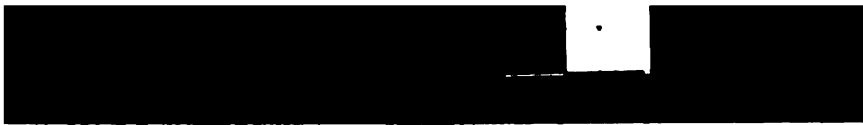




The Boys and Girls
Book of Enchantment



THE BOYS' AND GIRLS' BOOK OF
ENCHANTMENT



THE BEAR IN THE BEECH-WOOD.

*THE BOYS' AND GIRLS' BOOK
OF ENCHANTMENT*

WITH NUMEROUS ILLUSTRATIONS



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THE BEAR IN THE BEECH-WOOD.

ONCE upon a time a King and a Queen were obliged to take a long journey, so long that probably years would pass over before they could return to their own kingdom. The Queen wished to stay behind with her children, a boy and girl, but the King would not hear of this, so the children were left to the care of an old nurse, who lived in a pretty little cottage in the middle of a beech-wood. The thatch was covered with green and brown and orange moss, and over this and on the white walls of the cottage were great clusters of purple and white grapes. Inside the cottage there were so many toys that it took the Prince and Princess three days to count them.

But at the end of that time they had grown tired of toys, and then they found out—what every one else had forgotten—there were no sugar-plums in the cottage. They went to the door and put their heads out but there was nothing to be seen but the beech-wood.

“I say, Bette,” said the Prince, “I see brown sugared almonds among the leaves.”

But when he found they were only beech-nuts he began to cry.

“Hush!” said his sister, whose name was Bettelinda, though her brother called her Bette; “I can’t bear cry-babies, Tim, especially if they’re boys.” The little Prince’s real name was Timoleus. “There is fun to be had without sweeties; think of something else.”

Tim was a good boy, though as the Queen always carried a silver box or sweetmeats hanging at her girdle for his special use, it was natural he should cry the first time he missed them.

“I tell you what, Bette,” he said; “we’ll tease old Badger.”

Now Dame Badger was their nurse, an old woman with a double chin, and large spectacles with tortoise-shell rims. She wore a high cap with

a broad black ribbon round the crown, and high-heeled shoes with silver buckles. She was just like a picture of Mother Hubbard, and when she was cross her chin wobbled like jelly that is not stiff enough.

Bettelinda said, "Oh, Tim!" but she laughed and followed Tim indoors.

There sat the Dame pretending to knit; in reality she was half asleep. She was nearly always asleep, and she hated to be waked up.



"I say, Dame," said the little Prince, close at her ear, "I'd look after my grapes if I were you."

Wobble, wobble, wobble went the old woman's chin, and she grumbled, "Tiresome children!" as she went out at the door.

She had left her spectacles on the table, and Tim put them on Bettelinda's nose, and then he made her climb upon the round table with him, where they danced a jig hand in hand, singing as loud as they could:—

"Badger's a bate—Badger's a bate;
She scolds all day, from early to late."

But the table was rickety, or they were too riotous, for down it came. They rolled over on the floor, and the spectacles were broken to bits.

How the old woman did scold, and how her chin did wobble when she came back! Tim and Bettelinda saw it as they got up from the floor and they burst out laughing.

"You nau-au-au-aughty chil-il-il-dren. I'll whi-i-i-p' you-ou-ou," she said; for, you see, her chin went on wobbling all the time.

"No, no, we are sorry we broke your spectacles," said the little Princess "but we are too old to be whipped. Come along, Tim, to the woods."

The old woman had shut the door after her as she came in, and now as the children reached it there came a strange sound all over it; it made Bettelinda's and Tim's hair stand on end with fright. Even Mrs. Badger's chin left off wobbling. There was the noise again, scratch—scratch—scra-a-atch—this time as if a gross of tenpenny nails were scratching against the wood.

"Oh! it's the bear," said the old woman, and she immediately put her face down between her knees, as she had been told that that was good for fainting-fits.

Now it happened that a cruel savage White Bear lived among some crags not far off, but Dame Badger had been too lazy and sleepy to caution the children against him.

They had been used to play with all kinds of animals at the palace, and they thought a bear would make a famous playmate, so they ran again to the door and opened it.

There was no bear, but a very handsome young huntsman, in a green suit trimmed all over with rich brown fur, stood there, and he pulled off his hat to Princess Bettelinda.

"I've lost my way in the wood," he said; "can you give me a drink of water?"

"No-o-o-o-o—go-o-o-o-o," screamed the old woman. She did not raise her head, but the children knew her chin must be wobbling still.

"I'll get you some water," said Bettelinda; "And I'll give you the cake I was to have had for supper," said Tim; and the little maid trotted round to the back of the cottage with the handsome stranger, and drew some water up from the well. It was a wonderful well,—so deep that when you threw a stone down, you had to wait quite two minutes before you heard it splash in the water below, while the stony sides sent up a

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prolonged chorus of groans, as if they were grievously tormented ; its mouth and throat, too, for that matter, were clothed with long shining ferns, like wavy green satin ribbons.

“You are very kind children,” said the huntsman, when Tim brought him the cake—such a capital cake, full of candied peel and raisins,—“and I will give you a bit of advice. When you are out in the wood



never stray far from a beech-tree : there are so many of them that you won't find it hard to remember this ; and, above all, never gather any of the ferns from this well. Remember, I can't advise you twice over, and I may not see you again. I must go.”

He disappeared suddenly, and it seemed to the children that they heard a growl, and then something very like a huge Brown Bear peeped *for an instant* through the beech-trees which surrounded the garden.

But they paid no heed ; they talked about the stranger, while they strolled into the wood, hoping to see him again.

It was very pleasant there : the glossy holly-trees showed plenty of red berries, and as to nuts and blackberries, there were little nooks and coves full of them.

"I say, Bette," said the boy, "why should we go back to that cross old Badger? We could sleep quite snugly on the soft green moss, and I'm sure I could live on nuts and blackberries; couldn't you?"

Bettelinda did not quite like the idea of going to bed in her clothes; but when Tim called this a "finnick," she agreed to sleep out in the wood.

They spent a very happy day; they made a hearty dinner off nuts and blackberries, and then they rolled up two little moss pillows, and carried them about under their arms against bed-time.

A deep ravine ran through the middle of the wood on the side next the cottage. The steep descent was covered with beech-trees, as gay as a pheasant's wing when the sun shines upon it; but the ascent opposite was a succession of rough stepping-stones, crowned at the top with dark gloomy pines.

"I say," said the little Prince, "I'm tired of beech-nuts; are not you, Bette? We might have fine fun pelting each other with fir-apples."

"So we might," said Bettelinda, and they pelted one another with the fir-cones till the sun went down, and till Tim's blue jacket and Bettelinda's rose-coloured frock were covered with sticky fir-apples.

"Somehow," said the Princess, "I would rather sleep in the beech-wood;" but just then she remembered the stranger's warning. "Come along, Tim," she said, in a frightened voice, "and make haste."

Alas! she spoke too late. Between the tall straight boles of the pine-forest the children had seen huge masses of rock piled one on another. Now from one of these came a low threatening growl, like far-off thunder, and before the sound had died away there was the little Prince in the grasp of a huge White Bear.

The boy fought and kicked desparately, but he did not utter a cry, though the Bear's close grip must have hurt him. He could not turn his head and look after Bettelinda, but he called out, "Run—run away, darling, and save yourself."

But Bettelinda had a brave little heart: she picked up a stone and aimed it direct at the Bear's eye. It hurt him, and he let go Tim that he might rub his wounded eye. Bettelinda rushed up to her brother in

hopes of dragging him away ; but, alas ! in an instant the wicked hairy monster had clutched her little rose-coloured frock, rending off all the pearl embroidery.

"There's no use struggling," he said with a kind of sneering growl : he meant it for a laugh, but there is nothing really joking in a bear's laugh ; and the poor children shook all over. "You are just the wife I want," he said to Bettelinda. "I have a nice little family for you to take care of ; my Ursula and I did not quite agree, so I hugged her to death yesterday. And you, little boy, are as plump and succulent as a young boar-pig. You'll make a prime dish at your sister's marriage feast ; only I can't carry you both at once. Here, Ursonino." And he began a series of awful growls, which made even Tim's heart stand still with fear. As to Bettelinda, she had fainted with fright.

The White Bear threw back his sly-looking ears to listen ; but, instead of the answering growl of his eldest-born, he heard a strange new voice in the direction of his den. He growled with anger, and tried to drag both the children along with him, but he could not keep Tim quiet, the little fellow beginning to struggle again with all his might. The White Bear stood erect and listened. Again came the strange angry growl, and, mingling with it, the voices of his children in an agonized chorus. There was no mistaking the tone. The monster gave Tim a hearty squeeze, and then, letting him and the stupefied Bettelinda drop, he trotted off in the direction of the sounds.

Tim tried vainly to rouse his sister, till he suddenly remembered that he had that morning pocketed Dame Badger's snuff-box in the hope of making her chin wobble. He pulled it desperately out of his pocket, and put it close to Bettelinda's nose.

"Isha—esha—usha!" came violently from Bettelinda ; she sat up and looked round her, wide awake, but she had lost all power of movement, and told Tim feebly to run away home and leave her to her fate. He knelt beside her and implored her to attempt the descent, but she could only say, "No."

Even while she spoke there came a heavy panting sound. They both started up, expecting their enemy ; instead they saw a great Brown Bear trotting up to them.

He did not growl, and the children were too much surprised to run away. He came close up to them, crouched on the ground, and licked Bettelinda's feet ; then he looked at Tim with such friendly eyes, that the little boy took heart.

He said, "Poor fellow!" and patted his shaggy head; but the Bear looked impatient, and pointed forward to the beech-wood. But still he lay crouching.

"I'll tell you what he means, Tim," said the Princess, who was very quick-witted. "We are to get on his back, and he will take us home."

As she spoke there came a fearful threatening growl from the rocks, and the Brown Bear shook his head impatiently. Bettelinda sprang on his back, and put both arms round his great furry neck; and Tim mounted behind her, and clasped her firmly round the waist—not a minute too soon: there came another deep rolling growl; and then, as their new friend rose and shook himself, the children saw the white coat of their enemy coming quickly through the pine-trees.

But the Brown Bear seemed to have wings; he reached the bottom of the ravine in less than no time, and sprang up the other side.

Under the beech-trees he halted. The children peeped timorously through the leaves, and saw the White Bear glaring up at them from the stony bottom of the ravine. He had no power to hurt them in the beech-wood. Then the Brown Bear trotted slowly through the trees till he reached the cottage.

The children patted their deliverer and thanked him. Bettelinda even kissed his broad brown forehead; but he only looked sad, and they saw great tears roll out of his eyes. He raised his paw and pointed to the cottage door; and as soon as Dame Badger showed herself, he turned and trotted off without casting a look behind him.

Next day a gold and green carriage drove up to the gate of the cottage, and out of it came first a tall and stately gentleman in cap and gown, and next a lady in a black dress and a flowing white veil. These personages announced themselves as the instructors appointed to convey the Prince and Princess to the places appointed for their teaching.

The children were sorry to leave their wood and their friendly Bear—they had promised themselves many a merry game with him, and many a ride on his broad back; but they were tired to death of old Badger, and Bettelinda had a shrinking dread of the White Bear. Besides, the idea of change was delightful; so they went.

They stayed with their instructors till Bettelinda was nearly grown up and till Tim was seriously thinking of leaving off jackets and taking to coats with tails; although the coats, of course, would still have been velvet, on account of his being a Prince.

Bettelinda was more lovely than spring flowers, and she wore a star of

brilliant on her bright golden hair. But when she heard that she and her brother were to spend a fortnight in the cottage in the beech-wood, she took off her blue silk gown, and asked for a suit of brown holland.

"I mean to go blackberrying," she said, "and I don't want to take care of myself."

Dame Badger was very glad to see them. She called Tim "Your Excellency," and Bettelinda "Your Highness," and she gave them cakes and treacle for tea, and blackberries and cream; but she was just as sleepy as ever.

Bettelinda and Tim had been sad on first arriving; but the sight of their old haunts soon brought back their liveliness.

"Come along," said the Prince; "our first task must be to find out our friend Bruin. I wonder if he will know you again, Bette?"

They went out into the little garden beside the cottage.

"Surely there used to be beech-trees here," said Bettelinda, as they reached the well. "But see, Tim, all around the well there is an open space; there are only two or three fir-trees." While she spoke there came a dismal sob from the wind among the pines.

"It feels chilly," said the Princess; "suppose we wait till to-morrow, before we seek out our deliverer. He is only a bear, you know, and he can wait."

There came again the same dismal sound from among the trees; you might almost have thought it the utterance of human sorrow. But, dear me! the young people were much too happy to care about the sobbing, sighing wind.

"Look," said the Prince, "how pretty the fern-leaves are; sit down, Bette, and I will deck your hair with them."

She sat down smiling, and the Prince leant over the well, selecting the smallest of the ferns for his garland. Bettelinda looked lovelier than ever, the glossy wavy leaves seemed as if made to contrast with her golden hair; her brother laughed, and called her the Queen of the Water-Sprites.

Another deep sob among the pines, and then Bettelinda saw that the largest of the drooping ferns that hung down the well-sides were moving.

Slowly they raised themselves, and as they pointed towards the wreath on her head they seemed to grow larger and larger. She tried to scream, but she felt dumb and motionless, and before the Prince saw what had happened the fern-leaves had mingled with those in Bettelinda's garland, and had drawn her gradually but gently into the mouth of the well.

There she lay completely hidden among the long thick leaves ; she could not cry out, she could not move, and yet she knew that her brave brother was so close that she might almost have touched him.

"Bettelinda!" he cried, "Bette! where are you?" and she heard his footsteps die away as he went about seeking for her.

Poor Bettelinda, she could not even shed a tear, she seemed frozen with horror: should she stay for ever under those clinging leaves, glued by some irresistible power to the damp oozing side of the well?

But a new terror was soon added to her despair. A low growl sounded far off, and as it came nearer and nearer she recognized, with a shudder that almost took away her remaining senses, the voice of the White Bear of the pine-forest.

"Aha!" he said, "my queen cousin, so you have caught my little wife, have you? Give her to me at once, that I may carry her to my den."

Bettelinda tried to call for help, but her tongue was as powerless as her body.

Then a sharp shrill voice came twanging up from the very bottom of the well.

"Not so fast, *Ursa Major*: our compact was a double one. Where is the young Prince, my promised bridegroom? Unless he too wears my colours, I have no power to claim him for myself. No, till you bring him to me, alive and unhurt, I keep this dainty lady to make sport for myself and my maidens."

The White Bear growled fiercely, but he seemed powerless against the Kelpie, and Bettelinda almost felt as if there would be more chance of escape for her from the grasp of the huge monster than from the spiteful malice of the Queen of the Well.

As the White Bear retreated, she heard advancing footsteps.

Alas! it was her brother's voice calling tenderly for her, and she had no power to warn him of the terrible fate that threatened him.

"O my sister!" the boy said; "my dear Bettelinda, where have you hidden yourself?" Then came a pause.

The Princess felt that a dreadful misfortune was about to happen: either terror sharpened her eyesight, or one of the long clinging ferns moved, for she distinctly saw that a leaf from her garland had fallen on the brink of the well, and that her brother had extended his hand towards it. The next minute he had put it in his cap, and then the Princess knew that he was in the power of the Kelpie.

At the same time she became conscious of a change in herself; her arms loosened from her sides, the rigid powerless feeling left her, and, grasping the ferns, she soon found herself at the brink of the well: another moment and she was free, standing on the identical spot from whence the ferns had dragged her.

Her brother had disappeared.

Before she had time to move, she saw the hated form of the White Bear coming round the side of the cottage.

Suddenly she bethought her of her old friend.

"Oh, dear Brown Bear," shrieked the unhappy Princess, "help me—help my brother!"

There came a sharp fierce growl from the wood, and before the White Bear could so much as lay a paw on Bettelinda, behold, there stood her friendly deliverer, his coat more glossy than ever, trembling and panting with rage.

Then ensued a terrific combat. The bears grappled with each other, and tried to hug one another to death; but at first they were too equally matched. The growling became louder and louder, and the two huge monsters, erect on their hind legs, swayed from side to side in their deadly struggle.

Bettelinda stood still in breathless terror, and now she saw the Brown Bear totter and fall backwards from the loosened grasp of his foe.

Quick as lightning she sprang forward, and, just as the White Bear was about to deal a finishing-stroke, she threw herself on the prostrate body of her defender, so that no blow could reach him except through her.

But to her surprise the warm furry coat slipped from her, and raising her head, she saw the White Bear overthrown, pierced by the sword of a huntsman who was standing over him.

"Oh, spare his life!" cried Bettelinda, "until he has delivered my brother from the power of the Queen of the Well."

But the huntsman took no notice till he had pierced the White Bear to the heart, and then, when he fell on one knee and thanked Bettelinda for his deliverance, she saw that he was the handsome stranger she had drawn water for years ago.

"I could only, lovely Princess," he said, "assume my natural shape once in seven years, for three hours, until a beautiful young lady should offer to save my life at the price of her own. Do not fear the Kelpie, Princess; she is powerless now that her cousin is no more."

He struck the well's mouth lightly with his sword, and Prince Timoleus

stepped forth and shook hands with his deliverer. The huntsman announced himself as the King of all that part of the country, and he asked Bettelinda to be his Queen. The marriage was celebrated with great rejoicings, and the handsome King appointed Prince Timoleus Generalissimo of all his forces. The King and Queen lived very happily ever afterwards, and had a large family of boys and girls, all as beautiful as a summer morning.



COCKIE LOCKIE'S JOURNEY TO SEACOD-LAND.

"PAPA, I do wish you would tell me a story."

"Tell you a story, Willie? Lessons all right, eh? Work honestly done to-day? prepared for to-morrow?"

"Yes, father, all right; and I wish now to have some fun."

"Well, old fellow—don't you like to be called *old*?—if you have done your work well, you may have some fun. Duty first, you know, and pleasure afterwards. But what sort of story do you want, Bill?"

"A story like those you told us before,—like 'The Black Cat and her Kittens,' or 'The Wild Horse with the Golden Bells,' or 'The Old Giant and the Hunchback,' or——" and Willie mentioned a dozen more.

"I had no idea I had told you so many stories. I think I must be almost as foolish as yourself to tell you so much nonsense."

"Oh, papa! it's splendid. I could lie here behind you on the sofa all night listening. Come here, Polly, and jump up behind me; there's some room yet. Papa is going to tell us about something."

But more than Polly gathered to the sofa to listen to some of these stories of mine, which had cheered them in long winter nights.

"But is it right of you to tell them such stories?"

I had no idea my estimable and beloved friend, Mrs. W. B. Tomkins, was listening to me while I spoke thus to my eager congregation. Yet all the while, this good woman—I know not a better!—was sitting sewing near the lamp, as intently as the Fates working secretly at their web.

"I don't agree with you," continued Mrs. W. B.

I raised myself on my elbow, let my spectacles drop from my forehead down to the bridge of my nose, and, gazing on Mrs. W. B., asked her, "Why not?"

Because——” said my admirable friend, and, starting with that consequential word, she gave such a sensible discourse, first on the enervating power of fiction on young minds, then on the advantage of studies requiring thought, perseverance, self-denial, &c., and lastly on the flimsy, silly characters created by fiction, that I felt as much ashamed as if I had committed some grave offence, and was inclined to scold the children all round for daring to gather about me to hear a story that was not true.”

But when Mrs. W. B. resumed her needle, and I my old position, I began to reflect on the hard work these young creatures had been engaged in—the wearing out of young brains—and the effect on my life from reading——Here I raised myself on my elbow again, and asked Mrs. W. B. with fear and trembling,

“Did you ever read in your early days, my good friend, such stories as ‘Bluebeard,’ ‘Jack the Giant-Killer,’ ‘Beauty and the Beast,’ ‘Cinderella and the Glass Slipper,’ or——?”

“Of course I have,” replied Mrs. W. B., smiling, “and I have never experienced such excitement as I did when Bluebeard’s wife cried out, ‘Sister Ann, Sister Ann, are they coming?’”

“Have those books done you any harm? Did you believe them? Do you repent having read them?”

“They never did *me* any harm, but that’s no reason why they may not do others harm——”

“Come, children,” said I, “and I’ll tell you a story.”

“Hurrah!”

“What shall it be, Willie?”

“About fishing.”

“Oh, that’s because you caught that fine cod off the Ardgour buoy. Were you not proud of the big brown fellow?”

“But, papa, I’m sure he *was* a very, very large cod. John Mackenzie and Malcolm both said they *never* saw a better cod. Now, Johnny, didn’t they say that?”

“My boy, I don’t want to tarnish your glory, so let me tell you a story about the cods. Did you ever hear of Cockie Lockie’s journey to Seacod-land?”

“No; but who was Cockie Lockie? and what is Seacod-land?”

“Well, Cockie Lockie was the name or the nickname of the boy I’m going to tell you about; and Seacod-land is, of course, the land of the sea-cod. You know already where one part of it lies, and that is just

along the bank marked by the buoy where you caught the big brown fellow you are so proud of——”

“Please go on.”

“Listen, then, to my story.”

Little Cockie was a nice boy, who went with his father and mother, brothers and sisters, to spend some weeks far away in the West Highlands of Scotland. He was a brave, good-hearted little fellow, who would sooner die than tell a fib. He used generally to be one of the party who went out in the evening to fish cod, ling, lythe, or whatever would kindly take the bait. One afternoon he went to get mussels for bait. As he was searching about, he met an old woman gathering shell-fish, partly for sale, but chiefly for food. Cockie was quite struck by her appearance. She was old, and thin, and poorly clad, with a bad cough, and tottering steps. With bent back she slowly paced among the stones and wrack, picking up all that could be used for food. Cockie was so touched by this picture of old age and poverty that he began to help the old woman to fill her basket.

“God bless you, my boy!” she said, in Gaelic; “cair of my heart, all good be yours, my dear, my dear. Ohone! ohone!”

When her basket was full she asked Cockie to help her to carry it to her house, which was hard by—a small cottage built near the sea-shore, and thatched with heather, so that you could hardly distinguish it from the rocks around. No one lived with her but a rough little terrier called Connan, to whom she was greatly attached, and who loved her in return. Perhaps I may tell you a story some night about Connan, who was a very queer little fellow, quite an original, and well worth knowing.

“Oh, do, papa, do!”

Have patience, bairns; one thing at a time. I must finish my present story first. Cockie entered the hut of old Shonagveg, as the woman was called, and was glad to do so, as he was very tired, and more than a mile from home. So Shonagveg made him lie down on a great bundle of heather she had cut that day for some purpose or other, and had heaped in a nook near the peat fire. As Cockie sank in the soft elastic heather, he thought he had never been in so nice a couch; and his comfort was complete when Shonagveg milked her goat Morag, and brought him a full bowl of warm milk.

“Drink that, my wee dear,” she said, “and rest yourself, and I’ll

show you something." So Cockie with great delight lay down on the heather, while Connan lay beside him.

In a while Shonagveg said, "Are you hearing me, calf of my heart, or are you sleeping? I think, my wee pet, you are sleeping!"

"No, no," said Cockie; "I am quite awake."

"Then look at me," said old Shonagveg, and, as she spoke, she grew young and beautiful. Her old grey hair gave place to golden ringlets; her face became so sweet and loving, and had such a gentle smile, that no one could have helped gazing upon her. She was dressed in a light green dress, and had an emerald band round her forehead.

"Come with me, my boy," she said, "and I will send you into the part of the country I rule as the Fairy of the Shore. I have watched you and your brothers and sisters night after night, sailing over my country, which is beneath the deep sea; and I have seen you taking my poor fish away. Now I should like you to know my fish. You will see in them nothing but what you have seen among the poor people everywhere—much simplicity and honesty, with plenty of fun."

The Fairy spoke to Cockie as if he was quite a man, and this pleased him very much. And she spoke so kindly that he had no fear whatever. Besides, as he had fished for cods every night, he was very anxious to see them in their home. So he agreed to go on the journey, but asked,

"How can I go into the sea and not be drowned?"

"Ah, I'll manage that," she replied, "but you must trust me and fear nothing. Look at me, Cockie Lockie, and say, do you think I would lie to you, my dear? Why should I?"

"No fear of you lying," he replied, as he looked into the sweet blue eyes and on the smiling beautiful mouth of her who was no longer old Shonagveg, but the "Fairy Queen of the Ardgour Shore."

"Now, my dear boy," said the Fairy, "I can't go with you. But this doesn't matter very much, for I never saw good come of boys who could not be trusted by themselves, but always required a mother or servant to look after them. And if a boy won't behave better, and with more care, when *trusted* and left to himself, I have little hope of him in after life. So, my boy, I trust your good sense, your courage, and discretion. Here are a wand and a ring. When you touch the ring and wish for anything, you will have it. If it is to be at the bottom of the sea, you can be there with perfect safety; if it is to come on shore, your wishes will be immediately accomplished."

"This is awfully jolly," said Cockie; "I am delighted at such an adventure."

"Now, my dear," said the Fairy, "let me blindfold you. When you are in the sea, you can take the bandage off. You were so kind to me when you thought I was only an infirm old woman, that I really would like to afford you a little amusement, by giving you a peep into Seacod-land."

"I'm not at all afraid," said Cockie, drawing himself up. "I once thrashed a Killie—that's a young rough, you know—because he struck my little brother."

The Fairy smiled, and bandaged his eyes. She then gave him something to eat, which Cockie said was "the jolliest food he had ever got."

Malvina, for that was the Fairy's name, led him by the hand. He went boldly on, feeling the sea becoming deeper and deeper. At last she bade him farewell, and let him go. With a plunge which took the breath out of him, down he went, down, down, until his feet reached the ground. No wonder he thought of touching his ring and wishing himself at home; but he refrained, and very soon took the bandage off.

When Cockie opened his eyes, you may be sure he was astonished to find himself at the bottom of the sea. But, knowing that he could come up again when he liked, and feeling quite warm and comfortable, he determined to see all the sights of the cod world. "Time enough to fear," he said, "when danger comes." So he sat down on a large round stone and looked about him. He seemed to be in a great forest of huge creeping plants. The long tangle spread its huge brown leaves overhead, and partly concealed the green sea above; innumerable fish of every kind swam around him. Large lobsters and crabs moved along the ground, never thinking about the fish market. Shell-fish of every kind crawled over the stones and gravel, with their shells open and fingers out, seeking for food. One huge red Cod swam up to Cockie, and stared at him with his big goggle eyes.

"Who are you?" asked the Cod. "What sort of fish are you? Where are you from? Blown in by the last gale, eh? What do you want, flounders or whiting?"

"What's your business, you unmannerly fellow?" replied Cockie. And he gave a good smart tap to the Cod's nose with his wand, which made him swim off, as if in great fright.

By-and-bye he came slowly back, with a lot of small cods after him. Keeping at a respectful distance, he said, "I beg pardon, Sir Prince

I know from whom you got that wand. Any friend of Queen Malvina is welcome here. I am chief of the red cod, my name is Red Ronald, and I have authority as far as the Black Buoy."

"I wish to see Codland, then," said Cockie ; "will you show it to me?"
"Since your Highness condescends to visit our country," replied Red



Ronald, "I shall be proud to show it. Be so good as to wait here a moment until I return. Let me, in the meantime, introduce to you a neighbour of mine, a very civil Turbot, who has travelled far and knows the world."

The Turbot waddled up, and looking right and left with his goggle eyes like side lamps, made the best bow he could.

"A stranger in this kintra, I'm thinkin'?" asked the Turbot.

"It is my first visit," replied Cockie.

"Aweel," said the Turbot, "I hae been in foreign pairts mysel'; I hae been as far south as Ayrshire! I was originally frae Girvan; my feither leaved on a bank there for a dizen year, but was unfort'nate in the heuk way, and was grippet, they tell me, for a Counceel denner in Glasgow, though I dinna ken mysel' what that means. A' his family were driven awa' by a big whale that harried the coast, and we traivelled frae the Mull o' Cantyre—an awfu' coorse, please ye—tae this."

"A long voyage indeed, but you have got into a good country at last," remarked Cockie.

"As tae that, it's just middlin'—no' to be compaired wi' Girvan or Ballantrae. Na, na! the cockles are varra puir, the mussels hae nae flavour, the sand eels are wee jimp half-starved critters. I've seen me a hail day pottering about for a male o' meat. But it's a bonny place. Ye ne'er saw finer wuds than these, nor cleaner water. It's a paradise o' beauty."

"Come here, Saney!" shouted the Turbot to a large Eel that was swimming past. "Here's a young Prince on his traivels." Then turning to Cockie, "This is an auld residenter here, a maist respectable eel."

"Yet," the Turbot whispered low in Cockie's ear, "a greedy, discontented bodie for a' that. Gie him a kick on the head, if he tries tae grip yer taes."

"It's a puir place this tae leeve in, is't no'?" asked the Turbot.

"Hoa can it pe cood place, when there's no ae poddie in't once in te five year?" remarked the old Highland Eel. "Since te pig gauger an' te poatman was droont, I never cot coot pellyfull."

Cockie was so disgusted that he very soon sent the eel about his business.

By this time the Red Chief had returned, having collected a great number of friendly fish—lythe, haddock, whiting, gurnet, mackerel, with shoals of small fry—all to do honour to the Prince.

When Cockie saw the shoal, he fumbled in his pocket and wished to get hooks and lines to fish!

"Will your Royal Highness——" said the chief.

"I'm not a Royal Highness, but Cockie Lockie," said the boy.

"We know manners too well in these parts, sir, to be ignorant of the honour due to any one who comes here as the friend of our Queen Malvina! Please, sir, will you follow me to my palace?"

At this all the fish formed themselves in line on each side, moving

gracefully along, and ever and anon turning their eyes in wonder on Cockie. They passed over deep dark valleys where they could see no bottom, but only gleams of some large fish that were swimming about far down. They came to the edge of great precipices, with yawning caves, and passed over plains of pure white sand. Cockie saw old anchors stuck among the stones, the remains of wrecked vessels that had sunk long ago; and he was sure he saw gold and silver lying in heaps, but could not lift any from the bottom, although he tried to do so.

In one place they came to the wreck of a large ship: all the masts were gone, the sides were broken, and the timbers were sticking up like great ribs.

"I remember when that wreck took place," said the old Cod. "It was an awful night! None of us could face the sea. It ran in fury, and tumbled everywhere about. Next morning what a cheering sight was the dead bodies of the drowned sailors! But just come here, follow me!" And the Cod led Cockie Lockie along the broken deck, and into the cabin, and there in a berth was the skeleton of a man.

"He pe clean pickit long while pack. Ha, ha, ha!" said the old Highland Eel as he wriggled out of a hole and swam off, afraid of Cockie's wand.

"This frightens me," said the boy; "let us go, I hate it."

"It's an ill wind that blows nobody good," said the Cod.

"So it seems," replied the boy in disgust.

The home of Red Roland was worthy of a great cod. It was a lofty cave in the midst of large boulders, which afforded recesses without number for all the tribe. The noblest tangle festooned the roof, and smooth green seaweed covered the walls, while nice sand and shells formed the floor. Most beautiful colours—green, blue, and red—lighted up the place. The chief politely asked Cockie to be seated.

Cockie began to think that, since he was treated with so much honour and respect, it behoved him to talk like a man, and to introduce such topics as he sometimes heard discussed at home.

"How do you employ your time here?" he asked. "Do you care for politics?"

"Politics?" inquired Ronald, with hesitation. "What's politics?—bait for fish?"

"I don't know myself very well what they are," said Cockie; "but they are something gentlemen like to talk about. You know of course about such men as Bright, Disraeli, and Gladstone?"

"What sort of fish are they, please your Highness? Flat-fish, eels, or sharks? I never heard of them."

Cockie was astonished at this ignorance. "Surely you know about the things we all talk of,—schools and churches, the army and navy, cricket and football, the rule-of-three and holidays, and all that sort of thing that goes on above?" said Cockie, pointing upwards.

"Ah, my Prince!" said the Cod, opening his mouth, "don't make a fool of me! You are young: I am old and have seen life. *We* know there is no world but this, and no beings but fish; and that you are a fish too, only a fairy fish—a fish in disguise."

"No world but this one under water! No beings but fish!" exclaimed Cockie with wonder. "Do you mean to tell me that you do not——"

"Oh!" said the Cod, moving his tail and fins as if to stop the argument, "I know all that can be said on that question! We have here among us seals and otters who pretend to be wiser than their neighbours, and tell all sorts of stories about a place where there are creatures who live in air, but die in water; who move along the dry ground on long fins, who have no gills; and all that kind of nonsense. They give lectures on these subjects, but we know why—it is to induce young fish to attend them, and then be eaten up. I never go near them."

"But," said Cockie, "the seals and otters are quite right, for I myself belong to that very world!"

"You!" exclaimed the Cod, opening his eyes. "You! and yet you live in the water without air! Oh, Prince! fie! fie! You to try and deceive *me*!" And Ronald turned tail, as if indignant at such an attempt to impose upon him.

Cockie was again nonplussed, and in politeness changed the subject of conversation.

"Are you married?" asked Cockie.

"Yes," replied Red Ronald, "and I have a large family too."

"Doing well?" inquired Cockie, with a wise look.

"Pretty well," replied the chief. "Some are good workers and support themselves; others have gone out to sea; several have left us in a mysterious way; the seals, otters, and other pirates and robbers have destroyed some, poor fellows!" And here Red Ronald opened his mouth and sighed, rubbing his eyes on the wreck. "But," he continued, "my youngest son gives me great annoyance at present, and I have asked our Malvina to advise him."

"May I ask what is wrong?" inquired Cockie.

“Why, the young stupid,” replied Roland, “who has hardly a square yard of the fishing-bank in his possession as yet, has taken it into his head to fall in love with a young grey codlin’, whose father, Donald More, is chief beyond the buoy. He has become so idle that he has not killed even a green crab for a week, and spends his time in writing letters to her. Here is one I have just picked up among the tangle; pray read it!” And his large red gills moved violently.

The boy blushed as he took the letter from the chief, for he had never seen a love letter before, and scarcely heard of one. But not wishing to appear unpolite, he read it. It was this:—

“Sweet and beautiful codlin’! I am dying of love! Oh, how I admire your lovely eyes, and red coral gills, and elegant tail, and silvery fins, and rounded lips, and large throat! I can do nothing but think of you, and watch you when the tide is flowing and ebbing as you swim through the bowers of Seacod-land! I have quite lost my appetite. I have not eaten a cockle for a week; crabs sicken me; mussels tempt me no more; herring-fry have lost their charm. I lie on the sand in silent meditation. Even the flounders despise me. Unless you will give me your fin and be mine, I will in despair swallow the first hook I see! Be mine! I will work for you summer and winter, and fly with you to the Sound of Mull, ay, even to Staffa—anywhere—if I have you only by my side! Meet me by moonlight near the buoy! Your devoted lover,

“YOUNG RONALD.”

“What a fool!” remarked Cockie. “I hope one of my brothers may hook him just. But I must leave you to manage him; I don’t understand being in love.”

“I think I will apprentice him to a dog-fish or shark,” said Red Ronald, “and send him off to Barra Head or St. Kilda; he is quite useless here.”

Cockie, wishing again to change the subject, asked, “Do you suffer much in this country?”

“Why, yes,” replied the chief; “we have hard times often, and suffer from cold as well as hunger.”

Here Cockie was at home, and immediately replied, “My mother always gives me a hot bath; flannel round the throat; nice gruel; sometimes a mustard blister; and some cod-liver oil—Oh! I beg pardon, hot water? gruel? mustard?—I forgot. I suppose you could not—No—I—it is impossible for you to get these things, eh? or to bathe

your feet, as you have none? Well, to tell you the truth, I don't know what cods should do when they have a cold."

"Nor I," said the chief. "But our great difficulty," he added after a pause, "is with what we call the mystery."

"The mystery! What do you mean by that?"

"Why," said the Cod, "it's been going on from time immemorial. The finest bits come down to us, we know not how. But any cod that touches them is sure to go away, we know not where. It's a great mystery—a great mystery!" said the Cod, meditating.

"I'll bet a sixpence," said the boy, "it's hand-line fishing."

"What do you mean?" asked the chief.

Cockie, not to hurt the chief's feelings, did not further explain, but asked him to go into details.

"Well, sir," said the chief, "you see——" here he stopped and peered out of the door. "There is the mystery at this moment!" he exclaimed. Cockie looked out, and saw three hand-lines let down with first-rate bait on the hooks, and he saw the shadow of a boat above.

"Come here, all my clan," and he sent off messengers to fetch them. What a number assembled! Ronald brought them all into his large hall, and keeping by the door, thus addressed them:—

"My friends, in the presence of this young prince, let me again warn you against the mystery, that Malvina, our friend, may know how I followed her advice. I see the thing has begun again. Cods and codlins! listen! You see these exquisite mussels hanging near. I admit that they might well make our mouths water, but, I implore you, touch them not! for if you do, where are you? Gone! no one knows where."

"Don't believe a word of it!" whispered one young cod.

"An old frightened fogie!" whispered another.

"We must be jolly, come what may," said a third.

"In my youth," continued Red Ronald, "I was once deluded, and though I got off, the thing stuck in my mouth for months, and gave me fearful toothache. My poor brother Bob had one of them attached to his gills for six months! Poor fellow, he got into low spirits, and choked himself in a net. How many of our family have disappeared!"

"Humbug!" said a red cod, with very red eyes; "it is easy to preach, but what can a fellow do with such splendid morsels hanging right before his nose? Danger? nonsense! Any cod of sense can see the thing if it is there, and avoid it, or he can pick the nice bit off it. I have picked scores off without injury, and can do so again." Thus saying, he sprang

past the chief, laughing. He snatched at the bait, crying, "Come, along, boys, and have a feed!"

Half a dozen followed his example.

In a moment there was a wriggle, one crying out "Murder!" another, "Catch my tail, will you? and hold fast!" But all vanished out of sight, and Cockie thought he heard his brother Jack above, saying, "Haul away! we've a splendid take!"

"There they go, silly fools!" said the chief. "I have in vain warned and taught them."



After a while, he remarked to Cockie, "Look now at that couple of mussels floating down with the tide. There's no danger taking *these*; for there's no line attached to them; and I have no objection to swallow them, for to tell the truth I am very hungry."

Alas, old Cod! *He* saw no line, for it was fine gut. Opening his large mouth in a dignified manner, he swallowed the delicious morsels. But in a moment he was struggling and plunging.

"*Ha ee agam!*" cried one of the fishers in Gaelic; "I have him! such an enormous fish! Easy, Johnny, be careful. Up he comes! up he comes!"

Cockie could not help flying to his friend's rescue. He managed to

cut the gut, and as he did so heard a voice above saying in despair, "Oh me! me! he's off! and I am sure he has taken away my hook with him."

The old Cod was almost dead. He lay on his side gasping. "Thank you, thank you, my Prince," he cried at last; "it was nearly all over with me. Example is better than precept. Alas! alas! there's no fools like old fools;" and he spat some blood out of his mouth. "Phit! phit! it's cruel work," he said, "for any one, whoever they be, to kill us in this way. It is cruel, cruel! I love peace, and not war. 'Live and let live' is our motto in Codland."

But he spoke very indistinctly, as the hook was still in his mouth, and kept him always spitting as he tried to get it out, though he did not from pride wish to confess its presence.

At this moment the young cods, who had gathered round the old chief in his suffering, rushed in great excitement out of the cave. Cockie heard such a row outside, such a flapping of tails, and foam, and splutter! What was this but an otter chasing a salmon!

"Well done the salmon!" the Cod cried as he fled hither and thither from the otter; "ten mussels to one on him!" But the flounders and turbot backed the otter, because they think the salmon a proud fish, who looks down on them. "One large whelk to twenty mussels on the otter!" shouted a flounder. How the otter swam, and the salmon swam! through the tangle, among the stones, up and down, as if they were mad! They both created great excitement among all the fish, who cried at one time, "Hurrah for the salmon!" at another, "Hurrah for the otter!" In the meantime the otter had to ascend to breathe, and the salmon escaped.

"Do you eat each other up in that way?" asked Cockie of the wounded chief, who was dozing among the wreck.

"How else could we live?" replied the chief. "Every one for himself, you know."

"I thought you said, 'Live and let live' was your motto?" remarked Cockie.

"Live? that we must," replied the chief, "and let live too, when—hugh! hugh! phit, phit—phiz, phiz!"—here quite a fit of coughing and sneezing seized him. "As to let live," he continued, "so it is, no doubt, when we can; but to live ourselves, which of course is the first thing, we are always obliged to hunt and kill other fish for food—in fact, they are—phit! phit!—of no use but for food to us."

"Then I don't see," said Cockie, "why we should not do to you as you do to others!"

The chief pretended to be asleep. But if there was a row when the otter chased the salmon, it was nothing to what took place now, for not only the otter, but a seal, and a bottle-nosed whale, and a whole shoal of porpoises came rushing headlong into Codland. A cry arose "Escape



for your lives!" "A whale!" cried one; "A seal!" cried another. "The otter!" cried a third; "Porpoises!" screamed others. The old chief, coughing and spitting, dived down into deep water out of sight. In a moment the palace was empty, and Cockie, to his horror, found himself, he knew not how, surrounded by all this piratical crew.

"Crunch him!" cried the Otter.

"Cut him up!" cried the Seal.

"Swallow him!" screamed the Whale.

"Chase him!" shouted the Porpoises.

Poor Cockie! Where was his ring? It had slipped from his finger!

"Oh, what a fool I was!" he cried, as he bolted among the tangle to hide himself, "to let mere curiosity get me into such a scrape as this. What sent me into Godland? Oh, papa!" he cried, "help! help!"

In vain he tried to escape. Wherever he looked from behind the stones, he saw some of these hungry eyes watching him. He was a capital runner on dry land, and a famous player at cricket, or "I spy." So he tried every expedient, and was baffling the Seal with his big head on the one hand, and getting a rock between him and the Otter on the other, when to his horror he saw the Whale slowly moving towards him in the clear green water, his little eyes staring on him, and his mouth open. It was all over with Cockie! But seeing the shadow of the boat above water, he made one spring up, and rose beside it. Seizing hold of the gunwale, he had just time to see that his father and mother, brothers and sisters, were in it fishing, and to hear a cry of "Cockie!" from them as they saw him suddenly appear, when the Whale rose and struck the boat. Then in midst of terror indescribable, he heard the kind voice of old Shonagveg saying—

"You've had a fine sleep, calf of my heart!—Why are you crying out that way?"

"The whale!" shouted Cockie, starting up from the heather and rubbing his eyes, his heart beating like a drum.

"What whale, my dear?" asked Shonagveg, tenderly.

Cockie, half ashamed, but feeling very thankful, asked, smilingly, "Are you not a fairy, Shonagveg?"

"No, no, my love; there's no such creatures now-a-days. Toot, toot, no, no! I'm just Shonagveg. Take this drink of nice cold spring water. Now let me wash your face and hands. There now, you are quite awake, my dove!"

"Oh, yes," said Cockie, "quite awake; but don't tell Tommy or Johnny about this, or they'll make a fool of me, and tease me about the whale."

"I'll not say a word about it, my dear, depend on that. You did not hear my story I was going to tell you. But I will tell it some other time."

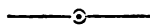
"Thank you," said Cockie; "I'll go home now."

"It's time," replied Shonagveg; "and I'll go with you, and show you



the way through the rocks. I see your father's boat returning from the fishing."

So vivid was the dream that Cockie was quite relieved when he saw the boat returning from the buoy. And when he saw the fine lot of cod they had caught, he almost believed they were his old friends about whom he had been dreaming. At the fireside he told his dream, to the great amusement of them all. His mother said it was the quantity of milk he had drunk when heated, which had given him the nightmare; and she said to him: "Hear my conclusions, Cockie: one is, that all dreams are of our own making, mere night stories which we tell ourselves, their character depending very much on the state of our digestion; the other is, that as your digestion seems to be somewhat out of order, I shall give you a dose of Gregory's mixture, Master Cockie, to cure it and to cool your imagination! So good night!"



FAIRY GOLD.

I.

"I DON'T believe in fairies, nor goblins neither," said Tom, sitting on the fence, swinging his legs.

"I do," his sister Susy said. She was weeding the garden outside the cottage, and, as she stooped down below him, Tom tossed her curls about with his boot. There was only one point on which this brother and sister could not agree. Susy was positive that there were fairies, and all granny's tales were true; Tom was equally positive that fairies were "shams," and the stories were nonsense.

So Susy looked up from her weeding, and Tom ceased swinging his legs, and they contradicted each other to their hearts' content. It came at last to—

"There are."

"*There aren't.*"

"There are."

"THERE AREN'T."

"I say there are."

"I won't quarrel with you, Susy; you're only a girl."

"I don't care," Susy said, with a red face and a trembling voice.

"Neither do I," whined Tom, mimicking.

"There *are* fairies," said Susy, turning away with her handful of weeds. She wanted to have the last word.

"There *AREN'T*," Tom shouted after her.

And then it came to "There are!" "There aren't!" "There are!" "There aren't!" again; and no one knows where it would have ended, had not granny's voice been heard from the cottage, crying, "Tom! are you there, Tom?" And in he went.

II.

"I'M going to the village," Tom said, when he came out two minutes after.

"What for?" asked Sue.

"Miss Curiosity!" responded Tom, who always chuckled over a secret. And he walked off without telling her.

As the morning wore on, Susy became tired of being alone. "If Tom is gone to the village, I sha'n't stay here," she thought at last; and, putting on her hat, she ran away to a dark little wood, through which wound the road to the village. There, sitting down on the gnarled roots of a big tree, she enjoyed the shade, and the sight of the green grass and ferns and the grand boughs above; and, of course, she began to think about the fairies,—how they came out and danced on moonlight nights, drinking out of acorn-cups and hiding under mushrooms, and how they sometimes came to people and did wonderful things by waving their wands, just as Cinderella's godmother did. How nice to have a fairy godmother! What a pity granny at home was not a fairy! Then she felt in her pocket and took out a bright new farthing. She held it where the sunshine came down through the leaves, and made it shine till it was dazzling.

"It is like a half-sovereign," she thought, "just the colour of the one mother had on Saturday. I wish a fairy would come now and change it into a half-sovereign."

But no fairy came, and Susy forgot all about them in gathering wild flowers and feathery grass. At last, sitting down with her back against the mossy trunk, she arranged her flowers and felt in her pocket for a string to tie them. Oh! where was the farthing? It was gone. It must have fallen somewhere on the ground. She jumped up and searched far and near, remembering that a piece of money may roll a long way; but



it was nowhere to be found. Standing still in the middle of a grassy space, she gave a last glance round her. There was something shining in a heap of fallen leaves. She ran to the spot, but a breath of wind blew the red leaves over it. She swept them off with her hand, and picked up the coin in triumph. And what a cry of delight she gave when she looked at it! "Oh, the fairies! They *have* changed it! It is a half-sovereign!"

Yes, it was true. There was no mistake about it. On one side was the Queen's head, looking, somehow, different from what it had been on the farthing; and on the other side were the arms of England and the crown.

She pinched her arm to make sure that she was awake, and never took her eyes off the coin, lest the fairies might change it back again into a farthing.

III.

HOMEWARD she ran; but before reaching the cottage she remembered one of granny's old stories, and thought with great sorrow, "I must not tell;" for she had been longing to tell every one, even the labourers she met in the field, that the fairies had given her gold. But granny had told her once about some one to whom the fairies sent money, and how he was to say nothing about it, because the fairies wanted to know if he could keep a secret. But he was a great gossip, always talking, and he told his good fortune to all his friends; then when he went to the box where he had left his gold, he found only a bunch of buttercups.

Susy was sorry, then, when she thought she would have to hide her money, but she said to herself, "Perhaps if I do not talk and boast as that man did, but keep the money without saying a word, the fairies may send me more. And then some day, when I have a lot of money, I'll bring it downstairs, looking at it hard all the time so that it can't fly away; and I'll put it in mother's hand, and tell her to hold fast. Then we shall be rich. Those dear fairies! Tom must be a bad boy to talk about them as he does. I wish I could tell Tom; but I shall not. I must be wise, and keep it secret."

IV.

WE must now go back and follow Tom on his way to the village. "If you meet any of the boys, don't go with them," granny had said,

when he was leaving her at the door. "Come straight back, mind; and tell the landlord your father will give him more on Saturday night. Take care you be polite to the landlord, Tom; and—and—don't go with those boys."

"No, I won't," said Tom for the third time, and hurried away, for he did not like granny's good advice, especially when it was long. And then, after exchanging that passing word with Susy, and styling her Miss Curiosity, he walked down the road, whistling, with his hands in his pockets.

How *could* it have happened that, in less than half-an-hour after he had said to the old woman, "No, I won't," Tom was away in the woods bird-nesting with half a dozen other boys? He was a famous climber, and went up branch by branch into the tree-tops, and mercilessly robbed the poor birds of their eggs. At last the boys declared they had had enough of the "fun" for that morning. The mother birds had as yet scarcely time to come back to their nests and find that cruel hands had been there before them.

Tom felt in his pockets. Then he got very red in the face, began to speak, and stopped suddenly.

"What is it?" said one of his comrades.

"What is what?" asked Tom, trying to look as if nothing had happened; and he began to talk about the nests, and the eggs, and the climbing, as fast as ever he could. They walked back all together out of the wood, and then Tom left the others, saying he had something to do in the village.

But why was it that, if he had something to do in the village, he watched the others out of sight, and then ran back to the wood as fast as two stout legs would carry him,—back to the woods and to the foot of the tree where he had last climbed? There he groped on the ground for something he had lost. It would not have done to let the others know he had lost it. They were idle boys, and he only hoped one of them had not found it already without saying anything. Foolish, daring Tom! why did it never strike him that, if he could not trust the other boys about money, they were no companions for him, and would only bring him into mischief? He searched and searched near this tree and near that, but he failed everywhere, and in despair he walked away to the village, just to kill time and think what he should do.

Tom's grandmother had given him half a sovereign which had been left by his father that morning for him to take to the landlord as payment

of part of the cottage rent, and it was lost because he had gone bird-nesting with those boys, after all his promises. What would his father say? What use to him were those speckled eggs in his pocket? He hated every one of them, hated the birds, hated everything; and in this sweet humour he spent the afternoon.

V.

It was about four o'clock when he returned to the cottage, but he did not go in. He had no excuse ready yet, so he only came to the garden fence.

"I do believe in the fairies," cried Susan, merrily swinging on the gate.

"What do I care about the fairies? I wish they were all choked!" grumbled Tom.

"Oh, Tom!" his little sister exclaimed in horror, "don't say that, because they might make you care, you know. They sometimes do things to people for spite. Are you coming in, Tom?"

"No, I'm going off to the wood. Don't you say that you saw me here. I sha'n't be home for an hour to come."

Again he went to the wood, and searched carefully wherever he remembered climbing or standing that morning; but the boys had walked about a great deal, and he was beginning to think it hopeless, when, not with a sigh but with a whistle of relief, he saw something glittering in a little crevice at the roots of a tree. He snatched the coin from its hiding-place, and then flung it aside in disgust. It had nearly deceived him, but it was only a farthing,—a bright farthing new from the Mint. All at once he thought of the fairies, and how Susy said they sometimes did things for spite; and, do what he would, he could not quite keep out of his mind the idea that perhaps there were fairies after all.

He spent a long time thinking what he could say on his return home. His father would be so angry. "I can't help it," thought Tom desperately, "I must tell a lie,—just for once. Suppose I say, 'I gave it to the landlord, and he sent you his thanks, and it will be all right to pay the rest whenever you like.' Then father will say—what will he say? Why, he'll say, 'Where's the receipt?' of course. No, that won't do. Suppose I tell him that I met a gipsy man on the road, and he knocked me over and took it. Yes, that sounds well. What would father say? I'm afraid he'd wonder how the gipsy knew I had it. That won't do.

Well, suppose I say it was not a half-sovereign granny gave me; she made a mistake. It was only a bright farthing. See, I've got it. But I know it *was* a half-sovereign I had. Still, what would he say to that, I wonder? Would it go down with him?" Tom shook his head. "Granny would say it *was* gold she gave me. Then I'd say the fairies must have done it, granny, for I had not the new farthing,—and father would come down on me for talking nonsense!"

On that point Tom became very miserable, and spent ten full minutes sitting on a fallen tree listening to the grasshoppers and wishing he had been made one instead of a boy. In the end a new idea struck him. Untruths would not do; that was plain. They might do for the moment, but they would not hold together long. Would not the truth be better after all?

"If I try that," he thought, "how would it sound? Suppose I go in and find father vexed because I've been out so long, and then I say plump that I lost the money, and stayed looking for it, and only found a farthing. Well, let's see; I'd get my ears boxed and all that kind of thing; but here goes, and I'll tell the truth."

VI.

WITHOUT delaying a minute, home Tom went, and told the truth too, all of it, including the bird-nesting. And he did get his "ears boxed and all that kind of thing." His grandmother scolded, and his mother cried, sitting in the corner with her apron to her eyes, sobbing out that he was a cruel boy to have his father working hard, and then to go and lose the money.

Susy was upstairs and heard the row, for there was enough of a row to fill the house with noise, between the mother crying and pitying Tom in her heart all the while, granny scolding, Tom howling, and his father giving him, as he called it, "a piece of his mind."

Susy stood at the top of the stairs unable to make out what new mischief Tom had been guilty of, until presently he came up, pushed her out of the way, and walked past into his room. The little sister followed. She always sympathized with Tom, no matter what he had been doing; but to-night he would not listen to her, though she tried hard to console him. In reality Tom was more grieved than people thought about the loss and his mother's trouble; and, as he sat looking out through the little window in the roof, he felt too depressed to say anything to this curious prattler at his side.

When all other resources failed, she fell back on the last.

"Let me tell you a story, Tom, a fairy tale,—shall I?"

"No, you sha'n't," said Tom, crossly.

"It's a true one."

"I don't care."

"May I not tell it to you, Tom, please?"

"Go away, and don't bother me, Sue!"

She waited a minute, and then began again. "Cheer up, Tom, do, and let me tell you the story about myself and the fairies."

"Oh, you teasing thing! I wish the fairies would run away with you," said the brother, smiling at last, because it is very hard for a boy not to smile when a little curly-haired sister throws one arm round his neck, and puts a finger of the other hand in his eye in her attempts to wipe away the last trace of a tear. "Come along, then. Tell us the story, and be quick," said Tom, pulling her up on his knee.

"Well, I don't know if I ought, because the fairies may not be pleased. But I don't mind that, Tom; I'll please you. After you went out to-day I was in the wood, and I had a new farthing just like a half-sovereign. I wished so much a fairy would come and change it into one, and then, Tom, I forgot all about the wish. But the fairies did not forget, because I lost the farthing in the grass, and when I found it, it was a beautiful real half-sovereign. And, Tom dear, I meant to keep it secret to please the fairies; but I couldn't when I saw you in trouble; so you must change it for me as quick as you can to-night or to-morrow, or they may take it away again; and then you can have as much as you like to buy a new boat with, and I'll keep sixpence, because, you know, that's lots for me."

VII.

SHE fancied Tom's glee and surprise all came out of the fairy tale, and so they did, of course, but not exactly as she thought.

"Give me the thing," he said, jumping up.

She brought it at once, but to her dismay he rushed off immediately, going downstairs four steps at a time, and burst into the kitchen with a triumphant shout, "Father, Susy found it in the wood, and here it is!"

Tom's trouble was over. He had the satisfaction of hearing his father say that he was proud to see he had told the truth, though it was only what every boy should do. To his great joy they trusted him to take the money to the landlord that evening; and being trusted once again, he

did his business well and wisely, and so deserved to be trusted not once but many times.

As for Susy, when her fairy tale ended like this, she hid herself and her grief in the recess of the window upstairs, and looking out at the fields and the dark trees of the far-off wood, she implored the fairies to try her once again, and she would not offend them and have their gift taken away. Her mother had hard work to convince her that it was really the coin Tom had lost. Then she told her that when money was found it never came from the fairies, but there was always some one who had dropped it, to whom it ought to be given back at once.

“And so keep no secrets, Susy,” she concluded; “no secrets about anything from me, and remember there’s no fairy money, though there are fairy tales. Go down now, and say to granny that I asked her to tell you a long story; and don’t mind Tom if he makes fun of you and the fairies when he comes back.”

THE MAGIC ORGAN.

LONG ago there lived an organ-builder, so clever and ingenious, that he made an organ which would play of itself whenever a bridal couple of whom God approved came into the church to be married—so that the fame of the organ-builder spread far and near. When he himself, with a great company of his friends, came to be married, he thought, “Now, how finely my organ will play!” But, as it happened, the organ was quite silent, for the organ-builder was so full of pride and self-conceit, that God was not pleased with him.

The organ-builder, however, never thought that it was for his fault that the organ was mute, but laid the blame on his bride. He spoke not a word to her the whole day, and when evening came, he made up a bundle of clothes and left the city.

He wandered many hundred miles, and at last settled in a foreign country, where he lived ten lonely years. At the end of that time a great longing came over him to go home, and the feeling that, after all, he had not behaved kindly or well to his bride. The more he thought about it, the more he felt convinced that he had acted cruelly.



Then he resolved to return, and set out on his journey, and every step he drew nearer to his old home, he grew more and more sorry for what he had done, and more anxious to make amends to the wife he had deserted.

As he entered the gates of the town, a funeral procession met him with a great number of people crying bitterly.

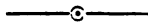
"Who is dead?" he asked.

"It is the good and beautiful wife of the organ-builder, she who was deserted by her cruel husband on her wedding day," said one.

The man bent his head, and followed the funeral into the church. No one knew him, or thought about him. But as, with his hand on the coffin, he crossed the threshold, the organ he had built suddenly pealed forth in glorious melody.

So the organ-builder knew that God had forgiven him.

When the last tones died away, the man sank upon the pavement, and those that ran to raise him found that he was lifeless. And the people, recognizing him as the husband of the dead woman, laid him beside her in the same grave. Then the organ once more played in low and tender tones, and it has never been known to play of itself since.



THE BIRD WITH THE GOLDEN TAIL.

NELLY was a little girl who never could get up in the morning,—at least, so she said; but whether anybody or anything really held her down and prevented her from doing so, we are not quite sure. At any rate, it was very difficult to persuade her to make the effort. The cocks would crow under her window till they, poor things, were quite hoarse; the birds would sing, the sparrows chatter, the daylight would look in full upon her, the sun peep through the blind, and still Nelly would sleep on—even though her mother called her once, twice, thrice,—who knows how many times?

She never thought, to be sure, this good mother, of shaking her little girl, or of giving her a dose of "cold pig," which might certainly have had the effect of rousing, if not of startling her; but Nelly was an only child, and Nelly's mother possibly over-indulgent.

Nelly's parents were poor people—that is to say, if people whose wants in a moderate way are all supplied, and who owe no man anything, can ever be said to be *poor*. Her father was a carpenter who went out early to his work, and as they kept no servant, Mrs. Merton had to be up betimes to get her husband's breakfast, light the fire, sweep the room, and boil the kettle. In all these little household duties Nelly took no share, and though her mother would certainly have wished her little daughter to show herself more helpful, she did not insist upon it, but took the burden on her own shoulders quite naturally, in a way that mothers have, and made excuses for "the child," if ever, even in her own heart, it occurred to her that her darling was selfish or indolent.

"She has her books and her lessons," the fond mother would say. "I can't expect her to do everything at once."

But the fact was that Nelly had her bed, and the two were so fond of one another that they could not be persuaded to part company, and so far from doing everything, she was doing nothing. But one fine day Nelly went on a visit to an old aunt of hers who lived in a neighbouring village. Now, this old lady was a somewhat peculiar person. She was, as folks say, well-to-do. She had a nice little cottage of her own, and could well have afforded to pay a servant had she chosen to keep one; but on the contrary Aunt Nancy was accustomed to say that "for her part she found bits o' gals more trouble than they were worth; that by the time you'd stood over 'em you might as well do the work yourself; and as for breakages—there," Aunt Nancy would exclaim, "if I'd kept *gals* all my life I shouldn't have had a tea-cup to call my own in my old age." In which there was doubtless a great deal of truth, supposing that Aunt Nancy had not now and then replenished the china-cupboard.

The first morning of Nelly's stay with her aunt she was rather surprised to find when she came downstairs that the breakfast-things were all cleared away, though a cup of milk and some bread and butter had been set aside for her on the dresser.

"Don't you eat any breakfast, Aunt Nancy?" asked the little girl.

"Not in the middle of the day, my dear," returned her aunt; "I'm thinking about dinner then."

"Oh," said Nelly, slightly offended, "mother always keeps breakfast till I come."

"And father?" asked Aunt Nancy.

"Oh, no, father's out—ever so early—you know."

"Um—umph!" said Aunt Nancy, as if she had just happened to catch

a fly in her throat. "And who makes father's breakfast, and sees to him, and makes things comfortable and lays the breakfast, and lights the fire and such-like?" inquired the old lady.

"Why mother—of course," returned Nelly, wondering at the question.

"Um! umph! um! umph!" grunted Aunt Nancy, as if the fly in her throat had grown unpleasantly lively. "It's a pity," she said presently, after a few moments' silence, "that you don't try to get up earlier, Nelly. You'll never catch the bird with the golden tail, I am afraid."

"Do what, Aunt Nancy? What bird? I never heard of him."

"Pshaw!" exclaimed the old lady. "What education is coming to! Here's a fuss that's made about school boards and schools and no end of things, and here's actually a child of—how old are you, Nelly?"

"Ten, Aunt Nancy."

"—Of ten that never heard of the bird with the golden tail; it is positively shocking."

At this Nelly was rather abashed, for as she had managed to get a prize for ancient history and arithmetic, last half, she thought she ought to know, and believed she did know, pretty nearly all about everything.

"Well, aunty, what about the bird?" asked the little girl.

"He is an early bird."

"And picks up the worms, doesn't he?" suggested Nelly. "I've heard somewhere about him, I'm sure."

"I don't know what *he* does. The thing is what *you* ought to do," said Aunt Nancy. "Perhaps it mayn't be the same bird, either. *My* bird has a golden tail, but he is only seen when the sun is rising, so you must be up betimes to catch him, and it isn't everybody can do that,—only people who know what they are about, you know."

Whereupon Nelly, who took rather a pride in being thought clever, said, "I should like to catch him, Aunt Nancy; I daresay I could if I tried; don't you think so?"

"I feel certain of it, my dear," said the old lady; "but you mustn't be discouraged if you don't succeed at first in even catching a sight of him. He is pretty sure to be shy, and—you will have to be up so early in the morning, you see!"

"Well," said Nelly, considering, "I suppose if I made up my mind very particularly for anything very important—"

"Exactly," said Aunt Nancy, "I thought so. Now if you really make up your mind to watch for the bird, I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll give you a bag of seed to lure the bird with, and a bag of salt to put on his

tail when you can catch him, and I will rouse you every morning at day break—and then——”

“Aunt Nancy!” cried Nelly, quite excitedly, “I’ll catch him—I’ll catch him and take him home to mother,—you see if I don’t.”

So that night Nelly went to bed with two bags at her side, the bag of seed and the bag of salt, ready for her morning expedition, and her latest and sleepest words to her aunt were entreaties to call her “in good time.”



Aunt Nancy awoke Nelly betimes the next morning, but the little girl was so unused to consider anything but just the pleasure of the moment, that, though she was very anxious to *be* up, it was some long while before she could *get* up, and when at length, a bag under each arm, she made her way in a great hurry and fuss down the stairs, Aunt Nancy had done nearly all the work of the house —swept the room ready for breakfast, lit the fire, and set the kettle to boil.

“You’re a little late for the bird this morning, my dear,” said Aunt Nancy, “but at any rate you’re in time for breakfast, which is a good thing to begin *with*.”

“How tiresome!” said Nelly. “I thought I was *so* early, but I’ll be earlier to-morrow, you’ll see, Aunt Nancy.”

The next day and the next, Nelly with her two bags was up betimes



and out in the garden looking for the golden-tailed bird, but not a sight of him did she get.

On the third morning she began to be rather discouraged and cross about the matter, especially as the weather happened to be wet, and she

could not well go out into the garden to look for her bird, but she sat at the window looking out, with a somewhat woeful little face, for the best part of an hour, while her aunt bustled about and did the house-work.

As for helping her—that never seemed to enter into Nelly's mind.

"I don't believe I shall ever catch that stupid bird, Aunt Nancy," she said that morning, rather peevisly.

"I hope you may, indeed, my dear," returned her aunt, seriously. "And after all, it is not the bird who is stupid, I am afraid."

The next morning Nelly was up again in excellent time, but the rain was coming down so heavily that, as she said, "it was all no good at all."

"I don't know that, my dear," said her aunt as she swept vigorously away at her parlour carpet.

Nelly stood watching her for some minutes with a listless and dejected air, until at last, she suddenly said, as if the thought had struck her quite for the first time—as no doubt it had—"Couldn't I help you a bit, Aunt Nancy?"

Aunt Nancy started. "There he is, there he is!" she cried—"you've caught a sight of him now, haven't you?—the golden-tailed bird, I mean."

"No! Where is he? Where is my bag of seed? Oh! Aunt Nancy," as she saw a funny little smile on her aunt's face, "where is he? *what* is he? I think you are only laughing at me, after all."

"Not *at* you, child; *with* you, I hope—here, hold this, while I fetch the salt. Why, I do believe," as Nelly clutched the broom eagerly "you've almost laid hold of his golden tail now."

"It's a riddle, I'm sure!" said Nelly.

If so, will you guess it, reader?

Nelly guessed it, and took the golden-tailed bird home to her mother, and a real treasure it proved to them both. How neat and industrious she became as a girl you can see for yourself by looking at the portrait of her which a celebrated artist was induced to draw.

THE TWO HUNCHBACKS.

A BRETON LEGEND.



ONCE upon a time in the Pays de Vannes there lived a widow with her two sons. She was a wicked old woman, and though the sons were grown men, she was neither loving nor kind to them. In spite of her sixty years her figure was quite upright, and she was ashamed of having brought two misshapen sons into the world, for Perr and Guilcher were both hunchbacks.

There was nothing but ill temper in the poor house, particularly when the time came for Perr, who was a tailor, to go his rounds, and travel from parish to parish to make wedding clothes, mend the women's cloth spencers, and tell the country news. It always happened that when

Perr left home he left his gloomy manner behind him, for he was really good and gentle, though his mother's and brother's bad temper made him sullen when he was with them. But he had not forgotten God's commandments: he honoured his mother, and always treated her as the mistress of the house, though, being the eldest son of his father, to whom it had formerly belonged, he was himself the real master of it. The only thing that Guilcher and his mother agreed about was liking to put Perr in a passion.

The little hunchback was making his way to a distant place with his bag on his back, pushed on one side by the hump. It was late, for he had been cutting out cloth at a great rate at the farmhouse to which the rich Alain was soon going to bring home the pretty Rosemich. Any kind and charitable person would have invited him to supper and to sleep when his day's work was finished; but Alain was hard, and liked to save beforehand for the expenses of his marriage.



It was midnight when Perr reached the borders of the moor that he had to cross on his way to a farm, a good way off, at which he was expected next day, and this made him uneasy, for in the midst of the heath before him there stood the stone palace of the Korrigans, which was said to have once been the temple of the false gods, where evil spirits had taken up their abode, and where the little black men came to dance at night. Perr, afraid of being drawn into their magic ring, made the sign of the cross and advanced boldly. The large white stones cast a dark shadow in the light of the moon, and he hoped to be able to pass unseen.

But he had counted without his host, for the Korrigans were all there, dancing and jumping in a ring, and shouting out certain words which were always the same, first on one side and then on the other. Perr, however, never listened to them, and advanced in the shadow, till suddenly the song stopped, and the elves all at once threw themselves upon him. Not a word did they say, but they drew him into their magic dance; and Perr knew that the man who dances with Korrigans soon drops down exhausted on the short grass of the moor, and his relations have nothing to do then but to look for his body and bury it.

The bold little tailor had not, however, lost head, for his courage only failed him at home, and when his mother was angry. He now listened to what the elves were saying, for they had taken up their song again. They were jumping first on the right foot, then on the left, and repeating in chorus the same words that they had sung before they stopped him; and the tailor soon found that the words were quite familiar: "Monday! Tuesday! Wednesday!" cried the elves, who held the captive by his two hands; and those who were in front immediately cried, "Monday! Tuesday! Wednesday!" leaping as they shouted higher and higher.

All at once an idea struck Perr. Until now he had merely followed the movement of the circle, but not dancing like the Korrigans first on one foot and then on the other, he had let the little black feet keep tune as they struck the ground, and his great *sabots* had not marked the measure; but as soon as he had said a little prayer to God in his heart, without attempting to remove his hands from the clutches of the dwarfs, he began to bound like them from one foot to the other, singing at the same time with all his might with the Korrigans, "Monday! Tuesday! Wednesday!" and then when the black men on the other side of the circle took up the words, on he went resolutely and boldly, "Thursday! Friday! Saturday!" and in a moment the delighted elves sang after him, "Thursday! Friday!

Saturday!" The dance grew more and more furious, they whirled round faster and faster, and the tailor, getting giddy, had begun to recommend his soul to God, when all at once the dance stopped, and the Korrigans spread themselves over the moor, still repeating the new words that had charmed them so much, and jumping and capering among the white stones. Then presently they all joined together around Perr, who had begun to breathe again and was preparing to fly, and "Ask of us what you will," they cried all together. "Will you have beauty or riches in exchange for the pleasure you have given us?"

Perr was very poor, and earned his own and his mother's bread by the sweat of his brow—the fatigue of his little misshapen body—the labour of every day and of many nights. But the tailor was not lazy, and his ugliness distressed him more than his poverty. It was not because no girl would marry him, for Perr had never offered marriage to any one, but he thought his mother would be kinder to him if he was not humpbacked.

So he did not hesitate an instant, but cried as loud as the Korrigans, "If you deliver me of my hump, I will thank the good God all my life for having brought me to the moor to-night."

At this answer the Korrigans retreated, for these little black men, though they *fear* God, do not *love* Him, and do not call Him the *good* God. However, after a few minutes, gratitude prevailed, and they sprang upon Perr, and without inflicting any pain, or causing a drop of blood to escape from the wound, with their little knives they cut away the tailor's hump, and passed their crooked hands so softly over the scar that their touch seemed like a caress.

When Perr found himself alone on the moor the next day was beginning to appear in the east; the song of birds was heard in the distance instead of the harsh voices of the little black men, and the tailor was straight, his back in and his head up, as if he had been drilled by a sergeant of the guards. His bag hung in the middle of his back, and the people at the farm where he was going to work did not know him, but said they expected Perr the hunchback; and he had great difficulty in making them listen to his story, for no one would believe him. He only, however, told them a part of the truth; he did not say a word about the magic ring, but only related how he had fallen asleep from fatigue near the palace of the Korrigans—at which all the good women looked incredulous—and how he had found himself in the morning straight, just as they saw him. "It is the first time the little black men have ever done any good to a Christian without being forced," said the old grandmother; "they are

grateful, and sometimes do a good turn to those who have pleased them; but no one has ever seen them seek an opportunity of benefiting any baptized creature without being asked."

Perr pulled out his needle and held his tongue.

He was at the end of his round now, and though they pressed him to pass the night in the barn, he would not, but took the road home, for he was eager to see the effect on his mother of the change that had been made in him.



It was night when he reached the cottage, but the moon was still bright, as it had been the night before at the white stones; and the widow was standing at the door.

She had been fastening the cow to a stake, for fear the creature might wander out to the open country, and the Poulpickans might come and milk her. The mother turned round at the sound of footsteps, and started back with astonishment. It was—it was not Perr! Not only had his hump disappeared, but he had grown taller, the harsh features of his face had become soft and regular, and there was a bright and joyful expression in his eyes. The elves had done their work well: Perr, when he despised riches, had received from them the gift of beauty.

He stooped to kiss his mother, and she looked at him as she had never done before: no words were needed between them, but leaning on his arm she went back into the cottage. Without waiting to hear his strange story, the vain woman, in her motherly pride, had forgiven Perr all the sorrow which his hump had caused her, and she was now quite ready to accept him as her son.

From the back of the house they heard the sharp voice of Guilcher calling out, "Be quick and shut the door, mother, the wind whistles over the moor, and it freezes my legs." When he in his turn looked up, expecting to hear his brother speak, an angry and malignant expression of jealousy passed over his face. Like his mother, he knew nothing as yet of Perr's adventures, but he saw that his brother was no longer hump-backed, and he knew, without taking the trouble to feel for it, that his own hump was still on his back. Up to this moment he had been quite content to despise Perr, but now he began to hate him.

Seated beside his mother on a three-legged stool, Perr told them his story; he held her hand in his, and as he described the terror he had felt when he was drawn into the magic ring and forced to dance, she looked at him with tears in her eyes: the Korrigans had indeed given him a straight body and a handsome face, but God had given him something still more precious—He had given him back his mother's heart.

Perr and Guilcher slept in the hayloft, for there was only one bed-room in the little cottage, and that belonged of right to their mother.

"It was there that we were both born," said Perr, when at his father's death he became the master of the house, "and if she wishes it, my poor mother shall sleep there as long as she lives."

So there she slept under the green serge curtains, with a lighter heart than she had had since the birth of her two sons.

The brothers stretched themselves out on their straw beds in two corners of the loft, separated by a heap of planks which Guilcher had piled up between them: "That I may not see thy ugly face by the light of the moon when thou art asleep," he used to say to his brother. Now, however, in spite of the planks, he seemed to see the face which was no longer ugly.

As he lay awake Guilcher reflected deeply on the story Perr had just told them, and at last an idea struck him. When all was still in the cottage, and the regular breathing of his brother showed that he was asleep, before the first cock-crow came to disturb the sports of the elves and fairies, he let himself down from the little window of the loft by means

of a rope which was used in lowering hay, and ran in the moonlight, without ever stopping to take breath, till he came to the moor where the palace of the Korrigans stood.

Though he made all the haste he could, yet it was past midnight when he reached it, and the little black men were already busy at their favourite pastime. They danced till they were out of breath, turning round and round till they were giddy, and crying out in their shrill voices, "Monday!



Tuesday! Wednesday! Thursday! Friday! Saturday!" and as they said the new words they burst into such loud fits of laughter that one would have thought an army of wild boars were grinding their teeth against the stones.

Guilcher ran on till he came close up to the dwarfs: his jealousy had made him so courageous that he did not hesitate a moment, but broke the magic ring, and seizing the paws of two giddy Korrigans, began to turn round with them, tapping with his bare feet on the ground, for he had not taken time to put on his *sabots*, and crying out louder even than

the little black men, "Monday! Tuesday! Wednesday! Thursday! Friday! Saturday!" then stopping an instant as if to take breath, he shouted out still louder than ever, "Sun—day!" and immediately stood still in the disordered ring to see the effect of his revelation.

The little men stood still also. Was the verse too short for them? did it offend their notions of harmony? Or was it the remembrance, in the midst of their pleasures, of that holy day on which Jesus Christ rose from the grave, after having bruised the serpent's head, that disturbed these spirits who had no part in His redemption? No one knows, or will ever know; but the mad merriment which hurried on the dance ceased suddenly; the Korrigans gathered round Guilcher with angry threatening looks, and speaking all together, they called out, "What dost thou wish us to do for thee? Perr chose beauty, and we offer thee beauty or riches, as we did him."

But as they spoke the little men stamped all round the hunchback, and held their claws so close to his face that poor Guilcher was terrified, and could only murmur in a faint voice, "I choose what Perr left."

Then the little men, bursting into shrill laughter, ran away behind the stones. Guilcher thought they had gone in search of the promised treasure; but a band of them soon returned, carrying in triumph a strangely shaped load, and before the unhappy man had had time to collect himself he was stretched on the ground, and twenty Korrigans had fastened in his breast a second hump, the pain of their small needles passing and repassing through his flesh adding to the anguish with which he heard the mocking words that they dinned into his ears, "There, thou hast what Perr left! Now thou hast humps both behind and before!"

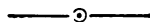
When Guilcher recovered his senses, he was lying on his mother's bed. Perr had searched for him two whole days before he found him at last, insensible amongst the white stones. The good brother had carried him home on his shoulders without discovering what a terrible accident had happened to him, but the mother saw it at the first glance.

"Alas!" she cried, with the softened feeling that had now been awakened in her breast, "my poor son has been showing his envious nature among the little black men, and they have punished him, even as they rewarded thee, my Perr, for thy goodness and patience towards me."

And then Perr blushed, for he had not yet grown accustomed to kind words.

Perr continued to take all care of poor Guilcher, but the unhappy man never again crossed the threshold of the cottage, for he could not bear

that any one should see the horrible deformity which he had drawn upon himself by his greed and his envy. His misfortunes did not improve him, yet Perr's tenderness and patience never failed. His mother helped him in his labour of love, and, after her death, he imposed one condition on the pretty Tinah who had promised to marry him: "You must always be good to Guilcher," he said. Tinah promised, and kept her word. When at last the unhappy hunchback died, he acknowledged that he had deserved his punishment; and he slept in peace, forgiven by God for the love of His holy Son Jesus Christ.



THE OSMUNDA.



By the side of a deep blue lake lived many hundred years, old Gyles the waterman. With him, in the little reed-thatched mud hut, dwelt his fair and only child, Osmunda. She was very beautiful, and it was no wonder that when men praised her loveliness they called it regal. No royal princess could have carried her lithe tall form in a more stately manner than did the daughter of the old waterman; many a queen would have envied her delicate white skin, beneath which the red blood coursed transparently, and the soft brown hair that rippled down to her slender waist. When she bounded over the green turf her light step re-

sembled that of some gentle deer, and her appearance spread sunshine wherever she went.

Her beauty, no less than her name, revealed her Saxon origin.

Osmunda was accustomed to pass her days much alone. Her father was often busy rowing wanderers to the opposite shore, or catching the fish that lived in the lake, and the fair maiden spent many hours by the side

of the gleaming waters, lost in silent meditation. Or she would seek for the herbs that should serve for their evening meal.

At eve, when she descried her father's boat come gliding over the clear blue lake, the water sparkling like diamonds as the drops flashed from his dripping oars, then it would be a race between Osmunda and Wulf the hound, which of them should first welcome Gyles at the landing-stage.



A kiss for his daughter, a pat on the head for the hound, were the stakes they raced for.

Thus quietly and calmly had life flowed on for the fair girl. Since her mother's death, when she was too young to know aught of the cruel loss that had befallen her, no outward disturbance had troubled the even tenour of her existence. Day passed much the same as day; she saw few strangers, and the outer world was to her an unopened book. Nor did she wish to change her narrow sphere. So long as she had her dearly-loved father by her, she was happy and content.

At that time Albion was governed by the wise and good King Alfred.

Osmunda had heard him spoken of as her sovereign; she had heard, too, of war, of incursions by the Danes, of plunder, bloodshed, and fire. But her ideas as to the nature of these things were indistinct. Nor did her father strive to enlighten her; he did not deem it needful she should know them better.

Thus years passed over the fair girl's head in quiet happiness. She had attained her eighteenth year, and was then in the full pride of her rare beauty.



One evening she was sitting in her favourite place among the reeds by the water's edge, waiting for the return of her father's boat. Gyles had been out fishing since the morning, and she looked to his booty for their morrow's meal.

It was some time since the waterman had rowed wanderers on their way to the market town beyond the lake, and he began secretly to wonder if there were once more disturbances in the land that rendered travelling dangerous.

Presently the boat rounded a tall rock that jutted out far into the sea. Gyles was pulling rapidly towards the land, and as he lashed the water with his oars, it splashed up merrily and glistened brightly in the setting sun. He nodded lovingly when he drew near enough to perceive his daughter's form.

"Sweet even to thee, darling," he said as he sprang from the boat. "Down, Wulf, down!" to the dog, who was wildly leaping up at him and barking furiously. "See here what a haul I have had—enough to feed us for many a day to come;" and he pointed to a heap of fish that lay in one corner of his skiff. "Basket ho! Wulf," he cried to the dog, who knew the signal and ran towards the hut, returning thence with a slight wicker basket between his teeth.

Gyles then proceeded to fill it, and Ósmunda returned to the house to set the vesper meal in readiness.

"You must be hungry, father," she said as he entered, placing a platter of smoking fish before him.

While he ate he recounted his day's adventures; how this fish had been hard to catch, how another had escaped when he thought to land it, how a third had not been worth the trouble bestowed.

Meanwhile the girl sat busily spinning by the open door, through which the flashing glistening lake and the wooded hill-tops were visible.

When Gyles had finished his food, and was about to rise from the table, the hut was suddenly approached by a man running full speed towards it, who in his haste to enter nearly overthrew Ósmunda as she sat on the threshold.

"What is it, Beowulf?" exclaimed Gyles, recognizing a friendly peasant from beyond the hills. "Speak, what is it?"

The man could not recover his breath to answer, but his looks expressed terror and despair.

"For Heaven's sake, what has occurred?" Gyles asked once more.

Ósmunda had risen from her wheel terror-stricken, her cheeks blanched, and her lips quivering with excitement. "Oh, speak if you can," she cried, and hastily bethinking her, reached a horn of clear water to the stranger.

He quaffed it eagerly, and returning it to her, gasped, "The Danes!"

"The Danes!" echoed Gyles, and his face grew a ghastly hue. "Not near us; oh, say! not near us, friend Beowulf!"

"On my track. They will be here at once. They have burnt my hut, *taken* my wife and children prisoners, I flee from them, and I must away.

They mean you to row them across ; they will not harm *you* : save your daughter."

And before either could recover from their horror, the man had disappeared once more, and was running for dear life towards the forest.

"Father," asked Osmunda, laying her hand upon his shoulder, and gazing into his terrified face, "father, what must we do?"



"I must bring you into hiding," he replied. "Beowulf is right ; they will not hurt me, they need my services. Come, child ;" and he took her by the hand.

"Nay, father," she pleaded, "let me stay with you. They will not harm me, surely. Let us face danger together."

At that moment a party of fugitives rushed past the cottage.

"The Danes ! the Danes ! save yourselves !" they cried.

"Nay, my child, you must go," said Gyles. His voice was faint from emotion.

Unfastening his bark from the stake to which it was bound, he seated Osmunda within, sprang in also, and took up his oars.

The sun had set, yet it was not wholly dark, and there was still light enough to distinguish objects. Gyles rowed eagerly. Osmunda sat silent, weeping bitterly. How rudely had that calm summer's evening been broken up!

"Where do you take me, father?" she ventured at last.

"To the island," he said, pointing to one at a little distance. "None live there; it is overgrown with the large bracken fern: lie down among it, you will be hidden by its tall fronds. When all danger is over, I will return for you. Rest assured, none will seek you there."

They landed. Gyles held the boat, while his daughter stepped on shore.

"Until the morning," he said, pressing the weeping girl to his heart. "The danger cannot be longer. Go, child. There; none can see you thus, for they must not perceive you as they row past. Hark—I hear a clatter as of armed men in the distance. I must away, or it may cost my life."

Hastily pushing his boat from the isle, he rowed back to land as speedily as he could handle his oars. His return was not a whit too soon, for as his skiff touched the reeds, a company of Danes rode up.

"Art Gyles the waterman?" they asked.

"The same. What is your pleasure?"

"First, to know if you have rowed peasants across just now," demanded one, who seemed the leader.

"None," replied Gyles.

"Upon your oath," inquired the Dane sternly. "We are in search of fugitives; perchance they have bethought them of going beyond the lake. Your late return home excites our suspicions."

"On my oath," said Gyles. "I have rowed no peasants across the lake for more than eight days at least. Release me," for they had seized him by the arms and held him prisoner.

"It is well," said the leader. "Thy face looks honest; we will believe thy word. Thou shalt take us to the opposite shore, in companies, as many as the boat will hold. There be yet a hundred men behind us. Thou dost refuse at peril of thy life."

"To row the wanderer across the lake is my office," replied Gyles; "I obey." And he stepped into his boat once more.

All that night the waterman rowed between the two shores, taking over troop after troop of those fierce Danes. Untiringly he pulled his oars,

that he might the sooner rid him of his unwelcome charges. Each time that he passed the fern-grown island, after landing his load, he would call out lustily, "It is well," as a sign to his child that he still lived and was free. But when the day had broken, and he had rowed over the last company, she listened in vain for his call. She remained crouched among the bracken, for her father had thus commanded, but her heart began to sicken with fear, and she longed to rise and look around her.



At last it was so long past his time to return, she could bear it no longer. Rising from her ferny bed, she approached the water's edge, and surveyed the lake. It lay calm and quiet; only a swan sailing on its bosom rippled the water. No sign of a boat was visible.

Then she glanced towards her home. It looked peaceful and still, showing no sign of the wild horde that had been there so short a time before.

"Can he have forgotten to call this time? Can I have slept and not

heard him? And yet I did not think to sleep." These were the thoughts that coursed through her brain. "Then, too, he would have fetched me ere now. Oh, father! father! where *are* you?" she wailed.

No answer. The swan continued sailing proudly on, the deep blue water reflected the sunlight and the tall grey rocks as calmly as before. Despair seized her. What should she do?

"They could not have taken him prisoner," she thought. "Oh, surely not, after he had worked all night in their service. Even the Danes could not be so cruel as that!"

They had been, however, though she did not know it.

The hours went on, and still Osmunda stood watching for her father's skiff. She tried at last to persuade herself that Gyles must be too wearied to return for her just yet. And for all that, though she would fain have believed it, she could not.

Hunger, too, was beginning to make itself felt. There, in the fern isle, she could find no food. Once more her eyes swept the lake's lone surface, and then she took her resolution.

Casting a grateful look towards the tall green fronds that had sheltered her so well, she threw herself into the water, determined to swim to shore.

"If he is at home, and ill, or in need of me, I shall know now," she said, as she pushed resolutely forward, unheeding that her strength was exhausted by a sleepless night and want of food. Her tender white arms clove the wavelets, while she held her lovely head well above the water.

At last she began to feel fatigued, but she would not yield. Throwing her last strength into the effort, she swam on boldly, and then, when even her energy could support her no longer, she touched her father's boat stake, and found herself at home.

Hurriedly she ran towards her natal hut, anxiously she pushed open the door, and it was not till she found the cottage empty that a cry of horror escaped her lips, and she sank lifeless to the ground.

She never woke to full consciousness again. The anxiety she had endured that night upon the bracken island, the exertion of her long swim, and the horror of not finding her father, were too much for her tender brain. Happily she was ignorant of the whole extent of the blow which had befallen her.

When some days after a peasant rode past, and told her that the Danes were spreading devastation over the land, that they had murdered her father, notwithstanding his good services to them, she did not understand *him*. With a sad smile she pointed across the lake, at whose margin she

would sit day by day, gazing across its fair expanse, saying, "I am waiting for his boat. It is not in sight yet."

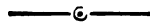
Thus she lived on in her old home for about six months. The waterman who succeeded her father was far too tender-hearted to turn the poor orphan away, and then she died. To the very end she was unconscious of all around her. Looking across the blue waters with her last glance, she murmured softly, "He is coming." But it was death, not her father, who came.

Next spring, near the spot where the waterman's fair child had loved to sit, watching for her father's return, his successor espied a tall graceful plant that was new to him. It resembled a fern in its elegant outline, its leaves too curled upwards from the ground like those of other ferns, but on its tall majestic fronds it bore a seed-cluster, of a soft light brown, such as had never been seen before on any plant. Its tall lithe form inclined towards the water, over which it seemed to bend regally, like a gracious sovereign towards her subject.

The fancy irresistibly overcame the waterman that the spirit of the fair Saxon girl still lived within this fern; and that as in life, so in death, she yet watched for him who could never return.

And he called the plant the Royal Osmunda, and it is called so to this day.

Wherever there is a lake, a stream, a brook, there flourish descendants of this lovely fern, and they still bend their graceful fronds towards the water in quest of him who is gone.



THE FORGOTTEN CROWN.

THE great day had come at last. The enemy swept down like a mighty torrent on to the beautiful land of Gaia, and the dread blast of war sounded over hill and dale, through forest and glen, by lake and river, till it died echoing away in the silent mountains beyond.

War had burst upon the people at last, and by the side of cottage fires along the corridors of princely palaces men talked of the struggle that was to come, and buckled on their arms. Faces were set stern and hearts beat high on that day in the land of Gaia, for its people knew that their

hour of trial was upon them, and that the struggle must be a struggle—terrible and to the very death.

Story has since told how the great battle, when it came, knew neither mercy nor quarter, for the day was a long and bloody one, over which angels might have wept. In truth, on that day, it was as if the strength of children were matched against the rage of demons. Such a battle might have been between the unaided heart of man and the reasoning powers of hell.

The great day had come. From tower to tower the summons sounded, and far and wide, through the length and breadth of the fair land, went up the answer. Men felt the storm of war was whirling on, and saw the sunshine flee before it; but, as the fresh grass springs forth in rain, so the flower of the youth sprang forth that day, till city and village, hill-side and valley, were alive with beauty and strength. The hour of parting came, the hour of bitter separations and of sad farewells, for dear ties had to be rudely severed, and happy homes broken up in haste. Once more the shrill trumpet's blast was borne upon the wind, and then, nobly, to the sacred music of fathers' blessings, purely, in the sweet baptism of mothers' tears, the vigour of the land marched forth to do or to die. And as the mighty hosts were sweeping onwards o'er the plain, Philothea, the proudest mother in all Gaia, called her three sons to her, and spoke:

"My sons, the hour of your trial has come. For years I have watched its slow but sure approach, and known that it would steal upon you un-awares at last. I am your mother, and have seen, as only mothers can, its shadow rising on you from the dawning of your lives. When helpless babes you slumbered in the sweet sleep of innocence and peace, I heard its distant thunders rolling in the air. When, too, in all your boyhood's spirit you awoke the woodland echoes with your merry cries, they lingered in my ears until their happy music seemed to die away in sadness and in wailing. And as I looked on to the life that each of you must live, I said, 'There is no peace on earth without unrest. There is no victory until the fight is fought.' But courage, you are men. Go forth with steadfast purpose, and with strong right hand, and may the great God of battles bless you."

And saying this, she opened a huge oaken chest, and bade them take from it three coats of mail that lay therein. And one was of the purest gold, and set with precious stones. Another, too, was of fine silver, and curiously wrought. But the third was of old iron, rusty and worn, valueless and of ignoble look. And on the breast of each was a strange device

and a scroll, on which a legend was inscribed. And of these, as the three youths stood gazing upon them, each in his heart made his own secret choice, and waited the signal of his mother's voice to speak.

Then Philothea called to her eldest born, and, pointing to the written legends, bade him read and take which suit of mail he would.

Now on the golden one was chased a monarch's crown encircling a skull, and the legend underneath ran thus :

"To glory all the world bows down :

Who wears the gold shall win the crown."

"Who wears the gold shall win the crown? then this be mine, mother," he said ; "for glory is a noble thing, and I would see the whole world kneeling at my feet." And with beaming eye and head erect he took the jewelled coat, and clad himself, and made oath he would do battle like a royal prince and win the homage of the world.

And then the second had his choice, and turning to the silver one, he took it up and said, "Look, mother, what is here? a tender flower choked upon a bed of brambles ! But listen to the wording of the scroll :

'Nor gold nor iron, neither high nor low ;
In easy channels silver stream shall flow.'

I have no thirst for fame, and I love comfort, ease, and peace. The legend speaks of these, and he who bears it, knowing of no strife or danger, needs must save his life against the foe, and end his days in this world's health and wealth. What can the earth give more?" And he took the silver coat, rejoicing in the promise which it bore, and fell to dreaming on the comfort of this life.

And last stepped forth the third and youngest son, and without a thought of envy in his breast, he took the rusted iron coat, and said, "Dear mother, I should have chosen this. I know not why, but there is something in this emblem that has touched my heart." As he spoke, he pointed to a simple cross, for the iron coat was of plainest fashion, and bore no other ornament, and read aloud the words that twined about it :

"Faith fights in faith alone. Come best, come worst,
No earthly crown is thine—be last, yet first."

"I seek no crown," he cried, "I look to no reward. I only kneel to crave your blessing, mother, and to ask your prayers." Then clad in the rough suit, he knelt, and as he stood erect, and drew himself to his full height, his soul within him rose, and never flinching as he turned from all he



loved, with faithful heart and fearless step he joined his brothers at the gate. Then came the surging stream of warriors that way, and those three noble youths—the Gold, the Silver, and the Iron Knights—waved back a last farewell, and sought the van, that caught them up and swept them on to war.

* * * * *

The strife was over now: a battle had been lost, a battle had been won; and men were talking of the bloody struggle of that day, and binding up their cruel wounds, and burying their valiant dead. And Philothea went among the throng, and gathered tidings of her sons. And there they told her how her eldest born had smitten down his foes, and gone a very king into the thickest of the fray; how, when the fight was ended, they had twined crowns of laurel and of gold round about his brow, while thousands knelt before him as he came, and cried, "Long live the Golden Knight!"

"Glory is his," she said, and then she thought of the device of death that wore a diadem.

And as she pondered upon this, a load of captured wealth came rolling by, and with it him who wore the silver coat.

"See, mother," he cried out, "the spoils of war—the riches of this life! And in the fight I never neared the foe, nor knew what danger meant. Wealth, comfort, ease are mine—behold!" And he rode on, and blessed his lot, and left his mother gazing after him. And as she gazed, her thoughts went back to a tender flower choked in a bed of brambles.

Then Philothea roused herself, and called aloud the name of her beloved, her youngest son; and as she called the sun went down, and yet he never came.

And then she called again, but twilight darkened, and yet he did not come.

Then night crept up the eastern sky, and myriads of fires shot out from the blue vault above, till fancy might have wandered on from star to star, and mounted up to the great throne of all. Once more she called upon her son, but a deep silence as of death held the scene. And when no answer came, she thought upon the cross and wept.

But far out on the field of blood, a youthful knight, clad in a suit of rusty armour, was lying cold and still, an arrow through his heart, and his face upturned to God.

THE LAST NEWS OF THE FAIRIES.



THE last news of the Fairies! And very reliable news too, upon evidence as good as one can get with regard to most doubtful things. Not so very late neither—not much more than half a century old. That is, it can be little more than thirty years since the person who *saw* the fairies told the story of his seeing them to the person who told me—then a boy and now only a middle-aged man. A man, too, whose truthfulness and honesty are proverbial in the village where he lives—which I do not intend to particularize more than by saying it was the West Riding of Yorkshire.

I myself have always had a lurking belief in fairies. There is an Italian proverb, *Se non è vero è ben trovato*: which means, freely translated—“If it isn't true it ought to be.” And I still think, that if there are not fairies, it would be very nice if there were to be. Such as the fairy godmother of Cinderella, and the pretty harmless creatures of the Midsummer Night's Dream—Oberon, Titania, and Puck. Or the Queen of Fairies who carried away Thomas the Rhymer and the young Tamlane, as we read of in old Scotch ballads. Or the brownies and the pixies, the cobolds and the gnomes, the Neck and the Undine—all those various elves of water, earth, and under the earth, with which the fairy mythology of different nations makes us acquainted. I was well read in it once, but have nearly forgotten it now. Still, I prick up my ears like an old horse at sound of the hunt, whenever there is the slightest reference to what is called folk-lore.

Many a time, when I was a child, I used to think how delightful it would be to catch a fairy—a little creature no bigger than a doll, only alive—

quite alive, full of pranks and pretty ways. How enchanting to play with it, and talk to it, and cuddle it! Only it might not understand cuddling; and whether it would be able to converse with me in plain English, or would talk unintelligible fairy language, was a point on which I never could satisfy my mind. It did not matter much, as I never caught my fairy. But I certainly should have set a trap for it, or gone endless wanderings about the woods and moors in search of it, had I ever heard the story, or the two stories, which I am about to tell to you; though of course I do not expect you to believe them.

My informant was, as I have said, a middle-aged man, whom I met last summer in Yorkshire. I shall not give his name—lest he might not like it, or like to be considered responsible for my version of the story, though I have given it as accurately as I could remember. Therefore I shall merely call him “John.”

One day John came to tea; and capital company he was,—self-educated, and very well educated too, for what I suppose would be called “one of the working classes.” As if the “upper” classes did not work hard enough also sometimes! Highly intelligent by nature, with a strong shrewd Yorkshire wit, and a way of expressing himself that at once said what he meant to say in the best manner possible. No attempt whatever at “showing off,” or appearing other than he was: an intensely honest man, whose word was his bond, and whose judgment might be fairly trusted on all points where he had had an opportunity of forming it. Modest—rather retiring than not—yet with plenty of self-respect; and a quiet conviction that “a man’s a man for a’ that.” Such is the sort of man whose society I like—be his rank in life what it may. And I can truly say that though I have spent many a pleasant evening with the celebrated men of the earth, I never spent a pleasanter than with my friend John.

Towards the close of it, after he had been giving us endless stories about the habits and manners of the last generation in the village where he had been born and reared, and which he had scarcely ever quitted, and had ended with an account of the various curiosities of the neighbourhood, he mentioned a large cave, capable of holding fourteen people, which was on the moor hard by, and was called “the Fairies’ House.”

“What!” said I eagerly, “are there any fairies in this part of Yorkshire?”

John looked at me with a queer twinkle of the eye. “The folks hereabouts used to think so—at least they did before we had Mechanice Institutes and those sort of things to tell us it wasn’t possible. But some

of the old people believed in them for a long time. When I was a boy, it was said that if you crept quietly into the Fairies' House you might see them there—provided you were early enough in the morning.”

“And did you go? Pray, John, did you ever see a fairy?” I put the question half-languishing, lest he might suspect I was in earnest.

“Well, ma'am,” replied John with grave politeness, “I can't say that I ever did. But I have known those that saw them, or at least firmly believed so.”

“What! in the present generation?”

“Very nearly. That is, when I was a lad I knew one old man who declared positively he had seen fairies. He was so strong upon it that nobody ever contradicted him. Besides, he was a man that you wouldn't like to contradict for nothing, was William Butterfield.”

“And who was William Butterfield?”

“The bathman at the Wells here, for many many years, and a most respectable man too. He never got drunk—as most people did in those days—and he never told a lie that I ever heard of.”

“But he might have made a mistake, or fancied things?”

“No, he wasn't given to fancies, nor likely to make mistakes. An uncommon sharp fellow was William Butterfield. Besides, often and often as he told the story, he never altered it one bit.”

“And he told it to you yourself?”

“Ay; I remember the day quite well. We were sitting on the bench outside the public house door—he never went inside; he said all the beer in the world was not worth a glass of the Wells waters. I was a boy, but a biggish boy—old enough to like the company of my elders and betters, and I used to go about a good deal with this William Butterfield, who had such a lot of queer stories to tell, especially about his Wells, of which he was very proud.”

(Here I ought to explain that “the Wells” are the principal feature of the village where John lives, which they are fast changing from a village into a flourishing town.)

“And it was at the Wells,” John continued, “that he saw, or fancied he saw, the fairies.”

“Do tell me all about it,” I asked eagerly. And John told me. I wish I could give anything like the graphic words in which he did so; but as I cannot, I had better give it in my own.

The Wells were originally a moorland spring on the hill-side, supposed to have some medicinal properties, but at any rate producing an unlimited

supply of very pure and delicious water. Over them is now erected a handsome building, and outside there are benches where people may sit about and admire the view up and down the dale, one of the finest in Yorkshire. But in John's boyhood the Wells were left open to the sky—the spring being merely led into a reservoir, which was enclosed by a circular wall, eight feet high, and used as a sort of bath.

This bath was entered by a small door, of which William Butterfield kept the key. It was his business to lock it up the last thing at night, and go back to open it the first thing in the morning. He did this day after day, and year after year, without seeing anything until one midsummer morning.

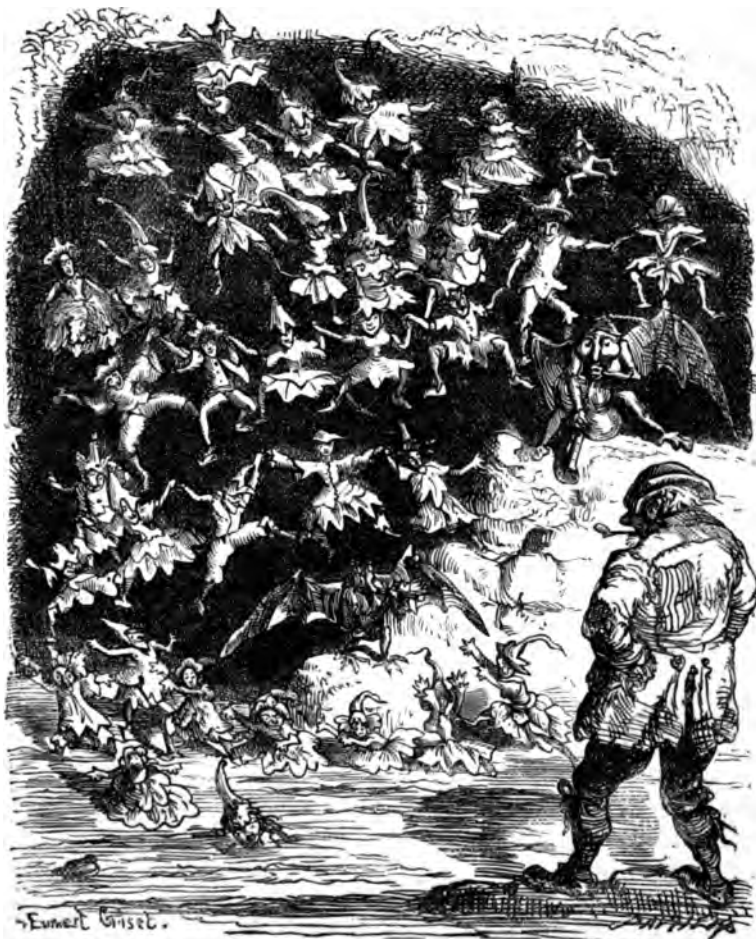
I inquired particularly, and found out from John without telling him the reason why—the fact that it *was* upon midsummer morning, and just before dawn. Which was a curious coincidence, as I am certain neither my friend John nor William Butterfield had the slightest idea that St. John's Eve—or the night before midsummer-day—and the magic hour “between the night and the day,” is, according to all popular superstition, the favourite time when the fairies are abroad, and disposed to make themselves visible.

William Butterfield got up that morning, he declared, no more expecting to see anything “queer” than on any other morning. He had gone to bed at his usual hour, and rose as usual, perfectly sober and cool-headed; climbing the steep ascent of the moor with active feet, and noticing nothing in particular, except that it was a very fine midsummer morning, cool, grey, and still, for the sun was not up, and the only sound along the hill-side was the cry of one solitary cuckoo in the distance; it being so early that no other birds were awake.

Butterfield thought he had made some mistake as to the hour; however, it mattered little, so he went cheerfully on his way, and coming to the circular wall, drew his big key out of his pocket, trying to open the door. But there was something “uncanny” about it; it refused to be unlocked, or rather the key turned round and round in the keyhole quite easily, but the door stuck fast. As often as he tried to push it open, it was pushed back again from inside; and he fancied he heard within the enclosure a rushing and a scrambling, as if a troop of rabbits or rats, accompanied by a noise not unlike children's laughter, only it was such very shrill thin laughter, as if the children had been tiny babies, except that new-born babies never laughed; which William Butterfield, who had one of his own at home, was well aware of.

At last, with one steady push, he forced the door open, and then—what do you think he saw?

I repeat I do not expect *you* to believe the story, but he believed it, and kept firm in his belief as long as he lived.



All over the well, skimming on its surface like water-spiders, or dipping into it as if they were taking a bath, was a swarm of little people, the **biggest** of them not above eighteen inches high; yet they seemed perfect *human beings*. They bathed with all their clothes on; and Butterfield

noticed that they were dressed from head to foot in green—as green as the colour of grasshoppers. There was such a quantity of them, and they were so agile, and lively, and frolicsome, that he felt he might as soon have tried to catch them as if they had been a swarm of May-flies or a shoal of minnows. He only stood and stared in mute amazement, though not exactly afraid; indeed, he was not the sort of young man to be afraid. Only bad men are cowards, and Butterfield was a very good fellow in his way.

So he stood and stared, he could hardly tell how long, for his tongue seemed frozen to the roof of his mouth. At last, with a very great effort, he called out, "Hallo there!" in his blunt Yorkshire way, it being the only thing he could find to say.

Immediately the little people began to "squittle" off, just like minnows when you throw a stone in among them. They went tumbling and scrambling, head over heels and heels over head; indeed, their limbs seemed made of india-rubber, and they bounded over the eight-foot wall like so many india-rubber balls; not in silence, however, but with such a great buzzing and humming, like a swarm of gigantic bluebottle flies, that they quite confused Butterfield's faculties. He stood gaping at them, he declared, "like a big fool," making no attempt to catch them, until they had all disappeared, one after the other, over the high wall, leaving the water empty. Then he came to his sober senses, and rushed out to the door, and looked in every direction up and down the hill-side. But there was nothing to be seen, except a great stirring among the bracken—which was growing tall and green—as if a troop of hares or rabbits, or some such small animals, were scampering through it. And while he stood watching, and thinking what a stupid ass he had been, the big, round, red sun popped up his head from the horizon, and shot his first arrow of light from east to west along the dale.

Butterfield ran back inside the wall, and searched all about the bath, but it was quiet and silent and the surface of the water perfectly motionless, looking exactly as it had looked for so many years, and as it did continue to look for many years after, for he never saw the fairies again. The whole thing had passed so like a dream, that he rubbed his eyes and pinched himself to see if he were quite awake yet; but whether he was dreaming or not, no one but himself could ever know.

The story seemed so strange, and even ridiculous, that he was a good while before he told it to anybody; besides, he had an idea that if they were fairies, his seeing them might be unlucky, and might bring some

harm to his wife and child. But as no harm ever came—indeed, being an uncommonly steady and industrious young man, he rather prospered in the world than otherwise—Butterfield took courage and told his wife, and of course she told everybody; and by the time he grew to be an old man, and people had gradually ceased to believe that there were such things as fairies, he used to tell the story very often indeed to all sorts of persons: some believed it and some didn't, but nobody ever doubted that William Butterfield believed it, and he being a man of such undoubted truthfulness, it was a very great puzzle to a good many. But one thing was certain, he never saw the fairies again.

“And did anybody else in the Dale ever see them, John?” asked I, when we came to a pause in the story.

John looked at me as if to make sure that I was not quizzing him, and answered cautiously, “Yes, there were several stories abroad of folk who said they had seen them, but they were generally stupid folk, or drunken folk, quite different from William Butterfield. The most reliable of them was a man named Henry Roundell, who declared he had seen them once in the early morning, at his sister's farm, ten miles off.”

“Did you hear the story from himself, then?”

“No,” said John honestly, “I can't say I did. I never knew the man myself, but he was well known in these parts, and bore a very good character too. A shrewd fellow he was, who knew quite well the difference between a pound and a shilling; and a steady church-goer, which often stood in his way, because the most of the rich folk here were then Independents, and disliked having to do with Church people. So he must have had a conscience, you see, ma'am,”

I agreed, and begged John to tell me, even if it were only by hearsay, the story.

Henry Roundell, it seemed, was never anything beyond a labouring man himself, but a sister of his was married to a prosperous farmer, and lived at a place called Washburn Dell. There he often hired himself, doing any work that came to hand. It was a large farm, and parts of it were exceedingly lonely, and far away from any cottage or human habitation. To one of these distant fields he was once sent to hoe turnips. He used to start off long before dawn, taking his food with him, and often not seeing a creature till he returned to the farm at the close of day.

One morning he rose, so early it was almost in the middle of the night, and started off for the field, which he reached long before sunrise. He *thought somehow* it looked queer like, in the misty dawn, that the turnips

had grown ever so much greener and higher since he left them overnight, and that their leaves were stirring strangely. When he looked again, he saw that what was moving about was not the turnip-leaves at all. Between every row of them was a row of little men, all dressed in green, and all with tiny hoes in their hands. They were hoeing away with might and main; and chattering and singing to themselves meanwhile, but in an odd, shrill, cracked voice, like a lot of field-cricket. They had hats on their heads, something in the shape of foxglove-bells, Roundell thought, but he was not near enough to distinguish them plainly, only he was quite certain they were all dressed in green, just the same colour as the turnip-leaves.

He crept cautiously forward, and peered through the bars of the gate, hiding himself as much as he could the while. But unfortunately he leant too heavily on the top rail; and though he had fastened the gate himself overnight, and it looked as if it were fastened still, as soon as he touched it it swung open with a great bang, and he fell right flat with his face in the mud.

Then, whirr!—whirr! off went the little men, like innumerable coveys of partridges. When Henry got up, he could not see a single one of them; and strange to say, though he searched up and down the rows of turnips in every direction, he could not find any of their hoes. Such tiny hoes! and yet the turnips were hoed up as well as he could have done them himself. And the little people seemed so busy and so merry; it was a sight which, though it only lasted a minute or two, he declared he never forgot.

Unlike William Butterfield, he went and told it immediately to everybody he knew; and if he had not been such an exceedingly respectable man, all would have been set down at once to a mere drunkard's fancy. As it was, he was very much laughed at: people thought he was not quite right in his head, or that his brains had "gone wool-gathering." But he stuck steadily to his story, and never went hoeing turnips again without a full conviction that, if he got up early enough, he should be sure to see the fairy farm labourers. And when he never did see them, he still persisted—if the turnips were particularly green or well grown—that the little men, with their little hoes, must have been there in the night.

"And they only did good, and never harm?" I asked. "None of the turnips were missing? for fairies are great thieves, you know."

"Are they?" said John, too civil to laugh, but evidently a good deal

amused. "Well, ma'am, I don't tell you any more than I've heard—and I warned you that I only heard it second-hand—not like William Butterfield's story. I suppose all wise and clever people would say that both stories were great nonsense, and that it was impossible there could be such things as fairies."

"Impossible is a large word, John, more than many people have a right to use."

John agreed to this, and unconsciously put into his broad Yorkshire the same sentiment which Shakespeare puts into the mouth of Hamlet :

"There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamed of in your philosophy."

"But still," he added, "if fairies are not impossible, I can't say they're very likely. And I never saw them myself, nor knew any one who did see them except William Butterfield. But he was a puzzle, I confess. You see, ma'am, when an honest man, whose word you have no reason to doubt, looks you in the face and tells you he has really seen so and so, it's rather hard to look him in the face back again and tell him he hasn't."

"Very hard," I acknowledged ; "nor, perhaps, is it always quite necessary. But, John, to come to the point, what do you yourself think about the matter?"

"The matter of fairies?" repeated John, cautiously, and evidently not liking to commit himself too much either way. But being hard pressed, he took the only course open to a man of his good common sense—clever enough to feel that there may be things beyond him, and honest enough to allow this, while still not giving in to any foolish credulity. "Well," answered John, at length—giving the wisest answer that the wisest man alive can give about many things—"Well, ma'am, all I can say is, I really don't know."

Which is my opinion too on the subject.



THE GLASS HEART.

SOME people's hearts are made of glass, and need very careful handling, or they break.

Once there was a royal couple, who had three daughters, and all three had glass hearts; and the Queen, their mother, always told them how careful they must be so as not to break them.



One day, however, the eldest sister was standing at the window, looking out, and unfortunately she leaned too hard against the sill, and, in a moment, her heart broke, and she fell lifeless to the ground. The second sister, also, had the misfortune to crack hers, but happily the damage was not so great as it might have been; for, as the Princess said of herself, "Cracked things last a long time if they are only taken care of."

So the King and Queen had only one daughter left with a whole heart. She was very beautiful, and all the neighbouring princes wished to marry her; but the old King, her father, refused them all, saying,—

"I must take warning by what has happened. My daughter, like her sisters, has a glass heart, and I can only give her to one who would know how to handle it. Her husband must be a glazier as well as a prince."

Then all the princes went away very unhappy; for not one of them knew how to put a pane of glass into a window.

But in the palace was a young page, who had long loved and admired the Princess from afar; he had carried her train, and waited upon her, and received many marks of her favour; and one day, to his great delight, he overheard the Princess wishing, with a sigh, that he were a glazier. Directly he heard this, he went off from the palace, determining that a glazier he would become. He found a master-glazier, and begged



"He had received many marks of her favour."

to be taken as an apprentice. The man consented, but on one condition.

"You must serve me four years," said he. "The first year you must learn to fetch the bread from the baker's, and to wash and dress my children; the second year, you shall learn how to stop the chinks and crannies with putty; the third year to cut and place the glass; and the fourth year you will be a glazier."

This seemed a very long process to the young page, who was anxious to come to the end more quickly; but as the man assured him this was the only proper way to become a glazier, he had to be content to fetch



the bread, to wash and dress the children, to stop all the cracks in the neighbours' windows, and then at last he learned how to handle and place the glass.

At the end of the four years he dressed himself in his best clothes, and set out for the palace. Now, his only trouble was that he was not a

prince, for he knew that the King had decreed that only a prince and a glazier should marry his daughter. But, as he was walking along, thinking very sadly of this matter, he met a man who began telling him the latest news.

"Have you heard what has taken place at the palace?" said the man. "What a pity it is that you are not a glazier!" he added; for the young man looked—as he would have said—"quite the gentleman."

"Why?" asked the young man, eagerly.

"Because the King has made a new proclamation. Formerly, as perhaps you know, he was resolved to marry his daughter only to a glazier who was also a prince, but it seems he can't anywhere find a prince who is also a glazier, and therefore, as she must marry a glazier, he has given in about the prince. Now, the only conditions he makes are, that the Princess's husband must be a glazier, that he must have beautifully soft delicate hands, and that he must please the Princess. Crowds of glaziers are going every day to the palace, to try their chance; but as yet, so it is said, the Princess has not so much as looked at one of them."

The young man hastened on to the palace, asked for the King, told him the story of his love for the Princess, and how he had learned to be a glazier for her sake.

The King sent for the Princess, and she did not at all seem to dislike the look of the young man. There remained, therefore, but one more condition to make all things right. The King ordered the young man to draw off his gloves, and show what his hands were like. But here the Princess interfered. That was not necessary, she said, for she quite remembered what his hands were like when he had been used to wait upon her as page, and that they would do very well.

So the Princess put her heart into the hands of her glazier, where it stayed whole and safe until her dying day.

The elder Princess, whose heart had been cracked in her youth, lived many years, and made an excellent aunt to the many little children who came to bless the home of the Princess and the glazier. She taught the little Princesses to read and to write, and to make their dolls' clothes, and kept the little Princes in good order, and when any one wondered how it was she managed to get on so well with a cracked heart, she would say,—

"Hearts injured in their early days, if they do not break at once, often last as long as if they were whole."

And so it is, curiously enough, with many other things besides hearts.

THE SWALLOW-WORT.

SPRING was returning to bless the earth. The trees, flowers, and woods sung of his blessed advent; Nature awoke to new life and vigour, and was glad and gay. The joyous news spread from throat to throat, and all successively took up the chorus. Its sound flew across the sea, far, far away to the sand-deserts of Africa; it played round the head of the Sphinx, and its wondrous searching eyes appeared to read the glorious message, and to relax somewhat from its stony imperturbability.

Still the tidings sped on, on, till they reached the Swallows who were passing the winter far from Europe's shores in Afric's sunny clime. They heard them gladly, and carolled one simultaneous song of glee.

"We will go home, go home," they warbled. For the swallow, though it flies away each autumn, holds Europe to be its home, and loves its green wooded uplands better far than the sand-wastes of Egypt.

So they all made them ready to depart from their winter quarters, and, at a given signal from the leader, spread their large wings, lifted their forked tails, and flew away with lightning speed. Over the desert, over the heads of the palms where the giraffes were lazily feeding, over the lairs of the lion and hyæna, over the gleaming sycamore-fringed Nile, over Cairo's narrow streets and gilded minarets,—away, away. When they had passed the vast heaving ocean, they rested awhile from their flight; and now began a great chattering and leave-taking, for it was here their various paths diverged: some went to east, some to north, south, or west; new leaders had to be chosen, old friends parted from, and a happy reunion at the banks of the Nile to be wished.

Among these busy chatterers were a swarm who had again to cross the sea, as they were bound for England, where they had left their homes under many a thatched eave and gabled roof, by many a barn or granary. Of this number was a Swallow who was more anxious than all the rest to return, for she wished to seek the nest where she was born and which her mother had bequeathed to her as a dying legacy. For had not that very amiable young bird, who had been so attentive to her all the journey and shortened the dulness of the voyage by his amusing anecdotes, promised that if she could find that nest again which her mother had built under *the thatched eaves* of the vine-clad cottage shaded by the slim mountain-

ash, that she had told him of, he would come and live with her? Would not that be pleasant? But if she could not find it? if the inhabitants of the cottage had pulled it down? or, worse still, if she had forgotten the way?

So our poor little Swallow felt very nervous, and got more so the nearer she came to England, till at last her friend received such curt answers to all his questions and tender inquiries, that he began to fear lest she were angry with him or had changed her mind, and also grew dejected and sad.

"May I come with you?" he asked timidly, as they were all parting company.

"If you like," she replied; and he followed her rapid flight. At length she saw the grey roofs of her natal village, and the copse where she had so often sought for food; and there—yes, there was her own nest, safe and sound as she had left it when the vine-leaves among which it was hid were turning red and yellow. Now they festooned round it with palc luscious green.

Eagerly the Swallow pounced down upon her home, and was about to enter it in great haste, when, to her horror, she found her passage obstructed. The nest was occupied. A moment later, and a tiny Sparrow sprang out and demanded what was her business in his house.

"Your house!" gasped the enraged Swallow, "your house, indeed! Pray, did you build it?"

"No," answered the Sparrow with cool indifference, "but I've lived in it undisturbed all the winter, and that is pretty much the same thing. So you had better leave, and build yourself a new nest; and if you made this, I can only say I recommend you to construct it on the same pattern, for this is very comfortable." And so saying, the bird drew away his head from the little aperture and disappeared.

"As you will be busy building the next few days," said the Swallow's friend, who had overheard the whole conversation, "why, my dear, I fear I shall only be in your way. I won't offer to help you, for I hate work, and my temper is not sweet when I am forced to it. I will go for a short voyage, and if in its course I do not find a comfortable home, perhaps I will return to share yours. Adieu, my love; I am sorry such a little unpleasantness should occur the first thing on your return."

"No, stay, stay!" cried the unhappy Swallow. Was she to lose all, her home and lover, for the sake of that upstart Sparrow? No, never! "Remain only a little while, dear bird, I conjure you," she said more

tenderly, "and all shall yet be well. What! am I not to live in my own house that my mother built for me? My mother and father built it, do you hear that, you little good-for-nothing sparrow? But perhaps you never had a father or mother," she added superciliously. "I daresay your connexions are very low people." And then, her grief and rage once more coming uppermost, she raised such a lamentable wail of woe that speedily all the Swallows of the neighbourhood flocked around her.

"What is it, sister?" they asked; "why do you weep so bitterly?"

She told them her sad tale, and one among them—he was an old bird, and had had much experience—bade them fly out of the usurper's hearing to yonder large oak, that they might there consider what should be done in this grievous strait. There they set up a loud chattering, and at last returned to the thatched roof, bearing some straw, lime, or road-dirt in their several bills. In turns they perched upon the gutter, and bending forward, deposited their burden on the door of the nest, disregarding the piteous plaints of the little Sparrow that they should let him go,—he would evacuate; indeed, indeed he would! He might wail and moan: his griefs fell on deaf ears; nor did the assembly cease their labour till they had completely fastened up the opening so that no air could enter, and the prisoner must inevitably die. Then, promising to return next day and help to reopen the door and throw out the dead bird, they congratulated the Swallow on her approaching marriage, and begged permission to be present at the nuptials that were to be celebrated in the adjacent wood.

"Well, I think I will stay," said the Swallow. He had been the only lazy one of the party, though for very shame he had made some pretence of work. "Your friends seem very kind, your home is well situated, and I have no doubt we shall be comfortable."

At his words joy came once more into the Swallow's heart; she had still feared that nice bird would leave her. And now he had promised to stay, to-morrow the nest would be once more hers; and overflowing happiness prevented her from hearing or heeding the heartrending sighs that broke from the dying Sparrow who had so innocently appropriated the vacant nest.

The year advanced, summer was come, and in the Swallow's dwelling there chirped and twittered a whole brood of unfledged young. Tenderly had their mother reared them, never stirring from off the eggs until the little ones had issued thence, nor leaving them after they had broken forth from the enclosing shell, lest their featherless bodies should feel

cold. Her mate roamed away daily, bringing home to his nest at even spiders, flies, bees, and other insects, to be distributed among his wife and children. If he did on these occasions reserve the titbits to himself, "Well, was it not very natural, since he had had the trouble of seeking for them, while she had sat lazily at home?"

So spoke the mother to a friend who had once ventured to throw out a hint that the mate was not kind, extolling at the same time in extravagant language her own attentive husband.

"Oh, he brought me such nice worms, my dear, when I had to stay at home with my children. To be sure I was not content, like you, to remain in, in stupid dulness, but wanted to go out into the woods also, therefore I suppose he thought I needed some consolation."

"I wish you would not interfere with my domestic arrangements," testily answered our Swallow. The close confinement had been no small deprivation to her, though she did not choose to own it. "I will not hear any complaints against my husband; he is as good as yours any day."

The other Swallow flew off, wondering at the infatuation of the poor she-bird creation: to care for such an animal, to praise him! well, well, she was glad he was not hers, that was all.

"My dear wife," said the Swallow one morning to his mate ere setting out for his daily excursion, "do not you think our young ones will soon be able to fly and take care of themselves? Then you might go out with me again, which I should find far more pleasant than being alone; and to tell you the truth, when I do stay in it bores me to hear you teach them to speak and fly, and how to find worms, and so on. It is dull when one has passed it oneself."

"But the children must be instructed, my dear, just as we have been."

"True, true; but have they not had enough?"

A few days after this the mother tested the flying powers of her children, and finding that all save one were strong in their wings, and would speedily learn to steer their course aright, and not be made giddy by the varying scenes beneath them, she told her husband, on his return, that of their presence he would speedily be relieved. She could not discover what ailed the youngest. His wings were strong, but he seemed fearful of using them, and never understood her directions as to the course of flight. He would whirl round and round helplessly, and at last with a piteous moan flutter back to the nest, and lie panting within its soft warm walls.

Another week, and the other children were able to quit home and begin life on their own account. Their mother was nothing loth: the burden of their education had been heavy, besides entirely separating her from their beloved father. Yet now this little one was still in the nest, and what could it be that ailed him and prevented his learning to fly? In all else he was not stupid, he could speak and sing as well as the rest. At length the truth dawned upon the Swallow: he was blind.

When she became convinced of this melancholy fact, she perched herself upon the cottage roof, that the little one might not hear her grief, and began to pour forth a sad strain of wailing.

"Look at that pretty little bird," said a child in the garden below. "How sweetly he is singing! Do you think he is glad because the sun shines, mamma?"

"No doubt," answered his mother, and they passed on.

Poor Swallow, what should she do now for her young one? She loved him so dearly, and would have given her own eyesight for his, yet that could not be. Oh, whom should she consult in this strait? Her mate, to whom she had confided this new grief, had become very angry when he heard it.

"Those children have been the plague of our lives," he said, "and if we are still to be burdened with one who will need every morsel of food sought for him—well, wife, you must choose between me or him."

How could the mother leave her helpless offspring?

"I'll stay with our child," she said. "Sweet, will you really go?"

"Of course," was the heartless reply; and from that day he never came back again.

The Swallow who had once before called visited her again in this distress, but she would not listen to her invectives against her beloved mate, and comfort or counsel she brought none.

Daily the mother flew down into the garden to seek for nourishment for herself and the little one, and when the children of the house perceived that it was always the same bird that came, they would strew crumbs for it before the window-sill.

"Kind children," thought the Swallow, as she picked up the crumbs and flew with them to her nest among the vine-leaves.

"Sweet birdie," said the children. "Mamma, is it not tame? Do you think it knows us and loves us that we give it crumbs?"

After a while the Swallow bethought her to consult the bees anent the blindness of her young one. "They are wise and learned," she said,

"and travel a great deal, so they must acquire much knowledge. Stay quiet, my child, I shall return soon." And she winged her way to the garden where stood a large wicker hive.

"Gentle bees," she said sweetly, tapping with her beak at the hive, "I crave to speak with one of you."

"What is it?" demanded a Drone, issuing forth; "why do you disturb us? We are busy, and have no time to talk to such as you."

The Swallow rapidly told her misery.

"Oh, indeed," said the Bee; "and you come to us for help. In sooth, that is cool of you. What! do you fancy we are likely to care for the welfare of your child, when you and yours have devoured so many of our brethren and friends? Adieu, and consult some one of your own kind. The eagle is your king; go to him." And saying that, the Bee vanished.

"Go to the eagle, he is your king," repeated the Swallow sadly. "Nay, I cannot do that; I cannot leave my child so long alone. Then, too, I fear him, he is so large and strong; and very fierce, they tell me. He might kill me if I went, and then what would become of my child?" The Swallow began to weep, but her weeping only sounded to the children like a repeated chirp; they fancied she was hungry, and fetched her crumbs.

"I will go and ask the Ants," thought the Swallow; "they travel much also, and perhaps they are not quite so stuck-up as those Bees. I wonder if the little Sparrow whom I found in my nest had a mother, and if she grieved at his long absence? I wish I had not murdered him."

It was curious how much that fancy had occupied her lately, and would not quit her head. She was so unhappy herself now, forsaken of her mate, alone with a blind child, that her heart was full of sympathy for others. Formerly she had been too glad to feel for others' grief.

Her mission to the Ants was no more successful than that to the Bees. They also taunted her with the injuries her fellows had done them. "Ask of your friends," they said, and returned to their hillock.

Sad and dejected, the Swallow once more wended her way to her nest. The little one missed all the merry chatter and kind words he had been used to that day.

"What if I apply to the Owl?" suddenly thought the Swallow. "She always looks so wise and learned, she will surely know. Only I am afraid she is too wise, and will not condescend to me: still, I will try."



"Mistress Owl," asked the anxious mother, "I have come to you for advice; pray give it me. I know it must be an easy matter to you with your vast learning." And she told her tale.

"Can you find your way here again at eve?" sleepily answered the Owl. "I can help you, but I want to rest now. Good night." And she dropped her head on her breast again and closed her tiny eyes.

Here was hope at least, and the Swallow returned more cheerfully to her nest, quitting it again at dusk in mortal dread lest that horrid cat should espy her in the dark, when she was less able to elude his grasp. However, she reached the Owl's roost in safety, and found her friend just awakening.

"Good evening!" she said. "You come for my advice? I assure you I feel sincerely flattered. But you do right to apply to me; I know much, and will help you. I am always glad to help, but I am undervalued—undervalued. Good people always are: do you not think so, Mistress Swallow?"

"Perhaps so," said the Swallow. She was impatient at the Owl's slowness, and wished she would come to the point. But she knew from experience that it was not wise to hurry her.

"Yes, always undervalued, my dear friend. To speak of our business, however, for no doubt you are very sleepy and want to go home. You swallows do sleep at such ridiculous hours. The best hunting-time, my dear friend, believe me, the best hunting-time: it is a pity you should lose it by idle slumber."

"Not for us," ventured the Swallow.

"Ah, well, perhaps not. You are inferior animals. But, as I said, to come to the point. Your little one is blind, and you wish a remedy? Well, listen to me. You know the old garden wall that divides the orchard from the flower-garden?"

"I do."

"Go there at break of day to-morrow, and you will find growing in a large clump a plant mortals call the larger celandine. You will know it by its flowers. They have four petals of a yellow colour, and large pods that hold their seeds. The leaves are large, thin, divided into three, notched at the edges, of a bluish-green. Can you remember all this? You see I am exact. It is my habit to be so in everything. I do not wish you to mistake the flower owing to any carelessness on my part. You comprehend?"

"Quite," said the Swallow, who was getting very anxious, what with

the lateness of the hour, and her child alone; and would this be a remedy after all? "Go on, I beg."

"Well," proceeded the Owl, "as I said, the flowers are yellow, the leaves bluish-green. It grows about two feet high, and has a thick juice of dull orange hue, very acrid and noxious. This you must extract by piercing the plant with your beak. Apply it on the eyes of your little one, and after two or three such applications you will probably find he will see as well as you or I; for, from what you tell me of the nature of his blindness, I do not hold it to be incurable. Now you can go; I wish to begin my hunt. You may return again after a few nights to tell me the result. Good bye." The Owl was setting forth on her midnight rambles.

"One thing more," pleaded the Swallow, "and I go, full of gratitude and love to you."

"Bother that!" gruffly answered the Owl. "What is it? Quick!"

"Will the flower die if I take its juice?" The Swallow had grown so compassionate now, she could not bear to hurt the meanest thing.

"Not if you take the juice from the leaves and are careful. Why do you bother yourself about that? Be glad if it cures your child. Once more good bye." And the Owl flew off.

The poor mother could hardly await the morning, and with the first ray of daylight she sought the wall, and found, exactly as the Owl had described, the herb that was to heal her little one. Carefully she detached a leaf with her beak, and gathering up the juice that dropped therefrom, flew upwards with it to her nest, and laid it on the young one's eyes. Towards evening the little bird complained of something hurting its eyes: it was the light. The Swallow's heart leaped for joy: the juice was evidently doing its work. Next day, and again the next, she sought the sight-restoring plant, and on the fourth day after this her little son could bear the daylight without pain, and was eagerly questioning his mother about the various objects he could behold from out the nest. A few days later, and the mother once more taught her son how to fly. Their first journey was to the Owl, to testify their gratitude and to show the good results of her advice. But the Owl only grunted that she was glad to hear it; of course she had been right, as usual. She wished they would not tease her with thanks; she hated them. If, by-the-bye, they wished to do anything for her, they might sing of this matter in all lands, extolling her wisdom and sagacity.

Which the Swallows did, mother and son, praising the Owl's wisdom *and the flower's* virtue. They told their tale so well that from hence-

forth, if aught ailed the eyes of swallows, they would seek the wondrous healing herb. Wherefore men called it the Swallow-wort when they beheld how these birds congregated around it, and they call it so to this day.

Autumn came once more upon the earth ; mother and son prepared for their migration to Egypt. The son felt full of eager longing to behold a new land, fresh scenes ; the mother wondered sadly and lovingly if she should meet her mate on the banks of the Nile, to whom, in spite of all his unkindness, she yet clung tenderly. So, with different hopes and fears, they set off on their journey, and the children said,—

“ Winter is coming again, for there go the birds. And Christmas will come soon, and the snow, and then they’ll come back. Good bye, swallows, come again soon,” they cried, as they saw them wing off in shoals.

They had not fled far ere the mother, looking down to earth, beheld a bird in the claws of their arch-enemy—the vicious cat.

“ Look at that poor swallow, my child,” she said. “ Stay for me, I will try and rescue him ;” and she fluttered to earth. But it was in vain she strove to save the poor bird,—in whom, on nearer approach, she recognized her mate,—hard though she struggled with all her tiny might. The cat had already given him the mortal blow, and, seeing another bird so close within her reach, sprang upon it, cruelly wounding the poor mother with her claws.

“ Adieu my, child, my little one,” she chirped in her death-throes to the bird that hovered above, awestruck by the scene. “ Fly to Africa with your fellows ; fly away and be happy. I have found your father, and am at peace. The monster who has murdered him has killed me also ; we die together. Go, little one,” she said, as her son seemed wavering in his resolution.

And he flew on, on ; over the heaving sea, over the desert, over the palm-trees, over the glistening Nile ; far, far into the sunny wastes of Africa, where all was life and gladness, and where he nearly forgot his distant English home among the vine-leaves, but never his tender mother.

As for pussy, she had not enjoyed so ample a meal for many a long day.



GOLDEN HAIR.

ONCE there lived a King who was so clever that he could understand all that the animals said to one another. Listen how he came to know this. One day an old woman brought him a snake in a basket, and said if he would have it cooked, and would eat it, he would understand what the animals and living creatures, whether on land, in the air, or in the water, said. The King was pleased at the idea of knowing more than any other man, paid the old woman well for her present, and ordered one of his servants to cook the "fish" immediately for dinner.

"But mind," added the King, "you do not taste it; if you do you will answer to me for it with your head."

Irik, the servant, thought it very strange that the King should forbid him so strongly to taste the dish.

"As long as I have lived," he said to himself, "I never saw such a fish; it looks more like a snake. Besides, how is a cook to prepare food without tasting it?"

When the snake was ready he ate a piece of it, just to try its flavour. Suddenly he heard something buzzing round his ears: "A piece for me! a piece for me!"

Irik looked round, but there was no one near, except a few flies darting about the kitchen. Then he heard a hoarse voice outside in the street: "Where are you going to? Where are you going to?"

And then various other voices answered: "To the miller's barley. To the miller's barley."

And looking out of the window, he saw a gander with a flock of geese.

"Oho!" said he to himself, "that's the 'fish,' is it?"

He understood the whole thing at once. He quickly ate another piece, and then, as if nothing had happened, took the dish to the King.

After dinner the King ordered Irik to saddle two horses, and accompany him on a ride. The King went on before, Irik following him. As they rode through a green meadow, Irik's horse gave a bound, and said, "Ho, ho, brother, I feel so light! I should like to jump over the hills!"

"Ah," said the other horse, "I, too, should like to jump. But I am mounted by an old man, and if I were to jump he would tumble off to the ground like a full sack, and break his neck."

"And let him break it," said Irik's horse, "it does not matter. Instead of an old you would have a young master."

During this conversation Irik laughed heartily, but quietly, lest the King should hear him. The King well understood what the horses had said. He turned round, and, seeing Irik laughing, cried,—

"What are you laughing at?"

"Nothing, your Majesty," Irik excused himself; "only something that came into my mind."

The old King, however, began to suspect him, and being afraid of the horses, he returned home.

Upon reaching the palace, the King ordered Irik to pour him out a glass of wine.

"But you will lose your head," added the King, "if you pour either too much or too little."

Irik took a bottle and began to pour out the wine. Suddenly two birds flew through a window into the room. One was pursuing the other, and the first held three golden hairs in its beak.

"Give them to me!" cried the second, "they are mine!"

"No," answered the first, "they are mine, I picked them up."

"But I saw them falling on the ground when the maiden with the golden locks was combing her hair. Give me at least two of them."

"No, not one."

Hereupon the second bird flew upon the first, and seized the three hairs of gold. Then they began to struggle for them; at last each bird got one of the three hairs in its beak, and the third one fell upon the floor with a ringing sound.

Irik looked at it, and spilt the wine.

"You have forfeited your head!" thundered out the King; "but I will be merciful to you if you find the maiden with the golden locks, and bring her to me for my wife."

What was Irik to do? If he would save his life, he must go and look for this maiden, although he did not know where to seek her. He saddled his horse, and started at haphazard. He came to a dense forest; near this forest, just by the side of the road, a bush was burning. Some shepherd boys had lighted it. Under the bush was an ants' nest; the sparks were falling upon it, and the ants, carrying their white eggs, were running in all directions.

"Oh, help, Irik, help!" they cried, piteously, "or we and our young ones yet unhatched will perish!"

Irik quickly dismounted, removed the bush, and put out the fire.

"When you are in trouble," said the ants, "think of us, and we will help you." •

Then he rode through the forest and approached a high fir-tree. On the top of it was a raven's nest; and under the tree lay two young ravens screaming and complaining.

"Father and mother have flown away from us. We are too young to search for food for ourselves, for we poor chickens cannot even fly. Oh, help, Irik, help! Give us something to eat, or we shall die of hunger."

Irik did not think long: he dismounted from his horse, and thrust a sword into its side, that the ravens might have something to eat.

"When you are in trouble," croaked the ravens, joyfully, "think of us, and we will help you."

Irik was now obliged to travel on foot. He walked for a long time through the forest, and when at last he came out of it he saw a broad sea before him. Two fishermen were quarrelling on the shore. They had caught a large yellow fish in a net, and each of them wanted to keep it.

"Mine is the net, and mine is the fish," cried one.

"Your net would have been of little use to you had it not been for my boat and help," said the other.

"When we catch another one like this you shall have it."

"No; you wait for that one, and let me have this."

"Let me settle your dispute," said Irik. "Sell the fish to me, and I will pay you well for it; then divide the money equally between you."

He gave them all the money he had received from the King for his journey, not keeping anything for himself. The fishermen were pleased with the bargain, and Irik let the fish go into the sea. The fish swam joyfully in the water, dived, and not far from land showed its head again, and said,—

"When you want help, Irik, think of me, and I will repay your kindness."

It then disappeared beneath the waves.

"Where are you going?" asked the fishermen of Irik.

"I am going to fetch a young bride, the maiden with the golden locks, for the old King my master; but I know not where to find her.

"We can tell you something about her," said the fishermen. "It is Zlatoulaska—Golden Hair; she is the daughter of the King of the Palace of Crystal, who lives on yonder island. Every morning, at the break of day, she combs her golden locks; their brightness is reflected on the sea

and up among the clouds. If you like, we will row you over to the island, because you have settled our dispute so pleasantly. Take care, however, to choose the right Princess; the King has twelve daughters, but only one of them has locks of gold."

When Irik arrived on the island, he went to the Palace of Crystal, and begged the king to give him his daughter with the golden hair as a wife for his own master.

"I will," answered the King; "but you must serve for her. You must in three days perform three tasks which I will give you—one for each day. Meanwhile you can rest yourself until to-morrow."

Early next morning the King said to Irik:

"My daughter, Zlatoulaska, had a costly pearl necklace; the string broke, and the pearls dropped off, and were scattered in the long grass of the meadow. You must gather these pearls together: not one must be missing."

Irik went into the meadow, it was wide and long; he knelt down in the grass, and began to search for the pearls. He searched from morning until midday, but could not find a single one.

"Oh that my ants were here!" he cried; "they would help me."

"We are here to help you," cried the ants, who suddenly appeared from somewhere, and ran to him from all sides. "What do you want?"

"I have to gather many pearls together in this meadow, and I cannot even find one."

"Wait a moment, we will collect them for you."

In a short time the ants brought Irik a great number of pearls from among the grass, and he had nothing to do but to thread them on a piece of string. Just as Irik was about to tie the ends, there came crawling to him a lame ant, whose leg had been burnt off when the ant-hill was in the midst of the fire, and cried,—

"Stop, Irik, stop! Don't tie the thread yet; I have brought you one pearl more."

Irik took the pearls to the King, and when the King had counted them there was not one missing.

"You have done your task well," said the King; "to-morrow morning I will give you some other work to do."

In the morning Irik presented himself to the King, and the King said to him, "My daughter with the golden locks, while bathing in the sea, lost her gold ring. You must find it and bring it here."

Irik went to the sea, and, full of sorrow, wandered on the shore. The

sea was clear, but so deep that he could not see the bottom. How then was he to find the ring?

"Would that my gold fish were here!" cried Irik; "it would help me."

Suddenly something bright appeared in the sea, and then the gold fish came up to the surface.

"I am here to help you. What do you want?"

"I have to find a gold ring in the sea, and I cannot even see the bottom of it."

"This very instant I met a pike carrying a gold ring in its fins. Wait a moment, and I will bring it to you."

Soon afterwards the gold fish appeared, bringing the pike with the ring.

The King again praised Irik for having done his work so well, and on the following morning gave him the third task.

"If you wish me to give you my daughter with the golden locks for a wife for your King, you must bring her some water of death and some water of life; they will be wanted."

Irik did not know where to seek for these waters. He walked where chance led him, until he came to a dark forest.

"Would that my ravens were here! they would help me."

Suddenly a noise was heard over his head, and the two ravens appeared.

"We are here to help you. What do you want?"

"I have to fetch some of the water of death and some of the water of life, and know not where to get them."

"We know where to get them. Wait a moment, and we will bring you some."

In a short time the ravens returned to Irik, each carrying a small gourd bottle; in one was the water of life, in the other the water of death.

Irik, delighted with his good fortune, hastened back to the palace.

On the skirt of the forest he saw a spider's web spread from one fir-tree to another; in the middle of it sat a large spider killing a fly. Irik took the gourd bottle with the water of death, sprinkled it over the spider, and it fell to the ground like a ripe cherry; it was quite dead. Then he sprinkled the fly with the water of life from the other bottle, and the fly began to struggle; in a short time it disentangled itself from the spider's web, and flew into the air.

“It is your good fortune, Irik, that you have brought me to life again,” buzzed the fly in his ears. “Without my assistance you would never guess which one of the twelve maidens is the Princess with the locks of gold.”

When the King saw that Irik had also accomplished the third task, he said he would give him his daughter Zlatoulaska.

“But,” added the King, “you must find her out yourself.”

Then the King took him to a large hall, in the middle of which stood a table, and around it sat twelve beautiful girls, all exactly alike; each of them had a long cloth, as white as snow, thrown over her head and reaching to the ground, so that it was impossible to see what kind of hair she had.

“These are my daughters,” said the King; “if you can find out which of them is Zlatoulaska, you will have won her, and may lead her away at once. If you cannot point her out, then she is not destined for you, and you must leave this place without her.”

Irik was in the greatest trouble, and did not know what to do. All at once something whispered in his ear:

“Bz—bz! go round the table, and I will tell you which one it is.”

It was the fly which Irik had rescued from death with the water of life.

“This is not the one—nor this—nor this;—but this is Zlatoulaska!”

“Give me this one from among your daughters,” cried Irik. “I have won her for my master!”

“You have chosen rightly,” said the King.

The Princess rose immediately from the table, removed the head dress, and showed her golden hair, flowing in thick locks down to the ground; it was as bright as the rising sun. Irik was almost blinded by its radiance.

Then the King arrayed his daughter for her journey, according to her high birth and station, and Irik took her to his master to become his wife. The old King's eyes sparkled, and he leapt with joy when he saw Zlatoulaska. He ordered immediate preparations to be made for the wedding.

“I intended to have you hung for your disobedience, that the ravens might eat you,” he said to Irik; “but since you have served me so well, I will only have you beheaded and decently buried.”

After the execution Zlatoulaska asked the old King for the dead body of Irik, and as the King could not very well refuse anything to his bride, he sent it to her. The Princess joined the head to the trunk, sprinkled



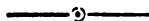
some of the water of death over them, and they immediately grew together so exactly that there was not even a mark left of the decapitation. Then she sprinkled the body with the water of life, and Irik got up as if he were newly born, and as hale as a deer; youth bloomed in his face.

"How soundly I have slept!" said Irik, rubbing his eyes.

"Yes," said the Princess, "you have slept soundly. Had it not been for me, you would have slept long enough."

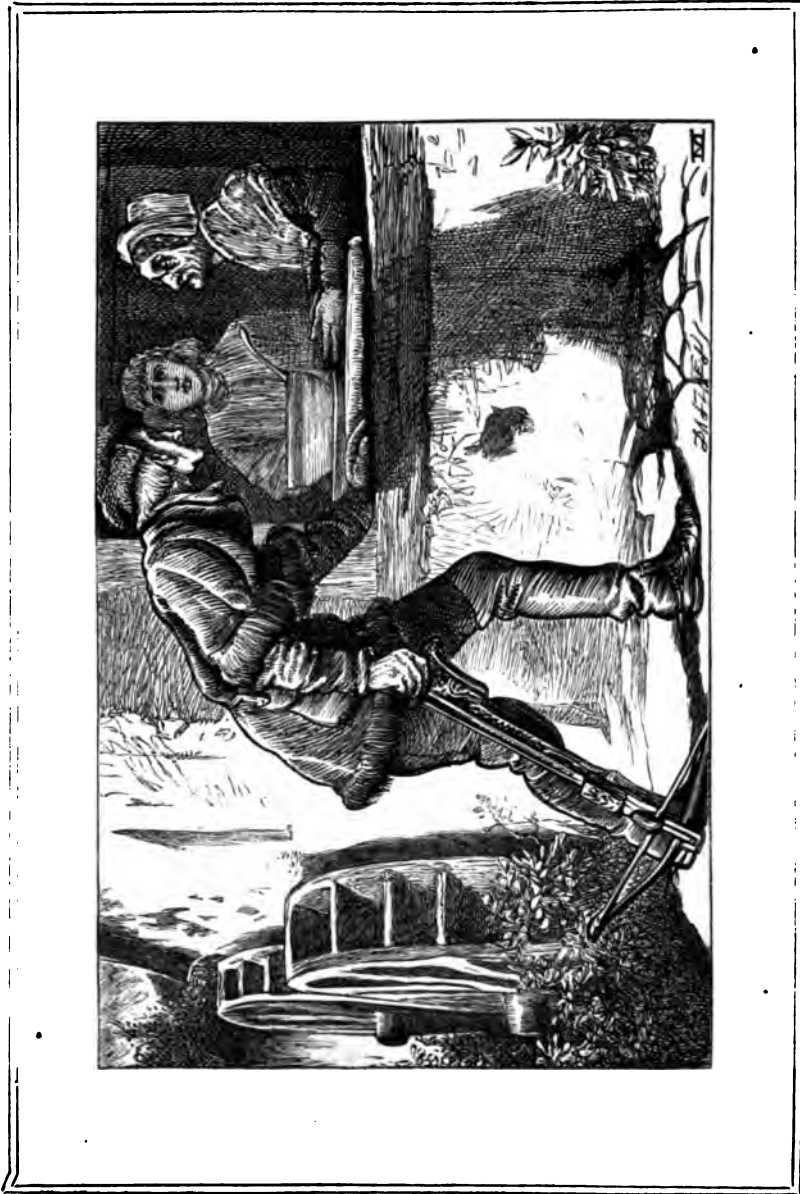
When the old King saw that Irik was alive, and had become younger and handsomer than before, he, too, wanted to be made young again. He immediately directed that the same should be done to him as had been done to Irik. Accordingly they beheaded him, and then sprinkled the body with the water of life over and over again, until there was no more left. But the head would not grow to the trunk. Then they sprinkled it with the water of death, and the head grew immediately to the trunk. But the old King remained dead, for there was no water wherewith to bring him to life again!

But as the kingdom could not remain without a sovereign, and as there was no one so wise as Irik, who understood the language of the brutes and other living creatures, the people made him their King and the Princess Zlatoulaska their Queen.



THE OLD MILL.

AT the foot of the Hagelburg Mountain, not far from the trout stream in the valley of the Old Mill, and a quarter of an hour's walk from the high-road along which heavy-laden waggons are continually passing between Augsburg and Nuremburg, there stood, three hundred years ago, a ruinous corn-mill. The slated roof was entirely overgrown with moss, the chimney had fallen into ruins, and the walls near the stream were all full of great holes. Every one who saw the water-wheel going round was surprised at the courage of the people who lived within such walls and slept beneath such a roof. These persons were, however, only two in number—an old blind woman, the owner of the mill, and her son, a strong, brave-hearted young man. They would, indeed, have gladly built up the mill again if they had only had some money with



which to pay the wages of the masons and carpenters; but in days gone by the old miller had been plundered of all his earnings, and his mill thrown into ruins by roving bands of the enemy during the war-time, and it was mainly of grief at his heavy losses that he had died. The clergyman of the village where he had been buried preached a funeral sermon on the occasion from the words, "He is the Lord God, rejoice ye before Him, for He is the Father of the fatherless, and defendeth the cause of the widow." With this promise the good pastor comforted the widow and her son, and prayed for them, and his prayer was answered in a very extraordinary manner.

Before the miller's wife sat down to table she was in the habit of saying aloud, "Come, Lord Jesus, be our Guest, and bless what Thou hast granted us." And she said the words in such a manner that it was plain to see they came straight from her heart.

Now the knight, Ulrich Von Geirstein, surnamed in the neighbourhood the Golden Knight, because he was richer than all his fellows far and wide, chanced one autumn evening to pass the open window of the mill just as the poor blind widow was praying, as usual, "Come, Lord Jesus, be our Guest, and bless what Thou hast granted us." The Golden Knight, not to be disturbed whilst he was hunting, had sent his servants before him to the castle, laden with many beautiful things which he had been buying for his daughter in the city of Weissenburg. And so whilst he was standing by the window, he said to himself,—

"I have heard many prayers, but compared with this they were but as the stammerings of heathens, and I am rejoiced that any one should pray in such a manner. I will make acquaintance with the people who live here, and who will not recognize me in my hunting clothes."

He then pushed back the wooden latch of the door, went up to the table, and said, in the free open manner of a forester, "Good even to you; the Lord Jesus cannot come here to-day Himself, but He has sent me instead."

And without saying anything more, he sat down on the settle near the fire. Nor did the widow or her son ask why or whence he had come; the young miller only giving him a clean wooden spoon out of the table drawer to eat the porridge with, and the old woman merely saying,—

"Eat as much as you like, and make yourself at home."

When they had nearly finished the porridge, the Golden Knight, whom the mother and her son really imagined to be a forester, said,—

"Pardon me, good mother, but do you quite understand what you are

saying when you look up to the blue sky and pray, 'Lord Jesus, be our Guest, and bless what Thou hast granted to us'?"

"Yes, I quite understand it," answered the widow, who had long ago given up eating, and had left the remainder of the porridge to the men. "If I did not, and if the words I so often utter had not come from my heart, you would not now be seated at my table, and very few hungry wanderers would have found their way here. I know well that the Lord Jesus will not now sit at the table of publicans and sinners, as once He did when He came among us in the flesh. But it is written, 'Whatsoever ye do unto the least of my brethren, that ye do unto me;' and I would gladly stand at His right hand, when from His throne He shall say, 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, for I was hungry and ye fed me, thirsty and ye gave me to drink.'"

While the Golden Knight and the widow were talking in this way, the son hung up the cross-bow and the fur cap of his guest on the bar over the stove, and went to his bed in the garret. Soon after the old woman groped her way to her room, asking the knight to make himself as comfortable as he could on the settle. He did not, however, remain there long, but as soon as the moon had risen high enough to give him light, he took out of his hunting-pouch the heavy silver coins which remained therein after his purchases at Weissenburg, and put them into the sack which hung over the corn-bin, and then quitted the house where he had been so hospitably entertained.

The widow's son slept, however, only two or three hours, and then came downstairs that he might finish grinding some corn for the inn-keeper at Dettenheim, which he wanted immediately. Scarcely had he let down the sack, that the flour might fall into the bin below, than coin after coin came rattling down.

The young miller was so astonished that for some time he stood as still as a statue; then, taking up the great heavy coins in his cap, he carried them to his mother.

It was not long before the money was changed into a new house, which rose with summer on the edge of the trout stream, close to where the old mill had formerly stood; and before her death the poor blind widow laid her hand in blessing on the head of a good kind daughter-in-law, and no one ever passed through the valley without partaking of the miller's simple fare, or spending a night beneath the hospitable roof.

THE WISHING-RING.

A YOUNG farmer, whose farming did not prosper particularly well, was sitting resting on his plough for a moment as he wiped his brow, when an old witch crept up to him and said,—

“Why do you toil so hard, and all for nothing? Walk straight before you for two days, and you will come to a large fir-tree, which stands alone, towering over all the other trees of the forest. If you can but fell it, your fortune is made.”

The farmer did not wait to be told twice, but, taking his axe on his shoulder, started on his way. After walking two days, he came to the fir-tree, and immediately set to work to fell it. Soon it toppled and crashed to the earth, when from the top branches dropped a nest containing two eggs. The eggs rolled on the ground and broke; as they broke, forth came a young eaglet from one, and a small golden ring from the other. The eaglet grew visibly, till it reached half the height of a man, shook its wings, as if to try them, raised itself from the ground, and then cried,—

“You have released me! as token of my gratitude, take the ring the other egg contained—it is a wishing-ring. Turn it on your finger, speak your wish aloud, and it will immediately be granted. But the ring has only one wish: when that is accomplished, it will lose all power, and become no more than any other ring. Therefore, reflect well on what you wish for, so that you may not have to repent afterwards.”

Having so spoken, the eagle rose high into the air, swept for some time in wide circles over the farmer's head, and then, like an arrow from a bow, shot swiftly towards the east. The farmer took the ring, put it on his finger, and started homeward. Towards evening he reached a town. At the door of his shop a goldsmith stood who had many valuable rings for sale. The farmer showed him his ring, and asked him what was about the value of it.

“Mere trumpery,” answered the goldsmith.

The farmer laughed heartily, telling the man it was a wishing-ring, and of more value than all the rings in his shop put together.

Now, the goldsmith was a false designing man, so he invited the farmer to stay all night at his house, saying, “It must bring one good luck to entertain a man who is the possessor of such a precious jewel, so pray remain with me.”

He accordingly entertained him well with plenty of wine and civil words, but when he went to sleep at night, he drew his ring stealthily from his finger, and put on it instead a common ring quite like it in appearance. The next morning the goldsmith could hardly wait with any degree of patience till the farmer had taken his departure. He awoke him in the early dawn, saying, "You have so far to go, you had better start early."

As soon as the farmer was safe on his journey, the goldsmith went into his room, and having shut the shutters, that no one might see, he bolted himself in, and, standing in the middle of the room, and turning the ring on his finger, exclaimed, "I wish to have a hundred thousand silver crowns immediately!"

Hardly were the words spoken, when bright five-shilling pieces began to rain down from the ceiling; shining silver crowns poured down so fast and hard that at last they began to beat him unmercifully about the head, and shoulders, and arms. Calling piteously for help, he tried to rush to the door, but before he could reach it and unbolt it, he fell bleeding to the ground. Still the rain of silver crowns did not cease, and soon, under the weight of it, the flooring gave way, and the unfortunate goldsmith and his money fell down into a deep cellar. And still it rained on, till the hundred thousand silver crowns were completed, and then the goldsmith lay dead in his cellar, with the mass of money upon him. Attracted at last by the noise, the neighbours rushed to the spot, and, on finding the goldsmith dead under his money, exclaimed, "It really is a great misfortune when blessings rain down like cudgels." Then the heirs came and divided the spoil.

Meantime the farmer went happily home, and showed the ring to his wife.

"We shall now never want for anything, dear wife," he said; "our fortune is made. But we must consider well what we must wish for."

The wife had a bright idea ready at hand.

"Let us wish ourselves some more land," said she; "we have so little. There is just a nice strip which stretches into our field. Let us wish for that."

"That would never be worth while," replied the husband; "we have only to work well for a year, and have a moderate share of good luck, and we can buy it for ourselves."

And the man and his wife worked hard for a whole year, and the harvest had never been so plentiful as that autumn, so they were not only able to buy the strip of land, but had money to spare.



"You see," said the husband, "the land is ours and the wish too."

Then the good woman thought it would be a capital thing to wish themselves a cow and a horse.

"Wife," answered the husband, again clinking the surplus money in his pocket, "it would be folly to sacrifice our wish for such a trumpery thing. We can get the cow and the horse without that."

And, sure enough, in another year's time the horse and the cow had been well earned. So the man rubbed his hands cheerfully, and said, "Another year has passed, and still the wish is ours, and yet we have all we want: what good luck we have!"

The wife, however, began to be very impatient, and tried seriously to induce her husband to wish for something.

"You are not like your old self," she said crossly: "formerly you were always grumbling and complaining, and wishing for all sorts of things; and now, when you might have whatever you want, you toil and work like a slave, are pleased with everything, and let your best years slip by. You might be king, emperor, duke, a great rich farmer with loads of money, but no—you can't make up your mind what to choose."

"Pray do cease continually worrying and teasing me," cried the farmer; "we are both of us young, and life is long. The ring contains but one wish, and that must not be squandered. Who knows what may happen to us, when we might really need the ring? Do we want for anything now? Since the ring has been ours, have we not so risen in the world that all men marvel at us? So do be sensible, and amuse yourself, if you like, by thinking what we shall wish for."

And so the matter was allowed to rest for the present. It really seemed as if the ring brought blessings to the house, for barns and granaries grew fuller and fuller from year to year; and, in the course of time, the poor farmer became a rich and prosperous one. He worked all day with his men as if the whole world depended upon it; but in the evening, when the vesper bell sounded, he was always to be seen sitting, contented and well-to-do, at his threshold, to be wished "Good evening" by the passers-by. Now and then, when they were quite alone and no one near to hear, the woman still reminded her husband of the ring, and made all sorts of propositions to him. He always answered there was time enough to think about it, and that the best ideas always occurred to one last. So she gradually fell into the way of mentioning it less often, and at last it rarely happened that the ring was ever alluded to at all. The farmer, *it is true*, turned the ring on his finger twenty times a day and examined

it closely, but he took good care never to express the slightest wish at the time.

And so thirty and forty years went by, and the farmer and his wife grew old and their hair snow-white, and still the wish remained unspoken. At last it pleased God to show them a great mercy, and He took them to Himself both in one night. Children and grandchildren stood weeping around the coffins, and, as one of them tried to withdraw the ring from the dead man's finger, his eldest son said,—

“Let our father take his ring to the grave. There was some mystery about it. Probably it was some love token, for our mother often looked at the ring too: perhaps she gave it him when they both were young.”

So the old farmer was buried with the ring which should have been a wishing-ring, but was not one, and yet had brought as much good luck to the house as man could desire. For it is strange, as regards the true and the false, but a bad thing can be turned to better account in good hands than a good thing in bad.

THE LEAF ON THE GROUND.

“**B**UT I don't like the lumps!” said the Leaf on the ground.

It was the leaf of an ash-tree, and it had fallen off in autumn, and a kind-hearted grasshopper, seeing that it was still quite green and sharp, had popped it into a little nook in the moss, where it had continued to live out the winter. Now spring was come again, and against a pale blue sheet of sky all the live trees were spreading themselves out like seaweed upon paper. And the Leaf was looking up at them and giving its opinion about them boldly, as became its ignorance. It was talking to a Fairy, and the Fairy was amused, and kept on twisting his moustaches with a slight curve of sarcasm, which greatly intensified the Leaf's expression of opinion.

“I don't like the lumps!” said the Leaf.

“What lumps, you droll thing?” asked the Fairy.

“The lumps at the end of the twigs,” said the Leaf, pouting and shrugging its segments. “They are very clumsy, and quite out of proportion. Every artist would say so.”

"Bravo! bravo!" cried the Fairy. "That's the best thing I ever heard in my life."

"I assure you I am talking about what I understand," answered the Leaf with dignity. "I know exactly how things ought to be done, only I can't do them. Everything ought to be finished with points, and when the world is perfect everything *will* be finished with points. Look at *me!*"



"Oh you dear!" exclaimed the Fairy, "I see you!"

"I wish, instead of talking in that silly way," said the Leaf, "you would try to be a little practical. Finish yourself with a point, if you can! But I believe you can't, though you are a Fairy!"

"Suppose I don't choose," retorted the Fairy. "What do you say to pins?"

"I never say anything to pins," rejoined the Leaf, sternly. "Why should I?"

"If you were consistent, you ought to prefer them to flowers," said the Fairy.

"That is nonsense," replied the Leaf; "all arguments which one can't see are nonsense."

"In fact, you don't see the point," observed the Fairy. "But perhaps you can see the potatoes. That is the sole alternative."

Which showed that he was an Irish Fairy.

The Leaf was irritated. It made use of an unbecomingly strong expression. It said, "Mash the potatoes!"

"With all my heart!" said the Fairy. "But do, pray, let us keep to our point, or rather let me keep you to yours. Would you like to be a twig without a lump, just to set an example to the others?"

"I should like to fulfil my destiny," said the Leaf, pompously. "No doubt I shall be considered eccentric at first, but by degrees the public will recognize the fact that when I differ from my neighbours I surpass them."

"Come with me, then," cried the Fairy, rather hurriedly. He inserted a tiny rainbow trowel below the under-surface of the Leaf, and began to rise slowly through the air, carrying it along with him. The Leaf continued to harangue in a sustained voice, as if nothing was happening.

"By differing from your neighbours you may always feel that you are superior to them," it said; "but you cannot always show it. You cannot command the circumstances which enable you to exhibit your superiority. Then a fairy comes and brings the circumstances to you. You fulfil your destiny. You are recognized. You are supreme. Oh! you hurt!"

The tone of this speech, which had become maundering and vague to the last degree, suddenly assumed a peculiar sharpness, as the Fairy, evidently bored, thrust the Leaf against a vacant place on the ash-stem, gave it a twirl and a twist, dislocated the whole of its skeleton in a moment, and changed it into a short twig which terminated in a fine point.

All the Ash-buds turned and looked at it. "Poor little thing, I am afraid it will never come to any good," said they to each other. "But there's no knowing. Let us hope for the best."

The Leaf saw them looking, and felt sure that they were admiring. This is a thing which sometimes happens.

"Now," it thought, "they will discover what they ought to do. Poor creatures—how black and untidy they are getting! and they have a sort of gloss about them which is quite unpleasant. It ought not to be allowed."

It stretched and sharpened itself as much as it could in the midst of the growing buds.

"How they swell!" thought the Leaf; "they ought really to be bandaged."

As the spring advanced, they swelled more and more, shell after shell opened, and at last out of each glossy black bud came a lovely slender plume of the tenderest green leaves. Then all the birds and butterflies crowded round them to tell them how pretty they were, and all the children played under them, and all the artists tried to copy them, and everybody behaved as if this was the first spring that had ever come into the world, and as if ash-trees were a new creation. This, too, is a thing which sometimes happens.

The Fairy, who had not a bad heart, remembered the poor pointed twig that had once been a leaf, and came in the twilight to comfort it. "By this time," thought the Fairy, "it has found out its mistake, and will be glad enough to be helped to grow as good as its neighbours. Nothing like experience for teaching humility.—Now my dear, how do you feel?"

The Leaf roused itself out of a reverie. "Ah, good evening," it said; "I think I once had the pleasure of knowing you. Do you see all these ridiculous ash-sprays, so diffuse and elaborate and frivolous? They are trying to make themselves like what I once was. They never can be what I am."

"They can never do what you have done," was the answer, "for you have quite confounded a fairy. Henceforth I shall let you alone, for, if I may venture to borrow an expression from my friends the schoolboys, it is useless to say to you, 'Do you twig?'"

"Not only useless, but personal," replied the Leaf.

At this moment, the Fairy is trying to find out the moral of what happened.



THE MOTHER'S PARDON.

A LEGEND OF BRITTANY.

THE courtyard of the Manor House of Skolan was crowded with dogs and horses, for Tannik Skolan was going to hunt the wild boar in the forest. He rode across the country with his servants, crying and *hallooing* to his hounds; the dogs' necks were torn with the thorny furze

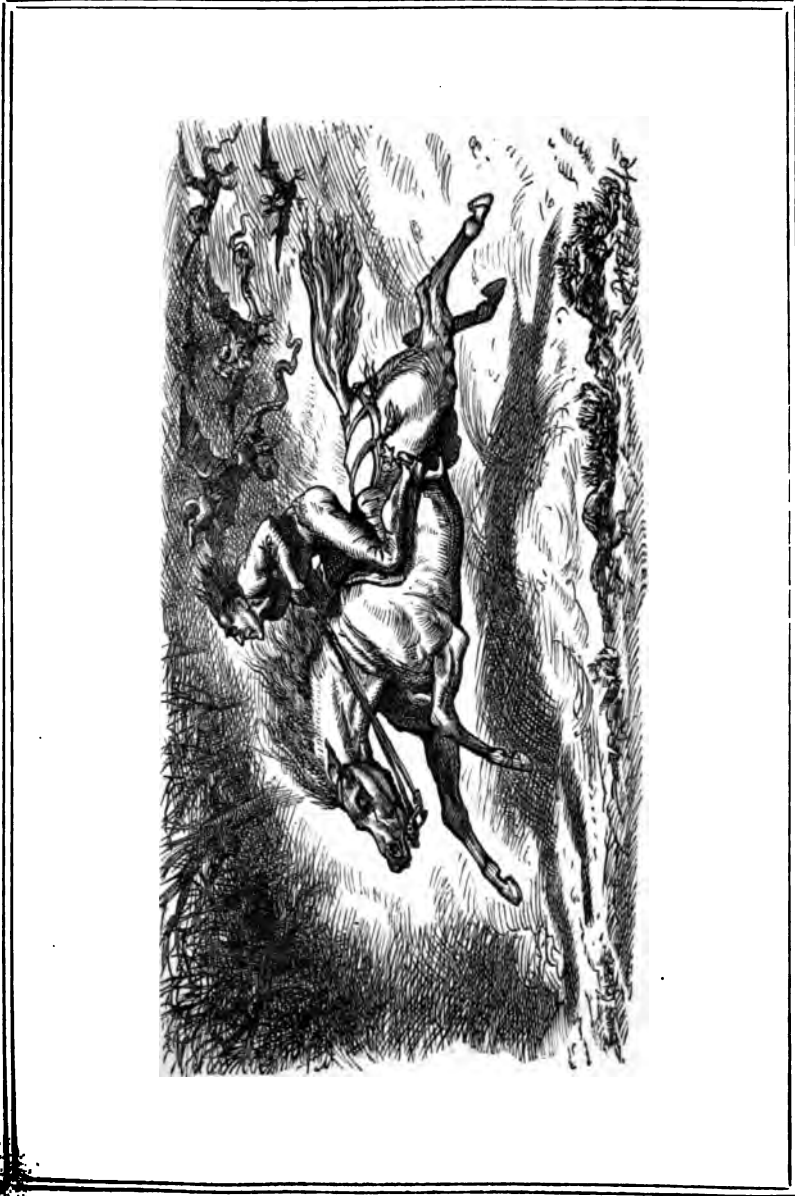
through which they passed, but the excitement of the chase carried them on; they had found the track of the wild boar that had slept all night amongst the tall grass, and were following it, barking as they ran, Tannik galloping after them on his good bay horse.

While the young Lord of Skolan was thus wasting his substance in foolish extravagance, his horses and dogs and hunting-men consuming by degrees all the possessions of the manor, his mother and sister worked and prayed in the old house. The poor mother often wept; but little Morised, who was cheerful and brave, busied herself with the care of the household, and was not given to weeping. In spite of her high birth, she put her hand to everything; though she was proud too, and when beggars came to the door, and she had nothing to give them but a piece of black bread, she would bite her red lips, and her heart would swell with anger against her brother, who had destroyed the comfort of her father's house.

There was, however, greater sorrow than this in store for Morised. The Baron de St. Cost saw her one day at church, and thought her very pretty in her white hood; for Morised never dressed like a rich lady, but always wore the dress of a peasant of Tréquier. And from that time the young nobleman came constantly to the Manor House; but Morised always shrank from him with terror. The baron then sought the company of Tannik Skolan, and lent him money, and encouraged him in all his extravagances, that he might get him into his power in order to obtain from him the hand of the little Morised. But good girls do not allow themselves to be gained by such means; and when Tannik spoke to his sister of the Baron de St. Cost, urging her vehemently to accept him, Morised left the linen which she was washing at the fountain, and stood up and faced him.

"I know not what bargain you may have made with the Baron de St. Cost," she said, with an expression of contempt which she did not try to hide; "but I tell you this, brother, you shall never barter away either my heart or my hand; you have never gained any right over me by your kindness, and I will rather go into the convent of St. Anne at Tréquier, and leave my mother at the Manor House alone, than marry your worthy companion."

The water of the fountain was stained with blood, the long grass which surrounded it was trodden underfoot, and beneath the thick bushes of the flowering furze lay hidden the body of little Morised. Tannik had stabbed her to the heart, and then, terrified at his crime, he had dropped his dagger and fled.



There was weeping and lamenting at the Manor House when the young girl's body was found and carried home. The mother alone did not weep: silent she stood beside the bed where Morised was laid, but in her heart a terrible sentence was inscribed. She cursed her only son.

Tannik fled on his bay horse. The noble animal had been wandering about the common, for his master had dismounted when he met Morised at the fountain. At the sound of the cries uttered by the poor girl when she fell under the murderer's blow, the horse had galloped to the spot; it smelt the cold little hand that had so often caressed it, and, lifting up its head, it neighed sorrowfully. When Tannik attempted to remount, the good horse reared for the first time in his life, and in his rage Skolan plunged his spurs so roughly into its sides, that the blood flowed from the steed as it had done from the breast of Morised.

Tannik galloped across the country, riding at random like a madman, not knowing where he was going, till at length he reached the town of Tréquier. The story of Morised's death was already known there, for it was market-day, and the country people had brought the news when they came to sell their eggs. All eyes were turned towards the murderer as he rode through the streets with his hair floating in the wind like a man who had lost his senses. The officers of justice laid hands on him; he attempted to deny his crime, but alas! his dagger had been found at Morised's feet. Two days later he died by the hands of the executioner in the streets of Tréquier, notwithstanding his high birth, for he had committed many crimes before the murder of his sister.

The mother now lived alone at the Manor House; no one ever saw her leave her chamber; she never went to church; and if she prayed she prayed alone, in the anguish of her bitter despair. She could not follow the priest's voice when he prayed to God for the pardon of sinners, for she had cursed her only son Tannik Skolan, who had killed her cherished daughter, the joy of her life, the desire of her eyes, the little Morised with the cherry lips.

It was night, and the Lady of Skolan had dismissed her servants. The young girls had shut themselves into their room, glad to escape from the sad face of their mistress, and to be able to laugh and talk at their ease. The lady wandered about the house, carrying a light in her hand, going from room to room, as if she were searching for her lost happiness. When at length she returned to the great hall, where some embers were still burning in the grate, she was startled to see a man seated at the fire warming his hands.

"My doors are all shut and locked, and my windows bolted," she murmured; "how can this man have got in?"

The visitor rose up in the shadow cast by the great chimneypiece.

"If you have shut and locked your doors, I have long known how to open them. Bring the candle here and stir the fire into a blaze, and you will then see two instead of one."

She went close to him with the candle, and saw before her Tannik Skolan, the rebellious and ungrateful son, the unnatural brother, the murderer of his sister. The mother slowly lifted her arms; the light did not tremble in her hand, and she was about to pronounce with her lips the



malediction that was in her heart, but Tannik fell on his knees before her. "Do not speak, mother," he cried, "do not speak yet. I have come to implore your pardon, for without it I cannot enter Paradise."

The Lady of Skolan listened in silence.

"Ah, God is a Father!" she said in her heart, and there was a smile on her pale lips as she thought of the terrible power which she still retained over her miserable son. Even the forgiveness of God could not secure the eternal repose of Tannik Skolan; the tears that he had shed in prison, and the blood of Jesus Christ which had been shed for him, had appeased the Divine anger, but he could not rest without his mother's pardon; and his patron saint, the gentle St. John, had consented to let *him revisit the earth* that he might beg for that supreme grace.

The injured mother looked upon the son whom she had carried in her bosom; but her eyes were still dry, and her heart unmoved. Tannik wept and clasped his hands.

"Calm yourself, my mother," he said. "Do not be afraid. It is I, the son whom you brought into the world, who has come back once more to see you. I have lost my mother's blessing."

A single word escaped her lips. "Morised!" she said.

"Alas! I know that I murdered her, basely and cruelly; but, since God has had pity on me, give me your pardon also, mother."

"Morised!" again repeated the mother.

"She is in heaven, in God's Paradise. Where she is there is no more anger. Morised has forgiven me; forgive me also, mother!"

The mother still stood erect; but the light began to tremble in her hands. Tears gathered in her eyes, though she would not let them fall. In silence she looked at her only son kneeling at her feet, imploring her to grant him eternal repose. Suddenly, in the silence of the night, she heard a grave sweet voice saying, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

She turned round, but saw nothing except the shadows of the black oak pillars, and her son Tannik still on his knees. The voice of God had penetrated her heart; she no longer saw the bleeding wounds of little Morised, for the Cross rose before her with its Divine burden. The blood of Jesus Christ had washed away her son's crime. Who was she that she should withhold her pardon?

"Go," she said; "thy mother forgives thee, even as God has forgiven thee."

She could not again pronounce her daughter's name.

Tannik, raising his hands to heaven, said, "Receive me into Paradise, O my God, for my mother has pardoned me."

The love of Jesus Christ has disarmed the mother's anger and resentment.

When the Lady of Skolan raised her eyes, she was alone. All was silent and gloomy in the Manor House, but her soul was filled with un-wonted peace. The angels in heaven rejoiced, for the repentant sinner had entered into the eternal rest; the Divine mercy had triumphed. Morised and her brother were united again in heaven.

When the servants went the next morning to light the fire in the great hall, they found that the stones of the hearth had been worn into a hollow by Tannik's knees; and amongst the embers were seen drops of blood, which had fallen from him with his tears.



THE GREAT MAGICIAN AND HIS TRAIN OF SPRITES.

I.

“**A**UNT LOUIE, what *do* you think?” said Wynnie Lesley one day, seizing on her aunt the moment she entered the house.

“I think a great many things,” said Aunt Louie.

“No, no,—but, auntie, I’ve something to tell you, you know.”

“I didn’t know, but I’m most anxious to hear. What is it?”

“Oh! it’s so nice. Only think, auntie, I’m going to have a governess—a regular governess—and she’s coming to-morrow.”

“Really?” said Aunt Louie.

“Yes,” went on the little girl very excitedly, “and we’re not going to have a nursery any more. It’s all altered and different, and it’s to be *my* study. Not school-room, you see, because there’s only one person to go to school in it, that’s me—and mamma says *one* doesn’t make a school; so it’s to be *my* study. Dear me! Doesn’t it sound grand and grown-up?”

“It does indeed, Wynnie. You’re getting such a big grown-up woman that you make me feel quite old.”

“Do I? But, auntie, I wish you’d come up and see the study. It is so nice and pretty.”

“My dear,” said her mamma, “why do you want to drag your aunt up all those stairs just to see a bookcase and an inkstand?”

“No, mamma dear. But that isn’t nearly all; there’s the new carpet and the new mahogany table, and—Oh! auntie,” very appealingly, “*do* come.”

“I never saw such a child,” laughed Mrs. Lesley. “As long as a thing is new—it does not matter in the least what it is—it is sure to be charming. It is to be hoped that the arrangement will be equally delightful a week hence.”

“You will come up, won’t you, auntie?” Wynnie is saying, at the same time taking her aunt’s hand and trying to pull her to the door.

“Oh! yes, I’ll come if you like,” is Miss Lesley’s good-natured answer.

They make their way up flight after flight of stairs, Wynnie scampering on in front like a young goat, and chattering—like a young chatterbox. *The door of the study is closed.*

"And now," says Wynnie, very much excited, "you must shut your eyes tight and let me lead you right into the middle of the room, and then you can tell me whether you were ever so surprised in your life."

This small performance is duly gone through with great seriousness on the part of both aunt and niece.

"Now you may open your eyes," cries Wynnie; "look about—do you know where you are?"

"No, indeed," says Aunt Louie, looking about her with an air of astonishment; "I haven't the remotest idea. If it wasn't for that map of Great Britain hanging up there, I should really think that the fairies had carried me off into some unknown place."

"You never were in this room before, were you, auntie?" says Wynnie, dancing about in great delight at the success of her experiment. "Isn't it nice? Do look at the new carpet, and the new bookcase, and the new paper on the walls, and the curtains, and the new table, and the new inkstand. You'd never think it was the old nursery now, would you?"

"You haven't done away with your doll's house, I see, Wynnie; that and the high fender are the only old friends I see."

"Why, no; mamma said this fender would do, though I can't say I think it is pretty," says Wynnie, reflectively; "and as for the doll's house, I thought I might, perhaps, like to play a little with it sometimes, you see; but I've put it rather up in a corner, where it doesn't show much. You don't think the doll's house makes it look like a nursery, do you, auntie?" in rather an alarmed tone.

"Oh, dear no, not in the least. I don't object to it," returned Aunt Louie; "and I'm glad to see you have not turned away all the old nursery pictures either," looking up at the walls. "There, I see, are our old playmates, Red Riding-Hood and Little Goody Two-Shoes standing guard over the map of Europe, and the Butterfly's Revels taking place right on the top of the United Kingdom."

"Ah!" said Wynnie, "do you know, auntie, we kept them there all on your account, because we know you are so fond of the old fairy tales and things."

"Did you really? Well, it was a most delicate attention on your part, I must say; and as I am your godmother as well as your aunt, you were quite wise to try and propitiate me. I might even yet turn out to be a fairy godmother, and then, supposing you had ever offended me, woe betide you!"

“But I don't think you are likely to turn out a fairy now, auntie.”

“There's no knowing, my dear, what may happen in this world,” says Aunt Louie, sententiously: “such very unlikely things do take place. Anyhow, I am very glad you don't wish to turn the fairies out of the school-room”—

“Study, Aunt Louie!”

“Oh! I beg your pardon—*study* I should say—because I am quite sure there are several little fairies who would be found extremely useful in it.”

“Are there, auntie? what are they?”

“Well, Wynnie, I've no time to stop talking about them to-day; but if you can't find out for yourself, I will tell you about them the next time I come. Now, I think mamma is waiting for me to go out with her, so I must run down again. In the meantime, dear child,” said Aunt Louie, kissing her little niece, “I wish you all good luck in your new quarters.”

“And you do think the 'study' is very nice, don't you, auntie?”

“I think it's simply perfect,” returned Aunt Louie.

II.

ONE afternoon, nearly a week later, Miss Lesley again paid a visit to her brother's house.

“How's Wynnie getting on with her governess?” she asked Mrs. Lesley. “Has the charm of the new 'study' gone off yet?”

“Oh dear!” returned Mrs. Lesley, in a tone of genuine distress. “I assure you I am quite worried about the child. She does not seem to be able to get on at all. The fact is, that though she is by no means wanting in ability, she has no application, and a very small stock of patience, and so regular study is hard work for her. To-day, matters have come quite to a crisis. It seems that after being very troublesome and inattentive all the morning, she finished matters by deliberately overturning the inkstand in a fit of impatience. In consequence of which freak she is under sentence of banishment to the school-room all the afternoon, with a French verb and some sums for a distraction, instead of going out with me.”

“Poor little Wynnie,” said Louie. “Only think of French verbs and arithmetic on this lovely summer afternoon. The inkstand will be avenged indeed.”

“But you know,” said Mrs. Lesley, “I can't allow her to give way to *these fits of temper.*”

"Or to fling inkstands about. No, I suppose that would be an inconvenient habit to get into."

"Yet it makes me wretched to think of the child sitting up there in disgrace, all alone," said Mrs. Lesley; "and, indeed, I feel there are excuses to be made for her. I am afraid I have rather spoiled her, to begin with; and then if she is anything like me, I don't wonder at figures irritating her. They always do me."

"But not to the extent of upsetting inkstands, I hope?"

"Well, no, not quite so badly as that, I think. That's an aggravated form of the complaint."

"May I run up and see the child?" asked Aunt Louie presently.

"Yes, if you like. Perhaps you may be able to give her a little talking to. You are her godmother, and so ought to see after her morals."

III.

A FEW minutes later Aunt Louie puts her head into the "study."

"May I come in?" she asks.

Wynnie is sitting at the table, with her elbows upon it, and her head in her hands, looking the very picture of woe, or rather the reality of it, which is a great deal worse.

She looked up as her aunt entered, but did not move.

"Why, Wynnie, child, what is the matter?" asked Aunt Louie, coming up behind her, and putting her hands on the little girl's shoulders.

"Oh, auntie, everything's the matter," says Wynnie, dismally, "and will be so, so far as I can see, till I'm grown up and able to do what I like. As for these things," pushing away a slate and some books impatiently, "I can't do them, and there's an end of it."

"Nonsense," said Aunt Louie, smiling; "that's only the beginning of it. If you knew all about everything, and could 'do' everything, as you say, why, what would be the good of learning? You'd be able to teach Miss Kent, instead of Miss Kent teaching you."

"Then I suppose it is that I am stupid, auntie," said Wynnie, rather doggedly.

"No, I don't think you're very stupid, dear, except when you go upsetting inkstands, you know, as you have evidently been doing, by the stains on your frock and fingers."

Wynnie blushed.

"I meant to do that, though," she said; "I was so cross, that it seemed to do me good."

"Oh, Wynn timer!"

"Well, auntie, you see, nothing would go right; and so——"

"As you were upset, you saw no reason why the inkstand should not be upset too. Well, I must say you were a stupid little girl to think that two wrongs could ever make a right. What a pity you didn't call for the fairies instead! If you'd been Gretchen, you'd never have got the coffee made."

"What do you mean, auntie?" said Wynn timer, with a sigh, leaning her head wearily against her aunt's shoulder. "What fairies? and who was Gretchen? and what about the coffee? Is it a story? Do tell me."

"I don't think you're good enough to have stories told you to-day. Eh, Wynn timer?"

"Oh, yes, auntie," coaxingly. "Perhaps the story will make me *gooder*, don't you see? And besides, you promised the other day to tell me about some fairies. Didn't you, auntie? Are these the same fairies you were talking about then?"

"Yes," said Miss Lesley, taking a seat beside her little niece—"the very same. When you were so delighted with your new 'study,' the other day, and all your new arrangements, I couldn't help thinking of this little German legend, and thinking, too, that unless you had a few of Gretchen's fairies to help you, you would not find things quite so bright as you expected."

"Ah!" said Wynn timer, with a deep sigh, "I did think it was all going to be so nice; and now, auntie—now—it's all so horrid, I can't tell you; but I know I shall never, never be happy till I'm grown up like you, auntie, and haven't any more lessons to do. I—I—can't do them." And here big tear-drops fell from Wynn timer's eyes, and blotched down on the front of her frock.

"My dear, you are indeed taking a melancholy view of things. I wouldn't wait, if I were you, to be grown up before I was happy, because, I do assure you, grown-up people have their trials and troubles just as much as little girls and boys have."

"You don't have French and arithmetic to do, auntie," put in Wynn timer.

"But I have other lessons which are, perhaps, quite as hard and quite as necessary to learn, darling," said Miss Lesley, smoothing her niece's bright hair. "But to return to you and your troubles. Before you are much older, you will find out that nothing ever does turn out quite so bright as we hoped it might do; but, on the other hand, you will, I am sure, also learn that nothing is ever quite so bad as we fear that it will be.

So now, believe me, if you will only dry your eyes, and cultivate the acquaintance of a few of the fairies who helped Gretchen to make the coffee, the future need not look so very black, nor the present be so very hopeless."

"But you haven't told me the story yet, auntie."

"No, I see I have been pointing the moral before telling the tale, which is equivalent to putting the cart before the horse, and is a very unorthodox proceeding indeed. But I will begin at once. The tale, or rather legend, is from an old German cookery book, and is to be found as a recipe for making coffee, but it is a recipe for making a good many things besides coffee. The legend runs thus :

Gretchen was a young German maiden—an orphan—who went to live as housekeeper, or maid-of-all-work, or general factotum, with an uncle, who was extremely particular and fidgety about every possible thing. But if there was one thing over which he was more particular and fidgety than another, that one thing was his morning coffee. And that was the one thing that Gretchen couldn't do. It was just worse one morning than another, but never better. It was always either cold, or weak, or smoked, or behind time, or *something*, and each day Mein Herr Onkel scolded, and grumbled, and stormed, and raged, and even swore, so that Gretchen's life became a burden to her, all on account of the coffee-making. It must be presumed that Gretchen was, like you, Winnie, rather a stupid sort of girl, or else, unlike you, she must have been very careless or very negligent. We won't pretend to determine as to the cause of her repeated failures; but it is certain that the fact occasioned her many bitter and useless tears, and she quite made up her mind at last that she couldn't do it, that it was no good trying, and that she would never have a moment's, not to speak of a day's, peace or happiness, so long as her uncle wanted coffee for his breakfast.

It was just when she had reached this very melancholy state that a new light broke in upon her.

She was sitting one morning helpless and hopeless, with her elbows on her knees and her head on her hands, the unmade coffee and empty coffee-pot before her. Suddenly she hears footsteps.

"There is my uncle now coming down the stairs, and in a minute or two he will be wanting his breakfast. He's specially cross, too, I'm sure, by the way in which he is stumping downstairs. Oh, dear! what *shall* I do?"

As she cried thus in her despair, she happened to give the little finger

of her left hand a long sharp pinch with the thumb and forefinger of her other hand.

In a moment, something like a flash of light beamed out of a distant dark corner of the little kitchen where Gretchen sat bewailing herself and the coffee, and a voice close at her ear said, "Here I am. Why didn't you send for me before?"

Gretchen looked up rather in alarm to see perched up on the top of a kitchen chair an ugly little manikin, with a solemn-looking face, and a conical hat all over points. On the top of his hat was a diamond as big as a plate, that shone like a star, and in his hand he held a wand, at the end of which was a bright eye, so bright that it literally made darkness all round it by way of contrast.

"I—I didn't send for you now, sir," said Gretchen, all trembling.

"Yes, you did," said the Fairy—for he *was* a fairy.

"No, sir, I assure you I did not," Gretchen was going to say, only the Fairy stopped her before she could get the words out of her mouth.

"Don't argue with me," said he, very abruptly.

"No, sir," returned Gretchen, considerably frightened by this time; "would you—would you like to take a seat?"

"No," said the Fairy, "I always make a stand. You evidently don't know me. In short, you've never had much to do with me before, or you wouldn't be the poor, useless, stupid creature you are." •

This was not pleasant for Gretchen to hear; but she was so cowed by the Fairy's manner, that she didn't venture to say a word.

The manikin went on—"My name is Determination."

"Is it indeed, sir? I'm sure I'm very happy to hear it," said Gretchen, wishing to be polite, and not quite knowing what to say.

"I am a magician."

At this Gretchen was so terribly frightened that she would have fallen to the ground if Determination had not held her up with one of his fingers.

"And, now that you have sent for me at last, what do you want of me?" he asked.

"Please, sir, I didn't know I'd sent for you," observed Gretchen, afraid to say that she had not done so.

"Don't talk nonsense," returned Determination, in a decided manner.

"You pinched your left-hand little finger for five seconds and a quarter; you can't deny that."

"Oh! I'm sure I don't want to deny anything," said Gretchen, humbly

"Didn't you know," Determination went on, "that the fairies, when they wanted to make you a present at the time of your christening, couldn't find anything to give you?"

"No," said Gretchen, "I never heard about it."

"It's true, though," said the manikin. "There happened to be quite a run of babies just at that time, to whom the fairies had been presenting one good gift and another; and when your turn came they were quite in despair: they looked in their riches-bags, and in their beauty-bags, and in their cleverness-bags, and every one of them was empty. What to dower you with they couldn't think, until at last one kind old fairy, who had taken a great fancy to you, and couldn't bear you to have nothing, declared that you should be put under the protection of the great magician Determination, and she prophesied that with his aid you would accomplish more than if you had possessed beauty, wealth, or talent; and she was right, for in truth there is very little in this world that I am not able to accomplish. Only I couldn't come till you called me—fairies never can."

"I didn't know how," said Gretchen.

"Ah! that was a pity. However, there are some things which I suppose everybody must find out for themselves. And, now I *am* here, tell me what you want."

"I want," said Gretchen, "to make the coffee, and such coffee as my uncle will approve of."

"Oh! if that's all, we'll soon put you to rights," said the manikin; "and if your Herr Onkel is not satisfied with the coffee which we make for him, why, he will be a more difficult man to please than I fancy."

With that Determination waved his wand, and in a trice the little kitchen was crowded with busy sprites.

Little Hardwork, a fierce-looking fellow, with a hatchet, chopped wood; Patience, bending on the floor, picked up the sticks; Humility, with a broom as big as himself, swept the chips up; Perseverance supplied the stove with the fuel; Hope, sitting on an overturned stewpan, ground cheerfully away at the coffee; old Heartiness and Goodwill brought in pailsful of water between them; and young Courage poured the water valiantly into the hissing kettle.

Not a creature was idle. There was work for each one of them. And over them all, Determination, their master, kept his watchful eye.

In short, there was such a commotion in the place that Purrer, the cat, was quite startled out of her usual serenity, and stood aghast with her tail on end; but the result was that Gretchen carried her uncle that morning

the most delicious coffee that had ever been made in the coffee-pot—to her own great relief, and the extreme satisfaction of Mein Herr Onkel.

So good was it, and so quickly was it ready, that he was heard to declare "it must have been made by magic," as indeed it was.



"Little Hardwork, a fierce-looking fellow."

"But if," so runs the quaint old cookery book, in conclusion, "you would have good coffee, and such as would be a pleasure to partake of, you must needs call in the aid of the great magician Determination, and he, with his train of sprites, will help you to make not only coffee, but many other things besides."

Miss Lesley stopped, and seemed to wait for Wynn timer to make some

remark. But Wynnie sat quite silent, apparently absorbed in thought. "Well, Wynnie?" said her aunt presently.

"Auntie, do you think those fairies would come and help me?" she said.

"I am sure they would if you only invited them, darling."



"Not one of them was idle."

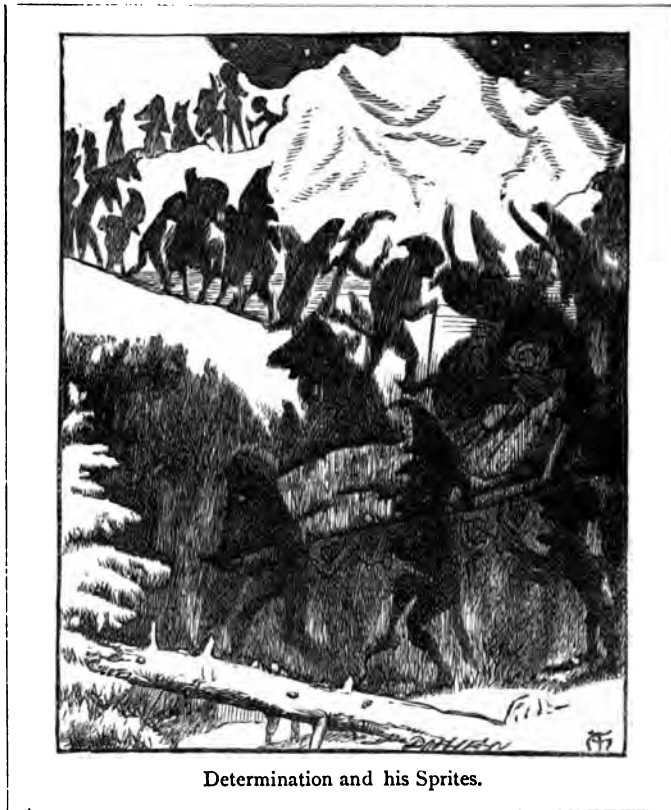
"Are those the very fairies you were thinking about the other day auntie?"

"The very same, my dear."

"Let me see, how many were there—Hardwork, Patience, Humility, Hope, Heartiness, Goodwill, and Courage. Were those they, auntie? It seems to take a great many fairies to make coffee, doesn't it?"

"You have forgotten Perseverance," said her aunt, "and he is one of the most important fellows of them all. Unless he kept the fire up, the labours of the rest would be in vain."

"I wish they would come and help me with my lessons," said Wynn timer, with a piteous little face.



Determination and his Sprites.

"They are all under the control of that old magician Determination, my love. If you get hold of him, or he gets hold of you, it will be all right."

"But how am I to get hold of him?" asks Wynn timer. "Do you think if I were to pinch my little finger for five seconds and a quarter, that he would come?"

"I feel pretty sure that if you were to try it, making good resolves all the while, that before the five seconds were over he would have come to you. You might not be able to see him. Fairies don't show themselves openly now-a-days, but they work their silent wonders all the same in the hearts of those who are willing to receive them."

"Auntie," said Wynn timer, "I'm pinching my finger."

"That's right," said Miss Lesley; "I feel sure Determination will come in a minute or two—particularly if you make good resolves all the while. For I should have told you one thing of which you should be careful. Determination has a cousin not unlike himself at first sight, who is no good fairy, but an evil genius. His name is Obstinacy; and it is a terrible thing to get into his power, for he is a great tyrant, leading people about they don't know where, nor he either, for he is as blind as a mole. Sometimes he tries to palm himself off on people for his cousin Determination; but one need never make a mistake between the two, because the good magician has always a bright shining light upon his head, the name of which is Duty, and at the end of his wand a watchful eye, which he keeps perpetually turned on his sprites, to see that they do their work."

"Auntie," said Wynn timer, "do you know, I really think Determination has come, though we can't see him? I wonder, now, whether he could help me to get this sum right?" pulling the slate towards her.

"I believe he could, if he has brought Perseverance and Goodwill with him," says Miss Lesley, looking over the slate too. "It's the last figure that's wrong, dear," she says. "Get Determination to help you to add that one column up once more, and the sum will prove beautifully."

"Will it really?" Wynn timer's face brightens. "But then there's that horrid old verb to do."

"Yes, that's true. But Determination will be sure to have brought all his court with him; and if you set Patience, Hope, and Courage to work at it, I believe you'll get it done in ten minutes."

Wynn timer smiles. "Do you think so, auntie?"

"I do indeed. Now, suppose I go down to mamma for a quarter of an hour, and come back again at the end of that time, do you think the fairies will have got through their labours by then?"

"Well, we'll see," says Wynn timer, setting Goodwill and Courage to work at once.

Miss Lesley smiles and goes away.

"What have you been about all this while?" asks Mrs. Lesley of her



sister, when she rejoins her in the drawing-room. "Have you been doing Wynnie's lessons for her?"

"No, indeed, I assure you. I have only been introducing her to a few little fairies of my acquaintance."

"Like the fairy godmother and aunt that you are," says Mrs. Lesley.

"I should like to be one to the child if I could," is Aunt Louie's answer.

A quarter of an hour later Miss Lesley again puts her head into the study.

Wynnie springs towards her. "Oh, auntie," she cries, "I must have had ever so many of the fairies here, for the sum's come right, and I've written *écrite* out without splotching it a bit. And now I may come down, mayn't I?"

"Yes, mamma says so, if you've finished your work; but I hope you've given my friends the fairies an invitation for to-morrow morning."

"Oh, yes, that I have—you dear auntie. What a good thing it is to have an auntie who has fairy friends!" cries Wynnie, as she skips lightly down the stairs by Miss Lesley's side, all brightness and smiles.

The troubles of childhood, heavy as they may be at the time, are happily not lasting. Behind the April storm-clouds lives the sweet spring sunshine, and on the slanting April sunbeams, and through the patter of the April showers, the fairy people find their way to earth.





TWO STORIES.

BY HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN.

I.—THE RAGS.

AT the door of a paper mill stood heaps of dust and rubbish, piled up into stacks ; they had been gathered far and wide, and every rag in them had a tale to tell, and told it too ; but we cannot listen to them all. Some of the rags were home-born, others came from foreign lands. Here now was a Danish rag, lying close to a rag from Norway ; rank Danish was the one, and rank Norse the other ; and there was likely to be some fun between the two, as any experienced Dane or Norseman could tell you.

They understand each other well enough, though the two languages were as different—so the Norwegian said—as French and Hebrew. “We go to the hill-side for ours, and get it fresh from the fountain-head, while the Dane cooks up a mawkish wishy-washy sort of a lingo.”

The Rags talked, and rags are rags all the world over ; they are thought nothing of except in the dust-heap.

“I am Norse,” said the Norwegian ; “and when I have said I am Norse, I guess I have said enough. I am firm of fibre, like the granite rocks of old Norway. The land there has a constitution, just like free America. It sets my fibres tickling to think of what I am, and to ring out my thoughts in words of the real old grit.”

“But we have a complete literature,” said the Danish Rag ; “do you understand what that is ?”

“Understand !” repeated the Norwegian : “oh, this flat-land creature ! shall I give him a hoist uphill, and a Northern Light or two, clout as he is ? When the Norway sun has thawed the ice, then come lubberly Danish hulks, bringing us butter and cheese, a right noble cargo ; and they bring, too, by way of ballast, the Danish literature. We don’t want it. One can do without stale beer in a land of sparkling springs, and up yonder is a natural well that was never bored ; no, nor yet puffed into European newsmongers, confederate jobbers, and book-making tourists in foreign parts. I speak from the bottom of my lungs, and the Dane must get used to the free sound ; and so he will some day, in his Scandinavian clamber up our proud mountain land—that primary knob of the universe !”

“A Danish rag could never talk like that ; no !” said the Dane. “It

is not our nature : I know myself ; and all our rags are like me. We are so good-natured, so unassuming. We only think too little of ourselves. Not that we gain much by our modesty ; but I do like it ; I consider it quite charming. Still I am perfectly aware of my own good qualities, I assure you, but I don't talk about them ; nobody shall ever bring such a charge against me. I am gentle and complaisant ; bear everything patiently, spite nobody, and speak good of all men—though there is not much good to be said of other people ; but that is their business. I can afford to smile at it, I feel myself so superior."

"Have done with this flat-land drivel : it turns me sick," said the Norwegian, caught a puff of wind, and fluttered away from his own heap on to another.

Paper they both became, and, as chance would have it, the Norwegian Rag became a sheet on which a Norseman wrote a true-love letter to a Danish girl ; and the Danish Rag became the manuscript for a Danish ode in honour of Norway's strength and beauty.

Something good there may come even of rags, when they are once out of the dust-heap, and the change has been made in favour of truth and beauty ; they keep up a good understanding between us, and in that there is a blessing.

The story is done. It is rather pretty, and offensive to nobody except to rags.

II.—WHAT THE WHOLE FAMILY SAID.

WHAT did the whole family say ? Well, listen now first to what the little Marie said.

It was the little Marie's birthday,—the most beautiful of all days, she thought. All her small girl-friends and boy-friends came to play with her, and she wore her finest frock : this had been given to her by Grandmother, who was now with the good God ; but Grandmother had cut it and made it herself before she went up into the bright beautiful heavens. The table in Marie's room was shining with presents : there was the prettiest little kitchen, with all the belongings of a kitchen ; and a doll that could twist its eyes, and cry "ugh !" when you pinched its stomach ; ah ! and there was a picture-book, too, full of the prettiest stories, to be read when somebody could read. But it was more beautiful than all the stories in the world to live to see many birthdays.

"Oh, it *is* so beautiful to live !" said the little Marie. "Godfather *said that was* the most beautiful fairy tale."

In the room next her were both her brothers : they were big boys, one of them nine years old, and the other eleven. They thought it beautiful to live, too, to live in their way ; not to be babies like Marie, but thorough-going schoolboys ; to get their high mark in class, to fight their school-fellows, and like them all the better for it ; to skate in the winter, and ride velocipedes in summer ; to read of baronial castles, with drawbridges and dungeons, and to read of discoveries in Central Africa. On this subject, though, one of the boys had a misgiving—that all might be discovered before he was grown a man : then *he* was to go out on adventures. Life is the most beautiful fairy tale, said Godfather, and one takes a part in it oneself.

It was on the parlour floor these children played and lived ; on the flat above them dwelt another branch of the family. And here, too, were children, but they had slipped their leading-strings, they were so big ; one son was seventeen, and another twenty ; but one of them was very old indeed, said little Marie : he was twenty-five, and engaged to be married. All of them were well off ; had good parents, good clothes, good attainments ; and they knew their own minds.

“Clear the way ! down with the old hoardings !” said they : “a free look-out into the wide world : that is the finest thing we know of ! Godfather is right ; life is the most beautiful fairy tale of all !”

Father and mother, both elderly people (older than the children, naturally) said with smiles on their lips, in their eyes, and in their hearts, “How young they are, the young folk ! things won’t go on in the world just as they fancy ; still, they will go on ! Life is a wonderful, beautiful fairy tale !”

Higher up—a little nearer the sky, as we say when people occupy the attics—lived Godfather. Old was he, and yet so young in mind ; always in good spirits. Many a long story could he tell. Far and wide had he been in the world, and from all the lands of the world were pretty tokens standing in his room. There were pictures from floor to ceiling, and some of the window-panes were of red or yellow glass : if one looked through them, the whole world lay in sunshine, however grey it might be outside. There were green plants growing in a great glass case, and in a globe attached to it there were gold fish swimming—they looked at one as if they knew many things they would not talk about. There was a sweet smell of flowers here always, even in the winter ; and in winter-time a great fire blazed on the hearth ; it was so amusing to sit looking into it, and to hear how it cracked and crackled.



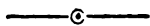
"It reads old memories out loud to me," said Godfather; and it seemed to little Marie, moreover, as if many pictures showed themselves in the fire. But in the large carved bookcase close by stood the real books; and the one which Godfather read oftenest he called the Book of books: it was the Bible. There was pictured the history of the world and all mankind; of the Creation, the Flood, the Kings, and the King of kings.

"All that has happened, and all that will happen, is written in this Book," said Godfather. "So infinitely much in one single book! Ay, and all that man has to pray for is entered there, in the prayer 'Our Father.'"

"It is the drop of mercy," said Godfather; "it is the pearl of comfort from God. It is laid as a gift on the child's cradle—is laid on the child's heart. Little child, keep it carefully! never lose it, however big thou mayest grow; and thou wilt not be forsaken on life's changeful way—it will beam bright within thee—and thou wilt never be lost."

Godfather's eyes were brightened by it till they shone with joy; once in his years of youth they had wept, and "This, too, was good," he said. "That was the time of trial: then all looked dark; now I have sunshine within and around me. The older one grows the clearer one sees, in adversity and prosperity, that Our Lord is in it all, that life is the most beautiful fairy tale: that this only He can give us, and that this goes on into eternity!"

"It is beautiful to live!" said the little Marie; so, too, said the small and big boys; father and mother, the whole family, and chief of all Godfather; and he had experience: he was the oldest of them all; knew all stories; and he said, "Life is the most beautiful fairy tale."



MAN AGAINST THE BEAST.

I.

MANY hundreds of years ago there dwelt in a certain island the King of the Jins. Now, for a long while there were no men in this island, and the beasts dwelt in peace; but after a time it so chanced that a ship, being driven by contrary winds, touched at it, and the men, finding it to be fertile and pleasant, took up their abode there, and began, after

their manner, to pursue the beasts, killing some, and making slaves of others. Whereupon the beasts made complaint, and the King ordered that they and also the men should appear before him, and plead each their cause. And after awhile they assembled, and the King said,—

“O ye men! prove this claim that ye make to be lords and masters of the beasts.”

And the men said many things, alleging that God had made them upright and of a graceful form, wherefore it was plain that they had the pre-eminence; and that they helped the beasts, protecting them and healing them, so showing their mastership. But the beasts answered that each had his proper shape and form convenient for his mode of life, and that each was beautiful after his sort, and that, as for the help of men, it was not given but for their own ends.

And each of the beasts made his own complaint. The Ass said, “They put great burdens upon our backs of wood and stone and iron, and, having sticks in their hands, they beat us sorely.”

Then the Bull said, “They bind us to the plough, and harness us to mills, and put muzzles on our mouths.”

After this the Sheep said, “That they may have milk for their children, they take away our young ones, whom, indeed, they slaughter and devour.”

And others also made various complaints, according to what they had suffered.

At the last, after much debate, the King held counsel with his wazir and with the sages of the Jins. And he was not a little perplexed as to what he should do, for being a just King, he wished to deliver the beasts from the tyranny of men; but, on the other hand, he was loth to cause enmity between men and his own people. In the end it was ordained that the beasts should send their orators, six in number, one for each kind, and that the men also should appoint ambassadors, so that the whole cause might be argued before the King, and that both should abide by his judgment.

II.

THE messenger went to the Lion, who is the King of the Wild Beasts, and told of what had happened. So the King called his subjects together, and held counsel with them. And each boasted of his own qualities,—the Leopard, who was the King's wazir, showing how he excelled in strength and courage, and the Ounce saying that he was very skilful in leaping and

seizing, and the Wolf that he was a great plunderer, and the Fox that he was exceedingly crafty, and the Weasel that none could hide himself better, and the Monkey that he could mock and mimic, and others other things.

But the King said, "These things are not needed ;" and he turned to the Leopard, and asked him, "O wazir, whom shall we send as our orator? Is there any beast that is acquainted with men?"

And the wazir said, "The dog, O King, is well acquainted with men, but then he is a traitor to the beasts. For, indeed, being a slave to his belly, he has sold himself to the men. So greedy is he that if a fox enter a village at night to steal a fowl, he will bark with great violence, desiring to have everything for himself. And if he see a child with a piece of bread in his hand, he will fawn upon him, and wag his tail, and shake his head. So that he is altogether to be despised."

And the King said, "Is there any other animal that is friendly with men?"

Then the wazir answered, "The cat is friendly with them, and she is better off than the dogs, for she dwells in their houses ; but she also is a slave to her appetite, and is unworthy."

And the King said, "May God never grant a blessing to these cats and dogs!"

The wazir answered, "So it is, O King! God has taken His favour from them and given it to the goats. For we see that though the dogs multiply exceedingly, and no one uses them for food or sacrifice, yet no one ever beholds a flock of them ; whereas of goats, though they bring forth but one or two kids in the year, and though they are slaughtered continually, there are many flocks to be seen."

In the end, after much talk, the Jackal, who was indeed a friend of the King, and had done him much service in time past, was chosen to be orator.

III.

WHEN the messenger had come to the King of the Birds, he called for his minister, and said to him, "Whom shall we send as our orator? Tell me the virtues of each bird, that we may choose."

The Peacock answered, "The hoopoe was the companion of Solomon, whom he told about the Queen of Saba. He is the bird of prayer, for do you not see that he bows his head continually? The cock again summons men to prayer, and he is exceeding generous ; nor does he ever

cease to praise and magnify God. The pigeon is the guide, and he takes messages from city to city and from friend to friend. The Nightingale has an exceedingly sweet voice, and is a great teller of tales, and the crow is a soothsayer, and the swallow is a traveller, and the crane is a watchman. Each of these is wise after his kind."

And the King said, "O wazir, whom shall we send?"

The Peacock answered, "Let us send the Nightingale, for he is the most eloquent of them all."

So the King said, "Go, O Nightingale, and plead for us against these men, and Allah help thee!"

Now another messenger had gone to the Phoenix, who was the King of the Birds of Prey; and he, too, called together his people, that they might choose whom they should send.

The Phoenix said to the Falcon, who was his wazir, "Who is fit for this business?"

The wazir answered, "There is no one fit but the Owl; for whereas other birds fly from men, he dwells near them, even in the houses which they have deserted; nor is there any bird who is so full of wisdom and piety."

But the Owl said, "I cannot go, O King, for men count me unlucky and hate me. Do thou rather send the Hawk, for him do men love, even having him to dwell with them, and making him to sit upon their hands."

But the Hawk said, "Not for our own sakes do men love us, but because we catch prey for them. Do thou rather send the Parrot, for all, whether small or great, men or women or children, love him, and talk with him, and listen with much attention when he speaks to them."

So the Phoenix and his people sent the Parrot.

IV.

THE messenger went to the Bee, who was the King of the Insects, and told him of the matter, and the King called his subjects together. Now these, after the manner of small things, had a mighty conceit of themselves, nor was there one of them but was ready to go.

The Gnat said, "We have prevailed in time past over great kings. Was not Nimrod a great and arrogant tyrant? yet one of us stung him that he died."

The Wasp said, "Hast thou not seen a man ready armed for battle with sword and shield and dagger? and lo! one of us pierces him with

a sting that is no bigger than a needle, and his body swells, and he is unable to fight or even to move."

The Fly said, "Oftentimes a great king sits upon his throne in much splendour, and there comes a fly from out of his kitchen, covered with dirt, and sits upon him, and torments him so that he knows not what to do."

The Mosquito said, "Lo, men seek to hide themselves from us behind curtains, but one of us finds an entrance, and then how mad does he become, for he thumps his own head and slaps his own cheek, and all to no purpose, not finding his enemy."

The King said, "Ye are foolish boasters; there will be no talk of such matter before the King of the Jins, but of justice, and discretion, and eloquence. Who is there among you that has any ability in such matters?"

But they were all silent, and hung down their heads. And in the end the Bee resolved that he would himself go.

V.

THE messenger went to Leviathan, who is King of the Fishes, and he also held a council about the matter.

And the Dolphin spoke first. Now, the Dolphin is very friendly with men, for often when one is drowning, he will bear him up so that he gets safe to the shore. And he said, "Let us send the Whale. She is very large and swift, and men honour her; for did she not give refuge to one of their prophets when he was cast into the sea? and they believe that the earth rests upon her back."

But the Whale said, "I cannot go, for I have no feet wherewith to walk, nor have I any tongue, nor can I live away from the water. Let us rather send the Turtle."

But the Turtle answered, "The way is long, and I am but a poor traveller. Let us send the Dolphin, who is very vigorous, and a good speaker."

Then the Dolphin said, "Let us send the Crab, for he is swift, and his claws are strong, and he is clad in armour."

"Not so," said the Crab, "for I am ugly, and, when they see me, men will say, 'Who is this headless animal, with eyes in his neck, and mouth in his breast, and cheeks split open, who has eight legs, and goes face downward, as if he were made of lead?' Let the Crocodile go, for he is large, and swift, and patient, and has mightily strong teeth."

Then the Crocodile answered, "Rather let the Frog go, for he is the friend of man, and they honour him. When Nimrod cast Abraham, the friend of God, into a furnace, did he not take water into his mouth and squirt it over the holy man, so that he was not hurt? And when Pharaoh strove with Moses, did he not help Moses? And he can move both on land and in the water. His head is round, his face is good, his eyes are bright, and he has no fear of men."

This speech pleased the King and his people, and they chose the Frog.

Last of all, the Dragon, who is the King of the Reptiles, chose the Locust as the orator for him and his people.

VI.

THUS it came to pass that after many days the orators of the animals presented themselves before the King of the Jins; and, on the other hand, there came on the part of the men seventy ambassadors from all the nations on the face of the earth. To these said the King, "Argue now the matter before me. Begin, O ye men, and prove the claim that ye make to have lordship over the animals."

Whereupon there rose up the man of Rúm, that is to say, the Greek, who spake thus:—

"We are acquainted with many sciences and arts, and we excel all animals in wisdom and counsel. Whence it is plain that we are the masters, and the animals the slaves."

"What say ye to this?" said the King to the orators of the animals.

They were all silent for the space of an hour. At the last the Bee said, "We too have many arts, and are indeed superior in them to the men. Without rule or compass we construct in our dwelling all manner of angles. We have taught men the rules of government, for we have kingdoms excellently well-ordered in all things. And we lay up much store of food, of which, when we have eaten enough, the men take gladly the remainder. But it is not the custom, O King, for kings to take the leavings of slaves. And it is also plain that men have need of us, but that we have no need of men. Let them also regard the ants: how they make winding dwellings under the earth, so as that even in flood-time the waters cannot enter them; how they lay up food for the winter; and *how, being very small* of stature, yet having wisdom to join together their

strength, they do mighty works. Let them also consider with what prudence the locusts and the silkworms lay their eggs, so that their young ones may be duly nourished. And this they do entirely out of tenderness, for they have not the hope, as have men, of being benefited by their children; but, knowing that they themselves will die, they do this that others may find comfort in it; and when the time of their mortality is come, they pass away with resignation and cheerfulness, not doubting, as men are wont to doubt, that God will reproduce them. Let not the men, therefore, boast of being masters."

The King was much pleased with these words, and said to the men, "Have ye any answer left, O ye men?"

Then rose up an Arab, who spake thus: "We have many good things in our life of which the animals know nothing. Thus we have many kinds of food, with sweetmeats and confections. We have dancing and music, tales and stories. We wear all manner of beautiful jewels, and we have tapestry and carpets under our feet. But the animals eat grass, and go about naked, both by day and by night; wherefore it is clear that they are slaves."

The Nightingale answered and said, "This foolish man, O King, does not perceive that all this variety of food and drink is a great trouble and torment to him. For look how he ploughs, and sows, and reaps; with what trouble he cooks the food which he has got; how he wrangles with butchers about meat, and about accounts with shopkeepers; how for the sake of getting money he studies difficult arts, and travels into far countries; how he bows himself in the presence of a great man to get a farthing or two: so heaping up wealth which, before long, goes to others. But we have none of these troubles and cares; no thought about food or drink enters into our minds; wherever we go God gives us enough. Look, too, at those men who, as they have many kinds of food, so are plagued with many kinds of diseases."

Then the Arab said, "Ye, too, have many diseases, O ye beasts."

"Not so," said the Nightingale; "but only such of us as have intimacy with you, or are in bondage to you. For these cannot pass their days in their natural manner, but eat to excess or at unseasonable hours, and so fall ill. But those who roam at will in the jungle are preserved from sickness."

Then rose up a Hebrew, and said, "We have many ceremonies which God has bidden us perform, in order that He may bring us to Paradise—washings, and fastings, and sacrifice, and almsgiving, and the saying

of prayers, and the preaching in pulpits, but ye have nothing of the kind. Wherefore it is evident that we are the masters."

Then said the Nightingale, "Ye have these things by reason of your sins, but, were ye pure as we are pure, ye would not need them. And as for almsgiving, if ye were as ye ought to be, there would be no rich men accumulating many things wrongfully, nor poor men to whom alms should be given."

Then one of the men said, "O beasts, it is not meet for you to speak before us."

And the Jackal replied, "Why not, O man?"

Then the man cried out, being very wroth, "Least of all does it become you, O Jackal, for you are more wicked and vicious than all other beasts; though, indeed, your fellows are exceedingly bad, tearing and devouring each other."

And the Jackal replied, "If we tear and devour each other, we have learnt it from you. And, besides, that the beasts are righteous, learn from this, that the most righteous among you, O men, being weary of the wickedness of their fellows, go out into the desert, and dwell with the wild beasts. Now, it is well known that the righteous do not willingly dwell with the wicked. Again, your tyrants have oftentimes driven out holy men into the jungle, and the beasts, being holy, do not tear them; for, as you own proverb says, 'Saint knows saint.'"

Then the men hung down their heads, being sore ashamed, neither had they anything to answer.

And the Parrot said, "See the children of these men, how helpless they are when they are born, and for many years afterwards. As many as twenty years pass before they arrive at years of discretion, and even then they are often mightily foolish. But see, on the other hand, the young ones of fowls, and partridges, and quails, how they run about and feed themselves as soon as they are out of the egg."

Much more talk of this kind was held. At the last the King of the Jins said, "Have ye anything more to say, O ye men?"

And then rose up a sage, who was wiser than all the rest, and spake. "God has promised us many blessings—resurrection from the grave, and judgment, entrance into Paradise, heaven, the garden of delight, the garden of eternity, the garden of Eden, the garden of refuge, the mansion of peace, the mansion of permanence, the home of rest, the glorious abode, nearness to God. Can the animals attain to these things?"

And the Nightingale answered, "Truly God has given you these

things ; but He has likewise given you, for as many as do evil, many dreadful things ; wherefore ye are not better off than those who neither hope for reward nor fear punishment."

Then the sage replied, "Nay, but we are better off ; for it is the will of God that we should come to good, and not to evil ; and we trust that even in the fierceness of His wrath there is mercy, that we may be cleansed from our sins, and may come to dwell with Him at the last."

Then spake the King of the Jins, "It is enough ; I give my decision. The men are the masters, seeing that God has given to them the hope of immortality, and the beasts are their servants. Do ye, O men, be kind and just ; and ye, O beasts, serve faithfully and well ; so, it may be—for who can tell how great is the power and the mercy of God?—that ye yourselves, seeing that ye are the friends and companions of man, and help to make his life perfect, may have some measure of this gift bestowed upon you also, and be sharer of endless life with him whom ye serve."





THE SWALLOW AND THE SPARROW.



It was a lovely spring morning. How bright everything looked in the sunshine! The dewdrops glittered like diamonds, and the cobwebs which the busy spiders had hung from tree to tree shone like so many tiny rainbows! The air was filled with the fragrance of early spring flowers, and the birds were singing gloriously; rejoicing, no doubt, over the beautiful spring time, and the

departure of the dreary, cold winter. But they were particularly lively this morning, because the swallows had just returned from their long winter journey, and of course there was a good deal to relate, and many questions to be asked and answered.

“And have you then really enjoyed your trip?” asked a Sparrow of one of the newly-returned swallows.

“Most thoroughly!” replied the Swallow. “But yet I am so glad to be back again in England. Foreign lands may be ever so beautiful, but *there is no place like one’s own native land after all.*”

"There I *quite* agree with you," said the Sparrow warmly; "but I *should* like to hear something about your travels. *Do*, there's a dear Swallow, tell me what you saw and did in foreign lands."

"With all my heart!" said the Swallow, who was a good-natured bird, and liked nothing so well as talking of his travels to any one who would listen attentively.

He related as follows:—

THE SWALLOW'S STORY.

"You know, my dear Sparrow, that the swallows never pass the winter in Europe;—whilst you are shivering here amidst ice and snow and leafless trees, we are flying about in warm countries, where there are the most exquisite butterflies and the most beautiful flowers it is possible to imagine, and where the sun shines brightly all the year round. What pains my dear mother took to teach me and my brothers to fly! All through last summer she made us fly races with one another, or with her, until we could exert our wings no longer, and were obliged to rest them for a time. 'My dear children,' she used to say, 'if you love me, try to fly well, and strengthen your wings through constant use; for soon all the swallows will assemble for their autumn journey, then we shall all fly far, far away to warmer lands, and you will need all your strength and all your skill for this long flight.'

"We followed our mother's advice, and exerted ourselves to fly well, not only out of love to her, but also because a longing filled our little hearts to see the beautiful countries she told us of.

"At last the long-wished-for day arrived. Early one glorious September morning we all flew away from England. My heart beat with joy and excitement, as I found myself one of a mighty company of swallows, sailing over the beautiful, glorious ocean, which I then saw for the first time.

"To my great disappointment we soon left the sea, however, and journeyed over land again. But my regret soon gave place to delight and wonder, I saw so much that was beautiful and new to me.

"We flew by mighty mountains, which filled me, who until then had seen nothing beyond a hill, with wonder and admiration. We passed over beautiful cities, with the most exquisite buildings and churches.

"Sometimes I would perch on one of the church windows and listen to the glorious music, which streamed forth and filled me with such delight

that I could have stayed and listened for ever ; but I was obliged to leave it and follow my companions.

“ At last we left Europe behind us, and flew over the sea again. At first I thought I should never tire of watching the glorious mighty sea, and listening to the waves as they roared and murmured alternately. But at last I grew weary of seeing nothing but water and sky all around me, and I longed for the sight of land, if it were only the tiniest patch of green grass. My great treat was to watch the ships sailing to and fro. There was one that interested me particularly. It was a fine large vessel, full of passengers. The life on board seemed to me a very lively one. Often there was dancing and music, and sometimes a play was acted. But there were two of the passengers who took no part in any of these gaieties :—one was a man of middle age ; the other was his daughter, a beautiful girl of about sixteen.

“ I heard it said that he was travelling to the East on account of his health, and that some great trouble had lately fallen on him.

“ I never saw such a sad, grief-stricken face : it interested me strangely, and so did that of his daughter.

“ They were always together, either sitting side by side, or walking up and down the deck, he leaning upon her arm. Sometimes she would read out to him, and then I liked nothing better than to listen to her clear sweet voice. But her father seemed to me never to listen ; I could always tell by his expression that his thoughts were far away. His daughter was very quick to find this out too, and she would look at him with such an expression of love and pity in her beautiful eyes, that my bird's heart felt as if it could burst with compassion for her. Willingly would I have remained with these two voyagers, but I was obliged to follow the swallows.

“ Our journey came to an end at last. We settled for a time in the land that is called Egypt, where birds, people, and buildings are quite different from what they are in Europe. In Egypt I saw enormous three-cornered stone buildings which end at the top in a point ; they are called ‘ Pyramids.’ I suppose you have never heard of them ?”

“ Oh, yes, but I have, though,” replied the Sparrow. “ One day, when the old owl was giving her owlets a lecture on Ancient History, I listened, and heard her telling them all about the Pyramids. But *do* go on : what else did you see ?”

“ Ah, so many wonderful things ! I saw enormous ugly creatures called crocodiles, which live in Egypt's great river, the Nile ; and I saw huge

humpbacked animals, upon which they ride as people do here upon horses; these are called camels. One day I met a pleasure party riding across the desert, mounted on camels, and among them I recognized the two travellers who had so interested me on board the great ship.

"I was delighted to see that the father looked much better and far less sad than when I had last seen him, and that his daughter was in much better spirits. She was chatting gaily with others of the party, and burst now and then into a merry hearty laugh that it delighted me to hear. I flew round and round their heads, and sang them good bye, and wished them much happiness in life. But, alas! they understood nothing of my song. Most likely I shall never see them again, but I shall never, never forget them! In returning we flew through a part of Africa, and then again over the sea; but I will tell you all about that another time. Now I should like to hear how *you* have passed the winter."

THE SPARROW'S STORY.

"SWALLOW," said the Sparrow, "this winter I have suffered much, but I have also learnt much. One day last autumn, whilst the earth still looked green and bright and beautiful, my mother called me to her, and said, 'Child, as yet I have taken good care of you, and provided you with food, but now I consider you old and strong enough to take care of yourself; this you will find very easy as long as the bright warm weather lasts, but soon will come the cold winter days, when you will have to exert all your wits and all your courage to keep from dying of cold and hunger. Ah! the winter is a sad, hard time for us sparrows. But do not fear, my child, only be brave and patient, and if in the dreary winter-time you should feel cold and hungry, and should everything around you appear desolate and hopeless, do not despair, but take courage, and remember that the winter does not last for ever; spring will come again, and summer too.'

"I felt proud and happy that my mother considered me old and strong enough to provide for myself. I was not the least afraid of the cold winter days, for I was young and full of hope. Many of the leaves had already fallen, and were spread over the wood in which I then lived, like a warm soft carpet, which grew thicker day by day. There came cold winds that whistled and howled through the trees, and shook them so unmercifully that I often feared they would be blown down. One morning I woke up and found that the trees, the ground, everything in fact,

was of a dazzling whiteness. It had frozen ! Oh, Swallow, I cannot tell you how lovely everything looked, above all when the sun shone. Every day the cold increased, and food became scarcer and scarcer. The flowers were all withered, the birds were silent, the winter had come at last ; but still I kept up my spirits, for although often very hungry, as yet I had always found enough food to keep myself alive. Often during the night I thought I should be frozen to death, and felt very wretched ; but the next morning I warmed myself in the sunshine and recovered my good spirits. But one morning there was, alas ! no sunshine to be seen ; it was far colder than I had ever known it, and the sky was all of a dull grey hue. Suddenly there began to fall from heaven great white flakes. I suppose, Swallow, you have never seen a fall of snow ? Ah, then you can't imagine how delighted and astonished one feels when one sees it for the first time in one's life. Picture to yourself that thousands of white birds are in the air, and that they suddenly shake their wings, and a shower of white feathers falls upon the earth, and you will have some idea of a fall of snow. The snow continued to fall for several days, until it lay deep, deep upon the earth, and everything was of the brightest white. I never shall forget the misery that I suffered in those days ! The cold became intense, and food was almost impossible to find ; often I felt so weak from cold and starvation that I could scarcely fly. My spirits sank, and I believe that I should have died from want of courage and hope to seek for food, had I not often thought of my mother's words, and remembered that the winter would not last for ever. One very cold morning I searched the wood through and through for food, but in vain ; but I was not discouraged yet, for I remembered my mother's words. ' Be brave and patient, take courage,' rang in my ears, and I flew out of the wood, and far, far away over common, hill, and meadow, and rested at last in the garden of a large house ; but not a single insect, not a berry, could I find. Too tired and weak to fly farther, I perched on the ledge of one of the windows of the house, and looked in. Oh, how warm, and bright, and happy it all looked the *other* side of the window ! Round a large table were seated several children ; their father was reading aloud, and opposite to him sat their mother. As the father sat near the window, I could hear from time to time what he was reading. Only a few words can I remember now, but those I shall *never* forget. These are they :— 'Behold the fowls of the air : they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns ; and yet your heavenly Father feedeth them.' The *family now began* their breakfast. It was a very merry meal ; the chil-

dren laughed and chattered, and the parents joined in occasionally. 'Ah,' thought I, 'if they would but throw me the tiniest bit of bread, how thankful I should be!' 'Children,' I overheard the mother say, 'we have had our own breakfast, now let us give some to the birds. Poor little things! how cold they must be!'

"She came to the window and opened it; the children followed. But I had a natural fear of human beings, and directly the window was opened I flew down to the nearest tree. She scattered a few crumbs on the window-sill, and, as she did so, looked so good and kind, that I flew back to the window again and ate a few of the crumbs. Oh, how the bread refreshed and strengthened me! I felt at once new courage, new hope. Had then the 'heavenly Father,' of whom the master of the house had just been reading, *really* taken pity upon me, and sent me this food? And is there then really some one in heaven who cares for me, a poor little bird, and will always provide for me? This must surely be the same Being who is able to bring back the spring, the flowers, the warm weather, and all that is beautiful! From this time forward I have never felt anxious about the future, and though I have often felt hunger since then, yet I have never doubted but that my heavenly Father would send me food.

"I now went every day to the great house, and soon got to know all its inhabitants by name. The mother never forgot to feed me, and I quite lost my shyness, and grew at last so tame that I would feed out of her hand. But one morning every one forgot the poor little sparrow, for the mother was not in the breakfast-room. The father looked grave and anxious, and the children were not merry as usual, but talked softly together, with hushed voices. I heard them whisper the words, 'Frank,' 'ill,' and then I noticed for the first time that the eldest boy, Frank, was not in the room. Next to the mother, Frank was my favourite of the whole family. He was a wild merry boy, whose voice could nearly always be heard, singing, whistling, or laughing, in some part of the house or garden. I flew round the house, and peeped in at all the windows until at last I found Frank. There he lay, in bed, and pale as death. The doctor bent over him, feeling his pulse, and the mother sat by his bedside. For several weeks Frank lay very ill. I flew every day to his bed-room window and looked in, and saw how the mother and father grew paler and sadder day by day.

"A change had come over the house that was once so full of fun and laughter and merry voices. All was hushed and still now, for the shadow



of death had fallen on the house. I had grown to love this family so dearly, that my heart ached for them in their great trouble, and I hoped and believed that the heavenly Father would take care of Frank and not let him die.

“And he did not die. One morning, when both father and mother were watching by his bedside, I overheard the doctor say to them, ‘Your son is now out of all danger. With care he will become quite strong again.’ When I heard this I flew away, feeling happier than I had been for some time past; I flew back to my old home, the wood. It seemed to me that a wonderful change had come over it since I had last been there. ‘Dear me! how beautiful everything looks, and how much warmer it is!’ cried I, in an ecstasy of delight.

“Yes, during the last week or two I had been so occupied with the family in the great house and their troubles, that I had quite forgotten to grieve over my own sorrows and hardships, or to long for the return of spring! But the spring *had* returned, unnoticed by me until now. The trees were already beginning to shoot forth green buds, and the birds were singing for joy.

“Frank grew better day by day, and now he is allowed to sit in the garden when the sun shines. I often visit him there, and now I have found out a way of giving him pleasure. I get my friend the nightingale to fly with me to the garden and sing. And oh! you should see how delighted Frank looks when he hears the nightingale!

“And that reminds me this is just about the time when we usually visit Frank; so good bye for the present.”

And the Sparrow flew away in search of his friend the nightingale.



THE DOG AND HIS MASTER.

ONCE upon a time, before animals had forfeited the power of speech, a Fox, deputed by his brethren of the forest, who perceived their numbers rapidly diminishing, attempted to excite a rebellion among that race of animals, which was even then distinguished for its sagacity and attachment to man. He refused to declare his errand till a general *meeting* of the dog tribe had been convened. But when all were as-

sembled, except the Pointer and the Setter, who were unavoidably absent, being that day in attendance on their respective masters, the Mastiff was called upon to preside, and the wily Fox, after a few rhetorical flourishes with his tail, began as follows :—

“Some of you, my friends, are doubtless surprised at the presence in this assembly of one whom you have been taught to regard as your natural enemy. Your real foe is the author of that delusion, and the same tyrant that keeps yourselves in endless bondage. His name is **Man**. Of *his* enmity you have sufficient proof in the whip and the collar. Of *our* anxiety for your welfare no one will doubt who considers that I have imperilled my life in coming here to-day, solely from a desire of benefiting you, and rousing you to claim that inheritance of freedom which is nature’s common gift to us all.

“I will not insult you by supposing that you are unwilling to taste the sweets of liberty. I will rather show the fallacy of that fear of your masters which alone keeps you in a state of servitude. Man, who has acquired (I know not how) so extensive a dominion over the rest of his fellow-creatures, is really the weakest and most helpless of all animals. Why, he has not even four legs! When he moves abroad, his form is simply the laughing-stock of us denizens of the forest, who know the world.

“Nature was so far from intending him to be lord of the creation, that she showed her contempt by refusing him that warm covering of hair which she has assigned to her more favoured offspring; so that, I am told, he is fain to borrow the sheep’s coat, and make with it what miserable shift he can. Then, he is of so tender a frame that he is obliged to build dwellings of stone to shelter him from the winds and rain, which you and I either never feel or despise. No, my friends! It is by your aid, and that of your fellow-servants, that he not only reigns, but lives. You run down the hare and the deer for his maintenance; the horse turns the soil for him, and carries him over distances which he is too feeble to travel without help; nay, to furnish him with food, the sheep and the ox, poor things! give up their very lives without a murmur. It is your own fault that this pest is perpetuated. Leave him, and he will die of starvation; wage war against him, and he is at once destroyed.”

As the discontented are ever a majority, the Fox’s speech was generally approved. When the applause had subsided, the Bull-dog said that “He should vote for war—*instant war*: he was not one-tenth the size of man, but would be ashamed to run away like him from a bull.” The Grey-



hound, too, contended that man was deficient in speed ; and the Spaniel said, " He did not care how soon the war began ; he considered himself shamefully treated : his mistress had ordered that he should always have new milk for breakfast, and yet that very morning Thomas the footman had given him nothing but blue,—yes, and had drunk the new milk himself."

After these a pert little Terrier, that lived in the house like the Spaniel, and was proud of this opportunity for distinction, stood up and shook himself viciously. Having thus roused his wits, he delivered quite an oration :—

" Our illustrious visitor, so renowned for wisdom," he said, " has satisfactorily proved the weakness of man ; my more intimate acquaintance with his domestic habits enables me to demonstrate his stupidity. Mr. President, would you believe it ? Many a time when I have been killing rats, and eating them afterwards, my master has stood stolidly by and watched me ; but never once, on my honour, has he had the sense to taste one. Thus to this day he remains ignorant what delicacies they are. I need not say," added the Terrier, with a smile, " that I do not complain of this conduct—it leaves me all the rats to myself. But can imbecility go further ?

" Again, the interior of his abode is furnished with numberless things of which one is utterly at a loss to conceive the use. For instance, instead of sitting on the ground, like a rational being, he has contrived a four-legged seat, which is probably unsafe and certainly superfluous. And I have often noticed a long shining tube attached to a carved piece of wood, which I have never once seen employed, and do not believe to be of the slightest advantage to its possessor. Now, what greater proof of folly can be given, Mr. President, than labour spent in making that which, when made, is useless ?"

As the Terrier ended his speech, a murmur of satisfaction ran through the assembly, and it was resolved that very night to attack the inhabitants of a neighbouring village—a resolution which was in vain opposed by the Mastiff, who voted for war, but thought a night attack cowardly ; and by the sagacious Newfoundland, who alone recommended delay until they had considered the matter more fully, and had better information about their enemy's resources.

While the rebels were still settling their plans, however, there appeared in the distance a man, with the Pointer at his heels, and carrying a gun, which the Terrier declared to be the very instrument he had been speak-

ing of. The Bloodhound, eager for slaughter, suggested that they should make their first attack on this solitary individual ; and the Newfoundland himself seconded the proposition, as affording the easiest means of comparing their strength with that of man, without committing themselves too far.

Accordingly they advanced in a compact body on their enemy. The man, in alarm at their threatening attitude, presented his weapon ; but the Bloodhound, with a contemptuous growl, sprang at his throat. What was the surprise, however, of the rebels, to see the next instant fire flash from the mouth of the tube they considered useless, and their champion lay prostrate on the ground ! They paused in amazement, and when the contents of another barrel were poured among them, fled in all directions, leaving two or three wounded comrades on the field.

And Master Reynard, the author of all the mischief ? Oh, *he* was all right, as he generally is. He had taken care to be well in the rear of the dogs when they advanced, so that he was in no danger even when the man fired. And now, seeing plainly that the insurrection would soon be at an end, he cunningly took advantage of the confusion and stole off home, carrying with him a lamb, a duck, and two chickens from a farmyard which the Mastiff had left unguarded. About dusk, therefore, the Fox was sitting down with his family to a varied and comfortable meal, which an emperor might have enjoyed. But what a laughable account did the rogue give his wife of the day's proceedings !

To the poor dogs, however, it was no laughing matter. When they reassembled at night, they were joined by the Pointer and Setter, who were well acquainted with guns, and gave such an account of these deadly instruments, that it was voted madness to attempt further resistance. And, perhaps, as the Newfoundland remarked before they slunk home, they would not have paid too much for their lesson if they had learned to distrust their own judgment in some things, and to beware of sudden friendship on the part of an old enemy like the Fox.





KING ELEPHANT'S COURT.

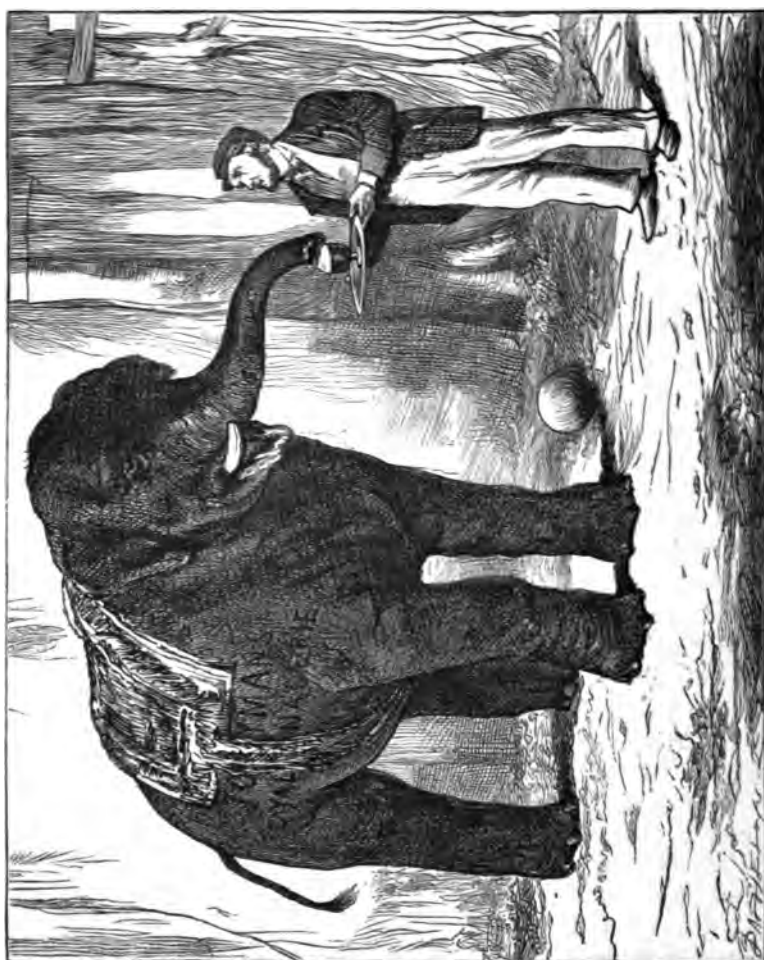
SUCH a hot day! And such a fuss among the beasts, for old King Elephant had ordered them all to court! Who? Why all the beasts and birds, to be sure. No fish. Elephant said the whale could see to them, and besides, he would not have any creatures who had not been in a Noah's Ark.

This vexed the rattlesnakes and boa-constrictors and worms dreadfully, who are not to be found in any toy-shop; but the King could not be persuaded. He said that a line must be drawn somewhere, and he did not want even the leviathan out of the water, and had his doubts about any creeping things at all. But one of the young elephants, who was sharp for his years, asked what was to be done for light, if glowworms were not to be let in. Well, I had the luck to be *there*, and to see the fine sight! Did you ask *where*? Why, right at the other end of the world, of course, ever so far off!

It was a sight worth seeing! Such a procession of birds and beasts! Excepting on Sundays, when Noah's Ark creatures go out two and two for their walk, I have never seen so many.

The ostriches were the last to start, dropping their eggs in their haste somewhere in the sand. They arrived first of all, outstripping most of the horses, thanks to their long legs. But then the steeple-chasers had turned out of their way more than once to leap hedges. Indeed, one of them got so hot that he was obliged to stop at a barber's to have his hair singed, and his tail clipped, before he was fit to go to court. A very giddy cuckoo asked a neighbour to look after her eggs, just as if the mother of a family had any business to go to court at all!

I stood by the Elephant and saw the company arrive. There were loads of policemen (gorillas) who kept order. Peacocks stood by the Queen Elephant, fanning her with their tails. Jackdaws, who had borrowed their feathers for the day, and parrots, announced their visitors' names. The ostriches, as I said, got in first. Then came a good many beasts all at once. The giraffes looked much heated, for they are delicate animals, and had nearly fainted on the road, being unable to find any servants tall enough to hold umbrellas over their heads. Dromedaries humped along rather slowly, monkeys riding on their backs. There were two elderly camels also, who had been travelling many days,



and had brought water to drink with them, as they did not like resorting to a public house. The hare and tortoise (the same that ran a race—you know about them) arrived together, which surprised me, as I had always heard that the tortoise got in first. The cats nearly all came in carriages, drawn by rats or mice, as their means permitted. There were numbers of dogs; King Charles's spaniel among them: he is rather an old dog, I believe, as I understand that his late master has been dead some little time. But I should never have done if I were to tell you of all the beasts. When all the company were assembled, King Elephant, leaning on his eldest son's trunk, went round to speak to them. The King was getting rather infirm from age, and very deaf. The gorillas were obliged to turn out some hyænas, who giggled in a very rude manner. I fancied that the poor creatures were hysterical, and could not help their laughter, but I may be mistaken. I felt much more angry with some love-birds, who flirted dreadfully, and also with some low butting goats, who had no idea of manners. There were some pigs too, who were such dirty creatures, I do not know how they contrived to get admittance.

There was a great deal of idle gossip going on among the cockatoos and parrots, but all was still when the King went round. He seemed to get on best with two steady old donkeys. They had been singing masters in their early days, although never very successful in getting pupils. The King talked to them for a very long time, and they brayed very respectfully in answer. Of course, though, every beast answered when His Majesty spoke. One nice motherly cow had brought her two eldest calves to be present, and the little creatures licked the Queen Elephant's trunk very prettily. I was sorry to notice that some rude sly oxes meanwhile played off ridiculous tricks upon some simple-minded sheep. After the King had spoken to every one, he ordered the games to begin. The first was a race between creeping beasts; the centipede, though, was made to take off most of his legs, in order to give the other creatures a chance. This race was won by a bustling ant. A lion who had betted heavily on the centipede roared with anger at his loss. Then came the jumping. Here a flea was successful, rather to the vexation of many present, who had hoped that the grasshoppers would have won; fleas being unpopular, and living with low, dirty people. During the games an interruption was caused by a wicked magpie who stole the hay which had been put down for the dear little calves to eat. However, the gorillas took her off to the lock-up.

Then the King wished to see the various proofs of industry given by his subjects. Beavers and ants were much commended.

The rest of the day was spent in music and other amusements. Nightingales and many other birds sang. The crickets played at their own game, assisted by bats. The frogs had a turn at leap-frog, quite among themselves. The night drew on; the glowworms attended the company part of the way home. But unfortunately many of the youngest and most imprudent among them had forgotten umbrellas. So a shower of rain put out several.

And now I have told you all I remember! Next time King Elephant holds a court, I advise you to attend it. He talks of opening a museum of curious things. If I go and see it, I will write and tell you all about it.



KING ARTHUR'S GREAT BOAR-HUNT.

AN ANCIENT BRITISH FAIRY TALE.

I.

I HAVE been into the country of the Ancient Britons, among whom the deeds of the great King Arthur were wrought, and where the memory of the mighty things which he did have taken name and shape among the lofty hills. And where the grey rocks are piled one upon another more greatly than the hands of common men could raise,—they are called “Arthur’s Quoit,” and “Arthur’s Table,” and the “Chair” where he sat, and the “Stone” where he is buried. And the “Table” is built high up on a hill on the horn of a bay, which looks far over the Northern Sea, and many ships have been wrecked on the fearful rocks which run into those wild waves. And almost every promontory and headland and cove has seen some cruel grinding to pieces of good ships, and dashing to pieces of brave men. And I sat upon a grey stone under the shelter of the stern rocks, and looked far below over the silver sea, which lay calm and quiet in the sunshine, as if it reflected on its many good deeds; and the low ripple of the innocent little waves came gently up on the sands, as if in their peaceful, well-spent lives they had never seen or even heard of anything wrong.

And an Ousel sang me a fairy tale of the Ancient Britons who built the Burdd Arthur above me. And now I tell it to you,—for, as the Triad says, “There are three means by which to gain knowledge—Song, Hieroglyphics, and Letters; and behold, the song is best!”

And the Ousel sang and said, “I heard it from the throstles, my ancestors, and they told it in the tongue wherein Adam wooed Eve to be his wife—even Welsh.”

“But I don’t understand Welsh,” said I.

“Yea, the language of their forefathers is forgotten by the race of to-day, and therefore must I tell it to thee in the degenerate speech which is called English.”

And she sang once more and said, “Once upon a time, in the days when Arthur was King in Britain—‘Arthur the Great, the Tower of Spears,’ says the Triad of the Bard Taliesin, “poet laureate” (!) to Malquen the King of North Wales, ruler of men—there were wars here and wars there, and upon every mountain and green hill was there strife. Now, at the court of Uther Pendragon, the father of Arthur, had there been a knight, whose wife Modron bore him a son, and he was called Mabon, son of Modron, for women were honoured among the Ancient Britons called Welsh, and men were named after the name of their mothers or the name of their fathers, as it pleased them best. And it came to pass that Mabon, the child, was taken by the enemy from between his mother and the wall when he was but three nights old, and no one listed where he was, nor whether he were alive or dead; and Modron his mother hankered after her child and sought him sorrowing; but there were no signs nor tidings of her boy, and they said to her, ‘Lo, he is dead!’ but she would not believe, and answered, saying, ‘Surely, why should they slay him? lo, he is a man-child whom they shall breed up as a warrior for to do them service;’ and she would not hearken unto them, but said ever to them that she should see his face again.

“Now, behold, Mabon had been taken prisoner by the Picts and carried into a far land,

“And it came to pass that Kilid, one of the princes of the island of Britain, had a son named Kiluch, and when they said to him that he should take an helpmate, he answered, ‘I am too young.’ Then they answered him, ‘It is thy fate never to find a wife till thou canst gain Olwen, the daughter of Pencaur.’

“And strong love for the maiden arose within his heart, though he had never seen her, and wist not where she was.



“And his father inquired of him, ‘What has come over thee, my son, and what aileth thee?’

“And the youth told him truly.

“‘This thing will be easy to thee,’ answered his father. ‘Arthur is thy cousin. Go and ask him to cut thy hair,* and then require of him the maiden as a boon.’

And the youth pricked forth on a steed four winters old, with head dappled grey, having a bridle of linked gold and a saddle of gold, and in his hand were two spears of silver, sharp, headed with steel, three ells long, and swifter than the fall of the dewdrop in June from the reed-grass on to the ground. And before him ran two brindled greyhounds, having strong collars of rubies about their necks, reaching from the shoulder to the ear; and the left-hand one bounded across to the right, and the right-hand one bounded to the left, and like two sea-swallows sported around him. And his horse cast up four sods with his four hoofs like four swallows in the air, about his head, now above and now below; and upon him was a four-cornered cloth of purple, with an apple of gold at each corner, each of the value of a hundred kine; and there was precious gold upon his shoes and stirrups, and so light was his tread that the blade of grass bent not beneath it as Kiluch journeyed towards the gate of Arthur’s palace.

“And he cried to the porter to let him in, but he answered, ‘I will not open the portal.’

“‘Wherefore not?’

“‘The knife is in the meat and the drink is in the horn, and there is feasting in Arthur’s hall, and none may enter in but the son of a King, or craftsman bringing his craft.’ (“Scest thou what honour was paid to the craftsman?” said the Ouscl unto me.)

“And the porter went on: ‘But there shall be food for thy dogs and for thy horse, and for thee there shall be collops cooked and peppered, and sweet wine, and mirthful songs in the guest-chamber without. A lady shall lull thee with songs, and to-morrow early when the gate is open thou shalt enter first, and sit in the place thou shalt choose.’

“Said the youth, ‘That will I not do. If thou openest the gate, it is well. If thou dost not open it, I will bring disgrace upon thy lord. And I will set up three shouts at this very gate, than which none were ever more deadly, from the top of Pengwaed’ (the Land’s End) ‘to the bottom of Dinsol in the North, and to Ireland; and all the women in the palace

* Making him thereby a sort of godfather.

shall be turned with fear, so that they shall lose their children, and not bear any more.'

"What clamour soever thou mayest make, thou shalt not enter in against the laws of Arthur's palace; but I will go and speak to the King.' And he went into the hall.

"And Arthur sat in the centre of the chamber upon a seat of green rushes, and there was over it a covering of flame-coloured satin, and a cushion of red satin was under his elbow; for what says the Triad? 'There are three things proper for a man to have in his house:

"A virtuous wife,
His cushion in his chair,
And his harp in tune.'

"And Arthur asked the porter what news of the gate; and he said, 'Half my life is passed, and half of thine. And I have been in India the Great and India the Lesser, and I was at the battle of Dau Ynir, where the twelve hostages were taken; and I have been to Europe and to Africa, and in the islands of Corsica; and when thou didst slay Mil Du, and when thou didst conquer Greece in the East, nine kings, handsome men, we saw in Caer Oeth and Annoeth, but never one like the man who is now at the door of the portal.'

"Then said the King, 'If thou comest in walking, thou shalt running return; and every one that opens and shuts the eye shall show him respect and serve him, some with gold-mounted drinking-horns, and some with collops cooked and peppered; it is not right that such a man should be in the wind and the rain.'

"Said Kai, the seneschal (his speech was ever uncourteous and rude), 'By the hand of my friend, if thou wouldst follow my counsel, thou wouldst break through no laws of this court because of him.'

"And Arthur answered him gently, and said, 'Not so, blessed Kai. It is an honour to us to be thus sought out, and the greater our courtesy, the greater will be our renown and our fame and our glory.'

"So the porter returned and opened the portal, and Kiluch did not dismount upon the horse-block at the gate, but rode in upon his charger, even into the hall, and he said,—

"Hail to thee, sovereign ruler of this island! and hail to all, the lowest as to the highest, thy guests, thy warriors, and thy chieftains! Great be thy favour and thy fame and thy glory throughout all this island.'

"And Arthur answered, 'Hail also to thee! sit thou between two of my warriors, and thou shalt have minstrels before thee, and shalt be as a king born to a throne as long as thou remainest here.'

"Said the youth, 'I came not here to eat nor to drink, but to obtain a boon from thee; and if I have it not, I will bear forth thy dispraise to the four quarters of the world, as far as thy glory has gone.'

"Then said Arthur, 'Thou shalt have the boon, whatsoever thy tongue can name, as far as the wind dries, and the rain wets, and the sun turns, and the sea surrounds; save only my ship and my mantle, and Kaleburn my sword, and Rogomiant my lance, and Guenever my wife. By the truth of Heaven thou shalt have it cheerfully.'

[*"That was a large boon," said I.*

"A King could scarcely refuse a boon without churlishness when he sat at meat," answered the Ousel.

"I think I remember a King of old who did likewise," replied I, "and shed a prophet's blood for his oath's sake and those that sat at meat." But she hearkened not, but went on.]

"And, firstly, the youth asked the King to bless his hair; and Arthur took a golden comb, and scissors whereof the hoops were silver, and he combed his hair. And Arthur inquired of him who he was. 'For my heart warms to thee, and I know that thou art of my blood. Tell me, therefore, who thou art.'

"'I am Kiluch, the son of Prince Kilid, by my mother, the daughter of Prince Anlaud.'

"'Thou art my cousin,' said Arthur. 'Whatsoever boon thou mayest ask, thou shalt receive.'

"'Pledge me the truth of Heaven and the faith of thy kingdom thereof.'

"'I pledge it to thee gladly.'

"'I crave of thee that thou win for me Olwen, the daughter of Pencaur, and I seek the boon also at the hands of thy warriors. I adjure Gwyn, the son of Nudd, and Prince Fflewdelun Fflam, and Uchtryd, and the sons of Guaurddur Kyrvach, and——'

[*And I, who listened, said, "O Ousel! are there many more such heroes as these? for lo! the names are too hard for me."*

And the Throstle looked a little ruffled as to her feathers, and she answered me, saying, "I have heard that in the songs of a blind songster, that lived even before the days of Arthur, and whom your sons and your fathers reverently read, there are lists of the names of warriors some ten pages long, and that by your teachers and your masters these are held in respect; behold, my roll is not longer! But seeing thou art but of a hasty disposition, and canst not endure as the listeners of old endured, I will leave the names of the men and women who were famous in the time and in the state of Arthur; and thou wilt lose greatly, for each has his own wondrous tale."]

So she went on once more. "And when Kiluch had finished his adjuration, Arthur the King lifted up his voice and said, "O chieftain, I never heard of the maiden of whom thou speakest, nor of her kindred; but I will send messengers gladly in search of her. Give me time.'

"And the youth said, 'I will willingly grant thee from this day to the end of the year.'

"And Arthur sent messengers into every land in his dominions to seek for the maiden, but they came back at the end without having gained any knowledge concerning her.

"Then said Kiluch, with anger, 'Every man has received his boon, and I yet lack mine. I will depart, and bear away thine honour with me.'

"And Kai the seneschal spoke—very sharp was the tongue of Kai—'Rash chief, dost thou reproach Arthur? Go with us, and we will not part till thou dost confess either that the maiden does not exist in the world, or till we gain her.'

"Then Kai rose up—very subtle was Kai. When it pleased him, he could make himself as tall as the tallest tree in the forest; a wound from his sword no physician could heal; and he could live nine days and nine nights without sleep, and his breath lasted nine days and nights under water.

"And Arthur called Bedwyr, his chief butler, and most valiant of the warriors. None were equal to him in swiftness, save Arthur and another; and though he had but one hand, three warriors could not shed blood faster than he on the field of battle; the wound of his lance was equal to that of nine.

"And Arthur called Guhrr, because he knew all tongues, even the tongues of the birds and of the beasts.

"And he called Menu, that he might cast charms and illusions, so that none might see them, while they could see all.

"These all journeyed till they came to a vast open plain, wherein they saw a great castle, which was the fairest of the castles of the world; and they went on till evening and the next day before they got there; and they beheld a vast flock of sheep, boundless and without end; and on the top of a mound a herdsman, and by his side a shaggy mastiff, larger than a horse nine winters old. Never had he lost a lamb from his flock, much less a large sheep, and his breath burnt the bushes to the ground.

"And Menu cast a spell on the dog, and they went up to the mound.

And they said, 'Whose are these sheep thou keepest, and to whom does the castle belong, O herdsman?'



“Truly ye are very dull. Throughout the world is it known that this is the castle of Ispaddeden Pencaur.’

“We are an embassy from Arthur to seek Olwen, his daughter, to wife.’

“Oh, then the mercy of Heaven be upon you! None has ever

returned alive from this quest. I am his brother, whom he oppressed because of my possession.'

"And they went to the herdsman's dwelling; and his wife, when she heard their desire, cried, 'Return again whence ye came, in the name of Heaven, before it is known that ye are come! Three and twenty of my sons has Pencaur slain, and I have but one left, whom I hide, but I have no hope to save.'

"Heaven is our witness that we will not go until we have seen the maiden. Does she ever come hither, that she may be seen?" said Kai.

"She comes every Saturday to wash her hair. Behold, she is my niece. In the vessel where she washes she leaves all her rings, and never fetches any away.'

"Will she come if she is sent for?"

"I will not destroy my soul, or betray those that trust me. I will not send, unless you pledge your faith that you will not harm her.'

"We pledge it,' said they.

"So a message was sent, and she came. The maiden was clad in a robe of flame-coloured silk. About her neck was a collar of ruddy gold, wherein were emeralds and rubies. Her hair was more yellow than the flower of the broom, and her skin whiter than the foam of the wave, and fairer were her hands and her fingers than the blossoms of the wood anemone. The eye of the trained hawk was not brighter than hers. Whoso beheld her was filled with her love. Four white trefoils sprang up wherever she trod, and therefore was she called Olwen.

"She came into the house, and sat beside Kiluch upon the foremost bench, and as soon as he saw her his heart knew her.

"O maiden! thou art she whom I have loved many days. Come away with me, lest they speak evil of thee and me.'

"I cannot; for I have sworn to my father not to go without his counsel; for his life will last only till I am wed. Whatever is must be. But go and ask me of my father, and deny him nothing that he shall require; else wilt thou not obtain me, and scarcely wilt thou escape with thy life.'

"And they rose, and followed her to the castle; and Menu cast a spell, so that they slew in silence the nine porters that were at the nine gates; and they slew the nine watch-dogs without one of them barking; so they went forward to the hall, where the giant Pencaur sat, and his grizzled eyebrows had fallen over his eyes, and they greeted him and

said, 'We are come to ask thy daughter in marriage for Kiluch the son of Kilid.'

"'Where are my pages and my servants? Raise up the forks of my eyebrows, which have fallen over my eyes, and let me see the fashion of my son-in-law.'

"And they did so.

"'Come hither to-morrow, and you shall have an answer.'

"And as they rose to go, he seized a poisoned dart, and threw it after them; and Bedwyr caught it, and flung it back, so that it pierced Pencaur's knee, and he said, 'A cursed ungentle son-in-law, truly! I shall ever walk worse for his rudeness. Cursed be the smith that forged it, and the anvil whereon it was wrought! It is so sharp!'

"And they abode at the house of the herdsman, and the next day with the dawn they went again to the castle, and entered the hall, and said, 'Give us Olwen, and we will pay thee her dower and her maiden fee, or else thou shalt die.'

"Then he said, 'Her four great-grandmothers are yet alive, and it is needful that I take counsel of them.'

"'Be it so,' answered they. 'We will go to meat.'

"And as they rose up, he took the second dart and cast it after them; but Menu caught it, and flung it back, so that it wounded him in the breast, and came out at the small of his back. And again the third time it happened in like manner; and Kiluch it was that wounded him in the eyeball; and Pencaur raged, and said, 'Like the bite of a mad dog is the stroke of this poisoned iron!' Wherefore they left him and went to meat.

"And once more they came to the palace next day, and Kiluch said, 'Give me thy daughter, and if thou wilt not, thou shalt receive thy death because of her.'

"'Where is he who seeks her? Lift up the forks of my eyebrows, that I may see him.'

"And they placed a chair face to face with him, and Kiluch in the chair.

"'I must have thy pledge that thou wilt do justly; and when thou hast gotten me those things which I shall name, my daughter shalt thou have.'

"'I promise willingly,' said Kiluch. 'Name what thou wilt.'

"'I demand the basket of Gwydneu, which is always full of meat, even if the whole world take from it thrice nine at a time. For the banquet

on the night my daughter is thy bride, must I eat therefrom. He will not give it of his free will, and thou canst not compel him.'

"'It will be easy for me to win it, though thou thinkest it will be hard.'

"'There is yet another thing—the harp of Tiertu, to play to us that wedding night. When a man desires that it should play, it does so of itself, and when he wishes it to cease, it ceases of itself. And this he will not give of his own free will, and thou canst not compel him.'

"'It will be easy——'

"'I must have the two-horned oxen, Ninniau and Peibau——'"

[And I said, "O Ousel, are there many more such marvels? for lo! the names are too hard for me."

And she drew herself up and answered, "The list of the labours of the strong man whom the old Greeks worshipped is far longer; but the folk of this generation are short of patience, wherefore I will but give thee the chiefest of the deeds which Pencaur required to be done."

So she went on:

"And the chieftain said, 'My hair is so thick that there is no comb or scissors which can cut it but those that are between the ears of the great boar Turch Troth, the son of Prince Tared.'

"'It will be easy——'

"'It is not possible to hunt the great boar Turch without the dog Drudwin the whelp of Gried.'

"'It will be easy——'

"'There is not a leash that can hold the whelp but that of Curs Cant Ewin.'

"'It will be easy——'

"'There is no collar that will hold the leash but that of Canlau.'

"'It will be easy——'

"'Throughout the world there is not a huntsman who can hunt with this dog except Mabon the son of Modron. He was taken from his mother when three nights old, and no one knows where he is.'

"'It will be easy——'

"'There is yet another needful thing. Guenn, the horse that is as swift as the wave, to carry Mabon the son of Modron to hunt the boar Turch.'

"'It will be easy——'

"'Until Glinien, the King of France, shall come, the Turch Troth cannot be hunted. It were unseemly for him to leave his kingdom for thy sake, and he will never come hither.'

"'It will be easy——'

“‘There is yet that which thou wilt not get. It is not possible to hunt the boar without Gwyn the son of Nudd, the King of Fairies, whom God placed over the brood of devils in Annum, lest they should destroy man. He will never be spared thence.’

“‘It will be easy——’”

[And I who listened, said, “But truly this Gwyn is a wonderful man; tell me more about him.”

And the Ousel was just a little bit, though gently, vexed, and she said, “Lo! but I would have told thee but now concerning him, among the mighty men, and thou wouldst not hear!”

And I answered, “Yet tell me now, good Ousel, I pray thee.”

“He is the sovereign of the Tilweth Teg, the ‘Family of Beauty,’ who dance in the moonlight in blue and green, and likewise of the Elves; and every May eve he fights with Gurthir (the father of one of Arthur’s three wives) for the possession of Cordelia the Fair, daughter of King Lear, and it shall not be settled till the day of doom.”]

And then she went on once more in her tale, and said:

“‘Lastly of all, though thou win these,’ said Pencaur, ‘there is yet that which thou canst not get,—Arthur and his companions must be there to hunt the Turch Troth. He is a mighty man, and he will not come for thee, neither canst thou compel him.’

“‘Arthur is my cousin, and it will be easy——’

“‘Troubles shalt thou meet with, and nights without sleep, in seeking these marvels; and, if thou get them not, neither shalt thou have my daughter.’

“‘Horses shall I have and warriors, and my lord and kinsman Arthur will gain for me all these things. And I shall win thy daughter, and thou shalt lose thy life.’

“And so they parted.

[“And I must take my breath, for I am weary,” said the Ousel unto to me.

II.

AND the Ousel (Thrush) began her tale once more, and said:

“So they, the warriors, returned to Arthur the King from the castle of Pencaur, and told him all that they had done. And he said, ‘Which of these marvels will it be best to seek first, that Kiluch may wed Olwen the fair?’

“And he would have gone forth on the quest; but they said, ‘Lord, thou canst not proceed with thy host on such small adventures; it will be best that we seek Mabon the son of Modron, and return to thee.’

“And Arthur said unto Kiluch, ‘Gurhir shall go with thee, for he knows all languages, and is familiar with those of all birds and beasts.’ And he sent Kai and Bedwyr also, saying, ‘I have hope of whatever adventure ye undertake that ye will achieve it. Achieve ye this adventure for me.’

“And they went their way, and Gurhir said, ‘Let us go to the ancients of the world; they that have lived longest on the earth, and in the air and the water, lo! they shall know the thing that we seek.’

“And they went until they came to the Ousel of Kilguri. (And she was the ancestor of all ousels, and my foremother also, and her tale, is it not told even to this day in the songs of the throstles and the whistling of the mavis?)

“And Gurhir adjured her for the sake of Heaven, saying, ‘Tell us if thou know aught of Mabon, son of Modron, who was taken when three nights old from between his mother and the wall.’

“And the Ousel answered and said, ‘When first I came hither there was a smith’s anvil in this place, and I was then a young bird, and from that time no work has been done upon it, save the pecking of my beak every evening, and now there is not so much as the size of a nut remaining thereof. Yet the vengeance of Heaven be upon me if, during that time, I have ever heard of the man for whom you inquire. Nevertheless I will do what is fitting towards an embassy from Arthur. There is a race that was made before me, and I will be your guide to them.’

“So they went and they went, until they came to the place where stood the Stag of Rhedinver upon a little hill, and he looked around, lest the hunters should be upon him, and his antlers branched into the sky.

“And they said, ‘O Stag of Rhedinver! we are come to thee on an embassy, for we have not heard of any beast older than thee. Tell us if thou knowest aught of Mabon.’

“And the Stag answered, ‘When first I came here there was a plain all round me, without any trees, save one oak sapling, which grew up to be an oak with a hundred branches, and that oak has perished, so that nothing now remains but a withered stump, and from that day to this I have been here, yet I have never heard of the man for whom you inquire. Nevertheless, being an embassy from Arthur, I will lead you to the place where there is an animal who was made before me.’

“So they went and they went, till they came to the Owl of Cum Caulid, and they asked her in like manner.

“And she shook her feathers and blinked with her eyes, and waited

awhile, and said, 'If I knew I would tell you. When first I came hither this wide valley ye see was a wooded glen, and a race of men came and rooted it up. And there grew up a second wood, and this wood is the third.'

[And I, the listener, said, "Surely this is the same as what Sir Charles Lyell, wise in stones, hath told, and hath he not unearthed the three layers of woods in the south of the land of the Cymri? Wherefore the Owl of Cum Cauluid hath the prior claim to the honour of the tale. I will write to the rulers of the science, and claim her rights."

And the Ousel answered, "I am the daughter of Song, and I love not the hard nuts of fact that thou wouldst crack. Is not the sweet savour of the music of song enough for thee as for me? I would that I were as 'the marvellous birds of Rhiannon,' daughter-in-law of King Lear, in listening to which even the warriors were held spellbound eighty years! then wouldst thou hearken to me in peace."]

"And the Owl went on and said, 'Nevertheless I will be the guide of Arthur's embassy until you come to the place where is the oldest animal in the world, and the one who has travelled most—the Eagle of Guernaby.'

"And they came to the place where the Eagle sat upon his rock, and he opened his hooked beak angrily, as who should say, 'Wherefore do ye trouble me?' and a film came over his eyes, and he gazed at them awhile, and said, 'I have been here a great space of time; and when I first came there was a rock here, from the top of which I pecked at the stars every evening, and now it is not so much as a span high. From that day to this I have never heard of the man for whom you inquire, except once when I went in search of food as far as Llinlui. And when I came there I struck my talons into a mighty salmon, for I said, "Lo! he is great, and he shall serve me for food for a winter's space." But he drew me into the deep, and scarcely was I able to escape from him. And after that I was enraged, and went with all my kindred, the other eagles, to attack him and try to put him to death; but he sent messengers, and made peace with me, and came and besought me to take fifty fish-spears out of his back. Unless he know something of the man whom you seek, I cannot tell you who may. Howbeit, I will guide you to the place where he is.'

"And the Eagle led the way courteously till they came to the river Severn, to the King of the River, even the Salmon. And the fish lay in a still place between two currents behind a rock, and he waved his tail, and answered and said, 'As much as I know I will tell thee. With every tide I go along the river upwards, until I come near to the walls of Gloucester, and there have I found such wrong as I never found elsewhere.'

["I am sorry that Gloucester is so old and so wicked," said I.

"Perhaps they did not listen to the singing of the bard," said she.]

“And to the end that ye may believe therein, let one of you go thither, one on each of my two shoulders.’

“So Kai and Gurhir went upon the two shoulders of the Salmon of Llinlui, and he swam and he swam, and they held on tightly in the swift stream, where the meadows lay green and still on either side, and where the rocks and the woods closed it narrowly in, until they came to the town of the city of Gloucester; and there was a tower in the wall of the prison, which reached down into the water of the river, even the river Severn, that flows by the walls of the great city; and they heard therein a sound of great wailing and lamenting from between the bars of the dungeon, black and noisome and deep, that was therein.

“And Gurhir spake aloud and cried, ‘Who is it that laments thus within this house of stone?’

“And the voice answered, and said, ‘Woe, woe! there is reason enough to lament for the man who abides therein. It is Mabon the son of Modron, who is captive here, and no captivity was ever so grievous as mine, neither that of Llod Law Ereint, nor that of Greid the son of Eri.’”

[And I who heard the tale said, “I cannot be so grieved as I would wish, seeing I know not who nor what might be Llod Law Ereint and his sorrow.”

And the Ousel answered me, “It is King Lear of whom they speak. Do not then the English know even the history of their own kings?”

“And concerning Greid the son of Eri?”

“I will tell thee by-and-bye,” she replied, evidently a little vexed at the interruption. (“‘By-and-bye’s easily said,’ as Hamlet observes.”)]

“And Kai, as he sat uneasily on the shoulder of the great fish, questioned the voice again, saying, ‘Hast thou hope of being set free for gold or silver or for any gifts of wealth? or through battle and fighting must thou come forth?’

“And the voice answered out of the depth again, ‘By fighting alone will any good I gain be won.’

“And they went thence once more upon the back of the fish, and came and told Arthur how Mabon the son of Modron was captive in the dungeon of the tower of Gloucester. And Arthur summoned the warriors of the island of Britain, and they went on their way, journeying. Over open moors and mountains and drear fens they passed, and through green woods, where they could see neither sky nor firmament, until they came to the place, even Gloucester. And Kai and Bedwyr went their way also upon the Salmon of Llinlui to assault the tower from the river below, while the warriors assailed the castle from above; and Kai broke through the

wall into the dungeon, and brought away the prisoner upon his back, while the fight was going on among the warriors.

"And Arthur returned home victorious, and Mabon with him at liberty.

"And Arthur said, 'Which of the marvels will it be best for us now to seek first?'"

"And he and his host departed to Gelliwic, in Cornwall, and he sent Menu to Ireland to see if the precious things lay between the two ears of the boar Turch Troth, since it was useless to fight him unless they were."

["That was a very sensible provision," said I.

"It is not wise to seek after that which cannot be found," answered she.]

"And they knew where the boar lay, for he had laid waste the third part of Ireland.

"And Menu took the form of a bird, and descended on the lair of the great boar, and strove to snatch the precious things, but he caught only one of the bristles; and Turch Troth rose up angrily and shook himself, so that some of his venom fell upon Menu, and he was never well from that day forward.

"And Arthur set forth and entered into his ship *Priduen*, and summoned unto him all the warriors of the three islands of Britain, and in the three islands lying near (Orkney, the Isle of Wight, and the Isle of Man), and all that were in France, in Normandy, and in the Summer* county—chosen footmen and valiant horsemen; and with all these he went to Ireland; and there was great fear and terror there. And the saints of Ireland came to him and besought his protection; and he granted it, and they gave him their blessing; and the men of Ireland brought him provisions. And Arthur went to Goger Orvel, where the boar Troth was with his seven young pigs; and the dogs were let loose upon him from all sides. And that day till evening the Irish fought with him; nevertheless, he laid waste the fifth part of Ireland. And on the day following, Arthur's household fought with the boar; and they were worsted, and got no advantage. And the third day Arthur himself encountered him, and he fought with the boar nine nights and nine days without so much as killing even one little pig. And the warriors inquired of Arthur concerning Turch Troth; and he told them how he had been once a king, and that God had transformed him into a swine for his sins.

"And Arthur sent Gurhir to speak with him; and Gurhir took the form

* Query, Somersetshire?

of a bird, and lighted on the top of the lair where he lay with the seven young boars.

"And Gurhir asked him, 'By Him who turned you into this form, if you can speak, let one of you, I pray, come and talk with Arthur.'

"Now Grugin Gurech made answer (his bristles were like silver wire, and he could be tracked by their glittering through the wood and through the plain), 'By Him who changed us, we will *not* speak to Arthur. It is enough for us to suffer this change, without you coming to fight us.'

"'I will tell you. Arthur comes but to fight for the comb, the razor, and the scissors, which are between the two ears of Turch Troth.'

"Said Grugin, 'Except he first take his life, Arthur shall never have those precious things; and to-morrow morning we will rise up hence, and go into Arthur's country, and there will we do all the mischief that we can.'

"So they all set forth swimming through the sea, even the Irish Sea, towards Wales; and Arthur and his hosts, and his horses and his dogs, entered *Priduen*, and followed them, that they might encounter them quickly. Turch Troth landed at Port Cleis, and thence he came to Menen (St. David's). The next day it was told Arthur that they had gone by; and when he overtook them, they had slain all of man and beast that were at Abergliddif (Milford Haven). From thence he went to Abesteivi (Cardigan), where he made another stand and slew many men of that country, and Arthur's chief architect, and he slew also Guelenin, King of France."

[*"They make small bones of the King of France,"* said I, *"killing him off like that in a corner without a word, as it were only to enhance the glories of Turch Troth and of Arthur's prowess."*

"Arthur was a great man," answered the Ousel meditatively.]

"Now when Arthur came near, and Bedwyr, leading Cavall, Arthur's dog, Turch Troth made a stand, and slew four of Arthur's champions. And after he had slain these men he made a second stand, and he slew Guider the son of Arthur, and others, and was wounded on Prenelly mountain, and there the men and dogs lost him. And Arthur summoned Gwyn ab Nudd, King of Annum and of the Fairies, and asked if he knew aught of the boar; and he said that he did not. And Grugin, and Luidawg his brother, closed with the huntsmen, and killed all, so that there escaped but one man only; and Arthur came to the place, and let loose the whole of the dogs, and with the shout and barking that was set up, Turch Troth came to their help.

"And from the time that they came across the Irish Sea, Arthur had



never got sight of him until then ; but he started off and went to Minid, and there one of his young boars was killed. Then they set upon him, life for life, and one more of the swine was killed ; Guys was his name. After that he went on to Amanu, and two more pigs were killed. Of all his children, there went only alive from that place Grugin and Luidawg. And Arthur overtook him at Ewin, and he made a stand ; and Luidawg slew Arthur's two uncles and many dogs. But Turch Troth went from thence to Tawy, and Arthur summoned all Cornwall and Devon unto him to the estuary of the Severn, and he said to the warriors of this island, 'Turch Troth has slain many of my men ; but, by the valour of warriors, while I live he shall not go into Cornwall. And I will not follow him any longer, but stand against him, life to life. Do ye as ye will.'

"And he sent a body of tried warriors as far as Ewas, and they forced him towards the Severn, and Mabon, son of Modron, upon the horse of swiftness Grun Migdon, came up with him near the river, and Menu and the rest, betwixt Llinlivan and Abergrei. And Arthur fell upon him, together with the champions of Britain, and they seized hold of the boar, catching him first by the feet, and plunged him in the river, so that it overwhelmed him. On the one side, Mabon the son of Modron spurred his steed in the midst of the waters, and snatched his razor from him, and the warrior Wilt came up on the other side in the rushing river, even the Severn, and took from him the scissors. But before they could take the comb, he had felt the ground under his feet towards the other shore, and from the moment that he reached the bank, even the bank of the Severn, neither dog nor man nor horse could overtake him until he came to Cornwall. If there had been labour with taking the jewels from the boar, much more had they in seeking to save two men from being drowned.

"Then Arthur and his host rode on till they overtook the boar in Cornwall, and the trouble which they had met before was nothing to what they had met in taking the last jewel from him ; but after one fight and another, the comb was taken. Then was Turch Troth hunted from Cornwall, and driven straight into the deep sea. And thenceforth it was never known whither he went.

"Then returned Arthur to Gelliwic to anoint himself and rest from his labours.

"But Kiluch set forth, and many with him, to take the marvels with them to Ispaddaden Pencaur. And when they came to the castle, Kai of North Britain shaved Pencaur's beard to the very bone, from ear to ear.

"'Art thou shaved, man?' said Kiluch.

"'I am shaved,' answered the other, with a grunt.

"'Is thy daughter mine now?'

"'She is thine; no thanks to me. It is Arthur that has done it. By my free will thou shouldst never have had her, for with her I lose my life.'

"And they seized him by the hair of his head, and dragged him to the keep, and cut off his head, and set it on a stake on the citadel, and took possession of the castle and its treasures. And that night Olwen became the bride of Kiluch, and continued to be his wife as long as she lived. And the hosts of Arthur dispersed, every man to his own country.

"This was the end of the Great-Boar Hunt of Arthur, and thus did Kiluch win Olwen, the daughter of Pencaur."

["She took her father's death very coolly," said I, "marrying his murderer the same night in that way."

"She couldn't help it," answered the Ousel.

"And Kiluch was very rude to Arthur, and not a bit grateful for all the trouble that he took."

"It was his business, the 'craft' of the King, to be the servant of the State, to do it service in those days, to rid it of wild beasts, and wicked men, and all evil things," sang she sweetly.

"And Mabon," inquired I; "did his mother ever see him again? I care most for her and him."

"I never heard," answered she. "And Mabon was buried in the upland of Nantlau. His story no one knows, says the Triad. And again another, 'Hast thou not heard the saying of Mabon, son of Modron the Sincere, when giving instructions to his sons?—Except God, there is no searcher of the heart.' There are some that say he was the same as St. Mabon."

"That I don't believe," said I. "There is plenty about devils and fairies and heaven in the story, but they are all frank Pagans as ever I heard of. No saints were there. It was before the time of such men. I wonder whether the boar was a real boar, or whether the story is only a record of an inroad into Wales by some Irish marauder?"

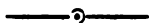
There was no answer; and when I looked up, behold, the Ousel had flown away, and I heard her in the thicket singing the song of the Ousel of Kilguri, loud and clear, to the other birds that were therein.]

The beautiful sentiments and chivalrous religious tone attributed to Arthur are "conspicuous by their absence" in the Welsh Arthurian legends. His name is simply a peg, in fact, round which is hung the ideal of the story-teller of each succeeding age. In the "Morte d'Arthur" he is a fierce chieftain, who is three times over on the point of causing Guinevere to be burnt upon suspicion; she is each time rescued by Lancelot, who certainly establishes a considerable right to her gratitude. The Arthur of the Mabinogion ("Popular Tales") is a "jolly fellow"—fond of feasting and minstrelsy, not liking to be disturbed when busy over his horn of mead and his peppered collops of meat; very good-natured, and willing to give anybody anything which does not belong to him, and to go anywhere for the sake of the "fun" of fighting.

The stories are all utterly *immoral*, not *immoral*. The "good old rule" is paramount. "Let him take who has the power, and let him keep that can," is the law. If any one has a precious possession of any kind, as a matter of course all his neighbours make it a point of honour to take it from him by force or fraud. And I own to a strong sympathy with the young boar Grugyn (he of the silver bristles), although he expresses himself "some-

what unmannerly," that it is exceedingly hard his father should be required, for no reason but Arthur's good pleasure, to give up the precious comb and scissors, which to all appearance belong to him as his own rightful property.

The legend, probably, has been added to and altered over and over again, the long list of names varying of course according to the great families where the bard sang the song; while the amount of their liberality to the singer perhaps determined the number of distinguished ancestors and of exploits allotted to each. The foundation or substructure is evidently Pagan to the core; there is much mention of heaven, once or twice of God; but fairies, elves, devils, and enchanters are the reigning powers. The "Saints" in Ireland probably crept into the story later than the rest. That the song is very ancient is proved, among other things, by the estimates of the value being always in kine. There is plenty of gold, but money is never alluded to. Altogether, it is a valuable and curious picture of the manners, ideas, and moralities of our Ancient British ancestors.



WHAT THE GREEN LIZARD TOLD ME.

MORNING had dawned over Ceylon's spicy shores. The bright tropical sun was illuminating the land and lighting up the sapphire sea, causing its waves to sparkle in myriads of bright jewelled drops, as they broke upon the huge rocks that marked the ocean's boundary. The headlands were carpeted with luxuriant verdure; tall palms bent their crowns towards the sea, while beneath their shade the ground was overrun with brightly coloured flowers and strange orchids, graceful climbing plants enveloping them all with their festoons of slender tendrils. Butterflies of gorgeous hue hovered above the gay scene, birds of gaudy plumage darted in and out among the foliage, many an emerald lizard basked in the sun. The cicada trilled his sonorous drum on the bark of the tall trees, the dew hung in diamonds from the spiders' webs, the earth teemed with ants and lustrous beetles.

Behind rose the hills, covered with forests of a lovely green, and far away in the hazy distance the mountain zone of Kandy was discernible, while high above towered Adam's Peak, hiding its summit among the clouds that overhung its sacred head.

It was a scene of exquisite tropical loveliness, full of light and colour.

At a little distance from the harbour of Point de Galle, along the margin of the Bay, stood, some years ago, a native hut. It was a small one-storeyed dwelling, along whose entire front ran a deep verandah, supported on pillars formed by the trunks of trees. Close beside it, owned by the



inmates of the hut, stood a tall Palm-tree. It was the only one of its species on this spot, though the richly wooded scene I have described above grew only some hundred yards from it. Still, the distance was too great for any companionship, and the Palm felt very lonely.

True, it could see the foamy ocean from where it stood ; could look down upon the yellow sand that was washed by its waves ; could survey the bay, dotted with its many strange crafts, among which the native canoes darted with surprising velocity ; and could behold the rich scene of luxuriant vegetation a little beyond its site.

But it had grown tired of these things, it had seen them so often ; all its life long its eyes had rested on nought else. It wanted some change, some new sensation ; and for several months past the sun had cast its loving beams in vain upon this discontented Palm, who would no longer respond to his addresses. It was sullen and morose ; it wanted companionship, variety, the neighbourhood of other trees ; it hardly could define *what* it was, it pined for. Certainly change of some kind. Yet whence should that arise ? If its owners were even to plant other palms within its vicinity, it would be long ere they were old enough to be any society to it ; besides, it did not want its own species, it wanted something new and strange.

As the Palm was thus thinking discontentedly on this particular morning, a little hill-dove flew over its crown and alighted among its leaves. The pigeon held in her beak a full ripe fig, which she began to devour eagerly, after seating herself within the Palm's grateful shade. As she sat a Fig-seed dropped from her mouth, and in falling lodged within one of the tiny cavities of the Palm's trunk. Having finished her meal, the bird re-issued from out the leaves, neither she nor the Palm thinking aught of the seed that had fallen. In fact, they had not regarded it. The pigeon flew away in search of other food, and the Palm continued its querulous musings.

Not so the seed, who felt within itself the full power of possible life. The circumstances in which it had been thus accidentally placed were favourable to its growth, the moist bases of the Palm-leaves supplying it with nourishment. Soon it began to germinate, and after a little time the Palm observed a new parasite growing upon its trunk. It thought nothing of that, however. All tropical trees afford more or less nourishment and support to other plants, and the Palm was already covered lower down with convolvuli and other climbing plants ; this new-comer was only one more added to their number.

Meanwhile the little plant continued growing steadily. Its root, firmly planted within the Palm's trunk, inclined towards the earth, branching into several rootlets as it descended, all of which it fastened again and again upon the tree, to give itself further support. Having, at length, by this process, reached the ground, it implanted itself fixedly into it. A second stem soon after sprang up, which sent forth branches and bare foliage, and these again fixed themselves securely upon the Palm, repeating the process once more. The Palm's attention was at length awakened. All these months it had been sunk in dull apathy, and had hardly observed what passed around it. But one day it suddenly grew fully awake to the fact that a tree was growing up beside, nay rather, upon it. At least he thought it must be a tree, for it was of a more woody nature than the ordinary climbing plants.

"Ho, there!" it said, addressing the stranger; "who are you, pray? and what do you call yourself?"

"Well, that's good," laughed the other. "Here I have been growing up beside you this long time past, and you don't seem to have been aware of it till to-day."

"I looked upon you as some inferior climbing plant, but now it strikes me you are a tree like myself. In that case we can become acquainted, and I hope we may grow to be friends."

"I hope so, too. It is my intention to attach myself to you. Your position and form facilitate my growth."

"Oh, indeed?" said the Palm. "You seem haughty: you might surely say, by my leave. I could rid myself of you soon enough if I chose."

"You are mistaken there, I fancy," said the other. "I have fastened myself securely while you have been unheedful. It is too late now."

The Palm writhed with vexation, but it would not show what it felt.

"And your name?" it asked once more.

"The Banyan-tree."

"Tree, indeed!" sneered the Palm. "Hardly that yet."

"But I shall be," replied the Banyan. "Wait and see."

From that day the two were hardly on good terms with one another. There was a constant rivalry and bickering between them as to whose claims to attention were greatest; besides which, the Palm did not view with pleasure the constant succession of new rootlets that hung down from the tree, to transfix themselves into the earth and grow to stems, which once more repeated the same operation. It was becoming completely enlaced by this encroaching tree, and was beginning to wonder

when it would leave off growing. At times the two would be tolerably good friends, and the Palm saw its wish for companionship to a certain extent realized. But whenever it looked down from its crowned height to the Banyan-tree that was thus making way around it, it would grow silent and sulky, and wished that its long-for companion had not been thrust into such close proximity with it.

Meanwhile the worshippers of Buddha who had passed that way, and to whom the fig is a sacred tree, looked upon it with increased veneration, for what they called its marriage with the Palm. Not so the owner of the hut, who followed the teachings of Brahma, and who looked upon the Banyan as an intruder, likely to render it difficult for him to reach his Palm-tree, even if, in the end, it did not kill it by its embraces.

And still the Banyan continued shooting out new roots, forming a complete network, ever closer and more close, around the Palm, and threatening at last literally to overtop it with its height, as well as crush it with its pressure.

How bitterly the Palm envied its former lonely position, before it had this unwelcome companion! The two trees rarely spoke together now. The Palm was too sad and humbled, the Banyan too apt to boast its own superiority, which the other could no longer disprove, and to taunt it with the haughty tone of its first advances.

So matters stood, and daily the Palm's position grew worse. Instead of being a lofty tree, around which a young plant had humbly twined itself for support, it was now only a Palm growing out from the centre of a thick mass of Banyan, which had long since become a standard, its feathery crown hardly to be discerned from among the luxuriant foliage of its rival. It, the older tree—it, the first on the spot—had become thus quite a secondary personage. It was truly a mortifying position.

At length, as the Banyan still continued to expand, the Palm could bear it no longer. It was growing literally strangled by the folds of roots, and the weight of its relentless companion. Added to this its vexation and grief. The whole was too much for the Palm. It faded, hung its crown heavily, pined, and died.

Years passed; the owner of the Palm regretted his tree, and cursed the Banyan that had supplanted it. The Palm meanwhile rotted away, and the Fig-tree showed no regret for the lost companion that had upborne it in its infancy.

"It did not support me willingly," it thought; "therefore why should I be grateful? Life is a fight, in which the stronger wins. In the

struggle for existence I have proved myself the stronger ; consequently I have a right to enjoy my life."

Thus it reasoned, and it was very glad when the Palm had completely mouldered away, leaving no remembrance behind it, save a hollow cylinder in the Banyan's centre, marking the place where it had once stood. It would be easier to forget it now all outward trace was vanished.

The original proprietor of the hut and Palm had died some time ago. His successor, seeing the Banyan developing so rapidly, grew alarmed. He knew from experience the pernicious character of these trees, how they overrun all that comes in their way, and what formidable enemies they are to buildings. Wherefore he did not desire to see his newly-acquired house destroyed by this tree, and determined on its destruction.

"These trees are the veritable Thugs of the vegetable world," exclaimed the Singhalese one day, as he stood beneath the verandah's shade and surveyed the Banyan, from whose stems hung numberless rootlets, ready to descend into the ground, and propagate themselves further.

"What are Thugs, father?" asked his little boy, a pretty bronze-coloured child, whose total want of clothing displayed to advantage his graceful, supple limbs.

"A set of Indians, my child, who practise murder, especially by strangling, as a sacred profession."

"Ugh!" exclaimed the boy, and he shuddered. "And would this tree strangle us, father?" he asked after a pause.

"No, my child," replied the Singhalese, smiling. "But it would undermine our house, and destroy its walls."

Next day a large party of men surrounded the Banyan. With their combined strength, and the help of an axe, they felled it to the ground ; and thus the tree, who thought in the pride of its heart to grow into a forest, was levelled to the earth.

"Pride must have a fall," said a Green Lizard, who settled himself to bask upon one of its branches. "Had you been less relentless to the Palm, men would have treated you more leniently too."

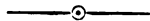
"Perhaps so," replied the Banyan ; "it is too late now. But the Palm was wrong too," it continued, determined not to bear the whole brunt of blame ; "it longed for a companion, and when it received one it was still discontented."

"And did it not find its punishment in the fulfilment of its wish?"

"True," replied the Banyan, and resigned itself to die.

As to the Lizard, he crept away and told the story of the discontented Palm and the encroaching Banyan to all who would listen to his prosy account, interspersed as it was with moral conclusions.

And as he told it me, while I rested one day beneath a banyan's shade, in that lovely island of Ceylon, so I tell it you, and you must draw your own lesson from the narrative.



THE KNIGHT WHO GREW RUSTY.

THERE was once a Knight who was not a good man, but proud and selfish. And as a punishment for his sins, God let one side of him grow rusty—all but his face, and that remained as it was before. As his coat of mail covered his body, it was only his left hand which showed the rust, and to hide this, the Knight wore a glove, night and day, sewn on the wrist.

One good thing the bad Knight did. He married a good and gentle girl, who loved him, and who did not believe half the evil that she heard of him.

But soon after the wedding she found out why he never took the glove from his left hand, and being very unhappy about it, she went to an aged hermit who lived in a wood near their house, and told him of her trouble. After listening to her tale, the old man retired and prayed very earnestly. Then he said, "I know a way by which you can restore your husband; but you will find it very hard, and if you begin the task and leave it off undone, you will grow rusty too. You must give up your fine house and fine clothes, and go begging barefoot through the world till you have gained a hundred golden guineas. Then take your husband's hand, go with him into the church, put the hundred golden guineas in the poor-box, and God will pardon your husband's sins, and the rust will disappear."

"I will do it," said the young wife, "for I firmly believe the rust is only outside."

So she wandered away from her home out into the world to beg

changing her fine clothes for those of a poor and ragged old woman whom she found in the wood gathering sticks.

The old woman was very much surprised when the Knight's young wife begged her to exchange clothes with her, and asked her the reason.

"I want to be very poor," said the lady.

"That is strange," returned the old woman. "I have seen a great deal of the world, and have met many people who wanted to be rich, but never one before who wanted to be poor."

However, she gladly changed her ragged clothes for the lady's beautiful dress.

The Knight's wife went on her way. But she found begging no easy task. One person spoke harshly to her, another passed her by, a third offered her work, and reproached her for being a lazy good-for-nothing woman. At length she reached a great city, and here she would sit on the steps of a church, and beg all day, but not making much way towards her hundred golden guineas, for when three-parts of a year were nearly gone she had only saved a shilling!

Just as she had done this, a lovely boy was born to her, whom she named "Joy," because of the hope that she still had of happier days to come. And she tore a strip from her ragged gown, and wrapping it about the child, still went on begging, and passers-by would often stop and give the young beggar woman a penny, for the sake of the beautiful baby she carried in her arms. So she hoped on.

Meanwhile the Knight, when he found his wife had left him, was very unhappy, and said to himself, "She has found me out, and will have nothing more to say to me." And he too went to tell his trouble to the old hermit of the wood, who, seeing how really sorry he seemed for his past wickedness, said,—

"I am glad to see that your heart has not as yet grown rusty. Give alms to the poor, pray without ceasing, and you shall find your wife."

The Knight went from place to place seeking his wife, giving money to all the poor he met, as the hermit had told him, and praying in every church he came to.

At last he reached the town where his wife sat begging on the steps of the church. In the distance his wife saw him coming, for he was tall and stately, and the helmet of gold he wore flashed in the sun; and she trembled and hid her face under her cloak, and crouched down so as to hide her snow-white bare feet, for she had as yet only saved up two golden guineas, and she knew that her task was not completed.



But as the Knight passed her to go, after his custom, into the church to pray, he was attracted, first by the beautiful baby, and then by the sobs of the poor young beggar-woman, for she could not help crying at the sight of her husband.

He stopped, and asked her what he could do for her, and what made her so unhappy. But she only sobbed the more, keeping her face hidden all the while. The Knight's heart was so touched at the sight of her grief, that he took out his purse, in which were more than a hundred golden guineas, and poured it into her lap; while at the same moment the cloak slipped from the beggar-woman's head, and the Knight saw that it was his own wife to whom he had given the gold.

In spite of her rags, he clasped her in his arms, and when he learned that the beautiful baby was his own son his delight was extreme.

But his wife, taking the Knight by the hand, led him into the church, and putting the money into the poor-box, said, "I wished to release you from the curse, but you have released yourself; my work is done." And in truth, as the Knight left the church, the rust which had covered his left side entirely disappeared.

He at once took his wife and child home to his castle, where they all lived happily, and in the fear of God, for many years.



THE TREASURE STONES.

A BRETON LEGEND.



IT was Christmas Eve in a small farm in the neighbourhood of Plouhinec beyond Hennebont.

No one was at home ; the master, mistress, children, and servants were all gone to midnight Mass. The sound of church bells was still heard across the heath, now covered with a thin layer of snow. Only an old woman, too old and infirm to go to church, was sitting up beside the fire.

A beggar was in the stable, asleep between a lean Ox that drew the little plough and an old Ass worn out with carrying bundles of heather or of rushes dried in the sun. The poor man had reached the farm after the departure of the farmer, and the old woman had given him a cake of black bread and a cup of milk, and then allowed him to go to bed in the stable.

He slept peacefully till he was awakened by voices near him. He listened, thinking it was the people of the farm come home, but he soon perceived, to his amazement, that the Ox and the Ass beside him were conversing in good Breton. The Ass had turned towards the Ox, who was reposing on his litter, and the beggar

Scriven remembered he had heard it said by old people that, in memory of the hospitality shown by the ox and the ass to the infant Jesus, once a year, at midnight on Christmas Eve, the inhabitants of the stable were endowed with the gift of speech, and were able to converse about their affairs like human beings.

Scriven was sharp and clever. It was not for nothing that he had

carried his wallet from parish to parish, making capital of his broken leg, and living as a beggar on the charity of kind folks. He did not make the least movement that might betray his presence, lest he should silence his bedfellows, whose conversation he was so eager to hear.

The Ox was saying to the Ass, "One never does what one wants to do. If I were not tied here, I would go and take a walk on the heath, that I might be at liberty for once; and if I met Beneadik, the ploughman of Pluvigner, I would tell him something."

"What would you tell him?" asked the Ass, who seemed depressed by bad treatment.

"Ah, you do not like Beneadik as I do. He does not drive you, and



that good-for-nothing Kaolo has given you so many blows, that you can hardly stand any more; but the master has never had such a ploughman as Beneadik: he talks to me as if I were a Christian, and if he pricks me at all when I go too slow, it is so gently that I scarcely feel it. He is always afraid of doing harm, and has no wish but to do good. If he looks often towards Mariemik, it is no wonder, for he wants to make her his wife. If he only knew——! He would soon be rich enough to buy the farm, the furniture, and all the land; and the master, instead of snubbing him, would stand before him cap in hand."

Scriven began to listen with all his ears, and the Ass, who was lying on his litter of heather, turned himself languidly round.

"You mean that you want him to find the treasure that the Stones of Plouhinec will leave uncovered one of these days? By the stable of St. Joseph, if he had the cross-wort and the five-leaved clover, they would be of some use to him when the Stones go down to drink at the Intel! But it happens only once in a hundred years, and he will know nothing about it."

"Besides," rejoined the Ox, "if there cannot be found in these parts a baptized Christian who will give his life for him, he will be crushed by the Stones when they come back. But, after all, he would never let another be killed for him, and the good God will show him some other way of becoming rich enough to marry Mariemik."

The Ass had fallen asleep, and all was again silent in the stable. Scriven alone was awake, with a terrible temptation gnawing at his heart. Why should he not profit by the knowledge of the existence of this treasure, which had just been revealed to him in so strange a manner? He was tired of begging. It was no longer the good trade that it used to be; the times were hard, and although charitable people might still give the beggar the best place in the chimney corner, and the largest piece of bread, ill-natured folks often let him wait at the door, and after all threw him only a dry crust. He knew very well where to find the magical herbs—on the way as you go from the sea-coast towards the country where it never freezes, where the myrtles are in flower in winter, and violets open in February in the woods. Scriven stopped, however, in his meditations when he came to the last condition of the great enterprise. Where was he to find a baptized Christian who would give his life for him?

He did not yet dare to ask himself aloud how he should delude any one, and allure him to his death. But the devil had already suggested dark schemes to him. The treasure glittered before poor Scriven's greedy eyes. He fancied he saw handfuls of gold, diamonds, and large bags of silver; and between sleeping and waking he gave himself up to these dangerous dreams. After he was quite asleep, the master and mistress, with their children and servants, returned from church.

When he woke in the morning, he saw Beneadik, who was arranging the litters of the animals. He did not know him, but the caresses he bestowed on the Ox from time to time, as well as the sweet words he exchanged in low tones with Mariemik, who was helping her mother in the kitchen, induced him to examine the ploughman carefully. Wickedness had already established itself in Scriven's heart. When he left the farm about midday his wallet was well furnished. He looked forward toward the Stones of Plouhinec, which stood out in the snow irregular and clear, like a troop of soldiers standing still upon the field of battle. He contemplated them for a minute, then went back to take another look at Beneadik, and at last plunged into the heath, walking in the direction of the sea.

Three or four days had passed, and the short winter's day had begun

to close. The ground was still covered with snow, and the Ox ruminated softly in the stable, blessing Heaven that had wrapped the earth in a white shroud.

No work could be done, and Beneadik, whistling gaily in spite of the growing darkness, was striking one of the largest of the Stones of Plouhinec with a chisel and hammer. The poor fellow was not, however, really gay, for the mistress, who had observed that Mariemik liked to talk to him, had warned her husband, who at once gave the Pluvigner lad notice to leave. When Beneadik asked the cause of this abrupt dismissal, the master said, "A man who has not twenty white pieces in his pocket ought not to think of speaking to a girl."

On this poor Beneadik hung his head, for he had not more than twelve, although he had received his wages at Christmas. He had paid for the shoes he had bought in the autumn to dance at the "Grand Pardon," and he had put his offering on the altar and in the priest's purse like a good Christian.

To console himself for the thought of leaving Mariemik, he had begun to carve something on the big Stone, when he was startled by hearing a voice beside him.

"What are you doing?" asked the beggar Scriven, and Beneadik turned round. It seemed as if the other had suddenly risen out of the earth. "Does the master pay you to make drawings on the stones?"

"The master has dismissed me—that is what he has done," replied Beneadik. His heart was full, and he was surprised at the beggar's bold tone. "I am going to have more time to myself than I want, and meanwhile, that I may find work, I am marking this Stone with the sign of my salvation. It is said that in former days these Stones have seen human blood flow in the devil's service. It won't do any harm now for this one to bear on it the sign of the cross."

And Beneadik quietly finished his work, completing the cross he had begun to cut upon the stone.

"Listen to me," said the beggar in a low voice. "What would you give me if I were to make you rich enough to marry Mariemik to-morrow if you like, or even to look elsewhere and higher if you have a mind to do so?"

Beneadik's tools dropped from his hands. "Rich!" he gasped in a choking voice; "Mariemik!" He was so much excited that he could not find words, but he looked eagerly at the beggar.

"I know," said Scriven, "that these Stones," and he touched the large

one on which Beneadik had just cut the sign of the cross, "will this very night tear themselves up from the ground on which they rest, and go to drink at the river Intel. Under them is hidden a treasure so great that no eye has ever seen the like. A single person would never be able to carry it off before the Stones come back to their place; but, if you will help me, I swear by your patron saint that you shall never again need to bow your head to any man."

Beneadik seized the beggar's hands in his, not noticing how they trembled.

"If you will only make me rich enough to obtain Mariemik from her father," he cried, "you may take all the rest; you shall have my gratitude into the bargain, and my services by day and by night, in fair weather or foul: except Mariemik and my hope of heaven, I will refuse you nothing that you can ask of me."

Scriven smiled, but it was dark by this time, and besides, Beneadik was too happy and too trustful to comprehend the look of troubled joy that passed over the face of his companion.

"I will stay here and watch beside the Stones," said the beggar. "I have something in my gourd which will keep out the cold. You have still a place at the fireside and table of the farmhouse; go back to supper, and when you look at Mariemik, say to yourself that to-morrow she will be yours, if our enterprise succeeds; and then at eleven o'clock come back here to me."

Scriven was eager to get rid of Beneadik, for the young man's gratitude weighed upon his mind till his remorse was insupportable. "It must be," he kept repeating to himself, "and he is such a good Christian that he will go straight to heaven."

Beneadik found it very difficult to conceal his joy: in the darkest moment of his grief a strange hope had risen before him. Mariemik looked at him in amazement; she had blushed when during that day her mother had said in her hearing that Beneadik was about to leave them to seek his fortune elsewhere, but she had bravely restrained her tears, waiting till she was alone to weep. Now, however, the joy that she read in Beneadik's face almost overcame her courage. Was he then so happy to go away from her?

Scriven had desired him above all things to keep their secret, but it was well that it was for so short a time, or Beneadik would never have been able to be silent when he saw Mariemik's sad looks. He stood for a moment before the crucifix and repeated a prayer, then turning to take

one more look at the young girl, he went out to the stable, where he could hide his agitation and his hopes ; he caressed the Ox, who looked up at the sound of his voice ; and then, before it was quite eleven o'clock, he went back to look for Scriven at the Stones of Plouhinec.

The beggar seemed almost benumbed with the cold, and scarcely spoke. The voice of conscience which he had tried to stifle so often during those two days was now at last silenced in his heart. Dreams of riches, pleasure, and greatness filled his thoughts : he felt no desire to reward those who had been kind to him ; but he determined to be revenged on all who had ever slighted or repulsed him.

From time to time he glanced at his companion, who sang in a low voice some verses of a Christmas hymn or repeated a prayer. Beneadik was a little uneasy at what he was about to do, and he commended himself to God, to the Holy Virgin, and to his guardian angel, that he might be preserved from the wiles of the devil, who had doubtless in former days hidden this treasure over which the Stones of Plouhinec kept watch.

Scriven at last desired him to be quiet. "No one knows," said he, "who may be listening to you."

But Beneadik prayed more fervently than ever in his heart, for it seemed to him that all the elves and sprites of the heath were dancing round him.

At last twelve o'clock struck ; the church was a long way off, but the twelve strokes sounded clearly across the long stretch of bare fields, now covered with snow.

Scriven had risen up, and roughly drawn his companion out of the shadow of the Stones. As the last stroke died away they began to stir, loosening themselves by a violent effort from the earth in which they were embedded ; they swayed about and leant against each other like tipsy men ; then springing forward irregularly, they rushed away together in the direction of the river, bounding over the frozen earth, and in their passage crushing the slender birch-trees on the heath and the great clusters of reeds like wisps of straw.

Scriven seized Beneadik's arm. "Come," he said, in a voice so hoarse that no one would have recognized it ; and they both ran to the place where the Stones had stood. The ground was ploughed up as if by bomb-shells on a battle-field, and in every hole was seen gold and silver and precious stones.

Beneadik was so dazzled that he would have stood still to gaze at

them, but Scriven forced him to stoop and pick up some of the treasure. "Take all you can," he whispered; "they will be back immediately."

As he spoke he filled all the empty bags that he had brought in his beggar's wallet. Beneadik also stuffed the gold into his pockets, and both his hands were full when a loud and terrible noise made him start up suddenly.

"The Stones!" he cried; and they were in fact rushing back again



even faster than they had run away, as if they were in a hurry to return to their places and to the treasures over which they watched. As they advanced they formed themselves into an immense circle, and Beneadik saw at a glance that they were surrounded.

"We are lost!" he cried.

"Not I," said the beggar, drawing from his bosom the cross-wort and the five-leaved clover that it had cost him so much trouble to find on the sea-shore. "The Stones of Plouhinec never harm any one who carries these plants with him. I must have a baptized Christian to stay

here after I have carried off the treasure, and I expect this favour from you," he said, with a diabolical laugh.

The Stones turned aside as he presented the magic plants to them, and, forming themselves again into a column behind the largest one, they advanced directly upon Beneadik, who had fallen on his knees in an agony of terror.

The beggar by this time had shut up his bags and was preparing to fly.



In less time than it had taken to tell, the terrible battalion had reached the ploughman of Pluvigner ; but at the sight of him the largest Stone suddenly stood still ; it bore the sign of the Cross, and could do no harm to a Christian. Beneadik was still on his knees, confusedly murmuring prayers mingled with the name of Mariemik, when the great Stone placed itself in front of him like a rampart, and protected him with its enormous size ; and the rest, separating, rolled into their places, once more hiding from human gaze those treasures on which rash eyes had ventured to look for a time.

Scriven meanwhile found the gold that he had collected press so heavily on his shoulders that he threw away his bags, hoping some other time to come back and look for them. His only thought now was how to save his life, for when the large Stone had accomplished its work of protection, it began to roll back like the others into its place ; the beggar was in front of it, and though he held up the magic plants in his trembling hands, they had no power over the Stone on which the sign of the cross had been made ; it rolled on, leaving the miserable man behind it, crushed to death under its weight.

Beneadik appeared the next morning at the farmhouse loaded with gold, and staggering under the weight of the bags he had picked up on the heath ; but he had grown ten years older, and it was only after many years of happiness with Mariemik and his children that he ceased to tremble when he heard the clock strike twelve at midnight.





THE ALOE.



IT was night, in the large glass conservatory. All the trees, shrubs, and flowers were fast asleep, and far away in the land of dreams. The palms were fancying themselves in their native country once more, with the hot tropical sun burning above them, the arid yellow desert sand lying around their roots, and the lion or glittering snake couching beneath their shade. The vine pined in sleep for Italian skies and climes; the passion-flower swayed to and fro uneasily in storm-tost slumber; all were unconscious of the present.

Save one, a small shrub, carefully placed in a corner of the greenhouse, where it was protected from the too fierce glare of the sun or the too great shade of the evenings. It was about three feet

high, and had long, broad, thick leaves, growing out direct from a slight central stem. The gardener called it an Aloe.

This shrub was wide awake, for it was discontented and unhappy: though it had been brought from its native land so young, it could remember no other home save this. But it had now been an occupant of the place for several years, far longer than that upstart passion-flower, which was only planted a short twelvemonth ago; and yet—and yet—there lay the grievance—the passion-flower, and all the other plants that had been brought in at the same time as itself, and even since, all had borne flowers, and *it* was barren.

For a long time the Aloe had been growing more and more miserable because of this.

“Ah! why don't I show pretty buds like the others?” it thought.

But when the plants around taunted it for being so ugly and useless, it would throw up its head proudly, and say in haughty tones, “Never mind. This is your day. But he who laughs last laughs the longest. Mine will come some time.”

Yet secretly, in its heart of hearts, the poor Aloe felt very dubious whether the time it thought fit to hold in view to its companions would ever arrive.

The garden flowers often asked those in the greenhouse, when the windows were open and they could talk together, whether that conceited Aloe had flowered yet? Then the greenhouse flowers laughed and answered "No," and the garden flowers when they heard it laughed too, till all their little bells rang with merriment, and they jeered and said, "Oh, indeed! Not yet? But never mind, some day, some day." And they imitated the Aloe's voice and mocked it.

All these things cut deep gashes in the plant's heart, and it felt very miserable and despired.

This sleepless night, when all its companions were deep in rest around it, the Aloe's feelings were even bitterer than heretofore. For that afternoon the gardener had brought the little girl and boy, who lived in the big red house the fuchsia said it could see with the topmost eyes of its topmost flowers, into the greenhouse to see the plants. He told them their names and all about them, of their flowers, fruit, and seed. When they passed the corner where the Aloe stood, the gardener, who was generally so kind to it, tending and nursing it most carefully, passed it unheeded by. The poor shrub was much hurt by this neglect: it had not thought to receive such treatment from its only friend. But the little boy let go the man's hand and ran to look at it. "Now," it thought, "my time is come, and I shall hear something about myself."

Imagine, therefore, its grief and disappointment when the man only said, "There's not much to be seen yet, Master Harry. That is an Aloe; it grows but slowly, and won't bear flowers for a very very long time, if it ever does, which I almost doubt. They're difficult things to rear. Folk do say they blossom every hundred years. I shan't live to see it; mayhap you will, sir."

So they passed on, and when all the flowers had heard what the gardener said, they set up a cry of derision, and laughed and pointed at the poor Aloe, and asked it what had become of its grand boastings now.

Of course, the children could not hear the noise the plants made; their ears were not sharpened enough; it only sounded to them like the swaying to and fro of the leaves. But the Aloe heard it, and though it tried to look supremely indifferent and proud, it really felt crushed and very very sad; heavy tears stood on the tip of each of its long leaves. But it conquered itself manfully and would not let them fall: its comrades

should not enjoy the satisfaction of witnessing its sorrow. They would only tease it still more, and it could not brook their scorn. Now they were all asleep, and it might throw off its disdainful mask and give full vent to its feelings.

Time went on, and still the Aloe did not bloom ; it began to despair of ever doing so ; but it would not let the other plants perceive that, for then their mockery would but have increased. It continued to keep up its proud manner towards them, and answered all their raillery with the same quiet assurance. Meanwhile many of its companions drooped and faded ; they had exhausted their pretty span of life. Whenever the Aloe saw that one was dying, it never failed to call out to it in derisive tones,

“ Ah ! you have to die, you see. I survive you and all your blossoms. You will now acknowledge it is better to have none. But some day I shall have some too,” it would always add in emphatic tones.

Still the days, months, and years sped. At last the Aloe began to change its tone.

“ When I do flower, I shall produce something superb—something far better than all your miserable buds,” it would say. That was its new way of consoling itself.

The old gardener who had watched its growth with such care died, and a younger man succeeded to his post, but he was just as good to the Aloe. All the plants within and without sneered and wondered what the gardener saw in that dull green thing.

The family who owned the red brick house had been abroad for many years ; but one day the Aloe heard that the master was coming back. Great preparations were made for his reception, and all the most beautiful flowers in the conservatory were cut off to adorn his room. When the Aloe saw that, it was very glad, and waved its leaves to and fro in a satisfied manner.

“ Your boast is gone now,” it said spitefully to the bereaved plants who were mourning for their children.

One day the master came to see the greenhouse. In the course of his survey he asked, “ Is there an Aloe here still, that stood in the far corner when I was a little boy ? ”

They told him “ Yes,” and pointed it out.

He went up to look at it, and the Aloe recognized little Harry, who had grown a man, and was the master now instead of his father.

“ It is a much larger plant than when I saw it last,” he said. “ Has it flowered yet ? ”

"No," answered the gardener. And all the plants took up the No, and the flowers outside, and the trees overhead, and even the little birds echoed the No. "Was there ever such a shrub, such a foolish shrub?" they said, till the poor Aloe grew more heart-broken and dejected than ever.

"I hope I may live to see it," said the master, turning away.

By-and-bye the Aloe began to feel itself growing very old; it knew it must be so, for its master's brown locks were turning grey, and he walked slowly and with difficulty. Nor did it any longer add leaves year by year; its stem was beginning to shoot up tall and high, like a pillar, from among its foliage.

"I wonder if the flowers are really coming at last?" once crossed its mind. It was a mere flash of feeble thought; it had given up all hope of blooming long, long ago. But it sustained its dignity with the other plants in the greenhouse; they were all young (its own contemporaries were dead), and did not know how long the Aloe had told the same tales and repeated the self-same promises.

The stem continued to increase in height, till at last it reached the top of the greenhouse, and it, too, could see the red brick house, and then it began to spread out in tiny branches. The Aloe wondered still more what was about to happen to it, yet dared not flatter itself that its fondest wish was going to be fulfilled at last—it had been disappointed of that so often.

And yet it was about to bloom; the gardener said so. The old master rubbed his hands with glee—he was delighted that he had lived to behold the sight. All his friends were now brought to the conservatory, and he told them that his Aloe would soon be in flower; they must bring their friends and their friends' friends. Everybody in the neighbourhood must come, for it would be a spectacle they were not likely to behold twice in their lives. They all assembled readily and with much joy, and the Aloe began to revive and feel very proud once more. It grew quite consequential, lorded it vastly over all the other plants, and they, not knowing how long it had taken to arrive at this point, were very respectful and paid a great homage, at which the Aloe was delighted, and became so puffed up with pleasure and vanity, it hardly knew how to contain itself for delight.

At length, oh bliss! at each of its joints thick clusters of buds began to show. The gardener watched anxiously, the master surveyed it with interest.

One night a loud report, like that of a cannon, rent the still clear air, startling the inmates of the red brick house, and in the morning, when they entered the greenhouse, the Aloe was decked in full and gorgeous bloom. The noise had been the bursting of its buds, and it now stood revealed, a pyramid of yellow blossoms more than twenty feet high. Oh, how proud and happy it felt! At last, after so many weary, weary years of waiting, it had attained its object—the goal of its ambition, and was well repaid in all the admiration it excited; for people came in swarms from far and near to see its flowers.

Only one drop of bitterness, but that a rather large one, was mingled in its cup of bliss. All its former comrades who had teased it so unmercifully were dead, and none who had known it in youth had lived to witness its success. That was very hard; the Aloe would have been so glad to have triumphed over them at last. As for its present companions, they were mere upstarts and knew nothing of its former life.

So it continued to flower for many weeks: from all sides visitors still flocked to see it, and the Aloe gradually began to believe that as it had taken so long to come to perfection, so now it would make up for the long dreary time of waiting, by blooming just as long. Therefore it raised its stately head still higher, and bore itself with yet more dignity. "After all, I am very superior to the common herd," it thought.

But not so: Gradually the Aloe began to feel life flowing less quickly through its veins; its leaves, till then straight and stiff, grew limp and drooped; general weakness seized its frame. Its spirits began to flag. What! was it to grow old and decrepit, and fade slowly into the grave? Never! After having been an object of such admiration, it could not bear to be contemptible again. The life of the past months had been too glorious, too beautiful; it could not endure a reaction. Yet it grew perceptibly, relentlessly fainter and weaker, and daily the Aloe became more miserable. None called to look at it any longer, and when by chance some one passed the place where it stood, they said it was not pretty now.

That broke the Aloe's heart. In the night it bent down all its leaves—low, low, till the nethermost swept the ground; they who had been so lofty and proud erewhile; then bowing its tall stem mournfully over its faded foliage, it wept softly and bitterly a little while.

When the gardener entered next morning, it was dead.



DISTANT RELATIONS.

I



EALLY," said the Prince, "I don't like the idea of it at all. Eat a white snake! It's horrible!"

"On the contrary," answered the wizard, "it is less horrible than to eat any other creature, for you will not destroy it. The life of the snake will become part of your life, and the wisdom of the serpent will be added to your own."

"I don't care about being so very much wiser," said the Prince. "But are you quite sure that when I have eaten it I shall understand all that the birds and beasts say to each other, and be able to converse with them?"

"Quite sure," replied the wizard. "The thing has never been known to fail."

"And is that the snake I am to eat?" continued the Prince, turning uneasily to a dark corner of the room, in which lay a gleaming whiteness, coiled and motionless.

"Yes."

"It's Horrible!" said the Prince again; and this time he said it with a capital H.

"Then give it up, and go home to the palace."

"No; I can't do that."

"Why not?"

"I am so tired of doing nothing. I dare say you have heard that a King has very important functions to perform. He sits in his chamber all day long, and writes *Jacobus Rex* whenever his Ministers tell him to sign his name. But a Prince does nothing at all, for he does not begin to sign his name until he is King."

"So I have heard," said the wizard. "It must be rather a dull life."

"It is," sighed the Prince. "And then it isn't even peaceful; for the Right Honourable the Buttonholder and the Groom of the Chambers quarrel continually."

"What about?" asked the wizard.



"Penknives," said the Prince. "The Right Honourable the Buttonholder sits on the left hand of the King, and he wants the penknives on his side of the table; but the Groom of the Chambers will insist upon placing them at his Majesty's right hand. When the Prime Minister heard of the quarrel, he sent to Sheffield for a Master Cutler, to explain the construction of the knives; and the Master Cutler talked for two hours. The King was just preparing to express an opinion, when a secretary discovered that the Master Cutler had been describing carving-knives; so nothing was done, and I don't believe ever will be. The Right Honourable the Buttonholder says that if, when he takes hold of the King's button in order to impart information, his Majesty should ask him to mend a pen, it would be impossible for him to comply with the royal commands. The Groom of the Chambers replies that everything in his Majesty's chamber ought to be so arranged as to suit his Majesty's convenience, and not that of the Right Honourable the Buttonholder; that his Majesty would not take up a penknife with his left hand; and that as fifty new pens are always before him, he would not be likely to want one mended. Then the Right Honourable the Buttonholder retorts, that it does not matter how many pens are before him, since his Majesty always writes with a gold nib. But I assure you the thing is endless; and I am so tired of it, and so hopeless about the state of the kingdom, that I have resolved to make friends of the beasts and birds of the forest. I have no doubt they will listen to me; and when I have cured them of all their faults I shall send them out into the world as missionaries. 'Messengers from the Prince,' is the title I have chosen for them."

"I thought you did not know anything about the world," said the wizard.

"Oh, yes," replied the Prince, "I know it quite well from the newspapers. I am longing to educate and improve my people, and this seems to be the only way in which I can do anything. The birds and beasts have a few faults and a few vicious habits; but, when I point them out, I am sure they will give them up. And, oh, what hope there is for mankind if I can prove to them that we all belong to one great family which embraces every living thing; and that my brother the wolf and my sister the lamb can live happily with each other and with us!"

The Prince could not see the wizard's face, for he was bending over some thick fumes which arose from a silver dish standing on a brazen tripod. "Do you know, I think that I heard some one laughing?" said the Prince.

"Most unlikely," replied the wizard, without looking up. "We are quite alone."

"There's the white snake again," said the Prince, with an uneasy glance at the ceiling.

"Yes," replied the wizard; and then he was silent, and busied himself with his preparations. He sprinkled powder upon the silver dish, and flames, golden, red, and blue, leapt from it. A thick smoke arose, and curled in and out of the groined roof of the apartment, which was painted with mystic signs and strange devices. Then it rested in a heavy black cloud, and forced the latest fumes down again; and they glided about like white snakes until they had filled the chamber. They crept into the armour which hung against the walls, and the eyes of the knight seemed to glow from out the empty visor, and his fingers to quiver in the gauntlet. As for the skeletons of beasts and birds, which were so curiously arranged that it seemed as if they must have been suddenly transfixed as they were running about the room, the Prince could have sworn that they were all in motion again. A tiger was crouching ready to spring, and a gazelle bounded forward with such despair and terror in its eyes that the Prince felt his own fill with tears of sympathy. The white snake glided hither and thither, now darting before the tiger, which started up in fear, and now coiling round the upraised trunk of a huge elephant, which quivered through all its mighty mass at the touch. A flamingo stepped forward, and the Prince felt sure that the snake was writhing under one of its large feet; but the next moment he saw it lying straight along the withered branch of a tree in one corner of the room, and watching a rabbit, which stared back at it motionless. The clouds of smoke grew more dense, and the skeletons with which the room was filled had regained form and colour. The Prince heard confused sounds, and saw on all sides of him eyes—eyes angry, terrified, imploring, fierce, menacing—saw the snake in such rapid motion that he could scarcely follow its movements. The beautiful whiteness flashed against the walls of the chamber, writhed round the wizard's tripod, and gleamed amidst the fumes rising from the silver dish. The Prince felt that his limbs were growing very heavy, and his eyelids beginning to droop.

The wizard approached him with a bowl of milk. He drank it, and fell into a deep sleep.

He awoke in his own room in the palace, and found himself on his bed.

"Bones and biscuit," said a voice near him. "I ate the biscuit and

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I left the bones, because I don't wish to stay here with the Prince. When he wakes we shall go out, and I'll have them home with the gristle on it. I know that's a nice one."

"Dear me!" said the Prince, opening his eyes. "that must be Sarah. I heard her tail against the door."

"Yes, it's Sarah!" answered a large black retriever. "And she put her cold nose into the band which the Prince had scratched out, and wagged her tail more than ever."

"Oh, Sarah, I like this!" said the Prince.



"So do I," answered Sarah. "I always did."

"Always did what?" asked the Prince.

"Always liked being with you," said Sarah.

"Yes; but now I can talk to you."

"You always did talk to me."

"Of course I did. But don't you see the difference now that you can talk back?"

"I always did talk back."

"Well, but I didn't understand you till to-day."

"Oh, dear!" said Sarah, lying down in a very dejected manner, "this is very sad! I always thought you did."

"It is of no use '*always thinking*,'" said the Prince, who could not help being a little vexed with Sarah and himself too. It seemed so very easy to understand her now, that he could not make out why he had not *done it before*; and he began to think she must be a very stupid dog.

"Sarah," said the Prince, with some solemnity, "I must teach you the value of facts, and the necessity of taking note of them. As a matter of fact, I did not know what you said until to-day; and indeed I thought you did not say anything unless you barked."

"I wish you wouldn't talk in such long sentences," said Sarah. "You never used to, and I don't know what you mean."

"Oh, Sarah, if you begin with '*never used*,' I give it up," exclaimed the Prince.

"You haven't got anything to give—have you?" and Sarah jumped up and began to sniff the Prince's pockets. At last she laid her head on the Prince's pillow and sighed. "There's nothing anywhere. Let us go out."

"Dear old dog, I am going out to the forest, to make friends with the beasts and birds."

"Hurrah!" shouted Sarah. "Trust me with the partridges and pheasants. I won't lose one."

And with great delight Sarah bounded across the room to the wall on which the Prince's foils and swords and firearms were arranged. She looked at the guns, and said, "Shall I bring one?"

"No; you mustn't touch them," said the Prince in a very decided tone.

So Sarah stood on her hind legs and took the Prince's cap down from its peg, and then carried it to him, and laid it lightly on his head. She was looking about for something else which she might fetch, when the Prince said,—

"Do the birds know anything about guns and sport, and you and me, Sarah?"

"To be sure. Just as well as I do. Why, don't you hear how they screech out when they tell one another we are coming? They are too frightened to speak, and can only scream."

"I have been thinking, Sarah, that I had better go to the forest by myself. It might make the birds uncomfortable to see us together, and I don't intend to take guns or anything of that sort. I want to go amongst them as a friend—in fact, as a brother."

"Won't you take me?" And Sarah looked very imploringly into the Prince's face; but he answered "No!" very firmly, just as he had always done, and Sarah lay down at his feet, submissive and obedient.

When the Prince found that she did not argue or protest, he was slightly disappointed, for he was very fond of an argument, and had quite looked

forward to convincing Sarah. But he had forgotten his old tone of command, and her old habit of obedience. However, he patted her head and said, "Good bye, old dog."

And she licked his hand, and answered, "Good bye, dear master."

"Don't forget me, Sarah."

"I never forget."

And so the Prince started for the forest.

When he left Sarah in his room, lying stretched out and motionless beside his bed, he felt a slight choking in his throat, which he thought must be the white snake; but he was glad to find that it went down again. He could not help being a little vexed with Sarah after the first moments of separation were over. He thought she would have cared to know the reason of things, and would have shown greater interest in his plans. Then it occurred to him that perhaps this was owing to her humble, unobtrusive nature, and that she did not like to put herself forward. At length he resolved that, as he had not walked above a mile, he would go back and see what she was doing, and say a few kind words, and perhaps explain his plans more fully. So he returned.

He found Sarah at the stable door with a bone. She looked up and said, "It's perfectly delicious. I knew it would be. But I'll put it down with pleasure if you want me."

"No, Sarah. Go on, old dog. I am glad it's a good bone." And the Prince turned away again, more disappointed than ever. He walked on very sadly for some time, and then he said aloud, "To think she could go and eat that bone the very moment I left her!"

"The fact is," said a voice near him, "you expect too much."

The Prince could not tell at first where the voice came from; but he soon saw a Redbreast perched on a blackberry-spray. "Did you speak?" asked the Prince.

"Yes," answered Robin. "People who are disappointed have always expected too much."

"Pray, do you never expect anything?"

"Yes. I expect worms after a wet day. I am looking for them now.

"But why do you eat worms when you can get blackberries?"

"Because I like worms best."

"But why do you like worms best?"

"What a lot of questions you ask! How should I know why I like them best? And I don't like them *best*; for I don't like blackberries *at all*."

"But please do tell me," urged the Prince, "why you like worms."

"But how can I tell you what I don't know? Let me see. Well, perhaps it is because they wriggle so in my mouth."

"That's just what I should not like," replied the Prince. "And now, please, don't be angry at what I say; but I am sure that birds would be much happier if they would not eat one another and eat living things. I am going to try and persuade you all to live upon berries and fruit; and if I can begin with you, and get you to give me a promise, I shall be greatly encouraged. I will soon gather some berries, and we will take our first meal of peace together."

"No, no," answered Robin. "It won't do. You had better begin with the big birds. When I hear that the hawks have joined you, I'll think seriously about it. I tell you honestly, I don't care about peace. Life would not be worth having without fighting, and there would be very little to quarrel about if it wasn't for worms and grubs. There's that sneaking fellow again!" And with an angry cry, Robin darted off after another redbreast.

"I'm sorry he's gone," thought the Prince. "I really believe he would have enjoyed an argument, if I could have got him to begin. But so far they don't seem to care much for the reasons of things, and right and wrong. However, I can't expect to succeed all at once, and I'll get on to the forest, and see what I can do with a real large wild beast." So the Prince turned aside from the high-road, and made his way across the fields, and through the woods which lay on the outskirts of the forest. He heard the pheasants saying, "We needn't go far. He has neither got a gun nor a dog."

But the Partridges said, "Better be out of harm's way;" and flew off at first sight of him.

For some little distance he followed a stream to which he had been guided by the sharp shrill cry of the Shrew-mice. He found that they were all calling to each other, and no one was listening; and they all complained of hunger at the very time they were eating; and the loudest of them was lamenting his wife and family, who were lying dead in the woods, after a fast of four hours which had proved fatal to them; and he had only saved his own life by falling upon one of his fellows and devouring him.

The Prince was strongly tempted to stop and reason with them; and indeed he would have done so if he could have found one listener amongst them. But under the circumstances it seemed better to get on

as quickly as he could. The twilight was dying out, and he was glad to leave the gloom of the forest for an open space. He saw a Hawk high above him, which suddenly swooped down and began to fly in large circles round and round his head.

"Take care! take care!" said the Hawk. "A Wolf is close to you, and two more are behind him!"

"I am so glad!" said the Prince. "I am longing to have a talk with the wolves."

"Talk away, then; but get up a tree first. One against three has no chance, and they are all ravenous."

"I don't think they'll hurt me when they know my object. I'd rather not get up a tree. They would see that I distrust them."

"You must please yourself. I shouldn't have given you warning, but you were very good to some relations of mine that you used to keep for hunting small birds when you were a boy. So I thought I'd tell you that they had settled to fall upon you as soon as you were out of the open. I have watched them tracking you half through the woods."

The Prince looked round rather uneasily, and half wished for his gun and his wolf-hounds, Lion and Juno, and then blamed himself for being as bad as the wolves. But he looked again, and felt certain that he saw the gleam of fierce eyes. "Thank you, brother Hawk," he said. "I think I will get up this wild cherry-tree. It is growing so dark, I cannot see my way, and it will be a very good place to talk from. Thank you for your kindness."

"Welcome," replied the Hawk, and flew away.

The Prince climbed the tree, and shortly after he heard the stealthy steps of the Wolf close to him. "Brother Wolf, is that you?" asked the Prince.

"Yes," answered the Wolf rather sulkily.

"It's a fine evening, isn't it?" said the Prince. "I am resting here after a long walk."

"Why don't you come down and rest on the ground?" asked the Wolf. "You'd be more comfortable than in a tree."

"The tree is very comfortable, brother Wolf. I am sitting in the fork of two large branches; and, if you are inclined to stop and have a chat with me, I shall be very glad."

"Well, I don't mind if I do," said the Wolf.

"Won't your two friends join us? I think they'll get tired of waiting for you."

‘Oh, can you see them from the tree? I didn’t know anybody was about.’

The Prince did not explain what the Hawk had told him. He felt hurt that the Wolf should begin the conversation with a lie, and so remained silent for a moment.

‘You haven’t got a gun, have you?’ said the Wolf.

‘No.’



‘Come on!’ shouted the Wolf. And his friends came toward with rather an ugly rush.

‘Brother Wolves, I am in the tree!’ They stopped short at this, and the Prince continued: ‘I shall be glad to have a chat with you.’

‘Better come down, then. We can’t hear you up there.’

‘Oh, I will talk very loud.’

‘That’s no use, I’m deaf; besides, it gives me the headache to look up.’

‘Don’t bother!’ said the first Wolf. ‘Hear what he has got to say. You are very kind, sir, I am sure. Pray go on.’

"But you," said the Prince, "I have been thinking that we all lead such an unsatisfactory kind of life. We can't trust each other and love each other as we ought to do."

"Don't you enough? Don't I love the lambs?" grinned an old Wolf, showing his great fangs.

"That's just what I mean. You love to destroy, and I want you to love to preserve."

"To preserve them for you?" said another Wolf. "Well, promise us the head and all the bones, and I'm not so sure that we can't come to an understanding."

"No, no. I don't mean that. I want the lambs, and the wolves, and mankind to live happily together, knowing that no one of us will harm the other. I am sure if we would only listen we should learn a great deal from each other, and no one wants such teaching more than I do. But if you will join me, we will promise and make peace and good-will until they are universal throughout the forest."

The Wolves murmured to one another in so low a tone that the Prince could not hear what they said. At length one of them replied, "We think it all sounds very fair, and we have no objection to join your party."

"I am delighted to find that I have convinced you, but do you think your friends will join us too?"

"To be sure they will. No fear of that."

"You had better come down at once," said the first Wolf; "and then we can talk over your plans with our friends."

"And look sharp about it," said another, "for I want my supper."

The Prince began to descend the tree, and then he remembered the Hawk.

"Perhaps," he said, "I had better stay where I am for to-night, and you and your friends can join me here in the morning."

"Didn't I tell you he was a poor sneak?" said the third Wolf. "I knew he didn't mean what he was saying. What's the good of wasting our time with him? Come along!"

"Stay!" said the Prince, who was quite angry with himself for listening to the Hawk. "I am very much ashamed of my distrust; and if you are really in earnest, and I have quite convinced you, I will come down directly."

"To be sure you have!" shouted the Wolves. "Come down at once, there's a good fellow!"

The Prince was quite proud of his first success, and began to get

down quickly enough. But just as he reached the ground the snap of teeth, which closed fortunately through his garments only, betrayed the real meaning of the Wolves. With a violent kick from his heavy boot he repulsed one assailant, and, springing round, he struck a second, which was close to him, a tremendous knock on the nose with a bough which had broken off in his hand as he jumped from the tree. He forgot everything now except that he was one to three, and must fight a good fight ; so he stood with his back to the tree and waited.

The Wolves drew back for a moment, and then all three rushed forward



together. But the Prince held his ground so firmly, and grasped his stick with such determination, that they hesitated, and again retreated. Then the first Wolf cried out, "At him again !" And a minute later there was a struggling mass on the ground, and the Prince was striking out with his arms, kicking back the fierce brutes, and fighting very hard for his life, but without uttering any sound or crying for help. But he had no chance ! The great gleaming teeth were like sharp swords on all sides of him, when suddenly there was a tremendous *thud* on the ground close to him, a deep savage growl, and in an instant an enormous brown Bear attacked the Wolves.

In vain they tried to defend themselves : the Bear stretched two or them dead, and the third, severely wounded, crawled away as best he could.

The Prince was quite exhausted with the struggle, and his wounds were bleeding fast. He could not move ; but he turned his head languidly towards the Bear, and wondered what it would do next.

He saw that it was sitting on its haunches, and laughing at him.

"What a jolly fool you are!" grinned the Bear.

The Prince could not answer; so the Bear went on,—

"To think of your being taken in by those sneaking cowardly Wolves! I thought I should have died of laughing when you got down the tree; and I would not have helped you, if you had not been so plucky when they set upon you. But what a fool you are!" And the bear laughed again.

The Prince winced a little, but he was so weak and in such pain, he couldn't say anything in his own defence. After a little while he moaned, "Water! Pray give me a drink of water!"

"Nonsense!" said the Bear, but not unkindly. "Lick the bites, and they'll stop bleeding. That's what I do, and we all do; and you can do the same, if we're brothers."

"I can't!" moaned the Prince; and then he fainted.

When he opened his eyes again, the moon was shining down upon him, and he heard some one snoring loudly by his side. He was very grateful to the brown Bear, when he found that it had not deserted him; and turned on one side to look at the great shaggy creature stretched out close to him and sound asleep. As he moved, something soft and cold rolled from his chest into his hand. They were cherries; and he knew at once that the Bear must have gathered the great heap for him; so he ate them very gladly and felt much refreshed. Then he sat up to look at the bites; but he found them all neatly plastered up with leaves, and so comfortable that he resolved to let well alone. He tried to get up and walk about; but he found that he was too stiff and sore for that; so he lay down by the side of the Bear, and found himself as comfortable and warm as if he had been covered with a fur rug. In spite of the Bear's snoring, he was soon fast asleep.

In the morning he was awakened by a queer chuckling sound; and he could not help being rather vexed when he found that the Bear was sitting up and laughing at him. But as soon as he moved, the Bear said quite kindly, "Well, how are you by this time?"

"Much better, thank you. It was very kind of you to gather the cherries for me. I enjoyed them so much! I hope I didn't disturb you in the night."

"Not at all," answered the Bear. "I liked it. It put me in mind of old times, when I used to travel about with a man and have rare fun, and people used to give me lots of sweet cakes and fruit. I'll set off with you, if you like."

“Oh, I should like it above all things! And as we can talk together, I am sure you will find it much more pleasant than you did last time.”

The Bear grinned again, and said, “You are a queer one. Do you think the other man didn’t talk?”

“Oh, yes. No doubt he could talk as well as I can. But what was the good, if you did not understand each other?”

“But I tell you we did understand each other. He knew everything I wanted, and very often he wouldn’t let me have it, and I was always obliged to give in. That was the only thing I didn’t like him for. But



we always made friends after we had quarrelled. He was much cleverer than I am, and bolder too. He’d go about through the towns, or along the roads, where I shouldn’t dare to go by myself.”

“Where did you come from last night?” asked the Prince.

“From the tree, to be sure. I went up there after my dinner for cherries, and fell asleep. I heard you climb up and talk all that nonsense to the Wolves; but I didn’t think you’d be such a fool as to go down.” And the Bear grinned.

The Prince put his hand to his throat. He had an uncomfortable feeling about the white snake again, and began to wonder whether it was really worth while to have swallowed it, since the animals wouldn’t believe that he could do more for them than other men. However, he kept down his vexation, and the snake too, and merely said, “I think we shall understand each other better after a time.”

At which the Bear grinned.

So the two set out on their journey through the forest; and the Prince told the Bear all about his past life, his tutors and his studies, the lan-

guages he had learned and the deportment he had practised—so that he was able to make a bow to every man in his dominions according to his degree. Also, how he grew very tired of his education before it was finished, and thought it very dull; and then, as he was not allowed to go anywhere or see any one except the King and the Prime Minister, he took to reading newspapers—and used to read one hundred and twenty-nine daily and thirty-seven weekly, eighteen monthly, and twelve quarterly journals, and two hundred and forty-five blue books every year. He had discovered from them that almost everybody was very wicked, and the few people who were not very wicked were too stupid to see how to help the others and make them good, and could do nothing but write books and draw up statistics. They could tell you for certain how many people would commit murder between the ages of twenty and forty, and how many between the ages of forty and sixty, and what proportion of these would be men and what proportion women; but they could not prevent the commission of one murder, and had invented a theory about the average of crime, which they gave themselves infinite pains to prove, because it justified them in doing nothing to try and make people good. So the wicked people kept on getting worse, and between them and the people who wrote the books there was a great gulf which no one knew how to cross.

The Prince went on to tell how he consulted the wizard, and swallowed the white snake, and now he hoped the beasts and birds would help him, and help mankind by listening to him; that he wanted to show them what a beautiful thing goodness is; that it means love, and peace, and truth, and honour, and universal brotherhood; and that we are all intended to be good. He was so excited, and so much in earnest, that he did not notice how the time passed; so he talked on for three days, and the Bear walked by his side, looking very wise and thoughtful.

“I am afraid I have tired you,” said the Prince, when at last he had finished.

“Not at all,” answered the Bear. “Go on. Pray don’t mind me. The other man always used to beat a drum or blow down a fife as we walked along, and I got rather fond of a noise. It helps you on the way.”

But this was too much for the Prince. He leant against a tree, and the tears rolled down his cheeks.

“What is the matter?” asked the Bear.

“Why, I have been talking to *you* all this time!”

“*No!* have you, though? Well, really, I didn’t know it, and I have

not heard you say a word I understand. Begin again. Now pray do, and I'll listen." The Bear looked so sorry for him that the Prince was quite touched.

"Thank you," said he. "I won't talk any more: I'll think a little."

So the Prince sat for seven days under the tree thinking, and the Bear brought him wild raspberries and cherries night and morning, and came and lay down by his side every night. At the end of seven days the Prince said, "Do you know, brother Bear, I have been quite wrong; instead of talking to you I ought to have let you talk to me. Shall we go on now, and will you tell me about bears?"

"With all my heart! But there is nothing to tell. We eat when we are hungry, and fight when we are angry—just as you do."

The Prince was very much inclined to say that this was wrong, and not what bears or men ought to do, but he had made up his mind to listen, and not to talk; so they went on and on for five days more, and although the Bear said very little, the Prince learnt more from him about bears, and other animals also, than he ever knew before. Strange to say, the Bear seemed also to get a better notion of men, and especially of the Prince and his views, than he had done whilst the Prince was explaining them.

"I tell you what," said the Bear; "begin at the outskirts of the forest where there are animals that know something about men, and get them to meet together, and talk things over with you. You'll do nothing with wolves and bears just yet; but you'll get on very well with the others."

"I should frighten the little ones," said the Prince; "I am so large."

"Dear, dear!" laughed the Bear, "these men know nothing at all. They haven't guessed our secret yet."

"What secret?" asked the Prince.

"Don't you know that if a man sees a bear in the woods, he goes home and says it was an enormous brute, bigger than any bear that anybody ever saw? and, perhaps, it was only a little creature all the time. If a child sees a wild cat he says it was as large as a tiger; and my old master used to tell me that you could never believe travellers' tales about the animals they had seen. He didn't know the secret any more than you do. The tales were true enough."

"How so?" asked the Prince.

"Well, I don't mind telling you; and you'll see I mean to help you. We can make ourselves small or large, whichever we like. When a cat crawls up to a bird she makes herself look as small as a mouse, and so

she does to chickens ; but an old hen has learnt the trick herself, and knows better, so she keeps calling out that it is the cat. Lions and tigers do the same, and, indeed, we all do."

"But how do you manage it?"

"We rub our palms with the juice of a plant, and whenever we lick them we can be any size we like."

"What plant do you use?"

"That I can't tell you, for it is a secret we are all bound to keep ; but I'll rub your hands for you."

"Oh, but I shouldn't like to lick them!"

"You must please yourself about that ; but, if you want to live among beasts, you had better do as they do."

The Prince thought the Bear looked as if he was annoyed, and he was vexed with himself for being fastidious ; so he said, "I shall be much obliged to you if you will rub in the juice ; it will be most useful to me. Can you do it at once?"

"Not till midnight," answered the Bear. "You must not see the plant I use ; and that is of no consequence, for you will never want to have it done again. We lick our paws because we like it ; but you needn't, if you don't like. It's of no consequence."

"What must I do, then?" asked the Prince.

"Rub your hands upwards over your face when you want to be larger, and downwards if you want to be smaller."

On the following day the Prince and the Bear parted company ; for they had gone right through the forest, and come out at the other side.

The Bear took his friend to a little hut, and left him there, saying, "I will see you safely home whenever you want to go back, and I'll take care of everybody with you, large and small ; but please DON'T tempt me with bees and honey—I shall never resist them, I know. Now, don't forget : hands *up* to make you large, and *down* to make you small. Good bye."

II.

THE Prince lived in the forest for twelve months. He followed the Bear's advice, and made friends with birds and squirrels, mice, rabbits, and hares ; in fact, with every creature, large and small, which would come near him. He listened to all they had to say : at first this was not much, but as soon as they had confidence in him they told him *all their troubles*, and quarrels, and jealousies. In his turn he told

them all he had learnt from the newspapers ; and he found them wonderfully ready to imitate a great many things he had not much regard for, but not inclined to follow his advice, and live in peace with each other and with the creatures around them.

They were delighted at the thought of forming a community like a parish, with rich and poor, beadles and parish officers, and plenty of Bumbledom about it. Before long the Prince deeply regretted that he had introduced meetings, and committees, and deputations; for the little creatures were just like Christians, and always forgot the object of the meeting, however important it might be ; and were as quarrelsome, and fussy, and self-important as men and women.

The Prince began to grow disheartened, and to wonder whether, after all, he might not do more good among his fellow-men than he ever would do in the forest. But it was not so easy to get home again. He had not seen the Bear since the day on which they had parted company, and he did not know where or how to find him. He thought of the night, and the wolves, and the long journey ; he was not sure of meeting a single friend, and did not know how he would be received at the palace, or what people would think of him. He began to discover that, after all, if the animals have not such great faults, they have also not such great virtues as mankind. He would often shut himself up for days together, trying to find out what he ought to do ; wishing to go home to his parents, thinking of his mother with an anxious longing heart ; and yet unwilling to forsake the work from which he had expected such great results, and the creatures whom he had learnt to love.

The hut to which the Bear had taken him was made of straw, and covered with a straw thatch. It was so small that a man could only have crawled in on his hands and feet, and must have sat with his head bowed down upon his knees; but the Prince had room and to spare, and could walk up and down, and round about, and ask his friends in to spend the evening with him. Sometimes he thought that the place was rather small, and would begin to stroke his chin, passing his hand slowly downwards, and then all the little creatures around him would lick their paws. And the curious thing was that, however many there were of them, and whether they were large or small, the Prince's house was always the right size. When the Squirrel jumped in, and sat with his tail curled over his back, he said, "How snug!" for he could just touch the thatched ceiling. And when the Ass, from the farm which lay beyond the forest, stood in the doorway, he was quite still for twenty minutes, and then he said, "A

nice roomy place you've got, young sir ; I'll look in and have a thistle with you some night."

Before the Prince had lived there for six months he had many friends, as a prince is sure to have. All the inhabitants of the forest and of the fields outside were very proud of the honour of his acquaintance, and really having a prince among them did make a very great difference. Instead of saying, "How do you do? Isn't it a hot day?" when they met each other, they now said, "Do you know the Prince thinks this one of the hottest days we have had this summer!"

They were very jealous of each other, and this made the Prince unhappy.

"Really," he used to say, "you ought to take a lesson from mankind. Just see what they have brought themselves to by their jealousies and quarrels. There is no living with them. For my own part, I love all living things, and would be loved by them; indeed, I cannot exist without love, so pray do not drive me away from you, and be sure I shall never go of my own free will."

Now the Prince's friends did not know much of mankind or of princes either, but they always said his words were very touching, and made a great impression on them, moreover, they were greatly astonished at the things he could do.

He would climb to the very top of the pine-tree and sit beside the Squirrel, cracking nuts with him. He knew his way in the warren as well as the rabbits themselves. He would go over to the farmyard and sit in the kennel beside Mr. Snarler the mastiff; and the owl had no hesitation in stating that he understood her "Tuwhit" and "Tuwhoo" better than any one else had ever done. As to Sam, the farmer's Skye Terrier, he was in a frenzy of delight with his new friend.

The Prince was never angry, the Prince was never impatient, the Prince was never in a hurry. When Sam had raced along a grassy bank, poking his nose into every hole, snatching up every bit of dry wood, worrying the flies, and ending by a mad scamper after his own tail, he liked to go back and begin the entertainment again. Of course he did not care for Rabbits, he had a profound contempt for Field-mice, he was not such a brute as to go worrying little birds; but who could say, after all, that there was not a *cat* somewhere along the bank? The Prince would smile, and Sam would rush up to him and throw himself on his back in an ecstasy of delight. "If I could only find her, or any of them! Oh, she scratched *my nose so this morning*; she was on a wall, and as I jumped up she

stretched out her paw and clawed me. There she is!" And he would rush off to the bank again.

Of course she wasn't there, but the Prince always let Sam find that out for himself. He was often very hard to be convinced, still at last he would give up the search, and stretch himself out beside the Prince to listen to the story of "Puss in Boots."

But it was of no use. They all liked the Prince, but they would have nothing to say to one another. Sam would not hear of being friendly with a Cat, and the Cat would not let the birds alone. As to the birds, they gobbled up all the grubs they could get at, and the grubs they didn't eat were devouring the forest.

So the Prince became very unhappy, and at last he was so ill that he stretched himself at the door of his straw house, and looked neither to the sky nor the trees, nor the green grass before him, but lay quite still with his eyes half closed.

His friend the Squirrel kept running to the end of a bough to peep at him, and at last he hurried to the top of the tree and called out to a lark who was near at hand, "The Prince is ill! I am sure he is ill! He was out of spirits at the loss of his dear friend the blackbird. And no wonder! Of course birds must die and cats must eat them; but the Prince thought he had changed all that, and the cats were going to live on bread and milk. But you know it was he that found the feathers, and saw Mrs. Puss sneaking home, so there could be no doubt what had become of his poor friend."

"Ah!" said the Lark, "he shut himself up for weeks and weeks, and now he has got into a low way. I wonder if he has had any dinner?"

"No, that he hasn't, for I ran over the roof just now and peeped through a hole, and his cupboard is quite empty. But I will run up to the top of the hazel-tree; there is such a bunch of nuts there as you never saw. If I bite through the stalk they will fall just before the Prince. He will open his eyes and see them, and then they will tempt him to eat. He'll be all right if he gets to nuts again."

"Do," said the Lark, "and I know a new song; the Prince will know it's new, though everybody else thinks it is always the old one, and that I sing it over and over again. But it isn't, and the Prince knows it."

"And I tell you what," said the Squirrel, "I'll run along to a few of the Prince's friends and tell them about him, for I think it will do him good to know how we all love him, although we are not clever enough to understand him yet."



The busy little fellow ran up to his nuts, and they fell in a beautiful bunch close by the Prince. He watched them for a moment, but the Prince was quite still, so he jumped to a bough of the nearest tree, and set off into the forest.

The Lark was just beginning to rise with his song when he saw the great Angora Cat come quietly up to the Prince; thinking of the blackbird, he felt so uncomfortable that he flew away, and could not venture to go near the place again for the rest of that day.

But the Squirrel went on from one to the other, saying, "The Prince is ill. What is there we can do for him?"

It was almost evening when he left the Guinea-pigs, who exclaimed the moment he had gone, "It's the most impertinent thing I ever heard in my life! Only think of a Squirrel putting himself forward in such a way! Of course, if anything is to be done, the Prince's friends must move in it."

And so as a Guinea-pig never goes anywhere or does anything alone, two of them set off to see the Cat.

"Madam," said they, "it is reported that the Prince is sick, and the Squirrel has been so ill-advised as to interfere. What do you think we ought to do? We all know how the Prince admires you. Will you move in the matter?"

"No," said the Cat, "I will have nothing more to do with it. I have done what I could already."

The Guinea-pigs ran forward. "What, madam! pray what have you done?"

"Well, I saw the Squirrel dropping nuts, and I knew how offensive anything of that kind must be to a Prince, and so I swept them away with my tail. My friends have often said that my tail is an ornament; but I did not know it would be so useful. I swept the grass—so-o-o-o, and the nuts rolled into the river."

"Dear me!" said the Guinea-pigs, running behind the Angora Cat. "Why, you have swept every little bit of stick and every leaf and flower away from the grass. How wonderful! How ashamed the Squirrel must have felt!"

"I don't know," said the Angora Cat. "A creature that spends his life running up and down a tree can know nothing of the rules of society. *Nuts*, indeed, to a Prince!"

Just then the Weasel came running along under the hedge that marked the boundary of the forest. "You are talking about the Prince! I am

sure you are! How absurdly the Squirrel has behaved! But it will all be set to rights. I have just come from the kennel, and Mr. Snarler says he will give a hint to the cook at the squire's. If Mr. Snarler leads the way, we may all follow."

"Indeed," said the Angora Cat, "you are very much mistaken; and I tell you this, if that fellow Snarler's name appears, I shall withdraw. I have done what I could already. The whole thing is a mistake. I suppose Snarler will send the Prince a bone. *Bones*, indeed, to a Prince!"

"Have you heard what the Owl proposes?" said a Hawk, at the sight of whom the Weasel looked very uncomfortable. "He says that sparrow-pie would be such a nice thing for the Prince!"

"Not a bad idea," said the Angora Cat; "and there'd be no difficulty in getting the sparrows."

"Oh, dear!" said the Guinea-pigs both together; "I don't think the Prince would like anything of that kind."

"Not like it?" said the Ass, putting his head over the hedge, "why, he likes everything, and he'd thank a pig for an acorn. But you're all wrong. The thing never ought to have been begun at all, and if we, who are intimate with the Prince, had been consulted, it never would have been begun. Of course I had a plan of my own; but this is not the time for it, and I should have waited till the time had come."

"To wit?" said the Owl from her tree.

"Well, when the Prince had gone back to the palace, we could have turned our thoughts to thistles."

"To who?" said the Owl, whose education had been neglected, so her grammar was not very good.

"*Thistles*," repeated the Ass impatiently. "If we had planted thistles in front of the cottage, they would have drawn together all the donkeys in the neighbourhood, and there would have been a memorial for posterity!"

"Bosh!" said Mr. Snarler, a heavy and angry-looking mastiff, who had joined the party. "Never heard such stuff in my life!"

"Perhaps you will make a suggestion yourself, sir?" said the Guinea-pigs.

"Suggestion! No. I should think we'd had enough of suggestions from the Squirrel. Really, that fellow's restless activity quite afflicts me.

"Can you imagine anything more offensive than his tail?" asked one of the Guinea-pigs.

"Well, don't let us be personal," replied Snarler; "but surely some of

you might have pointed out to him that he was putting himself in the wrong altogether, and that if the Prince's intimate friends thought it better to take no notice of his state, it wasn't for him to interfere."

"Can't we do nothing?" said a very meek Mole.

"No, we can't," answered Snarler angrily. "The thing's begun, and it must go on; but I'll have nothing to do with it."

"The Lark is at the bottom of the whole affair," said the Hawk, "with his songs and his sentiment; but I've got my eye on him, and will see what I can do."

"Really," said the Guinea-pigs to a Rabbit which was half hidden under a dock-leaf, "this is a very unpleasant meeting. There is so much threatening and intimidation. We are only two, and we don't feel at all safe. Do you like it?"

"Oh, pray don't!" replied the Rabbit. "I daren't speak and I daren't move. Oh, pray don't say anything to me again. Was it *rabbit-pie* they said?"

Before the Guinea-pigs could answer, some further offence seemed to have been given, for Mr. Snarler was growling angrily, the Angora Cat's eyes were flashing, and you could hear the sweep of her tail, while the Owl hissed angrily from her tree. And the result was that the assembly dispersed without coming to any resolution at all.

The Ass was left to the last. He had been lost in thought, and seemed not to have noticed either the disputes or the departure of the others. At length he lifted his head, and pricking up his ears, said, "What a lovely night! I'll sing!" So he sang

THE NIGHT OF THE THISTLE.

And the knight was calm and dark,
 And She asked for a lock of his hair;
 But the sound of the thistles was still,
 Oh, the downy spirit was there!
 It was there, oh, there!
 It is here, oh, here!
 Oh, how, oh, where, oh, here, oh, there!

"Ah—hee!" said the Ass when he had finished, "I couldn't get on without music and poetry. But it's a long song, and I can't remember all the words. I'll do the rest another night."

Now the sick Prince had had a companion nearly all the day. Sam, the Skye Terrier, had paid him a visit; and after licking his hands and sniffing all about the spot where he was lying to find out who had been

there, he stretched himself out at full length by the Prince's side, with his head between his paws. He was very, very sorry for the Prince, but he did not know what to say or how to say it, so he lay quite still. At length the Prince put his hand among the soft thick hair on Sam's back, and then Sam crept a little nearer to him, and just raised his black ears to show that he knew whose hand it was, and was pleased. After that they were quite still for a long time, and then the Prince began to speak, or rather he began to think aloud.



"Dear old Sam," he said, "I do believe he would give up everything for those he loves, lying here, hour after hour, just because he feels it is a comfort to me; and I do think that as time goes on I shall teach him to be friendly, even with the cats."

"Cats!" screamed Sam, jumping up in a frenzy, "cats again? Well, you shan't be bothered with them, anyhow!" And he went off in such a hurry and such a fury that he did not hear the Prince calling after him.

After this the Prince grew very thin and pale, and the beasts of the forest did not go near him: they said they were sure it would only worry him, and that the kindest thing his friends could do would be to leave him alone for the present. But they appointed a general meeting for the following spring, and were very busy with committees, and sub-committees, and president, and treasurer, and secretary. Innumerable difficulties arose as to these arrangements; for every creature of any importance

expected to preside, and there was no means of reconciling their rival claims.

"Put it off another six months, and there'll be one less," said the Owl. "I believe old Snarler will be out of the way by that time. He's getting so stiff with rheumatism, he can hardly move. He's got a rare lot of bones buried behind his kennel, and he sleeps outside on the damp ground for fear of somebody stealing them. He won't be able to crawl the length of his chain by Christmas."

Indeed, there were so many things to discuss and adjust in reference to this meeting, that the Prince was quite forgotten. This was natural, for his friends were fully occupied in deciding what position they should take that would not be inconsistent with their own dignity and merit.

So the quiet little creatures, and Sam amongst them, had it all their own way, and watched the Prince daily, and tried to amuse and console him.

One fine autumn day the Squirrel was with him when a little Field-Mouse crept up, and Robin Redbreast sat on a bush of wild raspberry, and sang a low sweet song. The Prince opened his eyes languidly, and the Squirrel said,—

"Couldn't you lean your head against my tail? I do think it would make you more comfortable."

"How kind you are!" said the Prince. "I'm afraid I am too heavy for you."

"Oh, no, you are not," said the Squirrel. And indeed he was right, for the Prince had grown so small that the Field-Mouse helped him up quite easily, and very comfortable he looked leaning against the Squirrel's bushy tail.

"That's the Redbreast," said the Prince. "I am so glad he likes to sing when the summer is over. It makes one feel that he has a home here always. Good bye, Robin, and good bye, Jack. How uncomfortable that Snake makes me feel to be sure! I never seem to get it out of my throat. I must talk to the wizard about it;" then, turning to the Squirrel, "I am going home myself now, so you must say good bye to them all for me."

"Oh, but you mustn't go," said the Field-Mouse, "for we can't do without you. We all want you to get well, and stay with us. You don't know what grand meetings there are to be when the spring comes, and how proud we are of the honour you have done us by coming to live in the forest. The Ass kicked Mr. Snarler most fearfully for proposing something he didn't like, and the Hawk tore a thrush to pieces because

he said that her allusions to you showed such a want of reverence ; and as to the Weasels——”

But the Squirrel saw how pale the Prince looked, and nudged her companion.

“ Ah,” said the Prince, with a sigh, “ and to think that I have not found out the right way yet !”

“ What way ?” said the Squirrel ; “ through the forest ? If you will only go by the trees, I will take you to the other side in a day.”

“ Ah, no,” said the Prince, smiling, “ not that. It was not that way I meant. And perhaps after all I have found the way, and not lost it. If I have, I will come back some day and tell you about it. So good bye. Thank you for the nuts.”

At that moment four beautiful ladies entered the cottage. The Prince threw himself into the arms of one of them, sobbing out, “ Oh, mother, mother, take me home !” And the beautiful ladies lifted the Prince in their arms, and, smiling at the Squirrel, they carried him away.

Poor little Jack hid his face in his tail for a long time ; but at last he felt a large cold nose touching him. He looked up, and it was Sam ; so he lifted his head, and licked Sam’s nose. Sam was too good-natured not to lick back again ; but after one gentle stroke with his tongue down the Squirrel’s back, he sank upon the floor in great dejection.

“ He’s gone,” said Sam. “ He’s gone ; and he’ll never come back again.”

“ Ah, well,” said the Redbreast, who was friendly but not sympathetic, “ no doubt it’s all for the best. The Prince did not get on so very well with us ; and the fact is that birds are birds and beasts are beasts. I think we had much better be contented as we are. As for the cats and dogs, they seem to have got the best of it, and they kill and eat just what they like ; but they don’t get on very well together, and never will do, for all the princes in the forest.”

“ It must be a great snare to be a big strong beast like a dog,” answered the Squirrel ; “ but I mustn’t judge. And I’m sure the Prince was right when he said squirrels could judge for squirrels, but not for cats and dogs ; so I’ll just get on with my winter store whilst the nuts are about. The Prince always said a squirrel’s store ought to be enough for himself and a friend.”

The Field-Mouse had a narrow escape, for at that moment the Angora Cat walked in, followed at a respectful distance by two Guinea-pigs.

When the Cat saw that the hut was empty she said, “ I had every

reason to expect this result. I quite foresaw it from the very first ; and it is this which has made me so anxious to restrain the impetuous zeal of our kind friends. The Prince was the last person to be troubled with absurd presents, *bones* and *nuts*, and *thistles* and *pies*, just as if he had been a puppy. Of course he was too kind and considerate to refer to the matter in a way which could be painful to any one, but what will be thought of us in the palace ?”

The Angora Cat was so overwhelmed by this consideration that she closed her eyes, and the Mouse, who had been trembling in a corner, slipped through a crack by the door and escaped.

When the spring came, and the great committee meeting was held, it was unanimously resolved that as the Prince had left the forest, it was desirable to preserve the cottage in which he had lived for the benefit of posterity, and to hold a grand entertainment in it, to which all his friends and admirers should be invited. This was done, and there was a large assembly. Nobody agreed with anybody else, and before it was over there were a great many loose feathers flying about, and several tufts of skin and hair ; but those who spoke of it afterwards always said that they had enjoyed themselves very much, and that, although a great many disputed subjects had been *handled*, they had, in the end, been *satisfactorily adjusted*.

The Lark, and the Squirrel, and Sam did not attend the meeting ; the Redbreast, and the Rabbits, and Guinea-pigs had promised to tell them all about it, but ; strange to say, they never saw them again after that day.

When June came the Lark said, “ I will just go up and up as high as I can, and sing to the Prince. Perhaps he will hear, for he always used to look up when he talked of home.”

Mrs. Lark and the little Larks watched him as he soared up, singing his very heart out ; but suddenly he ceased singing, began to descend, and fell into his nest like a stone.

“ What ! oh, what is it ? ” said Mrs. Lark. “ Pray speak ! Do tell me what is the matter ! ”

“ A message from the Prince ! ” answered the Lark, in a whisper.

And then he brooded in his nest for a long time, and was quite silent.

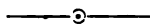
“ What is the message ? ” asked Mrs. Lark and all the little Larks.

“ Don't tease so ! ” said the Lark.

“ Wait ! ” said Mrs. Lark ; “ your father will tell us all in good time.”

Perhaps he intends to sing the message to-morrow. We shall be sure to hear it from your father all in good time."

Now some people say that the Lark sings the message every day in the spring-time, but that the clouds carry it away with them, and keep it so carefully that even the Lark can only find it when he is very high up in the air. He finds it and sings it once over, and then drops down to his nest to tell Mrs. Lark and the little Larks the good news. But the clouds have snatched it from him again, and he never can repeat that message from the Prince, much as we should all like to hear it.



THE STORY OF THE GREEN BIRD.

A SICILIAN FOLK-LEGEND.

THERE was once upon a time a King, who had an only daughter, of whom he was very fond. One day, when he was playing on the terrace with little Maruzza, a fortune-teller passed, looked up at the Princess, and shook his head. This vexed the king. He commanded that the fortune-teller be seized, and brought before him.

"Why did you shake your head when you saw my daughter?" he asked.

"Your Majesty," answered the soothsayer, "I did it unconsciously."

"If you do not tell me the real reason at once," said the King, "I will have you thrown into the deepest dungeon."

What could the poor soothsayer do but obey?

"When the Princess attains her eleventh year," he said, "a hard fate will await her."

The King was very sad when he heard these words. He caused a tower that had no windows to be built in a lonely spot. In this he imprisoned his daughter, with her nurse; but he came almost daily to visit her. Years passed away, and Maruzza grew fair and tall. Every care was taken of her; the bones were removed from her meat, lest she should hurt herself with them; and everything that could be dangerous was put out of her reach.

However, when she was nearly eleven years old, her nurse brought

her a chicken, in which she had accidentally overlooked a small pointed bone. When Maruzza found this, she longed to play with it; but as she knew her nurse would take it away if she knew about it, she hid the bone in a box. As soon as she was alone, she took it out, and began to scratch the wall. Now, there happened to be a hollow at that part, into which she soon pierced a little hole, and then she worked on till it was big enough for her to get her head through. When she saw the beautiful flowers, and the blue sky, and the sun, she was so delighted that she looked out all day long. Only, whenever the nurse came into the room she pulled a curtain before the hole.

This was her amusement for some time till her eleventh birthday—till the very minute when she had completed her eleventh year—when a rushing sound was heard in the air, and a bright Green Bird flew in through the hole.

“I am a bird, and shall become a human being,” it said, and instantly changed into a handsome youth.

Maruzza started, and was going to scream; but the youth said kindly,—

“Noble lady, be not afraid; you need fear no harm from me. I am an enchanted Prince, and must remain like this for many years to come. If you will wait for me, you shall be my wife.”

Then he talked of other things, and so pleasantly, that the time flew; but when an hour was past, he changed into a bird again, and left, promising to return on the morrow. So every day at twelve o'clock he flew in, and remained till it struck one.

When another year had passed, the King thought all danger for his little Maruzza must be over; so he came in a beautiful carriage to fetch her home to his castle. But Maruzza was dull in her father's stately halls, for the Green Bird did not visit her there. She grew sad; nothing could make her smile; and at last she did not even care to leave her chamber. Then the King, troubled by this state of his dearly-loved child, caused this proclamation to be made known through all the land: “Whoever makes the Princess laugh shall receive from me costly gifts.”

When this news came to the ears of a very old woman, who lived on a hill, she determined to go to the King. On her way she met a mule-driver, whose mules were laden with sacks of money.

“Give me a handful of your money,” she begged.

“I can give you nothing here,” answered the mule-driver; “but if you will come to the palace, where I unload these sacks, you shall have some.”

The old woman went with him to a beautiful castle where twelve fairies

lived. The mule-driver led her up some stairs, opened one of the sacks, and let the coins roll about the floor. The sight of such a quantity of money so amazed and pleased the old woman that she forgot to take any. She walked through all the rooms, and examined their treasures, for the chairs, tables, beds, indeed everything they contained, were of solid gold. At last she came to a room where a table was laid with twelve golden plates and twelve golden goblets, and round this table stood twelve golden chairs. She went on till she reached the kitchen, and found the fairies standing in a row, each before a golden hearth, on which boiled a golden kettle. When the soup was ready, the fairies took their kettles from the fire, and put them on the table. They took no notice of the old woman; this emboldened her to speak.

"Noble ladies," she said, "you say nothing to me,* so if you will not be offended I shall help myself." So saying, she took up some soup in a golden spoon, but when she tried to swallow it, the liquid spurted into her face and scalded her.

At that moment was heard a rushing sound in the air, and the Green Bird flew into the hall. "I am a bird, and shall become a human being," it said, and changed into a handsome Prince. "O Maruzza, my Maruzza," he moaned, "have I lost you for ever? Shall I never see you again?"

The fairies tried to comfort him; meanwhile the old woman ran out of the castle.

"I will tell this story to the young Princess," she thought; "if it does not make her laugh, then nothing will."

When she arrived at the palace she sent word to the King that she had come to make the Princess laugh. The King led her in, and left her alone with his daughter. Then the old woman began to tell her adventures—how she had met the mule-driver, who had led her to the beautiful castle, and how she had burned her mouth when she tried to taste the soup. Hearing this, Maruzza laughed so loudly that the King heard it outside. He was delighted. Some one had succeeded in cheering his beloved child.

"There is more yet," the old woman said, and she told the Princess all about the Green Bird that had changed into a handsome Prince, and wailed for his dear Maruzza. At this news all the Princess's lingering sadness vanished.

* This means, "You do not ask me to eat." In Sicily it is considered great rudeness not to offer people something if you are at table yourself.

"My father will give you beautiful presents," she said, "but you shall have as much again from me if you will come to-morrow at this hour and lead me to the castle where the fairies live."

The old woman promised to do so, and the next day she led the Princess over hill and dale, till after a long walk they came to the castle of the twelve fairies. The twelve fairies sat before their golden hearths, and the soup in the golden kettles was ready and taken off the fire.

"Look, noble lady," said the old woman, as she took some soup in a golden spoon; "this was how I tasted the soup the other day." She tried to lift the spoon to her mouth, but again the liquid was spurted in her face.

"Let me try now," said Maruzza. She took the spoon, filled it, and behold, she was able to eat the soup.

Suddenly there was a rushing sound in the air, and the Green Bird flew in and changed into a handsome Prince. When he began to say, "O Maruzza, my Maruzza!" the Princess threw herself into his arms, and cried, "I am here."

"Ah, Maruzza!" said the Prince very sadly, "what have you done? Why have you come? Now I must leave this place, and fly about without rest or peace for seven years, seven months, seven weeks, seven days, seven hours, and seven minutes."

"What!" cried poor Maruzza, "are you going to desert me now, when I have sorrowed so much on your account, and have come all this way to see you?"

"I cannot help it," answered the Prince, "but if you want to redeem me, I will tell you how." Then he led her on to a terrace, and said, "If you will wait for me here the time I named, exposed to rain and sun, without eating, drinking, or speaking, I can be released from the evil spell, and you shall be my wife."

Saying these words, he changed into a bird again and flew away. Poor Maruzza stayed on the terrace, and when the fairies came and begged her to go into the castle, she only shook her head. She crouched in a corner, neither eating, drinking, nor speaking, for seven years, seven months, seven weeks, seven days, seven hours, and seven minutes, exposed to storm, rain, and burning sunshine. Her soft white skin turned black, her face became ugly and distorted.

When at last the weary time had passed, the rushing sound was heard once more, and the green bird flew up and changed into a handsome Prince.

Poor Maruzza ran into his arms. "You are released," she cried, "and my troubles are ended too."

But when the Prince saw how ugly and black she had become, he did not want to have anything to do with her, and pushed her away, saying harshly, "What do you want with me? I do not know you."

Then she burst into tears. "What! you know me no longer? Have I not left my old father for your sake? Have I not stayed here for seven years, seven months, seven weeks, seven days, seven hours, and seven minutes, exposed to all weathers, neither eating nor drinking, and all for you?"

"And for the sake of a mortal man you have suffered all this, and lain here like a dog?" So saying, he spat twice in her face, turned away, and left her.

Poor Maruzza lay on the ground weeping bitterly till the fairies came and comforted her.

"Take courage, Maruzza," they said, "you shall become more beautiful than before, and shall revenge yourself on that bad man."

They led her into the castle, and washed her with rose-water till her skin turned white again, and she became so beautiful that no one would have recognized her. Then Maruzza went into the country where the Prince lived with the old Queen his mother, and the fairies accompanied her with all their treasures. In one night they built her a splendid castle, just opposite the royal palace. When the Prince looked out of the window next morning, he was surprised to see the splendid castle, which was much more beautiful than his own palace. While he was still gazing, lost in wonder, Maruzza appeared at a window. She was magnificently dressed, and looked so lovely that the Prince could not take his eyes off her, but he did not recognize her. He bowed low, and was about to speak, when Maruzza abruptly closed the window.

"Oh," thought he, "who can this lady be that she thinks herself better than me?"

He inquired of his mother, but she could not tell him, neither could any one explain this mystery. Every morning when he saw her at the window he went on to his balcony, but as soon as he made an attempt to speak, she turned her back on him and shut the window. Now this made the Prince very unhappy, for he wanted to ask that beautiful lady to be his wife.

"Mother," he said one day to the old Queen, "do me a favour, and go to the lady who lives opposite. Give her this diadem in my name, and ask her to become my wife."

The Queen assented, and went into Maruzza's castle, followed by a servant bearing upon a tray the golden diadem, glittering with pearls and precious stones. When Maruzza heard that the Queen was there and wished to speak to her, she hurried to greet her visitor.

"O noble Queen, why did you trouble to come here? why did you not send for me? it was my place to hasten to you." She led her visitor into the most beautiful room of all, which glistened with gold and precious gems. "Wherein can I serve you, noble Queen?"

"I have come to speak to you in the name of my son. He loves you dearly, and offers you his hand. As a token of his sincere affection he sends you this costly diadem."

"The honour is too great for me," answered Maruzza. "Your son should marry a rich and powerful Queen, not a poor girl such as I. I am not worthy to be his wife." While she spoke she pulled the costly diadem to pieces. "Ku, ku, ku!" she called, and the twelve fairies entered as twelve little geese. They gobbled the grains of gold and the gems.

When the Queen saw this she was speechless with rage.

"Noble Queen," said Maruzza, "why do you look at me so angrily? I always feed my geese with solid gold."

What could the Queen do but go home again? The Prince was standing on the balcony looking out for the beautiful girl, and when Maruzza had accompanied her guest to the door, she turned back quickly, and stepped on to her balcony. But as soon as the Prince tried to speak to her, she turned and shut the window. Thus the Prince knew his fate even before his mother could report, and his heart was very heavy. Still, every evening as before, he went on to the balcony to look at Maruzza, and always with the same result. After a while the Prince spoke to the old Queen again, and begged her once more to ask the hand of the beautiful lady.

"Oh, my son," said his mother, "remember how she has offended me. I cannot go back again."

"Mother, if you love me, grant my prayer. Go, give her my crown in my name." He took the circlet from his head, and gave it to his mother, who was persuaded by his entreaty to go once more to the lady.

When Maruzza saw the Queen approach, she hurried to meet her, and received her very politely, and asked, after she had shown her to a seat, "Wherein can I serve you, noble lady?" as she did the first time.

Then the Queen replied, "My son loves you dearly, and has sent me

to ask you to become his wife. As a mark of his devotion he sends you his golden crown from his own head."

"Ah, noble Queen," said Maruzza, "how could I accept such an honour? Your son cannot make such a poor girl as I am his wife." When she had said these words Maruzza called her cook. "Here, cook," she said, "take this golden crown; it will do for a ring round my kettle." And when she saw the Queen trembling with anger, she turned to her and said, "Noble Queen, why are you so surprised? I always put a golden ring round my kettle;" and she made a sign to the cook, who brought her a great many kettles of solid gold, with golden rings round them.

The poor Queen returned home very sad and depressed, and Maruzza hastened to the window to insult the Prince in her customary way.

Now the Prince fell ill from disappointment and mortified pride, so that he had to keep his bed a whole month. As soon as he was able to walk again, he hurried to the balcony, and when he saw Maruzza, he attempted to accost her, but she turned her back as usual, and closed her window abruptly.

"Mother," said the Prince, "if you love me, go once more to the beautiful lady and ask her to become my wife."

The Queen did not want to go, but he begged till she gave in. Then he took a costly golden chain from his neck and gave it to his mother for the beautiful lady.

Maruzza received the Queen very politely as before, and asked her again, "Wherein can I serve you, noble Queen?"

Then the Queen said that the Prince wished her for his wife, and sent her his own golden chain.

Maruzza only repeated that she was too poor, too humble for the Prince, and gave the chain to her servant, telling him to put it on her dog. The Queen was enraged at this new insult, but Maruzza only said, "Noble Queen, why are you enraged? My dogs always wear chains of solid gold." And she made a sign to her servant, who brought her a great many dog-collars, all of the finest gold.

The Queen returned home in despair, and Maruzza hurried to the balcony, and when she saw the Prince, who was looking out for her, she turned her back on him and shut the window before his face. Now the Prince fell so ill that every one thought he must die, but he recovered nevertheless.

When he was a little better he said to his mother, "Mother, I implore you go but once again to that beautiful lady, and entreat her to be my

wife. Tell her that if she refuses to grant my prayer and shuts the window again in that insulting way, I shall sink down dead before her eyes."

The Queen refused at first, but when she saw how very weak and ill her son was, she went to Maruzza in spite of all that had happened.

"Noble lady," said the Queen, "I come to beg something of you that you must not refuse. My son loves you more than ever, and implores you to become his wife. If you will not grant his prayer, and shut the window in his face again, he will sink down dead before your eyes, for he cannot live without you."

Then Maruzza answered, "Tell your son that if for love of me he will have himself carried in a coffin from his house to mine, to the sound of tolling bells, accompanied by priests singing the funeral hymns, then the priest who is to marry us shall await him here."

The Queen hastened with this answer to her son, who instantly had a coffin made and got inside it. The bells of the whole town were set a-tolling, and the Prince was carried in his coffin out of the palace, accompanied by priests, who sang funeral dirges. Maruzza stood on her balcony, magnificently dressed, and looked proudly down upon the sad procession. When the coffin passed under her window, she bent down and called loudly,—

"And for love of a mortal woman you have consented while still alive to lie in a coffin like the dead!" and she spat twice in his face.

"Maruzza, my Maruzza!" shouted the Prince, for he recognized her now.

On hearing these words she hurried down and said, "Yes, I am your Maruzza, and I wanted to make you feel also what you had caused me to suffer. But now all is over, and the priest who is to marry us is waiting within."

Then a gorgeous wedding was celebrated; the Prince became King and Maruzza Queen.



SEPP'S COURTSHIP.

"SEPP, my son," said the bedridden old mother, "why don't you take a wife? Do you want to be a grumpy old bachelor all your days?"

Sepp answered that he really did not know whom to choose, for that all the girls in the village pleased him equally well.

"Go, then, into the village," said the mother, "and look at the girls you like the best, and when you come back tell me what you found them doing."

Sepp went.

"Well," cried his mother, when he came back, "where have you been?"

"I went first to Ursula. She had just come home from church—with such a fine dress on, and a new pair of earrings."

The mother shook her head doubtfully. "Where next did you go?"

"To Kate, mother, who was in the kitchen, busy among the pots and pans."

"How did they look?"

"Quite black."

"And her fingers?"

"Quite white."

"Slatternly and greedy," muttered the mother.

"After that I went to Barbara, who was sitting in the garden making flower wreaths. She asked me which she should wear to-day at the fair."

The mother was silent awhile. Then she said, "What next, my son?"

"My next visit was to Madge. She was standing at the street door giving bread to the poor."

"Ah!" said the mother, "to-day she does what she wishes people to see; to-morrow, perhaps, she may be doing something she would like to hide. She is not a wife for you, my son. Were there no more?"

"Yes; I went lastly to Mary, but she was doing nothing."

"Nothing at all,—absolutely nothing?"

"Nothing that I could see—that I noticed."

"Then choose Mary, my boy: those girls make the best wives who do nothing the lads can talk of," said the old woman.

And Sepp married Mary, and they were both as happy as two people could be.



THE THREE BROTHERS.

HE who asks little shall obtain much.—There once lived three brothers whose only property in this bright world consisted of a pear-tree which they watched one after another: whilst one of them was left watching it the two others would go to their daily labour.

One day an angel from heaven was commanded to go and see how the brothers were living, and to provide them with better means of subsistence if they needed it. As soon as the angel had descended to the earth, he assumed the shape of a beggar, and having come to the brother who was watching the tree, he begged him for a pear. The man plucked one of the pears which belonged to him, gave it to the angel, and said, "Here you have one of my own pears; of those which belong to my brothers I cannot give you any."

The angel thanked him and went away. On the following day the second brother stopped at home to watch the tree; the angel came also to him and asked for a pear. The second brother likewise plucked one of the pears which belonged to him, and gave it to the angel, and said, "Here you have one of my own pears; of those which belong to my brothers I cannot give you any."

The angel thanked him and went away. When the turn came for the third brother to watch the tree, the angel came to him also and asked for a pear. The youngest brother, in like manner, plucked one of those which belonged to him, gave it to the angel, and said, "Here you have one of my own pears; of those which belong to my brothers I cannot give you any."

On the fourth day the angel took the form of a monk, and having come early in the morning, he found the brothers still at home, to whom he said, "Come with me, and I will give you something better to do."

The brothers followed the angel without any hesitation. When they had come to a broad rapid stream, they all rested there, and the angel said to the eldest brother, "What would you like to have?"

And he answered, "I should like this water to be turned into wine and belong to me."

The angel made the sign of the cross with his staff, and lo! instead of water, there flowed wine in the stream. Casks were being made, wine

was being poured into them, people were seen working, and a village arose. The angel left the eldest brother there, and said, "Now you have what you wished for, stop and live here."

Then the angel took the two younger brothers, and went with them farther on. They soon came to a field in which an enormous number of pigeons were feeding. There the angel asked the second brother, "What would you like to have?"

And he answered, "I should like all these pigeons to be changed into sheep and belong to me."

The angel made a sign of the cross with his staff over the field, and in an instant all the pigeons became sheep. A dairy appeared in which some women were milking the ewes, others were measuring the milk, collecting cream, making cheeses and melting fat; there was also a slaughterhouse in which meat was dressed, weighed, and money received; people were busy everywhere, and a village sprang up on the spot. Hereupon the angel said to the younger brother, "Here you have what you wished for."

Then the angel went away with the youngest brother, and whilst walking through a field he asked him, "And what would you like to have?"

So the youngest brother answered, "May Heaven grant me a truly pious wife; I do not ask for anything else."

"Ah," said the angel, "it is very difficult to find a truly pious woman. In the whole world there are only three such: two of them are already married, but the third is still a maiden; there are, however, already two suitors for her."

Then they started again, and having walked for a long time they reached a town where a King lived who had a truly pious daughter. Having entered into the town, they went immediately to the King to ask for his daughter. There they found that two Kings had arrived before them, had asked for the Princess, and had already put their apples on the table. Hereupon they also put their apples on the table by the side of the other apples.

When the King saw them, he said to those who stood around, "What shall we do? The first two suitors are Kings, and these men are mere beggars in comparison with them."

Then the angel said, "I will tell you what to do. Let the Princess take three branches of vine, plant them in the garden, and name each one after her lovers; in the morning on whose branch grapes will be found, him she must take for her husband."

They all agreed to this proposition. The Princess planted three branches of vine in the garden, and named each one after a suitor.

In the morning there were grapes on the vine of the poor man. The King, not knowing how to get out of this difficulty, was obliged to give his daughter to the youngest brother for wife; he took them at once to church and married them. After the ceremony, the angel took the newly married couple to a forest and left them there, and they lived in that forest one year.

When the year was up, the angel was again commanded to go and see how the brothers were living, and to assist them if they needed it. Having descended to the earth, the angel again assumed the shape of a beggar, went to the eldest brother, where the wine was flowing in the stream, and begged him for a glass of wine; but the man drove him away, saying, "If I were to give a glass of wine to everybody that asks for it, there would be nothing left for me."

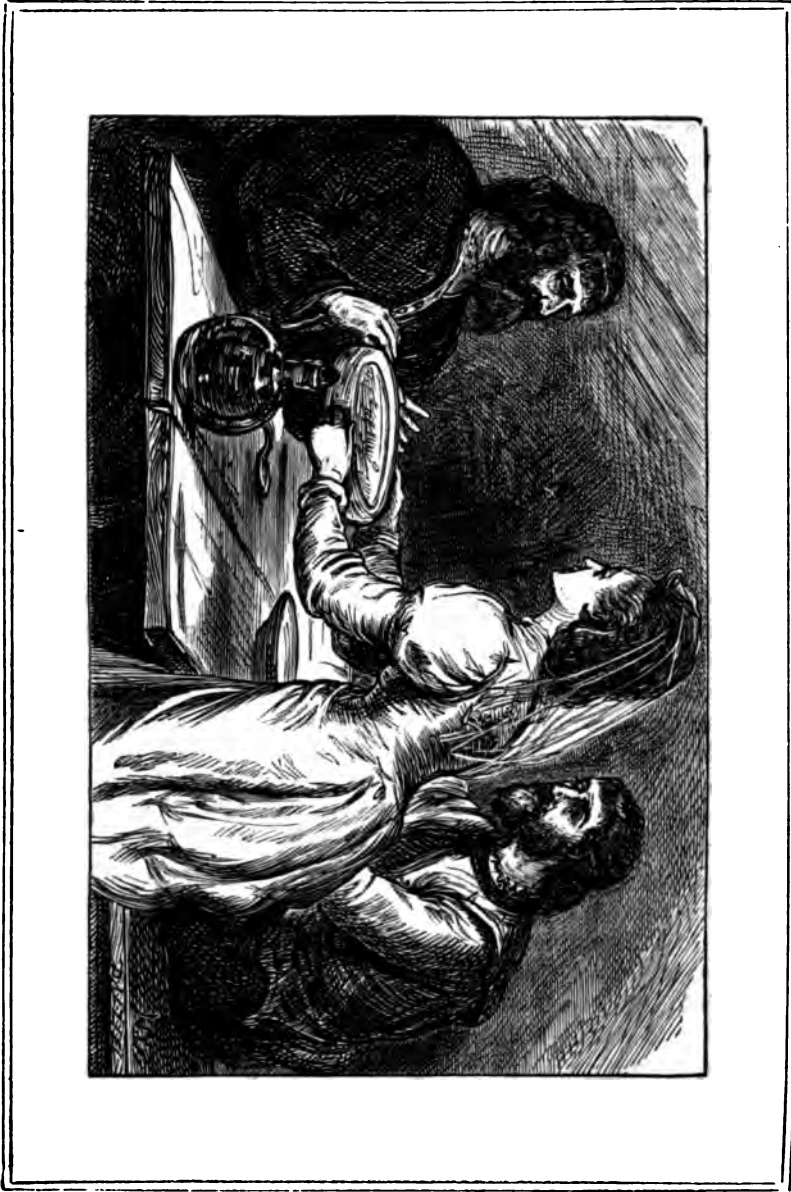
When the angel heard this he made the sign of the cross with his staff, and the water flowed again in the stream as before; then he said to the eldest brother, "Riches were not good for you; go home and attend to your pear-tree again."

Then the angel went to the second brother, whose sheep covered the field, and begged him for a piece of cheese; he also drove the angel away, saying, "If I were to give a piece of cheese to everybody that asks for it, there would be nothing left for me."

When the angel heard this he made the sign of the cross with his staff, and the sheep changed into pigeons again; then the angel said to him, "Riches were not good for you; go home and attend to your pear-tree again."

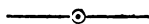
At last the angel went to the youngest brother in order to see how he was getting on, and he found him living with his wife in a poor hut in the forest. The angel asked him for a night's lodging, and they received him with all their hearts, and begged him to excuse them that they could not entertain him as they wished, "For," they added, "we are very poor." And the angel answered them, "Never mind; I shall be satisfied with whatever it is."

What were they to do? They had no corn to make bread with, but they used to pound the bark of trees and make bread of it. Such bread the woman prepared also for the visitor, and put it under an earthen cover to bake. Whilst the bread was baking they entertained the visitor with conversation. When, some time afterwards, they looked to see



whether the bread was baked yet, they found under the cover fine bread nicely baked—one could not wish for better, and it had even risen up under the cover. When the man and his wife saw it, they lifted up their hands to heaven, and said, “O Lord, receive our thanks! Now we can entertain our visitor.”

Then they put the bread before the angel and a gourd-bottle with water; but as soon as they began to drink out of it, the water was changed into wine. Hereupon the angel made the sign of the cross with his staff over the hut, and in its place there arose a princely palace with plenty of all good things in it. Then the angel blessed the man and his wife, and departed from them, and they lived happily until their lives' end.



THE ENCHANTED CASTLE.

SOME people say that there are no fairies now-a-days. And even some people have been found who have refused to admit that there ever was such creatures. Of course this is a great mistake. But when I tell you that some people also want to persuade us that little boys and girls are only well-grown and well-educated oysters, we may feel quite sure that it will not do to believe all that some people tell us. Do you feel in the least like a well-educated oyster, my little boy or girl? No, of course not. You won't believe in being an oyster, whatever some people may say. In the same way we won't believe in what “some people” tell us about the fairies. We are quite sure that they always have existed and do exist still. Yet it is certainly true, that there are not so many fairies to be found now-a-days as there used to be when I was young. Fairies, as you have perhaps heard, are persons who are rather easily offended. They don't like being interfered with, and they have a great objection to express trains being whirled through their most favourite haunts, or to electric wires being carried through their most romantic dells.

They say a terrible Ogre, by name Cram-brain, has almost succeeded in chasing them out of the great kingdom of Knursery-World, which was once all their own.

It is certainly hard upon them, for though somewhat tricky in their

ways, they were kind little people to the children, these fairies. As for Ogre Cram-brain, he now goes striding about the country having it all his own way, so that Knursery-World has become quite a different place from what it was in the good old times. Cram-brain is in reality ten times worse than the good old-fashioned ogres of past times ; for though he does not eat the children up at a meal, he has a nasty fashion of turning them into little old men and women to begin with, and of snapping at them continually, so that they grow thin and pale, and after all, perhaps, he finishes them up with a gulp.

As for the fairies, if we once got them really chased out of Knursery-World, that Cram-brain would have it all his own way. But this I hope will never be. Certainly there are a few strong places which I think even he will have some difficulty in getting hold of. For instance—the Enchanted Castle. Surely you know it, and have been there? If not, it is difficult to describe the way to reach it, for there are no really good maps of Knursery-World. Though if Ogre Cram-brain ever gets possession of the country, you may be sure it will soon be parcelled out into counties and departments, with heaps of capital towns, and the stones that he will set up at every mile will be covered with sums in addition, and the sign-posts will be scrawled all over with dull and useful information—we know his ways and manners, don't we?

But if you really want to know the way to the Enchanted Castle, you must first go into the Lane of Pleasant Fancy, and then keep turning to the right—always to the right, if you please—till you see the Mountains of Delight in the distance. You will then pass over a little bridge, where the streams of Wisdom and Nonsense meet, and then go on and on. In short, you can't miss the path, because you are sure to meet with a lot of other children going the same road.; but I am really afraid of giving any more particular directions—even if I were able to do so—for fear of that old Cram-brain finding out the way, and marching an army of Ologies and Oographies, who are the imps which he chiefly employs against this last grand stronghold which the fairies, and the children helping them, have kept in Knursery-World.

I need hardly tell you what a lovely place the Enchanted Castle is. A picture scarcely gives you half an idea of its beauty or charms. Of course you can see that it is big ; that it is full of quaint little nooks and corners ; that it is surrounded by lovely trees and gardens. But unless you were there yourself, you could not understand what a delightful spot it is. First of all, the sun always shines there, and nobody ever cries,



except for a minute or two, when the Knursery fairies tell one of their very affecting tales ; nobody has to show his tongue to the doctor, or has to go to the dentist, or learns arithmetic—so you may imagine what a delightful place it is for the children, and also, though the Castle is full of staircases and queer little winding turrets, nobody ever tumbles down and hurts himself.

Outside the Castle, the trees are always in leaf, and the flowers in bloom, winter and summer through ; and more than this, the fruit is always ripe ; and though the happy children pick and eat it all day long, it never gets any less, and the children don't make themselves ill.

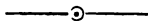
Inside, everything is just as delightful. To tell you that the furniture was all gold and silver, and the looking-glasses enormous diamonds, would be to give you but a faint idea of the grandeur of this wonderful place. Indeed, you might not see it as I did, for if you do not think gold and silver furniture the prettiest in the world, it would not seem to you that the Enchanted Castle was so fitted up ; for there is one thing very remarkable about this Castle, that it is furnished afresh by the kind fairies for every little child who enters it, and always after the fashion that each little child thinks the prettiest. Another thing, too, is peculiar about it. In one of the best rooms there is a gorgeous throne, and on that throne will always be found, by every separate little child who goes into the Castle, the one dear and beautiful being whom he loves best in the world ; and you may easily guess who that is—at least I should be very sorry for the little child who did not find his own dear mother seated on that throne.

Sometimes there are other thrones in the same room, on which papas, and aunts, and grandmamas, and other dear friends are seated, all with crowns on, and sceptres in their hands ; for in the Enchanted Castle every grown-up person is a king or a queen, and every little child a prince or princess. And in this grand and beautiful room there is, more often than not, a darling baby in a cradle, who is, of course, just as much a prince or princess as any of the rest, only his tiny, chubby fingers won't hold the sceptre, so it's no use giving it to him, and the crown won't sit upon his head, because there's so very little hair to keep it on. But the place of honour in the centre of the grand hall is always kept by the fairies for "mother."

In the other thousand-and-one rooms of which the Castle consists live, as I have said, the fairies of the Enchanted Land. In one, the Princess Cinderella holds her Court ; in another, Jack the Giant-killer will be found, as ready as ever for deeds of daring ; in a third, Aladdin with his

wonderful Lamp and Ring ; in a fourth—a very mysterious chamber this—old Bluebeard, grim and terrible, with his row of headless wives, will be discovered ; and so on. In one part of the Castle there is a complete menagerie, where all the animals famous in Knursery-World have delightful little homes of their own, just as if they were in the Zoological Gardens : little Red Riding-Hood's Wolf, and the Fox who couldn't get at the Grapes, and the Dog who threw the Bone after the Shadow, and the Crow who dropped the Cheese, and Dick Whittington's Cat, and Beauty's Beast, and I can't tell you how many more,—all living together in the greatest happiness and contentment.

Many and many are the delightful hours that I have spent when I was a child wandering through these halls of enchantment, in the delightful old days before Cram-brain came to worry the little ones, and to chase the fairies out of Knursery-World. But it's to be hoped old Cram-brain never will storm that castle. What havoc he would work there, to be sure ! We know very well what he'd do. He'd have the animals stuffed and put into glass cases, all in a row, with tickets on their backs of words fifteen syllables long ; he'd make old Bluebeard professor of political economy and physiology, and Aladdin teacher of biology and animal magnetism ; he'd dress poor Beauty up in dismal shades of faded green, and make her sit as a model for high-art students, and would insist upon poor dear Cinderella learning to cook mutton chops on scientific principles. I hope it may be very, very long, for all our sakes, before old Cram-brain has it all his own way in the Enchanted Castle of Knursery-World.



ALL ABOUT TWOPENCE.

A SERVIAN STORY.

THERE lived once a poor man who endeavoured to get his living by various means. One day he filled up a bag with moss, put a little wool on the top of it, and then started to market to try to sell it all as wool. On the road he met another man, who was also going to market and carrying a bag full of acorns, which he wished to sell as nuts, and the top of which he had, indeed, carefully covered with nuts. Upon mutual inquiry as to what each had in his bag, the first man said that he

was carrying wool, and the second that he was carrying nuts to market for sale, whereupon they agreed to exchange their goods on the spot. The owner of the moss, however, demanded some money into the bargain, maintaining that wool was more valuable than nuts; but when he perceived that the owner of the acorns would not give anything extra, but only wanted to exchange one thing for the other, he thought that, after all, nuts were better than moss. After bargaining for a long time, the man who had the acorns agreed to give the other an extra twopence; but as he had no money with him, he agreed to owe him that sum, and as a pledge that he would pay the debt faithfully, they entered into a bond of friendship. Having exchanged the bags, the men parted, each thinking that he had cheated the other; but when they had come home and removed the goods out of the bags, then they saw that, in reality, neither of them was cheated.

Some time afterwards the vendor of the moss went out in search of his confederate in order to get the twopence out of him, and having found him in the employment of a certain village parson, he addressed him thus: "Brother, you have cheated me."

And the other answered, "And you, brother, have also cheated me."

Then the first man demanded the twopence, saying, that it was only just to pay that which had been agreed upon, and strengthened by a bond of friendship. The other acknowledged the debt, but excused himself, saying that he had no money wherewith to pay it. "However," he added, "behind my master's house there is a deep hole in the ground down which he often goes, and in which, doubtless, he has hidden either some money or some other valuable property. We will go there after dark, and you shall let me down into the hole; after I have ransacked it, we shall share the plunder, and then I will pay you your twopence."

This proposition was accepted. In the evening the parson's servant took up a sack and a rope, and having come with his confederate to the hole, he got into the sack, the confederate fastened the rope round his waist, and let him down into the hole. When the man had reached the bottom he came out of the sack. Having examined the hole and not finding anything but corn, he said to himself, "If I tell my brother that there is nothing in the hole, he is likely to go away and leave me here; what would my master say to-morrow if he were to find me in this hole?" He quickly got into the sack again, fastened the rope to it, and then called out to his confederate, "Brother, pull up the sack, it is full of various things."

As the man was pulling up the sack he said to himself, "Why should I divide these things with my confederate? I had better take it myself, and he may come out of the hole as well as he can." Having lifted up the sack with the confederate in it, he put it on his shoulders and hastened through the village; he was followed by a large number of dogs barking furiously. As he grew tired he allowed the sack to slip close to the ground, upon which the confederate in the sack called out,—

"Brother, pull up the sack, the dogs are biting me."

When the man who carried the sack heard this, he threw it down on the ground.

Then he in the sack said, "Thus, brother, you wanted to cheat me."

And the other answered, "By Heaven you have again cheated me."

After a long dispute the man who owed the twopence promised to pay them faithfully to the other whenever he would come again, and then they parted.

Some time afterwards the man who was in the service of the clergyman made himself a home and got married. One day as he was sitting with his wife before the hut, he observed his confederate walking directly towards it; then he said to his wife, "Wife, here comes my confederate; I owe him twopence. Now, I do not know what to do, for I promised to down pay them to him as soon as ever he found me out. I will go in, lie on my back, and you must cover me up; then you must begin to cry and to lament, and tell him that I am dead; then, surely, he will go away."

Having said this, he went into the hut, lay on his back, and crossed his arms; his wife covered him up, and then began to lament. Meanwhile the confederate approached to the hut, and wishing to the woman Heaven's blessing, asked her whether this was the house of So-and-so.

The woman, writhing in agony on the ground, answered him, "Yes, woe is me! This is his house, and here he lies dead in it."

Then the confederate said, "Heaven have mercy upon his soul! He was my confederate. We have worked and transacted business together, and since I have found him in such a state, it is only right that I should stop and accompany him to his grave, and throw a handful of earth over his coffin."

The woman told him that he would have to wait a long time for the funeral, and that he had better go away.

But he answered, "Heaven forbid! How could I leave my former confederate like this? I will wait, be it even three days, until he is buried."

When the woman whispered this to her husband in the hut, he told her to go to the clergyman, tell him that he was dead, and have him removed to the church in the cemetery; then, perhaps, his confederate



would go away. The woman went to the clergyman and told him of her husband's death. The clergyman came up with some of his men, who put the pretended dead on a bier, carried him off and left him in the

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middle of the church, so that he might spend the night there according to custom, and then on the following day receive the benediction and be buried. When the clergyman with the other people were about to leave the church, the confederate said that he could not leave his brother unguarded, with whom he had transacted business, and had eaten bread and salt, but that he would watch over him the whole night. Thus he remained in the church.

Now, it happened that night that some robbers were passing near who had plundered a castle not far off, and had carried away a large sum of money, with quantities of clothes and arms. When the robbers approached the church and saw that there was a light in it, they said among themselves, "Let us go into this church and there divide our booty."

The confederate, when he perceived that armed men had entered into the church, hid himself in a corner. The robbers sat down on the ground, divided the money, with a helmet and the clothes and arms, as well as they could. They were perfectly satisfied with the division of all their plunder, with the exception of one sword, which all of them believed to be of a very great value. One of the robbers took it in his hand, rose up, and said, "Wait a moment; I will try the sword on this dead person whether it is really so good as you suppose. If I can cut off his head at one blow, then it is really good."

Having said this, the robber approached to the bier, but in the same moment the pretended dead jumped up and cried with a terrible voice, "Dead, where are you?"

And his confederate in the corner answered, "Here we are; all ready to fight."

At the sound of these words, the robber who held the sword threw it down and fled; his companions left all their booty, which they had collected in heaps on the ground, jumped up and also fled away without daring to look behind. Having run away a long way off, the robbers stopped, and their captain cried out,—

"Stop! comrades, stop! We have walked over mountains and valleys, by day and by night; we have fought with men and attacked castles and palaces, and we have never been afraid so much of anybody as this night of the dead. Is there not a brave man among us who would go and see what is going on in that church?"

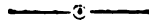
Then one of the robbers said, "I won't do it." Another said, "I do not dare to do it." "And I," said a third, "would rather fight with ten living than one dead man."

At last there was found one robber who said that he would go back. Having returned, he approached carefully to a window in the church in order to see what was taking place inside it. In the church, meantime, the confederates divided all the robbers' money, clothes, and arms among themselves, but, in the end, could not agree about the twopence, and almost came to blows. All that the robber could hear behind the window was, "Where is my twopence? Give me my twopence!"

Suddenly the man who owed the twopence observed the robber standing close by. In an instant he stretched out his arm through the window, pulled off the robber's cap, and, giving it to his confederate, said,—

"Confound your twopence! Take this instead of your twopence."

The robber, terrified, fled away without daring to look behind, and, having reached his companions, he cried out half dead with fear, "Oh, comrades! thank Heaven that we have escaped alive from that dreadful place! We have divided the money among ourselves with the helmet, but there is risen such an enormous number of dead people that when they had divided the money among themselves there was scarcely left twopence for each of them; in fact, that was even wanting for one of them, so they pulled off my cap and gave it to him instead of the twopence!"



THE INVISIBLE KINGDOM.

GEORGE lived with his old father, in a little house, a mile or two from the village, on the border of a great forest. Close to the house lay a large broken millstone, so old that no one knew how long it had lain there, or who had brought it. From this point there was a most delightful view of the valley, with its winding stream, and of the distant mountains. Here George would often sit musing, for he was a silent, thoughtful fellow, so much so, that the village people called him "Dreamy George." But he did not care for that, and his chief pleasure in life, especially after the death of his old father, whom he dearly loved, was to sit upon the millstone when the day's work was done, and gaze into the beautiful valley.

One day, George, sitting on the millstone, somewhat sad and lonely, sank to sleep. He dreamed that between two stars hung a golden swing, on which sat a lovely Princess. She swang backwards and forwards

between heaven and earth, and every time that her feet touched the earth, she smiled and threw George a rose.

When he woke, he started up and looked about him eagerly. To his delight, on the old millstone beside him lay a bunch of freshly-gathered roses. The same thing occurred day after day for a whole week. Then Dreamy George began to think there must really be some truth in his dreams, and he determined to shut up his house, and go in search of the Princess.

After travelling many days, he came to a country where the clouds touched the earth. Nothing daunted, he went straight on into Cloudland, till he came to a thick forest. Soon he was attracted by the sound of cries for help, and going to the spot, he found a weak old man being attacked by two ruffians. Catching up the branch of a tree, which was lying handy, George soon put these rascals to flight.

The old man, thanking him for his timely help, told him that he was the King of Dreamland, who had somehow lost his way, and had thus wandered into the country of his bitter enemy, the King of Reality.

"That man hates me," said the old King, "and no sooner did he discover me than he set two of his men upon me, with orders to kill me at the first opportunity; but you have saved my life, and I must prove my gratitude to you by showing you my country."

So saying, the King of Dreamland led the way where, beneath the thickest clouds, was a trap-door. He lifted it, and entered, with his companion. They mounted higher and higher into the clouds, till they came to a magnificent grotto. Here were palaces on islands, floating about in the midst of crystal waters, just as though they had been ships; and castles that floated through the air like balloons, and came at call if you fancied to pay a visit to one of them; here were exquisite flowers, and wonderful birds that sang fairy tales, and many strange and lovely things.

"Now I will introduce you to some of my dream subjects," said the old King. "I have good dreams for good people, and bad dreams for bad people, and funny, mischievous dreams, who, if I send them to earth by way of a joke, will do all sorts of queer things. This one runs into a house, for instance, picks up the soundest sleeper in his arms, carries him up to the top of the church steeple, pitches him headlong over, jumping down himself just in time to catch him as he falls. Then he carries him back to bed, and the man wakes with a start, in a horrible fright, and says, 'Thank goodness, it was only a dream. I thought I had

tumbled off the church.' Oh! he is a mischievous little fellow, that dream, I assure you."

"Oh! I know him," cried George. "He has been to me before now,—wouldn't I like to catch him and pay him out!"

"He shan't worry you again, Dreamy George," said the King. "Now let us go and look at the bad dreams."

They were so horrible and ghastly, however, that George could scarcely bear to look at them, and ran away from the door of the prison where the King kept them as fast as ever he could, dragging the King after him.

Then they went to see the good dreams, who lived in a lovely garden full of shining flowers. Many beautiful dreams, men, women, and children, all with kind and lovely faces, were walking about the gardens. Suddenly Dreamy George gave a cry of joy, for there was his own Princess. In a moment he ran up to her, and the Princess seemed as glad to see him as he was at finding her.

They sat side by side on a seat, and told each other how delightful it was to meet again, and when they had said all they could think about on that subject, they began it over again.

Meanwhile the King paced up and down the garden, till he got tired, and thought they would never end the conversation.

At length he said, "Dreamy George, it is really time for you to go home. I can't offer you a bed, for we don't keep them in my country, and you, Princess, must get ready for your night's work."

But Dreamy George at once declared that, having found his Princess, he would never consent to part from her again.

The King hardly knew what to say to this at first, but at length he consented.

"But now," cried George, "I have my Princess, I want a kingdom for her. Cannot your Majesty, who is so powerful, help us?"

Then the King said, "I have no earthly kingdom to give you, but I can, if you like, give you an invisible one as glorious and beautiful as you could wish."

"But if we can't see it, what would be the good of it?" George asked.

"Silly fellow," said the King, "you and your Princess will see it. It is only the rest of the world who won't see that you are a king."

After all, Dreamy George was rather relieved that this should be so, for he did not know what his old neighbours in the village would have said to him if he had come home and set up to be a king, with a princess or a wife. So he and his Princess took leave very kindly of the King

of Dreamland, and made their way, hand-in-hand, up the five hundred steps that led down into the world. George lifted the trap-door, which closed behind them with such a bang that he was quite stunned; but when he recovered he found himself sitting on the old millstone near his own house, with his hand within that of the Princess, and she his own true wife.

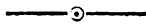
There they sat, side by side, happily chatting, while the moon came out and the old trees rustled, and the stream, as it rolled by, sang them sweet music.

When they turned at last to go to their own house, they found that it had become a beautiful palace, with steps of crystal and halls of dazzling light, and wherever they moved, flowers were showered in the path and music played. Thus they knew that they were King and Queen; but nobody else in the village knew.

"Dreamy George has brought home a wife," said the neighbours. "She is a plain little girl. I wonder where he picked her up?"

They were such stupid matter-of-fact people that they never found out all their lives long that they had a King and a Queen living in a beautiful palace among them, though George and his wife had six lovely children, who were all Princes and Princesses, every one of them.

One good thing was that George did not care whether these stupid people found out about it or not. He and his Princess were as happy as King and Queen could be.



THE CAT AND THE FOX.

ONCE upon a time there lived a Russian peasant, and this peasant had a Cat—so wicked a Cat that every one detested it; even the peasant himself hated it. At last one day, after thinking and thinking about it, he thrust the Cat into a bag, tied it up, carried it into the forest, and there lost it; he fancied the Cat would die. But the Cat, after running about for a long time, came to the hut of a woodman. He jumped upon the roof and lay down, going when hungry into the wood to chase the mice and birds; when satisfied, he jumped upon the roof again, and so lived free from care.

One day, Mr. Cat, walking in the forest, met Miss Fox. She was surprised at his appearance. "Well," she thought, "for all the years I have lived in the wood, I never saw a creature like this." So she curtsied to the Cat, saying, "Who are you, young man? By what chance came you into the forest? And what is your name?"

The Cat bristled his back, and said, "I am sent from the woods of Siberia, to perform the duties of burgomaster; and my name is Kotofei Ivanovitch."

"Well, Kotofei Ivanovitch, I never heard of you before. Will you do me the honour of dining with me?"

So Mr. Cat went to dine with Miss Fox. She gave him game of all sorts, and asked, "Kotofei Ivanovitch, are you married or single?"

"A bachelor," replied the Cat.

"And I am a spinster; marry me."

The Cat consented, and they had a gay wedding.

The morning after the marriage, Mrs. Fox went out to seek food for her young husband; Mr. Cat remained at home.

Mrs. Fox met the Wolf, who began to flirt with her. "What has become of you, my dear? we have been over all the earth and could not find you."

"Don't you know, stupid, that I am married now?"

"And whom have you married, Lisaveta Petrovna?"

"Where have you been? Know you not that from the forest of Siberia has come a burgomaster, Kotofei Ivanovitch? I am the burgomaster's wife."

"I knew nothing about it; can I see your husband?"

"Oh, Kotofei Ivanovitch is a terrible fellow: whomsoever he does not like he devours. Bring a lamb, as a proof of your obedience; lay it down here, and take care he does not see you. If he does, look out for yourself."

So the Wolf ran off to look for a lamb.

Mrs. Fox walked on till she met a Bear, who also began to flirt with her.

"Don't flirt with me, limping Michka; I am married now."

"Whom have you married, Lisaveta Petrovna?"

"The new burgomaster from the forests of Siberia; his name is Kotofei Ivanovitch."

"Can I see him, Lisaveta Petrovna?"

"Oh, Kotofei Ivanovitch is a terrible fellow. Whomsoever he does not like he devours. Bring a calf as a proof of your obedience; the Wolf

has gone for a lamb. But look out ! lay down the calf, and take care Kotofei Ivanovitch does not see you ; if he does, so much the worse for you."

So the Bear hobbled off to look for a calf.

The Wolf, having killed a lamb and flayed it, began to consider. Suddenly up comes the Bear with a calf.

"How do you do, brother Michel Ivanovitch?"

"And how are you, brother Leon? Have you not seen Mrs. Fox and her husband?"

"No, I have been expecting them for some time."

"Go and call them."

"No, I shan't, Michel Ivanovitch ; go yourself, you are bigger than me."

"I shan't go."

Just then a Hare ran past. The Wolf called after it, "Come here, you squinting fool."

The Hare came up terrified.

"Do you know, stupid, where Mrs. Fox lives?"

"I know, Michel Ivanovitch."

"Then run quick and tell her that Michel, and his brother Leon Ivanovitch, have been ready ever so long, and are now awaiting her husband to offer him a lamb and a calf."

The Hare showed a clean pair of heels.

The Wolf and Bear began to think of hiding. Said the Bear, "I shall climb up a fir-tree."

"And what shall I do?" said the Wolf. "I cannot climb up a tree. Tell me for Heaven's sake where I can hide."

The Bear concealed him under some bushes, covered him with dead leaves, climbed up to the very top of a fir-tree, and kept a good look-out to see whether Kotofei came with Mrs. Fox.



THE PINK BIRD.



HANS and Gretchen were the children of a farmer, who lived on the borders of the Black Forest, in Germany. One day their mother said to them, "This is the hundredth birthday of your great-grandmother. I cannot go to give her my good wishes and to receive her blessing, as I should like to do; because, as you see, your poor little baby brother is ill, and your father is gone to sell some horses at the fair. Now, children, can I trust you to walk through the wood to your great-grandmother's cottage, where you have often been with me, and to carry to her this little basket of eggs, and butter, and cheese?"

"That you can, mother!" cried both the children joyfully; for there was nothing they liked better than a visit to the old lady, who told them stories, and gave them coffee and cakes.

"Now mind," said the mother, "you must not loiter by the way. You must not run in among the bushes after the rabbits, and get your clothes torn and soiled. Mind what I say, and do not leave the pathway; walk straight along, turning neither to the right nor left, till you reach the cottage."

The children promised; and their mother dressed them up in their best clothes, and watched them start from the door, gazing after them till their little figures disappeared among the trees.

For some time they walked steadily along the pathway, hand-in-hand, turning neither to the right nor to the left; but suddenly a beautiful Pink Bird started up close to their feet, and ran along the path in front of them. Hans and Gretchen gave chase at once; rattle, rattle went the eggs in the basket, but they took no heed, though the contents of a broken one streamed down Hans' stockings, and splashed on Gretchen's white frock. Presently the Bird spread its lovely rose-coloured wings, rose upwards,

and alighted in a tree close by the path. The children stood still, and gazed up after it with longing eyes.

"Depend upon it," said Hans, who was rather knowing about birds, "her nest is up there, full of pink eggs, or perhaps little pink birds."

What a thought! One pink bird is wonderful enough; but a whole nestful of little pink birdies! Gretchen fairly danced with delight at the idea.

"How can we get them?" she cried.

"I could climb the tree easily enough, for that matter," said Hans, rather gloomily, "but, you see, we promised not to leave the path."

"Well," said Gretchen, "let us mark the tree, so that we shall know it again, and then hurry on to granny's; and when we get home, father will have come back from the fair, and he will come here with us; and we can put on our old clothes and climb the tree."

This seemed a reasonable proposition enough, but Hans wanted the pink birds at once. "After all," he said, "to climb this tree can hardly be called leaving the pathway; for see how the branches hang over it."

"That's true," said Gretchen, doubtfully; "but I don't think our clothes would look so nice and clean if we climbed to the top and down again; and that is what mother cares about."

"Well," said Hans, "I think I'll just go up a little way—and then, perhaps, I shall be able to see the nest." He then tucked up his trousers very carefully, put the basket in Gretchen's hand, and climbed two or three branches. Then Gretchen heard a scream of delight.

"Oh! Gretchen," he cried, "I can see the nest! The Pink Bird is sitting by it, and I believe she is feeding her young ones. Now I can see a mouth wide open!"

"Oh! I must come and see too!" cried Gretchen, who was nearly as good a climber as her brother; and she threw down her basket, and was soon among the branches, with stains of green down her white frock, and a great rent in it.

Hans was obliged to climb a little higher to make room for her; and then, as the nest was so deep that nothing could be seen in it but some gaping mouths, he climbed on higher still, followed by his sister. Suddenly the Pink Bird perceived the intruders; and with a melancholy cry spread her lovely rose-coloured wings, and sailed away over the forest.

"Ha, ha!" laughed Hans; "now we shall have the pink birdies!"

And he stretched up his hand and grasped the nest. But what was the disappointment of the children to find it full of the most hideous little objects you can conceive! They were as large as young cuckoos, quite unfledged, and had round black faces, with large ears, and a most wicked expression in their eyes. In fact, they were fairy birds, and the nest was a fairy nest, and the tree was a fairy tree.

Gretchen screamed when she saw them. "Let us come down at once!" she cried; but as she spoke the tree began to sway to and fro so violently that she had to clutch a bough firmly to steady herself. Slowly the wonderful tree uprooted itself, and then, having shaken the earth from its roots, with a jerk which almost dislodged the children, it set off at full gallop through the forest.

You may imagine how frightened Hans and Gretchen were when they found what was happening to them; but if children will not mind what is said to them by their elders, and disobey them in order to get what they wish for, they cannot expect that things will turn out very pleasantly in the end, though perhaps it is not often that anything so very unpleasant as this comes to pass. Besides the tree running away with them and nearly shaking them to bits, there was another very disagreeable thing. All the ugly little birds began to talk and squabble in rude loud voices.

"I shall have all four thumbs," said No. 1, "because I am the eldest."

"Shan't!" said No. 2; "father promised that the fingers should all be divided equally."

"Fingers!" rejoined No. 1, "but that doesn't mean thumbs."

"Yes, it does," said No. 2.

"Does."—"Doesn't."—"Does."—"Doesn't!" and so they went on.

"Father promised me first peck at the eyes!" whined the youngest.

"You always have the best of everything," snarled No. 3; "it's not fair."

It was some time before Hans and Gretchen could make out the meaning of all this, but at last they discovered that the feast the little goblin birds were looking forward to so eagerly was nothing more nor less than themselves, who had been entrapped for this very purpose.

When Gretchen made out that it was her eyes the horrid little birds were intending to peck, she began to cry, as was natural; but Hans, who was a brave boy, comforted her.

"Never mind," he whispered, "I've got the big knife father gave me in my pocket. I'll chop off all their heads if they try to hurt you. Why should you be afraid of the nasty little things?—Hold your wicked

tongues," he cried at last. "How can you suppose that you could do a great strong boy like me any harm, or my sister, when I am by to protect her?"

At this the goblin birds began to laugh. "Our papa will kill you," said they, "and then we shall eat you."

Upon this Hans made a dash with his knife at the head of No. 1, but what was his horror to find one of the branches of the tree shape itself like a hand and close upon both his wrists with a grasp of iron! The tree was, in fact, a wicked Ogre, and the father of the goblin birds. On and on he raced through the forest to the wildest and loneliest part, never stopping till night-time, when, at the entrance of a moonlit glade, he suddenly pulled up. There stood the beautiful Pink Bird waiting for them. It may be imagined how fast Hans and Gretchen climbed down; but they had no sooner done so than the tree changed into the form of a hideous Ogre, with a huge face like that of the goblin birds, his children. At the same moment the trees all round pressed forward, twining their branches into an impenetrable wall, and the children found themselves in a beautiful green prison-house, through which the moonbeams streamed, as it were mocking them with their peaceful loveliness. The poor children turned to the right and left, but there was no escape, and apparently no friend.

Presently, however, the beautiful Pink Bird moved gently towards them, and whispered, "Be brave and patient, and I will do all I can to save you."

"Wife," called out the Ogre, "why haven't you laid the fire? We are going to have a grand stew to-night, and your children are crying for their food."

"Coming—coming," called the Pink Bird, hastily. "I am under a cruel enchantment," she whispered to the children. "All the day long I fly about in the shape you see. When the moon rises high over the trees you will see me in my natural form; but, either way, I am the Ogre's wife, bound to serve him and help him in his cruel way."

"Lay the sticks, I say!" roared the Ogre; and the gentle Bird set to work to bring them one by one in her bill, till a goodly pile was raised. The children, meanwhile, sat trembling on the grass.

"Don't cry," whispered Hans to his sister; "I think the beautiful bird will save us."

"Oh, I wish we had never climbed that wicked tree," sobbed Gretchen. Presently the Pink Bird approached them again, under pretence of

picking up a stick close to them, and then she managed to whisper, "You see that tree growing near, with the berries like pearls and the leaves like jet; it is too tough for me to break, but if you get some sprays of it and fling it on to the fire when the Ogre sets it alight, the Fire King will appear among the flames; he is very powerful indeed, and the only being the Ogre fears, and may help you."

"Mother!" shrieked the young goblin birds, "we want our supper!"

"It takes a long time to make a fire big enough to cook those two children," said the Pink Bird to the Ogre. "I wish you would help me for once."

"Not I," answered the Ogre; "what's the good of a wife, if she can't manage these little domestic matters? I shan't trouble myself, I can promise you."

This was just the answer the Pink Bird expected; indeed, she had only made the suggestion to avert suspicion from what she meant to propose next. "Why not make the two children you have brought for supper help me?" said she.

"Ha! ha!" laughed the heartless Ogre; "that's a good idea; get the children to help to make their own fire! Set to work at once, youngsters!" he roared. "I shall have one of you roasted, and the other boiled—you can settle it between you which; I always had a spice of good-nature in my composition, ha! ha!"

No sooner was the order given than Hans and Gretchen started to their eat, and began to pick up sticks; then Hans drew out his knife, and cunningly cut off some dried twigs first, not to excite suspicion; then, when the Ogre's back was turned for a minute, in order to set the pile alight, he suddenly cut a branch of the tree with berries like pearls and leaves like jet.

"Go on throwing on more fuel!" called the Ogre, while the flame sprang up, and the goblin birds shrieked with delight; and then Hans tore a spray from his branch, took good aim, and flung it into the flame, right over the Ogre's great round head.

At the same moment, the form of the Fire King appeared in the flames, rising gradually, far taller than the Ogre. He was an awful spectacle: his coat was flame-colour; his eyes shone like red-hot coals; and his hair stood out in stiff curls, like flaming serpents. At another time the children would have been dreadfully frightened at sight of the Fire King, but now they hailed his appearance with joy, feeling as if he were a friend come to save them.

The Ogre made the most hideous face you can imagine when he saw the Fire King, and all the goblin birds began to scream with terror.

"Well," said the Fire King, "I am glad I have found my way here at



last. It doesn't do to let things go too far, you know, and when I hear of anything very bad going on in my forest, why I just come and burn it up. What are you doing with those children?"

"My wife brought the dear little things home to play with my children," said the Ogre.

"She did, did she?" said the Fire King. "Where is she?"

But at this moment his attention was called off by the appearance of a lady, gliding in between the trees, who lighted the way as she went; she had brilliant red hair, flaming eyes, and a belt of dazzling light round her waist. The children guessed at once that she must be the Fire Queen. The Ogre made another face when she appeared, and the Fire King did not seem much pleased to see her either.

"My dear," he said, "there really was no occasion for you to come. I can surely manage a little matter like this by myself. I thought I left you setting light to the haystacks of the farmer who didn't give his workmen enough wages! That was a nice little job for you."

"I've done that long ago," said the Fire Queen, scornfully, "and burnt down the thieves' hut since, and I thought I had better just come and see what you were about here; you always want keeping up to the mark!"

Upon this, the Fire King said something to his wife, very sharply, in French. He evidently did not like her to speak in this way to him before the Ogre.

Then, to show that he did not want keeping up to the mark, he doubled his fiery fists, and turned threateningly to the Ogre. "What are you going to do with those children?" he roared.

And now another wonderful thing happened: the form of the Pink Bird suddenly changed into a beautiful lady. No one, however, seemed to think this at all odd, except Hans and Gretchen. The Ogre and his children were used to the metamorphosis, and the Fire King and Queen took no notice.

"Speak up, this moment!" said the Fire Queen to the Ogre.

"Be silent, my dear, I *beg*," said the Fire King. "Do let me manage this little affair my own way, for once;" and then he repeated the question once more, louder than ever, "What are you going to do with those children?"

There was a dead silence for a moment; not a sound was to be heard except the crackling of the Fire King's flames.

Then rose Hans' shrill young voice, clear and distinct. "He's going to roast one of us, and boil the other!"

"I thought so!" said the Fire King.

"I don't believe you did," put in his wife; "I thought so!"

"My dear, I *beg* of you, just for once," implored the Fire King; and then he began again in a very pompous tone, "I thought so! Well, I shall not be very hard on you this time. I shall simply burn up all this

portion of the forest, which belongs to you, including the nest of young ones you are bringing up so badly: but don't let me catch you playing any more pranks of changing into a tree to decoy naughty children again. It's a stupid, ungentlemanly trick. I always take a fatherly interest in you, you know: but I won't stand any nonsense."

"My husband is a great deal too indulgent," said the Fire Queen; "but if anything of this kind occurs again, I shall take care that he does his duty."

The Fire King turned to his wife, much hurt at this remark. "My darling," said he, in a low voice, "is that quite a nice way of putting it?"

At this moment the beautiful lady, whom the Pink Bird had changed into, crept tremblingly out from behind the fire, and curtsied to the King and Queen. "Please your Majesties," said she, "it is now eight years since you enchanted me."

"I know that," said the Fire Queen; "you have got two more years to serve."

"I thought, perhaps," said the lady, timidly, "that, under the circumstances, you might be inclined to let me off the last two."

"Under what circumstances?" asked the Fire Queen.

"Well, really, my dear," said the King, "without going into all that," and he glanced admiringly at the trembling form of the beautiful lady, "I think we might let her off these last two years."

"Not an hour! not the hundredth part of a second!" cried the Fire Queen. "Children," she continued, turning to Hans and Gretchen, "for what crime do you think this lady has been changed into a bird, and married to an Ogre?" The children looked as if they could not believe that the beautiful lady, who had been so kind to them, could be guilty of any crime; but the Queen went on to explain. "It happened, eight years ago when she was a little girl—*she played with fire!*" There was an awful silence; and then the Queen repeated the words again. "She played with fire: think of the frightful levity of such an act! The consequence was that her clothes caught, and, in a moment, she was a sheet of flame. Fortunately, my husband turned up at the moment——"

"Let me tell this part of the story," interrupted the Fire King, eagerly, "because you know, my dear, you were not there just then." And then he went on very quickly, as if afraid of being stopped before the words were out of his mouth, "'You shall not be burned to death,' said I; 'but as an expiation of your crime, I must enchant you for ten years. During that time you must be changed into a bird, or married to an Ogre.'"

"I beg your pardon, my dear," put in the Fire Queen. "What you said was, 'You must be changed into a bird, *and* married to an Ogre,'—*and*, not *or*, you see."

"My wife and I always differ about this part of the story," said the King, "but as she was not there, and as I said the words myself, I am sure my version is most likely to be correct; besides, what fixes it in my mind is, that I gave the young person on fire her choice between the Bird and the Ogre, and that she chose the former. In the other case, you see, there would have been no question of choice."

The beautiful lady looked as if she would have liked to corroborate the King's version, but did not dare.

"If you did say *or*, more shame for you," said the Fire Queen. "It would have been a ridiculously light punishment for such an offence, as I told you at the time, as soon as I heard of it."

"Well," said the Fire King, "anyhow, my wife had her way about it, and all I could do to mitigate the severity of the sentence was to allow the young person to assume her natural shape for a few hours every night, for fear she should quite forget how to behave like a lady. I also picked out the most promising young Ogre I knew, who I thought might really be improved by a decent wife, but he has not turned out all I could wish."

"You did another very silly thing," said the Fire Queen, "you made her a *Pink* Bird; a ridiculous fancy, most unsuitable, under the circumstances; a plain brown or grey would have been the proper thing."

"Well, well, my dear," said the Fire King, "you were young once yourself, remember."

"Pooh!" said the Fire Queen, "I never cared about dress; I have worn simple flame-colour all my life. *You* always were a dandy. I believe, if the truth were known, you would like to go about in a chimney-pot hat at this moment."

Of all the annoying things his wife had said to him, this last seemed to annoy the Fire King most, and he spoke to her once more, in French, very rapidly and emphatically.

The Queen was silent for a moment, and the beautiful lady took advantage of the pause to say, tremblingly,—

"Let me, at least, humbly beg one favour of you: spare the nest!"

"What, those hideous little birds?" said the Fire Queen. "You surely can't care about them?"

"They are my own children," said the lady, "and they will really not be so ugly when the pretty pink feathers begin to come."

"It is a very proper feeling on your part," said the Fire King. "For her sake, not yours," he continued, turning to the Ogre, "I spare the young ones, though, I must say, they seem to take more after their father than their mother. On this condition, however :—these young birds are to be brought up on a purely vegetable diet. I will not have them taught your coarse, gluttonous tastes. Berries and fruits, mind, but not a scrap of animal food ; not even a worm or an insect. The first time anything of the kind passes their beaks, I shall manage to find it out ; and mind, in this affair, not the slightest blame attaches to your wife, who, of course, is obliged to obey your orders. Now, my dear," he added, turning to the Queen, "don't you think it would save us trouble to wind up the whole affair at once, and let this lady off her two years?"

"Not a day !—not an hour !—not the thousandth part of a minute !" said the Fire Queen again.

"Well, then, I suppose there 's nothing more to be said about it," said the Fire King, regretfully. "Now, my dear, one of us must light these children home. Would you mind seeing to it, because I have to burn up all these trees?"

"I shan't be bothered with it," said the Fire Queen. "You can leave a little space unburnt for to-night, and they can sleep there, and the Pink Bird will take them home in the morning."

And so it was settled, and Hans and Gretchen, worn out with the day's fatigue and excitement, lay down to sleep on the grass ; and the beautiful lady spread her cloak over them as tenderly as if she had been their own mother. It was quite warm enough, however, without this, for the Fire King was as good as his word, and was very busy all night, burning up every scrap of the Ogre's domains ; and fires blazed on all sides. What became of the Ogre that night I can't say positively ; but I believe he changed himself and his children into bats, for convenience.

When Hans and Gretchen woke next morning they found themselves in a wild scene of desolation. Except the patch of ground on which they lay, every blade of grass was scorched and blackened ; and every tree around was burnt nearly to the ground. The fires, however, had quite gone out now, and by their side stood, not the beautiful lady, but the Pink Bird, her lovely plumage brilliant in the morning sunshine, and her gentle eyes looking at them lovingly.

"Now I will show you the way home," said she ; and she spread her soft wings and flew lightly on before them, stopping every now and then for them to overtake her. They had soon left the dreary waste behind

them, and were once more in the green forest. Here the Pink Bird made them rest often. Sometimes she would come close to them, and let them stroke her beautiful rosy wings, and sometimes she would mount to the topmost branches of the trees, which one can never reach, and where the nicest things always grow, and bring them down berries and fruits in her bill; cooing forth sweet encouraging words between whiles. At length they reached a part of the forest quite familiar to Hans and Gretchen, and their hearts began to beat with joy, as they felt that they were near home.

“And now,” said the Pink Bird at last, when a little curl of smoke, from the chimney of a distant farm-house, showed itself through the trees, “I must leave you. I dare not venture nearer a human dwelling than this, in my present form; I must fly back to my husband and children. For two years more the cruel spell binds me! You know what has brought it on me?”

“I know,” said Hans; “you played with fire! and it is a great shame to enchant you like this for ten years, only for that.”

“It seems hard,” answered the Pink Bird, “but I sometimes think that I deserved some misfortune. My mother had often told me never to go near the fire, and on no account to touch it, and I had disobeyed her many times before my clothes took fire at last. Be warned by my example. Now I must say farewell. Two years hence you may, perhaps, hear of me again!” Then she nestled close to each of the children in turns, and they caressed and thanked her, and promised to remember her counsel; and she rose once more high in the air, and sailed away over the forest, the children gazing after her till her lovely rose-coloured form looked like a tiny dusky speck, and at last disappeared altogether.

It may be imagined with what joy Hans and Gretchen were received, when they reached their own home, after their day and night's absence; indeed, their parents had been so miserable about them, and were so amazed at their wonderful adventures, and thankful for their escape, that they quite forgot to scold them at all for their disobedience; but Hans and Gretchen knew how it really was. They often spoke together of their night in the forest, and, whenever either of them was inclined to disregard their parents' wishes, the other would say, “Remember the Pink Bird.”



THE QUEEN WHO COULD NOT MAKE GINGER-
BREAD-NUTS, AND THE KING WHO COULD
NOT PLAY ON THE JEW'S-HARP.

THE King of Macaroons was dressing himself, with the help of his Chamberlain, one morning, when to his dismay he found that there was a hole in the heel of his stocking.

"Dear me!" said the King, "look here! I really must get a wife."

"Just what I should have said," returned the Chamberlain, "only I knew your Majesty was going to make the same remark."

"Good," said the King; "but do you think I could easily find a wife to suit me? You know I am very difficult to please. My Queen must be clever and beautiful, and besides which, she must be able to make gingerbread-nuts, for you know how fond I am of them; and there is not a person in my kingdom who knows how to make them properly—neither too hard nor too soft."

The Chamberlain was astonished to hear this, and felt rather inclined to laugh, but he answered very properly, "A great King like your Majesty must surely be able to find a Princess who knows how to make gingerbread-nuts."

That very day the King and his Minister set off to look for a wife for the King, paying visits to all the neighbours who had Princesses to dispose of.

They could only hear of three at all likely to suit, and of these three not one could make gingerbread-nuts.

The first Princess said she could make delicious almond cakes, if they would do.

But the King said, "No—no—nothing but gingerbread-nuts will do."

The second Princess turned away very angrily when she was asked the question.

But the third, quite the cleverest and prettiest of the three, before the King had time to speak, put a question of her own. "Could the King," she asked, "play on the Jew's-harp? If not, she was sorry, really sorry, as she liked the look of him—but she could not be his wife. She had resolved never to marry any man who could not play on the Jew's-harp."

So the King had to come home without a Queen; but as the holes in

his stockings grew larger, he felt that he really must make another effort to find a wife.

"Go to the first Princess, and ask her," said he to his Chamberlain. "I must give up the gingerbread-nuts, I suppose, and be contented with almond cakes."

The Chamberlain went, and came back with the news that this Princess had just married somebody else. Then the King sent him to the second Princess; but she had unfortunately just died. And so there was only the Jew's-harp Princess left.

In despair, he sent to her; and to his great joy, she consented to do without the Jew's-harp, and to be his wife.

So they were married with very great rejoicings, and lived in the greatest happiness for a whole year. The King had forgotten all about the gingerbread-nuts, and the Queen all about the Jew's-harp.

One morning, however, the King got out of bed with his left foot first, which made everything go wrong all through the day; and so the King and Queen had a quarrel. What it was about they really did not know; but they were both snappish and cross, and determined to have the last word.

"You'd better hold your tongue, and not keep on finding fault with everything and everybody," said the Queen at last. "Why, you can't even play the Jew's-harp."

"At any rate," returned the King, "you can't make gingerbread-nuts."

For the first time, the Queen had nothing to say. And, indeed, the moment the word Jew's-harp had passed her lips she was sorry she had said it, and she ran away at once into her own apartments, and, throwing herself on the cushions of her sofa, had a good cry.

The King, on the other hand, paced up and down the room, rubbing his hands in high glee.

"What a good thing for me my wife can't make gingerbread-nuts, otherwise I should not have had a word to answer about the Jew's-harp," he said.

Presently, however, he looked at the portrait of the Queen, which was hanging on the wall. "My poor little wife! I daresay, after all, she is sorry to have teased me," he said. "I think I'll go and see what she is about. Perhaps she may be crying her pretty eyes out."

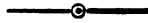
As it happened, the King and Queen, each thinking of the other, ran into each other's arms in the great corridor on which their rooms opened,



and there they kissed, and made up their quarrel, and vowed never to have another.

“I tell you what we will do,” said the King; “we will banish two words from our kingdom, under pain of death, and those are Jew’s-harp and——”

“Gingerbread-nuts,” interrupted the Queen, laughing low, while she wiped a tear from her cheek.



THE FIRST ALMOND-TREE.

HEARKEN to the ancient fable that tells the origin of the fair almond-tree, which breaks into bloom long ere a leaf is visible upon its naked twigs.

Many hundred years ago there reigned upon the shores of Thrace a young Queen. She was fair as day; her soft brown hair rippled far down her white neck, which looked as though it had been born of snow and kissed of roses. Yet the lovely Phyllis knew little joy in her life, for it was lonely and destitute of love. Called early to fill her father’s throne, born to rule over rude warlike men, in whose pursuits she felt no interest, what wonder that restlessness reigned within her breast?

Perplexed and dreamy, she was pacing the sea-shore one summer evening, watching the wavelets as they rippled at her feet and sparkled in diamond-flashes in the light of the setting sun.

“Dione,” said the young Queen to her favourite handmaiden, “we shall have a storm to-morrow, mark my word. See that dark streak of red ’neath Phœbus’ car, and note the deceptive stillness of the water. Ah! would that storm, sunshine, or cold ever broke in upon the stillness of my life!” she sighed.

“The night falls apace, let us return within,” said Dione, who knew not how to deal with her mistress when in these strange moods.

Phyllis retraced her steps mechanically.

When she arrived at the grove of trees at the promontory that overlooks the wide-sweeping bay, she stopped an instant to review the scene before it was hidden to her sight by the foliage.

“The weight of some unknown event oppresses me to-night, Dione. Oh! shall I ever recall with sorrow this peaceful evening, and my rest-

less thoughts, glad if I could have them in exchange for more bitter ones? Remind me of this eve, should that day ever arise."

"May it never dawn, O Queen!"

The fair beauty sighed again. "Perchance it might be better if it did. Time will reveal."

Next morn the Queen's predictions were verified. The wind was blowing fiercely from across the broad ocean, and the waves were lashed to fury. Their angry thunder as they broke upon the shore fell upon the Queen's ear, and made her shiver with dread. "Ah! Dione, how fearful it would be if one were exposed to the water's rage and lost among these pitiless breakers! Do you not hear cries of distress? I thought some caught my ear."

"It was the roar of the wind, O Queen, and the sighing of the trees."

The women were silent for some time: Dione absorbed in her weaving; the young Queen, listless and thoughtful, lying on her couch playing with her unbound hair.

"Yet again, Dione, I thought to hear it. Go forth, I pray, and spy if any bark be struggling with this boiling sea."

"It cannot be, no vessel could live in such a storm; yet I obey."

"And you saw nothing?" demanded Phyllis, when Dione once more raised the heavy curtain that overhung the doorway and entered the chamber.

"Nothing save sea and cloud, my Queen. Say, shall I divert your thoughts by song?"

"Ay, do."

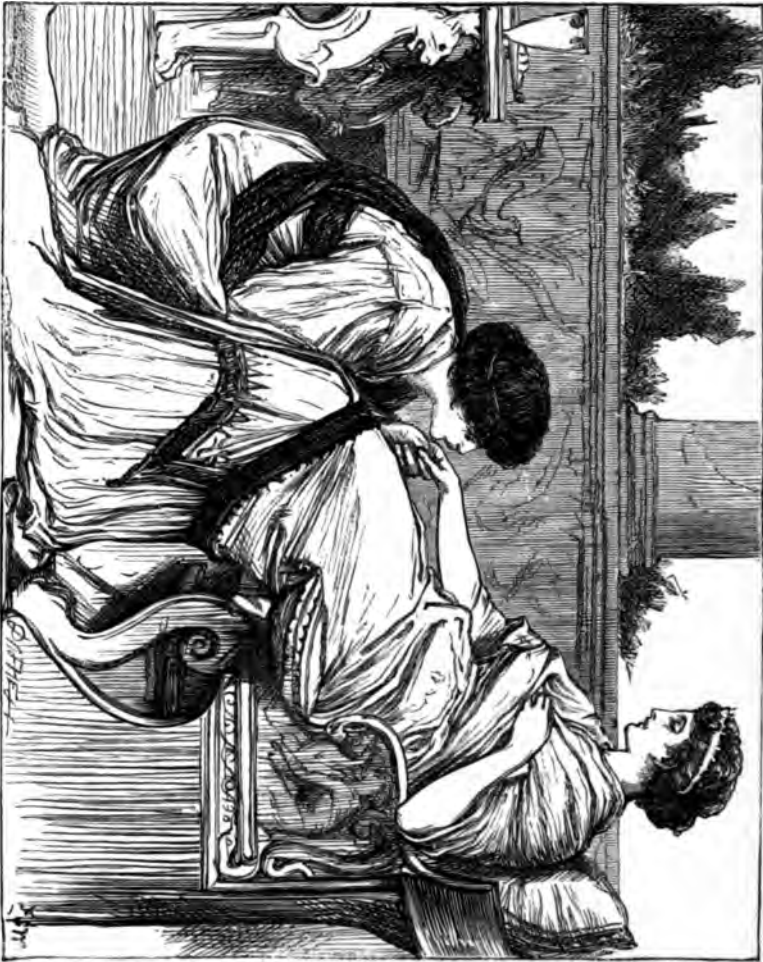
The gentle handmaiden pushed aside her loom, and drawing a stool to her mistress' feet, seated herself thereon, and sang a soft lulling melody to the strains of the lyre.

Phyllis listened, first carelessly, then with attention. But ere the song had ended, she broke forth, "Dione, there it is again, that cry of anguish. I command you, tell the watchers to look out. Some mortal is in distress, I know."

Dione obeyed, amazed at the Queen's strange manner. She returned in a few minutes breathlessly.

"O Queen, you heard aright; a bark has stranded upon our shore, and the watchers are bringing a stranger in to thee. They found him weeping and lamenting his sad fate, asking if he were cast among barbarians, or among a nation who honoured the eternal gods."

Hardly had she done speaking than the unknown himself entered.



Flinging himself down on the ground, he embraced the young Queen's knees and besought her protection.

"I am a wanderer," he said, "shipwrecked upon my journey home to Attica; take pity on me, fair Queen, and grant me the rights of hospitality."

"You are welcome, stranger; rise. Among a god-fearing people you need dread no ill. Go, prepare a bath and fresh raiment for our visitor; let a feast be spread and the wine be mixed. Then, when he has rested and refreshed himself, perchance he will tell us his name, country, and adventures."

The handmaidens did as they were bid, and Phyllis, once more alone with Dione, told her to fetch forth her richest garments, "for I must deck me in my best," she said, "to show honour to this handsome stranger. How stalwart he is, Dione! how tall and manly, and yet withal how fair and gentle! Methinks he must have sprung from gods; I have not seen such beauty in mortals ere now."

Some time later Phyllis entered the banqueting-hall, there to join her guest. She was looking more beautiful than ever. Her long hair was entwined with sweet-scented flowers; the odour of delicious perfume was wafted from the drapery that enfolded her. Golden bracelets, beset with precious stones, glittered on her slender arms, and on her snow-white neck shone a band of gold.

These charms were not unperceived by the shipwrecked man. Neither did he lose by the change he had undergone; and Phyllis, as she compared him to the warriors that sat around the board, once more acknowledged to herself that there was none among them that would bear comparison with him.

When the meal was ended, and a libation had been offered to Zeus, as the patron of hospitality, the Queen turned to her guest, who was seated at her right.

"Stranger, I pray thee tell us how thou camest to be stranded alone and friendless upon our shores."

"Mighty Phyllis," he answered, "I am Demophoon, the son of Theseus. Attica, that land of olive and honey, is my country. But I have been long absent, for I come from the siege of Troy, that proud city which the Hellenes have levelled to the dust for the crime of its son Paris, who broke the sacred laws of hospitality. Returning thence, a mighty storm arose, my comrades were all drowned, and I alone survive. Such, O Queen, is all I have to tell."

Phyllis had listened attentively, her soft large eyes bent compassionately upon the speaker.

"The gods must love you, Demophoon," said she, "even though Poseidon be not thy friend, for they have brought thee safely unto our coasts. Wherefore behold in this a sign that thou hadst best remain among us, nor think to regain thy native land. Say, shall it not be so?" she continued, turning to the warriors. "See, is he not stalwart and fair, and should he not remain and become a Thracian hero?"

The men shouted "Ay" because they saw their Queen regarded the youth with favour, but many were secretly displeased and jealous at this marked preference shown for Demophoon; yet he only shook his head sadly at the flattering speech.

"O Queen," he cried, "tempt me no further to stay with you. To be the meanest watcher in your house, and daily to see your godlike countenance, would be joy indeed for mortal man. But duty recalls me to Athens. I am my father's only son, and heir to the throne of Attica. It were not well or right if I never went back; but if I may take advantage of your proffered friendship, aid me in my return, and I shall for ever remember you and this land with gratitude."

"If you must go," said Phyllis, and her brow clouded, "my men shall fit the stoutest bark for you, and fifty of my best oars shall row you to your native shores."

Next day and the next the storm still raged with unabated fury, and there was no question as to the possibility of Demophoon's quitting Thrace. Meantime he had been constantly with the Queen, who had done all in her power to make her guest's enforced stay a pleasant one.

A dangerously pleasant one it proved to the visitor, who, when the sun shone out brightly again and the sea was once more calm, and they asked when it pleased him to command the bark, felt that the image of the lovely Phyllis had sunk deep, deep into his heart, and that he could not bring himself to leave her.

He made an idle excuse to rest yet another day. The young Queen perceived this, and her heart leaped within her. Perchance she could retain him near her, after all. And when the next day came, and yet the next, and still Demophoon could not tear himself away, it began to be tacitly understood by all that the stranger would remain and wed the lovely Queen.

So it came to pass indeed. And then there dawned for Demophoon weeks of all-absorbing happiness. He thought of nought but Phyllis;

absent from her side he knew no pleasure, and she was equally glad in him.

“Dione,” she said many and many a time, when her handmaiden was decking her proud beauty for the innumerable games and feasts the marriage had called forth; “Dione, how wrong I was that night before the storm! The weight of an unknown event did oppress me, but what a joyous one it has proved!”

Alas! Phyllis had spoken too soon.

When Demophoon had passed through the first intoxicating effects of happiness the sense of duty awoke in him once more. He knew he must return to seek out his father, that he might reassure him of his safety.

In vain Phyllis sighed and entreated; in vain she called him cruel, harsh, unkind, to think of venturing once more on the dangerous sea, leaving her sorrowing behind. Demophoon was firm this time.

“My beloved Phyllis, it must be,” he said. “This parting is no less hard for me than for you. I shall return within a month’s space. I swear it, Phyllis, by the Styx and the eternal gods, whose aid and protection I implore.”

Weeping bitterly, Phyllis saw him depart, and watched his bark as it slipped from her view, feeling that her heart, her life, and her joy went with it. Nothing diverted, nothing consoled her. Vainly did Dione strike the lute; in vain did her warriors perform manly games. The only comfort she found was in Demophoon’s oft-repeated promise that he would return at the expiration of a month.

The tender Phyllis counted the hours till he could be back. At last, at last, after weary waiting, the happy day was at hand.

Incessantly Phyllis ran to the shore, that she might be the first to spy the boat and welcome her beloved on landing. She never for an instant doubted that he would come. When night began to fall, and yet he had not arrived, she would not credit that the day had indeed ended without bringing him. Her eyes never closed that night; constantly she thought to catch the sound of oars, to distinguish *his* voice, and ere day had well dawned the anxious Queen was once more unquietly pacing the sea-shore.

Again this day did not bring him, nor the next, nor the next.

Phyllis grew distracted and lost all hope of his return. It was useless that her handmaidens strove to comfort her. She was certain, had he remained true, he would have come through all obstacles of whatever kind. All hope was now dead, and she had even ceased her visits to the shore.

She was pining her life away ; she refused all nourishment, and at last she died heartbroken at the neglect of him whom she had loved so tenderly.

“O eternal gods!” she had prayed when she felt life slipping from her hold, “grant me yet one request. Let me not quit this world, but let my shade remain upon it, near to the promontory whence I have so often looked for my darling’s return, lest he yet come and I not know it.”

The gods, who loved her, granted her wish. Her soul passed into the form of a Dryad, and became enclosed within the bark of a young tree, barren and leafless, unlike the laurels and olives that clad the same spot, and were decked in evergreen garbs. Therefore all noticed the tree, and wondered at its new and strange aspect.

The Thracians wept their lovely Queen ; for three days great mourning prevailed in the land.

At daybreak on the fourth a light bark was seen to round the promontory ; bright-coloured sails hung from its masts, and it showed the signs of joy. It held Demophoon, come at last, detained by adverse winds and storms from keeping his solemn promise to his beloved.

When the sad news of her death was told him he was in despair, and his grief knew no bounds. He searched the whole palace for her ; he could not believe she was indeed departed from him.

But when he became convinced that it was bitter truth, he bowed his head to inexorable fate, and offered sacrifices upon the sea-shore to appease the manes of his beloved. The smoke rose upwards and mingled with the trees on the promontory.

Was Phyllis sensible of his return and deep despair ? It must have been, for as the fumes from the altar wreathed the leafless branches of the tree that enclosed her in its bark, it burst forth into one mass of tender rosy blossoms, covering the bare twigs with a blushing wilderness of flowers.

Then Demophoon knew that his dearest was become a Dryad, her home that tree ; knew, too, that she had forgiven him, and that death had wrought no change in her affections.



THE GLASS MERCHANT.

THE young Felix possessed all the good things of this world; rank riches, health, good looks, and good abilities,—everything, in a word, which is supposed to have the power of setting a man at ease with himself. His residence, his establishment, his horses and equipage, were very little inferior to those of royalty, and he was the centre of a large circle of obsequious and admiring friends, who sang his praises to no measured tune.

And yet he was not at ease with himself. It was impossible but that the flattery which had followed him from the cradle, and filled the very air he breathed, should have convinced him to some extent that he was a vastly superior being to the common herd of men; but a natural modesty had served considerably to counteract it, and often occasioned him grave misgivings as to how much of the praise lavished on him was genuinely due to his merits, and how much, on the other hand, was merely a servile tribute to his great possessions. Therefore he was often oppressed with a feeling of hollowness and unreality in the scenes before him, and he would say to himself,—

“Would it not be very different if I were poor and humble? Where then would be these troops of friends?”

As these thoughts forced themselves often upon him, the greater became his dissatisfaction with the state of affairs.

“Of what avail are my riches,” he would sigh, “if the happiness they create is a hallow sham?”

But ponder as he might, he could see no way to a remedy.

At this time, and while he was in this frame of mind, it was one day announced to him that an old man stood at the gate who desired to see him. “He describes himself as a glass merchant,” said the servant, “and says he has some very wonderful curiosities to sell. We told him to go away, but he will take no denial.”

“Let him be admitted,” said Felix; and accordingly a venerable old man, with flowing white beard was ushered into his presence, carrying a small knapsack.

After bowing low, he looked round on the attendants, and said, “May I request the favour of your Excellency ordering the attendants to withdraw before I produce my goods?”



"As you will," said Felix, smiling, "but I confess you seem over-particular. There are, I fancy, more beautiful objects in the house than any you can have in your poor little knapsack. If you had called yourself 'pedlar,' instead of 'merchant,' you would have been nearer the mark. However, let them withdraw."

The old man, whose face had worn a very expressive smile as his wares were being depreciated, began slowly to open his bag the instant they were alone.

"We shall see," he said. "Mine are no common wares, though it is true there are not many of them. The perfection of them has occupied a long lifetime; but now! why, if your servants knew of them, they would have me burned as a sorcerer. Ha! ha! that would never do. No! your Excellency is a man of sense, of judgment; but not so those fellows."

All this time he was slowly unstrapping his pack. His speech had fairly roused the interest and curiosity of his customer, but provoked no remark.

"Your Excellency will permit me to exhibit my poor wares," he continued. "I do not expect you to credit what I say of them, but I shall not require payment for any purchase until you have made a trial of it. Now, what do you say to this pair of spectacles? There is not much to look at, I grant. But you have only to contemplate any natural object through them, and you see at once right into it, and know all about it. With these on your nose, you are at once astronomer, botanist, geologist, and any other 'ologist you can name."

"Say no more," cried Felix. "If they indeed bear out your description, they are the things of all others for me, and there is only the price to settle."

"The price," said the merchant, "is five thousand pieces of gold, but it need not be paid now. You can have a month's trial. On this day month I will see you again, and then, if I have not deceived you, you shall pay me the pieces. Farewell, for one month." And strapping up his pack, with another low bow he departed.

The moment Felix had heard of the wonderful properties of the spectacles, it had occurred to him that here were the means of rendering himself really superior to those about him, and worthy of the praise so freely bestowed on him. So he thought he should lose that sense of hollowness and unreality in his surroundings which was such a drawback to the enjoyment of them. Hence his eagerness to possess them.

He lost no time in putting them to the test, and during the whole of *the following* month so assiduously did he apply himself to the investiga-

tion of natural phenomena with their aid, that he became a profound natural philosopher. The month fled quickly by, and his studies were only interrupted by the announcement that the old glass merchant had returned.

He immediately ordered the servant to admit him into his presence, and to bring from his treasury five bags of a thousand pieces each.

After returning the old man's salutation, he said, "You did not deceive me. It is a wonderful instrument, and there is the price agreed."

"I trust your Excellency has found the spectacles answer, not only my description of them, but also the purpose for which you purchased them."

"To tell the truth, they do *not*," Felix answered. "I value them very highly. There is a vast deal of pure and true pleasure to be derived from the knowledge they impart; though even with regard to that, I find that to increase your knowledge is only to make you more conscious of your ignorance, and that these studies would absorb one's whole life:

"But what I feel most is, that they do not remove the impression that those who praise and flatter you to your face may all the while be sneering at or ridiculing you behind your back; and I find, too, that whilst I am intent on botany or astronomy, my servants are cheating me, my friends deceiving me, or perhaps a thief picks my pocket.

"I incline to think, after all, that the 'proper study of mankind is man. Have you anything that will aid me in that study? that will assist me to read man, as the spectacles do to read nature?"

"I can suit you exactly," was the reply. "Put this eye-glass in your eye, and no man can deceive you as to his real character. In fact, you will see and know him better than he knows himself—for, whatever else we may know, few of us know ourselves."

"And the price?"

"Ten thousand pieces, on the same terms as before."

"Be it so, then," said Felix, and dismissed the merchant, full of eagerness to put his new power into practice. During the month he diligently studied the characters of every person with whom he was brought into contact, from the servants up. It was observed that he did so with a continually diminishing interest; and at the end of the month he was sad and dispirited, and evidently farther from happiness than ever. He was looking eagerly for the reappearance of the glass merchant, and he said to him the moment he appeared,—

"Here is your money, merchant; but I confess I grudge it to you.

The glass is a most disappointing affair, and would have been dear at half the price."

"Surely it has fulfilled my promise, and informed you of what you wanted to know?" said the old man interrogatively.

"Yes; but what avails that if the knowledge is not worth having, and only adds to one's unhappiness? And truly this is a case, I think, 'where ignorance is bliss.'"

"Your Excellency will explain?"

"Well, does it add to one's happiness to know for certain that the greater part of your friends are false, that few of your dependants have any real care for you, that the lady you are disposed to admire only cares for your wealth, that many of those with whom you have dealings are only watching for an opportunity to cheat you, that——"

"These were exceptions?" interrupted the old man.

"Yes; and so far so good; but the worthless predominate."

"You suspected their worthlessness before?"

"Yes; but I did not know which *were* worthless, so I could give all credit for good qualities; and though I know now they were destitute of them, I think it was almost better to believe and be deceived than to lose one's faith altogether; better even to fancy men virtuous and honourable than to know that they are not."

"That is well said," returned the old man. "It is not for me to advise, but simply to sell my goods. If it were otherwise, I should have expressed the opinion that man would be no happier for a real ability to read men's character, certainly not for the fancied and imperfect ability on which some men pride themselves, but which leads them into all kinds of mistakes. It seems almost to be another sample of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. No man has the power in any degree approaching to perfection. It would not make him happier. There is so much that is evil in man that it is better to make-believe in his goodness than to disbelieve in it altogether. And now what do you propose to study next, and in what can I assist you?"

"I have thought," said Felix, "that I ought to direct my study to myself. 'Know thyself,' says the philosopher, and the poet prays that—

'Some power the gift would gie us,
To see ourselves as others see us.'

Have you anything that will enable me to do that?"

The old man smiled rather sadly, as he replied,—

"I do not offer advice, but I fear you will be disappointed again in

the result. However, you can try. Here is a mirror in which you may at any time see reflected an image of what you appear in the eyes of those with whom you are in company. The price, fifteen thousand pieces, and a trial as before."

"I will certainly try it," said Felix, "for it is a point on which I much desire to be satisfied."

Felix made free use of his mirror during the month that followed. It was not so large but that he could conceal the use of it, or he would have found but one opinion of himself to prevail; namely, that he was exceedingly vain, and always admiring himself in the glass. As it was, he saw himself reflected in an endless variety of ways, almost equalling in number the persons about whose opinion he consulted it. He found that no one regarded him as the kind of person he considered himself to be, and that scarcely any two agreed completely in their estimate of him. He found two distinct classes of opinion—those which took a good-natured, and those which took an ill-natured view. The former gave him credit for some good qualities, but they were far from overlooking the bad, although they would often make excuses for them. The latter distorted or depreciated his very best qualities. But even so the individuals of each class differed among themselves in the particular good or bad qualities they assigned to him; so that not only was he disappointed at the difference between their estimate of him and his own estimate of himself, but absolutely perplexed by the differences among themselves, to make out what he was or what they thought of him. For he could not be both of two contradictory things, as for example truthful and deceitful; yet, some thought him one, and some the other.

The effect of the month's investigation was to make him intensely miserable, and he welcomed with a sigh of relief the announcement of the glass merchant's return. On his appearance he pushed the bags of gold over to him without a word.

"As I feared," said the old man, "you have not found the opinions of others as favourable as your own."

"As favourable as I deserve, perhaps," Felix remarked. "It is not altogether that which has so inexpressibly depressed me. To learn my weak points would do me no harm if I learned them on good authority. But when each one differs from the other on some important point, how am I to know which is right, or if either is right? Save, perhaps, on a few broad points, I may just as well take my own estimate of myself, as that of anybody else."

"Probably," said the merchant, "all are more or less wrong and more or less right. You will get from them only broad general grounds, from which to review your former estimate of yourself, and make the necessary corrections. But after all it will come back to yourself to sum up and strike the balance."

"And again," observed Felix, "it affords me no help for the regulation of my conduct with a view to please my friends ; for, in endeavouring to please some, I must necessarily displease others."

"It has been always so," replied the old man, smiling. "Ever since I read as a boy the fable of the Old Man and his Ass, I have seen more and more reason to pronounce it the height of folly to endeavour to please *all*."

"It strikes me still, however," Felix remarked, "that what a man wants to know is *himself*; and that my mistake lay in supposing that I should get at that knowledge by observing what other people thought of me. But that is not myself. They don't know me, and therefore their thoughts of me give me no certain clue. I must have something to show me what I *really* am, what I am in the sight of God who made me, and who alone knows me."

"You are right," said the old man. "It may not give you happiness directly, but is the most likely to lead you to it eventually : you will at least be on sure ground. If you will use this microscope as I will instruct you, in connection with a careful study of this book, and prayer to God, you will see yourself, your thoughts, motives, character, and condition as they really are in the sight of God."

The bargain was struck, and Felix carried his microscope with the book of directions to his own private room, which none but himself ever entered.

He commenced at once to examine himself according to his instructions, and was soon deeply interested in the occupation. Indeed, so absorbed did he become, that, before a week had passed, his nights as well as his days were given to it. This was the more remarkable because it was evident that he derived no pleasure from the work, but quite the contrary. In spite of this, it had a strange fascination for him, and he still worked away, although long before the trial month had expired he was so utterly overcome with misery and anguish, that he lay groaning and weeping through the weary nights, a prey to despair. For he had beheld under the microscope a poor, vile, sinful creature, with only death and destruction before him ; and he did not doubt that such he was in

the sight of God. He was watching at the gate when the day came round for the merchant's return, and ran to meet him.

"Tell me," he cried, "is it true?" And then, seeing his answer in the old man's countenance, he exclaimed with passionate emphasis, "Wretch that you are! you have destroyed my happiness for ever."

"Nay, not so, my son," said the old man kindly. "Your condition was that which you have seen before you saw it; your seeing it now makes it no worse than it was, but will perhaps set you upon finding a remedy. And then, though (as I told you) you do not obtain happiness directly, you will find it eventually; and your present misery and despair will serve to make you appreciate better the deliverance in store for you, and to enhance the happiness of knowing that you are at peace with God."

"In pity say not another word," cried Felix; "but the remedy, if you have it, only let me know where it is."

"The remedy, then," said the old man, "is this telescope. Take it, and gaze long and steadfastly at the heavens. Gaze, till your vision pierces the heavens, and you see there what will bring you peace and happiness. Gaze, till you see (as you will see) the way of escape from that state of sin and condemnation in which you beheld yourself. Gaze again till it has brought that deliverance so near to you that you can put forth your hand and grasp it, and take it to yourself. Then you will want me no more. My work will be done. I shall not return."

"But the price?" cried Felix. "Take everything I possess, if it will only deliver me from that dreadful state."

"The price," said the old man, solemnly, "is *paid*; else all your possessions could not buy it. It is not sold, but freely given, for the sake of One who paid for it with His life, to such as feel their need of it; to those who like yourself are ready to give all they possess for it, and who will use it diligently when they have got it."

With these words the old man bowed low and departed, and Felix saw him no more.

Gradually, from that time, Felix recovered his peace of mind, or rather he attained to a degree of happiness and contentment such as he had never before experienced.

He became remarkable also for modesty, humility, unselfishness, and charity. He always declared that if there was any good in him, it was entirely due to the possession and the use of the merchant's wonderful telescope, to which he gave the name of "Faith."

He still took pleasure in the use of his spectacles, and he daily examined himself by the aid of his microscope. As to the eyeglass and mirror, he only employed them on rare occasions ; indeed, I may say he almost entirely discarded the latter.

The telescope was his chief treasure, his joy and comfort till death—and *after death*.



A SECRET ABOUT A POOR HUNCHBACK.

HIGH up on the brown shaggy mountain-side there stands an old stone cross, cracked, lichened, mossed, and sinking on one side into the ground ; and beneath the cross there bubbles a clear Holy Well, to which few go now except the sheep that crop the rich green grass that springs around its brink.

Beside the well sat a little boy, and as he looked into the crystal water, his tears dimpled it like rain.

"It only tells me what I knew before," said the disappointed little fellow with a sigh.

The little boy was weeping because he was a hunchback. His big sad eyes melted the heart like minor melodies, but there was nothing else beautiful in his stunted, distorted, feeble frame.

His mother lavished fondness on him at times, but at other times there was a look in her eyes which it was hard to bear—the mortifying pity of crushed hope. His father looked at him as if he wished that he had never been born. His sisters were kind to him after a fashion, but their proud love was reserved for his beautiful young brother, who patronized and promised to protect him with half-contemptuous compassion.

Outside his own family the little hunchback was either ignored, or coarsely pitied, or made the butt of most cruel ridicule and the victim of downright brutality. He felt very lonely in a world which he loved because it was so full of beauty—amongst so many people whom he longed to love if they would only let him.

He had heard the old tales that were told of the curing power of the deserted Holy Well. It bubbled up as brightly as ever it had bubbled ; why should it not be as good a doctor as ever it had been ? He determined to try it.



Fearing to be laughed at, he kept his determination to himself, and started without telling any one for the mountain-side.

As he passed through the village street, he was jeered at and pelted by the village children, but a good-hearted woman rushed out from her wash-tub with brawny, bare, soapsuddy arms, and drove off his young tormentors by sounding boxes on the ear, and breath-taking thumps upon the back, and teeth-chattering shakings by the collar.

The little boy was grateful to his protectress, but he thought it hard he should need protection, and when she said "Poor little boy, it is not his fault that he is such an object," her pity made him feel sore.

But he left the village behind him, and got out into the sunny country beyond, where he met no one to twit him with his ugliness, and the pain of his poor little smarting heart was lulled. It was a glorious day in June. The trees were out in full leaf, but the leaves had not yet lost their fresh May green. The mottled hemlock-stalks in the ditches were covered with a veil of creamy lace. Purple and golden vetches grew in and about the hedges, and the meadows and the patches of turf between the ditches and the road were tufted with white and red and yellow clover-heads. The purple thyme was breathing out honey beneath the sun's warm kiss. The foxglove was nodding its claret-coloured bells, and the globe-flower was tossing about its golden balls like a conjuror. The little boy picked handfuls of honeysuckle-blossom and sucked the sweet bugles as he walked. The traveller's joy and the bryony were trying, like birds'-nesting boys, which could climb the higher. Where a clump of trees hung over the swampy margin of a pond, witch's nightshade put out its pretty pink flowers. The pond glowed with the golden drooping-lipped vases of the water-flag, and purple water-violets and cinquefoil trembled on its banks. The pimpernel snuggled its little pink face into its mossy pillow. All along the lanes dog-roses put forth their straggling sprays, and littered the ground with their shell-like petals. In and out crept the silver-leaved, golden-blossomed silver-weed, mixed with the snowy bells of the bindweed, and beneath the plantain stood gay in its gala suit of pink and silver. The pink and the purple crane's-bills were both in blossom, and when the little boy left the plain and mounted the hill-side, bluebells were tossing as if fairies were ringing an inaudible peal, and the butterfly orchis was pouring out its delicious fragrance to mingle with the sweet scent of the mint and thyme. Larks sang overhead, golden-banded wild bees went booming about, lilac-coloured butterflies fluttered hither and thither, the bells of a distant church were chiming merrily, in

a meadow down below—too far off for him to fear teasing from them—haymakers were singing and laughing.

“In this beautiful, happy world,” thought the little boy, “how is it that I am so ugly and sad?”

He toiled up to the Holy Well; the black-faced sheep, that had been drinking its clear water and cropping its lush grass, scampered off; and, kneeling down, he curved his hand into a cup and dipped it into the well.

Thrice, according to old custom, he drank of the holy water, thrice he sprinkled it over his head, but he became no stronger, no handsomer.

“It only tells me what I knew before,” said the little boy, as he sat looking into the liquid mirror. “Everything is beautiful except me,” he murmured. “No, *there's* an ugly thing,” he added, “as hump-backed as I am. What is it? It looks like a bit of dry stick, and yet it seems to be alive. It's moving.”

As he spoke, the hump-backed bit of stick cracked, and there came forth a beautiful butterfly, which soon spread its wings of orange-tipped white, and flew off to a hawthorn-bush hard by.

The little boy, stretching himself on the sunny grass, watched, for a long time, the beautiful insect fluttering over the beautiful mass of creamy blossom flecked with red and green. Presently it flew off and began to flutter around him. It alighted on his ear, and whispered something to him; and then butterfly, and hawthorn-bush, nay, more, the very mountain itself, suddenly vanished.

But, after having been spoken to by a butterfly, the little boy could be astonished at nothing.

He was no longer a little boy, but a man. He was still a hunchback, but he had ceased to be sorry for that. When people, as was still sometimes the case, slighted or insulted him on account of his ugliness, he would smile and whisper to himself, “Ah, if they only knew—but that's a secret.”

Two brothers were going to fight, but the hunchback ran between them, and being ashamed to strike such a one as he, they ceased from their quarrel long enough to cool, and finally shook hands over the hunchback's head.

In a bare room, an almost blind old woman lay alone bedridden. Every one belonging to her was dead. She was a peevish old woman, interesting in no way, and in the wide world there was not a soul to care whether she lived or died, until the hunchback found her out. He

THE BOYS' AND GIRLS' BOOK OF ENCHANTMENT.

brought her food and physic and clothes; he brought her coals, he brought her cooling fruit. He sat with her, reading and talking. Sometimes the ungrateful ugly old woman snapped at him for being so ugly; but the hunchback simply smiled, and went on being kind to her.

A young woman, without a penny, alone in a great city, and maddened by her loneliness, had thrown herself, with a loud shriek, into the black gas-lit river of which the hunchback, when he saw it as a man, remembered that he had read when a boy. There was none to care for her but the hunchback. He had dragged her out and calmed her, and comforted her, and got her work; and at last she had married an honest husband, and lived to have a swarm of pretty little faces swaying about her like roses round a bush; and wife and father and the little roses all blessed the hunchback.

Another lonely girl, whose face had once been a pure little rose, but had been sadly blighted, he had found wandering reckless in the same great city; but he had lured her back to her quiet country home; and once more father and mother, sisters and brothers, blessed the hunchback.

One of the most cruel of his village tormentors, grown-up like himself, was almost ruined—would be completely ruined if he had to pay immediately a sum of money he owed the hunchback.

"Ask him to have mercy on you, and give you a little grace," said the man's wife.

"It's of no use," the man answered moodily; "I never had any mercy on him, and, of course, he'll take it out of me now."

"Then I'll go and ask him," cried the wife; and when she had told him of his old tormentor's troubles, the hunchback freely forgave him all. The man professed to be very grateful, but afterwards he spread a report that the hunchback had only given up his claim because he knew that he had been a cheat in pretending to have one. And again the hunchback forgave the man all.

A fearful plague raged in the village. In almost every farmhouse and cottage there were some persons down with it. Almost all not smitten with it had fled in their selfish terror. There was no one left to bury the dead. Scarcely any one was left to comfort the dying, and to cherish and rescue such of the sick as might be saved, except the hunchback. Ugly as he was, he went from house to house like a sunbeam, the only ray of hope to the poor creatures with whom he sat up night and day.

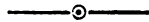
But his turn came to be stricken down. His eyes were sealed, his limbs were frozen; and then his face was transfigured, and the hump

expanded into snowy wings on which he fled away to rest. The secret was out.

"We always said he was an angel, and that his wings were packed away in the hump," exclaimed the sufferers who watched his flight.

But when his eyes opened, he saw again the orange-tip butterfly and the hawthorn-bush. He was again a little, feeble, ugly boy lying on the warm grass beside the Holy Well.

Somehow, however, as he walked down through the heather, thinking over his strange experiences, he felt that his pilgrimage to the Well had not been made in vain.



THE CAMEL AND HIS ASSOCIATES.

AN EASTERN FABLE.

THERE was once a Lion that had his lair in a meadow adjoining a frequented road, and he had three friends, a Wolf, and a Raven, and a Jackal, who attended upon him and received their food out of the prey which he took in hunting. Now, as some herdsmen were passing along the road, one of their camels lagged behind and strayed into the meadow until he found himself in the presence of the Lion. The lord of the prey said to him,—

"Where do you come from?"

"From such a place," said the Camel.

"And what is your business here?"

"Whatever the King may command me," said he.

"Then," said the Lion, "you will remain with us here at large, in safety and abundance."

So the Camel remained with them for some time.

Well, it happened that the Lion, going out one day to hunt, attacked a large elephant, that gave him battle so vigorously with his tusks that he escaped from him severely wounded and dripping with blood; and he was just able with difficulty to reach his lair, when he sank down completely exhausted and unable to move.

So there was no more hunting, and the Wolf, and the Raven, and the Jackal remained without food, for they used to eat what remained of the

Lion's prey. Hunger soon told upon them, as the Lion saw by their lean appearance, and he said to them,—

"You are starving for want of food."

"Our trouble is not about ourselves," they said, "but it is to see the King in this case. Would that we could find him something, that he might eat and get well."

"I doubt not your advice is good," said the Lion. "Wherefore, go abroad in different directions, and perhaps you will find something to eat."

Then the Wolf, and the Raven, and the Jackal retired from the presence of the Lion, and went apart by themselves to hold a consultation. And they said one to another :

"What have we to do with this great grass-eating Camel, who is neither of our way of living nor of our way of thinking? Could we not induce the Lion to eat him and feed us with his flesh?"

But the Jackal said, "This is a thing we dare not mention to the Lion, for he has assured the Camel of safety, and taken him under his protection."

Said the Raven, "Let me bring the King round to our proposal." And away he went and presented himself before the Lion, who said, —

"Have you found a prey?"

The Raven replied, "They only find who can run well and have good sight. As for us, we can neither run nor see because of hunger. But we have hit upon a scheme and agreed thereto; and if the King will assent to our proposal, we shall answer for its execution."

"What is it?" said the King.

"This grass-eating Camel," said the Raven, "that goes lolling about among us, is of no profit to us. He can neither repay our kindness nor do any work that will turn to advantage."

Now, when the Lion heard this he was very wroth, and said, "How wicked is your proposal and how vain your speech! May faithfulness and mercy be far from you! I did not think you would venture upon such words in my presence, seeing you knew that I had given the Camel assurances and taken him under my protection. Did you never hear it said, 'He who sacredly keeps a sacred obligation has greater merit than one who protects a person in fear of death, and prevents the wanton shedding of blood'? Now, I have given the Camel assurance of protection, and I cannot break faith with him."

To which the Raven replied, "I know not the saying quoted by the

King, but I know another which runs thus : ' One person is a ransom for a family, and a family a ransom for a tribe, a tribe for all the people of Egypt, and all the people of Egypt for the King.' So the matter comes at last to the King. Now, I will find a way of escape from this treaty of protection in such a manner that the King need not give himself any concern or anxiety, nor give any order to any one on the subject, for we shall proceed by stratagem, the result of which to the King and to us will be advantage and success."

As the Lion made no answer to this speech the Raven understood that he assented, and he and his companions determined to execute their purpose without delay.

Accordingly next day, when all the three, and the Camel also, were before the King, the Raven spoke as follows :—

" O King, thou art in want of food to strengthen thee. Now, we offer ourselves to thee, for by thee we live, and if thou perish, not one of us can survive thee. Wherefore, let the King eat me, for this will be according to my desire."

But the Wolf and the Jackal interposed, " Hold your tongue. What benefit would the King receive from eating you? You would not be a mouthful to him."

Then the Jackal said, " But I have enough to satisfy him. Therefore let the King eat me, for I willingly consent thereto, and it will be according to my desire."

But the Wolf and the Raven replied, " Hold your tongue. Your flesh is foetid and impure."

Then said the Wolf, " I am not so. Therefore let the King eat me, to satisfy my wish and my sincere desire."

But the Raven and the Jackal said, " That will not do, for the doctors say, ' If any one wishes to kill himself, let him eat the flesh of the wolf.'"

Now, the Camel thought that if he offered himself also for food, they would invent some excuse for him, as they had done for one another, and he would get off, and at the same time find favour with the Lion ; so he said, " There is enough in me to fill the King abundantly. My flesh is pleasant to eat and free from impurity. Therefore let the King eat me, and feed his friends and dependants, for I obediently submit to this."

Then the Wolf, and the Raven, and the Jackal said, " The Camel has spoken what he knows to be the truth, and exhibited great generosity."

And so they fell upon him and tore him in pieces. And that was what the Camel made by associating with improper companions.

THE SLEEP-SEED.

IN the old, old times there was a beautiful Princess to whom a great many knights, and lords, and princes went a-wooing. And there was an enchantress whose son fell in love with her; but the beautiful Princess could not bear the sight of him. The enchantress, his mother, was very angry when the Princess refused him, and she said,—

“My son, we will have our own way after all. I have a mighty spell, by which I can enchant people in a deep sleep, so that they shall not wake for a year and a day, and I will show you how to use this spell on the Princess; and it is one of the laws of this spell that when a maiden is put to sleep by it, then whichever of her suitors is the first to appear before her and claim her hand at the end of the year and the day shall be her husband.”

This pleased her son very much, and he said, “Let us work the spell at once then, but I hope it is not much trouble.”

He was a very lazy young man, for he had got so used to seeing things done by magic, that he thought most things that he wished ought to come to him of themselves.

“Not much, my son,” said the old witch. “It is only to go and sow sleep-seed all in the gardens and grounds of the palace, and all inside it wherever you can, especially in the Princess’s bed-room. You can sow it outside her father’s palace yourself, I daresay.”

“Oh, yes, I can tell the Princess that I am sowing beautiful flowers.”

“And you can bribe the old nurse and the servants to drop it about all over the palace, and in the Princess’s chamber. You can tell them it is a powder that will make work come easy to them.”

Now, though the enchantress’s son hated trouble, he was fond of trickery, and he put some pieces of gold into the hands of the servants and of the Princess’s old nurse, and told them the powder was to make their work easy, and they went and strewed it all over the palace.

And he went to the lady herself, and said, “You will not wed me, but let us be friends. May I sow some beautiful flower-seeds in the gardens and grounds of your father’s palace?”

And the beautiful Princess asked her father, and he said, “Yes.” So he went into the gardens and grounds of the palace and sowed the sleep-seeds everywhere.



As the Princess went up the steps of the door of the palace that opened upon the garden, she looked back and saw him sowing the seed, and muttering to himself.

"Poor fellow," thought she, "I am very sorry I cannot return his love. I suppose he is fretting and talking to himself about his troubles."

But he was saying the spell his mother had taught him, to make the sleep-seed come up quick and strong. And all over the palace the servants went about muttering that day. They sowed the sleep-seed so softly that it was not noticed; but the King said,—

"Bless my heart! what is that buzzing noise that I hear? All the servants are talking to themselves to-day."

Then the Chamberlain made answer, "I believe, sire, they are only saying their prayers."

"I wish they would say their prayers to themselves," said the King.

After the lazy lover had sown the sleep-seed all over the grounds, he went away. At the same time the servants had sown it all about the castle, and the sleep-plant was very soon seen sprouting up from every corner of the gardens and the park, and from every crack in the flooring. All along the galleries it grew and grew, and in a few days the air of the place was heavy with the scent of the pale-coloured sleep-flowers. Then the whole world of the palace began to drowse. From the King and Queen to the scullery-maids, everybody nodded and spoke only in short sentences. And the pale sleep-flowers bloomed thicker and thicker, and the air grew heavier and heavier, and at last everybody was lapped in sleep. The King dropped his sceptre, the Queen let fall her hand-mirror, the cook left off turning the spit, the Princess lay in a dream on her bed, and the old nurse sat breathing hard in a sound slumber by the bedside.

"My son," said the old enchantress, "there is no telling what may happen. I may be sent somewhere all of a sudden by a more powerful enchantress than myself, and may forget the counter-charm of the sleep-flower, so I will give it you now. Look at this jewel. The parchment that it is wrapped up in tells you what to do when you want to enter the palace just before the time of a year and a day is up. Everybody who enters even the grounds without this counter-charm will, as you know, be at once sent to sleep by the scent of the flowers. This charm will enable you to be first in the palace, and yet to keep wide awake till the time comes for the breaking of the spell."

So the lazy suitor of the Princess took the jewel, wrapped up in the parchment that said all about it, and he meant to take great care of it—

of course he did, because he wanted to win the beautiful lady. But he lost it after all. He was so lazy.

One day he noticed that the cord by which the jewel-chain hung round his neck was very much worn. "I will get another cord to-morrow," said he, but he did not: he kept on putting it off and putting it off, and at last he dropped the jewel with the parchment.

Now, there was a young Prince who was very much in love with the Princess, but who had been sent abroad by his father in a big ship. When he came home, he heard something about the sleep-flowers and the enchanted palace, with his beautiful lady in it, and he made up his mind to go to the place, and see if he could not find his way inside, and be the first to greet the Princess at the end of the year and a day.

"You will be sent to sleep by the breath of the sleep-flowers," said all the people.

"Never mind," said he, "I will try what I can do," for he was a bold young fellow, not lazy like that other one. So off he set.

It was a long journey to the palace, but he kept on the way in good spirits, and at last he could see the park and grounds. Just then he saw a small packet of parchment lying on the ground. "What is this, I wonder?" said he to himself, and stooped and picked it up. Then he read the parchment, and saw what it was. "Oh, ho!" said he, "now I am safe," and he went on singing for joy.

By the time he had got through the grounds and park it did not want many hours of the end of the year and a day. When he came to the gate of the garden, he did just what the parchment said. He rubbed the jewel three times with the forefinger of the *left* hand (if you used the right hand, you would be sent asleep yourself there and then for *three* years and *three* days), and repeated these words:—

" Sleep-seed, sleep-seed, make an end !
 Know your foe and know your friend !
 Lady, wake ! for time and tide
 Bid me claim you for my bride."

Then he walked in at the gate. All the garden grounds were strewed with the bodies of young men fast asleep. They had come to woo the Princess, and the sleep-seed had sent them off. The Prince entered the palace, and went through room after room and gallery after gallery: everywhere he found the inmates asleep; at every turn he kicked against somebody's body.

"I wonder which is the room of the Princess?" said he to himself;



for, of course, there was nobody to ask, and a great big palace like that contains hundred of rooms. At last he recollected a beautiful hound that she was very fond of; and when he saw this hound fast asleep at the door of a room, he said to himself, "Yes, this is the room of my Princess," and in he stepped. He was almost afraid; his heart beat; and he trod lightly. There was the beautiful lady, and there was the nurse—fast asleep; and all around the room the pale sleep-flowers were growing. He went inside on tiptoe, and bent over the couch where the Princess was sleeping, and he thought to himself, "How beautiful she is! The clock will strike soon!"

Yes, the time of a year and a day was just up. Not a clock in the King's palace had stirred or sounded for all that time; but now, all on a sudden, they woke up from their sleep and struck all over the palace. The beautiful Princess woke, and the happy Prince kissed her, and she put her hand in his and smiled, so that he could tell how glad she was to see him. The King and Queen, the nurse, and the servants, and the dogs, and all the rest of them, awoke too. The hound scratched at the door, and when the old nurse opened it he leaped in and fondled his dear mistress. The servants, as they awoke, began mumbling the sentences they had left unfinished as they had dropped off to sleep, and the King said,—

"What! are they at it again? I wish they'd say their prayers to themselves in their own rooms."

Then the Prince and the Princess were married. And all the bushes of the sleep-flower were pulled up and dried and made into a bonfire, and everybody was very happy, except those who had done wrong. When the King came to understand all about it, he was very angry with the servants who had taken bribes to sow sleep-seed all over the palace.

"I shall have their heads cut off," said he.

"No, my dear," said the Queen, "but we won't pay them the twelve-month's wages. They have been doing nothing all this time, and the whole place is overgrown with cobwebs."

However, the Prince and Princess begged so hard for them, that the King forgave them, and the bonfire was the most splendid bonfire ever seen in that country.



THE BLUE PRINCESS.



KING GLUGGIBUS, monarch of Nusquamland, had no children, though he had been married many years. This had been a very great grief to him, although he never said a word about it to the Queen. It was a pity he did not, for when at last he was compelled to do so, because his council requested him to name a successor, she at once pointed out a remedy. She had a fairy godmother, and that fairy godmother had promised to bestow one gift on her whenever she chose to ask for it. In those times

almost every one of importance had a fairy godmother, and fairy godmothers, instead of giving silver spoons and forks, endowed their godchildren with gifts of virtue or grace, or promises of aid in time of need. Queen Gordiana's godmother had given her godchild a hollow crystal globe, on the breaking of which she promised to appear and assist the little Gordiana. Gordiana had kept the globe carefully wrapped up in cotton-wool, feeling that, as it could only be broken once, she should reserve it for some most especial occasion.

That occasion appeared to have arrived, so the crystal globe was produced from its soft wrappings. The Queen gave it a smart tap with her sceptre, and shivered it to atoms. Almost as soon as the last fragment had fallen with a tinkle on the marble floor, the Fairy Fleetfoot appeared.

"I am dreadfully busy, my dear," she said in a hurried voice, "for the King of the Will-o'-the-Wisps is about to marry the Princess of the Butterflies, so we will dispense with all ceremonies. I know what you want—tell the King that he will be the happy father of a young Prince in about two months' time."

With that she vanished, before the Queen had time to ask how she could summon her in case of need.

You may imagine that King Gluggibus was highly delighted at the news. He at once gazetted the young Prince as a cornet in the Royal Guards, in order to expedite matters, and qualify him the sooner for promotion to a generalship. He put notices in all the papers to say that when the Prince should be ten months old, he would receive tenders from neighbouring kings who had daughters of six months or under, but that he would not bind himself to accept the lowest or any tender.

He immediately appointed all the officers and ladies-in-waiting for the young heir, and set to work building a magnificent nursery. In this way he managed to kill time very satisfactorily until the two months were over, when the fairy's promise was realized, and he found himself the proud father of a Princeling of seven pounds weight. All the Court declared there never was such a baby!

One evening, when the baby was about a month old, King Gluggibus happened to be strolling in the palace gardens, when he saw a little mouse running along the top of the marble balustrade on one of the terraces. Now, I regret to say Gluggibus had from a boy been very cruel to dumb animals, and as he grew up the bad habit clung to him. His friends always told him as a boy that he would be punished some day if he was so cruel; but, as the punishment never came, he only laughed at them.

When he saw the little mouse his old cruelty revived, and he picked up a stone, and threw it at the poor thing, hitting it on the side of the head, and knocking it down.

But before it reached the ground it changed into a little Fairy Prince all over silvery shining scales like a bright fish. The side of the fairy's face corresponding with the side of the mouse's head that had been struck by the stone, was much swollen, and exhibited a large blue bruise. You see, a fairy's flesh is so very delicate, being nourished entirely on dew and nectar, that it bruises very easily.

King Gluggibus felt that he had got into a terrible mess, but he took off his crown, and made a polite bow to the little stranger, trying to pretend that he didn't know he had hurt him.

"You cruel monster!" said the little fairy. "What do you mean by flinging a great stone at me?"

"If you please, sir," said Gluggibus very humbly, "I thought it was a mouse——"

"That makes it no better. Why should you try to hurt an unoffending mouse? Know, wretch! that I am Twinkleinkle, King of the Will-o'-the-Wisps, but recently married to the lovely Princess of the Butterflies.

How do you think I can venture into the presence of my bride thus disfigured?"

Gluggibus mumbled out something about the eyes of love not noticing such trifles.

"Don't argue with me, sirrah," said the fairy. "We are above logic! But do you think love will not suffer when the loved suffers?"

Gluggibus ventured to state his belief that when he had leeches on the back of his neck a short while before, her Majesty had suffered no inconvenience. But he did not benefit his case much.



"Your mention of the Queen reminds me," said the fairy, "that you have a son. I will make him the instrument of your punishment. He shall not know what happiness is until he loves, and is beloved by, a lady whose complexion is of the same hue as this livid bruise. There, Sir King! let that teach you to be merciful to the defenceless."

The King fainted away on the spot, but fortunately falling into one of the fountains, was speedily revived by the cold water. Picking himself up, he hastened indoors, all dripping, to the astonishment of the Queen.

"Where *have* you been, your Majesty?" she asked.

"The mouse!" said the King.

"What do you mean?" said Gordiana, surprised.

"Will-o'-the-Wisp, and a blue Princess, and oh! what will become of *us*?" exclaimed Gluggibus, rather incoherently.

Her Majesty looked in her key-basket to see if the key of the buffet were missing.

"My love," she said, leaning forward, in order that the lords-in-waiting might not hear, "you have been at the wine again!"

"No, upon my word," said the King; and there and then told her his evening's adventure, which so affected the Queen that she swooned, as her husband had done before her; and, as there was no fountain handier than the one in the hall, there was some difficulty in bringing her to.

The Queen's first idea was to summon her godmother, but there was some doubt as to the best mode of doing that. They broke wine-glasses and goldfish-globes in vain, and at last were obliged to write to her by post, which took a couple of days. During that time the King, Queen, and Court of Nusquamland were, as you will guess, in a terrible state of excitement. At length, however, the Fairy Fleetfoot arrived in a car drawn by three hundred dragon-flies, which she had harnessed to her vehicle for the sake of speed, regardless of the expense incurred for tolls. She was received with every demonstration of joy, mingled with anxiety and distress.

"Gluggibus," said she at once, turning to the King, "I always told you that your cruelty to animals would get you into a scrape. Gordiana, my love, I have often asked you to break him of his bad habits. Where is the boy? I must take charge of him."

The baby was brought, and the fairy enclosed him in a cradle made in the shape of a pomegranate, and lined throughout with azure satin, all the bed-clothes and pillows being of the same colour.

"Put him under the box-seat in my car," she said to one of the attendants. The fairy was, as you will perceive, one of those quick, busy people who do everything out of hand. She almost took the King's breath away, she was so rapid in her speech and movements.

"Now, Gluggibus, sit down, there's a good soul, and listen to me. The child must be brought up where she can see nothing but blue. I have had a turquoise rock made in the middle of the Mediterranean, where the blue sea reflects the cloudless azure of the sky. Everything in that little islet will be blue, even to the attendants and tutors I shall place there with him. They will be fairies, who will have no difficulty in assuming that hue. But how are we to get the lady—who of course must be human—on whose colour and kindness the Prince's happiness depends?"

Gluggibus shook his head. He did not know of any neighbouring Princess with such a complexion.

"Princess, indeed! No chance of that," said the fairy. "No Princess will submit to the diet and bringing-up necessary to render her the required colour. You will have to be content with any girl you can get. I know a little thing, the daughter of a gooseherd, who would do——"

But King Gluggibus was furious, and would not hear a word about the gooseherd's daughter.

"Very well," said the fairy, "I am not going to waste arguments on you. I will take the child to the rock, and bring him up to the love of all that is azure. You can look about for a Princess who will be turned



blue for your son. When you find her, throw this skein of blue silk into the fire, and I will be with you."

"But, dear godmother," interposed the Queen, "may we never behold our babe?"

"Yes, to be sure, if you will agree to the conditions. There will be a bridge of sapphire connecting the rock with the mainland, where there will be a large dye-house. There you will have to suffer yourself to be stained blue, and will then be allowed to visit your son. When your visit to him is over, you will have to return to the dye-house until the blue wears off, and you can again appear in public. It will take about three weeks."

With that the fairy took her departure. It was not long before the Queen paid a visit to the island, and submitted to the dyeing process. Indeed, her maternal affection took her so often to see her boy, that she

spent most of her time on the rock and at the dye-house, and very little at the palace; and the dye so got into her system, that the whites of her eyes were never quite right afterwards, but had a faint tinge of blue.

In the meanwhile King Gluggibus sent ambassadors, and advertised, and offered rewards, and threatened invasions; but all to no avail. No monarch would allow his daughter to be turned a genteel azure. Five years passed away, and, as the young Prince was therefore of a marriageable age, the King of Nusquamland was at his wits' end. At last in a fit of despair he burnt the skein of blue silk, and when Fairy Fleetwood appeared, said,—

“Here! bring us your gooseherd girl, for I can't find a Princess, or even a lady of noble birth, ready to sacrifice her beauty.”

“Send a courier to the wide moorlands on the northern confines of your kingdom, and he will find her among the furze-bushes making daisy chains,” said the fairy.

And accordingly a courier was sent off on six of the King's fleetest horses, and returned in two days with the little girl in his arms.

She looked a little surprised when she found herself in such a beautiful palace, but her emotion only made her more lovely. She was an exquisitely pretty girl, as even King Gluggibus admitted.

“Now, my child,” said the fairy, “I have a little story to tell you, so come and sit down by my knee.”

And then the fairy told her all about the mouse, and the King of the Will-o'-the-Wisps, and the little Prince in the blue rock in the middle of the Mediterranean, and how he would be unhappy for life unless some lady would be turned blue for his sake.

“Poor little boy!” said the child. “It wasn't his fault; and if you please you may turn me blue if you like, only do send and tell my father—he won't mind, because he's very poor, and it will be one mouth the less to feed.”

“King Gluggibus shall see that he wants for nothing, my child,” said the fairy.

The King bowed, the courtiers hurrahed, and the fairy, putting the little girl in her car, took her departure.

You see, it would not do merely to dye the little girl, because she was always to stop in the island, and in time the dye would have worn off. The fairy knew this, and had quite a different plan in her head. She fed the child on nothing but conserve of hyacinths, and gave her to drink dew gathered from the harebells, while she wrapped her in the

leaves of the blue corn-flowers and speedwell. And so by degrees the girl became a lovely delicate blue; and, although it was rather unusual, her appearance was by no means displeasing. Her hair was a very dark blue—almost black, save where the light shone on it. Her eyes were a deep blue, and her skin had a very faint blue tinge, growing more intense on her cheeks and in her lips. When she smiled her teeth gleamed like turquoise; and when she blushed, a tinge of sapphire illumined her cheek.

So then the fairy took the girl to the enchanted rock, and the Prince and she were playfellows until they grew up.

Now when they were quite grown up, it became very evident that the former playfellows were turned into lovers. And as soon as the Queen



told Gluggibus of that, he gave a great laugh, and said that now the spell was broken, and it was all right—they might have the Prince home now, or they should not want the rock or the gooseherd's daughter any longer.

You see, Gluggibus had only consented to the gooseherd's daughter becoming his son's playfellow, when he found, on recalling the spell, that the charm consisted "in the Prince's loving, and being loved by, a blue damsel"—and that nothing was said about marriage. The Queen, you may be sure, was not quite satisfied with this interpretation, and knowing how fondly her son loved Azurella—as they called the girl now—she felt that it was not for his happiness to be separated from her.

The King arrived at the bridge—refused to go through the dye-house

—and forced his way to the enchanted rock. Of course he could not have done this if the Fairy Fleetfoot had chosen to oppose him, but she wished to see what he would do.

He arrived at the very moment when the Prince had for the first time declared his love to Azurella, and had extorted from her a reluctant admission of her affection.

“Let me kiss the deepening bluebells on your soft cheek, sweet Azurella,” he was saying, when in burst the King with,—

“Deepening fiddlesticks! Now, my boy, you’ve been here long enough; you must come home with me and learn how to rule a kingdom.”

But the Prince shrank from him. “Good gracious! who ever saw such a coloured face as that! What a calamity to have such a bad complexion!”

“Complexion be hanged, you impudent puppy!” said the King. “My face is as good as yours—look in the glass.”

But all the mirrors in the rock were of blue glass, so that the Prince had never seen the real colour of his own complexion. He quite shuddered at his father’s crimson doublet and green trunk-hose, and almost fainted at his yellow stockings and gold embroidery.

In the midst of the disturbance the fairy appeared. “Well, Gluggibus! So you are going to reward this poor girl’s kindness by turning her out in the world that colour, and take your son to your own kingdom, where the variety of colours will go near to blind one always accustomed to blue. You are a very wicked and dishonest person; but you will suffer for it.”

So the King took the Prince home, and the fairy sent Azurella back to her father, and the enchanted rock sank into the sea.

But Gluggibus found out his mistake before long. The anguish of parting from his beloved Azurella, and the pain he experienced from the variety of new colours which met his gaze, completely prostrated the young Prince. The first physicians were called, but could do little to aid him. They ordered him to have blue curtains to his bed, and to take blue pill, and they recommended the King to look about for a blue nurse, if such a thing could be found.

Of course the King sent off at once for the gooseherd’s daughter, and she came without delay, only too glad to be near her beloved at any price.

By degrees she accustomed the Prince’s eyes to the various colours, and he was able at last to look on the world without being dazzled or pained very acutely, though he never could do so with pleasure. He avoided his father and shuddered at the sight of him, which was perhaps

partly owing to his Majesty having bad taste in dress and a *penchant* for strong colours. The Queen, who, as I have told you, had been dyed so often that the blue never quite came out, was on that account more welcome to her son's sight. But there was no one in the world who could really make him happy but his adored Azurella, and even Glugibus was obliged to come to that conclusion.

There was no evading the spell of the King of the Will-o'-the-Wisps. Though it said nothing about marriage, by insisting on the Prince's loving and being beloved, it made his happiness consist in the presence of the object of his affection.

It was necessary that poor Azurella should have some compensation in



the Prince's love, for the world at large was inclined to flout her, as it does all novelties. The nobles of the Court turned their eyes away as she passed. The ladies tossed up their chins and tittered. And the rude little boys in the street used to shout after her—

“ Blue ! blue ! blue !
Bluebottle, how do you do?
Every old sailor that sails on the sea,
Has a shirt the same colour as you ! ”

Poor girl ! for all this scorn and insult, her only consolation was the certainty that she was adding to the happiness of her beloved Prince, by allowing herself to remain such a strange colour. For the Fairy Fleetfoot had offered to change her to her natural colour, but Azurella felt that the Prince might not approve of the alteration.

So when Fleetfoot saw that Azurella and the Prince came out of this

trial of their constancy unscathed, she determined to put an end to their troubles. Accordingly she sent the swift courier on the six horses to the moorland in the north, to ask the old gooseherd for the box which stood in Azurella's bed-room.

On its arrival she told Gluggibus to open it, when, on doing so, he found it filled with the most exquisite royal robes, a gold crown, which exactly fitted Azurella, and a large parchment proclamation, stating that Azurella was the daughter of King Glorious of Nomansland, and had been left in charge of the gooseherd when that monarch was driven from his throne by the invading armies of Duke Gogo.

Gluggibus hearing this, immediately embraced Azurella, and consented to her union with his son. He also sent out an army to drive Duke Gogo from the throne of Nomansland.

On the day of the wedding the fairy again asked the Princess whether she would like to be changed back to her natural complexion.

"Now that you are married, it can't make any difference," said the fairy.

"It would look less singular," said the Queen.

"It is a duty you owe the nation," said Gluggibus.

But Azurella still declined. Now that she was married it was more than ever important that the Prince should find no alteration in her. If she did not look singular in his eyes, it mattered little what she seemed to others. And before her duty to the nation was her duty to her husband.

"Very well said, my dear," said the fairy. "But, luckily, I have a means of satisfying every one."

So she waved her wand twice, and Azurella was changed back to her natural complexion, and became so lovely that her beauty almost blinded the Court. And before the Prince had time to notice the change, the fairy clapped on his nose a pair of blue spectacles.

And so they all lived happily ever after.



THE DISCONTENTED DAISY.



NE! Two! Three! Four! Clear and sweet the old bell sounded out from the old ivy-drest church-tower; and the strokes were heard far over meadow and wood and hill, all round the quiet village, in the still air of the summer morning. Then the chimes began. They always rang at four o'clock, eight o'clock, and twelve o'clock; and they played the three sweetest tunes, to my ear, in the world (the one at noon and midnight was a psalm tune); but for that very reason I shall not tell you what tunes they were, but leave you to fancy them the three you like best. Just as the chimes ended their song, the sun lifted his great cheery face over the top of Beechwood Hill, and flung so bright a smile over all the landscape that it seemed as though he were glad to look down once more on the peaceful old-fashioned little village (after looking on so many very different places and people on the other side of the world since sunset); and, moreover, as if he meant to make a day of it, to warm the haymakers well at their fragrant work, and play the part of head haymaker himself, and to allow no clouds for that day but such as would set off his beams to greater advantage by their snowy splendour in the blue sky, and their soft moving shadows on the green corn-fields and grassy uplands. That first sun-smile of the day streamed through an archway of boughs right along a narrow green lane, whose high bank, crowned with hazels and brambles and wild roses, was crimson with foxgloves at midsummer, as it had been yellow with primroses at Easter, and blue with bluebells at Whitsuntide. This bank was on the southern side of the green lane. But on the opposite side ran a long, high garden wall, in which was a gate. Just opposite the gate grew a DAISY. As it opened its crimson-tipped snow-white rays, all wet with dew, to the sunshine, there was not a prettier, happier, or more contented Daisy in the world. As to that, however, the Daisy supposed the green lane to be the whole world; and the tall garden gate, which sometimes opened (when a man came out wheeling a barrow loaded with weeds or

cut grass, and presently came back with his barrow empty, and shut the gate behind him), seemed to the Daisy the entrance to another world ; very bright and pleasant, perhaps, but with which it felt no desire to become acquainted. Just as the Daisy opened its golden eye, a Snail on a foxglove-leaf close by was asking a great Humble-bee what he thought of the weather.

"Hum!" said the Bee, "you see"—and he popped into one of the bells of the foxglove—"I'm too busy to talk," he went on as he came out again; "but I think"—and in he popped into another flower-bell—"that we shall have a hot day," he concluded as he came out again. And off he flew over the garden wall.

"Those Bees are so intolerably conceited!" said a great Stag-horn Beetle, whom the conversation had awoke out of a cosy nap under a broad dock-leaf. "Just because they work so hard, they think they're everybody, and everybody else is nobody. And yet they sleep all night, and know nothing about astronomy, or bats, or glowworms."

"And what good is all their hard work?" rejoined the Snail. "For my part, I think we were meant to enjoy ourselves, or why were things made so nice?"

"And for my part," interrupted a Grasshopper, who had been jumping from one blade of grass to another, and performing the most curious gymnastics in his impatience to edge in a word; "for my part, I think honey itself would not be sweet if one had to work hard for it and store it up like a miser. A light heart and a light pocket, that's my maxim. Chirp! Chirp! Chirp!"

"As to the weather," resumed the Beetle, rather drowsily, and with solemnity, "it may be hot, as that conceited Bee says; but mark me, there will be rain before forty-eight hours. I know it by the dew; it tastes so peculiarly fine this morning."

"Rain or east wind," said the Snail; "but I guess east wind, because I feel a pricking in my horns. But talk of dew! No one knows what dew is who has not tasted it on a cabbage-leaf. Talk of Paradise! Give me a large juicy cabbage-leaf covered with dew, and that is Paradise enough for me. And there *are* cabbages in that garden, to be sure! But one of those odious men, who for some inscrutably mysterious reason are permitted to infest the place, picked me up and flung me over the wall. If I had not fallen on the top of that tall hemlock, I should have been killed on the spot."

Just then a splendid Butterfly settled on one of the crimson bells of the

foxglove. "Pardon my interrupting you," said he, "but there is nothing mysterious when you understand things. People think things mysterious just because they don't enlarge their minds by travel. Those odious men, as you call them, my slow friend, are simply the servants of the flowers. Instead of being left to grow up uneducated, and with no one to see their beauty or pay them any attention, like my pretty little friend Pink-tips down there, the flowers in the garden are planted where they will appear to most advantage, and watched, and watered, and waited on, and cared for to such a degree that they grow into quite a different sort of creatures, I assure you, from mere wild flowers. Why, there are sunflowers in that garden just the shape of a daisy, but all gold-coloured, and as big as the moon. And those odious men, as you call them, are kept to do nothing but wait on them. But travel does so enlarge the mind ! Why, I dare say, now, you think, because you have no wings, that the tree-tops touch the clouds."

As the Butterfly spoke, he kept opening and shutting his lovely wings with an air of immense superiority.

"Folk may know better than that," put in a small shrill voice, which nevertheless was like a great deep organ-pipe compared with the Butterfly's. It belonged to a tiny Field-mouse which had just run through the hedge from the corn-field on the other side ; "folk may know better than that, if only they keep good company. I have no wings, you see, but I have very sharp ears ; and my nest in the stalks of corn looks right down into the lark's nest on the ground ; and when I laugh at my humble neighbour, and tell her that my nest is ten times more like a bird's nest than hers, she just calls her husband to come and talk to me of what he has seen up in the sky ; and he tells me that when you're up there, the tallest trees look no bigger than daisies ; and that our whole corn-field, and the garden and lane to boot, are no more to compare with the whole world than an acorn is to an oak. He even thinks that he hasn't seen the whole world himself ; but I expect that's his humility. And then up he goes, singing, singing, singing, till he looks no bigger than a gnat's eye."

"Ah, well," said the Butterfly, "the sky is all very well for larks, no doubt ; but I expect it's awfully cold and damp up there." And off he flew, as the Bee had done, over the garden wall.

The Daisy felt very sad and lonely when the Butterfly was gone. She knew that he meant her by "Pink-tips," and her curiosity was excited to such a degree by what he said about the sunflowers, that she had not heard one word of the Field-mouse's speech. All her contented happiness had

departed. The green lane, full of sunshine, balmy with the soft breeze and the scent of wild roses and sweetbriar, and musical with the songs of thrushes, linnets, and blackcaps, seemed to her to be a dull, dreary wilderness. True happiness and enjoyment seemed now to lie within the garden gate; in that wonderful region which the Bee and the Butterfly could visit at pleasure; where the flowers were planted so as to show their beauty, and had servants to wait on them.

“Alas!” cried the little Daisy in her heart, “why was not I born a sunflower?”

When the shadows of evening fell on the lane, and the long black procession of rooks, cawing as they flew homeward, had passed overhead, and the blackbird was singing his good-night hymn (with his gladdest note, for he smelt rain in the air), and the bats and the moths and the cockchafers were flitting up and down the lane, rejoicing that day was gone, and that sweet cool night had come once more, and the glowworm was trimming his silver lamp, and the light of the moon, not yet risen, was beginning to gleam behind the tree-tops on Beechwood Hill; just then, I say, who should come softly flying past, mounted on a gigantic moth, but the Fairy of the Flowers? His quick glance noted in the millionth part of an instant that the little Daisy's golden eye was wide open; and though there was no dew (for the sky had clouded over at sunset), it was full of tears.

“What is the matter,” said the Fairy, in the softest, most musical voice you can imagine, “with my little Pink-tips? What business has she to be awake so long after sunset—and in tears, too?”

If it had not been dark, the Daisy



would have blushed pinker than ever. She was surprised that the **fairy** should call her by the same name as the butterfly, and half suspected he had heard the conversation at sunrise. And so in fact he had, **cosily** ensconced in a bunch of honeysuckle, smoking his pipe, made from the leg of a wood-ant, with a richly-carved bowl made of a mustard-seed. Very much ashamed the Daisy felt, though she hardly knew why. But



never a flower in field or garden could refuse to answer any question put in so magically sweet a tone. So she told the **fairy** all her trouble. "And oh! if I could only but be a sunflower!" said she, quite in despair.

"As to that," said the fairy, "there is no **great** difficulty in **turning** you into a sunflower; the difficulty would be in turning you back **again**."

"Oh, but I should never wish to be turned back again—never!"

"My poor little Pink-tips," said the fairy, "wilful hearts must write their own lesson-books. I shall be able to give you till sunset of the **third** day to change your mind; what you wish to be then, you must remain. But, alas! my power will not suffice to make you again quite what you now are. People who have been once turned into sunflowers can never get the daisy heart back again. Now go to sleep, and at sunrise open your eyes, and you shall see what you shall see."

"Oh, joyful, joyful!" cried the little Daisy. "Thank you, dear fairy, ten thousand million times! Never fear, come what will, that I shall ever, ever repent my choice."

When the waning moon was fairly risen over the beech-wood, the Daisy was fast asleep. And though a wind rose at midnight that swept down the green lane, and covered the grass with fallen rose-leaves, and in the grey dawn the rain came pattering down, so that it shook the nest of the

Field-mouse in the green corn, and made Farmer Clobshanks tremble for his hay as he lay in bed listening to the dripping eaves, yet the Daisy never woke until the glorious sunrise turned the millions of millions of raindrops that hung on leaf and flower and grass-blade into diamonds, rubies, and emeralds.

Such a sunrise it was ! The flowers were all refreshed with the cool delicious shower ; and the birds sang as if they had never seen the sun rise before in their lives. Who knows ? Perhaps as they were only little birds, and neither fashionable people nor philosophers (for they were too busy with their nests and young to be philosophers, and were contented to wear just the same fashions as their ancestors had done in the garden of Eden), instead of saying, "Oh, we've seen that before, we needn't wonder at that," or "That's nothing mysterious, it's only the rotation of the earth ;" they wondered more at the beautiful sight, and rejoiced in it more every time they saw it. Happy little birds ! Wise little birds, too, I think !

At any rate, the Daisy found plenty to wonder at when she woke. Daisy I must still call her, though she was no longer wee Pink-tips, but a tall, splendid, golden sunflower. At first she could not imagine what had become of the ground, which seemed to have vanished into air, and could neither tell where she was, nor (which was terribly puzzling) *what* she was. At last she perceived the ground far below her, and found that she had grown high up into the air with a long, thick, straight stalk. She was growing in a border, close to the sunny side of a summer-house, roofed with thatch and overgrown with ivy. On the other side of a broad gravel walk stretched a beautiful lawn, with shrubs and tall trees and rich flower-beds. Never had the Daisy dreamed that the world inside the garden gate was so large and beautiful. The lawn was thickly sprinkled with daisies, and the Daisy felt a secret yearning towards them. But in the border stood three or four tall sunflowers, staring at the sun ; and as she looked at them she became suddenly conscious that she was one of them *Yes*, she had her wish ! The first two hours or so after sunrise passed in a marvellous dream of happiness. How poor and narrow the lane seemed compared with the garden ! How tiny the bees looked, not nearly so big as lady-birds used to look ! Even the birds were wonderfully diminished in size, and the Daisy felt ready to laugh out loud as she watched the water-wagtails running about the lawn, and remembered how she used to be afraid lest they should tread on her as they passed. *Yes*, it was a glorious thing to have her wish !

Presently two men appeared, dragging a strange-looking machine,

which made a harsh whirring noise. "These," said the Daisy, "are the servants of the flowers; I wonder what they are going to do for us?" What was her dismay to see that as they pushed and pulled the harsh-voiced machine across the lawn, the heads of the daisies, and tops of grass, flew up in a strange sort of moving fountain: and when the machine had passed, it left a wide strip of smooth shaven grass. Just then a lovely little girl came running along the walk. She had on a white jacket and white frock, and her golden hair streamed over her shoulders from under a tiny straw hat. She was watching very sorrowfully the mowing machine beheading all her pet daisies, when a little boy, perhaps two years older than herself, came bounding along, bareheaded, crimson-cheeked, and making a sort of box with his two hands.

"Oh, Florrie! Florrie!" he cried, "guess what I've caught! Such a splendid butterfly!"

"Oh, Horace, you'll hurt it! Please let it go! Do, please!" said the little girl, in such a pleading tone that the boy could not resist it.

"There, you old butterfly," he said, opening his hands; "to please Florrie, I'll let you go." And away fluttered the butterfly, and settled, not a little agitated with his terrible adventure, on the tall new sunflower by the summer-house. She knew him again in a moment. But how small he looked, compared with the gigantic creature he had seemed in the lane but yesterday!

"Don't you know me?" said the Daisy.

"I'm sorry to be so rude as to confess that I don't," replied the Butterfly. "In fact, I could have declared that there was no sunflower growing in this spot yesterday at sunset."

"No more there was," said the Daisy. "I am the daisy you talked to in the lane, and called 'Pink-tips;' the fairy has changed me into a sunflower. Isn't it glorious?"

"Certainly," said the Butterfly, "the lane is not to be compared with the garden, nor daisies with sunflowers; but—excuse me—when you *were* changing, couldn't you have hit on something a thought more fashionable? A new dahlia (for example), or one of the new roses? But I beg your pardon; having always lived in the green lane, how could you guess that a tea-scented rose is superior to a sunflower? Ah! why have not flowers wings? Certainly there is nothing like travel for enlarging the mind."

The Butterfly flew away on his travels, leaving the Daisy in by no means so happy and contented a mood as he found her. The children

played a little with the cut grass, but took no notice of the handsome new sunflower, and presently disappeared, to return no more that day. The gardeners steadily went on with their work till it was finished, and then disappeared also. The day became sultry and still. The Daisy-Sunflower found no one to talk to. The other sunflowers were too far off, and seemed, she thought, rather stiff and unsociable. The shrubs were all foreigners, and took no notice of her. There were some pretty little flowers in the border, which kept up an animated conversation with the bees and white butterflies; but these were too low down, and fancied she was almost as tall as a tree; while as to the trees, to her surprise they looked three times as tall as they used to do, which puzzled her more than anything else. Why should the lady-birds and bees look so much smaller, and yet the world so much bigger and the trees so much taller than before? Once or twice she caught herself thinking that the sunshine was too hot and the border too unsheltered, and sighing for the shade of the wild roses and tall foxgloves in the old green lane. But she checked such thoughts as quite unworthy of her new dignity. At last the long summer afternoon wore away, evening stole softly on, and the Daisy fell asleep.

The only event of great importance which happened the next day was that the two children discovered the new sunflower, which they had not observed the day before, and admired it immensely. In truth, the fairy had taken care that little Pink-tips should not have her wish by halves, and had turned her into the most superb sunflower ever seen.

The children, however, grew tired of looking at it, and ran off to play until the rain drove them indoors. The north-east wind, knowing that he was to have the whole day to himself, managed matters in his usual leisurely fashion. First he overspread the sky with one dull uniform grey covering. Then he began, about an hour before noon, with a fine, almost invisible drizzle, which people fancied would "soon blow over," but instead of that it thickened from hour to hour into a steady down-pour, which lasted all the evening.

Next morning the south-west wind came back again, not in one of his boisterous impetuous moods, but stealing along soft and warm, stirring the leaves, but hardly swaying the slender points of the branches, and steering the great white clouds so gently across the blue sky, that they seemed to float motionless. Everything steamed and glittered as the sun began his day's journey; but by noon every raindrop had vanished, even in the shadiest nooks; the great white clouds had shrunk to thin silver

fleeces, and but that the north-east wind had done his work so skilfully as to make the moisture soak deep into the ground, the flowers would have fainted with the heat. Everybody said it was the hottest day they had had that summer.

The Daisy could not help thinking a great deal of her old home in the green lane. Three days seemed a very long time to have been away from it. She thought how the shadows of the wild roses were dancing across it when for a minute or two the breeze freshened; how the merry grasshoppers were chirping in the long grass; and the beetles, of a hundred different sorts and sizes, running about among the leaves of hemlock, dock, and foxglove; and the forget-me-nots (which after all she thought were as pretty as any of the garden flowers) were playing at hide-and-seek under the hedge; and the lark was springing up from the blooming wheat just on the other side of the hedge, and singing his joyful love-song overhead. Many another sight and sound, which had once seemed common enough, now seemed in memory clothed with wonderful sweetness and dearness to the Daisy's imagination.

A nameless mixture of hope and fear began to take possession of her, as the question would keep coming back, do what she would: "The garden is very bright and beautiful, it is true; but after all, was not I happier in the green lane?"

It was afternoon before she saw the children, though she heard their voices now and then from some part of the garden out of sight. A grave but pleasant-looking person was walking slowly, as if busy with his own thoughts, towards the summer-house, when the two children came running from behind a shrubbery with glowing cheeks, and shouts of "Papa! papa!" and each seized one of his hands.

"Oh, papa!" they cried both at once, "have you seen this superb sunflower by the summer-house? Isn't it splendid?"

"It is indeed very handsome. What other sort of flower does it seem to you to be like, Floretta?"

"I know," said Florrie, "it is for all the world like a large, big, immense daisy, only all yellow instead of yellow with white frills."

"You have a botanist's eye, my little daughter," said the father. "Daisies and sunflowers, and a great number of other flowers, are all made on the same plan and belong to the same natural order; each flower being made up of hundreds of little flowers, called *florets*."

"Like my name, papa!" said the little girl, with pleased surprise.

"Yes, like your name," answered her father. "Tell me, now; if you

had to be changed into a real flower, my little Floretta, which would you rather be,—a sunflower or a daisy?"

"Oh, a daisy; it's so much dearer and prettier. Wouldn't you, Horace?"

"Well," said her brother, "if I were a girl I think I should say so too. Daisies are prettier, as you say; but as I am a man, I think I would rather be a sunflower. But, Florrie dear, that's just like the little poem you learnt yesterday, which papa hadn't time to hear you say. Do say it now."

"Yes," said their father, "let us go into the shade of the summer-house, and let me hear it."

Florrie repeated, in a soft but very clear voice,—

WISHES.

A Rose would be a Star.
 "I am so lost and and lonely here," she said,
 "leaf-buried, with thick branches overhead;
 I would be seen from far,
 And on unnumbered eyes my glories shed."

A Star would be a Rose.
 "I keep a lonely vigil in the sky,"
 He said, "unmarked by any loving eye;
 Vainly my radiance glows.
 I would be known and loved, though I must die."

An angel passed, and bade
 Each prayer be granted. Then, "Alas!" said one,
 "I shine from far, but am yet more alone."
 His plaint the other made,—
 "Can earthly love for my lost light atone?"

The Sunflower-Daisy heard every word through the lattice of the summer-house, and pondered it so thoughtfully, long after the two children had led their father away to tea, chatting merrily as they danced along, that she was startled when a long shadow, creeping close to her foot, made her notice that the sun was nearing the horizon.

Would the fairy come?

Yes! as she asked herself the question, the fairy was at her side.

"Well," quoth he, "my fair Golden-tips, for I must not call you little Pink-tips now, I hope you are as happy in your new home as you expected."

"Oh!" said the Daisy, "I wish you would call me 'little Pink-tips!' I wish you would make me into little Pink-tips again! Yes, the garden is beautiful, more beautiful than I ever imagined; but I should be so glad, so happy, so thankful, if you could change me back to what I was before. I repent of my proud, foolish discontent with all my heart"

"My child," said the fairy, tenderly and rather sadly, "so far as it is in my power to grant it, you shall have your wish. See, the sun is just setting—go to sleep."

And as he waved his wand the garden vanished from her eyes, and a deep sweet sleep fell on her, like the sleep of a baby on its mother's bosom



She awoke just before sunrise. She was in her old home in the green lane. The dew lay heavy on every blade and leaf; the lark was singing aloft; all looked as it used to do. But the Daisy heard another voice singing beside the lark, and looking up she saw a brown fairy sitting on a dead bramble branch, which trailed down from the hedge. His face was sallow, his hair, the colour of withered bracken, streaming over his shoulders. He was dressed from head to foot in russet brown, but his cap, jacket, and shoes were brodered with gold and crimson. He was the Fairy of the Dead Leaves; and this was his song:—

"The falling sands will never rise,
The faded blossom,—who can find it
The light that dies
In sunset skies
Will fade, and leave no trace behind it,

There was one question the Daisy had longed to asked the Flower-Fairy, but she had fallen asleep before she had time to utter it. What he had said about wilful hearts had proved but too true. Was that true, too, which he had said about people who had once been sunflowers? Would she never quite get the daisy heart back again? She thought she would ask the Fairy of the Dead Leaves; but, behold! the moment his song was over he was gone. She did not even see him vanish. There was no voice to answer her question but the soft murmur of the wind among the leaves, the distant chimes from the old church-tower, and the lark singing his morning hymn high up in the clear blue.



THE NEGLECTED GRAVE.

IN the churchyard on the hill was one grave which nobody cared for. All the other graves were trim and bright with flowers, and on some of them lay wreaths tied up with fresh ribbons; but nobody laid wreaths or planted flowers upon the neglected grave in the corner, for it was the grave of a man who had cared for nobody, and for whom, therefore, naturally, nobody had cared.

The grave-digger's two little children, however, liked that corner of the churchyard, for here they would play, trampling down the grave as much as they liked, while the others they were not allowed to go near or touch.

"Katey," said the little boy one day, as he knelt before the neglected grave, looking at a hole he had dug in the side of it with his little hands; "Katey, our house is ready. I have paved it with coloured pebbles, and strewn it with flowers. Now I'll be father, and you shall be mother. Good morning, mother. How are the children?"

"Hans," replied the little girl, "don't be in such a hurry; I have no children yet. Wait a minute and I'll fetch some." And she ran away among the bushes, and returned with a handful of snails.

"Now, father, I have seven children—seven beautiful snail-children. See."

"Then let us put them to bed directly, for it is getting very late."

They gathered green leaves and put them in the hole; then they laid the snails upon them, and covered each with a green leaf.

"Now be quiet, Hans, and go away. I must sing my children to sleep all by myself," said the little girl. "Fathers never sing—they go away and work."

So Hans ran away, while Katey sang a lullaby to her snail-babies.

But one of the leaves began to move, and a snail poked its small horned head up; Katey tapped it gently back with her finger. "Take care, Gussy," she said; "you are always the naughtiest. Why, it was only this morning you would not have your hair brushed. Get into bed again this minute!" And then she went on singing.

In a very little while the seven snails had fallen asleep, or, at least, were quite quiet, and as Hans had not come back, the little girl ran all about the churchyard looking for more snails. She collected a number in her pinafore, and came back with them to the grave.

Hans was sitting there, waiting for her.

"Father," she called out, "I've got a hundred more children."

"Nonsense, wife," said the little boy, "a hundred children are too many. Besides, we have only one dolls' plate, and two dolls' spoons. How could we feed them? No mother has a hundred children. We could not find even a hundred names for them. Throw them away."

"No, Hans, it is nice to have a hundred children,—I want them all, I cannot part with one: mothers always love their children."

Just then the grave-digger's young wife had come with two huge slices of bread and butter, for it was supper-time; she kissed both the children, lifted them up, and seated them on the grave, saying, "Take care not to spoil your new pinafores, darlings."

Now, a passing angel, who was winging his way over the graveyard—for the angels are all about us everywhere, though we cannot see them—stayed a moment to watch the little children at their play, and the kisses which their mother gave them, for there is no sight upon earth more beautiful to an angel's eyes than the love of a mother for her children.

And while he watched, the angel noted how the children were playing over the neglected grave. The angel had known the poor forgotten soul who lay there; had many and many a time tried to whisper thoughts of gentleness, and kindness, and unselfishness to him, but for the most part in vain; and so the angel knew he had gone down to the grave unloved, because unloving, unregretted, and leaving no mark behind him.

It was enough to make an angel weep to think of it. And as he thought, a tear, bright and sparkling, dropped from his radiant face upon the sad and untended spot.

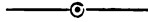
The next day, when the children came out to play, they were surprised to see their playground covered with a mass of brilliant bloom. They called their father to see.

"Look, look, father, somebody has been planting beautiful flowers on our grave."

The grave-digger laughed. "Not they," said he. "They are only wild flowers. Nobody would trouble themselves about that grave, nor about the old miser who lies buried there."

"Don't you think God^d might?" asked little Hans. "Perhaps He put the flowers there because nobody else had thought it worth while." The father shrugged his shoulders and smiled.

"Anyhow, we will pick a nosegay for mother," said the little girl.



LITTLE SIMPLETON.

A RUSSIAN STORY.

ONCE there lived a peasant and his wife who had three daughters. The two elder girls were cunning and selfish; the youngest was simple and open-hearted, and on that account came to be called, first by her sisters and afterwards by her father and mother, "Little Simpleton." Little Simpleton was pushed about, had to fetch everything that was wanted, and was always kept at work; but she was ever ready to do what she was told, and never uttered a word of complaint. She would water the garden, prepare pine splinters, milk the cows, and feed the ducks; she had to wait upon everybody—in a word, she was the drudge of the family.

One day as the peasant was going with his hay to market, he asked his daughters what they would like him to buy for them.

"Buy me some kumach* for a sarafan,† father," answered the eldest daughter.

"And me some nankeen," said the second.

The youngest daughter alone did not ask for a present. The peasant

* Red wool stuff from Bucharest. † A long dress worn by the Russian peasant women.

was moved with compassion for the girl: although a simpleton, she was still his daughter. Turning to her, he asked, "Well, Little Simpleton, what shall I buy for you?"

Little Simpleton smiled and replied, "Buy me, dearest father, a little silver plate and a little apple."

"What do you want them for?" asked her sisters.

"I will make the little apple roll round the plate, and will say some words to it which an old woman taught me because I gave her a kalach."

The peasant promised to buy his daughters what they asked of him, and then started for market. He sold his hay, and bought the presents: some nankeen for one of his daughters, for another some kumach, and for Little Simpleton a little silver plate and a little apple. Then he returned home, and gave these things to his daughters. The girls were delighted; the two elder ones made themselves sarafans, and laughed at Little Simpleton, wondering what she would do with the silver plate and the apple.

Little Simpleton did not eat the apple, but sat down in a corner and cried, "Roll, roll, little apple on the silver plate, and show me towns and fields, forests and seas, lofty mountains and beautiful skies."

And the apple began to roll on the plate, and there appeared on it town after town; ships sailing on the seas, and people in the fields; mountains and beautiful skies; suns and stars. All these things looked so beautiful, and were so wonderful, that it would be impossible to tell of them in a story, or describe them with a pen.

At first the elder sisters looked at the little plate with delight. Soon, however, their hearts were filled with envy, and they began to try to get it from their youngest sister. But the girl would not part with it on any account. Then the wicked girls said,—

"Dearest sister, let us go into the forest to gather blackberries."

Little Simpleton got up, gave the plate and apple to her father, and went with them into the forest. They walked about and gathered blackberries. All at once they saw a spade lying upon the ground. The wicked sisters killed Little Simpleton with it, and buried her under a birch-tree.

They returned home late, and told their father,—“Little Simpleton is lost; she ran away from us in the forest; we searched, but could not find her anywhere. The wolves must have eaten her.”

The peasant regretted the loss of his daughter bitterly; for, although so simple, she was still his child. The wicked sisters also shed tears

Her father put the little silver plate and the little apple into a box, and locked them up.

Next morning a shepherd was tending his sheep near the place, playing on his pipe, and searching in the forest for one of his flock that was missing. He observed the little grave under the birch-tree; it was covered by the most lovely flowers, and out of the middle of the grave there grew a reed. The shepherd cut off the reed, and made a pipe of it. As soon as the pipe was prepared, oh, wonderful! it began to play of itself, and say,—

“Play, O pipe, play! and comfort my poor parents and sisters. I was killed for the sake of my little silver plate and my little apple.”

When the people heard of this they ran out of their huts, and all came round the shepherd, and began to ask him who was killed.

“Good people,” answered the shepherd, “I don’t know who it is. While searching for one of my sheep in the forest, I came upon a grave covered with flowers. Above them all stood a reed. I cut off the reed and made this pipe of it. It plays of itself, and you have heard what it says.”

The father of Little Simpleton happened to be present. He took the pipe into his own hand, and it began to play,—

“Play, O pipe, play! Comfort my poor father and mother. I was killed for the sake of my little silver plate and my little apple.”

The peasant asked the shepherd to take him to the place where he had cut the reed. They all went into the forest; saw the grave, and were astonished at the sight of the lovely flowers which grew there. They opened the grave, and there discovered the body of a girl, which the poor man recognized as that of his youngest daughter. There she lay, murdered—but by whom no one could tell. The people asked one another who it was that had killed the poor girl. Suddenly the pipe began to play,—

“Oh, my dearest father! my sisters brought me to this forest, and here killed me for the sake of my little plate and my little apple. You will not bring me to life until you fetch some of the water from the Czar’s well.”

Then the wicked sisters confessed it all. They were seized and cast into a dark prison, to wait the pleasure of the Czar. The peasant set out for the capital. As soon as he arrived at the city he went to the palace, saw the Czar, told his story, and begged permission to take some water from the well.



The Czar said, "You may take some water of life from my well, and as soon as you have restored your daughter to life, bring her here with the little plate and the little apple; bring your other two daughters also."

The peasant bowed to the ground, and returned home with a bottle full of water of life. He hastened to the grave in the forest, lifted out the body of his daughter, and as soon as he had sprinkled it with the water the girl came to life again, and threw herself into his arms. All who were present were moved to tears.

Then the peasant started again for the capital, and arriving there, went at once to the Czar's palace. The Czar came out, and saw the peasant with his three daughters—two of them with their arms bound, the third, as beautiful as the spring flower, stood near, the tears like diamonds falling down her cheeks. The Czar was very angry with the two wicked sisters; then he asked the youngest for her little plate and apple. The girl took the box from her father's hands, and said,—

"Sire, what would you like to see? Your towns or your armies; the ships at sea, or the beautiful stars in the sky?"

Then she made the little apple roll round the plate, and there appeared on it many towns, one after the other, with bodies of soldiers near them, with their standards and artillery. Then the soldiers made ready for the fight, and the officers stood in their places. The firing commenced, the smoke arose, and hid it all from view. The little apple began again to roll on the plate, and there appeared the sea covered with ships, their flags streaming in the wind. The guns began to fire, the smoke arose, and again all disappeared from their sight. The apple again began to roll on the plate, and there appeared on it the beautiful sky with suns and stars.

The Czar was astonished. The girl fell down on her knees before him, and cried,—

"Oh, Sire, take my little plate and my little apple, and forgive my sisters!"

The Czar was moved by her tears and entreaties, and forgave the wicked sisters; the delighted girl sprang up and began to embrace and kiss them. The Czar smiled, took her by the hand and said,—

"I honour the goodness of your heart and admire your beauty. Would you like to become my wife?"

"Sire," answered the beautiful girl, "I obey your royal command; but allow me first to ask my parents' permission."

The delighted peasant at once gave his consent; they sent for the mother, and she, too, gladly bestowed her blessing.

"One favour more," said the beautiful girl to the Czar. "Permit my parents and sisters to remain with me."

On hearing this the sisters fell down on their knees before her, and cried, "We are not worthy of so much favour!"

"Dearest sisters," said the beautiful girl, "all is forgotten and forgiven. They who remember the past with malice deserve to lose their sight."

She then tried to lift them up from the ground, but they, shedding bitter tears, would not rise. Then the Czar, looking at them with a frown, bade them get up; he allowed them, however, to stay in the palace.

A magnificent entertainment then began; the palace was splendidly lighted up, and looked like the sun among the clouds. The Czar and Czarina rode out in an open chariot and showed themselves to the people, who cried joyfully,—

"Long live Czar and Czarina! May they shine upon us like the glorious sun for years and years to come!"



THE LOST CHILD.

A LEGEND OF BRITTANY.

KATINKEL sat weeping at the farmhouse. She was a widow, and had lost her husband about two years ago, but her tears for him had been soon dried. She was brave and active, and her little Lavik slept beside her in his cradle. She must work for him; for him she must cultivate the farm, plough the fields, and gather in the harvest. Katinkel rose early, and went late to bed, and all the farm servants obeyed her better than they had of old obeyed the master who had for two years been sleeping peacefully in the churchyard.

The corn was growing yellow on the hill-sides, the cows lowed softly in the fields, the sheep cropped the short grass that grew amongst the furze, the ploughmen came early to the fields and worked industriously; but Katinkel no longer enjoyed the prosperity that surrounded her, for Lavik slept no more in his cradle. Yet the cradle was not empty: in

the place of the beautiful Christian child there lay a little monster, black and hairy, with sharp claws, a harsh voice, and hideous features, who was always crying, and who wanted to be suckled, although he talked like a man, and was at least seven years old. It was the child of a Korrigan, one of those fairies with fair hair who dance by night behind the Dolmens; she had carried off Lavik, and left her own ugly child in its place. Poor Katinkel did not dare to ill treat the little monster, for fear her dear



child should be made to suffer for it. She wept night and day, and went every morning very early to pray in the church. She consulted the priest, and he said to her,—

“Take the Poulpikan to the shrine of St. Anne of Auray, and pray to the saint that she may come and help thee.”

So she set out for Auray, barefooted; she fasted all the way, and begged money for her pilgrimage, for the rich peasant woman wished to present herself before the Mother of our Lord as a suppliant. The Poulpikan sat bolt upright in her arms and looked about him with his

piercing eyes ; he asked a hundred questions about all the new things that he saw, and Katinkel interrupted her prayers to answer him, for she thought that if she did not, her little Lavik might call in vain to the fairy who had carried him off—that his cries might be left unanswered. But in vain she fasted, in vain her bleeding feet were bruised against the stones on the road ; St. Anne gave her no consolation, and she carried the Poulpikan back to the farm.

“O Virgin Mary!” cried the poor woman in her sorrow ; “you who watched over your Son even while He passed through the agonies of death, pray to Him that He may give me back my child ! Divine Son of Mary ! let my Lavik return to his mother’s arms.”

The next morning an old beggar-woman presented herself at the door of the farmhouse. She smiled as she entered, and said, “God bless all in this house—you, my good woman, and you, my child ! How do you all do here ? You see I have come out again for a walk.”

“Alas ! good mother, all would be well were it not that I am consumed by a great sorrow. I went to draw water at the fountain, and left my Lavik in his cradle. When I came back to the house, he was far away, and in his place they had left this monster. He has a face like that of a toad, he scratches and bites, and is, in fact, the child of a Korrigan.”

“My daughter, my daughter, do not grieve so ; the good Jesus to whom you have prayed has sent me here. Your Lavik is not lost ; your dear Lavik shall come back to you. Stand in front of the hearth, and make a pretence of preparing the meal for your ten ploughmen in an egg-shell. When the Poulpikan questions you as to what you are doing, take him in your arms and beat him well ; his mother will certainly come to look for her monster, for Korrigans, like women, always hear the cries of their children.”

The tears ran down Katinkel’s brown cheeks. “The good God must indeed have sent you here, my mother. If my Lavik is restored to me by your means, you need never again wander about the country with the gleaners in summer, and the Christmas-box-seekers in winter, to gain your bread. The hottest pancake, and the best corner at the hearth, and the freshest milk from the cow, shall be always at your service. Lavik will see to it when his mother is no longer here.”

The old woman smiled and shook her head. “Before Lavik grows up,” she said, “before you are carried out from the farmhouse feet foremost, I shall have been long sleeping in holy ground. Now, do not forget to strike hard as soon as the Poulpikan speaks.”

When the old woman was gone, Katinkel, with trembling hands, broke an egg on the edge of the hearth. The Poulpikan was sitting on his little chair warming his misshapen feet, and watching eagerly every movement that Katinkel made.

"Mother," he cried at last, in a harsh voice, "what are you doing there with that little egg?"

"What am I doing here, my son? I am preparing dinner in an egg-shell for my ten farm servants."

"For ten, dear mother! In an egg-shell!" and the Poulpikan started



up in his astonishment and propped his chin on his little black hand, and muttered to himself, "I have seen the egg before the hen; I have seen the acorn before the tree; but I have never seen a thing like this!"

Katinkel made a single step towards the ugly dwarf, and caught him in her strong arms.

"Thou hast seen too many things, my son! Ah, little old man! I have thee tight!"

The blows fell as thick as hail on the hairy skin of the Poulpikan. He struggled and cried out, but Katinkel only hit the harder. The dog began to howl, the cat ran away, the terrified chickens went to roost on the beam of the ceiling. Katinkel was lifting her hand once more, when another arm prevented her.

"Do not strike him; give him back to me. I have never done any harm to thy child; he was like a king in our country."

How had the Korrigan come in? No one could tell. The door had not creaked on its rusty hinges, the window was shut, for the rain was beating against the panes. Nevertheless, there she was, frail and delicate, wrapped in her long white veil, with her fair hair flowing over her shoulders. She stretched out her arms to her son, who ran to her side, and immediately they both disappeared, before Katinkel, who was frightened and stupefied, had been able to say a word, or to ask for Lavik.

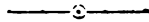
She did not speak, but she looked behind her into the cradle where the ugly little dwarf had lain, and there slept a fair rosy child, a beautiful little boy of two years old. Katinkel heard his light breathing, and she gazed at the loved features, and watched for the moment when the beautiful blue eyes, for which she had been weeping for six months, should open and shine once upon her life. Lavik moved in his sleep: did he feel the passionate love that watched over him? At length he wakened and looked up; then, stretching out his little arms:

“I have slept a long time, my mother,” he stammered.

Katinkel carried him to the foot of the crucifix, and there offered up her thanks to the Son of Mary. The child smiled, and stroked his mother's face with his plump little fingers.

“When the old beggar-woman comes back,” said the mother, after she had finished her prayer, “she shall see whether Katinkel has a good memory.”

Then she put Lavik to sleep again, and sat watching beside him. The farm servants came in at twelve o'clock, but they did not find their dinner ready as usual, for Katinkel was still gazing at her child.



THE DREAMING BEECH.

IT has long ago been cut down. But in olden times it stood on a grassy knoll at the entrance of the village—a grand old tree, centuries old, even then—a tree such as there are few left in the world now—a-days, and possessing one very peculiar property, which was, that any dream dreamed under its shadow came true—that is, supposing the person who lay down to sleep under it, did not do so with the express purpose or wish of dreaming of any one particular thing.

One hot summer's day, a young labourer, out of work, and with empty pockets, was trudging along the road. He was hungry and tired—even more tired than hungry. He came to the beech, and, invited by its shade, lay down to rest.

Soon he fell asleep and dreamed. He dreamed that he sat in a comfortable room, in a house which was his own, with a pretty young wife standing by his side. On his knees sat one little child, and another was playing on the floor at his feet.

When he woke up a reaper was standing by, looking at him.

"Pleasant dreams, by your face," said the reaper. "What were they?"

"Would they might come true," said the dreamer, "but small chance of that."

Then the reaper told the young man the strange legend about the tree.

The young man laughed. He did not believe in the charm. He walked on into the village. There, in front of the village inn, he saw the sign of "The Golden Crown." The landlord was standing at his open door.

The young labourer, pulling off his cap, asked him humbly for a night's shelter. The landlord was a kind man, and seeing the youth looked weary and worn, told him he might stay, and bade his daughter bring him some bread and cheese and beer.

The young woman stood for a while chatting, while the young man ate and drank. After a time he told her how he had had a sleep under the beech, and asked her if what the reaper had said about the tree was true.

"Yes," said the girl, "it was undoubtedly so."

Then she asked him what he had dreamed about. The young man hesitated, and to quicken his tongue, the girl fetched him another foaming tankard of beer.

Just then, the reaper who had seen him at the beech, passed by and laughed.

Meantime, after a good deal of teasing from the girl, the young man said, with a half-smile, just by way of a joke, "If you must know, I dreamed that I should marry the daughter of the landlord of the Crown, and one day be landlord myself."

The girl grew suddenly red—then white. "Are you sure?" she asked, "quite sure?"

Then she turned and walked into the house. But she could not forget the dream, and that night she in her turn dreamed of the stranger.



After all, he was a good-looking fellow.

In the morning, when the young man, with many thanks to the landlord, was about to start off again on his tramp, the girl said to her father, "Could we not find the poor fellow a day's work? There is all the new beer to be tapped. Somebody must help us to do it."

The landlord consented. And after the beer-tapping, there was the wine to bottle, and work to be done in the garden or house—something to detain the young man. In short, he made himself so useful and agreeable to both father and daughter, that in a twelvemonth's time there was a wedding at the inn, and the stranger was the bridegroom of the landlord's daughter.

Not long afterwards the kind old landlord died, and his son-in-law became really landlord of the Crown, as he had in joke said he would be, and in time he and his wife had two dear children born to them.

About five years after their marriage he and his wife were talking one day, when she happened to say something about the legend of the dreaming beech.

"What rubbish, my dear!" said her husband. "Surely you are too sensible to believe in this nonsense."

The wife looked both astonished and hurt. "You should be the last to talk so," she said at length; "you have every reason to be grateful to the tree."

"I am grateful," said the man solemnly, "for all my happiness—thankful to God and to you. It is a thousand times better than my dream, and you are a thousand times prettier and dearer than the young woman I saw in it, but——"

"Was it not me that you saw?" asked the wife, trembling. "Didn't you tell me the first evening we met that you had dreamed you were to marry me?"

Then the man remembered the joke he had played upon his wife.

"It can't be helped now, dear wife," said he. "I remember you were so very curious. I did it to tease you; I was only joking. You are better than any dream."

But the wife would not be comforted.

"You have stolen my love and cheated me," said she, crying bitterly, "and I shall never be happy again."

The landlord hoped that this mood of his wife would pass away. But on the contrary, though her tears ceased, day after day passed, and still she remained silent and miserable. At length one day the landlord

himself, very unhappy at the turn affairs had taken, wandered out and sat down under the great beech to think. Yes, indeed he had dreamed a pleasant dream five years ago, thought he. It had been a long dream, for it had lasted till now, but now it was broken. He had lost his wife's love, and the old times could never come back again.

So thinking, he fell quietly off to sleep.

Strangely enough, he dreamed the very dream of five years back ; but now the faces of the little ones were those of his own children, and the face of the woman was, in very truth, the face of his own dear wife, who was estranged from him. In the dream she smiled at him, and loved him. Then he woke with a start and a sigh, and plucking a small green twig from the tree, went home, and placed it in his hymn-book. The next day was Sunday. As the silent couple walked to church the leaves fell out at the wife's feet. The husband stooped, and flushed scarlet as he picked them up.

"What is that?" asked the wife.

"They are leaves from the dreaming beech," said the man. "I fell asleep there and had a dream yesterday, such a happy one ; but it is not as you say, that dreams under the tree come true, for I dreamed that you were kind to me as you used to be—that you loved me, and had forgiven me, whereas——"

"Did you dream that, really, husband?"

"Really, dear wife."

"Then never venture to say unkind and slighting things of the old tree again, for that dream at least has come true," said the wife, suddenly falling on her husband's neck and giving him a kiss. "Whether you stole my heart or no, you have it now, you bad man."

And they pasted the leaves from the dreaming beech at the beginning of the hymn-book, so that they might not be lost.



THE MASON DWARF.

I.

THE dwarf was a mason dwarf and a mining dwarf, and he was always very busy. In fact, he was the most hard-working little fellow of that mountain. Day and night you heard his hammer and pick going

if you passed that way. He seemed to care nothing for pretty things ; the jewels that came in his way for instance. And when he came up from the under-world, he did not seem to heed the blue sky, or the green grass, or the many-coloured flowers, or the shining water by day, or the moon and stars by night.

The mason dwarf had once wooed a fairy. He was very fond of her, but she treated him unkindly and made game of him.

"When will you give me your love?" said he.

"When you have built me a palace of ruby, and topaz, and amethyst, and emerald, with doors of agate, and windows of diamond," said the giddy fairy.

"Oh, that will be very easy," said the mason dwarf ; and he set to work that very day to collect the jewels. These he kept heaped up in little mounds underground.

One night he went to see the giddy fairy, and said to her, "Will you not come and see how many jewels I have already gathered for your palace?"

"Oh," said she, "I do not like your underground places. They are so dark and cold."

"Not cold," said the mason dwarf ; "it is very warm in my hill. And when you come it shall be lighted up beautifully."

So one midnight the giddy fairy stole away from the dance and paid the dwarf a visit in his mountain caves. They were all hung with lamps, and as bright as day. Then the dwarf showed her the piles of jewels, and looked in her eyes to see if she was pleased. And indeed she smiled ; for she felt very proud that the mason dwarf had taken all this trouble for her.

"I shall begin building our palace to-morrow," said he.

"There is only enough for a one-storey palace," replied the fairy. "I must have mine two storeys high."

"Indeed, you are mistaken," said the mason dwarf, "I have collected jewels enough for two storeys."

"Two storeys, did you say? Well, now I think of it, I must have three storeys. I could not live in a two-storey palace," said the fairy.

Then the mason dwarf sighed to himself, but he began collecting more precious stones the very next day, and soon had enough for a three-storey palace.

"I shall begin to build our palace to-day," said he to the giddy fairy.

"I have now jewels enough to build it three storeys high as you said."



"As I said?" replied the fairy, smiling; "you forget, I said *four* storeys. I could not live in a palace only three storeys high."

And so it went on. The mason dwarf sighed and gathered more jewels, till he had gathered enough to build a palace nine storeys high. Then the giddy fairy laughed in his face, and said,—

"What curious ideas you of the under-world have, to be sure! I could not think of living in a palace less than eighteen storeys high. I always *said* eighteen storeys, you know I did."

Now the mason dwarf was very passionate. He loved this fairy, but now he saw that she was mocking him, and in his rage he flung his hammer right in her path. He did not mean to throw it at her, but he heard a cry, and when he looked for her she was gone.

After this he shut himself up in the mountain and worked harder than ever, as I have said.

II.

ONE beautiful summer day, as he peeped forth from the mouth of his cave, he saw three lovely blue butterflies. The butterflies kept hovering round him and in front of him, as if they wanted to speak, but he turned his back and went in to his work again.

The next day the three butterflies did not come again, but at night, when the mason dwarf came out to breathe more freely for a few moments, he saw three little spires of purple-white light hanging in the air over his head. He only said something cross to himself, and turned his back and went in again.

But the next night there was another sight for him to see. Right above, in front of him, were the three blue flames, and they hovered over the heads of three sylphs, whose wings were like those of the three butterflies which he had seen.

The mason dwarf rested on his hammer and looked up at the three sylphs.

III.

THE three sylphs were pointing away from the mountain, and the three blue-white spires of flame shook and played in front, and appeared eager to start off in the same direction. The mason dwarf arose, and said to himself, "I will follow these three lights, at all events."

So he took up his hammer and followed them, and they led him far away from his mountain land. All the night he travelled on, and the

three spires of light went before him as he journeyed. It seemed to him to grow colder and colder, and the country more and more bleak. First the flowers and the soft-leaved summer trees came to an end. Then the grass began to grow short and scanty, and there was scarcely a fern or a bramble to be seen. At last, when he had been journeying he knew not how far, the very grass seemed to have passed away, and the country was all bleak rocks and ravines, and dark cold water running underground. The air was chill and piercing, and the mason dwarf looked up to the stars to see if he could tell how far he had come. He could not read them. At last the three lights paused over a sullen little gorge, where the damp rose and the air pierced to the marrow. He thought he heard a weak, shrill voice, and listened. The voice said, "Shelterless! shelterless! shelterless!" He drew near, and looked hard at the creature that spoke.

"It is a stock—a changeling," said the mason dwarf to himself, "and very ugly." And so it was. "Why do you not move from this bleak place?" said he.

"Shelterless! shelterless! shelterless!" moaned the changeling.

Then the dwarf sat down and rubbed his beard, and fell into a brown study. When at length he looked up again, the three blue fires were moving forward once more. He followed them, and as he went the cry of "Shelterless!" came sad and shrill on the wind behind him.

IV.

To his great surprise the mason dwarf soon came to a very different place, a spot where the air was fresh and sweet and dry, and where trees grew and flowers. Here the lights paused again, and again upon the wind came, louder and shriller than ever, the cry of "Shelterless!"

The mason dwarf felt a little puzzled and angry, and struck his hammer hard upon the ground, saying to himself, "I cannot make this out." The blow resounded through the dell, and quicker than thought two little mason dwarfs—apprentices they were—arose from the earth, bearing the tools of their craft, trowel and hammer and pick, and wearing aprons and caps, and they bowed low to him, and said, "Master, shall we build?"

"Shelterless!"—the miserable wail came floating on the wind again.

"Yes, build," said the master mason. And he began to build too, and they helped him, and they said,

"Master, shall it be a cottage?"

And he said, "A cottage."

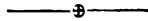
And they said, "Of two rooms, master?"

And he said, "Of one room." For he was very cross, and he did not understand it.

So they built a cottage of one room; and they said, "A fireplace, master, and a chimney?"

And he said, "Neither."

So they built a cottage of one room, with no fireplace and no chimney, and then the two apprentices went underground, and the master mason slept. But early in the morning he was awake by a terrible noise, and saw that the wind had blown down the walls and carried away the roof, and there was no cottage.



VISITED BY A FAIRY.

TIMOTHY, or as he was more shortly called, Tim, lived with his grandmother, whom the neighbours spoke of as Old Kitty. They did not get on very well together. Tim was sulky, and his grannie was cross.

"I ain't going to worry for him," groaned old Kitty, sitting in the cottage on the dirty hearth. "What I want at my time of life is rest."

"I ain't going to care for her," muttered Tim, lounging in the weed-grown garden outside. "Lads like me want fun."

With these feelings in their hearts, it may be imagined how wretched they made one another's life. If old Kitty had to speak to Tim, she snapped at him; in his answers Tim grunted back again. One day this came to its worst. Tim had been sent on an errand, but, instead of going, he idled his time away in the village, playing with some lads. At last, late in the evening, he shuffled in sideways at the cottage door. When he saw there was no supper on the table, he bluntly cried,—

"Isn't there anything ready for me to eat?"

His grannie turned round in her chair, glaring at him. "Have you brought the parcel from the carrier's?"

"No."

"Well, the food for supper is in that package! So you can't have any; you must go to bed hungry."

Tim, very wrathfully, scrambled up the ladder into the loft where he slept. "I won't stand this!" he said, tossing his jacket into one corner. His waistcoat he threw into another. "To-morrow, I'll run away. I'll go to sea or anywhere."

At that moment, his grannie, below, was rocking herself in her chair. She had been expecting to have a comforting cup of tea when Tim brought home the parcel. "Nobody can bear this!" she muttered. "Let morning come! I'll shut up the cottage, and go into the work-house. He'll have no roof over his head then."

In the morning they both got up very hungry; but, before they had had time to quarrel, there came in a good-hearted woman, who lived next door. In one hand she bore a jug of the whitest new milk, and under that arm a nice brown loaf, while, in the other hand, she had a dish heaped with rosy-cheeked apples. She put all the things on the table, saying,—

"You must please take these from me. We have had a piece of good fortune this morning. Our cow, Dapple, has brought us a lovely calf."

"I am sure I'm very glad," stammered old Kitty, amazed at this kindness.

"Thank you," blurted Tim, snatching at an apple, and fixing his teeth in it.

Without waiting for their thanks, the neighbour crossed again to the door and went out. But neither Tim nor his grannie was at liberty to pay further notice to her. The cottage had all at once become filled with a curious whirring and humming noise; something was flashing about here and there in it like a sunbeam. Now it glanced up to the ceiling, then shone on the old dresser, or again skimmed along the dusty mantelshelf. As they both looked and listened, they made out something like the clapping of small hands, and the sound of a very tiny voice speaking. The skippings about of the glancing light were gradually growing narrower and slower. In the end it stopped right in the centre of the hearth, and then Tim and his grannie saw that it was a small child—a girl it seemed. It kept on clapping its little hands, dancing on pointed toes. They now could make out the faint musical words.

"I have got in—I have got in!" it repeated. "Many a day I have been about the cottage waiting to enter, but I could not. Now I am inside!" Again the tiny hands were clapped, tinkling like music.

The grannie actually dropped a curtsy to the pretty creature. "But,"

she asked, "why could you not come in before, my little lady, if you wished it? The door was mostly open."

"It doesn't matter," was the reply, "how wide doors and windows are open, I never can enter a dwelling till kind words are spoken in it. You," and one of the little white hands pointed to grannie, "said at the kind neighbour's good news, 'I am glad;' and you,"—now the glittering fingers pointed to Tim,—"said 'Thank you.' Then I could come in, and here I am! But get on with your breakfast, for you are hungry. See, behind the milk-jug there is a screwed-up paper, which your neighbour left; it has some tea and sugar in it. Come, you mustn't stay looking at me," went on the golden-haired child. "You'll be famished. Put the kettle on this moment."

Tim and his grandmother started together to obey this command. They nearly knocked one another down on the floor in their hurry. But they only laughed, helping each other with the kettle, and when they laughed, their little visitant laughed too, the silvery sounds mixing with their merriment. The fire flashed up, as if it was delighted at the fairy's presence; the kettle had never boiled so quickly.

"Why, grannie, you have poured his cup brimming over!" delightedly said the fairy, springing up on tiptoe to look. It was so. Old Kitty had never been so unstinted before. "I may take off one of these wings, I believe," added the small visitor. She did take the silver shining gauze wing from one shoulder, and, folding it up, put it away in a pocket somewhere in her skirt.

Soon after this, Tim asked for more bread.

"Now I know the other wing must come off," laughed the little speaker. "Why, Tim, you said 'Please,' and gave grannie the knife with the handle towards her." She was busy folding up the other wing and putting it into her pocket. "I shan't want my wings for some time to come, I can foresee."

"Are you really going to stay with us?" asked Tim, blinking his eyes, afraid he was dreaming.

"It would make us happy all the day long, though we don't deserve such an honour," said the grannie, getting up from her chair, and making another curtsey.

The lovely little fairy grew grave for an instant. "You will not always see, at least not clearly as you do now. The sun is shining very brightly this morning."

It was so: golden sunshine came pouring in at the door.

"But if I vanish now and then, you must not think I am really gone. I shall be somewhere about; and there are some words, the speaking of which will always bring me back again. You had better know my name—I am called Goomour. However, breakfast is over, and here we are doing nothing but talking."

Grannie's old cheeks reddened, as, on looking round the cottage, she noticed how untidy it was. She shuffled hastily across the hearth to a corner, bringing from thence a broom. With this she began sweeping the floor. The fairy Goomour clapped her tiny hands, and, tripping forward, she touched the brush-handle with one of her small fingers. The brush instantly began to go twice as fast. It rushed into the corners, taking grannie with it; it glided under the chairs; there was not an inch overlooked, nor a grain of dirt left anywhere. The same thing happened when grannie picked up a duster and began to use it. Goomour just touched it, and it fluttered and whisked so fast that grannie could scarcely see her own hands, they moved so quickly. At this rate, the cottage promised to be as bright and well ordered as a little palace before dinner-time.

"I can't do anything myself," said Goomour; "I am only allowed to help others."

Tim now blushed. If his grannie was at work, he thought he ought to be so. Going hastily into the garden, he took up a rusty spade; and began to dig. No sooner had he done this than Goomour was out of the cottage beside him, laughing and clapping her tiny hands. When he struck the spade into the hard soil, she just touched it with her taper foot as he put his own boot-sole on it. Down the spade went into the ground without any trouble. It came up again with its load in the same light way when she touched the handle on his grasping it. The digging went on like magic. But neither inside the cottage with grannie, nor outside with Tim, did Goomour touch any vessel or tool until they had first put a hand to it. Before long Tim had done everything about the little premises. Just at the same time his grannie had finished her work. Going a step within the door, Tim, looking towards their little visitor, said,—

"I must go back to the smith's shop, and ask him to please let me learn my trade."

"Oh, do, Tim!" gleefully cried the fairy, again clapping her small hands.

Tim had been apprenticed to the village smith, but had been turned out of the shop many weeks ago because he would not fasten Farmer

Merryweather's white mare by the rope-halter in the ring of the old ivied shed, to have her shoes refastened.

When the smith saw Tim standing in the doorway, asking to be taken



into the shop again, he could scarcely believe his own eyes, Tim looked so bright and nice. It happened that only a few minutes before Farmer Merryweather's mare had again been brought to be shod.

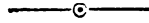
"There's the white mare," said the smith, with a nod towards her ;
"fasten her up."

This time Tim did not hesitate in the least. Well he might not, for on the animal's back he saw Goomour sitting, though nobody else in the shop seemed to do so. He tied up the horse, and throughout the day did everything else the smith bade him.

When he returned home at night, the cottage was shining in cleanness and brightness. Grannie and he were all smiles, as they sat one on each side of the hearth, with Goomour between them. They were talking merrily, when the fairy said,—

“How you mispronounce my name! It is not Goomour. You did not hear it clearly. Fully spoken, my name is *Good Humour*.”

There was not a pleasanter cottage in the whole village after that than grannie's and Tim's, and all because “Good Humour” had come to live in it with them.



THE RAVEN AND THE DOG.



A RAVEN once took up his abode in the fork of an old tree that overshadowed the little wooden hut, where Hector, Farmer Hodgett's watch-dog, lived. At first the two, the Raven and the Dog, although neighbours, were not very friendly. Possibly the Raven, being the latest comer, thought that Hector should have been the one to make the first advances towards acquaintance. But the fact was, that though Hector was naturally a dog of a sociable disposition, he was considerably tied to home by circumstances— one chief circumstance

being a chain, which had so attached itself to his collar that it was very

rarely the two were ever separated. In consequence of this, visiting beyond a certain radius was really an impossibility to Hector.

The Raven at length recognizing this fact, and being somewhat of a gossip, resolved to waive ceremony, and, clad in his best black coat, made a morning call, at the most fashionable hour of the afternoon, upon Mr. Hector.

That gentleman received his guest with the greatest politeness, and the two conversed in the most amicable way.

The Raven had evidently the intention of making himself agreeable.

"As neighbours, I think we should be acquainted," said he.

"I am sure I am charmed to see you," replied the Dog; "and shall be at any time. For myself, you see, my duties really tie me so much to home that you must excuse me if I neglect to return your visit."

"Yes, yes," said the Raven, in a melancholy tone, "I pity you with all my heart."

"Dear me! you need not do that," replied Hector, quickly. He did not very much care to think that he was an object of pity to his visitor. "I don't know that I've anything to complain of."

"Oh, really?" returned the Raven, lifting his feathers a little contemptuously. "If you are satisfied, there is nothing more to be said, of course. But I should have thought your life was a *very* sad one."

The Raven looked so unhappy about it that Hector really began to think there must be something in what he said, especially as he had always heard that the raven was a very wise bird.

"Well, I don't know," said Hector, meditatively, "I've a very good house to live in, as you see; a good master, and pretty nearly everything that I want."

"Ah! of course," returned the Raven, with a sickly smile, "if such a life suits you, far be it from me to make you discontented with your lot. But it does seem to me a melancholy thing that an animal of your intelligence should live in slavery—chained up night and day by the caprice of a cruel tyrant. It almost makes me weep to think of it."

"You must know," returned the Dog, rather indignantly, "that I occupy a position of trust and responsibility. My master places the greatest confidence in me. If it were not for me, he would never be able to close an eye in peace. But he knows that I am always keeping guard over his property and over his safety, and so he is able to live in happiness and contentment. He is, besides, by no means a tyrant, but one of the kindest masters possible."

"*Masters!* ay, that 's it. You're nothing better than a slave, my poor Hector," croaked the Raven—"a poor miserable captive, chained down to a prison-house. But, of course, if you like it, that 's enough. Heaven forbid that I should put ideas into your head!" added the bird, turning up his eyes; "we have each of us our different walk in life. I daresay, after all, you have some compensations; but, for myself, give me liberty, freedom, the power of doing what I will, of going where I please——"

"Of being no good to anybody, in short," put in the Dog, sarcastically.

"No, no, my good friend—do not say so," returned the Raven; "I am at least able to offer sympathy to those less fortunately placed than myself; and while I spread my wings to the morning breezes, or swing myself to sleep in my leafy hammock, my heart will still be sighing for the fate of my poor friend, chained down in his solitary dungeon, wearing his coat away under the galling chain."

By the time the Raven had come to the end of this sentence his emotion was such that his hoarseness quite overcame him.

The Dog hardly knew whether to laugh or be angry.

"I'm sure you're very kind," he said, "to be so interested in other people's affairs. But, after all, I don't see that my fate is such a very hard one. I really think, sir, that you are disposed to take a melancholy view of things."

"Poor dear!" croaked the Raven, still very hoarse. "I truly rejoice that you are able to take any other view from this dismal prison of yours."

"I tell you what it is, Mr. Raven," said Hector, provoked by the air of superiority which the bird assumed, "I believe you must be suffering from an attack of indigestion. That last worm you swallowed has evidently stuck in your throat, and that is why you are so terribly in the blues; or else you're in for a shocking cold,—your voice sounds like it. I don't believe leafy hammocks are good for your constitution. If you'll take my advice you'll keep your mouth shut, and not let the cold air get down your beak."

"What do you mean?" croaked the Raven, very much offended. "I don't hear anything the matter with my voice."

"Well, well," returned the Dog, slyly; "Heaven forbid that I should put ideas into your head, or try to make you discontented with your fate!"

"With my voice, you mean," retorted the Raven,—"no, you would have some difficulty in doing that. It has always been considered a remarkably fine organ. By the way," he went on, "I must be off now, or I shall be late at a concert that is going to take place to-day in the

elm avenue, at which I have promised to take the principal bass solo. Good bye, my friend, good bye. What a pity it is you can't come with me! *How* you would enjoy it, to be sure!" With this parting thrust, the Raven stalked off.

"What a stupid, meddling, conceited, ridiculous bird, to be sure!" observed Hector, as soon as he was gone; "what nonsense he talked, too! It was as much as I could do to keep myself from flying at him, and punishing him for his impertinence. Only the cunning creature kept himself, I observed, just out of reach of my chain. Umph!—Ah! After all, that chain is rather a bore sometimes. Though there wasn't a word of truth, of course, in what that old croaker said, still—still——"

In short, though Hector did not believe one word of what the Raven had said, he began from that time to think that perhaps it would have been more pleasant if one or two things had been differently ordered in his life. He began to feel less proud of his handsome brass collar than he had formerly done; his house did not appear to him so convenient or comfortable; even the caresses of his master seemed to have lost their charm; and sometimes he could not help fancying that his chain was growing shorter than it used to be.

He mentioned this circumstance one day to the Raven, who still continued his friendly visits to his neighbour, in spite of the rather ungracious manner in which his attempts at sympathy had been received in the first instance. He was a bird of a patient disposition, and besides so firmly convinced of his own excellences that he felt sure he need only be known to be appreciated. In truth, it appeared to be so in this case, for the more Hector saw of the Raven, the more he was persuaded to believe in his shrewdness and wisdom. It was evident, thought Hector, that he had seen a great deal of the world, and done a great many things that he, Hector, had not done, and it was plain that on many matters his opinion was valuable.

So he referred this affair of the chain to him.

"Do you think it possible," said he, "that it does grow shorter? After you have paid me a visit, and we have had one of our interesting conversations together, it always seems to me that it is rather tighter than it was before."

"Ah," returned the sagacious bird, "I am not surprised to hear it. The fact is your eyes are becoming wide open, and when that is so, chains always grow tighter and more painful."

"Dear me!" replied the Dog, taking the Raven's words literally. "In

that case I will try to shut my eyes rather closer ; but I had really no idea that I opened them any more than I have done since the time I was a puppy."

The Raven smiled and nodded his head, and looked very wise indeed.

"When once folks' eyes are opened it is very hard to shut them again," he remarked, sententiously. "They go on widening and widening."

"No! do they really?" said Hector, rather alarmed. "But in that case, then, my chain will go on shortening and shortening. Don't you think it would be better for me to make up my mind to keep at least one eye shut, for fear of consequences?"

The Raven shook his head. "There would be a better plan than that," said he.

"What is that?" asked Hector.

The Raven came close to his friend and whispered something in his ear, but his voice was so croaky with emotion that Hector could not make out what he said.

"What do you say?" he inquired, very much puzzled. "'Bray again'? I don't understand. I'm not a donkey, sir, whatever you may think."

"You're a worse donkey than I took you for," said the Raven, speaking louder. "Break your chain—break your chain! There: now do you understand?"

"Goodness me! of course. I'm not deaf; you needn't shout so," retorted Hector. "But in spite of all your wisdom, I don't see why I should take all that trouble only to get myself into a scrape with my master, who would probably beat me and buy me a new chain, which might not be so comfortable as the old one."

"Pshaw!" said the Raven, as soon as he could speak for laughing. "Did ever anybody hear such a creature? What would your master have to do with you then? Don't you see that, your chain once broken, you would be free—free? Are you too mean-spirited a cur to understand even the meaning of the word *liberty*?"

"There's no occasion to call me bad names, Master Raven," said Hector, a little sulkily, "though I'm sure I'm always willing to listen to your opinion and to take your advice—when it's good."

"It's always good," observed the Raven, with an air of great conviction.

When people believe thoroughly in themselves they often succeed in making other people believe in them.

So it was in this case. The Raven was eloquent. He loved to hear his

own voice. He had a number of very fine phrases which he did not quite understand himself, and which the dog understood even less. But in the end Hector became firmly impressed with the notion that he was a very ill-used and unhappy animal. In short, his eyes became so very wide open, as the Raven would have said, that the whole pleasure of his life was gone. He grew completely discontented. He did not know in the least what he wanted. He had had no experience of any life other than the one he led. But he was put thoroughly out of temper with that by the Raven's sophistries. He was always longing for something different from what he had, and, for want of a better name, he called this vague unknown something for which he longed *Liberty*. It is a word that has to suffer a good many meanings as the world turns round.

At length, after many very serious and lengthy conversations, Hector, urged on by the Raven, resolved that he would at the first opportunity escape from his bondage.

"Let us join company, my dear fellow," said the Raven. "I know something of life. I will be your guide and friend."

"Indeed, you are most kind," said the Dog, "and I feel deeply grateful. I confess I don't know much about the ways of the world outside my master's premises."

"No: how could you, you poor ill-treated creature?" responded the Raven, sympathetically.

"The only thing," observed the Dog, "is that if I abandon my master, what will become of him? Who will guard him from danger, or his property from depredation? Who will keep beggars and tramps off his grounds? If I neglect all my duties, who will do them?"

"Pshaw, duties!" returned the Raven, quite impatiently. "Who ever heard of such things? It only shows what a slave you are, my poor Hector, to have such low ideas. If your *master*, as you call him, wants his property guarded, why, he can sit in the kennel himself—can't he?"

"Well, I suppose he could," said Hector, meditating. "It's a good idea, Raven. I never thought of it before—only——"

"Nonsense! *only*," replied the Raven. "You just take my advice. Think about yourself, and don't trouble yourself about anybody else. That's my maxim, and you'll find it much the best way to get along. That's true liberty, that is."

"Ah!" said Hector, considerable impressed. "Is it, really?"

The opportunity for which Hector sought was not long in coming.

One day Hector's master took him out for a walk, as he occasionally did. And very delightful these little excursions had always been to the Dog. But latterly even they had lost their charm.

"What pleasure," the Raven had said, "can there be in trotting here and there after a slow two-legged creature, who orders you about every moment, and expects you to 'keep to heel,' and 'fall in,' or perhaps even fetch and carry for him at the slightest word of command, just for his amusement?"

So on this particular day, instigated by the Raven, who was hovering about, Hector resolved to give his master the slip.

He pretended, after a while, to be extremely busy poking his nose into a rabbit-hole he found in a field, through which he and the farmer passed.

He heard his master whistling and calling to him, now in one tone, now in another. Still he did not go.

He resisted, though it went rather against him to do so.

"Hector! Hector!"

Again the well-known whistle. The custom of obedience was almost too strong for the Dog to be able to throw it off. He was just going to rush along in answer to the summons, when the Raven, who had followed the pair, alighted close beside him, and whispered in his ear,—

"Are you going to lose your chance, you stupid? Do you want your chain to grow shorter than ever? Come with me, come with me. Run off in the other direction to your master's call. Put distance between you and him. Come!"

So saying, the bird took flight, the whistling at the moment ceased, and Hector, in a tremor of mingled pleasure and pain, followed his tempter as fast as his four legs would go. After a while Hector began to get tired, and called on the Raven to stop.

"No, no," croaked he; "you must come on now. It's no good stopping half-way on the road to liberty."

"But where are we going?" gasped the Dog.

"Who shall say?" returned the bird, with one of his wise looks. "It's very hard to say where liberty will lead us."

"I wish it might lead us to a good supper and a comfortable bed," thought Hector; but he did not say so, for he was beginning to be rather afraid of the Raven's sarcastic remarks. On they went, over fields and ditches, and through streams, and by dusty high-roads. At least, this was Hector's way; and many a roundabout path he had to take, and

many a breathless scamper, to keep up with his winged companion, to whom stone walls were no barriers, and stony roads no grief.

At length, when daylight was fading, they came to a clump of trees.

"I shall roost here," said the Raven.

"And what am I to do?" asked the Dog.

"What you like," returned his friend. "That's the beauty of it now; don't you see you are free?"

"Yes," said Hector; "then I should like a nice bit of meat, and some straw for a bed."

"What nonsense!" returned the Raven; "find some insects, and then go to sleep under the tree, if you can't get up into the branches."

"No, I'm afraid I couldn't do that," said the Dog, ruefully; "and I'm horribly hungry. I don't think a million of insects would do me much good."

"I see, after all, you're a coarse, low-minded creature," croaked the Raven, as he prepared to go to sleep, leaving his companion to his own devices.

At length the Dog, hungry though he was, was so overpowered with weariness, that he, too, curling himself on the damp earth, fell asleep.

Hector awoke in the morning to find himself still more hungry and quite as tired as he had been on the previous night. In fact, he was terribly footsore.

"What are we going to do now?" he asked the Raven, who was already up and dressed, and breakfasting to his satisfaction, among the roots of the tree.

"What we like," returned the Raven.

The Dog looked so melancholy that the Raven could not help laughing.

"You don't seem half to enjoy liberty as yet," he remarked.

"I should enjoy something to eat more," returned poor Hector.

"Think of your liberty," exclaimed the Raven.

"I should be more inclined to think of it, if I'd had my breakfast," said Hector.

"Well, I tell you what," said the Raven, soothingly; "we'll try and find a young lamb or a chicken, and we'll kill and eat it."

"Dear me! but that would be stealing, wouldn't it?" asked Hector, who had always been a Dog of very good character. "I have been told that stealing is wrong."

"Except in the cause of liberty," put in the Raven.

"Ah! I see," returned Hector, not unwilling to be convinced.

At length his scruples were all overcome. There was a farmyard not very far from the tree where the two friends had passed the night.

The Raven said that he would go and reconnoitre.

It was yet very early morning, and the gates of the farmyard were closed fast. Hector prowled gloomily round, his tail between his legs, while the Raven hovered above the farmyard, seeking for prey.

To Hector, hungry, and waiting inactive, the time seemed to pass very slowly. At length he could restrain his impatience no longer, and barked out rather loudly to his companion, to know what he was about. But the sound of his bark was as a trumpet-call to battle. At this challenge at the gate, all the sounds of farmyard life awoke—cocks crowed, geese cackled, dogs barked.

"Hold your tongue, you stupid!" croaked the Raven. "You're just spoiling everything. You'll get me shot if you don't take care. We'd better make off as hard as ever we can, now."

Hector was so crestfallen with the consciousness of the blunder that he had committed, that he could only apologize very humbly to the Raven, and follow as well as he was able, by land, the course which the sagacious bird took in the air. But he found the task even a harder one than he had done the day before. Hungry, thirsty, weary, his limbs stiff and aching, and his spirits woefully depressed, he plodded on, in an aimless, hopeless way.

"What is to be the end of it all?" he asked himself again and again. He at length ventured to put the same question to his companion.

"The end? Oh! I don't know," remarked the Raven, tranquilly. "Aren't you enjoying yourself?"

"Bless my heart, no!" cried our poor Hector, surprised out of his usual good manners; "I only wish I was back again at good Farmer Hodgett's."

"Contemptible creature," said the Raven, looking down upon the Dog, "to be yearning after your chains! I've no patience with you!"

"I'm yearning after my dinner more than anything else at this moment," growled Hector.

"If you hadn't barked and made a foolish commotion, you'd have dined like a prince an hour ago," remarked the Raven.

Hector, feeling the full force of the reproach, could only be silent.

"Perhaps now you have learnt wisdom, however," the bird went on. "I see another farmyard close by. If you'll only have a little confidence in me, all will, I have no doubt, go well."

Hector, with much humility, professed that he would be guided in all things by the Raven, and do exactly as he was told.

"That is well," said his Mentor. "Then you lie quietly down by this haystack, and leave me to manage. If you will be docile and obedient, all will go smoothly."

Hector was so tired that he was not sorry in this matter to obey the Raven; but he could not help thinking, as he stretched his limbs languidly on the grass, "After all, liberty seems very much the same to me as the other thing. It's only obeying one person instead of another, and not being half so comfortable."

As he had permission to rest, however, he availed himself of it by taking a nap. Whether he slept for a long or a short time he did not know, but when he awoke he discovered the Raven at no very great distance from him, eagerly employed in picking the flesh off the bones of a small duckling, which he had managed to capture and kill.

Hector roused himself.

"Oh! splendid!" he cried, bounding up to his friend. "Now, this is something like! But why didn't you wake me before? It—it really seems to me that you're eating every bit of the creature yourself. Do leave off and let me have a turn."

"No, no," said the Raven, pecking away as hard as ever he could. "Don't be impatient, and don't be unjust. I shall have finished in one minute. As soon as I have eaten all the flesh, you shall have all the bones. Can anything be fairer?"

Poor Hector gave a perfect howl of disappointment.

"What is the matter now?" cried the Raven. "Aren't you satisfied yet, when I've just risked my life on purpose for you?"

"You might have left me a bit of the meat, then, I think," said Hector, almost with tears in his eyes, and with the water running out of his mouth.

"Greedy creature! a likely idea!" said the Raven, as well as he could, with his beak full of duckling. "You wanted it all, didn't you? What heartless ingratitude! You know you like the bones quite as well as the meat. And, besides, let me tell you, beggars mustn't be choosers. There, now you may finish the rest," he added, leaving a collection of well-cleaned bones, and a heap of feathers, for our hero's portion.

"So this is liberty, is it?" said our poor crestfallen Hector, as he set to work upon his unappetizing meal.

From that moment, he resolved in his secret soul that he would give

the Raven the slip, and return to his old allegiance. He would go back to Farmer Hodgett's.

But it is not always so easy to go back when once the path of duty has been left. And Hector found it to be the case.

His first object was to rid himself of his companion, for whom he had begun to entertain not only fear, but positive aversion.

This was not accomplished without some little difficulty; for the Raven, although he affected to despise the Dog, was not willing to relinquish the power which he had acquired over him. In some minds there is a wonderful pleasure in tyranny, and the Raven had what, in a human being, we should call a dominant mind. What the equivalent would be in a bird's composition we must leave those who are learned in ornithology to decide.

However, Hector did at length manage to escape from the feathered enslaver. While the Raven was away on a foraging expedition, which would doubtless have resulted to Hector in a share of well-cleaned bones, our hero once more made a stroke for freedom.

He ran after a man who was walking along the high-road, and followed him.

Draggled, hungry, and wretched as he was, Hector, now that he had broken away from his evil genius, believed that his troubles were at an end.

It was well for Hector, as, perhaps, it is well for some of us, that he did not know all he had to go through.

The man's way led him to the nearest market town.

Hector followed at his heels.

After a while the man found him out, and not being desirous of his company, threw stones at him.

Hector fell back a little, but followed at a distance.

Hector was glad when the town was reached, although in the crowd he lost his conductor. If he had not shown him much favour, Hector, at least, felt grateful to him for having delivered him from the Raven.

Now, at any rate, Hector was in a position to enjoy the full pleasures of liberty. He owed no service to any one; he was free. But yet he was not happy. He wandered aimlessly down one street and up another, eating such refuse as he found in the roads, drinking from the gutters, having airy sleeping-quarters on doorsteps, from which he was as often as not kicked off; and each day he became more dejected, more miserable, and thinner.

At length, consumed by hunger, he ventured to make a raid upon a

small piece of meat that he saw lying on the floor of a butcher's shop.

He entered stealthily. The butcher—who was sitting reading the newspaper at the far end of the shop—without moving, flung his knife at the intruder.

It made a deep gash in Hector's shoulder. Howling with pain, wounded alike in body and spirit, he rushed through the streets.

A cry of "mad dog!" was raised.

On went Hector, a crowd of idle urchins at his tail, who shouted and yelled and gathered fresh force from every alley and byway.

Bleeding, desperate, and, in truth, goaded almost to madness, our hero rushed into a cobbler's shop, the door of which was standing open, and found a haven of refuge, very much to the alarm of the cobbler, beneath his bench.

There he stood at bay—or rather lay—panting. A council of war was held by an excited little mob who swarmed into the cobbler's shop.

"Fetch him out."

"Drown him."

"Knock him on the head."

"Poison him."

These were the sentences passed against Hector.

The only question was, who was to put them into execution?

Every one urged his neighbour to the task, but no one seemed desirous of becoming the hero of the adventure.

At length, as good luck would have it, somebody's eyes strayed to a paper stuck up against the cobbler's wall, which ran thus:—

"Strayed since Tuesday last, from Farmer Hodgett's, a brown rough-haired dog, terrier bred, answers to the name of Hector. Whoever will restore the same shall receive ten shillings reward."

"Heigh!" cried the discoverer of this wonderful document. "Perhaps after all this may be no other than Farmer Hodgett's watch-dog. Here, Hector! Hector!"

Whereupon Hector, hearing himself addressed mildly by name, crept forth from his hiding-place, and lying down upon the floor on his back, with his paws in the air, surrendered at discretion at the feet of his conquerors. Very shortly afterwards, he, to his intense satisfaction, found himself once more in his old quarters. His master was the poorer by ten shillings, but all the richer in a servant who had bought his experience pretty dearly, and was not therefore likely to "stray" again.

IN THE HALL AND SHED ROOM OF ENCHANTMENT.

With ~~with~~ feelings the wayward ~~ing~~ more more took possession of his ~~in~~ ~~dwelling~~ with ~~with~~ emotion he witnessed the real delight with ~~with~~ ~~he~~ ~~honest~~ ~~welcomed~~ him with ~~with~~ ~~his~~ ~~guilty~~ feeling of self-reproach ~~is~~ ~~issued~~ ~~to~~ ~~the~~ ~~reader~~ ~~may~~ ~~which~~ ~~his~~ ~~miserable~~ ~~condition~~ ~~provoked~~; ~~with~~ ~~with~~ ~~regret~~ ~~at~~ ~~the~~ ~~pitiful~~ ~~men~~ ~~which~~ ~~was~~ ~~set~~ ~~before~~ ~~him~~ — ~~all~~ ~~the~~ ~~can~~ ~~he~~ ~~never~~ ~~imagined~~ ~~that~~ ~~described~~. Never was returning ~~trough~~ ~~more~~ ~~than~~ ~~penitent~~ ~~that~~ ~~was~~ ~~he~~. Never was a watch-dog who ~~do~~ ~~he~~ ~~can~~ ~~with~~ ~~more~~ ~~happiness~~ ~~and~~ ~~spirit~~.

They passed in

Heard and ~~rest~~ ~~nothing~~ of the Raven—the bird of evil counsel— ~~since~~ ~~he~~ ~~was~~ ~~when~~ ~~he~~ ~~had~~ ~~taken~~ ~~the~~ ~~resolution~~ ~~of~~ ~~breaking~~ ~~free~~ ~~from~~ ~~his~~ ~~gambles~~. Summer had passed into autumn, and autumn had ~~grown~~ ~~dark~~ ~~and~~ ~~winter~~. The early snows lay upon the ground thick and soft and Hector curled himself up on the rug inside his house, and ~~laughed~~ ~~at~~ ~~them~~ ~~how~~ ~~sting~~ ~~he~~ ~~was~~.

Not much fit him to sit either on these bitter cold days, for the tramps and beggars would scarcely venture to brave such weather, and the busy world's sounds were all hushed in the snowy stillness.

Hector lay peacefully thinking—not sleeping, but lost a little in reverie; ~~reflecting~~, perhaps, on his past errors and hairbreadth escapes.

Suddenly he started up his ears. A well-known sound had reached them. It was the voice of the Raven—the Raven, no longer the charmer.

"Delighted to find you once more, my dear friend," he croaked out. "So distressed as I was at losing sight of you, I can't tell you."

The Dog vociferated no reply. He only raised himself a little, and put his nose out of the kennel.

The Raven came a little nearer. "My dear friend, how charmed I am to meet you, and looking so well, too, in spite, poor fellow, of your misfortunes. I see they have made you prisoner again."

Still the Dog did not reply. The Raven went on.

"But no doubt every lot has its alleviations. What have we here?" looking towards a platter which lay beside the kennel. "Food! ah!"

The Raven's eyes looked hungry. The snow lay thick on the earth.

The Dog showed his teeth a little grimly.

"Yes," he said, "I have just had my dinner. I owe you something, my friend. There are the bones. I am sorry I have not any feathers to offer you, but beggars mustn't be choosers, you know."

"What do you mean?" asked the Raven.

"I mean," returned Hector, "to pay what I owe, as an honourable dog

should. I owe you (besides the bones and feathers) some advice. Now, the advice you gave me was very bad, and the advice I'm going to give you is good, so that, in fact, I'm being not so much just as generous."

"What is your advice, my friend?" asked the Raven blandly.

"I advise you," said the Dog, solemnly, "to take yourself off as fast as ever you can, if you have any regard for your own bones—or feathers."

The Raven sighed and shook his head.

"Slavery has a very demoralizing effect on the mind and morals," he said, "though far be it from me to make you discontented with the fate which——"

The Dog interrupted him with a growl.

"No," said he, "you won't easily do that, my cunning old bird. You have taught me a very good lesson, for which I thank you. For the rest, I can dispense with your company. You had best take my advice and make yourself scarce, for my chain is not, you will, I am sure, be glad to hear, by any means so short as it used to be. I have quite liberty enough to do my duty."

"Well, well," said the Raven, making his best bow, "if that is so, I will take the liberty of wishing you good morning."

And being a wise bird, he went—to air his liberty, bestow his advice, and seek his dinner elsewhere.

Hector watched him till he was well out of sight, and then once more rolled himself round on his warm rug and went to sleep comfortably with one eye open, as is the manner of faithful watch-dogs.

"Let him laugh who wins," he said, winking the eye which he kept open.



THE MINNOWS WITH SILVER TAILS.

THERE was a cuckoo-clock hanging in Tom Turner's cottage. When it struck one, Tom's wife laid the baby in the cradle, and took a saucepan off the fire, from which came a very savoury smell.

Her two little children, who had been playing in the open doorway, ran to the table, and began softly to drum upon it with their pewter spoons, looking eagerly at their mother as she turned a nice little piece of pork into a dish, and set greens and potatoes round it. They fetched the salt,

then they set a chair for their father, brought their own stools, and pulled their mother's rocking-chair close to the table.

"Run to the door, Billy," said the mother, "and see if father's coming."

Billy ran to the door, and, after the fashion of little children, looked first the right way and then the wrong way, but no father was to be seen.

Presently the mother followed him, and shaded her eyes with her hand, for the sun was hot. "If father doesn't come soon," she observed, "the apple-dumpling will be too much done, by a deal."

"There he is!" cried the little boy, "he is coming round by the wood; and now he's going over the bridge. O father! make haste, and have some apple-dumpling."

"Tom," said his wife, as he came near, "art tired to-day?"

"Uncommon tired," said Tom, and he threw himself on the bench, in the shadow of the thatch.

"Has anything gone wrong?" asked his wife; "what's the matter?"

"Matter?" repeated Tom, "is anything the matter? The matter is this, mother, that I'm a miserable hard-worked slave;" and he clapped his hands upon his knees, and muttered in a deep voice, which frightened the children; "a miserable slave!"

"Bless us!" said the wife, and could not make out what he meant.

"A miserable, ill-used slave," continued Tom, "and always have been."

"Always have been?" said his wife, "why, father, I thought thou used to say, at the election-time, that thou wast a free-born Briton?"

"Women have no business with politics," said Tom, getting up rather sulkily. And whether it was the force of habit or the smell of the dinner that made him do it, has not been ascertained, but it is certain that he walked into the house, ate plenty of pork and greens, and then took a tolerable share in demolishing the apple-dumpling.

When the little children were gone out to play, his wife said to him, "Tom, I hope thou and master haven't had words to-day?"

"*Master!*" said Tom, "yes, a pretty master he has been; and a pretty slave I've been. Don't talk to me of masters."

"O Tom, Tom," cried his wife, "but he's been a good master to you; fourteen shillings a week, regular wages, that's not a thing to make a sneer at; and think how warm the children are lapped up o' winter nights, and you with as good shoes to your feet as ever keep him out of the mud."

"What of that?" said Tom, "isn't my labour worth the money? I'm not beholden to my employer. He gets as good from me as he gives."

"Very like, Tom. There's not a man for miles round that can match you at a graft; and as to early peas—but if master can't do without you, I'm sure you can't do without him. Oh, dear, to think that you and he should have had words!"

"We've had no words," said Tom, impatiently; "but I'm sick of being at another man's beck and call. It's 'Tom do this,' and 'Tom do that, and nothing but work, work, work, from Monday morning till Saturday night; and I was thinking, as I walked over to Squire Morton's to ask for the turnip-seed for master,—I was thinking, Sally, that I am nothing but a poor working man after all. In short, I'm a *slave*, and my spirit won't stand it."

So saying, Tom flung himself out at the cottage door, and his wife thought he was going back to his work as usual. But she was mistaken: he walked to the wood, and there, when he came to the border of a little tinkling stream, he sat down, and began to brood over his grievances. It was a very hot day.

"Now, I'll tell you what," said Tom to himself, "it's a great deal pleasanter sitting here in the shade than broiling over celery-trenches; and then thinning of wall-fruit, with a baking sun at one's back, and a hot wall before one's eyes. But I'm a miserable slave. I must either work or see 'em starve: a very hard lot it is to be a working man. But it is not only the work that I complain of, but being obliged to work just as *he* pleases. It's enough to spoil any man's temper to be told to dig up those asparagus-beds just when they were getting to be the very pride of the parish. And what for? Why, to make room for Madam's new gravel walk, that she mayn't wet her feet going over the grass. Now, I ask you," continued Tom, still talking to himself, "whether that isn't enough to spoil any man's temper?"

"Ahem!" said a voice close to him.

Tom started, and to his great surprise, saw a small man, about the size of his own baby, sitting composedly at his elbow. He was dressed in green—green hat, green coat, and green shoes. He had very bright black eyes, and they twinkled very much as he looked at Tom and smiled.

"Servant, sir!" said Tom, edging himself a little farther off.

"Miserable slave," said the small man, "art thou so far lost to the noble sense of freedom that thy very salutation acknowledges a mere stranger as thy master?"

"Who are you?" said Tom, "and how dare you call me a slave?"

"Tom," said the small man, with a knowing look, "don't speak roughly

Keep your rough words for your wife, my man, she is bound to bear them—what else is she for, in fact?"

"I'll thank you to let my affairs alone," interrupted Tom, shortly.

"Tom, I'm your friend; I think I can help you out of your difficulty. I admire your spirit. Would I demean myself to work for a master, and attend to all his whims?" As he said this the small man stooped and



looked very earnestly into the stream. Drip, drip, drip, went the water over a little fall in the stones, and wetted the watercresses till they shone in the light, while the leaves fluttered overhead and chequered the moss with glittering spots of sunshine. Tom watched the small man with earnest attention as he turned over the leaves of the cresses. At last he saw him snatch something, which looked like a little fish, out of the water, and put it in his pocket.

"It's my belief, Tom," he said, resuming the conversation, "that you have been puzzling your head with what people call Political Economy."

"Never heard of such a thing," said Tom. "But I've been thinking that I don't see why I'm to work any more than those that employ me."

"Why, you see, Tom, you must have money. Now it seems to me that there are but four ways of getting money: there's Stealing"—

"Which won't suit *me*," interrupted Tom.

"Very good. Then there's Borrowing"—

"Which I don't want to do."

"And there's Begging"—

"No, thank you," said Tom, stoutly.

"And there's giving money's worth for the money; that is to say, Work, Labour."

"Your words are as fine as a sermon," said Tom.

"But look here, Tom," proceeded the man in green, drawing his hand out of his pocket, and showing a little dripping fish in his palm, "what do you call this?"

"I call it a very small minnow," said Tom.

"And do you see anything particular about its tail?"

"It looks uncommon bright," answered Tom, stooping to look at it.

"It does," said the man in green, "and now I'll tell you a secret, for I'm resolved to be your friend. Every minnow in this stream—they are very scarce, mind you, but every one of them has a silver tail."

"You don't say so!" exclaimed Tom, opening his eyes very wide; "fishing for minnows, and being one's own master, would be a great deal pleasanter than the sort of life I've been leading this many a day."

"Well, keep the secret as to where you get them; and much good may it do you," said the man in green. "Farewell, I wish you joy of your freedom." So saying he walked away, leaving Tom on the brink of the stream, full of joy and pride.

He went to his master, and told him that he had an opportunity for *bettering* himself, and should not work for him any longer. The next day he rose with the dawn, and went to work to search for minnows. But of all the minnows in the world never were any so nimble as those with silver tails. They were very shy too, and had as many turns and doubles as a hare; what a life they led him! They made him troll up the stream for miles; then, just as he thought his chase was at an end, and he was sure of them, they would leap quite out of the water, and dart down the stream again like little silver arrows. Miles and miles he went, tired, and wet, and hungry. He came home late in the evening, completely wearied and footsore, with only three minnows in his pocket, each with a silver tail.

"But at any rate," he said to himself, as he lay down in his bed,

"though they lead me a pretty life, and I have to work harder than ever, yet I certainly am free; no man can order me about now."

This went on for a whole week; he worked very hard; but on Saturday afternoon he had only caught fourteen minnows.

"If it wasn't for the pride of the thing," he said to himself, "I'd have no more to do with fishing for minnows. This is the hardest work I ever did. I am quite a slave to them. I rush up and down, I dodge in and out, I splash myself, and fret myself, and broil myself in the sun, and all for the sake of a dumb thing, that gets the better of me with a wag of its fins. But it's no use standing here talking; I must set off to the town and sell them, or Sally will wonder why I don't bring her the week's money." So he walked to the town, and offered his fish for sale as great curiosities.

"Very pretty," said the first people he showed them to; but "they never bought anything that was not useful."

"Were they good to eat?" asked the woman at the next house. "No! Then they would not have them."

"Much too dear," said a third.

"And not so very curious," said a fourth; "but they hoped he had come by them honestly."

At the fifth house they said, "Oh! pooh!" when he exhibited them. "No, no, they were not quite so silly as to believe there were fish in the world with silver tails; if there had been, they should often have heard of them before."

At the sixth house they were such a very long time turning over his fish, pinching their tails, bargaining and discussing them, that he ventured to remonstrate, and request that they would make more haste. Thereupon they said if he did not choose to wait their pleasure, they would not purchase at all. So they shut the door upon him, and as this soured his temper, he spoke rather roughly at the next two houses, and was dismissed at once as a very rude, uncivil person.

But, after all, his fish were really great curiosities; and when he had exhibited them all over the town, set them out in all lights, praised their perfections, and taken immense pains to conceal his impatience and ill temper, he at length contrived to sell them all, and got exactly fourteen shillings for them, and no more.

"Now, I'll tell you what, Tom Turner," he said to himself, "in my opinion you've been making a great fool of yourself, and I only hope Sally will not find it out. You were tired of being a working man, and

that man in green has cheated you into doing the hardest week's work you ever did in your life by making you believe it was more free like and easier. Well, you said you didn't mind it, because you had no master ; but I've found out this afternoon, Tom, and I don't mind your knowing it, that every one of those customers of yours was your master just the same. Why ! you were at the beck of every man, woman, and child that came near you—obliged to be in a good temper, too, which was very aggravating."

"True, Tom," said the man in green, starting up in his path, "I knew you were a man of sense ; look you, you're *all* working men, and you must all please your customers. Your master was your customer ? what he bought of you was your work. Well, you must let the work be such as will please the customer."

"*All* working men ; how do you make that out ?" said Tom, chinking the fourteen shillings in his hand. "Is my master a working man ? and has he got a master of his own ? Nonsense !"

"No nonsense at all ;—he works with his head, keeps his books, and manages his great works. He has many masters, else why was he nearly ruined last year ?"

"He was nearly ruined because he made some new-fangled kind of patterns at his works, and people would not buy them," said Tom. "Well, in a way of speaking, then, he works to please his masters, poor fellow ! He is, as one may say, a fellow-servant, and plagued with very awkward masters ! So I should not mind his being my master, and I think I'll go and tell him so."

"I would, Tom," said the man in green. "Tell him you have not been able to *better* yourself, and you have no objection now to dig up the asparagus-bed."

So Tom trudged home to his wife, gave her the money he had earned, got his old master to take him back, and kept a profound secret his adventures with the man in green, and the fish with the silver tails.

YOUNG PRINCE FLORIKIN'S SUNDAY RIDE.

THIS young Prince lived in a castle far away, and it is now a long time ago. He had a good heart, but was too self-willed.

One Sunday morning he took a very strange notion into his head. He angrily said, "I will go out riding, and on the biggest horse in all the stable; I mean the black one, which so paws and snorts. Yes, indeed I will! Let it be got ready at once."

All the great household was grieved to see young Prince Florikin behave in this self-willed way. He could not be more than nine years of age, and had a pretty but rather haughty-looking face.

The old servant, to whom he had spoken, bowed respectfully, but asked, "Have you not forgotten it is the day for rest?"

A stamp of the tiny-booted foot upon the floor was the first answer. The second came in the rude words, "You rest, if you like, Aldred. I shall go forth. Why is not the horse brought out?" He expected his wishes to be obeyed by magic, and a fully-caparisoned horse to stand in the courtyard as soon as he had spoken.

"What is this I overheard?—a ride this morning, Florikin?" A beautiful lady entered from an adjoining apartment; it was easy to see that she was the Prince's mother. "Aldred," she said, "was right. Sunday is given to us for quieter living than the other days. The noise of the world is hushed for a few hours that we may the better hear our own thoughts."

"I can hear the birds singing and the leaves rustling at this moment," Florikin angrily said, pointing to the open window, through which the sunlight was pouring. "And I don't want to hear my own thoughts." The white forehead was positively drawn into a little frown. "What I want," he added, "is to ride out on Conqueror, the great black steed."

The lady's beautiful face grew very sad. "If you," she slowly replied, "will go into the chapel and listen to the preacher, you will find the quiet come into your own heart, Florikin. From thence it will spread to all else, so that even the rustling leaves and singing birds, though they will not stop, yet will soften in their sounds. You will hear them differently than on other days. Then, when your heart is made gentle by the coming of this blessed day, rejoice in sweet Sunday gaiety, which

you will find can be free enough without being just the same pleasure as on the week-days."

It was all of no use: Florikin would have his ride.

Very gravely his mother made a sign to the oldest attendant, who, in turn, passed an order to a younger servitor standing just within the doorway of the other room. "I will go and pray for you and myself," she said, turning slowly away from Florikin, and passing out of the apartment.

Ten minutes later the young Prince, mounted on the great black steed, issued from beneath the low archway of the castle. He was not alone; the elderly attendant, now also on horseback, rode close behind him. Everywhere outside the dark shadow of the arch the sunlight blazed upon the stone walls. It glittered in a shining patch on Conqueror's flank, and added a bright lustre to the silk mantle which had been thrown on the Prince's shoulders. But it was to be noticed that his head was bare; it was shielded only by the long thick locks he wore. Nobody in the castle knew why he had not put on his plumed cap. But the reason was a good one,—he was not quite pleased with himself for not obeying his mother's wishes. His coming out uncovered was, in fact, partly a punishment of himself for that; partly, too, he hoped that, if she was looking out, she might learn from his having no cap on that he did not intend the ride to be a long one.

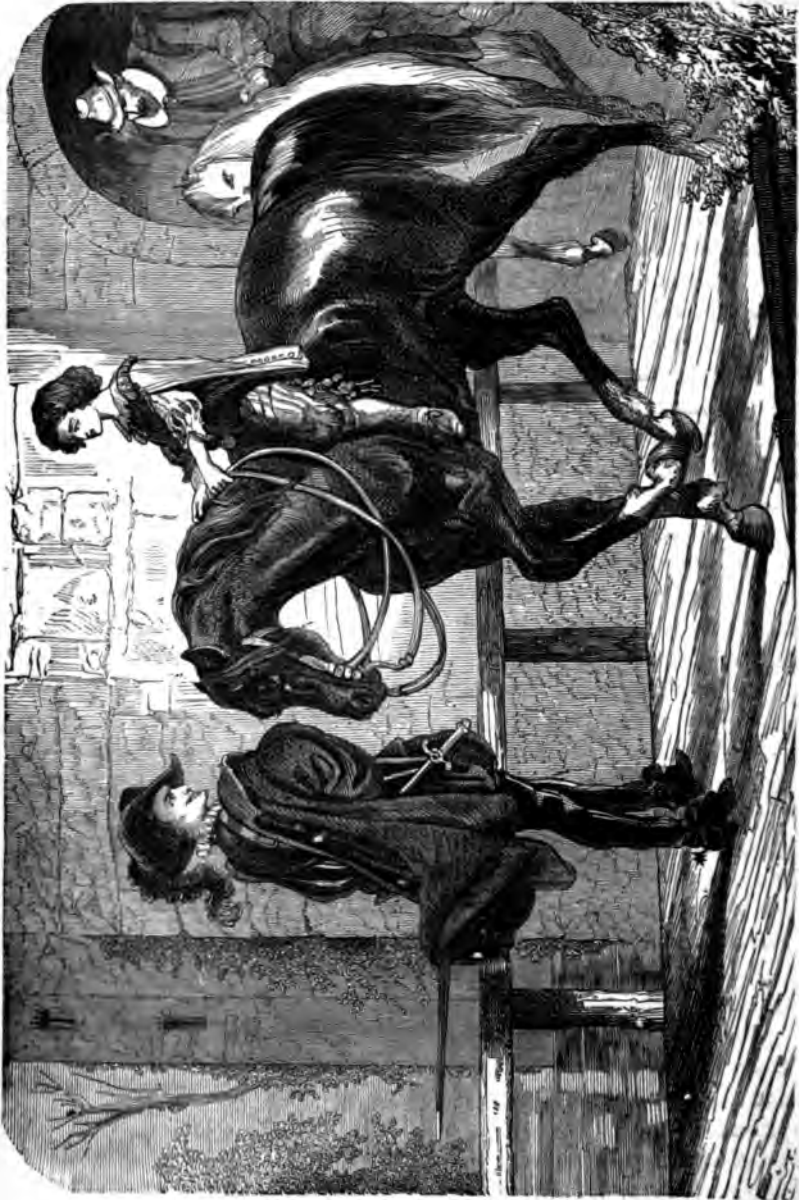
The lady did not see or know of this. In her own apartment she was sorrowing upon her knees.

Out Florikin rode, courteously returning a word of kindly greeting offered to him by a gaudily-dressed cavalier they met on the bridge. But no sooner had the bridge been passed than Florikin reined up; the great gentle horse yielded to the first touch of the rein, only pawing and snorting. "Aldred," said the Prince, "I still am going my ride; but I must first turn back to kiss my hand to my mother's window. Perhaps I did not speak to her as I ought to do."

A bright light flashed across Aldred's aged features. "I knew," he muttered, "that his heart was noble."

Back they rode into the courtyard, and Florikin, waving his white hand, threw two kisses towards the Princess's casement. Still she was kneeling, and did not know that a good answer was already being given to her prayers.

As the second kiss left his lips, Prince Florikin started. Something, he almost fancied, fluttered close by his ear, and in doing so, it gave out



a little strain of the sweetest music. "What was that I heard?" he asked. "It was something very beautiful."

"Perhaps," said Aldred, again wheeling his horse round to follow his young master once more through the gate, "it was one of the bright sweet Sunday thoughts my lady speaks of."

The Prince looked in a puzzled way at the speaker, turning a little more towards him on the noble horse's back;—there was no saddle, for the stirrups would but have trammelled the youthful rider. But Florikin, though he turned to listen to Aldred, did not say anything in reply.

Soon they were out in the meadows below the great towering castle. The far-stretching fields were lying in the rich sunshine, the leafy trees cast down brown shadows on the green grass, while the winding river gleamed like silver. But although, as Florikin had said before leaving the castle, the sounds of nature were going on outside as usual, neither the fluttering of the leaves and the grass nor the singing of the birds were exactly the same as he had heard them on the previous week-days.

"Things are not quite as at other times," Florikin said, speaking now very gently. "Why are the sounds different to-day, Aldred?"

For an instant Aldred drew rein under the shade of an oak-tree. "I think it is that some usual sounds are missing altogether on Sundays," the good old serving-man said. "The village yonder is quite still." Florikin saw that it was so. The cottages, dark on the roofs and white at the gables, slept in the sunlight; the brown-patched sails of the wind-mill on the brow of the slope were motionless. "It is men stopping from their week-day labours which makes the change; and the day being so different, men have other and better feelings. That is how I think it is," modestly wound up Aldred.

Again they rode on; but now Florikin went very slowly. "It is strange," he said, "more and more of the sweet flutterings come about my ears!" His voice was itself as soft as music as he said it.

"You may depend upon it, they are the bright Sunday thoughts," suggested Aldred.

One moment later, the Prince, almost entreatingly, said, "Let us go back."

Back they rode. It was Aldred this time who urged the pace.

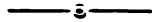
"Will you forgive me, mother?" Florikin, after alighting, asked as he was met by the Princess in the great hall. "I find that the Sunday quiet is not in the trees and streams, but comes from men ceasing their work-a-day doings. Aldred says it is from men's hearts that the stillness comes."

"Aldred is wise," the lady answered.

Florikin's eyes were liquidly bright, as he further said, "I came back to throw two kisses towards your window."

"Ah, it was then your heart began to grow quiet," replied his glad mother. "I will give you three kisses back for them."

And she did so.



IN THE SAWDUST COUNTRY.

THREE of the children who lived in this strange country were called Rop, Bop, and Kop. Of course Rop was the name of the girl, and she was the oldest of the three.

Very little need be said about their parents. There were bigger, drier, more broken figures moving about in the Sawdust Country (for that was the name of it), and these were understood to be the parents of the younger ones you met with there. But they never showed any love for the children. If the two old wooden shapes, master and mistress of the cottage, ever found themselves near Rop, Bop, or Kop, they said, "Off to your teachers!" giving them a push, which usually knocked them down with a crash.

We have mentioned the teachers. In Wooden Land, the old figures, not wishing to be bothered by the young ones, got teachers in plenty. They said to these schoolmasters and schoolmistresses, "See, we will pay you, and you must look after these troublesome children. Mind that they turn out learned, well-behaved, and everything that can be wished. Only remember that we are not to be bothered by helping you, or in adding at home to what you do in the class, or in any other way. We are going to pay you, and there is an end of it." They then counted down a great many pieces cut from the ends of laths, that being the money in Wooden Land.

"We'll do it; we'll do all that is needful," said the teachers.

But, unluckily, the teachers were a little more stiff, hard, and unyielding than the children's parents, which, perhaps, is not to be wondered at, bearing in mind that the young people were not *their* children.

For example, Rop, Bop, and Kop had no fewer than four teachers; that was an odd one over and above one for each child. It had been found that the stupidity and wilfulness of a child were more than a match



for the hardness of a single teacher, so they had to increase the hardness by giving one teacher in. But we had better give a specimen of how lessons were taught to Rop, Bop, and Kop.

The teaching often took place out of doors, for in that dry hard country it mattered very little whether you were indoors or out. If it rained at all, it rained only showers of sawdust; the snow, when there fell any, was made of small shavings. As was only natural with this sort of weather, the grass there grew up in little sharp wooden spikes, with oak and deal knots among them for daisies and buttercups. But we are forgetting the lesson.

The teacher of things-in-general first took Rop, Bop, and Kop in hand on the morning we are speaking of. She set Bop and Kop in one row, and Rop behind them, or, her own frame being of wood, she could only turn her eyes so far each way. Then, lifting a stiff forefinger, she began.

“What is the distance of the sun from our earth?”

“Seventeen inches and a half,” said Bop, who was always rash. Then he stuck his finger in his mouth, for he thought perhaps he was wrong.

“You are an idiot!” wrathfully said the teacher. “What distance do you give, Kop?”

Kop answered, “Four hundred thousand billion millions of miles.”

The teacher set her wooden eyes on Kop with what would have been a glare if the orbs had not been made of timber. She said, “Your brother is as wise as Solomon compared to you. As soon as your other lessons are over, I will cut you both up into matchwood for giving such ignorant answers. You need not grin, Rop!” she added to the girl, who was standing behind the others. “I shall serve you the same, because I know your answers would have been worse still!”

It was in this way that the children were encouraged to make progress.

The other teachers then had their turn. One of them gave Rop, Bop, and Kop a drawing-lesson. It was made up of nothing but triangles ellipses, and single straight lines. All three broke down in it, but especially Rop, who, by some accident, drew a perfect circle, and then, by a shaky motion of the fingers, indented it round the edge, finishing by making a dash in the middle. It very much resembled a real daisy. The teacher said it was the greatest mistake in drawing that had ever been seen in Wooden Land. When school was over Rop would have her arm broken in two places for making it. All in vain Rop pleaded that the waving line she had made was owing to a sudden pain in her left side, just under the arm.

As the morning went on things got worse. The wooden lady who taught arithmetic, and wore a pair of elm knot-holes for spectacles to enable her the better to see decimal fractions, creaked in every timber joint when Bop said that twelve multiplied by nine gave seven as the product. She said, when school was over he would have to be crushed between two heavy planks by way of helping him to rally his wits.

Then came the grammar. Bop said there weren't any parts of speech; you had to take it all or leave it. Kop stated that a noun was an adverb when it was not an interjection. The teacher gave up before coming to Rop, and astounded the other teachers by murmuring that she thought the lessons were too hard for the children. The other mistresses came around her hurriedly, their wooden joints clattering with rage. Such a thing, they said, had never been heard of in Wooden Land!

"I don't believe it is the right way of teaching," said this mistress. "Please do not speak to me at this moment: a pain has seized me in the left side, just under the arm."

But the other teachers clamoured louder than ever.

The three children took advantage of the sudden noise. They turned their faces together. Bop spoke:

"When school is over we are all to be cut up into matchwood!"

"Yes," said Rop, "and my arm is to be broken in two places for the mistake in drawing."

Kop added, "And I am to be crushed between two heavy planks."

"It won't hurt us much,—we are so used to it," said Rop. "But we may as well run away; let us play truant."

No sooner said than done: away they scampered. They went to play in a wood not far away. The trees were only so much dry timber, great old trunks without a leaf on them.

After they had amused themselves, in their dull way, for some time, Rop came to a standstill, leaning against a tree, and resisted Kop's efforts to push her farther. She said, "I don't think we have done right. We must go back. I have that pleasant pain again at my side."

They started off homeward in single line. When they got back to the school, the teacher of grammar was lying on a plank, still worse. A physician had been fetched. The wooden old gentleman, having examined her, was just saying, "It is very singular, but there seems to be something warm and very sensitive growing within the body on the left side, just under the arm. I have read of such rare cases,—it is, I believe, called a heart."

Rop walked right up. Putting her hand to her side, she said, "I have got one coming too, sir."

The sick schoolmistress, who had just been asking for the children, saying that she loved them all, reached up her hand, and took Rop's fingers in her own. Rop bent down her head, and the two kissed each



other. But no sooner did their lips touch than a frightful storm broke over all that country. The lightning and thunder were terrible.

When the tempest cleared off, nobody was alive but those who had hearts coming. The sawdust softened into real fresh earth, and there sprung up green grass and coloured flowers. Rop, Bop, and Kop, after this, got on rapid'y in their learning.

PENELOPE ANNE.

AS wet and dreary-looking a day as one could well have; the sky lying smoothly on the tops of the chimney-pots, and the rain dripping down in a placid and contented fashion, as if it had no intention of leaving off for the next week.

Frank and Wynn timer are standing at the nursery window, flattening their noses against the panes, and finding what amusement they can in looking out.

But the prospect is not very enlivening. It consists of a damp-looking row of houses opposite, the drawing-room shutters of which are chiefly closed, and the windows of which are the reverse of clean. Beneath, in the street, is to be seen a stretch of muddy pavement, and a portion of muddy road. On the pavement pass and repass foot passengers in every stage of dampness. In the roadway occasional vehicles plunge along in every stage of muddiness.

The children have been playing a new game of roadside cribbage for the last half-hour. "I'll take the people with umbrellas, and you shall take the people without," Frank had said, "and every woman shall count two, and a policeman five. That will be all to your advantage, Wynn timer, because they never have umbrellas," put in cunning Frank, feeling sure that the weather was far too bad for a policeman to be anywhere about.

So Wynn timer agreed, but lost horribly, because there wasn't one person in twenty who dreamed of going out on such a day without an umbrella; and except one or two little street boys, Wynn timer really made nothing. Even then Frank was cruel enough to insist that two boys only counted for one.

"I declare I won't play," cried Wynn timer, indignantly.

But just then she spied out, at the far end of the street, a whole force of policemen marching along two and two.

"Two, four, six, eight, and an odd man: that makes ten, twenty, thirty, forty-five," shouted Wynn timer, pegging them off on her fingers as if her hand had been a cribbage-board. "Splendid! splendid! now I'm above you ever so far, Frank."

And when that was fully established, Frank declared that he was tired, and would leave off playing. Frank could never bear to be beaten.

"It's a stupid sort of game after all," he said. "Dear me, how I do hate wet days!"

Just then the nursery door opened and a head appeared.

"What are you about, you two?" asked a voice that belonged to the head.

The children made a rush.

"Aunt Louie—Aunt Louie! come in!" they cried together. "You're just the very sort of person we want. We want somebody to amuse us. Come in, there's a dear delightful auntie. We are so glad to see you."

"Well, there's nothing like being honest," said Aunt Louie, laughing. "Pray what do you expect me to do for your amusement—dance, sing, or play?"

"No, no; tell us a story," said Wynnie.

"Yes, a real good story," put in Frank.

And as they spoke, they pulled the arm-chair up to the fire for auntie, and settled themselves comfortably down on the floor, one on each side of her.

"Now, then, auntie, go on," said Frank, with the air of a young autocrat.

"Um!" said Aunt Louie, considering, and preparing to obey quite meekly. "What story shall I tell you? Let me see. Oh, I think I will tell you about the little girl and the wolf."

"No, no, auntie," interrupted Frank; "that's Red Riding-hood, and we know all about her."

"That's quite an old story," put in Wynnie. "And, besides, there are no wolves now-a-days."

"No wolves who talk, you mean," corrected Frank.

"Well, I suppose they never did—*really*—auntie, did they?"

"Of course not," said Frank. "You can't think we ever could believe such baby nonsense."

"I must say I think you are the most unbelieving children I ever knew," observed Aunt Louie. "When I was a little girl I believed everything I was told. I believed in Red Riding-hood's wolf quite as much as I did in Romulus and Remus, or Henry VIII., or Richard III., or any other historic personage about whose sayings and doings there can be no doubt whatever."

"Well, never mind, auntie; go on," said Wynnie, fearing that her aunt was slightly offended. "Tell us 'Red Riding-hood' if you like."

"Oh, dear, no," said Aunt Louie. "If you are so sceptical about the hero, I shouldn't think of it. Besides," with a merry little twinkle of her eye, "it wasn't 'Red Riding-hood' at all that I was going to tell you, but quite a different story altogether."

"Oh," exclaimed Wynnie, "what a pity it was we stopped you! Do go on, there's a dear darling!" coaxingly.

"Yes, do, auntie," echoed her brother.

And so Aunt Louie, after a little pressing, such as all great performers naturally require, began:—

"Once upon a time, and not so very long ago either, there was a little girl called Nineteenth-Century Child. But as that was a very long name, and inconvenient to call when one was in a hurry, and as her papa and mamma and most of her friends always were in a hurry, they shortened it, for convenience sake, to Penelope Anne.

"Now Penelope Anne was a very clever little girl, very sharp and very knowing—quite a modern-improvement child, in fact, and as unlike the little girls of the good old story-books as it was possible to be. It was very difficult to take Penelope Anne in. She knew so much about everything, and she was altogether such a remarkably wise child, that she sometimes knew better even than her papa or mamma, which is the very latest development of the modern infant.

"One day Penelope Anne's mamma sent her with a little basket, in which was a small pot of calf's-foot jelly, to a poor old woman in the village who was ill.

"'You may go alone, if you like,' said her mamma. 'It is such a very little distance, I don't think you can come to any harm.'

"'I should think not, indeed, mamma,' said Penelope Anne in reply, for she thought she was quite capable of taking care of herself. All the same, she was rather proud of being allowed to go alone.

"She popped on her hat in a moment, and was ready to set off.

"'Now then,' said her mamma, 'here is the basket; take it carefully. Don't drop the jelly out of it, and'—smiling a little mischievously—'don't go loitering by the way, or you may meet Red Riding-hood's wolf, and get into mischief.'

"Penelope Anne laughed, and tossed her little head.

“‘As if anybody believed in those ridiculous nursery tales now-a-days!’ she said. ‘I should hope we know better.’

“So off set Nineteenth-Century Child with her basket, in all the pride of her wisdom.

“‘When mamma talks like that,’ she said to herself as she walked along, ‘she must really think that I am one of those little girls one reads of, who believed in all sorts of nonsense, and who, I daresay, couldn’t see that musical-boxes were only clockwork, and that pantomime fairies were only girls dressed up and painted. In these times to talk of Red Riding-hoods and Jack Giant-killers, and all the rest of them, is too absurd.’

“While thus talking to herself, she was passing through a small plantation which separated her papa’s land from the village.

“Just as she had finished her last sentence, she heard a low growl coming from among the shrubs beside her.

“Penelope Anne started.

“‘There is a dog there, I think,’ she said. And she looked in the direction from which the sound came. ‘Fox, fox!’ she called, ‘is that you?’

“But, instead of ‘Fox,’ as she spoke there sprang forth, from behind the shrubs, a great brown Wolf, as big as three Newfoundland dogs rolled into one.

“Penelope Anne was certainly very much startled, and the idea at once struck her that the creature must have made its escape from the Zoological Gardens in London, which she had visited when she was staying with her cousins.

“‘Oh!’ she said in her fright, ‘wherever did you come from?’ This she said to the wolf, scarcely knowing what she was about, for of course she was a great deal too wise and sensible to imagine that the wolf would understand her. Great, then, was her surprise when the Wolf, addressing her, said,—

“‘Ah, Miss Nineteenth-Century Child, there you are at last! I’ve been waiting for you ever so long.’

“The sound of the voice at once restored Penelope Anne’s composure. ‘Oh!’ said she in a relieved tone, ‘I see there is some trick here. Pray who are you, Mr. Wolf?’

“‘I,’ said the Wolf, ‘am that same animal of whom you have doubtless heard in the affecting story of “Little Red Riding-hood.”’

“At this Penelope Anne laughed. ‘Nonsense!’ said she. ‘I don’t know who you are, but I’m sure that isn’t true. We children of

now-a-days are a great deal too clever to believe all those rubbishy old tales.'

"'Really!' said the Wolf, in a delighted tone. 'Do you mean, my dear Miss Nineteenth-Century Child, that though you see me, you don't believe in me?'

"'Certainly I don't,' said Penelope Anne. 'I have been better educated, I should hope, than to believe all I either see or hear.'

"'Ah!' exclaimed the Wolf with a scream of delight. And at the same moment there was a sort of gunpowder-flash which made Penelope Anne wink her eyes, and when she opened them again, the Wolf was gone, and in his place stood a beautiful green and gold fairy.

"Penelope Anne certainly was very much astonished now.

"'Thank you, my dear Nineteenth-Century Child,' said the fairy. 'You have relieved me from a horrible oppression under which I have suffered for ages. A cruel Ogre, whom I unhappily offended centuries ago, gave me the form of this ugly Wolf, and vowed I should never be released from the hateful spell until I could find a little child and an old woman in one, who was too clever by half to believe in me, even when she saw me. For ages I have been wandering about looking for this curious child. I have even been over to America once or twice, hoping that I might discover her there, but even there the little children were not quite advanced enough for me. I can't be sufficiently thankful to have met with you.'

"'Oh, well,' said Penelope Anne, drawing herself up rather proudly, 'I am sure if I have been of any service to you, my poor fairy, I am very pleased. I certainly do think, as you say,' though the fairy hadn't said it, 'that the human race is improving. We are getting more clever than we used to be, and by the time we have properly instructed our papas and mammas, the world generally will be very much better arranged than it is at present.'

"As Penelope Anne spoke she gave her head a little toss, which she had rather a habit of doing. But as she did so, it struck her that there was something rather unusual about her head, or rather about her hair. Usually, as she tossed the head, the hair, which was long and wavy, flopped down on her shoulders with rather a bump. But there was no bump now. Instinctively she put her hand up to the back of her neck; but strange to say, there was no hair to be felt. She couldn't make it out.

"'What's the matter with my hair?' she said, feeling her head at the same moment.

“To her utter surprise, she felt, at the back of her head, a tiny little screw of hair tightly done up under her hat. She pulled it down, and one or two hairs came into her hand. What was her astonishment to find that they were grey! She looked at her hand too. In her recol-



lection it had always been pink, plump, and dimpled. In her extreme horror, she found that it was now yellow and wrinkled, with blue veins showing all over it, like the hand of a woman of seventy!

“Penelope Anne was really getting quite alarmed.

“‘What has happened?’ she cried; and her voice, as she spoke, sounded to herself like somebody else’s, it was so harsh and cracked. ‘Dear! dear! what can be the matter?’

“Her words did not even seem to come naturally out of her mouth, but her tongue rolled about in the most extraordinary fashion.

“She put her hand up to it, and to her intense horror discovered the cause of her discomfort. *She had lost all her teeth!* Instead of the double row of little pearls that had been there half an hour ago, there were left only two jagged front teeth and three stumps quite at the back.

“Penelope Anne let drop her basket, jelly-pot and all, and burst out crying.

“‘What is the matter?’ asked the fairy, who had been watching her all the while.

“‘What have you done to me?’ cried poor Penelope Anne. ‘You cruel, cruel creature! I feel sure that you have changed me like this; and it is very ungr—ungrateful indeed of you,’ she sobbed, ‘when I have been so kind to you, and turned you from a Wolf to a fairy. And now what have you turned me into, I should like to know?’

“‘My dear Miss Nineteenth-Century Child,’ said the fairy, ‘I wouldn’t have turned you into anything you didn’t like, for the world. But the fact is, I have not turned you at all. You were an old woman, much more than a child, before, and you have only now taken your proper form; and a very knowing and sensible old woman you look, I’m sure!’

“‘Oh!’ sobbed the little-girl old woman. ‘How wicked of you! I didn’t want to be an old woman; and what will my papa and mamma say when they see me, I should like to know? and how am I to eat my dinner without any teeth? and how——Oh, dear, dear!’

“Here Penelope Anne’s troubles became too great for her, and sobs choked further utterance.

“‘I am sure,’ said the fairy, consolingly, ‘that your papa and mamma would much rather that you should be setting them and everybody else right, as an old woman, than as a little girl. It *looks* better, you know. And as for your teeth, why, such a clever child as you can surely manage without them—any baby can do that!’

“‘But my hair!’ objected Penelope Anne; ‘my lovely crimped hair!’

“‘My dear child!’ said the fairy, ‘you know that you never could bear your hair hanging about your shoulders; so that you will really feel the loss of it as quite a good riddance.’

“Penelope Anne shook her head dismally. Like many other folks, she began to value things when she had lost them. She sat sobbing for a long while on the trunk of a fallen tree, quite silent.

"The fairy stood by, watching.

"My dear," said the fairy at last, "I am really most grieved to have distressed you so, but I couldn't help it. When I took my right form, you were obliged to take yours. And, indeed, I had no idea what a change it would make in you; but I do now see that from a pretty little child you have completely changed into an ugly old woman. It only shows how very deceptive you must have been before."

"This was not consoling to Penelope Anne's feelings. She sobbed more than ever.

"She wrung her withered old hands together. 'What am I to do?' she cried, in her croaky old voice. 'Must I be an ugly old woman all my life?'

"Ah!" said the fairy. "No—an idea strikes me. I think you can grow out of it if you like. But would you like?"

"Of course I should," said Penelope Anne.

"But to accomplish this," said the fairy, "you will have to become a real child. You will quite have to give up the notion of being wiser and cleverer than other folks, and to teach yourself that instead of knowing a great deal more than the rest of the world, you know a great deal less—which is in fact the case," added the fairy, with more candour than politeness. "You will have to be very obedient and submissive to your papa and mamma, and, in fact, to everybody who is older than yourself. You will have to believe every single word that is said to you, just like the old story-book children whom you used to despise so much, until at last you come to believe in "Jack the Giant-killer," and all the rest of the dear old nursery tales, including, of course, my friend "Red Riding-hood" and her wolf. And when you have done all this, and have so by slow degrees grown a simple child's heart and an innocent child's mind in you, and when you are quite persuaded that your mamma knows better than you do about every possible thing under the sun, then you will change back again from an ignorant, foolish old woman, such as you are now, into a real, true, lovable child, such as you were meant to be from the first."

"Oh, dear me!" sighed poor Penelope Anne. "There seems a great deal to do. But I will try," she added, with the big tears rolling down her wrinkled old cheeks.

"So she went straight home and tried. For the fairy kindly promised to drop the pot of jelly at the old woman's door for her. When she reached home, you may imagine how astonished her mamma was to see

the change which had taken place in her little girl's appearance. The first thing that Penelope Anne did was of course to tell her mamma all that had happened.

"When all was told, 'And now, dear mamma,' said Penelope Anne, 'will you help me to do what the fairy said, and teach me to be a real good little girl, instead of a stupid, conceited, ignorant old woman, as I used to be?'

"It was very curious that no sooner were these words out of Penelope's mouth than one front tooth came in, and ever so many hairs turned from grey to gold colour.

"Yes, darling, of course I will help you,' said her mamma, 'if you wish.'

"So Penelope Anne tried her very hardest to grow, as the fairy had said, a true child-heart and child-mind within her. And after a while it was wonderful what an effect was produced. The wrinkles smoothed gradually out of her face; her teeth came one by one, prettier and more pearly than ever; her grey hair turned into a mass of shining yellow silk so that by the time she had become quite childlike, and had learned, among other things, to delight in the old fairy fables she used to despise, and counted 'Puss in Boots' and 'Red Riding-hood' among her dearest friends—by that time she had grown into one of the prettiest little girls imaginable.

"But all her life long she had to be extremely careful. For even when she grew up, if ever she found herself thinking herself cleverer or better than other people, out would drop a tooth on the spot, or a great bit of her hair would turn white, or a crow's-foot would come under her eye, all of which were very unpleasant circumstances, particularly if they occurred at a dinner party. But by the time she had reached womanhood she had learned so much, and to such good purpose, that she very seldom fell into these errors, so that, unfortunately for her, these little accidents were not of frequent occurrence.

"And this," said Aunt Louie, "is the end of my tale, which you, you impertinent and unenlightened children, actually thought was going to be nothing better than that stupid worn-out old fable of 'Red Riding-hood.'"

"Aunt Louie," said Frank, "you are laughing at us."

"Laughing?" said Aunt Louie, pressing her lips together so as to look very grave indeed. "I wouldn't venture to do so for the world.

I know you nineteenth-century children would correct me at once for bad manners."

"Oh, auntie!" exclaimed Wynnle.

"I'm glad, though, you think we know what good manners are," said Frank, mischievously.

"Monkey!" returned his aunt, laughing, while she pretended to pinch his ear, "you are too clever by half."

THE END.

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