



Ririro

READ ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

The Doll that came straight from Fairyland

Evelyn Sharp

The country was celebrating the tenth birthday of the Prince Perfection. That particular country always celebrated the tenth birthday of its princes and princesses, but never before had it gone so completely wild with joy. The fireworks began punctually at sunrise, and so did everything else that was worth beginning; and the happy shouts of the people made conversation quite impossible, except in the royal family, which was fully accustomed to being shouted at whenever the country had a whole holiday. The Prince had five hundred and fifty-four birthday presents, and his Secretaries spent all their summer holidays in writing letters to acknowledge them; and every child in the kingdom who was of the same age as the Prince was allowed to come to the palace gates and receive a royal smile and a large box of barley sugar from Prince Perfection himself. In the afternoon, the Prince drove through the streets over a carpet of flowers and smiled without stopping; and by his side sat the little Princess Pansy, who was not smiling at all, for she had no birthday and no presents, and two years was a long time to wait before she, too, should be ten years old. Still, she was so fond of the Prince Perfection that she would not have let him guess for a moment that she felt envious of him, although this he was in no danger of doing, for he was so brimful of happiness that he had no time to think about his sister at all. Truly, it is worth while to be ten years old if one is a Prince! In the evening there was a banquet of a hundred and twenty courses, which was the exact number of months in the Prince's life; and the two children sat at the head of the table between their royal parents, and managed to keep awake until the moment arrived to cut the birthday cake.

That was when the catastrophe occurred. At the moment nobody suspected that it was going to be a catastrophe at all. It seemed the most fortunate thing in the world that the Prince's godmother, the Fairy Zigzag, should manage to arrive just in time to drink her godson's health. Most people would think that a catastrophe was far more likely to have occurred if the King and Queen had forgotten to invite the Fairy Zigzag. That only shows how little most of us know about fairy godmothers. The truth is that the Fairy Zigzag was not like other godmothers at all. She did not like banquets and she did not like noise; and she would much sooner have sent her present by post. It would never have done, however, to refuse the Queen's invitation, for that is what no fairy godmother has ever been

known to do; so she came at the very last minute with a very bad grace, and she meant to go away again as soon as she could.

Bang! What a noise she made as she came down the chimney in a cloud of blue smoke! If she had not been quite so cross she would have arrived through the window in her best chariot drawn by sea-gulls; but she was determined to take as little trouble as possible over the matter, and no one could take less trouble over anything than to come straight down the chimney.

"Oh!" said every one with a little scream; and the Prince was so startled that he cut an extremely crooked slice of cake. As soon as the blue smoke cleared away, however, and he saw that it was his fairy godmother, he recovered his good manners without any difficulty, and walked across the room to greet her.

"I am delighted to see you, dear godmother," said Prince Perfection with his best birthday smile, which he had been saving up all day on purpose. "Would you like to have a piece of cake?"

His parents beamed with pleasure at the charming manners of Prince Perfection; and the little Princess rubbed the sleep out of her eyes, and wondered how long it would take to live through two whole years, so that she might have a birthday party and a birthday cake, and a visit from her fairy godmother. The Fairy Zigzag, however, did not seem at all impressed by the charming manners of her godson.

"I never eat cake," she said, without giving so much as a look at the crooked slice of cake which the Prince was handing her on a real gold plate. Her godson put down the cake immediately, and took up a silver goblet filled to the brim with sparkling ginger-beer.

"You have come just in time, dear godmother, to drink my health," he said, just as politely as ever.

"I never drink healths," said the Fairy Zigzag, frowning. "I have plenty of my own, thank you. What's the matter with your health that you want every one to drink it up? You 'd better keep it: it may come in useful, later on."

This was such an entirely new view of the matter that a complete silence fell on every one in the room; and all the guests put down their glasses of ginger beer, and stared into them to see if the Prince's health was floating about on the top. In the midst of the pause, the Fairy Zigzag stalked to the table, nodded to the royal parents, and took the seat that had been reserved for her at the Queen's right hand.

"So good of you to come," murmured the Queen, nervously. "We never thought you would give us so great a pleasure."

"Oh, didn't you? Then, why did you invite me?" snapped the fairy godmother. The Queen said nothing, for she did not know what to say. The King did his best to put matters right.

"The Prince has been looking forward to your visit all day," he hastened to say. "The dear boy has hardly known how to wait until this evening."

"Rubbish," said the Fairy Zigzag, laughing most unpleasantly. "It is quite time for the dear boy to be in bed. What is that other child doing, over there?"

She pointed with her wand at the little Princess Pansy, whose eyes were now so full of sleep that she could hardly keep them open. When, however, she saw the Fairy Zigzag pointing at her, she instantly became wide awake, and grew quite pink with pleasure at being noticed. It was the first time any one had noticed her all that day; but of course, one must expect to be forgotten when it is somebody else's birthday.

"Oh!" cried Princess Pansy, holding out both her hands to the cross old Fairy Zigzag. "Are you really a fairy godmother? I have never seen a real fairy before, and I am so glad you have come!"

The King and Queen were horrified at the familiar way in which the little Princess was speaking to such an important guest as the fairy godmother. It was true that she was only eight years old, but it was quite time she learnt some of the charming manners for which her brother the Prince was so remarkable. If the Fairy Zigzag had turned her into a toad, or a marble statue, or something chilly like that, they would not have been in the least surprised. But the Fairy Zigzag did nothing of the sort. She just took the two hands the Princess Pansy held out to her, and looked her full in the face; and directly she did that all the crossness faded out of her own, and instead of being just a disagreeable old fairy she suddenly appeared quite good-natured and pleasant. This, indeed, was no wonder; for it would have been difficult to look at the little Princess without feeling happier for it. The King and Queen, however, mistook her silence for anger.

"Pray forgive her," they said, tremblingly. "She is so young, and she doesn't know any better. We have tried in vain to teach her good manners. Doubtless, when she is as old as the Prince Perfection she will have learnt to be as polite as he is."

"It is to be hoped not," said the Fairy Zigzag, turning once more to the royal parents. "And if I know anything about it, she will never be as polite as the Prince Perfection. That child is a real child, and none of us will ever make her anything else. Now, I don't mean to waste any more time; so come here, godson, and tell me what you would like for a birthday present."

The Prince Perfection did not know what to say. He longed to ask for a steamboat that went by real steam, or a cannon that would fire real gunpowder, or a balloon that would take him wherever he wished to go; but he felt that only an ordinary boy would have asked for such things as these, and Prince Perfection had always been told by his nurses that he was not an ordinary boy.

"Please give me whatever you like, dear godmother," he said, and hoped very much that it would be a steamboat with real steam.

"The dear boy does not like to appear greedy," said the Queen.

"Fiddlesticks!" said the Fairy Zigzag, and then she pointed again at the little Princess Pansy. "If I were to give you a present, do you think you would know what to choose?" she asked her, smiling.

"Oh, how beautiful!" exclaimed Princess Pansy, clapping her hands. To have a present without a birthday was more than she had ever believed possible.

"What will you have?" asked the Fairy, raising her wand. The Princess did not stop to think.

"I will have a wax doll, please, with blue eyes and yellow hair and pink cheeks, dressed in a white silk frock with lots of little frills," she said, rapidly. "And, if you could manage it," she added, glancing sideways at the Prince, her brother, "I think I should like one that doesn't melt when you put it near the fire."

"I think I can manage it," said the Fairy Zigzag, and down came her wand with a sharp tap on the table. Princess Pansy gave a cry of delight. In front of her lay the most beautiful wax doll any little girl of eight years old has ever possessed. She had blue eyes and yellow curls and pink cheeks; she was dressed in a white silk frock with rows and rows of little frills; she had a gold crown perched on her head, and she wore high-heeled shoes on her dainty feet; she had a real pocket with a real lace handkerchief sticking out of it; she carried a fan in one hand and a scent bottle in the other; and she actually possessed real six-buttoned gloves, which could be drawn on and off her little hands. Princess Pansy was breathless. She had never seen anything so beautiful before.

"You must thank the Fairy Zigzag," whispered the King and Queen. The little Princess gave a sigh and looked up; it seemed so stupid to say "Thank you" for such a superb dolly as hers. After all, she had to say nothing whatever, for the Fairy Zigzag was no longer there; she had gone away without a chariot, or a cloud of blue smoke, or even a bang!

"She has given nothing to her godson," said the courtiers to one another; and they fully expected that Prince Perfection would fly into a passion. However, Prince Perfection did not fly into a passion. He looked at the little Princess as she laughed with joy over her beautiful new doll; he thought just once of the

steamboat that would have gone by real steam, and the cannon that would have fired real gunpowder, and the balloon that would have taken him wherever he wished to go; and then he remembered that he was ten years old and a Prince, and he flung back his head and began to whistle.

"It doesn't matter," he said, indifferently. "I have five hundred and fifty-four presents upstairs, and I don't care for dolls."

Little Princess Pansy had never been so contented in the whole of her life. The palace seemed a different place to her, now that it contained the doll that had come from Fairyland; and she immediately named her the Lady Emmelina, which was the most important name she could remember on the spur of the moment. From that day the Princess and her doll were never separated. When the Prince and Princess went for a drive, the Lady Emmelina sat up stiffly between them; when the Professors came to give the children their lessons, they found that they had to give them also to a little lady in a white silk frock with rows and rows of little frills, who stared at them solemnly with her large, impassive blue eyes, and never answered a word to any of their questions. Princess Pansy no longer wished to be ten years old; she no longer wished for anything: she had everything she wanted in the unchangeable Lady Emmelina. For the Lady Emmelina never varied; the Princess might have as many moods as she pleased, but the Lady Emmelina merely smiled. For a constant companion, it would have been difficult to find any one more delightful than the Lady Emmelina. The Prince Perfection, however, took a very different view of the matter. Thanks to the Lady Emmelina, he had no one to play with. He had never been left so much to himself in his life, and in spite of his excellent opinion of himself he found himself extremely dull. He could no longer play cricket, since the Princess was not there to bowl for him; it was no fun to play at soldiers if the Princess was not there to be on the losing side; he could not pretend to be the Royal Executioner if the Princess was not there to be executed. To be sure, he had five hundred and fifty-four birthday presents; but what consolation could they afford him when he was still without a steamboat that went by real steam? The Lady Emmelina was the cause of all his misfortunes, and he could not bear the Lady Emmelina. It was the Lady Emmelina who had come in the place of his real steamboat and his real cannon and his real balloon; it was the Lady Emmelina who had bewitched the little Princess, his sister, and robbed him of his best playfellow. And the Prince Perfection, whatever his faults were, was extremely fond of the little Princess.

"If you will come and play cricket with me, I will let you have the first innings," he said to her in despair one sunny afternoon.

"It is far too rough a game for the Lady Emmelina," answered Princess Pansy, shaking her head.

"Then choose any game you like, only do come and play with me," begged the

Prince. He had never had to beg so hard for anything before, for the little Princess had been his willing slave as long as he could remember.

"We cannot possibly come this afternoon," answered Princess Pansy. "The Lady Emmelina is going to have a tea-party. I will ask her to invite you if you like."

The Prince, however, would have nothing to do with Lady Emmelina's tea-party. He went and sat by the pond instead, and thought how fine his steamboat would have looked if it had gone puffing across the water with real smoke coming out of the funnel. The mere thought of it made him dislike the Lady Emmelina so much more than before that he made up his mind to be revenged on her. Now, this was an extremely bold thing even to think about, for she had come straight from Fairyland, and it is never safe to meddle with toys that have come straight from Fairyland. For all that, the Prince crept into the nursery that very same night, when everyone in the palace was asleep, and prepared to have his revenge on the waxen Lady Emmelina. There she sat in all her magnificence on the nursery table, with both her gloves tightly buttoned, and both her pointed toes turned upwards. The very sight of her annoyed the jealous little Prince. He pattered across the floor on his bare feet, and seized the Lady Emmelina by the arm. She greeted him with a shrill and angry shriek.

"How dare you? Let me go at once!" she screamed. The Prince was so surprised that he dropped her on the table again. The Lady Emmelina, shaking all over with fury, began smoothing out her rows of crumpled frills.

"The idea of such a thing!" she gasped. "I declare, you have actually pushed my crown on one side, and there is no looking-glass in the room. I have a great mind to report you to Fairyland."

"You may do what you like," answered the Prince, who was no coward and had recovered from his astonishment. "You have bewitched the Princess Pansy, and I mean to hide you where no one will be able to find you."

No sooner had he uttered these words than the Lady Emmelina turned extremely pale. If he had tried to melt her at the fire or to cut off her head with the scissors, which was the kind of thing he usually did to his sister's dolls, she knew that she would have been safe; but he had threatened to do the one thing that even the fairies who protected her could not prevent him from doing. Her only hope was that he would hide her somewhere so that she should have time to escape before sunrise; for after sunrise all her powers of moving or speaking would desert her and she would be nothing but a wax doll again. She need not have been afraid, for the Prince did not mean to waste any more time than he could help; and the next moment she was being carried swiftly out of the room under his arm. Downstairs ran the little Prince, with his hand over the Lady Emmelina's mouth to prevent her from screaming; and along the marble passages he

hastened, until he came to a little door that led into the garden, and this he unlocked with the diamond key that usually hung on the nail on the nursery wall. It is not pleasant to run without shoes along a gravel path, and Prince Perfection soon turned aside on to the lawn, and trotted over the grass in search of a hiding place for the Lady Emmelina. A large white stone lay in the middle of the lawn and gleamed in the moonlight. The Prince did not remember having seen it there before; indeed, it was not likely that the royal gardeners would have allowed it to remain in such a place for a moment. He stooped down and rolled it on one side, and found that it covered a neat round hole lined with green moss. It was the very place for the Lady Emmelina; and he laid her gently in the very middle of it.

"I hope you will not be very cramped," said Prince Perfection, politely.

Lady Emmelina lay motionless on the mossy ground, and stared at the moon. No one would have thought that she was the same dolly who had screamed so angrily in the nursery ten minutes ago.

"It is the nicest place I could have found in the whole garden," continued Prince Perfection a little anxiously. After all, she was a very beautiful doll, and she had come straight from Fairyland.

Still the Lady Emmelina stared intently at the moon, with her large blue eyes.

"I should never have thought of putting you anywhere if you had not bewitched the Princess," declared Prince Perfection, feeling still more uncomfortable. It was not easy to go on apologising to some one who persisted in staring at the moon just as though no one was speaking to her.

"Why did you bewitch the Princess Pansy?" cried the little Prince. "If you will promise not to bewitch her any more, I will take you straight back to the nursery."

But although he waited eagerly for her answer, not a word came from the Lady Emmelina; and the Prince ceased to feel sorry for her, and gave up apologising.

"It is your own fault, and I don't care a bit," he said, impatiently; and he rolled the large white stone over the hole, until the doll from Fairyland was completely hidden. It is a wonder the fairies did not interfere; but perhaps they had their reasons.

There was no peace for any one in the palace when the Princess discovered that the Lady Emmelina was gone; and she discovered it before breakfast the very next morning. It was in vain that the Prince offered to give her his five hundred and fifty-four birthday presents if she would only stop crying: the Princess wanted her doll from Fairyland, and nothing but her doll from Fairyland would console her. Every one who loved the little Princess—and that was every one in the palace—began looking for the Lady Emmelina; but no one succeeded in

finding a trace of her. This, however, was by no means so surprising as it sounds, for the large white stone was no longer in the middle of the lawn, and the neat round hole lined with green moss had disappeared just as completely. The Prince was no less unhappy than his sister. Nothing was turning out as he had expected; for, instead of being ready to play with him again, the little Princess was far too miserable to think of playing at all. He tried all day long to coax her into a good humour; but bedtime came, and he had not won a single smile from her. It was then that he made up his mind to go out into the world and find the Lady Emmelina. So that night the Prince once more unhooked the diamond key from the nail on the nursery wall, and stole into the garden in the moonlight. This time, however, he had not forgotten to put on his shoes and stockings and his second-best court suit, for when a prince goes out into the world he must at least do his best to look like a prince. When he came to the lawn he stopped and stared with amazement; for there, in the moonlight, lay the large white stone under which he had hidden the doll from Fairyland. Overjoyed at reaching the end of his journey so soon, he ran forward and rolled the stone on one side. There, to be sure, was the neat round hole lined with green moss; but in the middle of it sat a large grasshopper, and not a sign of the Lady Emmelina was to be seen.

The Prince was so disappointed that he had the greatest difficulty in remembering that he was ten years old, and that crying was therefore out of the question. The grasshopper was winking at him as though he understood how he felt.

"I guessed you would come," he said, in a kind voice. "I just waited on purpose."

"Where has she gone?" asked Prince Perfection, dolefully.

"Ask me something easier than that," answered the grasshopper. "I didn't see her go. I happened to look in as I was passing; and when I found she was gone I thought I'd just wait and tell you she was gone, don't you see?"

"What is the good of waiting to tell me something I could have found out for myself?" asked Prince Perfection. "If you can't help me to find her, you might just as well not be there."

"I didn't say I couldn't help you to find her," said the grasshopper, looking hurt; "though if you are going to be cross about it I don't know that I will."

"Oh," cried Prince Perfection, "I will never be cross again, if you will help me to find the Lady Emmelina."

"Then why did you hide her in the first place?" asked the grasshopper. The Prince looked foolish.

"Because I had no one to play with," he said.

"If you do find her," continued the grasshopper, "do you think the Princess will play with you again?"

"Oh, no," sighed the Prince. "She will only want to play with the Lady Emmelina."

"Then don't try to find the Lady Emmelina," said the grasshopper, promptly.

"I must," said Prince Perfection. "Anything is better than seeing the Princess cry. I took her doll away, you see, and it is my fault that Pansy is so unhappy. I don't mean to go home again until I have found the Lady Emmelina."

"Right you are," said the grasshopper. "You're the man for me. I'll help you as far as I can, but you must come down here first; I can't go on shouting like this."

"Down there?" said the Prince. "The hole is much too small."

"Nonsense! Come and try," said the grasshopper, and indeed, before he tried at all, the Prince found himself inside the neat round hole, with the mossy walls reaching far above his head, and the grasshopper shaking hands with him.

"Feel all right?" asked the grasshopper. "Sit down and get your breath. These sudden changes are apt to be exhausting if you are not used to them."

"Are you used to them?" asked the Prince, when he had recovered enough breath to speak.

"Dear me, yes!" said the grasshopper with a chuckle. "When I get up in the morning I never know how many changes I may not have to go through before the day is over. Don't think I am complaining though, for of course it is part of my profession."

"What is your profession?" asked the Prince.

"Chief Spy in Particular to the Fairy Queen," answered the grasshopper. "It's very hard work, I can tell you; some days I haven't a moment to myself. Of course, I find out a great deal that nobody else knows, which is always amusing. Yesterday, for instance, if I hadn't been a cockchafer, a doll's teapot, a garden seat, a rose tree and a nursery table, I shouldn't know as much as I do about you and the Lady Emmelina."

"Then please tell me what I must do in order to find the Lady Emmelina," begged the Prince.

"By all means," said the grasshopper, cheerfully. "Go straight on without turning to the right or the left; and whenever some one greets you, ask him politely to give you what he is thinking about, and then you will be able to find the Lady Emmelina."

It seemed rather a roundabout way of finding anything; but, as the grasshopper

disappeared directly he had finished speaking, there was nothing to do but to follow his advice. The first part was easy enough, for just in front of him the Prince noticed a little door in the green mossy wall, which he was quite sure had not been there before; and through this he straightway walked. He immediately found himself in a blaze of sunshine on the sea-shore, with green waves stretching before him as far as he could see, and nothing on either side of him except the flat stony beach. "It's all very well to tell any one to go straight on, but how am I to get across the sea?" thought the Prince. He had never been afraid of anything in his life, however, so he ran down the beach and put one foot into the white foam at the edge.

"Good-day to you!" said a voice. "Who are you, and what do you want?"

"I am Prince Perfection, and I want what you are thinking about," answered the Prince, boldly, although he could not see who was speaking.

"That is a strange thing to want," said the voice; "for I was just thinking about a little steamboat that would go by real steam; and how you can possibly want such a thing as that is more than I can understand."

At that moment there was a faint puffing sound in the distance, which came nearer and nearer; and presently over the waves rode a most perfect little steamboat, with real smoke coming out of the funnel. It was just large enough for the Prince, and he stepped on board directly it came near enough, and put his hand on the little brass wheel.

"Thank you very much," he said as loudly as he could, in the hope that the owner of the mysterious voice would hear him. Nobody answered him; but he wondered why an old crab, who was shuffling along the beach, chose that particular moment to wink at him.

Certainly, no one has ever reached the shore on the opposite side of the sea so quickly as Prince Perfection in his real steamboat. It was a pleasure to hear it puff as it cut through the big green waves; and he stood like a real captain with his hand on the little brass wheel, and steered it right into a bay that seemed waiting on purpose for it. It was very sad that it should disappear directly he stepped out of it; but as it had come from nowhere at all because he wanted it, he could not complain because it went back to nowhere at all when he had done with it. So he sighed twice, and then walked straight ahead as before, up the beach and over a flat grassy plain, covered with yellow poppies and gorse bushes and purple heather. Nothing could have been easier than this; and Prince Perfection had not the slightest wish to turn to the right or the left, until he came suddenly upon a thick clump of gorse bushes which lay in the very middle of his path. He made two attempts to clamber over it; but, each time, he was caught in the gorse bushes and was scratched all over; and even if one is ten years old

and a prince, it is hard to bear being scratched all over by a gorse bush. Prince Perfection began to wonder if it would be very wrong to follow the path to the right until he should come to an opening, but before he had time to decide such a difficult question a shrill voice broke the silence once more.

"Good-day to you," it said. "Who are you, and what do you want?"

"I am Prince Perfection, and I want what you are thinking about," answered the Prince, boldly.

"How ridiculous!" laughed the voice. "Why, I am thinking about a cannon, a real cannon that will fire real gunpowder. Surely, you can want nothing so useless as that?"

"Indeed, I do," said the Prince; and there stood the most perfect little real cannon, loaded with real shot, and in his hand was a lighted match ready to fire it with. He lost no time in pointing it straight at the clump of furze bushes, and the real gunpowder made a flash and a splutter, and the shot went right into the middle of the yellow gorse and blew it all away so completely that not a trace of it was left, except one small bush that the Prince had no difficulty in jumping over. The cannon went back to nowhere at all, just as the steamboat had done.

"Thank you very much," said the Prince Perfection as loudly as he could; and again no one answered him. He was much surprised, however, when he looked back and found that the gorse bush had disappeared as soon as he had jumped over it. After that he walked on for a long way; and just as he was beginning to feel tired, and the sun was beginning to think about setting, he tumbled right up against a big iceberg. It is not usual for icebergs to drop down suddenly in the middle of the road, but that is what this particular iceberg did, and that is why the Prince tumbled against it.

"Dear me," sighed Prince Perfection, for even a prince's legs are not very long when he is only ten years old, and it is not pleasant to have to climb an iceberg at the end of a long walk. There was no help for it, however, for there was the iceberg waiting to be climbed; so the little Prince went straight at it as bravely as he could. Any one who is accustomed to climbing icebergs will at once know how difficult Prince Perfection found it; and he tried seven times without being able to get up a single yard of it.

"Good-day to you," said a voice, which sounded as though it came from the very middle of the iceberg. "Who are you, and what do you want?"

"I am so glad you have come!" exclaimed the Prince; although, for that matter, no one had come at all. "I am Prince Perfection, and I want what you are thinking about."

"There certainly is no accounting for tastes," observed the voice. "I was just

thinking about a real balloon that would take me wherever I wanted to go; and what use that would be to you I cannot imagine."

The Prince did not trouble to explain what use it would be to him, for at that very instant the balloon floated down towards him, and he stepped into it as a matter of course. It was far more beautiful than anything he had ever been able to imagine, however; and the movement of it was so delicious that he fell sound asleep the moment it began to carry him upwards; and he could not keep awake long enough even to thank the sender of it. When he awoke, he was lying on the grass under a silver birch tree, and in front of him was a red brick fort with battlements and a drawbridge. It was so like the fort in which he kept all his tin soldiers in the nursery at home that he was not at all surprised when a sentinel without a head came out in answer to his knock. He remembered melting off the head of that particular tin soldier only two days before, and he was much relieved when he showed no signs of recognising him. As the poor tin fellow had no head, this was hardly to be wondered at.

"Make haste, and let down the drawbridge," said the Prince, banging away at the wooden gate with his fists; "I want to see if the Lady Emmelina is inside."

He thought he could do what he liked with his own property, but the soldier without a head was evidently of another opinion. He did not attempt to let down the drawbridge, and he answered the Prince in a rhyme which he seemed to have made up for the occasion:

"What a ridiculous clatter
Over such a small matter!
I was peacefully napping
When you came with your tapping;
You are vastly mistaken
If you think I've forsaken
My official position
Because no physician
Could give me a cranium
Like a pot of geranium.
And these are my orders—
No one passes these borders
Unless he is able,
In song, rhyme, or fable,
The real, true intention
Of his coming to mention!"

To be sure, it was not much of a rhyme, but it was not bad for a soldier who had no head. When he had finished it he went away again, and the Prince sat down disconsolately under the silver birch tree. He felt more convinced than before

that the Lady Emmelina was inside the fort; but although he thought as much as most people would over an ordinary arithmetic lesson, he could not think of a single rhyme.

"Good-day to you," said a voice that seemed to come from the very top of the birch tree. "Who are you, and what do you want?"

"I am Prince Perfection, and I want what you are thinking about," answered the Prince, although he hardly hoped, this time, that he would get what he wanted.

"Do you really mean it?" remarked the voice. "I was just composing a song about a charming little lady in a white silk frock, who lives behind that drawbridge over there. It is not very likely you can want that!"

"Hurrah!" shouted the little Prince, standing on his head for joy. "Then, it is the Lady Emmelina!"

"The fact is," continued the voice, without noticing the interruption, "I always make poetry when there is nothing else to do. So does the tin soldier. He can't help it, poor fellow, because he has lost his head, you see. If you have lost your head you cannot be expected to make anything except poetry."

"Have you lost your head, too, may I ask?" said the Prince, as politely as he could put such an awkward question.

"For the time being I have no head to lose," answered the voice. "That is how I happened to be inventing a song just as you came by. Are you sure there is nothing else you would like better? A nightmare, for instance, or a thunder-storm?"

The Prince was sure he would like nothing better; and the voice in the birch tree sang him the following song, very softly:

"Here I've come as I was bidden
To seek the dolly you have hidden—
The dolly with the yellow hair,
With cheeks so pink and eyes so fair,
With hands that move and feet that stand—
The doll that came from Fairyland.

"Do you pretend you've never seen her,
The dainty Lady Emmelina?
I pray you let the drawbridge down,
I'm ten years old and I can frown!
I mean to find her—here's my hand!
I want the doll from Fairyland.

"The song I'm singing—let me mention—
Is not a song of my invention;

It comes like steamboats sometimes do,
Like real balloons and cannons too;
It comes like all that's real and grand,
All the way from Fairyland!"

"Why," said Prince Perfection, "one would almost think you had made up the song on purpose for me!"

What the birch tree thought about it has never been known, for when the little Prince looked up again it had gone away to nowhere at all.

The soldier without a head let the drawbridge down, when he heard the song that had come all the way from Fairyland. The Prince did not stop to thank him, but hastened into the fort and looked round anxiously for the Lady Emmelina. He had very little difficulty in finding her, however, for she occupied nearly the whole of the ground floor. She was sitting up against the wall, supported on one side by an ambulance waggon, and on the other by a camp-fire which, strange to say, had not even singed her elegant fan, although it burned with the brightest of red and yellow flames.

"There you are! Will you come home with me?" said the Prince, rather nervously; for he was not much bigger than she was, now, and he was a little afraid lest she should have unpleasant recollections of the neat round hole lined with green moss. To his relief, she seemed quite glad to see him.

"To be sure I will," said the Lady Emmelina. "I should not be fit to be seen if I stayed much longer in this dusty old place!"

So they went home together, and of course that did not take them long, for the way home is always the shortest way in the world. To begin with, the balloon was waiting for them as they came out of the fort; and it carried them all the way to the sea-shore before they had time to notice that they were in a balloon at all. When they reached the sea-shore they found that the steamboat was waiting for them, too; and the steamboat landed them on the opposite side of the sea even before they knew that they had stepped out of the balloon; and after that the Prince never knew what did happen, for the next thing he noticed was that he had grown to his proper size again, and was standing once more in the royal nursery with the Lady Emmelina tucked under his arm. There at the table in the middle of the room sat the little Princess Pansy, and in front of her was a large bowl of bread and milk.

"Oh! Oh! You have come back at last!" cried the Princess, jumping down from her chair. "I am so glad, I am so glad!"

"I thought you would be glad to see her again," said Prince Perfection, and he handed her the doll from Fairyland.

"I didn't mean that!" exclaimed the little Princess. And then, sad as it is to relate, they both forgot all about the Lady Emmelina; and the next minute, she found herself lying face downwards on the floor, while the Prince and Princess hugged each other. And it was of no use for the royal nurses to talk about bread and milk, for not a thing would the two children touch until they had talked as much as they wanted.

"You will not cry any more, now that you have the Lady Emmelina to play with, will you?" said Prince Perfection, who, strange to say, did not feel in the least bit jealous of the Lady Emmelina as long as she lay face downwards on the floor.

"I don't think I want to play with the Lady Emmelina much," answered Princess Pansy. "I think I would rather play with you. It has been so dull while you have been away." For, although the Prince did not know it, he had been away for a whole month.

"I am delighted to hear it," cried the little Prince. "Let us play at Royal Executioner, and you shall be executioner."

"Oh, no," said the little Princess. "I would much sooner be executed."

As they disputed the point politely, the grasshopper suddenly jumped in at the window and nodded at them.

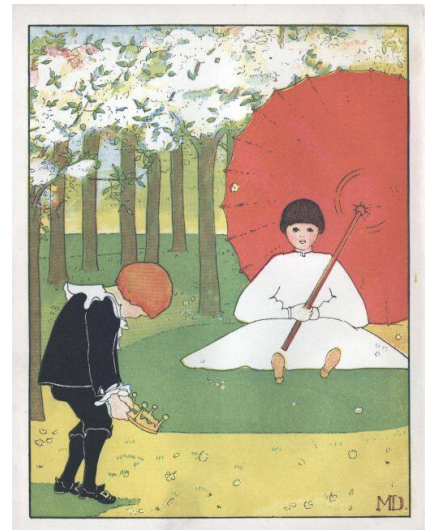
"Good-day to you," he said. "I was just thinking at that moment about a steamboat and a cannon and a real balloon. Strange, wasn't it?"

Immediately the Prince found a steamboat in his right hand and a cannon in his left; while outside the window floated a charming balloon, just large enough for himself and Princess Pansy.

"Wait a minute," cried the Prince, as the grasshopper jumped on to the window-sill again. "I want to tell you all about—"

"No need to do that," chuckled the grasshopper. "You don't suppose I've been a crab and a gorse bush and an iceberg and a silver birch tree for nothing, do you?"

That time he really hopped away to nowhere at all, and the children have never seen him since. This does not matter in the least, however, for they are not likely to want his help again; the Lady Emmelina is always kept in her proper place now, and the Princess is no longer bewitched by her. It is only reasonable to suppose that the Fairy Zigzag had something to do with the change in the Lady Emmelina, but the Fairy Zigzag says that she never troubled herself about it at all. However that may be, the children have never had an unhappy moment since Prince Perfection went out into the world to find the doll that came straight from Fairyland.



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