shook each of them cordially by the hand, and

The children seemed every bit as glad as she

Miss Miggs nodded pleasantly as if they were old acquaintances. When Maggie looked surprised at this Allegra explained,—

"Oh yes, we are old friends, are n't we?"

The children nodded, grinning. "You see," she turned to Maggie, "while you were ill these two had to have somewhere to play; for the Bonnyburn people were afraid of the infection and would not let them come near. So they came here, and I used to see them often and tell them about you."

"We 've been all over the Park," volunteered Bob, "and we know the way 'round everywhere. And we 've seen the ponies!"

"Maggie is going to ride with the ponies to-morrow, if the Doctor is willing," said Allegra. "Would you like to go too?"

Would they like it! "Oh-oh-oh!" thrilled from three pairs of lips at once. "Very well. Now we are going away to leave you children alone together, so you can talk for a little while," said Allegra. "But don't tire Maggie too much. Remember how ill she has been." With that Allegra smiled at them and withdrew, taking Miss Miggs with her.

"Is n't she lovely!" sighed Maggie, looking

after her. "Oh, she has been so good to me,—you don't know!"

"I guess we do know; and she 's been good to us, too," said Bess, eyeing Maggie almost bashfully. It was a long time since they had seen her, and she looked like a different Maggie,—paler and thinner, and dressed in pretty white clothes.

"She lets us play here whenever we want to," said Bob, "and she gives us candy and lots of stuff. I think it was she who used to do all those nice things."

"Do you think," Maggie hesitated, "do you believe she can be the same as the Princess? I have been puzzling a lot about it!"

"Anyway, there is n't any other princess," declared Bob. "Miss Allegra is the whole thing. She can do anything she likes."

"Then she has changed," said Maggie. "For once she could n't have what she wanted most. She said so."

"Maybe she does n't want it now," suggested Bess. "Anyhow, there are n't any more 'trespassing' signs in the Park, and she says she is going to let everybody come here whenever they like, after you get quite well."

"Oh, how nice! How pleased Mr. Graham

would be!" cried Maggie. "He was always wishing that there were more parks for every one to play in. Oh! I wish he would come to see me, and then I should be perfectly happy."

"He 's coming," said Bess unexpectedly. "Mother said so. She had a letter yesterday."

"Oh, Bess! when is he coming?" asked Maggie eagerly.

"I dunno. After you get well enough to go home, I guess."

"I wish he was here this minute! I know a secret I 'd like to tell him," said Maggie mysteriously. "I can tell you too, if you 'll promise not to tell any one else,—not a single soul." The children promised. "Well, when I am quite strong again, we are going to have a party here in the Park,—a great big party for all the children in the town."

"What kind of a party?" queried Bob warily. "I don't like the kind they have at sociables, where you sit in a room and play silly games."

"This one won't be that kind," said Maggie. "This party will be outdoors, and there will be funny things happening, the way it was those first days. We three are to give the party, and Miss Allegra says maybe there will be a sur-

prise that not even I shall know. Won't it be fun?"

At that moment Nurse Miggs appeared and announced that Maggie had had enough excitement for one morning. So the Timmins children said good-by, reluctantly, and ran home to think of the white ponies, and the party that was to be.

The happy days sped by, and Maggie continued to improve. A time was set for the grand party which was to celebrate her recovery, and Bob and Bess, who had been waiting eagerly for the day, went out with Allegra to deliver the invitations. Allegra said, rather sadly, "You see, I don't know any of the people in Bonnyburn, although I came here every summer since I was a little girl up to ten years ago. Why, even Maggie knows more people here than I do. It is all my fault, and I am going to change it. You must help me."

They went in the automobile, and stopped at every house in the village where there lived a boy or girl, and at some places far outside the village, on neighboring hills; Bonnyburn was all hills. Allegra said they were to invite to their party all the children who went to school with Bob and Bess. There were forty of them; and those who had no other convenient way of coming to the party, which

was to be in the evening, were promised that the automobile should call to fetch them and take them home again when everything was over. So nobody had any excuse for refusing to come; and indeed, it would have been hard to keep those boys and girls away when they heard that the party was to be in the mysterious Park, and that Bob and Bess, with their little new friend, Maggie, were to be host and hostesses.

Besides, there were the invitations, written on pink paper, with a little fairy painted at the top of each one. These sounded very tempting to the children to whom Allegra handed them with her sweetest smile.

This is the way the invitations read:

"You are invited to attend the party given by Maggie Price and her friends, Bob and Bess Timmins, at the Park, Bonnyburn, next Wednesday evening promptly at half-past seven o'clock. Please bring a wrap to sit on, as the party will be mostly out of doors. And do not be surprised at anything strange that happens. Maggie believes in fairies."

All Bonnyburn wondered what was going to happen on the night of the party. And some could scarcely wait to find out.

CHAPTER XVII

THE FÊTE

"Such sights as youthful poets dream
On summer eves by haunted stream."

THE day of the party brought a stranger to Bonnyburn. From the afternoon train, as usual an hour late, stepped a tall, good-looking young man with tired eyes. No one met him at the station. He was not expected. Mr. Graham had been feeling run down and exhausted by his long summer in the city, and the Doctor had ordered him away. What more natural than that he should decide to run up and take Maggie by surprise, prepared to bring her back with him if her new friends were ready to let her go; for she had made them a long visit. He knew nothing about the party, for Maggie had been too busy to write. But he did know that she was still at the Park, quite well and happy. Allegra had written him as much.

Bag in hand Mr. Graham stood on the station

platform and looked around him as Maggie had done on the day of her arrival. "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills!" he said, inhaling a deep breath of the piny air. "What glorious hills! And how good it smells! No wonder my little girl is getting back her strength so fast. The first breath of Bonnyburn puts life into me. I see already that I shall never want to go home."

The station-master glanced languidly at the stranger. "I suppose there 's a hotel somewhere in town?" asked Mr. Graham pleasantly. "I suppose there is a town?"

"Yep. Over there,—Bonnyburn Inn," answered the man, pointing over his shoulder. "Two hundred years old. Nobody there just now. Plenty of room, I guess." With these helpful words the station-master returned to his lair.

There was but one road to the village, so Mr. Graham had no difficulty in finding the little, old-fashioned inn. In answer to his inquiry, the landlord pointed out a road which wound steeply upward from the green in front of the hotel. "That 's the road to the Penfold place," he said. But he added no mention of the party which was to take place in the Park that very night; although

it was an event in which the whole town was keenly interested. The folk of Bonnyburn never offered any more information to a stranger than was strictly necessary.

"I will run up there right after supper and surprise Maggie," thought Mr. Graham, grinning to himself mischievously as a boy. "Won't she be surprised! Maybe she will think I am a fairy, the dear little thing. It will be good to see her again. And I wonder what her Princess will be like? Children are such idealists,—I dare say she is not so wonderful as she sounds in Maggie's letters."

Still wondering and expectant Mr. Graham climbed the long hill. But instead of his surprising Maggie, what a surprise greeted him when he reached the top! The gates of the Park stood open, and the marble lions had each a great lantern between his paws. Through the gateway he had a glimpse of what seemed fairy-land. Line upon line of many-colored lanterns bordered the paths, and queer little figures bearing lights flitted like fireflies over the lawns and down the rainbow alleys among the flowers.

Mr. Graham rubbed his eyes to be sure he was not dreaming. Could Maggie be right, and were her fairy friends busy in this Bonnyburn of hers?

It seemed so. Scarcely thinking of what he was doing, he passed unnoticed through the gateway and concealed himself in a shadowy corner to watch what was going on.

When the guests drove up to the entrance of the Park in the country carts and carryalls, their eyes stuck out in amazement, and so did the eyes of their fathers and brothers who brought them. They were greeted at the gate by an old man with a long white beard and gray robe, who leaned upon a staff, and by two queer little round figures in brown, who looked like brownies, and who offered to guide the guests to the place where the party was being held.

The old man was Miss Miggs, who had entered into the spirit of the fun, and was having the merriest time of her life. The brownies were Bob and Bess, dressed up in costumes from the green room. Each of them carried a colored lantern, and they led the children along the lighted paths, where the trees made strange shadows and the flowers looked even more beautiful than by day, to an open space beside the lake. It was a great surprise to the children to see that lake; for none of them had guessed there was such a thing in the Park.

All around the lake among the flowers were colored lanterns which made weird reflections in the water. Beside the lake was an open circle of grassy lawn with a slope above, like an amphitheater, having woods at the back and sides. From somewhere among the trees came the sound of soft music; but no one could see the musicians. Overhead winked the stars, peeping down curiously to see what was going on; but there was no moon. So the scene was vague and mysterious and lovely in the soft colored light of the lanterns.

In the grassy ring other figures were waiting to receive the guests. Maggie looked exactly like a Peas-Blossom fairy, as she skipped about the place greeting the children gaily. She was dressed in a pretty frock of green silk and a flower-hat of pink, with her curls hanging loose and little wings growing from her shoulders.

"This is a fairy-party," she explained to the other children, "and you must n't be surprised at all sorts of funny things. For this is our Fairy Godmother, who makes queer things happen."

With these words Maggie introduced a little old woman in a peaked hat and long robe, with white hair and a staff, who bowed solemnly to

the guests and eyed them through her glasses as they shook hands with her. The children were a bit afraid of her, she looked so queer.

Indeed, they did not know what to make of it all, and at first were rather quiet and restrained. Most of them had never believed in fairies. But this certainly seemed like fairy-land. They sat down in their places on the slope of grass and waited expectantly, whispering among themselves.

Mr. Graham, hiding behind them in the bushes, waited too. When first he spied her, he could hardly help rushing up to embrace Maggie, whom he had not seen for so many, many weeks. It made his heart beat gladly to see her looking so well and rosy. But he was held back almost as if he too had fallen under a spell. He waited, holding his breath.

When the hour of eight sounded from the village steeple, and the guests were quite ready, the Fairy Godmother clapped her hands. Instantly there was silence, and a quiver of excitement ran among the children. What was going to happen now? The Fairy Godmother stepped forward and said,—

"Children, you have all been invited to this party because Maggie Price believed in the fairies. Before she came to Bonnyburn nobody thought

much about fairies. But Maggie had a lucky stone which brought her here in the first place, and ever since then queer things have been happening in the Park. I don't know whether you believe in fairies or not, but I do, and I ought to know!

"Whatever you call it, there is Something which makes queer things happen; always there is Something that nobody can explain. Some people can explain more than others, but they are just as likely to be wrong as right.

"Now perhaps some of you can explain what our Magician is going to do. I can't. I don't say he is a fairy; I don't promise that any of the things which are going to happen are fairy things. But they will show you how nice it is not to be able to explain everything, and why Maggie Price may be right about the fairies. Now let us watch the Magician do his wonders."

With this Allegra clapped her hands, and out from the bushes stepped a tall figure with a box under his arm and a little folding-table which he set up in the open space. He was dressed in a long black velvet gown, covered with white circles and moons and stars and triangles, such as magicians always wear in books. On his head he wore a black hood, and in his hand he held a little

wand. When he tapped thrice on the table with his wand a light popped out from somewhere and shone upon him, so that he stood in a brilliant circle, where everything he did could be plainly seen.

Allegra had sent for a conjurer from the city, and he did all the tricks that conjurers usually do. He fired a pistol into an empty old silk hat, and immediately pulled out a live rabbit, which kicked and struggled, to the children's great delight. He took yards and yards of ribbon out of his own mouth, until the children wondered what in the world he could be made of.

He rolled up cornucopias of plain white paper, and presto! They became full of popcorn, which he tossed to the audience to prove that it was real. He did dozens of wonderful things, which none of the open-mouthed guests could begin to explain. They wondered if Maggie was right, and if the fairies had a hand in it somehow.

Last of all, the Magician borrowed a hat from one of the boys, and waving it in the air several times, cried "Abracadabra! Abracadabra!" in a loud voice. Immediately, the hat was brimful of flowers, which the Magician showered upon the children until each had a bouquet of beautiful hot-

house blossoms. Then *pop!* The light went suddenly out; and in the surprise of it the children winked, and—the Magician was gone! It was very strange and puzzling, and made every one feel that this was indeed a mysterious Park, and that anything might happen here. Which was just what Allegra had intended.

Now, from somewhere in the shadows, the hidden music sounded once more, and presently a sweet, clear voice began to sing a fairy song,

"In the cowslip's bell I lie!"

The voice rose and fell, and finally ended on a high, shrill note, as if the fairy had flown away up into the air. And the music went on playing by itself, imitating the song of birds, and the ripple of water, and the sound of the breeze in the trees, so plainly that all the children understood what it meant, without being told.

When this was ended the Fairy Godmother again stepped forward into the ring. "Now I am going to tell you a fairy story," she said. "Perhaps you know it already. But wait and see."

Thereupon she told them the story of Cinderella and the glass slipper, and how the Fairy Godmother changed a pumpkin-and-mice into a coach-

and-horses to take Cinderella to the palace. The children listened eagerly; most of them had heard the story before, but never told so vividly as Allegra told it. "Now I am going to show you something," she concluded. "I am the Fairy Godmother, you know; and when I wave my wand you shall see Cinderella riding in her coach, as it looked after I changed it out of a pumpkin."

With that Allegra waved high in the air the staff she carried, crying at the same time, "Presto! Change! Come hither, Coach!"

At these words, from the shadow of the woods came trotting a wonderful little carriage drawn by a pair of white ponies. The carriage itself seemed to be made all of flowers; the harnesses were white, and the coachman who sat on the box wore a white coat and cocked hat and powdered hair. Bob was a capital driver, as Allegra had found out. And now he was the proudest boy who ever lived, trusted to drive the famous white ponies. In the carriage were the Prince and Cinderella. The Prince wore a beautiful suit of blue satin, and a little blue velvet cap with a long white feather. Bess made a very handsome Prince. And Maggie was dressed in a gown of white, with a sparkling necklace.

The carriage drew up in the middle of the ring where every one could see. Then the Prince descended, and knelt on one knee while Cinderella stepped to the ground. From his pocket the Prince produced a tiny glass slipper, and when Cinderella held out her silk-stockinged foot, lo and behold! the slipper fitted exactly. Then the Prince kissed Cinderella's hand, and rising, helped her back into the carriage, and off they drove into the shadows of the fairy-land that had concealed them.

"Oh! Oh-O-Oh!" breathed the watching children. "Was n't it lovely. I wish we could see them again!"

"Woof! Woof!" There was a loud bark, and out into the ring trotted Cæsar, with a ruff about his neck and a bright red bow. Behind him walked Miss Miggs, still disguised like the old guide, with a snowy beard. The ancient man bowed to the audience, and explained in a cracked voice that this remarkable dog, who had once been a real Prince, would now show how well he knew the English language. Then he made Cæsar do a series of wonderful tricks; for Cæsar had been trained in a circus; a thing which Maggie and her partners did not know.

The Prince kissed Cinderella's hand

At a word of command they were amazed to see Cæsar stand on his hind legs and walk like a man. He waltzed gracefully in a circle. He jumped over the staff which the old man held horizontal for him; he said his prayers with his head laid piously on his paws; and finally he lay down and pretended to die. But he sneezed himself alive when he was asked to do so, he howled when he was told to cry, and barked joyously when bidden to give three cheers for Maggie Price. The children eagerly applauded this feat, whereat Cæsar barked more loudly than ever, which set everybody to laughing. Then the old man bade him say good-night, whereupon Cæsar bowed his head very gracefully and the two disappeared into the shadows.

"Well, I never!" whispered Bess to Maggie, behind the shrubbery. "I knew Cæsar was a wonderful dog. But I did not know he could do all those things. Did you?"

"No," answered Maggie, with flushed cheeks. "But I am not surprised at anything in this wonderful place. Let 's go out and sit where we can see better. Something is going to happen!"

Still dressed in their pretty costumes, the three actors crept out and took seats in the front of the

audience. The children's voices were buzzing, but they quieted as from behind the screen of trees the hidden musicians began to play sweet music.

"What 's going to happen next?" whispered some one to Bess.

"I don't know," she answered. "This is a surprise for us, just the same as it is for you. Not even Maggie knows."

"No," said Maggie, "but I hope—I hope—"

No one ever heard what Maggie hoped, for at that moment the surprise began. There was a flare and a flicker in the bushes, and then the whole space was filled with a mysterious green light. Every tree and bush and blade of grass stood out distinctly, and the faces of the wondering children looked weird and ghostlike.

The hidden music changed into a soft, swinging waltz. Then from somewhere glided into the open space of grassy lawn a fairy figure, with gauzy wings growing from her shoulders and a star-tipped wand. She wore a spangled short dress that glittered strangely in the green light, and little silver slippers that twinkled over the grass and seemed not to touch it at all.

Back and forth, whirling and twirling in time to the lovely music, floated the fairy. The children

had never seen anything so beautiful. Maggie sat spellbound, watching her. Her dream had come true, and she was seeing her fairy at last! For the face of the dancing fay was that of her dear hostess, Allegra.

As she danced, the green light faded and then flared again, red. The fairy circled, the glowing point of her wand making strange patterns against the trees. It seemed to the stranger concealed in the shadow behind the audience that this was the most beautiful thing he had ever seen in his life. The faces of the watching children, eager and wondering, Maggie and the two others in their quaint costumes in the foreground; the lake, the rosy light, the weird shadows, and that graceful figure keeping time to the hidden music; Mr. Graham rubbed his eyes to be sure he was not dreaming.

"I do believe she is a fairy," he said to himself. "She is too altogether lovely to be real!"

At last the music came to an end with a quaver and a tantalizing chord. The rosy light faded away; and in the shadows the fairy also faded, no one saw whither.

There was a moment's silence; then the children broke into applause and cries of "Do it again! Do

it again!" Mr. Graham waited, behind his tree, eager as they; but the fairy did not reappear.

"No," said he to himself, "fairies never repeat themselves. It was too perfect!" He closed his eyes to bring back the picture.

Now in the open space blazed fireworks,—pinwheels and rockets and serpents such as the children had never seen before,—except Maggie, who knew what the city could do in that way. Mr. Graham did not wait to see the fireworks. "Evidently, this is no evening to make a call on the ladies," he said to himself; "I will wait until tomorrow. Perhaps I shall be awake, then. But what a lovely dream!"

He stole back through the Park by the way he had come, without being seen by any one. But he did not go straight to his room at the inn. He wandered about for a long time under the stars, thinking fairy stories and dreaming fairy dreams.

"Really," he said to himself, "here is a fairy tale worth investigating. With half an excuse, I 'd stay for a while in Bonnyburn and look into it."

Meanwhile the fireworks blazed and darted and let fall wonderful colored stars into the lake. And the children cried "Oh-O-Oh!" and stared up into

the sky until their necks ached, and until the last banging bomb announced that all was over.

Then the Fairy Godmother re-appeared and invited them all to follow her into the house for supper. Cinderella and the Prince with their gorgeous coachman led the way, and the others came merrily after them, laughing and whispering and teasing Bob and Bess about their clothes, and asking questions about the lovely fairy who had disappeared. But no one seemed to know anything about her; or if one did, she held her tongue.

There was a fine supper ready for them in the dining-room, with all the things which Bob and Bess had suggested that they liked best to eat, and many more beside. After every one had eaten all he wished, an enormous bran pie was served by Maggie, who saw that each boy and girl had a plateful containing a "plum." The plums were wrapped up in colored paper, and when they were "peeled" proved to be pretty gifts and toys such as everybody likes to have. The children wished they could have such a pie for dinner every day!

When it was time to go home, the Fairy Godmother came forward and said, "Well, children, we all hope you have had a good time at the party of Maggie and Bob and Bess. And we hope you

will come to the Park very often after this. All day long every Saturday and Sunday the grounds will be open for you and your fathers and mothers, and you may go wherever you like. I hope you will want to visit me some of those times here in the house. I shall always be glad to see you, for I want to be better acquainted with you all. Now good-night, everybody. Come again!"

"What a lovely party!" said the children, as they went home. But the story of the evening which they told their parents sounded to the latter like a fairy tale. Such doings had never been heard of in Bonnyburn!

CHAPTER XVIII

THE LUCKY STONE

"To live with her and live with thee
In unreprovèd pleasures free."

IT was rather late the next morning before Mr. Graham went to make his call at the "palace of the fairies," as he called it to himself. His heart beat fast as he stood on the white marble steps waiting for the door to open. "I wonder how it will all turn out?" he said to himself. "I wonder! What will she be like?" Mr. Graham was not thinking of Maggie at that minute.

But after he had sent in his card to Miss Penfold it was Maggie who came running to greet him. "Oh, you dear Mr. Saint George!" she cried, flinging her arms about his neck. "What a surprise you are, the very nicest surprise of all! Have you come to hunt dragons? When did you come, and how long are you going to stay? Tell me everything that has happened."

While Mr. Graham was trying to answer some

of these questions and to ask a few of his own, Maggie led him through the house and out upon the terrace overlooking the valley. Allegra in a pink muslin gown came smilingly to meet him. She looked even more lovely than on the night before; for now one could see how like gold her hair was, and how blue her eyes. Yes, she seemed indeed like a fairy princess.

"Welcome to the Park!" she said, and her voice sounded sweet as music. "I have heard Maggie speak so often about her 'Mr. Saint George' that I feel as if we were friends already."

"And I," said Mr. Graham with a twinkle in his admiring eyes, "do not feel as if I were seeing you for the first time. Maggie's letters though few have been very vivid."

"When did you come, Mr. Graham?" asked Allegra, when they were all seated in a cool corner. "I did not know that there was a morning train from the city to Bonnyburn."

"There is n't," he replied. "I arrived in fairy-land last night." Allegra glanced quickly at him; but he was looking off innocently at the mountains.

"Last night!" cried Maggie. "Oh, I wish we had known. Then you could have come to the

party,—such a lovely party, Mr. Saint George! We *proved* there were fairies, did n't we, Miss Allegra?"

"I need no proof, Maggie," smiled Mr. Graham. "But I see I shall have to confess. I did come to the party. I did see the fairies, and I believe no one enjoyed it more than I. It was indeed the loveliest party that ever mortal eyes were privileged to see."

"But why did n't you tell us you were there? Why did n't you come and be a part of the party?" pouted Maggie, who could not understand why Miss Allegra seemed suddenly to become bashful, and why Mr. Saint George seemed to be almost apologizing.

"Well," hesitated Mr. Graham. "I did not know—I was not sure—you see, I did not find any dragons ramping about, so I had no excuse to be there. Everybody else seemed to be more or less like a fairy. So I just *trespassed.* I hope you 'll forgive me?" he looked beseechingly at Miss Penfold.

"We don't use that word 'trespassing' any more in Bonnyburn," she said, smiling faintly. "I am sure you were welcome, as Maggie's friend. I wish you had come forward and had

helped us out. The party would have been all the better."

"Oh, no! It could not have been better," he replied fervently. "And I am afraid it would have been quite spoiled, if the fairies had known there was a mere mortal among them. They might have disappeared entirely—they do sometimes, you know. No, I am glad I kept myself hidden!" he confessed boldly.

"Saint George could hardly be called a 'mere mortal,'" said Allegra. "Maggie has been telling me about the dragons you are fighting in the city. It is splendid!" Mr. Graham looked at her gratefully.

Maggie climbed up onto her old friend's knee.

"Have you come to take me back?" she asked rather wistfully.

"Well, don't you want to go with me?" he inquired. "You have made a good long stay in Bonnyburn. I am dreadfully lonesome without you, Maggie."

"Oh, no!" protested Allegra. "You can't have my Maggie so soon!"

"I wish you would stay here instead," Maggie temporized. "Can't you stop in Bonnyburn too, Mr. Saint George,—why not?"

"Well," said he, "perhaps I need not go back immediately. That will depend. But I thought that possibly you would be homesick for the city by this time, little girl."

"Homesick for the city!" cried Maggie. "Do you think I want to go back to the old tenement? Oh, Mr. Saint George! Why, I was pining to see you, and that 's the truth. But now you are here, —oh goodie! goodie!" she clapped her hands ecstatically. "Wait till we have shown you Bonnyburn, Mr. Graham, and you will never want to go away any more!"

"I can well believe that," he murmured. "But you know some of us have duties in the city that keep us prisoner against our will. Some of us can't always do what we like best. There are the dragons, now."

"Maggie and I have talked about them very often," interpolated Allegra. "I never knew there was such a lot of work in the world that needed to be done. I have been thinking I should like to help. Do you think I could? I 'd be willing to take hold anywhere."

"Help! Indeed you could!" cried Mr. Graham eagerly. "The world is waiting with just the sort of work that you could do best, Miss Penfold.

Oh, how we need the fairies in the city! Maggie knows."

"Yes, I know!" Maggie nodded vehemently. "We can't get along without the fairies!"

"I have thought a great deal about the children in the city," said Allegra. "Tell me more about them, and what they most need."

Mr. Graham began to tell her something about his dreams for the future of the Settlement; and Maggie ran to fetch Bob and Bess. She was eager to introduce her old and new friends to each other. It did not take her long to run up to the Timminses' farm; when she returned with the other two children they found Allegra and her visitor talking earnestly, both looking troubled.

"We must leave her to choose," Mr. Graham was saying. And Allegra answered, "Yes. But hush! please! Here she comes."

Mr. Graham greeted Bob and Bess heartily. "Maggie has written me about you and the wonderful times you have had together," he said. "I must say, I quite envy you!"

"We will show you the places where it all happened," said Maggie eagerly. "Oh, there is so much to tell you! I could n't write it all. Can't we go now, Miss Allegra, dear?"

They took him to all the favorite spots in the Park; to the garden of the peacocks, the lake and the island, the cave and the wigwam. Especially they pointed out the gate where Allegra had first overheard the children talking, and where so many adventures had begun. Mr. Graham was deeply interested, especially in the different disguises of the fairy princess, which the children described very vividly.

"And it was dear Miss Allegra all the time!" said Maggie, as they came back to the house. "She was the fairy Princess who made all the nice things happen."

"Oh, we were all parts of a fairy tale," said Allegra, laughing. "One was just as important as another."

"I kept telling Maggie they was n't real fairies, but she would n't believe me," grinned Bob.

"Oh you did, you young unbeliever!" said Mr. Graham, shaking him by the shoulder. "You tried to spoil her story, did you? That is a thankless task, always. I would n't do it again."

"But I believe in fairies more than ever I did," Maggie assured him. "You and Miss Allegra and I think just alike."

"I am glad of that!" said Mr. Graham fervently.

"We all think alike," said Bess. "All the children in Bonnyburn think just as you do, Maggie. The party did it."

"Why, of course there must be fairies!" Maggie went on eagerly. "*Something* led Miss Allegra down to the gate that day. I know it was a fairy, though it looked like only a butterfly. And before that, *Something* dropped that lucky stone for you to find, Mr. Saint George. Don't you believe that was a good fairy, too?"

"Maybe," said he. "We must see how it all turns out; then we shall perhaps know what to call it."

After Bess and Bob had gone home to dinner, Mr. Graham rose and took Maggie by the hand, and put his arm tenderly about her shoulders. "Good-by, dear little Maggie," he said. "It is time for me to be starting towards the station. When you are ready to come back to the city, let me know." He looked very sad.

"Oh, I thought you were going to stay!" Maggie seemed about to cry. "I can get ready pretty quickly. But—but—"

"You don't need to go at all, unless you wish,

Maggie," said Mr. Graham gravely. "Ask Miss Penfold."

"I shall be glad to have you stay with me as long as you like," Allegra assured her. "Will you stay with me always, Maggie?"

"Oh, how good you are!" cried Maggie, beaming with joy. Then she looked troubled, and held out her hand to her older friend as if she would keep him from going away. "But I want to be with you too!" she said pitifully. "And I guess I ought to be going back—home."

"You are not to go back to 'Tilda and the old place anyway," said Mr. Graham kindly. "That is over; that is n't your home any more. 'Tilda has gone away. I will tell you about it sometime. But once I thought that you might come to live at the Settlement and be my little girl. That was before you had met the real fairies—in Bonnyburn."

"Oh!" cried Maggie, turning distractedly from one to the other. "To be your little girl, Mr. Saint George! How lovely! But I wish I could live with you both at once. Why do I have to choose?"

"You must choose, Maggie," said Allegra, looking at her very earnestly. But in the last few minutes Mr. Graham had been thinking rapidly.

"Why must poor Maggie choose between us? Why could we not make a compromise?" he suggested. "Why could she not live here in Bonnyburn during the summer, and come to me for the winter and school in the city?"

Allegra hesitated and bit her lip. Then she said rather reluctantly, "Well, perhaps that can be arranged. You see, I need Maggie to help me here. I have not yet told you my plan. What you have been telling me this morning makes me more eager than ever to carry it out. My father has given me the Park for my very own, and I want to make it into something splendid. Would it not be a fine summer home for city children? I mean, a real *home,* where they could visit me as guests for some weeks of every year and where I would try to make them have a happy time."

"Wonderful!" cried Mr. Graham, with shining eyes. "It is what I have always been dreaming, —an ideal home with an ideal hostess, who is a real fairy godmother!"

Allegra blushed. "Perhaps you would help me too?" she asked timidly.

"I certainly would," he answered with eager readiness.

"I should need to study the matter," Allegra

"Why do I have to choose?"

continued. "I should want to know more about all kinds of children, and to look into the ways of Settlements and things."

"I will show you all I know," he assured her.

"Why could n't you stay in Bonnyburn and begin to show me now?" asked Allegra quickly. "It would be a kindness to Maggie,—to everybody."

"Oh, do, Mr. Saint George!" begged Maggie, clasping his arm. "And maybe we could find some dragons for you to fight here. We haven't explored every corner of Bonnyburn yet, you know. Will you stay?"

Mr. Graham did not hesitate long. "Well," he said, looking thoughtfully at Allegra, "if the fairies are so polite as to invite me to stay, I don't see that I can do otherwise than accept. Yes, I might spend my vacation here. I 'd like nothing better, for my part!"

"Oh goodie!" Maggie jumped up and down, clapping her hands in wildest joy. "We will make it the very jolliest vacation that ever anybody had, won't we, Miss Allegra?"

"We shall certainly try," smiled Allegra. And they succeeded.

The next two weeks were wonderful ones, even for Bonnyburn. Never before had the Park ech-

oed with such continuous merriment. It seemed as if a band of happy fairies had taken possession of it and of the palace from attic to cellar. Mr. Graham gave up his room at the inn and moved up to the Timmins farm, so as to be nearer the center of fun. And he proved to be almost as ingenious at helping things to happen as was the Fairy Godmother herself.

Such games as he invented for the children to play, indoors and out! Such theatricals and parties as he helped organize, to which the neighbors were invited! Such stories as he told on rainy evenings by the great fireplace in the library, where once Maggie had been so frightened by the Voice! Such trips as he planned to climb the neighboring hills, with picnic dinners in the woods!

One could fill a book with the merry doings of that fortnight alone, in which there was not a minute wasted. The vacation days of Mr. Saint George were as busy as his other days. But this was a kind of business that smoothed out the tired lines from his face and made him happier-looking every minute.

He made friends with every one in Bonnyburn. And they all came to him with their troubles and doubts and questions, just as the people did at the

Settlement. And he liked it. The village children followed him about whenever he appeared, clinging to his hands, just as long ago the children followed the Pied Piper of Hamelin. And he liked that, too.

Those were blessed days for Allegra. It was wonderful to see how fast the Princess was recovering from the spell which had magicked her. Day by day she grew sturdier and heartier and more like herself. Till suddenly she realized that she had won back all the old joy of life which she had once thought gone forever.

When Mr. Saint George led them up into the hills to seek dragons, she found she could climb and tramp as well as any of them; and she always reached the top side by side with the leader. The outdoor exercise put new roses into her cheeks, and she became almost as brown as Maggie and the Timmins children. And she was laughing and singing all the time. It hardly seemed possible that this could be the same fragile Allegra who had lain in the long-chair looking so gloomily over the valley when Maggie arrived in Bonnyburn those few short weeks ago!

"I love to see her laugh!" declared Maggie one day. "Nowadays she does not look like a pale

Princess just freed from a spell. But she is lovelier than ever." And Mr. Graham did not contradict her.

They made wonderful plans for the future. Next summer the Park was to be turned into a big, comfortable home where perhaps twenty children from the city could be invited to come and stay and be made strong. They were to be the guests of Allegra and Maggie, with Bob and Bess to help. And they promised that those city children should have a lovely fairy-story visit.

Miss Miggs was to help, too. She was to manage practical things as house-mother, with assistants of her own choosing. She was full of enthusiasm about the new scheme.

The Park was to become a sort of country-cousin to Mr. Graham's Settlement; and he was planning to start all kinds of Settlement classes and clubs which the country children might share.

Already Allegra was inventing nice surprises for the new children whom Mr. Graham had in mind to be her little guests. Maggie used to wake up in the night and hug herself with joy to think how happy those poor children were going to be; enjoying all that she had herself enjoyed during this lovely summer.

They were all so happy that the days flew with a swiftness hardly natural. Maggie declared they were bewitched, and only half as long as days should be. The time approached when Mr. Graham and Maggie must go back to the city. For he had his work, and she was to be his little girl that winter, and go to school near the Settlement.

Indeed, they would soon be all together once more. For was not Allegra to be at her father's house in the city that winter, instead of going to Europe as usual? And would she not be coming every day to the Settlement to study and to help? And, oh yes! Were not Bob and Bess to be Allegra's guests for eight good weeks, while the Bonnyburn school was closed? They would see the city for the first time; and Maggie would have the fun of showing it to them! There was indeed something for every one to look forward to.

One crisp September morning Allegra drove a little party to the station to catch the train cityward. It was the team of white ponies which carried them, Mr. Graham sitting beside Allegra and Maggie squeezed on the rear seat between Bob and Bess, who had come to see her off.

"It will not be long," said Maggie, gulping, as she saw tears in Bess's eyes.

"No, it will not be long," echoed Allegra, looking brightly at Mr. Graham, who had been talking earnestly to her. "See, I have something I am going to give you; something very precious." And she took from her pocket the lucky stone which Maggie had given her. "Here is the lucky stone that brought us all together in a marvelous way. May it bring you luck with your dragons, 'Mr. Saint George,' and may it give you your Wish, whatever that may be!"

"My Wish!" he repeated, as he took the little heart-shaped stone into his hand and looked at it thoughtfully. "It is the lucky stone that brought us all together. And *together* is the finest word in the world. Thank you, Princess, for giving me back the precious lucky stone, which shall, *I wish,* bring us to begin a new fairy tale of our own,—together!"

The train rumbled up to the little station. "All aboard!" shouted the brakeman, helping Maggie on to the plaform, just as he had helped her off that July day, weeks ago.

"Good-by! Good-by!" they cried, and the

train started. Mr. Graham drew Maggie into a seat from which, as they rounded the curve, they could catch a glimpse of the high white walls of the palace in the Park, gleaming from a setting of green. Maggie smiled as she remembered how she had first seen it, and as she thought of all that had happened since. But Mr. Graham as he gazed did not smile, but hummed below his breath,—

> "Towers and battlements it sees,
> Bosom'd high in tufted trees,
> Where perhaps some Beauty lies,—"

"What is that song you are singing?" asked Maggie, wiping away a tear as the last hills of Bonnyburn slipped from view.

"Oh, nothing," said Mr. Graham hastily. "I was only thinking of 'Faery Mab,' and 'the light fantastic toe,' and all that in the poem."

"What poem? Tell me about it, Mr. Saint George, please," said Maggie, settling herself comfortably against his shoulder, ready for a story.

"It is called *'L'Allegro,'* " said Mr. Graham, smiling to himself, "and I think it is the loveliest poem in the world."

"L'Allegro!" cried Maggie. "Why, that

sounds like the sweetest name in the world,—Allegra."

"So it does," said Mr. Saint George softly, as he fingered the lucky stone.

THE END

"Then done the tale, to bed they creep,
By whispering winds soon lulled asleep."