



"Slowly the door opened, and there peeped round it the face of a little inquisitive boy."

CHINNA.

By MRS. HOBART-HAMPDEN,

Author of 'The Secret Valley,' etc., etc.

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CHAPTER XXIV.

DIRECTLY the door was closed, the children came scrambling into the hut one after another, in the order Brian had planned, dragging the skins after them. And Chinna, who could see the small figures plainly against the starlit night, sighed with relief. And when he spoke, his brave voice shook a little as never had it shaken in the presence of his enemies.

'Ye have come,' he said. 'There were moments when I feared that, after all, ye might hesitate. It is so easy when ill-luck strikes a man for all to fall away from him. And already, it seemed, I felt the pain of the hot irons, the smart of the pepper, the bamboo choking my breath. It is no death for a man to die, that—the death of a thing in a trap.'

Already Brian's little axe was at work on his bonds, and in another moment Chinna was free, and his cheerful self again. He seemed to take for granted that now the children had come all would be well, which was extremely reassuring. And Brian and Frederick wrapped the skins around them as neatly as they could in the darkened hut; and meanwhile Nancy explained to Chinna just what they meant to do. She and Brian had planned it all out very carefully on the way from the forest to the village.

'We will stand a little to one side of you,' said Nancy; 'and, when the door opens, you must point to us and say nothing at all, and I'll do the talking, because that will surprise them most.'

And she rehearsed to herself the little speech Mrs. Chinna had taught her, and added a few more sentences. She felt as if they were dressing-up to act charades. So intent were they all on rescuing Chinna, that as yet they scarcely had time to feel afraid on their own account.

But their preparations were soon completed, and still the enemy lingered. There was noise in plenty from the village street, but the door remained unopened. And it was then that fear crept close to the children, and for the first time they fully realised that, not only might they fail to save Chinna, but that they might themselves be in danger from his enemies. Would it not have been better, they wondered, merely to have cut Chinna's bonds and then to have escaped with him through the window? But they could not have guessed that the villagers would be so long in returning, and such an escape would have been useless without a considerable start. The little party must soon have been overtaken and captured, and would have been robbed of such advantage as the present situation gave them. Some such thoughts passed now through Nancy's mind and through Brian's, while Frederick was frightened because the others were frightened, but without quite knowing why. Chinna was the least uneasy of the four; partly because he was so much pleased at the loyalty the children had shown, partly because he was very busy listening to all the sounds of the night, which came drifting in through the open window, as well as to all the sounds of the village. His quick ears separated one from another as skilful fingers separate the tangled threads of a skein.

'There is something moving outside,' Chinna began.

'Something large and heavy. First it comes close, and then for a short space it slinks away, and again returns.'

The children listened, but could not detect the movement of which Chinna spoke. They had not his delicacy of perception yet, though it was wonderful how their hearing had improved in the last few days.

'It might be the buffalo,' Brian suggested. 'It did turn towards the village street, but it may have followed us afterwards, thinking we were herd-boys, perhaps.'

'It is not the footsteps of a buffalo that I hear,' Chinna asserted. And then he ceased speaking suddenly as the latch of the door rattled. In an instant the children had grouped themselves a little to his right, Nancy in the middle, and Brian and Frederick on either side of her.

Slowly, very slowly, the door opened, and the light of the flames flickered in once more, and weirdly illumined the curious little group. Most strange indeed the children looked, so strange that they could almost have been afraid of themselves. The snake-skin, which was wrapped round Frederick, shimmered and glimmered until, through its undulating folds, a snake-like seemed to flow. In bold stripes of orange and silver the tiger-skin threatened and defied. And Nancy was so pale with excitement that her face was paper-white.

Slowly the door opened, and there peeped round it, not the crowd they were all expecting, but the face of a little inquisitive boy. He had been challenged by his comrades to look at the wizard while his elders were still at the house of the sick man, who firmly refused to be moved into the deadly presence of the sorcerer.

One glance the little boy gave, and followed that glance with a yell—a yell so utterly piercing that it brought the whole population of the village, helter skelter, to his aid. He was too frightened to run away, but remained in the doorway as if he were frozen to the spot, while the yell poured from his throat as though he had breath enough in reserve to go on for ever. And the crowd, which rapidly collected round him, began to yell also as they, too, caught sight of the strange shapes within the hut, until Chinna opened his mouth to speak, and a frightened silence ensued.

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FRUITS FROM ACROSS THE SEAS.

I.—THE ORANGE.

GREAT BRITAIN is well off for home-grown fruit, but there are many other fruits which we get from overseas. Some of them we can purchase at our fruiterers, but others we never obtain in their fresh state—we only meet them sometimes among candied fruits which have been sent from abroad. People who have travelled much, or who have lived in foreign lands, especially the tropics, tell us that we, at home here, do not know the real flavour of an orange, or a pineapple, or of many other fruits! You see, in order that these fruits should arrive here ripe, they are packed unripe, and a fruit which has ripened in a packing-case cannot be as beautiful as one ripened in its natural element and on its tree or bush. Then again, there are heaps of foreign fruits which will not travel in their fresh state at all! Imagine what would be the result if you tried to pack raspberries or mulberries, and they had to remain in their packing for weeks! Why, these fruits rot when they have been gathered two or three days! Since our

vessels have been supplied with the wonderful refrigerators which they carry, merchants have been able to bring over specimens, but still these have to be eaten soon after they are removed from the cold storage, or they go bad. And even then we cannot experience their true flavour.

I have had, from time to time, the opportunity of tasting many overseas fruits, as a friend of mine, a sea captain, brings them over. As his ship comes into dock quite near to my home, he often brings me specimens. I shall start by giving you some account of the overseas fruits which are met in English shops, for I dare say you do not really know so very much about them. It is a curious fact that we are often very ignorant about things which are quite common to us.

I suppose the most common are the members of the orange family, viz., the orange and the lemon.

We will take the Orange (*Citrus aurantium*) as our example; the history of all the others of this family is much the same. The orange was originally a native of Asia; it was introduced into Europe by the Portuguese about 1547. You will remember that the Portuguese were great explorers and were very keen about spices, so naturally they were interested in oranges. Also they found that they would actually grow in the south of Europe, and so they instituted 'Orange groves,' and they have flourished quite well ever since.

There are a tremendous number of varieties. We hardly realise this at first sight, but even in our shops we get such kinds as the Seville oranges, which are large and very bitter—we use them you know for marmalade. Then there are Tangerine and the Mandarin, little flat fellows, with very thin skins, and a very penetrating scent. These at Christmas we see in our shops, temptingly packed in boxes decorated with tinsel fringes and rosettes. Then again, there are the Maltese Blood Oranges, fruits in which the pulps are streaked with dark red. Other varieties vary in shape, colour, and thickness of skin, but there is not much interest for you in a string of names of varieties, so I will go on to describe the tree itself.

Now, have you ever tried to grow a little orange-tree? It is quite easy if you have a greenhouse where you can place it away from the possibility of frost. You just plant a pip or two in a pot with a little good soil and they will grow quite easily. If you try it, you will thus be able to verify many of the details which I shall now describe to you.

In fig. 1, I show you a spray of orange blossom drawn from a small plant grown by a florist in the neighbourhood. The leaves are evergreen and have a peculiar winged stalk which is jointed to the leaf. This you can see plainly at A. If you have a plant of orange, and do not keep it watered, the leaves will fall off, and, instead of giving way at the main stem, they break at the joint. This winged leaf-stalk and the joint will help you to know a quite young orange plant with only a leaf or two, so remember this, and look out for it.

The leaves are of a clear green and very shiny; the young ones are very pale in colour. The flowers are white, sometimes tinged on the backs of the petals with bluish purple. There are five fleshy petals; the sepals are mere points round a woody disc. The stamens have flattened filaments, sometimes being split at the top and carrying more than one anther. At fig. 2, I show you an enlarged section of a flower and also a single stamen of the form I describe. You see

the pistil has a round 'ovary' (or seed vessel), and a short 'style' on which is a single stigma. The part which will be the orange is the ovary. Now, if you again refer to fig. 1 (B) you will see there are several flowers which have lost their petals and stamens. This is the first stage in the development of the orange. The orange is green at first, a very vivid emerald green too. As it grows, the stigma disappears, leaving only a scar (or 'cup' where the fruit rests), but the calyx lasts on, and is the little dry disc you find on your orange. At B, in fig. 1, you have an orange which has begun to develop, but it is at that size still green. Later, of course, it gradually turns yellow, and finally takes on that particular shade of yellow which we call 'orange' (it is the fruit which has given the name to the shade). One great peculiarity of the tree is the fact that on a moderate-sized branch you will, at the same time, find buds, flowers, and fruits in all degrees of ripeness.

Now you will think it strange, I suppose, when I tell you that the right term for the fruit is a 'berry'; but such is the case. The structure of the orange is a little peculiar: you know when you have removed the outer skin you can divide the fruit into what we call 'quarters'; but this is a wrong name really, as the divisions are many more than four (fig. 3). Each of these divisions are covered with a thin skin and enclose generally a pip or two and hundreds of tiny bags of juice. Have you ever noticed this last fact? These bags are formed by a large number of hairy outgrowths from the inner wall of the 'quarter.' If you very carefully take off the outer skin from a 'quarter,' you can separate out these little bags of juice. In fig. 4 you can observe the arrangement of the 'bags.' It is an interesting thing to do! The 'pips' are, of course, the seeds. Oil is extracted from the outer rind of the orange which is of considerable value in medicine.

Oranges are grown in 'groves'—that is, in rows which are far apart, giving them plenty of room to spread out: the wider the branches spread, the more fruit they carry.

For exportation they are gathered unripe, and, as you no doubt know, they come to us packed in boxes. A friend once told me that when you have once tasted an orange which has been gathered, ripe, straight from the tree, you never again want to eat the poor things we get here! Well, that is all very well, but we cannot all go to the home of the orange and have this experience, so we must be thankful for small mercies in the shape of a very luscious and favourite fruit.

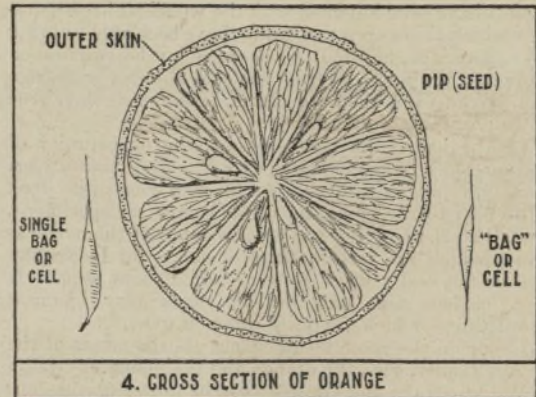
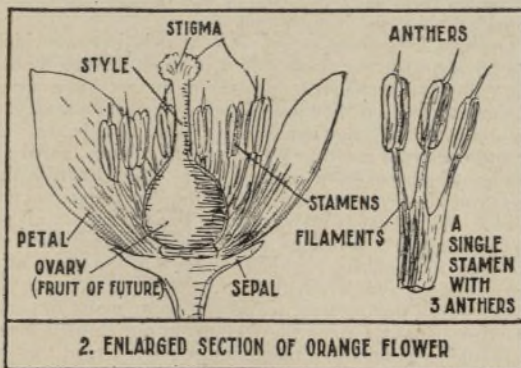
Of course, during war, we do not see so many oranges about, because the room they occupy in our ships is more valuable to us for other merchandise; but I read that in 1905 the value of the oranges brought into Great Britain was about 1,949,496l.

The next most important member of the Citrus family is the Lemon (*Citrus limonum*). Its chief differences from the orange are that it is seldom sweet, is lighter in colour (again it gives a name to a colour, viz. 'lemon yellow'), and it is longer and has a point (fig. 6). Its life history is much the same. It does not grow to be so large as an orange-tree, and is a thorny bush about twelve feet high. There are a number of varieties, many of which are used for flavouring and in medicine.

Then there is the Citron (*Citrus medica*). This fruit is similar to the lemon, but larger and with a thicker rind. It is the skin of the fruit which we have, candied, and use in cooking. There is also the Shaddock (*Citrus decumana*), which is a larger tree than the orange, bears

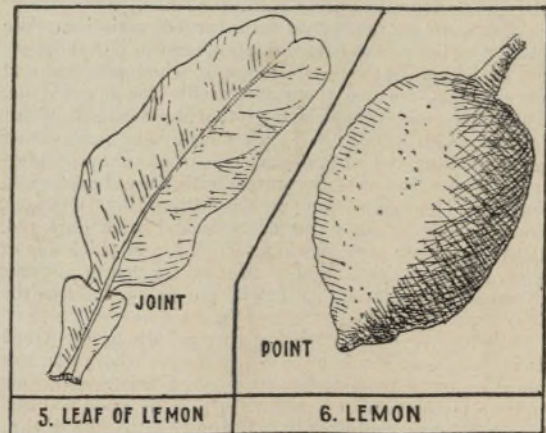


larger fruits and flowers, and the scent of the flowers is more penetrating. Fig. 5 shows a leaf of this tree, which will be seen to have a notched tip. The fruit is very



nearly spherical in shape and of a lemon colour. It is sometimes called Grape Fruit, because it is thought to have a flavour of grape. It is one of many fruits which have been declared to have been the Forbidden Fruit of the Garden of Eden.

The Lime fruit, too, is a similar and valuable fruit,



but is not nearly so well known in England as other varieties.

This, I think, covers the Orange family fully enough, though you may often read of local varieties which I do not mention.

E. M. BARLOW.

THE GOLDEN BOOK.

THE French Government is said to be compiling a 'Golden Book,' all about the brave work of those boys and girls who, during the war, have been trying to fill the places of their absent fathers. One of the stories in this book will be that of Robert Pigal, a lad aged fourteen. He, when his father had gone to the front, tried hard to manage a farm of one hundred and sixty acres.

But his mother died, and Robert was left absolutely alone. He found it impossible to do all the work of the farm himself. It was equally impossible



"From behind a haystack came a small figure with a swollen face."

to hire any one to help him. So at last the sensible boy wrote to the commandant of the military depôts at Evreux, telling of his sad plight, and asking that some soldiers might be sent to his assistance. The day after

Robert had sent his letter, a little band of soldiers rode up the lane leading to the farm, and knocked at the door of the empty house.

'Robert Pigal!' the commanding officer called out.

'Here I am!' replied a rather weak voice, and from behind a haystack came a small figure with a swollen face. Poor Robert had the toothache, and had bandaged his cheek with a handkerchief.

The officer spoke to him very kindly. 'You are just tired out, my brave boy,' he said; 'what you need is a doctor, and a woman in the house to look after you. Who does your cooking?'

'I do it myself, sir,' answered Robert.

And then, because he was so very, very tired, he could not help crying. But his troubles were over. His affairs were put in order; he was helped out of his difficulties. The Prefect wrote him a letter, praising his pluck and perseverance, and, as we have already seen, the name of Robert Pigall has been placed on the 'golden' list.

FAIRY GLOVES.

IF you would see a fairy ball,
Go, pick some foxgloves, mauve or white
(Not for yourself, because they'd be
A fairy's size, and much too tight).

The Little Folk in robes of state,
Will welcome you with open arms;
Such dainty gifts, and useful, too!
Are worth all other fairy charms.

The mauve are for the elfin boys;
The white are liked by fairy girls,
And both will have more value, far,
If edged with glistening dewdrop pearls!

And now you guess why Mr. Fox
Will never wear such pretty gloves:
He knows quite well, like you or I,
'Tis those a little fairy loves.

I. E. OSBORNE.

WANDERERS IN THE WAR.

By A. A. METHLEY.

(Continued from page 227.)

CHAPTER VII.

VAL was beginning to wonder whether she would ever get home at all.

First there had been the sprained ankle, which, although it had not been a very bad sprain, had prevented her from travelling home with the other English pupils in July, and then, when Fräulein Heinz went to the station to inquire about times and trains, it appeared that there were difficulties of some sort, and that it would be inadvisable to think of starting on a long journey for at least a week.

No one seemed to know exactly what was the trouble with the trains, and there was nobody to ask. Madame Martin, the head-mistress, had gone to Switzerland on the first day of the holidays, and the other governesses had all dispersed to their various homes. Only Fräulein Heinz, the young German teacher, was left, and she did nothing but grunt and shake her head vaguely when she was asked questions. To tell the truth, Fräulein was not in a very good temper just then, for she had wanted to leave for

London, where she was to spend a month, with the party of English girls, and had seemed very much annoyed when the unfortunate sprained ankle made other arrangements necessary.

'Miss Smith cannot possibly stay on,' Madame Martin had said, when it became evident that Val would not be able to leave St. Denis with her schoolfellows. 'Her mother is very ill, and she must get home at once. I do not expect that you will have to wait long, Fräulein; the doctor thinks that Valerie will be quite well enough to travel by the end of the month.'

Fräulein Heinz had listened to these plans with a sulky frown, and after Madame Martin had gone, she did not conceal her discontent at having to stay on at the school. The three little girls who had been left in her charge, however, did not trouble themselves about this, for the stout flaxen-haired German had never been a favourite with her pupils. She was a strange mixture of stolidity and sentiment, a person who went into raptures about food, poetry, picturesque scenery, and German soldiers, but who did not attempt to conceal her contempt and hatred for everything French and everything English.

'I can't make out why on earth she wants to stay in France, or go to England,' Val remarked to the other girls one day. 'She had much better live in Germany and teach little Germans. Then she can eat as much sausage, and read as much Schiller, as ever she likes.'

There could be no doubt, however, about Fräulein's desire to visit England, and after the two Belgian girls, Jeanne and Marie Vernet, had been fetched away by their father in a large motor-car, her restlessness and anxiety seemed to increase with every hour that passed. She actually cried when she came back from the station with the bad news about the trains, and talked as if the delay were not only an inconvenience, but a tragedy.

'I never saw any one make such a silly fuss,' Val Mervyn remarked to her friend, old fat Suzanne, the cook. 'And really it is ever so much worse for me. Roger will eat up all the fruit if I don't get home soon, and I'm simply dying for a good game of tennis.'

At last one morning—it was on the Sunday—a telegram came for Fräulein, and she rushed into Val's room, while the little girl was dressing, in a state of great excitement and distress.

'Look, look! This has just arrived. What a disaster! But it cannot be helped. I must go at once. A telegram from my home, from Berlin! And it says, "Come at once." What can have happened? Something terrible, that is certain. My dear mother is ill, perhaps, or my old grandfather. Oh, how unfortunate I am!'

Val was full of sympathy, and her own affairs were quite forgotten in her eagerness to help the governess in her trouble. She finished dressing quickly, and then ran down the corridor to Fräulein's room, where she found the German girl with all her luggage ready packed, and engaged in carefully sealing a large envelope.

'Ach, Val, dear child,' she exclaimed, as the little girl entered, 'I want you to do something for me. Here is this letter; it is to my friends in England, explaining why I cannot go to them. Will you take it with you, and, when you get home, put an English stamp on it and post it. That is all.'

Val took the letter rather reluctantly. 'Very well,' she said, 'I'll try to remember; but you know I haven't got much of a memory. Roger always says that I shall

forget my own head some day. Why don't you post it yourself?'

'No, no, I cannot. There is not time, and, besides, the posts seem to be disorganized. And you are certain to be back in England in a few days. I have sent a telegram to Madame Martin. She will return immediately, and will take you back to England herself. And you will remember the letter, dear one. It is very important; for what would my kind friends think of me if I did not write? See, I will fasten it inside your dress. Here is a large safety pin.' Fräulein unhooked Val's frock, and suited the action to her words. 'And don't tell any one about the letter. You must promise me that. It is a little secret of my own.'

'Oh, all right.' Val gave the required promise, and accepted the commission carelessly enough, for Fräulein Heinz was always a young person who delighted in foolish sentimental secrets and mysteries.

And then the pair went down to the dining-room, where Suzanne had prepared a good breakfast, to which the German, in spite of her anxiety, did full justice.

'One must always eat well before a long journey,' she said, as she spread a crusty roll with butter and honey. 'It is very foolish not to keep up one's strength.'

Val felt very lonely when, half an hour later, she stood at the door and watched Fräulein drive away down the avenue in the crazy old fiacre which, in default of a better vehicle, she had engaged to take her on the first stage of her journey.

'It breaks my heart to leave thee,' she had sobbed, as she embraced her little pupil; 'but what can I do? "Come at once!"—that is what the telegram says, and who can tell what has happened! Farewell, dear little one; you will be safe and happy with Suzanne, and Madame Martin is certain to arrive to-morrow.'

Val herself did not cry, for she was not very fond of Fräulein; but still, she could not help being troubled about her own journey. No message came from Madame Martin in reply to the telegram, and there was no one to make new arrangements. Suzanne was a darling, of course, but it would be very dull to spend the whole of the holidays with her at St. Denis-sur-Meuse.

Val knew that she could not travel by herself, and although she might write to England, it seemed doubtful when she would get an answer. As Fräulein had said, the posts seemed to be out of order as well as the trains, and except for the telegram, nothing had arrived at the school for several days.

It was as if a curtain had fallen, cutting off the house from the rest of the world, and laying it under a spell like the enchanted palace of the Sleeping Beauty.

Val spent most of the day in the garden after Fräulein had left, for she could not walk very well yet, but at about six o'clock she scrambled out of the hammock and made her way towards the house. It was nearly supper-time, and she had determined to ask Suzanne to let her have the meal in the kitchen instead of by herself in the big dining-room. Suzanne, at least, would be some one to talk to, although she had not been very cheerful these last few days, and her wrinkled, brown face had worn an anxious look that was very unlike its usual expression of placid good-nature.

There was nobody in the kitchen when Val reached

it, and she paused for a moment, looking round the wide sunny room, with its rows of brass and copper pots and pans, its great polished stove, the tabby cat asleep on the window-sill, and the clock ticking slowly on the wall. It was very hot, a bee was humming, and everything seemed as drowsy and spellbound as the rest of the large, empty house. However, a second glance showed that Suzanne could not have been away long, for a tempting salad was in a little blue bowl on the table, together with a plate of horseshoe-shaped rolls, some butter, and a dish of freshly gathered wood strawberries.

There was also an omelette burning in a pan on the stove, and when she saw this, Val realised that something must be very seriously amiss. Suzanne was a thrifty and careful cook, in whose eyes the waste of good food was not only foolishness but sinful, and only some startling event or dire calamity would have caused her to neglect her work in this strange fashion.

And then, suddenly, as she stood there wondering, Val heard the sound of some one weeping bitterly, and a voice—Suzanne's voice—exclaimed, 'Oh, dear! oh, dear! that I should have lived to see it. Whatever will become of us all?'

The little girl hesitated for a moment, and then limped out of the kitchen and through the great shadowy scullery where washing was done, and where firewood, charcoal, potatoes, and onions were stored for winter use. There, outside the door in the bright sunlight, was Suzanne, seated on a bench with her apron over her head, rocking herself to and fro and crying as if her heart would break. By her side stood a young man in the quaint blue coat and red trousers of the old French infantry, and Val realised at once that this must be the old woman's soldier grandson, Anton, of whom she had often heard.

For a moment neither of the two noticed Val, and she stood motionless, watching the scene with wide, bewildered eyes.

'Come, come, Grandmother, there is no need to be so sad about it. I shall be home again before long, safe and sound.' The boy (he hardly looked more than eighteen) patted Suzanne's shoulder with awkward gentleness, but nothing seemed to comfort her, and then the little girl came forward through the doorway into the dazzling sunshine.

'What is it, Suzanne? Tell me at once!' she demanded. 'It's no good pretending that you're not crying,' as Suzanne hurriedly wiped her eyes and tried to stifle the choking sobs. 'I must know what has happened.'

'It's the War that she is troubled about, Made-moiselle.' The young soldier straightened himself, and, although his face was grave, there was a gleam of excitement in his black eyes. 'I have to go, you see; we have been called up, and I came to bid my grandmother good-bye.'

'The War!' Val repeated the word in an awe-struck voice, for this was the first news of the coming struggle that had penetrated into the little shut-in world of the school; or, perhaps, it would be more correct to say that it was the first that Val had heard, for no newspapers had come to the house lately, and although Suzanne had listened to plenty of whispers and wild rumours, she had managed to keep them from the ears of her charge.

(Continued on page 242.)



"I shall be home again before long, safe and sound."