



YOU are, of course, a singularly intelligent child, and so must often have wondered what has become of all the interesting things that you read about in the old fairy tales—the shoes of swiftness, and the sword of sharpness, and the cloak that made its wearer invisible, and things like that. Well, the fact is all these things are still in the world, hidden about somewhere, only people are so busy with new inventions, wireless telegraphs and X-rays, and things like that, that they don't trouble any more to look for the really interesting things. And if you don't look for things you don't find them—at least, not often. Though some lucky people have only to walk out of doors and adventures happen to them as readily as breakfast and bed happen to ordinary people. But when people do find any of the wonderful old treasures they generally hold their tongues about it, because it is so difficult to make people believe the truth if it is at all out of the way. Two of the wonder things out of the old stories were found only the other day, by a little girl in Sussex. And she never told anyone but me and one other person. I often have things

told me that no one else ever hears of, because everyone knows that I can believe anything.

The little-girl-in-Sussex's name was Seraphina Bodlett. She did not belong to Sussex, having been born in Tooting, but she was staying at a Sussex farmhouse for the summer holidays. It was the very nicest place to stay at, plenty of room to play in, all the Sussex downs, in fact, and plenty of animals to pet and feed. The only thing was that all the other people at the farm were grown up, and Seraphina longed very much for someone to play with. The farmer's daughter, Miss Patty, was very kind and always quite willing to play Halma, only it happened that Halma was not what Seraphina wanted to play.

It was summer, and Seraphina went to bed early, while it was still daylight. She used to lie awake in the big four-post bed with the white dimity curtains, and look at the latticed window and the oak chest of drawers with the shell boxes on it, and try to make herself dream that she had another little girl to play with. But she always surprised herself by waking up in the morning without having dreamed of anything at all.

The best parlour at the farm was a very

nice place, but Seraphina (whose name takes so long to write that I think I had better call her Fina, as everyone else did) was not usually allowed to play there, and the blinds were always drawn down exactly half-way, because that is genteel.

Sometimes Fina was taken into the parlour by Miss Patty, and then Miss Patty would bring out the curiosities that her brother the sailor had brought home from his voyages: South Sea necklaces of seeds and beads and cut-up reeds, and fat idols from India, with far more arms than most of us could find a use for. Then there were beady pincushions made by sailors, and a stuffed parrot exactly like life, except that one eye was out, and Chinese junks in beautiful carved ivory, and a pagoda (or Chinese temple), and that was of ivory too, and all carved out of one solid block, Miss Patty said. Fina loved the pagoda best of all the curiosities. You could see right into it—it was a tower with seven stories, and it had little gold bells on it that rang when Miss Patty took off the glass case and gently shook the wooden stand. Of course, Fina was never allowed to shake it herself.

"Where did it come from?" She asked this question every time she was shown the pagoda.

"It came from the Emperor of China's own Summer Palace at Pekin," Miss Patty always said, "but my brother Bob never would tell me how he got it."

Then, when Fina had had a last peep through the windows of the pagoda, the glass case would be put on again, and Fina would be told to "run along now and play."

One day she was "running along and playing" when she met a playfellow. It was a fat foxhound puppy, very clumsy and very affectionate. They had a romp together, and then the puppy blundered off and Fina went indoors to wash her hands, because the puppy's idea of a romp had been a roll in the dust, which Fina had gladly consented to share.

But as she passed the door of the best parlour she stopped a minute, for the door was open. It was the day for cleaning out the room, but Miss Patty had stopped in the middle of the cleaning to go to the back door to see a pedlar who had some really wonderful bargains in handkerchiefs and silk dresses, and mixed white pins and back-hair combs. Fina often wondered afterwards whether that pedlar was a real pedlar or a magician in disguise.

Now, Fina was an obedient little girl.

She did *not* slip into the parlour to have a look round just because the door was open and no one was about. But she had not been forbidden to *look* in—if she got the chance—so she stood at the door and looked at the stuffed parrot, and the junk, and the rest of the things. And as she looked she started, and said:—

"Oh! It will tumble down—I know it will. If a door banged, even!"

And just then the front door *did* bang, and the pagoda trembled. For it was standing at the very edge of the chiffonnier, and one of the little black carved claw-feet of its stand was actually overhanging the chiffonnier edge.

"I *must* stand it steady," said Fina. "If I go and tell Miss Patty it may tumble off before I get back."

So she went quickly in, and took the glass case and stand and pagoda very carefully in her hands to move them back to a safe place.

It was this very moment that the foxhound puppy chose for rushing in—all wriggle and bark and clumsy paws—and plunging between Fina's feet. She reeled, staggered, and she, the puppy, the stand, the glass case, and the precious pagoda all went down together in a crashing heap.

When Fina picked herself up the puppy's tail was just disappearing round the door, and at her feet lay a scattered heap of splintered ivory and glass, the hopeless ruins of the beautiful pagoda.

Her heart seemed to stand still, and then began to beat so hard and fast that she felt as though she had a steam-engine in her chest.

Her hands trembled so much that she could hardly pick up the pieces. But she did begin to pick them up.

"Perhaps it could be mended," she said, "with glue or white of egg, like nurse did the china basin, only the pieces are so small and chippety, some of them, that I don't see how you could ever fit them together. And Miss Patty will be in in a minute! Oh, I wish I was somebody else and not me! Oh, whatever will she say?"

Among the shivered splinters of ivory the little gold bells were scattered.

"But what's that?" said Fina. "It's not a bell or—"

She picked whatever it was up from among the shattered ivory and glass. It was a gold ring, thick and beautiful, with a strange design on it like on the sides of tea-caddies. She slipped it on her hand to keep it safe while

she went on with the dismal work of picking up the pieces. And then, suddenly, the dreadfulness of the deed she had done—though quite the puppy's fault, and not hers at all—came over her. She began to breathe quickly and then to make faces, and in a moment she was sobbing and sniffing, and rubbing her wet eyes with her knuckles, still dirty from her politeness in letting the puppy choose what game she and it should play at.

She was roused from her crying by a voice, and it was not Miss Patty's voice. It said:—

"Your servant, miss. What can I have the pleasure of doing for you?"

She took her knuckles out of her eyes, and saw, from between her very dirty eyelids, a tall footman who was bowing respectfully before her. He was dressed wonderfully in green satin—his large and lovely legs wore white silk stockings, and his hair was powdered till it was as white as the inside of a newly-sheared fleece.

"Thank you," said Fina, sobbing, but polite, "no one can do anything for me, unless they can mend all this—and of course nobody can."

"Your servant, miss," said the footman. "Do I understand that you order me to mend this?"

"If you can," said Fina, a ray of hope lighting her blighted existence; "but, of course—WHAT?"

The pagoda stood on the table *mended*. Indeed, it seemed as though there had never been any breaking. It was there, safe and sound as it had always been, on its ebony stand, with the shining

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bubble of its glass case rising dome-like over it.

The footman had vanished.

"Well!" said Fina, "I suppose it was all a waking dream. How horrible! I've read of waking dreams, but I didn't know there were ever waking nightmares. Perhaps I better *had* wash my hands—and my face," she added, when she saw it, round, red, and streaked with mud (made of dust and tears), in the glass of the chiffonnier.

She dipped her face in fresh water in the willow-patterned basin in her big attic bedroom. Then she washed her hands. And as she began to rub the soap on she heard a noise.

"Your servant, miss. What can I have the pleasure of doing for you?"

And there was that footman again.

"Who are you?" said Fina. "Why do you follow me about?"

"I am the Slave of the Ring, please, miss," replied the footman, with another bow. "And, of course, when you rubs it I appears."

"The Slave of the Ring?" said Fina, letting the

soapsuds drip from her hands to the carpet. "Do you mean Aladdin's ring?"

"The ring belonged to the gentleman you mentions at one time, miss."

"But I thought the Slave of the Ring was a genie—a great, foaming, fierce, black slave in a turban."

"Times is changed, miss," said the footman. "In this here civilized country there aren't no slaves, only servants. You have to keep up with the times, even if you're a——"

"But I thought the Slave of the Ring spoke Chinese?"



"YOUR SERVANT, MISS," SAID THE FOOTMAN. "DO I UNDERSTAND THAT YOU ORDER ME TO MEND THIS?"

"So I does, miss, when in that country. But whatever'd be the use of talking Chinese to you?"

"But tell me—— Oh! there's the dinner-bell. Look here, I wish you'd not keep appearing so suddenly. It does startle me so."

"Then don't you go on rubbing the ring sudden, miss. It's that as does it. Nothing I can do for ye, miss?"

"Not now," said Fina, and he vanished as she spoke.

When Fina sat down to dinner in the farm kitchen—a very nice dinner it was, boiled pork and beans, and a treacle tart to follow—she picked up her horn-handled knife and fork and clutched them hard. They felt real enough. But the footman—she must have dreamed him, and the ring. She had left the ring in the dressing-table drawer upstairs, for fear she should rub it accidentally. She knew what a start it would give Miss Patty and the farmer if a genie footman suddenly appeared from nowhere and stood behind their chairs at dinner.

Miss Patty seemed very cheerful.

"It *was* a piece of luck, father, wasn't it, that pedlar wanting Chinese things? He gave me two pieces of broadcloth that'll cut into three or four coats for you, and a length of black silk that rich it'll stand alone, and ten pounds in gold, and half-a-dozen silk neck-squares."

"Yes," said the farmer, "it was a good bargain for you; and Bob give you the pagoda, and you've a right to do as you like with your own."

"Oh, Miss Patty," said Fina, "you've never been and sold the pagoda—the beautiful, darling pagoda?"

"Yes, I have, dear; but never mind, I'll buy you a new doll out of the money I got for it."

"Thank you," said Fina, but the pork and beans did not taste so nice now she knew that the pretty pagoda was sold. Also she was rather worried about the ring. Ought she to keep it? She had found it, of course, but someone must have lost it. Yet she couldn't bear to give it up, when she hadn't made the slave of it do a single thing for her, except to mend the pagoda.

After dinner Fina went and got the ring. She was very careful not to rub it till she was safe and alone in a quiet green nook in the little wood at the end of the garden, where the hazels and sweet chestnuts and hornbeams grew so closely that she was quite hidden.

Then she rubbed the ring, and instantly the footman was there. But there was no room for him to stand up under the thicket, so he appeared kneeling and trying to bow in that position.

"Then it's not a dream," said she.

"How often I have heard them very words!" said the Slave of the Ring.

"I want you to tell me things," said Fina. "Do sit down; you look so uncomfortable like that."

"Thank you, miss," said the footman; "you're very thoughtful for a child of your age, and of this age, too! Service ain't what it was."

"Now, tell me," she said, "where did the ring come from?"

"There's seven secrets I ain't allowed to tell," the footman said, "and that there what you asked me's one of them, but the ring's as old as old—I can tell you that."

"But I mean where did it come from just now—when I found it?"

"Oh, *then*. Why, it come out of the pagoda, of course. The floor of the third story was made double, and the ring was stuck between the floor of that and the ceiling of the second floor, and when you smashed the pagoda o' course it rolled out. The pagoda was made o' purpose to take care of the ring."

"Who made it?" asked Fina.

"I did," said the genie, proudly.

"And now," said Fina, "what shall we do?"

"Excuse me," the footman said, firmly; "one thing I'm *not* bound to do is to give advice."

"But you'll do anything else I tell you?"

"Yes, miss—almost anything. I'll talk to you willing, I will, and tell you my life's sorrows."

"I should like that some other time," said Fina, "but just now, perhaps, you'd better get me a doll."

And a doll lay at her feet among the dead leaves. It was a farthing Dutch doll.

"You didn't say what sort of a doll," said the footman, when she had rubbed the ring and he had reappeared, and she had reproached him. "I've been in service long enough to do exactly what I am told. My life-sorrow has been——"

"I say," Fina said, suddenly, "can't you get the pagoda back for me?"

Instantly the pagoda was there and the footman was not. Fina spent the afternoon playing with the beautiful ivory toy, but when it was tea-time she had to ask the genie foot-

man to take it away again, for she dared not face the questions and she could not invent the explanations that would have had to be given if she had turned up at the farm with the pagoda under her arm.

You will think that Fina ought to have been the happiest of little girls, now that she had a genie footman Slave of the Ring in a green coat to get her anything she wanted and run her errands on his beautiful balustrade-like white silk legs. But this was not so.

It was all very well to go into the wood every day and make the footman fetch her the most beautiful dolls and toys and sweets, but even sweets are dull if you eat them alone; and what is the use of toys, or even pagodas, if you have no one to show them to, and dare not have them except in a secret corner of a wood?

She tried to get the footman to play with her, but he said that was a little more than anyone could expect, and began again about his sorrows; and as for getting him to take any interest in the wonderful things he fetched for her, she felt at once that these were nothing to a genie footman with such a jewelled and exciting past as his.

She was not a very clever little girl. She wished for a white pony, and, of course, it came, but there was no room for it in the wood, and it walked on her foot and tried to bite her, and she hastily had to send it away. She wished for a pet lamb, but it baa-ed so loudly that she was almost discovered by the farmer, so that had to go too. And she had been wishing for these vain and unsatisfying things for more than a week before she thought of asking for a little girl to play with.

The genie brought a little girl at once, but she was a horrid little girl, with a red pigtail and a green frock trimmed with black bead trimming, and she broke the toys and laughed at Fina when she tried to tell her the story of the pagoda and the Ring Slave. Also there was no room to play in the secret nook in the wood, and when the little girl had slapped Fina and taken the pagoda away from her it seemed best to ask the genie to take the little girl herself away. Fina never saw her again, and never wanted to either!

At last Fina saw that what she really wanted was not only someone to play

with, but a good place to play in, so she shut her eyes and thought—as hard as a not very clever person of eight can think—and then she rubbed the ring and said:—

“Please take me somewhere where there is a little girl who will play with me, a nice little girl, and room to play in.”

And at once the wood vanished—like a magic-lantern picture when the kind clergyman who is showing it changes the slide—and she was in a strange room.

It was a nursery—very large and light. There were flowers at the window, and pictures on the walls, and many toys. And on a couch, covered with a bright green rug with yellow daisies embroidered on it, lay a little girl with pretty yellow hair and kind, merry blue eyes.



“THE LITTLE GIRL HAD SLAPPED FINA AND TAKEN THE PAGODA AWAY FROM HER.”

“Oh!” said the little girl, very much astonished.

“Oh!” said Fina, at the same minute, and with the same quantity of astonishment.

"I've come to play with you, if you'll let me," said Fina.

"How lovely! But how did you get in?"

"The Slave of the Ring brought me!"

"The Slave of the Ring! How wonderful!"

"Yes, isn't it? What's your name?"

"Ella."

"Mine's Fina. Wouldn't you like to see my Ring Slave, Ella?"

"Yes, oh, yes!" Ella was laughing softly.

Fina rubbed the ring and the footman genie appeared, his silk legs more beautifully silk than ever.

"Please fetch the pagoda."

The pagoda toppled on to the couch, and the genie vanished, as he always did when he had executed an order.

When Ella had admired the pagoda, which she did very thoroughly and satisfyingly, she said:—

"And now I'll show you mine!"

She pulled a battered iron thing from under her pillow and rubbed it. Instantly a very grand stout gentleman in evening dress stood before them. He had most respectable whiskers, and he said:—

"What can I do for you, madam?"

"Who is it?" whispered Fina.

"It's the Slave of the Lamp," said Ella. "He says he's disguised as a perfect butler because times have changed so since *his* time."

"Send him away," said Fina.

"Oh, dear Ella," she went on, when they were alone, "tell me all about yours and I'll tell you all about mine."

"Well," said Ella, "I found the lamp at the seaside, just before I hurt my back. I fell off the sea-wall, you know, and I sha'n't be able to walk for ever so long. And one day I rubbed it by accident, and since then my

beautiful perfect butler gets me anything I want. Look here, I'll tell him to make it like it was yesterday."

The lamp was rubbed, the order given, and the nursery became a palace hall hung with cloth of gold and blazing with jewels and softly-coloured lamps.

"But can't your butler cure your back?"

"No. Time is the only genie who can do that, my butler says. You don't know how I've wanted someone to show it all to! But I never thought of wishing for you. It's only a week since I found the lamp—"

"Do they leave you alone all the time?"

"Oh, no, only when I say I'm sleepy; and my butler has orders to change everything to ordinary directly the door-handle turns."



"THE NURSERY BECAME A PALACE HALL HUNG WITH CLOTH OF GOLD AND BLAZING WITH JEWELS."

"Have you told anyone?"

"Oh, *no!* My butler says if you tell anyone grown-up that you've got the lamp it will vanish away. I can't remember whether it's like that in the 'Arabian Nights'; perhaps it's a new rule."

The two little girls talked all the afternoon about the wonderful things they would make their slaves do for them, and they were so contented with each other's company that they never once called on their slaves for anything.

But when Fina began to feel the inside feeling that means tea-time, she rubbed the ring for her slave to take her back to the farm.

"I'll get my slave to take me to see you home," said Ella. "He can carry me quite without hurting me."

So she rubbed the lamp, and the stately butler instantly appeared.

"Please——" Ella began, but the glorious butler interrupted.

"James," he said to the footman, "what are you doing here?"

"I'm in service with this young lady, Mr. Lamp, sir."

"Give me the ring, James."

And instantly the footman took the ring, very gently but quite irresistibly, from Fina's finger and handed it to the butler.

"Oh, *no!*" Fina cried, "you've no right to take my ring. And he's no right to obey you. He's *my* slave."

"Excuse me, madam," said the butler, looking more and more perfect, and more and more the sort of person who is sure to know best, "he is not *your* slave. He is the Slave of the Ring. But then you see he is a

footman, and footmen have to obey butlers all the world over."

"That's so, miss," said the footman; "but the lamp's stronger than the ring." He snatched up the lamp. "Now, then," he said, turning fiercely to the butler, "we'll see if you're going to begin a-orderin' of me about!"

The butler so far forgot himself as to scratch his head, thoughtfully.

"Yes," he said, after a pause, "I've got to own that you've got the better of me there, James Rings. But why dispute—which is beneath the dignity of a six-foot footman like yourself, to say nothing of the dignity of a butler, which is a thing words can't do justice to? You're my slave because I've got the ring and because I'm a butler and you're a footman. And I'm your slave because you've got the lamp. It's half-a-dozen of one and six and a half of the other. Can't we come to some agreement between ourselves, James?"

"Oh," cried Ella, "what about *us*?"

"We are excessively sorry to cause any inconvenience, madam," said the butler,

"but we give you five minutes' notice. We are leaving service for good."

"Oh, Lamps!" cried Ella. "And you were always such a beautiful butler. I thought you enjoyed being it."

"Don't you make any mistake, miss," the footman put in. "Nobody *enjoys* being in service, though they has to put up with it. Me and Mr. Lamps is retiring from service. Perhaps we may take a little business and go into partner-



"NOW, THEN," HE SAID, TURNING FIERCELY TO THE BUTLER, 'WE'LL SEE IF YOU'RE GOING TO BEGIN A-ORDERIN' OF ME ABOUT!'"

ship, and always wishing you well, young ladies both."

"But," said Fina, "you *can't* go and leave me here! Why, I should never get home. I don't so much as know what county I'm in."

"You're in Auckland, miss," said James.

"There isn't such a county."

"Pardon me, madam," said the butler, "there is. In New Zealand!"

"Don't cry, miss," said James. "If Mr. Lamps 'll only give the word, I'll take you home."

"And then I shall never see Ella again."

"Oh, tell Lamps to rub the ring and tell you to arrange for me to come and live near her in England," cried Ella; "if he'll do that I don't care. I'd rather have a friend than twenty slaves."

"A very proper sentiment, madam," said the butler, approvingly. "Is there any other little thing we could do to oblige you?"

"The pagoda," said Fina. "If you could only get it back to Miss Patty, so that she won't lose the things she sold it for, and won't know about the ring having been in it."

"Consider it done, madam," said the Slave of the Lamp, stroking his respectable butlerial whisker. "Now, if you're ready, your footman shall see you home."

"Good-bye, oh, good-bye," said the little girls, kissing each other very much.

Then Fina shut her eyes, and there she was in the wood in Sussex—alone.

"Now, *have* I dreamed it all?" she said, and went slowly home to tea.

The first thing she saw on the tea-table was the pagoda! And the next was a brown-faced sailor eating hot buttered toast in the window arm-chair.

"Well may you look!" said Miss Patty; "this is my brother Bob, newly arrived from foreign parts. And he met that pedlar and

bought the pagoda off him for two pounds and a highly-coloured cockatoo he was bringing home. And these ten sovereigns the wicked old man gave me are bad ones. But the dresses and the cloth are good. It's a wonderful world!"

Fina thought so too!

Now, the oddest thing about all this is that six months later some new people came to live in the house next door to the house where Fina lived in Tooting. And those new people came from New Zealand. And one of them was called Ella!

Fina knew her at once, but Ella had forgotten her and forgotten the beautiful perfect butler and the perfect footman, and the lamp and the ring, and everything. Perhaps a long sea voyage is bad for the memory. Anyway, the two little girls are close friends, and Ella loves to hear Fina tell the story of the two slaves—though she doesn't believe a word of it!

Fina's father and Ella's father have left Tooting now. They live in lovely houses at Haslemere. And Fina has a white pony and Ella has a brown one. Their fathers are very rich now. They both got situations as managers to branch houses of Messrs. Lamps, Rings, and Co., Electrical Engineers. Mr. Lamps attends to the lighting department, and Mr. Rings is at the head of the bells, which always ring beautifully. And I hear that Ella's father and Fina's father are likely to be taken into partnership. Mr. Bodlett has bought the pagoda, at Fina's earnest request, and it stands on a sideboard in his handsome drawing-room. Fina sometimes asks it whether she really did dream the whole story or not. But it never says a word.

Of course, you and I know that every word of the story is true.