

# FAIRY WORK, AND HOW TO DO IT.

BY EMILIE SEARCHFIELD.

A LITTLE fairy sat alone in a garden one bright morning in June. The flowers waved to and fro around her and the air was full of their sweet scent, while the leaves, as they rustled in the summer breeze, whispered all sorts of loving messages to her. Yet she wept! Wept as only fairies can weep! and her tears as they fell, left dull dirty marks on her white dress.

The leaves as they whispered brought her no comfort, for she knew that the wind which stirred them came directly from the fairy queen's palace, and just then she wanted to forget all about her queen and the lovely place where she lived. Would you like to know why she was unhappy? Well, I will tell you. It was because she had not done her duty. Neither fairies, children, nor grown-up people, can be happy when such is the case, however they may laugh and try at times to forget the very sound of the word.

Sometimes Ina would be very merry—at least outwardly so—but at the same time her heart was heavy, very heavy, and that day in spite of the lovely weather and summer skies, she fairly gave way to tears. You would have thought, to have seen her tiny figure swaying to and fro, on the top of one of the white stones, piled in one corner of the garden, that if the wind grew rough she would be blown away by it, as easily as a withered leaf from a tree. But if you had looked well at her you would have seen something very like a blue ribbon on each shoulder, and that was the little fairy's wings, given her by her queen; so that should she find herself in an open place with no shelter near, when the wind became rough and boisterous, she would at least be able to fly along with it till an opportunity was given her of stopping to rest, and creep away into some hollow.

Last May night, when all the little people had had their tasks given them for the year, the queen had sent Ina to where she was, to drive away all insects and reptiles—such as spiders, earwigs, frogs, and toads—from among the flowers, because the widow lady and her little girl who lived in the house adjoining to the gardens were particularly afraid of such things.

Many of her friends had envied her the work, because it was so grand to do something directly for the good of the fair gentle mother and lonely child they had watched so often walking about on the common. But one and all resolved, that if not permitted to tend the widow's garden, they would water the wild flowers, paint the butterflies, teach the wild bees to hum, and the crickets to chirp, so that the common should be a pleasant place to them, when they wandered there in the bright summer days. Nothing grand or noble could they do, like Ina, but they tried to do their best, and then when night came and the moon shone lovingly upon them as they gambolled and played, its gentle beams seemed to their little hearts to be like the reflection of the widow's smile, which they felt they had fairly earned.

At first Ina was happy in the garden; there were so many pretty flowers to look at, so many gentle messages from her queen, and lastly, so much to observe and love, in the mother and child. So she passed away her time, never thinking of diving under the pile of stones, or the leaves nearest to the ground, for, like her mistress, she had a dislike to creeping things in general, and to frogs and toads in particular. She kept carefully away from the places where they were likely to be, and looking on the lovely flowers, and admiring their gorgeous hues, she dreamed her little life away for several weeks.

Once or twice, when her daughter was at school, the lady had tried to do a little gardening, in order to make the time pass more quickly, till her darling should return, but after a few minutes she would give a faint scream and hurry away. Then on the very morning of which I am writing, Ina had heard the mother's voice calling to her little girl, who lingered a moment in the garden, to pluck a few flowers on her way to school.

"Lottie, Lottie, take care my love! There are so many toads under the flowers. I must send John to weed the garden, and hunt them out."

John was a big boy, kept by the lady to go errands, and do all he could to help her one maid-servant. At this speech

Ina trembled, for would not she, as well as the toads, be at the mercy of this great giant of a boy. She did not dare to leave her work, or she would have at once fluttered her little wings, and flown high over the garden wall, but the fairy queen had expressly charged her to stay there till next May night, and on no account to leave it, unless—which was scarcely likely to be the case—the wind was so rough as to oblige her to fly over the wall.

The thought never entered her mind to disobey her queen, and yet she had been doing it all the time she had been in the garden. She had known it, too, in her heart, and been miserable, although she had kept up her spirits, and danced about here and there, looking at the, smelling that, and admiring something else, so as to have no time for serious thought. Now, however, she could laugh and enjoy herself no longer. All her faults and failings stared her in the face. They were not so much wrong things done as right things left undone, and the little fairy sobbed aloud at the thought of her wasted life.

It did seem like a lifetime to her, for after their winter's sleep, a fairy's life seems to begin anew, and although they remember the doings of the last summer, yet they seem to belong to other fairies' lives, not theirs. So the weeks spent by Ina in the garden were to her like the best years of a lifetime, spent in idleness and folly.

"What can I do? What can I do?" she moaned over and over again.

A rose-bush grew by her side, and one branch kept whispering, whispering, whispering; but she did not heed, and again the little bird-like voice cried out, "Oh, what shall I do?"

At length the branch bent down a little lower, and one leaf touched her cheek. She looked up, and the thought came into her mind, "The Queen knows everything, so perhaps she has sent to tell me what I must do, and the rose-leaves are even now waiting to speak." So she listened attentively, and as the leaves rustled once more she distinctly heard the words—

"The Fairy Queen is your friend,  
'Tis never too late to mend."

New life seemed given to her in a moment, and rising, she set about hunting spiders and earwigs in good earnest. For some time, however, she could do but little, for, in spite of all her efforts to keep them back, the tears would come and blind her eyes; only now they were tears of love and thankfulness to the Queen for her kind message.

Just as she was rejoicing in the fact that she was doing right, the sun went in behind a cloud, and when Ina looked up she saw that there was not one cloud but many, and that the sky was almost black with them. She knew what they meant, as they frowned upon her, for she remembered a thunderstorm which had frightened all the fairies last summer, and she knew that just such another was in store for them now. She was only a fairy, and neither knew why thunderstorms came nor who sent them; therefore it is not to be wondered at that she trembled and was very much afraid. All work was over for her now till fine weather should come again, and, when the first big drops of rain fell, she ran up to the pile of stones, and crept into a hollow between two for shelter. She was so small that what was only a mere crevice was to her a grotto, and a patch of green moss on one of the stones was a nice couch for her, so she stretched her little tired limbs upon it and fell asleep.

It was the first time since last May Night that she had been really tired, and her sleep was very sweet.

She dreamt that next May Night was come, and that the Queen, being pleased with her work, had taken her back with her to her palace to live. Oh, it was so beautiful there! The floor was all shining, and of many different hues, just as if it had been paved with beetles' wings. There was a fountain too, and the cool, bright water plashed and sparkled as it fell. Some of the bright drops actually washed her arms, as she stood off at a little distance and admired.

Suddenly she awoke. The palace faded away; but what was it made the fairy scream and tremble—what was lying cold against her, making her dream of fountains with cool water? Nothing more or less than a toad. There it was, staring at her; and Ina tried to creep closer to the side of her grotto. But alas, poor little creature! the toad moved too. She could not get out into the garden without touching it, so there she lay, almost fearing to breathe.

She knew she ought to drive it away; but how could she