

LYMAN BAUM

DOT AND TOT

OF

MERRYLAND

Лаймен Фрэнк Баум

Dot and Tot of Merryland

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L. Frank Baum

Dot and Tot of Merryland

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The success achieved last year by "The Wonderful Wizard of Oz" – a book that not only ran through many large editions, but brought the author hundreds of letters from interested little folks – has induced me to follow that tale with another, herein presented.

Should "Dot and Tot of Merryland" win the approval of my young friends, I shall be pleased and contented.

In any event Mr. Denslow's quaint and merry pictures, which, in this book excel all his previous work, will be sure to induce happiness in the heart of every beholder.

L. FRANK BAUM.

Chicago, July 1, 1901.

DEDICATION

To ev'ry laughter-loving Tot —
Whether your name be Dot or not;
And may you find a Merryland
Forever lying close at hand.

CHAPTER I. – Roselawn

YOU should have seen Dot as she nestled among the cushions of the carriage on her way to the railway station with her father and governess, Miss Bombien. Her dainty white gown was covered with tucks and puffings and embroideries, as became the dress of the daughter of the wealthy banker who sat smilingly beside her. Her soft, braided white hat had a wide brim that drooped languidly over the pale little face beneath, and broad, white ribbons drew down the brim until all the yellow curls were hidden away. Indeed, the only bits of color about Dot that showed were her deep blue eyes and rosy lips. Even these last were not so rosy as they should have been, for Dot was not in her usual good health, having been confined to the big city house during a long winter and a chill, uncomfortable spring.

But, now that the flowers were blooming and the birds singing in the new-leaved trees, she was going, in charge of her governess, to pass the summer at Roselawn, a beautiful country home her father had recently purchased.

"You must try not to be lonely, dear," said her father, as he held her little hand in his big, strong one. "I have told Miss Bombien to let you run and romp to your heart's content, so the roses may more quickly return to your pale cheeks."

Dot's eyes brightened. To run and romp as she pleased would indeed be a new experience to her, and she was happy even to think of such delight.

"You will have no one but Miss Bombien for company," continued her father; "but there are plenty of servants, and I am told the grounds are in beautiful condition. In a few days, at most, Sweetheart, I shall run down to see you, and then you can tell me how you like your new home. In the meanwhile, Miss Bombien will simply look after your comfort; there will be no lessons to bother you. All you must do is eat and sleep and play, and to grow strong and rosy-cheeked again."

Dot listened to all this with much pleasure, and decided she was about to have a fine holiday. Her real name, by the way, was Evangeline Josephine Freeland; but mamma and papa had always called her "Dot" from the day she was born, so sometimes she almost forgot she had such a beautiful name as Evangeline Josephine.

Dot's mamma was an invalid, and had been taken by her father – Dot's grandfather, you know – for a trip to Europe, in search of better health, and so she had been forced to leave her little daughter to the watchful care of Miss Bombien. Mr. Freeland, although he loved Dot dearly, was a very busy man and could devote but little time to his child. "So, Sweetheart," he told her, "you will be Queen of Roselawn this summer, and I will come down once in a while to bow before your Majesty's throne."

What he really feared was that Dot might grow up weak and delicate as her mother was; but he did not tell the child this. He resolved, however, that if fresh air and healthy surroundings could give his little girl strength and health, they should be at her command, and therefore he had purchased Roselawn almost entirely on Dot's account.

Before she realized it, Dot found herself at the railway station and aboard a parlor car, where her father gave her a long and loving farewell kiss. Then Mr. Freeland stood upon the platform and waved his hand to his daughter, while the train slowly glided out from the station and began its journey into the sweet, fresh country.

Roselawn won the girl's heart at first sight. The cool but sun-kissed mansion seemed delightful after the stuffy, formal city house. It was built in a quaint yet pretty fashion, with many wings and gables and broad verandas on every side. Before it were acres and acres of velvety green lawn, sprinkled with shrubbery and dotted with beds of bright flowers. In every direction were winding paths, covered with white gravel, which led to all parts of the grounds, looking for all the world like a map, Dot thought.

From the first day of her arrival, Dot was all eagerness and joy. Miss Bombien fully obeyed her instructions to let the child run. Dot entered the house only to eat her meals, which she did with growing appetite, and then away she would romp to chase butterflies, visit the stables or poultry yard, or sit near the river bank and watch the driftwood float by. Sometimes a boat danced over the broad, blue waters, and then Dot would jump up and down and clap her hands in ecstasy at the pretty sight. The river soon became her favorite resort, for the green banks and terraces before the house ran down to the water's edge.

Miss Bombien passed her days in hammock swung under a side porch, where she read a great many books and enjoyed herself in her own way. She did not bother to watch Dot, thinking the child could get into no mischief beyond a torn frock or a soiled face.

One morning, having finished her breakfast and scampered out upon the lawn, as usual, Dot chanced to notice a tiny path that led through a small opening in a high and thick hedge. She had never been in this direction before, and although she had often seen the hedge, she had not thought there was a way to pass through it. So a spirit of adventure came over her.

"I'll explore," said Dot to herself.

Pat, pat, patter went the little feet on the gravel, and soon the busy hedge was reached and the opening passed.

Then Dot stopped suddenly and looked around. A cozy little vine-covered cottage nearly surrounded by blooming posies, was before her. From the doorway, however, a path led to Dot's feet, and sitting in the middle of this path, slowly piling pebbles into his broad-brimmed straw hat, was a little boy.

CHAPTER II. – Tot

THE boy was a year or two younger than Dot, and seemed a chubby little fellow as he sat with his legs spread apart and his dark eyes raised wonderingly to the face of his unexpected visitor. Waves of brown hair clustered loosely about his broad forehead, and his dress was neat, though of a coarse material.

He paused in his play and stared hard at Dot for a moment; then dropped his eyes bashfully and ran his fingers through the white pebbles in an embarrassed way.

"Who are you?" asked the girl, in the calm, matter-of-fact tone peculiar to children, while she continued to regard the boy with the interest of a discoverer.

"Tot," was the low reply.

"Tot who?" she demanded.

"Tot Tompum," murmured the boy.

"Tompum! That doesn't mean anything," said Dot, decidedly.

This positive statement seemed to annoy the little fellow. He raised his eyes half shyly a moment and said, in a louder voice:

"Papa Tompum cuts the grass, an' makes the flowers grow. I'm Tot Tompum."

"Oh," said Dot; "you must mean Thompson. Thompson's the gardener, I know, and gardeners make the flowers grow and cut the grass."

The boy nodded his head twice as if to say she was right.

"Gard'ner," he repeated. "Papa Tompum. I'm Tot Tompum."

Then he took courage to look up again, and seeing a friendly smile upon Dot's face he asked boldly, "Who is you?"

"Oh, I'm Dot," she answered, sitting down beside him. "My whole name is Dot Freeland."

"Dot F'eelan'," said Tot.

"Freeland," corrected Dot.

"F'eelan'," said Tot.

"Never mind," laughed the girl; "let us play together. What were you doing with the pebbles?"

"Jack-stones," said the boy, and gravely picking out five of the white pebbles, nearly of one size, he tossed them into the air and tried to catch them on the back of his hand. Two tumbled off, and Dot laughed. The boy laughed, too, and tried it again. Before long they had become fast friends, and were laughing and chatting together as happily as if they had known one another for months.

Tot's mother, hearing their voices, came to the door of her cottage; but seeing her boy's new playmate was "the young lady at the mansion," she smiled and returned to her work.

Presently Dot jumped up.

"Come, Tot," she cried, "let us go where your father is working. I saw him weeding one of the flower beds this morning."

Tot scrambled to his feet and poured the white pebbles from his hat, after which he placed it upon the back of his head; so far back, indeed, that Dot wondered why it did not tumble off.

"We'll go see Papa Tompum," he said, trotting along beside his new friend.

Thompson, the gardener, was quite surprised to see his little boy holding fast to the hand of the rich banker's daughter, and chatting away as frankly as if he had known her for years; but Thompson had learned by this time that Dot ruled everyone about the place and did exactly as she pleased, so he made no protest. As he watched the children running about the grounds where Tot was usually forbidden to play, Thompson felt proud that his boy had been selected by "the young lady" for so high and honorable a position as her playmate.

He made no protest when they raced across a flower bed and left the prints of their small feet upon the soft earth, for Dot held Tot firmly by the hand, and he obediently followed wherever she

led. The big red roses attracted her fancy, and she ruthlessly plucked a handful and stuck them in rows around the rim of Tot's hat as well as her own, although the poor gardener, who had tended these flowers so patiently that they had become precious in his eyes, actually winced and shivered with dismay at witnessing the careless and, to him, cruel manner in which the young mistress of the house destroyed them. But Dot knew they were her property and enjoyed the roses in her own way; while Tot, although he may have felt guilty, wisely shifted all responsibility to his companion, and admired the royal way in which she accepted everything about the place as her very own.

When the luncheon gong sounded from the big house, and Dot left Tot to obey the summons, she said to him, "Tomorrow I will bring a basket of sandwiches and cake, and we'll have a picnic down by the river bank."

"All right!" answered Tot, and trotted away toward his father's cottage.

It had been an eventful day to him, for he had found a delightful playmate.

CHAPTER III. – The Boat

Early next morning Dot came out of the house with a basket on her arm so big and heavy she could hardly carry it. Indeed, she stopped several times between the house and the gap in the big hedge to set the basket down while she rested. Once she was sorely tempted to chase a pretty butterfly that fluttered lazily over the lawn near by; but a glance at the basket and a thought of Tot recalled her to the fact that this was "a picnic day," and so she trudged steadily on and passed through the hedge.

Tot was sitting on the door-step waiting for her. He wore a clean sailor waist and blue brownie overalls, and his face and hands had been freshly washed for the important occasion.

When he saw Dot's basket his eyes grew big and round, and he asked, "What you got?"

"Oh, that's our lunch," said the girl, setting down her burden with a sigh of relief.

"What's lunch?" demanded Tot.

"Why – something to eat, you know," she answered.

"Oh," said Tot. Then he looked at the basket with new interest and asked, "Basket all full somefin' t'eat?"

"Yes," replied Dot, with some pride. "I begged cook to give me all the good things she had in the pantry, 'cause you and I are going to have a picnic, and eat our lunch down by the river. So she filled it way up to the top, 'cause cook always does anything I ask. And it's a great big basket, Tot, too."

"Yes," answered Tot, gravely, "big basket!" Then he jumped up and, all eagerness, approached the basket.

"Let's eat it!" he exclaimed.

"Oh, no," cried Dot reprovingly. "It isn't time for lunch yet. And I've just had my breakfast. But we'll go down to the river and start the picnic right away. And, if you're good, Tot, perhaps I'll give you just one piece of jelly-cake before lunch time."

Tot's mother came out and kissed her boy good-bye, and then he and Dot took hold of the handle of the big basket and started for the river.

Of course, it took them a long time to get there, for often they set down the basket to pick flowers or watch a robin redbreast carrying food to its nest full of babies, or to run over the soft, close-cropped grass and chase each other, in very joyful and good spirits.

But they always returned to the basket, and at last carried it down to the water's edge, where they placed it upon a large, flat stone.

"That will be our table, when it's time for lunch," said Dot.

"Time now," remarked Tot, wistfully.

"Not yet," said the girl, "but you shall have the jelly-cake, 'cause there's plenty to last all day."

So she drew aside the white cloth that covered the basket and took out two big slices of cake, one for Tot and one for herself. While they ate it, they walked along the shore. The river was entirely deserted by boats, for it was a warm day and even the fisher folk did not care to be out. On the opposite shore were great walls of rock rising up from the river, but at the foot of the cliffs were bushy trees that lined the further edge of the water.

"Just like whiskers," said Tot.

"So they are, from here," agreed Dot; "but if we were on the other side of the river we would find them to be big trees. It's because they are so far away that they look like the river's whiskers."

They walked farther along the shore until they were past the grounds of Roselawn, and then, turning a little bend in the river, they came to some low bushes growing down by the water.

"Oh, Tot," cried the girl, "wouldn't it be nice to lunch under those trees, where it is cool and shady? Let us go back and fetch the basket."

Tot followed obediently, for he recognized Dot as the leader not only because she was older, but because she possessed the wonderful basket of good things. They walked back to the big stone where they had left the basket, and after a good deal of labor managed to carry it to the grove of low trees. Pushing the branches aside, they crept through the bushes until they reached the edge of the river, and then Dot uttered an exclamation of delight.

"Here's a boat!" she said. "And a pretty boat, too. I wonder whom it belongs to. But never mind, there's no one here; so we will climb into it and eat our luncheon on the seats."

It really was a pretty boat, painted all white, except for a red stripe running along the outer edge. There was a broad seat at each end and two seats in the middle, and in the bottom of the boat, under the seats, were two oars.

One end of the boat was drawn up on the shore, while the rest of it lay quietly upon the water; but the branches of the trees threw a cool shade over all, and it seemed to Dot and Tot the most pleasant place to eat their luncheon.

They carried the basket to the broad seat farthest out in the water, and Dot spread her white cloth over it, and laid upon that all the good things cook had put into her basket.

"Let's play house," said Tot.

"Not house," corrected Dot; "we'll play this is a ship, and we're on a trip across the ocean. Won't it be jolly?"

Sitting upon the bottom of the boat, close to the seat which formed their table, they laughed and talked and ate their luncheon with the keen appetites all healthy children have.

The time passed so quickly they never knew how long they sat there; but suddenly Tot exclaimed, "It's hot!" and put on his hat to keep the sun from his head.

Dot looked up, surprised to find that the sun was indeed shining full upon them. Then she noticed that the shade of the trees was gone and only the blue of the sky was over the boat.

She stood up and gave a little cry of dismay.

"We're in the river, Tot," she said; "the boat has got away!"

CHAPTER IV. – Under the Cliffs

Tot scrambled to his feet and sat upon a seat of the boat, holding fast to the sides with both hands. As he looked around and saw the boat was far from land, he smiled and nodded his head, saying, "Now we'll play ship, an' ride on 'e ocean. Won't we, Dot F'eelun'?"

"Oh, Tot!" exclaimed the little girl; "I'm afraid we'll be drowned. How can we ever get home again?"

"Ride in 'e boat," said Tot, composedly.

"But the boat is carrying us farther away every minute. We're floating downstream; and by-and-by we'll come to the ocean, where there are big waves," declared Dot, who was really frightened.

But Tot refused to be afraid. As the swift current carried them along, he clapped his hands together joyfully and gave a little laugh of delight. "Nice ride!" he said again and again. "Hooray!"

Dot was older and wiser. She knew a boat could be rowed by means of oars, and there were two oars lying on the bottom of the boat. She decided to make an attempt to reach the shore, for then someone might be found to help them back to Roselawn, which they had now left far behind.

She drew out one of the oars and with difficulty, for it was heavy for the child to handle, managed to push one end into the water and rest the other against the row-lock of the boat. Then she began to row as hard as she could; but her strength was not great, and all she did was to push the front of the boat half around, so that it headed toward the rocky cliffs on the far side of the river.

Her efforts pleased Tot, who laughed merrily as the oar splashed in the water; but Dot was determined to get to land if possible and struggled desperately at her task.

The boat was still headed toward the rocky cliffs, when suddenly the oar flew out of Dot's hands and she fell backward off the seat.

She was not hurt, but when she got up she saw the oar floating in the water, out of her reach; still she was reassured to notice that the boat was now gliding swiftly along, and presently, to her joy, she saw it was headed directly toward the fringe of trees, and getting nearer to the bank every moment.

"It must be another current, Tot," she cried, "and this one is taking us to the shore. So I did some good by rowing, even if I lost the oar."

Tot nodded, but said nothing. He was still enjoying the novel boat ride. Dot sat down on the seat beside him, and they watched the shore grow nearer and more distinct every moment as the boat glided steadily on.

The trees were bigger than they had thought, and grew close down to the water's edge. Dot became worried when she noticed the speed of the boat increasing as they drew nearer to the shore.

"If we bump those trees," she said, "we may be hurt, and the branches will scratch our faces dreadfully."

Tot stopped smiling when he heard this, and took hold of Dot's hand, which he clasped tightly in his own.

The next moment, still speeding onward, the boat reached the trees. The two children were caught by the branches, swept quickly from the seat, and sent sprawling at the bottom of the boat. But the boat itself never stopped an instant. There was just room for it to float underneath the thick branches, and instead of bumping into the shore, the water carried it through a small opening in the face of the rocky cliff, and then, in total darkness, it continued swiftly on its way!

Dot and Tot, who were both startled by this unexpected danger, managed to get up and sit together upon the seat of the boat; but they could see nothing before them and only a faint light behind, where they had entered this hidden tunnel in the cliff.

For some moments they sat in silence. Then Dot reached out her hand to see if she could feel anything; but the cool, damp air was all around them. Then she reached upward, and her hand struck against a piece of projecting rock which hurt her.

"Tot," she whispered, "I think we'd better lie down in the bottom of the boat. The roof isn't very high up, and it may bump our heads if we sit here."

Tot slipped off the seat at once and stretched himself out on the boards underneath. Dot quickly followed him, and then for a time they lay very still in the darkness, listening to the water as it rippled softly along the sides of the boat.

Presently the girl asked, "Are you frightened, Tot?"

"Not, much," was the hesitating answer; and then, after a long pause, he added, "but some."

"Oh, I'm some frightened myself," said Dot. "But I don't know what we can do."

"I know," declared Tot, solemnly.

"What?" she inquired, in an anxious voice.

"Nuthin'."

Dot saw no need of replying to this, and another long period of silence followed.

They did not seem to be in any immediate danger, for the boat swept along with a free, easy motion that was very pleasant, and the air was delightfully cool after the heat of the sun outside in the open river.

But two things worried Dot. One was the fact that she was being carried a long ways from home, and the other a fear of where the underground river might lead them. She wasn't at all sure they were not floating down into the middle of the earth, and the chances of ever seeing Roselawn again were growing smaller every minute.

Nothing seemed to worry Tot, however. The darkness and the murmuring of the water made him drowsy, and before long he was fast asleep, with his chubby little arms clasped around Dot's neck.

The girl was also gradually recovering from her fright, since nothing terrible seemed to happen. They were having a long journey under the cliffs; but she knew there must come an end to it some time, and probably they would float out of the dark tunnel into the daylight sooner or later.

On and on sped the little boat, until at last, as Dot lay staring into the darkness, she noticed a dim light about her, and began to see the rocky roof of the cavern through which they were passing.

Then she sat up, and, far away in the distance, she saw a round, bright spot that reminded her of a full moon. It seemed to be getting nearer and bigger, and finally she gave a cry of joy and awakened her companion.

"Tot! Oh, Tot!" she called. "We've got to the end at last and are coming out of the tunnel!"

Tot sat up and rubbed his eyes. He gave one careless glance at the opening, and then turned his eyes upon the lunch basket, saying, sleepily, "I'm hungry!"

CHAPTER V. – The Watch-Dog of Merryland

Of course, Dot paid no attention, during this exciting moment, to the boy's demand for food. There would be plenty of time to eat after they were out of the tunnel and in safety.

The boat glided on as gracefully as a swan, and in a few minutes it passed through the jagged rocks that formed the mouth of the tunnel and floated into a broad, open river.

Dot and Tot quickly scrambled upon the seat and looked around them.

They were in a deep valley, shaped very much like a chopping bowl, only around the outer edge were high, peaked mountains. Not a tree nor a green thing was to be seen anywhere, but the valley was thickly covered with stones – big stones and little stones and stones of all sizes – scattered about in every direction.

Through the center of the valley ran the broad, blue river, at one end of which was now the boat, while at the other end the children saw a low archway, through which the water seemed to pass into some country beyond.

Very slowly the boat was floating toward this archway, and Dot decided there would be ample time to eat something from the basket before they had passed through the valley of stones.

"We may as well go on, Tot," she said, as she arranged the luncheon; "for this isn't a pleasant place to stop in, and we should never be able to climb over those high mountains."

"Never could," agreed Tot, as he bit into a sandwich.

"What a queer place this is," she continued, looking around them. "I don't believe anyone has ever been here before. Let us give it a name. That's what all explorers do. We'll call it Stony Vale."

"All right," said Tot, contentedly. Then he stretched out his arm and pointed to something that was moving among the stones.

"See!" he said. "Funny man."

"Why, I really believe it is, Tot!" exclaimed the girl, looking toward the place. "No, it isn't a man; it's a bear."

"Bear!" repeated Tot, with wide open eyes. "Funny bear!"

Halfway up the valley they saw a shaggy-looking creature sitting upon a rock. It seemed to have the form of a man, as Tot had first declared; but it was covered with long, thick hair, which made Dot decide it must be a bear.

Whatever it was, the creature was surely alive, and it had also seen the boat, for the next moment it rose from the rock and came bounding down to the shore of the river, leaping from stone to stone, and moving so swiftly that its long hair streamed out behind it in the wind.

The boat was now being carried by the current directly toward the shore, and soon its front end touched softly upon the gravelly beach. At the same time the strange creature drew closer to them and sat down upon a big stone only a few feet away.

Dot and Tot had been watching it, and now saw that what they had taken for a bear was an old man, with whiskers and hair so long that they reached down to the soles of his feet, and probably would have grown still longer had not the rough stones worn away the ends of the hair. Not a bit of his body could be seen; the flowing white hair covered him everywhere like a gown, except upon the top of his head, which was smooth and bald. So thick, indeed, was the covering that when he stretched out his arms, the old man could only push his hands and wrists through the masses of hair.

The curious appearance of this strange person surprised the children, and they remained for some time staring at him without trying to say a word.

The hairy man looked at them, in return with equal interest, and was the first to speak, saying in a mild, sad voice:

"Strangers, who are you?"

"I'm Dot, sir," answered the girl. "Dot Freeland."

"She's Dot F'eelun'," repeated Tot.

"And this is my friend, Tot Thompson," she continued.

"I'm Tot Tompum," said Tot gravely.

"Oh," replied the man. "I'm pleased to make your acquaintance. I'm the Watch-Dog of Merryland."

"What a queer name!" exclaimed Dot. "Why do they call you that?"

"Because I'm placed here to keep everyone from passing through the archway that spans the river into the fair and happy valleys of Merryland."

"How can you keep them from passing through?" asked the girl.

"Why, tell them they mustn't, of course."

"But suppose they won't mind you, what will you do then?"

The old man looked puzzled, and shook his head slowly.

"I'm sure I don't know what I could do in that case," he answered. "You see, no one has ever before come here since I was commanded to guard the entrance to Merryland."

"How long have you been here?" inquired Dot.

"About three hundred years, I think; but I've lost track of the exact time."

"Don't you ever die?" asked Tot wondering at this great age.

"I haven't died yet," answered the old man, thoughtfully.

"But you will, won't you?" persisted the boy.

"Why, I suppose so, if the Queen lets me," was the reply.

"Who is the Queen?" questioned Dot.

"She who rules Merryland," answered the man.

Then, for a few moments, there was silence, while Dot and Tot stared at the hairy old man and he stared at them.

Presently Dot broke the silence the stillness by asking, "What do you do in this lonesome place, where you have no one to talk to?"

"Why, most of the time I watch, as it is my duty to do. And when I get lonely, I count my whiskers."

"Oh!" said Dot. Then she inquired, curiously, "How many whiskers have you?"

"Well," answered the Watch-Dog of Merryland, confidentially, "there are either eighty-seven thousand four hundred and twenty-six, or else eighty-seven thousand four hundred and twenty-eight. Sometimes I make it one figure and sometimes the other, so I can't really tell which is right. I was engaged in counting my whiskers when I looked up and saw your boat. I had then counted sixty-nine thousand three hundred and fifty-four; but I was so surprised to see you that I missed the count, and now I shall have to begin all over again."

"I'm sorry," said Dot, sympathetically; "I'd like to know just which is the right number."

"If you will wait I'll count them," he replied, eagerly. "Perhaps then you can tell if I make a mistake."

"How long will it take?" she asked.

"I can do it in about four months."

"Oh, we couldn't possibly wait that long," declared the girl. "I really think we should be going now."

"Where will you go?" he asked.

"There is only one way for us to go – through that archway into Merryland, as you call it. We are not strong enough to pull the boat upstream, so we must let it float where it will."

"It will be a terrible disgrace to me," said the Watch-Dog of Merryland, in a solemn voice, "if you escape me. What will the Queen say when she knows I have watched here three hundred years without seeing anyone, and then allowed the first strangers who came along to pass through the archway?"

"I do not see that she can blame you," returned Dot. "You say yourself you would be unable to stop us if we decided not to mind you. So the Queen can only blame us for not minding you."

"That is true," said the old man, more cheerfully.

"Want somethin' t'eat?" inquired Tot, holding out a slice of jellycake.

"Dear me!" said the Watch-Dog, taking the cake in his hand and looking at it with much curiosity. "What is it?"

"Eat it," said Tot; "it's good."

"But I can't eat," replied the old man. "I don't know how. I've never eaten anything in my life."

"Not even when you were a little boy?" Tot asked, in wonder.

"Well, I've forgotten what happened when I was a little boy, it's so long ago," returned the man.

"But I certainly have no desire to eat now, and if I had there is nothing in the Valley to devour except stones. I suppose eating is a habit you have acquired. Why don't you break yourself of it?"

"I get hungry," answered Tot.

"Hunger must be a habit, too," remarked the old man, "for I never have had it since I have been in this valley. However, if you will allow me to keep the cake, I will amuse myself by looking at it when I'm tired of counting my whiskers."

"You are quite welcome to the cake," said Dot. "But now I must ask you to excuse us, for it is time we started upon our journey."

"Oh, don't let me detain you," replied the Watch-dog of Merryland, politely; "that is, if you are determined to disobey my orders."

"I fear we must," said the girl. "Is Merryland the other side of that archway?"

"Part of it is," answered the old man. "There are Seven Valleys in Merryland, connected by archways, for the river flows through them all."

"And what is beyond the Seventh Valley?" asked Dot.

"No one knows except those who pass through, and those who pass through never return to tell," he replied.

"Well, good-bye," said Dot.

"Bye!" repeated Tot, briefly.

"Good-bye," answered the Watch-Dog.

The girl took the remaining oar and pushed the boat away from the shore with it. The little craft glided out into the river very slowly, and drifted along with the current in the direction of the archway.

Dot and Tot sat on the seat and watched the friendly old man until a shadow fell upon them, and called their attention to the fact that they were passing through the arch into the First Valley of Merryland.

CHAPTER VI. – The First Valley

The rocky arch was not very thick, yet before Dot and Tot had floated to the other side of it, shouts of merry laughter and the chattering of many voices came to their ears. Some of the voices sounded loud and shrill, others low and deep, but all rang with a happy tone that aroused the children's interest at once, and made them wonder what occasion could cause so much amusement.

Then, so suddenly that it quite startled the childish voyagers, the boat glided from the archway into the most beautiful country one could imagine.

It was a Valley, as the Watch-Dog had said; but it was level and sunny and dotted with broad-leaved trees; while soft, tender grasses, mingled with brilliant flowers, covered the ground in every direction. There seemed to be no houses at all, yet streets were laid out in regular order, having at their sides raised platforms in place of houses. Each of the platforms was four feet high and fifteen feet square on the top, and they were separated from one another by stretches of the flower-strewn lawn. The top and sides of every platform were padded like the mattresses of a bed, and were covered with silks and velvets of the most gorgeous patterns, no two being of the same combinations of colors.

On many of these raised and padded platforms, Dot and Tot saw groups of funny-looking Clowns, all dressed in wide, baggy trousers, puffy jackets and soft, pointed caps. Yet in their costumes was an endless variety of colorings and combinations of colors, making the groups look remarkably bright and pleasing.

The faces of the Clowns were painted in a fanciful way, with rings of red and blue and yellow on their cheeks, and spots and streaks of the same gorgeous colors over their eyes and around their chins.

When the children first came into the Valley of the Clowns, they saw many of them leaping and tumbling and turning somersaults upon the platforms, while others were juggling with balls, or balancing long feathers and sticks upon their noses and chins. These feats were greeted with shouts of laughter by other Clowns who were resting and looking on, and these spectators also cried out their approval or poked fun at the performers when they failed to accomplish the acts they were attempting.

While Dot and Tot sat in their boat, looking with amazement at the strange sights all about them, one of the Clowns chanced to look their way, and upon seeing the children, he set up a shout and rushed down to the shore, followed by more than a hundred of his fellows.

As they ran, the Clowns leaped over one another, turned somersaults into the air, and walked upon their hands nearly as fast as they could upon their feet; and so swift were all their movements that, in less time than one could think possible, they were all crowded along the river bank, and shouting loud greetings to the new arrivals.

Dot had to put her fingers in her ears at first, for the noise bewildered her, and while she wondered what she should say to these lively creatures, she noticed a richly dressed Clown standing before the others, and making low bows to her and to Tot. As his lips seemed to move, she took away her fingers from her ears that she might hear what he was saying.

Everyone was talking at the same time, and at first Dot could hear nothing plainly; but the Clown who was standing in front of his comrades clapped his hands loudly together three times, at which the others instantly became silent and motionless.

Then, with another bow, the leader addressed her, speaking in a sweet and most pleasing tone of voice, "Welcome, O King and Queen of Children, to the Valley of Clowns! We live but for your amusement; we love your happy and smiling faces more than anything else in the world, and this day on which you have come to visit your slaves is the most joyful we have ever known."

Here he made another bow and threw his pointed cap high into the air, where it whirled over and over and finally fell straight upon his head again. There was a shout of applause at this feat, and Tot laughed loudly and clapped his hands.

Then the leader of the Clowns again spoke, "If you will graciously consent to land in our country, where everything we have is at your service, we shall be delighted to amuse you to the best of our ability."

"You are very kind," answered Dot, "and as we are tired by sitting in the boat so long, we shall be glad to accept your invitation."

Then she pushed the boat to the shore, where a dozen Clowns seized it and drew it far up on the grassy bank. Then Dot and Tot stepped out upon land, and as they did so every Clown present turned a backward somersault and shouted, "Here we are again!"

The one who had first spoken to them now came forward and shook hands with both Dot and Tot in a very polite manner.

"My name is Flippityflop," he said, "and I am the Prince of Clowns, ruling here under the gracious favor of her Majesty the Queen of Merryland. I beg you will allow me to escort you to my dwelling; but first I should like to know your names, and how you came here."

"I'm Tot Tompum," said the boy, looking up into the Clown's painted face, "and here's Dot F'eelun. We've come in a boat, long, long ways off. An' we don't know how to get home again."

"We are delighted to have you with us, however you came here," replied the Clown; "and as for your getting home again, why, that is worry, and no one ever worries in the Valley of Clowns. You are welcome to remain our guests as long as you please, and while you are with us you must consider us your slaves, for Clowns have always been the slaves of children." Then he turned to the others.

"Brothers!" he shouted. "Allow me to introduce you to our friends Dot and Tot, of the Big Round World. We are all their slaves. Salute them!"

Instantly every Clown stood upon his head and knocked his heels together in the air. As they wore silver bells around their ankles, this made a most delightful, tinkling sound, and the sight of so many topsy-turvy Clowns was so pretty that Dot and Tot both laughed and clapped their hands.

Then Flippityflop caught the children in his arms and seated one of them upon each of his shoulders, after which he marched up the street, followed by the rest of the Clowns, who sang and danced as they came.

The Prince carried them to one of the prettiest platforms and set them gently upon its cushioned top. Then he leaped into the air, whirled around like a windmill and landed gracefully beside them.

"Welcome to my dwelling," he said.

"But this isn't a dwelling," exclaimed Dot. "A dwelling is a house."

"And this is a sofa!" declared Tot.

"Oh, no; it's a real house," said Flippityflop, "although it may be different from the dwellings you are accustomed to. Let us enter."

He seized a silken strap and opened a trap-door in the top of the platform.

"Come on!" he cried, and jumping down the hole, disappeared from view.

Dot crept up to the trapdoor and looked down. Just beneath her was Flippityflop, holding out his arms.

"Come on!" he said again; "I'll catch you."

Dot did not hesitate, but dropped through the opening, and the Prince caught her safely in his arms. Tot followed a moment later, and then the children gazed about them curiously.

CHAPTER VII. – The Clown Country

Flippityflop's house proved to be one big room, built under the platform, and lighted by a soft glow from hidden electric lamps. The walls were covered with bright-yellow silk hangings and on the floor was a crimson carpet. All around the sides were wide benches with soft cushions of purple velvet, and near the middle of the room was a small table of blue and silver. On the walls Dot noticed several gaudily colored pictures of Clowns, and when Flippityflop saw the children looking at these pictures he said:

"Those are portraits of my father and grandfather and great-grandfather. They were all Princes of this Valley of Merryland, as well as good men and clever Clowns. Therefore I am proud of them."

"They look very jolly," said Dot.

"They were jolly, and proved a comfort to thousands of children. But you must be hungry, and I trust you will allow me to offer you some dinner. What will you have?"

"What you got?" inquired Tot.

"Well, I have in my cupboard some fried goldfish, boiled buttercups and pickled shoelaces," he answered.

"Don't want any," said Tot.

"These seem rather foolish things to eat," remarked Dot.

"Of course, they are foolish things," agreed Flippityflop, cheerfully. "Everything we do here is foolish. You certainly can't expect wisdom in a country of Clowns."

"Course not," said Tot.

"If you'll send to the boat for our basket, I think we will prefer to eat the things we brought with us," declared Dot.

"Certainly!" answered the Prince, and immediately sticking his head through the trapdoor, he asked a Clown who stood outside to fetch the basket.

It came in a remarkably short time, and then Flippityflop assisted Dot to lay the cloth on the blue and silver table, while the children proceeded to eat of the sandwiches, cake and apple-tarts that remained in the basket.

"Wouldn't you like something to drink?" asked the Prince.

"I am rather thirsty," admitted Dot; "have you any milk?"

"No, we do not use milk in this Valley," he answered. "But we have some excellent green paint, or, if you prefer it, I can give a bottle of red mucilage."

"No, thank you," said Dot; "we couldn't drink those. Perhaps you will bring us some fresh water from the river."

"But the water is quite wet," exclaimed the Clown, "and is liable to make you damp. Surely you won't think of drinking it!"

"Oh, yes; we're accustomed to drinking water," said the girl.

So the water was sent for, and Dot and Tot took long and refreshing drinks, although their action alarmed Flippityflop, who urged them to eat a few handfuls of sawdust afterward to absorb the dampness.

"Do all the Clowns live in this Valley?" asked the girl, when the table was cleared.

"Yes, all except those we send into the world to amuse the children," answered Flippityflop. "You see, we train them all very carefully, and every year one is selected to go into the world."

"How do they get there?" asked the child.

"At the upper edge of our Valley there is one place not so steep as the rest. The Clown who is leaving us climbs to this place and finds himself on the top of a mountain. So he makes himself into a ball, as he has been taught to do, and rolls down the mountain into the outside world, where he travels around until he finds a circus to join."

"Oh!" exclaimed Dot. "I've seen 'em – in circuses."

"To be sure; that's the proper place for Clowns. Do they make the children laugh?"

"Sometimes," said the girl.

"When they do not," said Flippityflop, gravely, "they are imitation Clowns, and were never trained in this Valley of Merryland. The real Clowns are sure to make you laugh. But come, it is time our people were gathering on the platforms for their evening practice. Would you like to watch them?"

"Yes, indeed!" cried Dot, joyfully; and Tot clapped his hands and echoed: "'Deed, yes!"

So Flippityflop lifted them through the hole to the top of the padded platform, where they saw a strange and merry sight.

All the platforms on both sides of the street were now occupied by Clowns, who were performing in a most marvelous manner. The trees were full of electric lights, which shed brilliant rays over the scene and enabled the children to see everything distinctly.

"Come with me," said their friend, "and I will lead you through the street, that you may see what my brothers are doing."

They left the Prince's platform and came to the next, where three gaily dressed Clowns were bounding into the air and whirling around before they came down again. Every time they jumped they cried: "All right, Mr. Johnson!" in their shrill voices, and often one of them would fall on his head or back instead of landing on his feet. When this happened they were not hurt, for the platform was soft and yielding; so they sprang up at once and tried it over again, laughing at their own mishaps.

At the next platform were some juggling Clowns. One of these placed a light ladder on his shoulders, and another ran up it and stood upon his head on the top rung.

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