The Rainbow Book

"Tales of Fun & Fancy"

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The Fish-King and the Dog-Fish

TO

BARBARA MARY RACKHAM

WITH ALL GOOD WISHES
FOR HER FUTURE HAPPINESS
MABEL H. SPIELMANN

PREFACE

It's all very well—but you, and I, and most of us who are healthy in mind and blithe of spirit, love to give rein to our fun and fancy, and to mingle fun with our fancy and fancy with our fun.

The little Fairy-people are the favourite children of Fancy, and were born into this serious world ages and ages ago to help brighten it, and make it more graceful and dainty and prettily romantic than it was. They found the Folk-lore people already here—grave, learned people whose learning was all topsy-turvy, for it dealt with toads, and storms, and diseases, and what strange things would happen if you mixed them up together, and how the devil would flee if you did something with a herb, and how the tempest would stop suddenly, as Terence records, if you sprinkled a few drops of vinegar in front of it. No doubt, since then thousands of people have sprinkled tens of thousands of gallons of good vinegar before advancing tempests, and although tempests pay far less attention to the liquid than the troubled waters to a pint of oil, the sprinklers and their descendants have gone on believing with a touching faith. It is pretty, but not practical.

But what *is* pretty and practical too, is that all of us should sometimes let our fancy roam, and that we should laugh as well, even over a Fairy-story. Yet there are some serious-minded persons, very grave and very clever, who get angry if a smile so much as creeps into a Fairy-tale, and if our wonder should be disturbed by anything so worldly as a laugh. A Fairy-tale, they say, should be like an old Folk-tale, marked by sincerity and simplicity—as if humour cannot be sincere and simple too. "The true Fairy-story is not comic." Why not? Of this we may be sure—take all the true humourless Fairy-stories and take "Alice"—and "Alice" with its fun and fancy will live beside them as long as English stories are read, loved for its fancy and its fun, and hugged and treasured for its jokes and its laughter. The one objection is this: the "true Fairy-

story" appeals to all children, young and old, in all lands, equally, by translation; and jokes and fun are sometimes difficult to translate. But that is on account of the shortcomings of language, and it is hard to make young readers suffer by starving them of fun, because the power of words is less absolute than the power of fancy in its merrier mood.

Some people, of course, take their Fairies very seriously indeed, and we cannot blame them, for it is a very harmless and very beautiful mental refreshment. Some, indeed, not only believe firmly in Fairies—in their existence and their exploits—but believe themselves to be actually visited by the Little People. For my part, I would rather be visited by a Fairy than by a Spook any day, or night: but when the "sincerity" of some of us drove the Fairies out, the world was left so blank and unimaginative, that the Spooks had to be invited in. The admixture of faith and imagination produces strange results, while it raises us above the commonplaceness of everyday life.

But, as I say, certain favoured people, mostly little girls, it is true, are regularly visited by Fairies even in the broad daylight, and they watch them at their pretty business, at their games and play (for Fairies, you may be sure, play and laugh, however much the Folk-lorists may frown when we are made to laugh with them). Two hundred and fifty years ago a Cornish girl declared that she had wonderful adventures with the Fairies—and she meant truly what she said. And it is only fifty years since an educated lady wrote a sincere account of her doings with Fairies and theirs with her, in an account which was reprinted in one of the most serious of papers, and which showed that the lady, like the uneducated Cornish girl two centuries before, was a true "fairy-seer." Here is a part of her story:—

"I used to spend a great deal of my time alone in our garden, and I think it must have been soon after my brother's death that I first saw (or perhaps recollect seeing) Fairies. I happened one day to break, with a little whip I had, the flower of a buttercup: a little while after, as I was resting on the grass, I heard a tiny but most

beautiful voice saying, 'Buttercup, who has broken your house?' Then another voice replied, 'That little girl that is lying close by you.' I listened in great wonder, and looked about me, until I saw a daisy, in which stood a little figure not larger, certainly, than one of its petals.

"When I was between three and four years old we removed to London, and I pined sadly for my country home and friends. I saw none of them for a long time, I think because I was discontented; I did not try to make myself happy. At last I found a copy of Shakespeare in my father's study, which delighted me so much (though I don't suppose I understood much of it) that I soon forgot we were living where I could not see a tree or a flower. I used to take the book and my little chair, and sit in a paved yard we had. (I could see the sky there.) One day, as I was reading the 'Midsummer Night's Dream,' I happened to look up, and saw before me a patch of soft, green grass with the Fairy-ring upon it: whilst I was wondering how it came, my old friends appeared and acted the whole play (I suppose to amuse me). After this they often came, and did the same with the other plays."

There! what do you say to that? Do you wonder that the good folk of Blagdon, for example, still point to the hill "where the fairies come to dance," and show you the Fairy-rings, like that which Cedric saw (as is recounted in this book), with the Little People capering about? Of course, the country folk don't laugh at them, because it is all so mysterious, and, as the scientific professors declare, abnormal, if not supernormal; but do you believe for one moment, that in their joyous dance the fairies do not laugh and joke as well as play and caper? The Bird-Fairy, as appears later, was always grave and loving, and didn't laugh—but then *she* was an enchanted Princess, and had sad and serious business on hand, and was not quite sure, sanguine though she was, of defeating the machinations of the cunning and wicked Wizard. But look at the classic Grimm, at the tiny, dancing, capering tailors whose portraits Cruikshank drew so well in it, and say if there is not a peal of laughter in every open mouth of them, and a chuckle in every limb

and joint. Not "comic," Mr. Folk-lorist? Why, they are the very spirit and personification of comedy and fun!

But then your scientist comes along and tries to explain away the Fairy-rings themselves, which have defied explanation since Fairy-rings first came among us. Once at Kinning Park at Glasgow (and thousands of times elsewhere) four Fairy-rings appeared in one night—on a cricket-ground, if you please! on which the cricketers had been continuously playing and practising; and the poets said that they were made by the Fairies dancing under the moonlight, or, when the moon went to bed, by the lamplight of a glow-worm. That, *I* think, must be the truth, simple and sincere. Each ring was a belt of grass darker and greener than the surrounding turf, and was eight or ten inches broad; and the largest were nine and ten feet in diameter, and the others five and six, measuring from the centre of the belt. And the circles were accurate and the advent of them quite sudden. Clearly, the Fairies *must* have made them. But then a learned professor arose and lectured about them before the British Association. He was a great naturalist, and said that the rings contained a great number of toad-stools. And he brought along a chemist who analysed the fungi, and said he found in them a lot of phosphoric acid and potash and peroxide of iron and sulphuric acid, and a lot of things the fairies had never heard of and certainly never brought there, and he said that that, with phosphated alkali and magnesia, accounted for the rings! And then another great professor said that they must have been years in coming, and that electricity might have something to do with it, and that small rings sometimes spread to fifty yards in diameter—which only proves the wonderful power of happy industry of the Fairies, even in their revels and in their play.

So much for the Fairies.

But everybody is not in love with Fairies; some people don't care for them, some (as we have seen) don't even believe in them! Many don't care to read about them, being insensible to their grace and pretty elegance, their exquisite dignity, and their ever-present youth. Who ever heard of a middle-aged fairy? Such folk, be their

age what it may, generally prefer fun; especially do they love what Charles Dickens once for all defined and established as the Spirit of Christmas. Well, here they may find Father Christmas at home, and on his rounds. Here they will find revealed and laid bare the whole secret and mystery of Santa Claus—where the presents come from, and where they are stored—how they are packed and how delivered while we are all asleep in our beds, delivered from the waits. Here, too, the "old-fangled father" is justified in the eyes of his "new-fangled sons," who recognise that fundamental truths—and such truths!—are not shaken by the on-coming tide of Time. And here, besides, you may learn what goes on on that other side of the moon which we never see, and what is its service to Man, and to Woman and Child as well. And for the first time in the history of romance we discover what it was that the Sleeping Beauty dreamt. And there are stories of other kinds—with a touch of pathos, too.

Story-telling is the oldest of the arts—the art of which we never tire—the art which will be out-lived by none other, however fascinating, however beautiful, however perfect. It may deal with human thought and human passion; it may appeal to the highest intellect and the profoundest sentiments of men; or just to the brightest and dreamiest fancy of the young. Be it but well told, even though it does not stir our emotions, the little story delights the imagination, and makes us grateful to the teller for an hour well spent or pleasantly whiled away. That is the greatest reward of the writer, as it is the sole ambition of the author of these little tales.

Mister M. H. SPIELMANN.



CHAPTER I

A KNOCK AT THE RED DOOR

"It's a shame, Dulcie. We mayn't go out just because it's raining a few drops," said the boy at the nursery window.

"Yes, a fearful shame," replied his sister. She always sympathised with him and gave in to him, right or wrong. She carefully propped her doll bolt upright on a chair and came to where he stood. "Never mind, Cyril. Let's play at something."

"Yes, but I do mind. It's too bad! It's always 'you mustn't' this, 'you mustn't' that. It would be a saving of breath if they'd just say the few things that we *might* do. Are you willing to go on putting up with it? I suppose you are, as you're only a girl."

"No, I don't want to, but I've got to. Mother says it is for our good, and we are spoilt."

"I don't think so at all. It's very hard lines," growled Cyril. "I'm sure the garden isn't a bit wet, and the rocks have only a sprinkle."

Certainly the window panes had more than a sprinkle trickling down them. But the birds were twittering fussily in the bushes and amongst the ivy, and the garden was looking its best in the summer shower. Fitful gleams of sunshine cast loving touches here and there on the roses and the sweet honeysuckle; and the tall white lilies never looked fresher or smarter. Beyond, were those tempting rocks, with their surroundings of sand, which rose so strangely in that part of inland Kent, telling of former ages and of the vagaries of the sea and river. The rocks were the happy playground of these lucky Twins, who lived in the fine solitary house close by, and who were now peering so disconsolately through the window, flattening their noses against the glass blurred with the pattering rain.

They were exactly the same height; they resembled one another in feature, and, being twins, were both nine years old; and there the likeness ended, for his dark hair was short and thick, and hers was fair and very long. She was timid and gentle though her bright face was very happy; he, what is termed "a handful."

"*I* know!" exclaimed Dulcie after a moment's silence, drawing her brother away from the melancholy amusement of tracing down the trailing drops with his finger until they disappeared mysteriously at the bottom of the glass. "I know! Let's play 'Birds, Beasts, and Fishes.'"

Cyril cast a lingering look at the tiresome dark clouds, then with a sigh and a frown turned round in token of consent, graciously suffered himself to be settled at the table with paper and pencil, and was soon excitedly trying to guess what Dulcie's Bird could be that began with the letter c, had four between, and ended with an *e*.

"It's very easy, really," pleaded Dulcie, burning to tell. "Do you give it up?"

Cyril wasn't so easily beaten as that, and thought till he grew impatient.

"Shall I tell you?—*Let* me tell you!" urged his sister.

"If you like," he replied magnanimously.

"Canare!"

"I'm sure it's spelt with a *y*," he said, as if he weren't quite certain in spite of his words.

They argued who should score the mark, and settled the point by counting it a draw. She followed it up with a Fish, which was *s*, two between, and an *I*, which puzzled Cyril until he found, of course, that it was "soul."

Believing he had lost again, he allowed his interest in the game to flag, and still restless, he ran to the window.

"Hooray! it's fine now," he cried. "Come along, we don't want hats!"

"*Ought* we to go, do you think, Cyril, without asking?"

"I'm not going to ask, not if I know it. We would be sure to be 'don't'-ed. I'm going out. It's so stuffy here. You can do as you like."

"If you go, I shall go too," she replied quickly, following him and taking his hand. He didn't quite like that, but he felt, as she was "only a woman," he would let her.

Away they ran lightly, out into the sunshine, happy to be in the warm, scented air, through the garden, off to the dear old rocks which were already drying nicely, and at once a fine game of hide-and-seek was in full swing.

Dulcie had gone again to hide, and Cyril had his face buried in his hands, waiting for the familiar "Cuckoo!" when he was startled instead by a faint cry of surprise, followed by "Cyril, come quick! Quick!"

"It must be a beetle or a toad, or something," he said to himself as he hurried to the spot from which her voice seemed to come; but it was only after she had repeated her excited cries that he found her at last.

She had found a passage through the rocks which they had never noticed before!

"Come along!" cried Cyril joyously at the sight of it. "Come along! we'll go on a voyage of discovery!"

Down the passage they went, far and carefully, for there was only a glimmer of light in a thin streak peeping through, because the rocks all but joined at the top, and the ground was uneven and slippery. But in spite of their caution they got a sudden start, for they became aware of a silent brook flowing deep and swiftly by, at their feet: another step and they would have been in it. The Twins, rather startled, looked at one another, and then without further thought they just jumped across. Jumped into an open space—into Moonlight. There was actually a full moon overhead, but with such seams and lines about it that it bore the appearance of being pieced together like a geographical puzzle.

"Cyril, look there!" whispered Dulcie, pressing close up to him, as soon as she found words.

In the white light there stood an immense rock. In it there was a wooden door with hewn-out steps leading up to it. A nice red door it was, with a green knocker upon it in the shape of a mouth smiling a welcome. Of course they went up to it, climbed the steps, which were high and difficult, and stared at the neatly engraved brass plate below it, which bore the words:

Knock if an answer is required.
If not, why?

"I'm going to knock," said Cyril.

"Oh no, we don't want any answer," said Dulcie, "so why do it?"

A backward glance at the steps puzzled her, for they had grown steeper than before and impossible to climb down again, or up, for the matter of that, and the door before which they stood was now at such a height from the ground as to make her feel giddy to look below. She hardly had time to think about it when Cyril raised the knocker and let it go. Instead of the usual sound a knocker makes, a

loud laugh rang out, discordant and disconcerting. "You needn't be frightened," he remarked, for his little sister hung back and tightened her grasp of his arm. The next moment the door swung open and there stood on the threshold a very tall man with an enormous bald head. He was clad in a yellow satin dressing-gown, and wore great smoke-coloured spectacles.

"So you've come to see the Wizard," he said blandly. "Pray walk in!"

"I—I think we'd—we'd rather not, thank you very much," stammered Cyril, very red, whilst Dulcie looked up, pale and wondering. "We're not dressed for visiting," she urged in a loud whisper in her brother's ear.

"But you require an answer, or why knock?" retorted the strange man. "*Pray* walk in," he repeated. He was so polite.

The door swung behind them, and the trembling twins found themselves alone with the Wizard in a very large cave, where the walls glowed with phosphorescent light, while the further end was hidden in deep gloom.



"So you've come to see the Wizard," he said

CHAPTER II

THE WIZARD AT HOME

"How do you do?" said the Wizard, as if he remembered he had forgotten to ask. The Twins shyly shook hands with him and said they were quite well, thank him. They didn't want to a bit, but he seemed to expect it. "Let's talk matters over," he added with a smile. It was such a winning smile that the children began to feel less uncomfortable. "You're not always quite content, I believe," and he rubbed his hands cheerfully together. "That mother of yours interferes rather too much, eh?" With a rapid movement he pushed his spectacles away on to the top of his bumpy baldness, revealing a pair of small eyes with a red, slumbering glow in them.

As Cyril didn't reply Dulcie ventured to remark, "If you please, my brother thinks she says 'don't' too often."

"But how do you know that?" interrupted Cyril, who, though surprised, took a more practical view of the situation.

"Because," slowly replied the Wizard, taking off his spectacles and scratching his big nose with them—"because I was an optician in my youth and made these glasses, through which I have only to look to see people as they really are and not what they appear to be. ["How clever!" broke in Dulcie under her breath.] I found out at a glance that you are discontented with your lot, and prefer to be free. You are tired of control, eh? Isn't that the state of Home Affairs?"

"Yes," said Cyril, once more full of his wrongs. "It's only children who are not allowed to do what they want. Grown-ups do as they like; so does our dog; he goes out and comes in when he likes, eats when he wants, leaves what he likes—or rather, what he doesn't like; so does our cat. You see," he continued, growing quite chummy, "we are never allowed to do this, that, and the other, like

other people—animals, I mean—and they are free and happy, and they needn't bother with lessons. It's so stupid being a child!" he concluded plaintively, and Dulcie nodded a similar opinion.

"Just as I thought. Well, I shouldn't put up with it if I were you," replied their new friend, smiling again, and scratching his nose with his spectacles in his thoughtful, insinuating manner. "I should advise you to go your own way, seek your own fortunes, and find your own happiness for yourselves. We must see what we can do to help you to freedom. Eh?"

The little guests did not think to thank him, for their eyes had begun to roam with curiosity over the strange things that were all about. The cave dwelling was queerly furnished, if it could be called furniture. There were animals of all sizes and shapes, standing around stuffed, staring, and immovable. Snakes, fish, small birds; an elephant just like life standing rigidly next to a number of grinning stuffed monkeys; while a crocodile with open jaws looked snaps at a startled fawn with wide-set eyes. It was like a frozen Zoological Gardens.

"Once upon a time," remarked the Wizard, following the children's source of interest, "all those poor creatures were children like you. Ah! their end was sad, very sad; very sad indeed!"

The Twins didn't like that remark at all, nor did they relish the winning smile this time that accompanied it. Then bursting out laughing he exclaimed—

"Now I'll show you something funny," and he brought out from a corner what looked like a cinematograph. "Look!" he said as he touched a spring and set it going.

There was a hissing sound, and the gloom at the end of the cave passed away, and there marched along in living procession all the inhabitants of their Noah's Ark.

Dulcie and Cyril were transfixed with delight at this charming entertainment.



"All those poor creatures were children"

"And we don't pay anything to come in!" remarked Cyril softly to his sister. "It can't pay him. They're all going in for safety, you see—all the birds, all the beasts——"

"Where are the fishes?" anxiously interrupted his little sister in a whisper.

"Don't be such a Billy," retorted Cyril with a frown; "the fishes are used to being drowned."

After Noah went into the Ark and had shut the door, the gloom reappeared. The show was over.

"That's a little idea of my own," remarked the Wizard as he put the machine away. "Amusing, isn't it?"

The Twins nodded. Then he invited the children to look through a hole in the wall of the cave, and they saw a small room.

"That's my hospitable bedroom," he said, "that I've endowed myself with. When I'm down in the mumps from being crouped up

here so long, I go there and wrap myself up in thoughts all nice and smug. It is fitted with the epileptic light, rheumatic bells, and all the latest infections.

"Now, what were we talking about before? Ah yes! My inventions. None of your modern up-to-date rubbish, only inventions of the future for me. None of your wireless telephony and wireless telegraphy for me. Listen to this." He called out—

"Number A. 1. Sea Power! Have you been successful in that last little financial venture, Sire?"

There were rushing sounds, as of waves, at the far end of the cave, and a muffled voice replied—

"No, Cabalistic One, I have lost again. Just my luck! Dash—sh—sh—" which resolved itself into the swish-swish of rolling surf. Then all was quiet again.

"The reply of a friend of mine residing far away at a place called 'The Billows,'" explained the Wizard in an offhand way. "I help him in his little transactions, which are sometimes rather—in fact very—!" and raising his arm he smothered a laugh in his yellow satin sleeve which was not pleasant to hear. "I always like to laugh up there," he explained, as the children looked surprised.

Dulcie's hand stole into her brother's and she whispered him to "Come away, come away, do, quick, and let's go home."

"But you haven't seen any of my marvellous jewellery yet," replied their host, as though she had spoken aloud.

"Don't be timid"—he was looking at them through those horrid spectacles again, which laid bare all their thoughts. "You know I am only answering that knock of yours. Had you not required an answer, there would have been no information forthcoming. I should just like to show you these bracelets I have here." He pushed his glasses across his baldness and took two jewelled golden circlets out of a satchel which hung from the cord of his gown. "Other children have taken great interest in them," said the Wizard slowly—"in fact have worn all the gems out. But I've often had them