

Chapter VIII Twinkle Receives a Medal

THE giant gave a roar like that of a baby bull when he saw Prince Melga standing before him, and in a twinkling he had caught up a big club that stood near and began whirling it over his head. But before it could descend, the prince ran at him and stuck his sword as far as it would go into the corrugated body of the giant. Again the monster roared and tried to fight; but the sword had hurt him badly, and the prince pushed it into the evil creature again and again, until the end came, and his corrugated enemy rolled over upon the floor quite dead.

Then the fairy turned to Twinkle, and kneeling before her he kissed her hand.

"Thank you very much," he said, in a sweet voice, "for setting me free. You are a very brave little girl!"

"I'm not so sure about that," she answered. "I was dreadfully scared!"

Now he took her hand and led her from the castle; and she didn't have to squeeze through the fence again, because the fairy had only to utter a magic word and the gate flew open. And when they turned to look back, the castle of the Corrugated Giant, with all that it had contained, had vanished from sight, never to be seen again by either mortal or fairy eyes. For that was sure to happen whenever the giant was dead.

The prince led Twinkle into the valley where the fairy palaces stood, and told all his people, when they crowded around to welcome him, how kind the little girl had been to him, and how her courage had enabled him to defeat the giant and to regain his proper form. And all the fairies praised Twinkle with kind words, and the lovely Queen Flutterlight, who seemed altogether too young to be the mother of the handsome prince, gave to the child a golden medal with a tiny mud-turtle engraved upon one side of it.

Then, after a fine feast had been prepared, and the little girl had eaten all she could of the fairy sweetmeats, she told Prince Melga she would like to go home again.

"Very well," said he. "Don't forget me, Twinkle, although we probably shall never meet again. I'll send you home quite as safely as you came; but as your eyes have been rubbed with the magic maita-leaf, you will doubtless always see many strange sights that are hidden from other mortals."

"I don't mind," said Twinkle.

Then she bade good-bye to the fairies, and the prince spoke a magic word. There was another rush of wind, and when it had passed Twinkle found herself once more in the back yard at home.

As she sat upon the grass rubbing her eyes and wondering at the strange adventure that had befallen her, mamma came out upon the back porch and said:

"Your turtle has crawled out of the tub and run away."

"Yes," said Twinkle, "I know; and I'm glad of it!"

But she kept her secret to herself.

THE END