



Ririro

READ ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

The cloud that had no lining

Mrs. Rodolph Stawell

There was once a cloud that had no lining. You have often, I dare say, heard grown-up people say that every cloud has a silver lining, and so you will understand that a cloud without a lining is a very uncommon thing.

The fairies who lived in the cloud found it very uncomfortable, because, you see, it let the rain come through.

"If only our cloud had a lining," they said, "the rain would not come through, and that would be very nice for us."

"We must really have it lined," said one.

"What with?" asked another.

"Why, with silver, of course," said a third. "Every one knows that a cloud ought to be lined with silver."

"But we have no silver!"

"Then we must get some. It is ridiculous to go on living in this state of dampness. Other fairies have comfortable clouds over their heads, and why should we be always drenched? And all for want of a simple silver lining!"

"Where does one find silver?" asked one of the fairies.

"There are a good many kinds of silver," said a fairy who had been about the world a great deal. "There is the kind that is dug out of the earth,—but that is a common kind of stuff, and no use for lining clouds with. Then there is the silver stream that you can see far below, winding through the fields and shining white in the sun. That is a much better kind of silver than the other. Then, of course, moonshine makes beautiful silver: you can see it glittering on the sea whenever the moon shines. But I really don't know what would be the best kind of silver to line clouds with."

"We must try them all, and see which is the best," said another fairy.

They went on talking about it for some time, because such an important matter could not be settled in a hurry. At last it was arranged that three of them should fly away and look for some silver to line their cloud with. The names of the three fairies were Pearlywing, and Skybright, and Mist-of-the-Morning.

Now, all the time that the fairies were talking, Pearlywing was looking down at the silver stream far below, winding through the meadows. It was so white and shining that he felt sure the silver of it would make a beautiful lining for the cloud. So when he was told to fly away and look for some silver, he lost no time in wondering where to go. He spread his wings—the soft grey wings that cloud-fairies have—and he flew down and down, away from the cloud to the meadows where the silver stream was shining. The nearer he came to it the more it sparkled. He felt sure it must be made of the very best silver.

But how could he carry it? A fairy's cap is not very large, and he had nothing else.

"I must just carry up a capful at a time, and empty it and come back for another. I must go on till there is enough silver to line the cloud with," he said to himself.

So he filled his tiny cap with the silver of the stream, and flew up again to his cloud, carrying the cap very carefully for fear of spilling the silver. Then he went round to the back of the cloud where the lining ought to have been, and poured the silver out of his cap.

Now, as I dare say you have guessed, the silver of the stream was really nothing but water. So when it was poured out of the cap it fell right through the cloud, and made the fairies on the other side much wetter than they had ever been before! I need not say that they were very much annoyed. They made so much commotion, spluttering and grumbling and scolding, that Pearlywing heard them through the cloud, and went round to see what was the matter.

"What we want," said one of them angrily, shaking the water off his wings, "is something to keep us dry, not something to make us wet!"

"I am so sorry!" said Pearlywing; "but I thought it was such good silver! And now, I suppose, you don't want any more of it."

"Certainly not!" said all the fairies very quickly.

"It is most unfortunate," said Pearlywing. "I can't understand it at all. The silver looked so very nice."

He was not a very clever fairy, I am afraid.

"I hope Skybright will have more sense," grumbled the wet fairies.

Skybright meanwhile was waiting on the sea-shore, far below the clouds. He was waiting for the moon to rise above the sea. He had to wait a long time, but he did not mind that, because there are always such nice fairies to talk to on the sea-shore.

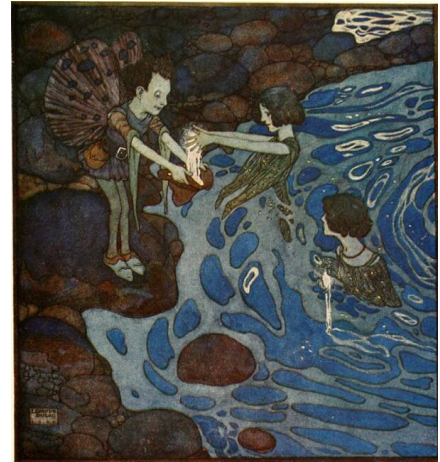
At last the big round moon sailed slowly up into the sky. At the same moment a

hundred thousand moonshine-fairies rushed out across the sea towards Skybright, flying and dancing on the water, and turning it into a sheet of silver as they came. For the moonshine-fairies carry silver with them wherever they fly, and scatter it as they go.

This was the moment that Skybright had been waiting for.

"Please, pretty moonshine-fairies," he cried, running to the water's edge and holding out his arms, "give me some of your silver to line my cloud with, and keep the rain from coming through!"

Then the moonshine-fairies danced towards him across the sea, with their tiny hands full of silver.



"Take our silver, little cloud-fairy," they said, "and line your cloud with it, and dip your wings in it, and scatter it over the earth as you fly, for everything is made more beautiful by our silver."

Then they poured the silver out of their hands into his, and because the silver of the moonshine-fairies is very light he was able to carry a great deal of it. He filled the pockets of his pretty grey coat with it, and he filled his cap, and took a quantity of it in his hands. And he said Good-bye to the moonshine-fairies, and flew away up to the clouds.

When the other cloud-fairies saw the beautiful silver he had brought with him they were delighted. They all set to work to line the cloud with it, spreading it out carefully and making it nice and tidy at the edges. When the lining was finished it looked lovely, and the fairies were much pleased with it. They sat down under the cloud, feeling quite safe from the rain.

But unfortunately their satisfaction did not last long. Presently it began to rain. The fairies smiled and nodded at each other, and agreed that it was very pleasant to be safe from a wetting. Then a big heavy drop fell right through the cloud and lining and all—and another—and another, and soon the fairies were as wet and uncomfortable and cross as if the cloud had never been lined. It was really very annoying.

The truth is that the silver of the moonshine-fairies is rather thin—altogether too thin to keep the rain out, and of very little use for lining clouds with.

"It is really too bad!" cried the poor cloud-fairies, wringing the water out of their nice little grey coats. "What are we to do? Any one would have thought that such beautiful silver would keep the rain out!"

"Perhaps," said one of them who liked to be cheerful, "Mist-of-the-Morning may bring us a better kind of silver even than this."

So they decided to grumble no more till Mist-of-the-Morning came home.

Now, when Mist-of-the-Morning started out to look for silver he did not fly down to the earth at all.

"Every cloud but ours has a silver lining," he said to himself; "so the best way to find the right kind of silver will be to ask the fairies who live in the other clouds."

He saw the clouds all about him, each with a bright rim round it, which was the edge of its lining. He went to the nearest one and spoke to the fairies that lived in it.

"Brother fairies," he said, "where can I find silver to make my cloud a lining as beautiful as yours?"

And the fairies answered—

"Go to the sunbeam-fairies. Their silver is the best for lining clouds with."

Then Mist-of-the-Morning went to one cloud after another, and asked all the fairies that lived in them the same question. And they all answered—

"Go to the sunbeam-fairies. Their silver is the very best."

So Mist-of-the-Morning flew away to the nearest sunbeam. It was crowded with fairies, who were all hard at work, for the sunbeam-fairies have more work to do than any others. As they worked they were laughing and singing, for the sunbeam-fairies are always happy.

"Please, kind sunbeam-fairies," said Mist-of-the-Morning, "I want some silver to line my cloud with. It must be the very best silver, and every one says that none but yours is good enough."

Then all the sunbeam-fairies shouted out—

"Quite right, little cloud-fairy, quite right! It is waste of time to line a cloud with any silver but ours. Our silver is the very best!"

While they were speaking they all rushed to the end of the sunbeam, and before Mist-of-the-Morning knew what they were going to do, they had cut off a great piece of it. There it lay in a shining heap! Mist-of-the-Morning had to shade his eyes, because its silvery brightness dazzled him.

"Sunbeam silver!" sang the fairies. "Sunbeam silver is the best of all!"

Then Mist-of-the-Morning spread his wings and flew home, trailing the sunbeam after him. And all the fairies in his own cloud welcomed him with shouts and

singing, because they saw at once that sunbeam silver was the best of all.

They made their cloud a beautiful thick lining of it, with the silver shining all round the edge. And the rain never came through any more.

Now that I have told you this story I hope you will not forget that it is waste of time to line a cloud with any kind of silver except the kind that sunbeams are made of.

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