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The Magic Flower

Maud Lindsay

Once upon a time there lived a wee woman whose bit of a garden was a delight to all eyes.

Such flowers as she had! And in the midst of them, green as an emerald and smooth as velvet, was a grass plot with never a weed upon it. And through the grass ran a garden walk as white as snow. Every one who saw it declared there was no prettier garden in the king's country and what they said was no more than what was true.

Early and late the wee woman worked to keep her garden fair and lovely but in spite of all her care whenever the east wind blew it brought with it a whirl of trash from her neighbor's dooryard, and scattered it among her flowers.

Alack and alas, what a dooryard was that! Except for the trash that was always upon it, it was as bare as the palm of your hand; and there was a heap of dirt and ashes as high as a hillock in front of the door. Everybody who passed it turned their eyes away from it, for there was no uglier spot in the king's country; and that is nothing but the truth of it.

Whenever the wee woman looked from her windows or walked in her garden she saw the dooryard and many was the day when she said to herself:

"I wish I were a thousand miles away from it;" and if she made up her mind, as sometimes she did, that she would trouble no more about it, the east wind was sure to come with a whirl of its trash. Oh, it seemed as if she were always cleaning because of that dooryard!

And what to do about it she did not know. She puzzled and planned, she wished and she worked, but she had come to the end of her wits when, one day, her fairy godmother came to see her.

"Never fret," said the godmother when she had heard the trouble. "In your own garden grows a magic flower that can set things right; and if you will only tend it and watch it and wait long enough you shall see what you shall see."

And when she had pointed out the flower she went on her way, leaving the wee woman much comforted.

She tended the flower and watched it and waited to see what she should see;

and while she was watching and waiting, the flower burst into bloom. The loveliest bloom! Every blossom was as rosy as the little clouds at sunrise; and the wee woman's garden was more beautiful than before because of them.

"'Tis the prettiest garden in the king's country," said every one who passed; and what they said was no more than what was true.

But as for the neighbor's dooryard it was as bare and ugly as ever. The heap of dirt and ashes grew larger every day; and whenever the wind blew from the east it brought a whirl of its trash into the wee woman's garden just as it had always done.

The wee woman looked each morning to see if the magic of the flower had begun to work but morning after morning nothing changed.



"It is long waiting and weary watching for magic things to work," said she to herself; but because of what her fairy godmother had told her, she tended the flower from day to day, and hoped in her heart that something might come of it yet.

By and by the blossoms of the flower faded and fell and after them came the seed. Hundreds and hundreds of feathery seed there were, and one day the wind from the west came by, and blew them away in a whirl over the fence and into the neighbor's dooryard. No one saw them go, not even the wee woman knew what had become of them; and as for the dooryard, it was as ugly as ever with its ash heap and its trash. Everybody who passed it turned their eyes away from it.

The wee woman herself would look at it no longer.

"I will look at the magic flower instead," she said to herself, and so she did. Early and late she tended the plant and worked to make her garden fair and lovely; but she kept her eyes from the dooryard. And if the wind from the east blew trash among her flowers she raked it away and burned it up and troubled no more about it.

Summer slipped into autumn and autumn to winter and the flowers slept; but at the first peep of spring the wee woman's garden budded and bloomed once more; and one day as she worked there, with her back to the dooryard, she heard passers-by call out in delight:

"Of all the gardens in the king's country there are none so pretty as these two," and when she looked around in surprise to see what they meant she saw that

the neighbor's dooryard was full of flowers—hundreds and hundreds of lovely blossoms, every one as rosy as the little clouds at sunrise. They covered the heap of dirt and ashes, they clustered about the door stone; they filled the corners; and in the midst of them was the neighbor, raking and cleaning as busily as if she were the wee woman herself.

"'Tis fine weather for flowers," said she, nodding and smiling at the wee woman.

"The finest in the world," said the wee woman; and she nodded and smiled too, for she knew that the magic flower had done its work.

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