EDITH KING HALL



TREDITION CLASSICS

# Adventures in Toyland What the Marionette Told Molly

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To
my little friends
Dorothy & Doris
in recollection of the time
we spent in fairy land
together.



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# ADVENTURES IN TOYLAND

WHAT THE MARIONETTE TOLD MOLLY

BY

EDITH KING HALL

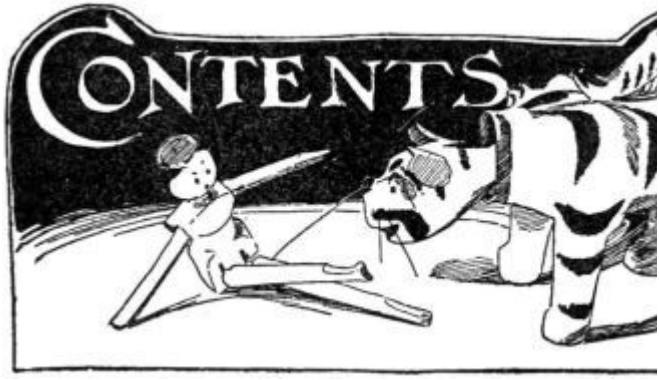
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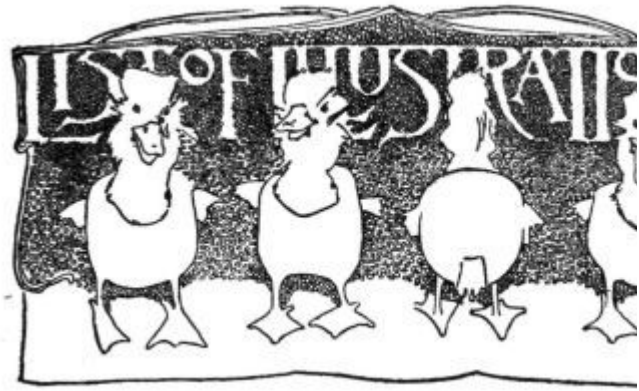
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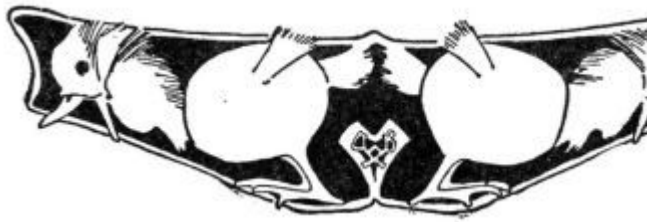


## Molly and the Marionette

Unrolling the Adventures
Three Friends in Fairyland
The Farthing Doll gets a Surprise
From Noah's Ark
Four Merry Ducklings
Birds of a Feather
A Procession from the Ark
"Molly's astonishment was great"
The two Dancers
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The Mouse collects the Money
A Pair of Conspirators
"The Sentry is both brave and wicked"
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The Rabbit bids the Sentry Good-day

The Rabbit spreads the Gum over the Floor
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Belinda shuts her Eyes
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“Oh, Belinda, how I love you!”
Bedtime in the Ark
The Marionette in a hurry
The Two Enemies
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The Officer threatens the Elephant
“He fell under the animal’s trunk”
“He grunted and walked slowly away”
Molly sits beside her Friend
“One day she saw the Bicycle-man”
“A very handsome fellow”
“Something within her went—*Snap!*”
“Alas! alack-a-day!”
“Come, this won’t do!”
“The Hansom-driver was very plain”
“The Butcher, the Baker, and the Clown”
“My face is my fortune”
“Every time he looked in the Glass”
“Drove off as fast as he could”
“I should like to hear about her”
“Claribelle was a haughty doll”
“The Rag Doll was a pushing person”
The Driver begins to sing

“Then she swept away”
“The Driver got up with dignity”
“He loved but drove away”
Proud Claribelle is penitent
“The two met as usual”
The Grocer meets the Farthing Doll
“They walked away hand in hand”
“She handed him a joint of beef”
“Supposing I said ‘Yes’ and you said ‘No’”
“They were happy ever after”
“Molly ran away content”
“The little Marionette lay on the ground”
“They had just finished their dance”
“I begin to understand—nerves”
The General rides off to the nearest chemist
The Clown dances a double-shuffle
“You are not crying, dear, are you?”
“She rocked to and fro silently”
The Marionette fell asleep quite happily






All sorts of toys were to be found in that toy-shop. It was truly a place to please any child! A little girl, who had come to stay there with her aunt—the owner of the shop—and her little cousin, was always to be found amongst the toys; she was forever picking up and admiring this one, stroking that one, nursing another. All her spare moments were spent in the shop.

It so happened one evening that she wandered in after the shutters were put up, and the place was deserted. She paused before the spot where she was accustomed to find her favorite doll, a little lady Marionette, who, when wound up, danced gayly in company with her partner, a very fine gentleman.

They were both very prettily dressed. The

little lady Marionette wore a beautiful white silk dress brocaded with pink roses, whilst her partner had on a blue velvet coat, knee breeches, white silk stockings, and diamond shoe buckles. Their clothes were really very grand!

And they danced so gayly, too.

“Just as if they like dancing with each other!” the little girl once said to her aunt.

“You are a fanciful child, Molly,” answered the woman, laughing.

“All the same, I believe I am right,” replied the little girl.

This evening, however, they were not to be found in their accustomed place. The little platform on which they danced was there, but the dolls themselves were gone!







The little girl looked round the shop much bewildered.

“Where *can* they be?” she said.

At last she saw the little lady Marionette sitting on the right hand counter, with her back against the Noah’s Ark.

“Well, how funny!” exclaimed the little girl aloud. “How have *you* got there?”

“Walked, of course,” answered the little

Marionette in a sweet little voice.

The little girl's astonishment at this reply was very great. So great that it kept her silent.

"You seem rather surprised," said the little Marionette. "Why?"

"Why, I never knew you could talk!" she exclaimed, recovering a little from her surprise. "Or any other toy, either," she added.

"Life is full of surprises," remarked the little Marionette; "especially in the toy-shop."

"I wish you would tell me all about it," said the little girl, becoming bolder. "If toys can walk and talk, why don't children know it?"

"Because, although they have known many toys, yet they are very ignorant regarding their habits," she answered. "*That* is the reason.

"At the same time," she continued, "as it is, generally speaking, only when mortals are not present that we *can* move and speak freely, this ignorance is, perhaps, partly excusable."

"But how long will you be able to go on

talking to me?"

"That I can't tell you. I can only say that our power of talking to a Mortal—a power which comes but once in the lifetime of every toy—generally lasts from a fortnight to three weeks."

The little girl clapped her hands.

"You will be able to talk to me, then, every day that I am here!" she exclaimed with pleasure. "I am only going to stay with my aunt and my cousin for twelve days longer."

She paused a moment, then added:

"How I should like you to tell me some stories of toys—a new story every day, you know. Couldn't you do that?"

The little Marionette looked doubtful.

"Before I attempt anything of the sort, I shall have to consult Father Christmas—the well-known and much-esteemed patriarch. As he is the Head of our Society, I should like to do nothing without his advice and sanction."

The little girl sighed anxiously.

"I *do* hope he'll say 'yes'," she said. "I want

so much to hear stories of toys told by a toy."

"I'll do my best to please you," said the little Marionette. "Come here at the same time to-morrow,—by yourself, for I can only speak before one Mortal at a time,—and I will see what I can do."

"Thank you," she said gratefully. "Please give my best love to Father Christmas; and tell him if he says 'yes' I will see that Auntie puts him at the very top of the Christmas tree."

She turned to go, then paused and came back.

"I should just like to ask you one thing before I go," she said. "Don't you and your partner enjoy dancing together?"

The pink cheeks of the little lady seemed to grow a little pinker.

"Perhaps we do," she replied.

"I thought so," remarked her new friend with some satisfaction. "Good evening! I shall come again to-morrow at this same time."






The next evening the little girl returned to the Noah's Ark, where she found the little Marionette in the same position.

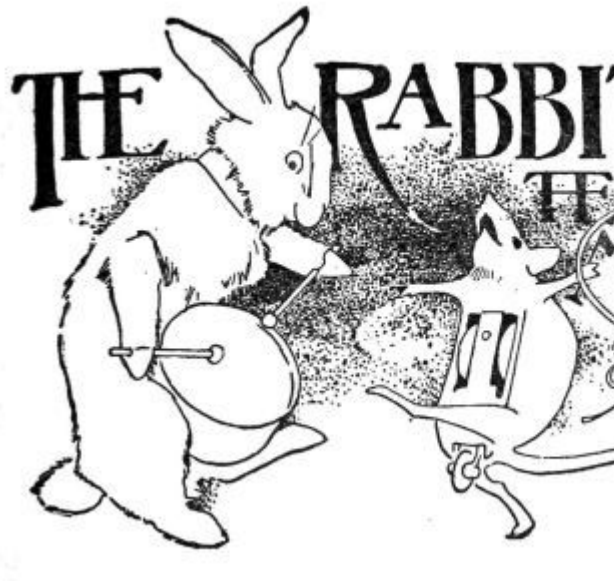
"Well!" she said eagerly.

"I have consulted Father Christmas," answered the little Marionette. "He is of the opinion that I may, without harm, tell you tales of *some* of the toys. You shall therefore hear the most interesting stories I can remember."

"That will be very nice," said the little girl. "Will you begin at once?"

"At once," she agreed, and began the story of

"THE RABBIT AND THE MOUSE"




The white Rabbit and the brown Mouse

were both talented, though in different ways. The Rabbit's talent showed itself in the precision and vigor with which he could beat a drum as he sat on his hind-legs; the Mouse in the swiftness and grace with which he could speed to and fro upon the counter.

Talking over the matter, they arrived at the conclusion that if they went up and down the counter together as a traveling-show they might turn a very pretty penny. The Rabbit was to display his musical talent, whilst the Mouse was to exhibit his powers of graceful movement.

The profits were to be equally divided. Such, at least, was the arrangement as *understood*; but it was not a *written* agreement, which was a great mistake.

The reason, however, that the two partners omitted to be more business-like was this: the Rabbit trusted the Mouse, and the Mouse hoped to cheat the Rabbit. Not that anything of the sort was openly expressed, but each was quite well aware of his own view of the matter.

The two started off upon the most amiable terms, stopping at such places as they thought most likely to prove profitable: in

front of the dolls' houses; before the race-courses; by the shops. Then the Rabbit would announce loudly:

"*I am a rare-bit from Wales, and the Mouse is a tit-bit from Ireland. We charge no fees for performing, but trust to your kind generosity.*"

After this the Rabbit played the drum with great energy, whilst the Mouse ran up and down in the most nimble manner.

It was probably owing to a report which got abroad, to the effect that the performers were noble strangers, working in the cause of charity, that the success of the pair was so great. It was, indeed, wonderful, and in a short time the two had gained quite a little fortune.

It was the Mouse who collected the money. For purposes of his own, he persuaded the Rabbit to let him always take upon himself this duty. And his companion, who was rather stiff in the joints after sitting perfectly still upon his hind-legs for the length of time he was obliged to, was quite willing to let the Mouse do as he wished.

Not that he would have been willing to had he known the real facts of the case. For as you will understand by what I have said, the

Mouse was acting towards him in the most dishonest fashion, in spite of his many fair words and speeches.



It was in this way that he plotted against his friend: As soon as a certain sum of money had been collected, the Mouse always suggested that he should go and invest it. To this the Rabbit never made any objection, having great faith in the Mouse as an animal with a good business head.

When the little rascal returned after a long absence, he had always a fine story to tell of the cleverness with which he had laid out the money, and of the fortune which would shortly be coming in. This was perfectly

untrue. The Mouse was not investing a penny. On the contrary, he was hoarding it all up, and for his own benefit.

There was a certain Horse who lived some little way off in a luxurious stable. Here the Mouse was minded to pass his last years, so soon as he had made a sufficiently large fortune, or unless chance removed him from the toy-shop. But in order to carry out his plan, he would have to pay the Horse a large sum for the right of sharehold—since it was his stall he wished to share,—and also to get the warm, cosy corner he especially desired.



The Horse himself was not the noble creature nature had intended him to be. He was to the full as greedy as the Mouse, and was indeed his helper in the plot. It was to the Horse the little swindler always ran when he pretended that he was going to invest the money, and it was in his stall that it was hidden. By the end of the half-year the Horse and the Mouse calculated that they would have sufficient money to carry out their design; when they intended to add further to their wickedness by causing the Rabbit to be killed, in order to prevent his asking any tiresome questions.

Now, as the time drew near when the money, had it been invested, should have brought in some returns, the Rabbit began to talk of what he intended doing with *his* share.

“I think,” said he, “after I have supplied my own wants, I shall found a drum-scholarship for Musical Rabbits;” for he was a creature of a kind and generous nature, and truly devoted to the cause of art.

“A most excellent notion,” said the Mouse. “I shall follow your good example, and found a scholarship for the encouragement of harmonious squeaking amongst Mice. One cannot do too much to encourage the love of music amongst all classes.”

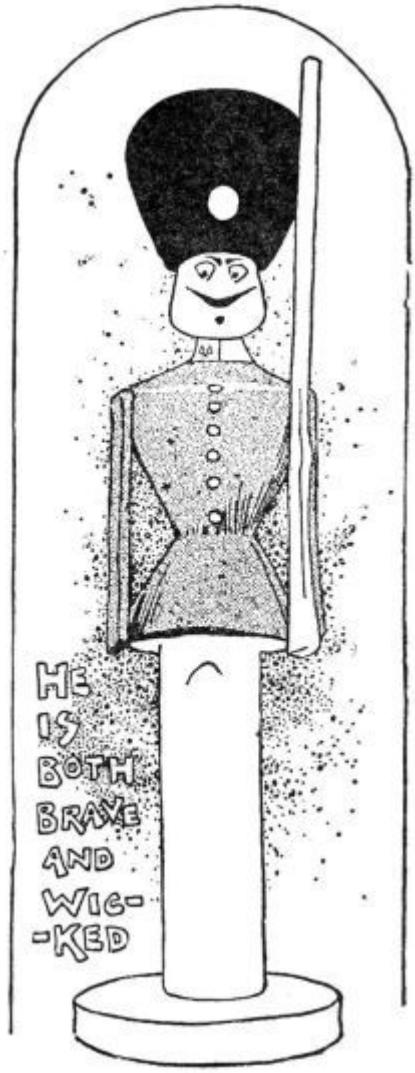
“When will our first dividends be paid?” asked the Rabbit.

“The money ought to have been paid already,” answered the little scamp, “but business is very bad just at present. I would explain the matter to you, but I doubt you would not understand all the details.”

“Very good; I will not trouble you,” answered his companion easily. “I have perfect faith in your judgment, and will leave all to you.”

Yet from time to time, as was natural, he still made inquiries, which the Mouse began to find troublesome. He therefore consulted with his wicked friend the Horse, and they resolved that, as the half-year was approaching, and they had got sufficient money for what they wanted, it was better to delay the carrying out of their plot no longer, but to kill the Rabbit as soon as it could be managed—indeed that very day.

“To whom shall we intrust the deed?” asked the Horse. “There would be too great a risk for either of us to undertake it, I fear. If we were discovered there would at once be an end of all our plans. Our money would be taken, and possibly our lives also.”




The Mouse considered for a moment, then he said:

“I think I know the very fellow for the job.

There is the Sentry who always stands in his wooden box. He is a chap who will do anything to vary the dulness of his life and earn a little money. He told me so the other day. He is both brave and wicked. Let *him* him do the deed."

"Very well," replied the Horse; "I think your idea is good. Will you arrange the matter so that it be carried out without any mistake?"

"Leave it to me," replied the other. "You need not disturb yourself. The days of the Rabbit are numbered."

"Good!" neighed the Horse; "and the quantity of my corn, oats,—besides carrots, apples, and other luxuries,—will be *beyond* number. We'll at once open an account with the fruiterer and corn-dealer."

"Also the cheese-monger," said the Mouse. "Well, I must go; there is not a moment to be lost if we wish to carry out our plan." Then he hurried off to the Sentry.

"Sentry," said he, "are you prepared to run some risk for the sake of money?"

"For the sake of money I'm prepared to do anything," said the wicked fellow.

"Then listen," said the Mouse. "There is a

sum of money that, strictly speaking, ought to be divided between the Rabbit and myself. But the best way appears to be that I should have it all. But that is a little difficult so long as he is alive. So I come to you to ask you if you will kill him, provided I fill your knapsack with gold."



"Upon that condition, yes," said the ruffian. "But don't attempt to break it, or I shall put an end to you as well as your friend."

"Never fear. Rest assured you shall have it," said the Mouse.

"Now for the details of the plot," he continued. "I am going to propose to the Rabbit a private performance in front of your sentry-box. I shall say I have suggested it in order to vary the terrible dulness of your existence. Having finished our performance I shall lead the way straight forward, *with our backs towards you*. When we have gone a few steps I shall remark loudly, '*That Sentry friend of ours is a smart chap;* he *knows how to handle the bayonet*'. This is to be the signal for you to step quietly out of your box, and, pretending to stumble, stab the Rabbit in the back with your bayonet. This should be quite easy, for he is sure to be walking away on his hind-legs. He has fallen into that habit since he has taken to playing the drum. You and I will, of course, exhibit much grief, and declare that his death was an unfortunate accident. You see the plan offers no difficulty."

"Then if the *plan* offers no difficulty, *I*

won't," said the Sentry, with a cold-blooded laugh. "When is it to be carried out?"

"This very day, in about two hours' time," replied the Mouse. "Well, good-bye for the present, I think it is all very nicely arranged;" and he nimbly scurried back to tell the Horse that the Rabbit was to be killed by the Sentry; which he did with the utmost glee.

Perhaps, however, his glee would not have been so great had he known that whilst he was giving his account of what had occurred to the Horse, *his wicked plan was at the same time being told to the intended victim*!

This is how such a strange thing happened.

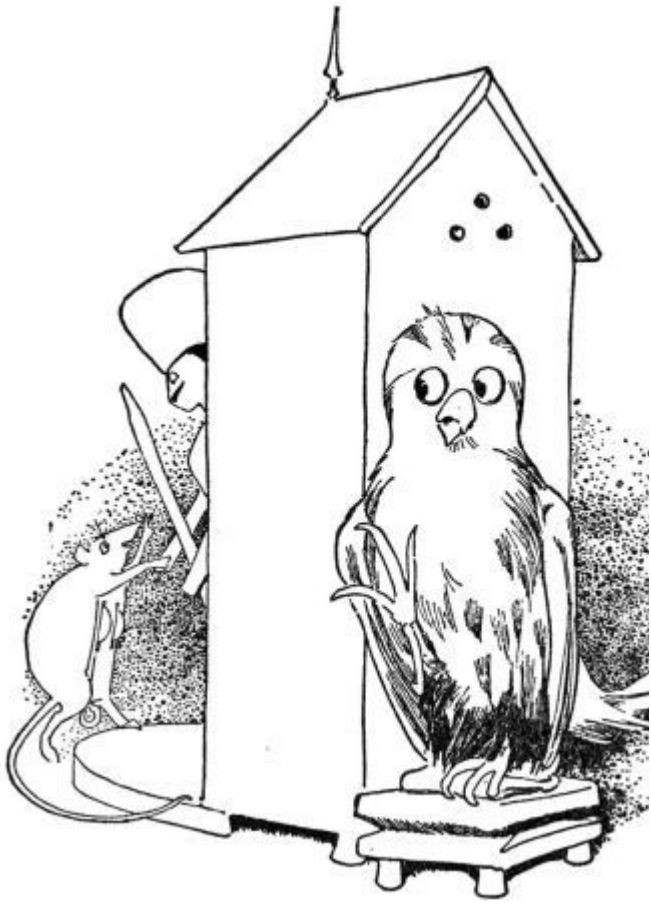
Whilst the Mouse and the Sentry were talking, they had forgotten that the Owl's usual position was just behind the sentry-box. Or, if they thought of it at all, they gave no heed to the fact, being aware that the Owl was accustomed to sleep during the whole of the day.

It so happened, however, that at the very moment the Mouse began his conversation with the Sentry, the Owl awakened with a start from a bad daymare, and all but hooted with fright. Growing calm as he

became wider awake, he was going off to sleep again,—when the name of the Rabbit caught his ear. Being well acquainted with both him and the Mouse, whose squeaking voice he recognized, the Owl listened to what was being said, at first with drowsy then with startled attention.

He only waited until he had learned all the details of the vile plot, and then, overcoming, in the cause of friendship, every desire to close his heavy eyes, he stole away, and imparted his startling news to the astonished Rabbit.

"*Impossible!*" exclaimed his hearer, letting his drum-stick fall with a crash upon the instrument he had been industriously practising. "I would as soon doubt my own honor as that of the little Mouse—my friend and companion through weal and woe. *Impossible!* You must have dreamt it, or invented it."



“Don’t be so hasty in your judgment,” remarked the Owl. “I have neither dreamt nor invented it. If you doubt me go without delay to the brown Horse’s stable, where you will find the Mouse at this present moment talking with his wicked companion. I will wait here until you return, in case I may be needed to help you in your

difficulty."

"Many thanks," said the Rabbit, and leaving his drum in charge of the Owl he hurried away.

But a short time passed, and then he returned with a look of horror and dismay.

"All you have told me is but too true," he exclaimed. "Let me tender you my most sincere apologies for having doubted your word. Unseen by my faithless friend, I listened to his conversation with the Horse, and overheard more than enough to convince me of the truth of your story.

"Yet who," he continued sorrowfully, "who could have believed it of that little Mouse? Who would have imagined so great an amount of deceit dwelt in so small a body?"



Then he recovered his spirit. “I will baulk him yet!” he exclaimed, his pink eyes flashing, and his white fur bristling with excitement.

“How can I help you?” asked the Owl. “I will endeavor to keep awake as long as I am wanted.”

“Wait a moment,” answered the Rabbit, and then he beat a tattoo thoughtfully on his drum. “I think I have arrived at a conclusion,” he said presently. “I will meet their dastardly plot by a counter-plot. I do

not expect the Mouse back for another half-hour; he told me he should be busy till half-past twelve putting away our recent earnings. This will just give us time to do what I wish.

“Here is *my* plot,” he continued. “Having procured a bottle of gum we will go to the sentry-box, at the back of which you will take up your position. I will tell the Sentry you have been telling me a most comical little dream you have had—the one, indeed, you told me of late. He is a great fellow for good stories, and will certainly hurry off to hear it.

“Whilst he is away I will spread the bottom of the sentry-box with gum. When, on his return, he steps into the box, I shall keep him still, and give the gum time to take effect, by offering him a bet of a gold piece that he will not stand perfectly motionless whilst I go home and back. He is very fond of a bet, and is sure to accept it. Leaving you to see that he acts fairly, I shall go and meet the Mouse, returning here for the performance which is to be suggested.






“That, however, I shall cut short, having no desire to waste my talent on a villain like the Sentry. I shall turn away with the Mouse, who, on giving the signal agreed upon, will, to his amazement, find that it is followed by no result. For by that time the Sentry will be gummed so tightly to the floor of his sentry-box that he will not be able to move an inch.

“Having enjoyed the sight of their confusion I shall punish them, biting off the head of the Mouse—for whose deceit no punishment can be too severe,—and beating the Sentry about the head until he can’t see out of his eyes. Nor shall the Horse escape my

vengeance. I shall creep into his stall, and suddenly, and with a precise aim, throw a piece of gold at the pupils of his wicked eyes. Thus he will be totally blinded by the gold he has wrongfully helped to keep. A most fit and proper punishment."

"Your plans are well and thoughtfully worked out," said the Owl, blinking his eyes.

"To business, then," remarked the Rabbit; and the two having first procured the gum took their way to the sentry-box; the Rabbit strolling thither on his hind-legs to avoid any appearance of alarm or haste, the Owl hopping by his side with a certain grave and sleepy dignity.




Arrived at the sentry-box, the Owl placed himself behind it, whilst the Rabbit, concealing the bottle of gum under his drum, went to the front and bid the Sentry "good-day."

"Good-day," said the Sentry. "What are you grinning at?" For the Rabbit was smiling from ear to ear.

"Nothing of much consequence," he replied.

“Merely a most comical little dream that the Owl—who happens for a wonder to be awake—has been telling me. It made me die of laughter.”

“Pass it on,” said the Sentry.

“I shouldn’t think of doing that,” replied the Rabbit. “I don’t approve of telling people’s own particular little stories; they prefer the fun of relating them themselves. Look here, you go round for a moment or two and get him to let you hear it before he drops asleep again. It is an occasion to seize, for he is hardly ever awake when other people are, and he tells a story better than anyone else I know.”

“Well, I rather think I will,” answered the Sentry. “I’m very fond of a good story. You take my place whilst I’m away, there’s a good fellow. Here, put down your drum and take my bayonet.”

“Very good,” answered the Rabbit, and the Sentry hurried off.

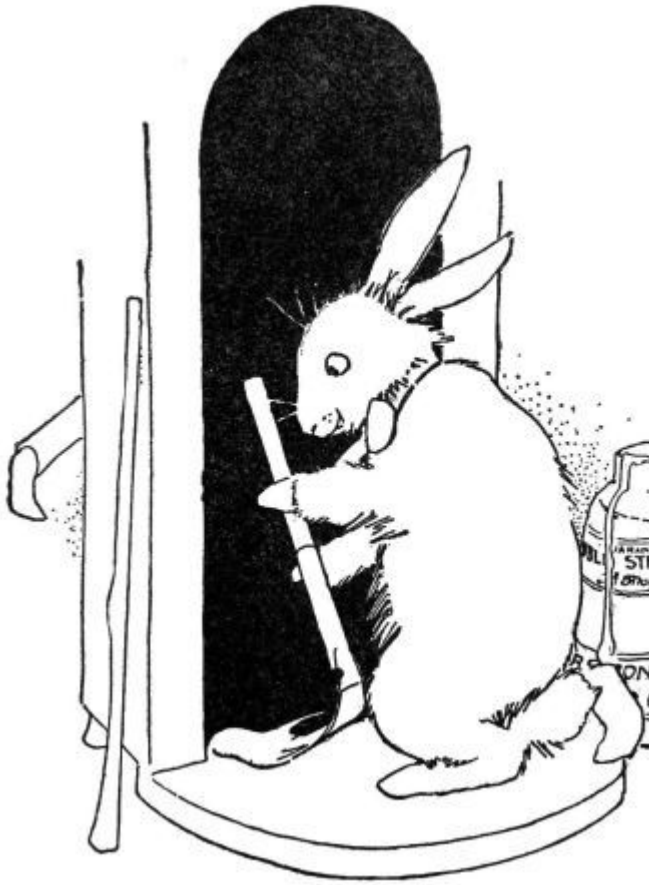
The moment he had turned the corner the Rabbit set to work and spread gum all over the floor of the sentry-box. Then, standing outside, he took up the bayonet and mounted guard, first carefully hiding the

tell-tale bottle behind a box of bricks. By and by the Sentry returned.

“Well, it was not a very good story after all,” he said rudely. “Thank you for nothing. Why aren’t you in the sentry-box? I am inclined to bayonet you for breaking your word.”

“I should not have been able to move about sufficiently,” the Rabbit answered. “I should have suffered from cramp.”

“Stuff and nonsense!” the Sentry replied. “I stand in it for hours at a time.”



“But not without moving?” asked the Rabbit, with an air of disbelief. “Without stirring an eighth of an inch,” the Sentry said.

“I don’t believe it,” replied the Rabbit. “I challenge you to keep perfectly still for any length of time. I bet you a gold piece you won’t stand motionless whilst I run home

and back again."

"Done!" said the Sentry, and straightway stepped into his box.

"This sentry-box gets slimy and dirty," he said, without the least idea of what the Rabbit had done. "It is quite sticky with dirt. It wouldn't be a bad thing if you were to clean it out for me some day."

"I'll see," answered the other carelessly, fearing to be either too polite or too rude lest he should arouse any suspicions in the Sentry's mind. "I don't generally care to do other people's dirty work, but I may do that some day when I am not busy. You serve your country, so you deserve a little help."

"If you don't do it willingly, you shall do it unwillingly," he blustered. "If *I* serve my country, *you* must serve me."

"There's plenty of time to think it over," answered the Rabbit. "In the meanwhile, you can't stir even to have it cleaned or you lose your bet. I'm off. But wait, I must call the Owl to be a witness that you keep strictly to the terms we have agreed upon."

Then, having called the Owl and stated the terms of the bet, the Rabbit went home.

Here he awaited the arrival of the Mouse, who presently returned, full of pretended sympathy for the dulness of the Sentry's life.

"He told me to-day," said the little rascal, "that the dulness of his life was killing him. It struck me that it would be really an act of charity on our part to give him a little performance, and let him fully understand we expect no money for it. I hinted at something of the sort to him, and the poor fellow's face lighted up in a way that was quite touching. Suppose we go his way now as we have a little spare time."

"I'm quite willing to," replied the Rabbit. "But I've just come from him, and he never complained of dulness to me. In fact, he was in quite good enough spirits to have a bet with me on the subject of his being able to stand motionless for a certain time."

"Oh, he did that to try and kill care, no doubt," answered the Mouse. "I know him well, though he is a reserved chap and opens out his heart to few. Come on."

Now by the time the Rabbit and the Mouse returned to the sentry-box, the gum had had time to get well dried, so that the Sentry was firmly fixed in his box. Nevertheless, there was still the danger that he might

attempt to move, and so find out too soon the trick that had been played upon him. To avert this, directly the Rabbit came back again he lost no time in remarking to the Sentry:

“Yes, I acknowledge you have won the bet. But you have only just managed to do so; you are looking quite tired out. Another five minutes or less, and you would have been unable to stand still a moment longer.”

“Double or quits!” cried the Sentry. “For another gold piece, I’ll engage to keep still for the time you mention. If I fail to do so, of course you don’t pay me anything.”

“Agreed,” said the Rabbit.

“Oh, friends,” exclaimed the Mouse, shaking his head, “do not give way to this habit! It is, indeed, a sad, bad one.”

This he merely said to impress the Owl (on whom he had not counted as a spectator) with a sense of his moral worth. He hoped by this means to counteract any after suspicions that might arise in the good bird’s mind.

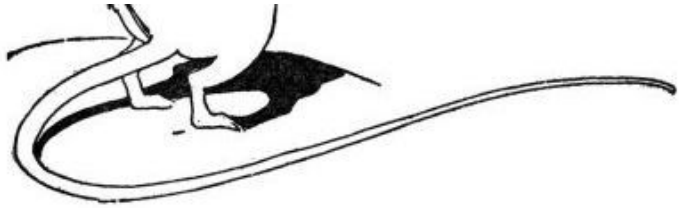
“As to that,” said the Sentry, who was generally rude whether he was addressing

friend or foe, “it is my own concern whether I bet or not. You had better not trouble yourself with my affairs, but if you really mean to give me one of your performances you would do well to begin.”

“Just as you will,” the Mouse said. “But I can’t help taking an interest in the welfare of those with whom I have to do.” Then addressing the Rabbit: “Dear friend,” he said smoothly, “will you open with your famous *rêverie*, ‘Dreamings of a Drum,’ whilst I perform my *pas de quatre*, ‘Twirlings of the Toes?’”







“Very good,” agreed the Rabbit.

And the two performers began. But in a few moments the Rabbit stopped.

“I cannot continue,” he said. “I am suffering from cramp in the muscles of my drum-legs.”

“Dear! What a pity!” exclaimed the Mouse. “Come for a walk and brace yourself up.”

“All right!” answered the Rabbit. “We’ll go and fetch the gold pieces which I must give this fellow.”

“Can’t you give me something at once?” asked the Sentry, who did not, in his greed of gold, wish to lose the chance of getting all he could.

“I’ve nothing with me,” replied the Rabbit. And so saying he followed the Mouse, who with his back towards the Sentry had already moved away.

They had hardly gone more than half a dozen steps when the Mouse said suddenly

and loudly: "*That Sentry friend of ours is a smart chap*; he *knows how to handle the bayonet.*"

"You are right," answered the Rabbit, and walked on, the Mouse doing the same, though with lagging steps.

Presently a look of anger and wonder crept into his eyes, remarking which the Rabbit laughed.

"What are you laughing at?" asked the Mouse uneasily.

"At nothing particular," answered his companion. "Cheerfulness, you know, is a habit of the mind."

At this moment a loud groan burst from the Sentry, who during this time had been struggling to get free, and in a last frantic effort, had just succeeded in giving a most painful rick to his back.

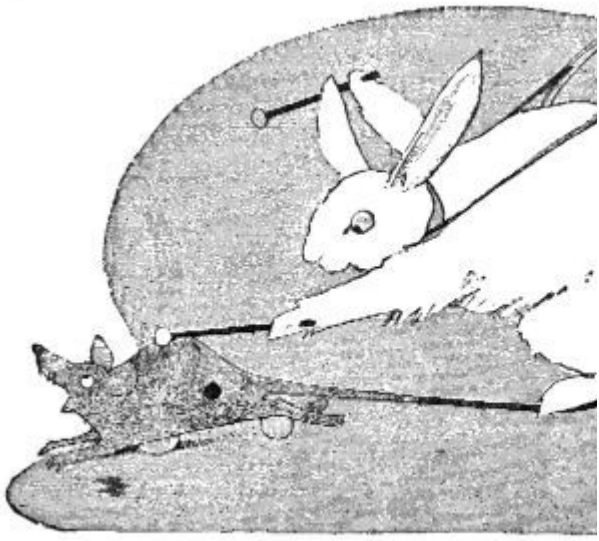
"Our Sentry friend does not look happy," said the Rabbit grimly.

"He is not well, I suppose," answered the Mouse nervously. "What has happened, I wonder?"

"ALL IS DISCOVERED!" exclaimed the Rabbit

loudly.

Then as the Mouse made a desperate effort to run away, the Rabbit dealt him a blow on the back which injured the clockwork within his body and quite put a stop to his flight.



“I know all!” the Rabbit said sternly. “You are a little villain! What defence can you offer for so grossly deceiving me?”

But the Mouse made no reply. In a fury of disappointment and fear he was biting the Rabbit’s legs, hoping thus to disable him and prevent his punishing the treachery that

had been brought to light.

“Desist!” cried the Rabbit, “or I shall end your life without delay. I repeat, what excuse can you offer for having so wickedly broken the terms of our agreement? You have tried to rob me of my life and my money. Make your defence.”

“There was no written agreement,” answered the Mouse shamelessly. “Each was at liberty to understand it in his own way.”

“Most wicked of animals, you are not fit to live,” cried the Rabbit with disgust. “Your moments are numbered.”

Then before the Mouse could offer any protest, the Rabbit bit his head right off and swallowed it.

“You will observe,” said the Rabbit to the Owl with dignity, “that I still maintain my proper position in the eyes of the world as a Welsh rare-bit, but the Mouse, owing to his misdeeds, is now in the contemptible state of the biter bit. Such is the end of the wicked.

“As for you,” he continued to the Sentry, who, with his boastful spirit crushed, stood trembling in the Sentry-box; “as for you,

you have seen too much of the world and its ways. It would be better for you to see a little less of it for a time."

Then, according to his intention, the Rabbit beat the Sentry about the head until he could not see out of his eyes.

"It now only remains to deal with the Horse. I go to give him the due reward of his deeds," the Rabbit remarked, taking up his drum and preparing to leave. But pausing a moment he added to the Owl: "With regard to you, my good friend, if ever an opportunity arises by which I can show you my gratitude for your kind services, rest assured that I shall eagerly avail myself of it."

Now, the next morning the woman who keeps this shop spoke severely to her own little girl.

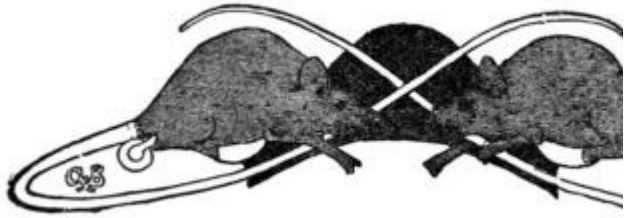
"You have been touching the toys and damaging them," she said with anger. "See what mischief you have done! You have knocked off the head of this mouse—and, what is more, I can't find it anywhere,—you have rubbed all the paint off this sentry's face, and you have broken the glass eyes of this brown horse. You shall be punished."

The little girl began to whimper.

“I have not hurt the toys,” she said. “I have never touched them since you put me to bed for breaking the baby doll.”

The woman looked puzzled: “If you say you haven’t, you haven’t, I suppose,” she said, “for I know you are a truthful child. Then how has it happened? I shouldn’t think any customer would do it without my noticing. I can’t understand it.”

Nor can she to this day. But we can: you, the Rabbit, the Owl, the Sentry, the Horse, and myself. But not the Mouse, for he has lost his head.






Here the little Marionette paused.

“That is all,” she said.

“What a good thing that the Mouse had his head bitten off,” said the little girl thoughtfully.

“It was just as well,” the Marionette answered, “since he could use it to no better purpose.”

“Some of the toys were very wicked in that story, I think; dreadfully wicked.”

“I think the same. They were bad, wicked toys, with bad, wicked ways.”

“Are many of the toys you know as wicked as that?” asked Molly.

“Oh, dear no!” said the little Marionette, quite shocked. “Most of my friends and

acquaintances are really wonderfully well-behaved."

"Do you know, I should like you next time to tell me about one of them."

"About some one simple, perhaps?"

"Yes, I think so."

The little Marionette thought a moment.

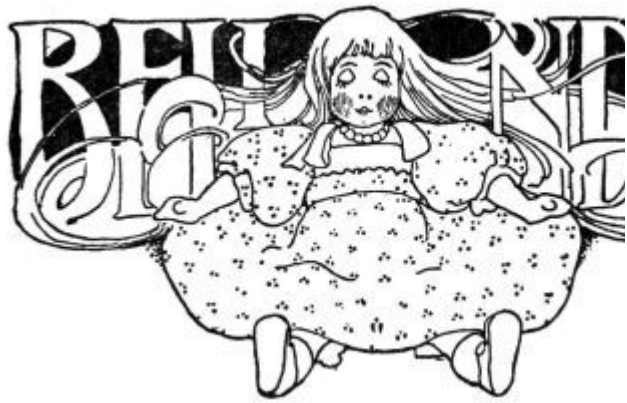
Then she said: "I know of no one more simple than Belinda."

"Tell me about her, if you please."

"Very good. You shall hear of Belinda and her simplicity."

So the next day she told her friend the story of

"BELINDA."



Belinda was a little wax doll who had a most charming way of opening and shutting her eyes. When Mortals were about, she could not do it unless they helped by pulling a wire. But when once the shop was closed, and the toys, left to themselves, could move at pleasure, *then* Belinda pulled her own wires and opened and shut her eyes as she pleased. She did this in so simple and unaffected a fashion that it delighted everyone to see her.

“What simplicity! what delightful simplicity!” said the other toys. “’Tis really charming!”

“Singularly simple,” repeated the Butcher, who always stood at the door of his shop, watching for the customers that so seldom came. “She is like an innocent lamb,” he

added, his thoughts turning to his trade; “a simple, harmless lamb.”

“*Elle est très gentille, la petite Belinde*,” remarked Mademoiselle Cerise, the French doll just arrived from Paris. “*Elle est une jeune fille fort bien élevée; elle ferme les yeux d’une façon vraiment ravissante.*”

“Here we are again, Simplicity and Self!” said the Clown, turning a somersault and landing by Belinda’s side with a broad grin upon his face.

She made no reply, but instantly closed her eyes. She was not quite sure but that he was laughing at her, so she thought it more prudent not to see him.

“There! did you notice?” ... “Wasn’t it pretty and simple?” said all the Toys to one another as they looked at Belinda.



I must, however, make an exception when I say “all” the Toys. There was one who did not utter a word. This was Jack, the curly-headed Sailor-Boy, who was deeply in love with Belinda. He was so unhappy about the matter that he feared to speak of her lest in so doing the thought of his sorrow should make him shed unmanly tears in public.

I will tell you the cause of his grief. He could not make her see how much he loved her. Whenever he came near her she immediately closed her eyes. So that it did not matter what expression he assumed, it was all wasted on Belinda. He worried himself about it very much.

"Is it," said he to himself, "because she doesn't happen to see, or because she doesn't wish to see? How can I make her open her eyes? Shall I speak to her coldly or gently, with mirth or with melancholy, in poetry or in prose?"

"I will be poetical," he resolved; "I will sing her a song of love. That may induce her to open her eyes."

Now Jack was only a simple Sailor-Lad; he knew little music and less poetry. A few sea-songs and one or two little ballads, these were all he had to trust to, and he could think of none that seemed suitable to the occasion.

He thought long, and finally remembered the beginning of an old song which, with a little alteration, would, he decided, do very well. So, in a rough but tender voice, he thus sang to his lady-love:—

> "Of all the girls I love so well,
> There's none I love like 'Linder;
> She is the darling of my heart,—
> And Linder rhymes with cinder."

"This," he said to himself, "will teach her how deep and how true my love is for her. *This* should open her eyes."

But Belinda, quite unmoved, sat with them tightly closed.

“I will try again,” he said to himself. And he sang the verse once more, though this time his voice shook so greatly with emotion that he was obliged to stop in the middle in order to steady it.

After this he sat silent, hoping that Belinda would even now open her eyes.

“Then,” said he, “she will see how sad I look, and she will surely be touched.”

But disappointment was again his lot. She never opened even half an eye.

“Shiver my timbers!” said the luckless Sailor-Lad, “she’ll be the death of me.”

And he went away mournfully whistling “*The Death of Nelson*.”

Then he tried to startle her by suddenly shouting within her hearing a few seafaring expressions he knew. “Hard-a-port! Lay aft! Yo, heave ho!”

She half-opened her eyes, but immediately closed them again. “Those expressions sound a little rough,” she remarked.

He felt sorely tried.

“None so blind as those who *won’t* see, my lass,” he said one day.

“I should have thought,” she answered with unaffected surprise, “it was those who *can’t* see.”

“Have you looked up through the sky-light this afternoon?” he asked. “The sunset is glorious.”

“Describe it to me. I love descriptions,” she said with simple enthusiasm.



“You had better see it for yourself,” he said crossly and turned away. He felt so wretched that really he would have liked to go to sea.

He sighed again,—and looked back at Belinda. Why, her eyes were open! He hurried over to her, pinching with great energy his arm as he went, in order to make himself tearful, and thus, if possible, appear more miserable than he already did. The tears did come, but just as he got to Belinda she closed her eyes once more.

“The sunset is indeed perfect,” she said, “I have been watching it till my eyes ache, and I cannot keep them open any longer.”

“I look just as if I had a cold in my head. You can see that for yourself, can’t you?” he asked, hoping that this question would induce her to glance at him and observe his tears.

“Why, no,” she answered, “I can’t because my eyes are closed. But if you say so, I suppose you must be correct.”

“Belinda, I love you,” said he.

“Thank you very much,” answered she. “Isn’t it extraordinary weather for this time

of the year? I can hardly believe that we are in the middle of summer."

Poor Jack left in despair, and this time he whistled a funeral march.

But like a true-hearted sailor, he resolved to try again. So the next day he said to her:

"Belinda, I'm afraid we are going to have heavy weather, there are so many clouds overhead. Look up out of the sky-light and you will see for yourself."

"I would rather not," she said, keeping her eyes tightly closed. "I don't like seeing clouds; it depresses my spirits."

"You can look out of the sky-light *now*," he said to her later, "without being afraid of seeing the clouds. They have all cleared away and it is blue again."

"Then I can enjoy my afternoon nap," she remarked simply, "without fear of thunder."

And on this occasion the poor curly-headed Sailor felt too miserable even to attempt whistling; he went away in dumb despair!

It was just about this time that Mademoiselle Cerise was bought by a lady as a present for her little god-daughter.

“But the color of the doll’s dress has become faded,” said the lady. “She must have a new one before I take her.”

“That can easily be arranged in a day,” said the owner of the shop.

“Very well,” answered the lady, “then I will buy her. You need not send her. I will bring my little friend with me to-morrow afternoon when we shall be passing your shop. She will like to carry her new doll through the streets.”

Next morning when Mademoiselle Cerise was brought back to the shop after having been absent since the previous afternoon, the Sailor-Lad was struck by something very familiar about the appearance of her new blue muslin dress. At first he could not think why. Then he understood; the muslin was—so it seemed to him—of exactly the same pattern and exactly the same color as Belinda’s dress.



As he realized this a sudden thought struck him, upon which he acted without delay.

Coming up to Belinda softly, who was sitting with her eyes closed, he exclaimed loudly and suddenly in her ear: “Belinda, Belinda! Mademoiselle Cerise has on a dress precisely like yours!”

“No!” she said, and opened her eyes in a moment. She gazed around anxiously for Mademoiselle Cerise, but the Sailor-Boy placed himself right before her and looked at her as adoringly as he knew how.

“Oh, Belinda,” he said, “how I love you!”

“Do you?” said she with great surprise. “Well, you don’t love me more than I love you.”

“You make me very happy, my lass,” said he. “But why are you astonished at my saying I love you? Have I not told you so before?”

“I thought you were quizzing,” she answered.

“The sad expression of my face should have told you I was not quizzing,” he replied.

“How could I tell what your expression was when I never saw it?” she asked with some reproach.

“You did not see it because you always closed your eyes when I spoke to you,” he replied. “What made you do that?”

Belinda thought a moment

"It was merely a habit I had fallen into," said she.

"You should never become a slave to a habit," replied the curly-headed Sailor-Lad. He spoke reprovingly, as he thought of his many heart-aches.

She did not like to be reproved, so she changed the subject.

"You made a mistake," she said. "Mademoiselle Cerise's dress is very pretty, but it is not *precisely* like mine; the pattern is larger and a little louder, and the color is lighter and a little harsher."

"Well, perhaps," said the Sailor-Lad. He spoke very cheerful now, he felt in such good spirits.

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"I am very glad that the Sailor-Boy was happy at last," said the little girl. "I was afraid Belinda never meant to open her eyes."

"It certainly looked like it at one time," answered the little Marionette. "However, it was all right in the end, for she opened them in time to prevent her Sailor-Boy's heart from breaking."

“I wonder why she kept them closed so long.”

“I wonder,” reflected the little Marionette. And she smiled.

“Force of habit, I suppose, as she herself said,” she remarked after a pause. “We all have our little ways. Now what sort of story would you like to-morrow?”

The little girl thought deeply for a few moments. Then she said: “You have told me a story about a sailor, so I should like the next one to be about a soldier.”

“A soldier—a soldier—” the Marionette answered. “I don’t think I know one about a soldier—Yes, stay; there is the story of the Officer and the Elephant. That is about a soldier.”

“An Officer and an Elephant! How nice!” exclaimed the little girl eagerly. “I am quite certain it must be very funny.”

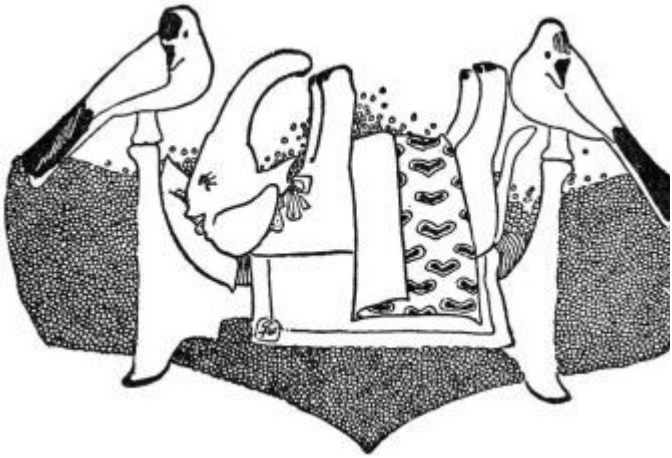
“I don’t think the Officer found it so,” the little lady replied, giving a sweet, little tinkling laugh.

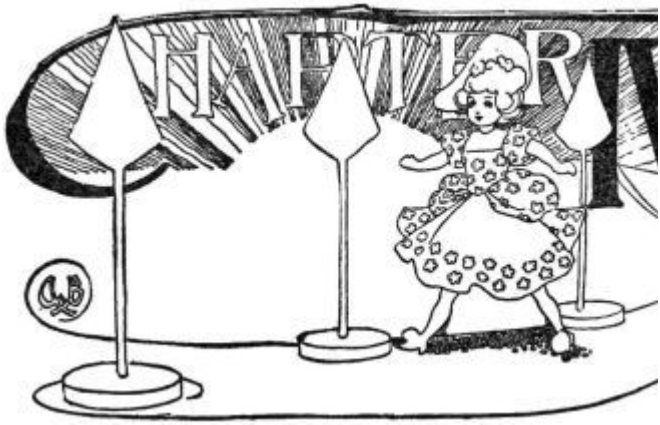
“Didn’t he?” asked her listener with much interest.

"I wish you would tell me all about it now," she continued; "I want so much to hear it."

"Not now," replied the little Marionette, "it is getting too late; all the animals in the Noah's Ark are fast asleep. Listen, they are snoring loudly. Come to-morrow at the same time. Be punctual, for the story is a long one."

"Yes, I will," promised the little girl.





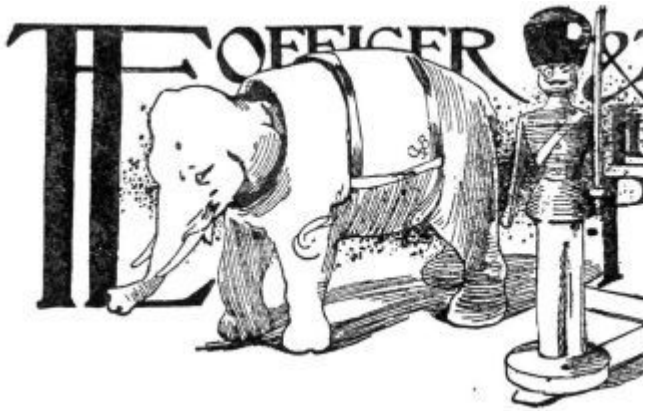

The next day she was as good as her word, arriving to the very minute. It was the little Marionette who was not in time. It was quite five minutes before she tripped up the counter and greeted her little friend. The little girl looked at her with some reproach.

"It is *you* who are late, not I," she said.

"Is it?" replied the little Marionette. "Well, I *am* ashamed. However, here I am now, so I will begin at once to tell you my tale."

And settling herself down, and smoothing out her beautiful brocade dress, she began without further ado, the story of:

"The Officer and the Elephant."




Amongst all the Toys in the toy-shop, none were so disliked and feared as the twelve Wooden Soldiers who, with an imposing Officer at their head, proudly faced the world in double file.

In the first place, they were intensely proud and vain. They showed this in everything they did. For example, their drill was of the most simple description. It merely consisted in their moving backwards and forwards from one another on a platform of sticks, which could be drawn out or in at pleasure.

This, it will easily be believed, required no great skill or knowledge. Yet, to judge from the pride expressed upon the faces of the Wooden Soldiers as they went through this simple movement, one would have certainly imagined it was exceedingly difficult.

Their foolish pride was also displayed in their manner towards others. No one ventured to ask them even the most civil of questions for fear of receiving a rude answer. Father Christmas one afternoon happened to inquire at the Commanding-officer what time it was.

“Time,” he replied, “for little boys to be in bed.”

“You might,” said the patriarch gravely, “have shown a little respect for the length of my beard and the whiteness of my hairs. ’Tis hardly the way to speak to a man of my years and standing. One, too, who with the decline of the year expects to be at the top of the tree.”

But the Officer merely laughed loudly and shrugged his shoulders.

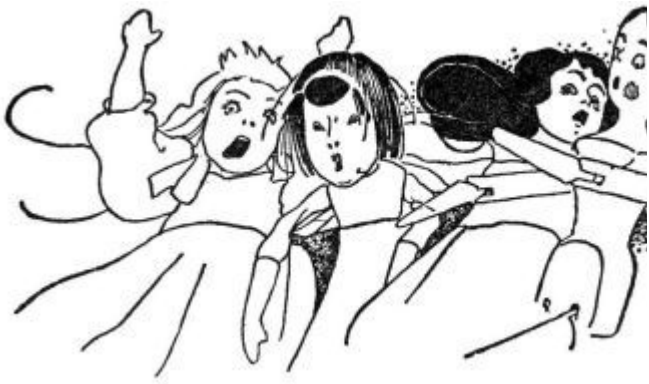
From this instance, which is only one example of many, you will easily understand how the Wooden Soldiers came to be disliked in the toy-shop.

As for the fear they inspired, this was partly owing to the long swords they wore, and partly owing to the boasting way in which they vowed they could use them.

“My men and I really command the whole shop,” said the Officer one day. “Moreover, who faces one, faces all, for we all march in the same direction. We not only have our good swords, but we know how to use them. They are sheathed now, but let no one count upon that to offend us. Let but a foolhardy toy dare insult us, and—” here he gave the word of command, and instantly a dozen and one swords sprang from their scabbards.

The lady Dolls shrieked, the Grocer and the Butcher began to put up their shutters with trembling hands; the white, furry Rabbit became a shade whiter; and the corners of the Clown’s mouth dropped instead of going up as usual. It was plain that a general panic was felt.

The only Toy that did not appear to be affected was the great gray Elephant lately arrived. He twisted his trunk round thoughtfully, but never changed countenance.



The Officer saw the general terror he had inspired, and both he and his Soldiers were well pleased.

“Besides,” he continued, speaking more loudly than before, “if our swords fail us we shall have recourse to gunpowder, which will make short work of our enemies.”

The Elephant looked at the Officer and his men.

“I don’t see it,” he said bluntly.

“I didn’t suppose you would,” said the Officer scornfully. “Don’t speak in such a hurry. The powder I’m speaking of is felt but not seen. It’s our last improvement, arrived at by slow degrees. Gunpowder,—smokeless gunpowder,—soundless gunpowder,—invisible gunpowder. Thus we may surround an enemy with enough

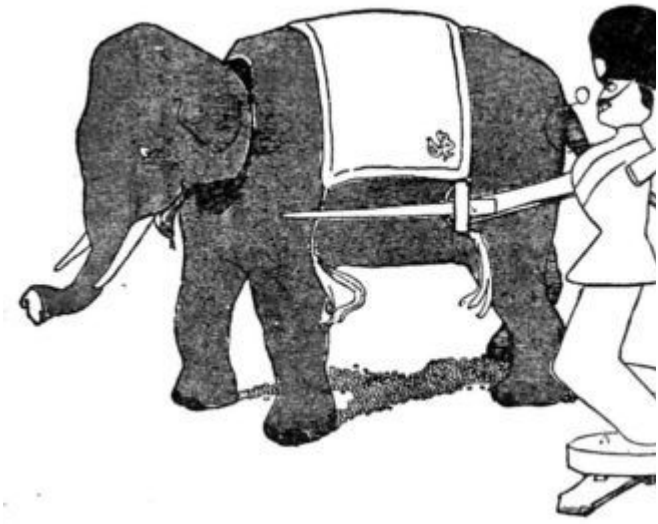
gunpowder to blow up a town, but they neither see it nor hear it. In fact, they know nothing about it until they are blown up."

This time all the Toys nearly expired with fright! The Elephant only remained, as before, unmoved.

"Invisible gunpowder is more humane in the end," the Officer continued. "You are quite unaware of what is happening until you find yourself in pieces."

"The same thing may happen to yourself, I suppose?" asked the Elephant, in his heavy and clumsy fashion.

"Beg pardon; did anyone speak?" inquired the Officer in the most insulting of voices. For he despised the Elephant and wished to snub him.



“I asked you if the same might not happen to yourself?” the Elephant repeated, regardless of the Officer’s attempt to make him appear foolish. “What if the enemy serves you the same way?”

“That difficulty, my good beast,” he answered in his most overbearing manner, “is easily disposed of. We have special Soldiers trained to *smell* gunpowder. We have merely to send out these scouts, and we can trace the gunpowder anywhere within gunshot.”

“I don’t believe it,” said the Elephant.

The Officer at this laughed a grim laugh,

truly awful to hear.

“Ha, Ha!” he exclaimed; “do not provoke me too far lest I slay you with my sword. I’m a man of sport, and to do the act would cause me no little diversion. Beware!”

The Elephant made no reply, which induced the Officer to think he had frightened him.

“A great clumsy beast of no spirit,” he said to his Soldiers.

“Right, sir,” answered the Soldiers.

“Now to drill,” he continued sharply. “Attention! Eyes right, eyes left; right movement, left movement; swords out, swords in! Mark—*time*!”

This last command they were obliged to obey with their heads, their feet being tightly gummed on to the platform. So tightly gummed that they could not get free even when Mortals were not present, and all the Toys were at liberty to speak, walk, and talk. Indeed, nothing but a strong blow could possibly loosen them from their position.

Therefore, when they marched or even took a simple walk they were obliged to march or walk in a body, taking the platform with

them. Again, if the Commanding-officer granted leave of absence to one, he was obliged to grant it to all, even to himself, otherwise no one could have taken it.

“Come,” said the Officer to the Elephant one day, “you are a bright beast. Let me propound you a mathematical problem. If a herring and a half cost three halfpence, how much would six herrings cost?”

“Just as much as they ought to, if you went to an honest fishmonger,” answered the Elephant.

The Officer and his men laughed loudly.

“Capital, capital!” said the bully. “If you distinguish yourself in this way we shall have to make you Mathematical Instructor-in-General to the whole army.”

But the Elephant made no reply.

“That’s the thickest-skinned animal I ever met,” said the Officer to his men.

But herein he made a mistake. The Elephant never forgot an insult, but paid it back upon the first opportunity.

The opportunity, in this case, was not long in arriving; it came, indeed, all too soon for

the Officer's taste.

It occurred in this way.

One day a little boy came into the shop and asked to look at some soldiers, upon which the shopwoman showed him the wooden warriors.

"No, I don't like them," he said; "they have to move all the same way at once. It is very stupid of them. Have you no others?"

"Not just at the moment," replied the shopwoman. "We are expecting some more. They should have been here several days ago."

"Then I'll take a train," said the boy. "But it is very funny that you should have such a poor lot of soldiers as these."

"That silly remark will make the Toys less afraid of us," thought the Officer to himself with some alarm. "I shall make the men practise sword-drill in the most open fashion for several hours. This will remind the world that we are not to be trifled with."

But it is one thing to make a resolution and quite another thing to carry it into effect. This the Officer was to experience ere the

day was over.

For in putting the Soldiers back into their place the shopwoman happened to hit the Officer with some force against a dolls' house. Being a very hard blow it knocked him off the platform, and, unnoticed by her, he fell on his back upon the counter.

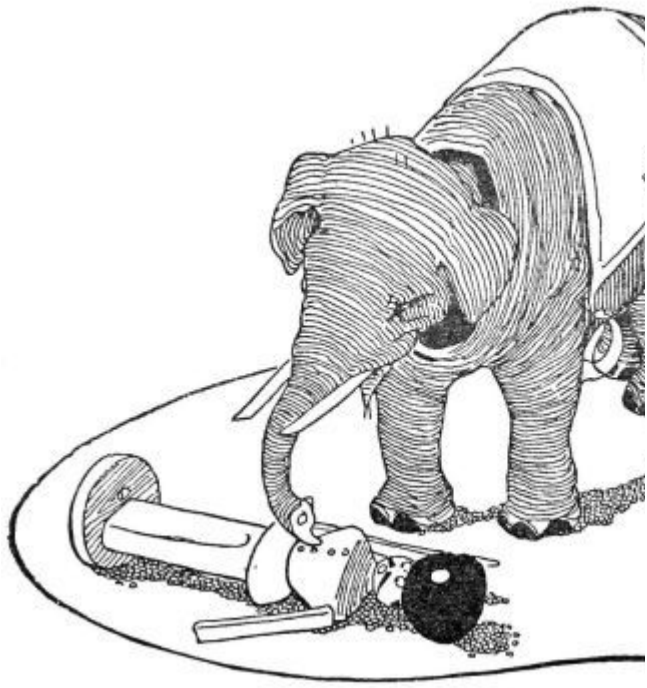
Now came the time for the Elephant's revenge. *The Officer fell just under the animal's trunk!*

It was, as the Officer at once realized, by no means a pleasant situation. As his men were some yards away from him, and unable to come in a body to his rescue till perhaps too late, the Officer was exceedingly uneasy.

"I had better soothe the monster," he said to himself. Then aloud, and in a pleasant voice: "What a nice handy trunk that is of yours; you must be able to carry so much in it? As for me, I have to travel with a portmanteau, a Gladstone-bag, a hat-box, and a gun-case; it is a terrible nuisance."

He paused, but the Elephant made no reply.

"This is not very pleasant," said the Officer uneasily to himself. "I fear the beast is of a sulky temper. What *will* happen to me?"



And he lay still, trembling and fearful.

At last the day closed in, the Mortals shut up the shop and left, and the time of the Toys arrived.

The Elephant then addressed the Officer in a slow voice and ponderous manner.

“I feel inclined to trample on you,” he remarked.

The Officer closed his eyes with terror; then,

half-opening them, he endeavored to look defiantly and speak boldly.

“Pre-pre-sump-tu-tu-ous b-b-b-beast!” he faltered.

The Elephant looked at him threateningly.

“It was on-on-ly my f-f-un!” stammered the Officer, trembling with fear, and all the crimson fading from his cheeks.

“Do you wish me to spare your life?” asked the Elephant.

“It is very valuable,” the Officer replied more calmly as he regained courage, and unable to forget his foolish pride even in that awful moment.

“The world can do without it,” said the great beast threateningly.

“Spare me!” cried the coward and bully.

The Elephant paused.

“Very good,” he answered, “but only upon my own conditions.”

“Certainly, certainly,” the Officer said in a fawning voice. “Many thanks; any conditions that you may think proper.”

After this the Elephant thought for a long while. Then he said:

"These are my conditions. You must submit to let me carry you up and down the counter, stopping before such Toys as I shall see fit. And whenever I stop, you are to announce yourself in these words: '*Good-evening. Have you kicked the coward and the bully? The real genuine article, no imitation. If you have not kicked him already, kick him without delay.*'"

"It is too bad of you to require me to say this," the Officer cried, his anger for the moment overcoming his fear. "But then you are not a gentleman. You are—"

"When you have done," interrupted the Elephant, "I will begin."

So saying, and amidst the intense excitement of the other Toys, the Elephant, with his trunk, slowly picked up his fallen foe by the back of the coat and began his ponderous march—so triumphant for himself, so humiliating for the Officer.

The programme was carried out exactly as the Elephant had said it should be, for the great gray beast was a beast of his word. He never made up his mind in a foolish hurry,

but having made it up he rarely altered it.

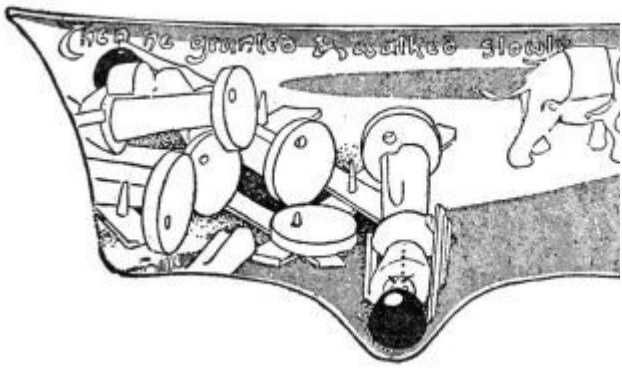
And so it was upon this occasion. After every few steps the huge creature stopped before one or another of the Toys, when the former tyrant was obliged to announce himself as a coward and a bully, and invite a kicking, an invitation which was always accepted, and acted upon with much heartiness.

Finally the avenger laid the Officer on the platform, from which the Wooden Soldiers had been watching with amazement and horror the journey of the Commanding-officer; understanding as they did for the first time the strength of the great beast and afraid to interfere.

Having placed his humble foe in his old position, only upon his back instead of upon his feet, the Elephant with his trunk deliberately knocked over all the Soldiers one after the other. Then he grunted and walked slowly away.

So ended the reign of terror which the Officer and his Soldiers had established over the toy-shop. And so universal was the relief experienced after the strain that had been felt, that the Elephant was everywhere hailed as a Friend to the Public. Indeed,

during the remainder of his stay in the shop, he was treated with greater respect and deference than any other toy,—Father Christmas only excepted,—and when he left at Christmas-time, the regret expressed was both loud and sincere.










"I am a little bit sorry for the Officer," said the little girl. "He must have been a good deal hurt. And he must have felt very silly, too," she added.

"Almost worse than being hurt, isn't it?" said the little Marionette. "Yes, I was a little sorry for him myself; but I think he deserved all he got."

"Yes; because he *was* a horrid bully, wasn't he?" said the little girl. "And his men, too, were as bad as he. I always used to like toy-soldiers. I never shall again."

"I should not like you to judge of all soldiers by the wooden ones I have told you of," said the Marionette. "We *have* had in the shop sets of wooden and tin soldiers of the highest character; gallant fellows, beloved and esteemed by all. I will tell you of them to-morrow if you like."

The little girl considered a moment.

"I think," she said at length, "I would rather hear something quite different for a change. If you do not mind," she added politely.

"Not in the least," replied the little lady. "I shall think of a story that shall have nothing to do with soldiers, good, bad, or indifferent."

So on the morrow when they met again the Marionette said:

"I have thought of quite a different sort of story to the one I told you yesterday."

"Thank you," said her little friend. "Please begin."

"Yes," she said as the little Marionette remained silent. "Yes—yes—*do* begin!"

"Patience, patience! I am just considering for a moment if I have the story correct in every respect. It is now some time since it happened, and one's memory is apt to play one tricks when one is telling stories of other people. But I think I remember it correctly. So I will begin without further delay the history of:

"'The Little Dancer.'"




There never was a prettier dancer than the Little Dancer of the frizzy dark hair, and the blue tulle dress with silver spangles.

Forward, backward, forward, backward went her little feet with rapid, dainty movement, whilst the small musical-box—on the top of which she gracefully danced—tinkled, tinkled, tinkled out its gay little tune, and all the Toys watched her with the greatest delight.

Truly she bewitched all who saw her, and gained much admiration. But she was very modest, and not at all conceited, so that she was not only admired but also loved; which, as you will agree, is far better.





She took life very easily and happily, till it happened one day that she saw the Bicycle-man, and unfortunately fell in love with him as he went by. He was a very handsome fellow, and made a good appearance upon his bicycle.

Directly the Little Dancer saw him she loved him, and she lost no time in telling him so. She spoke without any hesitation.

“Dear heart, I love you,” she said as she danced.

Now the Bicycle-man was very vain, and was therefore not a little gratified at the impression he had made. But he pretended to be much displeased.

“You should not have said that until I had first said something of the sort,” replied the Bicycle-man. “It was not your place to speak first. You are very forward.”

And he rode on.

The Little Dancer was much distressed.

“He is angry,” she said to her friend the Little China Doll next to her, with the two long flaxen pigtails hanging down her back.

“He is angry.” And she danced more slowly and less gaily.

“What of that?” said her friend, tossing her head. “It is of no consequence.”

“No; it is of no consequence,” repeated the Little Dancer. But she felt unhappy.

The next day the Bicycle-man passed that way again, and she danced her very best, hoping to win his heart.

“That is really not bad,” he said; “not at all bad. You dance quite nicely, as dancing

goes."

"Oh sweetheart, I love you!" she said, encouraged by his praise.

"I really cannot stand such remarks," said the Bicycle-man. "They make me both angry and confused."

And he went on, leaving her in tears.

"Why do you trouble about him?" said the Little China Doll. "He is not worth it. A penny Toy, indeed! You turn his head. Take no more notice of him."

"I won't," replied the Little Dancer tearfully.

So the next time he stopped to watch her dancing she did not speak to him.

"You are getting rude now," he said. "I am not sure whether that is not worse than being forward."

"What shall I say?" asked the Little Dancer. "My words do not please you."

"I should not be displeased if you were to say 'good-day'," he replied. "It would only be polite, and I never find fault with politeness."

"Good-day," she said, as she practised her

steps.

“Is that all?” he inquired.

“That is all,” she answered.

“I have a bit of news for you,” he said. “I am thinking of marrying the doll to whom the Red House belongs. It is a comfortable house, well built, and well appointed. You shall come and have tea with us.”

The Little Dancer burst into tears, and her feet moved more slowly.

“Why are you crying?” asked the Bicycle-man, with pretended surprise.

“Dear heart, Oh dear heart, I love you!” she wept.

“Well, well, so do many others,” he answered. “It isn’t my fault”

And mounting his bicycle he rode away.

“Don’t you see you are making him terribly conceited?” said the Little China Doll. “It is absurd of you. Try to be more sensible.”

“I love him so, I love him so!” sobbed the Little Dancer. “My heart is broken.”

On the morrow the Bicycle-man appeared as

usual.

“It is all settled,” he said. “I hope to marry the doll to whom the Red House belongs, before the week is out. I fear my marriage will be a disappointment to many a lady.”

The Little Dancer made no reply: she was too heart-broken to utter a sound.

“Are you not going to wish me happiness?” he asked.

But the Little Dancer still spoke not. She danced faster and faster as the tears fell from her eyes.

The Bicycle-man did not notice how quickly her tears were falling.

“Your silence is a sad want of manners,” he said. “Uncivility is far from attractive.”

Still the little Dancer made no answer; she could not speak, she was crying so bitterly.

“Well, good-day,” he said. “It is very evident that you did not pay the extra twopence for manners.”

Then he left.

“Stop dancing,” said the Little China Doll to the Little Dancer. “You are not in a fit state

to dance. You will kill yourself."

"I *must* dance till I forget, or till I die," she answered—sobbing.

And then she danced faster, *faster*, FASTER, till she went at quite a furious rate. Her little feet went to and fro so quickly you could hardly see them.



The China Doll implored the poor Little Dancer to stop, but she did not heed her. She continued dancing, dancing, dancing all through the day, all through the evening, and far into the night. Till, at last, something within her went—*Snap*!

And she fell flat on the ground, and the gay little tune stopped suddenly. The clockwork within her had broken. She had danced herself to death!

The next morning the Bicycle-man came again.

“The wedding is put off—” he began. Then he saw the lifeless form of the Little Dancer, and he turned pale.

“You have killed her by your vanity,” said the China Doll severely. “If you had stayed away she would have forgotten you. But you *would* come because it pleased your conceit to hear her say she loved you, and to hear her lament because you did not love her. She has danced herself to death in her despair. Alas! Alas! My poor friend!”

“I really believe I loved her after all,” said the Bicycle-man in a sad voice. “What can I say or do to make some slight amends? Tell me.”

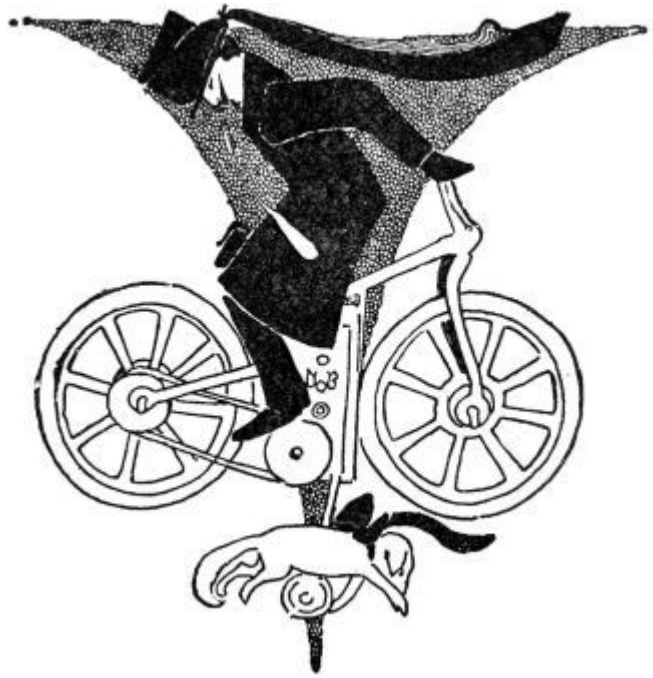
“There is nothing to be said or done,” said the China Doll. “The poor Little Dancer is dead. It is too late! Go and marry the Doll of the Red House.”

“I don’t want to *now*,” he answered.

"Henceforward my life shall be passed mourning for the Little Dancer who broke her heart because of me. And from this time I shall ride my bicycle sitting with my back to the handle, and with my hands behind me. It will be a most absurd position, but it will serve as a punishment to remind me of the sad end to which my vanity brought my poor little sweetheart."

And he strictly kept his resolve. At first the other Toys laughed: then they wondered; then they inquired into the meaning of so strange a performance. And when they heard the story, such of them as had heads shook them, and all said gravely:

"'Tis well and nobly meant. But it won't mend the poor Little Dancer's heart. Alas! Alack-a-day!"





When the tale was ended the little girl took out her handkerchief and wiped her eyes.

“Come, this won’t do,” said the little Marionette. “I should not have told you the story if I had thought you were going to take it so much to heart.”

“I am very sorry for the poor Little Dancer,” she replied sadly; “I wish that the Bicycle-man had not been so unkind.”

“Well, well, it is all over now. Wipe your eyes; you can’t do any good by crying, and I don’t like seeing tears,” said her friend.

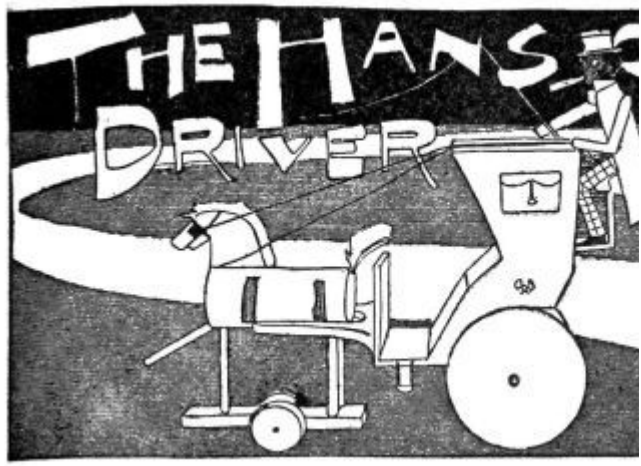
“Never mind; I rather like feeling sad,” Molly answered politely, though tearfully.

“Still, a little sadness goes a long way,” remarked the Marionette. “There is no doubt of that. I think I had better tell you something to amuse you now.” She thought a moment and then she laughed.

“What are you laughing at?” asked the little girl with curiosity.

“At the remembrance of the Hansom-driver,” she answered. “I never can think of him without laughing. Shall I tell you his story? I shall have time to do so this evening, for it is short, like the one I have just finished.” And she began the story of:

“THE HANSOM-DRIVER.”




The Hansom-driver was indeed very plain, but he fancied himself very beautiful. 'Tis thus that we are liable to make errors of judgment; especially respecting ourselves.

His cheeks were crimson and his nose was the same hue, yet he was quite convinced that all the young lady dolls envied him his complexion. His eyes were dull as lead, but in his boundless conceit he always compared them to sparkling diamonds.

In a word, his appearance was terribly against him, yet his constant complaint was that he attracted so much attention, and won so much admiration wherever he went, that he could almost find it in his heart to wish he had been born ugly.

His own looks were his constant topic of conversation, till at length the other Toys quaked when he opened his mouth, knowing very well how they were going to suffer.

Amongst those who suffered the most from his talk were the Butcher, the Baker, and the Clown. They lived at the opposite side of the counter, where he drove every morning to give his orders for bread and meat. He never thought of driving away at once when he had done this, but always stopped to make remarks upon his own appearance; till at length, in common with the rest of the world, they became wearied to death of the subject. The Butcher and Baker tried to put a stop to it by making uncivil remarks, and the clown by making rude jests. But the conceit of the Hansom-driver still remained.

One day when he was talking to his three acquaintances, the Butcher happened to remark on the beauty of the sunset-glow the previous evening.



“Some people,” said the Hansom-driver at once, “admire the beautiful glow of the sunset sky, some the beautiful glow of the healthy countenance. By the by, a chap I met yesterday told me my face was simply glowing with health.”

“Especially your nose, my pretty fellow,” remarked the Clown.

“From my brow to my chin, I am, I believe, suffused with the glow of a pretty color,” replied the Hansom-driver. “Naturally it does not skip my nose. And very glad I am it does not; I should not like any feature to feel neglected or left out in the cold.”

“He becomes quite unbearable,” whispered

one lady doll to another.

“Quite,” she replied in the same tone.

The Hansom-driver smiled as he saw them whisper. He did not doubt but that they were making some flattering remarks about himself.

“Speak out, ladies,” he said.

But they turned away in silent anger.

Most people would have been annoyed at this behavior. Not so the Hansom-driver. In his great vanity he completely misread their silence.

“A compliment about me,” he laughed. “Doubtless too great a one to be said aloud.”




"You needn't fancy *that*," said the Butcher rudely. "You hear a good many compliments, I don't deny, but they all come from the same source—your own block of a head. When you are absent you get few enough, that I know for a positive fact."

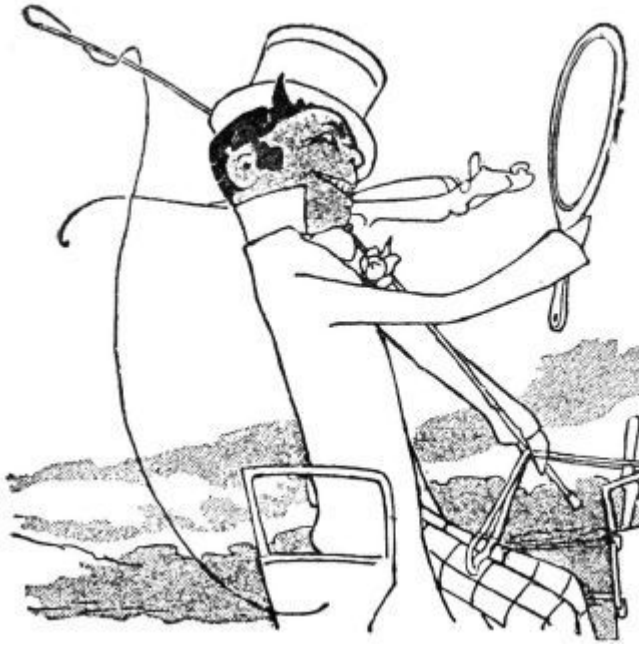
"Not that there is anything surprising in it," the Baker said to the Hansom-driver in quite as rude a manner as the Butcher. "I am not yet aware that you are a subject for compliments."

“‘My face is my fortune, sir, he said’,” misquoted the Hansom-driver with great conceit; “and a very handsome fortune, too,” he added.

“Your face!” exclaimed the Butcher. “Why, a sheep’s face is more to be admired than yours.”

“I beg to differ,” the Hansom-driver said, shaking his head. “I’ve never yet seen a really good-looking face amongst a flock of sheep.”

“So you actually think yours is good-looking?” sneered the Baker. “Why, I could make a better-looking one out of a piece of dough.”



“I defy you to,” the Hansom-driver replied. “A face like mine is not easily copied. Nor am I the only person of that opinion. All the ladies think that I am beautiful. And of course I go by what they think.”

“And who,” he asked, with a bow towards a little group of lady dolls, “who can be better judges of the matter?”

“Do you think they consider you good-looking?” inquired the Clown. “Get along, you dreamer!”

“I do not think it, I know it,” he replied.

“We don’t,” said the Butcher and the Baker. “Put it to the proof. We challenge you. Let the ladies vote upon the matter and they will prove you mistaken.”

“Very well,” answered the Hansom-driver. “The result will be favorable to me. Of that I have no doubt.”

“All right! To business,” said the Butcher. “What about the ladies’ decision as to this fellow’s claim of beauty?”

“Ay; when shall it be given?” inquired the Hansom-driver, anxious to lose no time.

“In a fortnight at the earliest,” said the Clown. “The making up of ladies’ minds, as of Christmas puddings, requires plenty of thought and preparation.”

“Good!” said the Hansom-driver. Then he got up upon the seat of his hansom, whipped up his horse, and drove off.

Now, during the fortnight he was, if possible, more conceited than ever. He never ceased making vain speeches respecting his looks, and could indeed be induced to speak of nothing else.

“I have not the slightest fear as to the ladies’ decision,” he boastfully remarked.

"When I look in the glass I see how impossible it is that they should have anything but one opinion. By the by, a most curious little incident occurred last night. I was sauntering about my end of the counter, when the white Polar Bear walked right up against me. 'Hulloa!' I said, 'look out where you are going.' 'I beg your pardon, I'm sure,' said he; 'It was a little mistake. I was trying to find my way home, and catching sight of your right eye, mistook it for the Polar Star and guided myself by its light.' 'Very flattering,' I said, 'but I'd prefer you not to tread on my toes.' Strange, wasn't it?"

"Most strange!" the Butcher jeered. "The Polar Bear has never been able to see clearly since the shopwoman's baby poked out both his eyes. Your story is a little far-fetched, my good chap."

"Oh, what a surprise!" laughed the Clown, as the Hansom-driver, unable to avoid looking a little silly, turned his head aside and pretended to sneeze.

"I've a piece of news for you," said the Baker; "another surprise. The ladies have made up their minds already. Instead of a fortnight they have only taken a week to

decide. They have but one opinion, and the Clown has been instructed to deliver it to you to-morrow morning when you come to give your orders. I may warn you that you will find a great crowd of Toys waiting to hear it."

"Let come who will," vaunted the Hansom-driver. "*I* fear no crowd. The more Toys to witness my moment of triumph, the better."

And it was in this frame of mind that, on the following morning, he drove to the Butcher's shop, outside of which a large crowd was gathered.

"Well," he said with a smile to the Clown who headed the crowd; "well, and what is the ladies' opinion about my beauty?"

"The ladies have decided," said the Clown, nodding his head and speaking very rapidly, "the ladies have all decided—mind you, *all* decided—that you *are* a hansom man. And so say I."

The Hansom-driver climbed down from his seat.

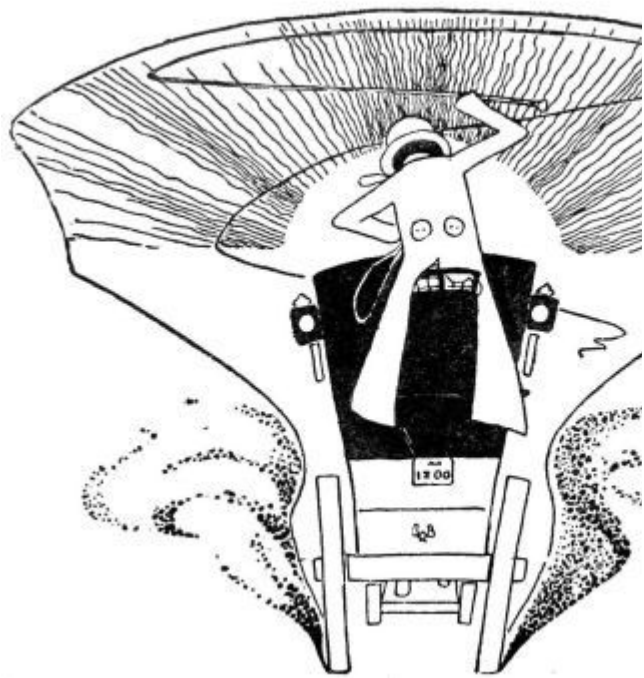
"Shake hands," he said. "One doesn't find a fellow of sense like you every day."

The Clown shook hands, then turned a

somersault and grinned from ear to ear.

“Handsome,” he said slowly, “but *without* the *d* and the *e*. Mark that, my child. No *beauty, but a hansom man*. Ho-la! What’s the time of day? Time to go away?”

For the Hansom-driver had mounted to his seat, and, whipping up his horse, was driving off as fast as he could.





“That was very funny,” said the little girl; “it made me laugh very much.”

“It made all the Toys laugh,” said the Marionette—“except the Hansom-driver himself. And, perhaps, he might be excused for not doing so.”

“He *was* a vain thing,” said the little girl.

“He was,” the Marionette agreed. “However, we must not be too severe on him. He had his good points after all. He was not bad-tempered, for example, like poor Claribelle, who at one time was quite unbearable, and made herself disliked by everyone. Though in the end, poor creature, she became, it is true, an altered character.”

“‘Poor Claribelle!’ Who was she?”

“A young lady doll whose bad temper, unfortunately for her, brought her great sorrow.

"I should like to hear about her," said the little girl.

The little Marionette mused a moment. "I should not do wrong to tell you," she remarked. "The story of this poor, proud creature may perhaps serve as a lesson and warning to some other haughty and fanciful young lady. Yes, you shall hear to-morrow evening of Claribelle." And so the next evening, in a grave voice that befitted the tale, she told the story of

"PROUD CLARIBELLE."




Claribelle was a very haughty doll. She was very beautiful, with great brown eyes and a mass of dark hair that fell to her waist. She had fine clothes, too; a pink silk dress, a large straw hat trimmed with lace and pink roses, pink silk stockings and bronze shoes, and round her neck a string of pearls, which were the envy of every lady doll in the toy-shop.

She held her head very high indeed, and would not speak to this doll because it was "frumpish," or that doll because it was not in the same set as herself. The China Doll she really could not be on intimate terms with, because she had a crack across her cheek. Fancy being seen walking with a cracky person! Also, she must really decline being introduced to the Farthing Doll. A very good, worthy person, no doubt, but really she and a doll worth a farthing could not possibly have many tastes in common.

As to the Rag Doll, she was a pushing person. At a tea-party at which they had both been present, she had asked Claribelle if she didn't think that skirts were fuller. To think of discussing clothes with a creature of rags! The idea was really too comical!

It was thus, and in this proud spirit, that Claribelle talked about the other and more modest Toys. There were, indeed, very few that she would take the slightest notice of. As a matter of fact, when she walked down the counter she held her nose so much in the air that it was very rarely she saw anyone. She did not care in the least whether she trod on other people's toes or not.

From this you will easily understand that she was a Toy who gained more admiration than love. There was, however, one who was truly devoted to Claribelle. This was the Driver of the Wagon, who was always of the opinion that beneath her haughty manner lay a kind heart. They were engaged to be married, and with true affection he often spoke to her about her haughty manner to the other Toys.



On such occasions Claribelle tossed her head and flew into a passion, often sulking for hours afterwards. Yet, although she so

sorely tried the Driver's patience, he continued to love her. And when all other means had failed he would often sing her back to good temper, for he had a beautiful tenor voice.

He was a little proud of his voice, and used to practise every night, partly because he loved music, also because he delighted to show his devotion to Claribelle by singing her little love-songs in a well-trained manner.

He was of a kindly, genial nature, so that you would have thought it was hardly possible to quarrel with him. But Claribelle's pride not seldom caused a dispute between them, and she would often start a heated argument without any reason.

It was thus one day that a quarrel arose which ended in the most serious manner.

They were out driving in the Wagon, when the Driver, remembering he owed a call on the Farthing Doll, proposed that he and Claribelle should go thither.

"What!" she exclaimed haughtily. "Pay a call on that Farthing creature! *Certainly* not!"



“I, at least, must go, sooner or later,” the Driver replied.

“Why?” she asked much displeased.

“Because did I not call,” answered he kindly but firmly, “I should be lacking in courtesy to a lady who has never shown me anything but the utmost civility. However, since you do not wish it, I will not go to-day.”

“I do not wish you to go at all,” she said. “But I see it is quite sufficient for me to say that I do not desire you to do a thing, for you to do it.”

And after this she sulked and said she did

not love him.

Upon this the Driver bethought him a new song he had just learnt, and he determined to sing it in the hope of winning her back to good temper. So he began:

> "'Oh, down in Alabama, before I was set free,
> I loved a dark-eyed, yaller girl,
> And thought—'"

But he got no further, for here Claribelle interrupted him.

"Does that apply to *me*?" she said with flashing eyes.

"Well, you *have* dark eyes, you know," he said pleasantly, hoping to make her smile. "Beautiful dark eyes, too."

"Stop the wagon!" she said furiously. "I will not be so insulted. Dark eyes, yes; but yaller! yaller! yaller!"

"Allow me to explain. I only—" began the Driver.

"*Yaller*, indeed! Stop the Wagon!"

"I should like to say—"

"A dark-eyed, *yaller* girl! Stop the Wagon,—

and consider our engagement at an end."

"*Will* you let me—"

But Claribelle shook her head furiously, and in her rage tried to jump out of the Wagon. So the Driver, fearing she would break her neck, did as she requested and pulled up his horse, when she immediately alighted. Then she swept away, flouncing her pink silk dress, and with her head in the air.

The Driver called later and tried to pacify her, but she would not listen. She only turned her back upon him—which was a very rude thing to do—and persisted in saying that their engagement was at an end.

So the Wagoner whipped up his horse and went away sad and sorry. He looked, indeed, so sad that the haughty Claribelle nearly repented of her pride and was just about to call him back.

"But he'll return to-morrow," she said to herself, "and he must be taught not to make false remarks about my complexion. Fancy calling me 'yaller!'"

The next day he came as she expected.

"Do I still look yaller?" Claribelle asked scornfully.

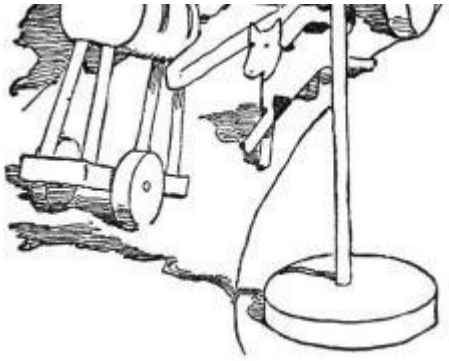
“Let bygones be bygones,” said he. “Besides, I never called you yaller.”

“Our engagement is ended,” she said.

“Claribelle,” he said kindly but firmly, “listen to what I say. If you do not tame your proud temper, you will one day bring sorrow upon yourself.” Then he left, wounded and displeased.







The next day he came again.

“I may be going away,” he said, “to the other side of the shop, to the opposite counter.”

“Do I still look yaller?” Claribelle asked, tossing her head.

“Aren’t you sorry I am going?” he replied.

“I haven’t time to think of trifles,” she said haughtily.

“Cruel Claribelle,” he said. “I shall not send you a letter, not even a post-card.”

“Letters are dull,” she said coldly, “and post-cards are vulgar.”

“You will repent of this some day,” he replied. And he turned and went away in anger.

On the morrow he came once more.

“I have come to say good-bye,” he said.

“Oh!” she replied; but not a word more.

“Aren’t you sorry?” he asked again.

“Yes,” she replied, “because the Farthing Doll put her foot on my dress this morning in passing me, and tore it. She is a clumsy thing.”

“You are trying my patience too far,” he said. “Proud Claribelle, beware! Beware, proud Claribelle!”

“You confirm me in my resolution,” said she. “I will never marry a Toy who gives way to his temper over nothing. Once for all, our engagement is at an end.”



“I cannot believe that,” he said. “Do you really mean it?”

“Certainly,” she answered.

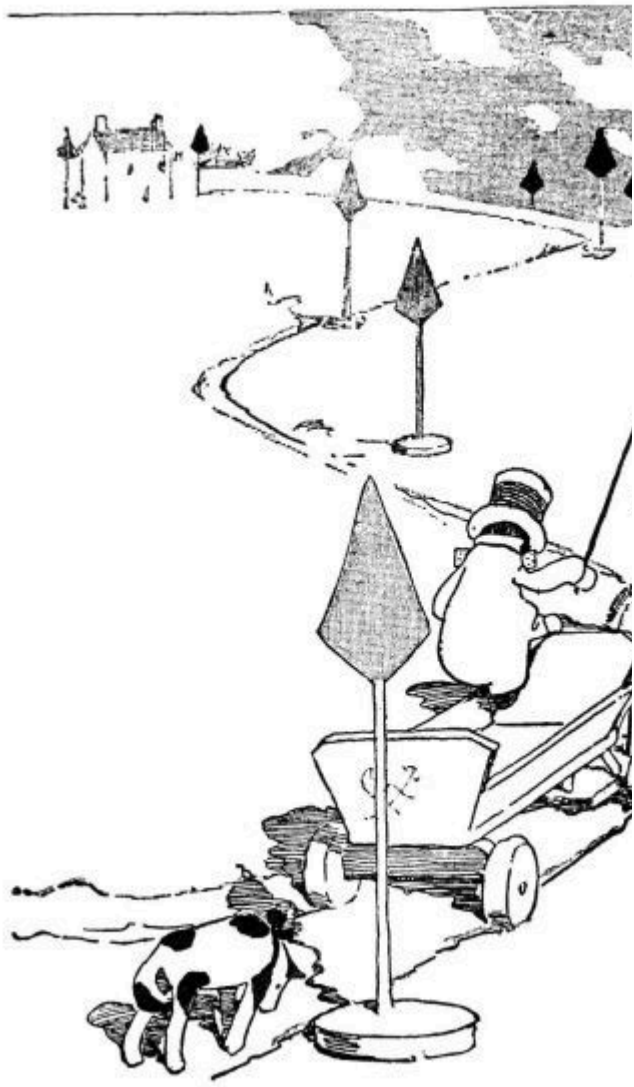
“So be it,” he replied.

Then he got up from his chair with dignity, made a low bow, mounted his Wagon, and

drove away.

“I almost wish I had not said that,” thought the haughty Beauty uneasily. “I never meant him to go away so soon. If he had stayed I should, perhaps, have altered my mind. I will tell him so when he comes to-morrow.”

But next day he did not come. Then a few tears fell from Claribelle’s haughty eyes. Nor did he come on the next, and then she shed more. Nor on the following day; nor the day after that, nor the day after *that*,—nor ever again! And each day poor Claribelle wept more and more, till it was sad to see her.



At last she heard the Wagoner had left the toy-shop altogether, and she knew she should never see him again. And she cried,

and cried, and cried, till she cried away every bit of pride in her nature! Indeed, from being the proudest Toy in the shop she became the meekest and gentlest—kind and thoughtful to all.

So the other Toys would often remark one to the other with surprise and pleasure:

“Lo! how poor Claribelle hath been chastened by sorrow!”

“Poor, *poor* Claribelle! I *am* sorry for her!” said the little girl.

“She had, indeed, a severe lesson,” answered the little Marionette.

“And did the Wagoner ever come back?”

“Never, never. He loved, but drove away.”

“How sad!” sighed the little girl.

“Sad, indeed,” said the Marionette. “Well, as I always say, let all young ladies take warning by the story of Proud Claribelle, and then it will not have been told in vain.”

There was a pause.

Then the little girl said:

“Next time you tell me a story I should like

it to be happy all through. Happy, you know, from beginning to end."

The little Marionette thought a few moments, then shook her head.

"I can't remember such a story," she said. "I think there must be very few."

"I am sorry for that," answered the little girl, disappointed. "I wanted very much to hear one."

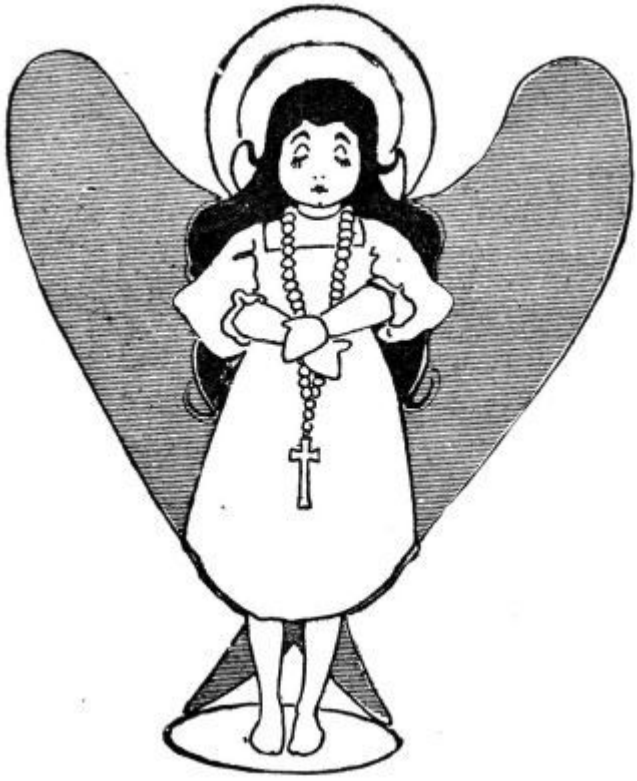
"We must take things as they are," said the little lady cheerfully. "If I don't know many stories that are happy all the way through, I know plenty that are so at the beginning, or the middle, or the end; or even more than that."

"Which do you like best?" said the little girl.

"Oh, stories with a happy ending! You can forget that the beginning or middle has been sad, and you can go away smiling."

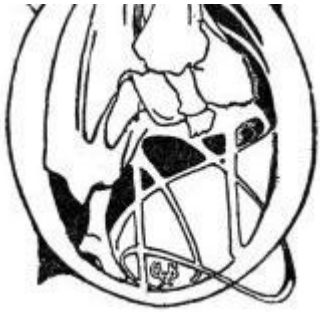
"Then tell me to-morrow a story that ends happily."

"If you will," said the little Marionette.




hapter VIII





On the morrow, when the two met as usual, the Marionette said to the little girl:

“Good evening. I have thought of a story that will please you.”

“Then I suppose it ends most happily, doesn’t it?” asked Molly.

“Quite right,” she replied. “I am going to tell you one that ends as happily as you could wish it to. You will, I am sure, be quite satisfied with the conclusion of:

“‘The Grocer and the Farthing Doll’”




Never was there a love affair more perplexing than the love affair of the Grocer and the Farthing Doll. It puzzled the whole toy-shop; it even puzzled the two lovers themselves.

The affair was rather difficult to understand, but I will try to explain it to you as simply as I can.

Everyone knew that the Grocer and the Farthing Doll loved each other; the Grocer knew he loved the Farthing Doll, but he did not know that she loved him; the Farthing Doll knew that she loved the Grocer, but she didn’t know if he loved her.

So everything was at a stand-still, and none of the other dolls knew how to bring the matter to a happy end. No one quite liked to

interfere. And for these reasons: The Grocer was very proud and would take no advice, whilst the Farthing Doll was so sensitive that a single wrong word might cause her a serious illness. Again, the Grocer wouldn't ask the Farthing Doll to marry him because, being a proud Toy, he feared the humiliation of her saying "No." She, on her part, would not say much to help him, lest it should look as if she were forward.

It was thus that matters stood, when, walking along the counter one day, the Farthing Doll met the Grocer sauntering by with a sad face.

"Well!" she exclaimed, with a start of surprise. "Fancy seeing you here!"

"My shop is close by," he answered. "Don't you remember?"

"To be sure," she said. "How odd of me to forget."

"I'm very pleased to see you," said the Grocer.

"I am glad of that, for I have every wish to please you," said the Farthing Doll.

"Is that satisfactory?" he asked.

“It ought to be,” she replied.

“I don’t know,” the Grocer said. “You may wish to please, without loving. For instance, you may try to please a turkey by giving him the best of grain. But that is not because you love him. It is merely because you wish to fatten him well for your Christmas dinner.”

“Good-morning!” said the Farthing Doll coldly.

“Stay!” the Grocer cried. “I have an idea. We appear to have some difficulty in finding out the Truth. Let us go and hunt for it.”

“Where is it to be found?” she asked.

“At the bottom of a Well, so I’ve heard.”

“Then I suppose the first thing is to find the Well.”



“Exactly so,” he said. “Come, let us start.” So they walked away hand in hand. They hunted all up and down the counter, and asked directions of many dolls. But never a Well could they find.

“See!” exclaimed the Farthing Doll at last; “here’s a square thing that looks something like a Well. Go, open it and look down.”

“What may be inside, though?” he said

cautiously.

“Truth, Truth, you silly thing!” she said impatiently. “Go!”

So he went and opened the lid.

But it was not a Well at all. It was merely the abode of Jack-in-the-box, and when the Grocer looked in Jack jumped out. He jumped up so suddenly that he knocked the Grocer flat on his back.

The poor fellow got up and rubbed his head.

“One gets very hard blows sometimes in the search for Truth,” he said ruefully.

“You shouldn’t be in such a hurry,” remarked Jack-in-the-box. “Take things more calmly, and ask the Policeman. Kindly shut up the lid of my box. I can’t very well manage it myself, I’m so springy. Close it firmly, please, or I shall be jumping out again, and I don’t want to do that. I wish to stay indoors to-day as much as possible, for I have a heavy cold in my head and am sneezing every two minutes.”

“*That* didn’t do much good,” said the Grocer when he had done as he was asked, and closed the lid of Jack’s box.

“Let us find the Policeman,” she said, holding out her hand.

“An excellent idea,” he replied as he took it. “There he is, just outside that dolls’ house.

“Constable,” he said, “can you direct us to the Well with Truth at the bottom?”

“First to the right, second to the left, and keep on till you come to it,” the policeman answered, without removing his eyes from the kitchen window.

“Not that I ever heard tell of any such Well,” he added, putting his head inside and speaking to the Little China Doll within.

“Then you’re a deceiver,” she said severely, as she handed him a joint of beef tightly gummed on to a wooden platter.

“You’re sure to arrive at anything if you keep on till you get it,” he answered carelessly. “So it doesn’t really matter if you take the first to the right and the second to the left, or the second to the right and the first to the left. You are bound to get there in time.... This beef is gummed so tightly to the dish that it is a job to get it off....”

In the meantime the Grocer and the Farthing Doll were wandering about trying

to find the Well. They sought for a long time, but they could not see a sign of it.

“We’ll never find it,” she said in despair. “And I am growing so tired I am beginning to lose all my good looks. All the crimson is wearing off my cheeks.”



“Come, come, my dear, we won’t give up yet,” he said. “Console yourself; I believe many others have been in the same plight before us.”

“I don’t mind if they have,” she said, tired and impatient.

Now the Grocer was a man of quick intellect. His thoughts were not solely given to the selling of raisins, currants, flour, rice and other groceries. As the Farthing Doll spoke, a very clever idea came into his head.

“Wait!” he said thoughtfully. “Your last remark has given me a new idea. You mentioned the word *mind*! Mind,—mind,—mind. Yes,—now why should we not give up seeking for truth in a Well, and try to find it in our minds?”

“Have we got them?” she asked doubtfully.

“I think so,” he replied.

“Then where are they kept?”

He pondered.

“In our heads, I imagine,” he said.

And tapping his forehead to help out his thought he remarked.

“Let us begin. Here is my first question: Do you approve of marriages with Grocers?”



“Before I answer,” said the Farthing Doll cautiously, “I should like to hear if you approve of marriages with Farthing Dolls? Some people don’t.”

“Ladies first. It is your place to reply to me before I reply to you.”

“I prefer the last word; you may have the first.”

"It is all very well to expect me to answer you, but supposing *I* said 'Yes' and *you* said 'No,' fancy how my pride would suffer!"

"But supposing I said 'Yes' and you said 'No,' picture to yourself what my feelings would be. I should not recover from the blow."

"We have got ourselves into a difficult position," said the Grocer. "Let us start afresh. If I wrote you a letter, how would you answer it?"

"As I thought best," she said. "But tell me how would you write it?"

"As I thought fit," he replied. "What would your 'best' be?"

"That would depend on your 'fit'," she answered.

The Grocer sighed and knit his brows.

"It seems very difficult to come to an understanding with you," he said.

And then they were both silent for a long while. As a matter of fact, this was because they were both so depressed that they could think of nothing further to say.

The Farthing Doll was the first to break the silence.

“Perhaps,” she said sadly, “we had better start looking for that Well again. The Policeman told us that if we kept on we should come to it.”

“I am not sure that I trust the Policeman,” he answered. “It struck me that he wished, unobserved, to enjoy some food from the dolls’ house kitchen. He wanted to get rid of us.”

“What is to be done then?” she asked.

The Grocer thought for a long while. Then he spoke again.

“I have another idea,” he remarked. “Let us look for Truth not in the Well, nor in our Minds, but in our Hearts. Do you agree?”



“Yes, I do,” she said. “But how shall we set about it?”

“Let our Hearts speak,” he replied.

After this they were silent for a moment or two. Then the Grocer and the Farthing Doll clasped each other’s hands and spoke at the same moment.

> “My Heart’s Dearest, I love you,” said he.
> “You are my Best Beloved,” said she.

So the matter ended happily, to their own

joy and to the joy of the whole toy-shop.

And these two lovers found Truth at last: not in the bottom of a Well, but in the depths of their own Hearts.

And they married and were happy ever after.

---

"That was a nice ending," remarked the little girl. "I like it."

"Yes; very satisfactory, wasn't it?" said the little lady.

"How will the next story end, happily or sadly?"

"I haven't thought of it yet. You shall know to-morrow."

"I think I must go now," said the little girl. "I promised my little cousin to have a game of nine-pins with her before bed-time."

"Wait," said the Marionette. "I have something to tell you. I think to-morrow evening will be the last time I shall be able to speak with you. My power of talking to a Mortal is going; it will not last after our next meeting."

"Oh, I *am* sorry!" exclaimed the little girl. "I

do not leave till two days after to-morrow, and I thought that you would be able to go on telling me stories up to the very last evening."

The little Marionette shook her head.

"It will be impossible," said she.

"And after to-morrow we shall not be able to talk to each other any more," exclaimed the little girl. "Oh, how sad!"

"Never mind, even if we cannot talk we can remain good friends. The deepest friendship is often the quietest."

"Then we can be very great friends indeed," said the little girl with much affection. "I am so glad, dear!"

"I am going out to-morrow afternoon to see the pantomime, but I shall come here as early as I can," she added as she went away. "Don't you be late."

"No, I won't," answered the Marionette.

"Remember!"

"Yes, I'll remember."

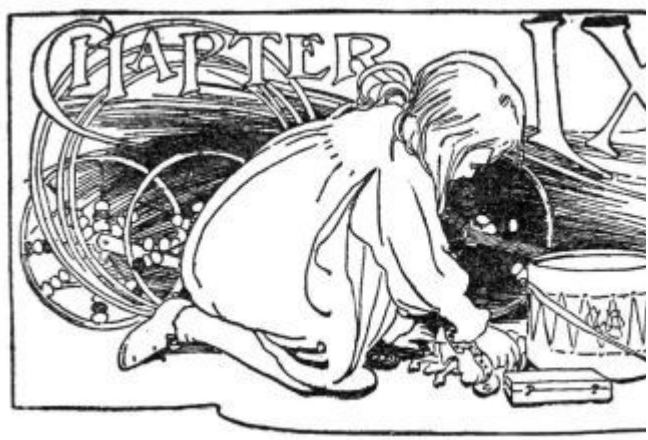
"*How* will you remember?"

"I'll tie a knot in my hair, so that when I brush it I shall feel that there is something to recollect."

"That's a good idea," said the little girl, and ran away in content.



---




The next evening, as soon as the little girl

came in, she went to their meeting-place by the Noah's Ark.

But the little Marionette was not to be found.

"This is too bad of her!" said the little girl. "Our last time! And after she has promised not to be late!"

Tears rose to her eyes.

"I am very much disappointed," said she as she walked up and down the shop looking for her friend.

"I shall never find her.... Why, *there* she is!" she exclaimed suddenly.

And she hurried up to the little Marionette, who, half-concealed by a big Drum, lay on the ground beside a Puzzle.

"You are not very kind," remarked the little girl reproachfully. "I asked you to be early, and you never came at all."

"I am very sorry," answered the little Marionette in a tired voice.

Then she sat up, and the little girl saw with much sorrow and surprise that she was quite disfigured. Her nose was broken, her

eyes were crooked, and her face was quite knocked about. All the little girl's annoyance vanished, and her heart was full of pity.

"Oh, you poor dear little dolly!" she cried; "what *has* happened to you?"

"I have hurt myself," was the answer. "I tripped up over this Puzzle."

"I am sorry. Are you very badly hurt?" asked her little friend with pity.

"Never mind me. I promised to tell you one more story, and I shall do so," answered the little Marionette.

She spoke very sadly, and the little girl picked her up and kissed her.

"Would you not like to put off telling me a story to-day?" she asked.

"No. I should like to do so," the Marionette answered, "for it is our last meeting. Put me back on the counter and I will tell it to you."

"Shall I put you back where I found you?"

"No, take me back to our old place. I am tired of this Puzzle."

So the little girl took her to the Noah's Ark, and placed her with her back to it.

"What is your story about, dear?" the little girl asked, drawing her chair close to the counter, and bending her head close to the little Marionette, the better to hear her small voice—weaker and more tiny that evening than usual.

"About a little Marionette like myself, whose best and dearest friend left her and thought she didn't mind. And all the while she minded so very much! More than she knew how to say!"

"Poor little Marionette!" said Molly.

"It *was* sad, for it was only a mistake, wasn't it?" said the little Marionette lady with a sigh. "But you shall hear all about it. Listen whilst I tell you the story of:

"'THE LAST PERFORMANCE.'"



The two little Marionette dolls had just finished their dance before an admiring throng of Toys, and the curtain had, that moment, fallen upon their last performance.

“So now,” sighed the little lady Marionette to her partner; “so now the play is over. We shall never act together again. I heard the woman who owned the shop say that she was going to separate us, and sell us as ordinary Toys. She said there was so little demand for Marionettes nowadays.... But you heard that as well as I, didn’t you?”

“Yes, I heard,” he answered. “And more, too. She said she was going to send me away with some other Toys to a Christmas-tree. So that it will be good-bye for a long

while."

The little lady Marionette patted the paniers of her pretty brocade dress and remained silent.

"You don't mind that, do you?" her partner said. "I thought you wouldn't."

"I do mind," she answered at last.

"Yes; very much I am sure," he said.

"You hurt my feelings," she replied.

"I wouldn't do that for the whole world—not for ten worlds," he answered.

She smiled.

"Oh, you smile!" he said. "Then you do not mind very much after all."

"I smile because it makes me happy to hear you speak kindly to me again," she answered.

But her answer did not please him.

"You smile at everything," he said "Nothing troubles you much."

"It troubles me that you should be going away; away from me into the wide world," she said.

“It will trouble you for half an hour, not longer,” said he. “Only half an hour, that’s all. I must leave you now.”

“Don’t,” said she. “*Stay*.”

“I can’t,” said he. “Good-bye.”

And he went straight away without another word.

“He does not know how dear he is to my heart or he would not leave me so,” said the little Marionette to herself after he had left.

Then she threw herself down on the counter and cried as if her heart were breaking. She threw herself down so violently that she broke her nose and knocked her eyes awry. But she was too miserable to care. She lay still and cried on.

At last a friend of hers came along—a friend who was a Doll of common sense and practical ways.

“What is all this about?” she asked. “Why are you crying?”

“Because half an hour may last for so long,” wept the little Marionette.

“You are talking nonsense,” she replied

contemptuously. “Everybody knows that half an hour can only last thirty minutes.”

“Not always. It may sometimes last a whole year—many years.”

“Tut, tut!” replied the common-sense Doll; “you have no reasoning power. That I can see by your face. Still, if I can help you I will. What would you have me do?”

“Give me back my dream,” said the Marionette. Then she covered her face with her hands and gave a great sigh.

The common-sense Doll looked even more practical than before.

“That is it, is it?” she said. “A morbid longing after a Dream. I begin to understand. Nerves,—indigestion,—too many sweet things,—I fear I cannot, then, be of much assistance. However, the General of the Tin Soldiers has a wonderful turn for doctoring, quite a natural gift. I will send him to you. He may be able to do you some good.”

So she went on her way, and the little Marionette was once more alone with her sorrow and regret.

By and by, however, the General of the Tin

Soldiers trotted up on his handsome black charger, and reined in before her.



“My dear little lady,” he said kindly, if pompously, “in what pitiful condition do I find you? Come, come, tell an old soldier,

who has been through much himself, all about it." And, as she did not at once answer: "Well," he continued good-naturedly, "never mind. Do not trouble to speak, I will prescribe for you. I recognize your complaint, and have already treated with much success a large number of my Tin Soldiers suffering in the same way. This, then, is my prescription for your malady: plenty of fresh air; exercise in moderation; early hours and plain diet. But don't let your diet become monotonous. For example, a rice pudding one day, sago the next, tapioca the third. And a little gentle amusement every now and then to keep up your spirits; Christy Minstrels; a pleasant, little musical gathering of friends; and so on. Finally, a powerful tonic to put a little more color into those poor little cheeks. Kindly permit me to feel your pulse."

And so saying the General bent from his saddle and courteously took the little Marionette's hand. Then, looking much alarmed, "*Galloping, galloping!*" he exclaimed, "I must do likewise, and order you a tonic at the nearest chemist's without delay."

And putting spurs into his horse he rode away hurriedly.

"All that won't do me any good," said the little Marionette aloud. "I don't want that."



"What do I want?" she sighed.

"A jest, my good creature," said a voice near her, and looking up she saw the Clown with his hands in his pockets dancing a double-shuffle in front of her.

"A jest," he repeated. Then as he danced and shook the bells on his cap, he chanted in time to the movement of his feet—

> "Broken nose and crooked eyes,
> Broken heart and mournful sighs,—
> Life's a jest for a' that."

"No, it isn't; not to me," answered the little Marionette very sadly.

"It will be, by and by," he said cheerfully.

"No; not to me," she repeated.

The Clown looked at her with sympathy.

"Shall I tell you a good story?" he asked. "Quite one of my best?"

"You are very kind," said the little Marionette. "I think, though, I would rather hear it another time, if you do not mind."

"Not at all," answered the Clown as he danced away, jingling his bells as he went. "*I* don't mind, I'm not easily hurt. But take my advice, if the situation is not a jest in

itself make a jest dove-tail into the situation. Good-bye, my little friend. Cheer up."



"Cheer up!" repeated the little lady. "But it is not easy. I shall have to wait until the half-hour is over before I can do that."

After this she lay on the counter quietly, without taking notice of anything or anyone. And the other Toys, seeing she wished to be left to herself, did not disturb

her.

By and by, the time when the Toys are able to talk and move about passed by, and they all became still once more: just as you are accustomed to see them. And people passed in and out, and to and fro, but the little lady Marionette lay unobserved—alone and unhappy in her corner of the counter.

“The half-hour is very long,” she said. “Will it ever end? My heart is very heavy....”

The little Marionette made a long pause.

“Go on, if you please,” said the little girl.

But the little lady remained silent.

“*Do* go on,” repeated her small friend.

Yet she never answered.





"What is the matter with you?" asked the little girl impatiently.

She looked closely at the Marionette as she spoke.

Why, were those tears she saw, or was it only the light shining upon the little lady's glass eyes? Glass eyes shine very easily, it is true. Still, supposing she *were* crying and wanted to be comforted? She would ask her.

"You are not crying, dear, are you?" said the little girl.

The little Marionette gave a great sigh.

"Perhaps," she replied gently.

"What is it about?" asked the little girl with much sympathy.

Then all at once she understood.

"I believe," she exclaimed, "you have been telling me a story about yourself! It all happened to you to-day, while I was away, didn't it?"

The little lady rubbed two tiny wax hands across her two glass eyes. "You have guessed rightly," she said in a little faltering voice.

"Oh, I am sorry!" said her little friend with great sympathy. "I have been out all the afternoon, so I never heard Auntie say she was going to send you and your partner away from each other. And fancy his going away and leaving you as he did! You poor little thing, how I *wish* I could do something to make you happier!"

Molly thought a moment. "I know!" she exclaimed; "you shall belong to me, my dear. I shall ask Auntie to give you to me, and you shall be my very own dolly!"

"Come with me, darling," she continued, hugging the little Marionette tightly, "and I will sing you to sleep in Auntie's big

rocking-chair. I will make up a nice song all by myself and all about you. You will see then how much I love you, and you won't cry any more. When you wake up you will feel happier again."

And going into the room at the back of the shop, she drew a rocking-chair near the cheerful blaze of the bright fire and sat down, still clasping the little Marionette in her arms.

At first she rocked to and fro silently, and with a thoughtful expression. Presently she gave a sudden jerk to the rocking-chair, and sung in a shrill sweet voice, and with some energy—

> "Lulla*by*, little dolly, lulla*by*, lulla*by*,
> Your poor nose is broken, your eyes are awry,
> But I'll love you and kiss you, so you must just try
> Not to cry, little dolly,—lulla*by*, lulla*by*."

"Lullaby," she said more gently, and kissed her fondly. Then she began afresh, but more softly and soothingly—

> "Lulla*by*, little dolly, lulla*by*, lulla*by*,
> You know you are ugly and rather a

guy,
But my arms are around you, so why should you sigh?
Just you sleep, little dolly,—lulla*by*, lulla*by*."

"Lullaby," she whispered, and kissed her again very tenderly.

"This is not poetry, only rhyme, and not very flattering rhyme either," murmured the little Marionette. "But if it is not poetry it is love.... And it brings comfort to my sore heart, which the reasoning, and the doctoring, and the jesting could not do...."



She whispered something more, but very weakly. Her power of talking to a Mortal had all but left her, and the child had to put her head quite close to the little lady so as to be able to catch what she said.

“Let me always stay with you,” the little

Marionette just managed to whisper.

“Always, dear,” said her little friend.

And then the little lady fell asleep quite happily. That at least was what the little girl thought. And if *she* thought so *we* might as well think the same.

---

“You want me to give you that little Marionette?” said the owner of the toy-shop to the little girl that same evening. “Very well, Molly, you shall have her.”

“Oh, thank you, Auntie!” replied her little niece with much gratitude.

“There is not very much to thank me for,” remarked her aunt. “She is not worth anything now. I can’t imagine,” she added, “how it is that she has got so knocked about.”

Now the little girl had no need to imagine it, for she knew. But she kept her knowledge to herself, fearing that if she told her Aunt what had happened she would be laughed at as a fanciful child.

But we should not have laughed at her,—should we? There would have been no fancy at out the matter for us. For *we* know that

the Toy World is a very real World indeed!



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