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READ ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

The Lost Doll

Maud Lindsay

There was once upon a time a little girl who had a china doll named Jennie Bluebell. Jennie Bluebell had black hair, and blue eyes, and rosy cheeks, and a smiling mouth; and on her feet were painted gilt slippers that shone like gold.

The little girl loved her more than she had ever loved any other doll and wherever she went she wanted Jennie Bluebell to go too. She took her to walk in the lane, and to ride in the carriage, and one day she carried her to a meadow where she and her little brother went to pick golden-rod. She held her in her arms all the way just as Mother held the baby and when she got to the meadow she laid her down to rest in the long meadow grass while she picked the flowers. Meadow grass makes a beautiful soft bed for a doll.

"I will come back for you by and by," she said as she left her there; but when it was time to go home all the green grass looked alike to the little girl and she could not tell where the dear doll lay.

"I put her right here, or at least I think I did. Oh, where can she be?" she cried, as she hurried from place to place parting the grasses with her hands and peeping anxiously in. Her little brother searched, too, but though they both looked till their mother called to ask why they were staying so long, they had to go home at last without the doll.

"Perhaps the fairies have taken her away," said the little girl, who was almost crying.

"Or a rabbit," said the little boy; "Father saw one in the field yesterday."

But neither fairies nor rabbits had touched Jennie Bluebell. The tall grasses had swayed in the breezes this way and that way till she was hidden from sight but she had not moved from the spot where the little girl had put her. All through the sunny afternoon she lay there hoping that some one would find her, and when it began to grow dark and nobody had come she felt very lonely indeed.



"I shall not close my eyes all night," she said; and she did not. When the rooster

over in the barnyard crowed for morning, her eyes were as wide open as they had been when the first star shone the evening before.

Almost as soon as it was light again she heard a noise in the meadow. Swish, swash! Swish, swash! it sounded. The children's father was cutting his grass with a sharp-bladed scythe, but the doll did not know this and when the grass around her fell down in a heap upon her she thought that the end of everything had come.

"What in the world has happened?" she asked a grasshopper who had been caught in the fall.

"That is just what I should like to know myself," he answered; and he struggled up to the sunshine and never came back.

The children did not come to look again for the doll that day, or the next, and she gave up all hope of being found.

"They have gone to visit their grandparents," she said. "I heard them talking about it. They have forgotten me, and I shall never see them again."

That very afternoon, however, they came to the meadow to help their father rake the grass, which the sun by that time had dried into sweet-smelling hay. They had been on a visit, sure enough, and as they worked they talked of the things they had done while they were away from home. The doll could hear every word they said.

"I rode Grandpa's horse to water two times by myself," said the little boy.

"I fed Grandma's chickens every day with corn," said the little girl.

"Grandpa plants corn in his fields," said the little boy. "You don't have to rake corn."

"I like to rake hay," said the little girl; "and Mamma says that I may find Jennie Bluebell when the field is cleared."

Oh! how the china doll's heart leaped for joy when she heard that; and—do you believe it?—the very next minute the hay that covered her was raked aside and there she lay right before the little girl's eyes!

"Oh, oh, oh!" the little girl cried; "here she is, my precious doll. I was never so glad in all my life."

And Jennie Bluebell was glad too, though she did not say a word. She only smiled.



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