

Dear Cousin Kate,—What terrible news we had about the King. I hope he will soon get better. I could hardly believe it, when I saw it in the "Star." One of my pigeons did the very same thing as one of the cousins'—it fell down the chimney, and we did not find it till about three or four days after, and then, when we did, the poor little thing was nearly dead. I do not play ping-pong very much, but I like it very much. I won't know whether I have passed my examination till September, and that seems such a long time to wait. The windows down town look lovely, all decorated up, but I suppose they will all have to be taken down. I am very fond of reading fairy tales. I have the Yellow, Pink, and Grey Fairy Books. There are a lot of new cousins, are there not? Have you heard the new German band that plays in the streets here? I think they play beautifully; it is a pleasure to sit and listen to them. I must conclude now.—With love from Cousin Mary. P.S.—Do you collect post-cards?

[Dear Cousin Mary.—No, I do not collect post-cards. Do you, and if so, what do you do with them? Is it the same as stamp collecting? I took some children down to see the circus last Saturday. They did like it so much. How sad about your pigeon. Did you save its life after all? It seems an awfully long time to wait till September. Quite a lot of cousins were up for the same music exam, were they not?—Cousin Kate.]

Dear Cousin Kate,—What a sad week this has been, and the King's illness makes it sadder. It did seem dreadful that the Coronation had to be put off, because people did not think the King was so ill. I haven't read any of the books you spoke of in your last letter, or even heard of them. I am reading "Through Darkness to Dawn." It is about Nero's time, and the early Christians. I suppose you have read it, though. What do the cousins mean about the cot, Cousin Kate? I would like to have a collecting-card, too, when they are ready, but I don't know what it is for. I went to a party last night, and had some good fun. The girls were all from our school, so we knew each other, and we played all kinds of games, ping-pong included. We just played anything we liked, and had a really good time (also supper). Don't you think it would be nice to have a motto, or do you think most of the cousins are too young yet to understand one? I wonder how many cousins like gardening. I am fond of it, and sometimes some of the schoolgirls give me plants, or slips of different things. One promised me some white forget-me-not, but although I gave her a slip of paper telling her to remember them written on it, which she put in her book, she always forgot. At last she did really bring them, so I put them in a cool place, and, of course, forgot to take them home. The next day was Saturday, but it was too wet to go for them, and I am hoping they won't be quite dead on Monday. I used to have a vegetable garden, but nothing would grow except broad beans, so I had to give it up, although I sold the beans to mother for threepence a dish, and might have made my fortune in time. We are thinking of getting up a school magazine, and everyone who will is to contribute something to it by half-term. I am sure there is nothing I can do for it, but it will be grand if we get anything worth printing. I have plenty of spare time to write a long letter in, but nothing to say, so will have to stop now.—With love from Cousin Alison.

[Dear Cousin Alison.—I will tell you about our new arrangements for the cot very soon, and when they are complete I will certainly send you a card. At present I do not wish to collect more money, but presently may want a lot. I am very fond of gardening, but get so little time nowadays. Forget-me-not grows very easily, so I expect yours will live.—Cousin Kate.]

THROUGH FAIRYLAND IN A HANSON CAB.

By BENNETT W. MUSSON.

(FROM "ST. NICHOLAS.")

CHAPTER IV.

IN THE ROYAL PRESENCE.

When the bandage was removed, Gretchen found herself in a long, high room, into which the sun shone brightly, as it had no ceiling or roof. In front of her was a low platform on which two thrones stood side by side. The walls of the room were formed of white columns striped with red.

"They look like sticks of candy," said Gretchen. "They are," said the captain. "At one of the fifty-year feasts the candy gave out, and these walls were built in case such a thing should occur again. At that time the royal architect happened to be also the court barber, and he selected this pattern."

About ten feet above the floor an iron bar extended from one side wall to the other. From the middle of this hung an enormous chandelier covered with mirrors.

"What is that?" asked Gretchen. "A moonograph," said the captain. "Those mirrors reflect the rays of the moon and light the room nicely." "And look!" cried Gretchen, "there is a fairy on it!" And, sure enough, perched high on the moonograph was a small fairy in brown overalls.

"Hush," whispered the captain. "Here comes the royal party." The curtains of an arched door at one side of the platform were drawn apart by two pages, and the procession entered. First came a number of court fairies in gauze draperies, each with a fixed smile on her face.

"That is the queen's chorus," said the captain. "Many of the fairies who do not think for themselves become members of the chorus, and merely have to repeat what other people think. The king has a chorus of men."

"But if they don't think, how do they decide to enter the chorus?" whispered Gretchen.

"They don't; the king or queen decides for them. That gloomy-looking man coming next, in the long robe covered with interrogation-points, is the Court Objector, whose duty it is to object to anything that is wrong."

"I should think that would be a very disagreeable office," said Gretchen.

"It is," replied the captain, "but he likes it. That younger one, with long hair, is the Court Poet. I can't tell you about the others, for here comes the queen." And last of all came a small fairy in a fur-trimmed dress.

"Where is the king?" asked Gretchen.

"They reign by turns," whispered the captain, "and it is his fifty years off. When his reign begins we shall have men's rights."

"Who comes first?" asked the queen.

"Yes; who, oh, who—who—who—comes first?" repeated the chorus.

"I don't like that," said the Objector. "It sounds too much like an owl."

"Don't do it again," said the queen, and the chorus, whose faces had not relaxed from their sickly grin, remained silent.

"I'm first, your Majesty," cried the little fairy on the moonograph.

"What are you doing up there?" she demanded.

"If it please your Majesty, I am a gas-fitter by trade, and I feel more comfortable up here."

"Well, it doesn't please me; come down."

The little fairy dropped to the floor. "I would like to be released from gaol," he said.

At this the whole court turned their backs on him.

"Of all the ridiculous nonsense I ever heard!" said the Objector.

"Where are you now?"

"Of course, I'm not in gaol at this moment," replied the gas-fitter. "They let me out to come for a pardon, while they were cleaning house."

"Well, what have you done?" inquired the queen.

"No one else has done anything," said the Objector, "so why does your Majesty say, 'what have you done?' That implies that there are others. You should say, 'What have you done?'"

"It must be very tiresome to be picked up in that way whenever you say anything," whispered Gretchen.

"It is," said the captain, "but it's good for you. Have you ever noticed that most of the things that are good for you are disagreeable?"

"Oh, yes," Gretchen said quickly.

"If it please your Majesty—" began the gas-fitter.

"Don't say that again," the Objector said, sharply. "You know that it doesn't."

"Well, anyway," said the little fairy, who was getting flustered and had entirely forgotten a speech he had prepared while sitting on the moonograph, "I want to get out of gaol."

"Why were you put in?" asked the Queen.

"For breach of contract. I was hired to mend a leak in a gas-pipe, and instead of fixing it with solder, as I agreed, I plugged it with the first thing that came handy."

"What came handy?"

"An opud."

"Ten years more. Take him away," the queen said, and two soldiers hurried the gas-fitter from the room.

"Ten years, ten years! oh, ten years!" the chorus sang joyfully.

"It's your turn next," the captain whispered to Gretchen, "and you've seen by the way the gas-fitter fared that it doesn't pay to be humble, so put on a brave face. I'm sorry Willie isn't here. I think his voice would impress them."

"Anyone else?" asked the queen.

"You answer," said the captain, nudging Gretchen, "as I don't want to lose my job."

"Yes; I want an audience, and I wish you'd be quick about it," she said, tremblingly.

"Why, it's a human being!" cried the queen and all the court fairies gathered at the front of the platform and looked at Gretchen.

"Is that the latest style in shirt-waists?" asked the queen.

"No, your Majesty; this is one I made from last year's pattern."

"Let me see your shoes," ordered the queen.

Gretchen, much puzzled, held up one foot so that they could get a good look at it.

"I told you so!" the Objector cried, triumphantly.

Gretchen looked closer at the fairies and saw they had strapped to their feet queer oblong wooden boxes with handles on them.

"A male human being who was here fifty years ago told us that pumps were all the style in high society, and we've had a most uncomfortable time ever since," said the queen.

She took off her pumps and threw them on the floor, and the chorus removed theirs and capered joyously.

"What do you think of fairyland?" asked the queen.

"I haven't seen much of it, except the hotel," said Gretchen. "I came here blindfolded."

"That's no excuse," said the Objector.

"Well, what do you want?" inquired the queen.

Gretchen told her story and the court held a whispered consultation.

"It is usual for each mortal who asks a favour of us to do some task in return," the queen said. "As it is so late now, I think you would better call again to-morrow afternoon, when there is to be a reception in the castle grounds, and we will then decide what you are to do."

"May I bring my dog with me?" asked Gretchen.

"Does he chase fairies?" the queen said, anxiously.

"He never has," Gretchen replied, truthfully.

"Then you may fetch him," said the queen. "Good-bye till to-morrow"; and she left the room, followed by the other fairies—the chorus last of all.

When they reached the hotel it was almost dark, and Gretchen, who had not slept in a really-and-truly bed for two nights, was ready to go to bed.

The human-being room proved comfortable, though it seemed queer not to have a roof over her head, and spread on a small table she found a very nice supper consisting of wild honey and sardines.

The next morning Gretchen decided to go to the magician's. She seldom ate much breakfast, and was so tired of honey and sardines that she didn't care for any at all that morning. As she reached the gate a hansom cab drawn by an enormous grasshopper came up, and the driver, a fairy of medium size, in a long coat and shiny high hat, pointed his whip at her.

"Cab, miss?" he cried. "I drove ya to the palace yesterday."

"But I can't go without Leonardo and the captain," said Gretchen, suddenly remembering.

"Here comes the gents as was with ye yesterday," said the driver, pointing to the captain and Leonardo, who were returning from an early morning stroll.

"I will have to leave you now, as I go on duty to-day," said the captain, but I have given Leonardo a guide-book so that he can help you; besides this driver knows all about the town. Take this young lady wherever she wants to go, and charge it to my account," he added.

"All right, sir!" cried the driver, tugging his hat.

Gretchen heartily thanked the captain for all his kindness, and bidding him good-bye, she and Leonardo got into the cab, the driver waved his whip, and they were driven rapidly away.

"Where to?" called the driver through a funny little trap-door he raised in the roof.

"To the Thirty-third Degree Transformer's," said Gretchen, trying to speak as though she had been accustomed all her short life to giving orders to cab-drivers.

"How do you like 'this rig?" asked Leonardo, who was dressed in a very fashionable suit of clothes, and wore a silk hat and an eye-glass.

"It is most becoming," Gretchen replied.

"I thought this sort of thing more appropriate for a tourist than my every-day suit. They fit pretty well, don't they? I got them ready-made."

"However do you keep that eye-glass in?" asked Gretchen.

"Glue on the edges," Leonardo said briefly.

"Why, there's Willie!" he cried, and told the driver to stop. "Hi, Willie!—I mean low Willie! Have you found a piece to work?"

"Yes," said Willie, grinning from ear to ear. "Got an answer to my advertisement and a place in a watch and clock-maker's this morning. Am on my way to fix the town clock."

"Where's your ladder?" asked Gretchen.

"Huh! I don't need a ladder!" said Willie. "The dial is only sixteen feet above the ground." Gretchen and Leonardo looked at each other and burst into laughter, and as they laughed the grin faded from Willie's face.

"There! I keep forgetting about being small!" he said. "What shall I do?"

"We are on our way to the magician's, and perhaps you could get him to change you back. Then you could fix the clock," said Gretchen.

"Good!" cried Willie, his merry grin at once returning.

Willie got into the cab, and Gretchen ordered the driver to go to the Transformer's, as it was nearly eleven