Twinkle and Chubbins

By

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Chapter I

The Trap

"THERE'S a woodchuck over on the side hill that is eating my clover," said Twinkle's father, who was a farmer.

"Why don't you set a trap for it?" asked Twinkle's mother.

"I believe I will," answered the man.

So, when the midday dinner was over, the farmer went to the barn and got a steel trap, and carried it over to the clover-field on the hillside.

Twinkle wanted very much to go with him, but she had to help mamma wash the dishes and put them away, and then brush up the dining-room and put it in order. But when the work was done, and she had all the rest of the afternoon to herself, she decided to go over to the woodchuck's hole and see how papa had set the trap, and also discover if the woodchuck had yet been caught.

So the little girl took her blue-and-white sun-bonnet, and climbed over the garden fence and ran across the corn-field and through the rye until she came to the red-clover patch on the hill.

She knew perfectly well where the woodchuck's hole was, for she had looked at it curiously many times; so she approached it carefully and

found the trap set just in front of the hole. If the woodchuck stepped on it, when he came out, it would grab his leg and hold him fast; and there was a chain fastened to the trap, and also to a stout post driven into the ground, so that when the woodchuck was caught he couldn't run away with the trap.

But although the day was bright and sunshiny, and just the kind of day woodchucks like, the clover-eater had not yet walked out of his hole to get caught in the trap.

So Twinkle lay down in the clover-field, half hidden by a small bank in front of the woodchuck's hole, and began to watch for the little animal to come out. Her eyes could see right into the hole, which seemed to slant upward into the hill instead of downward; but of course she couldn't see very far in, because the hole wasn't straight, and grew black a little way from the opening.

It was somewhat wearisome, waiting and watching so long, and the warm sun and the soft chirp of the crickets that hopped through the clover made Twinkle drowsy. She didn't intend to go to sleep, because then she might miss the woodchuck; but there was no harm in closing her eyes just one little minute; so she allowed the long lashes to droop over her pretty pink cheeks--just because they felt so heavy, and there was no way to prop them up.

Then, with a start, she opened her eyes again, and saw the trap and the

woodchuck hole just as they were before. Not quite, though, come to look carefully. The hole seemed to be bigger than at first; yes, strange as it might seem, the hole was growing bigger every minute! She watched it with much surprise, and then looked at the trap, which remained the same size it had always been. And when she turned her eyes upon the hole once more it had not only become very big and high, but a stone arch appeared over it, and a fine, polished front door now shut it off from the outside world. She could even read a name upon the silver door-plate, and the name was this:

Mister Woodchuck

Chapter II

Mister Woodchuck Captures a Girl

"WELL, I declare!" whispered Twinkle to herself; "how could all that have happened?"

On each side of the door was a little green bench, big enough for two to sit upon, and between the benches was a doorstep of white marble, with a mat lying on it. On one side Twinkle saw an electric door-bell.

While she gazed at this astonishing sight a sound of rapid footsteps was heard, and a large Jack-Rabbit, almost as big as herself, and dressed in a messenger-boy's uniform, ran up to the woodchuck's front door and rang the bell.

Almost at once the door opened inward, and a curious personage stepped out.

Twinkle saw at a glance that it was the woodchuck himself,--but what a big and queer woodchuck it was!

He wore a swallow-tailed coat, with a waistcoat of white satin and fancy knee-breeches, and upon his feet were shoes with silver buckles. On his head was perched a tall silk hat that made him look just as high as Twinkle's father, and in one paw he held a gold-headed cane. Also he wore big spectacles over his eyes, which made him look more dignified

than any other woodchuck Twinkle had ever seen.

When this person opened the door and saw the Jack-Rabbit messenger-boy, he cried out:

"Well, what do you mean by ringing my bell so violently? I suppose you're half an hour late, and trying to make me think you're in a hurry."

The Jack-Rabbit took a telegram from its pocket and handed it to the woodchuck without a word in reply. At once the woodchuck tore open the envelope and read the telegram carefully.

"Thank you. There's no answer," he said; and in an instant the Jack-Rabbit had whisked away and was gone.

"Well, well," said the woodchuck, as if to himself, "the foolish farmer has set a trap for me, it seems, and my friends have sent a telegram to warn me. Let's see--where is the thing?"

He soon discovered the trap, and seizing hold of the chain he pulled the peg out of the ground and threw the whole thing far away into the field.

"I must give that farmer a sound scolding," he muttered, "for he's becoming so impudent lately that soon he will think he owns the whole country."

But now his eyes fell upon Twinkle, who lay in the clover staring up at him; and the woodchuck gave a laugh and grabbed her fast by one arm.

"Oh ho!" he exclaimed; "you're spying upon me, are you?"

"I'm just waiting to see you get caught in the trap," said the girl, standing up because the big creature pulled upon her arm. She wasn't much frightened, strange to say, because this woodchuck had a good-humored way about him that gave her confidence.

"You would have to wait a long time for that," he said, with a laugh that was a sort of low chuckle. "Instead of seeing me caught, you've got caught yourself. That's turning the tables, sure enough; isn't it?"

"I suppose it is," said Twinkle, regretfully. "Am I a prisoner?"

"You might call it that; and then, again, you mightn't," answered the woodchuck. "To tell you the truth, I hardly know what to do with you. But come inside, and we'll talk it over. We musn't be seen out here in the fields."

Still holding fast to her arm, the woodchuck led her through the door, which he carefully closed and locked. Then they passed through a kind of hallway, into which opened several handsomely furnished rooms, and out again into a beautiful garden at the back, all filled with flowers and

brightly colored plants, and with a pretty fountain playing in the middle. A high stone wall was built around the garden, shutting it off from all the rest of the world.

The woodchuck led his prisoner to a bench beside the fountain, and told her to sit down and make herself comfortable.

Chapter III

Mister Woodchuck Scolds Twinkle

TWINKLE was much pleased with her surroundings, and soon discovered several gold-fishes swimming in the water at the foot of the fountain.

"Well, how does it strike you?" asked the woodchuck, strutting up and down the gravel walk before her and swinging his gold-headed cane rather gracefully.

"It seems like a dream," said Twinkle.

"To be sure," he answered, nodding. "You'd no business to fall asleep in the clover."

"Did I?" she asked, rather startled at the suggestion.

"It stands to reason you did," he replied. "You don't for a moment think this is real, do you?"

"It seems real," she answered. "Aren't you the woodchuck?"

"Mister Woodchuck, if you please. Address me properly, young lady, or you'll make me angry."

"Well, then, aren't you Mister Woodchuck?"

"At present I am; but when you wake up, I won't be," he said.

"Then you think I'm dreaming?"

"You must figure that out for yourself," said Mister Woodchuck.

"What do you suppose made me dream?"

"I don't know."

"Do you think it's something I've eaten?" she asked anxiously.

"I hardly think so. This isn't any nightmare, you know, because there's nothing at all horrible about it so far. You've probably been reading some of those creepy, sensational story-books."

"I haven't read a book in a long time," said Twinkle.

"Dreams," remarked Mister Woodchuck, thoughtfully, "are not always to be accounted for. But this conversation is all wrong. When one is dreaming one doesn't talk about it, or even know it's a dream. So let's speak of something else."

"It's very pleasant in this garden," said Twinkle. "I don't mind being here a bit."

"But you can't stay here," replied Mister Woodchuck, "and you ought to be very uncomfortable in my presence. You see, you're one of the deadliest enemies of my race. All you human beings live for or think of is how to torture and destroy woodchucks."

"Oh, no!" she answered. "We have many more important things than that to think of. But when a woodchuck gets eating our clover and the vegetables, and spoils a lot, we just have to do something to stop it. That's why my papa set the trap."

"You're selfish," said Mister Woodchuck, "and you're cruel to poor little animals that can't help themselves, and have to eat what they can find, or starve. There's enough for all of us growing in the broad fields."

Twinkle felt a little ashamed.

"We have to sell the clover and the vegetables to earn our living," she explained; "and if the animals eat them up we can't sell them."

"We don't eat enough to rob you," said the woodchuck, "and the land belonged to the wild creatures long before you people came here and began to farm. And really, there is no reason why you should be so cruel. It hurts dreadfully to be caught in a trap, and an animal captured in that way sometimes has to suffer for many hours before the

man comes to kill it. We don't mind the killing so much. Death doesn't last but an instant. But every minute of suffering seems to be an hour."

"That's true," said Twinkle, feeling sorry and repentant. "I'll ask papa never to set another trap."

"That will be some help," returned Mister Woodchuck, more cheerfully, "and I hope you'll not forget the promise when you wake up. But that isn't enough to settle the account for all our past sufferings, I assure you; so I am trying to think of a suitable way to punish you for the past wickedness of your father, and of all other men that have set traps."

"Why, if you feel that way," said the little girl, "you're just as bad as we are!"

"How's that?" asked Mister Woodchuck, pausing in his walk to look at her.

"It's as naughty to want revenge as it is to be selfish and cruel," she said.

"I believe you are right about that," answered the animal, taking off his silk hat and rubbing the fur smooth with his elbow. "But woodchucks are not perfect, any more than men are, so you'll have to take us as you find us. And now I'll call my family, and exhibit you to them. The

children, especially, will enjoy seeing the wild human girl I've had the luck to capture."

"Wild!" she cried, indignantly.

"If you're not wild now, you will be before you wake up," he said.

Chapter IV

Mrs. Woodchuck and Her Family

BUT Mister Woodchuck had no need to call his family, for just as he spoke a chatter of voices was heard and Mrs. Woodchuck came walking down a path of the garden with several young woodchucks following after her.

The lady animal was very fussily dressed, with puffs and ruffles and laces all over her silk gown, and perched upon her head was a broad white hat with long ostrich plumes. She was exceedingly fat, even for a woodchuck, and her head fitted close to her body, without any neck whatever to separate them. Although it was shady in the garden, she held a lace parasol over her head, and her walk was so mincing and airy that Twinkle almost laughed in her face.

The young woodchucks were of several sizes and kinds. One little woodchuck girl rolled before her a doll's baby-cab, in which lay a woodchuck doll made of cloth, in quite a perfect imitation of a real woodchuck. It was stuffed with something soft to make it round and fat, and its eyes were two glass beads sewn upon the face. A big boy woodchuck wore knickerbockers and a Tam o' Shanter cap and rolled a hoop; and there were several smaller boy and girl woodchucks, dressed quite as absurdly, who followed after their mother in a long train.

"My dear," said Mister Woodchuck to his wife, "here is a human creature that I captured just outside our front door."

"Huh!" sneered the lady woodchuck, looking at Twinkle in a very haughty way; "why will you bring such an animal into our garden, Leander? It makes me shiver just to look at the horrid thing!"

"Oh, mommer!" yelled one of the children, "see how skinny the beast is!"

"Hasn't any hair on its face at all," said another, "or on its paws!"

"And no sign of a tail!" cried the little woodchuck girl with the doll.

"Yes, it's a very strange and remarkable creature," said the mother. "Don't touch it, my precious darlings. It might bite."

"You needn't worry," said Twinkle, rather provoked at these speeches. "I wouldn't bite a dirty, greasy woodchuck on any account!"

"Whoo! did you hear what she called us, mommer? She says we're greasy and dirty!" shouted the children, and some of them grabbed pebbles from the path in their paws, as if to throw them at Twinkle.

"Tut, tut! don't be cruel," said Mister Woodchuck. "Remember the poor creature is a prisoner, and isn't used to good society; and besides that, she's dreaming."

"Really?" exclaimed Mrs. Woodchuck, looking at the girl curiously.

"To be sure," he answered. "Otherwise she wouldn't see us dressed in such fancy clothes, nor would we be bigger than she is. The whole thing is unnatural, my dear, as you must admit."

"But we're not dreaming; are we, Daddy?" anxiously asked the boy with the hoop.

"Certainly not," Mister Woodchuck answered; "so this is a fine opportunity for you to study one of those human animals who have always been our worst enemies. You will notice they are very curiously made. Aside from their lack of hair in any place except the top of the head, their paws are formed in a strange manner. Those long slits in them make what are called fingers, and their claws are flat and dull--not at all sharp and strong like ours."

"I think the beast is ugly," said Mrs. Woodchuck. "It would give me the shivers to touch its skinny flesh."

"I'm glad of that," said Twinkle, indignantly. "You wouldn't have all the shivers, I can tell you! And you're a disagreeable, ign'rant creature! If you had any manners at all, you'd treat strangers more politely."

"Just listen to the thing!" said Mrs. Woodchuck, in a horrified tone. "Isn't it wild, though!"

Chapter V

Mr. Woodchuck Argues the Question

"REALLY," Mister Woodchuck said to his wife, "you should be more considerate of the little human's feelings. She is quite intelligent and tame, for one of her kind, and has a tender heart, I am sure."

"I don't see anything intelligent about her," said the girl woodchuck.

"I guess I've been to school as much as you have," said Twinkle.

"School! Why, what's that?"

"Don't you know what school is?" cried Twinkle, much amused.

"We don't have school here," said Mister Woodchuck, as if proud of the fact.

"Don't you know any geography?" asked the child.

"We haven't any use for it," said Mister Woodchuck; "for we never get far from home, and don't care a rap what state bounds Florida on the south. We don't travel much, and studying geography would be time wasted."

"But don't you study arithmetic?" she asked; "don't you know how to do

sums?"

"Why should we?" he returned. "The thing that bothers you humans most, and that's money, is not used by us woodchucks. So we don't need to figure and do sums."

"I don't see how you get along without money," said Twinkle, wonderingly. "You must have to buy all your fine clothes."

"You know very well that woodchucks don't wear clothes, under ordinary circumstances," Mister Woodchuck replied. "It's only because you are dreaming that you see us dressed in this way."

"Perhaps that's true," said Twinkle. "But don't talk to me about not being intelligent, or not knowing things. If you haven't any schools it's certain I know more than your whole family put together!"

"About some things, perhaps," acknowledged Mister Woodchuck. "But tell me: do you know which kind of red clover is the best to eat?"

"No," she said.

"Or how to dig a hole in the ground to live in, with different rooms and passages, so that it slants up hill and the rain won't come in and drown you?"

"No," said Twinkle.

"And could you tell, on the second day of February (which is woodchuck day, you know), whether it's going to be warm weather, or cold, during the next six weeks?"

"I don't believe I could," replied the girl.

"Then," said Mister Woodchuck, "there are some things that we know that you don't; and although a woodchuck might not be of much account in one of your schoolrooms, you must forgive me for saying that I think you'd make a mighty poor woodchuck."

"I think so, too!" said Twinkle, laughing.

"And now, little human," he resumed, after looking at his watch, "it's nearly time for you to wake up; so if we intend to punish you for all the misery your people has inflicted on the woodchucks, we won't have a minute to spare."

"Don't be in a hurry," said Twinkle. "I can wait."

"She's trying to get out of it," exclaimed Mrs. Woodchuck, scornfully. "Don't you let her, Leander."

"Certainly not, my dear," he replied; "but I haven't decided how to

punish her."

"Take her to Judge Stoneyheart," said Mrs. Woodchuck. "He will know what to do with her."

Chapter VI

Twinkle is Taken to the Judge

AT this the woodchuck children all hooted with joy, crying: "Take her, Daddy! Take her to old Stoneyheart! Oh, my! won't he give it to her, though!"

"Who is Judge Stoneyheart?" asked Twinkle, a little uneasily.

"A highly respected and aged woodchuck who is cousin to my wife's grandfather," was the reply. "We consider him the wisest and most intelligent of our race; but, while he is very just in all things, the judge never shows any mercy to evil-doers."

"I haven't done anything wrong," said the girl.

"But your father has, and much wrong is done us by the other farmers around here. They fight my people without mercy, and kill every woodchuck they can possibly catch."

Twinkle was silent, for she knew this to be true.

"For my part," continued Mister Woodchuck, "I'm very soft-hearted, and wouldn't even step on an ant if I could help it. Also I am sure you have a kind disposition. But you are a human, and I am a woodchuck; so I think I will take you to old Stoneyheart and let him decide your fate."

"Hooray!" yelled the young woodchucks, and away they ran through the paths of the garden, followed slowly by their fat mother, who held the lace parasol over her head as if she feared she would be sunstruck.

Twinkle was glad to see them go. She didn't care much for the woodchuck children, they were so wild and ill-mannered, and their mother was even more disagreeable than they were. As for Mister Woodchuck, she did not object to him so much; in fact, she rather liked to talk to him, for his words were polite and his eyes pleasant and kindly.

"Now, my dear," he said, "as we are about to leave this garden, where you have been quite secure, I must try to prevent your running away when we are outside the wall. I hope it won't hurt your feelings to become a real prisoner for a few minutes."

Then Mister Woodchuck drew from his pocket a leather collar, very much like a dog-collar, Twinkle thought, and proceeded to buckle it around the girl's neck. To the collar was attached a fine chain about six feet long, and the other end of the chain Mister Woodchuck held in his hand.

"Now, then," said he, "please come along quietly, and don't make a fuss."

He led her to the end of the garden and opened a wooden gate in the wall, through which they passed. Outside the garden the ground was

nothing but hard, baked earth, without any grass or other green thing growing upon it, or any tree or shrub to shade it from the hot sun. And not far away stood a round mound, also of baked earth, which Twinkle at once decided to be a house, because it had a door and some windows in it.

There was no living thing in sight--not even a woodchuck--and Twinkle didn't care much for the baked-clay scenery.

Mister Woodchuck, holding fast to the chain, led his prisoner across the barren space to the round mound, where he paused to rap softly upon the door.

Chapter VII

Twinkle is Condemned

"COME in!" called a voice.

Mister Woodchuck pushed open the door and entered, drawing Tinkle after him by the chain.

In the middle of the room sat a woodchuck whose hair was grizzled with old age. He wore big spectacles upon his nose, and a round knitted cap, with a tassel dangling from the top, upon his head. His only garment was an old and faded dressing-gown.

When they entered, the old woodchuck was busy playing a game with a number of baked-clay dominoes, which he shuffled and arranged upon a baked-mud table; nor did he look up for a long time, but continued to match the dominoes and to study their arrangement with intense interest.

Finally, however, he finished the game, and then he raised his head and looked sharply at his visitors.

"Good afternoon, Judge," said Mister Woodchuck, taking off his silk hat and bowing respectfully.

The judge did not answer him, but continued to stare at Twinkle.

"I have called to ask your advice," continued Mister Woodchuck. "By good chance I have been able to capture one of those fierce humans that are the greatest enemies of peaceful woodchucks."

The judge nodded his gray head wisely, but still answered nothing.

"But now that I've captured the creature, I don't know what to do with her," went on Mister Woodchuck; "although I believe, of course, she should be punished in some way, and made to feel as unhappy as her people have made us feel. Yet I realize that it's a dreadful thing to hurt any living creature, and as far as I'm concerned I'm quite willing to forgive her." With these words he wiped his face with a red silk handkerchief, as if really distressed.

"She's dreaming," said the judge, in a sharp, quick voice.

"Am I?" asked Twinkle.

"Of course. You were probably lying on the wrong side when you went to sleep."

"Oh!" she said. "I wondered what made it."

"Very disagreeable dream, isn't it?" continued the judge.

"Not so very," she answered. "It's interesting to see and hear

woodchucks in their own homes, and Mister Woodchuck has shown me how cruel it is for us to set traps for you."

"Good!" said the judge. "But some dreams are easily forgotten, so I'll teach you a lesson you'll be likely to remember. You shall be caught in a trap yourself."

"Me!" cried Twinkle, in dismay.

"Yes, you. When you find how dreadfully it hurts you'll bear the traps in mind forever afterward. People don't remember dreams unless the dreams are unusually horrible. But I guess you'll remember this one."

He got up and opened a mud cupboard, from which he took a big steel trap. Twinkle could see that it was just like the trap papa had set to catch the woodchucks, only it seemed much bigger and stronger.

The judge got a mallet and with it pounded a stake into the mud floor. Then he fastened the chain of the trap to the stake, and afterward opened the iron jaws of the cruel-looking thing and set them with a lever, so that the slightest touch would spring the trap and make the strong jaws snap together.

"Now, little girl," said he, "you must step in the trap and get caught."

"Why, it would break my leg!" cried Twinkle.

"Did your father care whether a woodchuck got its leg broken or not?" asked the judge.

"No," she answered, beginning to be greatly frightened.

"Step!" cried the judge, sternly.

"It will hurt awfully," said Mister Woodchuck; "but that can't be helped. Traps are cruel things, at the best."

Twinkle was now trembling with nervousness and fear.

"Step!" called the judge, again.

"Dear me!" said Mister Woodchuck, just then, as he looked earnestly into Twinkle's face, "I believe she's going to wake up!"

"That's too bad," said the judge.

"No, I'm glad of it," replied Mister Woodchuck.

And just then the girl gave a start and opened her eyes.

She was lying in the clover, and before her was the opening of the woodchuck's hole, with the trap still set before it.

Chapter VIII

Twinkle Remembers

"PAPA," said Twinkle, when supper was over and she was nestled snugly in his lap, "I wish you wouldn't set any more traps for the woodchucks."

"Why not, my darling?" he asked in surprise.

"They're cruel," she answered. "It must hurt the poor animals dreadfully to be caught in them."

"I suppose it does," said her father, thoughtfully. "But if I don't trap the woodchucks they eat our clover and vegetables."

"Never mind that," said Twinkle, earnestly. "Let's divide with them. God made the woodchucks, you know, just as He made us, and they can't plant and grow things as we do; so they have to take what they can get, or starve to death. And surely, papa, there's enough to eat in this big and beautiful world, for all of God's creatures."

Papa whistled softly, although his face was grave; and then he bent down and kissed his little girl's forehead.

"I won't set any more traps, dear," he said.

And that evening, after Twinkle had been tucked snugly away in bed, her

father walked slowly through the sweet-smelling fields to the woodchuck's hole; there lay the trap, showing plainly in the bright moonlight. He picked it up and carried it back to the barn. It was never used again.

THE END

BANDIT JIM CROW

List of Chapters

Chapter I

Jim Crow Becomes a Pet

ONE day, when Twinkle's father was in the corn-field, he shot his gun at a flock of crows that were busy digging up, with their long bills, the kernels of corn he had planted. But Twinkle's father didn't aim very straight, for the birds screamed at the bang of the gun and quickly flew away--all except one young crow that fluttered its wings, but couldn't rise into the air, and so began to run along the ground in an effort to escape.

The man chased the young crow, and caught it; and then he found that one of the little lead bullets had broken the right wing, although the bird seemed not to be hurt in any other way.

It struggled hard, and tried to peck the hands that held it; but it was too young to hurt any one, so Twinkle's father decided he would carry it home to his little girl.

"Here's a pet for you, Twinkle," he said, as he came into the house. "It can't fly, because its wing is broken; but don't let it get too near your eyes, or it may peck at them. It's very wild and fierce, you know."

Twinkle was delighted with her pet, and at once got her mother to bandage the broken wing, so that it would heal quickly.

The crow had jet black feathers, but there was a pretty purplish and violet gloss, or sheen, on its back and wings, and its eyes were bright and had a knowing look in them. They were hazel-brown in color, and the bird had a queer way of turning his head on one side to look at Twinkle with his right eye, and then twisting it the other side that he might see her with his left eye. She often wondered if she looked the same to both eyes, or if each one made her seem different.

She named her pet "Jim Crow" because papa said that all crows were called Jim, although he never could find out the reason. But the name seemed to fit her pet as well as any, so Twinkle never bothered about the reason.

Having no cage to keep him in, and fearing he would run away, the girl tied a strong cord around one of Jim Crow's legs, and the other end of the cord she fastened to the round of a chair--or to the table-leg--when they were in the house. The crow would run all around, as far as the string would let him go; but he couldn't get away. And when they went out of doors Twinkle held the end of the cord in her hand, as one leads a dog, and Jim Crow would run along in front of her, and then stop and wait. And when she came near he'd run on again, screaming "Caw! Caw!" at the top of his shrill little voice.

He soon came to know he belonged to Twinkle, and would often lie in her lap or perch upon her shoulder. And whenever she entered the room where he was he would say, "Caw--caw!" to her, in pleading tones, until she

picked him up or took some notice of him.

It was wonderful how quickly a bird that had always lived wild and free seemed to become tame and gentle. Twinkle's father said that was because he was so young, and because his broken wing kept him from flying in the air and rejoining his fellows. But Jim Crow wasn't as tame as he seemed, and he had a very wicked and ungrateful disposition, as you will presently learn.

For a few weeks, however, he was as nice a pet as any little girl could wish for. He got into mischief occasionally, and caused mamma some annoyance when he waded into a pan of milk or jumped upon the dinner table and ate up papa's pumpkin pie before Twinkle could stop him. But all pets are more or less trouble, at times, so Jim Crow escaped with a few severe scoldings from mamma, which never seemed to worry him in the least or make him a bit unhappy.

Chapter II

Jim Crow Runs Away

AT last Jim got so tame that Twinkle took the cord off his leg and let him go free, wherever he pleased. So he wandered all over the house and out into the yard, where he chased the ducks and bothered the pigs and made himself generally disliked. He had a way of perching upon the back of old Tom, papa's favorite horse, and chattering away in Tom's ear until the horse plunged and pranced in his stall to get rid of his unwelcome visitor.

Twinkle always kept the bandage on the wounded wing, for she didn't know whether it was well yet, or not, and she thought it was better to be on the safe side. But the truth was, that Jim Crow's wing had healed long ago, and was now as strong as ever; and, as the weeks passed by, and he grew big and fat, a great longing came into his wild heart to fly again--far, far up into the air and away to the lands where there were forests of trees and brooks of running water.

He didn't ever expect to rejoin his family again. They were far enough away by this time. And he didn't care much to associate with other crows. All he wanted was to be free, and do exactly as he pleased, and not have some one cuffing him a dozen times a day because he was doing wrong.

So one morning, before Twinkle was up, or even awake, Jim Crow pecked at

the bandage on his wing until he got the end unfastened, and then it wasn't long before the entire strip of cloth was loosened and fell to the ground.

Now Jim fluttered his feathers, and pruned them with his long bill where they had been pressed together, and presently he knew that the wing which had been injured was exactly as strong and well as the other one. He could fly away whenever he pleased.

The crow had been well fed by Twinkle and her mamma, and was in splendid health. But he was not at all grateful. With the knowledge of his freedom a fierce, cruel joy crept into his heart, and he resumed the wild nature that crows are born with and never lay aside as long as they live.

Having forgotten in an instant that he had ever been tame, and the pet of a gentle little girl, Jim Crow had no thought of saying good-bye to Twinkle. Instead, he decided he would do something that would make these foolish humans remember him for a long time. So he dashed into a group of young chickens that had only been hatched a day or two before, and killed seven of them with his strong, curved claws and his wicked black beak. When the mother hen flew at him he pecked at her eyes; and then, screaming a defiance to all the world, Jim Crow flew into the air and sailed away to a new life in another part of the world.

Chapter III

Jim Crow Finds a New Home

I'LL not try to tell you of all the awful things this bad crow did during the next few days, on his long journey toward the South.

Twinkle almost cried when she found her pet gone; and she really did cry when she saw the poor murdered chickens. But mamma said she was very glad to have Jim Crow run away, and papa scowled angrily and declared he was sorry he had not killed the cruel bird when he shot at it in the corn-field.

In the mean time the runaway crow flew through the country, and when he was hungry he would stop at a farm-house and rob a hen's nest and eat the eggs. It was his knowledge of farm-houses that made him so bold; but the farmers shot at the thieving bird once or twice, and this frightened Jim Crow so badly that he decided to keep away from the farms and find a living in some less dangerous way.

And one day he came to a fine forest, where there were big and little trees of all kinds, with several streams of water running through the woods.

"Here," said Jim Crow, "I will make my home; for surely this is the finest place I am ever likely to find."

There were plenty of birds in this forest, for Jim could hear them singing and twittering everywhere among the trees; and their nests hung suspended from branches, or nestled in a fork made by two limbs, in almost every direction he might look. And the birds were of many kinds, too: robins, thrushes, bullfinches, mocking-birds, wrens, yellowtails and skylarks. Even tiny humming-birds fluttered around the wild flowers that grew in the glades; and in the waters of the brooks waded long-legged herons, while kingfishers sat upon overhanging branches and waited patiently to seize any careless fish that might swim too near them. Jim Crow decided this must be a real paradise for birds, because it was far away from the houses of men. So he made up his mind to get acquainted with the inhabitants of the forest as soon as possible, and let them know who he was, and that he must be treated with proper respect.

In a big fir-tree, whose branches reached nearly to the ground, he saw a large gathering of the birds, who sat chattering and gossiping pleasantly together. So he flew down and joined them.

"Good morning, folks," he said; and his voice sounded to them like a harsh croak, because it had become much deeper in tone since he had grown to his full size.

The birds looked at him curiously, and one or two fluttered their wings in a timid and nervous way; but none of them, little or big, thought best to make any reply.

"Well," said Jim Crow, gruffly, "what's the matter with you fellows? Haven't you got tongues? You seemed to talk fast enough a minute ago."

"Excuse me," replied a bullfinch, in a dignified voice; "we haven't the honor of your acquaintance. You are a stranger."

"My name's Jim Crow," he answered, "and I won't be a stranger long, because I'm going to live here."

They all looked grave at this speech, and a little thrush hopped from one branch to another, and remarked:

"We haven't any crows here at all. If you want to find your own folks you must go to some other place."

"What do I care about my own folks?" asked Jim, with a laugh that made the little thrush shudder. "I prefer to live alone."

"Haven't you a mate?" asked a robin, speaking in a very polite tone.

"No; and I don't want any," said Jim Crow. "I'm going to live all by myself. There's plenty of room in this forest, I guess."

"Certainly," replied the bullfinch. "There is plenty of room for you here if you behave yourself and obey the laws."

"Who's going to make me?" he asked, angrily.

"Any decent person, even if he's a crow, is bound to respect the law," answered the bullfinch, calmly.

Jim Crow was a little ashamed, for he didn't wish to acknowledge he wasn't decent. So he said:

"What are your laws?"

"The same as those in all other forests. You must respect the nests and the property of all other birds, and not interfere with them when they're hunting for food. And you must warn your fellow-birds whenever there is danger, and assist them to protect their young from prowling beasts. If you obey these laws, and do not steal from or interfere with your neighbors, you have a right to a nest in our forest."

"To be quite frank with you, though," said the robin, "we prefer your room to your company."

"I'm going to stay," said the crow. "I guess I'm as good as the rest of you; so you fellows just mind your own business and I'll mind mine."

With these words he left them, and when he had mounted to a position above the trees he saw that one tall, slim pine was higher than all the

rest, and that at its very top was a big deserted nest.

Chapter IV

Jim Crow Becomes a Robber

IT looked like a crow's nest to Jim, so he flew toward the pine tree and lit upon a branch close by. One glance told him that at some time it really must have been the home of birds of his kind, who for some reason had abandoned it long ago. The nest was large and bulky, being made of strong sticks woven together with fine roots and grasses. It was rough outside, but smooth inside, and when Jim Crow had kicked out the dead leaves and twigs that had fallen into it, he decided it was nearly as good as new, and plenty good enough for a solitary crow like him to live in. So with his bill he made a mark on the nest, that every bird might know it belonged to him, and felt that at last he had found a home.

During the next few days he made several attempts to get acquainted with the other birds, but they were cold and distant, though very polite to him; and none of them seemed to care for his society.

No bird ever came near his nest, but he often flew down to the lower trees and perched upon one or another of them, so gradually the birds of the forest got used to seeing him around, and paid very little attention to his actions.

One day Mrs. Wren missed two brown eggs from her nest, and her little heart was nearly broken with grief. It took the mocking bird and the bullfinch a whole afternoon to comfort her, while Mr. Wren hopped around

in nearly as much distress as his wife. No animals had been seen in the forest who would do this evil thing, so no one could imagine who the thief might be.

Such an outrage was almost unknown in this pleasant forest, and it made all the birds nervous and fearful. A few days later a still greater horror came upon them, for the helpless young children of Mrs. Linnet were seized one morning from their nest, while their parents were absent in search of food, and were carried away bodily. Mr. Linnet declared that on his way back to his nest he had seen a big black monster leaving it, but had been too frightened to notice just what the creature looked like. But the lark, who had been up very early that morning, stated that he had seen no one near that part of the forest except Jim Crow, who had flown swiftly to his nest in the tall pine-tree.

This was enough to make all the birds look upon Jim Crow with grave suspicion, and Robin Redbreast called a secret meeting of all the birds to discuss the question and decide what must be done to preserve their nests from the robber. Jim Crow was so much bigger and fiercer than any of the others that none dared accuse him openly or venture to quarrel with him; but they had a good friend living not far away who was not afraid of Jim Crow or any one else, so they finally decided to send for him and ask his assistance.

The starling undertook to be the messenger, and as soon as the meeting was over he flew away upon his errand.

"What were all you folks talking about?" asked the crow, flying down and alighting upon a limb near to those who had not yet left the place of meeting.

"We were talking about you," said the thrush, boldly; "and you wouldn't care at all to know what we said, Mister Jim Crow."

Jim looked a trifle guilty and ashamed at hearing this, but knowing they were all afraid of him he burst out into a rude laugh.

"Caw! caw! caw!" he chuckled hoarsely; "what do I care what you say about me? But don't you get saucy, my pretty thrush, or your friends will miss you some fine morning, and never see you again."

This awful threat made them all silent, for they remembered the fate of poor Mrs. Linnet's children, and very few of the birds now had any doubt but that Jim Crow knew more about the death of those helpless little ones than he cared to tell.

Finding they would not talk with him, the crow flew back to his tree, where he sat sullenly perched upon a branch near his nest. And they were very glad to get rid of him so easily.

Chapter V

Jim Crow Meets Policeman Blue Jay

NEXT morning Jim Crow woke up hungry, and as he sat lazily in his big nest, he remembered that he had seen four pretty brown eggs, speckled with white, in the nest of the oriole that lived at the edge of the forest.

"Those eggs will taste very good for breakfast," he thought. "I'll go at once and get them; and if old Mammy Oriole makes a fuss, I'll eat her, too."

He hopped out of his nest and on to a branch, and the first thing his sharp eye saw was a big and strange bird sitting upon the tree just opposite him and looking steadily in his direction.

Never having lived among other birds until now, the crow did not know what kind of bird this was, but as he faced the new-comer he had a sort of shiver in his heart that warned him to beware an enemy. Indeed, it was none other than the Blue Jay that had appeared so suddenly, and he had arrived that morning because the starling had told him of the thefts that had taken place, and the Blue Jay is well known as the policeman of the forest and a terror to all evil-doers.

In size he was nearly as big as Jim Crow himself, and he had a large crest of feathers on the top of his head that made him look even more

fierce--especially when he ruffled them up. His body was purplish blue color on the back and purplish gray below, and there was a collar of black feathers running all around his neck. But his wings and tail were a beautiful rich blue, as delightful in color as the sky on a fine May morning; so in personal appearance Policeman Blue Jay was much handsomer than Jim Crow. But it was the sharp, stout beak that most alarmed the crow, and had Jim been wiser he would have known that before him was the most deadly foe of his race, and that the greatest pleasure a Blue Jay finds in life is to fight with and punish a crow.

But Jim was not very wise; and so he imagined, after his first terror had passed away, that he could bully this bird as he had the others, and make it fear him.

"Well, what are you doing here?" he called out, in his crossest voice, for he was anxious to get away and rob the oriole's nest.

The Blue Jay gave a scornful, chattering laugh as he answered:

"That's none of your business, Jim Crow."

"Take care!" warned the crow; "you'll be sorry if you don't treat me with proper respect."

The Blue Jay winked solemnly, in a way that would have been very comical to any observer other than the angry crow.

"Don't hurt me--please don't!" he said, fluttering on the branch as if greatly frightened. "My mother would feel dreadful bad if anything happened to me."

"Well, then, behave yourself," returned the crow, strutting proudly along a limb and flopping his broad wings in an impressive manner. For he was foolish enough to think he had made the other afraid.

But no sooner had he taken flight and soared into the air than the Blue Jay darted at him like an arrow from a bow, and before Jim Crow could turn to defend himself the bill of his enemy struck him full in the breast. Then, with a shriek of shrill laughter, the policeman darted away and disappeared in the forest, leaving the crow to whirl around in the air once or twice and then sink slowly down, with some of his own torn feathers floating near him as witnesses to his defeat.

The attack had dazed and astonished him beyond measure; but he found he was not much hurt, after all. Crows are tougher than most birds. Jim managed to reach one of the brooks, where he bathed his breast in the cool water, and soon he felt much refreshed and more like his old self again.

But he decided not to go to the oriole's nest that morning, but to search for grabs and beetles amongst the mosses beneath the oak-trees.

Chapter VI

Jim Crow Fools the Policeman

FROM that time on Policeman Blue Jay made his home in the forest, keeping a sharp eye upon the actions of Jim Crow. And one day he flew away to the southward and returned with Mrs. Blue Jay, who was even more beautiful than her mate. Together they built a fine nest in a tree that stood near to the crow's tall pine, and soon after they had settled down to housekeeping Mrs. Blue Jay began to lay eggs of a pretty brown color mottled with darker brown specks.

Had Jim Crow known what was best for him he would have flown away from this forest and found himself a new home. Within a short flight were many bits of woodland where a crow might get a good living and not be bothered by blue jays. But Jim was obstinate and foolish, and had made up his mind that he never would again be happy until he had been revenged upon his enemy.

He dared no longer rob the nests so boldly as he had before, so he became sly and cunning. He soon found out that the Blue Jay could not fly as high as he could, nor as fast; so, if he kept a sharp lookout for the approach of his foe, he had no trouble in escaping. But if he went near to the nests of the smaller birds, there was the blue policeman standing guard, and ready and anxious to fight at a moment's notice. It was really no place for a robber at all, unless the robber was clever.

One day Jim Crow discovered a chalkpit among the rocks at the north of the forest, just beyond the edge of trees. The chalk was soft and in some places crumbled to a fine powder, so that when he had rolled himself for a few minutes in the dust all his feathers became as white as snow. This fact gave to Jim Crow a bright idea. No longer black, but white as a dove, he flew away to the forest and passed right by Policeman Blue Jay, who only noticed that a big white bird had flown amongst the trees, and did not suspect it was the thieving crow in a clever disguise.

Jim found a robin's nest that was not protected, both the robin and his wife being away in search of food. So he ate up the eggs and kicked the nest to pieces and then flew away again, passing the Blue Jay a second time all unnoticed.

When he reached a brook he washed all the chalk away from his feathers and then returned to his nest as black as ever.

All the birds were angry and dismayed when they found what had happened, but none could imagine who had robbed the robins. Mrs. Robin, who was not easily discouraged, built another nest and laid more eggs in it; but the next day a second nest in the forest was robbed, and then another and another, until the birds complained that Policeman Blue Jay did not protect them at all.

"I can't understand it in the least," said the policeman, "for I have

watched carefully, and I know Jim Crow has never dared to come near to your trees."

"Then some one else is the robber," declared the thrush fussily.

"The only stranger I have noticed around here is a big white bird," replied the Blue Jay, "and white birds never rob nests or eat eggs, as you all know very well."

So they were no nearer the truth than before, and the thefts continued; for each day Jim Crow would make himself white in the chalk-pit, fly into the forest and destroy the precious eggs of some innocent little bird, and afterward wash himself in some far-away brook, and return to his nest chuckling with glee to think he had fooled the Blue Jay so nicely.

But the Blue Jay, although stupid and unsuspecting at first, presently began to get a little wisdom. He remembered that all this trouble had commenced when the strange white bird first arrived in the forest; and although it was doubtless true that white birds never eat eggs and have honest reputations, he decided to watch this stranger and make sure that it was innocent of the frightful crimes that had so aroused the dwellers in the forest.

Chapter VII

Jim Crow is Punished

SO one day Policeman Blue Jay hid himself in some thick bushes until he saw the big white bird fly by, and then he followed quietly after it, flitting from tree to tree and keeping out of sight as much as possible, until at last he saw the white bird alight near a bullfinch's nest and eat up all the eggs it contained.

Then, ruffling his crest angrily, Policeman Blue Jay flew to attack the big white robber, and was astonished to find he could not catch it. For the white bird flew higher into the air than he could, and also flew much faster, so that it soon escaped and passed out of sight.

"It must be a white crow," thought the Blue Jay; "for only a crow can beat me at flying, and some of that race are said to be white, although I have never seen one."

So he called together all the birds, and told them what he had seen, and they all agreed to hide themselves the next day and lie in wait for the thief.

By this time Jim Crow thought himself perfectly safe, and success had made him as bold as he was wicked. Therefore he suspected nothing when, after rolling himself in the chalk, he flew down the next day into the forest to feast upon birds' eggs. He soon came to a pretty nest, and was

just about to rob it, when a chorus of shrill cries arose on every side of him and hundreds, of birds--so many that they quite filled the air--flew straight at the white one, pecking him with their bills and striking him with their wings; for anger had made even the most timid of the little birds fierce, and there were so many of them that they gave each other courage.

Jim Crow tried to escape, but whichever way he might fly his foes clustered all around him, getting in his way so that he could not use his big wings properly. And all the time they were pecking at him and fighting him as hard as they could. Also, the chalk was brushed from his feathers, by degrees, and soon the birds were able to recognize their old enemy the crow, and then, indeed, they became more furious than ever.

Policeman Blue Jay was especially angry at the deception practiced upon him, and if he could have got at the crow just then he would have killed it instantly. But the little birds were all in his way, so he was forced to hold aloof.

Filled with terror and smarting with pain, Jim Crow had only one thought: to get to the shelter of his nest in the pine-tree. In some way he managed to do this, and to sink exhausted into the hollow of his nest. But many of his enemies followed him, and although the thick feathers of his back and wings protected his body, Jim's head and eyes were at the mercy of the sharp bills of the vengeful birds.

When at last they left him, thinking he had been sufficiently punished, Jim Crow was as nearly dead as a bird could be. But crows are tough, and this one was unlucky enough to remain alive. For when his wounds had healed he had become totally blind, and day after day he sat in his nest, helpless and alone, and dared not leave it.

Chapter VIII

Jim Crow Has Time to Repent His Sins

"WHERE are you going, my dear?" asked the Blue Jay of his wife.

"I'm going to carry some grubs to Jim Crow," she answered. "I'll be back in a minute."

"Jim Crow is a robber and a murderer!" said the policeman, harshly.

"I know," she replied, in a sweet voice; "but he is blind."

"Well, fly along," said her husband; "but hurry back again."

And the robin-redbreast and his wife filled a cup-shaped flower with water from the brook, and then carried it in their bills to the pine-tree, without spilling a drop.

"Where are you going?" asked the oriole, as they passed.

"We're just taking some water to Jim Crow," replied Mrs. Robin.

"He's a thief and a scoundrel!" cried the oriole, indignantly.

"That is true." said Mrs. Robin, in a soft, pitiful voice; "but he is blind."

"Let me help you." exclaimed the oriole. "I'll carry this side of the cup, so it can't tip."

So Jim Crow, blind and helpless, sat in his nest day after day and week after week, while the little birds he had so cruelly wronged brought him food and water and cared for him as generously as they could.

And I wonder what his thoughts were--don't you?

PRARIE-DOG TOWN

List of Chapters

Chapter I

The Picnic

ON the great western prairies of Dakota is a little town called Edgeley, because it is on the edge of civilization--a very big word which means some folks have found a better way to live than other folks. The Edgeley people have a good way to live, for there are almost seventeen wooden houses there, and among them is a school-house, a church, a store and a blacksmith-shop. If people walked out their front doors they were upon the little street; if they walked out the back doors they were on the broad prairies. That was why Twinkle, who was a farmer's little girl, lived so near the town that she could easily walk to school.

She was a pretty, rosy-cheeked little thing, with long, fluffy hair, and big round eyes that everybody smiled into when they saw them. It was hard to keep that fluffy hair from getting tangled; so mamma used to tie it in the back with a big, broad ribbon. And Twinkle wore calico slips for school days and gingham dresses when she wanted to "dress up" or look especially nice. And to keep the sun from spotting her face with freckles, she wore sunbonnets made of the same goods as her dresses.

Twinkle's best chum was a little boy called Chubbins, who was the only child of the tired-faced school-teacher. Chubbins was about as old as Twinkle; but he wasn't so tall and slender for his age as she was, being short and rather fat. The hair on his little round head was cut close, and he usually wore a shirt-waist and "knickers," with a wide straw hat

on the back of his head. Chubbins's face was very solemn. He never said many words when grown folks were around, but he could talk fast enough when he and Twinkle were playing together alone.

Well, one Saturday the school had a picnic, and Twinkle and Chubbins both went. On the Dakota prairies there are no shade-trees at all, and very little water except what they they get by boring deep holes in the ground; so you may wonder where the people could possibly have a picnic. But about three miles from the town a little stream of water (which they called a "river," but we would call only a brook) ran slow and muddy across the prairie; and where the road crossed it a flat bridge had been built. If you climbed down the banks of the river you would find a nice shady place under the wooden bridge; and so here it was that the picnics were held.

All the village went to the picnic, and they started bright and early in the morning, with horses and farm-wagons, and baskets full of good things to eat, and soon arrived at the bridge.

There was room enough in its shade for all to be comfortable; so they unhitched the horses and carried the baskets to the river bank, and began to laugh and be as merry as they could.

Twinkle and Chubbins, however, didn't care much for the shade of the bridge. This was a strange place to them, so they decided to explore it and see if it was any different from any other part of the prairie.

Without telling anybody where they were going, they took hold of hands and trotted across the bridge and away into the plains on the other side.

The ground here wasn't flat, but had long rolls to it, like big waves on the ocean, so that as soon as the little girl and boy had climbed over the top of the first wave, or hill, those by the river lost sight of them.

They saw nothing but grass in the first hollow, but there was another hill just beyond, so they kept going, and climbed over that too. And now they found, lying in the second hollow, one of the most curious sights that the western prairies afford.

"What is it?" asked Chubbins, wonderingly.

"Why, it's a Prairie-Dog Town," said Twinkle.

Chapter II

Prarie-Dog Town

LYING in every direction, and quite filling the little hollow, were round mounds of earth, each one having a hole in the center. The mounds were about two feet high and as big around as a wash-tub, and the edges of the holes were pounded hard and smooth by the pattering feet of the little creatures that lived within.

"Isn't it funny!" said Chubbins, staring at the mounds.

"Awful," replied Twinkle, staring too. "Do you know, Chub, there are an'mals living in every single one of those holes?"

"What kind?" asked Chubbins.

"Well, they're something like squirrels, only they aren't squirrels," she explained. "They're prairie-dogs."

"Don't like dogs," said the boy, looking a bit uneasy.

"Oh, they're not dogs at all," said Twinkle; "they're soft and fluffy, and gentle."

"Do they bark?" he asked.

"Yes; but they don't bite."

"How d' you know, Twink?"

"Papa has told me about them, lots of times. He says they're so shy that they run into their holes when anybody's around; but if you keep quiet and watch, they'll stick their heads out in a few minutes."

"Let's watch," said Chubbins.

"All right," she agreed.

Very near to some of the mounds was a raised bank, covered with soft grass; so the children stole softly up to this bank and lay down upon it in such a way that their heads just stuck over the top of it, while their bodies were hidden from the eyes of any of the folks of Prairie-Dog Town.

"Are you comferble, Chub?" asked the little girl.

"Yes."

"Then lie still and don't talk, and keep your eyes open, and perhaps the an'mals will stick their heads up."

"All right," says Chubbins.

So they kept quiet and waited, and it seemed a long time to both the boy and the girl before a soft, furry head popped out of a near-by hole, and two big, gentle brown eyes looked at them curiously.

Chapter III

Mr. Bowko, the Mayor

"DEAR me!" said the prairie-dog, speaking almost in a whisper; "here are some of those queer humans from the village."

"Let me see! Let me see!" cried two shrill little voices, and the wee heads of two small creatures popped out of the hole and fixed their bright eyes upon the heads of Twinkle and Chubbins.

"Go down at once!" said the mother prairie-dog. "Do you want to get hurt, you naughty little things?"

"Oh, they won't get hurt," said another deeper voice, and the children turned their eyes toward a second mound, on top of which sat a plump prairie-dog whose reddish fur was tipped with white on the end of each hair. He seemed to be quite old, or at least well along in years, and he had a wise and thoughtful look on his face.

"They're humans," said the mother.

"True enough; but they're only human children, and wouldn't hurt your little ones for the world," the old one said.

"That's so!" called Twinkle. "All we want, is to get acquainted."

"Why, in that case," replied the old prairie-dog, "you are very welcome in our town, and we're glad to see you."

"Thank you," said Twinkle, gratefully. It didn't occur to her just then that it was wonderful to be talking to the little prairie-dogs just as if they were people. It seemed very natural they should speak with each other and be friendly.

As if attracted by the sound of voices, little heads began to pop out of the other mounds--one here and one there--until the town was alive with the pretty creatures, all squatting near the edges of their holes and eyeing Chubbins and Twinkle with grave and curious looks.

"Let me introduce myself," said the old one that had first proved friendly. "My name is Bowko, and I'm the Mayor and High Chief of Prairie-Dog Town."

"Don't you have a king?" asked Twinkle.

"Not in this town," he answered. "There seems to be no place for kings in this free United States. And a Mayor and High Chief is just as good as a king, any day."

"I think so, too," answered the girl.

"Better!" declared Chubbins.

The Mayor smiled, as if pleased.

"I see you've been properly brought up," he continued; "and now let me introduce to you some of my fellow-citizens. This," pointing with one little paw to the hole where the mother and her two children were sitting, "is Mrs. Puff-Pudgy and her family--Teenty and Weenty. Mr. Puff-Pudgy, I regret to say, was recently chased out of town for saying his prayers backwards."

"How could he?" asked Chubbins, much surprised.

"He was always contrary," answered the Mayor, with a sigh, "and wouldn't do things the same way that others did. His good wife, Mrs. Puff-Pudgy, had to scold him all day long; so we finally made him leave the town, and I don't know where he's gone to."

"Won't he be sorry not to have his little children any more?" asked Twinkle, regretfully.

"I suppose so; but if people are contrary, and won't behave, they must take the consequences. This is Mr. Chuckledorf," continued the Mayor, and a very fat prairie-dog bowed to them most politely; "and here is Mrs. Fuzcum; and Mrs. Chatterby; and Mr. Sneezeley, and Doctor Dosem."

All these folks bowed gravely and politely, and Chubbins and Twinkle

bobbed their heads in return until their necks ached, for it seemed as if the Mayor would never get through introducing the hundreds of prairie-dogs that were squatting around.

"I'll never be able to tell one from the other," whispered the girl; "'cause they all look exactly alike."

"Some of 'em's fatter," observed Chubbins; "but I don't know which."

Chapter IV

Presto Digi, the Magician

"AND now, if you like, we will be pleased to have you visit some of our houses," said Mr. Bowko, the Mayor, in a friendly tone.

"But we can't!" exclaimed Twinkle. "We're too big," and she got up and sat down upon the bank, to show him how big she really was when compared with the prairie-dogs.

"Oh, that doesn't matter in the least," the Mayor replied. "I'll have Presto Digi, our magician, reduce you to our size."

"Can he?" asked Twinkle, doubtfully.

"Our magician can do anything," declared the Mayor. Then he sat up and put both his front paws to his mouth and made a curious sound that was something like a bark and something like a whistle, but not exactly like either one.

Then everybody waited in silence until a queer old prairie-dog slowly put his head out of a big mound near the center of the village.

"Good morning, Mr. Presto Digi," said the Mayor.

"Morning!" answered the magician, blinking his eyes as if he had just

awakened from sleep.

Twinkle nearly laughed at this scrawny, skinny personage; but by good fortune, for she didn't wish to offend him, she kept her face straight and did not even smile.

"We have two guests here, this morning," continued the Mayor, addressing the magician, "who are a little too large to get into our houses. So, as they are invited to stay to luncheon, it would please us all if you would kindly reduce them to fit our underground rooms."

"Is that all you want?" asked Mr. Presto Digi, bobbing his head at the children.

"It seems to me a great deal," answered Twinkle. "I'm afraid you never could do it."

"Wow!" said the magician, in a scornful voice that was almost a bark. "I can do that with one paw. Come here to me, and don't step on any of our mounds while you're so big and clumsy."

So Twinkle and Chubbins got up and walked slowly toward the magician, taking great care where they stepped. Teenty and Weenty were frightened, and ducked their heads with little squeals as the big children passed their mound; but they bobbed up again the next moment, being curious to see what would happen.

When the boy and girl stopped before Mr. Presto Digi's mound, he began waving one of his thin, scraggy paws and at the same time made a gurgling noise that was deep down in his throat. And his eyes rolled and twisted around in a very odd way.

Neither Twinkle nor Chubbins felt any effect from the magic, nor any different from ordinary; but they knew they were growing smaller, because their eyes were getting closer to the magician.

"Is that enough?" asked Mr. Presto, after a while.

"Just a little more, please," replied the Mayor; "I don't want them to bump their heads against the doorways."

So the magician again waved his paw and chuckled and gurgled and blinked, until Twinkle suddenly found she had to look up at him as he squatted on his mound.

"Stop!" she screamed; "if you keep on, we won't be anything at all!"

"You're just about the right size," said the Mayor, looking them over with much pleasure, and when the girl turned around she found Mr. Bowko and Mrs. Puff-Pudgy standing beside her, and she could easily see that Chubbins was no bigger than they, and she was no bigger than Chubbins.

"Kindly follow me," said Mrs. Puff-Pudgy, "for my little darlings are anxious to make your acquaintance, and as I was the first to discover you, you are to be my guests first of all, and afterward go to the Mayor's to luncheon."

Chapter V

The Home of the Puff-Pudgys

SO Twinkle and Chubbins, still holding hands, trotted along to the Puff-Pudgy mound, and it was strange how rough the ground now seemed to their tiny feet. They climbed up the slope of the mound rather clumsily, and when they came to the hole it seemed to them as big as a well. Then they saw that it wasn't a deep hole, but a sort of tunnel leading down hill into the mound, and Twinkle knew if they were careful they were not likely to slip or tumble down.

Mrs. Puff-Pudgy popped into the hole like a flash, for she was used to it, and waited just below the opening to guide them. So, Twinkle slipped down to the floor of the tunnel and Chubbins followed close after her, and then they began to go downward.

"It's a little dark right here," said Mrs. Puff-Pudgy; "but I've ordered the maid to light the candles for you, so you'll see well enough when you're in the rooms."

"Thank you," said Twinkle, walking along the hall and feeling her way by keeping her hand upon the smooth sides of the passage. "I hope you won't go to any trouble, or put on airs, just because we've come to visit you."

"If I do," replied Mrs. Puffy-Pudgy, "it's because I know the right way

to treat company. We've always belonged to the 'four hundred,' you know. Some folks never know what to do, or how to do it, but that isn't the way with the Puff-Pudgys. Hi! you, Teenty and Weenty--get out of here and behave yourselves! You'll soon have a good look at our visitors."

And now they came into a room so comfortable and even splendid that Twinkle's eyes opened wide with amazement.

It was big, and of a round shape, and on the walls were painted very handsome portraits of different prairie-dogs of the Puff-Pudgy family. The furniture was made of white clay, baked hard in the sun and decorated with paints made from blue clay and red clay and yellow clay. This gave it a gorgeous appearance. There was a round table in the middle of the room, and several comfortable chairs and sofas. Around the walls were little brackets with candles in them, lighting the place very pleasantly.

"Sit down, please," said Mrs. Puff-Pudgy. "You'll want to rest a minute before I show you around."

So Twinkle and Chubbins sat upon the pretty clay chairs, and Teenty and Weenty sat opposite them and stared with their mischievous round eyes as hard as they could.

"What nice furniture," exclaimed the girl.

"Yes," replied Mrs. Puff-Pudgy, looking up at the picture of a sad-faced prairie-dog; "Mr. Puff-Pudgy made it all himself. He was very handy at such things. It's a shame he turned out so obstinate."

"Did he build the house too?"

"Why, he dug it out, if that's what you mean. But I advised him how to do it, so I deserve some credit for it myself. Next to the Mayor's, it's the best house in town, which accounts for our high social standing. Weenty! take your paw out of your mouth. You're biting your claws again."

"I'm not!" said Weenty.

"And now," continued Mrs. Puff-Pudgy, "if you are rested, I'll show you through the rest of our house."

So, they got up and followed her, and she led the children through an archway into the dining-room. Here was a cupboard full of the cunningest little dishes Twinkle had ever seen. They were all made of clay, baked hard in the sun, and were of graceful shapes, and nearly as smooth and perfect as our own dishes.

Chapter VI

Teenty and Weenty

ALL around the sides of the dining-room were pockets, or bins, in the wall; and these were full of those things the prairie-dogs are most fond of eating. Clover-seeds filled one bin, and sweet roots another; dried mulberry leaves--that must have come from a long distance--were in another bin, and even kernels of yellow field corn were heaped in one place. The Puff-Pudgys were surely in no danger of starving for some time to come.

"Teenty! Put back that grain of wheat," commanded the mother, in a severe voice.

Instead of obeying, Teenty put the wheat in his mouth and ate it as quickly as possible.

"The little dears are so restless," Mrs. Puff-Pudgy said to Twinkle, "that it's hard to manage them."

"They don't behave," remarked Chubbins, staring hard at the children.

"No, they have a share of their father's obstinate nature," replied Mrs. Puff-Pudgy. "Excuse me a minute and I'll cuff them; It'll do them good."

But before their mother could reach them, the children found trouble of

their own. Teenty sprang at Weenty and began to fight, because his brother had pinched him, and Weenty fought back with all his might and main. They scratched with their claws and bit with their teeth, and rolled over and over upon the floor, bumping into the wall and upsetting the chairs, and snarling and growling all the while like two puppies.

Mrs. Puff-Pudgy sat down and watched them, but did not interfere.

"Won't they hurt themselves?" asked Twinkle, anxiously.

"Perhaps so," said the mother; "but if they do, it will punish them for being so naughty. I always let them fight it out, because they are so sore for a day or two afterward that they have to keep quiet, and then I get a little rest."

Weenty set up a great howling, just then, and Teenty drew away from his defeated brother and looked at him closely. The fur on both of them was badly mussed up, and Weenty had a long scratch on his nose, that must have hurt him, or he wouldn't have howled so. Teenty's left eye was closed tight, but if it hurt him he bore the pain in silence.

Mrs. Puff-Pudgy now pushed them both into a little room and shut them up, saying they must stay there until bedtime; and then she led Twinkle and Chubbins into the kitchen and showed them a pool of clear water, in a big clay basin, that had been caught during the last rain and saved for drinking purposes. The children drank of it, and found it cool and

refreshing.

Then they saw the bedrooms, and learned that the beds of prairie-dogs were nothing more than round hollows made in heaps of clay. These animals always curl themselves up when they sleep, and the round hollows just fitted their bodies; so, no doubt, they found them very comfortable.

There were several bedrooms, for the Puff-Pudgy house was really very large. It was also very cool and pleasant, being all underground and not a bit damp.

After they had admired everything in a way that made Mrs. Puff-Pudgy very proud and happy, their hostess took one of the lighted candles from a bracket and said she would now escort them to the house of the Honorable Mr. Bowko, the Mayor.

Chapter VII

The Mayor Gives a Luncheon

"DON'T we have to go upstairs and out of doors?" asked Twinkle.

"Oh, no," replied the prairie-dog, "we have halls connecting all the different houses of importance. Just follow me, and you can't get lost."

They might easily have been lost without their guide, the little girl thought, after they had gone through several winding passages. They turned this way and that, in quite a bewildering manner, and there were so many underground tunnels going in every direction that it was a wonder Mrs. Puff-Pudgy knew which way to go.

"You ought to have sign-posts," said Chubbins, who had once been in a city.

"Why, as for that, every one in the town knows which way to go," answered their guide; "and it isn't often we have visitors. Last week a gray owl stopped with us for a couple of days, and we had a fine ball in her honor. But you are the first humans that have ever been entertained in our town, so it's quite an event with us." A few minutes later she said: "Here we are, at the Mayor's house," and as they passed under a broad archway she blew out her candle, because the Mayor's house was so brilliantly lighted.

"Welcome!" said Mr. Bowko, greeting the children with polite bows. "You are just in time, for luncheon is about ready and my guests are waiting for you."

He led them at once into a big dining-room that was so magnificently painted with colored clays that the walls were as bright as a June rainbow.

"How pretty!" cried Twinkle, clapping her hands together in delight.

"I'm glad you like it," said the Mayor, much pleased. "Some people, who are lacking in good taste, think it's a little overdone, but a Mayor's house should be gorgeous, I think, so as to be a credit to the community. My grandfather, who designed and painted this house, was a very fine artist. But luncheon is ready, so pray be seated."

They sat down on little clay chairs that were placed at the round table. The Mayor sat on one side of Twinkle and Mrs. Puff-Pudgy on the other, and Chubbins was between the skinny old magician and Mr. Sneezeley. Also, in other chairs sat Dr. Dosem, and Mrs. Chatterby, and Mrs. Fuzcum, and several others. It was a large company, indeed, which showed that the Mayor considered this a very important occasion.

They were waited upon by several sleek prairie-dog maids in white aprons and white caps, who looked neat and respectable, and were very graceful in their motions.

Neither Twinkle nor Chubbins was very hungry, but they were curious to know what kind of food the prairie-dogs ate, so they watched carefully when the different dishes were passed around. Only grains and vegetables were used, for prairie-dogs do not eat meat. There was a milk-weed soup at first; and then yellow corn, boiled and sliced thin. Afterward they had a salad of thistle leaves, and some bread made of barley. The dessert was a dish of the sweet, dark honey made by prairie-bees, and some cakes flavored with sweet and spicy roots that only prairie-dogs know how to find.

The children tasted of several dishes, just to show their politeness; but they couldn't eat much. Chubbins spent most of his time watching Mr. Presto Digi, who ate up everything that was near him and seemed to be as hungry after the luncheon as he had been before.

Mrs. Puff-Pudgy talked so much about the social standing and dignity of the Puff-Pudgys that she couldn't find time to eat much, although she asked for the recipe of the milk-weed soup. But most of the others present paid strict attention to the meal and ate with very good appetites.

Chapter VIII

On Top of the Earth Again

AFTERWARD they all went into the big drawing-room, where Mrs. Fuzcum sang a song for them in a very shrill voice, and Mr. Sneezeley and Mrs. Chatterby danced a graceful minuet that was much admired by all present.

"We ought to be going home," said Twinkle, after this entertainment was over. "I'm afraid our folks will worry about us."

"We regret to part with you," replied the Mayor; "but, if you really think you ought to go, we will not be so impolite as to urge you to stay."

"You'll find we have excellent manners," added Mrs. Puff-Pudgy.

"I want to get big again," said Chubbins.

"Very well; please step this way," said the Mayor.

So they all followed him through a long passage until they began to go upward, as if climbing a hill. And then a gleam of daylight showed just ahead of them, and a few more steps brought them to the hole in the middle of the mound.

The Mayor and Mrs. Puff-Pudgy jumped up first, and then they helped

Twinkle and Chubbins to scramble out. The strong sunlight made them blink their eyes for a time, but when they were able to look around they found one or more heads of prairie-dogs sticking from every mound.

"Now, Mr. Presto Digi," said the Mayor, when all the party were standing on the ground, "please enlarge our friends to their natural sizes again."

"That is very easy," said the magician, with a sigh. "I really wish, Mr. Mayor, that you would find something for me to do that is difficult."

"I will, some time," promised the Mayor. "Just now, this is all I can require of you."

So the magician waved his paw and gurgled, much in the same way he had done before, and Twinkle and Chubbins began to grow, and swell out until they were as large as ever, and the prairie-dogs again seemed very small beside them.

"Good-bye," said the little girl, "and thank you all, very much, for your kindness to us."

"Good-bye!" answered a chorus of small voices, and then all the prairie-dogs popped into their holes and quickly disappeared.

Twinkle and Chubbins found they were sitting on the green bank again, at

the edge of Prairie-Dog Town.

"Do you think we've been asleep, Chub?" asked the girl.

"'Course not," replied Chubbins, with a big yawn. "It's easy 'nough to know that, Twink, 'cause I'm sleepy now!"

THE END

PRINCE MUD-TURTLE

List of Chapters

Chapter I

Twinkle Captures the Turtle

ONE hot summer day Twinkle went down into the meadow to where the brook ran tinkling over its stones or rushed and whirled around the curves of the banks or floated lazily through the more wide and shallow parts. It wasn't much of a brook, to tell the facts, for there were many places where an active child could leap across it. But it was the only brook for miles around, and to Twinkle it was a never-ending source of delight. Nothing amused or refreshed the little girl more than to go wading on the pebbly bottom and let the little waves wash around her slim ankles.

There was one place, just below the pasture lot, where it was deeper; and here there were real fishes swimming about, such as "horned aces" and "chubs" and "shiners"; and once in a while you could catch a mud-turtle under the edges of the flat stones or in hollows beneath the banks. The deep part was not very big, being merely a pool, but Twinkle never waded in it, because the water would come quite up to her waist, and then she would be sure to get her skirts wet, which would mean a good scolding from mamma.

To-day she climbed the fence in the lane, just where the rickety wooden bridge crossed the brook, and at once sat down upon the grassy bank and took off her shoes and stockings. Then, wearing her sun-bonnet to shield her face from the sun, she stepped softly into the brook and stood

watching the cool water rush by her legs.

It was very nice and pleasant; but Twinkle never could stand still for very long, so she began to wade slowly down the stream, keeping in the middle of the brook, and being able to see through the clear water all the best places to put her feet.

Pretty soon she had to duck her head to pass under the fence that separated the meadow from the pasture lot; but she got through all right, and then kept on down the stream, until she came close to the deep pool. She couldn't wade through this, as I have explained; so she got on dry land and crept on her hands and knees up to the edge of the bank, so as not to scare the fishes, if any were swimming in the pool.

By good luck there were several fishes in the pool to-day, and they didn't seem to notice that Twinkle was looking at them, so quiet had she been. One little fellow shone like silver when the sunshine caught his glossy sides, and the little girl watched him wiggling here and there with much delight. There was also a big, mud-colored fish that lay a long time upon the bottom without moving anything except his fins and the tip of his tail, and Twinkle also discovered a group of several small fishes not over an inch long, that always swam together in a bunch, as if they belonged to one family.

The girl watched these little creatures long and earnestly. The pool was all of the world these simple fishes would ever know. They were born

here, and would die here, without ever getting away from the place, or even knowing there was a much bigger world outside of it.

After a time the child noticed that the water had become a little muddy near the edge of the bank where she lay, and as it slowly grew clear again she saw a beautiful turtle lying just under her head and against the side of the bank. It was a little bigger around than a silver dollar, and instead of its shell being of a dull brown color, like that of all other mud-turtles she had seen, this one's back was streaked with brilliant patches of yellow and red.

"I must get that lovely turtle!" thought Twinkle; and as the water was shallow where it lay she suddenly plunged in her hand, grabbed the turtle, and flung it out of the water on to the bank, where it fell upon its back, wiggling its four fat legs desperately in an attempt to turn over.

Chapter II

Twinkle Discovers the Turtle Can Talk

AT this sudden commotion in their water, the fishes darted away and disappeared in a flash. But Twinkle didn't mind that, for all her interest was now centered in the struggling turtle.

She knelt upon the grass and bent over to watch it, and just then she thought she heard a small voice say:

"It's no use; I can't do it!" and then the turtle drew its head and legs between the shells and remained still.

"Good gracious!" said Twinkle, much astonished. Then, addressing the turtle, she asked:

"Did you say anything, a minute ago?"

There was no reply. The turtle lay as quiet as if it were dead. Twinkle thought she must have been mistaken; so she picked up the turtle and held it in the palm of her hand while she got into the water again and waded slowly back to where she had left her shoes and stockings.

When she got home she put the mud-turtle in a tub which her papa had made by sawing a barrel in two. Then she put a little water into the tub and blocked it up by putting a brick under one side, so that the turtle

could either stay in the water or crawl up the inclined bottom of the tub to where it was dry, whichever he pleased. She did this because mamma said that turtles sometimes liked to stay in the water and sometimes on land, and Twinkle's turtle could now take his choice. He couldn't climb up the steep sides of the tub and so get away, and the little girl thoughtfully placed crumbs of bread and fine bits of meat, where the turtle could get them whenever he felt hungry.

After that, Twinkle often sat for hours watching the turtle, which would crawl around the bottom of the tub, and swim in the little pool of water and eat the food placed before him in an eager and amusing way.

At times she took him in her hand and examined him closely, and then the mud-turtle would put out its little head and look at her with its bright eyes as curiously as the girl looked at him.

She had owned her turtle just a week, when she came to the tub one afternoon and held him in her hand, intending to feed her pet some scraps of meat she had brought with her. But as soon as the turtle put out its head it said to her, in a small but distinct voice:

"Good morning, Twinkle."

She was so surprised that the meat dropped from her hand, and she nearly dropped the turtle, too. But she managed to control her astonishment, and asked, in a voice that trembled a little:

"Can you talk?"

"To be sure," replied the turtle; "but only on every seventh day--which of course is every Saturday. On other days I cannot talk at all."

"Then I really must have heard you speak when I caught you; didn't I?"

"I believe you did. I was so startled at being captured that I spoke before I thought, which is a bad habit to get into. But afterward I resolved not to answer when you questioned me, for I didn't know you then, and feared it would be unwise to trust you with my secret. Even now I must ask you not to tell any one that you have a turtle that knows how to talk."

Chapter III

The Turtle Tells of the Corrugated Giant

"WHY, it's wonderful!" said Twinkle, who had listened eagerly to the turtle's speech.

"It would be wonderful, indeed, if I were but a simple turtle," was the reply.

"But aren't you a turtle?"

"Of course, so far as my outward appearance goes, I'm a common little mud-turtle," it answered; "and I think you will agree with me that it was rather clever in the Corrugated Giant to transform me into such a creature."

"What's a Corrulated Giant?" asked Twinkle, with breathless interest.

"The Corrugated Giant is a monster that is full of deep wrinkles, because he has no bones inside him to hold his flesh up properly," said the turtle. "I hated this giant, who is both wicked and cruel, I assure you; and this giant hated me in return. So, when one day I tried to destroy him, the monster transformed me into the helpless little being you see before you."

"But who were you before you were transformed?" asked the girl.

"A fairy prince named Melga, the seventh son of the fairy Queen Flutterlight, who rules all the fairies in the north part of this land."

"And how long have you been a turtle?"

"Fourteen years," replied the creature, with a deep sigh. "At least, I think it is fourteen years; but of course when one is swimming around in brooks and grubbing in the mud for food, one is apt to lose all track of time."

"I should think so, indeed," said Twinkle. "But, according to that, you're older than I am."

"Much older," declared the turtle. "I had lived about four hundred years before the Corrugated Giant turned me into a turtle."

"Was your head gray?" she asked; "and did you have white whiskers?"

"No, indeed!" said the turtle. "Fairies are always young and beautiful in appearance, no matter how many years they have lived. And, as they never die, they're bound to get pretty old sometimes, as a matter of course."

"Of course!" agreed Twinkle. "Mama has told me about the fairies. But must you always be a mud-turtle?"

"That will depend on whether you are willing to help me or not," was the answer.

"Why, it sounds just like a fairy tale in a book!" cried the little girl.

"Yes," replied the turtle, "these things have been happening ever since there were fairies, and you might expect some of our adventures would get into books. But are you willing to help me? That is the important thing just now."

"I'll do anything I can," said Twinkle.

"Then," said the turtle, "I may expect to get back to my own form again in a reasonably short time. But you must be brave, and not shrink from such a little thing as danger."

That made Twinkle look solemn.

"Of course I don't want to get hurt," she said. "My mama and papa would go distructed if anything happened to me."

"Something will happen, sure," declared the turtle; "but nothing that happens will hurt you in the least if you do exactly as I tell you."

"I won't have to fight that Carbolated Giant, will I?" Twinkle asked doubtfully.

"He isn't carbolated; he's corrugated. No, you won't have to fight at all. When the proper time comes I'll do the fighting myself. But you may have to come with me to the Black Mountains, in order to set me free."

"Is it far?" she asked.

"Yes; but it won't take us long to go there," answered the turtle. "Now, I'll tell you what to do and, if you follow my advice no one will ever know you've been mixed up with fairies and strange adventures."

"And Collerated Giants," she added.

"Corrugated," he corrected. "It is too late, this Saturday, to start upon our journey, so we must wait another week. But next Saturday morning do you come to me bright and early, as soon as you've had breakfast, and then I'll tell you what to do."

"All right," said Twinkle; "I won't forget."

"In the mean time, do give me a little clean water now and then. I'm a mud-turtle, sure enough; but I'm also a fairy prince, and I must say I prefer clean water."

"I'll attend to it," promised the girl.

"Now put me down and run away," continued the turtle. "It will take me all the week to think over my plans, and decide exactly what we are to do."

Chapter IV

Prince Turtle Remembers His Magic

TWINKLE was as nervous as she could be during all the week that followed this strange conversation with Prince Turtle. Every day, as soon as school was out, she would run to the tub to see if the turtle was still safe--for she worried lest it should run away or disappear in some strange manner. And during school hours it was such hard work to keep her mind on her lessons that teacher scolded her more than once.

The fairy imprisoned in the turtle's form had nothing to say to her during this week, because he would not be allowed to talk again until Saturday; so the most that Twinkle could do to show her interest in the Prince was to give him the choicest food she could get and supply him with plenty of fresh, clean water.

At last the day of her adventure arrived, and as soon as she could get away from the breakfast table Twinkle ran out to the tub. There was her fairy turtle, safe as could be, and as she leaned over the tub he put out his head and called "Good morning!" in his small, shrill voice.

"Good morning," she replied.

"Are you still willing and ready to assist me?" asked the turtle.

"To be sure," said Twinkle.

"Then take me in your hand," said he.

So she picked him out of the tub and placed him upon her hand. And the turtle said:

"Now pay strict attention, and do exactly as I tell you, and all will be well. In the first place, we want to get to the Black Mountains; so you must repeat after me these words: 'Uller; aller; iller; oller!'"

"Uller; aller; iller; oller!" said Twinkle.

The next minute it seemed as though a gale of wind had struck her. It blew so strongly against her eyes that she could not see; so she covered her face with one arm while with the other hand she held fast to the turtle. Her skirts fluttered so wildly that it seemed as if they would tear themselves from her body, and her sun-bonnet, not being properly fastened, was gone in a minute.

But it didn't last long, fortunately. After a few moments the wind stopped, and she found she could breathe again. Then she looked around her and drew another long breath, for instead of being in the back yard at home she stood on the side of a beautiful mountain, and spread before her were the loveliest green valleys she had ever beheld.

"Well, we're here," said the turtle, in a voice that sounded as if he

were well pleased. "I thought I hadn't forgotten my fairy wisdom."

"Where are we?" asked the child.

"In the Black Mountains, of course," was the reply. "We've come a good way, but it didn't take us long to arrive, did it?"

"No, indeed," she answered, still gazing down the mountain side at the flower-strewn grass-land of the valleys.

"This," said the turtle, sticking his little head out of the shell as far as it would go, "is the realm of the fairies, where I used to dwell. Those beautiful palaces you see yonder are inhabited by Queen Flutterlight and my people, and that grim castle at your left, standing on the side of the mountain, is where the Corrugated Giant lives."

"I don't see anything!" exclaimed Twinkle; "that is, nothing but the valleys and the flowers and grass."

"True; I had forgotten that these things are invisible to your mortal eyes. But it is necessary that you should see all clearly, if you are going to rescue me from this terrible form and restore me to my natural shape. Now, put me down upon the ground, for I must search for a particular plant whose leaf has a magic virtue."

So Twinkle put him down, and the little turtle began running around here

and there, looking carefully at the different plants that grew amongst the grass on the mountain side. But his legs were so short and his shell-covered body so heavy, that he couldn't move very fast; so presently he called for her to pick him up again, and hold him close to the ground while she walked among the plants. She did this, and after what seemed a long search the turtle suddenly cried out:

"Stop! Here it is! This is the plant I want."

"Which--this?" asked the girl, touching a broad green leaf.

"Yes. Pluck the leaf from the stem and rub your eyelids with it."

She obeyed, and having rubbed her lids well with the leaf, she again opened her eyes and beheld the real Fairyland.

Chapter V

Twinkle Promises to Be Brave

IN the center of the valley was a great cluster of palaces that appeared to be built of crystal and silver and mother-of-pearl, and golden filigree-work. So dainty and beautiful were these fairy dwellings that Twinkle had no doubt for an instant but that she gazed upon fairyland. She could almost see, from the far mountain upon which she stood, the airy, gauze-winged forms of the fairies themselves, floating gently amidst their pretty palaces and moving gracefully along the jeweled streets.

But another sight now attracted her attention--a big, gray, ugly looking castle standing frowning on the mountain side at her left. It overlooked the lovely city of palaces like a dark cloud on the edge of a blue sky, and the girl could not help giving a shudder as she saw it. All around the castle was a high fence of iron spikes.

"That fence is enchanted," said the turtle, as if he knew she was looking at it; "and no fairy can pass it, because the power to prevent it has been given to the giant. But a mortal has never been forbidden to pass the fence, for no one ever supposed that a mortal would come here or be able to see it. That is the reason I have brought you to this place, and the reason why you alone are able to help me."

"Gracious!" cried Twinkle; "must I meet the Carbonated Giant?"

"He's corrugated," said the turtle.

"I know he's something dreadful," she wailed, "because he's so hard to pronounce."

"You will surely have to meet him," declared the turtle; "but do not fear, I will protect you from all harm."

"Well, a Corralated Giant's a mighty big person," said the girl, doubtfully, "and a mud-turtle isn't much of a fighter. I guess I'll go home."

"That is impossible," declared the turtle. "You are too far from home ever to get back without my help, so you may as well be good and obedient."

"What must I do?" she asked.

"We will wait until it is nearly noon, when the giant will put his pot on the fire to boil his dinner. We can tell the right time by watching the smoke come out of his chimney. Then you must march straight up to the castle and into the kitchen where the giant is at work, and throw me quickly into the boiling kettle. That is all that you will be required to do."

"I never could do it!" declared Twinkle.

"Why not?"

"You'd be scalded to death, and then I'd be a murderer!"

"Nonsense!" said the turtle, peevishly. "I know what I'm doing, and if you obey me I'll not be scalded but an instant; for then I'll resume my own form. Remember that I'm a fairy, and fairies can't be killed so easily as you seem to think."

"Won't it hurt you?" she inquired.

"Only for a moment; but the reward will be so great that I won't mind an instant's pain. Will you do this favor for me?"

"I'll try," replied Twinkle, gravely.

"Then I will be very grateful," said Prince Turtle, "and agree to afterward send you home safe and sound, and as quickly as you came."

Chapter VI

Twinkle Meets the Corrugated Giant

"AND now, while we are waiting," continued the fairy turtle, "I want to find a certain flower that has wonderful powers to protect mortals from any injury. Not that I fear I shall be unable to take care of you, but it's just as well to be on the safe side."

"Better," said Twinkle, earnestly. "Where's the flower?"

"We'll hunt for it," replied the turtle.

So holding him in her hand in such a way that he could see all the flowers that grew, the girl began wandering over the mountain side, and everything was so beautiful around her that she would have been quite contented and happy had not the gray castle been before her to remind her constantly that she must face the terrible giant who lived within it.

They found the flower at last--a pretty pink blossom that looked like a double daisy, but must have been something else, because a daisy has no magic power that I ever heard of. And when it was found, the turtle told her to pick the flower and pin it fast to the front of her dress; which she did.

By that time the smoke began to roll out of the giant's chimney in big

black clouds; so the fairy turtle said the giant must be getting dinner, and the pot would surely be boiling by the time they got to the castle.

Twinkle couldn't help being a little afraid to approach the giant's stronghold, but she tried to be brave, and so stepped along briskly until she came to the fence of iron spikes.

"You must squeeze through between two of the spikes," said the turtle.

She didn't think it could possibly be done; but to her surprise it was quite easy, and she managed to squeeze through the fence without even tearing her dress. Then she walked up a great driveway, which was lined with white skulls of many sheep which the giant had eaten, to the front door of the castle, which stood ajar.

"Go in," said the turtle; so she boldly entered and passed down a high arched hall toward a room in the rear.

"This is the kitchen," said the turtle, "Enter quickly, go straight to the kettle, and throw me into the boiling water."

Twinkle entered quickly enough, but then she stopped short with a cry of amazement; for there before her stood the ugly giant, blowing the fire with an immense pair of bellows.

Chapter VII

Prince Mud-Turtle Becomes Prince Melga

THE giant was as big around as ten men, and as tall as two; but, having no bones, he seemed pushed together, so that his skin wrinkled up like the sides of an accordeon, or a photograph camera, even his face being so wrinkled that his nose stuck out between two folds of flesh and his eyes from between two more. In one end of the kitchen was the great fireplace, above which hung an iron kettle with a big iron spoon in it. And at the other end was a table set for dinner.

As the giant was standing between the kettle and Twinkle, she could not do as the turtle had commanded, and throw him into the pot. So she hesitated, wondering how to obey the fairy. Just then the giant happened to turn around and see her.

"By the whiskers of Gammarog--who was one of my ancestors that was killed by Jack the Giant-Killer!" he cried, but in a very mild voice for so big a person. "Whom have we here?"

"I'm Twinkle," said the girl, drawing a long breath.

"Then, to pay you for your folly in entering my castle, I will make you my slave, and some day, if you're not good, I'll feed you to my seventeen-headed dog. I never eat little girls myself. I prefer mutton."

Twinkle's heart almost stopped beating when she heard these awful words. All she could do was to stand still and look imploringly at the giant. But she held the fairy mud-turtle clasped tight in her hand, so that the monster couldn't see it.

"Well, what are you staring at?" shouted the Corrugated Giant, angrily. "Blow up that fire this instant, slave!"

He stood aside for her to pass, and Twinkle ran at once to the fireplace. The pot was now before her, and within easy reach, and it was bubbling hot.

In an instant she reached out her hand and tossed the turtle into the boiling water; and then, with a cry of horror at her own action, she drew back to see what would happen.

The turtle was a fairy, all right; and he had known very well the best way to break the enchantment his enemy had put upon him. For no sooner had Twinkle tossed him into the boiling pot than a great hissing was heard, and a cloud of steam hid for an instant the fireplace. Then, as it cleared away, a handsome young prince stepped forward, fully armed; for the turtle was again a fairy, and the kettle had changed into a strong shield which he bore upon his left arm, and the iron spoon was now a long and glittering sword.

Chapter VIII

Twinkle Receives a Medal

THE giant gave a roar like that of a baby bull when he saw Prince Melga standing before him, and in a twinkling he had caught up a big club that stood near and began whirling it over his head. But before it could descend, the prince ran at him and stuck his sword as far as it would go into the corrugated body of the giant. Again the monster roared and tried to fight; but the sword had hurt him badly, and the prince pushed it into the evil creature again and again, until the end came, and his corrugated enemy rolled over upon the floor quite dead.

Then the fairy turned to Twinkle, and kneeling before her he kissed her hand.

"Thank you very much," he said, in a sweet voice, "for setting me free. You are a very brave little girl!"

"I'm not so sure about that," she answered. "I was dreadfully scared!"

Now he took her hand and led her from the castle; and she didn't have to squeeze through the fence again, because the fairy had only to utter a magic word and the gate flew open. And when they turned to look back, the castle of the Corrugated Giant, with all that it had contained, had vanished from sight, never to be seen again by either mortal or fairy eyes. For that was sure to happen whenever the giant was dead.

The prince led Twinkle into the valley where the fairy palaces stood, and told all his people, when they crowded around to welcome him, how kind the little girl had been to him, and how her courage had enabled him to defeat the giant and to regain his proper form. And all the fairies praised Twinkle with kind words, and the lovely Queen Flutterlight, who seemed altogether too young to be the mother of the handsome prince, gave to the child a golden medal with a tiny mud-turtle engraved upon one side of it.

Then, after a fine feast had been prepared, and the little girl had eaten all she could of the fairy sweetmeats, she told Prince Melga she would like to go home again.

"Very well," said he. "Don't forget me, Twinkle, although we probably shall never meet again. I'll send you home quite as safely as you came; but as your eyes have been rubbed with the magic maita-leaf, you will doubtless always see many strange sights that are hidden from other mortals."

"I don't mind," said Twinkle.

Then she bade good-bye to the fairies, and the prince spoke a magic word. There was another rush of wind, and when it had passed Twinkle found herself once more in the back yard at home.

As she sat upon the grass rubbing her eyes and wondering at the strange adventure that had befallen her, mamma came out upon the back porch and said:

"Your turtle has crawled out of the tub and run away."

"Yes," said Twinkle, "I know; and I'm glad of it!"

But she kept her secret to herself.

THE END

TWINKLE'S ENCHANTMENT

List of Chapters

Chapter I

Twinkle Enters the Big Gulch

ONE afternoon Twinkle decided to go into the big gulch and pick some blueberries for papa's supper. She had on her blue gingham dress and her blue sun-bonnet, and there were stout shoes upon her feet. So she took her tin pail and started out.

"Be back in time for supper," called mamma from the kitchen porch.

"'Course," said Twinkle, as she trotted away. "I'm not hungry now, but I'll be hungry 'nough when supper-time comes. 'Course I'll be back!"

The side of the gulch was but a little way from the house. It was like a big ditch, only the sides were not too steep to crawl down; and in the middle of the gulch were rolling hills and deep gullies, all covered with wild bushes and vines and a few flowering plants--very rare in this part of the country.

Twinkle hadn't lived very long in this section of Dakota, for her father had just bought the new farm that lay beside the gulch. So the big ditch was a great delight to her, and she loved to wander through it and pick the berries and flowers that never grew on the plains above.

To-day she crept carefully down the path back of the house and soon reached the bottom of the gulch. Then she began to search for the

berries; but all were gone in the places where she had picked them before; so she found she must go further along.

She sat down to rest for a time, and by and by she happened to look up at the other side and saw a big cluster of bushes hanging full of ripe blueberries--just about half way up the opposite bank.

She had never gone so far before, but if she wanted the berries for papa's supper she knew she must climb up the slope and get them; so she rose to her feet and began to walk in that direction. It was all new to the little girl, and seemed to her like a beautiful fairyland; but she had no idea that the gulch was enchanted. Soon a beetle crawled across her path, and as she stopped to let it go by, she heard it say:

"Look out for the line of enchantment! You'll soon cross it, if you don't watch out."

"What line of enchantment?" asked Twinkle.

"It's almost under your nose," replied the little creature.

"I don't see anything at all," she said, after looking closely.

"Of course you don't," said the beetle. "It isn't a mark, you know, that any one can see with their eyes; but it's a line of enchantment, just the same, and whoever steps over it is sure to see strange things and

have strange adventures."

"I don't mind that," said Twinkle.

"Well, I don't mind if you don't," returned the beetle, and by that time he had crept across the path and disappeared underneath a big rock.

Twinkle went on, without being at all afraid. If the beetle spoke truly, and there really was an invisible line that divided the common, real world from an enchanted country, she was very eager to cross it, as any little girl might well be. And then it occurred to her that she must have crossed the enchanted line before she met the beetle, for otherwise she wouldn't have understood his language, or known what he was talking about. Children don't talk with beetles in the real world, as Twinkle knew very well, and she was walking along soberly, thinking this over, when suddenly a voice cried out to her:

"Be careful!"

Chapter II

The Rolling Stone

OF course Twinkle stopped then, and looked around to see who had spoken. But no one was anywhere in sight. So she started on again.

"Look out, or you'll step on me!" cried the voice a second time.

She looked at her feet very carefully. There was nothing near them but a big round stone that was about the size of her head, and a prickly thistle that she never would step on if she could possibly help it.

"Who's talking?" she asked.

"Why, I'm talking," answered the voice. "Who do you suppose it is?"

"I don't know," said Twinkle. "I just can't see anybody at all."

"Then you must be blind," said the voice. "I'm the Rolling Stone, and I'm about two inches from your left toes."

"The Rolling Stone!"

"That's it. That's me. I'm the Rolling Stone that gathers no moss."

"You can't be," said Twinkle, sitting down in the path and looking

carefully at the stone.

"Why not?"

"Because you don't roll," she said. "You're a stone, of course; I can see that, all right. But you're not rolling."

"How silly!" replied the Stone. "I don't have to roll every minute to be a Rolling Stone, do I?"

"Of course you do," answered Twinkle. "If you don't roll you're just a common, still stone."

"Well, I declare!" exclaimed the Stone; "you don't seem to understand anything. You're a Talking Girl, are you not?"

"To be sure I am," said Twinkle.

"But you don't talk every minute, do you?"

"Mama says I do," she answered.

"But you don't. You're sometimes quiet, aren't you?"

"'Course I am."

"That's the way with me. Sometimes I roll, and so I'm called the Rolling Stone. Sometimes you talk, and so you're the Talking Girl."

"No; I'm Twinkle," she said.

"That doesn't sound like a name," remarked the Stone.

"It's what papa calls me, anyway," explained the girl. Then, thinking she had lingered long enough, she added:

"I'm going up the hill to pick those berries. Since you can roll, suppose you go with me."

"What! Up hill?" exclaimed the Stone.

"Why not?" asked Twinkle.

"Who ever heard of a stone rolling up hill? It's unnatural!"

"Any stone can roll down hill," said the child. "If you can't roll up hill, you're no better than a common cobble-stone."

"Oh, I can roll up hill if I have to," declared the Stone, peevishly. "But it's hard work, and nearly breaks my back."

"I can't see that you have any back," said Twinkle.

"Why, I'm all back," replied the Stone. "When your back aches, it's only a part of you. But when my back aches, it's all of me except the middle."

"The middle ache is the worst of all," said Twinkle, solemnly. "Well, if you don't want to go," she added, jumping up, "I'll say good-bye."

"Anything to be sociable," said the Stone, sighing deeply. "I'll go along and keep you company. But it's lots easier to roll down than it is to roll up, I assure you!"

"Why, you're a reg'lar grumbler!" exclaimed Twinkle.

"That's because I lead a hard life," returned the Stone, dismally. "But don't let us quarrel; it is so seldom I get a chance to talk with one of my own standing in society."

"You can't have any standing, without feet," declared Twinkle, shaking her head at the Stone.

"One can have understanding, at least," was the answer; "and understanding is the best standing any person can have."

"Perhaps that is true," said the child, thoughtfully; "but I'm glad I have legs, just the same."

Chapter III

Some Queer Acquaintances

"WAIT a minute!" implored a small voice, and the girl noticed a yellow butterfly that had just settled down upon the stone. "Aren't you the child from the farm?"

"To be sure," she answered, much amused to hear the butterfly speak.

"Then can you tell me if your mother expects to churn to-day," said the pretty creature, slowly folding and unfolding its dainty wings.

"Why do you want to know?"

"If she churns to-day, I'll fly over to the house and try to steal some butter. But if your mother isn't going to churn, I'll fly down into the gulch and rob a bees' nest I know of."

"Why do you rob and steal?" inquired Twinkle.

"It's the only way I can get my living," said the butterfly. "Nobody ever gives me anything, and so I have to take what I want."

"Do you like butter?"

"Of course I do! That's why we are called butterflies, you know. I

prefer butter to anything else, and I have heard that in some countries the children always leave a little dish of butter on the window-sill, so that we may help ourselves whenever we are hungry. I wish I had been born in such a country."

"Mother won't churn until Saturday," said Twinkle. "I know, 'cause I've got to help her, and I just hate butter-making!"

"Then I won't go to the farm to-day," replied the butterfly. "Good-bye, little girl. If you think of it, leave a dish of butter around where I can get at it."

"All right," said Twinkle, and the butterfly waved its wings and fluttered through the air into the gulch below.

Then the girl started up the hill and the Stone rolled slowly beside her, groaning and grumbling because the ground was so rough.

Presently she noticed running across the path a tiny Book, not much bigger than a postage-stamp. It had two slender legs, like those of a bumble-bee, and upon these it ran so fast that all the leaves fluttered wildly, the covers being half open.

"What's that?" asked Twinkle, looking after the book in surprise.

"That is a little Learning," answered the Stone. "Look out for it, for

they say it's a dangerous thing."

"It's gone already," said Twinkle.

"Let it go. Nobody wants it, that I know of. Just help me over this bump, will you?"

So she rolled the Stone over the little hillock, and just as she did so her attention was attracted by a curious noise that sounded like "Pop! pop! pop!"

"What's that?" she inquired, hesitating to advance.

"Only a weasel," answered the Stone. "Stand still a minute, and you'll see him. Whenever he thinks he's alone, and there's no one to hear, 'pop' goes the weasel."

Sure enough, a little animal soon crossed their path, making the funny noise at every step. But as soon as he saw that Twinkle was staring at him he stopped popping and rushed into a bunch of tall grass and hid himself.

And now they were almost at the berry-bushes, and Twinkle trotted so fast that the Rolling Stone had hard work to keep up with her. But when she got to the bushes she found a flock of strange birds sitting upon them and eating up the berries as fast as they could. The birds were not

much bigger than robins, and were covered with a soft, velvety skin instead of with feathers, and they had merry black eyes and long, slender beaks curving downward from their noses, which gave to their faces a saucy expression. The lack of usual feathers might not have surprised Twinkle so much had she not noticed upon the tail of each bird one single, solitary feather of great length, which was certainly a remarkable thing.

"I know what they are," she said, nodding her head wisely; "they're birds of a feather."

At this the birds burst into a chorus of laughter, and one of them said:

"Perhaps you think that's why we flock together."

"Well, isn't that the reason?" she asked.

"Not a bit of it," declared the bird. "The reason we flock together is because we're too proud to mix with common birds, who have feathers all over them."

"I should think you'd be ashamed, 'cause you're so naked," she returned.

"The fact is, Twinkle," said another bird, as he pecked at a blueberry and swallowed it, "the common things in this world don't amount to much. There are millions of birds on earth, but only a few of us that have but

one feather. In my opinion, if you had but one hair upon your head you'd be much prettier."

"I'd be more 'strord'nary, I'm sure," said Twinkle, using the biggest word she could think of.

"There's no accounting for tastes," remarked the Rolling Stone, which had just arrived at Twinkle's side after a hard roll up the path. "For my part, I haven't either hair or feathers, and I'm glad of it."

The birds laughed again, at this, and as they had eaten all the berries they cared for, they now flew into the air and disappeared.

Chapter IV

The Dancing Bear

"REALLY," said Twinkle, as she began picking the berries and putting them into her pail, "I didn't know so many things could talk."

"It's because you are in the part of the gulch that's enchanted," answered the Rolling Stone. "When you get home again, you'll think this is all a dream."

"I wonder if it isn't!" she suddenly cried, stopping to look around, and then feeling of herself carefully. "It's usually the way in all the fairy stories that papa reads to me. I don't remember going to sleep any time; but perhaps I did, after all."

"Don't let it worry you," said the Stone, making a queer noise that Twinkle thought was meant for a laugh. "If you wake up, you'll be sorry you didn't dream longer; and if you find you haven't been asleep, this will be a wonderful adventure."

"That's true enough," the girl answered, and again began filling her pail with the berries. "When I tell mama all this, she won't believe a word of it. And papa will laugh and pinch my cheek, and say I'm like Alice in Wonderland, or Dorothy in the Land of Oz."

Just then she noticed something big and black coming around the bushes

from the other side, and her heart beat a good deal faster when she saw before her a great bear standing upon his rear legs beside her.

He had a little red cap on his head that was kept in place by a band of rubber elastic. His eyes were small, but round and sparkling, and there seemed to be a smile upon his face, for his white teeth showed in two long rows.

"Don't be afraid," called out the Rolling Stone; "it's only the Dancing Bear."

"Why should the child be afraid?" asked the bear, speaking in a low, soft tone that reminded her of the purring of a kitten. "No one ever heard of a Dancing Bear hurting anybody. We're about the most harmless things in the world."

"Are you really a Dancing Bear?" asked Twinkle, curiously.

"I am, my dear," he replied, bowing low and then folding his arms proudly as he leaned against a big rock that was near. "I wish there was some one here who could tell you what a fine dancer I am. It wouldn't be modest for me to praise myself, you know."

"I s'pose not," said Twinkle. "But if you're a Dancing Bear, why don't you dance?"

"There it is again!" cried the Rolling Stone. "This girl Twinkle wants to keep everybody moving. She wouldn't believe, at first, that I was a Rolling Stone, because I was lying quiet just then. And now she won't believe you're a Dancing Bear, because you don't eternally keep dancing."

"Well, there's some sense in that, after all," declared the Bear. "I'm only a Dancing Bear while I'm dancing, to speak the exact truth; and you're only a Rolling Stone while you're rolling."

"I beg to disagree with you," returned the Stone, in a cold voice.

"Well, don't let us quarrel, on any account," said the Bear. "I invite you both to come to my cave and see me dance. Then Twinkle will be sure I'm a Dancing Bear."

"I haven't filled my pail yet," said the little girl, "and I've got to get enough berries for papa's supper."

"I'll help you," replied the Bear, politely; and at once he began to pick berries and to put them into Twinkle's pail. His big paws looked very clumsy and awkward, but it was astonishing how many blueberries the bear could pick with them. Twinkle had hard work to keep up with him, and almost before she realized how fast they had worked, the little pail was full and overflowing with fine, plump berries.

"And now," said the Bear, "I will show you the way to my cave."

He took her hand in his soft paw and began leading her along the side of the steep hill, while the Stone rolled busily along just behind them. But they had not gone far before Twinkle's foot slipped, and in trying to save herself from falling she pushed hard against the Stone and tumbled it from the pathway.

"Now you've done it!" growled the Stone, excitedly, as it whirled around. "Here I go, for I've lost my balance and I can't help myself!"

Even as he spoke the big round stone was flying down the side of the gulch, bumping against the hillocks and bits of rock--sometimes leaping into the air and then clinging close to the ground, but going faster and faster every minute.

"Dear me," said Twinkle, looking after it; "I'm afraid the Rolling Stone will get hurt."

"No danger of that," replied the Bear. "It's as hard as a rock, and not a thing in the gulch could hurt it a bit. But our friend would have to roll a long time to get back here again, so we won't wait. Come along, my dear."

He held out his paw again, and Twinkle took it with one of her hands while she carried the pail with the other, and so managed to get over

the rough ground very easily.

Chapter V

The Cave of the Waterfall

BEFORE long they came to the entrance to the cave, and as it looked dark and gloomy from without Twinkle drew back and said she guessed she wouldn't go in.

"But it's quite light inside," said the bear, "and there's a pretty waterfall there, too. Don't be afraid, Twinkle; I'll take good care of you."

So the girl plucked up courage and permitted him to lead her into the cave; and then she was glad she had come, instead of being a 'fraid-cat. For the place was big and roomy, and there were many cracks in the roof, that admitted plenty of light and air. Around the side walls were several pairs of big ears, which seemed to have been carved out of the rock. These astonished the little girl.

"What are the ears for?" she asked.

"Don't walls have ears where you live?" returned the Bear, as if surprised.

"I've heard they do," she answered, "but I've never seen any before."

At the back of the cave was a little, tinkling waterfall, that splashed

into a pool beneath with a sound that was very like music. Near this was a square slab of rock, a little raised above the level of the floor.

"Kindly take a seat, my dear," said the bear, "and I'll try to amuse you, and at the same time prove that I can dance."

So to the music of the waterfall the bear began dancing. He climbed upon the flat stone, made a graceful bow to Twinkle, and then balanced himself first upon one foot and then upon the other, and swung slowly around in a circle, and then back again.

"How do you like it?" he asked.

"I don't care much for it," said Twinkle. "I believe I could do better myself."

"But you are not a bear," he answered. "Girls ought to dance better than bears, you know. But not every bear can dance. If I had a hand-organ to make the music, instead of this waterfall, I might do better."

"Then I wish you had one," said the girl.

The Bear began dancing again, and this time he moved more rapidly and shuffled his feet in quite a funny manner. He almost fell off the slab once or twice, so anxious was he to prove he could dance. And once he tripped over his own foot, which made Twinkle laugh.

Just as he was finishing his dance a strange voice cried out:

"For bear!" and a green monkey sprang into the cave and threw a big rock at the performer. It knocked the bear off the slab, and he fell into the pool of water at the foot of the waterfall, and was dripping wet when he scrambled out again.

The Dancing Bear gave a big growl and ran as fast as he could after the monkey, finally chasing him out of the cave. Twinkle picked up her pail of berries and followed, and when she got into the sunshine again on the side of the hill she saw the monkey and the bear hugging each other tight, and growling and chattering in a way that showed they were angry with each other and not on pleasant terms.

"You will throw rocks at me, will you?" shouted the Bear.

"I will if I get the chance," replied the monkey. "Wasn't that a fine, straight shot? and didn't you go plump into the water, though?" and he shrieked with laughter.

Just then they fell over in a heap, and began rolling down the hill.

"Let go!" yelled the Bear.

"Let go, yourself!" screamed the monkey.

But neither of them did let go, so they rolled faster and faster down the hill, and the last that Twinkle saw of them they were bounding among the bushes at the very bottom of the big gulch.

Chapter VI

Prince Nimble

"GOOD gracious!" said the little girl, looking around her; "I'm as good as lost in this strange place, and I don't know in what direction to go to get home again."

So she sat down on the grass and tried to think which way she had come, and which way she ought to return in order to get across the gulch to the farm-house.

"If the Rolling Stone was here, he might tell me," she said aloud. "But I'm all alone."

"Oh, no, you're not," piped a small, sweet voice. "I'm here, and I know much more than the Rolling Stone does."

Twinkle looked this way and then that, very carefully, in order to see who had spoken, and at last she discovered a pretty grasshopper perched upon a long blade of grass nearby.

"Did I hear you speak?" she inquired.

"Yes," replied the grasshopper. "I'm Prince Nimble, the hoppiest hopper in Hoptown."

"Where is that?" asked the child.

"Why, Hoptown is near the bottom of the gulch, in that thick patch of grass you see yonder. It's on your way home, so I'd be pleased to have you visit it."

"Won't I step on some of you?" she asked.

"Not if you are careful," replied Prince Nimble. "Grasshoppers don't often get stepped on. We're pretty active, you know."

"All right," said Twinkle. "I'd like to see a grasshopper village."

"Then follow me, and I'll guide you," said Nimble, and at once he leaped from the blade of grass and landed at least six feet away.

Twinkle got up and followed, keeping her eye on the pretty Prince, who leaped so fast that she had to trot to keep up with him. Nimble would wait on some clump of grass or bit of rock until the girl came up, and then away he'd go again.

"How far is it?" Twinkle once asked him.

"About a mile and a half," was the answer; "we'll soon be there, for you are as good as a mile, and I'm good for the half-mile."

"How do you figure that out?" asked Twinkle.

"Why, I've always heard that a miss is as good as a mile, and you're a miss, are you not?"

"Not yet," she answered; "I'm only a little girl. But papa will be sure to miss me if I don't get home to supper."

Chapter VII

The Grasshoppers' Hop

TWINKLE now began to fear she wouldn't get home to supper, for the sun started to sink into the big prairie, and in the golden glow it left behind, the girl beheld most beautiful palaces and castles suspended in the air just above the hollow in which she stood. Splendid banners floated from the peaks and spires of these magnificent buildings, and all the windows seemed of silver and all the roofs of gold.

"What city is that?" she asked, standing still, in amazement.

"That isn't any city," replied the grasshopper. "They are only Castles in the Air--very pretty to look at, but out of everybody's reach. Come along, my little friend; we're almost at Hoptown."

So Twinkle walked on, and before long Prince Nimble paused on the stem of a hollyhock and said:

"Now, sit down carefully, right where you are, and you will be able to watch my people. It is the night of our regular hop--if you listen you can hear the orchestra tuning up."

She sat down, as he bade her, and tried to listen, but only heard a low whirr and rattle like the noise of a beetle's wings.

"That's the drummer," said Prince Nimble. "He is very clever, indeed."

"Good gracious! It's night," said Twinkle, with a start. "I ought to be at home and in bed this very minute!"

"Never mind," said the grasshopper; "you can sleep any time, but this is our annual ball, and it's a great privilege to witness it."

Suddenly the grass all around them became brilliantly lighted, as if from a thousand tiny electric lamps. Twinkle looked closely, and saw that a vast number of fireflies had formed a circle around them, and were illuminating the scene of the ball.

In the center of the circle were assembled hundreds of grasshoppers, of all sizes. The small ones were of a delicate green color, and the middle-sized ones of a deeper green, while the biggest ones were a yellowish brown.

But the members of the orchestra interested Twinkle more than anything else. They were seated upon the broad top of a big toadstool at one side, and the musicians were all beetles and big-bugs. A fat water-beetle played a bass fiddle as big and fat as himself, and two pretty ladybugs played the violins. A scarab, brightly colored with scarlet and black, tooted upon a long horn, and a sand-beetle made the sound of a drum with its wings. Then there was a coleopto, making shrill sounds like a flute--only of course Twinkle didn't know the

names of these beetles, and thought they were all just "bugs."

When the orchestra began to play, the music was more pleasing than you might suppose; anyway, the grasshoppers liked it, for they commenced at once to dance.

The antics of the grasshoppers made Twinkle laugh more than once, for the way they danced was to hop around in a circle, and jump over each other, and then a lady grasshopper and a gentleman grasshopper would take hold of hands and stand on their long rear legs and swing partners until it made the girl dizzy just to watch them.

Sometimes two of them would leap at once, and knock against each other in the air, and then go tumbling to the ground, where the other dancers tripped over them. She saw Prince Nimble dancing away with the others, and his partner was a lovely green grasshopper with sparkling black eyes and wings that were like velvet. They didn't bump into as many of the others as some did, and Twinkle thought they danced very gracefully indeed.

And now, while the merriment was at its height, and waiter-grasshoppers were passing around refreshments that looked like grass seeds covered with thick molasses, a big cat suddenly jumped into the circle.

At once all the lights went out, for the fire-flies fled in every direction; but in the darkness Twinkle thought she could still hear the

drone of the big bass fiddle and the flute-like trill of the ladybugs.

The next thing Twinkle knew, some one was shaking her shoulder.

* * *

"Wake up, dear," said her mother's voice. "It's nearly supper-time, and papa's waiting for you. And I see you haven't picked a single blueberry."

"Why, I picked 'em, all right," replied Twinkle, sitting up and first rubbing her eyes and then looking gravely at her empty tin pail. "They were all in the pail a few minutes ago. I wonder whatever became of them!"

THE END

SUGAR-LOAF MOUNTAIN

List of Chapters

Chapter I

The Golden Key

TWINKLE had come to visit her old friend Chubbins, whose mother was now teaching school in a little town at the foot of the Ozark Mountains, in Arkansas. Twinkle's own home was in Dakota, so the mountains that now towered around her made her open her eyes in wonder.

Near by--so near, in fact, that she thought she might almost reach out her arm and touch it--was Sugar-Loaf Mountain, round and high and big. And a little to the south was Backbone Mountain, and still farther along a peak called Crystal Mountain.

The very next day after her arrival Twinkle asked Chubbins to take her to see the mountain; and so the boy, who was about her own age, got his mother to fill for them a basket of good things to eat, and away they started, hand in hand, to explore the mountain-side.

It was farther to Sugar-Loaf Mountain than Twinkle had thought, and by the time they reached the foot of the great mound, the rocky sides of which were covered with bushes and small trees, they were both rather tired by the walk.

"Let's eat something," suggested Chubbins.

"I'm willing," said Twinkle.

So they climbed up a little way, to where some big rocks lay flat upon the mountain, and sat themselves down upon a slab of rock while they rested and ate some of the sandwiches and cake.

"Why do they call it 'Sugar-Loaf'?" asked the girl, looking far up to the top of the mountain.

"I don't know," replied Chubbins.

"It's a queer name," said Twinkle, thoughtfully.

"That's so," agreed the boy. "They might as well have called it 'gingerbread' or 'rock-salt,' or 'tea-biscuit.' They call mountains funny names, don't they?"

"Seems as if they do," said Twinkle.

They had been sitting upon the edge of one big flat rock, with their feet resting against another that was almost as large. These rocks appeared to have been there for ages,--as if some big giants in olden days had tossed them carelessly down and then gone away and left them. Yet as the children pushed their feet against this one, the heavy mass suddenly began to tremble and then slide downward.

"Look out!" cried the girl, frightened to see the slab of rock move.

"We'll fall and get hurt!"

But they clung to the rock upon which they sat and met with no harm whatever. Nor did the big slab of stone below them move very far from its original position.

It merely slid downward a few feet, and when they looked at the place where it had been they discovered what seemed to be a small iron door, built into the solid stone underneath, and now shown to their view by the moving of the upper rock.

"Why, it's a door!" exclaimed Twinkle.

Chubbins got down upon his knees and examined the door carefully. There was a ring in it that seemed to be a handle, and he caught hold of it and pulled as hard as he could. But it wouldn't move.

"It's locked, Twink," he said.

"What do you'spose is under it?" she asked.

"Maybe it's a treasure!" answered Chubbins, his eyes big with interest.

"Well, Chub, we can't get it, anyway," said the practical Twinkle; "so let's climb the mountain."

She got down from her seat and approached the door, and as she did so she struck a small bit of rock with her foot and sent it tumbling down the hill. Then she stopped short with a cry of wonder, for under the stone she had kicked away was a little hole in the rock, and within this they saw a small golden key.

"Perhaps," she said, eagerly, as she stooped to pick up the key, "this will unlock the iron door."

"Let's try it!" cried the boy.

Chapter II

Through the Tunnel

THEY examined the door carefully, and at last found near the center of it a small hole. Twinkle put the golden key into this and found that it fitted exactly. But it took all of Chubbins's strength to turn the key in the rusty lock. Yet finally it did turn, and they heard the noise of bolts shooting back, so they both took hold of the ring, and pulling hard together, managed to raise the iron door on its hinges.

All they saw was a dark tunnel, with stone steps leading down into the mountain.

"No treasure here," said the little girl.

"P'raps it's farther in," replied Chubbins. "Shall we go down?"

"Won't it be dangerous?" she asked.

"Don't know," said Chubbins, honestly. "It's been years and years since this door was opened. You can see for yourself. That rock must have covered it up a long time."

"There must be something inside," she declared, "or there wouldn't be any door, or any steps."

"That's so," answered Chubbins. "I'll go down and see. You wait."

"No; I'll go too," said Twinkle. "I'd be just as scared waiting outside as I would be in. And I 'in bigger than you are, Chub."

"You're taller, but you're only a month older, Twink; so don't you put on airs. And I'm the strongest."

"We'll both go," she decided; "and then if we find the treasure we'll divide."

"All right; come on!"

Forgetting their basket, which they left upon the rocks, they crept through the little doorway and down the steps. There were only seven steps in all, and then came a narrow but level tunnel that led straight into the mountain-side. It was dark a few feet from the door, but the children resolved to go on. Taking hold of hands, so as not to get separated, and feeling the sides of the passage to guide them, they walked a long way into the black tunnel.

Twinkle was just about to say they'd better go back, when the passage suddenly turned, and far ahead of them shone a faint light. This encouraged them, and they went on faster, hoping they would soon come to the treasure.

"Keep it up, Twink," said the boy. "It's no use going home yet."

"We must be almost in the middle of Sugar-Loaf Mountain," she answered.

"Oh, no; it's an awful big mountain," said he. "But we've come quite a way, haven't we?"

"I guess mama'd scold, if she knew where we are."

"Mamas," said Chubbins, "shouldn't know everything, 'cause they'd only worry. And if we don't get hurt I can't see as there's any harm done."

"But we mustn't be naughty, Chub."

"The only thing that's naughty," he replied, "is doing what you're told not to do. And no one told us not to go into the middle of Sugar-Loaf Mountain."

Just then they came to another curve in their path, and saw a bright light ahead. It looked to the children just like daylight; so they ran along and soon passed through a low arch and came out into--

Well! the scene before them was so strange that it nearly took away their breath, and they stood perfectly still and stared as hard as their big eyes could possibly stare.

Chapter III

Sugaf-Loaf City

SUGAR-LOAF Mountain was hollow inside, for the children stood facing a great dome that rose so far above their heads that it seemed almost as high as the sky. And underneath this dome lay spread out the loveliest city imaginable. There were streets of houses, and buildings with round domes, and slender, delicate spires reaching far up into the air, and turrets beautifully ornamented with carvings. And all these were white as the driven snow and sparkling in every part like millions of diamonds--for all were built of pure loaf-sugar! The pavements of the streets were also loaf-sugar, and the trees and bushes and flowers were likewise sugar; but these last were not all white, because all sugar is not white, and they showed many bright colors of red sugar and blue sugar and yellow, purple and green sugar, all contrasting most prettily with the sparkling white buildings and the great white dome overhead.

This alone might well astonish the eyes of children from the outside world, but it was by no means all that Twinkle and Chubbins beheld in that first curious look at Sugar-Loaf City. For the city was inhabited by many people--men, women and children--who walked along the streets just as briskly as we do; only all were made of sugar. There were several different kinds of these sugar people. Some, who strutted proudly along, were evidently of pure loaf-sugar, and these were of a most respectable appearance. Others seemed to be made of a light brown sugar, and were more humble in their manners and seemed to hurry along

as if they had business to attend to. Then there were some of sugar so dark in color that Twinkle suspected it was maple-sugar, and these folks seemed of less account than any of the others, being servants, drivers of carriages, and beggars and idlers.

Carts and carriages moved along the streets, and were mostly made of brown sugar. The horses that drew them were either pressed sugar or maple-sugar. In fact, everything that existed in this wonderful city was made of some kind of sugar.

Where the light, which made all this place so bright and beautiful, came from, Twinkle could not imagine. There was no sun, nor were there any electric lights that could be seen; but it was fully as bright as day and everything showed with great plainness.

While the children, who stood just inside the archway through which they had entered, were looking at the wonders of Sugar-Loaf City, a file of sugar soldiers suddenly came around a corner at a swift trot.

"Halt!" cried the Captain. He wore a red sugar jacket and a red sugar cap, and the soldiers were dressed in the same manner as their Captain, but without the officer's yellow sugar shoulder-straps. At the command, the sugar soldiers came to a stop, and all pointed their sugar muskets at Twinkle and Chubbins.

"Surrender!" said the Captain to them. "Surrender, or I'll--I'll--"

He hesitated.

"What will you do?" said Twinkle.

"I don't know what, but something very dreadful," replied the Captain. "But of course you'll surrender."

"I suppose we'll have to," answered the girl.

"That's right. I'll just take you to the king, and let him decide what to do," he added pleasantly.

So the soldiers surrounded the two children, shouldered arms, and marched away down the street, Twinkle and Chubbins walking slowly, so the candy folks would not have to run; for the tallest soldiers were only as high as their shoulders.

"This is a great event," remarked the Captain, as he walked beside them with as much dignity as he could muster. "It was really good of you to come and be arrested, for I haven't had any excitement in a long time. The people here are such good sugar that they seldom do anything wrong."

Chapter IV

To the King's Palace

"WHAT, allow me to ask, is your grade of sugar?" inquired the Captain, with much politeness. "You do not seem to be the best loaf, but I suppose that of course you are solid."

"Solid what?" asked Chubbins.

"Solid sugar," replied the Captain.

"We're not sugar at all," explained Twinkle. "We're just meat."

"Meat! And what is that?"

"Haven't you any meat in your city?"

"No," he replied, shaking his head. "Well, I can't explain exactly what meat is," she said; "but it isn't sugar, anyway."

At this the Captain looked solemn.

"It isn't any of my business, after all," he told them. "The king must decide about you, for that's his business. But since you are not made of sugar you must excuse me if I decline to converse with you any longer. It is beneath my dignity."

"Oh, that's all right," said Twinkle.

"Where we came from," said Chubbins, "meat costs more a pound than sugar does; so I guess we're just as good as you are."

But the Captain made no reply to this statement, and before long they stopped in front of a big sugar building, while a crowd of sugar people quickly gathered.

"Stand back!" cried the Captain, and the sugar soldiers formed a row between the children and the sugar citizens, and kept the crowd from getting too near. Then the Captain led Twinkle and Chubbins through a high sugar gateway and up a broad sugar walk to the entrance of the building.

"Must be the king's castle," said Chubbins.

"The king's palace," corrected the Captain, stiffly.

"What's the difference?" asked Twinkle.

But the sugar officer did not care to explain.

Brown sugar servants in plum-colored sugar coats stood at the entrance to the palace, and their eyes stuck out like lozenges from their sugar

faces when they saw the strangers the Captain was escorting.

But every one bowed low, and stood aside for them to pass, and they walked through beautiful halls and reception rooms where the sugar was cut into panels and scrolls and carved to represent all kinds of fruit and flowers.

"Isn't it sweet!" said Twinkle.

"Sure it is," answered Chubbins.

And now they were ushered into a magnificent room, where a stout little sugar man was sitting near the window playing upon a fiddle, while a group of sugar men and women stood before him in respectful attitudes and listened to the music.

Twinkle knew at once that the fiddler was the king, because he had a sugar crown upon his head. His Majesty was made of very white and sparkling cut loaf-sugar, and his clothing was formed of the same pure material. The only color about him was the pink sugar in his cheeks and the brown sugar in his eyes. His fiddle was also of white sugar, and the strings were of spun sugar and had an excellent tone.

When the king saw the strange children enter the room he jumped up and exclaimed:

"Bless my beets! What have we here?"

"Mortals, Most Granular and Solidified Majesty," answered the Captain, bowing so low that his forehead touched the floor. "They came in by the ancient tunnel."

"Well, I declare," said the king. "I thought that tunnel had been stopped up for good and all."

"The stone above the door slipped," said Twinkle, "so we came down to see what we could find."

"You must never do it again," said his Majesty, sternly. "This is our own kingdom, a peaceful and retired nation of extra refined and substantial citizens, and we don't wish to mix with mortals, or any other folks."

"We'll go back, pretty soon," said Twinkle.

"Now, that's very nice of you," declared the king, "and I appreciate your kindness. Are you extra refined, my dear?"

"I hope so," said the girl, a little doubtfully.

"Then there's no harm in our being friendly while you're here. And as you've promised to go back to your own world soon, I have no objection

to showing you around the town. You'd like to see how we live, wouldn't you?"

"Very much," said Twinkle.

"Order my chariot, Captain Brittle," said his Majesty; and the Captain again made one of his lowly bows and strutted from the room to execute the command.

The king now introduced Chubbins and Twinkle to the sugar ladies and gentlemen who were present, and all of them treated the children very respectfully.

Chapter V

Princess Sakareen

"SAY, play us a tune," said Chubbins to the king. His Majesty didn't seem to like being addressed so bluntly, but he was very fond of playing the fiddle, so he graciously obeyed the request and played a pretty and pathetic ballad upon the spun sugar strings. Then, begging to be excused for a few minutes while the chariot was being made ready, the king left them and went into another room.

This gave the children a chance to talk freely with the sugar people, and Chubbins said to one man, who looked very smooth on the outside:

"I s'pose you're one of the big men of this place, aren't you?"

The man looked frightened for a moment, and then took the boy's arm and led him into a corner of the room.

"You ask me an embarrassing question," he whispered, looking around to make sure that no one overheard. "Although I pose as one of the nobility, I am, as a matter of fact, a great fraud!"

"How's that?" asked Chubbins.

"Have you noticed how smooth I am?" inquired the sugar man.

"Yes," replied the boy. "Why is it?"

"Why, I'm frosted, that's the reason. No one here suspects it, and I'm considered very respectable; but the truth is, I'm just coated over with frosting, and not solid sugar at all."

"What's inside you?" asked Chubbins.

"That," answered the man, "I do not know. I've never dared to find out. For if I broke my frosting to see what I'm stuffed with, every one else would see too, and I would be disgraced and ruined."

"Perhaps you're cake," suggested the boy.

"Perhaps so," answered the man, sadly. "Please keep my secret, for only those who are solid loaf-sugar are of any account in this country, and at present I am received in the best society, as you see."

"Oh, I won't tell," said Chubbins.

During this time Twinkle had been talking with a sugar lady, in another part of the room. This lady seemed to be of the purest loaf-sugar, for she sparkled most beautifully, and Twinkle thought she was quite the prettiest person to look at that she had yet seen.

"Are you related to the king?" she asked.

"No, indeed," answered the sugar lady, "although I'm considered one of the very highest quality. But I'll tell you a secret, my dear." She took Twinkle's hand and led her across to a sugar sofa, where they both sat down.

"No one," resumed the sugar lady, "has ever suspected the truth; but I'm only a sham, and it worries me dreadfully."

"I don't understand what you mean," said Twinkle. "Your sugar seems as pure and sparkling as that of the king."

"Things are not always what they seem," sighed the sugar lady. "What you see of me, on the outside, is all right; but the fact is, I'm hollow!"

"Dear me!" exclaimed Twinkle, in surprise. "How do you know it?"

"I can feel it," answered the lady, impressively. "If you weighed me you'd find I'm not as heavy as the solid ones, and Tor a long time I Ve realized the bitter truth that I'm hollow. It makes me very unhappy, but I don't dare confide my secret to anyone here, because it would disgrace me forever."

"I wouldn't worry," said the child. "They'll never know the difference."

"Not unless I should break," replied the sugar lady. "But if that

happened, all the world could see that I'm hollow, and instead of being welcomed in good society I'd become an outcast. It's even more respectable to be made of brown sugar, than to be hollow; don't you think so?"

"I'm a stranger here," said Twinkle; "so I can't judge. But if I were you, I wouldn't worry unless I got broke; and you may be wrong, after all, and as sound as a brick!"

Chapter VI

The Royal Chariot

JUST then the king came back to the room and said:

"The chariot is at the door; and, as there are three seats, I'll take Lord Cloy and Princess Sakareen with us."

So the children followed the king to the door of the palace, where stood a beautiful white and yellow sugar chariot, drawn by six handsome sugar horses with spun sugar tails and manes, and driven by a brown sugar coachman in a blue sugar livery.

The king got in first, and the others followed. Then the children discovered that Lord Cloy was the frosted man and Princess Sakareen was the sugar lady who had told Twinkle that she was hollow.

There was quite a crowd of sugar people at the gates to watch the departure of the royal party, and a few soldiers and policemen were also present to keep order. Twinkle sat beside the king, and Chubbins sat on the same seat with the Princess Sakareen, while Lord Cloy was obliged to sit with the coachman. When all were ready the driver cracked a sugar whip (but didn't break it), and away the chariot dashed over a road paved with blocks of cut loaf-sugar.

The air was cool and pleasant, but there was a sweet smell to the breeze

that was peculiar to this strange country. Sugar birds flew here and there, singing sweet songs, and a few sugar dogs ran out to bark at the king's chariot as it whirled along.

"Haven't you any automobiles in your country?" asked the girl.

"No," answered the king. "Anything that requires heat to make it go is avoided here, because heat would melt us and ruin our bodies in a few minutes. Automobiles would be dangerous in Sugar-Loaf City."

"They're dangerous enough anywhere," she said. "What do you feed to your horses?"

"They eat a fine quality of barley-sugar that grows in our fields," answered the king. "You'll see it presently, for we will drive out to my country villa, which is near the edge of the dome, opposite to where you came in."

First, however, they rode all about the city, and the king pointed out the public buildings, and the theaters, and the churches, and a number of small but pretty public parks. And there was a high tower near the center that rose half-way to the dome, it was so tall.

"Aren't you afraid the roof will cave in some time, and ruin your city?" Twinkle asked the king.

"Oh, no," he answered. "We never think of such a thing. Isn't there a dome over the place where you live?"

"Yes," said Twinkle; "but it's the sky."

"Do you ever fear it will cave in?" inquired the king.

"No, indeed!" she replied, with a laugh at the idea.

"Well, it's the same way with us," returned his Majesty. "Domes are the strongest things in all the world."

Chapter VII

Twinkle Gets Thirsty

AFTER they had seen the sights of the city the carriage turned into a broad highway that led into the country, and soon they began to pass fields of sugar corn and gardens of sugar cabbages and sugar beets and sugar potatoes. There were also orchards of sugar plums and sugar apples and vineyards of sugar grapes. All the trees were sugar, and even the grass was sugar, while sugar grasshoppers hopped about in it. Indeed, Chubbins decided that not a speck of anything beneath the dome of Sugar-Loaf Mountain was anything but pure sugar--unless the inside of the frosted man proved to be of a different material.

By and by they reached a pretty villa, where they all left the carriage and followed the sugar king into the sugar house. Refreshments had been ordered in advance, over the sugar telephone, so that the dining table was already laid and all they had to do was to sit in the pretty sugar chairs and be waited upon by maple-sugar attendants.

There were sandwiches and salads and fruits and many other sugar things to eat, served on sugar plates; and the children found that some were flavored with winter-green and raspberry and lemon, so that they were almost as good as candies. At each plate was a glass made of crystal sugar and filled with thick sugar syrup, and this seemed to be the only thing to drink. After eating so much sugar the children naturally became thirsty, and when the king asked Twinkle if she would like anything else

she answered promptly:

"Yes, I'd like a drink of water."

At once a murmur of horror arose from the sugar people present, and the king pushed back his chair as if greatly disturbed.

"Water!" he exclaimed, in amazement.

"Sure," replied Chubbins. "I want some, too. We're thirsty."

The king shuddered.

"Nothing in the world," said he gravely, "is so dangerous as water. It melts sugar in no time, and to drink it would destroy you instantly."

"We're not made of sugar," said Twinkle. "In our country we drink all the water we want."

"It may be true," returned the king; "but I am thankful to say there is no drop of water in all this favored country. But we have syrup, which is much better for your health. It fills up the spaces inside you, and hardens and makes you solid."

"It makes me thirstier than ever," said the girl. "But if you have no water we must try to get along until we get home again."

When the luncheon was over, they entered the carriage again and were driven back towards the city. On the way the six sugar horses became restless, and pranced around in so lively a manner that the sugar coachman could scarcely hold them in. And when they had nearly reached the palace a part of the harness broke, and without warning all six horses dashed madly away. The chariot smashed against a high wall of sugar and broke into many pieces, the sugar people, as well as Twinkle and Chubbins, being thrown out and scattered in all directions.

The little girl was not at all hurt, nor was Chubbins, who landed on top the wall and had to climb down again. But the king had broken one of the points off his crown, and sat upon the ground gazing sorrowfully at his wrecked chariot. And Lord Cloy, the frosted man, had smashed one of his feet, and everybody could now see that underneath the frosting was a material very like marshmallow--a discovery that was sure to condemn him as unfit for the society of the solid sugar-loaf aristocracy of the country.

But perhaps the most serious accident of all had befallen Princess Sakareen, whose left leg had broken short off at the knee. Twinkle ran up to her as soon as she could, and found the Princess smiling happily and gazing at the part of the broken leg which she had picked up.

"See here, Twinkle," she cried; "it's as solid as the king himself! I'm not hollow at all. It was only my imagination."

"I'm glad of that," answered Twinkle; "but what will you do with a broken leg?"

"Oh, that's easily mended," said the Princess, "All I must do is to put a little syrup on the broken parts, and stick them together, and then sit in the breeze until it hardens. I'll be all right in an hour from now."

It pleased Twinkle to hear this, for she liked the pretty sugar princess.

Chapter VIII

After the Runaway

NOW the king came up to them, saying: "I hope you are not injured."

"We are all right," said Twinkle; "but I'm getting dreadful thirsty, so if your Majesty has no objection I guess we'll go home."

"No objection at all," answered the king.

Chubbins had been calmly filling his pockets with broken spokes and other bits of the wrecked chariot; but feeling nearly as thirsty as Twinkle, he was glad to learn they were about to start for home.

They exchanged good-byes with all their sugar friends, and thanked the sugar king for his royal entertainment. Then Captain Brittle and his soldiers escorted the children to the archway through which they had entered Sugar-Loaf City.

They had little trouble in going back, although the tunnel was so dark in places that they had to feel their way. But finally daylight could be seen ahead, and a few minutes later they scrambled up the stone steps and squeezed through the little doorway.

There was their basket, just as they had left it, and the afternoon sun was shining softly over the familiar worldly landscape, which they were

both rejoiced to see again.

Chubbins closed the iron door, and as soon as he did so the bolts shot into place, locking it securely.

"Where's the key?" asked Twinkle.

"I put it into my pocket," said Chubbins, "but it must have dropped out when I tumbled from the king's chariot."

"That's too bad," said Twinkle; "for now no one can ever get to the sugar city again. The door is locked, and the key is on the other side."

"Never mind," said the boy. "We've seen the inside of Sugar-Loaf Mountain once, and that'll do us all our lives. Come on, Twink. Let's go home and get a drink!"