

The Little Lame Princess

ONCE UPON A TIME not so many years ago there lived a little girl whose name was Emaline. Her friends and the children of the neighborhood called her the Little Lame Princess.

The tiny cottage where she lived was surrounded by a green lawn, and bright flowers bordered the walk in summer time. In one corner of the yard stood a big elm tree.

Each day Emaline sat by a wide window where she could see the flowers in the yard, the people passing in the street, and watch the birds building their nests in the great elm tree.

Although this little girl could not walk, many were the boys that came to her as she watched the children pass to and fro on their way to school or play. They all knew and loved her, and never failed to wave their hands in passing, or to stop when they had time to talk a few minutes and share with her their flowers, candy, or whatever they happened to have.

So Emaline was happy, and great was her delight when the birds came to pick the crumbs which she scattered on the window sill.

Outside of her window was a box where she had planted tiny seeds which her mother had given her, and through the loving care which she had bestowed upon them they were now a mass of beautiful colors. Their fragrance gave Emaline continual pleasure. How she loved these gentle friends who nodded their heads in the breeze and seemed always to be smiling at her.



Watercolor for the Rays courtesy of Alan Gregory

“The poor and needy stood gazing in awe-stricken silence as she passed by.”

On a small table close at hand were books of fairy tales and adventure. Many were the pleasant hours which the Little Lame Princess spent in Fairy Land where all was bright and lovely.

By her side on a chair one could almost always find a big yellow cat, curled up asleep. He loved to have Emaline smooth his fur, and showed his pleasure by purring loudly and spreading his claws, pushing first one foot and then the other into the cushion on which he lay. Emaline explained that he was playing the organ for her.

In spite of all these things that helped to make her life happy, Emaline grew restless and longed intensely to walk, run, and jump as she saw other children doing every day. Then she would grow sad and ask her mother, wistfully, “Why am I this way, Mother? Why does God punish me so?”

“My dear, you mustn’t think God punishes you,” her mother would answer as she came and knelt by her side, putting her strong arms gently around the frail form to comfort her. “I do not know why you are like this, but God is too good to punish, and in His great wisdom He knows what is best for us.”

At this the little girl would sigh, wishing she had

her mother's faith and that God would show her the reason for her lameness.

It had been a beautiful June day, and Emaline had been wishing all day that she could walk about on the cool green grass and that she were able to climb into the elm tree to see the young birds which she knew must be there. As the sun sank behind the distant hills and the shadows began to creep round about, she became very restless and heartsick because she was denied the great privilege of walking.

After her mother had tucked her in between the cool sheets, she lay thinking for a long time. Finally she prayed with her whole soul in her prayer that she might some day be able to walk. If God would only show her why she was an invalid she might be happier, she thought.

Emaline did not know how long she had been asleep when she heard a voice saying, "Come with me and I will show you." She wasn't even surprised when a figure in white took her by the hand and they glided swiftly over hills and valleys as if they were flying, until they came to a beautiful white palace surrounded by high stone walls.

"This is where you once lived," said Emaline's companion.

"She must know," thought Emaline, so she said nothing but gazed in wonder at the scene about her.

A little girl was playing on the marble steps that led into the palace, and while they watched, a servant came and took the child into the palace.

They followed, and it seemed strange to Emaline that no one noticed their presence. Within there were fine ladies and gentlemen and such grandeur in furnishings as the Little Lane Princess had never seen.

Presently the little girl was dressed for the street, and with the servant walked to and entered the coach, which had been driven up to the gate. The driver cracked his whip and they started away.

"So she grows up to womanhood, the pampered 'darling' of the rich," explained Emaline's guide. "Behold her as a woman!"

She turned and saw a beautiful woman came through the great doors of this same palace, walk haughtily to the waiting coach, and enter and drive away just as she had done when a little girl.



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"She lay thinking for a long time. Finally, she prayed with whole soul that she might some day be able to walk."

"Let us follow," murmured the guide.

They watched the coach driven swiftly through the streets, while the poor and needy stood gazing in awe-stricken silence as she passed. On the faces of some Emaline saw hate, and shuddered.

"And so through life she rides, neglecting the limbs God gave her with which to walk. She has no sympathy for those who work and toil for their daily bread. It is very sad. Now we will go home," said Emaline's companion.

The next morning the Little Lane Princess surprised her mother with this question: "Mother, do you think we have ever lived here on earth before?"

"Why, yes, dear. I believe we have, but why do you ask?"

"One of God's messengers showed me last night where I used to live and why I am helpless now; and it is my own fault. Oh, mother! I am going to be so good from now on," eagerly exclaimed

Emaline.

“How strange,” thought her mother, but she only hugged her and said: “You have always been good, dearie,” for she was used to this odd little daughter.

So now as the summer days passed by, little Emaline line sat by her window and sang happily, watching the children, the birds, and the flowers. Fingers were bound up, tears wiped away, and stories were read to the children who came, knowing they would find help and sympathy from their Little Lamé Princess. ‘

Quick tears of sympathy sprang to her eyes as she sat by the window one day and saw a bird with a broken wing fall to the ground under her window. It was rescued by her mother, and together they bound the broken wing and cared for the bird until it was well again.

One day there came a great physician to the town where Emaline lived and hearing of the Little Lamé Princess with the kind heart, he came to see her. When he was seated in a big chair facing Emaline, he asked her in a voice full of love and understanding just what it would mean to her to be able to walk.

“Oh, sir,” she murmured, “I am very happy now just as I am, but it would be wonderful to be able to walk. Then I could go everywhere, helping the children who need help. There are so many, you know.”

The physician’s eyes were tender as he looked at the little girl, and he told her he would be back on the morrow.

During the night Emaline opened her eyes in wonder, for there by her bedside stood a white robed figure.

“Be not afraid,” said he, “I am the physician and I have come as an Invisible Helper in my spiritual



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“Wonder, unbelief and joy struggled for expression on the mother’s face when she saw her...”

body to heal you. I can leave my physical body, as you see, but I shall return to it in the morning.”

She fell asleep immediately and never woke up until morning. Then, she remembered what she had seen in the night, so she threw back the covers and placed her feet gently on the floor and stood for a few minutes, afraid to move.

“I can walk,” she thought. There seemed to be needles and pins sticking in her feet but, she reached out bravely and placed her hand on the back of a chair for support.

She took first one step, stopped, and then another, until she reached her chair by the window, where she sat down trembling with excitement, and there it was her mother found her.

Wonder, unbelief, and joy struggled for expression on the mother’s face when she saw her sitting in her chair. Emaline soon convinced her that she could walk, and with her mother’s aid, she practiced walking back and forth from bed to chair until she grew tired and her mother advised her to rest until the physician should come.

It was with a face glowing with love and thankfulness that she related to the physician all that had happened since his departure the day before and how he had come to her during the night.

Great was the rejoicing when the news spread that the Little Lamé Princess could walk. □

—Martha Fancher