The Story of Prince Fairyfoot

by Frances Hodgson Burnett

Once upon a time, in the days of the fairies, there was in the far west country a kingdom which was called by the name of Stumpinghame. It was a rather curious country in several ways. In the first place, the people who lived there thought that Stumpinghame was all the world; they thought there was no world at all outside Stumpinghame. And they thought that the people of Stumpinghame knew everything that could possibly be known, and that what they did not know was of no consequence at all.

One idea common in Stumpinghame was really very unusual indeed. It was a peculiar taste in the matter of feet. In Stumpinghame, the larger a person's feet were, the more beautiful and elegant he or she was considered; and the more aristocratic and nobly born a man was, the more immense were his feet. Only the very lowest and most vulgar persons were ever known to have small feet. The King's feet were simply huge; so were the Queen's; so were those of the young princes and princesses. It had never occurred to anyone that a member of such a royal family could possibly disgrace himself by being born with small feet. Well, you may imagine, then, what a terrible and humiliating state of affairs arose when there was born into that royal family a little son, a prince, whose feet were so very small and slender and delicate that they would have been considered small even in other places than Stumpinghame. Grief and confusion seized the entire nation. The Queen fainted six times a day; the King had black rosettes fastened upon his crown; all the flags were at half-mast; and the court went into the deepest mourning. There had been born to Stumpinghame a royal prince with small feet, and nobody knew how the country could survive it!

Yet the disgraceful little prince survived it, and did not seem to mind at all. He was the prettiest and best tempered baby the royal nurse had ever seen. But for his small feet, he would have been the flower of the family.

The royal nurse said to herself, and privately told his little royal highness's chief bottle-washer that she "never see a infant as took notice so, and sneezed as intelligent." But, of course, the King and Queen could see nothing but his little feet, and very soon they made up their minds to send him away. So one day they had him bundled up and carried where they thought he might be quite forgotten. They sent him to the hut of a swineherd who lived deep, deep in a great forest which seemed to end nowhere.

They gave the swineherd some money, and some clothes for Fairyfoot, and told him, that if he would take care of the child, they would send money and clothes every year. As for themselves, they only wished to be sure of never seeing Fairyfoot again.

This pleased the swineherd well enough. He was poor, and he had a wife and ten children, and hundreds of swine to take care of, and he knew he could use the little Prince's money and clothes for his own family, and no one would find it out. So he let his wife take the little fellow, and as soon as the King's messengers had gone, the woman took the royal clothes off the Prince and put on him a coarse little nightgown, and gave all his things to her own children. But the baby Prince did not seem to mind that—he did not seem to mind anything, even though he had no name but Prince Fairyfoot, which had been given him in contempt by the disgusted courtiers. He grew prettier and prettier every day, and long before the time when other children begin to walk, he could run about on his fairy feet.

The swineherd and his wife did not like him at all; in fact, they disliked him because he was so much prettier and so much brighter than their own clumsy children. And the children did not like him, because they were ill natured and only liked themselves.

So as he grew older year by year, the poor little Prince was more and more lonely. He had no one to play with, and was obliged to be always by himself. He dressed only in the coarsest and roughest clothes; he seldom had enough to eat, and he slept on straw in a loft under the roof of the swineherd's hut. But all this did not prevent his being strong and rosy and active. He was as fleet as the wind, and he had a voice as sweet as a bird's; he had lovely sparkling eyes, and bright golden hair; and he had so kind a

heart that he would not have done a wrong or cruel thing for the world. As soon as he was big enough, the swineherd made him go out into the forest every day to take care of the swine. He was obliged to keep them together in one place, and if any of them ran away into the forest, Prince Fairyfoot was beaten. And as the swine were very wild and unruly, he was very often beaten, because it was almost impossible to keep them from wandering off; and when they ran away, they ran so fast, and through places so tangled, that it was almost impossible to follow them.

The forest in which he had to spend the long days was a very beautiful one, however, and he could take pleasure in that. It was a forest so great that it was like a world in itself. There were in it strange, splendid trees, the branches of which interlocked overhead, and when their many leaves moved and rustled, it seemed as if they were whispering secrets. There were bright, swift, strange birds, that flew about in the deep golden sunshine, and when they rested on the boughs, they, too, seemed telling one another secrets. There was a bright, clear brook, with water as sparkling and pure as crystal, and with shining shells and pebbles of all colours lying in the gold and silver sand at the bottom. Prince Fairyfoot always thought the brook knew the forest's secret also, and sang it softly to the flowers as it ran along. And as for the flowers, they were beautiful; they grew as thickly as if they had been a carpet, and under them was another carpet of lovely green moss. The trees and the birds, and the brook and the flowers were Prince Fairyfoot's friends. He loved them, and never was very lonely when he was with them; and if his swine had not run away so often, and if the swineherd had not beaten him so much, sometimes—indeed, nearly all summer—he would have been almost happy. He used to lie on the fragrant carpet of flowers and moss and listen to the soft sound of the running water, and to the whispering of the waving leaves, and to the songs of the birds; and he would wonder what they were saying to one another, and if it were true, as the swineherd's children said, that the great forest was full of fairies. And then he would pretend it was true, and would tell himself stories about them, and make believe they were his friends, and that they came to talk to him and let him love them. He wanted to love something or somebody, and he had nothing to love—not

even a little dog.

One day he was resting under a great green tree, feeling really quite happy because everything was so beautiful. He had even made a little song to chime in with the brook's, and he was singing it softly and sweetly, when suddenly, as he lifted his curly, golden head to look about him, he saw that all his swine were gone. He sprang to his feet, feeling very much frightened, and he whistled and called, but he heard nothing. He could not imagine how they had all disappeared so quietly, without making any sound; but not one of them was anywhere to be seen. Then his poor little heart began to beat fast with trouble and anxiety. He ran here and there; he looked through the bushes and under the trees; he ran, and ran, and ran, and called and whistled, and searched; but nowhere—nowhere was one of those swine to be found! He searched for them for hours, going deeper and deeper into the forest than he had ever been before. He saw strange trees and strange flowers, and heard strange sounds: and at last the sun began to go down, and he knew he would soon be left in the dark. His little feet and legs were scratched with brambles, and were so tired that they would scarcely carry him; but he dared not go back to the swineherd's hut without finding the swine. The only comfort he had on all the long way was that the little brook had run by his side, and sung its song to him; and sometimes he had stopped and bathed his hot face in it, and had said, "Oh, little brook! you are so kind to me! You are my friend, I know. I would be so lonely without you!"

When at last the sun did go down, Prince Fairyfoot had wandered so far that he did not know where he was, and he was so tired that he threw himself down by the brook, and hid his face in the flowery moss, and said, "Oh, little brook! I am so tired I can go no further; and I can never find them!"

While he was lying there in despair, he heard a sound in the air above him, and looked up to see what it was. It sounded like a little bird in some trouble. And, surely enough, there was a huge hawk darting after a plump little brown bird with a red breast. The little bird was uttering sharp frightened cries, and Prince Fairyfoot felt so sorry for it that he sprang up

and tried to drive the hawk away. The little bird saw him at once, and straightway flew to him, and Fairyfoot covered it with his cap. And then the hawk flew away in a great rage.

When the hawk was gone, Fairyfoot sat down again and lifted his cap, expecting, of course, to see the brown bird with the red breast. But, instead of a bird, out stepped a little man, not much higher than your little finger—a plump little man in a brown suit with a bright red vest, and with a cocked hat on.

"Why," exclaimed Fairyfoot, "I'm surprised!"

"So am I," said the little man, cheerfully. "I never was more surprised in my life, except when my great-aunt's grandmother got into such a rage, and changed me into a robin-redbreast. I tell you, that surprised me!"

"I should think it might," said Fairyfoot. "Why did she do it?"

"Mad," answered the little man—"that was what was the matter with her. She was always losing her temper like that, and turning people into awkward things, and then being sorry for it, and not being able to change them back again. If you are a fairy, you have to be careful. If you'll believe me, that woman once turned her second-cousin's sister-in-law into a mushroom, and somebody picked her, and she was made into catsup, which is a thing no man likes to have happen in his family!"

"Of course not," said Fairyfoot, politely.

"The difficulty is," said the little man, "that some fairies don't graduate. They learn to turn people into things, but they don't learn how to unturn them; and then, when they get mad in their families—you know how it is about getting mad in families—there is confusion. Yes, seriously, confusion arises. It arises. That was the way with my great-aunt's grandmother. She was not a cultivated old person, and she did not know how to unturn people, and now you see the result. Quite accidentally I trod on her favorite corn; she got mad and changed me into a robin, and regretted it ever afterward. I could only become myself again by a kind-hearted person's saving me from a great danger. You are that person. Give me your hand."

Fairyfoot held out his hand. The little man looked at it.

"On second thought," he said, "I can't shake it—it's too large. I'll sit

on it, and talk to you."

With these words, he hopped upon Fairyfoot's hand, and sat down, smiling and clasping his own hands about his tiny knees.

"I declare, it's delightful not to be a robin," he said. "Had to go about picking up worms, you know. Disgusting business. I always did hate worms. I never ate them myself—I drew the line there; but I had to get them for my family."

Suddenly he began to giggle, and to hug his knees up tight.

"Do you wish to know what I'm laughing at?" he asked Fairyfoot.

"Yes," Fairyfoot answered.

The little man giggled more than ever.

"I'm thinking about my wife," he said, "the one I had when I was a robin. A nice rage she'll be in when I don't come home to-night! She'll have to hustle around and pick up worms for herself, and for the children too, and it serves her right. She had a temper that would embitter the life of a crow, much more a simple robin. I wore myself to skin and bone taking care of her and her brood, and how I did hate 'em!—bare, squawking things, always with their throats gaping open. They seemed to think a parent's sole duty was to bring worms for them."

"It must have been unpleasant," said Fairyfoot.

"It was more than that," said the little man; "it used to make my feathers stand on end. There was the nest, too! Fancy being changed into a robin, and being obliged to build a nest at a moment's notice! I never felt so ridiculous in my life. How was I to know how to build a nest! And the worst of it was the way she went on about it."

"She!" said Fairyfoot.

"Oh, her, you know," replied the little man, ungrammatically, "my wife. She'd always been a robin, and she knew how to build a nest; she liked to order me about, too—she was one of that kind. But, of course, I wasn't going to own that I didn't know anything about nest-building. I could never have done anything with her in the world if I'd let her think she knew as much as I did. So I just put things together in a way of my own, and built a nest that would have made you weep! The bottom fell out of it the first

night. It nearly killed me."

"Did you fall out, too?" inquired Fairyfoot.

"Oh, no," answered the little man. "I meant that it nearly killed me to think the eggs weren't in it at the time."

"What did you do about the nest?" asked Fairyfoot.

The little man winked in the most improper manner.

"Do?" he said. "I got mad, of course, and told her that if she hadn't interfered, it wouldn't have happened; said it was exactly like a hen to fly around giving advice and unsettling one's mind, and then complain if things weren't right. I told her she might build the nest herself, if she thought she could build a better one. She did it, too!" And he winked again.

"Was it a better one?" asked Fairyfoot.

The little man actually winked a third time. "It may surprise you to hear that it was," he replied; "but it didn't surprise me. By-the-by," he added, with startling suddenness, "what's your name, and what's the matter with you?"

"My name is Prince Fairyfoot," said the boy, "and I have lost my master's swine."

"My name," said the little man, "is Robin Goodfellow, and I'll find them for you."

He had a tiny scarlet silk pouch hanging at his girdle, and he put his hand into it and drew forth the smallest golden whistle you ever saw.

"Blow that," he said, giving it to Fairyfoot, "and take care that you don't swallow it. You are such a tremendous creature!"

Fairyfoot took the whistle and put it very delicately to his lips. He blew, and there came from it a high, clear sound that seemed to pierce the deepest depths of the forest.

"Blow again," commanded Robin Goodfellow.

Again Prince Fairyfoot blew, and again the pure clear sound rang through the trees, and the next instant he heard a loud rushing and tramping and squeaking and grunting, and all the great drove of swine came tearing through the bushes and formed themselves into a circle and stood staring at him as if waiting to be told what to do next.

"Oh, Robin Goodfellow, Robin Goodfellow!" cried Fairyfoot, "how grateful I am to you!"

"Not as grateful as I am to you," said Robin Goodfellow. "But for you I should be disturbing that hawk's digestion at the present moment, instead of which, here I am, a respectable fairy once more, and my late wife (though I ought not to call her that, for goodness knows she was early enough hustling me out of my nest before daybreak, with the unpleasant proverb about the early bird catching the worm!)—I suppose I should say my early wife—is at this juncture a widow. Now, where do you live?"

Fairyfoot told him, and told him also about the swineherd, and how it happened that, though he was a prince, he had to herd swine and live in the forest.

"Well, well," said Robin Goodfellow, "that is a disagreeable state of affairs. Perhaps I can make it rather easier for you. You see that is a fairy whistle."

"I thought so," said Fairyfoot.

"Well," continued Robin Goodfellow, "you can always call your swine with it, so you will never be beaten again. Now, are you ever lonely?"

"Sometimes I am very lonely indeed," ananswered the Prince. "No one cares for me, though I think the brook is sometimes sorry, and tries to tell me things."

"Of course," said Robin. "They all like you. I've heard them say so."

"Oh, have you?" cried Fairyfoot, joyfully.

"Yes; you never throw stones at the birds, or break the branches of the trees, or trample on the flowers when you can help it."

"The birds sing to me," said Fairyfoot, "and the trees seem to beckon to me and whisper; and when I am very lonely, I lie down in the grass and look into the eyes of the flowers and talk to them. I would not hurt one of them for all the world!"

"Humph!" said Robin, "you are a rather good little fellow. Would you like to go to a party?"

"A party!" said Fairyfoot. "What is that?"

"This sort of thing," said Robin; and he jumped up and began to

dance around and to kick up his heels gaily in the palm of Fairyfoot's hand. "Wine, you know, and cake, and all sorts of fun. It begins at twelve to-night, in a place the fairies know of, and it lasts until just two minutes and three seconds and a half before daylight. Would you like to come?"

"Oh," cried Fairyfoot, "I should be so happy if I might!"

"Well, you may," said Robin; "I'll take you. They'll be delighted to see any friend of mine, I'm a great favourite; of course, you can easily imagine that. It was a great blow to them when I was changed; such a loss, you know. In fact, there were several lady fairies, who—but no matter." And he gave a slight cough, and began to arrange his necktie with a disgracefully consequential air, though he was trying very hard not to look conceited; and while he was endeavouring to appear easy and gracefully careless, he began accidentally to hum, "See the Conquering Hero Comes," which was not the right tune under the circumstances.

"But for you," he said next, "I couldn't have given them the relief and pleasure of seeing me this evening. And what ecstasy it will be to them, to be sure! I shouldn't be surprised if it broke up the whole thing. They'll faint so—for joy, you know—just at first—that is, the ladies will. The men won't like it at all; and I don't blame 'em. I suppose I shouldn't like it—to see another fellow sweep all before him. That's what I do; I sweep all before me." And he waved his hand in such a fine large gesture that he overbalanced himself, and turned a somersault. But he jumped up after it, quite undisturbed.

"You'll see me do it to-night," he said, knocking the dents out of his hat, "—sweep all before me." Then he put his hat on, and his hands on his hips, with a swaggering, man-of-society air. "I say," he said, "I'm glad you're going. I should like you to see it."

"And I should like to see it," replied Fairyfoot.

"Well," said Mr. Goodfellow, "you deserve it, though that's saying a great deal. You've restored me to them. But for you, even if I'd escaped that hawk, I should have had to spend the night in that beastly robin's nest, crowded into a corner by those squawking things, and domineered over by her! I wasn't made for that! I'm superior to it. Domestic life doesn't suit me.

I was made for society. I adorn it. She never appreciated me. She couldn't soar to it. When I think of the way she treated me," he exclaimed, suddenly getting into a rage, "I've a great mind to turn back into a robin and peck her head off!"

"Would you like to see her now?" asked Fairyfoot, innocently.

Mr. Goodfellow glanced behind him in great haste, and suddenly sat down.

"No, no!" he exclaimed in a tremendous hurry; "by no means! She has no delicacy. And she doesn't deserve to see me. And there's a violence and uncertainty about her movements which is annoying beyond anything you can imagine. No, I don't want to see her! I'll let her go unpunished for the present. Perhaps it's punishment enough for her to be deprived of me. Just pick up your cap, won't you? and if you see any birds lying about, throw it at them, robins particularly."

"I think I must take the swine home, if you'll excuse me," said Fairyfoot, "I'm late now."

"Well, let me sit on your shoulder and I'll go with you and show you a short way home," said Goodfellow; "I know all about it, so you needn't think about yourself again. In fact, we'll talk about the party. Just blow your whistle, and the swine will go ahead."

Fairyfoot did so, and the swine rushed through the forest before them, and Robin Goodfellow perched himself on the Prince's shoulder, and chatted as they went.

It had taken Fairyfoot hours to reach the place where he found Robin, but somehow it seemed to him only a very short time before they came to the open place near the swineherd's hut; and the path they had walked in had been so pleasant and flowery that it had been delightful all the way.

"Now," said Robin when they stopped, "if you will come here to-night at twelve o'clock, when the moon shines under this tree, you will find me waiting for you. Now I'm going. Good-bye!" And he was gone before the last word was quite finished.

Fairyfoot went towards the hut, driving the swine before him, and

suddenly he saw the swineherd come out of his house, and stand staring stupidly at the pigs. He was a very coarse, hideous man, with bristling yellow hair, and little eyes, and a face rather like a pig's, and he always looked stupid, but just now he looked more stupid than ever. He seemed dumb with surprise.

"What's the matter with the swine?" he asked in his hoarse voice, which was rather piglike, too.

"I don't know," answered Fairyfoot, feeling a little alarmed. "What *is* the matter with them?"

"They are four times fatter, and five times bigger, and six times cleaner, and seven times heavier, and eight times handsomer than they were when you took them out," the swineherd said.

"I've done nothing to them," said Fairyfoot. "They ran away, but they came back again."

The swineherd went lumbering back into the hut, and called his wife.

"Come and look at the swine," he said.

And then the woman came out, and stared first at the swine and then at Fairyfoot.

"He has been with the fairies," she said at last to her husband; "or it is because he is a king's son. We must treat him better if he can do wonders like that."

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In went the shepherd's wife, and she prepared quite a good supper for Fairyfoot and gave it to him. But Fairyfoot was scarcely hungry at all; he was so eager for the night to come, so that he might see the fairies. When he went to his loft under the roof, he thought at first that he could not sleep; but suddenly his hand touched the fairy whistle and he fell asleep at once, and did not waken again until a moonbeam fell brightly upon his face and aroused him. Then he jumped up and ran to the hole in the wall to look out, and he saw that the hour had come, and the moon was so low in the sky that

its slanting light had crept under the oak-tree.

He slipped downstairs so lightly that his master heard nothing, and then he found himself out in the beautiful night with the moonlight so bright that it was lighter than daytime. And there was Robin Goodfellow waiting for him under the tree! He was so finely dressed that, for a moment, Fairyfoot scarcely knew him. His suit was made out of the purple velvet petals of a pansy, which was far finer than any ordinary velvet, and he wore plumes and tassels, and a ruffle around his neck, and in his belt was thrust a tiny sword, not half as big as the finest needle.

"Take me on your shoulder," he said to Fairyfoot, "and I will show you the way."

Fairyfoot took him up, and they went their way through the forest. And the strange part of it was that though Fairyfoot thought he knew the forest by heart, every path they took was new to him, and more beautiful than anything he had ever seen before. The moonlight seemed to grow brighter and purer at every step, and the sleeping flowers sweeter and lovelier, and the moss greener and thicker. Fairyfoot felt so happy and gay that he forgot he had ever been sad and lonely in his life.

Robin Goodfellow, too, seemed to be in very good spirits. He related a great many stories to Fairyfoot, and, singularly enough, they were all about himself and divers and sundry fairy ladies who had been so very much attached to him that he scarcely expected to find them alive at the present moment: he felt quite sure they must have died of grief in his absence.

"I have caused a great deal of trouble in the course of my life," he said, regretfully, shaking his head. "I have sometimes wished I could avoid it, but that is impossible. Ahem! When my great-aunt's grandmother rashly and inopportunely changed me into a robin, I was having a little flirtation with a little creature who was really quite attractive. I might have decided to engage myself to her. She was very charming. Her name was Gauzita. Tomorrow I shall go and place flowers on her tomb."

"I thought fairies never died," said Fairyfoot.

"Only on rare occasions, and only from love," answered Robin. "They needn't die unless they wish to. They have been known to do it

through love. They frequently wish they hadn't afterward—in fact, invariably—and then they can come to life again. But Gauzita—"

"Are you quite sure she is dead?" asked Fairyfoot.

"Sure!" cried Mr. Goodfellow, in wild indignation, "why, she hasn't seen me for a couple of years. I've moulted twice since last we met. I congratulate myself that she didn't see me then," he added, in a lower voice. "Of course she's dead," he added, with solemn emphasis; "as dead as a door nail."

Just then Fairyfoot heard some enchanting sounds, faint, but clear. They were sounds of delicate music and of tiny laughter, like the ringing of fairy bells.

"Ah!" said Robin Goodfellow, "there they are! But it seems to me they are rather gay, considering they have not seen me for so long. Turn into the path."

Almost immediately they found themselves in a beautiful little dell, filled with moonlight, and with glittering stars in the cup of every flower; for there were thousands of dewdrops, and every dewdrop shone like a star. There were also crowds and crowds of tiny men and women, all beautiful, all dressed in brilliant, delicate dresses, all laughing or dancing or feasting at the little tables, which were loaded with every dainty the most fastidious fairy could wish for.

"Now," said Robin Goodfellow, "you shall see me sweep all before me. Put me down."

Fairyfoot put him down, and stood and watched him while he walked forward with a very grand manner. He went straight to the gayest and largest group he could see. It was a group of gentlemen fairies, who were crowding around a lily of the valley, on the bent stem of which a tiny lady fairy was sitting, airily swaying herself to and fro, and laughing and chatting with all her admirers at once.

She seemed to be enjoying herself immensely; indeed, it was disgracefully plain that she was having a great deal of fun. One gentleman fairy was fanning her, one was holding her programme, one had her bouquet, another her little scent bottle, and those who had nothing to hold for her were

scowling furiously at the rest. It was evident that she was very popular, and that she did not object to it at all; in fact, the way her eyes sparkled and danced was distinctly reprehensible.

"You have engaged to dance the next waltz with every one of us!" said one of her adorers. "How are you going to do it?"

"Did I engage to dance with all of you?" she said, giving her lily stem the sauciest little swing, which set all the bells ringing. "Well, I am not going to dance it with all."

"Not with *me*?" the admirer with the fan whispered in her ear.

She gave him the most delightful little look, just to make him believe she wanted to dance with him but really couldn't. Robin Goodfelllow saw her. And then she smiled sweetly upon all the rest, every one of them. Robin Goodfellow saw that, too.

"I am going to sit here and look at you, and let you talk to me," she said. "I do so enjoy brilliant conversation."

All the gentlemen fairies were so much elated by this that they began to brighten up, and settle their ruffs, and fall into graceful attitudes, and think of sparkling things to say; because every one of them knew, from the glance of her eyes in his direction, that he was one whose conversation was brilliant; every one knew there could be no mistake about its being himself that she meant. The way she looked just proved it. Altogether it was more than Robin Goodfellow could stand—for it was Gauzita herself who was disporting herself in this unaccountable manner.

He made his way into the very centre of the group.

"Gauzita!" he said. He thought, of course, she would drop right off her lily stem; but she didn't. She simply stopped swinging a moment, and stared at him.

"Gracious!" she exclaimed. "And who are you?"

"Who am I?" cried Mr. Goodfellow, severely. "Don't you remember me?"

"No," she said, coolly; "I don't, not in the least."

Robin Goodfellow almost gasped for breath. He had never met with anything so outrageous in his life.

"You don't remember *me*?" he cried. "*Me*! Why, it's impossible!"

"Is it?" said Gauzita, with a touch of dainty impudence. "What's your name?"

Robin Goodfellow was almost paralyzed. Gauzita took up a midget of an eyeglass which she had dangling from a thread of a gold chain, and she stuck it in her eye and tilted her impertinent little chin and looked him over. Not that she was near-sighted—not a bit of it; it was just one of her tricks and manners.

"Dear me!" she said, "you do look a trifle familiar. It isn't, it can't be, Mr. ..., Mr. ...," then she turned to the adorer, who held her fan, "it can't be Mr. ..., the one who was changed into a robin, you know," she said. "Such a ridiculous thing to be changed into! What was his name?"

"Oh, yes! I know whom you mean. Mr. ..., ah—Goodfellow!" said the fairy with the fan.

"So it was," she said, looking Robin over again. "And he has been pecking at trees and things, and hopping in and out of nests ever since, I suppose. How absurd! And we have been enjoying ourselves so much since he went away! I think I never *did* have so lovely a time as I have had during these last two years. I began to know you," she added, in a kindly tone, "just about the time he went away."

"You have been enjoying yourself?" almost shrieked Robin Goodfellow.

"Well," said Gauzita, in inexcusable slang, "I must smile." And she did smile.

"And nobody has pined away and died?" cried Robin.

"I haven't," said Gauzita, swinging herself and ringing her bells again. "I really haven't had time."

Robin Goodfellow turned around and rushed out of the group. He meant to be insulting. He went back to Fairyfoot in such a hurry that he tripped on his sword and fell, and rolled over so many times that Fairyfoot had to stop him and pick him up.

"Is she dead?" asked Fairyfoot.

"No," said Robin; "she isn't."

He sat down on a small mushroom and clasped his hands about his knees and looked mad—just mad. Angry or indignant wouldn't express it.

"I have a great mind to go and be a misanthrope," he said.

"Oh! I wouldn't," said Fairyfoot. He didn't know what a misanthrope was, but he thought it must be something unpleasant.

"Wouldn't you?" said Robin, looking up at him.

"No," answered Fairyfoot.

"Well," said Robin, "I guess I won't. Let's go and have some fun. They are all that way. You can't depend on any of them. Never trust one of them. I believe that creature has been engaged as much as twice since I left. By a singular coincidence," he added, "I have been married twice myself—but, of course, that's different. I'm a man, you know, and—well, it's different. We won't dwell on it. Let's go and dance. But wait a minute first." He took a little bottle from his pocket.

"If you remain the size you are," he continued, "you will tread on whole cotillions and destroy entire quadrilles. If you drink this, you will become as small as we are; and then, when you are going home, I will give you something to make you large again."

Fairyfoot drank from the little flagon, and immediately he felt himself growing smaller and smaller until at last he was as small as his companion.

"Now, come on," said Robin.

On they went and joined the fairies, and they danced and played fairy games and feasted on fairy dainties, and were so gay and happy that Fairyfoot was wild with joy. Everybody made him welcome and seemed to like him, and the lady fairies were simply delightful, especially Gauzita, who took a great fancy to him. Just before the sun rose, Robin gave him something from another flagon, and he grew large again, and two minutes and three seconds and a half before daylight the ball broke up, and Robin took him home and left him, promising to call for him the next night.

Every night throughout the whole summer the same thing happened. At midnight he went to the fairies' dance; and at two minutes and three seconds and a half before dawn he came home. He was never lonely any more,

because all day long he could think of what pleasure he would have when the night came; and, besides that, all the fairies were his friends. But when the summer was coming to an end, Robin Goodfellow said to him: "This is our last dance—at least it will be our last for some time. At this time of the year we always go back to our own country, and we don't return until spring."

This made Fairyfoot very sad. He did not know how he could bear to be left alone again, but he knew it could not be helped; so he tried to be as cheerful as possible, and he went to the final festivities, and enjoyed himself more than ever before, and Gauzita gave him a tiny ring for a parting gift. But the next night, when Robin did not come for him, he felt very lonely indeed, and the next day he was so sorrowful that he wandered far away into the forest, in the hope of finding something to cheer him a little. He wandered so far that he became very tired and thirsty, and he was just making up his mind to go home, when he thought he heard the sound of falling water. It seemed to come from behind a thicket of climbing roses; and he went towards the place and pushed the branches aside a little, so that he could look through. What he saw was a great surprise to him. Though it was the end of summer, inside the thicket the roses were blooming in thousands all around a pool as clear as crystal, into which the sparkling water fell from a hole in the rock above. It was the most beautiful, clear pool that Fairyfoot had ever seen, and he pressed his way through the rose branches, and, entering the circle they inclosed, he knelt by the water and drank.

Almost instantly his feeling of sadness left him, and he felt quite happy and refreshed. He stretched himself on the thick perfumed moss, and listened to the tinkling of the water, and it was not long before he fell asleep.

When he awakened the moon was shining, the pool sparkled like a silver plaque crusted with diamonds, and two nightingales were singing in the branches over his head. And the next moment he found out that he understood their language just as plainly as if they had been human beings instead of birds. The water with which he had quenched his thirst was enchanted, and had given him this new power.

"Poor boy!" said one nightingale, "he looks tired; I wonder where he

came from."

"Why, my dear," said the other, "is it possible you don't know that he is Prince Fairyfoot?"

"What!" said the first nightingale, "the King of Stumpinghame's son, who was born with small feet?"

"Yes," said the second. "And the poor child has lived in the forest, keeping the swineherd's pigs ever since. And he is a very nice boy, too—never throws stones at birds or robs nests."

"What a pity he doesn't know about the pool where the red berries grow!" said the first nightingale.

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"What pool—and what red berries?" asked the second nightingale.

"Why, my dear," said the first, "is it possible you don't know about the pool where the red berries grow—the pool where the poor, dear Princess Goldenhair met with her misfortune?"

"Never heard of it," said the second nightingale, rather crossly.

"Well," explained the other, "you have to follow the brook for a day and three-quarters, and then take all the paths to the left until you come to the pool. It is very ugly and muddy, and bushes with red berries on them grow around it."

"Well, what of that?" said her companion; "and what happened to the Princess Goldenhair?"

"Don't you know that, either?" exclaimed her friend.

"No."

"Ah!" said the first nightingale, "it was very sad. She went out with her father, the King, who had a hunting party; and she lost her way, and wandered on until she came to the pool. Her poor little feet were so hot that she took off her gold-embroidered satin slippers, and put them into the water—her feet, not the slippers—and the next minute they began to grow and grow, and to get larger and larger, until they were so immense she could hardly walk at all; and though all the physicians in the kingdom have tried to

make them smaller, nothing can be done, and she is perfectly unhappy."

"What a pity she doesn't know about this pool!" said the other bird. "If she just came here and bathed them three times in the water, they would be smaller and more beautiful than ever, and she would be more lovely than she has ever been."

"It is a pity," said her companion; "but, you know, if we once let people know what this water will do, we should be overrun with creatures bathing themselves beautiful, and trampling our moss and tearing down our rose-trees, and we should never have any peace."

"That is true," agreed the other.

Very soon after, they flew away, and Fairyfoot was left alone. He had been so excited while they were talking that he had been hardly able to lie still. He was so sorry for the Princess Goldenhair, and so glad for himself. Now he could find his way to the pool with the red berries, and he could bathe his feet in it until they were large enough to satisfy Stumpinghame; and he could go back to his father's court, and his parents would perhaps be fond of him. But he had so good a heart that he could not think of being happy himself and letting others remain unhappy, when he could help them. So the first thing was to find the Princess Goldenhair and tell her about the nightingales' fountain. But how was he to find her? The nightingales had not told him. He was very much troubled, indeed. How was he to find her?

Suddenly, quite suddenly, he thought of the ring Gauzita had given him. When she had given it to him she had made an odd remark.

"When you wish to go anywhere," she had said, "hold it in your hand, turn around twice with closed eyes, and something queer will happen."

He had thought it was one of her little jokes, but now it occurred to him that at least he might try what would happen. So he rose up, held the ring in his hand, closed his eyes, and turned around twice.

What did happen was that he began to walk, not very fast, but still passing along as if he were moving rapidly. He did not know where he was going, but he guessed that the ring did, and that if he obeyed it, he should find the Princess Goldenhair. He went on and on, not getting in the least

tired, until about daylight he found himself under a great tree, and on the ground beneath it was spread a delightful breakfast, which he knew was for him. He sat down and ate it, and then got up again and went on his way once more. Before noon he had left the forest behind him, and was in a strange country. He knew it was not Stumpinghame, because the people had not large feet. But they all had sad faces, and once or twice, when he passed groups of them who were talking, he heard them speak of the Princess Goldenhair, as if they were sorry for her and could not enjoy themselves while such a misfortune rested upon her.

"So sweet and lovely and kind a princess!" they said; "and it really seems as if she would never be any better."

The sun was just setting when Fairyfoot came in sight of the palace. It was built of white marble, and had beautiful pleasure-grounds about it, but somehow there seemed to be a settled gloom in the air. Fairyfoot had entered the great pleasure-garden, and was wondering where it would be best to go first, when he saw a lovely white fawn, with a golden collar about its neck, come bounding over the flower-beds, and he heard, at a little distance, a sweet voice, saying sorrowfully, "Come back, my fawn; I cannot run and play with you as I once used to. Do not leave me, my little friend."

And soon from behind the trees came a line of beautiful girls, walking two by two, all very slowly; and at the head of the line, first of all, came the loveliest princess in the world, dressed softly in pure white, with a wreath of lilies on her long golden hair, which fell almost to the hem of her white gown.

She had so fair and tender a young face, and such large, soft eyes, yet looked so sorrowful, that Fairyfoot loved her in a moment, and he knelt on one knee, taking off his cap and bending his head until his own golden hair almost hid his face.

"Beautiful Princess Goldenhair, beautiful and sweet Princess, may I speak to you?"

The Princess stopped and looked at him, and answered him softly. It surprised her to see one so poorly dressed kneeling before her, in her palace gardens, among the brilliant flowers; but she always spoke softly to every-

one.

"What is there that I can do for you, my friend?" she said.

"Beautiful Princess," answered Fairyfoot, blushing, "I hope very much that I may be able to do something for you."

"For me!" she exclaimed. "Thank you, friend; what is it you can do? Indeed, I need a help I am afraid no one can ever give me."

"Gracious and fairest lady," said Fairyfoot, "it is that help I think—nay, I am sure—that I bring to you."

"Oh!" said the sweet Princess. "You have a kind face and most true eyes, and when I look at you—I do not know why it is, but I feel a little happier. What is it you would say to me?"

Still kneeling before her, still bending his head modestly, and still blushing, Fairyfoot told his story. He told her of his own sadness and loneliness, and of why he was considered so terrible a disgrace to his family. He told her about the fountain of the nightingales and what he had heard there and how he had journeyed through the forests, and beyond it into her own country, to find her. And while he told it, her beautiful face changed from red to white, and her hands closely clasped themselves together.

"Oh!" she said, when he had finished, "I know that this is true from the kind look in your eyes, and I shall be happy again. And how can I thank you for being so good to a poor little princess whom you had never seen?"

"Only let me see you happy once more, most sweet Princess," answered Fairyfoot, "and that will be all I desire—only if, perhaps, I might once ... kiss your hand."

She held out her hand to him with so lovely a look in her soft eyes that he felt happier than he had ever been before, even at the fairy dances. This was a different kind of happiness. Her hand was as white as a dove's wing and as soft as a dove's breast.

"Come," she said, "let us go at once to the King."

Within a few minutes the whole palace was in an uproar of excitement. Preparations were made to go to the fountain of the nightingales immediately. Remembering what the birds had said about not wishing to be disturbed, Fairyfoot asked the King to take only a small party. So no one

was to go but the King himself, the Princess, in a covered chair carried by two bearers, the Lord High Chamberlain, two Maids of Honour, and Fairyfoot.

Before morning they were on their way, and the day after they reached the thicket of roses, and Fairyfoot pushed aside the branches and led the way into the dell.

The Princess Goldenhair sat down upon the edge of the pool and put her feet into it. In two minutes they began to look smaller. She bathed them once, twice, three times, and, as the nightingales had said, they became smaller and more beautiful than ever. As for the Princess herself, she really could not be more beautiful than she had been; but the Lord High Chamberlain, who had been an exceedingly ugly old gentleman, after washing his face, became so young and handsome that the First Maid of Honour immediately fell in love with him. Whereupon she washed her face, and became so beautiful that he fell in love with her, and they were engaged upon the spot.

The Princess could not find any words to tell Fairyfoot how grateful she was and how happy. She could only look at him again and again with her soft, radiant eyes, and again and again give him her hand that he might kiss it.

She was so sweet and gentle that Fairyfoot could not bear the thought of leaving her; and when the King begged him to return to the palace with them and live there always, he was more glad than I can tell you. To be near this lovely Princess, to be her friend, to love and serve her and look at her every day, was such happiness that he wanted nothing more. But first he wished to visit his father and mother and sisters and brothers in Stumpinghame! So the King and Princess and their attendants went with him to the pool where the red berries grew; and after he had bathed his feet in the water they were so large that Stumpinghame contained nothing like them, even the King's and Queen's seeming small in comparison. And when, a few days later, he arrived at the Stumpinghame Palace, attended in great state by the magnificent retinue with which the father of the Princess Goldenhair had provided him, he was received with unbounded rapture by

his parents. The King and Queen felt that to have a son with feet of such a size was something to be proud of, indeed. They could not admire him sufficiently, although the whole country was illuminated, and feasting continued throughout his visit.

But though he was glad to be no more a disgrace to his family, it cannot be said that he enjoyed the size of his feet very much on his own account. Indeed, he much preferred being Prince Fairyfoot, as fleet as the wind and as light as a young deer, and he was quite glad to go to the fountain of the nightingales after his visit was at an end, and bathe his feet small again, and to return to the palace of the Princess Goldenhair with the soft and tender eyes. There everyone loved him, and he loved everyone, and was four times as happy as the day is long.

He loved the Princess more dearly every day, and, of course, as soon as they were old enough, they were married. And of course, too, they used to go in the summer to the forest, and dance in the moonlight with the fairies, who adored them both.

When they went to visit Stumpinghame, they always bathed their feet in the pool of the red berries; and when they returned, they made them small again in the fountain of the nightingales.

They were always great friends with Robin Goodfellow, and he was always very confidential with them about Gauzita, who continued to be as pretty and saucy as ever.

"One of these days," he used to say, severely, "I'll marry another fairy, and see how she'll like that—to see someone else basking in my society! I'll get even with her!"

But he *never* did.