

The boy gave a violent start, and his brown fingers clenched tightly. His voice shook in spite of himself.

"Not Ted Brown? What do you mean? Who told you? How could you possibly know?"

"I'm sorry," Dossie said; "I only guessed. You're like a story-book. Won't you tell me who you are? I wouldn't tell a soul."

The boy hesitated. He felt that he must confide in some one, and he also felt that this thin atom of a girl could be trusted implicitly.

"Well," he said, slowly, "I—ran away."

Dossie nodded her dark head wisely.

"Why, of course!" she said. "When they're not stolen, they always do run away."

"They wanted to send me to college, and I hated to go. I want to do great things, not to grind all day, so—I ran away. I thought it would be fun, but—" The pause was expressive.

"You haven't told me your name yet?" Dossie said, calmly.

"You won't tell?"

"I promised!" with dignity.

"I beg your pardon. I'm Maurice Cheriton."

Dossie clapped her hands.

"I thought you might be a Roland or Ferdinand, but Maurice is a lovely name. I knew you weren't a milk-cart boy."

Maurice made a little grimace.

"Thank Heaven!" he said, fervently.

Dossie's dark eyes were glowing with excitement.

"Of course you'll go home now. They always do."

"I shall consider that you are my Christmas Princess," said the boy, half in jest and half in earnest.

"Will you? How lovely! But you can't go on being a milk-cart boy now that you're not Ted Brown?"

Perhaps it suddenly struck Maurice that a more fitting occupation could be found for a colonel's son, and he flushed.

"As soon as your father gets someone to take my place, I will go home," he promised.

"Dossie—Dossie—Doris!"

The summons echoed and re-echoed through the bush glades, and the radiance died out of the dark eyes as Dossie started to her feet.

"I must go! Someone is calling! As you're not really a milk-cart boy"—she stooped over his hand and kissed it, then sped away, while Maurice lay listening to the musical tinkle of the creek over its stony bed, and regarding his favoured hand curiously.

A month later, to his great annoyance, Mr Kenyon lost, for no apparent reason, the best milk-cart boy he had ever employed. Dossie went down to the gate with her hero, and kissed him good-bye, no one being near to see.

"Good-bye!" she whispered; "don't forget I was the Princess who found you."

"I will never forget," the boy answered.

And so Ted Brown disappeared from "Toi-Toi," and Maurice Cheriton returned to his home.

The Colonel was not angry. He had not even been anxious when he learnt that his only son had disappeared. "A Cheriton can take care of himself," he said, when the mother's tender heart feared for her boy. The old soldier admired the Cheriton spirit and pluck that enabled Maurice to stand out for six months, but upon one point he was immovable. When he did return, Maurice was to go to college, so to college Maurice went.

The Colonel went to Mr Kenyon and told him the whole story, and a friendship sprang up between the two families, which finally resulted in Maurice spending half his holidays at home and half at "Toi-Toi" with his Christmas Princess.

Then came the year of the terrible bush-fires, and Maurice, just home from college, heard that "Toi-Toi" was surrounded. Nobody could get to or from the homestead through the fiercely-raging flames. Rescue