

into the world, from which I had ventured far into sunny, silver Brook-land,—felt again the fresh breeze upon my face, the soft grass beneath my feet, and all around the perfume of God's flowers, as I went thoughtfully homeward, where the laughter and prattle of younger brothers and sisters soon enough dispelled the illusion that had grown "big in my heart."

It was during one of these visits of my Youthhood to this sunny, silver stream that I wondered, as I lay upon its verdurous bank, whence came this length of laughing water,—what marvellous source existed afar off, out of which fell unceasingly this crystal flood. Whilst I lay thus musing in the dreamy summer atmosphere, and inhaling the rich odour of flowers that filled all the air, I seemed suddenly to be falling from space to space,—gently as if borne up by some unseen and unfelt power. During this unusual and delightful condition of the senses gradually the murmur of the waters became intelligible; and this, the fairy tale, they told:—

Miles and miles away to the South in a pleasant and beautiful land is a lofty mountain which towers like a queen above its sister peaks. There, ere the foot of man pressed the virgin soil of this lovely land, dwelt a fairy people. Wealthiest of all fairy peoples was this; its maidens were fairest and gentlest; its youths bravest and noblest; and its old men and women lived happy in the contemplation of their own well-spent lives and the young lives blossoming around them, which would fill their places, when they should fall asleep for ever, be wrapt up for the last time in fresh-plucked rose-leaves, and be consigned to the agate tombs where rested the sacred ashes of their fathers.

Deep down in the bosom of this queenly mountain were the secret habitations of this happy fairy people. In these gorgeous dwellings wrought of the most precious stones of every hue, blending in dazzling splendour, this blissful nation passed its years and its centuries ignorant alike of care and strife. Day after day would they ascend and descend from pearl-lit court to vine-covered bower,—from agate chamber to boudoirs luxuriant with mosses and flowers of wondrous tints.

Never had they held intercourse with the fairy peoples that surrounded them; never had their chosen representatives gone up to the great assemblies where annually fairy matters were discussed. Their own domain, their own laws, and their own customs, were sufficient for them; with them they had always been prosperous and happy; and they feared the introduction into their midst of any discordant element. So at length they came to be regarded as haughty and distant; and little by little their companionship ceased to be sought after until at length even the name of the nation was forbidden to be mentioned in the domains of their brother fairies. Now fairest of all fairy maidens was Azulah, daughter of the king of this wise and prosperous nation. None were so light of foot,—none so light of heart as she. None could boast a form so symmetrical,—none such eyes wondrously deep and clear,—none such hair wondrously dark and luxuriant. Hers was the wildest legend,—hers the sweetest song that beguiled the hours in fairy land. None, too, were so generous in heart, so pure in life, so

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