



A STORY FOR BOYS AND GIRLS.

BY F. ANSTEY.

PART I.

CHAPTER I.

HOW IRENE AND TORQUIL WERE MADE TO FEEL SMALL.

HOW do you think this will do, Torquil?" said Irene, looking up from a short paper she was composing for the *Girls' Own Garland* on "How I Amuse Myself in the Holidays," and she proceeded to read aloud: "Of course, with so much to occupy us we have no time to spend on toys, which, Torquil says, are a babyish pursuit——"

"Except when they're exact models of things," corrected Torquil. "There's some sense in *them*. But none of *our* toys are models!"

Irene accepted the amendment dutifully. It took her some little time to get it all down. "Would you spell model with two 'd's' or only one?" she inquired, presently.

"Two, of course," said Torquil. "Or

else, don't you see, you would have to pronounce it 'modle.' But I can't listen to any more till I've made up my mind how much the Isle of Wight ought to count."

He was ten and Irene nine, and they were sitting opposite one another at the school-room table on the top floor of a certain London house one afternoon, shortly after Christmas. She was engaged in the manner already described, while he was copying and colouring all the counties of England from an atlas before him upon sundry small bits of cardboard.

By-and-by he intended to cut them all out and play some sort of game with them. He was not quite sure what, because he had not invented more than one or two of the rules, but it would be something between "snap" and "bézique," and it would have the great merit of teaching you geography.

It will be guessed from this that both children were rather more grown up than

many children are at their age. They had always been encouraged to take an intelligent interest in the world's affairs; their father and mother were both serious persons, and their governess (or rather Irene's, for Torquil now went to a day-school) was a highly-educated young lady who had distinguished herself at Girton. However, Miss Barlow was now away for her holidays, so the children were left to their own devices, and, as we have seen, were enjoying themselves in a creditably quiet and sedate fashion; in fact, possibly because they had had curried chicken and roly-poly pudding for dinner, they were not feeling so alert as usual.

They vaguely heard the "chink-chink-chink" of bells from some vehicle passing outside, but they were both too absorbed to be disturbed by it. Irene was trying to remember how she had meant to end that sentence about toys, and Torquil was beginning to realize that, if he was going to colour and cut out every separate county in the map of England, it would take a longer time than he had calculated. He *might* do without cutting them out, but then they wouldn't fit in like a puzzle, and it wouldn't make half such a good game.

So they were quite startled when a rich, jolly voice from the hearthrug said: "Why, how's this? Hard at work? In the holidays, too!" for they had not even noticed that anyone had entered the room.

Their visitor was nobody they had ever seen before; he was oddly dressed, for London, in a big fur cap and driving-gloves, and a long green robe edged with fur. He had a ruddy, weather-beaten face, with a white beard, and the eyes under his heavy white eyebrows were blue and sparkling.

"You don't mean to say you've been naughty?" he said, but in a tone that showed that he would not be greatly shocked if they had.

"We're not *very* often naughty," said Irene, "and we're not *working*—we're amusing ourselves."

"So *that's* your idea of amusing yourselves, is it?" said the stranger, after he had looked over their shoulders. "Of course," he added, "you've guessed who *I* am."

"I'm not quite sure," said Irene, "but I *expect* you're one of our uncles, dressed up as Father Christmas."

"Father Christmas indeed! Why, I'm Santa Claus."

"Well, whoever you are," said Torquil, "we're not a bit frightened, you know."

"Frightened! Of course not. As if any

good children could be afraid of old Santa Claus, who brings all the toys, and comes down the chimneys on Christmas Eve and fills your stockings!"

"Not *ours*," said Torquil. "We don't hang them out. Mother doesn't approve of our being encouraged to believe things that aren't true. And it isn't Christmas Eve now."

"That's true. But, you see, I've been driving round leaving presents for all the children who were not good enough to have theirs at the proper time. Don't you hear my reindeer shaking their bells on the roof?"

"We hear bells," said Torquil, "but then lots of hansom cab-horses have *them*."

"Cab-horses don't run along the roofs," remarked the stranger.

"No more do reindeer," replied Torquil. "And you can't have come down the chimney *this* time because there's a fire."

"And, anyhow, you'd be all covered with soot," added Irene.

The visitor seemed to feel that they were having the best of it so far. "I see," he said, "you are uncommonly clever children. Too clever to believe in *me*, at all events!"

"We don't believe you're Santa Claus *really*, because Miss Barlow says there's no such person," said Irene.

"Oh, of course, if *Miss Barlow* says so. But answer me as if I really was Santa Claus. Haven't you any toys?"

"Oh, lots!" said Irene. "I've got a dolls' house, and a farm, and a Noah's ark, and any amount of dolls; and Torquil has quantities of soldiers, and a theatre, and a grocer's shop, and all sorts of clockwork things."

"People will go on giving us them!" explained Torquil, in rather an aggrieved tone.

"And where are all these toys?"

"In the day nursery, somewhere," said Irene.

"Do you play with them every day?"

"Well, no—not exactly *every* day."

"When did you play with them last?"

"I forget," said Irene, "it's so long ago. You see," she explained, "Torquil doesn't care for toys, and I can't very well play with them all by myself."

"And so all this time they've been neglected?"

"Oh, no—they're all right. They're put away most carefully, and they're nearly as good as new—except the mechanical tumbler we took all the quicksilver out of."

"To make a looking-glass with," put in Torquil, "only it wouldn't stick. We

found out what made him turn head over heels downstairs, though."

"Ah," said the stranger, "I felt sure the toys here were not being properly played with. I could tell from the way the smoke was coming out of the nursery chimney. So I thought I'd stop and look into it. Has it never occurred to you," he went on, gravely, "that toys have been created to be played with—not to be put on the shelf and taken no notice of? Oblige me by going into the nursery at once and playing with them."

"We can't go now," said Torquil, "we're too busy—we are *really*."

"Nonsense! It will do the toys good, and do you good too. Come, be off with you!"

"*Would* you mind going away and not bothering?" said Irene, in a politely long-suffering tone. "I suppose this is amusing *you*, but *we* don't think it at all funny."

"At least, you can tell me *why* you refuse to go in and play with the poor toys?" Santa Claus insisted.

"Because," replied Torquil, "if you really want to know, we're a good deal too big for that sort of thing now."

"Why, so you are," said the visitor, "to be sure. I forgot that. Shut your eyes tight."

"Why?" asked Torquil.

"Because I tell you to," was the answer, and both the children shut their eyes promptly; the stranger *might* be going to give them a present—he was queer enough for anything. "Open your eyes!" commanded their visitor, and they obeyed—to find themselves perched on the very edge of their chairs a long way from the carpet, and only just able to see each other's heads across an immense stretch of tablecloth. At first they could not imagine why the table and the tumbler of water, and the colour-box and inkstand, had all grown so enormous; but the next moment they saw

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the reason. The change was in themselves; they had suddenly become no bigger than middle-sized dolls!

"Oh!" they both cried, in dismay. "Then it really *is* Santa Claus after all!"

"If you hadn't been quite so clever," said Santa Claus, "you would have recognised me at once. Now, you see, you are about the same size as your toys, so you will be able to play with them all the more easily, on equal terms."

"But we *sha'n't!*" protested Torquil. "You forget that you've made us too small to take them out of their boxes even—and we're not nearly strong enough to set them up!"

"We never meant that we were too big in size, Santa Claus," urged Irene. "Please put us back again as we were, and we *will* go in and play with them. We *promise*."



"SANTA CLAUS ONLY LIFTED THEM BOTH VERY GENTLY AND SET THEM DOWN ON THE CARPET."

"We can't even get down from our chairs like we are," added Torquil.

But Santa Claus only lifted them both very gently and set them down on the carpet.

"I can't stay with you any longer," he said, opening the door. "Now run away into your nursery and enjoy yourselves with the toys. You will find them all out of their boxes already."

With that Santa Claus disappeared, whether up the chimney or not they could not see; but presently, as they stood forlornly on the threshold, they heard a cheerful jingle overhead, as if the reindeer were delighted to be off again.

"It's too bad of him to go and leave us like this!" said Irene, half crying. "I *do* think Santa Claus is a *most* disagreeable person!"

"It shows there are *some* things Miss Barlow doesn't know," said Torquil. "But Santa Claus may say what he likes. *I'm* not going in to play with the beastly toys!" The bells chinked more shrilly and nearer again, as if the sleigh had turned back. "At least," continued Torquil, hastily, "only till tea-time."

"Oh, what *is* the use of talking about tea?" cried Irene; "they'll never be able to cut bread and butter thin enough for us *now*!" By this time they were out of the schoolroom and Torquil, who had hurried on towards a row of tall pillars in front, came back looking scared.

"It was lucky I looked down," he said, "or I should have walked right over the edge of the landing—those big things are the banisters. I say, couldn't we get downstairs to the drawing-room and tell mother?"

"It would take so long," objected Irene, "and then nurse or Jane or somebody might come upstairs and tread on us without noticing. Besides, even *mother* couldn't do anything!"

"No, and there might be visitors calling," agreed Torquil; "and we should feel so funny coming in as we are. I suppose we'd better do as Santa Claus told us, after all."

And he led the way towards the green nursery door, which was so high that they could not see the top without cricking their necks. "There's *another* thing Santa Claus forgot!" said Irene, with some satisfaction. "How are we going to open the door when the handle's all that way up?"

"He's thought of that," said Torquil, gloomily; "it's ajar."

"We shall *never* be able to lift all those heavy tin soldiers of yours," complained Irene; "and we shall get *so* tired!"

"We must do the best we can," said Torquil. "Then, when Santa Claus comes back, we can tell him we *tried*, else he may keep us like this *always*, you know. Come along and play."

And he squeezed himself through the narrow opening first, and Irene followed, neither of them at all in the humour for play of any kind.

CHAPTER II.

QUEEN CLEMENTINA.

EXCEPT that the ceiling was infinitely higher, and the walls, windows, and furniture all seemed a long way off and very much larger, the nursery looked unchanged.

Away across the thick, soft druggot Torquil and Irene made out several objects that, in spite of their greatly increased size, they knew must be some of the toys they had not played with for so long.

There was a tall red and white mansion which Irene recognised as her dolls' house. It was a most superior one, with a staircase and doors to every room, but she seldom looked into it, having found that, when the furniture was once put in its place, there was nothing more to be done with it.

Close by was the toy theatre, with its green glazed calico curtain down. When he first had it Torquil had rather liked lighting the footlights, winding the curtain up and down, and changing the scenery, but the play that came with it was too stupid and old-fashioned to be worth performing, particularly with cardboard characters which required to be changed whenever they had to strike a fresh attitude.

A little farther on were the market, the livery stables, the infant school, the Noah's ark, the clockwork railway, and several other things which he—and Irene, too, under his influence—had long ago voted too babyish and unlike what they professed to be to be played with by persons with any regard for their own dignity. And it puzzled them to think how they could possibly play with them now.

"Torquil," whispered Irene, "isn't that one of your wooden soldiers over there? He's nearly as tall as *us* now, though."

Torquil looked round and saw a wooden Grenadier on a round stand, stiffly shouldering a bright pink musket. He had a shiny black hat, with a yellow half-circle in front, a scarlet body shaped exactly like an urn, bright blue trousers, and no trace of any feet.

"He's out of a box Aunt Margery gave me when I was quite a kid," said Torquil, eyeing him with no great favour. "I'm not going to play with *him*, anyhow."

"But he's *alive*!" said Irene, with a little gasp. "At least, he's *moving*. I do believe he's coming to play with *us*!"

And there was no doubt that the wooden soldier was slowly shuffling towards them. When he came nearer he called out "Halt!" which might have been alarming, seeing that he was the very last kind of toy one would

have expected to hear any sound from. But this warrior's voice was so high and creaky, he had such a slight suggestion of a nose and such little dots of eyes, that the effect was not particularly terrifying.

It was odd, to be sure, that anyone with a mouth that was a mere dab could speak at all; but, after all, that was *his* affair, and if all the toys were able to move about and talk it would certainly make it easier to play with them.

The moment they stopped the soldier squeaked "Halt!" once more.

"We *can't* halt any more than we *are* halting, you know," said Torquil. "What is it you *do* want?"

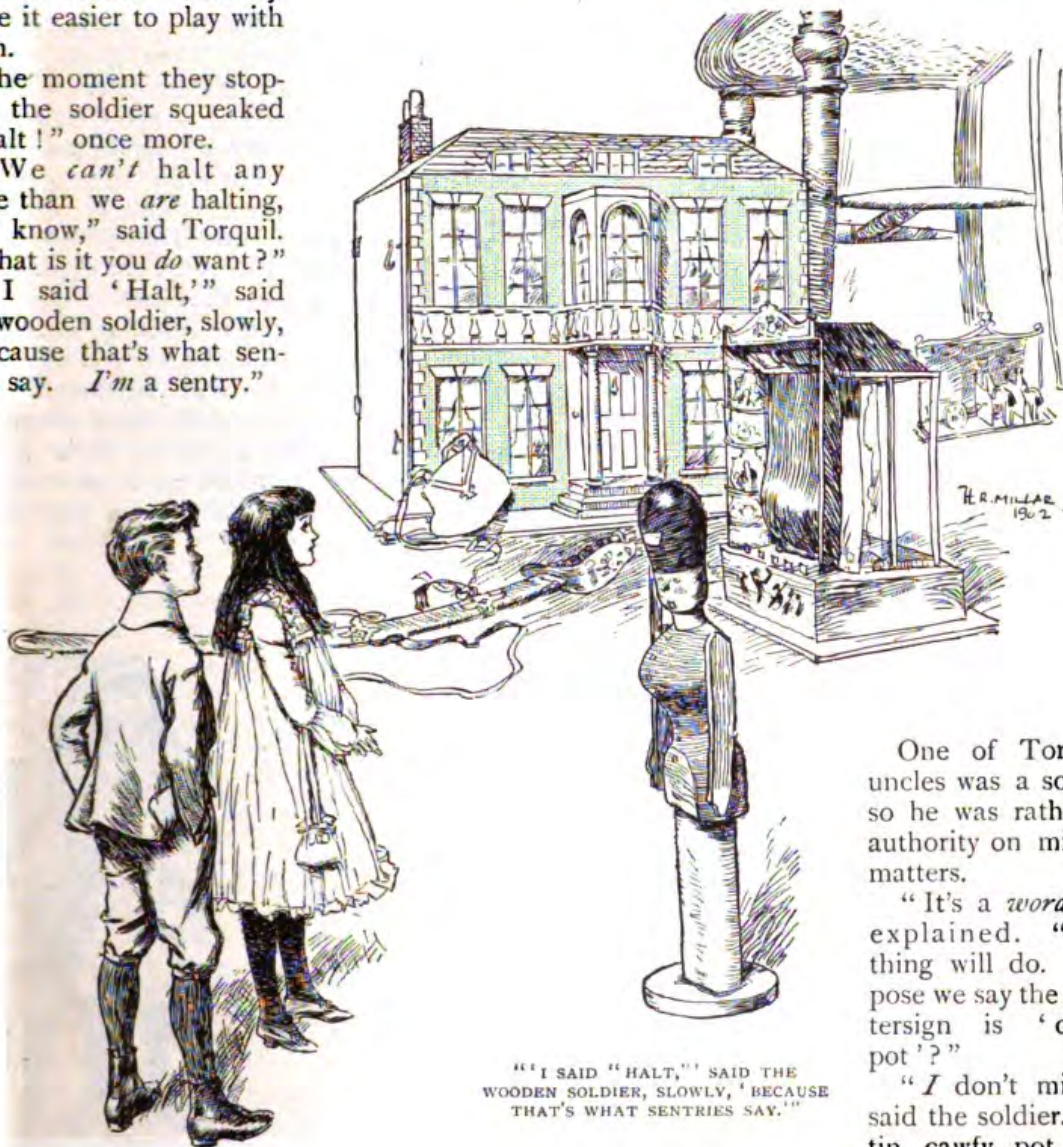
"I said 'Halt,'" said the wooden soldier, slowly, "because that's what sentries say. *I'm* a sentry."

in your pocket," said Torquil. "You're a pretty sentry not to know *that!*"

"You should see the Captin," said the sentry; "he's prettier than me by a long way. He's got a *sword!*"

"But don't you really know what a countersign is?"

"I suppose," said the sentry, doubtfully, "it'll be a animal o' *some* sort?"



"I SAID 'HALT,'" SAID THE WOODEN SOLDIER, SLOWLY, 'BECAUSE THAT'S WHAT SENTRIES SAY.'"

One of Torquil's uncles was a soldier, so he was rather an authority on military matters.

"It's a *word*," he explained. "Anything will do. Suppose we say the countersign is 'coffee-pot'?"

"I don't mind!" said the soldier. "A tin cawfy-pot or a wooden one?"

"If you're going to play at sentries," said Torquil, "you may as well do it *properly*."

"I *am* doin' of it properly," said the sentry. "Halt!"

"No, no," Torquil corrected. "Next you ask us to give you the countersign."

"You must lend me a pocket first to put it in, then," said the sentry. "My uniform ain't got no pockets."

"A countersign isn't a thing you can put

"What *does* that matter? It isn't a *real* coffee-pot!"

"Oh!" said the soldier, his little eyes nearly disappearing into his head. "Then it won't pour out, will it? Still, hand it over."

"But I tell you it isn't a thing at all!" said Torquil, losing all patience. "We only say 'coffee-pot' because it's the countersign. Then you say 'Pass, friends, and all's well!'"

"It *ain't* all well if you haven't got no cawfy-pot," replied the wooden soldier.

"I'm only trying to show you how to play, as you don't seem to know *much* about it," said Torquil.

"I've no time to play. I've too much work to do, *I* have!" said the sentry.

"What work do *you* do?" Torquil asked.

"It's hard work, *I* can tell you, shouldering this here gun mornin', noon, and night."

"But what's the *good* of shouldering it? It won't go off."

"It *can't* go off," replied the soldier, squinting down at the butt. "It's glued on too tight for that."

"I mean, it hasn't got a trigger or a barrel—you couldn't *shoot* anybody with it."

"I never *want* to shoot nobody," said the wooden soldier, "so it's good enough for *me*."

"Are all the others as st—I mean, like *you*?" inquired Irene.

"They *do* say I'm the brightest and smartest of the lot," replied the sentry.

"But then I've been more careful of my varnish, or there was more of it, I dunno which."

"There must be *somebody* here who can talk sense," said Torquil, in despair.

"Isn't there?"

"There's the Prime Minister—the Lord High Ackerobot, you know—he talks sense, leastwise, so I'm told. And he could turn head over heels all down a flight of steps once—his 'career,' as they call it. Wonderful head he has!"

"Well, we might just go and see him," said Irene. "Where is he?"

"Sitting over there, on the bottom step of his career. Look here, I'll come along and introduce you to him."

"No, you needn't trouble, thank you," said Irene, hurriedly.

"No trouble at all," said he. "I've nothing particular to do."

"If you were a *real* sentinel," said Torquil, "you'd be punished if you deserted your post."

"Then it's your opinion as I'd better stay where I am?" he asked.

"*Much* better!" said Irene, very decidedly. "We can find the way quite well for ourselves."

"Of all the silly idiots I *ever* met," remarked Torquil, as they went on, "that sentry is the very silliest!"

"Yes," said Irene, "I'm glad we got out of being introduced by *him*. Though, after all," she added, "I suppose it's rather wonderful for a wooden soldier to have sense enough to be even an *idiot*."

"I don't see why we should be expected to *play* with idiots," said Torquil. "Look! That must be the Lord High Acrobat, Irene, and I suppose those steps are his 'career.' It is the tumbler Cousin Alice gave us—the one we took all the quicksilver out of. He's not much like a Lord High Anything!"

The tumbler had already seen them and risen to meet them. They had always thought him a quaint-looking figure, with his narrow, salmon-pink face (which had only a



"THE TUMBLER HAD ALREADY SEEN THEM."

shade more expression than that of a monkey on a stick), his thin arms and broad, flat hands, and bent legs ending in feet which stuck out as much behind as before, like a towel-horse's; but now that he was as tall as themselves he naturally seemed quainter-looking than ever.

He was dressed in a kind of bathing

costume of bright emerald green, with a sort of apron and square cap of crimson, and he advanced towards them with little hops and slides, like a great, ugly bird.

"May I ask," he began, "who you are and what is your business in these parts?"

Irene, rather relieved to find that he did not appear to recognise them, explained that they had been sent in by Santa Claus, and that the wooden sentry had told them that the Lord High Acrobat was a person of great sense.

"No!" said the Lord High Acrobat; "did he *really*, though? That was very kind of him—very kind indeed! But he's a remarkably intelligent fellow. I dare say you noticed it."

"We didn't have *much* talk with him," said Irene, feeling suddenly inclined to laugh.

"Oh, he's very sharp. In fact," said the Lord High Acrobat, meditatively, "I've serious thoughts of making him a General." And he peered at them as if to see what *they* thought of the idea.

"That would be *rather* sudden from being only a private," said Torquil. "And don't generals have to ride on horseback?"

"Oh, there's an india-rubber horse he could have, as far as *that* goes. It's lost most of its wind, but he wouldn't mind that," said the Lord High Acrobat.

"But how could he get *on* it, when his legs are just a solid block?"

"He could lead it about, and no one would know that he hadn't just got off. However, it certainly is a drawback. I must think about it. As Prime Minister," he said, importantly, "I have a great deal to think about."

"You mean things like politics, I suppose?" said Torquil.

"I *could* think about politics too, I dare say, if I knew what they were."

"Why, politics——" began Torquil, and then he found that he wasn't very clear himself what politics were exactly.

"They're the things Prime Ministers have to manage."

"Then I've no doubt I've managed them in my time. I used to be very energetic. You see this career of mine—four steps and a little drawer underneath to retire to? Well, you'll hardly believe it, but in my prime I thought nothing of standing on the pedestal at the top and turning back somersaults down to the bottom. I can't do it *now*, though. *Why*, is more than I can tell you."

Torquil and Irene could have told him, but they thought, on the whole, they had better not.

"And so you are recommended here," he continued, "by our old friend and patron, Santa Claus. But for him we should none of us be where we are now, and I have much pleasure in welcoming you—not only on my own behalf, but in the name of my most gracious Sovereign Lady, the Queen."

"So you've a Queen here?" said Irene, with more interest.

"I should think so," said the Prime Minister, "and a grand Queen she is! Why, she can shut her eyes whenever she lies down, and she's taller than any of us. Dear me!" he broke off, looking round. "Here comes Her Majesty out for a walk, with all the Court! It's the first time I've ever known



"HER MAJESTY OUT FOR A WALK."

her to take any exercise. If she *should* condescend to speak to you, don't be *too* overawed !”

And, either from respect or because he lost his balance, he suddenly threw himself forward on his hands, as the Queen approached with a kind of majestic toddle, followed by a train of courtiers and maids of honour.

Irene was not in the least overawed. Why *should* she be, when the Queen was only her best doll Clementina? If it pleased her to pretend to be a Queen, she must ; but Irene felt rather ashamed that any doll of hers should make such an exhibition of herself, especially before Torquil, who she knew had but a poor opinion of dolls already.

For poor Clementina's Court was a very queer one indeed. The ladies composing it were chiefly Dutch, with a sprinkling of china and composition dolls, none of them remarkable for personal beauty. As for the courtiers, they were simply ordinary ninepins. Or, rather, not *quite* ordinary, for they were less stiff than the rest of their kind. They bent their long necks with deferential courtesy to their partners as they shuffled by their sides, and each of their round heads, which had even less features and expression than the wooden sentry's, wore a shadowy but amiable simper.

Clementina evidently did not recognise Irene any more than the others had done, but this was only natural, as it was a long time since she had seen her, and, besides, Irene was now smaller than Clementina. But she was most gracious as soon as the Lord High Acrobat (who was upright again) presented the children as friends of Santa Claus.

“*Isn't* Santa Claus a dear, kind old gentleman?” she said. “Aren't you very fond of him?”

It was as well, perhaps, that she did not wait for their reply. “I'm Queen here,” she informed them. “I don't know why—except that I'm taller, and cleverer, and more beautiful than all the others, and the only one that can shut my eyes. But I'm not at all proud, and you mustn't be in the least afraid of me. I'm sure we shall be tremendous friends. Do tell me your names?”

“Oh, *those* won't do at all,” she cried, when she had heard them. “I must invent some really nice names for you. Keep quite still everybody, while I think.”

And the whole Court waited expectantly while she closed her eyes.

“I've done!” she announced, at last. “They're such beauties! You,” she said, to

Irene, “shall be ‘Buffidella,’ and you,” she added, to Torquil, “shall be ‘Chipsitop.’ *There* now !”

“What readiness!” exclaimed all the Ninepins, wagging their bulbs of heads. “What extraordinary powers of invention !”

“And so suitable, too,” added the Dolls of honour.

“I cannot imagine,” cried the Lord High Acrobat, “how your Majesty can think of such things !”

“Of course you can't,” said the Queen, “when I hardly know myself. I shut my eyes, and suddenly the names came. And I *give* them to you,” she added to Torquil and Irene ; “they're your very own—to keep !”

“What queenly generosity!” chorussed the Ninepins, “to give away two such names as that !”

“They *ought* to be grateful ; *indeed*, they ought !” the Dolls of honour declared.

Privately Irene thought her own name much nicer, and she did not dare to look at Torquil, for she guessed what he must be feeling. And, indeed, Torquil was fuming secretly at being called “Chipsitop,” which he probably considered “just the sort of duffing name a doll *would* think of.”

“Of course, you must come to the Royal high tea to-night,” Clementina babbled on. “Or, as it's such a special occasion, suppose we call it a State banquet and have out the best Britannia metal service, and be as grand as possible ! And—I know—we'll have a Court ball afterwards. We all seem so lively and active, somehow, that we're sure to enjoy ourselves !”

“I'm afraid,” said Irene, “that we're neither of us dressed for a party” (“and we couldn't put on our party things *now* if we had them !” she thought to herself with a pang).

“Oh, *that's* of no consequence,” said Clementina ; “I shall go dressed as I am, and so will everybody. But you must have somewhere to live in. You'd better stay at the palace,” and she pointed to the red and white dolls' house. “I never use it myself, because I'm a little too big for it, and I prefer the drawer. But I'll tell the Caretaker Royal to see that you're comfortable.”

And she waddled away smiling, and the Court followed her.

“I suppose,” said Irene, “we'd better go and ask to see our rooms. As it's going to be a State banquet we ought at least to wash our hands for it.”

“I don't see *why*,” grumbled Torquil ; “I bet none of *them* will !”

However, he consented to go to the dolls' house, and they were admitted by the Caretaker Royal, who was, as a matter of fact, the gentleman doll. Irene knew him at once by his neat little china head with its fair hair (not real hair, but painted) parted down the middle, his black velvet coat and green bow, his shirt front with a very large gilt stud in it, and check trousers.

"With the baby!" exclaimed Irene, and rushed into the nursery to rescue the unhappy infant.

To her horror the kettle *was* in the cradle, but the baby didn't seem to be inconvenienced by it, perhaps because the kettle was quite cold. "Very odd!" said the Caretaker, when she called his attention to the fact; "it was boiling when it was bought,



"'VERY ODD!' SAID THE CARETAKER."

It was a new and curious experience to find herself being shown up the stairs of her own dolls' house, which was in a wofully dusty state. She and Torquil were given two rooms on the top floor, the nursery and the bedroom, both extremely untidy. "I remember now," thought Irene, "those two little Grahams were playing with it that afternoon they came to tea."

"But there's a nice fire in each room," said the Caretaker Royal.

"Could we have a little hot water?" Irene asked.

"Certainly," said the Caretaker Royal. "There's a kettle somewhere, and it's probably boiling. I think you'll find it in the cradle with the baby."

I know. Why not try putting it on the fire? I fancy you can make a kettle boil that way, sometimes."

"Not on *this* fire," said Torquil, "because, you see, it's only red tinsel."

"It does very well for a fire," replied the Caretaker Royal, "and I shouldn't be surprised if, when you've put the kettle on, you got something that will do very well for hot water."

Then, after courteously begging them to let him know if there was anything else they required, he bowed himself out, and they heard him falling down two flights of stairs in a quiet, unassuming manner, as a gentleman should.

They had to do without washing their

hands after all, for there was no cold water even, nor soap, nor towels.

"Well," said Torquil, disgustedly, as he went to the nursery window, "if *this* is what Santa Claus calls 'playing with our toys,' I wish he'd mind his own business!"

"I wouldn't lean *too* hard against the wall if I were you," said Irene. "I'm almost sure those Graham children forgot to fasten the hook. It *is* rather queer being here like this, isn't it?"

"Queer? It's downright beastly!" said Torquil. "Why, these things seem to think they're just the same as us. And they're all so jolly silly!"

"They can't help it, I suppose," said Irene. "We must be as nice to them as we can."

"I don't see why I should be nice to a Ninepin!" grumbled Torquil. "And then, that Clementina of yours! The calm cheek of her telling us she's Queen here, and calling me 'Chipsitop!'"

"I know. And me 'Buffidella!'" said Irene, hardly knowing whether to laugh or to cry. "Still, we must put up with it as long as we can. And, after all, there's the banquet."

"Yes, there's *that*. I don't mind how silly they are if they'll only give us some decent grub. I'm getting hungry. But what *will* they give us, do you suppose?"

"I don't know. But they wouldn't call it a banquet if there wasn't plenty to eat and drink, *would* they?"

"Oh, you never know—with dolls!" said Torquil, gloomily; and just then the Caretaker Royal tumbled upstairs to announce that a guard of honour had called to escort them to the banqueting-hall.

So they went down and found the chief Ninepin (who was distinguished by having a small knob on the top of his head) waiting for them with four wooden soldiers, so like their friend the sentry that for all they knew he might be one of them.

"Allow me to conduct you to the Royal table!" said the chief Ninepin, ceremoniously; and they followed him, with two wooden soldiers stumping along on either side of them.

"Do you know, my dear young friends,"

remarked the Ninepin, as he led the way, "that you may consider yourselves highly favoured—very highly favoured indeed?"

"May we?" said Torquil, who rather resented being addressed by a Ninepin as his "dear young friend." "Why?"

"Because," the Ninepin replied, very solemnly, "this is the very first time Her Majesty has ever had a banquet for anybody. And it's the best dinner-service, too!"

"Oh!" said Torquil, without showing any signs of being impressed. "But what is there going to be to eat?"

"What is there going to be to eat?" said the Ninepin. "Why, the banquet!"

"Will there be roast turkey and plum-pudding and mince-pies?" asked Torquil.

"That's not what *I* should call a banquet," said the Ninepin.

"Well, what would *you* call a banquet?"

The Ninepin considered a little. "I should call it a *banquet*," he said at last, and seemed to think that settled the question. "I hope," he added, with some anxiety, "that you both know how to sit at table—it would be so awkward if you didn't."

"This isn't the *first* time we've been to a party!" replied Torquil, with his nose in the air. "I dare say we shall do it quite as well as *you*."

"You must try and do it *better*," said the Ninepin, "a great *deal* better. Because, you see, *I* can't sit down at *all*."

"I'm glad of that," whispered Irene to Torquil. "I was so afraid I might have to sit *next* him, and *I know* I should laugh if he talked to me much."

"*I* shouldn't," said Torquil, who was not so ready as Irene to see the comic side of things. "I should tell him to shut his stupid head."

Here the Ninepin looked round. "Prepare yourselves," he said. "We are now about to enter the banqueting-hall. You will naturally feel a little nervous at first, but that won't matter so long as you're not too shy to answer the Queen when she speaks to you."

"Thank you," said Irene, demurely, "I don't think we shall be so shy as all *that*."

And with this she and Torquil prepared to follow their conductor into the hall.

(To be continued.)



A STORY FOR BOYS AND
GIRLS.—PART I.

CHAPTER III.

ENTERTAINED BY ROYALTY.

IN spite of herself, Irene was rather impressed on first entering the banqueting-hall. It was so much larger and more imposing than anything she had expected. Four massive columns, at the foot of each of which stood a wooden soldier shouldering arms, supported the lofty roof, and on all four sides hung crimson curtains, not too low to allow plenty of light to enter beneath their heavy fringes. "I'd no idea Clementina had any place as grand as this!" she thought—and then realized all at once that, as a matter of fact, they were only underneath the nursery table.

The company were already seated, the Queen, of course, at the head of the board, which was covered with a white cloth that was too stiff to hang properly. A place was kept on each side of her for Torquil and Irene; at the other end, facing her, sat the Lord High Acrobat, and the remaining chairs were occupied by the Dolls of honour, the Ninepins having chosen to remain standing behind.

"We're sorry we're late," said Irene, not very penitently, for she thought Clementina

might have waited for them. "We didn't know you had sat down."

"Oh, but we have, though!" said Clementina, with immense pride. "All by ourselves, too! And we laid the table as well. I really don't know what's come to us all! *Isn't* it a beautiful banquet?"

"Everything looks very nice," said Irene, looking down the table, which was sumptuously set out. In the centre were the big Britannia metal teapot, milk-jug, and sugar-basin—but merely for purposes of display—and everybody had wooden soup-plates painted white and blue, which, with two vases of artificial flowers, she recognised as part of a dinner-service that had once been given to her. "I suppose the banquet will begin soon?" she remarked.

"It *has* begun," said the Queen; "if you don't make haste and eat your soup it will get cold. And it's such excellent soup—made entirely from flies' wings."

"Oh!" said Irene, resolved not to mention that for some reason they seemed to have forgotten to fill her and Torquil's plates, while the rest had emptied theirs already.

"It's time for the second course!" cried Clementina; whereupon the Ninepins began to topple about and bump up against one another, evidently under the impression that they were changing plates and handing dishes. "Though *how*, when they've got no arms," thought Irene, "I'm sure I don't know!"

"Buffidella, dear," said the Queen, in the

friendliest manner, "*do* let me give you some more of this delicious curried clothes-moth!"

Irene hardly knew what to say—for she still had the same empty soup-plate before her, and so had everybody else, while the dish before Clementina was absolutely bare. However, for all she could tell, there might be some curried clothes-moth somewhere, and she felt sure it would be anything but delicious, so she declined, as politely as she could bring herself to do.

"It *is* satisfying, I know," said Clementina. "Chipsitop, won't you try a leg of this nice roast bluebottle?" and she pointed serenely to the very same dish.

Torquil felt that he was being trifled with, and he saw no fun in playing at banquets with nothing whatever to eat. "I don't see any bluebottle," he said, grumpily, "but I wouldn't have any if I did. I *know* roast bluebottle would be beastly!"

"It's their nature, poor things," said the Queen. "But you really must have something. You and Buffidella are eating positively nothing. Now, why is that?"

"Because," Torquil blurted out, "if you want to know, we've had nothing *to* eat yet."

"But, my dear Chipsitop," said the Queen, "you've had exactly the same as everybody else!"

"You see," explained Irene, "it doesn't matter for *you*; you don't mind *how* little you eat. But Torquil and I are used to something more substantial."

"But surely this banquet *is* substantial?" cried Clementina. "Why, there are real dishes and knives and forks, and the State Britannia metal plate, and everything!"

"Everything except real *food*," said Irene. "But never mind. I dare say this does quite as well—when you don't happen to be hungry."

"Still, it's better to have *some* real food—at a banquet," said the Queen. "I knew there was *something* wanting! But, at all events, there's plenty to drink. My Lord High Acrobat, will you please to pass the wine? The red's currant and the white is orange," she explained; "you must taste both and tell me which you like best."

A goblet of red liquid and another of yellow were passed up, and very clear and refreshing they looked, only, unfortunately, it was quite impossible to taste them, as they were completely enclosed in glass.

"The advantage of this wine," said Clementina, proudly, as Torquil and Irene put their goblets down, "is that you can't waste it. However much you drink, the glass keeps as full as ever."

"But we can't drink a drop," said Torquil.

"Can't you?" said the Queen, with concern. "I *am* so sorry. We must see by-and-by if we can't get some wine you *can* drink—at the grocer's. Tell me, Buffidella, do you think it's time the banquet ended?"

"Quite, *I* think," said Irene, for after all this parade she was a little cross at not having had even an ordinary tea. "There's not much sense in having a *very* long banquet without anything to eat or drink at all, *is* there?"

"I suppose there isn't much," Clementina admitted. "And besides, there's the Court ball to come."

Irene glanced at the stiff Dutch dolls and the limp composition ones, and the great, clumsy Ninepins, with growing doubts. "I suppose," she said, "all these—a—ladies and gentlemen *can* dance?"

"I've never heard them say they *couldn't*," said the Queen, "but the Prime Minister is sure to know. My Lord High Acrobat," she called across the table, "can the Court dance?"

"Dance, your Majesty?" said the Prime Minister; "to be sure they can—fluently!" And all the Dolls of honour sat up and simpered with conscious pride.

"Then clear away the table," commanded the Queen, "and let the ball begin."

They managed to clear the hall somehow, and dancing began. Irene had often heard of people talking French fluently, but she had never heard of dancing fluently, and she was curious to see how it was done. She very soon decided that it was not at all the same thing as dancing well.

The Court ladies bobbed about, curtsying whenever it occurred to them, generally to one of the wooden soldiers. The Ninepins blundered up against one another and bowed solemnly to nobody. Everyone danced by himself and herself, and seemed perfectly satisfied. As for Clementina, she looked on, beaming with pride and content.

"The *idea* of calling this a ball!" said Irene, indignantly, to Torquil, as they stood apart. "Why, they haven't even a piano to dance to!"

"They don't want one for *their* kind of dancing," said Torquil. "This *is* a duffing party, and no mistake!"

"Just look at that Dutch doll 'making cheeses' to the soldier over there!" said Irene. "*Isn't* it silly? He can't make it out a bit—and no wonder! And they're all so pleased with themselves, too!" She checked herself suddenly, as she saw Clementina coming up.

"Isn't it a pretty sight?" cried the Queen, with childish glee. "I'd no notion they could dance so fluently as *this*. Have you ever seen anything like it before?"

Irene felt tempted to say that she had seen a monkey do something very like it on an organ, but she refrained. "It's not *quite* the way Torquil and I have been taught to dance," she replied.

Irene whispered to Torquil, "but we might manage a polka if you whistled the tune."

Clementina was much pleased with their performance of the polka. "It certainly is a great improvement—dancing in couples like that," she said. "I'm going to dance with Chipsitop myself now."

Of course, Torquil's dignity was severely tried by having to dance with a doll, and it was hard work too, for he could only just reach up to and round Clementina's waist, and had to swing her round and, in fact, do all the dancing himself.



"TORQUIL'S DIGNITY WAS SEVERELY TRIED BY HAVING TO DANCE WITH A DOLL."

H. R. MILLER. 1902

"Isn't it? Do show us how *you* dance," said the Queen; "it will be so interesting."

"We can't very well without a piano," Irene explained.

"Oh, but we have a splendid piano somewhere," said Clementina; "we'll have it brought in."

This was done, and the Prime Minister very kindly offered to play for them. But as the piano only had six keys, and his notion of playing was to smack them at random with his big, flat hands, it was just as well, perhaps, that all the notes were dumb. The Queen, at all events, was perfectly satisfied with his efforts, and remarked that he had an exquisite touch.

"It's no use trying to dance to *that*,"

Irene was glad for his sake when the Queen at last consented to stop. "It's quite easy!" said Clementina. "Now I want to see the whole Court dance in couples, with every courtier's arm round his partner's waist."

Only, as few of the Dolls of honour had a waist, and none of the Ninepins an arm, this was not so easy as she imagined, and accordingly they begged the Queen to give them just one more lesson.

"Very well," said Clementina, graciously, "and *this* time I'll dance it with the Prime Minister."

It was in vain for the Lord High Acrobat to plead that he had lost all his quicksilver and that he didn't know the step; she insisted that it was ridiculously simple, and that she could teach him in no time. So they started.

Irene felt certain that they would come to grief, but she had hardly expected it so soon. There was a little aimless prancing and slipping about, and then a total and most undignified collapse, which upset several Ninepins, who had been studying the new step with close attention.

Irene had been feeling too hot and ashamed on Clementina's account to think of laughing even then. But when the Queen scrambled up out of the general scrimmage and remarked, with unaltered complacency, "That is the *correct* way to dance this very elegant step," Irene suddenly went off into peals of laughter.

She was quite aware that it was not good manners, but she simply couldn't help it. And it wasn't as if Clementina had been a real Queen either, who might have ordered her to lose her head because she couldn't keep her countenance—she wasn't afraid of Clementina. So Irene laughed—wildly, helplessly, peal after peal—till the Queen and all her ladies stared at her in pained amazement, and the Ninepins wobbled with dismay.

However, Clementina seemed rather anxious than angry. "My *dearest* Buffidella!" she cried. "What is the matter? Do—do stop making those dreadful noises. They do alarm us so."

But Irene couldn't leave off. "Your Majesty," said the Lord High Acrobat, "I fear the Lady Buffidella has been seized by some strange and sudden illness."

They all showed the greatest concern, not knowing much about illness themselves, and fully believing, as dolls and toys are unaccustomed to laughing out loud, that nothing but illness could account for Irene's extraordinary behaviour.

"I'm better now," said Irene, as soon as she could speak. "It really was your fault—it was *too* funny to see you teaching everybody the polka when you've no idea how to do it yourself."

"But I *have*," said Clementina; "why, you saw me dance it with Chipsitop!"

"I saw him dance it with *you*," said Irene; "it isn't quite the same thing. And really, you know, if I were you I shouldn't have a State bal' till you can all dance a little!"

"I'm sure," said the Queen, plaintively, "I don't know when we've all been so energetic."

"Perhaps not," said Irene; "but it isn't real dancing—only just jiggling about."

"But we could *learn* real dancing if you would only teach us how!" said Clementina.

"You'd never learn properly," said Irene,

decisively; "you're all of you too limp or too stiff. I think you had much better give it up altogether."

"Yes," said Clementina, "we won't go on with the ball any longer or we might make poor Buffidella ill again. I'll tell you what we'll do. We'll pay a State visit to the Court painter. He has studied in Paris, and he's the cleverest artist in the world, so I'm glad to have him in my Court. I think Queens ought to encourage art, don't you?"

"What kind of pictures does he paint?" asked Irene, wondering which of the toys it could be.

"Well, he hasn't done any *yet*; but he's going to do one of me as soon as he gets what he calls the '*mouvement*.' He may have got it by this time. Let's go and see"; and she led the way out of the banqueting-hall.

"What are we supposed to be playing at *now*?" Torquil asked Irene, as they followed the procession out under the fringe of the table-cover; and she told him they were going to visit a famous portrait painter from Paris.

"I expect it's only that clockwork chap Aunt Hetty bought me in Oxford Street," said Torquil. "He was made in Paris, I know—most of those *mechanical* figures are; father said so. But what rot calling *him* a famous portrait painter! Why, he only draws one outline in pencil—and he can't colour that!"

"He *may* have improved," said Irene, though she thought it unlikely, and with this they came upon the artist himself, seated on a raised tin platform before a tin easel, on which was a sheet of blank paper. He was tin himself, but wore a brown blouse of real calico; his pink and white face (which showed a line down each side where the two halves of his head joined) had a dreamily absent expression.

"Don't trouble to rise," said the Queen, which, as he was soldered fast to his seat, showed true thoughtfulness on her part. "We've come to see if you've finished my portrait yet."

"I attend still ze *mouvement*, madame!" he replied, with an accent that reminded Irene of a French maid her mother had once had. "Ven I commence, I make of you a portrait that shall be all there is of the most *magnifique*!"

"That's exactly the kind of portrait I should like," said Clementina. "But couldn't you commence *now*?"

"Alas, no!" he replied. "Art is not to be pressed. I vork only ven I feel ze *impulsion*." Which the Lord High Acrobat

explained was a proof that he was a real genius.

"The humbug!" said Torquil, in an undertone, to Irene; "he knows jolly well he *can't* work unless somebody turns his handle for him!"

"Let's try if *we* can't turn it and see what he draws," suggested Irene, mischievously. "It *used* to be a head of 'Punch.' What fun if he does it now!"

Torquil was willing enough, and they slipped unnoticed behind the artist, and began with some difficulty to turn the big handle in his platform which set the machinery going.

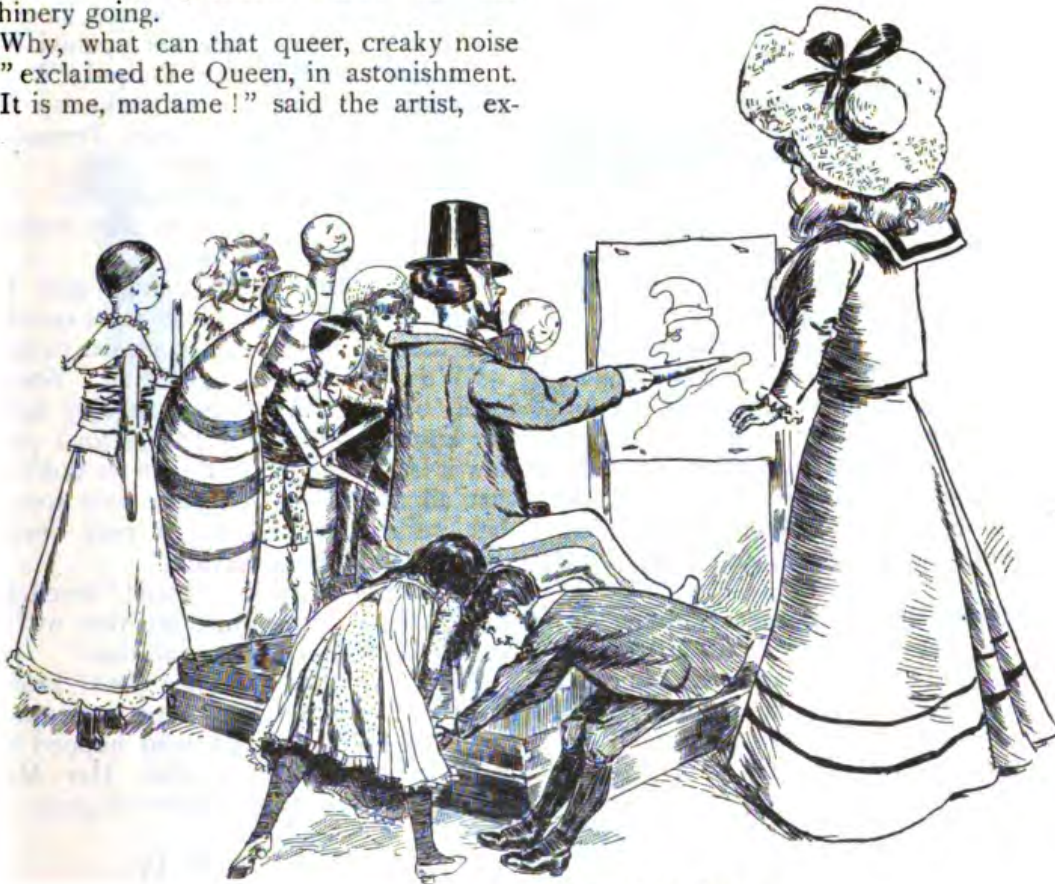
"Why, what can that queer, creaky noise be?" exclaimed the Queen, in astonishment.

"It is me, madame!" said the artist, ex-

tina, who certainly wasn't vain—if she didn't know much about Art. "Am I really like *that*?"

"A wonderful likeness," pronounced the Lord High Acrobat, who knew that that was the proper remark to make about any portrait. "Why, there's an eye, and a nose, and a mouth and chin, as plain as possible!" And the Ninepins all agreed that it was unmistakable.

"What do *you* think, Chipsitop?" demanded Clementina, as if she were beginning to have doubts.



H. R. MILLAR, 1902

"THE ARTIST TRACED SLOWLY AND JERKILY ON THE PAPER."

citedly. "At last ze moment 'ave arrive! Yes, I go to paint my masterspiece!"

Irene could not restrain a little gurgle of laughter as the artist, following every stroke of his pencil with conceited motions of his head, traced slowly and jerkily on the paper before him a feeble outline which proved to be, indeed, the profile of "Mr. Punch."

"*Voilà!*" he said, proudly, as he stopped with a click. "'Ave I not surprised ze true expression, so gracious, so spirituelle, of your Majesty? It is *chic*, hein?"

"How very clever of you!" cried Clemen-

"*I* think," said Torquil, candidly, "that it might be more like you if you had a hook nose and a hump on your back. But it's rather like 'Punch.'"

The Lord High Acrobat and the Ninepins admitted that the portrait certainly had a *look* of "Punch."

"But how *can* it have?" asked the Queen. "Because *I'm* not like 'Punch.' We're not even related! And I don't understand, Mr. Court Painter, how you could sit down to draw me and then do quite a different person of the name of 'Punch'!"

"Pardon!" he said. "An accident. Your Majesty is more difficult than I imagine."

"See if you can draw me," said Irene, who knew very well that he couldn't. "You can't say *I'm* not easy!"

"You would be nossing!" he replied. "Un'appily, ze impulsion 'ave all gone. I can vork no more."

"Oh, yes, you can!" insisted Irene, reversing his sheet of paper for him. "Just you wait a minute and see!"

And again she and Torquil worked the handle, and, of course, the artist proceeded to draw the very same outline of "Punch," only rather fainter.

"I 'ave succeed against my 'opes," he said, complacently. "A portrait that speaks!"

"My *dear* Buffidella!" cried the Queen; "it's the very image of you!" And all the Court said the same, which annoyed Irene extremely.

"It's nothing of the sort!" she declared. "Why, it's just 'Punch' over again. If you only *look* at me you must see I'm no more like 'Punch' than you are yourself!"

"She's right!" said Clementina, after looking critically at Irene. "Buffidella's nose is short and quite straight, and she has long hair, too, with waves in it. Can't you draw people *without* humps and hook noses?" she asked the painter.

"I *could*, madame, no doubt," he replied, "but it vould not be *Art*. Ze artiste draw as he see!"

"Don't you tell such corkers!" burst out Torquil. "You can't draw at all till you're wound up—and then it's always the same old head of 'Punch.' Why," he added to the others, "if you looked inside him you'd see the machinery he does it with!"

"Ze public," said the painter, grandly, "ave no concern viz ze inner life of ze artiste. He is judged by his vorks."

"But *your* works are all inside you!" said Torquil; "and they can't be seen unless you're opened."

But the artist protested that if he were once opened he would in all probability never be able to draw anything again.

"I don't think *that* would be any great loss," said Clementina, who had evidently lost all faith in him. "For there seems to be only one thing you can draw—and it's not even pretty. And if I had known you were so mechanical, I would never have let you be my Court painter. You needn't be opened *this* time, but if you wish to be forgiven you must learn to draw without being wound up, and to draw things out of your own head!"

And with these words she turned her back on him, while the Lord High Acrobat told the abashed artist that he hoped this exposure would be a warning to him for the future, and the Ninepins congratulated themselves on there being no machinery or nonsense of that sort inside *them*; and presently the whole Court moved on, leaving the painter in dumb despair, for he was apparently just beginning to realize that, try as he might, it was not in him to draw anything really original.

"You needn't have told them about the clockwork," said Irene to Torquil, as they followed the Court. "It would have been so horrid for him if they *had* opened him!"

"I wish they *had*," said Torquil; "I should have rather liked to see his works myself."

"But wouldn't that be cruel, Torquil? It might *hurt* him, you know!"

"Bosh!" said Torquil, carelessly. "He's only *tin*! And he was so jolly cocky, he wanted taking down a bit."

"What *I* can't understand," said Irene, thoughtfully, "is how Clementina could ever have thought he was *really* a great painter."

"Why, of course she didn't. She's not much better than some great silly kid, but she knows more than that. Don't you see how it is, Irene? She thinks we don't know that all the things here are only toys, and that we sha'n't find out if only they can keep on pretending enough."

"She *can't* be such a goose!" cried Irene. "Even Clementina must see that we're not to be taken in so easily as all that."

"Well, we'll soon *let* her see!" said Torquil; and just then they were interrupted by the Lord High Acrobat, who hopped fussily back to inform them that Her Majesty desired the pleasure of their company.

CHAPTER IV.

AWKWARD QUESTIONS AND CLUMSY ANSWERS.

"I WANT to show you some of the principal sights in my kingdom," said Clementina, as they rejoined her, "and I'm sure you'll be astonished. First, I'll take you to see my model farm, and I thought we'd go there in a train—by *railway*, you know. Perhaps you don't know what a railway is?"

"Oh, yes, we do," said Torquil.

"But not such a railway as mine," she said; "it's a beauty—it's got a tunnel, and a station, and a train, and everything. There it is, you see!"

Now it was quite a cheap clockwork railway, with circular lines and a tiny tin station, so they could not pretend to go into ecstasies

over it. "I see a train," said Torquil, "but I don't see how we're to go anywhere in it."

"We must find out," said Clementina. "There must be *some* way, or people wouldn't travel by train."

"Oh, I know how you travel by a real train," said Torquil; "I've done it ever so often."

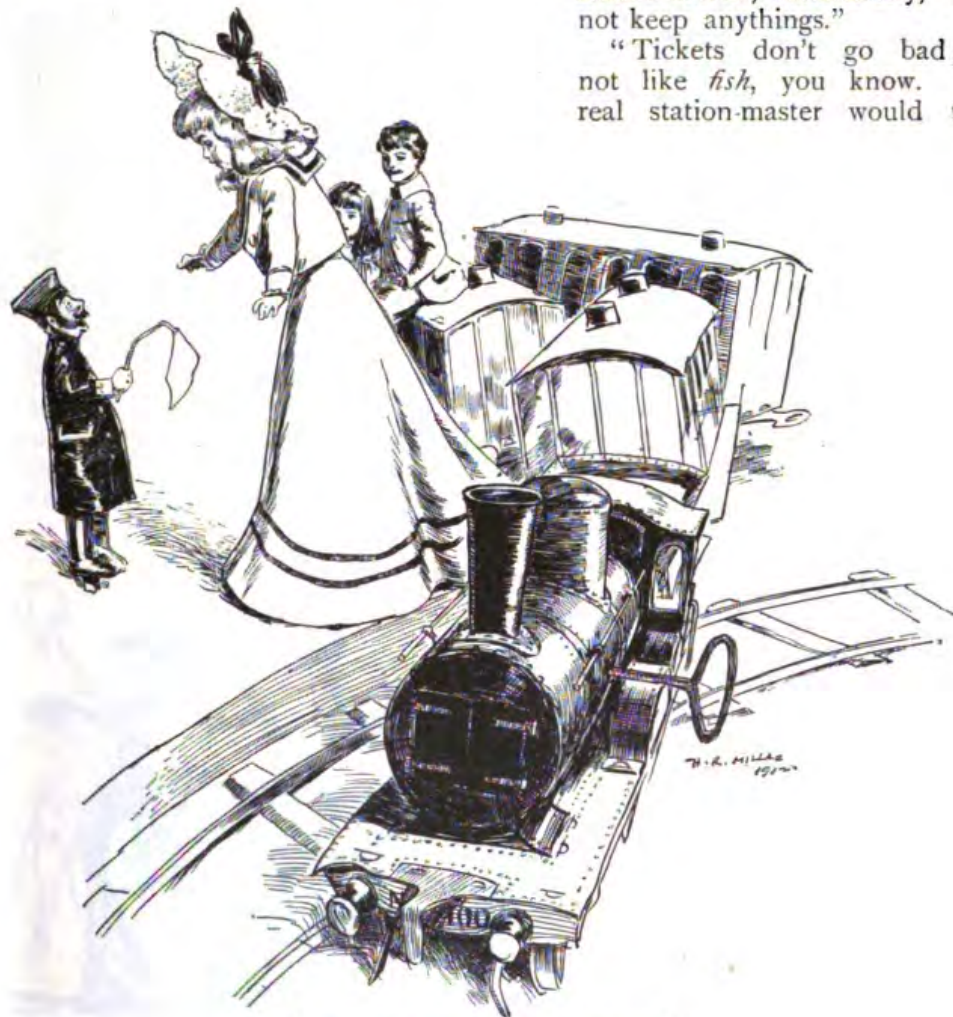
"Then it's all right," she said, "for, of

had no idea what tickets were, but he was too much of an official to admit it. "I regret, your Majesty," he said, with a slight accent that showed that he was made in Germany, "that I haf no dickets shoost now."

"At *real* stations," said Torquil, "they *have* to keep tickets."

"When it is hot vedder," replied the station-master, shamelessly, "you cannot keep anythings."

"Tickets don't go bad; they're not like *fish*, you know. And no real station-master would think of



"THE LITTLE STATION-MASTER STARED."

course, I shouldn't have any train that *wasn't* real. How do you begin?"

"You begin," said Torquil, "by getting tickets. The station-master keeps them."

"Of course," said Clementina. "There *is* the station-master." And with her usual toddle she bore down upon a very small plaster official in a flat cap with a red top to it, who was standing stolidly on a spike in the platform. "I'm the Queen, and I want to travel by train," she began. "Could you kindly give me some of your very best tickets?"

The little station-master stared; clearly he

allowing anybody to travel without a ticket."

"That is quite true," said the station-master, "but for the Queen, of course, I make exceptions." Which was really smart of him, for even Torquil wasn't sure whether Queens travelled free or had to take tickets like ordinary people.

"In future," said the Queen, "you mustn't allow anybody to travel without at least *one* ticket . . . What's the *next* thing to do, Buffidella, when you go by train?"

"Well, next," said Irene, who could scarcely believe Clementina could be so

ignorant, "you generally open one of the carriage doors and get in; only there aren't any doors to *these* carriages."

"Why, so there aren't!" cried Clementina. "What has become of all the carriage doors, Mr. Station-master?"

"On this line, your Majesty," he replied, "we nefer have doors—nefer."

"Then how do your passengers get in?" inquired Irene.

"They shtop outside," was the answer; "it is more comfortable—much."

"But I don't *want* to stop outside," said the Queen; "I want to get in—we all do."

"Only we can't," said Torquil, "because, you see, we're all a lot too big."

"It is petter outside," explained the station-master, placidly, "because I do not know when the train starts; and when it starts, always the second time round it runs off the rails—always."

"Oh," said Clementina, looking rather disappointed, "very well; but I must say I don't see that trains are so convenient to travel by, after all. They don't seem at all safe."

"Real trains are," said Torquil. "But, of course, this is a toy one."

If Clementina had known this all along and had been hoping he wouldn't notice it she certainly passed it off uncommonly well. "What do you mean, Mr. Station-master?" she said, in a tone that—for her—was almost severe. "What *do* you mean by providing me and my Court with a toy train? Be good enough to let us have a real one at once!"

"I am sorry," was all he could say, "but this is all the trains I have." Whereupon the Prime Minister said the line was disgracefully managed, and the Ninepins agreed that it was perfectly scandalous.

"What do you *expect*?" said Torquil; "he's only plaster. He couldn't manage a real railway if he *had* one."

But the Queen would listen to no excuses. "You're every bit as bad as the Court painter," she told the station-master; "and it's fortunate I found you out in time. I wouldn't travel by your line on any account. I shall walk to the model farm instead.

Luckily," she added to Irene and Torquil as she went on, "it's close by. And I know you'll be pleased with *that*. Mr. and Mrs. Farmer *do* understand how to manage *their* business. At least, so I've always understood. But if you *should* notice anything at all amiss; you must be sure and tell me of it." And Torquil promised to do so.

The model farm turned out to be the one that Irene had had on her last birthday but one. It was the ordinary toyshop affair, with the usual crinkly sheep and piebald pigs and cows, two horses, one Indian red and the other slate colour, and curly little trees on stands. Mr. and Mrs. Farmer, accompanied by an utterly impossible white and yellow dog, were standing at the gate to receive them.

"How do you do, Mr. and Mrs. Farmer?" began Clementina, in the friendliest manner. "I'm the Queen, you know, and I've brought my guests, Buffidella and Chipsitop, to see your beautiful farm."

"Your Majesty and your vrients are very velgom," said Mr. Farmer, with a much stronger accent than the station-master—perhaps because he had not had such a good



H. R. MILLER.
1905

"THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THE LINE WAS DISGRACEFULLY MANAGED."

education. "Egscuse that ve do nod salute. My hat he vill nod dake off, and my wife she is too thick that she make you a gurtsy."

"It doesn't matter in the least," said Clementina, who, for a Queen, was remarkably easy-going about etiquette. "Now, just

tell my friends exactly how you do your farming."

"How ve does our farmings?" repeated Mr. Farmer, with a bewildered look in his eyedots, and a general vacancy of expression that betrayed the blankest ignorance on the subject. "My wife, she exblain soch dings."

"There is nodings to exblain," said Mrs. Farmer, nervously. "We farms shoost like other beoples."

"Tell us," said Irene, who was, I am afraid, in a naughtily malicious frame of mind, "what you do first?"

"First," said Mrs. Farmer, "first, ve geds op."

"My wife she vorgeds," put in Mr. Farmer. "First, ve goes to ped. *Then* ve geds op."

"What *we* should like to know," said Torquil, "is what you do when you *are* up."

"Oh, vell," said Mrs. Farmer, obviously making it all up, "ve—ve vashes ze faces and necks of all ze ducks and geeses."

"We stayed at a real farm all one summer," said Torquil, "and *there* the ducks and geese washed themselves."

"Not bossible!" said Mr. Farmer. "Here zey are nod so glever. *Zen*," he continued, "ve visits ze pig-houses, to see if zey haf laid any ecks."

"Real pigs don't lay eggs," objected Torquil.

"I nefer said ve *find* any," said Mr. Farmer, craftily. "So, you see, my pigs *are* real pigs."

"Do you ever feed your animals?" Irene asked, feeling positive that he didn't.

"Oh, yes," he replied, "sontimes; zey ged som foods—yes."

"What sort of food do you give them?"

His little eyes wandered till they finally rested on the carpet, which seemed to give him an idea. "I gifs zem floff," he said, boldly; "floff, and—and dea-leafs."

"Real farmyard animals wouldn't *look* at fluff or tea-leaves either!"

"Qvide drue!" said Mr. Farmer; "mine also zey vill nod look at it."

"How do you milk your cows?" inquired Irene, who wasn't going to be put off like this.

"I bulls their ears," said Mrs. Farmer, desperately, "and bresently ze milg it com drickling out of their horns. To-day," she added, cautiously, "it is a holiday, so zey vill nod vork."

"All *I* know is," said Irene, "that it's not the place people *usually* milk a cow."

"But so long as you get the milk," said Clementina, "what *does* it matter? And the

sheep are splendid, now *aren't* they, Buffidella?"

"It makes them look rather silly having those red neckties on," said Irene.

"Nod any more silly as they are alretty!" retorted Mr. Farmer, standing up for his sheep like a man. "I likes my sheeps, you see, to be smart and like shendlemans."

"No gentleman *ever* wears a red made-up bow," said Torquil, who must have learnt this at school, "though I dare say it's right enough for a sheep. When do you begin making hay?"

"If you knew only a liddle apout farmings," said Mr. Farmer, "you vould understant that you cannod *make* hay. He *crows*."

"Of course it grows first, and then you make it afterwards, with rakes," said Torquil. "I know, because I've helped real farmers to make it."

"*My* hay," said Mr. Farmer, "crows all retty made."

"Then you ought to have haystacks; but there don't seem to *be* any," said Irene.

"I dell you vy nod. *Zey* vas all throwed away mit ze shavinks."

"What bosh!" said Torquil. "How could you throw haystacks away with shavings?"

"I don't know, bot I *exbect*," said Mr. Farmer, at his wits' end, "ze haystags zey vould be in ze poddom of ze box mit ze shavinks, and so, you see, ven zey are throwed away, ze haystags zey go also."

"If you go and lose your haystacks like that," said Irene, "you *must* be a careless farmer!"

"I'm afraid he's not so careful as I thought he was," said Clementina, "and as you know so much about it, Buffidella, the best plan vould be for you to live in the farm-house and show them how to farm properly."

"She shall lif mit us as one of our vamilies; yes," said Mr. Farmer—which was good natured of him, under the circumstances.

"Ve gif her ze best pedrooms," added Mrs. Farmer.

But Irene did not at all approve of this proposal. It vould be even stupider living at the farm than in the dolls' house. "It's all very well to talk about giving me the best bedroom," she said, "but you can't help knowing that the farm-house is much too small to hold either of you!"

"I dell you vy," explained Mr. Farmer; "it looks schmall begause it is a long vay off—all houses zey do that sontimes."

Irene felt baffled for the moment, for she

could not deny that houses have a way of looking small at a distance. But at last she saw a way out of the difficulty. "But *your* house can't be large enough for me," she said, "when I can sit on the roof quite easily!"

And she did—to Mr. Farmer's intense

"We're wood ourselves, but we're descended from a very old family indeed, and if we're to be told——"

"Buffidella didn't mean that, I'm sure," said the Queen. "*Everybody* can't be wax in this world, and whether they're china, or wood, or plaster, or tin, or anything else, is



W. R. GILMAN. 1908.

"I CAN SIT ON THE ROOF QUITE EASILY."

annoyance. "You do nod blay fair!" he said. "My house is pig enoff for every-potties — brovided zey go nod too near."

"He *must* know, Buffidella," said the Queen; "it's his own house. And I particularly want you to live here and teach them to farm."

"Nobody could teach them to farm properly," she said, "when they've only got a *toy* farm."

"My beautiful farm nothing but a toy!" cried Clementina. "Oh, Buffidella, you *must* be mistaken."

"But I'm not!" said Irene. "Just look at it. All their animals are wood—and so are they."

"Really!" exclaimed the Ninepins, drawing themselves up. "We cannot see that *that* is any discredit."

"Far from it," chimed in the Dutch dolls.

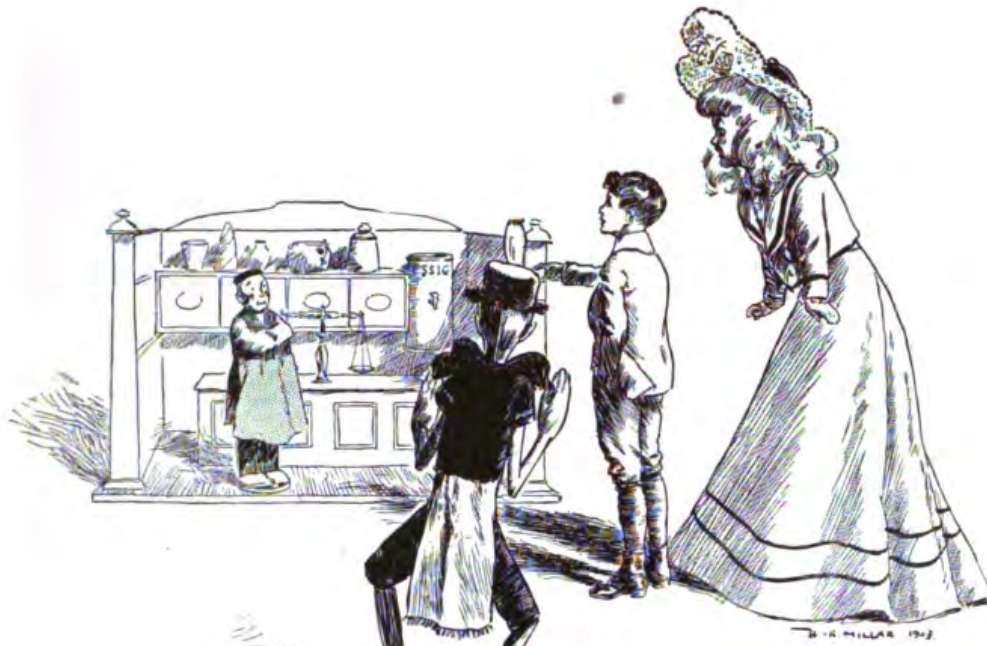
of no consequence so long as they're not toys—like Mr. and Mrs. Farmer—trying to pass themselves off as real persons. *That* is a very serious offence indeed, and anyone found out doing it deserves to be severely punished!"

"But, your Majesty!" protested Mr. Farmer, "ve nefer bass oursellefs off as nodings! And I do nod beleaf ve are no more doys as everypotties else!"

"Buffidella and Chipsitop say you *are*, and they're so clever they must know best," said the Queen. "However, I will let you off this once, on condition that you behave better for the future."

And she went on with the Court, leaving the unfortunate Mr. and Mrs. Farmer standing by their gate, staring first at one another and then at their cattle, as if they were slowly beginning to suspect that they were not quite real after all.

(To be continued.)



ONLY TOYS!

BY F. ANSTEY.

A STORY FOR BOYS AND GIRLS—PART I.

CHAPTER V.

THE SHOWING-UP OF MR. GROCER.



QUEEN CLEMENTINA seemed a little cast down as they left the model farm. "I'm afraid," she remarked, uneasily, to Torquil and Irene, "you'll think I can't be very clever to have taken a toy railway and farm for real ones all this time?"

Torquil said, "Oh, I don't know!" and Irene, "Not at all!"—which might mean anything.

"The fact is," continued Clementina, "I've lived too much in my own drawer. I oughtn't to have left everything to the Lord High Acrobat. I thought he knew all about railways and farming. But now I'll take you to see the Grocer," she added, more brightly; "*he's* real enough, at all events. He has a splendid shop with the largest assortment of everything. The Admiral gets all the stores from him—for the Navy."

"I didn't know you *had* a Navy," said Torquil, in some surprise.

"Every Sovereign has to have a Navy of some sort," said the Queen. "Mine's a magnificent one. We'll go and inspect it

presently, when we've done our shopping."

By this time they had arrived at the Grocer's shop, which, as both the children knew, had come from the old Lowther Arcade just before it was pulled down. It would have been more like a real shop if it had had a roof and windows instead of being perfectly open, and if there

had been a counter along each side instead of only one in front. And it had big drawers with china labels, and queer wooden pots and jars, which you would never find in any proper grocer's establishment.

The proprietor was a meek little plaster man with a flat top to his head, side whiskers, and a faint smirk on his pink and white face; he seemed slightly disconcerted by the arrival of his Sovereign and so august a company, and would evidently have rubbed his hands if they had not been so closely folded in front of him.

"Good evening, Mr. Grocer," said Clementina, for, like Mr. and Mrs. Farmer, he appeared to have no private name of his own. "I want some wine for my next State banquet. *Real* wine, I mean. My friends here, Buffidella and Chipsitop, can't drink any other kind. Do you keep it?"

"Certainly, your Majesty, certainly! I have a most extensive stock of everything."

"Didn't I *tell* you!" whispered Clementina in Irene's ear. "Which wine?" she said aloud, "do you recommend?"

Mr. Grocer's eye wandered round his shelves until at length it rested on a cask labelled "Essig." "There—there is Essig,"

he said ; " that is very nice wine." He, too, they noticed, spoke with a slightly foreign accent.

" I thought Essig was German for vinegar," said Irene, who had lately begun German.

" *German* for vinegar, certainly," answered the Grocer, readily ; " English for *wine*—excellent, I can assure you ! "

" It wasn't at all excellent when *I've* tasted it," said Irene ; " it was all sour and horrid."

" Indeed ? " he said. " Perhaps you tasted it in German. Will you have a pound of it now, or a yard only ? "

" You can't sell vinegar by the yard ! " said Irene.

" Not vinegar—no," he replied ; " but Essig—yes." He was so serious that Irene was a little puzzled by him.

" Then you can give me a *little* Essig, just to taste," she said.

" I am sorry," he stammered ; " but I cannot sell less than a yard."

" Very well," said Irene, who now felt convinced that he couldn't sell any at all. " I'll have a yard of it—only you must put it in a jug or a pail, you know."

As she expected, this embarrassed the plaster Grocer most frightfully, for he couldn't possibly have turned the tap of the cask labelled " Essig," even if it had been made to turn (which it wasn't), not to mention that the cask—as he must have known perfectly well—was empty. At last he said : " I should strongly advise you to have some starch instead."

" Starch doesn't *sound* like anything to drink ! " said Irene.

" It makes no sound whatever," said the Grocer ; " it—it's the same quality I supply to Mr. and Mrs. Farmer."

" Never mention them again in *my* presence ! " interrupted Clementina, with feeling. " I fear, Mr. Grocer, they have imposed on you, as they have on us all ! "

" Imposed on *me!*" cried the Grocer. " Is it possible ? "

" They aren't real farm people at all," said the Queen ; " just wooden Toys. And they never said a *word* about it. So *deceitful* of them ! "

" Very, your Majesty ! " agreed the Grocer. " I'm sure I'd no idea they weren't plaster."

" I should never have found them out if it hadn't been for my two friends here," said the Queen. " They're so clever they can tell *directly* whether a person is what he pretends to be, or only a Toy."

" Dear me ! " exclaimed the plaster Grocer " Can they, indeed ? A—a most desirable

accomplishment, I dare say." But he looked far from comfortable. " And no wonder ! " thought Irene, indignantly. " Anyone but Clementina would have found out long ago that *he* doesn't know much about grocering ! "

" Now this *is* fortunate ! " cried the Queen, suddenly, forgetting her annoyance. " Here comes the dear Admiral."

Accustomed as they were becoming to the Toys' extraordinary powers of making-believe, even Torquil and Irene were surprised when the Admiral turned out to be nobody but Noah.

He came lumbering up in the same old broad-brimmed hat and long brown coat with big yellow buttons ; his features were just as sketchy and undecided, and his beard was too obviously down or rabbit's fur to give him a really venerable appearance. He did not even wear epaulettes or a sword, which was perhaps as well, for they would only have made him look more absurd.

Clementina, however, evidently thought he was all right, and introduced Torquil and Irene with the remark that they would like very much to inspect the fleet presently, if it was ready.

" The Navy," said Noah, stolidly, " is *always* ready. Which is only its duty as the first line of defence. And so long—as I've often told your Majesty—so long as our fleet retains the command of the carpet no enemy can effect a landing upon our national oil-cloth."

" I'm sure *you'll* take care he doesn't do that," said Clementina, comfortably. " Have you come to order some stores for the fleet ? "

" Only a little hempseed to-day," said Noah, who evidently was also of German origin. " For the lions, you know."

" Are you *quite* sure you don't mean the canaries ? " inquired Irene.

" For the canaries *too*, of course ! " said Noah. " *All* two-legged animals are fond of hempseed."

" But a lion is a *quadruped*," objected Torquil.

" *Never*—if treated properly ! " replied Noah, with great decision.

" I mean, a lion has four legs—not two," said Torquil ; " I should have thought you knew *that*."

" Not *my* lions," said Noah, with an air of triumph ; " why, they've only three legs between the pair of them. How much is your very best hempseed to-day, Mr. Grocer ? "

" The *very* best is two beads a pound," replied the Grocer, glibly. " But I've also an inferior quality at four beads a pound which is quite as good."



"HOW MUCH IS YOUR VERY BEST HEMPSEED TO-DAY, MR. GROCER?"

"Why do you charge exactly twice as much for it?" Torquil wanted to know.

The Grocer paused before answering. "Because," he said at length, "the best is exactly twice as bad."

"That's nonsense," said Torquil. "The best *can't* be the worst."

"It can," said the Grocer, "when bad's the best of it."

"I don't believe you know a bit what you're talking about," said Torquil. "But aren't you going to serve Mr. Noah with something?"

"Thankee, thankee," said Noah, hastily. "He *has* served me!"

"No, he hasn't. He hasn't given you a single seed yet!"

"How can I," said the Grocer, "when he hasn't given *me* a single seed?"

"You can give him *credit* for it, can't you? That's what grocers do."

"I know *that*," said the Grocer, who was getting very badgered. "But it so happens that I'm quite out of credit. I sold the last pot I had of it only a little time ago to—a gentleman of the name of Golliwogg," he added, unblushingly.

"You can't keep credit in *pots*!" said Torquil.

"Exactly so," said the Grocer; "that's why I sold it!"

"You *couldn't* have sold it to a Golliwogg,"

said Irene, "because nobody ever gave me—I mean," she corrected herself, "because I *know* there's no such person *here*."

"Perhaps you are not aware," retorted the Grocer, with a mild attempt to assert himself, "that some of my customers reside at a considerable distance—all over the world, in fact."

"Any way," said Torquil, "I can't see why you shouldn't put the hempseed down in Admiral Noah's bill."

"That's impossible," replied the Grocer, "because, not being a bird, he hasn't *got* a bill. The canaries have bills, but it would puzzle you to put anything in *them*."

"It strikes me, Mr. Grocer," said Clementina, "that Chipsitop is cleverer about business than you are. Now, I've a splendid idea. Why shouldn't you two go into partnership?"

Torquil turned extremely red. "Thanks," he said, "but—but I'd rather not."

Of course, he knew that nowadays you can be in almost any sort of business and still be a gentleman, provided that you are one already; but Irene guessed that he was afraid that, if he ever recovered his proper size and went to school again, and it came out that he had been partners with a plaster grocer, the fellows might "rot" him about it.

"But why not?" asked Clementina, opening her eyes very wide. "I'm sure you're quite *clever* enough!"

"It isn't me—it's him!" explained Torquil (he knew his grammar wouldn't have satisfied Miss Barlow, but it was good enough for Toys). "He isn't even a real grocer—he's got nothing inside any of his jars and drawers and things, and he wouldn't know how to sell it if he had. There's no fun in pretending to keep a *toy* grocer's shop."

"Oh, Mr. Grocer!" cried Clementina, much pained. "I did *not* expect this. So *you* are only a Toy, too!"

"Your Majesty," protested the Grocer, "I can only say that never in all the time I have been in business has such a thing been even suggested before!"

"You have been very clever in avoiding suspicion," said the Lord High Acrobat; "but I'm afraid there's little doubt that your grocery shop is a sham, and that you yourself are no better than a Toy."

"No doubt whatever," declared the Nine-

pins, and the one with the knob on his head hinted that, if it had been his place to speak, he could have told them as much long ago.

"After this," said Admiral Noah, "I shall most certainly get my supplies somewhere else."

"It's really very dreadful," complained the Queen; "so many of my subjects seem to be turning out to be Toys in disguise. First the Court Painter, and then the Station-master, and Mr. and Mrs. Farmer—and now Mr. Grocer here! It must be stopped somehow. I must make an example of Mr. Grocer. Let him be confiscated immediately!"

"Oh, your Majesty!" pleaded the unfortunate Grocer; "not that! not *that!* Why, I don't even know what it means!"

"Well," said Clementina, who obviously was by no means sure herself, "I will let you off being confiscated this once, on condition that you never do it again."

"I promise," said the Grocer.

"Then mind you don't," said the Queen. "Admiral, we will now inspect the Navy, if you please."

"But what *is* it that the Grocer has promised not to do again?" Irene could not resist asking her as they moved on.

"I really don't know, Buffidella, my dear," she replied; "but it doesn't signify, as he isn't going to *do* it."

"But if he doesn't know what it is himself?" pursued Irene.

"In *that* case," said Clementina, "he *couldn't* do it again if he *tried!*"

CHAPTER VI.

MORE PLAIN TRUTHS.

"FORTUNATELY," said the Queen, as Admiral Noah conducted the party towards the edge of the drugget, "there's no danger of Buffidella and Chipsitop not being impressed by the *Navy*. Nobody could say *that* was a Toy, *could* they, Admiral?"

"It is not possible," said Noah, though he seemed to be getting a little nervous. "No, no, the Navy is all right—there it lies, you see, in the —er—offing." And he jerked his head stiffly in the direction of Irene's old Noah's Ark, which was lying high and dry on the carpet.

"You don't mean to say that's *all* the Navy?" cried Torquil, who, in spite of himself, had half expected a gunboat or two—or at least a clockwork steamer.

"Yes, all of it—from stem to stern," said Noah. "You are surprised—yes?"

"Well," said Torquil, "I *did* expect more than that old ark of yours."

"It is not the *newest* pattern of fighting ship, perhaps," said Noah; "but the only one I should ever feel myself at home in."

"I shouldn't call it a *fighting* ship at all myself."

"You would if you were inside it," said Noah; "it is full of lions, and tigers, and elephants, and guinea pigs and things—and you know that such animals will fight when they get together. I assure you the bottom of the hold is already over my feet in horns and tails and ears and legs, and such articles!"

"But where do you put the big guns?"

"With the other animals, of course; I make no favourites."

"Guns aren't *animals*," Irene informed him.

"Then I can't take them on board *my* navy," said Noah.

"You see, Buffidella," put in the Queen, "guns would be no use to guinea-pigs, *would* they, now?"

"You can't have a real navy without guns," said Torquil, "or funnels, and torpedoes, and searchlights, and lots of other things arks don't have."

"I've put to sea without them all *my* life," said Noah, obstinately.

"I don't believe you've ever put to sea at all," said Torquil; "how can you, when you haven't any engines, or even masts and sails?"

"I can *flout*, I suppose?" retorted Noah, sulkily.

"Only on the carpet. If you tried to on real water your ark would sink, or else turn topsy-turvy."

"A very good reason for sticking to the carpet," was Noah's reply to this.

"Of course," said Clementina. "The Navy would be no use topsy-turvy, you know!"

"A navy that daren't go to sea is no use anyhow," persisted Torquil. "Why, even a clockwork steamer could get half-way across the Round Pond."

"So could the ark," said Noah, stoutly; "in the dustiest weather, too!"

"It isn't dusty on the Round Pond—it's jolly wet!"

"Then all the paint would wash off, and my beautiful ark would be good for nothing."

"It can't be good for much as it is, with nothing but a lot of broken animals on board!"

"We have all the pieces," said Noah; "with a little glue they will be as fit as ever to defend their country!"

"But they never *were* fit!" argued Torquil. "You can't call it a navy when it won't float on real water and hasn't got a single cannon—now *can* you?"

"Certainly I can, if I choose," said Noah; "what *else* do you call it?"

"Well," said Torquil, "*I* call it a toy Noah's Ark—and that's all it *is*, too!"



“WELL,” SAID TORQUIL, “I CALL IT A TOY NOAH’S ARK.”

There was a general outcry at this. The whole Court was horrified to hear that the Navy they were so proud of was nothing but a Toy after all.

"I shouldn't make such a fuss about it if I were you," said Irene, a little disdainfully. "There's no reason why you shouldn't go on *pretending* it's a navy, if you choose!"

"No, Buffidella," said the Queen; "I can't put up with pretences now that I know the truth. And I *do* think the Lord High Acrobat ought to have seen that I had a regular real navy, like other crowned heads!"

"I don't pretend to be a judge of navies myself, your Majesty," said the Prime Minister. "I left all naval matters to Admiral Noah and he seemed perfectly satisfied—at least, he made no complaints."

"Over and over again," protested Noah, "I have complained that every animal ought to have a berth to itself, and that the grasshopper and ladybirds had not nearly enough elbow-room. But you took no notice!"

"It would have made no difference," said the Lord High Acrobat, "if, as it seems, they are nothing but wooden Toys."

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"It is not so!" said Noah. "They are no more Toys than *I* am!"

"Perhaps not," replied the Lord High Acrobat. "But you may be one *yourself*, you know!"

"Oh, Chipsitop, no!" cried Clementina, "Not the *Admiral*! He *can't* be a Toy!"

"He belongs to the same *set*, you know," Torquil felt obliged to answer. "I don't know what else he is *but* a Toy."

"Then," said Clementina, pettishly, "if I've only a pretence navy and a toy Admiral I might just as well have none at all. Mr. Noah, I sha'n't require your services any more, and don't ever let me see you again."

Noah stood staring at her as if he hadn't understood; at last he said, in a dull, muffled voice, "Very good, your Majesty. Then I shall have to go aboard and break it to my poor wife and the boys and my three daughters-in-law that we're only a set of useless Toys after all. I expect the shock will send them all off their stands; but, there, I'd better get it over."

And he shuffled feebly away without the least display of sympathy from the Court; the Lord High Acrobat remarked that it was quite clear that the Navy required to be brought up to a more modern standard, while the chief Ninepin considered that it was lucky they had made the discovery in time, and the others agreed that anything was better than living in a state of false security.

I should like to be able to say that Irene was a little sorry for poor old Noah, or for Clementina's evident disappointment; but the truth is she considered it served them both right for giving themselves such airs. "Though why she should dismiss him like that, I *don't* know," she said to Torquil, privately; "he did quite well enough for all she is likely to want."

Clementina soon cheered up. "After all," she said, "it doesn't matter so much about the Navy—it's only the first line of defence, and, fortunately, I've a splendid Army to defend me if an invader ever *does* come. Would you like to see my Army, Chipsitop?"

Torquil knew they would only be tin and

wooden soldiers, which he never had cared much about. However, as she made such a point of it, he had to say, ungraciously enough, that he "didn't mind."

"The Field-Marshal is just going to have a review," she said; "we'll go and look on, and you shall tell me what you think of my troops."

The whole army was drawn up on an open space not very far away, and really made a most imposing appearance; there were horse, foot, and artillery of various sizes; only one regiment of Grenadiers was wood, and that was the one the sentry belonged to—the rest were lead.

The Field-Marshal himself was lead, and looked extremely smart in his cocked hat and feathers and scarlet tunic. He had a very pink complexion, and the rings of white paint round each eye gave him quite a fierce expression. He was mounted on a spirited charger, which seemed unaware that it had lost its tail.

Clementina at once informed him of the painful discovery she had made about her Navy, and, on the whole, he seemed rather pleased than otherwise. "I always thought it a mistake to rely too much on the fleet, your Majesty," he said, in a thin metallic voice. "Never was what I call 'efficient.' I'd certainly no notion that Noah and his crew were Toys--but they were thoroughly behind the times; antiquated, in fact. You can't hope to defeat an enemy nowadays without modern weapons. I'm glad to say the Army is provided with rifles of the latest pattern—all except the Grenadiers, and they stick to the old 'pink Bess'—it's one of their regimental customs, and, of course, it doesn't do to interfere with them unnecessarily."

"Of course not," said the Queen. "And they're all brave, *aren't* they, Mr. Field-Marshal?"

"Brave!" he repeated. "Why, these fellows will face the hottest fire of peas and slate-pencil, and stand firm under it, without so much as flinching!"

"They don't seem to stand very firm when they *aren't* under fire," said the terrible Torquil, as a private at one end of a rank fell against his neighbour and brought down the entire line, which is a common habit of tin soldiery, and one that Torquil had always found too much for his patience.

"That's only the regulation way of falling in," said the Field-Marshal; "and very smartly they did it, too!"

Whether this was a mere excuse or not, the

men certainly managed to pick themselves up again without assistance, as they had never done for Torquil.

"You *do* think the Army's all right, *don't* you, Chipsitop?" Clementina asked, anxiously. "I mean, if I had to go to war or anything."

"It all depends on what sort of wars you have," he replied; "but they wouldn't have been of any use out in South Africa!"

"Why not?" said the Field-Marshal, sharply. "What makes you think that?"

"Because," said Torquil, "for *one* thing, their rifles won't fire powder and shot."

"Pooh!" said the Field-Marshal; "what does a civilian like you know about such things?"

"Well, I can see for myself they're just solid pieces of painted tin."

"But they've got bayonets!"

"You must know perfectly well that a gun isn't the least good if there's no barrel for the bullet."

"I don't know anything of the kind, and I'll guarantee that every gun here will go off when it's wanted to. I've every confidence in the gallant fellows under me!"

"Are their guns loaded now?" asked Torquil.

"I have no reason to suppose they are *not*," replied the Field-Marshal, with dignity.

"Well, I don't mind letting them have a shot at *me*, if they can."

"No," said the Field-Marshal; "no, I won't order them to stain their hands with useless bloodshed, especially at a review!"

"Then tell one of them to fire in the air, and see what happens."

"That's quite safe, Mr. Field-Marshal," said Clementina; "and really I should like to feel quite sure that the guns will shoot properly."

"Entirely as your Majesty pleases," said the Field-Marshal, stiffly. "Send a soldier forward, will you?" he called out to the Army, and presently a rather small private in a red coat and white helmet, with his rifle held at the charge, as if to defend himself against cavalry, came sliding out on his green tin stand, until he stood in front of the commander.

"Her Majesty wishes to see if you can let your gun off," said the Field-Marshal.

"Well," said the soldier, cheerfully, "I can but *try*, sir." (He was pointing the muzzle full at the Queen as he spoke, but nobody seemed to mind.) "Let me see, it's done with the *trigger*, ain't it?"

"According to the new drill," said the Field-Marshal, gravely. "Press the trigger

before you shoot and fire in the air. Ready—present—shoot!

Of course, there was no discharge, or the bullet, if there had been one, would certainly have gone through Clementina. "It's a

"Of course they are, and it's all rubbish to call them defenders of your country when one or two peas will bowl over the lot!"

"Ah! he's right *there*," said the Ninepins, shaking their heads. "We don't pretend to be military men, but it would take more than that to upset *us*. This army's a hollow fraud!"

"I'm afraid it's only too true!" said Clementina, looking as depressed as a wax doll ever *can* look; "I must get along without you and the army in future, Mr. Field-Marshal."

It might have been fancy, but Irene thought she could see two tin tears glittering in the General's eyes as he sat there on his tailless horse.

"But what's to become of us all?"



"HE WAS POINTING THE MUZZLE FULL AT THE QUEEN."

funny thing," said the soldier, "but this rifle seems to be the kind that won't fire *in* the air."

"You should have put it up to your shoulder," said his commanding officer.

"Begging your pardon, sir, it's another regiment as fires from the shoulder, not mine."

"Then you couldn't have pressed the trigger," the Field-Marshal said.

"Well, no, I didn't do that, sir; because, you see, there *ain't* no trigger to this here rifle."

"Oh, very well. I see. You may go, then," said the Field-Marshal. "He *would* have fired, your Majesty," he explained, "but his rifle didn't happen to have a trigger."

"Of course it hadn't," said Torquil; "none of them have. That's why I say they're no real protection."

"But you don't mean that they aren't brave?" cried Clementina.

"I never said they were *funks*," he replied. "All *I* say is they're ordinary tin soldiers. You can get them for elevenpence-halfpenny a box at any toy-shop."

"Then *they* are Toys, too?" gasped the Queen.

he said. "We can't be anything *but* soldiers, because our uniforms won't come off!"

"I can't help it," said Clementina; "you're no soldiers of *mine*. The best thing you can do is to march your troops back to the toy-shop, and defend *that*."

And she toddled off haughtily, for she was seriously vexed.

Irene and Torquil were quite ready to let the matter end there, but the Lord High Acrobat wouldn't hear of it. He said that he had grave reasons for fearing that there might be other fellow-citizens who were really undetected Toys, and proposed to form a committee of inquiry, on which all the Ninepins eagerly volunteered to serve.

"I suppose we had better know the worst!" agreed Clementina, with a little sigh, "and if you *should* find anyone at all suspicious, we must ask Chipsitop and Buffidella to decide whether he's a Toy or not."

It was extraordinary how sharp the Ninepins were, and how zealously they entered upon their work. In next to no time the Ninepin with the knob created a sensation by reporting that the little market women were suspiciously like the ladies of

ex-Admiral Noah's family. They had much the same figure, with, perhaps, rather smaller waists; their arms were glued to their sides, and none of their vegetables would come off their stalls or out of the baskets; he had no hesitation, he said, in taxing them with being Toys.

Another Ninepin denounced the butcher for being unable to explain how he conducted his business or even say which of his joints were mutton and which beef, while a third had serious doubts about the gentleman in a tall hat and top boots who kept the livery stables, and who certainly couldn't harness a single one of his horses.

A fourth Ninepin inspected the theatre, and found that the cardboard company were perfectly flat and plain when you went behind—from which he inferred that they couldn't be real actors and actresses. This, it is true, was of less consequence, because there were never any performances; still, as the Ninepin said, very justly, if they *should* patronize the drama at any time, they naturally expected to have the genuine article.

And so the Ninepins all solemnly appealed to Torquil and Irene (who, however, was too helplessly overcome by laughter to give any opinion) to pronounce that all these people were unmitigated Toys.

"Of course they are," said Torquil, who was losing all patience with them. "And so are *you*, if it comes to that!"

"Really," cried the Ninepins, reeling with surprise and indignation, "this is a down-



"HE SIMPLY COLLAPSED WITHOUT ANOTHER WORD."

right insult. But we scorn to answer it. Why, we don't even *look* like toys!"

"You great stuck-up, thick-headed things!" said Irene, scornfully. "You don't look like anything but a set of Ninepins—the very stupidest toys that were ever invented—so *there!*"

"And we actually took them for real courtiers," exclaimed the Dutch dolls. "Why, now we come to look at them, they've no arms or legs, and their faces are positively *plain*. In our position we can't be expected to associate with them any longer."

"You needn't be so particular," retorted the chief Ninepin. "For all *you* know, you're no better than we are."

"What a shameful thing to say!" cried all the Dolls of honour. "It's a wicked story—*isn't* it, Buffidella?"

"Oh, don't ask *me*," said Irene, faintly; "it's too ridiculous, you know."

"Buffidella," cried the Queen, "don't go and be ill again. Tell me—*are* they Toys?"

"Well," said Irene, "they're *dolls*, you know. And dolls are a kind of Toys."

"Dolls!" repeated Clementina, closing her eyes. "Then I haven't even a real *Court* now!"

"Don't give way, your Majesty!" put in the Lord High Acrobat, hopping to her side.



"You have still a real Prime Minister."

"How do *I* know?" she said, peevishly. "Chipsitop may say *you're* a Toy next!"

"That's out of the question, your Majesty. The line must be drawn *somewhere*. Me--a Prime Minister who has spent his quicksilver in the service of his Sovereign and turned more somersaults, though I say it myself, than any statesman living. Me, with a career like mine, a *Toy!* The very idea is absurd!"

"Real Prime Ministers," remarked Torquil, "don't turn somersaults downstairs. I know *that!*"

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UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

"No one ever said they did!" replied the Lord High Acrobat. "So I've given it up since I became Prime Minister."

"That wasn't why, though!" said Torquil. "And you wouldn't have done it at all unless you had been a toy. After all," he added, generously, "there's no *harm* in being one. I don't see why you should mind."

But, whether it was unreasonable or not, the Lord High Acrobat evidently *did* mind very much; he simply collapsed without another word. The Ninepins, too, had staggered off in different directions and toppled over; the Dutch and composition dolls lay about in forlorn heaps; the entire army had fallen in their ranks, and such Toys as still remained standing had no expression or animation left in them.

"I've got no subjects left now," said poor Clementina, "so it's hardly worth while going on being a Queen. But *I* don't care!" she went on, gushingly; "I've got *you*, my darling Buffidella, and *you*, my clever Chipsitop—and you are all the companions *I* want!"

And here, to Torquil's embarrassment, she flung her waxen arms round his neck.

"I say, you know," he said, flushing, "I don't like being pawed about. And I'd rather you wouldn't call me 'Chipsitop'—it's such a feeble name to call a fellow!"

"Is it?" she said, good-temperedly. "I can easily invent another. How do you like 'Topsichip?'"

"Not a bit!" he said. "If you *must* call me anything, I'd rather it was my own name—and so would Irene."

"I don't know why you're so cross," she said, staring. "I'm so fond of both of you, and you don't seem to care a bit for *me*. *I* couldn't help my kingdom being all Toys. It isn't as if——" but here she stopped short. "Oh, it can't be *that*!" she cried. "Don't tell me *I'm* one, too!"

To do Irene justice, she really felt a little sorry for her then—but what could she say? Clementina *was* only a doll, and not even a clever one, and it was no use to pretend otherwise; so Irene didn't say anything. Torquil was silent, too; he objected to sentiment, especially in dolls—it made him feel so uncomfortable.

"I see," said Clementina at last, with her set smile. "It's *true*, then. *I am* only a Toy."

"Well, a *doll*," said Irene; "and quite an expensive one. I shouldn't *worry* about it, you know," she added, consolingly. "*We* don't mind, so long as you don't cuddle us, or call us stupid pet names. One doesn't expect that from dolls, you know!"

Clementina made no answer. She fell forward, still smiling vacantly, and lay there, limp and motionless, at their feet.

And then they heard the chink-chink-chink of Santa Claus's sleigh bells outside, and the next moment Santa Claus himself came striding in.



T. E. MILLAR (1907)

"WELL, CHILDREN!" HE BEGAN, CHEERILY, "BEEN HAVING A PLEASANT TIME WITH ALL YOUR TOYS, EH?"

"Well, children!" he began, cheerily, "been having a pleasant time with all your toys, eh?"

And then he took in the scattered rows and heaps of prostrate figures, and his expression suddenly altered. "I arranged," he said, slowly, "that the Toys should be able to move about and talk on purpose to make it easier for you to get to know them all. How is it that I find them like this?"

It was curious—but, although Torquil and Irene felt quite sure that it was no fault of theirs, neither of them for the moment was ready with an answer.



BY F. ANSTEY.

A STORY FOR BOYS AND GIRLS.—PART II.

CHAPTER VII.

SANTA CLAUS TRIES AGAIN.

“WELL,” Santa Claus asked once more, “how is it that all the Toys are lying idle, instead of using the powers I gave them?”

“I don’t know,” said Torquil, “unless they got tired.”

“You see, Santa Claus,” Irene insinuated, “you *have* left us here with them *rather* a long time.”

“It’s very singular,” said Santa Claus; “Toys don’t get tired of being played with, as a rule. I must inquire into this.” And he went towards the spot where Clementina was lying. “Come, come, your Majesty,” he said, “this won’t do. Why are you neglecting my young friends here, instead of making them feel at home in your dominion?”

Clementina raised herself slowly to a kneeling position: “Because I can’t, Santa Claus,” she replied, dejectedly; “I’ve found out that I’m not a real Majesty—only a Doll—and all my people are only Dolls and Toys, too.”

“Indeed,” said Santa Claus. “And how did you find out *that*?”

“Well, it was Buffidella and Chipsi—oh, I forgot, I mustn’t be so familiar with them—they don’t like it; but *they* told us what we were.”

“But there’s nothing to be ashamed of in that. It’s just the reason why I wanted you to play with them.”

“If you please,” said Clementina, humbly, “we’d so much rather not play any more. We’re too stupid to do things properly, and we haven’t houses and food and shops or anything like they ought to be, so it’s really no *use* going on. We can’t even pretend to one another any longer, and your clever friends will only look down on us all the more. Please, *please* take them away and leave us in peace!” And she fell forward again and said no more.

“Come with me,” said Santa Claus to Irene and Torquil, and they gladly obeyed.

“You don’t seem to have made yourselves very agreeable, do you?” he remarked, when they were some distance away. “Wouldn’t

it have been better manners not to let them suspect that they were any different from yourselves?"

"We didn't at first," said Irene. "But they really were too silly. They can't play sensibly!"

"And they think they know everything!" said Torquil. "They *will* try to go by train, and keep shops, and have an army and navy, and all that, without an *idea* how it's done! And who ever heard of a real kingdom that hasn't got a single policeman in it?"

"It *was* silly to forget to have a policeman, certainly," admitted Santa Claus, "but perhaps if you had played with them regularly, and not left them to puzzle everything out for themselves, they would have been wiser."

"Perhaps," agreed Torquil. "But nothing could make a toy railway and farm and shop *really* real, you know!"

"A little imagination could, easily," said Santa Claus.

"Ah, I suppose we haven't got any," said Torquil. "And they would keep going on as if everything was so wonderful, and expecting us to admire them. So, of course, we had to tell them at last."

"I see, I see," said Santa Claus. "It was *my* mistake. The Toys were too childish, not grown up or clever enough to be any companions for two such advanced children as you are."

"They certainly were *rather* babyish," said Irene. "Still, it doesn't matter *now*—we didn't mind it so very much."

"When I sent you in here," said Santa Claus, "I wanted you to learn to appreciate your toys, and have a kindly feeling for them, instead of considering them beneath you."

"I know," said Torquil; "but, you see, we can't at *our* time of life. Mayn't we go back to the schoolroom now? I'm sure it must be tea-time."

"Shut your eyes tight till I tell you," commanded Santa Claus. . . . "Now open them," he said, after a pause.

They had felt so sure of finding themselves back on their chairs again that the shock was all the greater when they opened their eyes to discover that they were not in a room at all—but in the open air, under a low sky that stretched above like a grey veil. They were standing on a sort of heath, with sandy paths winding among clumps of brown bushes all about the same size and growing at regular intervals, so that at a distance they formed a kind of pattern. In front was a

high ridge over which they could see nothing.

"On the other side of that ridge," said Santa Claus, who was still at their side, "you will find Toys which even *you* will admit are not too childish for you, and I can assure you that all their surroundings are much more like the real thing."

"Thank you very much," said Irene, politely, "but—but we really ought to be getting home."

"I don't think," added Torquil, "that it's any good going on. Nothing will ever make us care for Toys."

"That's unfortunate," replied Santa Claus, drily, "because I'm afraid you will have to stay here till you have learnt to care for them. And if you'll take my advice, you will be as civil as you can."

When they looked round he was gone, and they could only hear the tinkle of his bells in the distance.

"It's a horrid bore!" said Torquil. "Still, there's no getting out of it now—we'd better go up to the top and see what it's like on the other side."

The view from the top was unexpectedly charming. At the foot of the slope was a tiny town of what looked like real houses; in the centre was a square, where a market seemed to be going on; there was a farm, with real ricks and haystacks, and white and brown cows grazing in green meadows, beyond they could see the gleam of railway lines, which were not laid in a circle, like a toy-shop railway, but stretched away to a vanishing point, as rails ought to do. And on one side there was the sea, shining and heaving, and a ship of some sort was lying at anchor in the harbour—they could just see the tops of her masts above the house-roofs.

And yet, somehow, they felt certain that the town must be inhabited by Toys of some kind. It was so spick and span and brightly coloured—not to mention that the fields, and even the sea, had the same faint trace of a pattern over them, as if it was not so very long since they had been an ordinary drugget and carpet. However, the general effect was real enough to satisfy even Torquil and Irene.

"It isn't half bad *now*!" declared Torquil, with enthusiasm. "I shouldn't wonder if we found the Toys here quite sensible and easy to get on with. I vote we go down into the town and talk to them."

"We'd better not tell them they're Toys *this* time," said Irene. "Let's pretend they're just the same as ourselves—then we *can't* hurt their feelings if they're touchy about it."

"All right," said Torquil, and they were about to descend when a sharp voice rang out:—

"Halt! who goes there?" and, on looking round, they saw a striped sentry-box, which they had not noticed before, on their right, and a sentinel with a rifle and glittering bayonet standing in front of it. He was very much more soldierly-looking than the wooden sentry; he had feet—rather large ones, too—on which he walked, instead of an absurd wooden stand; his hat was not smooth and shiny, but furry, like a real Guardsman's, and his face, though not handsome, was distinctly intelligent. "Who goes there?" he said again.

"Only us," answered Torquil. "I mean—Friends!"

"Advance one," said the Sentry, "and give the countersign!"

"You see," said Torquil to Irene, as they went towards him, "he knows how to challenge *properly!*"

"I said advance *one* of you—not two," said the Sentry, sternly. "Now then—the countersign?"

"Shall we say 'Coffee-pot'?" suggested Torquil, for he couldn't think of any other at the moment.

"You ought to know better than to give me a silly answer like that!" said the Sentry. "A countersign ain't a *conundrum*, you know. If you don't know it you ain't likely to guess it!"

"I'm afraid," said Torquil, "we *don't* know it, quite. But you must let us pass, because we want to go to that town down there."

"If you attempt to pass without giving the countersign," he said, "I shall have to fire on you, that's all."

"Don't mind what he says, Irene," said Torquil; "he can't shoot with that gun!"

"Can't I?" said the Sentry. "What do you *suppose* I do with it—fish?"

"I know it won't *fire*, anyhow," said Torquil; "and we're going on."

The Sentry drew and shut the bolt of his rifle with a click. "We'll see about that," he said. "You've been and sauced me, you have—and it's my dooty to shoot you on the spot."

"But you wouldn't do that," said Torquil, "even if you could. We're not *spies*."

"How do *I* know what you are? It's no good me being Sentry here if I go and let suspicious parties through. But I'll give you the benefit of the doubt. You set off running to the town and I won't start firing till I've counted fifty, slow. If I don't bowl

you over before you reach that Butcher's shop you'll have the laugh of me!"

"But we *don't want* to laugh at you," protested Irene. "We never *thought* of it!"

"You can think of it going along," said the Sentry, raising his rifle to his shoulder. "Off you go. I shall now commence counting . . . One! . . ."

He seemed perfectly good-humoured about it, and Torquil could hardly believe, even now, that he was really in earnest. Still, he thought it better to go, and, seizing Irene's hand, he ran with her down the hill at the top of his speed. "Fifteen!" he heard the sentry call out after them. "Come, you can run faster than *that* if you like!" But the ground was very rough, and here and there they had to go carefully for fear of tripping.

"Thirty!" roared the Sentry. "Don't you *dawdle* now!"—which they certainly had no inclination to do.

"I fancy he's only in fun!" panted Torquil, as the Sentry counted forty. "Still, if we can only get to the Butcher's and hide behind the counter before he begins, we shall be all right!"

"It's no use," gasped Irene, "I—can't—run—any more. You must go on alone!"

"He's got to forty-five!" Torquil groaned. "Come on! You *can't* be blown already!"

"But *I am!*" said poor Irene, and fell—just as they were a few paces from the Butcher's shop.

Of course, Torquil couldn't desert her, so he threw himself down by her side, and the next moment they heard the Sentry shout "Fifty!"

One thing was quite certain—his rifle would really go off; it made a louder bang than any toy-gun that you fire with caps. But either he was a very bad shot, or else he only meant to give them a fright, for he never actually hit either of them.

Still, they were afraid to get up for fear he might begin shooting again, and as they lay there they saw the Butcher peeping at them from between his joints.

"Well," said the Butcher, "I never see anyone look so silly as you two, laying there like that. Why don't you get up?"

"Because if we do that Sentry on the hill will shoot us," said Torquil.

The Butcher laughed long and loud. "Not *him*," he said; "he's done all *his* shooting for the day. Why, he's standing on his head now, laughing fit to split himself."

And when Torquil ventured to look back he saw that the Butcher spoke nothing but the truth. The Sentry was not only standing on



"HE'S STANDING ON HIS HEAD NOW, LAUGHING FIT TO SPLIT HIMSELF."

his head, but clapping his great feet together with triumphant glee.

"He did give you a scare and no mistake," said the Butcher, chuckling. "Lor', to see you two scuttling down that hill! He is a funny chap, ain't he? *Full o' yumour!*"

"I don't see any fun in it," said Torquil, as he got up, feeling still rather queer and shaky. "And I'm sure no soldier in *our* army would have done such a thing!"

"Then the soldiers in *your* army—whatever that may be—don't know much about the dooties of a Sentry, that's all!" retorted the Butcher; and just then a strange-looking person came stalking up.

He wore a large black metal helmet and a uniform of dark-blue cloth, with a cape, and Irene was inclined to think he might be one of the clockwork Policemen which (although she had none among her toys) she had seen in toy-shop windows. There was a decidedly foreign look about him, and when he spoke it was with a French accent, like the artist's.

"What has 'appened?" he demanded, sternly, "zat I hear rifle shoots?" And he produced a large note-book.

"Why, mossoo," explained the Butcher, respectfully, "it's these two. Tried to slip past the Sentry up there with a bogus counter-

sign, and, o' course, he opened fire on 'em; and the selfish young var-mints," he added, in a tone of deep injury, "must needs run straight for my shop! It's a mercy I didn't get a bullet in some o' my beef or mutton!"

"He'd no business to fire at us, really," said Torquil. "Why, he might have shot us dead!"

"He 'ave orders," said the Official, "to keep out all intruders."

"But we're *not* intruders," said Irene; "we're friends of the Queen."

"And yet you know not ze vord of order, ze countersign!" said the man in the helmet, making a note in his big black book. "And you run away and endanger ze beef and mutton of zis gentelman! All zat has to me ze air suspect. 'Owever, for ze present I do nossing. You may go—but, remember, I keep on you ze eye of a lynx. And if I attrap you in ze least little crime, I give no nottice—I pounce!"

Irene and Torquil went on, considerably alarmed by this warning.

"They have a Policeman *here* at all events. Still, he needn't have

been so ready to suspect we were going to do something wrong!" said Irene, who was hurt and indignant as well as frightened. "And I *didn't* think he would have taken the Sentry's part."

"After all," said Torquil, "the Sentry was only playing the game properly. He isn't a noodle, like that wooden chap!"

"I don't think I like Sentries to be *quite* so full of humour, though, or so particular about obeying orders," said Irene, doubtfully.

"Well, at any rate, we've found out *now* that these Toys are clever enough to make companions of," said Torquil. "And I expect we shall get along all right with them—when they get to know us."

"I *hope* so!" said Irene, despondently, for she could not help thinking that they had not made a very good beginning.

CHAPTER VIII.

FINDING THEIR LEVEL.

THEY walked on into the market-place, which was crowded with Toys—all of them able to move about with just as much freedom as Torquil and Irene. In fact, but for a certain hardness in their faces and a glassiness in their eyes, you would scarcely have known that they were Toys at all. They

had altered so much that Irene could identify very few as having belonged to the nursery, and even then it was more because of their occupations than anything else. And most of them, she was quite certain, she had never met before, and some looked so disagreeable that she would rather not have met them at all. She noticed that everybody they met was grown up; but this, she discovered later, was only because all the children were at school. She and Torquil admired the shops, which had real plate-glass windows, and things for sale in them, which seemed almost exactly like the goods in ordinary shop-windows. And there were several private houses now, all very neat, and looking as if they were inhabited by dolls of the very highest respectability and position. As for Irene's old doll's-house, which stood at the top of the square, she only recognised it by the colour—it had grown into so large and stately a mansion. "Clementina said we might live there," she said; "let's go in—we ought to be able to get some *real* tea there *now*."

"Let's get some cakes and fruit first," said Torquil, stopping before a highly attractive-looking stall. "How do you sell your cakes?" he asked a girl with cheeks like a love-apple and sharp, beady eyes.

"Same way that other people sell *their* cakes!" replied the girl, pertly; "how are you going to *buy* them?—that's the point."

"You needn't be afraid," said Irene; "we can pay for them. I've a whole necklace of blue beads in my pocket." It was one which had come off a cracker at their Christmas dinner, and it was lucky, she thought, that

she had kept it, for it wasn't good enough to wear.

"We don't take blue beads at *this* establishment," said the girl, with an unpleasant smile. "If you can't pay money now I'll put it down to your account if you give me your address."

"Oh, we're staying in that big red house over there for the present," said Irene, and was surprised at the instant change in the girl's manner.

"Oh, at the *Palace!*" she said. "In *that* case we shall be proud to send over anything you condescend to order at once."

"I'm afraid we mustn't run into debt—even for tarts," said Irene, regretfully; but the girl entreated that they would not trouble themselves about payment. Till this the Toys had not taken much notice of them, beyond occasional and rather contemptuous glances, but the news that they were staying with Royalty seemed to spread about at once, and it was astonishing how civil everybody became.



"'WE DON'T TAKE BLUE BEADS AT THIS ESTABLISHMENT,' SAID THE GIRL."

The Grocer—a very different person now, sleek, stout, and important, with a fringe of real red hair under his double chin—came out of his flourishing-looking stores rubbing his hands, and requesting to be favoured with their patronage. And a person who looked as if he had to do with horses touched his hat-brim and begged them, if they had an opportunity, to mention to Her Majesty that he had a magnificent State

carriage which he wished to offer for her inspection; he added that he had a pony that was the very thing for Torquil.

Then a gentleman in a brown velvet coat and flowing necktie lounged up and introduced himself as a Painter—from Paris. He had almost given up portrait painting, he said; it was impossible, though he offered large sums, to find anyone here worthy of his art. But he had never beheld two such ravishing types of beauty as Irene and Torquil, and it would afford him felicity unspeakable to have the honour of transferring their features to his canvas.

Irene really was a pretty child, though she did not think too much about her looks, and Torquil, who never thought about his at all, was certainly not a plain boy. But they were both rather embarrassed, though not exactly displeased, by the artist's high-flown flattery. They said they would come and have their portraits painted after tea; for he was a very different sort of person from the clockwork artist, and they felt sure that *he* would not make them like Mr. Punch.

Quite a crowd accompanied them to the Palace door and looked on while they went up the steps and rang the visitors' bell. A couple of very magnificent footmen in scarlet liveries opened the door to them, and they could see a grand hall and staircase within which looked like marble.

"I believe," said Irene, suddenly feeling extremely shy, "this is where we are living."

"I believe it isn't," said the First Footman, loftily, "considering it's the present residence of Her Majesty the Queen."

"We know that," said Torquil, "but she lent it to us, as she likes the drawer best."

"Does she, indeed?" said the First Footman. "It's the first *we've* heard of it, and just now Her Majesty is in the throne-room."

"I'm sure she would see us," said Irene, "if you would kindly tell her we're here."

"I can take up your cards—if you think it's worth while," said the Footman, languidly.

"We haven't any cards, but will you say it's—it's Buffidella and Chipsitop?"

"Miss Buffidella and Mr. Chipsitop," repeated the First Footman, with infinite contempt. "I will let Her Majesty know . . . You stay down here," he added to the Second Footman, in a very audible undertone, "and keep an eye on the Royal umbrella-stand."

"I don't think much of those names of yours," remarked the Second Footman, after the other had gone; "sound silly to *me*."

"Well," said Torquil, "it was the Queen who gave them to us, anyhow."

"Did she, though?" said the Second Footman. "I should have credited her with more sense."

And he hummed in rather a disrespectful manner till the First Footman returned.

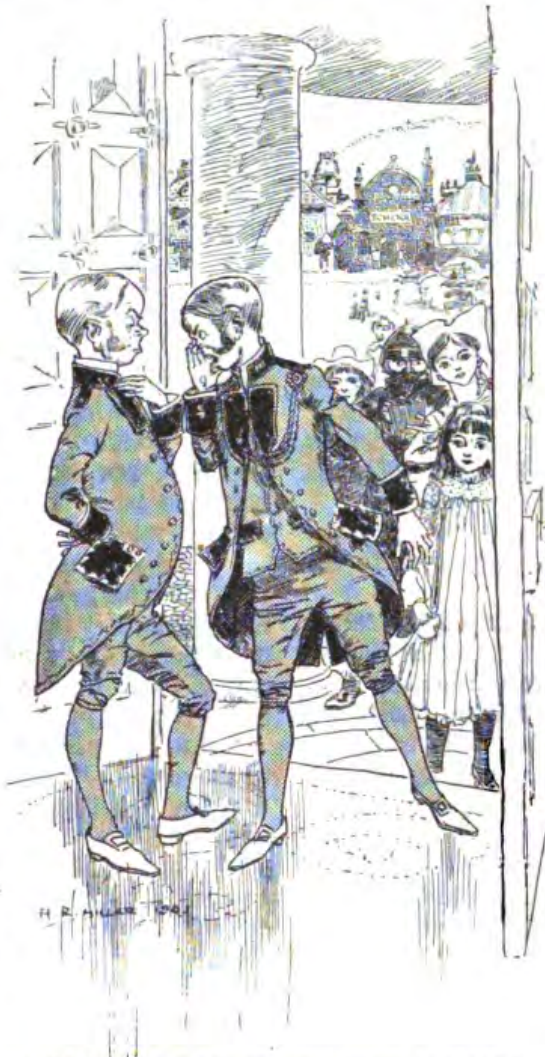
"What did the Queen say when you told her?" both the children asked.

"Her Majesty," drawled the First

Footman, "is not at home."

"Then tell her," said Irene, in her most dignified tone, "that we are very sorry to have troubled her. But where *are* we to go?" she asked; "we must find *some* place to live in, you know."

"There are furnished apartments to be had, I believe," said the First Footman, "or there's the Workhouse. You must please yourselves. You won't get lodgings *here*." And he slammed the door on them.



"KEEP AN EYE ON THE ROYAL UMBRELLA-STAND."

"I didn't think Clementina would be so unkind," cried Irene, as they turned away, "after all the fuss she made about us!"

"I expect she's ashamed of giving us those names," suggested Torquil. "She sees now how silly they were—or else she's offended with us, and we must wait till she comes round."

"I wish all these things wouldn't stare so," said Irene. "There's a house over there with 'Apartments' in the window—let's go and take them, Torquil."

"I'm not sure I know how," he said; "do you?"

"Oh, I've seen mother do it. You just look round, you know, and say the rooms *seem* clean, and ask if all the beds have spring mattresses, and then you say you dare say it will do very well—and you've taken them."

It was only a small three-story house, painted to look like yellow brick, but it seemed snug and comfortable. So they crossed the square and knocked at the door, which was opened by the Landlady herself in a print gown and cap. She was wonderfully like the kind of old person who lets seaside lodgings, and no one would have believed she had ever come out of a toy-shop.

"Are your apartments still to let," inquired Irene, "and can we see them, please?"

"They're to let," said the Landlady, "but I never show them to parties till after they've taken them. It's the rule of the house."

"But we can't tell whether we shall like them unless we see them first," said Irene.

"It's a matter of perfect indifference to me," replied the woman, "whether you like them or not."

Irene wavered. She could see the passage and stairs, and they looked beautifully neat. "How much is the rent?" she asked, with a faint hope that it might be something moderate—in beads.

"There isn't any rent," said the Landlady, closing her mouth with a snap.

"I really think we'd better take these lodgings, Torquil," whispered Irene; "we sha'n't get any *much* cheaper."

"When you've done making up what minds you've got," said the Landlady, "perhaps you'll let me know. There's another party I'd almost settled to let the rooms to—a Mr. Golliwogg, a dark gentleman. I don't know that I particularly care to let to children like you."

This decided them. "We'll take the rooms if you'll let us have them," said Torquil, "for a week at *least*." For he was

beginning to see that they might have to spend a good part of their Christmas holidays in this place—he had not come across a Toy he could really be friends with yet.

"Done!" said the Landlady, and led the way upstairs to the first floor. To their great relief the sitting-room—considering it was only a doll's lodging-house—turned out to be delightfully cosy and nicely furnished.

They tried all the chairs and the sofa; they warmed their hands at the fireplace, where the glow, whether it was red tinsel or not, gave out real heat; they looked out of the windows, which afforded a cheerful view of the bustling market-square; and, in short, made themselves thoroughly at home.

"It's perfectly lovely! I wonder you can afford to let such rooms for nothing a week," cried Irene, somewhat injudiciously.

"I couldn't," said the Landlady; "but, of course"—and here she gave a little landladylike cough behind her hand, "I'm obliged to make a trifling charge for wear and tear—that's another rule of the house."

"I'm sure *that's* fair enough," said Irene, with a comfortable sense that Torquil and she were not destructive children. "We ought to have beads enough to pay for any damage we do."

"Beads, indeed! They're no good here. But my charges are very reasonable," said the woman; "twopence every stair you go up, a penny every one you go down; threepence each time you sit down, sixpence when you get up."

"But how are we to remember how often we do all that?" exclaimed Irene.

"The furniture registers it for you," she said. "Then there's heat from fire, a halfpenny a minute. Looking out of window, a penny a pane for each glance. Air, light, and flies," she said, virtuously, "I make *no* charge for. Up to the present you owe me—let me see"—and here she did the sum in her head—"exactly seven and fivepence apiece."

"Oh, Torquil!" cried Irene, as they both sprang up from the sofa in dismay; "we shall never be able to afford to stay here!"

"Those are the rules of the house," said the Landlady, composedly; "if they don't suit you, pay your bill and go. It's seven and elevenpence each now, as you both jumped up, and another halfpenny each for heat, and there'll be the stairs going down as well—call it nine and sixpence."

"But we've no money with us!" said Irene, "only beads, and it's more than we've got in both our money-boxes, and *they're* at home."



"THEY BOTH SPRANG UP FROM THE SOFA IN DISMAY."

"No money! and you have the impudence to come in here, wearing and tearing my furniture and windows, and trying to put me off with beads!" cried the Landlady. "Be off with you this minute!"

"But what are we to do?" Irene asked, as the woman saw them downstairs and opened the door. "How are we to get money to pay for things?"

"Earn it," said the Landlady; "you're old enough to work for your living, if you know how. I can't afford to keep you for nothing."

She stood on her doorstep abusing them for some time, and when they were out of hearing they could see her relating her wrongs to the official in the helmet, who seemed to be noting it all down.

"It's just as well," said Torquil, "we didn't stay in those lodgings. I didn't know a doll could be so beastly disagreeable."

"They seem so different now," sighed Irene, "but I *did* like that room. And as they won't *look* at beads here we must try and earn some money somehow. I wonder if that Painter man would engage us to sit for our portraits—he wanted badly to do them before, and he said something about offering large sums." So, as they were just passing a

please—because we want it, rather badly."

"There is a little mistake," said the Painter. "Me, I do not pay. It is you—or the Queen," he added; "she will pay to possess the portraits of her little frens, is it not so?"

"I'm afraid she won't," said Irene. "She wouldn't even see us when we called. And we've got no money. That's why we want to earn some. You said you would pay anything, if you could only find people who are worth painting."

The Painter made a circle of his thumb and forefinger, through which he inspected them. "I find," he said, "you have not the heads to inspire me. You have features, yes—but features of dolls. For me, I do not paint dolls. They leave me cold. Very much obliged—but, you see, I am occupied."

"What a *pig!*" said Irene, as soon as they were outside again. "How *dare* he say we were like dolls! I don't believe he can paint at all—not even 'Punch'!"

"He's changed his mind about painting *us*, anyhow," said Torquil; "so we can't earn any money *that* way. I wish I knew how we could!"

"I know what we'll do," said Irene,

door with "studio" painted on it and thought that was probably where he lived, they knocked and went in.

The Painter was there, seated in front of an easel on which was an empty canvas. "Aha!" he said, cordially, "you arrive to sit! At the good hour! I am enchanted to paint two heads so sympathetic. Did I inform you of my terms? Fifty guineas to commence, and ten every day till I finish. When I finish, I tell you. Not much, eh?"

"It's quite enough for *us*," said Torquil. "But would you give us the money *now*,

suddenly; "we'll go on the stage! You know everybody said how well we acted in 'The Rose and the Ring.' And we *must* be able to do it better than the cleverest Toys. Look, it says 'Theatre Royal' on that building there—and there's somebody who looks as if he belonged to it, leaning against the wall outside. Let's go and see if they won't engage us. Wouldn't it be splendid if we made a great success? These Toys would begin to think something of us *then!*"

Torquil thought he would rather like it, so they went up to the odd-looking person with the theatrical appearance. He wore a heavy overcoat trimmed with black lamb's wool, which concealed most of his figure, but they had a suspicion that he was cardboard underneath, and his crimson-lake hat, like an inverted flower-pot, his chrome-yellow tights, and his ultramarine boots singularly resembled those of Grindoff (Plate 1, figure 1) in the drama they had never found the patience to perform on their toy stage.

"Could we speak to the Manager, if you please?" said Irene.

"I am he, me che-ild!" said the figure, rolling his cardboard eyes under his heavily-painted eyebrows, and pointing at nothing in particular. "What would ye with me? Speak!"

So Irene explained.

"Have ye been trained for the profession?" he inquired. "Can ye slide on to the stage without falling out of the tin clip, or turning your plain side to the audience?"

"We can walk on without a slide," said Torquil, "and we haven't *got* a plain side."

"Amateurs, as I suspected," said the Manager. "Yet ye may not lack talent, and I would fain help ye to success. Hark ye, this night I make my appearance in my celebrated impersonation of Grindoff in 'The Miller and His Men.' I will engage ye to go on in the crowd, and, in time to come, perchance ye may hope to soar to speaking parts, for, if I mistake not, I read genius in your speaking countenances."

"Thank you *very* much," said Irene, for it seemed an opening, and she and Torquil could learn the longest parts quite easily. "And what shall we have to do?"

"All ye have to do in return for the opportunity I offer ye is to purchase six dress circles, which ye can easily dispose of amongst your friends. If ye have not thirty shillings about ye I can get ye change."

Once more they had to confess that they had no money about them.

"Then I cannot encourage ye to adopt so

arduous a career," said the Manager, "for now I behold ye more plainly, I perceive that ye have not been cut out for it. Far-well! me dearrs—may Heaven bless ye!"

"He might have given us a trial to see if we really could act," said Irene. "I don't know how it is, but all *these* Toys seem trying to get money out of us—the *others* didn't."

"These are so much cleverer, you see," said Torquil. "I say, Irene, do you see this?" and he pointed to a notice outside what was apparently a school-house—'Assistant master and mistress wanted. To teach arithmetic and geography. Liberal salaries.'

"We might try for it," said Irene. "We're both rather good at geography, and you know arithmetic."

"Up to rule of three, I do," said Torquil.

"That's quite far enough for *Toy* school-children, I'm sure. Let's go in." And accordingly they marched into the school, between rows of desks, at which little scholars in pink, and blue, and grey, and green were seated. "They look fearfully intelligent!" thought Irene, "but they'll be all the easier to teach."

A dry little Schoolmaster in black, with a skull-cap and a cane, was standing by a blackboard at the upper end. "Have I the pleasure of seeing two new pupils?" he inquired, politely enough; but it made it all the more awkward to explain why they had come, and the scholars giggled.

"Silence!" said the Schoolmaster. "Judge no one by appearances! So," he said to Torquil, "you represent yourself as proficient in simple multiplication and division?"

"Oh, I can do *them*," said Torquil, recovering confidence. "And compound, too."

"Oblige me by multiplying A B C by D E F and dividing by G H I," said the Schoolmaster.

"That's Algebra, or Euclid," said Torquil. "I haven't begun either of *them*, yet."

"My most backward scholar," observed the Schoolmaster, blandly, "could do that simple sum in her head, or *on* her head. I fear you are hardly up to our standard, sir. Let us hope your sister is better acquainted with elementary geography. Kindly draw on this board," he said to Irene, "an outline map of Noarcadia, indicating the principal towns, lakes, and rivers."

Irene coloured painfully. "It isn't in *my* geography book," she explained.

"Your education appears to have been sadly neglected," replied the Schoolmaster. "It is usual to have learnt a little before undertaking to teach. I almost think some situation as nursery governess, where the



"YOUR EDUCATION APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN SADLY NEGLECTED," REPLIED THE SCHOOLMASTER.

children are very young indeed, would be more in *your* line. But I am very much indebted to you both for offering your valuable assistance." And he showed them out with elaborate politeness, amidst the unaffected sniggers of his scholars.

"Well," said Torquil, as soon as they were outside, "some of the masters at school are *rather* beasts—but they're nothing to *him*! As if we didn't know any more than a lot of plaster school-kids!"

"We didn't even know so much!" said Irene, sadly.

"We do, *really*. He was only trying to score off us."

"All of them do *now*," said Irene. "The other Toys seemed to think such a lot of us."

"It didn't matter what *they* thought—they were such idiots. Now *these*—I should like to show them that we have some sense and

can do things quite as well as they can."

"Yes; and win them over gradually, like they do in stories, you know!" said Irene, eagerly.

"Only I don't see how we're going to *do* it, unless they'll give us the chance. Look at that stout gentleman talking to the Shepherdess there. Doesn't he remind you just a little of Mr. Farmer?"

"Only the brown coat and blue breeches," said Torquil, but as they came nearer they heard him say to the Shepherdess: "Those vages is all my vife gifs—zey is nod enoff for you, no?"

"It *is* Mr. Farmer!" cried Irene, as the Shepherdess shook her head very decidedly.

"It is a bity," said Mr. Farmer; "you vas shoost ze glefer liddle curl my vife vant for tairymaid. But you vant too much moneys. Goot morning."

"Oh, Mr. Farmer!"

pleaded Irene, when the Shepherdess had gone; "do try *me*! I really don't mind *what* the wages are!"

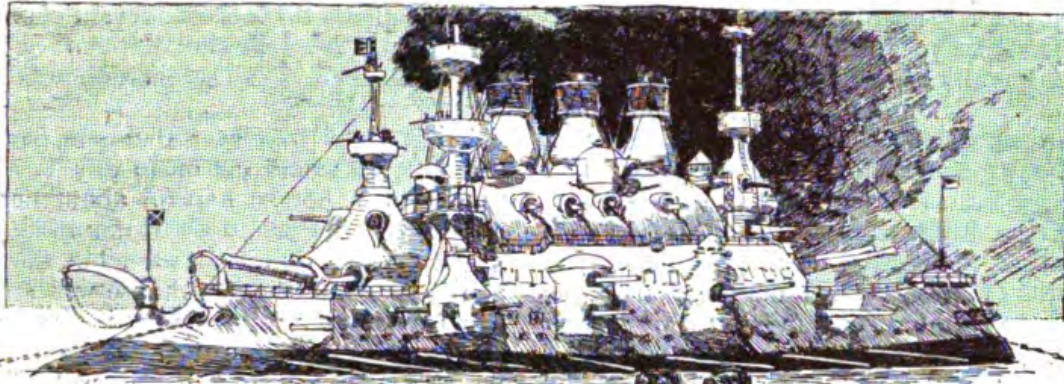
"Then I think you suit very vell," said Mr. Farmer, looking at Irene with his pale-blue goggle eyes. "You see my farm away out there? You com there bresently and seddle madders mit my vife," and he tramped away.

"I don't like your having to work on a farm," said Torquil; "but I suppose we mustn't be too particular, and anyhow *you're* provided for all right now. I wish *I* could find something to do!"

They had reached the harbour by this time, and there, lying at anchor, was a large battleship painted grey, with yellow funnels, and masts, and crows' nests.

"I know what I'll do!" he exclaimed, suddenly. "I'll go into the Navy!"

(To be continued.)



A STORY FOR BOYS AND GIRLS.
PART II.

CHAPTER IX.

HOW IRENE FARED AT THE FARM.



O into the Navy, Torquil!" said Irene, who didn't like the idea at all; "but I thought you said an Ark *couldn't* be a proper Navy?"

"That *isn't* an Ark," he replied. "Where's the sloping roof?"

"I think it *must* be an Ark, though, all the same," said Irene, "or there wouldn't be *quite* so many giraffes and camels and tapirs and things looking out of the portholes."

"Well," said Torquil, "Noah will be glad to have *somebody* on board who understands clockwork. This looks rather like the Admiral coming ashore now."

A little boat, manned by sailors in black glazed hats, striped pink shirts, and black trousers, with the neatest little boots, had just reached the landing-stage, and out of it stepped two naval officers. The elder, who wore a long dark blue frock-coat with gold epaulettes, and a cocked hat and sword, was evidently an Admiral, and would not have disgraced the quarter-deck of the finest model

ironclad. The junior officer seemed to be a Captain, and his uniform was quite as correct in every detail. Only a very close observer indeed, noticing their hard, weather-beaten faces and their square, waistless figures, would ever have seen in them the slightest resemblance to humdrum old Noah and insipid Shem. Which, Irene thought, only showed what wondrous transformations Santa Claus could bring about when he gave his mind to it.

Torquil went fearlessly up to the Admiral, for, of course, he knew very well he was only Noah really.

"I say," he began, "if you want any help in working your new Ark I shouldn't mind coming for a cruise with you."

"Touch your forehead, my lad," said the Captain, "when you address the Admiral"; and somehow, though sorely against his inclination, Torquil did it.

"Thankee, my boy, thankee!" said the Admiral. "but I've no vacancy for a Cabin-boy at present."

"I didn't mean as *Cabin-boy*," explained Torquil, flushing. "I meant as Midshipman."

"I see," said the Admiral; "I see. Well, as it happens, I *do* want a Midshipman."

"Then you'll take me?" cried Torquil, overjoyed. "Thanks, most awfully!"

"Don't be in quite such a hurry!" said the Admiral, concealing a smile in his snowy beard. "Before I take anyone as Middy aboard *my* flagship, I must be satisfied that he knows something about navigation and gunnery and such matters, d'ye see?"

"Oh, I know a lot!" said Torquil, and was about to describe how he had once lost a spirits of wine steamer on the Serpentine, when the Admiral cut him short.

"Captain Shem here will examine you," he said, "and if you satisfy him (which, if you are at all intelligent, you'll have no difficulty in doing—for it's a very easy examination) you can join the ship this very day. We weigh anchor shortly. I shall hope to see you on board then," he added. "You needn't make the examination *too* stiff, Shem."

"I will let him through if it's at all possible, sir!" said Captain Shem, touching the peak of his cap.

"I should like to say good-bye to my sister before I pass the examination, if you don't mind," said Torquil to Captain Shem, as Admiral Noah passed on, and Shem obligingly replied that there was plenty of time for both purposes.

"You mustn't mind my leaving you like this, Irene," said Torquil. "You see, it's such a splendid chance for me to distinguish myself. Perhaps I shall come back no end of a swell, with medals and prize money, and then I'll take you away from the farm and get you comfortable lodgings somewhere."

"Let me stay till I know whether you've got through," begged Irene. "Boys don't, always."

"I think I know enough to satisfy *Shem!*" said Torquil, tranquilly. "Besides, if you stay, it might make me nervous, you know. I'd rather you went—really, Irene."

Irene saw that she could do no good by remaining longer, so she said good-bye with an affectionate and rather tearful hug. "*Whatever* you do, Torquil," she counselled, "don't let the Admiral see that you know they're only Toys. I'm *sure* you'll be disliked if you do!"

"Of course I sha'n't!" he said. "And—you mustn't think it conceited of me, Irene—but I'm sure Shem has taken a fancy to me. I know I shall get on with *him* all right. Mind you don't laugh at Mr. and Mrs. Farmer's queer ways of doing things."

"As if I *should!*" said Irene; "I'm *prepared* for them *now*, you know."

And so they parted, and the last she saw of Torquil was the look of buoyant confidence with which he followed Captain Shem to the spot where the examination was to be passed.

Torquil was so clever that she had little fear that he would get on in any Toy Navy, but she was not so hopeful about her own prospects. She had quite made up her mind to accept everything as it was, but where was she to sleep if the farmhouse was still too small to hold her? And what if Mrs. Farmer recognised her as the girl whose outspokenness had caused their disgrace with Clementina? Altogether, she was in a very low-spirited state by the time she reached the farmhouse.

It was somewhat reassuring, however, to find that it had now grown to quite an ordinary-sized house, and actually had a barn and out-buildings, much as real farmhouses have.

They looked a little queer, it is true, and she was surprised to find that every haystack (and there were several now) had a little cupola on top with a weather-vane and a clock. But she supposed vaguely that it was the custom in Germany. There were pigs about, which Irene noticed were just a shade different from natural animals—but they grunted and smelt as much as could be wished for from any pig, and she fervently hoped it would not be part of her new duties to hunt for *their* eggs, whether they laid any or not.

She opened a very bright green gate, and went up a sanded path between beds of flowers—which she thought *must* be paper—to the door, and knocked timidly.

Out came Mrs. Farmer promptly; she had a flaxen wig now and stony little green eyes, but her fresh-coloured face looked nearly as wooden as before, and nothing like so good-tempered.

"I nefer gif nodings to peckers," she said, sharply, as soon as she saw Irene, and seemed about to shut the door in her face.

"I'm not a beggar," said Irene; "I'm the new dairy-maid. Mr. Farmer engaged me."

"Hans! com you here, quick!" cried Mrs. Farmer, and her husband appeared with a long-stemmed china pipe. "This liddle curl say you enrage her for tairy-mate!"

"Vell, Gredel," said Mr. Farmer, who was evidently rather afraid of his wife, "I did not egsactly *encae* her, but she say she vant no vages, so I dell her to saddle mit you."

"Oh, if she vant no vages, berhaps," said Mrs. Farmer—"berhaps she can com."

Now, Irene had not said she wanted no

wages, only that she didn't mind what the wages were—which was not at all the same thing. Still, if she could only get taken in on any terms she felt sure that they would soon learn her value, so she said nothing.

"Led us see vat you can do," said Mrs. Farmer. "You onderstandt how to milg a gow?"

Fortunately, Irene thought, she knew how Mrs. Farmer did it, at all events. "Oh, yes," she said, brightly, "it's very easy. You just twist their ears and the milk trickles out of their horns."

"Like that?" said Mrs. Farmer. "You *vas* a gleser liddle curl, and no misdakes!"

"I could wash the ducks' necks," Irene went on, encouraged, "and the swans', too—if someone would hold their wings for me. And I could feed the cattle—on fluff and tea-leaves, you know; and I can make lovely neckties for the sheep, to tie in either a bow or a sailor's knot, and—and—I'd do anything else to make myself useful!"

"Donnerwetter!" said Mr. Farmer, "she don't know nodings whatefer apout it!"

"She is a perfect liddle vools!" added

Mrs. Farmer, with great frankness. "A paby in arms vould know pedder as to milg a gow through ze horns, and feed it mit floff and such nonsenses!"

Irene did not like to remind them that it was not so very long ago since they knew no better themselves. "Of course, I know you don't milk *real* cows that way," she said; "I only thought you milked *yours* differently, that's all."

"Then com along and show us how you milg a real gow," said Mrs. Farmer.

"I'm afraid," said Irene, "I've never milked one myself. But if you've got a quiet cow—not *too* large" (she put this in because it occurred to her that a kick from even a wooden cow might not be pleasant)—"I'd do my very best to learn, if you'll only show me."

"Here you cannot be teached without bayments," said Mrs. Farmer, graspingly; "I charch only fife shilling a lessons—fery cheab, but for you I make reduction."

So even Mrs. Farmer was trying to get money out of her, thought poor Irene.

"I'm sorry," she said, "but I can't afford even that. I've got no money, and that's why I want to earn some. But I'll work for you for nothing till I have learnt how to milk and things."

"And I am to vaste my dimes teaching you for nodings?" cried Mrs. Farmer. "Keep a liddle idiot vat vill ead op more as she is vort efery day? Dank you for nodings! You go away, you hear? and vash schvans and make gravats for sheeps someveres else. Valk yourselfe out of this—quick march!"

"So yong!" said Mr. Farmer, morally, "and alretty so imbudent a liddle hombogs!"

"I think you're both *extremely* unkind!" said Irene, and then, with a heart swelling under this fresh humiliation, she turned away and left the farm.

She could hardly believe that that hard, avaricious pair could really be the kind, puzzle-headed couple she had been taken to visit—*how* long ago was it? It seemed ages and ages—by poor, silly, good-



"SHE IS A PERFECT LIDDLE VOOLS!" ADDED MRS. FARMER.

natured Clementina. If they were, they had certainly contrived to pay her out pretty thoroughly.

"Perhaps it's just as well they *didn't* take me, though," she told herself, with a forlorn attempt to look on the bright side; "because their cows may be as disagreeable as *they* are—and I always *was* a *little* afraid of a cow. And I'm sure Torquil won't want to go to sea now and leave me all unprovided for. Or at least he'll persuade Admiral Noah to let me come, too. There *are* ladies on board, I know."

She set off running towards the harbour to find Torquil, when all at once, as she came in sight of the sea, she saw something which made her stop with a cry of despair.

She was too late! The big ironclad Ark, with its funnels discharging thick grey smoke like cotton-wool, was already churning its way through the heaving linoleum, bound for some distant shore. Irene could see the little sailors clambering up the rigging or looking out of the crow's



necks; she could even make out the Admiral's form on deck—but Torquil was not by his side. Most likely he was having tea in Shem's cabin, without even a thought of the sister he was leaving behind!

"Torquil!" she cried, without reflecting that her voice could not possibly reach him all that way off. "Come back! Do come back! . . . I can't bear it all alone here, I can't indeed! . . . Oh, won't anybody stop the ship?"

But the Ark went on, growing smaller and smaller, and at last Irene saw that it was all no use. She was left here, lonely and unprotected, among all these unfriendly and contemptuous beings, and she was farther off from finding any employment than ever.

And, as she thought of all this, poor Irene broke down completely, and, flinging herself on a clump of blue and crimson tufts by the shore, she cried—no, cry is much too mild a term—she absolutely *howled*—without caring in the least whether it was babyish and undignified or not.

CHAPTER X.

HOW TORQUIL FAILED AT VARIOUS THINGS.

"WHAT *are* you blubbing about like that for?" said a well-known voice behind her; and Irene turned round and, scarcely able to believe her eyes, saw Torquil stand-

ing there with his hands thrust deep in the pockets of his knickerbockers.

She sprang up and hugged him violently. "I don't mind *anything* now!" she cried. "You've come back to me. You've come back! Oh, Torquil, I thought you were on board that

ship there!" and she pointed to the Ark, which was now little more than a speck in the distance.

"Well," said Torquil, "I'm *not*, you see."

"You *were* good to stay behind because of me, when you might have risen to be a distinguished officer in no time!"

Torquil balanced himself on his heels once or twice. "Oh, I don't know," he said. "Not on a rotten old tub like that. They've stuck masts and funnels and things into her, but she's only an Ark all the same, and they know it, too. It's all bosh being a Midshipman on a beastly Ark."

"WHAT ARE YOU BLUBBING ABOUT LIKE THAT FOR?" SAID A WELL-KNOWN VOICE.

"But wasn't Shem dreadfully disappointed when you said you couldn't go?"

"He didn't seem to be, particularly. Besides, who cares whether a cad like Shem minds or not?"

"Why, Torquil!" said Irene, rather shocked, "I thought you felt you could get on with him so well?"

"I don't feel that now, anyhow. He's a jolly sight too stuck-up for *me*, Shem is!"

"But you passed all right, didn't you, Torquil?" said Irene.

"I should have—with anything like fair questions. But—well, if you *must* know, I got plucked on Projectiles."

"It does sound horrid!" said Irene, shuddering. "What are Projectiles?"

"It seems Projectiles are the things you fire out of cannons. He asked me to mention the chief sorts, and I said, 'Peas, *generally*, but you *can* use bits of slate-pencil.' I thought if they had any guns on his Ark that was about all they *would* fire."

"And wasn't that right?"

"He *said* not. The sarcastic beast said he supposed I had 'pursued *my* studies chiefly in the nursery!' So I said, 'Of course I knew that ironclads fired torpedoes.' And Shem said, 'What *is* a torpedo?' And I said, 'It's a sort of a metal fish.' And he said, 'Describe the process of letting it off.' Well, I never have let one off, but I said I supposed it was done with a lighted match somehow, and he said, 'Wrong.' So I said, 'How do *you* do it, then?' and he got as red as a turkey-cock and said his business was to *ask* questions, not *answer* them. But I believe *he* didn't know either. Then he said I was very weak in Gunnery and it wasn't necessary to trouble me any further. So I said, 'Did that mean I'd passed?' And he said, 'No, it didn't.' And I came away. It does seem rot being so particular on a Noah's Ark—as if it was the *Britannia*!"

"They all seem to know so much now, don't they?" said Irene, with a little sigh.

"Yes, it's no use trying for a profession here—they're sure to say you're plucked. What's it like at the Farm?"

"I—I wasn't there very long," confessed Irene, and then she told her story. "I don't see how we're ever to win their hearts and all that," she concluded, plaintively, "if they will go on being so snifty to us."

"The Grocer was polite enough just now," said Torquil. "I dare say he'd take me in as partner. He seemed rather to like the idea when Clementina started it before—at least,

if it's the *same* Grocer; they're all altered so, you can't tell."

"You won't like having to serve in a shop."

"It's Stores now, and I must find something to do; and when I'm a partner I shall get you in as a show-woman, or to sit at the desk and sign the bills, or something. It's no good being proud."

So they made their way back to the market-place and entered the handsome and prosperous-looking Stores, where Mr. Grocer was standing with a highly important air between his counters. This time he did not bow or smirk, but observed drily that his terms were strictly cash.

"We haven't come to shop," said Torquil, "but do you remember what the Queen said when she brought us to see you a little time ago?"

"I have no recollection of the circumstance," said the Grocer, "but I *did* understand that you were hand-in-glove, so to speak, with Royalty. Stoppin' with Her Majesty, ain't you?" he added, with a disagreeable grin.

"That was a mistake," said Irene. "At least, we're not staying at the Palace *now*."

"So I heard," said the Grocer. "Went to Mrs. Bodgers's apartments, didn't you? 'Ighly respectable party she is, and *most* partickler who she takes in."

"I know," said Torquil. "She—she couldn't take *us* in. So I thought, if you can find a place here for my sister, you and I might go into partnership together."

"Lor! *did* you, though?" said the Grocer. "*There's* condescension for you!" And several lady and gentleman customers who had gathered round to listen sniggered almost as openly as the school children had done.

"I *mean* it!" Torquil assured him. "Not the condescension—the partnership."

"And no doubt you've had a good deal of business experience, at your age?" said the Grocer; and though Torquil didn't notice it, Irene was almost sure she saw the Grocer wink at the Toy Customers!

"I know some Grocers sell Essig by the yard and that the worst starch is two blue beads a pound more than the best," said Torquil. "But perhaps you don't do *your* business like that," he added, remembering that beads did not seem to be much valued now.

"Perhaps I don't," said the Grocer. "About how much capital, now, did you think of bringing into the concern?"

"I don't quite understand," said Torquil.

"I mean," said the Grocer, "as you propose to do me the honour—and an honour it is, I'm sure!—of becoming my partner, how much money might you be prepared to invest in the business?"

"I've got seven-and-sixpence in my money-box at home," said Torquil, "but I'm afraid I can't get at it very well."

"So your idea," said the Grocer, "is to take half the profits of *my* money, without putting in any—money of your own, eh? P'raps you can explain how I benefit by that transaction," he went on, pompously. "I'm only a poor, ignorant Tradesman, I dare say, and I don't see at present what good it's going to do *me*. Where do *I* come in?"

Torquil hadn't looked at it in that light before, and now he did it was not so easy to explain where Mr. Grocer came in precisely.

"Well, never mind about being partners," he said. "I'll be anything you like, so long as you let me come."

"There is a post vacant in my emporium," said Mr. Grocer, slowly, "but the dooties are so important and responsible that I almost 'esitate; however, I might give you a trial as errand-boy."

"Errand-boy!" cried Torquil, blankly, for it was a considerable come-down from being a partner.

"Of course," said Mr. Grocer, "I must have a character from some party who can vouch for your honesty and respectability."

"I'm sure Santa Claus would tell you I was all right!" said Torquil, hoping that such a reference would impress them.

"Don't know the gentleman," said the Grocer. "Who is he, and what's his address?"

"I don't know where he lives exactly, but you *must* know Santa Claus! The one who drives over the roofs at Christmas-time in a sledge drawn by reindeer."

"I'd like to ketch him driving over *my* roof," said the Grocer; "he wouldn't do it twice!"

"He only does it to come down the chimneys and fill children's stockings," put in Irene, eagerly.

"A party who comes down chimneys in a reindeer sledge to fill stockings!" said the Grocer; "and a friend o' *yours*! What d'ye mean by trying to make me believe such rubbish?"

"We didn't believe it *ourselves* once," said Torquil, "but we do now—because we've *seen* him. And I can tell you *this*: you wouldn't be so grand as you are now—

whether you know it or not—if it hadn't been for *him*."

"That'll do!" said the Grocer. "I can't tolerate any sooperstitious nonsense among *my* employés. If you've got a friend of that special sort you'd better go to him."

"We would," said Irene, "only we don't know where to find him."

"And yet you give him as a reference!" said the Grocer. "I've had enough of *your* impudence, comin' here and interrupting me and my customers with such stories, and as likely as not just to see what you can pick up unbeknown. You clear out—sharp's the word, now!"

They hadn't the heart to make any retort; they left the shop without a word, and as they did so they saw that the Official in the big black helmet, who must have been watching them all the time through the glass door, was making copious notes in that thick book of his.

"If Santa Claus knew how some of these Toys spoke of him," said Torquil, when they were some distance away, "he wouldn't be so jolly fond of them. I wish I'd told them now that they were only a pack of enchanted Toys. I've half a mind to go back and do it!"

"I *wouldn't*," said Irene, anxiously. "They'd only be all the more unpleasant. And that Police-gentleman is in there now, and we don't want to offend *him*. Besides, we don't know for certain that they *are* Toys. They're quite unlike any Toys *we've* ever known."

"I should just think they were!" said Torquil. "Those other Toys were at least easy to get on with!"

"Only we didn't try to get on with them," said Irene; "we only told them how silly they were!"

"Well, they *were* duffers, you know," said Torquil. "These are awfully clever, which makes it all the more qucer why we can't make friends with them. . . . Oh! I say, look at that!" And he read a placard which was stuck on the gate of the Livery Stables which they had just come to: "Wanted, a Stable-boy. Must be a thoroughly good horseman." "I'd sooner be a Stable-boy than run on errands for a Grocer, any day!"

"But *are* you a thoroughly good horseman, Torquil?" asked Irene.

"I can ride a real pony in the Row," he said, loftily, "so I ought to be able to stick on a horse that's only wood, or else plaster. Anyhow, I'm going in."

The Jobmaster seemed to have heard of

their expulsion from the Queen's Palace; at all events, his manner was no longer obsequious or even respectful. "Can't you get a job at the Royal stables?" he inquired. "I thought you was such a chum of Her

"Tumble up!" said the Jobmaster. And Torquil tumbled up—and down again.

"Have another try!" the Jobmaster suggested, and Torquil climbed into the saddle, and found himself the next moment flying over the horse's nose, to the undisguised delight of the Jobmaster and his men, who roared with unfeeling merriment.

But they said the third time was always lucky, and Torquil, determined not to be beaten by a skin horse, mounted once more, and came off again, only over the tail this time.

Fortunately he wasn't hurt, and they all urged him to persevere, but he saw now that this was only for the fun of seeing him tumble off, and he had had enough of that.

"I think I won't try any more," he said. "You see, I've never been accustomed to *this* kind of horse."

"They *do* go quieter on rockers, don't they?" said the Jobmaster; "but as I don't

keep that breed of animal you're no use to *me*. So good morning!"

And Torquil left the stables with Irene, who was thankful to have him safe and sound again, and they were pursued by derisive laughter, in which—or so Irene believed—even the piebald joined!

CHAPTER XI.

THE TRAIN THAT LEFT FOR LONDON.

"If we have to stay here till we've learnt to like all these creatures," said Irene, disconsolately, glancing back at the jeering crowd which had collected, and was following them at a distance, "we shall *never* get home. They don't seem to *want* to be liked."

"That's because we're not clever enough to play with *these* Toys," said Irene, "so, of course, they look down on us."

"Well, if they're too stuck-up to play with us, I don't see why Santa Claus should expect



"TORQUIL FOUND HIMSELF FLYING OVER THE HORSE'S NOSE."

Majesty's. And how do I know you can ride?"

Torquil said he had had several lessons from a real Riding Master.

"Well," said the Jobmaster, "you're a nice light weight, and I don't mind taking you on as Rough Rider, if you can stay on my piebald o's for five minutes."

Torquil felt sure he could do that, and that he had found a place at last. He did not feel so certain about it, however, when the grooms (who resembled real stablemen in not walking about on wooden stands) threw open a stable door, and a great piebald horse, ready saddled and bridled, came ramping out. It was in vain to tell himself that the animal, though covered with real skin, was only a wooden horse with glass eyes, and little wheels inside its hoofs—it was none the less vicious for that. Its nostrils were red and distended, its glass eyes flashed, and it plunged and reared all over the yard in a very spirited manner.

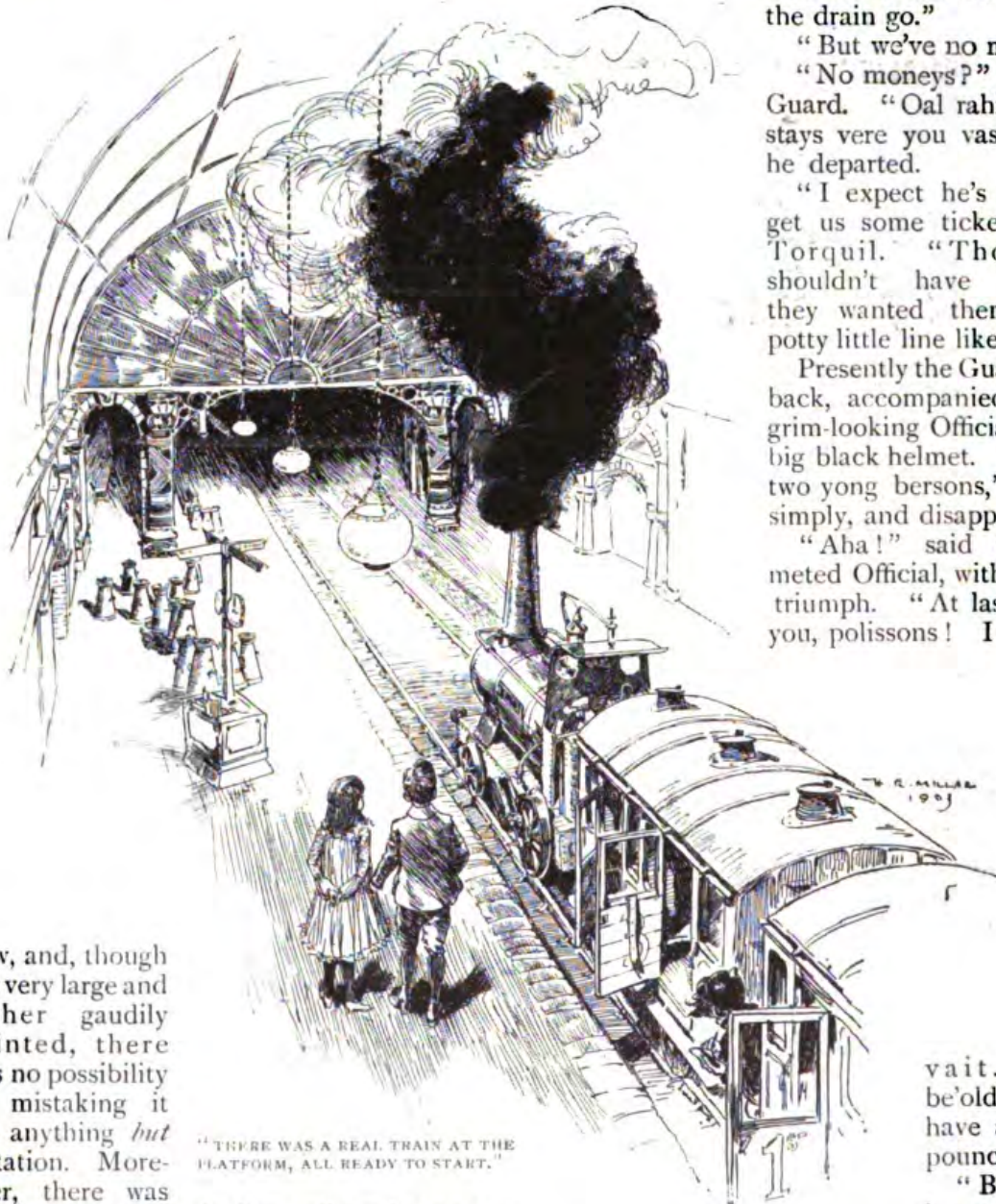
However, Torquil felt he was in for it now, and he wasn't going to back out, though Irene begged him to do so.

us to stay on here. I vote we go straight home, Irene."

"But, Torquil! How?"

"Why, by train, of course, silly! There's something *like* a Railway here, and don't you see what's painted on that board, 'Frequent trains to London'? Very well, then, all *we've* got to do is to get into one, and say good-bye to all these beasts."

They were close to the Railway Station



now, and, though not very large and rather gaudily painted, there was no possibility of mistaking it for anything *but* a station. Moreover, there was a real train at the platform, all ready to start.

"THERE WAS A REAL TRAIN AT THE PLATFORM, ALL READY TO START."

There was nobody in the Booking-Office or at the barrier either; so they went through and took their seats in one of the carriages, which were numbered First, Second, and Third, but were all bare and cushionless alike.

"We shall be off directly," said Torquil; "here comes the Guard."

And a very German-looking Guard, with a flat cap and a red leather belt, stuck his head into the window and said, "Billette!—dickets, please!"

"We haven't got any," said Torquil. "But it's London we're going to."

"To London? Goot! You ged your dictets at the bureau—aideen shilling each. You haf shoost dime before the drain go."

"But we've no money."

"No moneys?" said the Guard. "Oal rabit. You stays vere you vas." And he departed.

"I expect he's gone to get us some tickets," said Torquil. "Though I shouldn't have thought they wanted them on a potty little line like this."

Presently the Guard came back, accompanied by the grim-looking Official in the big black helmet. "Those two yong bersons," he said simply, and disappeared.

"Aha!" said the helmeted Official, with gloomy triumph. "At last I catch you, polissons! I vatch, I

vait. And be'old ze hour have arrive to pounce!"

"But what have we

done?" they asked, both together.

"You 'ave broke a by-law! You make attempt to travel by rail wizout tecketts, and pay nossing. I 'ave your *dossiers*," and here he produced his book. "You cannot evade my eye of lynx!"

"But we never knew—we thought——" stammered Torquil.

"Silence! you make your excuses at your trial, if you like—zey serve you not."

"At our Trial!"

"I arrest you as my prisoners. You go before ze Lord 'Ead Justice Shelley for your condemnation!

"Oh, please, monsieur!" pleaded Irene, "do let us off this once—like a nice, kind Policeman! We'll send you the money directly we get home."

"Ha! so you vould corrup' me — viz bribes? I am not a Pollis. No; I am ze Prosecuting Chief Commissary - Pouncer. Tremble!"

And they did tremble, for they had never heard of such a title before, and it sounded very terrible indeed.

"Milor Shelley he vill be moch please," continued the Official. "He has a fine Court and a Jury, and *tout ce qu'il faut* for a trial—but prisoners, no. Now he 'ave some. *Sortez donc*. Come out of zat!"

"We won't!" said Torquil. "We don't want to be tried!"

The Chief Commissary-Pouncer simply raised his hand, and two big Grenadiers came up with fixed bayonets. "My frens," he said, quietly, "remove me zese two vickeds!"

And the next moment Torquil and Irene

found themselves ignominiously hauled out of the compartment and marched off, between the soldiers, out of the station.

There a crowd — amongst whom they recognised the Sentinel, the Butcher, the Market-woman, the two Royal Footmen, Mrs. Bodgers the landlady, Mr. and Mrs. Farmer, Admiral Noah (whose cruise seemed to have been rather a short one), the Jobmaster, and Mr. Grocer—had collected, and greeted the captives with a storm of hisses.

"I vant all of you for vittnesses," said the Chief Commissary-Pouncer, and they joined the procession to the Court House.

And Irene, as she was being led along, heard the whistle of the engine behind them as it started on its journey, and could not help reflecting that perhaps she and Torquil might have been in the train and on their way home at that very minute — if only they had not taken such

pains, at their first visit to the Toy Railway, to insist on the necessity of tickets!

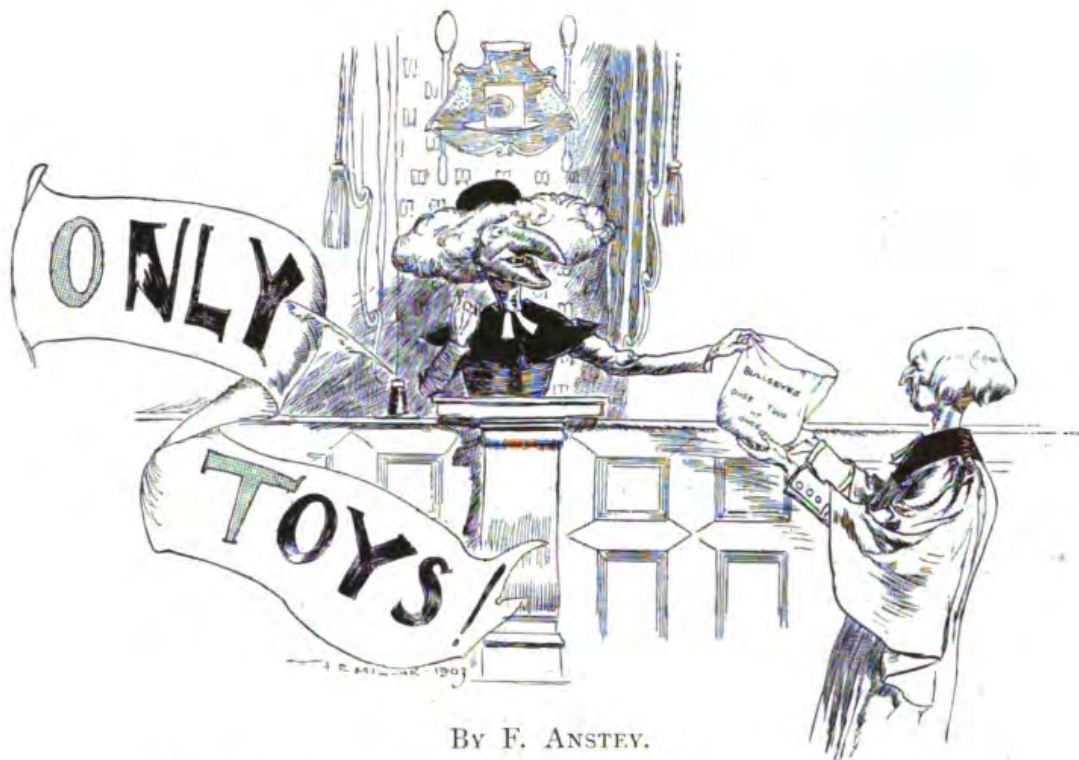
But it was too late to regret all that now, and her only hope was that Mr. Lord Head Justice Shelley—whoever he might be—would not take quite such a serious view of their offence as the Commissary-Pouncer seemed to do.



H. R. MILLAR. 1903

"TWO BIG GRENADIERS CAME UP WITH FIXED BAYONETS."

(To be concluded.)



BY F. ANSTEV.

A STORY FOR BOYS AND GIRLS.—PART II.

CHAPTER XII.

IN THE EYE OF THE LAW.



IRENE had never happened to go into a Court of Justice before, so she could not tell how far the one they were brought into now resembled the real thing.

The walls certainly looked as if they had been built of huge wooden blocks, and the windows had patches of red, blue, and yellow at the tops, and their sashes traced in Chinese white, like the windows you get in boxes of bricks. Still, there was a bench for the Judge and a box for the Jury, and quite a roomy dock, with spikes, for themselves, so that all the arrangements, so far as she knew, were correct enough.

Mr. Lord Head Justice Shelley was on his bench when they came in. To tell the truth, he was rather unlike Irene's idea of a Judge. He wore neither robes nor wig, only a short black velvet cape and a little cap of the same material. He had very fuzzy white hair, protruding black and white eyes, and a long, sharp, nutcracker nose and chin of a brilliant scarlet hue.

In fact, if Irene had not known him to be a Judge, she might have taken him for one of those comical figures made out of the shell and claws of a lobster. But somehow she did not feel tempted to laugh—she was far too much afraid of him for that.

However, he seemed in quite a good temper. "Prisoners, eh?" he said, as the Procession filed in after the Chief Commissary-Pouncer. "That's capital! Now we shall have something to do at last. Though I'm sorry to see Mr. Butcher and Mr. Grocer and the Admiral and so many of our respected fellow-citizens in this painful position," he added, feelingly.

"Pardon, milor Shelley," explained the Chief Commissary-Pouncer. "Zey are my vitnasses. It is zese two who are ze Culprits."

"Oh!" said the Judge, plainly disappointed. "I see. I hoped you would have had something bigger for us, Mr. Chief Commissary-Pouncer. Never mind, we must make them go as far as we can. How do you do, Culprits? Very pleased to see you. Seasonable weather, isn't it? Have a bull's-eye?"

And to Torquil and Irene's extreme surprise he produced a large paper bag, from which he extracted a couple of what appeared to be rather superior bull's-eyes, which were handed to them by the Usher.

"Peppermint is very sustaining," said the Lobster Judge, solemnly, "but you are not to suck them till the sentence, mind. Now we can begin. By-the-bye, is anybody going to defend the Prisoners? Not that it signifies."

At this a little black-robed figure sprang

up from under the lid of a desk in the front row. "I'm the Demurrer-General's Devil, my lud," he said, in a nervous, squeaky voice. "I appear for the Defence. I have a *perfect* answer to the charge!" Which Irene was very glad indeed to hear.

"You'd better not say that," advised the Judge, "till you've heard what the charge *is*."

And the little figure squeaked, "As your ludship pleases," and bobbed down, shutting the lid over himself with a bang; "*just* like a Jack-in-the-box," as Irene thought.

"Proceed, Mr. Chief Commissary-Pouncer," said the Judge, and the State Prosecutor began in loud and dramatic tones, "If, milor, I ransack ze gloomy and 'orrible register of Crime from his earliest commencements—"

"Stop!" said the Judge. "If you're going to do *that*, we'd better *all* have a bull's-eye," and he took one himself, and directed that the bag should be handed round, which, to Irene's joy, seemed to put the Pouncer-General out considerably.

"Since zat ze Prisoners arrive in this town," he began again, "I 'ave kept upon zem always ze eye of a lynx."

"You needn't do it any longer," said the Judge. "They've each got two *Bull's-eyes* on them now." And, as nobody laughed, it was evident that he could not have intended to make a joke.

"It will be better, perhaps," said the Commissary-Pouncer, discouraged, "zat I call my witnesses."

"I think it *would* be more amusing," said the Judge, and the witnesses were called accordingly.

First, the Sentinel told how Torquil and Irene had passed him by giving the wrong countersign; then the Market Woman related their attempt to obtain cakes by falsely representing that they were staying with the Queen; the Royal Footmen described how the Prisoners had forced their way into the Palace under absurd and obviously fictitious names; Mrs. Bodgers identified them as having wantonly worn and torn her furniture and declined to pay the bill; and all the other witnesses told their stories in turn, until Irene began to think that she and Torquil must be dreadfully bad characters without knowing it.

Every now and then the little Demurrer-General's Devil would pop up and say, "My lud, *mar* I ask the witness just one question?" And the Judge invariably replied, "Certainly *not*. They're not *your* witnesses. If you *must* ask questions, you

should find witnesses for yourself." Whereupon the little Advocate bobbed down, crushed.

"One moment!" said the Lord Head Justice later, while Mr. Grocer was being examined. "You say, 'The prisoners referred me for their character to Santa Claus.' Who *is* Santa Claus?"

"That's just the *point*, my lud!" screamed the Demurrer-General's Devil. "He don't *exist*. And *my* argument is—"

"Sit down!" said the Judge. "If he doesn't exist there can't be any argument *about* him." And the little Advocate sat down promptly. "He's very easily shut up," thought Irene. "We might almost as well not be defended at all."

"Now, milor," concluded the Chief Commissary, "I arrive at ze grand climax of ze career, so scandalous, so infamous, of ze Prisoners now cowering in ze dock—"

"Stop! Let me get that down, and *do* use words that are easier to spell," said the Judge, pettishly. "'Now cowering in the dock.' *That* won't do, you know," he added to Irene and Torquil. "I can't have any cowering in the *dock*. If you want to cower you must come outside."

"We weren't cowering," said Torquil.

"Then take care you don't," said the Judge, "or I shall stop the case. This is a Court of Justice, remember, not a—not a—what *is* it that a Court of Justice isn't, Mr. Commissary-Pouncer?"

"Pardon, milor!" he replied; "for me it is too difficult a conundrum. I cannot guess him!"

"I know, my lud, I know!" squeaked the Demurrer-General's Devil, shooting out his hand like a boy at a village school. "It isn't an Asylum for Idiots!"

"If it *were*," said the Judge, pointedly, "some persons might feel more at home in it," and the little figure was shut up once more.

"As I was about to say, when I was so rudely interrupted," continued the Judge, "a Court of Justice is not a Theatre. And why? Because there's no band, no scenery, and no charge for admission. Do get on, Mr. Commissary-Pouncer, and let us hear what it is the Prisoners have done—for I am bound to say they've been behaving quite properly while they've been in the dock!" This comforted Irene, who began to feel sure now that he meant to let them off.

"Milor," said the Chief Commissary-Pouncer, "I 'ave detect zem in ze act of travelling wizout tickets."

"What?" shrieked the Judge—and his nose and chin actually faded to a pale pink. "No! I can't—I *can't* believe it. Whatever you may be, Prisoners, tell me you have not sunk to *that!*"

"We didn't know there was any harm in it," said Torquil. "We did want to get home so!" added Irene.

"They confess it!" cried the Judge. "Give me back those bull's-eyes, Prisoners!"

"I can't," said Torquil, as Irene reluctantly surrendered hers. "I've eaten both mine. There wasn't much taste in them either," he added, in rather an injured tone.

"He has eaten both his, Gentlemen of the Jury, and complains of their want of flavour!" cried the Judge, in a tragic voice.

"When I expressly said they were not to be sucked till the sentence! After *that*, and the highly intelligent manner in which you have followed the case, I need hardly say that you will find both prisoners guilty. I've no wish to influence you in any way," he added, "but if you *don't*, you will have every reason to regret it."

sion is that *I* do the sentencing, and I'm *going* to, anyhow. You can do the summing-up afterwards, if you like."

"But, my lud," screamed the Demurrer-General's Devil, "your ludship hasn't heard my *defence* yet!"

"You make such a noise, sir," said the Judge, severely, "that it's impossible to hear *anything*. Be kind enough to speak in your proper turn. Prisoners at the Bar," he continued, "you have been convicted, after the first and one of the fairest trials I have ever presided over—convicted of trampling in the most wanton and deliberate manner upon a poor, unprotected by-law, one of the hallowed bulwarks of our country. You have cheated, not a



"THE NINE JURYMEN PUT THEIR HEADS TOGETHER."

The nine Jurymen put their heads together at this. They were most respectable-looking persons, all in frock-coats and gold spectacles, and it was odd that they should have reminded Irene of the Ninepins—but they did.

"My lord," said the Foreman presently, rising, "we find each prisoner guiltier than the other; and the sentence is——"

"One moment," said the Lobster Judge. "Correct me if I'm wrong—but my *impres-*

fellow-creature who could cheat you back again, but a helpless, inoffensive Railway Company. I find it hard to believe that such heartless audacity could even be contemplated by reasonable beings. However, you have done it, and it is my painful duty now to inflict penalties which I think everybody, yourselves included, will admit are devised with no little ingenuity. As for the female Prisoner, I am willing to allow some excuse on the grounds of gross ignorance and lack of education. *Her* sentence will therefore be comparatively light: she will merely go to school for a term

of fifty years, *or* her natural life, which ever lasts longest. She will learn and repeat all her lessons backwards, with the book held upside down, and write her exercises on pink blotting-paper with cold water. For every bad mark she will get an extra month, for every good mark she will get a half-holiday—such half-holidays not to commence until after her sentence has expired. By that time I trust she will have become a good, happy, and law-abiding little girl."

There was a round of applause as he finished, which he acknowledged by gratified bows.

"It's a beastly unfair sentence!" shouted Torquil. "How can you *expect* her to learn lessons backwards and upside down?"

"She may find it difficult at first," admitted the Judge, "but she'll have all her life to practise it in. And if she prefers to do her lessons in Chinese she will be graciously permitted to do so. Now I come to *you*! In spite of your conduct with respect to those peppermints I am loth to believe that you are utterly incorrigible, and I shall give you a chance, at all events, of retrieving your disgrace. You shall enter the Army. I think," he added, addressing the two Grenadiers, "your regiment goes to the Front next?"

"To-morrow, my lord," they replied, presenting arms; "on active service, against the Golgrislians."

"I thought so," said the Judge. "You will take the male Prisoner with you as Drummer-Boy."

"We've *got* a Drummer-Boy, my lord," they said, as if they did not want Torquil particularly.

"Well, it doesn't matter what he *goes* as," said the Judge, "so long as you take care that he is in every forlorn hope, several yards ahead."

"We'll take good care of *that*, my lord," they said.

"But he's *sure* to be killed then!" cried Irene. "He'll be shot by the—the Golgrislians the very first thing!"

"Oh, not *necessarily*," said the Judge. "He *might* be shot by his own side. And, anyway, he'll have a hero's death and a free pardon—and what *more* can he want? It's really impossible to please *everybody*! It only remains for me," he added, rising, "to thank all concerned, including the Prisoners in the dock, for the very able and talented—Goodness gracious me, Mr. Demurrer-General's Devil, what is it *now*?"

"Only the—the Defence, my lud!" faltered the poor little man.

"Oh, I can't hear that *now*—keep it for the next case—if you are ever trusted with one."

"I warn your ludship," said the Advocate, "that if you don't hear what I've got to say you may find you have made a rather ridiculous exhibition of yourself, that's all."

"I cannot conceive anything making *me* ridiculous," said the Lobster Judge, bringing his nose and chin together with a sharp click. "However, I don't mind hearing you—it won't affect my decision in the least."

The Demurrer-General's Devil was like many nervous persons in one respect—all his diffidence wore off him as soon as he once warmed to his work. Irene had no idea what he was driving at, and very little hope that he would do any good, but she was astonished by his eloquence.

He began by calling the Judge's attention to the Prisoners' personal appearance, which he maintained was unnatural and even grotesque.

"Really, now you mention it," said the Judge, scratching his head thoughtfully with his right foot, "so it *is*."

"I hope to show beyond all doubt, my lud," proceeded the Advocate, "that my unhappy clients belong to a race of beings so inferior and unintelligent as to be beneath the notice of the law—that they are, in short, nothing more nor less than ordinary Toys!"

There was a tremendous sensation at this, and Torquil and Irene were at least as astonished as anybody.

"A very singular defence!" said the Judge. "I am curious to hear how you make it out."

"From all their actions, my lud. Only Toys would have been so ignorant of the immense importance of a countersign. Only Toys would have attempted to purchase valuable pastry and hire sumptuously furnished apartments with trumpery beads. Only Toys would suppose that cattle were fed on fluff and tea-leaves, and that cannon and rifles were loaded with such charges as peas and slate-pencil. Only a Toy—and a very simple Toy at that—would have proposed partnership to a highly respected and influential tradesman like the gentleman who has given his evidence in that box." (Here the Grocer rose and bowed.) "Finally, only Toys would have been unaware that tickets are absolutely essential before undertaking the shortest railway journey. On *Toy* railways, so I am instructed, there are no such regulations. And then, my lud and Gentlemen of the Jury, the Prisoners' reference to a certain individual of the name of Santa Claus is another

strong point in their favour. For let me inform your ludship and the Jury who this person *is*: a purely imaginary being whom Toys, in their simplicity, suppose to be their patron and protector. Then, again——”

“You needn't go on,” interrupted the Judge, suddenly. “The Court is entirely with you. They are clearly Toys. That was my own opinion from the first. In fact, if the Chief Commissary-Pouncer hadn't been so positive and the Jury so obstinate I should never have wasted a sentence on them. It's all the Prisoners' fault, though, because they must have known what they were, and they stood by and never said a word.”

“I was the first to discover they *were* Toys!” put in the Demurrer-General's Devil.

“We won't squabble over it,” said the Judge, “it's so undignified! I tell you what we'll do. We'll *all* present them to the Queen—I don't mind if I introduce the Deputation myself.”

The Demurrer-General's Devil scrambled out of his box as the Jury bundled out of theirs, and the Lobster Judge climbed cautiously down from his bench. “How are we to get them to the Palace, though?” he said. “Oughtn't they to be wound up, or something, Mr. Demurrer-General's Devil?”

“I don't exactly know how they work, my



“I WAS THE FIRST TO DISCOVER THEY WERE TOYS!” PUT IN THE DEMURRER-GENERAL'S DEVIL.

“But we're n——” Torquil was beginning, when Irene pinched his arm, only just in time.

“They hadn't the sense to see the importance of it, my lud,” explained their Advocate.

“Well,” said the Judge, “the question is now: what's to be done with them? They can't be punished, yet we can't have them running loose all over the place. They might get into *more* trains without tickets. It wouldn't be a bad idea to present them to Her Majesty. They might amuse her.”

“It is for me to make ze presentation,” said the Chief Commissary-Pouncer. “It was me who arrest zem.”

“But we *tried* them!” said the Jury.

lud,” said the Advocate; “but as they don't seem to have run down, I dare say they'll get there without much trouble.”

“Perhaps if I were to put another bull's-eye in the slot,” suggested the Judge—“but no, better not, it might put the machinery out of order. Just point them towards the Palace—that's right. . . . Now, forward all!”

“Torquil,” Irene managed to whisper, “hadn't we better try to walk as if we were clockwork?”

“You may, *I* sha'n't,” said Torquil, stoutly; “I'm not a Toy, and I'm not going to pretend to be one.”

“But it's our only way to get off,” said Irene.

"We shall be all right as soon as we see old Clementina. *She'll* know us, and take care we're not bullied any longer."

"Dear old Clementina!" said Irene. "It *will* be nice to see her again!"

It was not a long walk to the Palace, and the Royal Footmen, who accompanied the Deputation, took them round by a back way, through a lovely garden of immense tin palms in tubs, to a marble terrace, where they were requested to wait.

CHAPTER XIII.

CLEMENTINA'S RIVAL.

THIS Queen was as different as possible from Clementina in every respect. She was



E. MILLER—1907.

"NOW, FORWARD ALL!"

Irene was secretly amused to see how nervous the Lobster Judge was getting: his nose and chin were positively clattering, though he tried to strut about jauntily and appear quite at home. The rest of the Deputation were not much more at their ease.

"They'll look more uncomfortable still," she thought, "when they see how Clementina treats us!"

Then there came a cry of "The Queen! The Queen!" and Irene saw the Judge suddenly turn a deep blue and get behind the Chief Commissary-Pouncer.

"You can introduce the Deputation," he said, hurriedly; "I've got a cold." And the next moment he bowed so low that his nose and chin scratched the priceless marble pavement. The Queen was slowly coming to them down the steps.

But Irene's heart sank at the sight—for the Queen was not Clementina after all!

dark, for one thing, with brown hair, and bold black eyes, with very thick upper and lower lashes. She was magnificently dressed in long trailing robes, and a little crown glittered and sparkled on her elaborately dressed head. She had a hard and slightly malicious smile, and carried a pair of long handled eye-glasses, which she put up every now and then with a supercilious air.

"Well," she said, "what is it you all want?"

"We 'ave permit ourselves ze liberty, your Majesty," explained the Commissary-Pouncer, "to beg your acceptance of a couple of Toys zat are very curious, very original."

"We detest Toys," was the Queen's not over-gracious reply. "They bore us to death. Is there anything very remarkable about this pair? We don't notice it ourselves."

"I think, your Majesty," said the Judge, who had now regained his courage, "that they must be *rather* out of the common, or



"THE QUEEN WAS SLOWLY COMING TO THEM DOWN THE STEPS."

my excellent friend, the Chief Commissary-Pouncer, wouldn't have arrested them as real criminals and brought them before me for trial. Ha, ha! He positively did, I assure you!"

"This is too moch," cried the Commissary-Pouncer. "Milor Shelley forget that he sentence bose of zem."

"Only for the *joke* of the thing, that's all," said the Judge. "We don't often get the chance of a trial, and it's just as well to keep our hands in. Of course, I very soon saw that they were really Toys."

"Not till *I* pointed it out," squeaked the little Advocate. "I was the *first* to discover it, your Majesty."

"Were you really?" she drawled. "How very talented of you! I could have discovered so much without my glasses. They seem to be quite a cheap sort of Toys. Do they talk or anything?"

"So well, your Majesty, zat one almost imagines they 'ave intelligence," said the Commissary-Pouncer.

"The reason of *that* is," explained the Demurrer-General's Devil, "that they are fitted up with phonographs inside them. That's how *I* explain it."

"Nossing of ze kind," said the Commissary-Pouncer. "Only a leetle pair of vat you call bellows. You pince zem. Zey say 'Maman! Papa!' Like zat."

"But they can say much more than *that*," objected the Advocate.

"Zat is true," said the Commissary-Pouncer, "but it is done viz bellows. Is it not so, Milor Judge?"

"I don't pretend to say how they *talk*," replied the Judge, "but it's clear enough that they *walk* by *clockwork*."

"I think, my lud, you're mistaken there," said the Advocate. "Their movements are too lively for clockwork. Besides, they haven't a key hung round their necks. I fancy you'll find it's quicksilver."

"Pooh!" said the Judge, "I tell you they're clockwork. I think *I* ought to know."

"What *is* the use of wrangling over it?" said the Queen, languidly. "It's easily settled—you've only to open them."

"But that might spoil them, your Majesty!" said

the Advocate.

"Oh, *we* don't mind," replied the Queen; "they're of no value to us. And if it *is* quicksilver it might be useful."

"So it might, your Majesty," said the Judge, briskly, "so it might. Can anybody oblige me with a knife or an old pair of scissors?"

"You—you *beasts!*" cried Torquil, enraged at this cold-blooded proposal. "You touch us if you dare! Don't you know it will hurt awfully?"

"That's absurd!" said the Queen. "Toys don't feel anything."

"But we haven't got any clockwork or quicksilver inside *us*; indeed, we haven't!" said Irene, who saw that it was useless to appeal to their sympathy. "And it *will* make such a horrid mess!"

"Only horsehair or bran or sawdust," said the Queen; "that's easily cleared up."

"I tell you *we aren't* Toys!" cried Torquil. "It's all a mistake. We're alive! And—

and—oh! you may think yourself cleverer than Clementina, but if she was here *she'd* never allow us to be cut open to see how we worked!”

“Clementina!” cried the Queen. “Why, what do *you* know about Clementina?”

“We were staying with her not so very long ago,” said Irene; “and I only wish we were still!”

“Mr. Demurrer-General’s Devil,” said the Queen, “you have made a very silly mistake. *These* are no Toys!”

“Aha!” cried the Commissary-Pouncer. “I was right, then. Toys! Bah!”

“I *knew* the Demurrer-General’s Devil was wrong,” said the Judge; “or, of course, I shouldn’t have sentenced them. He *would* go interfering with Justice, and I hope he’s feeling properly ashamed of himself!”

The unhappy little Demurrer-General’s Devil glanced nervously around, as if he would have been glad of a desk to retire into.

“Now,” said the Lobster Judge, triumphantly, “they *can* be punished—and my sentences won’t be wasted after all! They’ve broken a by-law, your Majesty.”

“I don’t care *what* they’ve done,” said the Queen, calmly, “I’m going to pardon them.”

“Might we inquire, without presumption, *why*, your Majesty?” asked the whole Deputation.

“Because, if you wish to know,” she replied, “they have taught that idiotic Clementina to know her proper place—and I love them for it! *She* to set herself up as a Queen, indeed! Why, I shouldn’t wonder if the silly creature actually thought herself our rival—*ours*! Ha, ha!”

“I don’t believe she ever thought *about* you,” said Irene.

“You mean she hasn’t the brains,” said the Queen. “What were those two ridiculous names she invented for you? ‘Buffidella’ and ‘Chipsitop,’ weren’t they? How very absurd, to be sure!”

“I don’t see anything so very absurd about them,” said Torquil.

“Oh, you’re *much* too clever not to see how foolish they are. And she actually invited you to a State Banquet, didn’t she, with nothing to eat or drink? Just the kind of thing she *would* do.”

“She gave us the best Banquet she had,” said Irene.

“And she took you round her precious ‘Kingdom,’ as she calls it, afterwards, I hear. I do wish I could have been with you, you dear satirical little things. How we would have laughed!”

“There was nothing to laugh at,” said Torquil. “You can’t expect Toys—at least Toys like *them*,” he added (Irene saw that for the life of him he couldn’t be sure what these things really were)—“to know *everything*.”

“But do you mean to tell me you *didn’t* laugh at them and all their ways?”

“No,” Irene admitted. “We did; and very beastly it was of us, too.”

“Nonsense! What else could she expect? They tell me she’s quite broken down since you left—not the same Doll, and her Kingdom quite at a standstill.”

“I know, poor thing!” said Irene, penitently.

“I’ve an idea!” said the Queen. “Suppose you two go and invite her and her Court to pay us a little visit? I’m sure she’d come if *you* asked her.”

“If we did, you would only make fun of her,” said Irene.

“Oh, she’d be much too stupid to notice it. And just think what fun it would be. Fancy Clementina and her Maids of Honour and all the Ninepins at a *real* Banquet and Ball. They’d be simply too killing! Oh, we must have them here, we simply *must*!”

“A brilliant idea, your Majesty,” said the Lobster Judge. “Their peculiarities will afford us excellent sport!”

“She sha’n’t come here if *I* can prevent it!” said Irene.

“And, pray, why not?” the Queen inquired.

“Because I won’t have her made any more uncomfortable than she is already.”

“Why, she’s nothing but a great silly Doll. *You* know that!” and the Queen addressed Torquil this time.

“She’s a jolly decent sort all the same,” said Torquil, and Irene could have hugged him for it. “And I’m not going to see her ragged or rotted.”

“I’d no idea you thought so much of her!” sneered the Queen, smiling unpleasantly. “It wasn’t so *always*, was it?”

“No,” said Torquil, “we thought such a lot of ourselves once. But we’ve found out since that we don’t really know how to do things much better than Toys—not so well as *some* do, and we’d a good deal sooner be with old Clementina and *her* lot than yours!”

“Because,” said the Queen, sharply, “you can look down on *them* and you can’t on *us*!”

“It isn’t that at all!” said Irene; “it’s because—but you’d only laugh if I told you.”

“Well,” said the Queen, “I’ve set my heart on having them all here, and she

won't come for anybody but you. Do as I wish, and directly afterwards I'll send you both home by special train. If you decline to oblige me, you can stay here and starve, for all I care. So choose. . . ."



"There's hardly anything I wouldn't do to get away from this hateful place," said Irene, almost in tears, "but no—I can't do that, and I don't believe Torquil will either."

"WHY, HALLOA! WHAT'S HAPPENED?"

"Of course I won't," said Torquil; "it would be too beastly shabby!"

"The truth is," said the Queen, "that you are actually babies enough to be fond of those silly Toys after all! At *your* age, too! Well, I thought you were more grown up!"

And the Lobster Judge and the Commissary-Pouncer and the Jurymen all laughed, and even the little Demurrer-General's Devil gave a shrill cackle, which was particularly hard to bear.

Irene's cheeks flushed defiantly. "I don't care!" she said. "I *am* fond of Clementina. She's a dear old darling. So now!"

"And what about Chipsitop?" asked the Queen, derisively. "Is *he* as devoted to her, too?"

"Torquil's a Boy," said Irene, "so of course he can't feel the same as I do. But I'm sure he doesn't *mind* her, *do* you, Torquil?"

"Rather not!" he replied. "She's not half a bad Doll. I'd as soon dance the polka with her as I would with some girls, any day.

I believe she'd pick it up—in time. And old Noah—the *real* Noah, I mean—was a good chap in his way. So was the Lord High Acrobat, and the other Grocer—and even the Ninepins, I dare say, when you got to know them. And if ever I see 'em again, I'll . . . Why, halloa! What's happened?"

For, while he spoke, the marble terrace and the courtyard and garden all melted away, and with them the haughty Queen, and the Lobster Judge, and the Commissary-Pouncer, and all the rest of the Deputation vanished, too, and in place of them stood Clementina and the Lord High Acrobat, and the homely Ninepins and Dolls of honour, and Irene found that they were back in the Banqueting Hall—which was really only underneath the nursery table, but she didn't mind that now; she was too

glad to be there once again!

CHAPTER XIV.

HOW IRENE AND TORQUIL CAME BACK

AFTER ALL.

"OH, you dear! you dear!" cried Irene, and in her relief and delight she actually hugged the astonished Clementina. "How clever of you all to act so well—and *what* a fright you gave us! But we don't mind a bit *now*."

As for Torquil, he shook hands heartily with Clementina and the Prime Minister, and all the Dolls of honour, and would have done the same with the Ninepins, only of course it was no use attempting it.

"You did it jolly well!" he said. "I'd no idea you had it *in* you—but I suppose Santa Claus helped. Anyway, I like you all a lot better as you are!"

Clementina stared blankly. "I don't know

what you mean," she said. "I don't remember doing anything. I fancy we must all have been asleep; and as to being clever, surely *you* know how dreadfully stupid we all are? We can't do a single thing properly!"

"No more can *we*!" said Irene, gaily; "but what does that matter when it's only play? And we'll play at Banquets, or Farming, or Shopping—anything you like, and whatever we don't know we can make up—it will be all the better fun."

"So you've found out that at last, eh?" said a cheery voice, and Irene saw that Santa Claus had returned once more. "And it's worth knowing, too. But you can't play any more now. I must put you back again."

"Oh, not yet, Santa Claus," cried Irene. "We're only just beginning to play really."

"I can't keep my reindeer waiting about any longer," said Santa Claus, and indeed they seemed to be shaking their bells outside more impatiently than ever. "Of course, you *could* come in here again after tea and play, if you liked. Only you probably *won't* like."

"Why do you think that?"

"Because by that time you will be your proper size again and too big to play."

"Not *really* too big," said Irene.

"Well, there's another reason. After I'm once fairly off, the Toys won't be able to move about or talk any longer."

"Ah!" wailed Clementina and all the Dolls and Toys together. "Then they won't have the patience to play with us. We shall be even stupider than we are now. No, they'll *never* come back!"

"Yes, we will," said Irene. "We can do all the moving and talking *for* you. And then, if you're silly, it will be all *our* fault. And we really do know a little—not much, though—about *some* things. Don't be afraid—we'll come back to you, won't we, Torquil?"

"They'll come back to you," said Santa Claus, before Torquil could reply. "I'll answer for them. Shut your eyes!" he ordered as before, and they obeyed as usual.

When Irene opened her eyes she was not at all astonished to find herself her proper size again and sitting at the schoolroom table opposite Torquil. It was merely what she had expected.

"We *will*, Torquil, won't we?" she said.

"Will *what*?" said Torquil, lazily.

"I—I don't know!" said Irene, shaking

the hair from her forehead. "Did I say anything?"

"You said, 'We will, *won't* we?' What did you mean?"

"I—forget," said Irene. And just then she read the sentence she had written, "No time for playing with Toys, which Torquil says is a childish pursuit unless they are exact moddles"; and as she read she again heard the faint chink-chink-chink of departing bells. "I remember now!" she cried. "Santa Claus—and the Toys, Torquil!"

"What bosh you *are* talking!" he said. "You've been dreaming, Irene; you're not half awake yet!"

"I'm *sure* I haven't!" Irene insisted. "Why, *you* were there *too*, Torquil; you know you were!"

"I've been almost asleep myself," he said. "I've got into such a muddle over this Geography game I've been trying to make. Why, it's just tea-time. Hooray!"

Irene saw that either he really had forgotten all about Santa Claus, or else he didn't care to be reminded just then. "What are you going to do *after* tea?" she asked. "Not finish your game?"

"No, I'm sick of that," he said; "I shall never make anything much of it. What are *you*? Going on with that article of yours?"

"It's too stupid," said Irene; "I haven't said what I mean a bit. I was just thinking," she went on, rather timidly, for she was dreadfully afraid he would only laugh at her, "that we—we might go into the nursery and get out some of our Toys; there's lots of things we could make them do."

"That's not half a bad idea," he said, more graciously than she had dared to hope. "I don't care if I do. I dare say we can get some fun out of them, if we try."

Irene was quite contented. "What *does* it matter," she thought, "whether he remembers or not, so long as he'll come and help me to play with the poor things? And I've some splendid ideas *now*!" . . .

And Torquil proved himself quite able to enter into them and carry them out, and even suggest better ones of his own, which Irene was convinced would never have happened if Santa Claus had not taken all that trouble.

However that might be, one thing is certain: from that afternoon to the end of the holidays there was not a single Doll or Toy in the day nursery which could justly complain of being neglected.