

FRANCES BRODERIP

TALES OF THE TOYS,
TOLD BY THEMSELVES

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Tales of the Toys, Told by Themselves

CHAPTER I. – INTRODUCTORY. THE TURNING OUT OF THE TOY CUPBOARD

"Hurrah! We are going to have such a jolly holiday!" shouted Frank, suddenly bursting out of his imprisonment in the slate closet, to the great disturbance of his sisters, who were peaceably occupied with their lessons.

"Frank," said Miss Watson, "I must really at last report you to your Papa. I do not like to trouble him if I can help it, but I am afraid you will oblige me to do so. I desired you not to leave the book closet until you had made up your mind to sit straight on your chair, and go through the multiplication table properly."

"We're to go to Sandbay for a month!" shouted Frank, capering about and clapping his hands.

"To Sandbay, Frank! oh, how charming!" cried Celia and Florry, with one voice.

"We shall be able to collect so many shells, and perhaps to get some anemones!" said Celia.

"I shall make such gardens and ovens in the sand!" cried Florry, opening her blue eyes as wide as possible. "I wonder what has become of my spade?"

"I'll leave Pa no peace till he takes me out for a sail," said Frank, whose antics had not yet subsided.

"I think you have all gone suddenly mad!" said Miss Watson. "Celia, I am surprised at *you!* I have ceased to hope for quiet manners from Frank, and Florry is so little, she scarcely knows better; but your giddiness is not usual."

"I beg your pardon, Miss Watson," replied Celia, demurely; "only it was so nice to think of going to the Sea."

"But I don't understand the matter now," said poor Miss Watson, looking very mystified; "you knew nothing about this at breakfast, Frank, and how your companionship with the books and slates in the cupboard has enlightened you now, I don't know, nor can I give even a remote guess!"

"Why, the store cupboard in the dining room is next to the book closet," replied Frank, eagerly, "and just now, when I had got my hand on the lock of the door to come out and tell you I had had enough of solitary imprisoning, I heard Mamma come into the store cupboard (for some jam, I daresay!) and she said out loud to somebody, 'I mean to take the children for a month to Sandbay this summer!' That's what made me rush out to tell the girls the good news!"

"Well, Frank, I never believed you guilty of the meanness of listening before," said Miss Watson, rather severely.

"I didn't listen," said Frank, rather sulkily.

"You can hear very plainly in the book closet, Miss Watson," said Celia. "When I have put away the books sometimes, I have heard Ellen laying the luncheon in the dining room from the store cupboard door being left open. I am sure we should not listen on purpose, and I don't think Frank could help hearing it, if Mamma spoke distinctly.

"It's very nice of you, Celia, to be always" so ready to excuse your brother," said Miss Watson, "and I *do* believe Frank above such mean, dishonest habits as that; and so I suppose I must overlook his boisterous conduct this once, as the news he heard by accident seems so exciting to you all."

"Oh, Miss Watson, don't you like the sea too?" enquired little Florry; "it's so nice to stand on a heap of sand and let the waves come round you."

"Well, Florry," replied Miss Watson, smiling, "there are many more pleasant things at the seaside than getting your feet wet through; but I suppose *you* like letting the waves chase you!"

"Then there is the bathing," said Celia, delightedly; "I do so love a dip in the cool, green salt water, and the dancing about in it, and waiting for a great wave to come over one!"

"Girls ought to learn to swim!" said Frank, very sententiously. "Suppose a big wave carried you out of your depth, and no one was near to fetch you out again but the old Molly of a bathing woman!"

"I have not the least doubt in the world," said Miss Watson, "that you will all enjoy your trip to Sandbay very much. But I think people should *earn* their holiday before they have it, or even waste much time beforehand in planning how to spend it. We shall get no lessons at all this morning if we are to be hindered like this, and the consequence will be, Frank, that as so often is the case, you will spend your playtime in going over them again."

"Suppose we all settle down steadily," suggested sensible Celia, "and put the thoughts of the sea out of our minds till we have done. Look, Miss Watson, it only wants a quarter to one, and we have finished all but our copies!"

"There's the 'vexation' to be got through first, by me at any rate," said Frank, with a rueful air. "I wish the man who invented it had all the 'three times' from one to twelve printed on him with a cat-o'-nine tails, every time a fellow is forced to go through it!"

"When you are a rich old merchant in the City, Frank," replied Miss Watson, smiling, "you will find the 'vexation' a pleasure, as you add up your pounds and shillings, or calculate the value of your cargoes!"

"I wonder if Sir Walter Raleigh bothered his head with all this rubbish," growled Frank. "I daresay he counted up his ingots on his fingers. Such a leader as he was never wasted his time and trouble on the bothering old multiplication tables, *I* know."

"Raleigh was a scholar and a poet too, Frank," replied Miss Watson; "you could hardly have chosen a worse example of your theory. He was an Oriel College man, and wrote a history of the world during his captivity in the Tower. He employed his imprisonment better than you have done, you see!"

"I have finished my copy, Miss Watson," said Celia, "may I go now, please? I have nothing more to do until the afternoon."

"Yes, Celia; but, Florry, how carelessly you have written yours! I am afraid the thoughts of going to the sea have bewildered your little head so, that your fingers have travelled along without any guidance, like runaway horses with the coachman fast asleep!"

Florry blushed and hung her head over the ill-written book, and was silent, for she knew that she had been thinking more of the pleasure before her, and musing where her wooden spade could be, than of her lessons; I am afraid that morning set a mark of "Careless!" in both Frank's and her score. However, school time ended at last, and off with a shout went Frank to hear all about the plans from Celia, for he had no doubt she had been talking the matter over with Mamma. Miss Watson was putting on her bonnet and mantle in order to return home for the usual weekly half holiday, when Mrs. Spenser entered the room.

"I find, Miss Watson," said she, smiling, "that Frank's long ears have managed to catch what Mr. Spenser and I have been arranging for the summer holidays. The house is so very dirty and worn now, after our long residence in it, that we find it will be best to set about a thorough course of paint, paper, and whitewash, so that I have resolved to give the children a month at Sandbay during these holidays, which will do them all a great deal of good, I think."

"I hope it will, indeed," replied Miss Watson; "and I am sure you will find it more agreeable to leave the house in possession of the workmen; all painting and papering is so unpleasant to endure."

"Yes, indeed," said Mrs. Spenser, "I have a great horror of the whole operation; and, besides, Mr. Spenser thinks it will be more thoroughly done, if everything is packed away, and we are all out

of the house. It will be very pleasant to be away from the heat of town, and with plenty of sea breezes to freshen up the children. Celia, I think, is looking rather delicate."

"A little sea wind, and a few rambles on the shore, will soon bring back her rosy cheeks," replied Miss Watson, shaking hands with Mrs. Spenser, as she took her leave. "I hope you will all be very much the better for the change."

For the rest of the next week – the last but one before the holidays began – Binswood Villa was a scene of endless bustle and confusion. The children enjoyed it all immensely, and rejoiced secretly at the little interruptions to the usual routine of their daily lessons, which were now taken in "pic-nic fashion," as Celia declared. For after the dining-room was cleared of its furniture, the schoolroom was obliged to be used for luncheon and dinner. And at last, joy of joys, the schoolroom itself had to be partially given up, and the weather being very warm and dry, the last few days' school was held in the arbour in the garden. The children enjoyed the remove greatly; but Frank declared that it was a sore trial to Miss Watson, for she had earwigs up her sleeve and snails on her gown!

"I am too fond of a garden, Frank, to mind even these mishaps," said Miss Watson, laughing; "and as they have not yet fallen to my share, I won't fear them beforehand. I think all the garden inhabitants recognise *you* for their lawful prey, for I can see a little money-spinner spider making a tour of your collar now!"

Then there was all the packing to be done. Mamma very wisely got over her share of the business during the quiet hours when the young folks were at school, and, therefore, managed to get everything stowed away in tolerable order. And she found out the wisdom of her plan soon enough, for the confusion and trouble that reigned during the three days' holiday before they left, nearly drove poor Nurse out of her senses. But at last even all these worries were happily got over, and Celia's treasures safely put away, Frank's bat and ball and cricket-shoes hunted up, and Florry's missing wooden spade found behind the clock-case.

Mrs. Spenser and the Nurse had the worst part of the business even now, in arranging and packing all the frocks and pinafores, socks and jackets in small compass for their long visit. Young folks are very apt not to think of all these things, and seem to imagine that hats and caps, gloves and shoes grow on the bushes, and are produced by rain and sunshine, like the garments of the flowers! Most mothers and nurses could tell a very different tale; and could, if they pleased, prove, that if little girls were as idly managed as the doll family are, life would not be so easy or quite so pleasant, to the juveniles at least.

At last the happy day of the journey arrived, and the Spensers, with all their luggage, were safely crammed into a couple of cabs, and borne off to the railway station on their way to Sandbay. Little Florry persisted in carrying her precious wooden spade, for fear it should be left behind, a proceeding that resulted in its being left in the refreshment-room at Hembery station, and only regained at the risk of Frank's being left behind; and it was finally forgotten in the carriage when they changed at Dawlish junction, its little tired owner being carried fast asleep in Nurse's arms. And so before Papa left them all comfortably settled in their airy lodgings at Sandbay, he was obliged to take his tearful little girl to the one toy-shop and buy her a new one.

"Which you gained by, Florry," remarked Frank; "for Pa gave you a bucket into the bargain; so now you can make ovens enough to bake all the rolls in Sandbay!"

And then, like a good-natured brother as he was, he printed Florry's name in great capital letters on her spade, with the name of the house they lived in, so that when she left it behind on the sands, there was a chance of its being brought back again. And Celia and her mother rambled about by the edge of the sea, and collected shells and sea-weed, or took long walks through the pretty country round Sandbay, till the rosy cheeks Miss Watson prophesied became quite Celia's usual look.

Meanwhile, Mr. Spenser having seen the little colony comfortably established, returned back to town, for he was going to stay with a sister who lived near his own house, in order to keep an occasional watch over the workmen. And so the town villa, which a few hours before had been the

scene of such confusion and bustle, – such noisy voices and pattering feet, – was left empty to the echoes and the dust which now had time to settle peaceably over the bare boards and dingy windows. An old charwoman had the charge of it, and was to sleep in the kitchen; but as the workmen were not to come till the day after, she contented herself with merely sweeping down the house in the afternoon, ready for the whitewashers next day; and then, locking all up safe, with old Growler, the dog, inside, she set off, after an early cup of tea, to get in her provisions for the next day.

It was, indeed, a change! The bed-rooms had lost their nice white little beds and curtains; the drawing-room was a dusty desert, with no piano and no work-tables; while the kitchen yawned like a gloomy cavern, stripped of its bright tins and cheerful dishes. And the dusky shades of evening fell and wrapped it in still darker shadows, while the distant roar and din of the streets seemed to sound quite far off. So then the crickets, who felt sure something unusual must be the matter, chirped, and made enquiries of each other, in the most noisy manner; while the mice, quite enraptured with the quiet and vacancy, came out and had regular pic-nic parties all over the house.

The furniture and packages had all been stowed away in one large room at the top of the house, which had then been securely locked and fastened. But one nook had been neglected in the midst of all the bustle. Busy as she had been with preparing the summer clothes, putting away all the winter ones, and setting aside all in her own particular domain, Nurse had utterly overlooked the old toy cupboard! It is true it was now seldom used; for even Florry cared little for the broken and discarded toys it contained, and so it was not to be wondered at that the old store of rubbish had not been remembered. Some officious person had unlatched the door and left it ajar, and a good blast of wind in the afternoon, when old Mrs Davis set the window open first, had pushed it quite back, though she had not observed the fact when she closed the nursery windows before she left. On the floor lay a heap of old leaden tea-things, mixed up with some of the inhabitants of a battered Noah's Ark which lay empty on its side on the top shelf. Several old marbles were nestled cosily up in an old toy kitchen which had been turned upside down to receive them. A humming-top, whose key had departed, lay side by side with a shuttlecock that had been shorn of half its feathers. The skipping-rope had become hopelessly entangled with the tail of the kite; the hoop had hung itself round the neck of a very ancient rocking-horse, whose mane and tail had long disappeared; to add to its misfortunes the poor animal now lacked the whole of one leg, and part of another, and being past mending, it had not seen daylight for a long while. A doll, with one arm, and whose bland, faded face had lost all expression with her missing eyes, presided in a solemn manner over the whole. The shelf above was empty, with one exception, for on it lay a very large ball, made of leather in many pieces, carefully joined together. Why it had been placed in the old toy cupboard was a mystery, for it seemed nearly new from the brightness of its colours and the full roundness of its form. That it was gifted with more strength and vitality than its companions was evident enough, for it gave a violent roll on the shelf, and then bounded suddenly down into the midst of its companions.

"And so *we've* got a holiday at last," said the Ball, with a lively frisk as he spoke.

"Oh! don't be so rough," faintly shrieked the Doll; "you have almost taken away all the little breath I had left!"

"I'll fan you with the greatest pleasure!" said the Kite, eagerly, "or at least, I'll try to do so, for I have stood here so long, that I am quite stiff, but I'll do my best!"

And so he vigorously flapped backwards and forwards, till all the dust was set in motion that had rested quiet so long. So that at last, the Rocking-horse even was roused from his long slumber, and hobbled out of the corner on his lame legs.

"How very pleasant!" exclaimed the Ball, hopping about with the greatest agility; "I declare it is quite worth while living in retirement for a while, if only to enjoy life once more when we come back to it again. How's the Doll now?" enquired he, politely, bounding towards her.

"Better I hope," puffed the Kite; "but you know this cupboard has been stifling for a long while, and so now the first breeze of fresh air is almost too much for us all."

"Speak for yourself," snapped the Shuttlecock, very peevishly; "you have fanned out my last feather, and what I'm to do now I can't think; I'm nothing but cork and leather!"

"We are none of us much to be boasted of," remarked the old leaden Teapot; "I'm sure I have been battered and dented till I've no shape left. But one gets used in time to being trodden on."

"Yes, indeed, and to get one's horns and legs snapped off," chimed in an eager lilac wooden Cow, who certainly had lost most of her members, "over and above parting with your relations. My twin brother was destroyed ages ago, and so was the scarlet cat's, and there's not even one elephant left in the ark, nor a camel, nor a canary, nor a ladybird, nor a bear."

"Oh! never mind your elephants and ladybirds," interrupted the Ball, irreverently; "we shall waste all our time in this arguing and quarrelling!"

"It's easy for you to talk, young man," remarked the Shuttlecock, sarcastically; "*you* have never been into the battle of life, or lost all your feathers."

"This is very stupid work," said the Skipping-rope, coiling about and trying to disentangle herself from the Kite, a proceeding that resulted in one of her handles coming off, and the Kite being shorn of the tassel at the end of his tail.

"Well, what *are* we to do with ourselves," asked the Rocking-Horse, "we are not all of us quite so lively as you, my friend Ball. To us a holiday conveys the idea of *rest*, not restlessness."

"Then I should think holidays were superfluous things to you!" muttered the Ball, as he took an extra roll out into the room; "but what are we to do, then?"

"Tell stories," suggested the Doll, and the Rocking-Horse and Kite seconded the motion. The Ball bounded about very impatiently, and proposed a game of play, but he was outvoted, and the first motion was carried. But the noise of the argument had awakened the Humming-top, and he began to buzz and hum in such a drony, drowsy fashion, that in sheer terror and dread, the Ball threw himself gallantly into the gap, and promised to tell the first story himself, on condition that he should be allowed to roll softly about the room for the rest of the evening. This was very willingly agreed to, and all the party being comfortably arranged, the Doll having taken care to ensure the services of the Kite, the Ball begun his proffered story in the following manner.

CHAPTER II.

THE HISTORY OF THE BALL; WITH THE STORY OF THE POOR OLD WIDOW WHO MADE IT

"If I were not of a very lively character," remarked the Ball, "I should feel rather shy at making my first appearance as a story teller. But you know all people of my giddy habits are not much given to serious consideration. We make a bold spring and bound down into the middle of a matter, while all the graver folks are nervously trembling on the very brink. And so, instead of beginning at the very first chapter of my story, and telling you that I first grew on an animal's back as skin, and was then turned into leather, I will skip the dry part of my history, and begin with some of my later impressions."

"Now," said the Humming-top, gravely, "I think I must rather protest against this summary way of disposing of some of the most interestin facts respecting your origin. I should like to know a little more about you, my dear friend. Pray indulge us with all the particulars of your early years: your first recollections."

"I had thought," said the Ball, modestly, "that all these minute facts could hardly be very interesting, and I have a great fear of tiring out your attention, and of being called *prosy*," added he, slily.

"That is impossible," answered the Humming-top, in a pompous manner; "let me beg of you to relieve our curiosity. I am sure I may speak for all the rest of our friends," said he, with a very solemn bow to each member of the party. The Toys, only too ready to enjoy the least variation of their long retired life, eagerly agreed, and the Ball resumed his story: —

"I am afraid I am not very clever at giving accurate descriptions of things in which I don't take much interest, and as you may suppose my real life only begun when all my several portions were collected together. I am composed, as you see, of several sections, each of the same size and shape, but all varying in colour and material. This quarter of me is composed of two portions of a pale, tawny leather; and this grew on the back of a fine robust young lamb, who frisked away his brief life on a sunny pasture in Denmark. He formed one of the members of a huge flock of sheep, belonging to a well-to-do farmer, whose riches in herds of cattle and flocks of sheep were accumulating for the dowry of his only child Mari. She was the best dowered maiden for fifty miles round, and though young in her teens, made the yellowest butter and firmest cheese for three villages round. Her father was a thrifty, enterprising man, who was especially successful in rearing fine lambs; thereby giving his old bachelor brother the tanner, plenty of employment in dressing the hides and fleeces, thus keeping "two mills going at once," as he said. The old tanner had a trade secret of his own for curing the skins in some peculiar way with the bark of the willows that grew so plentifully on the borders of the stream that ran through his tan yards. No one's hides sold so readily as old Johann Nilson's, or fetched so good a price in the market. They were entirely reserved for making gloves, and exported to England for that purpose.

"The next two sections of my figure are, as you see, of a bright scarlet colour; and, like those two on the opposite side, which are of a rich dark blue, are made of morocco leather. This is made from the skin of Spanish goats, carefully tanned with oak bark, and then dyed on the grain side. The crimson portion owes its hue to being steeped in a bath with the little cochineal insect; and the blue to indigo. It is then curried and glazed till it becomes as shining and smooth as you see it.

"Half of my fourth and last section is made of kid that was once pure white; and of the same kind as that used for ladies' gloves and boots. But time and rough usage have turned it now to a somewhat dingy hue. This was made from the skin of a calf, which was carefully steeped in baths of lime and bran, and then dressed with flour paste, and well stretched; being finally polished and

smoothed with hot irons. This came from France, and after all this toil and care bestowed upon it, was beautifully soft and white, as supple as you could desire, and ready to be made into gloves. The other half of my last portion is formed of what is called chamois leather, being made from the skin of a lively little chamois that in vain once fled along Alpine peaks to escape his fleet hunter. The only part that now remains to account for is the small round portion at each end, which, from its dark, peculiar, tawny hue and pleasant scent, you have no doubt recognised as Russia leather. This, which is so highly prized because insects will not destroy it, or damp penetrate through it, owes much of its virtue to its being tanned with the bark of the graceful birch tree.

"I have now, I think, satisfied even my friend the Humming-top, and may proceed to tell you that these several portions of my frame, coming as they did from various countries, and owing their colour and texture to different ways of preparing them, were all stored together in a very large wholesale warehouse, in a narrow, gloomy lane in the heart of London. These were all sold out again to travel once more, some to the glove-making counties; others to great shoe factories; some to makers of dressing cases and purses; others to grocers in town or country for polishing plate and glass. With all this general separation, there were a good many stray pieces, some torn off by accident, others used for pattern samples, which were always carefully collected, down to the smallest bits, and put into an old box by the boy who swept the warehouse. His master allowed him to collect them each week and carry them home to his mother, a poor, industrious widow, who earned a scanty living for her children and herself by making toys for a shop in the suburbs.

"The eldest son, Sam, was shop-boy at this great leather warehouse; and feeling the importance of his position as the man of the family, and the only one receiving regular wages, and being in a place, he was not a little proud. He drew himself up on tip-toe, for he was, unluckily, rather short for his age, and spoke in the deepest tones he could make his naturally squeaky voice take, which sounded like the chirp of the cuckoo, when "in leafy June, he is out of tune!" But Sam was a good boy, and loved his mother and little sisters dearly, and would have bristled, like an angry cock robin, in the smallest but fiercest displeasure, if any one had tried to invade the parent nest.

"It was Saturday night, and Sam was very tired, for he was at everyone's call, being the youngest and smallest there; and though he was pert and perky, he was good-natured and willing, so his poor thin legs had been well trotted about. But tired as he was, he gave a careful look round for any stray bits, and then tucked his little old box under his arm, and walked home. He stopped at the door of a very dingy house, up a dark, dirty court, and opening it, mounted the close, steep staircase. After climbing up two stories, he sat down to rest awhile, to get breath to mount the last one. At last he wearily picked up the box, and, step by step, painfully went up to the door of the back room. And this was his *home*, his only idea of comfort and rest after his long day's toil. But his mother was a good and tender woman, and though she had only this one small room to dwell in, where her three children and herself lived and slept, she tried her very best to keep it as wholesome and cheerful as she could, with the poor means she had.

"A pleasant place it seemed to poor little Sam as he went in, with the kettle singing merrily on the hob, and the summer sunset shining in over the tall chimney-pots, through a clean window, between two cracked pots of blooming mignonette. Many little children were, no doubt, going to bed then in country cottages, tired out with their long rambles in country lanes – dirty with dust and forbidden mud-pies – and hungry for the crust of very dry bread – but healthy from their day's long breathing of pure air. But Sam only exchanged the close city warehouse, with its disagreeable smell of leather, for that of a room in which his mother and sisters breathed most of the day the smoky air among the chimney tops. In he came, only too glad to rest, and thankful for the warm tea his mother had ready for him. And then he showed his treasure of pieces of leather, such a big bundle this time, that little Susan clapped her hands quite gaily; and his mother said that there was enough for a half score dozen of balls at least!

"The poor widow made leather balls to sell to a toy shop; her eldest girl, Jemima, always called Jemmie, made little toy bedsteads, for she had been lame from her birth. Little Susan, the youngest, helped as well as she could by making the little bolsters and mattresses for the dolls' bedsteads, which were to form the toys of luckier and younger children. She was a grave little morsel, with long thin, *thin* limbs, and hollow cheeks – but she would have been pretty, with her large soft blue eyes and long yellow hair, if she had been well fed and healthy.

"Their mother took the box of leather scraps from Sam, and having made him comfortable at his meagre tea, she began at once to arrange her work; for the last week she had quite used up all her scraps, and had been obliged to use her spare time in helping Jemmie with the bedsteads. So she picked out the colours, and laid her card patterns on them, and cut them with as little waste as possible, and as I was the first ball she finished that evening, I saw and heard all that ensued.

"'Are you very tired Sam,' she asked, 'you're late home to-night. However, to-morrow is blessed Sunday, and you can take your rest with all the other poor creatures God has made His holiday for.'

"'Oh yes, mother,' said Jemmie, her sallow face quite lighted up, 'and we can have another walk in the Park, you know. Only I wish I could walk better, it is such slow work hopping along.'

"'So it is, Jemmie,' replied her mother, sighing, 'but thank God, child, you don't keep your bed; that would break my heart. I hope it'll please Him to spare me *that* sorrow, and then I'll be contented if you can only crawl like a snail.'

"'I wish it was treat time,' said little Susan; 'oh, how we did enjoy it, mother! if only you had been there! Oh, they were such grand trees in the forest, mother, they seemed to reach up to the clouds; I'm sure the birds couldn't build their nests up there! Why they were three times higher nor these chimbley stacks!'

"'I liked the ride best,' said Jemmie; 'wasn't it nice to be carried along like that, and resting all the time; and teacher was so kind. She lent me her thick shawl to sit on; and how nice it was. What a lot of flowers we brought you, mother. And how nice and dry our acorns have kept.'

"'When I'm only a little bit older,' said Sam, 'and earn more money, we'll have such jaunts into the country; won't it be fun to climb a tree, and lie on the grass!'

"The mother sighed wearily; but she encouraged the children to gossip on cheerfully, for the work went twice as quick, while the memories were living over again the few, few days of fresh air and sunshine they had known. And the work *must* be done, for the sake of food and shelter, such as it was. As for clothes, they were not thought of; for they were darned, patched, and "tidied up," till they were *all* darn, and only replaced, when some kind friend gave a cast off garment. Jemmie made pretty little dolls' bedsteads, the frames of which, made of white wire, she bent into shape, and strengthened with slender strips of tin. Sam soldered them neatly together for her in his precious spare time, the wire and tin being sold to her cheap, cut ready into lengths, by a friendly tinman. Then Jemmie trimmed them up with white muslin worked round with gay coloured yarn. They were such pretty little toys that she found a tolerably ready sale for them.

"'What a sight of work you've got for me, Jemmie!' said Sam, as his mother cleared away the tea, and his sister got out the wires. 'A chap ought to have a lot of strength for such a nigger drivin' missus as you!'

"'Never mind, Sam,' said Jemmie, cheerfully; 'don't do no more nor you feels inclined for. But Mr. Dobbs had such a lot of bits for *me* this week, and as mother was slack of work, she turned to and made up all the curtains and valances, and I had only to do the wool work. So we've got a sight of 'em done, and then, if mother has time this week, she thought she'd take a few round and sell 'em.'

"'So she shall!' said Sam, setting vigorously to work, 'I don't mind, there's lots of work yet in this here feller, all along of your cup of tea, mother, and the holiday to-morrow.'

"'I think it wouldn't do no harm, Jemmie,' said the widow, as she finished me, and laid me aside, 'if you was to send one of your bedsteads to Mr. Nethersole's little Miss. He's kind to Sam, and it seems only a dutiful way of thanking for all these nice bits. You've got enough and to spare.'

"'Take one and welcome, Sam,' said Jemmie, limping off to the cupboard and bringing one out; 'you shall have this here for little Miss. It's the king of the lot, and is worked in the last bit of magenter wool I've got.'

"Sam quite approved of this offering to his ruling powers, and on Monday morning he set off early to his work, refreshed and brightened by his brief holiday, and very proud of the bedstead, which he carried carefully in a paper bag.

"It was duly presented, and not only admired, but brought Sam a message which made him tear home at headlong speed after his day's work, and face the stairs with the desperate energy that helps a soldier to storm a wall, and that carried Sam, hot and breathless, into the room to tell the good news in gasps that frightened Susan out of her wits, and nearly drove his mother frantic. At last, by patting his back, and making him sit in her low chair by the open window, the calmer Jemmie found out that Mrs. Nethersole had sent to say she liked the doll's bedstead so much that she should be glad to have three dozen like them, for which she would give five-and-twenty shillings a dozen, as she was going to have a stall at a very large bazaar, and had not much time to work for it herself.

"'And you can make a lot of balls, mother, and she'll try and sell 'em for you, and will guarantee two dozen at sixpence each. She's a jolly brick, mother, that she is! But the best of it is to come, for they had me into the parlour and asked me all about us; and master has riz my wages a shilling a week. I'm the happiest chap in London, and I'll never call him "old skinny" no more, that I won't! Hurray, Jemmie! Up ye goes Sue.'

"I am sorry, my friends," said the Ball, "I can tell you no more of them; for you see I was packed up with the rest and sent off to the Crystal Palace, where Mrs. Spenser bought me on the bazaar day, and I have lived among you ever since. But I should like to know how Sam, and Jemmie, and little Sue are getting on."

CHAPTER III.

THE HOOP'S ROUND OF ADVENTURES

When the Ball had concluded his story, and had modestly taken a leap backwards out of the way, he was eagerly accorded the warm thanks of the party, and desired in his turn to call upon some one else.

"I am sure I feel deeply honoured that you should be amused with my poor story, and hope sincerely that my successors will have something more interesting to relate. I will now call upon our merry friend the Hoop, to give us his experiences in life."

"O dear me," cried the Hoop, rolling slowly out of his corner, but contriving in his course to scatter the Marbles to all the corners of the room, and to knock down the Doll also. "My dear Doll, how sorry I am, alas! alas! I am so very unlucky in always doing awkward things."

"Oh," sighed the Doll, "I can't bear much more! I am almost gone now!"

"Come and sit on my roof," said the Noah's Ark, very compassionately, "it is not at all rickety, I can assure you, for *your* light weight; and I will keep you out of all harm." And so he carefully consoled and took care of the poor old Doll.

"I don't think awkwardness goes by luck," snapped the Shuttlecock; "people need not be clumsy unless they choose. It is carelessness, and giddiness, that cause all these mishaps!"

"I daresay you are right," said the Hoop, candidly, "I always was a giddy young thing. But where are all the Marbles gone! poor little fellows; I must go and help them back!"

"You had much better stay where you are!" whispered the Ball, "you'll only get into fresh scrapes; there's the Kite just in your way, and if you poke a hole in his head, you won't hear the last of it in a hurry, I'll promise you!"

So the Hoop edged himself into a corner, where he stood safely propped against the door, for although he was a careless, awkward fellow, he was really very good-natured, and would not vex any one on purpose.

"I have really no story to tell you," said he; "for, as you see, I am simply a large iron ring, and could not have been very difficult to make. And as to any relation of my round of adventures, they are, I am sorry to say, only one long list of accidents and mishaps. But as our good friend the Ball has set us all a noble example by so readily obliging the company, I will also do my best. My first step in life was to be hung with several of my companions at the door of a toy shop at Sydenham. Here, however, I did not stay long, for I was selected by a little boy, called Edward Moore, who had saved up his pocket money for many weeks in order to purchase me. My first unfortunate beginning occurred almost at the shop door, for Master Teddy, in all the rapture of first calling me "his very own," gave me such an energetic tap with the new stick, that I went over the smooth pavement as if I had been oiled; ran sharply over an old gentleman's gouty foot, and only checked myself in my mad career by slipping through some railings, and tumbling down a strange area.

"I could see nothing at first, but heard the old gentleman bawling angrily for the police; but, very luckily, as usual, none happened to be about, and after a little while the hubbub subsided, and the old gentleman, after abusing and threatening my poor Teddy well, limped off, and my disconsolate owner had time to peep down the areas, and try to recover his lost property. I had no idea of remaining buried in that dismal den, so I managed to roll off the flower pot I had fallen on, and by the jangle attracted his attention. He rang the bell, and coaxed the maid-servant to let him go down and fetch me.

"Get along with you, yer impedent monkey, a-ringing at people's bells, and a-calling one up in the middle of cooking! I shan't let you in! I don't care for your hoop, nor you neither!"

"Oh, do Mary! there's a kind girl,' coaxed Teddy; 'I know you're good-natured, because you've got such a laughish mouth! *Do* give me my hoop, it's just new, and I've saved up for it ever so long, you can't think!'

"Bless the boy's impudence,' said she, half laughing, 'who told you my name was Mary, which it isn't, for it's Jane! You're very saucy, and have no call to make rude remarks about my mouth. Go along with with ye, there's your precious hoop!'

"And so saying, she gave me a toss which sent me spinning up into daylight again, and nearly knocked off a grand young lady's smart hat, who walked grumbling off, looking daggers at Teddy, and muttering something about "pests of children!"

"Teddy, however, was too rejoiced to regain me to care for anything else, and shouting his thanks to Jane, he set off home at a good pace, taking me on his arm till he got out of the paved street into the green lanes. And here for many a day we ran races, and one of us at least was mightily tired. At last, one unlucky day Teddy's mother sent him on an errand to a shop in the middle of the most frequented street, and he had now become so used to his indispensable companion, that he took me with him, of course. We went, on very merrily, till we came to the corner of a crossing, when, thinking he could send me over before a great coal waggon came too near, Teddy gave me such a tap that I bounded over the street in no time. But the curb stone tripped me up first, and in hopping over that I took an unfortunate slide, and rolled into the open door of a china shop. Before I could stop myself I had knocked down two jugs, run over a pile of plates, and fallen into the middle of an array of wineglasses, just newly unpacked from a great crate close by.

"I am used to misfortunes now, and am of a very buoyant disposition, but never shall I forget the crash and smash of that early calamity. Teddy stood aghast for one brief instant, and then turned to run away, even forgetting *me* in the catastrophe. But that short moment had been enough to satisfy the horrified china merchant as to the author of the damage, and making a rapid spring across the road, he seized Teddy by the collar, and sternly hauled him into the shop. The poor boy was bewildered by the sudden accident, and half deafened by the shrill scolding of Mrs. Delf, who, having heard the crash, had rushed into the fray, and was now picking up the pieces.

"Two of the best Parian jugs! – I thought the police seized all the hoops as was seen, – nine willow cheeseplates, – and oh my! what a sigh of glasses! You've done it now, and no mistake, you little vagabond!"

"Her husband, however, seeing that Teddy was evidently a gentleman's son, after a few threats of fetching the police, decided upon accompanying him home, with a bill of the damages. Teddy begged and implored to be let off with many tears, but the man was determined, and taking me in one hand, he laid the other on Teddy's shoulder, and marched off in the direction of Willow Lodge, with the bill in his pocket. I must really draw a veil over the dreadful picture of the scene there, as my feelings will not allow me to do justice to the anger of Teddy's father, and the horror of his mother, at the money they had to pay for *that* accident. Let it suffice that poor Teddy had a whipping that cured his roving propensities for some time, and I was confiscated, and placed in ignominious imprisonment in the stable.

"Some months must have elapsed in the meanwhile, for when I was first shut up it was the end of the late summer, and when I saw daylight again it was spring-time, for the lilacs and laburnums were in full flower. How glad I was to rub off a little of the rust I had acquired from lying so long in that damp place, and how delighted was Teddy once more to get hold of me.

"I tell you what it is, old fellow,' said Teddy, rubbing me industriously with his pocket handkerchief; 'you must not let me into any more scrapes, for I could only get you again by promising Ma to be very careful, and only take you in the lanes. So we must mind what we are about!"

"And so we did; and were as sober and steady as possible; perhaps, now that I was a little rusty from want of exercise, I was not as nimble as I used to be, but we got on very well, very comfortably indeed, and I began to think our troubles were over, and that we were getting older and more sedate.

We had a few minor mishaps, but these were not of a serious order; for instance, when I just happened to run against little Polly Stubbs, a small toddling body of two years old; and upset her. But, then, after all, she was a very waddley sort of duck on her feet, and was very good tempered, so after the first shriek, she scrambled up with her little fat roley-poley body, and began to laugh. And Teddy was so delighted with her good temper, that he patted her dirty cheeks, and gave her such a big lump of gingerbread out of his pocket (where it had been rubbed all crumbling with his marbles), that her cheeks stuck out on each side as if she had a swelled face, she had stuffed her mouth so full.

"Then another day we found a charming shady lane with no house in sight, and not a sound of a carriage to be heard, and so off we went helter-skelter, – I gliding swiftly on in advance, like a slender snake, and Teddy tearing along behind with his short, stumpy legs, and his face as red as a full blown peony, – puffing like a pair of bellows. He had reached me after a long chase, and gave me a good bowl on, when we turned round a slight winding, and came right into the middle of a brood of young ducklings, with their fat majestic mother waddling after them. Oh there was a scatter, as I rushed into the middle of them like a steam-engine coming, express into a flock of sheep! Some tumbled headlong into the pond hard by, others scrambled off out of the way as they best could, while old mother duck quacked and waddled like one possessed. But one poor little lame duckling, the last of the troop, was just in my way. I could not stop myself, so the only thing I could do to prevent myself from killing or hurting her, was to fall, which I did, flat round her in the dusty road, to her infinite fright. But she was not hurt, and, after crouching down for a moment, she recovered, and scrambling weakly over my prostrate circle, she limped off to the pond, and then sailed off into deep water with a delighted quackle that amply repaid me.

"Our next misfortune was worse; but it did not cause any serious consequences to us, although for a long time, warned by his previous experience, poor Teddy walked about with a grave face, and trembled at every ring of the bell. We were out as usual, and *had*, perhaps, put more steam on than was quite necessary, for it was one of those lovely fresh mornings in early June, that are as bracing as a glass of cold water, or a breath of pure air. Teddy was capering and dancing along, and had dealt me one of what he called his "left handers" which were awkward, uncertain strokes, that I privately christened "wobblers!" Well, he had just given me a wobbler, when a horrid pebble came in my way; and what business pebbles have in the way in the middle of a foot path I never could discover. They are quite out of their own track, and very much in the way of elderly ladies and gentlemen who have pet "callosities." Why, every toddling child tumbles over them, and as for *my* family, we abhor them! Let them be kept to their beaches, and brooks, and not interfere with our few suburban enjoyments! Well, as I was saying, when indignation got the better of me, I was turned *out* of my course by one of those hateful round, slippery pebbles, and *into* a strange garden, and a very smart one too! I slipped over the smooth, dewy grass like lightning, and right through a clump of hyacinths, ending my career by falling in a scrambling, all-four sort of fashion all over a bed of choice tulips. How many I beheaded I do not know, for Teddy, after peeping with a horrified face over the hedge, and seeing no one about, made a rush in to rescue me, and carrying me off, never stopped running till we were safe at home in the old stable.

"As I said before, we were not found out in that instance, and, after a little seclusion, we came again into active life, when the crowning misery happened that parted me from my poor little master. We were going out quietly enough, and in a solitary lane too, turning as steadily as a rusty old windmill, so that I felt half asleep; when suddenly I was twirled about, whisked here and there, and then dropped in the dust, amidst such a confusion of shouting and screaming as beggars description. And this time it was owing to a donkey! This perverse animal, after having never been known from his youth to do more than walk or jog-trot under any treatment whatever, had at this unlucky time taken it into his long-eared head to run away full gallop with his owner, a deaf old woman, hanging on to the front of the little cart, with all her market produce jumbled together as it had never been before. Down he came thundering upon us, and before poor Teddy could catch me up, while he had but scant time

to get into the hedge himself, I got entangled in the wretched little brute's rough legs, and down we all came, old woman, donkey, cart, and all, with a perfect set of fireworks of onions, cabbages and potatoes, flying in the air all round us. The first thing I noticed after the general crash was Teddy, who sat in the hedge shrieking with laughter, and a funny appearance I daresay we all presented. The cart, with one wheel off, was dragged and knocked about by the wretched little donkey's struggles to regain his legs. But the old woman had been shot down on the top of him, and as she was very fat and heavy she lay there like a sack of beans, only uttering fearful moans and shouts, with her face covered with bruised strawberries, and a shower of green peas all over her.

"Teddy scrambled out of the hedge and very kindly helped up the old woman and her donkey, and collected all her stray vegetables as well as he could, for he was a very good-hearted boy, in spite of his carelessness. But the crabbed old woman laid all the blame on him, and following him slyly home, beset the house, and made such a fuss, that Teddy got in the wars again worse than ever. His mother believed his account of the mischief, because, with all his faults, he was very truthful; but his father was very angry, and though he only paid the old woman half her outrageous demand, he punished Teddy severely, and wound up by depriving him of me altogether.

"'Well Ma!' said poor Teddy, almost tearfully, 'if I must not have my hoop myself, I know no one I'd sooner give it to than Frank Spenser, my old schoolfellow. Pa's so angry with me about it, I don't like to ask him; but if *you* would, I daresay he'd let Frank have it.'

"His mother, who was really sorry for him, did so very readily, and Teddy had the only satisfaction left him, in giving me to his friend. Frank was almost too old to care for a hoop, but he did not like to hurt the poor boy by refusing, so he took me with a very good grace, and promised to take great care of me; which he certainly has done by shutting me up here like this; and so now my friends I think I have related my whole round of adventures to you, as far as I can myself remember."

CHAPTER IV. THE FATE OF THE LEADEN TEA-THINGS

The rest of the Toys having thanked the Hoop for his story, he once more rolled himself lazily into a comfortable position, and took his rights by calling upon the leaden Teapot, to entertain them next. But such an uproar arose among all the leaden Tea-things; the cups and saucers, clattering and clanking like mad, and the milk jug even mounting on the sugar basin to be heard the better, that for a few moments no one could be heard. But the little Teapot set to work vigorously, and soon reduced her unruly family to order. She rolled one teacup here, and bowled over another there, piled up the plates before they knew where they were, and toppled down the milk jug into its proper place, before it recovered enough to defend itself. Then she sat down and volubly began her story, while her tribe were temporarily pacified.

"I am afraid," said she, "you will not like my story at all, for it's not half so lively and entertaining as the Hoop's, in fact there's nothing merry about it, but quite the reverse. I can tell you nothing of my birthplace or of my original history, for you see I've had a large family to keep together, and look after, and I've been so battered and knocked about in my course through life, that my memory is sadly impaired. So I can only tell you that we all came from Germany, where we were made, and were carefully packed in a little pasteboard box, in which we travelled to the English house to which we were sent, with numbers of others. We remained for some time in seclusion on the shelf of the toy warehouse, and were then drafted off to a little toy-shop at the West end of London. Our present owner was a notable little woman, the wife of a head workman at a large cabinet manufactory, and as she had two or three small children, she was glad to make ends meet by fitting out her front parlour as a little toy-shop. It was a very quiet, nice street, not far from a large hotel, and as the rents were rather high, the houses were only let to fairly respectable people. The little woman let her first floor, neatly, but plainly, furnished, to an elderly lady; and by all these small helps, added to her husband's wages, they lived very comfortably, and brought up their little ones nicely. A younger sister of the wife's lived with them, and was a great help in waiting on the old lady and in serving the customers.

"Rose was such a good-tempered girl, she was a great favourite with all the young purchasers; she never cared what trouble she took to suit them, and turned over the whole stock of toys that she might find what they wanted. All the little poor children in the neighbourhood used to watch to see when she came into the shop to make their small bargains. She never grumbled while they picked out the prettiest faces that suited their fancy among the halfpenny wooden dolls, and she kept a choice corner of very cheap toys on purpose for all these little ones, who so rarely knew what the pleasure of buying a toy was. But I think she had her reward when she saw the little eyes nearly sparkle, and the pale, thin faces get a little colour, as they trotted happily off with their few and scanty treasures cuddled up in their old ragged pinafores. We lay for a long time on the counter with our lid off, to tempt the young folks who came to the shop, so I had some opportunity to see all the different customers.

"I suppose my own busy, careful life, with all my tribe of young ones, has made me understand all these things better, for I remember so much of this time, while I have forgotten a great deal else. How often I have seen the richer class of children come in with their governesses or servants, and just glancing over the toys carelessly, they have selected what they wanted, and have gone off, with no more than a passing pleasure with their possessions. And very likely in a fortnight the same party have returned again, and carried off something else, feeling more careless than before at the sight of the playthings they had almost exhausted.

"Different to them, as station and dress could make them, were Rose's little friends. The golden hair, or dark braids of the little ladies, and their flower-like faces, set off with their trim hats, and

tasteful, cool, well-made dresses, did not contrast more strongly with the sallow faces, ragged, short locks, tangled with wind and weather, and the patched or ragged garments of the poorer children, than did their manners and wants. These latter little ones were the small evening audience who flattened their noses against the bright, gas-lighted window of the gay toy-shop, and who knew all its contents by heart, as well as its owner. But they never hoped, poor little souls! except in dreams, for all these beautiful toys. Dirty little Polly, who stood pointing with her smutty finger, and elbowing her sister to look at the grand doll dressed in muslin and ribbon, only gazed at it in a sort of ecstatic rapture, and had no more idea, indeed far less, of having it for her very own, than little Lady Edith had of owning the Crystal Palace. Pence, scanty, hard-earned pence, were too much wanted for bread and food, to be easily got to lay out even in two half-penny dolls in a year! But when a happy piece of good fortune did come about, and these poor little creatures really had a whole penny they could call *their own*, oh, how difficult it was to spend it! How much they wanted for it! and what a business it was to decide what it should be laid out in! And the one-jointed doll or penny cart was like a pot of gold to its happy little owner for months afterwards!

"Rose had other friends as well, however, as these poor little ragged customers, for her pleasant face and gentle voice made her popular with all, and she had a tasteful way of arranging the one window of the toy-shop that made it quite attractive to older eyes than the children. One day in late autumn, a lady, with a nurse and a little girl, paused before it for a moment, and after a brief inspection they came into the shop.

"I think a box of tea-things will be almost the best thing for her, Lee,' said the lady to her nurse.

"I sould ike a bots of tea-sings wey mush!' said the little thing, as the servant sat down, and placed her on her lap.

"So you shall have some, my pet, and then you will be able to make tea for all the dollies,' replied the nurse.

"Have you any boxes of wooden tea-things?' asked the lady.

"Rose placed before them a tolerably large assortment; some made of china, very brightly ornamented with pink and blue flowers; some made of glass, white with tiny gold sprays and stars, but these were voted dangerous for baby, because they would break easily, and might cut her little fat hands. Then the wooden sets were examined, but they were painted freely, and mamma and nurse thought they might go to the rosy mouth more closely and often than would be quite wholesome, and baby would not look at the plain, white Swiss carved tea-sets, pretty as they were.

"Fower ike those, wey pitty,' cried she, eagerly, as Rose brought out our box of large polished leaden tea-things.

"Then she shall have them!' decided Mamma at once, 'and a very good choice too, Lee, don't you think so? They will be quite safe, and neither break nor spoil so easily as the rest. How much are they? I will take these please!

"And so Rose packed us carefully up in paper and gave us to the nurse, who, taking up the little girl, carefully tied on her warm fur cape and carried her after the lady. They walked for a short distance, and then stopped at the door of a house in a handsome square. The lady's beautiful dress and elegant air had somewhat prepared me for our new home, which was one of luxury. The lady, after tenderly kissing the little one, stopped at the door of her dressing room, while the nurse and my new owner mounted another flight, and reached the spacious and airy day nursery. The little rosy girl was rolled out of all her velvet wraps, and a very pretty snowy embroidered pinafore was put on her, after her glossy bright flaxen curls had been carefully arranged by the nurse. The little thing had borne all this very impatiently, and had fretted and fidgeted to get away to her new toys; but her nurse would not let her go till she was "made tidy," as she called it.

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