



# **MORNING GLORIES**

**AND OTHER STORIES**

**LOUISA MAY ALCOTT**

# Morning-Glories

*and other stories*

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## A SONG FOR A CHRISTMAS TREE

Cold and wintry is the sky,  
Bitter winds go whistling by,  
Orchard boughs are bare and dry,  
Yet here stands a fruitful tree.  
Household fairies kind and dear,  
With loving magic none need fear,  
Bade it rise and blossom here,  
Little friends, for you and me.  
Come and gather as they fall,  
Shining gifts for great and small;  
Santa Claus remembers all  
When he comes with goodies piled.  
Corn and candy, apples red,  
Sugar horses, gingerbread,  
Babies who are never fed,  
Are hanging here for every child.  
Shake the boughs and down they come,  
Better fruit than peach or plum,  
'T is our little harvest home;  
For though frosts the flowers kill,  
Though birds depart and squirrels sleep,  
Though snows may gather cold and deep,  
Little folk their sunshine keep,  
And mother-love makes summer still.  
Gathered in a smiling ring,  
Lightly dance and gayly sing,  
Still at heart remembering  
The sweet story all should know,  
Of the little Child whose birth  
Has made this day throughout the earth

A festival for childish mirth,  
Since that first Christmas long ago.

## MORNING-GLORIES.

WHAT'S that?"—and Daisy sat up in her little bed to listen; for she had never heard a sound like it before.

It was very early, and the house was still. The sun was just rising, and the morning-glories at the window were turning; their blue and purple cups to catch the welcome light. The sky was full of rosy clouds; dew shone like diamonds on the waving grass, and the birds were singing as they only sing at dawn. But softer, sweeter than any bird-voice was the delicate music which Daisy heard. So airy and gay was the sound, it seemed impossible to lie still with that fairy dancing-tune echoing through the room. Out of bed scrambled Daisy, her sleepy eyes opening wider and wider with surprise and pleasure as she listened and wondered.

"Where is it?" she said, popping her head out of the window. The morning-glories only danced lightly on their stems, the robins chirped shrilly in the garden below, and the wind gave Daisy a kiss; but none of them answered her, and still the lovely music sounded close beside her.

"It's a new kind of bird, perhaps; or maybe it's a fairy hidden somewhere. Oh, if it is, how splendid it will be!" cried Daisy; and she began to look carefully in all the colored cups, under the leaves of the woodbine, and in the wren's-nest close by. There was neither fairy nor bird to be seen; and Daisy stood wondering, when a voice cried out from below,—

"Why, little nightcap, what brings you out of your bed so early?"

"O Aunt Wee! do you hear it,—that pretty music playing somewhere near? I can't find it; but I think it's a fairy, don't you?" said Daisy, looking down at the young lady standing in the garden with her hands full of roses.

Aunt Wee listened, smiled, and shook her head.

"Don't you remember you said last night that you thought the world a very stupid, grown-up place, because there were no giants and fairies in it now? Well, perhaps there are fairies, and they are going to show themselves to you, if you watch well."

Daisy clapped her hands, and danced about on her little bare feet; for, of all things in the world, she most wanted to see a fairy.

"What must I do to find them. Aunt Wee?" she cried, popping out her head again with her cap half off, and her curly hair blowing in the wind.

"Why, you see, they frolic all night, and go to sleep at dawn; so we must get up very early, if we want to catch the elves awake. They are such delicate, fly-away little things, and we are so big and clumsy, we shall have to look carefully, and perhaps hunt a long time before we find even one," replied Aunt Wee, very gravely.

"Mamma says I'm quick at finding things; and you know all about fairies, so I guess we'll catch one. Can't we begin now? It's very early, and this music has waked me up; so I don't want to sleep any more. Will you begin to hunt now?"

"But you don't like to get up early, or to walk in the fields; and, if we mean to catch a fairy, we must be up and out by sunrise every fair morning till we get one. Can you do this, lazy Daisy?" And Aunt Wee smiled to herself as if something pleased her very much.

"Oh! I will, truly, get up, and not fret a bit, if you'll only help me look. Please come now to dress me, and see if you can find what makes the music."

Daisy was very much in earnest, and in such a hurry to be off that she could hardly stand still to have her hair



brushed, and thought there were a great many unnecessary buttons and string's on her clothes that day. Usually she lay late, got up slowly, and fretted at every thing as little girls are apt to do when they have had too much sleep. She wasn't a rosy, stout Daisy; but had been ill, and had fallen into a way of thinking she couldn't do any thing but lie about, reading fairy-tales, and being petted by every one. Mamma and papa had tried all sorts of things to amuse and do her good; for she was their only little daughter, and they loved her very dearly. But nothing pleased her long; and she lounged about, pale and fretful, till Aunt Laura came. Daisy called her "Wee" when she was a baby, and couldn't talk plainly; and she still used the name because it suited the cheery little aunt so well.

"I don't see any thing, and the music has stopped. I think some elf just came to wake you up, and then flew away; so we won't waste any more time in looking here," said Wee, as she finished dressing Daisy, who flew about like a Will o' the-wisp all the while.

"Do you think it will come again to-morrow?" asked Daisy anxiously.

"I dare say you'll hear it, if you wake in time. Now get your hat, and we will see what we can find down by the brook. I saw a great many fireflies there last night, and fancy there was a ball; so we may find some drowsy elf among the buttercups and clover.

Away rushed Daisy for her hat, and soon was walking gayly down the green lane, looking about her as if she had never been there before; for every thing seemed wonderfully fresh and lovely.

"How pink the clouds are, and how the dew twinkles in the grass! I never saw it so before," she said.

"Because by the time you are up the pretty pink clouds are gone, and the thirsty grass has drank the dew, or the sun has drawn it up to fall again at night for the flowers'

evening bath," replied Wee, watching the soft color that began to touch Daisy's pale cheeks.

"I think we'd better look under that cobweb spread like a tent over the white clovers. A fairy would be very likely to creep in there and sleep."

Daisy knelt down and peeped carefully; but all she saw was a little brown spider, who looked very much surprised to see visitors so early.

"I don't like spiders," said Daisy, much disappointed.

"There are things about spiders as interesting to hear as fairy tales," said Wee. "This is Mrs. Epeira Diadema; and she is a respectable, industrious little neighbor. She spreads her tent, but sits under a leaf near by, waiting for her breakfast. She wraps her eggs in a soft silken bag, and hides them in some safe chink, where they lie till spring. The eggs are prettily carved and ornamented, and so hard that the baby spiders have to force their way out by biting the shell open and poking their little heads through. The mother dies as soon as her eggs are safely placed, and the spiderlings have to take care of themselves."

"How do you know about it, Aunt Wee? You talk as if Mrs. Eppyra—or whatever her name is—had told you herself. Did she?" asked Daisy, feeling more interested in the brown spider.

"No; I read it in a book, and saw pictures of the eggs, web, and family. I had a live one in a bottle; and she spun silken ladders all up and down, and a little room to sleep in. She ate worms and bugs, and was very amiable and interesting till she fell ill and died."

"I should like to see the book; and have a spider-bottle, so I could take care of the poor little orphans when they are born. Good-by, ma'am. I shall call again; for you are 'most as good as a fairy there in your pretty tent, with a white clover for your bed."

Daisy walked on a few steps, and then stopped to say,—

"What does that bird mean by calling 'Hurry up, hurry up?' He keeps flying before us, and looking back as if he wanted to show me something."

"Let me hear what he says. I may be able to understand him, or the bob-o-link that swings on the alder by the brook."

Wee listened a moment, while the birds twittered and chirped with all their hearts. Presently Wee sang in a tone very like the bob-o-link's:—

"Daisy and Wee,  
Come here, and see  
What a dainty feast is spread:  
Down in the grass  
Where fairies pass,  
Here are berries ripe and red.  
All wet with dew,  
They wait for you:  
Come hither, and eat your fill,  
While I gayly sing.  
In my airy swing,  
And the sun climbs up the hill."

"Did he really say that?" cried Daisy, watching the bob-o-link, who sat swaying up and down on the green bough, and nodding his white-capped head at her in the most friendly manner.

"Perhaps I didn't translate it rightly; for it is very hard to put bird-notes into our language, because we haven't words soft and sweet enough. But I really think there are berries over there, and we will see if what he says is true," said Wee.

Over the wall they went, and there, on a sunny bank, found a bed of the reddest, ripest berries ever seen.

"Thank you, thank you, for telling me to hurry up, and showing me such a splendid feast," said Daisy, with her

mouth full, as she nodded back at the birds. "These are so much sweeter than those we buy. I'd carry some home to mamma, if I only had a basket."

"You can pick this great leaf full, while I make you a basket," said Wee.

Daisy soon filled the leaf, and then sat watching her aunt plait a pretty basket of rushes. While she waited she looked about, and kept finding something curious or pleasant to interest and amuse her. First she saw a tiny rainbow in a dewdrop that hung on a blade of grass; then she watched a frisky calf come down to drink on the other side of the brook, and laughed to see him scamper away with his tail in the air. Close by grew a pitcher plant; and a yellow butterfly sat on the edge, bathing its feet, Daisy said. Presently she discovered a little ground-bird sitting on her nest, and peeping anxiously, as if undecided whether to fly away or trust her.

"I won't hurt you, little mother. Don't be afraid," whispered the child; and, as if it understood, the bird settled down on her nest with a comfortable chirp, while its mate hopped up to give her a nice plump worm for breakfast.

"I love birds. Tell me something about them, Aunt Wee. You must know many things; for they like you, and come when you call."

"Once upon a time," began Wee, while her fingers flew, and the pretty basket grew, "there was a great snow-storm, and all the country was covered with a thick white quilt. It froze a little, so one could walk over it, and I went out for a run. Oh, so cold it was, with a sharp wind, and no sun or any thing green to make it pleasant! I went far away over the fields, and sat down to rest. While I sat there, a little bird came by, and stopped to rest also.

"'How do you do?' said I.

"'Chick-a-dee-dee,' said he.

"'A cold day,' said I.

"'Chick-a-dee-dee,' said he.

"'Aren't you afraid of starving, now the ground is covered and the trees are bare?'

"'Chick-a-dee-dee, ma'am, chick-a-dee-dee!' answered the bird in the same cheerful tone. And it sounded as if he said, 'I shall be cared for. I'm not afraid.'

"'What will you eat? There's nothing here or for miles round? I really think you'll starve, birdie,' said I.

"Then he laughed, and gave me a merry look as he lit on a tall, dry weed near by. He shook it hard with his little bill; when down fell a shower of seeds, and there was dinner all ready on a snow-white cloth. All the while he ate he kept looking up at me with his quick, bright eyes; and, when he had done, he said, as plainly as a bird could say it,—

"'Cold winds may blow,  
And snows may fall,  
But well we know  
God cares for all.'"

"I like that little story, and shall always think of it when I hear the chick-a-dee-dee." Daisy sat a moment with a thoughtful look in her eyes; then she said slowly, as if sorry for the words,—

"It isn't a stupid, grown-up world. It's a very pleasant, young world; and I like it a great deal better this morning than I did last night."

"I'm glad of that; and, even if we don't find our fairy to-day, you will have found some sunshine, Daisy, and that is almost as good. Now put in the berries, and we'll go on."

How they hunted! They climbed trees to peep into squirrel-holes and birds'-nests; they chased bees and butterflies to ask for news of the elves; they waded in the brook, hoping to catch a water-sprite; they ran after thistle-down, fancying a fairy might be astride; they searched the flowers and ferns, questioned sun and wind, listened to

robin and thrush; but no one could tell them any thing of the little people, though all had gay and charming bits of news about themselves. And Daisy thought the world got younger and happier every minute.

When they came in to breakfast, papa and mamma looked at Daisy, and then nodded with a smile at Aunt Wee; for, though Daisy's frock was soiled, her boots wet, and her hair tumbled, her cheeks were rosy, eyes bright, and voice so cheerful that they thought it better music than any in the summer world without.

"Hunting fairies is a pleasant play, isn't it, Daisy?" said papa, as he tasted the berries, and admired the green basket.

"Oh, yes! and we are going again to-morrow. Aunt Wee says we must try seven days at least. I like it, and mean to keep on till I really find my fairy."

"I think you will find something better than 'little vanishers,' dear," said mamma, filling up the bowl of bread and milk which Daisy was fast emptying; for she certainly had found an appetite.

"There it is again!" cried Daisy, flying out of bed the next morning still earlier than the day before. Yes, there it was, the fairy music, as blithe and sweet as ever; and the morning-glories rung their delicate bells as if keeping time. Daisy felt rather sleepy, but remembered her promise to Aunt Wee, and splashed into her tub, singing the bob-o-link's song as she bathed.

"Where shall we go to-day?" she asked, as they went out into the garden.

"I think we'd better try a new place; so we'll go to the farmyard; and, while we feed the hens, I'll listen to their chat, and perhaps can learn something from it," replied Wee soberly.

"Do hens know about fairies? I thought they were very dull things, and didn't care for any thing but eating corn and laying eggs," said Daisy, surprised.

"Oh, dear, no! they are very sensible creatures, and see a deal of the world in their daily walks. Hunting for insects gives them an excellent chance to see fairies, if there are any. Here is some corn for the biddies; and, after we have fed them, we will look for eggs, and so may find a brownie or two."

Such a clatter as there was when they came to the barnyard; for every thing was just awake, and in the best spirits. Ducks were paddling off to the pond; geese to the meadow; and meek gray guinea-hens tripping away to hunt bugs in the garden. A splendid cock stood on the wall, and crowed so loud and clear that all the neighboring chanticleers replied. The motherly hens clucked and scratched with their busy broods about them, or sat and scolded in the coops because the chicks would gad abroad. Doves cooed on the sunny roof, and smoothed their gleaming feathers. Daisy's donkey nibbled a thistle by the wall, and a stately peacock marched before the door with all his plumage spread. It made Daisy laugh to see the airs the fowls put on as she scattered corn, and threw meal and water to the chicks. Some pushed and gobbled; some stood meekly outside the crowd, and got what they could; others seized a mouthful, and ran away to eat it in a corner. The chicks got into the pan entirely, and tumbled one over the other in their hurry to eat; but the mammas saw that none went hungry. And the polite cock waited upon them in the most gentlemanly manner, making queer little clucks and gurgles as if he said,—

"Allow me, madam, to offer you this kernel;" or, "Here, my dear, try that bit." And sometimes he pecked a little, with a loud quaver, evidently saying, "Come, come, children, behave yourselves, and don't eat like pigs."

"What is she saying?" asked Daisy, pointing to an old gray hen in a black turban, who was walking about alone, muttering to herself, as hens often do in their promenades.

"She says a cat has made a nest, and hatched three kits up on the loft, near her own nest; and she don't like it, because their mewling annoys her," said Wee, after listening a minute.

"How nice! let's go and find them. But do you learn any thing about the fairies from the hen's chat?"

"No: they have been so busy setting, they have had no time for picnics yet. But they will let us know, if they discover any."

In the barn, the cows were being milked; and Daisy had a mugful of it, warm and sweet, out of the foaming pail.

"We'll take some to Mrs. Purr; for, I dare say, she don't like to leave the kits long, and will like a sip of something comfortable," said Wee, as Daisy climbed the ladder, and went rustling over the hay to a corner, whence came a joyful "Mew!" What a charming sight it was, to be sure! a snow-white cat lying in a cosy nest, and, by her, three snow-white kits, wagging three very small gray tails.

"There never was any thing so lovely!" cried Daisy, as she sat with the three downy balls in her lap, while the mamma gratefully lapped the new milk from Aunt Wee's cup.

"Are they better than fairies?"

"Almost: for I know about pussies, and can cuddle them; but I couldn't a fairy, you know, and they might be afraid of me. These dears are not afraid, and I shall have such fun with them as they grow up. What shall we name them, auntie?"

"Snowball, Patpaw, and Wagtail would do, I think," said Wee, stroking the cat, who rubbed against her, purring very loud.

"Yes: I like those names for my pets. But what is Mrs. Purr saying, with her mouth up to your ear?" asked Daisy, who firmly believed that Aunt Wee knew every thing.

"She tells me that when she went on a grasshopper hunt the other day, as she ran through the meadow, she saw some lovely creatures all in blue, with gauze wings, flying