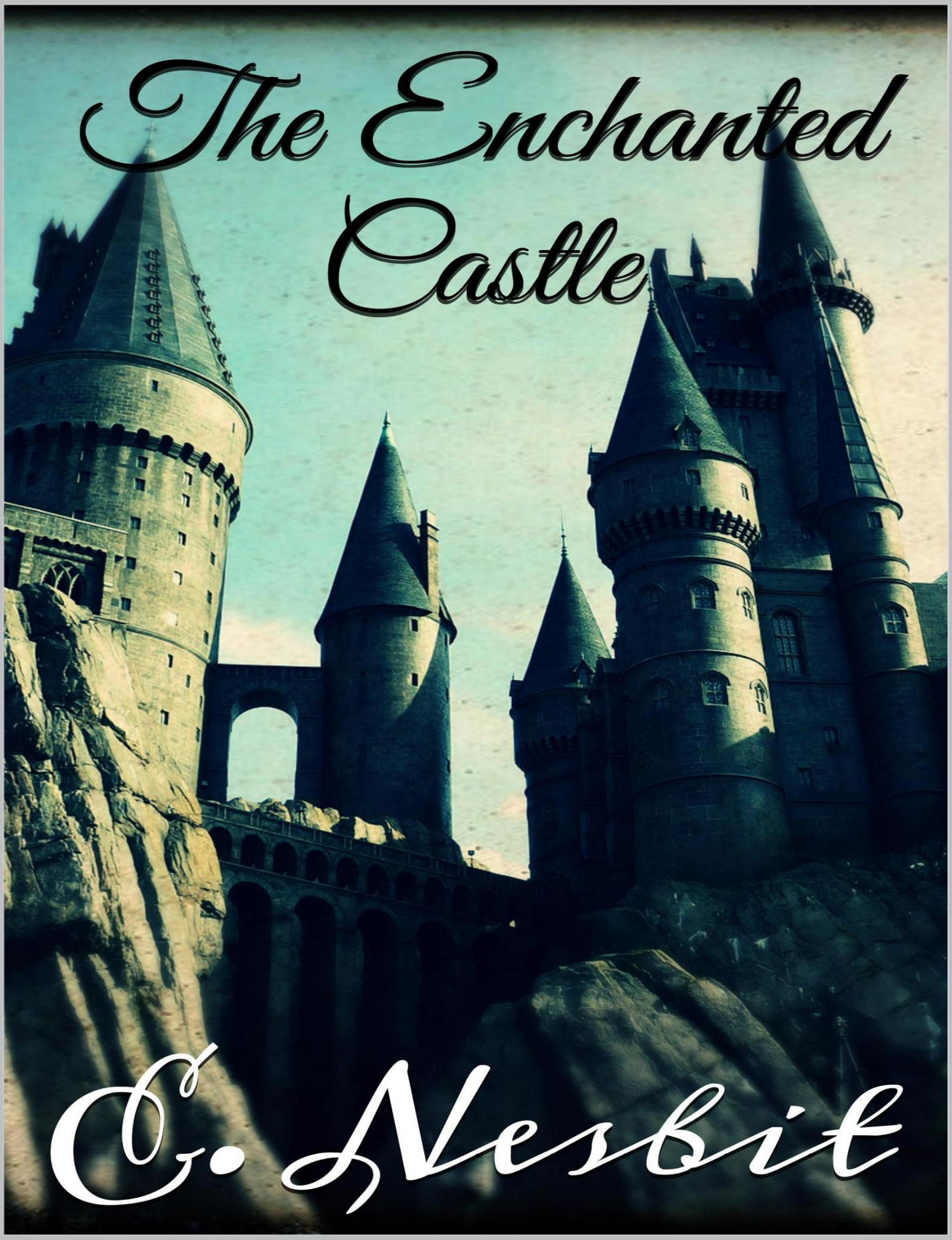
The Enchanted Castle
E. Nesbit

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CHAPTER I

There were three of them—Jerry, Jimmy, and Kathleen. Of course, Jerry's name was Gerald, and not Jeremiah, whatever you may think; and Jimmy's name was James; and Kathleen was never called by her name at all, but Cathy, or Catty, or Puss Cat, when her brothers were pleased with her, and Scratch Cat when they were not pleased. And they were at school in a little town in the West of England—the boys at one school, of course, and the girl at another, because the sensible habit of having boys and girls at the same school is not yet as common as I hope it will be some day. They used to see each other on Saturdays and Sundays at the house of a kind maiden lady; but it was one of those houses where it is impossible to play. You know the kind of house, don't you? There is a sort of a something about that kind of house that makes you hardly able even to talk to each other when you are left alone, and playing seems unnatural and affected. So they looked forward to the holidays, when they should all go home and be together all day long, in a house where playing was natural and conversation possible, and where the Hampshire forests and fields were full of interesting things to do and see. Their Cousin Betty was to be there too, and there were plans. Betty's school broke up before theirs, and so she got to the Hampshire home first, and the moment she got there she began to have measles, so that my three couldn't go home at all. You may imagine their feelings. The thought of seven weeks at Miss Hervey's was not to be borne, and all

three wrote home and said so. This astonished their parents very much, because they had always thought it was so nice for the children to have dear Miss Hervey's to go to. However, they were "jolly decent about it," as Jerry said, and after a lot of letters and telegrams, it was arranged that the boys should go and stay at Kathleen's school, where there were now no girls left and no mistresses except the French one.

"It'll be better than being at Miss Hervey's," said Kathleen, when the boys came round to ask Mademoiselle when it would be convenient for them to come; "and, besides, our school's not half so ugly as yours. We do have tablecloths on the tables and curtains at the windows, and yours is all deal boards, and desks, and inkiness."

When they had gone to pack their boxes Kathleen made all the rooms as pretty as she could with flowers in jam jars, marigolds chiefly, because there was nothing much else in the back garden. There were geraniums in the front garden, and calceolarias and lobelias; of course, the children were not allowed to pick these.

"We ought to have some sort of play to keep us going through the holidays," said Kathleen, when tea was over, and she had unpacked and arranged the boys' clothes in the painted chests of drawers, feeling very grown-up and careful as she neatly laid the different sorts of clothes in tidy little heaps in the drawers. "Suppose we write a book."

"You couldn't," said Jimmy.

"I didn't mean me, of course," said Kathleen, a little injured; "I meant us."

"Too much fag," said Gerald briefly.

"If we wrote a book," Kathleen persisted, "about what the insides of schools really *are* like, people would read it and say how clever we were."

"More likely expel us," said Gerald. "No; we'll have an out-of-doors game—bandits, or something like that. It wouldn't be bad if we could get a cave and keep stores in it, and

have our meals there."
"There aren't any caves," said Jimmy, who was fond of contradicting every one. "And, besides, your precious Mamselle won't let us go out alone, as likely as not."
"Oh, we'll see about that," said Gerald. "I'll go and talk to her like a father."
"Like that?" Kathleen pointed the thumb of scorn at him, and he looked in the glass.
"To brush his hair and his clothes and to wash his face and hands was to our hero but the work of a moment," said Gerald, and went to suit the action to the word.
It was a very sleek boy, brown and thin and interesting-looking, that knocked at the door of the parlour where Mademoiselle sat reading a yellow-covered book and wishing vain wishes. Gerald could always make himself look interesting at a moment's notice, a very useful accomplishment in dealing with strange grown-ups. It was done by opening his grey eyes rather wide, allowing the corners of his mouth to droop, and assuming a gentle, pleading expression, resembling that of the late little Lord Fauntleroy—who must, by the way, be quite old now, and an awful prig.
"Entrez!" said Mademoiselle, in shrill French accents. So he entered.
"Eh bien?" she said rather impatiently.
"I hope I am not disturbing you," said Gerald, in whose mouth, it seemed, butter would not have melted.
"But no," she said, somewhat softened. "What is it that you desire?"
"I thought I ought to come and say how do you do," said Gerald, "because of you being the lady of the house."
He held out the newly-washed hand, still damp and red. She took it.
"You are a very polite little boy," she said.
"Not at all," said Gerald, more polite than ever. "I am so sorry for you. It must be dreadful to have us to look after in

the holidays."
"But not at all," said Mademoiselle in her turn. "I am sure you will be very good childrens."
Gerald's look assured her that he and the others would be as near angels as children could be without ceasing to be human.
"We'll try," he said earnestly.
"Can one do anything for you?" asked the French governess kindly.
"Oh, no, thank you," said Gerald. "We don't want to give you any trouble at all. And I was thinking it would be less trouble for you if we were to go out into the woods all day to-morrow and take our dinner with us—something cold, you know—so as not to be a trouble to the cook."
"You are very considerate," said Mademoiselle coldly. Then Gerald's eyes smiled; they had a trick of doing this when his lips were quite serious. Mademoiselle caught the twinkle, and she laughed and Gerald laughed too.
"Little deceiver!" she said. "Why not say at once you want to be free of *surveillance* , how you say—overwatching—without pretending it is me you wish to please?"
"You have to be careful with grown-ups," said Gerald, "but it isn't all pretence either. We *don't* want to trouble you—and we don't want you to——"

"LITTLE DECEIVER!" SHE SAID.
"To trouble you. Eh bien! Your parents, they permit these days at woods?"
"Oh, yes," said Gerald truthfully.
"Then I will not be more a dragon than the parents. I will forewarn the cook. Are you content?"
"Rather!" said Gerald. "Mademoiselle, you are a dear."
"A deer?" she repeated—"a stag?"
"No, a—a *chérie* ," said Gerald—"a regular A1 *chérie* . And you shan't repent it. Is there anything we can do for you—wind your wool, or find your spectacles, or——?"
"He thinks me a grandmother!" said Mademoiselle, laughing more than ever. "Go then, and be not more naughty than you must."
* * * * *
"Well, what luck?" the others asked.
"It's all right," said Gerald indifferently. "I told you it would be. The ingenuous youth won the regard of the foreign governess, who in her youth had been the beauty of her humble village."
"I don't believe she ever was. She's too stern," said Kathleen.
"Ah!" said Gerald, "that's only because you don't know how to manage her. She wasn't stern with *me* ."
"I say, what a humbug you are though, aren't you?" said Jimmy.
"No, I'm a dip—what's-its-name? Something like an ambassador. Dipsoplomatist—that's what I am. Anyhow, we've got our day, and if we don't find a cave in it my name's not Jack Robinson."
Mademoiselle, less stern than Kathleen had ever seen her, presided at supper, which was bread and treacle spread several hours before, and now harder and drier than any other food you can think of. Gerald was very polite in handing her butter and cheese, and pressing her to taste

the bread and treacle.
"Bah! it is like sand in the mouth—of a dryness! Is it possible this pleases you?"
"No," said Gerald, "it is not possible, but it is not polite for boys to make remarks about their food!"
She laughed, but there was no more dried bread and treacle for supper after that.
"How *do* you do it?" Kathleen whispered admiringly as they said good-night.
"Oh, it's quite easy when you've once got a grown-up to see what you're after. You'll see, I shall drive her with a rein of darning cotton after this."
Next morning Gerald got up early and gathered a little bunch of pink carnations from a plant which he found hidden among the marigolds. He tied it up with black cotton and laid it on Mademoiselle's plate. She smiled and looked quite handsome as she stuck the flowers in her belt.
"Do you think it's quite decent," Jimmy asked later—"sort of bribing people to let you do as you like with flowers and things and passing them the salt?"
"It's not that," said Kathleen suddenly. " *I* know what Gerald means, only I never think of the things in time myself. You see, if you want grown-ups to be nice to you the least you can do is to be nice to them and think of little things to please them. I never think of any myself. Jerry does; that's why all the old ladies like him. It's not bribery. It's a sort of honesty—like paying for things."
"Well, anyway," said Jimmy, putting away the moral question, "we've got a ripping day for the woods."
They had.
The wide High Street, even at the busy morning hour almost as quiet as a dream-street, lay bathed in sunshine; the leaves shone fresh from last night's rain, but the road was dry, and in the sunshine the very dust of it sparkled like diamonds. The beautiful old houses, standing stout and strong, looked as though they were basking in the sunshine

and enjoying it.
"But *are* there any woods?" asked Kathleen as they passed the market-place.
"It doesn't much matter about woods," said Gerald dreamily, "we're sure to find *something* . One of the chaps told me his father said when he was a boy there used to be a little cave under the bank in a lane near the Salisbury Road; but he said there was an enchanted castle there too, so perhaps the cave isn't true either."
"If we were to get horns," said Kathleen, "and to blow them very hard all the way, we might find a magic castle."
"If you've got the money to throw away on horns ..." said Jimmy contemptuously.
"Well, I have, as it happens, so there!" said Kathleen. And the horns were bought in a tiny shop with a bulging window full of a tangle of toys and sweets and cucumbers and sour apples.
And the quiet square at the end of the town where the church is, and the houses of the most respectable people, echoed to the sound of horns blown long and loud. But none of the houses turned into enchanted castles.
So they went along the Salisbury Road, which was very hot and dusty, so they agreed to drink one of the bottles of gingerbeer.
"We might as well carry the gingerbeer inside us as inside the bottle," said Jimmy, "and we can hide the bottle and call for it as we come back."
Presently they came to a place where the road, as Gerald said, went two ways at once.
" *That* looks like adventures," said Kathleen; and they took the right-hand road, and the next time they took a turning it was a left-hand one, so as to be quite fair, Jimmy said, and then a right-hand one and then a left, and so on, till they were completely lost.
" *Com* pletely," said Kathleen; "how jolly!"
And now trees arched overhead, and the banks of the road

were high and bushy. The adventurers had long since ceased to blow their horns. It was too tiring to go on doing that, when there was no one to be annoyed by it.
"Oh, kriky!" observed Jimmy suddenly, "let's sit down a bit and have some of our dinner. We might call it lunch, you know," he added persuasively.
So they sat down in the hedge and ate the ripe red gooseberries that were to have been their dessert.
And as they sat and rested and wished that their boots did not feel so full of feet, Gerald leaned back against the bushes, and the bushes gave way so that he almost fell over backward. Something had yielded to the pressure of his back, and there was the sound of something heavy that fell.
"O Jimminy!" he remarked, recovering himself suddenly; "there's something hollow in there—the stone I was leaning against simply *went!* "
"I wish it was a cave," said Jimmy; "but of course it isn't."
"If we blow the horns perhaps it will be," said Kathleen, and hastily blew her own.
Gerald reached his hand through the bushes. "I can't feel anything but air," he said; "it's just a hole full of emptiness."
The other two pulled back the bushes. There certainly was a hole in the bank. "I'm going to go in," observed Gerald.
"Oh, don't!" said his sister. "I wish you wouldn't. Suppose there were snakes!"
"Not likely," said Gerald, but he leaned forward and struck a match. "It *is* a cave!" he cried, and put his knee on the mossy stone he had been sitting on, scrambled over it, and disappeared.
A breathless pause followed.
"You all right?" asked Jimmy.
"Yes; come on. You'd better come feet first—there's a bit of a drop."
"I'll go next," said Kathleen, and went—feet first, as advised. The feet waved wildly in the air.
"Look out!" said Gerald in the dark; "you'll have my eye out.

Put your feet *down* , girl, not up. It's no use trying to fly here—there's no room."
He helped her by pulling her feet forcibly down and then lifting her under the arms. She felt rustling dry leaves under her boots, and stood ready to receive Jimmy, who came in head first, like one diving into an unknown sea.
"It *is* a cave," said Kathleen.
"The young explorers," explained Gerald, blocking up the hole of entrance with his shoulders, "dazzled at first by the darkness of the cave, could see nothing."
"Darkness doesn't dazzle," said Jimmy.
"I wish we'd got a candle," said Kathleen.
"Yes, it does," Gerald contradicted—"could see nothing. But their dauntless leader, whose eyes had grown used to the dark while the clumsy forms of the others were bunging up the entrance, had made a discovery."

JIMMY CAME IN HEAD FIRST, LIKE ONE DIVING INTO AN UNKNOWN SEA.

"Oh, what!" Both the others were used to Gerald's way of telling a story while he acted it, but they did sometimes wish that he didn't talk quite so long and so like a book in moments of excitement.
"He did not reveal the dread secret to his faithful followers

till one and all had given him their word of honour to be calm."
"We'll be calm all right," said Jimmy impatiently.
"Well, then," said Gerald, ceasing suddenly to be a book and becoming a boy, "there's a light over there—look behind you!"
They looked. And there was. A faint greyness on the brown walls of the cave, and a brighter greyness cut off sharply by a dark line, showed that round a turning or angle of the cave there was daylight.
"Attention!" said Gerald; at least, that was what he meant, though what he said was "'Shun!" as becomes the son of a soldier. The others mechanically obeyed.
"You will remain at attention till I give the word 'Slow march!' on which you will advance cautiously in open order, following your hero leader, taking care not to tread on the dead and wounded."
"I wish you wouldn't!" said Kathleen.
"There aren't any," said Jimmy, feeling for her hand in the dark; "he only means, take care not to tumble over stones and things."
Here he found her hand, and she screamed.
"It's only me," said Jimmy. "I thought you'd like me to hold it. But you're just like a girl."
Their eyes had now begun to get accustomed to the darkness, and all could see that they were in a rough stone cave, that went straight on for about three or four yards and then turned sharply to the right.
"Death or victory!" remarked Gerald. "Now, then—Slow march!"
He advanced carefully, picking his way among the loose earth and stones that were the floor of the cave. "A sail, a sail!" he cried, as he turned the corner.
"How splendid!" Kathleen drew a long breath as she came out into the sunshine.
"I don't see any sail," said Jimmy, following.

The narrow passage ended in a round arch all fringed with ferns and creepers. They passed through the arch into a deep, narrow gully whose banks were of stones, moss-covered; and in the crannies grew more ferns and long grasses. Trees growing on the top of the bank arched across, and the sunlight came through in changing patches of brightness, turning the gully to a roofed corridor of goldy-green. The path, which was of greeny-grey flagstones where heaps of leaves had drifted, sloped steeply down, and at the end of it was another round arch, quite dark inside, above which rose rocks and grass and bushes.
"It's like the outside of a railway tunnel," said James.
"It's the entrance to the enchanted castle," said Kathleen. "Let's blow the horns."
"Dry up!" said Gerald. "The bold Captain, reproving the silly chatter of his subordinates——"
"I like that!" said Jimmy, indignant.
"I thought you would," resumed Gerald—"of his subordinates, bade them advance with caution and in silence, because after all there might be somebody about, and the other arch might be an ice-house or something dangerous."
"What?" asked Kathleen anxiously.
"Bears, perhaps," said Gerald briefly.
"There aren't any bears without bars—in England, anyway," said Jimmy. "They call bears bars in America," he added absently.
"Quick march!" was Gerald's only reply.
And they marched. Under the drifted damp leaves the path was firm and stony to their shuffling feet. At the dark arch they stopped.
"There are steps down," said Jimmy.
"It *is* an ice-house," said Gerald.
"Don't let's," said Kathleen.
"Our hero," said Gerald, "who nothing could dismay, raised the faltering hopes of his abject minions by saying that he

was jolly well going on, and they could do as they liked about it."
"If you call names," said Jimmy, "you can go on by yourself." He added, "So there!"

"IT'S THE ENTRANCE TO THE ENCHANTED CASTLE," SAID KATHLEEN.

"It's part of the game, silly," explained Gerald kindly. "You can be Captain to-morrow, so you'd better hold your jaw now, and begin to think about what names you'll call us when it's your turn."
Very slowly and carefully they went down the steps. A vaulted stone arched over their heads. Gerald struck a match when the last step was found to have no edge, and to be, in fact, the beginning of a passage, turning to the left.
"This," said Jimmy, "will take us back into the road."
"Or under it," said Gerald. "We've come down eleven steps."
They went on, following their leader, who went very slowly for fear, as he explained, of steps. The passage was very

dark.
"I don't half like it!" whispered Jimmy.
Then came a glimmer of daylight that grew and grew, and presently ended in another arch that looked out over a scene so like a picture out of a book about Italy that every one's breath was taken away, and they simply walked forward silent and staring. A short avenue of cypresses led, widening as it went, to a marble terrace that lay broad and white in the sunlight. The children, blinking, leaned their arms on the broad, flat balustrade and gazed. Immediately below them was a lake—just like a lake in "The Beauties of Italy"—a lake with swans and an island and weeping willows; beyond it were green slopes dotted with groves of trees, and amid the trees gleamed the white limbs of statues. Against a little hill to the left was a round white building with pillars, and to the right a waterfall came tumbling down among mossy stones to splash into the lake. Steps led from the terrace to the water, and other steps to the green lawns beside it. Away across the grassy slopes deer were feeding, and in the distance where the groves of trees thickened into what looked almost a forest were enormous shapes of grey stone, like nothing that the children had ever seen before.
"That chap at school——" said Gerald.
"It *is* an enchanted castle," said Kathleen.
"I don't see any castle," said Jimmy.
"What do you call that, then?" Gerald pointed to where, beyond a belt of lime-trees, white towers and turrets broke the blue of the sky.
"There doesn't seem to be any one about," said Kathleen, "and yet it's all so tidy. I believe it is magic."
"Magic mowing machines," Jimmy suggested.
"If we were in a book it would be an enchanted castle—certain to be," said Kathleen.
"It *is* an enchanted castle," said Gerald in hollow tones.
"But there aren't any." Jimmy was quite positive.

"How do you know? Do you think there's nothing in the world but what *you've* seen?" His scorn was crushing.
"I think magic went out when people began to have steam-engines," Jimmy insisted, "and newspapers, and telephones and wireless telegraphing."
"Wireless is rather like magic when you come to think of it," said Gerald.
"Oh, *that* sort!" Jimmy's contempt was deep.
"Perhaps there's given up being magic because people didn't believe in it any more," said Kathleen.
"Well, don't let's spoil the show with any silly old not believing," said Gerald with decision. "I'm going to believe in magic as hard as I can. This is an enchanted garden, and that's an enchanted castle, and I'm jolly well going to explore. The dauntless knight then led the way, leaving his ignorant squires to follow or not, just as they jolly well chose." He rolled off the balustrade and strode firmly down towards the lawn, his boots making, as they went, a clatter full of determination.
The others followed. There never was such a garden—out of a picture or a fairy tale. They passed quite close by the deer, who only raised their pretty heads to look, and did not seem startled at all. And after a long stretch of turf they passed under the heaped-up heavy masses of lime-trees and came into a rose-garden, bordered with thick, close-cut yew hedges, and lying red and pink and green and white in the sun, like a giant's many-coloured, highly-scented pocket-handkerchief.
"I know we shall meet a gardener in a minute, and he'll ask what we're doing here. And then what will you say?" Kathleen asked with her nose in a rose.

"THIS IS AN ENCHANTED GARDEN AND THAT'S AN ENCHANTED CASTLE."

"I shall say we've lost our way, and it will be quite true," said Gerald.

But they did not meet a gardener or anybody else, and the feeling of magic got thicker and thicker, till they were almost afraid of the sound of their feet in the great silent place. Beyond the rose garden was a yew hedge with an arch cut in it, and it was the beginning of a maze like the one in Hampton Court.

"Now," said Gerald, "you mark my words. In the middle of this maze we shall find the secret enchantment. Draw your swords, my merry men all, and hark forward tallyho in the utmost silence."

Which they did.

It was very hot in the maze, between the close yew hedges, and the way to the maze's heart was hidden well. Again and again they found themselves at the black yew arch that opened on the rose garden, and they were all glad that they had brought large, clean pocket-handkerchiefs with them. It was when they found themselves there for the fourth time that Jimmy suddenly cried, "Oh, I wish——" and then stopped short very suddenly. "Oh!" he added in quite a

different voice, "where's the dinner?" And then in a stricken silence they all remembered that the basket with the dinner had been left at the entrance of the cave. Their thoughts dwelt fondly on the slices of cold mutton, the six tomatoes, the bread and butter, the screwed-up paper of salt, the apple turnovers, and the little thick glass that one drank the gingerbeer out of.

"Let's go back," said Jimmy, "now this minute, and get our things and have our dinner."

"Let's have one more try at the maze. I hate giving things up," said Gerald.

"I *am* so hungry!" said Jimmy.

"Why didn't you say so before?" asked Gerald bitterly.

"I wasn't before."

"Then you can't be now. You don't get hungry all in a minute. What's that?"

"That" was a gleam of red that lay at the foot of the yew hedge—a thin little line, that you would hardly have noticed unless you had been staring in a fixed and angry way at the roots of the hedge.

It was a thread of cotton. Gerald picked it up. One end of it was tied to a thimble with holes in it, and the other——

"There *is* no other end," said Gerald, with firm triumph. "It's a clue—that's what it is. What price cold mutton now? I've always felt something magic would happen some day, and now it has."

"I expect the gardener put it there," said Jimmy.

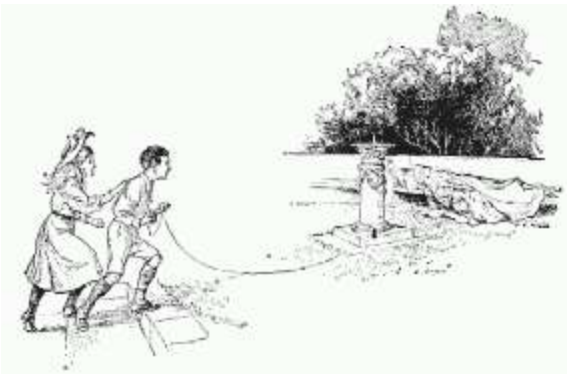
"With a Princess's silver thimble on it? Look! there's a crown on the thimble."

There was.

"Come," said Gerald in low, urgent tones, "if you are adventurers *be* adventurers; and anyhow, I expect some one has gone along the road and bagged the mutton hours ago."

He walked forward, winding the red thread round his fingers as he went. And it *was* a clue, and it led them right

into the middle of the maze. And in the very middle of the maze they came upon the wonder.
The red clue led them up two stone steps to a round grass plot. There was a sun-dial in the middle, and all round against the yew hedge a low, wide marble seat. The red clue ran straight across the grass and by the sun-dial, and ended in a small brown hand with jewelled rings on every finger. The hand was, naturally, attached to an arm, and that had many bracelets on it, sparkling with red and blue and green stones. The arm wore a sleeve of pink and gold brocaded silk, faded a little here and there but still extremely imposing, and the sleeve was part of a dress, which was worn by a lady who lay on the stone seat asleep in the sun. The rosy gold dress fell open over an embroidered petticoat of a soft green colour. There was old yellow lace the colour of scalded cream, and a thin white veil spangled with silver stars covered the face.
"It's the enchanted Princess," said Gerald, now really impressed. "I told you so."
"It's the Sleeping Beauty," said Kathleen. "It is—look how old-fashioned her clothes are, like the pictures of Marie Antoinette's ladies in the history book. She has slept for a hundred years. Oh, Gerald, you're the eldest; you must be the Prince, and we never knew it."



THE RED CLUE RAN STRAIGHT ACROSS THE GRASS AND BY THE SUN-DIAL, AND ENDED IN A SMALL BROWN HAND.

"She isn't really a Princess," said Jimmy. But the others laughed at him, partly because his saying things like that was enough to spoil any game, and partly because they really were not at all sure that it was not a Princess who lay there as still as the sunshine. Every stage of the adventure —the cave, the wonderful gardens, the maze, the clue, had deepened the feeling of magic, till now Kathleen and Gerald were almost completely bewitched.

"Lift the veil up, Jerry," said Kathleen in a whisper; "if she isn't beautiful we shall know she can't be the Princess."

"Lift it yourself," said Gerald.

"I expect you're forbidden to touch the figures," said Jimmy.

"It's not wax, silly," said his brother.

"No," said his sister, "wax wouldn't be much good in this sun. And, besides, you can see her breathing. It's the Princess right enough." She very gently lifted the edge of the veil and turned it back. The Princess's face was small and white between long plaits of black hair. Her nose was straight and her brows finely traced. There were a few freckles on cheek-bones and nose.

"No wonder," whispered Kathleen, "sleeping all these years in all this sun!" Her mouth was not a rosebud. But all the same—

"Isn't she lovely!" Kathleen murmured.

"Not so dusty," Gerald was understood to reply.

"Now, Jerry," said Kathleen firmly, "you're the eldest."

"Of course I am," said Gerald uneasily.

"Well, you've got to wake the Princess."

"She's not a Princess," said Jimmy, with his hands in the pockets of his knickerbockers; "she's only a little girl dressed up."

"But she's in long dresses," urged Kathleen.

"Yes, but look what a little way down her frock her feet come. She wouldn't be any taller than Jerry if she was to stand up."
"Now then," urged Kathleen. "Jerry, don't be silly. You've got to do it."
"Do what?" asked Gerald, kicking his left boot with his right.
"Why, kiss her awake, of course."
"Not me!" was Gerald's unhesitating rejoinder.
"Well, some one's got to."
"She'd go for me as likely as not the minute she woke up," said Gerald anxiously.
"I'd do it like a shot," said Kathleen, "but I don't suppose it ud make any difference me kissing her."
She did it; and it didn't. The Princess still lay in deep slumber.
"Then you must, Jimmy. I daresay you'll do. Jump back quickly before she can hit you."
"She won't hit him, he's such a little chap," said Gerald.
"Little yourself!" said Jimmy. " *I* don't mind kissing her. I'm not a coward, like Some People. Only if I do, I'm going to be the dauntless leader for the rest of the day."

THE THREE STOOD BREATHLESS, AWAITING THE RESULT.

"No, look here—hold on!" cried Gerald, "perhaps I'd better ——" But, in the meantime, Jimmy had planted a loud, cheerful-sounding kiss on the Princess's pale cheek, and now the three stood breathless, awaiting the result.

And the result was that the Princess opened large, dark eyes, stretched out her arms, yawned a little, covering her mouth with a small brown hand, and said, quite plainly and distinctly, and without any room at all for mistake:—

"Then the hundred years are over? How the yew hedges have grown! Which of you is my Prince that aroused me from my deep sleep of so many long years?"

"I did," said Jimmy fearlessly, for she did not look as though she were going to slap any one.

"My noble preserver!" said the Princess, and held out her hand. Jimmy shook it vigorously.

"But I say," said he, "you aren't really a Princess, are you?"

"Of course I am," she answered; "who else could I be? Look at my crown!" She pulled aside the spangled veil, and showed beneath it a coronet of what even Jimmy could not help seeing to be diamonds.

"But——" said Jimmy.

"Why," she said, opening her eyes very wide, "you must have known about my being here, or you'd never have come. How *did* you get past the dragons?"

Gerald ignored the question. "I say," he said, "do you really believe in magic, and all that?"

"I ought to," she said, "if anybody does. Look, here's the place where I pricked my finger with the spindle." She showed a little scar on her wrist.

"Then this really *is* an enchanted castle?"

"Of course it is," said the Princess. "How stupid you are!" She stood up, and her pink brocaded dress lay in bright waves about her feet.

"I said her dress would be too long," said Jimmy.

"It was the right length when I went to sleep," said the Princess; "it must have grown in the hundred years."

"I don't believe you're a Princess at all," said Jimmy; "at least——"
"Don't bother about believing it, if you don't like," said the Princess. "It doesn't so much matter what you believe as what I am." She turned to the others.
"Let's go back to the castle," she said, "and I'll show you all my lovely jewels and things. Wouldn't you like that?"
"Yes," said Gerald with very plain hesitation. "But——"
"But what?" The Princess's tone was impatient.
"But we're most awfully hungry."
"Oh, so am I!" cried the Princess.
"We've had nothing to eat since breakfast."
"And it's three now," said the Princess, looking at the sun-dial. "Why, you've had nothing to eat for hours and hours and hours. But think of me! I haven't had anything to eat for a hundred years. Come along to the castle."
"The mice will have eaten everything," said Jimmy sadly. He saw now that she really *was* a Princess.
"Not they," cried the Princess joyously. "You forget everything's enchanted here. Time simply stood still for a hundred years. Come along, and one of you must carry my train, or I shan't be able to move now it's grown such a frightful length."