

A LONG TIME AGO.

THERE were six of us at home. Alice is my name, and I'm the eldest; and then there were Bob and Bella, Tom and Ethel, and Baby Tot. There we were in the nursery trying hard to think how to amuse ourselves. We were quite tired of hide-and-seek, blind-man's buff, musical chairs, and all the other old games. We had burnt our fingers every night at snap-dragon, the Christmas tree was turning brown, and there wasn't even one cracker left to pull, so the boys pulled the girls' hair instead, and began getting into mischief all round.

"Dear me, children, what's the matter?" exclaimed our dear Auntie, coming into the nursery.

"Oh, Auntie," we cried, "we don't know what to do with ourselves. We want a new game to play; or will you tell us a story that will be better still?"

"Tom and I are going back to school in a week," said Bob, "and we want this to be the jolliest week of the holidays."

"But," said Auntie, taking Baby Tot upon her knee, "I have already told you the stories over and over again."

"Never mind, Auntie dear," said Bella; "we're not tired of them, so tell them to us once more."

"This is what I'll do," said Auntie, after thinking a little bit; "I'll tell you a story every night, and you can dress up and act the parts in the different fairy tales. That will be something quite new."

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"Oh, Auntie, how lovely!" I cried.

"How awfully jolly!" said Bob.

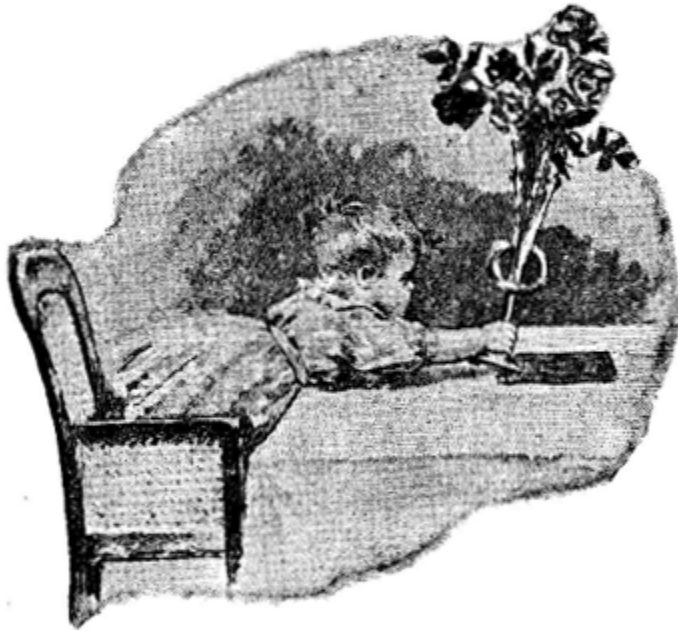
"Hurrah! I'll be 'Robinson Crusoe,'" cried Tom, with glee.

"And I'll be Friday," said Bob.

"And I'll be Sunday," cried Tot, clapping her little fat hands.

This made us all laugh. Tot didn't know very much about stories then, because she was so young.

"Tot shall be the 'Old Woman who Lived in a Shoe,' and the dolls shall be her naughty children," said Auntie.



"And we'll have 'Aladdin' and 'Jack and the Beanstalk,'" said Ethel.

"And 'The Sleeping Beauty' and 'Beauty and the Beast,'" said Bella, with delight.

And, oh! what a lovely rummage we had in dear Auntie's boxes for clothes to dress up in! She lent us her beautiful silks and satins, but made us promise to be very careful of them. And then we made crowns out of cardboard, and painted them with green, and red, and blue, until they looked quite covered with emeralds, rubies, and sapphires. And Papa's silver-headed cane made a lovely sceptre; and we made flags out of handkerchiefs.

Auntie told us a story every night, as she promised, and I am quite sure it was just the merriest week we ever spent.

Edric Vredenburg.