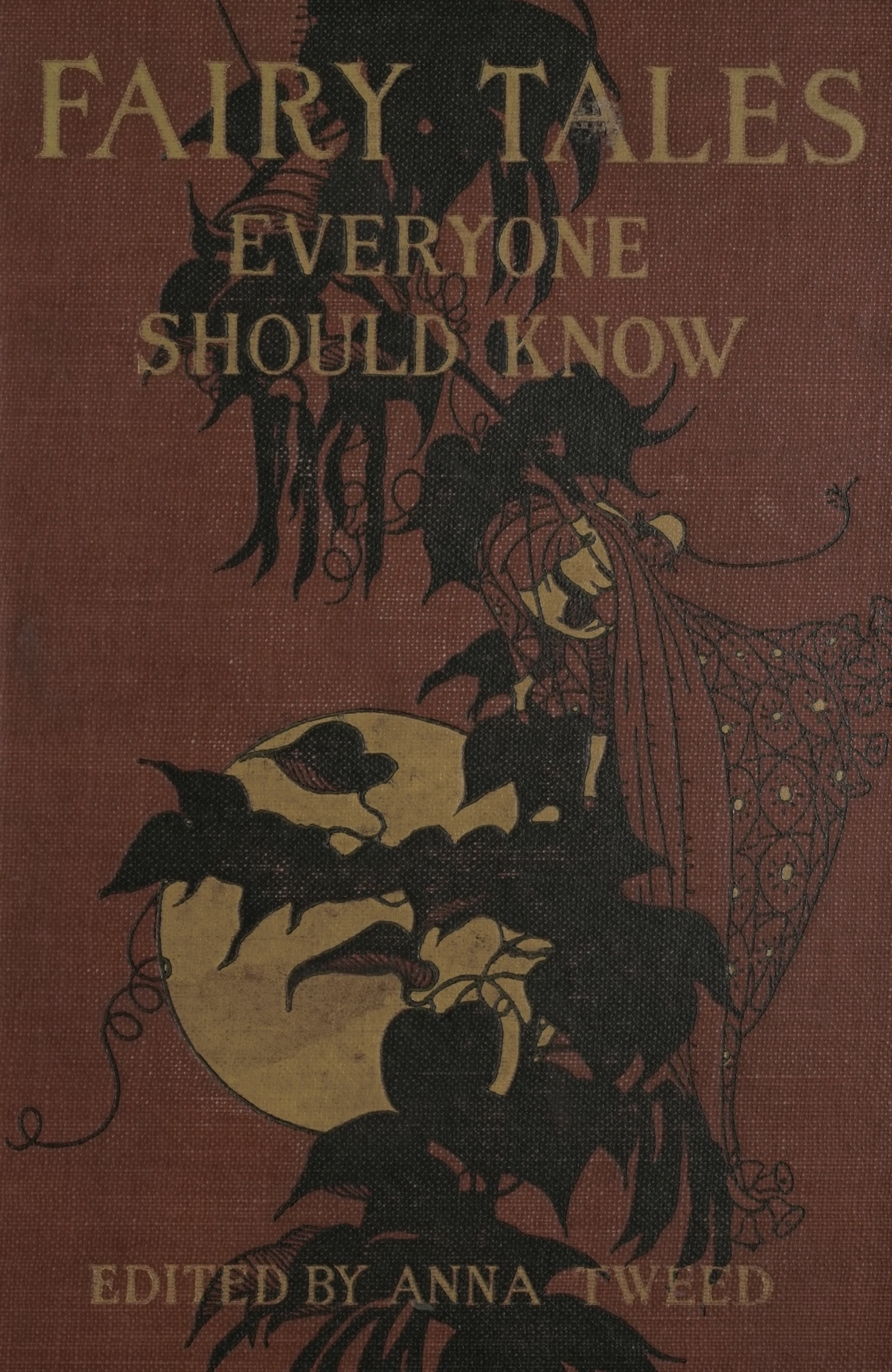
FAIRY TALES

EVERYONE SHOULD KNOW



EDITED BY ANNA TWEED

The fairy tries to comfort Cinderella.
—Page 5.

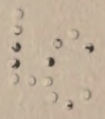
Fairy Tales Everyone Should Know

Edited by

Anna Tweed

Illustrated by

Maginel Wright Enright



Milton Bradley Company

Springfield, Mass.

Fairy Tales Everyone Should Know

Introductory Note

THIS book of "Fairy Tales Everyone Should Know" contains the foundation of culture as far as this form of folklore is concerned. Each story has long been accepted as a classic with vital interest and perennial charm. We often find reference to them in our miscellaneous reading; we often see use made of them by the cartoonists. Familiarity with such a collection of tales is essential to the education of children, and is scarcely less important for their elders.

The version supplied for the text is simple and natural. Some of the primitive savagery that was in the early versions has been omitted, but the lively action, the humor, the quaint fancy, and the essential sweetness are all retained. The stories have a human interest that gives delight to persons of all ages, yet it is probably children from four to twelve who get the keenest enjoyment from them.

Contents

Fairy Tales Everyone Should Know

I

Cinderella

ONCE upon a time, though not in my time nor in your time, nor in the time of anyone else now living, there was a great king who had an only son. When this prince and heir was about to come of age, the king decided to give a grand ball in his honor.

So a herald was sent forth to blow a trumpet at every four corners where two roads crossed. As soon as the people came together he would call out: "O yes, O yes, O yes! know you that on next Monday night his Grace, the king, will give a royal ball to which all maidens of noble birth are hereby summoned. Be it furthermore known unto you

that at this ball his Highness, the prince, will select a lady who shall be his bride and our future queen. God save the king!"

Among the nobles of the royal court was one whose wife had died leaving him a young daughter. Later he married again. The second wife had two daughters, and she neglected his daughter and favored her own in every way.

The two daughters were much like their mother. They were proud and disagreeable. It displeased them that they had to share their home with the other girl, and they treated her very badly, though she was the sweetest, best-tempered lass that ever lived.

She was compelled to work in the kitchen most of the time. She washed and wiped the dishes, tended the fire, and fed the parrot whose cage hung by the window. Besides, she swept the floors, scrubbed down the stairs, and kept tidy the chambers of the madam and her daughters. She slept in the garret on a wretched bed of straw, but the two sisters had rooms with polished floors

and curtained beds and mirrors so large that they could see themselves reflected from head to foot.

The poor girl bore her troubles with patience and never complained. When she had finished her day's work she used to sit in the chimney corner among the ashes and cinders. So the sisters called her Cinderella, a name which means Ashes, or, as some people think, Cinder-maid. In spite of hard work and shabby clothes Cinderella was a hundred times prettier than the other two in all their finery.

You can imagine how excited the two sisters were when they heard of the king's proclamation, for they made a great figure in society. "What shall we wear, mother? What shall we wear?" they cried. "We shall certainly go, and perhaps we may have a chance to dance with the prince."

So they were wonderfully busy choosing such dresses as would be most becoming, and they could talk of nothing but their fine clothes day in and day out.

"I shall put on my crimson velvet gown

with point lace trimmings," the elder announced.

"And I," the younger sister said, "shall wear my gold-brocaded gown, and have a circlet of diamonds in my hair."

Their preparations made no end of work for Cinderella, who was kept constantly engaged in plaiting ruffles, and arranging bows and ribbons, and in washing and ironing the sisters' linen. But she helped willingly all she could, and when the ball day came she offered to dress the young ladies' hair.

They were glad to have her do that, and while she was brushing and combing they said to her, "Cinderella, don't you wish you were going with us?"

"Yes," she answered, "but such a grand affair is not for such as I am."

"You are quite right," they said. "Everyone would laugh to see a ragged kitchen girl there. You would disgrace us all."

After Cinderella finished their hair she helped them put on their ball gowns, and never before in their lives had they been ar-

rayed half so becomingly. Indeed, they were so delighted that at dinner-time they could hardly eat a morsel, and, besides, it would not have been easy to eat much anyway, for they had laced very tight to make their waists as slender as possible.

In the early evening the two young women set off for the ball. Cinderella watched them from the open kitchen door until they were out of sight, and then, still standing there, burst into tears. At this moment a good fairy appeared and asked her what was the matter.

"I wish — I wish —" the poor girl began, but her voice was choked with sobs.

"You wish you could go to the grand ball in the king's palace," the fairy said.

"Indeed, I do," Cinderella agreed, wiping her eyes with her apron.

"Well, then, stop crying," the fairy ordered, "and I will try to contrive that you shall go. Run to the garden and bring me a pumpkin."

Off went Cinderella and brought back the finest pumpkin she could find, though she

could not imagine what the fairy wanted of it. But the fairy took a knife, scooped out the inside of the pumpkin, and then touched the pumpkin with her wand. Immediately it was changed into a splendid gilded coach.

"Isn't there a mouse-trap set in the store-room?" the fairy asked.

"Yes," Cinderella replied.

"Go and see if there are any mice in it," the fairy said.

Cinderella soon returned, bringing the trap with four mice inside.

"Lift the trap door a little and let the mice out," the fairy told her; and as they escaped she changed each one by a tap of her wand into a fine dapple-gray horse.

"Now we need a coachman," the fairy said.

"There's likely to be a rat in the trap in the cellar, if you could make a coachman out of it," Cinderella suggested.

"That's a good thought," the fairy responded. "So look at the trap without delay."

A few minutes later Cinderella returned

carrying the trap, and inside was a rat with a tremendous pair of whiskers. The fairy, by a touch of her wand, changed the rat into a fat, jolly coachman on whose face were the smartest whiskers ever seen.

"The next thing for you to do," the fairy said to Cinderella, "is to go again to the garden. You will find two lizards there behind the watering-pot. Bring them hither."

No sooner was Cinderella back with the lizards than the fairy turned them into footmen with laced liveries, and they skipped up to a seat at the back of the coach just as naturally as if they had been footmen all their lives.

"Well, my dear," the fairy said, "here are your coach and four horses, your coachman, and your footman. They will take you to the ball. Are you not pleased?"

"Oh, yes!" Cinderella answered, "but must I go in these shabby clothes?"

The fairy smiled and tapped her with the wand. At once her rags were changed to a beautiful silk dress blue as the heavens, all embroidered with stars. That done, the

fairy gave her a pair of glass slippers, the prettiest in the world.

"These slippers are yours to keep always," she said, "but the other things are enchanted for only a short time into the forms they have at present. So you must not on any account stay at the ball after midnight. If you do, the coach will become a pumpkin again, your horses will be mice, your coachman a rat, your footmen lizards, and your beautiful clothes the rags you wear every day."

Cinderella promised the fairy that she would not fail to leave the palace before midnight, and drove away in an ecstasy of delight.

When she arrived at the royal palace, the guards and attendants were so struck by her magnificent equipage that they supposed her to be some rich princess. At once the carriage was surrounded by courtiers who assisted her to alight and conducted her to the ball-room. The moment she appeared all voices were hushed, the violins ceased playing, and the dancing stopped short.

Everybody was admiring the stranger's beauty.

On all sides were heard such expressions as "How handsome she is!" "How surpassingly lovely!" and the old king whispered to the queen that he had not seen so comely a young woman in many a long day.

All the ladies busied themselves in considering her clothes that they might have garments of the same pattern, provided they could find such rich materials and seamstresses sufficiently capable.

The prince came forward to receive Cinderella, and he so admired her beauty and manners that he promptly offered her his hand to dance. She was pleased beyond measure by this gracious reception and by the splendor of all she saw, and she danced with such grace and animation that the onlookers were charmed.

The proud sisters, in whose home she lived, were vexed to have anyone attract more attention than themselves, but they did not recognize the ragged kitchen girl in the superb garments she now wore.

Presently a fine supper was served, and the young prince helped Cinderella to every delicacy, yet ate nothing himself he was so absorbed in gazing at the fair stranger.

Time passed swiftly, and she never looked at the clock until a quarter to twelve. Then she rose in haste, made a low curtsy to the whole assemblage and retired in haste. Her coach was ready at the door of the palace, and she jumped into it and drove home as fast as she could.

On arriving at the house, her coach, horses, and servants all disappeared, and she found herself clothed in her old tattered gown. She waited by the fire for the return of the sisters, eager to hear what they would say, but fully determined not to tell them anything of her own experiences.

At length they came knocking at the door. Cinderella let them in with a pretense of yawning, and she rubbed her eyes as if she had just been waked out of a nap. "How late you are!" she said.

"Late!" one of the sisters repeated, "you would not think of its being late if you had

been at the ball and seen the handsome princess who was there."

"What princess was she?" Cinderella asked.

"We do not know her name," was the reply. "Nor does anybody. She had a dress like the heavens, and on her feet she wore glass slippers. When midnight came she disappeared. The king's son would give a fortune to know who she is. He has arranged to have a second ball tomorrow night in the hope that she will come again."

"If she is so beautiful as to have made such an impression as that, how I would like to see her!" Cinderella exclaimed. "Oh! my Lady Charlotte," she said, addressing the elder sister, "do lend me the yellow dress you wear every day. I want to put it on and go to the ball tomorrow evening. Perhaps I could get a peep at this wonderful princess."

"What! lend my clothes to a common kitchen girl like you," Miss Charlotte cried. "I wouldn't think of such a thing."

Cinderella expected to be refused and was

not sorry, for she would have been very much puzzled to decide what to do had the yellow dress really been lent to her.

On the following evening the sisters again went to the court ball, and shortly after their departure the good fairy came to Cinderella and told her to prepare to go also. A touch of the fairy's wand served to supply a dress this time that was all golden brown like the earth embroidered with flowers. The equipage she had used the night before conveyed her to the palace, and she was ushered into the ball-room with every attention.

Great was the joy of the prince to see her, and he never left her side the evening through. He talked so charmingly that she forgot all about the time and had no thought that midnight was at hand when the clock began to strike, one — two — three — four — five — six — then she started to run. The clock continued striking, seven — eight — nine — she was going in great haste down the broad staircase that led to the palace entrance — ten — eleven — twelve. One of her glass slippers dropped off, but she could not

stop to pick it up, for the clock had reached the final stroke.

Then, in a twinkling, she was a gay lady no more, but only a poor kitchen girl hurrying down the steps. The splendid coach and four horses, and the driver and two footmen had all vanished, and on the ground lay a scooped-out pumpkin, while four mice, a rat, and two lizards were scurrying away to find hiding places.

Cinderella reached home quite out of breath, and she had nothing left of her grand apparel except one little glass slipper. When the sisters returned from the ball she asked them whether they had been well entertained, and whether the beautiful princess was there.

"Yes," they replied, "we enjoyed the ball very much, and the princess was there, but she ran away just as the clock struck twelve. The people who were at the ball have no more idea who she is than they had before."

When Cinderella fled, the prince had stood in amazement a moment and then pursued

her. She was too swift for him, but as he was running down the stairway he noticed the little glass slipper that she had lost, and he picked it up. Then he went on and asked the guards at the palace gates whether they had seen a princess drive out in a grand gilded coach.

"No," they said, "the only person who has passed out of the gates for several hours is a ragged girl just gone, and how such a person as she happened to be in the palace we cannot imagine."

During the following days the prince caused inquiries to be made everywhere for the princess, and when the search failed he grew ill with disappointment. The king, who dearly loved his son, called a council and asked his ministers what they thought ought to be done.

"It is my advice," the chief minister said, "that you should cause a proclamation to be made all over the kingdom that the prince will marry her whose foot will just fit the slipper he found."

This plan was adopted. A herald was or-

dered to take the glass slipper on a velvet cushion and go to every four corners where two roads crossed. There he was to sound his trumpet and call out: " O yes, O yes, O yes! be it known to you all that whatsoever lady of noble birth can fit this slipper on her foot shall become the bride of his Highness, the prince, and shall be our future queen. God save the king! "

So the slipper made the rounds of the country and many were the noble ladies who tried to put it on. They tried and tried and tried, but it was too small for them.

At last it came to the home of the proud sisters. Each of them did all she possibly could to thrust her foot into the dainty slipper and had to acknowledge that it did not fit.

Cinderella, who was present, laughed and said, " Suppose I were to try."

The sisters ridiculed her. " What a foolish notion to think of that dainty slipper's fitting your clumsy foot! " they exclaimed.

The herald who had brought the slipper looked at Cinderella and said, " Only maid-

ens of noble birth are allowed to try on the slipper."

Then her father spoke. "She is my daughter," he declared. "Her birth is as noble as that of the other two."

So Cinderella sat down, while the two sisters looked on contemptuously. They were amazed when her foot went with ease into the slipper, which evidently fitted like wax. Their astonishment increased ten-fold when Cinderella got the other glass slipper from under the ashes in the chimney corner where she had hidden it, and put that on too.

Just then the fairy appeared, touched her wand to Cinderella's clothes, and made them once more the robes of a princess. Instantly the sisters recognized her as the beautiful stranger they had seen at the ball.

The herald now conducted Cinderella to the royal palace where the prince welcomed her with great joy. In a short time Cinderella and the prince were married,
and after that they lived happily
the rest of their days.

II

Jack and the Beanstalk

Long before you and I were born, there lived in an English country cottage a poor widow, who had an only child named Jack. She gratified him in everything, and the result of her foolish kindness was that Jack paid little attention to anything she said and was heedless and naughty.

It was not easy for them to get a living, and they were quite dependent on a cow that they owned. They drank some of the milk the cow gave and some they sold. But at last the cow went dry, and the widow said to Jack, with tears in her eyes, "I don't know what will become of us."

"Cheer up, mother," Jack said, "I'll go and get work."

"Nobody would keep you," the widow declared. "You never have learned to work. You just dream and dawdle. No, we must sell our cow or starve."

"Just so!" Jack cried. "We will sell the cow and have plenty of money. It's market day, and I will start at once for market with the cow, and we shall see what we shall see."

His mother reluctantly consented, and off he went. But by and by he met a queer little old man who called out, "Good morning, Jack!"

"Good morning," Jack responded, with a polite bow, wondering how the little old man happened to know his name.

"And where may you be going?" the little old man asked.

"I am going to market to sell this cow," Jack answered; "and I mean to make a good bargain."

"So you will! So you will!" the little old man chuckled. "You look the sort of chap for it. I bet you know how many beans make five."

"Two in each hand and one in my mouth,"

Jack said quickly, for he really was as sharp as a needle.

"Quite right, quite right!" the little old man laughed, and as he spoke he took five beans from his pocket. "Well, here they are. So let me have the cow."

Jack was so flabbergasted that he stood staring at the little man for fully a minute unable to utter a word. Then he exclaimed: "What! sell this cow for five beans? Not if I know it!"

"But they are magic beans," the little old man explained. "Plant them and they will bring you good luck. They are worth much more than your cow."

Jack looked at them. They were prettily colored and different from any beans he had seen before. "I'll take them," he said, and the little old man went off with the cow while Jack trudged whistling homeward with the five beans, very well satisfied with his bargain.

The lad's mother met him at the gate, and said: "I see you sold the cow. How much did you get for her?"

"You'll never guess," Jack responded.

"Laws-a-mercy! you don't say so," the good woman exclaimed. "I've been worrying lest you should be cheated. Was it ten pounds — fifteen — surely you didn't get twenty."

Jack triumphantly held out the beans, saying, "That's what I got for her."

"Those beans?" the widow said in amazement.

"They're magic beans," Jack told her.

But his mother took them and threw them out of the window. "I can't bear the sight of the miserable things," she said, "and now we shall soon starve, I suppose."

Night came and Jack went to bed and slept soundly in spite of his troubles. When he woke he at first thought it was moonlight, for there was a peculiar sort of gloom in the chamber. He stared at the little window. It was covered by leaves as if with a curtain! He got hastily out of bed, dressed, and went to the window. What the queer little old man had said was true. The beans were magic. One of them had found soil, taken

root, and grown in the night till now its top was clear out of sight.

Jack concluded that he would see where it went to. So he crept through the window to the beanstalk and climbed and climbed and climbed. The big stalk with the leaves growing out on each side was like a ladder. At last he reached the sky and found a strange country without a tree, shrub, house, or living creature in sight.

He sat down on a stone to rest and said, "Humph! if this is all there is up here I may as well go back home."

But while he was resting he saw a beautiful lady coming toward him along a path. As soon as she arrived where Jack was she spoke to him, and he rose and took off his hat.

"I am a fairy," she said, "and I want to tell you something about your father. Do you remember him?"

"No," Jack answered; "and when I ask my mother about him she always begins to cry and will say nothing."

"I thought as much," the fairy went on, "and you will understand why your mother

never speaks of him when you hear my story. He was a brave and generous knight. The fairies were his friends and made him many wonderful presents; but after a time a wicked giant came to your father's castle and killed him and carried off everything we had given him.

"At that time you were a little baby. The giant put you and your mother into one of his castle dungeons, but at last told your mother he would set her and her babe free on condition that she should never speak about her wrongs to anybody. She agreed, and he carried her to a place a great distance from where she had lived before. There he left her with just money enough to rent a little cottage and buy a cow.

"That giant lives in the country where you are now, and if you follow this path you will find his big castle over yonder hill. All that he has is rightfully yours, and perhaps you can contrive some way to regain possession of what he stole from your father."

The fairy went on her way, and Jack, after thinking things over, decided to have a look

at the giant's castle. He walked along the path and found the castle in a valley beyond the hill. On the doorstep stood a woman giant with a black porridge pot in her hand.

The day was drawing to a close and Jack was very hungry. "Good evening, ma'am," he said politely, "would you be so kind as to give me some supper?"

"Is it supper you want?" the big woman said. "It's supper you'll be if you don't move away from here. My husband likes to eat little boys."

"But I am very hungry," Jack told her, "and I've had no food all this day."

"Well, well, then I don't wonder that you are hungry," the giantess responded. "Come along and I'll see what I can find for you."

She took him into the kitchen and gave him a piece of cheese and a bowl of bread and milk. He had disposed of most of this when

Tramp! TRAMP!! TRAMP!!!

he heard the steps of someone coming, and

the whole castle trembled with the heavy footfalls.

"Gracious me!" the giantess exclaimed, "there's my husband. Be quick, lad, and jump into the oven or he'll catch you."

The oven door was just closed when the giant strode into the room. Jack could see him through a small crevice. The big fellow looked around and sniffed the air, frowned horribly, and said,

"Fe, fi, fo, fum!
I smell the flesh of an Englishman.
Be he alive or be he dead,
I'll eat the fellow with my bread!"

"Don't be silly," his wife retorted. "This afternoon the crows brought a piece of raw flesh to the top of the castle and dropped it on the roof."

"Ha!" the giant growled, "I thought it was something nearer and fresher than that."

He had three sheep strung to his belt, and now he threw them down on the table, saying: "Here, wife, cook these three snippets

for supper. They're all I've been able to get today."

While she busied herself getting the supper ready he sat down and waited. When the sheep were served, Jack watching through the oven crevice, was amazed to see what a prodigious quantity he devoured. It seemed as if he would never have done with his eating and drinking.

But at last his wife cleared off the table and went away to bed. "I am getting a bit sleepy myself," the giant said, "but I must have a look at my money."

Then he went to a big oaken chest and took out several bags of gold coins, which he brought to the table. He sat down, emptied a bag, and began to count the coins. But before he finished he nodded off into a nap and was soon snoring with a noise like thunder.

Now Jack crept out of the oven, and by getting on a chair beside the table he reached one of the bags of gold. With that in his hands he ran as fast as he could to the beanstalk. He couldn't climb down it with the heavy bag of gold. So he flung his burden

down first, and followed as quickly as he was able.

When he reached the bottom, there was his mother with a lantern picking up goldpieces in the garden, for of course the bag had burst. "Dear me!" she said, "wherever have you been? See! It's been raining gold."

Jack told her something of his adventures and they picked up as much of the money as they could find by lantern light and carried it into the house.

They had money enough now, but Jack could not help thinking how many things the giant had that were rightfully theirs, and before long he again climbed the beanstalk. This time he carried some food so that he did not have to beg of the giant's wife. Near the great castle he hid behind a rock and watched until he saw the giantess come out to the well with a pail. While she was busy filling the pail he ran into the kitchen and hid in a closet.

Soon the woman brought in the water, and by and by

Tramp! TRAMP!! TRAMP!!!

came the giant. He began to sniff the instant he entered the kitchen and exclaimed:

"Fe, fi, fo, fum!
I smell the flesh of an Englishman.
Be he alive or be he dead,
I'll eat the fellow with my bread."

"Twaddle!" his wife said. "Look around if you want to. If anybody is hiding here you'll probably find him in the oven."

He went to the oven, but luckily Jack was not there. "Well, it's empty," the giant's wife said, "and I thought it would be. I'm tired of hearing your fe, fi, fo, fum!"

The giant wanted to do more searching, but his wife said: "No, I won't have you mussing up the house. You would turn everything you could lay your hands on topsy-turvy in your searching. I know that from experience. So sit down and eat your supper."

That was what he did, and afterward he called out, "Wife, bring me the little speckled hen that lays the golden eggs."

She brought the hen and put it on the table, saying, "If you don't need me any more, my dearie, I will go to the next room to finish some sewing I have there."

"No, I don't need you," was the giant's response. "Go along."

She left and he patted the little hen on the back. "Lay" he said and the hen laid an egg of solid gold.

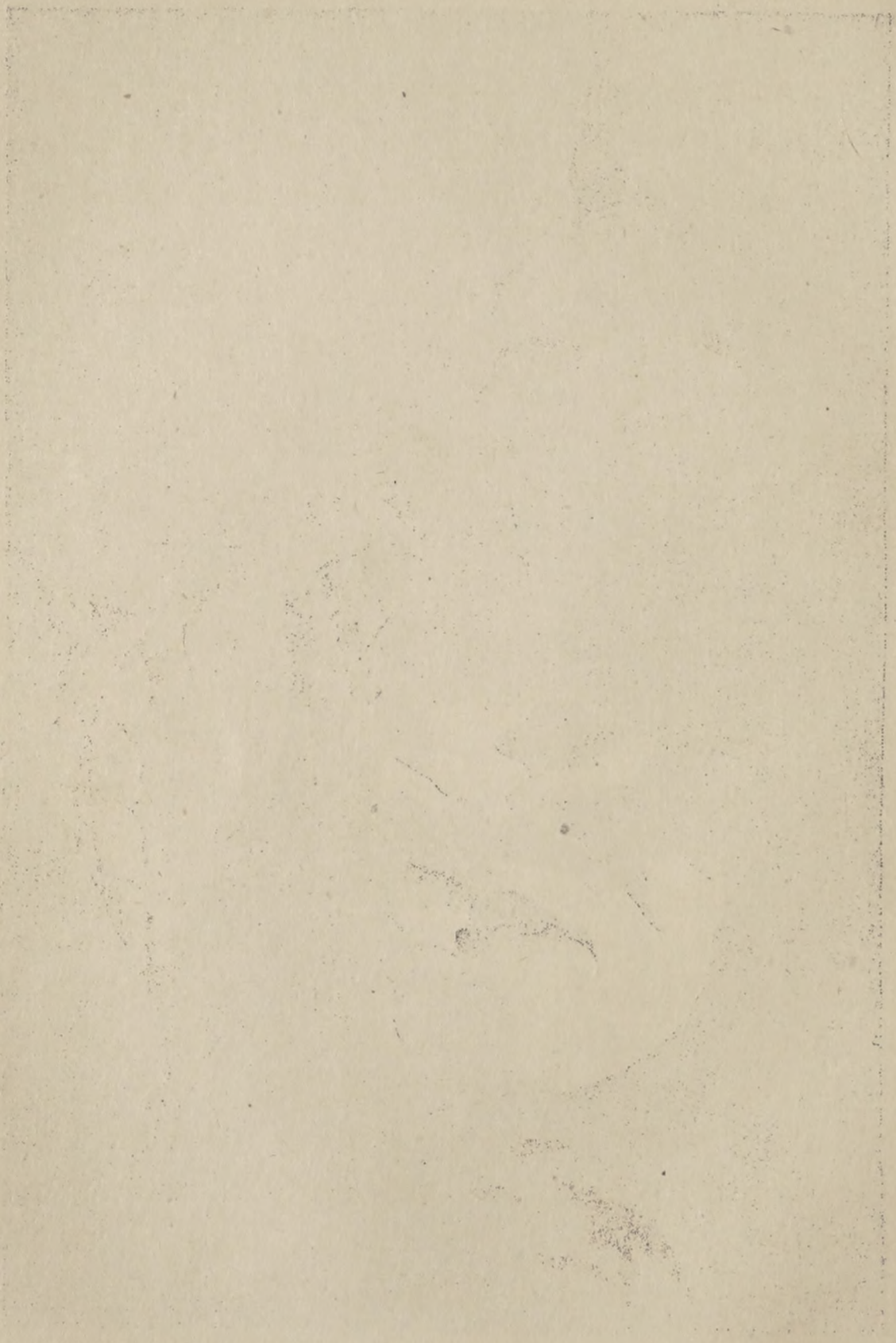
Jack could hardly believe his eyes as he peeked out from the closet, and he made up his mind that he would have that hen, come what might. The giant held the egg in his hand and looked at it for a while, but pretty soon he fell asleep and snored so that the castle shook.

Then Jack crept out of the closet, grabbed the little speckled hen, and ran. That frightened the hen, and she gave a cackle which woke the giant. He sat up and rubbed his eyes. "Where's my hen?" he shouted.

His wife came hurrying to the kitchen from the next room, and said, "Why do you ask, my dear?"

Meanwhile Jack had smothered the hen's

Jack pursued by the giant down the beanstalk.



cacklings in the bosom of his jacket and slipped very quietly out of a back door. Now away he went to the beanstalk and descended it to his mother's cottage.

They took the best of care of the hen, and every day Jack told her to lay, and she laid a golden egg. After a time Jack went up the beanstalk again, and he kept going up every few days until he had carried off nearly all the giant's treasure.

On one of his visits the giantess brought a little harp and put it on the table before her husband. He leaned back lazily in his chair and said, "Play."

And lo, and behold! the harp began to play. It played so beautifully that Jack in his hiding-place forgot all fear, and the giant fell asleep. The lad secured the harp without much difficulty, but when he attempted to get the giant's bedquilt, the task almost proved his undoing. The quilt was made of silk of many colors, and it was adorned with precious jewels, and all along the edge were little silver bells that went tinkle, tinkle when Jack began to pull it off the bed.

The giant was in the bed asleep, but he heard the bells, and called out, "Who's in my castle this dark dismal night?"

Jack kept perfectly still until the giant was snoring, and then he pulled the quilt off a little farther. The bells went tinkle, tinkle and the giant woke up. "Who's in my castle this dark dismal night?" he shouted.

Jack stopped pulling and stayed as quiet as a mouse. But no sooner was the giant asleep again than Jack got the bedquilt a little farther off, and he kept on pulling at intervals until he had it all. Then away he ran with it, and how the bells did jingle!

The giant was roused from his sleep and up he jumped and started in hot pursuit. Jack kept on at his best speed and went helter-skelter down the beanstalk. But before he had made half the descent the giant started to come down, and his weight made the stalk sway like a tree in a storm. Jack clung to it and went faster and faster, meanwhile shouting, "Mother, mother! bring me an ax!"

His mother always sat up until he re-

turned from these adventurous forays, and out she ran with the ax just as Jack reached the ground. At once he began to chop off the beanstalk. The giant felt it quivering and stopped to look down to see what was the matter. Just then Jack gave a final blow with his ax that brought giant, beanstalk and all tumbling to the earth. The fall killed the giant instantly. Jack and his mother were rich people afterward to the end of their days.

III

The Babes in the Wood

A GREAT many years ago there lived in England a brave kind gentleman who was held in high esteem by all who knew him. His wife was good and beautiful, and they loved each other most tenderly.

They had lived happily together for a long time when the gentleman became sick. Day after day he grew worse, and his lady was so grieved by his illness that she became sick too. No medicines nor anything else gave them any relief, and they realized that they had not long to live.

What troubled them most, now that their end drew near, was the thought that they would be taken away from their two children. One of the children was a fine boy four years old, and the other was a pretty lit-

tle girl not quite three. The father and mother talked together about the children's future, and decided to give their babes into the care of the gentleman's brother.

He was sent for, and when he came, the gentleman said to him: "Ah! brother, you can plainly see that the time of both my wife and myself on earth is short. Our poor babes will soon be left parentless. Brother, they will have no one but you to be kind to them."

"We commend them to your care," the mother said.

"You need have no fear as to my doing the best I can for them," the brother declared. "May Heaven never prosper me nor mine if I should do them wrong."

Not long afterward the gentleman and the lady died, and they were buried side by side in the same grave.

The gentleman's will gave his son three hundred pounds a year after he came of age, and the girl was to be paid five hundred pounds in gold on the day that she married. But if the son did not live till he was of age, and if the daughter did not live to be mar-

ried, all their property was to go to their uncle.

He took them to his own home, and for a time he made much of them and showed them great kindness. At length, however, he began to covet their wealth, and to wish that they were dead so he could possess it. But they continued sturdy and well.

Finally he said to himself: "It would not be very difficult for me to have them destroyed in such a way that my neighbors would never suspect that I was responsible for the act. Then their property would be mine, and that would be the end of the matter."

With this thought in mind, the cruel uncle soon decided how to dispose of the children. He hired two burly ruffians, who were used to doing desperate deeds, to take the little boy and girl into a thick dark wood, some distance away, and slay them.

He told his wife an artful story of intending to send the children to London, where they could be brought up by one of his friends. Afterward he turned to the little

boy and girl, who had stood close by listening, and asked: "Would you not like that, my pretty ones? You will see famous London Town; and you, my lad, can buy a fine wooden horse there, and ride on it all day long, and you can buy a whip to make your horse gallop, and you can buy a sword to wear by your side. As for your sister, she shall have pretty frocks, and she shall have dolls and other nice playthings."

"Oh, yes! I will go, uncle," the little boy said.

"Goody-good!" the little girl exclaimed. "I will go too."

Early the next day the children's uncle got them ready, just as if they were going on a long journey, and sent them off in a fine coach in charge of the two ruffians he had hired. As the children rode along they prattled pleasantly to the men who intended to be their butchers until the coach reached the borders of the thick dark wood.

There the wretches took out the little boy and girl, and told them they might walk a short way and gather some flowers. The

children ran about here and there, getting farther and farther from the coach, and the men began talking together in low tones.

"Truly," one said, "now that I have seen the babes' sweet faces and heard their pretty talk, I have no heart to do the will of that villain, their uncle."

"The thing suits me no better than it does you," the other affirmed, "but we have been paid so well for the job that I shall complete my part of the bargain."

The more kindly disposed ruffian would not agree to such a course, and they argued till they got angry and began to fight. Finally they drew the big knives with which they had planned to kill the babes, and the one who wished to spare the children stabbed his comrade so that the fellow dropped dead in the grass.

The victor knew not what to do with the children now. He wanted to get away to some distant region as quickly as possible. If he was found near the man he had slain he could hardly hope to escape punishment. There was no time to take the children back.

Besides, they would not be safe in their uncle's power.

He concluded that the best thing he could do would be to leave them in the wood and trust that they would be kindly treated by whoever passed that way and discovered them. So he went to where they had rambled in their flower-picking, and said, "Take my hands and come with me."

They complied, and he led them on and on until they began to complain that they were hungry.

"Stay here," he ordered, "and I will go and get you something to eat."

Then away he went, and the babes sat there a long time waiting for him to return. "Will the strange man come soon with some cakes for us?" the little girl asked.

"Before long, I think," the boy replied encouragingly.

They stood up and looked all about among the trees, but no one was in sight. They listened for approaching footsteps, but heard nothing except the wind fluttering in the foliage above their heads.

"Perhaps we had better go to meet the man," the boy suggested; and hand in hand they wandered about in the wood.

They found some blackberries and stained their lips eating them. At last night came, and they sat down and cried themselves to sleep.

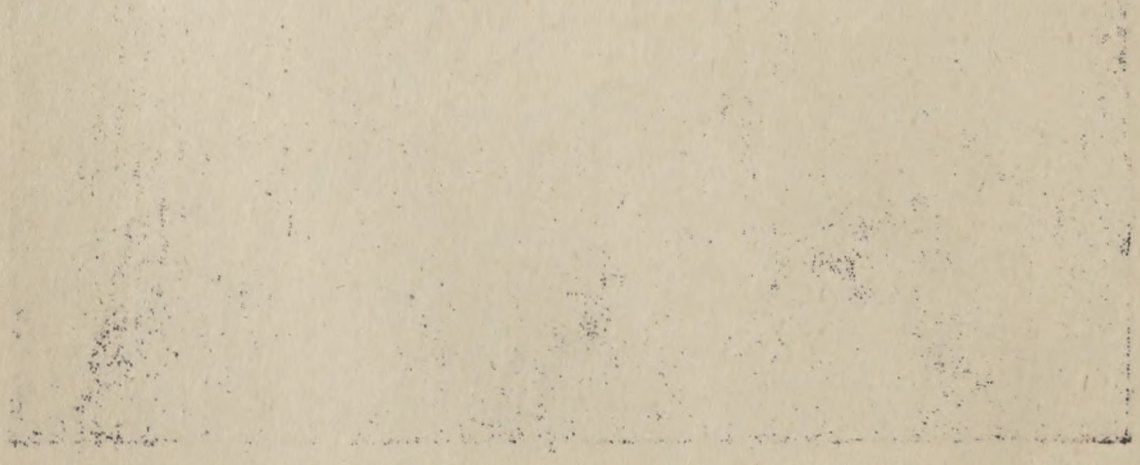
When day dawned, they resumed their wandering again, but they could not find their way out of the wood. Nor were they any more successful in the days that followed. Of course they could not live on blackberries, and so they died.

There was no one to bury the pretty babes, but Robin Redbreast saw them lying side by side lifeless in the woodland, and he covered them with leaves.

Meanwhile the wicked uncle supposed they had been killed according to his orders, and he let it be understood that they had died in London of the smallpox. Their fortune became his, and he thought he had provided amply for his comfort and pleasure to the end of his days.

But instead of happiness, he experienced

The babes are lost in the woods.



only misfortune. He had no peace of mind, because he had an evil conscience, and his thoughts dwelt on the death of the babes. Moreover, his barns burned, his harvests failed, his cattle died in the pasture, and his two sons, who had gone on a voyage to Portugal, were wrecked and drowned.

In the end he was brought to want and misery. He pawned his jewels and mortgaged his land. Not long afterward he was thrown into jail for debt, and there he died.

About this time the ruffian who had left the children in the wood was captured, after committing some crime, and he was sentenced to be hung. When he knew that he must die, he sent for the keeper of the prison in which he had been shut up, and confessed all the wicked deeds he had done.

Among other things he told of the two children whom he and his companion had been hired to kill, and of the dispute that had ended in his companion's death, and of how he left the babes in the wood. It was thus that their sad fate was made known.

IV

Hop-o'-My-Thumb

THERE was once a wood-cutter and his wife who had seven children, all boys, and none of them large enough to do much toward earning a living. So the parents had to work very hard to get food and clothing for their family.

What made matters worse was that the youngest child was sickly and weak, and he was so small that his father and mother called him Hop-o'-my-Thumb. Yet the little weak boy was gifted with a great deal of sense, and though he never had much to say, he noticed all that went on around him.

The year that Hop-o'-my-Thumb was five and his oldest brother was twelve, the harvest failed. Only half as much corn and potatoes as usual was raised on account of lack of

rain, and a time came when the wood-cutter and his wife knew not how to supply this large family with food. Their last penny had been spent, and there was only a single loaf of bread left in the house. They must starve as soon as this loaf was eaten.

That evening, after the children were all in bed, the father and mother sat by the fire thinking sadly of the dismal fate that awaited the family.

"My dear wife," the wood-cutter said at length, "a lingering death seems destined to be the fate of all of us. But I cannot bear to see our children die of hunger. Therefore I am resolved to lose them tomorrow in the forest."

"That would be too dreadful," the wife objected.

"But they cannot be worse off than they are at home," the wood-cutter continued; "and perhaps the fairies will take care of them. You and I will go very deep into the forest with the seven boys, and while they are busy tying up faggots we will slip away and leave them."

"No, no!" the wife exclaimed, "I could never do such a thing."

"But if we don't do that," the wood-cutter said, "they will die here before our eyes, crying with hunger."

He kept on arguing until his wife consented to his plan, and then she went weeping to bed.

The parents thought the children were all asleep while they talked, but Hop-o'-my-Thumb was wide awake. He heard what was said, and he never slept a wink that night for thinking of what he would do.

Early in the morning he crept out of bed, ran to a brook near the house, and filled his pockets with tiny white pebbles. Then he went indoors.

By and by the family ate half of the one loaf of bread for breakfast and started as usual for their day's work in the forest. The father led the way, and Hop-o'-my-Thumb, who came along behind all the others, dropped the little white pebbles one by one from his pockets.

They kept on into the very thickest, gloom-

iest part of the woodland. There the father started chopping with his ax, while the mother and children picked up the brush and tied it into bundles. Thus they worked until late in the afternoon. Then the parents stole away, and as soon as they were out of their children's sight they hurried back to their home.

For a long time they sat silent in the lonely house. The sun went down and night was at hand when there came a rap at the door. A man had been sent by the lord of the manor with a present of ten shillings and a haunch of venison.

"Good evening to you," he said, when the wood-cutter opened the door. "My lord, the baron, is sorry for the distress of his people. He is going to help them, and those who have large families like you are to get the most."

After delivering what he brought he hurried on his way, for there were other suffering households to whom he was also carrying food and money.

When he had gone, the wife exclaimed: "Oh! if only our children were here to eat

this nice venison. Let us go to the forest and find them."

"No," the husband said sorrowfully, "it would not do any good to seek them now. If the fairies have failed to take care of them, they must have been eaten by wolves before this time."

Then the mother wept and would not be comforted.

However, though the children had not been taken care of by fairies, neither had they been eaten by wolves. As soon as they discovered that they were alone, Peter, the oldest boy, began to call, "Father and mother, where are you?"

No voice answered him, and then he and all the other little boys, except Hop-o'-my-Thumb, ran hither and thither shouting for their parents and crying.

Hop-o'-my-Thumb waited until he could make himself heard. Then he said: "Brothers, you need not be alarmed. Our father and mother have left us here, but I will lead you safely home."

"Why did they leave us?" Peter asked.

In reply, Hop-o'-my-Thumb told them what he had overheard, and how he had strewed the white pebbles to guide them back. He ended by saying: "Just follow me. It will soon be dark, and we must start at once."

He hurried along, keeping his eyes on the line of pebbles, with the other boys close at his heels. They reached home presently, but because their parents had abandoned them, they were afraid they would not be welcomed. So, instead of going in, they huddled under a window at the back of the house to listen.

They heard the man come with the money and the venison, and after he had gone they heard their mother begin to cry. Then they ran around to the front of the house and in at the door, shouting, "Here we are, mother!"

She hugged them every one, and though she continued to shed tears, they were tears of gladness and not of sorrow. The woodcutter was no less rejoiced. He started a fire, and soon some slices of venison were broiling before the flames. When the meat

was ready, the family sat down to the best supper they had eaten for a long time.

Several weeks passed, and while the venison and the money lasted the wood-cutter got along very well. But the famine grew worse and worse, and finally the lord of the manor could not send his tenants any more supplies.

Again there was nothing to eat in the wood-cutter's home but a loaf of bread, and he could see no escape from starvation. He and his wife talked the matter over late one night and decided to take the children into the forest and lose them a second time.

They talked in whispers so that Hop-o'-my-Thumb should not know what they said, even if he chanced to be awake. He really was awake, and he had such keen ears that he heard the conversation in spite of its being in whispers.

He determined to get more pebbles in the morning, but when morning came, the parents kept a sharp watch of him and would not let him go out of the house. This troubled him greatly until the mother gave

Hop-o'-My-Thumb drops bread crumbs.

each of the boys a slice of dry bread for their breakfast.

Then Hop-o'-my-Thumb said to himself, "I can use bread crumbs instead of pebbles;" and he put his slice of bread into his pocket.

The wood-cutter took his family deeper than ever into the forest this time, and Hop-o'-my-Thumb followed behind the others scattering bread crumbs all the way.

They worked as was their custom until toward evening their father proposed that the children should play a game of hide and seek. While they were playing he and the mother hurried off and left them.

The children soon discovered that they had been deserted again, and there was much bitter crying, but Hop-o'-my-Thumb said: "Do not weep, my brothers. I will take you home."

They started, intending to follow the trail of bread crumbs, but the birds had eaten them all up, and the children were very much distressed.

"Well," Hop-o'-my-Thumb said, "we

must not waste time in tears. Come with me, and we will see if we can find some shelter for the night."

He led the way, and the others huddled along close behind. The gloom of evening came, and the wind among the trees seemed to the children like the howling of wolves. Every moment they expected to be devoured and they hardly dared to speak a word.

Presently Hop-o'-my-Thumb climbed to the top of a tall tree to look about for some path out of the forest. He could see no path, but far away a light was shining. "There must be a house where that light is," he said.

When Hop-o'-my-Thumb came down to the ground, he could not see the light, but he knew which direction to take. The little boys hastened along, and by and by got out of the forest. Then they saw right before them a great castle, and the light that Hop-o'-my-Thumb had seen was shining through an open door.

They went to the door and looked in. A wrinkled old woman was busy at a fire-

place roasting a whole sheep, and Hop-o'-my-Thumb rapped to attract her attention.

She turned and looked at them. "What do you want?" she asked.

"We are poor children who have lost our way in the forest," Hop-o'-my-Thumb said, "and we beg you, for charity's sake, to grant us a night's lodging."

"Alas! my little darlings," the woman sighed, "you do not know where you are come. This is the castle of an ogre who would like nothing better than to eat you. I am the cook here, and I know very well the sort of food he likes to eat."

"Then what can we do?" Hop-o'-my-Thumb asked. "If you refuse to give us shelter, the wild beasts will tear us to pieces in the forest."

"Perhaps I can hide you," the woman said. "Come in and I will do the best I can for you."

As soon as they entered the room, she shut the door, and the children sat down by the fire to warm themselves. They had not been

there long when they heard heavy footsteps outside.

"The ogre is coming," the old woman said in a whisper. "Make haste and crawl under the bed."

Scarcely were they out of sight when the ogre walked in. "Is my supper ready?" he asked, and sat down at the table.

The woman called in another servant, and the two of them lifted the sheep that was roasting before the fire and put it on a great pewter platter. Then they took up the platter and placed it before the ogre. The sheep was half raw, but he liked it that way.

After he finished eating, he began to sniff right and left. "I smell fresh meat," he said.

"It must be the calf I have skinned and hung in the pantry for your breakfast," the cook told him.

"No, no!" the ogre responded suspiciously. "It smells nearer and fresher than that."

Just then he chanced to look toward the fireplace and saw lying there a little shoe

that one of the boys had taken off. He stamped over to the hearth and picked it up.

"What is this?" he demanded in a terrible voice.

"Why, that must be a shoe which belongs to your oldest daughter's doll," the cook said.

At that moment, poor Peter, who happened to have a bad cold, sneezed.

"Aha!" the ogre exclaimed, shaking his fist at the cook, "you have been deceiving me, and I would eat you if you were not so old and tough."

He dragged the children from under the bed and never gave the least heed to their appeals for mercy. Had it not been for the old woman he would have devoured one or two that night. "See how lean they are," she said. "They have been half starved. If we feed them for a few days they will be much fatter."

The ogre took up Hop-o'-my-Thumb and pinched his arms. "You are right," he agreed. "This child is nothing but bones."

Then the ogre went upstairs to bed, and

the old woman gave the boys a good supper. While they were eating, she said: "I'm afraid it's little I can do to save you now that the ogre knows you are here. Even if you could get away from the castle, which is not likely, you would not be much better off; for the ogre has a pair of magic boots that he only needs to put on to be able to go seven leagues at a stride. He would easily overtake you and bring you back.

"The boots become large or small to fit the feet of whoever wears them, and if I could get one of you boys out of the castle I might give him the boots. Then he could escape, but what would become of the others? No, my poor lads, your chances of living aren't worth that" — and she snapped her fingers.

After supper the old woman put the boys to bed, and they were so tired that, in spite of their danger, they slept soundly right through the night.

All the next day Hop-o'-my-Thumb was on the watch for some chance to escape. But he could accomplish nothing because the

ogre's daughters had been ordered by their father to keep the boys from straying. There were seven of the daughters. They had small gray eyes, and large mouths, and long sharp teeth. As yet they were young, and not very vicious; but they showed what they would be, for they had already begun to bite little boys. So you may be sure that their captives did not in the least enjoy their company.

When night came, and every one in the ogre's castle had gone to bed, Hop-o'-my-Thumb lay awake until all the others were asleep. Then he roused his brothers, and whispered: "Wake up. We must be off."

They all dressed quickly and quietly, and he led the way out of a back door into a walled garden. By climbing up some vines that grew on the wall they got outside, but did not dare to go farther for fear of wolves. So they crept into a heap of straw that lay beside the wall and waited for daylight.

Hop-o'-my-Thumb thought he could find the way home by keeping along the edge of the forest, and as soon as there was light

enough to enable them to see, they started for their home.

The ogre was not an early riser, and he did not think of the boys until after he had eaten breakfast. He was very angry when they were not to be found.

"Quick!" he shouted to the old woman cook, "bring me my seven-league boots, that I may go and catch the little rascals."

With those boots he could go a great distance at a single step, and he would have caught the fugitives in a jiffy if only he had known just where to look for them. As it was, he hunted in every direction, striding from hill to hill, and stepping over wide rivers as if they had been brooks.

Late in the afternoon the boys had arrived within a mile of home and were hurrying along intent on joining their parents before sundown when they saw the ogre coming. Luckily he had not seen them, and they scurried into a cave that was close by.

The ogre had done so much racing about that he was tired, and no sooner did he come to the grassy hillside which was above the

cave than he lay down to rest. Soon he was asleep and snoring with a sound like thunder that frightened the little boys very much.

"Now, brothers," Hop-o'-my-Thumb said, "run home as fast as you can. I intend to follow you a little later, but first I'm going to see if I can get the ogre's boots."

When the other boys had gone, he crept up to where the ogre lay, and tugged gently at the boots till he pulled them off. They were very large and heavy, but the moment Hop-o'-my-Thumb put his own feet into them they fitted him perfectly.

The boot-pulling disturbed the ogre without fully awakening him, but now he suddenly opened his eyes and sat up. He saw what had happened and let out a roar of anger.

Off went Hop-o'-my-Thumb, taking such prodigious steps that he felt as if he were flying. The ogre jumped to his feet and gave chase, but was no match for the little lad in the seven-league boots.

Not far from where the giant had lain was a precipice, and Hop-o'-my-Thumb

stepped off this cliff to an opposite hilltop. The ogre, who was rushing after him, forgot that he did not have the boots on and that he needed to be cautious. He did not halt on the brink of the cliff, but plunged down with a crash that made the rocks echo near and far. So ended the life of the savage ogre.

In his castle was a treasure room that had one little window to let in light. The old woman cook had told Hop-o'-my-Thumb of this window, and offered to let him out through it, but he did not accept her offer because the window was not large enough to allow his brothers to escape that way also.

Now that the ogre was disposed of, Hop-o'-my-Thumb remembered the castle treasure room. "Unless I can get some money to buy food with," he said, "my father and mother and all the rest of us will starve. I must see what I can do."

So away he went, and the seven-league boots took him to the ogre's castle in a twinkling. There he slipped in at the little window of the treasure room and loaded him-

self with all the gold he could carry. Then he hastened home.

His father and mother were very happy to have all their children back and the money Hop-o'-my-Thumb brought enabled them to get all the food they needed. Thus they had no difficulty in passing through the remainder of the famine period very comfortably.

Afterward Hop-o'-my-Thumb with his magic boots served the king as a messenger and gained great wealth. His prosperity did not make him selfish, and he gave his parents and brothers good homes and much else so that they lived happily all their days.

V

The Sleeping Beauty

ONCE upon a time, so long ago that even the oldest people now alive cannot remember it, there dwelt a king and queen in a great white marble palace that had splendid halls and high towers, and a golden roof which flashed in the sunlight. The king and queen possessed a great deal to make them happy, but they had no little child, which was what they wanted most of all.

They prayed, they made vows, and they went on pilgrimages, and at last their desire was granted. The queen became the mother of a baby girl and there were great rejoicings all over the kingdom. Bonfires as big as hay-stacks were kept burning all night, fat oxen were roasted whole in the market-place of

every town, and the church bells were rung until the ringers were out of breath.

A few weeks later all was bustle and hurry in the palace to make ready for the christening feast. The maids trimmed the halls and chambers with flowers, and sprinkled the floors with sweet-scented leaves and petals. Among the guests invited to the feast were seven powerful fairies. The choicest foods were provided for them, and a golden plate from which to eat was made specially for each of them.

Just as the feast was about to begin there was a sudden clashing of brazen claws and a rushing of wings. Something like a black cloud passed before the windows and darkened the room. Then the great doors burst open with a terrible bang, and an old fairy with her face almost hidden in a black hood jumped out of a chariot drawn by fierce griffins, and came into the hall.

The king turned pale, and the queen nearly fainted; for this was the spiteful fairy, Tormentilla, who lived alone an immense distance away from everywhere in a dismal cas-

tle that stood in the middle of a desert. The queen in her happiness had forgotten all about her, and so neglected to send her an invitation.

However, another chair was brought for Tormentilla, and she was given a place of honor at the table. All who were present tried to make up for the oversight, but in vain. Nothing pleased her. One thing, in particular, she could not forgive — each of the other fairies had a golden plate to eat from, but none had been made for her. So she chose to imagine that the king and queen did not treat her with sufficient respect, and she sat scowling angrily about her, neither eating nor drinking until the feast was over.

Then she and the seven other fairies went to the chamber where the tiny princess lay sleeping in her cradle, and each stepped forward in turn to bestow a magic gift.

The first said, " She shall be as good as gold."

The second said, " She shall be very beautiful."

The third said, " She shall be the cleverest princess in the world."

The fourth said, " She shall be the happiest princess in the world."

The fifth said, " She shall sing like a nightingale."

The sixth said, " She shall be loved by all who know her."

Next the cross old fairy took her place beside the cradle and shook her cane at the king and queen as she shouted, " And I say that before the princess reaches the age of twenty she shall prick her hand with a spindle and die of the wound! "

At this the queen fell on her knees and begged Tormentilla to recall her cruel words. But the wicked fairy, without replying, turned and left the hall.

Then the eighth fairy went to the queen and said: " Do not cry, my dear lady, for though I cannot relieve the princess of this enchantment I can make it less severe. Instead of dying she shall sleep for a hundred years. When that time is past, a prince shall come and awaken her with a kiss."

So the king and queen were somewhat comforted, and the fairies returned to their homes.

The greatest care was taken of the little princess in order to save her from her fate, and a law was enacted that every spindle in the kingdom should be burned and no more made.

Life moved along serenely for her until she was eighteen years old. All that the first six fairies promised had come true, and she was the best, the cleverest, the most beautiful, the happiest, and the sweetest-voiced princess in the world, and everybody loved her. Indeed, by this time Tormentilla's spiteful words were nearly forgotten.

But one morning the king and queen went away to be gone till late in the afternoon, and the princess amused herself by wandering into the out-of-the-way nooks and corners and attics of the great building. She found dusty furniture that was so quaint it made her laugh, and she found many other curiosities.

At last she climbed a narrow winding

stairway in an old tower. It led to a little door with a rusty key sticking out of the lock. She turned the key, opened the door, and there, in a low chamber, sat a white-capped old woman with a spinning-wheel before her on which she was spinning flax. This poor old woman had been allowed to make her home in the tower many years previous, and it happened that she had never heard the king's command to destroy the spindles; for she was so deaf that if you shouted till you were hoarse she never would have been able to understand you.

The princess stood on the threshold watching the old woman. This was the first time she had ever seen a spinning-wheel. Presently she said, "What pretty work you are doing, and why does that wheel go whir, whir, whir?"

But of course the old woman could not hear, and she neither answered nor lifted her eyes from her work. So the princess stepped into the room and laid her hand on the old woman's shoulder.

The spinner looked up and rubbed her

eyes. "Deary, deary me!" she cried in a high cracked voice, "and who may you be, my pretty darling?"

"I'm the princess!" the maiden screamed in her ear. But the spinner only shook her head. She could hear nothing.

Then the princess pointed to the spindle on which the flax was twirling into thread, and made the old woman understand that she wanted to try spinning.

The spinner nodded and laughed and got up from her seat, and the princess sat down at the wheel. But scarcely had she begun to spin when she pricked her finger with the spindle. Immediately a faintness seized her. She staggered to a bed close by, and as soon as her head touched the pillow she became unconscious.

At the same moment there was a deep silence everywhere in the castle. The little bird that just before had been singing so sweetly on the window-sill hushed its song. The distant hum of voices from the court-yard beneath was stilled. Even the old woman, who had been standing beside her

wheel telling the princess how to spin, stopped short in what she was saying, drooped down into her chair and fell asleep.

In the great hall the king and queen had just returned and seated themselves on their thrones. They inquired for their daughter, but fell asleep before the lady-in-waiting could answer them, and the lady herself began to snore. The guards slumbered at their posts. The horses in the stables became motionless, and so did the dogs in the yard, the pigeons on the roof, and the flies on the wall. The fire ceased burning on the kitchen hearth, and the meat on the spit ceased roasting.

In short, sleep fell on the whole palace, and round about the building there sprung up a magic wood. There was a multitude of trees large and small, and the brambles and briars all intertwined to make it impossible for man or beast to force a way through. The entire palace was hidden from view except a weather-vane on the loftiest pinnacle of the roof.

Time went on until a hundred years had

passed, and then, one day, a king's son happened to be hunting in the region. He became separated from his attendants in the excitement of the chase and lost his way. At length he came to a wood-cutter's cottage and dismounted to ask about the roads.

The old man who lived in the cottage gave him the required information, and in doing so spoke of a thick wood a little farther on in the direction the prince had been riding.

"No one has ever been able to get through that wood," the old man affirmed, "and my grandfather used to say it surrounded a castle in which was a beautiful princess condemned to sleep for a hundred years. He said some prince would come and awaken her with a kiss. We know there is a building in the wood because, when we are where we can overlook the treetops, a weather-vane is in sight."

On hearing this, off went the prince to have a look at the wood. When he found it, he tied his horse to a tree, intending to attempt to push his way through the thorny thicket on foot. He did not have the difficult

The prince and the sleeping beauty.

task he expected, for no sooner did he make a start than the tangled briars of the undergrowth were changed into pretty flowers which parted and bent aside to let him pass.

Presently he reached the palace courtyard and saw the dogs lying asleep, and the pigeons sitting on the roof with their heads under their wings. He went indoors, and there were the flies asleep on the wall, and there was the kitchen boy putting some plums into his mouth, and the cook with hand uplifted to box the lad's ears, and a maid sitting near by with a fowl on her lap ready to pluck.

In the great hall the prince found the whole court asleep, and the king and queen slumbering on their thrones. Everything was so still he could hear his own breathing.

As yet he saw no princess, and he continued looking about till he came to the old tower and ascended the narrow winding stairway. He entered the little room where the princess lay. Her cheeks were warm and pink, and she looked so lovely in her sleep that he could not turn away his eyes. After

gazing at her a few moments he stooped and kissed her.

Instantly she awoke and said: "O prince, are you here at last? I have had such pleasant dreams!"

She sat up laughing and rubbing her eyes, then stood on her feet, and they went hand in hand out of the room. The old woman, who had also awakened, stared at them in amazement, mumbled a little to herself, and resumed her spinning.

The two descended the winding stairway, and passed along the corridors until they came to the throne room. There the king and queen and whole court had just opened their eyes and were gazing at each other in wonderment.

The long sleep was ended for the rest of the palace too. Roosters crowed, dogs barked, the cats began to mew, the clocks struck the hours, the heralds blew their trumpets, the pigeons cooed and flew away from the roof to the fields, the kitchen fire crackled merrily, the meat was roasting again, the boy with the plums put them in

his mouth and the cook gave him such a box on the ear that he roared lustily, and the maid began to pluck the fowl.

Everything went on as if there had been no enchantment at all. To be sure, the dress the princess was wearing was such as the prince's great grandmother might have worn, but that only gave them something to laugh at.

As soon as preparations could be made, the wedding of the prince and princess was celebrated with great splendor, and they lived happily ever after.

VI

Dick Whittington and His Cat

In England, long ago, there was a boy called Dick Whittington, whose father and mother died when he was seven years old. He was left a ragged little fellow running around a country village, and as he was not old enough to work much, he was very badly off. He got little for his dinner, and sometimes nothing at all for his breakfast and supper. In truth, the villagers were so poor that they could not spare him much more than the parings of potatoes and now and then a hard crust of bread.

Dick was a bright boy, and he was always listening while others talked. He liked especially to hear the chat of the farmers on Sunday while they stood about in the church-

yard before the parson came. In this manner he heard many strange things concerning the great city of London; for the country people at that time thought folks in London were all fine ladies and gentlemen, and that there was singing and music in the city all day long, and that the streets were paved with gold.

One morning a large wagon drawn by eight horses all with bells at their heads arrived in the village. Dick was leaning against the sign-post of an inn where the driver stopped for a few minutes, and he heard someone say that the wagon was going to London. So when the driver came out of the inn he said to him, "Please, sir, will you let me walk with you to London by the side of your wagon?"

"But what will your father and mother say?" the driver asked.

"I have no father and mother now," Dick replied, "nor is there anyone who would care whether I stayed or went."

When the wagoner heard this and saw by the boy's ragged clothes that he could not be

worse off than he was, he told him he could go. The man cracked his whip, the horses started with their bells tinkling merrily, and away trudged Dick and his new friend. It was a long journey, but good-natured people in the towns the travelers passed through gave the boy something to eat, and at night the driver let him get into the wagon to sleep among the boxes and parcels.

Dick arrived safely on the outskirts of London and was in such a hurry to see the splendid streets all paved with gold that he did not stay even to thank the wagoner, but ran on as fast as his legs would carry him. He hurried from one street to another, constantly expecting that the next one would be paved with gold. His idea was that he would only need to take up some bits of the pavement and then he would have as much money as he could desire.

Poor Dick ran on till he was tired out. It was growing dark, and every way he turned he saw nothing but dirt instead of gold. So he sat down in an out-of-the-way nook and cried himself to sleep.

There he stayed all night, and when morning came he was cold and hungry. He got up and walked about asking everybody he met to give him a halfpenny that he might buy food to keep him from starving. But no one paid any attention to him except a man who said crossly, "You are an idle rogue."

He wished himself back in the country, where he knew he could find shelter in a comfortable kitchen and sit by a warm fire, and where he was at least sure of enough to eat so that he would not starve. At last he sat down very sorrowful, and faint for lack of food, at the door of a rich merchant's house. Soon the cook spied him. She was an ill-tempered creature, and happened to be very busy getting dinner for her master and mistress.

"What business have you there, you young rascal?" she called out. "We want no beggars hanging around this house, and if you do not take yourself away, I will see how you like a sousing of dish-water. I have some here hot enough to make you jump."

Just then Mr. Fitzwarren, the owner of

the house, came home to dinner. He saw the dirty ragged boy, and said: "Why are you here, my boy? You seem old enough to work. I am afraid you are inclined to be lazy."

"No, indeed, sir!" Dick protested earnestly. "That is not the case, for I would work with all my heart if I could find work to do. But now I can hardly stand up, I have had so little to eat."

"Poor fellow!" the gentleman said, "come into the house and we will see what we can do for you."

So the kind merchant had the lad accompany him to the kitchen. There he ordered that a good dinner be given him and that he should be kept to help the cook in such work as he was able to do.

Little Dick would have lived very happily in this good family if the cook had not been so cross. She used to say: "You are under me and you must keep busy. Clean the kettles and the dripping-pan, make the fires, wind the clock, and do all the other kitchen work nimbly, or —" and she would shake the ladle at him.

She was finding fault with him and scolding from morning to night, and sometimes she would whack him over the head with a broom. At length her ill-usage was observed by Mr. Fitzwarren's daughter, Alice, who was about Dick's age. The little girl told the cook she would complain to her father and have her discharged if she did not treat the boy more kindly.

That made the cook behave a little better, but Dick had still another hardship to endure. His bed was in a garret, where there were numerous holes in the floor and walls, and every night he was tormented by rats and mice. They ran over his face and disturbed him with their squeaking. Sometimes he could scarcely sleep a wink. He could think of no way to mend matters until one day a gentleman who was visiting at the house gave him a penny for cleaning his shoes.

"Ah!" Dick said, "I wonder if I could buy a cat with this money."

Soon afterward he saw a girl passing with a cat in her arms. So out he ran and said,

"Will you let me have that cat for a penny?"

"Yes, surely I will," she replied, "and you will find her an excellent mouser."

That just suited Dick, and he took pussy to his garret, where he fed her on scraps that he saved for her from his own food every day. In a little while he had no more trouble with the rats and mice and could sleep all night.

One day Dick's master announced that he had a ship ready to sail. It was his custom to allow his servants to have a chance to profit by the good fortune of his vessels, and he called them into the parlor to ask what money they would invest on this voyage.

Dick had not a farthing in the world, and he stayed in the kitchen, but all the rest gathered as requested, and each was glad to venture something.

Then Miss Alice asked for Dick and had him called in. "If you have no money," she said, "I will let you have some from my own purse."

"That will not do," her father commented. "Whatever he sends must be his own."

When Dick heard this, he said, "I have nothing of my own but a cat which I bought some time since with a penny a gentleman gave me."

"Fetch your cat then, my lad," Mr. Fitzwarren ordered, "and she shall go in the ship."

Dick went upstairs, and with tears in his eyes brought down pussy and gave her to the captain. "I'm sorry to have the cat go," he sighed, "for now I shall be kept awake by the rats and mice."

All the company laughed at Dick's odd venture. However, Miss Alice, who felt sorry for him, gave him some money to buy another cat. This and other marks of kindness shown by Miss Alice made the ill-tempered cook jealous of Dick. She began to use him more cruelly than ever, and often made sport of him for sending his cat to sea.

"Why," she said, "your cat won't sell

for as much money as would buy a stick with which to beat you."

Finally poor Dick could bear this abuse no longer, and he decided to run away. So after making a bundle of his few things, he started very early in the morning and walked on and on until he had left the city far behind. By and by he stopped on a hilltop where the road parted and sat down on a wayside stone to rest and decide which way he would go.

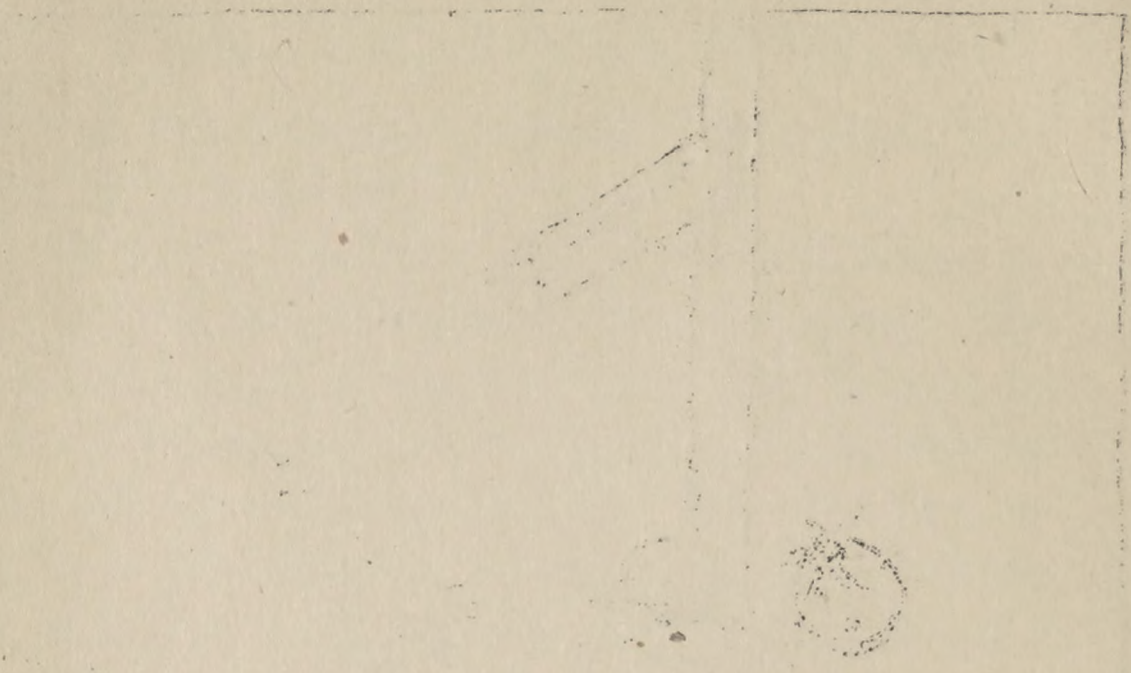
While he was thinking, the bells of Bow Church back in the city began to ring, and their sound seemed to say, over and over,

"Return, Whittington,
Lord Mayor of London."

"Lord Mayor of London!" he said to himself. "Why, I would put up with almost anything if I could be Lord Mayor of London, and ride in a fine coach when I grow to be a man. Well, I will go back and bear the cuffing and scolding of the old cook as best I can."

Dick retraced his steps as quickly as he

Dick Whittington hears the London bells ring.



could and was lucky enough to get into the house and start about his usual drudgery before the cook came downstairs.

The cat that Dick sent on the *Unicorn,* as his master's ship was called, voyaged to the coast of Africa, and she made herself useful in catching the unwelcome rats that were on board. Contrary winds drove the vessel to a part of the Barbary coast whither the English had never gone before, and where the only inhabitants were Moors. When the ship put into a harbor, the people came in great numbers to see the sailors, who were so different from them in color and dress as to arouse their curiosity. However, they were very civil, and when they and the crew became better acquainted, they were eager to buy the fine things with which the ship was loaded.

Presents were sent by the captain to the king of the country, who was so much pleased with them that he invited the ship's officers to come to the palace. A feast was prepared, but they had scarcely sat down to eat when a multitude of rats and mice came

scampering in and devoured much of the food in spite of all efforts to drive them away.

"It seems to me," the captain said, "that these rats and mice are very disagreeable."

"Yes," the king agreed, "they are so offensive that I would give half my treasure to be freed of them. They not only spoil my food, but they assault me in my chamber and oblige me to have a guard at my bedside while I am sleeping."

The captain remembered Whittington's cat and told the king he had a creature on the ship that would dispatch all the vermin in short order. On hearing this, the king was jubilant. "Bring the wonderful animal to me," he said, "and if she will do what you say, I will give you a fortune in exchange for her."

"Hurry, hurry!" the queen urged. "I am impatient to see the dear thing."

Off went the captain to the ship, took puss under his arm, and returned to the palace. He arrived just in time to see the rats and mice again rush pell-mell into the dining-

hall where another feast had been spread. At once the cat scrambled away from the captain and pounced on the marauders. In a few minutes many of them lay dead on the floor and the rest scuttled off in great fright to their holes.

The king and queen were quite charmed to get rid of such plagues so easily, and they asked that the cat might be brought to them so they could inspect her more closely, for no creature like her had hitherto been seen in their country.

Then the captain called, "Pussy, pussy, pussy!" and the cat at once came to him.

He carried her to the queen, who drew back afraid to touch a creature which made such havoc among the rats and mice. However, the lady soon gained more confidence, and he put the cat down on her lap. There puss began purring and sang herself to sleep.

The king was so well satisfied with the cat that he gave for her a cabinet of jewels worth ten times as much as the captain received for all his cargo. After exchanging the latter to great advantage for goods of that country,

the vessel made ready for the return voyage. Sails were set, and with a fair wind the ship headed toward the open sea.

One morning Mr. Fitzwarren had just come to his counting-house and seated himself at his desk when somebody rapped at the door. "Who is there?" the merchant asked.

"A friend," was the answer. "I come to bring you good tidings of your ship, *Unicorn.*"

The merchant bustled to the door in a great hurry, and who should he find waiting there but the ship's captain with a cabinet of jewels and a list of the ship's merchandise. When he had looked at the list, he lifted his eyes and thanked heaven for giving the ship such a prosperous voyage.

Then the captain told the story of the cat and showed the jewels the king had presented to obtain her. The merchant rejoiced as heartily on Dick's behalf as he had over his own good fortune. He at once called in such of his servants as were near at hand and shared the news with them.

They at first declared that so great a treasure was too much for the lad, but Mr. Fitzwarren said: "God forbid that I should deprive him of the value of a single penny. It is all his own." Then he added:

"Go fetch him, and we'll tell him of his fame;
Pray call him Mr. Whittington by name."

Dick was found scouring the pots for the cook, and he tried to excuse himself from going to the counting-house, saying, "I haven't swept the room yet, and my shoes are full of hobnails."

But the servants took him along with them, and when they entered the counting-house Mr. Fitzwarren ordered a chair to be set for him. Dick began to think they were making game of him, and he said, "Please don't play any tricks on me, but let me go back to my work."

"Indeed, Mr. Whittington," the merchant responded, "we are very much in earnest. I congratulate you on your good fortune. The *Unicorn* has returned and the captain

reports that he sold your cat to the King of Barbary. In exchange he received more riches than I possess in the whole world. I wish you may long enjoy them."

When the treasure was shown to Dick he hardly knew how to behave for joy. He begged his master to take what part of it he pleased, since he owed it all to his kindness.

"No, no," Mr. Fitzwarren said, "the wealth is yours, and I only urge that you use it well."

However, Dick was too kind-hearted to keep it all to himself, and he made generous presents to the captain and his crew, and to his fellow-servants in the house — even to the ill-natured old cook.

By Mr. Fitzwarren's advice he went to a tailor to get himself dressed like a gentleman, and when his new clothes were on and his hair curled, he was as handsome and attractive as any lad in London. He also gained in confidence, and by the time he was a young man he had dropped that sheepish behavior which had been largely the result of low spirits. In truth, he became so

sprightly and pleasant a companion that Miss Alice fell in love with him, and at length they were married.

Mr. Whittington and his lady lived in great splendor to a good old age, and were very happy. He became Sheriff of London, was three times Lord Mayor, and received the honor of knighthood from the king.

VII

The Ugly Duckling

It was beautiful in the land of Denmark, for summer had come. The wheat was golden, the oats were still green, and the hay was stacked in the rich low-lying meadows, where the stork was marching about on his long red legs.

Yes, the country was delightful, and in one of the prettiest spots the sunshine fell warmly on an old mansion surrounded by a deep moat. Between the walls of the mansion and the water's edge grew many great burdocks, which were so tall that the children could stand among them and not be seen. In the midst of these burdocks was seclusion like that of a dense forest, and there a duck had chosen to make her nest.

She was sitting on her eggs, but the pleas-

ure she felt at first was now almost gone, because she had been there so long and had so few visitors. She seldom saw the other ducks, as they liked swimming about in the moat better than waddling up to gossip with her under the dock leaves.

At last the eggs began to crack one after another. The little ducklings were poking their heads out. "Chirp, chirp!" they cried.

"Quack, quack!" the mother duck said; and they scrambled out of the shells as fast as they could and looked around on all sides among the green leaves. Their mother allowed them to look as long as they pleased, for green is good for the eyes.

"How big the world is!" the young ones exclaimed; and though they could not see very far, it was very big compared with the space inside of the eggs.

"Do you think that this is the whole world?" the mother asked. "Oh, no! The world extends far beyond what is in sight here. It stretches on and on a long way to the other side of the garden right into the

parson's field; but I have never been as far as that. I suppose the eggs have all hatched."

She got up and looked down into the nest. "No," she sighed, "the biggest egg is there yet. How long is this sitting going to last, I wonder?"

Then she settled herself on the nest again just as an old duck came along and said, "Well, how are you getting on?"

"There seems to be no end of trouble with one of the eggs," the tired mother complained. "Probably the shell is too thick so that the poor little duckling inside cannot break through. But you must see the rest of the children. They are just as pretty as any mother could wish them to be; and how much they resemble their father who is certainly the handsomest drake in the whole flock!"

"I would not spend any more time with the egg that has not broken," the old duck said. "Take my advice and leave it. You ought to be teaching your little ones to swim."

"I will sit on it a little longer," the mother duck responded, shaking her head. "I have been sitting on it so long already that a day or two more will not matter."

"Oh! if you are suited, I have no objection," the old duck said, and with a stiff curtsy she went away.

At last the big egg cracked. "Cheep, cheep!" the tardy comer cried, and tumbled out.

How large and ugly he was! The duck looked at him. "That is a great strong creature, even if he is homely," she said, "and no doubt he will do very well."

The next day, as soon as the sun had risen and was shining warmly, the mother duck with all her family waddled down to the moat. Plump she went into the water. "Quack, quack!" she cried, and one duckling after another followed her. The water closed over their heads, but they soon came up and swam beautifully.

As for the ugly gray late-comer, he paddled around as merrily as any of them. "Only see how well he moves his legs," the

mother duck said. "How erect he holds himself. He is good-looking enough, after all. Quack, quack! Now, children, come with me and I will take you into society. We are going to the poultry yard. Keep close to me or someone may tread on you; and I warn you to beware of the cat."

When they arrived at the poultry yard a fearful uproar was going on. Two broods were fighting for the head of an eel, but in the end the cat got it.

"That's how things go in this world," the mother duck said, and she licked her bill, for she wanted the eel's head herself.

"Children," she went on, "remember to quack properly, and when we pass that old duck you see yonder, I want you all to bow. She is the most distinguished of any of the fowls present. Look, she has a red rag round her leg. That is the finest mark of distinction any duck can have. It shows clearly that she is not to be parted with. Come along, and make haste, but, for goodness' sake! don't turn your toes in so! A well-bred duckling must walk just like papa

and mamma. Imitate me in all things and pay attention to my commands. When you bow, do not neglect to bend your neck gracefully and then boldly say, 'Quack, quack!' Nothing more."

They did as they were told, but the other ducks who were in the yard looked at them with contempt and said, quite loud: "Only see! Now we have another brood, just as if there were not enough of us already; and fie! how ugly that big duckling is! We will not endure him."

Immediately a duck flew at him and bit him in the neck.

"Let him alone," the mother entreated. "He is doing no one any harm."

"Yes, but he is so ungainly and queer," the assailant said. "He must be punished."

"Those are fine children that the mother has," the old duck with the red rag round her leg remarked. "They are all good-looking except one. It is a pity she can't hatch that one again."

"He certainly is not handsome," the mother acknowledged, "but he is a very

good child and swims as well as any of them. I think he will improve and be like the others after a while. Probably the difference is caused by his staying so long in the egg-shell."

As she spoke she did her best to smooth down the youngster's gray-green uniform where it had been ruffled. "He is a drake," she added, "and very strong. Therefore looks do not matter so much. I think he will make his way in the world."

"The rest of the little ones are charming," the old duck with the red rag round her leg declared. "Now make yourselves at home, and whenever one of you ducklings finds anything particularly nice to eat you may bring it to me."

So they took up their abode in the poultry yard, but the duckling who had come last out of the eggshell, and who was so ugly, was bitten, jostled, and teased by all the other poultry yard dwellers.

"He is too big," they said; and the turkey-cock, who was born with his spurs on and fancied himself an emperor, puffed him-

self up like a ship in full sail, and bore down on the duckling gobbling till he became quite red in the face.

The poor duckling was at his wits' end, and did not know what to say or which way to turn. He was greatly distressed to be so ugly and the jest of the whole poultry yard. As time went on matters grew worse. The gray-green duckling was scorned by all. Even his own brothers and sisters behaved unkindly. The ducks bit him, the hens pecked him, and the girl who fed the poultry kicked him.

At length his fear and despair so increased that he determined to run away. With a great effort he got through the hedge that surrounded the poultry yard, and hurried on as fast as his weak legs and wings would carry him. The little singing birds in the bushes flew up in a fright.

"That is because I am so ugly," the duckling thought, and he hastened along till he came to a wide moor where some wild ducks lived.

There he stayed, tired and miserable, all

night. The full moon was shining in the sky, and its friendly countenance seemed to be laughing at the frogs which kept jumping from the water on to the grass and then back into the water.

Early the next morning the wild ducks, aroused by the first glimmer of the sun, rose from the reedy pools to take a flight in the warm summer air. With surprise they saw the stranger. "What funny guy is this?" they exclaimed. "Where can he have come from?"

The duckling, with all possible politeness, turned from side to side, first bowing to the right, and then to the left. "You are really uncommonly ugly," the wild ducks said.

For several days he remained among the rushes, only stirring about enough to get what food he needed. Then two wild ganders came and spoke to him. They were young and pert, and tried to show off their smartness.

"I say, comrade," they called out, "you are so ugly that we have taken quite a fancy

to you. Will you join us in a little excursion? Not far from here is another marsh where there are some charming wild geese, all young ladies. They would find you very interesting."

Just at that moment, bang! bang! went some guns. Both the young ganders fell dead among the reeds, and the water was reddened by their blood. Bang! bang! More shots were being fired, and whole flocks of wild ducks flew up from the marshy waters.

A grand hunting party had come for a day's sport. Men lay hidden all round the marsh, and some even sat on the branches of the trees that overhung the water. The blue smoke rose like a mist, and there was a smell of burning powder in the air. The dogs wandered about in the swamp — splash! splash! and the reeds and rushes bent beneath their tread in all directions.

How frightened the poor duckling was! Once a dog came close to him, his tongue hanging out and his eyes gleaming. He opened wide his jaws at sight of the duck-

ling, showed his sharp white teeth, and — splash — he was gone.

The outcast gave a sigh of relief and said, "Well, thank heaven! I am so ugly that even the dogs won't touch me."

The shooting continued until late in the day and then the duckling hastened away from the marsh as fast as he could. A boisterous wind was blowing and it had no consideration for the scantily-clad traveler. It impeded his progress and exhausted his strength.

After a time the fugitive reached a miserable cottage, and discovered that its rickety door had broken loose from the lower hinge leaving a slanting crevice through which he could slip. The cottage was the home of an old woman who lived there with her tom-cat and her hen. Night had come and all three were asleep. So the duckling crept quietly in without disturbing them, and made himself comfortable in the nearest corner.

The old woman loved the cat and the hen as if they had been her own children. She called the cat "Sonny." He was an expert

The ugly duckling in the old woman's house.

in purring, and he could turn head over heels so cleverly that no other cat in the neighborhood could equal him. Besides, if you stroked his fur the wrong way, his back gave forth bright sparks. The hen was a good layer, and because she had very short legs the old woman had named her "Chicky Shortlegs."

In the morning the uninvited guest was found, and the cat began to mew and the hen began to cackle.

"What on earth is the matter?" the old woman asked, looking round.

Then she saw the intruder, but her eyes were not good, and she mistook him for a fat duck that by some chance had wandered into her cottage. "This is a rare prize!" she exclaimed joyously. "Now I shall have duck's eggs — that is, if the stupid thing should not prove to be a drake. At any rate, we will give it a trial."

So the gray-green youngster remained on trial for three weeks, but no eggs made their appearance.

The cat considered himself the master of

the house, and the hen considered herself the mistress. They always spoke of "we and the world," for they imagined themselves to be not only half the world, but by far the better half. The duckling thought there might be two opinions about that, but the hen would not concede any such thing.

"Can you lay eggs?" she asked.

"No," the duckling replied.

"Well, then, hold your tongue," the hen cackled.

And the cat said, "Can you arch your back, or purr, or give off sparks?"

"No," the duckling answered.

"That settles it," the cat declared. "You had better keep your opinions to yourself when people of sense are speaking."

So the duckling sat alone in a corner, quite melancholy. He thought of the fresh air and the bright sunshine out-of-doors and felt such a strong desire to swim again that he could not help telling the hen of his longing.

"What ails you?" the hen said. "You have nothing to do. It is sheer idleness that

allows these foolish freaks to get into your head. Lay eggs or purr and you will be all right."

"But it is so delightful to swim," the duckling responded; "and it is even more delicious when the water closes over your head and you dive to the bottom."

"Well, that is a queer sort of pleasure," the hen remarked. "I think you must be crazy. The cat is the most sensible animal I know. Ask him if he would like to swim and dive. Ask the old woman, our mistress. Do you suppose she would enjoy swimming, or having the water close over her head?"

"You do not understand me," the duckling sighed.

"What — not understand you!" the hen exclaimed. "So you think yourself wiser than the cat and the old woman, not to mention myself. Don't get silly things into your head, child, but thank your stars for all the kindness that has been shown you here. Are you not lodged in a warm room, and have you not the advantage of society from which you can learn something? But you are an

idiot, and it is wearisome to have anything to do with you. Believe me, I wish you well. I tell you unpleasant truths, but it is thus that real friendship is shown."

"I think I will go out into the wide world again," the duckling said.

"Well, go!" Chicky Shortlegs responded sharply.

So the duckling went, and he hurried on till he found the longed-for water. Then he swam about joyously and boldly dived right down to the bottom.

Autumn came. The leaves turned yellow and brown, and the wind caught them and danced them about. The air was cold, and the crows sat on the hedges and croaked, "Caw! caw!" Things certainly looked far from cheerful to the poor duckling.

One evening the sun was setting in chilly brilliance when a flock of large handsome birds rose out of the brushwood. The duckling had never seen any birds so beautiful before. Their plumage was pure white, they had long slender necks, and they spread out their magnificent broad wings to fly away

from the cold northern region to warm countries southward. They mounted very high, and the ugly duckling became strangely uneasy. He circled round and round in the water craning his neck up into the air after them. Then he uttered a cry so loud and shrill that he was frightened by it himself.

When they had quite disappeared from sight he was greatly distressed. Ah! he could not forget those noble birds — those happy birds. He knew not what kind of birds they were, nor whither they were flying, yet he loved them as he had never before loved any creature. He did not envy them, for how could it enter his head to wish he had such beauty. He would have been content if only the ducks in the poultry yard had endured his company.

The weather grew bitterly cold, and the duckling was obliged to swim about in the water to keep it from freezing. But every night the opening in which he swam became smaller. At last, exhausted by constant exertion, he was frozen tight into the ice.

Early the following morning a peasant

came along and saw him. The bird's wretched plight roused the man's pity, and he went out on the pond, broke the ice around the duckling with his wooden shoe, and carried him off to his wife. She took the half-frozen creature into the warm kitchen, where he soon recovered animation and strength.

The children tried to play with him, but the duckling thought they wished to tease him, and in his terror he jumped into a pan of milk so that the milk was spilled about the room. The woman shrieked and threw up her hands, which thoroughly bewildered the duckling, and he flew into the jar where the butter was kept and thence into the meal barrel and out again. Just imagine what he looked like by that time!

The woman bewailed her losses while she pursued him with the tongs, and the children laughed and shouted as they tumbled over one another in trying to catch him. Luckily for the duckling, the door was open, and he fluttered out into the snow and found shelter in some bushes not far away.

It would be too painful to tell of all his

misfortunes and of the misery and privation he suffered during the winter. In some way he contrived to live, and finally the sun began to shine warmly again. The duckling was in the marsh among the reeds. Larks were singing and beautiful spring had arrived.

The outcast shook his wings. They were stronger than formerly, and when he tried a flight through the air they bore him swiftly forward. Before he was aware of it, he found himself in a large garden where the apple trees were in full bloom, and where the syringas sent forth their fragrance, and the willows drooped their slender green branches down into a winding stream.

Just in front of him two beautiful white swans came sailing lightly over the water from behind some bushes. The duckling saw that they were the same sort of birds he had seen going away southward the previous autumn, and a feeling of deep sadness oppressed him.

"I will fly to these royal birds," he said, "and they will kill me because I who am so

ugly have presumed to approach them. But it won't matter. Better to be killed by them than to be snapped at by the ducks, pecked by the hens, kicked by the poultry girl, and to have to suffer so much during the winter."

He flew into the water and swam toward the beautiful creatures. They saw him and darted forward to meet him.

"You may kill me if you will," he said, and he bowed his head low, expecting death. But what did he see in the water. There, beneath him, was reflected his own form, no longer that of an ugly gray bird — it was that of a swan. Then he knew that the big egg from which he had been hatched, and which he had heard the ducks in the poultry yard talk about, was a swan's egg.

The other swans gave him a friendly welcome and stroked him with their beaks. Some little children came into the garden with grain and pieces of bread, which they threw into the water; and the smallest child cried out: "There is a new one!"

The others shouted with joy, "Yes, a new swan has come!" and they clapped their

hands and danced around, and then ran off to call their father and mother.

The older members of the family soon came, and all said, "The new one is the prettiest."

He felt quite shy, and when the old swans bowed before him doing homage, he hid his head under his wing. The willows bent their boughs right down into the water toward him, and the sun shone warm and cheering. He rustled his feathers and raised his slender neck aloft, saying with exultation in his heart, "I never dreamed of so much happiness when I was the ugly duckling."

VIII

St. George and the Dragon

Long, long ago, in the old English town of Coventry, a boy was born in the castle of his father, who was a brave knight; and this baby had on his breast the likeness of a red dragon, and on his right palm the likeness of a red cross. When he was two days old a strange thing happened. It was in the afternoon, and two nurses were with him. One was busy with her needle. The other, who was rocking the cradle, looked out of the window for a moment, and in that moment the babe vanished, with no sound and without the nurses seeing any person near.

Ten years passed, during which the father searched for his lost son in countries near and far. Then he was killed fighting the

pagan Saracens in the Holy Land of Palestine.

The babe, who was destined to be the patron saint of England, had been stolen by a wicked enchantress and carried off to her dominion in a dark forest many leagues from Coventry. This enchantress had the gift of eternal youth and beauty. She always appeared to her captive in the guise of a lovely maiden, and she was the only being in human form he saw until he had grown to manhood. His other companions were twelve satyrs, half men and half goats, who waited on him and taught him all knightly arts.

At length there came a day when the enchantress said to him: "You shall be lord of all my magic realm if you will marry me and live with me forever. By my magic you shall have the same unchanging youth that I enjoy."

But deep in the youth's heart was a dread and hatred of all that was evil. "You are very beautiful," he responded, "and your realm is wonderful, yet you do wicked deeds.

I do not think well of your black arts, and I do not love you. Those ugly guards of mine have told me that outside of your dominion is a world where men strive for honor and justice. What would be my lot there?"

"It would be one of great sorrows and many hardships," she replied. "There would be in it more sadness and toil than joy."

They stood near a great gray cliff. She made a pass with the wand she carried, and he saw six comely knights fully armed, motionless against the cliff, as if they also were rock.

"These knights would be your companions if you chose that life of which I spoke." the enchantress said. "Each is a knight of a different country; and the countries are Scotland, Wales, Ireland, France, Spain, and Italy. The seven of you would be known as the Seven Champions of Christendom. But they will not wake as long as my enchantment of this realm continues."

She made a mockery of the knights, and as she talked she led the way to a stable

where were seven noble steeds, like so many statues, and on the walls hung their trappings.

"Your comrades would ride six of these," she said, "but the white one, which is the swiftest and most powerful horse in the world, would be yours."

Near by was a castle, and they went into one of its large rooms that contained many weapons and suits of armor. Among the weapons was a great sword with a hilt in the shape of a cross.

The enchantress pointed to it, saying: "This would be your sword, and its fame would be unequaled. With it you would be invincible. You would be known as St. George, the champion of right against wrong, of good against evil. The sword's name is Ascalon. But surely you will not use it or live the hard life of the world. You will stay with me."

It seemed best that he should let her think he assented, and they went back to the great cliff. "Now you shall have my wand," she said, handing it to him. "Strike this hard

rock and see how potent my magic is. A stroke of the wand serves equally well to open a cleft or to close one."

He struck the rock, and with a rending crash a dark narrow way opened into it.

"Follow me," the enchantress said, "and you shall go to a more beautiful portion of my domain than you have ever before visited."

They went in a few steps, and then he suddenly leaped back and struck the rock with the wand again. Instantly the opening clanged shut, the earth trembled, and the trees roundabout bent and swayed as if a storm had struck them. The spell of the enchantress was ended.

St. George broke the wand across his knee and threw the fragments from him, saying: "It is not fitting that I should use such a thing. Now I will join my comrades"; and he went to the spot where he had seen them.

They were rubbing their eyes and stretching themselves like men roused from deep sleep, and were asking one another questions in amazement at their sudden freedom.

"Friends," St. George said, "I have slain the wicked enchantress who had made you like so many stone statues. We can go now to seek adventures in the world. There are weapons and steeds for us here, and we will fare forth as knights should."

They went to the armory where St. George got the sword Ascalon and such other things as he needed. His comrades equipped themselves also, and then they all feasted together. Finally they packed up such food as they chose to carry with them, got their steeds from the stable, and left the realm of the enchantress forever.

They knew not whither they were going, but were determined to uphold the Christian faith against pagans, and honor and right against all evil-doers.

After journeying many miles they came to a broad plain where seven roads met. Here each chose a different road, and they parted.

St. George rode on alone and at length reached the seashore, where he found a ship about to sail for Egypt. He embarked and crossed the sea to that distant country.

Then, mounted on his good white horse, he traveled on under the glaring sun amid strange heathen folk till he came to a little hut by some palm trees.

This was the dwelling of a holy hermit, a long-bearded old man, who stood in front of his rough shelter of leaves and branches. He held up his arms and motioned St. George to stop. "Come no farther, Sir Knight," he said. "This is a land of mourning where are found sorrow and death."

"But it is my task to aid the sorrowful, and to dare all that a brave knight may," St. George responded. "What is the evil from which your country suffers?"

"There is a loathsome dragon here," the hermit replied. "His lair is a cave in a fruitful valley. No man knows whence he came, but for twenty-four years he has ravaged the king's realm. If an innocent maiden is not taken to the valley each day for him to devour, he is much enraged and kills hundreds of people with his great claws or his poisonous breath.

"Only one maiden of suitable age is now

left, and she is the king's daughter. When she is no more, Egypt will be at the mercy of the beast, who will not hesitate to spread death and misery far and wide. Tomorrow the fair Sabra must die unless some brave knight saves her by slaying the dragon. The hero who can thus deliver her will receive her in marriage and be made heir to the throne."

"I want no kingdom," St. George affirmed, "and as for your princess I know nothing of her. But if I can slay the dragon and save her I will."

The hermit shook his head. "Many knights have said the like," he declared. "You will see their bones in the valley if you are rash enough to venture there."

"Would you have a Christian knight fear to aid a lady in peril because others have failed?" St. George asked. "Let me rest in your hut this night and I will fight the dragon on the morrow."

So the hermit shared his simple fare with St. George and let him sleep in the hut. The next morning they went to the entrance of

the valley, and then, after receiving a blessing from the hermit, St. George rode on alone down a stony path through a dark wood of cypress trees.

Beyond the wood, bound to an outlying tree, he saw a princess so lovely that she seemed to light up the whole valley. She was clad in white silk and had a golden circlet on her head. From farther down the valley could be heard at intervals a low threatening roar, and she was looking with dread in that direction.

St. George alighted by the tree, drew his sword, and cut the bonds. Then he knelt and saluted the lady. "I have come to fight the dragon," he said, "and you must hasten away."

At that moment there sounded a roar that made the branches of the trees rattle against each other and started an echo that rumbled like thunder between the rock walls of the valley.

"I will go," the princess said, looking at St. George earnestly, "and if my prayers can bring you victory you will win."

Then she turned and fled up the path. St. George rode in the other direction, his armor jingling gayly and flashing in the sun, and with his spear, his sword, and his shield, on which was blazoned the red cross of England, ready for action.

The bottom of the valley was strewn with the white bones of dead knights, and with rusty weapons and pieces of armor. St. George's horse sniffed the air and snorted, but kept on, and they passed a fair orange tree loaded with fruit that glowed like golden lamps.

Straight ahead was the dragon's cave, and now the dragon came forth. He was breathing out hot and poisonous smoke from his nostrils and the beat of his huge leathery wings as he half ran, half flew, toward the champion made the orange tree leaves rustle like the clapping of hands.

St. George gripped his spear and spurred his horse into a gallop. When he and the dragon met he felt as if his spear had run against a stone wall. It was useless for piercing the horny scales. As he recoiled,

his horse reared up and the two rolled over under the branches of the orange tree.

Luckily no poisonous creature could breathe the fragrance of this kind of tree, and the dragon dared not come within the compass of its branches. So St. George was able to rest in safety till he recovered his strength. Then he arose, mounted his horse, and drew his sword from its sheath.

"Now will I see whether this good blade can pierce a dragon's hide," he said.

He urged his horse forward, and smote the fiery dragon a blow that cut through the yellow scales on his breast. The beast reeled, and St. George gave him so deep a thrust under one of his red wings as to pierce his heart. Then the dragon's great legs grew weak. He fell over on his side lifeless, and all the grass around turned crimson with his blood.

The knight cut off the creature's hideous head, and started riding to the royal city taking the head with him. But there had been onlookers who had seen the fight from the adjacent cliffs, and they quickly carried

St. George assails the dragon.

the news of the glorious victory to court. At once King Ptolemy ordered that the streets should be hung with rich tapestry, and went himself in his best chariot accompanied by Sabra to meet the hero. The chariot was followed by thirty negroes in purple robes, mounted on camels, and next came men with all manner of musical instruments, then standard bearers and guards, and finally a crowd of people bearing flowers and wreaths to strew before the champion.

When St. George met this procession he saluted the king saying: "Hail, King of Egypt! I bring you a gift"; and he held up the dragon's head, which was so terrible that few who saw it could help shuddering.

"You could bring no gift that would give greater happiness to my people," the king declared. "Come with us to the city, Sir Knight, and let us feast."

After St. George had told the king who he was and some details of his fight in the valley, the procession turned about, and returned to the city with one of the king's guards going on before bearing the dragon's

head aloft on his lance. As soon as they arrived at the palace, St. George washed off the stains of travel and of the fight, and donned new clothing that the king furnished.

Then there was a great feast with song and minstrelsy, and at its close the king said: "St. George of England, I promised that whoever slew the dragon should have my daughter for his wife. Do you consent to that?"

St. George looked at the princess and she at him. "Gladly would I wed her, but not against her will," he said.

"You are my choice," she declared, and gave him a diamond ring of great value.

Then King Ptolemy proclaimed that the wedding should take place in two months' time.

During the next few days St. George enjoyed himself at the Egyptian court in tilts and tournaments with the nobles and in dancing and conversing with the ladies, but his happiness soon came to an end.

Sabra had long been loved by Almidor, King of Morocco, and although he knew that

she could not bear the sight of him, he hoped to win her through the influence of her father. Presently he went to Ptolemy and told him — what was perchance true — that the beautiful Sabra had promised St. George to become a Christian and go with him to England.

Ptolemy was greatly enraged that his daughter should slight her religion, and he was furious to think of her going to England, a far-away country, set in the midst of a great ocean, which no man in his own land had ever seen. So the two kings plotted the champion's destruction. In accord with the plan they agreed on, the Egyptian king ordered St. George to go with a letter to the Sultan of Persia. Really the letter which the unsuspecting knight was requested to deliver described him as a dangerous enemy of the Mohammedan religion, and contained an earnest request that he might be put to death.

Obedient to the king's command, St. George at once left the court. Day after day, from dawn to dusk, he traveled with the ut-

most haste till he arrived at the sultan's palace. Great was his surprise and dismay when he learned the contents of the letter and heard himself sentenced to death in thirty days.

In vain he remonstrated against this treachery and cruelty. He was seized by a number of guards, who took away his fine raiment and clothed him in the dress of a slave. Then they bound his hands together with stout cords and threw him into a horrible dungeon. No light entered it, rats visited him in the darkness, and when the guards brought him his poor allowance of bread and water each day, they came by lantern-light.

There he lay in his damp cell sighing and lamenting, while far away in Egypt Sabra's father forced her to marry the King of Morocco, whom she hated, and who had brought about all her lover's troubles.

The thirtieth day came, and now the roaring of two lions reached the knight's ears. One of his guards entered and said: "Sir, you hear the royal beasts who await you.

For four days they have not tasted food. The sultan, in his great mercy, commanded that they should be made fierce and hungry so they would make short work of you."

After thus speaking, the guard conducted the prisoner along a narrow passage to a kind of circular den hollowed out of rock. There the lions were walking back and forth, lashing their tails and roaring as they looked hungrily up at the Persians who were gazing down from the top of the walls.

Suddenly St. George exerted all his strength and burst asunder the cords that bound his wrists. The lions saw him and sprang furiously toward him; but he met them unshaken, greatly to the amazement of the onlookers. Before the huge beasts could set their teeth into his flesh, he thrust his hands down their throats and tore out their hearts.

The sultan was already aware that St. George had slain the fiery dragon in Egypt, and when he saw him destroy without weapons the two lions, he concluded that his prisoner was more than human. So he gave up

the idea of putting him to death. However, he thought him too dangerous a person to be allowed at large and sent him back to the dungeon, which he ordered made doubly secure by closing the door with immovable iron bars. The only opening left was a little shutter through which food could be pushed.

For many weary months the unhappy knight was kept in that dark miserable place, never once seeing the light of heaven. He only knew the difference between night and day by the bringing of his food. At last, when he chanced to stumble into a pool of water that was in a cranny of his dungeon, he found a crowbar that was still strong in spite of rust. Perhaps it had been used to pry the fetters off from some former captive, or it might have been a tool of the craftsmen who built the dungeon.

St. George waited till about midnight. Then he managed to get the point of his bar into a crack at the edge of the heavy dungeon door. Slowly but firmly he pressed on the bar, the fastenings gave way, and the door swung open. Beyond was a grating of bars,

but he contrived to bend two of them far enough apart to enable him to squeeze through.

He was in a passage dimly lighted by a lantern. The guards were asleep. He took the lantern and, still gripping his crowbar, hastened softly along till he turned a corner and suddenly met the warder. There was only one thing to do, and he gave him a stunning blow with the crowbar before the man could make any outcry.

Then he bound and gagged him, took his keys away, and left him lying in the passage. He had no further trouble in getting out of the palace. That done, he went to the royal stables, where, to his great joy, he found his own horse, who knew him at once and nuzzled against him with his nose. Above the manger hung the champion's sword and armor. These he took, and led out the horse. He had locked all the doors behind him, and now he threw the keys into the courtyard well.

Away he went straight to the city gates and beat on them with his sword, crying, "Ho, within!"

A sleepy watchman came out from the gatehouse, very angry at being disturbed.

"Hurry, man!" the champion shouted. "Open the gates! The Christian knight, St. George, has broken out of his dungeon. He climbed the wall a little way hence by aid of a tree. Let me through! I am close on his heels!"

The man was too dazed to ask questions. He fumbled at the gates, muttering wrathfully at the Christian prisoner for escaping at such an hour of night. At last he got the gates open, and in a moment St. George was outside speeding away like the wind. By the time the first warm beams of the sun shot up into the sky he had no fear of being overtaken.

But he was almost famished now, and presently, when he saw on a cliff a little way ahead a huge castle, he rode toward it to ask for food. It proved to be the dwelling of a giant who had just gone forth to spend a short time hunting.

St. George was allowed to enter and was taken to the giant's wife. She had the serv-

ants bring him food and drink, but urged him to hurry away as soon as possible because her husband was a man-eater. "I am weary of his cruelties," she said, "but I cannot prevent them. Go, Sir Knight, I beg you, before it is too late."

"No, that may not be," St. George responded. "A knight cannot refuse to encounter one who is an enemy of the human race."

The giantess left him and he finished his meal at his leisure. Scarcely was he through when he heard a great voice shouting rough commands. The giant had returned. Soon he entered the room where St. George was and said: "You are welcome, fair sir. I have had poor hunting today, and you will reward me for my vain chase. It is not often a man sets a snare and catches nothing, and reaches home to find the game all ready for him in the pot. Come hither and I will cut your head off very gently. You will not know it is off, so gentle will I be."

St. George looked at him with contempt. "You are not worthy of this castle, fellow,"

he said. "None but a boor would offer such insults to a knight who claims hospitality."

"I care nothing for knighthood," the giant laughed. "So no more words. You must die."

He snatched a big broad-bladed scimitar from the wall, and St. George drew his good sword, Ascalon.

"What!" the giant roared, "you will fight me, you wretched little creature? Well, have your own way. A little sword-play will give me an appetite for you."

He rushed at St. George, who sprang aside and put the table between them. Soon one of the giant's fierce strokes cut deep into the hard wood of an oaken chair. As he tugged to release his scimitar he left himself unguarded for a moment, and in a flash St. George cut off his head.

The champion soon resumed his journey, carrying with him a considerable amount of the giant's treasure. He went to Egypt, where, to his great grief and horror, he learned from the same hermit he had met on landing, the whole story of how the King of

Morocco had treacherously gained the beautiful Princess of Egypt for his wife. So he kept on till he came to the capital of Morocco.

In order to obtain a sight of Sabra he left his horse and armor at an inn, disguised himself as a beggar in a ragged cloak, and made his way to the gate of the palace. There he found about half a hundred other beggars. They were on their knees waiting for the alms which they said the good Queen Sabra bestowed on them daily, on condition that they should pray for the welfare of an English knight named St. George to whom her heart was given when he was at her father's court.

The joy of St. George may be imagined when he heard these words, and he waited impatiently till the lovely Sabra came down to the gate. She was clothed in deep mourning and her face was pale and sad. In silence she handed the alms to the beggars till she came to St. George. Then she started, and exclaimed: "You have the very face of my gallant knight! Rise! You shall not kneel

here. For the sake of him who once rescued me from death I will now aid you."

"Lady," St. George said, "I am that knight who has so long lived in your memory."

He showed her the ring she had given him, and told her the tale of Almidor's treachery, and of the cruel treatment he had received at the hands of the Sultan of Persia. This greatly grieved the princess, but after weeping for a while she said: "Let us waste no more time. We will fly from this detested place without delay. Almidor is visiting another part of his kingdom with his courtiers. We could not have a better opportunity to escape."

A black servant was persuaded to accompany them. He got horses for himself and her and the three rode away to the court of Greece. There they found a festival being celebrated, and the other six champions of Christendom were attending it. St. George and his old comrades were delighted to meet, and they held council together how best to defend the cause of their religion, for the

pagan monarchs of Asia and Africa had sent out proclamations declaring their intention to destroy all Christian kingdoms.

Most of the champions had with them a fair lady they had rescued, and it was agreed that each should return to his native land to place the lady in safety, and to collect a body of fighting men. Then they would return, every champion leading an army, and meet in the selfsame place prepared for war.

All this they did, and the first king they marched against was Almidor of Morocco. He was speedily defeated, and was himself vanquished and made captive in single combat with St. George. Afterward he was led in chains to his capital where he was put to death. The nobles of Morocco were rejoiced to be rid of him and they made St. George king in the tyrant's place.

The champions next marched to Egypt. As they approached the capital they were met by a procession of nobles and soldiers who begged for mercy for themselves and their unfortunate country. The Christian

knights gladly promised protection on condition that the king was surrendered.

It was settled that he should be given up, but Ptolemy, who knew that he deserved no clemency, hastened to the top of his palace and threw himself down from the parapet. Thereupon the nobles with one accord chose St. George to be their king.

The next day he was dressed in a richly-embroidered green robe over which was flung a scarlet mantle trimmed with white fur and decorated with ornaments of pure gold. In this magnificent array he was led to the throne, which was supported by an elephant of pure alabaster. The crown of Egypt was placed on his head, a sword and a scepter were handed to him, and amidst the shoutings of the people, the herald-at-arms cried out, "Long live St. George, Champion of England and King of Egypt!"

A splendid feast was served in a large hall where the ceiling was painted to look like the sky, and the Seven Champions were lodged that night in the finest rooms and fell asleep on beds of the softest swansdown.

Later they went to vanquish Persia and were again victorious, even though the sultan, who had kept St. George so long a prisoner, was helped by a magician. The wicked ruler was disastrously defeated and condemned to pass the remainder of his life in the dungeon that had been the English knight's prison.

St. George then became monarch of Persia and made his subjects happy with wise new laws. To each of his fellow champions he gave a small kingdom, and presently he left trusty counselors in charge of the countries he ruled, and returned to the island of his birth that he might show Sabra how fair were the English fields and meadows around the ancient town of Coventry.

There they lived peacefully for many years, and three sons were born to them, but after Sabra's death he and the other champions fared forth again. As they grew old the brotherhood was gradually broken up, and St. George returned to England. When he arrived there he found his own beloved town of Coventry threatened by a wingless

dragon that dwelt on the neighboring Dunsmore Heath, and without hesitation he went to fight the beast. He killed the dragon with his enchanted sword, but was himself so badly hurt that when he had ridden to Coventry market-place he reeled in his saddle and fell dead.

So ended the life of St. George, the greatest and bravest of all the Seven Champions of Christendom.

IX

Little Red Riding-Hood

ONCE upon a time there was a little girl who lived in a village near a forest, and she was such a nice little girl that everyone was very fond of her. When she went anywhere she always wore a red riding-hood which her grandmother had given her. So people called her Little Red Riding-Hood.

One day her mother, who had been churning and baking, said to her: "My dear, put on your red cloak with the hood to it and go to your grandmother's cottage in the forest. I want you to see how she is, and you can take her some cakes and a pot of butter. I will pack the cakes and butter in a basket that you can carry on your arm."

Little Red Riding-Hood was soon on her way, but she had not gone far in the forest when she met a wolf.

"Good day, little girl," the wolf said.

He was very polite, though at the same time he was wishing he could eat her. Indeed, that is what he would have done if he had not been afraid of some wood-cutters who were near by.

She saluted him as politely as he had her, and then he asked, "Where are you going, my pretty little lady?"

"I am going to see my grandmother," she replied, "and I am taking her some cakes and a pot of butter from my mother."

"Where does she live?" the wolf inquired.

"You keep right along this road," Little Red Riding-Hood told him, "and she lives in the first house."

"Well, good-by," the wolf said. "I'm going to be passing your grandmother's house, and I will stop and let her know you are coming to see her."

So saying, off he ran. When he arrived

The wolf speaks to Little Red Riding Hood.

at the house he went to the door and knocked — tap, tap!

He got no answer, and he knocked louder — slam, slam!

But there was no response, and after waiting a minute or two he stood on his hind legs, reached up one of his forepaws to the latch and opened the door. The grandmother was not at home, for she had gone to market. She had started early and left her bed unmade and her nightcap lying on the pillow.

"I know what I'll do," the wolf said; and after shutting the door he put on the grandmother's nightcap, lay down in the bed, and drew the covers up over himself, leaving only his face and front legs in sight.

Meanwhile Little Red Riding-Hood was coming along the forest road. She did not hurry. Sometimes she stopped to pick flowers, and sometimes she paused to watch the butterflies flitting about, or to listen to the birds singing in the trees.

But at length she reached her grandmother's cottage and knocked at the door — tap, tap!

"Who is there?" the wolf asked, softening his rough voice as much as he could.

"It's me, Granny," she replied. "It's your Little Red Riding-Hood. Are you sick, Granny? Your voice is very hoarse."

"I have a cold," the wolf said, "and I am not feeling well enough to get up today. You can press your finger on the latch and come in."

So Little Red Riding-Hood pressed her finger on the latch and opened the door and went in.

"Dear Granny," she said, "I have brought you some cakes and a pot of butter from my mamma, and I have brought you some flowers that I picked in the forest."

"Thank you," the wolf said. "You can put your basket and the flowers on the table and take off your hood."

Little Red Riding-Hood did as he suggested and then went to the bedside. "Oh, Grandmamma, Grandmamma!" she exclaimed, "what hairy arms you have!"

"All the better to hug you with, my dear," was the wolf's response.

"And oh, Grandmamma, what great ears you have!" Little Red Riding-Hood said.

"All the better to hear you with, my dear," was the wolf's response.

"And oh, Grandmamma, what great eyes you have!" Little Red Riding-Hood said.

"All the better to see you with, my dear," was the wolf's response.

"And oh, Grandmamma, what a long nose you have!" Little Red Riding-Hood said.

"All the better to smell the sweet flowers you have brought me, my dear," was the wolf's response.

"And oh, Grandmamma, what great white teeth you have!" Little Red Riding-Hood said.

"All the better to gobble you up with!" the wolf cried; and he leaped from the bed toward Little Red Riding-Hood with his mouth wide open.

But while the wolf and the little girl were talking, the grandmother had come home from market. Little Red Riding-Hood had not shut the cottage door, and when the grandmother was about to go in she saw the

wolf in her bed. At once she ran to the wood-pile in the yard, got an ax, and hurried back with it.

She was none too soon, for just as she rushed in at the door, the wolf sprang toward the little girl. But before he could seize her, the grandmother gave him a terrific blow with the ax. That killed him and the child was not harmed at all.

The grandmother picked up Little Red Riding-Hood and kissed her. "You dear child," she said, holding her tight in her arms, "how glad I am that I came in time to save you!"

When she put her down, they dragged out the dead wolf, tidied up the cottage, and had dinner. Toward the end of the day Little Red Riding-Hood started for home, and her grandmother went with her through the forest till they came to the open fields. There they parted and the grandmother went back to her cottage while Little Red Riding-Hood ran on toward the village.

X

The Pied Piper

Long ago there was a certain seaport which was reputed to be as sleepy a town as there was in the country of which it was a part, and yet for a time it was the noisiest. The noise was not due to the number of people in the place, nor to the traffic on the streets. It was caused by an invasion of rats.

Such an invading horde had never been seen before, nor ever will be seen again. The place was scarcely worth living in, so infested was it by these rats. The people found them in their breeches or petticoats when they put on their clothes in the morning, and it was nothing unusual to discover a rat's nest in one's shoes or pockets, or in one's Sunday hat or bonnet.

The rats were great black creatures that ran boldly through the streets in broad daylight, and swarmed all over the houses. There was not a barn, nor a cornrick, nor a storeroom, nor a cupboard into which they did not gnaw their way.

They fought the dogs and killed the cats,
And bit the babies in the cradles,
And ate the cheeses out of the vats,
And licked the soup from the cook's own ladles.

Even the barrels of beer were not safe from them. They would gnaw a hole in a barrel head, and into this hole some master rat would thrust his tail. When he withdrew the tail dripping with beer, all his friends and relatives would crowd around, and each would have a suck at it.

The rats were bad enough in the daytime, but they were still worse at night. Then they were busy everywhere — in the walls and ceilings, and in the rooms from cellar to garret. There was such a chase and a scurry, and such a squeaking and squealing, and

such a noise as of gimlets, pincers, and saws that a deaf man could not have rested for as much as an hour. The people could hardly hear themselves think, and many a mother felt obliged to sit up and keep watch over her children lest some big ugly rat should run across their faces.

Cats and dogs, poison and traps were of no avail. Nor were prayers any more effective. Of course many of the rats were killed. Yet others constantly came to take the places of the dead ones.

The mayor and the town council were at their wits' end. While they were sitting in the town hall one day racking their brains, a queer-looking stranger arrived in the place. He played the bagpipes as he tramped up the chief street, pausing now and then in his playing to sing this refrain:

"Ho, come and see!
This is he —
The ratcatcher."

The stranger was a tall gawky fellow with a swarthy skin, a crooked nose, a long mus-

tache and piercing eyes. His broad-brimmed felt hat had a scarlet cock's feather stuck into its band, and there was not a color of the rainbow that could not be found in his jacket and breeches. A leather belt girded his waist, and on his feet were sandals fastened by thongs passed round his legs. He stopped in the great market-place and continued his piping and singing.

The town beadle heard the purport of the song and asked the stranger if he could rid the town of the rats with which it was overrun.

"Yes," was the reply, "if you will make it worth my while."

At once the beadle hurried off to report the stranger's words to the council. As he drew near to the room in which the council met, the mayor was saying: "What to do, I know not. My poor head aches, I've scratched it so, and all in vain."

Just as he said this, what should hap
At the chamber door but a gentle tap?
"Bless us!" the mayor cried, "what's that?

Anything like the sound of a rat
Makes my heart go pit-a-pat! "

Then he added in a louder voice, " Come in," and the beadle entered.

" Please, your honor," the beadle said, " a very queer fellow has come to town playing the bagpipes. He says he is a ratcatcher and that he can clear the place of rats if we make it worth his while."

" He must be a sorcerer," the councilors declared with one voice. " We shall have to beware of him."

The mayor, who was considered clever, reassured them. " Sorcerer or not," he said, " if this bagpiper speaks the truth, I am of the opinion that it was he who sent us these horrible vermin in order to get money from us for inducing the rats to go away. Well, we must catch the evil-minded in their own snares. Leave it to me."

" Yes, leave it to the mayor," the councilors remarked one to the other.

" Show the man in," the mayor ordered,

and the beadle soon brought the ratcatcher to the council room.

"I am called the Pied Piper," the stranger said, "and ratcatching is my trade. What would you pay me to get rid of every rat in the town?"

Much as the councilors disliked the rats, they disliked parting with their money still more, and they fain would have higgled and haggled. But the piper was not a man to stand nonsense, and the upshot of the bargaining was that they agreed to pay him at the rate of a penny a rat as soon as there was not one left to squeak or scurry in the place.

The bagpiper announced that he would operate that very evening when the moon rose, and he requested that the inhabitants should leave the streets and content themselves with looking out of their windows while he was at his task.

When the townspeople heard of the bargain they exclaimed: "A penny a rat! This will cost us a great deal of money!"

"Leave it to the mayor," the councilors said with a sly shrug of the shoulders.

Toward nine o'clock the piper appeared in the market-place just as the moon began to show above the roofs. At once he put his bagpipes to his lips and began a shrill keen tune that penetrated to the remotest nooks and alleys of the town. Then a strange sight was seen. From every hole the rats ran to the market-place until it was so full of them that the pavement was hidden from sight.

Presently the piper faced about, and, still playing briskly, went down a street that led toward the harbor. At his heels followed the rats with eager feet and upturned noses. Every fifty yards he stopped and gave an extra flourish of the pipes while he waited for the toddling little rats and the less vigorous older ones to catch up with those that were stronger. Meanwhile the townsfolk looked on from their windows and called down many a blessing on his head.

When he reached the harbor and had marched to the outer end of a wharf, he turned about and looked at the multitude of rats. "Hop, hop!" he cried, pointing his finger toward the water.

Not far from the end of the wharf a big whirlpool had formed, and the rats, obedient to the piper's orders, began to leap off and swim straight to the center of the whirlpool, where they disappeared. This continued till midnight, when only one rat was left — a big rat, so old his hair had turned white — who dragged himself along with difficulty. He was the king of the band.

"Are they all there, friend Whitey?" the piper asked.

"They are all there," Whitey replied.

"How many?" the piper inquired.

"Nine hundred and ninety-nine thousand, nine hundred and ninety-nine," was the answer.

"Then go and join them," the piper said. "Good-by."

So the old rat jumped into the water, swam to the whirlpool, and down he went out of sight.

The piper walked back into the town, where he went to bed at an inn; and for the first time in three months the people slept quietly through the night. There was no

noise to disturb them, and they slept the more serenely because now there was a prospect they would have a chance to enjoy some food that the rats had not tasted before them. In the morning, so jubilant were they over their delivery from the plague of vermin, that they threw up their hats and hurrahed, and they rang the church bells till they rocked the steeples.

But at ten o'clock, when the piper went to the town hall to get his pay, the mayor and the council and the townsfolk generally began to hum and ha, and to shake their heads, for where was all that money to come from? Besides it had been a very easy job that the piper had done and had only taken him a little while.

"Sirs," the piper said, "all your rats took a jump into the harbor last night, and I guarantee that not one of them will come back. There were one million, and you can reckon how much is due me at a penny each."

"My good man," the mayor responded, "we are poor folk. Surely you will not ask us to pay such a sum."

"I only want you to do as you agreed to do," the piper told him.

"Ah!" the mayor said, "then let us determine how many rats you have destroyed. Have the kindness to bring them here that we may count them."

The ratcatcher did not expect such treachery. He paled with anger, and his eyes flashed as he cried, "If it is counting you care about, go and find the rats in the bottom of the harbor!"

"There is no way of knowing what we owe you unless you show us the dead rats," the mayor declared. "You evidently have no intention of doing that. Hence we have good reason to refuse you all payment. But you have been of use to us, and we will be glad to recompense you to the extent of twenty pounds."

"Keep your recompense to yourselves," the ratcatcher retorted proudly. "The best thing you can do is to pay me quickly all that is my due, for I can pipe many kinds of tunes, as folk sometimes find to their cost. Unless you pay me I'll be paid by your heirs."

"Do you threaten us, you strolling vagabond?" the mayor shrieked. "Begone and do your worst now that the rats are drowned."

"Very well," the piper said, and he pulled his hat down over his eyes, turned about on his heel and left the hall.

The townspeople were much pleased over this outcome. They rubbed their hands gleefully, and laughed over the ratcatcher, who, they said, was caught in his own trap. Above all they laughed at his threat of getting himself paid by their heirs. "Ha, ha!"

But when the piper reached the market-place he again put his pipes to his lips. This time there came forth no shrill notes, but a tune that was joyous and resonant, full of happy laughter and merry play.

At the sound of the music the children all ran forth to the piper from cottage and mansion, from schoolroom and nursery. Every little boy and girl in town hurried to the market-place, attracted by the magic harmony.

Then the stranger began to walk up a

street that led out of the town, and the children followed him, dancing, laughing, and singing.

Small feet were pattering, wooden shoes clattering,
Little hands clapping, and little tongues chattering.

On they went out of the town gate and into a near-by forest — a forest full of old oaks and wide-spreading branches. In among the trees trudged the piper in his many-colored garments, and the laughter of the children gradually faded away as they got deeper and deeper into the cool green woodland.

Hour after hour passed, and at nightfall three weeping little boys came from the forest to the town gate. They said that the children had followed the bagpiper to a mountain, which at their approach had opened a little, and all had gone in with the bagpiper except them. The opening had closed before they could enter. One of the three was bandy-legged and could not keep up with the procession. Another fell behind because he had

The children follow the pied piper.

left home hastily, one foot shod and the other bare, so that he bruised the bare foot and lamed himself. The third might have gone into the mountain had he not, in his eagerness, banged his head against the mountain wall and fallen backward. Before he could get up the crack closed.

The next day the parents went to the mountain with pikes and mattocks, and searched till evening to find the opening by which their children had disappeared. They came back desolate. Nor was searching in future days any better rewarded.

The most unhappy person in the town was the mayor. Not only had he lost a little boy and two pretty little girls, but the people overwhelmed him with reproaches, forgetting that on the fatal day they had all agreed with him.

He sent east, west, north, and south, to offer the piper, as soon as he was found,

Silver and gold to his heart's content,
If he'd only return the way he went,
And bring the children behind him.

But never were the hearts of the townspeople gladdened by the sight of the piper and his following of singing dancing children issuing from the ancient oaks of the forest. What became of the children is a mystery to this day.

XI

Puss in Boots

ONCE upon a time there was a poor miller who had three sons, and when he died the only property he left them was the mill, a donkey, and a cat. These were quickly divided without the help of either lawyer or judge. The eldest son took the mill, the second took the donkey, and there was nothing left for the youngest but the cat.

He could not help feeling that he had been treated shabbily. "My brothers will be able to earn a comfortable living," he sighed, "but what chance have I? Puss may feed himself by catching mice, yet he can't feed me, and I shall certainly die of hunger."

While he spoke, the cat was sitting near by

and heard all he said. Immediately the creature jumped on his shoulder, rubbed gently against his cheek, and began to speak.

"Dear master, do not grieve," he urged. "I am not as useless as you think. If you will get me a bag, and supply me with a pair of boots so I can scamper through the brush and brambles, I promise to make your fortune."

The lad had very little money, but he knew Puss was a faithful creature, and he had seen him play many cunning tricks to catch rats and mice. Therefore he did not altogether despair of getting some help from him, and he bought him a smart pair of boots made of buff-colored leather and got him the bag for which he had asked.

Puss drew on the boots, and then he fitted slip-strings around the mouth of the bag, put some bran and parsley inside, and went off to a neighboring hillside carrying the bag over his shoulders. After laying it on the ground with the mouth propped open, he hid in the ferns and bushes and waited.

Every pleasant day he went hunting in

this manner, and when a rabbit or a partridge tried to get some of the bran and parsley — snap! the cat drew the slip-strings, and there was some game for his master to eat.

One morning two rabbits happened to rush into the bag at the same time. Then Puss slung the bag over his shoulder, and away he went to the royal palace where he asked to speak to the king.

The guards ushered him into his Majesty's presence, and Puss made a low bow and lifted the rabbits out of his bag. "Sir," he said, "I have been commanded by my noble lord, the Marquis of Carabas" (this was the title he chose to confer on his master), "to present these rabbits to your Majesty with his respects."

The king was very fond of stewed rabbit, and he said, "Tell your master that I thank him and that he has given me great pleasure."

Then he dismissed Puss with many compliments and a purse of gold. Afterward he summoned his cook and ordered him to serve

the rabbits for dinner so he and his daughter might enjoy them.

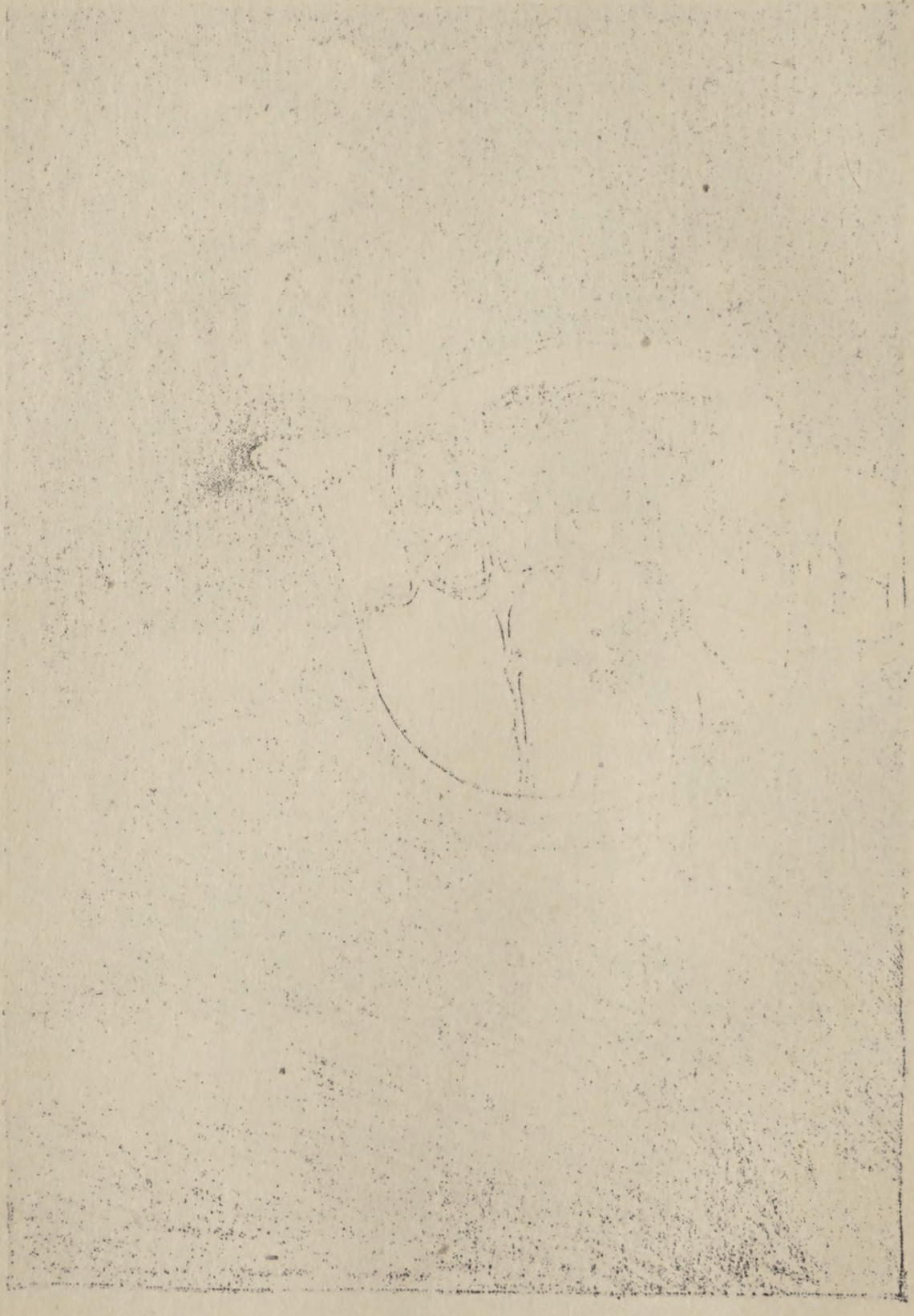
Time went on, and Puss not only kept his master well supplied with game, but often had a surplus which he carried to the king. Whatever he presented at the palace was sure to be accompanied with the message, "From my lord, the Marquis of Carabas." All the gentry at court were talking of this strange nobleman, whom none of them had seen, yet who sent such generous gifts to his Majesty.

By and by Puss decided that it was time for his master to be introduced at court. He learned that on a certain day the king and his daughter, who was the most beautiful princess in the world, were to drive in their coach along the riverside. As quickly as possible he went to his master.

"Now," he said, "your fortune shall be made without further delay, if you will follow my advice. Go and bathe in the river at a spot which I will show you, and leave the rest to me."

The young man knew nothing of the why or wherefore of the cat's words, but he went

Puss-in-Boots stops the king's coach.



to the river, and Puss took charge of his clothes while he plunged in. He did not enjoy the experience, for the water was cold, and he soon stopped splashing around and stood shivering with the water up to his neck, wondering what was to happen next.

Just then the king's carriage drawn by four horses appeared in sight, and Puss promptly began to shout: "Help, help! My lord, the Marquis of Carabas, is drowning!"

The king put his head out of the coach window and recognized Puss as the cat who had so frequently brought him presents of game. Immediately he ordered his attendants to go to the assistance of the marquis.

While they were pulling the youth out of the river, the cat went up to the coach and told the king that some rogue had gone off with his master's clothes, though in fact the cunning cat had hidden them under a big flat stone.

On hearing this story the king dispatched one of his grooms to fetch a handsome suit of purple and gold from the royal wardrobe.

When the young man had been arrayed in this he looked so well that no one for a moment supposed but that he was some noble lord. The king and his daughter were so pleased with his appearance that they invited him into their carriage to ride with them.

The marquis hesitated, but Puss whispered that it would be all right if he only didn't speak much while on the journey. So in he got, although he could not help feeling a little shy about sitting next to a princess. But she smiled at him so sweetly and was so kind and gentle that he soon forgot his fears. As for her own feeling, after he had cast two or three respectful and somewhat tender glances in her direction, she fell in love with him to distraction.

When the cat saw his master seated in the royal carriage he was overjoyed to think how well his project was succeeding. But there was more for him to do, and he ran on ahead as fast as he could trot until he came to a field of grain where some laborers were busy reaping.

"Reapers!" Puss said fiercely, "the king will soon pass this way in his carriage. If he should ask you to whom this field belongs, remember that you are to reply, 'To the Marquis of Carabas.' Don't dare to disobey me, or the guards who ride before and behind the carriage will cut you in pieces with their swords."

This frightened the reapers, and they promised to say that or anything else he wanted said. Puss then ran on and told all the other reapers along the wayside to give the same answer, declaring that if they did not they would be terribly punished by the royal guards for their disobedience.

The king was in excellent humor, for the day was fine, and he found the marquis a pleasant companion. So he ordered the coachman to drive slowly that he might admire the beautiful country.

"What a splendid field of wheat!" he remarked presently, and he had the coach stop while he hailed the reapers, saying, "Who is the owner of this field?"

They replied in accord with the cat's com-

mand, "It belongs to our lord, the Marquis of Carabas."

The king turned to the marquis and said, "I did not know that you had estates so near us."

And the young man responded, "I had forgotten it myself."

The coach went on until it encountered a herd of cattle. "To whom do these cattle belong?" the king asked the drovers.

"To the Marquis of Carabas," they answered.

It was the same all along the way. The king's inquiries as to the ownership of property received this uniform reply. The marquis listened with the greatest astonishment, but he knew very well that this was the cat's doing. "What a wonderful creature Puss in Boots is!" he thought.

At the same time the king was thinking, "How nice it is to find that this new friend of ours is as wealthy as he is charming!"

Meanwhile Puss, who was well in advance of the royal party, had arrived at a stately castle which belonged to a cruel ogre, the

richest ever known. Indeed, he was the owner of all the land and cattle the king had admired so much. The cat knocked at the door, and a servant conducted him into the presence of the master of the castle.

The ogre had never seen a cat in boots before, and the sight amused him. They began chatting together, and presently Puss said, "I have heard that you possess the power to change yourself into any kind of an animal you choose — a horse or an elephant, for instance."

"Well, so I can," the ogre responded briskly.

"Dear me!" Puss said, "how much I should like to see you make such a change now."

The ogre was only too glad to show how clever he was, and he agreed to transform himself into any animal Puss might mention.

"Oh! I will leave the choice to you," the cat said politely.

No sooner were the words uttered than there appeared, in place of the ogre, an enormous lion, lashing with his tail and roaring

as if he meant to gobble up the cat in a trice.

Puss was really very much frightened, and he jumped out of a window and managed to scramble up on the roof, though not without abundance of trouble and danger because of his boots. There he clung, refusing to come down, until the ogre resumed his natural form and laughingly called to him that he would do him no harm.

Then Puss ventured back into the room and complimented the ogre on his marvelous power. In conclusion he said: "Although what you did was very amazing, it would be still more remarkable if you, who are so big and fierce, could transform yourself into some timid little creature such as a mouse. That, I suppose, would be impossible."

"Not at all," the ogre declared. "One is quite as easy to me as the other, and I will prove it to you."

A moment later the ogre had vanished and a little mouse was frisking about the floor.

"Now or never!" Puss said, and with a sudden leap he seized the mouse and ate it.

The wicked ogre had been holding many ladies and gentlemen in his castle under a spell. When he was destroyed they were instantly disenchanted, and they came to express their gratitude to their deliverer.

"We are ready to do anything to please you," they told him, and at his request they agreed to enter his master's service.

Puss now had a splendid castle with much treasure stored in its vaults, and he ordered a magnificent feast to be prepared. Then he hurried forth to the highway and met the king's coach.

His Majesty was looking toward the ogre's castle. "Whose is it?" he asked. "I have never seen a finer one."

"It belongs to the noble Marquis of Carabas," Puss replied; "and I beg you to honor my master by being his guest."

The king ordered the coachman to drive to the castle, and Puss went on ahead and threw open the gates. As the carriage was crossing the drawbridge he cried out, "Welcome to the castle of my lord, the Marquis of Carabas!"

His Majesty turned to the marquis, and said, "Not even my own palace can surpass the beauty of your castle."

Puss helped him to alight and conducted him to a spacious hall while the marquis followed with the princess. A group of ladies and gentlemen was waiting to receive the new arrivals, and after the greetings were over they all sat down to a splendid banquet.

Long and merrily they feasted, and when at length the king rose to depart, he embraced the marquis, saying: "The castle which is your home impresses me profoundly, and so does the splendor of your hospitality. I am charmed, too, with your many excellent qualities, and it will be your own fault, my dear Marquis, if you are not my son-in-law."

The marquis made several low bows, and thanked his Majesty for the honor he conferred on him. Not long afterward the miller's son married the princess, and there were rejoicings throughout the land.

On the evening of the wedding day a great ball was given, to which came princes and

nobles from near and far. Puss opened the ball, wearing for the occasion a pair of boots made of the finest leather, with gold tassels and scarlet heels. I wish you could have seen him.

When the old king died, the princess and her husband reigned in his stead. Their most honored and faithful friend at court was Puss in Boots, for his master always remembered to whom he owed all his good fortune.

Puss lived on the daintiest meat and the most delicious cream. He was petted and made much of all the days of his life, and he never ran after rats and mice except for exercise and amusement.

XII

Tom Thumb

In the days of good King Arthur lived the famous wizard, Merlin. Never before nor since has there been his equal.

Once, when he was traveling dressed like a beggar, he stopped about sundown to ask for food at the cottage of a poor plowman. He was given a friendly welcome, and the plowman's wife not only supplied him with a big bowl of milk and some brown bread, but said he might stay through the night.

That evening as he sat with her and her husband in the tidy comfortable kitchen he noticed that neither seemed happy, and he asked why.

"Ah!" the woman sighed, "we cannot

help being sad, for we have no children. All the evening I spin and spin, and my husband sits in the chimney corner and pokes the fire. How dull it is!"

"Yes," the plowman agreed, "our house is very quiet, while other people's houses are noisy and merry."

"Sir," the woman said to Merlin, "we should be content if we had a child, even though it were no bigger than my thumb."

"You are quite right, my dear wife," the husband commented.

"That would be a strange kind of child," Merlin said, "but I hope you may have your wish."

The next day off he went to call on the queen of the fairies. He repeated to her the words of the plowman's wife, and the droll fancy of a child no bigger than a person's thumb so tickled her that she promised to grant the good woman's wish.

Some time afterward a boy was born at the plowman's cottage, and he was just the size of his mother's thumb.

"He is exactly what we asked for," his

parents said, "and we will love him very much."

They decided that Tom Thumb should be his name. He was given plenty to eat and drink, but he never grew any bigger. However, he was healthy and strong, and he had quick wits so that he got along for the most part very well, in spite of his small size.

His first serious mishap occurred one day when he climbed to the top of a fireplace andiron. The wind blowing in the open door lifted him from where he stood and whisked him up the black chimney. He soon came out at the top and was wafted off across the fields.

When at last he floated down to the ground, a strange house was in sight, and he said: "I am so far from home that I will not try to return at present. I think I had better go to the house yonder and ask for work."

This he did. A woman named Ann Brown lived in the house. She hired him, but the food he received from her was very poor, and after a while he complained to her about

it. That made her angry, and she declared she would punish him.

He started to run, and she shouted, "Stop, you little grasshopper!"

But Tom did not stop. He climbed up a table leg and popped under a teacup. She saw where he had gone and she lifted the cup. However, before she could lay hands on him, he slipped through a crack in the table into a drawer and called out to her,

"Hey, hey! there, Mistress Ann,
Now catch me if you can!"

For a while he was able to avoid her clutches, but in the end she caught him and turned him out of the house. Then he set off for home, which he reached safely — and very glad he was to be there.

Several months later Tom was playing about on the kitchen table when his mother was making a batter pudding. She had to leave the pudding for a few minutes, and in this interval he climbed up on the edge of the dish, lost his footing and fell in head first. He went into the batter all over, and his

mother did not know what had become of him.

Soon she transferred the pudding to a bag which she put into a kettle of hot water hung over the fire. When Tom began to feel the heat he kicked so that the pudding danced about in the kettle like mad.

His mother noticed the strange behavior of the pudding and was nearly frightened out of her senses. She thought it was bewitched. So she took the kettle and poured pudding and all into the yard.

Presently a tinker who happened to be passing that way saw the pudding and picked it up. He imagined he would have the pleasure of eating the best dinner he had enjoyed for a long time. But as he was going over a stile he sneezed, and Tom, who hitherto had remained silent, cried out, "Hello, Pickens!"

The tinker was so terrified to hear a voice from the pudding that he threw it down and scampered away as fast as he could go. Luckily for Tom, the pudding string broke and he crept out of the bag all covered with

half-cooked batter. Then he hurried home to his mother who was feeling much alarmed over his disappearance. She gave him a thorough washing in a saucer of water, kissed him, and tucked him up in bed.

On another day Tom's father made ready to go to the forest to cut wood. "My dear," he said to his wife, "I shall be gone until evening, and I wish you would bring the cart to me this afternoon."

"Isn't that just like a man?" she retorted. "I have plenty of work of my own to do without driving Dobbin to the woods."

"I can bring the cart to you, father," Tom announced.

His father laughed and said: "How would you manage to drive? You are much too little to hold the reins."

"That has nothing to do with it," Tom declared. "Mother can put me in one of the horse's ears and I will tell the horse where to go."

After the plowman had talked the matter over with his wife, he said, "Well, Tom, we

will try your plan." Then he tramped off into the forest.

As soon as it was time for Tom to start, his mother hitched Dobbin to the cart, set Tom in one of the horse's ears, and resumed her work. Tom drove off, crying, "Gee-up, gee-wo!"

The horse went along the road quite as if its master were driving, and drew the cart into the forest. While on the way, two strange men chanced to meet the cart, and they heard Tom calling to the horse.

"How is this?" one of them said. "There goes a cart, and the driver is calling to the horse, yet he is nowhere to be seen."

"It is very queer," the other responded. "I think we had better follow the cart and see where the journey will end."

So they followed the cart into the woods until it came to the place where Tom's father was at work. They did not wish to be seen, and had just hidden behind some bushes when they heard Tom call: "Look, father, here I am with the cart. Now take me down."

The plowman lifted his little son out of the horse's ear and put him on a stump. There Tom sat, happy and contented, looking on while his father worked.

As for the two strangers, they were struck dumb with wonder at sight of a human being so very small. Finally one of them whispered to the other: "That little chap would make our fortune if we were to show him in the cities for money. We must manage to carry him away with us."

Soon the father began to load the cart. While he was busy at that task, one of the strangers slipped up behind Tom, threw his handkerchief over him, and thrust him into his pocket. Then the two men hurried off.

Tom's quarters were by no means comfortable, for the pocket contained a foul-smelling tobacco pipe, hard bits of bread and cheese, and other things not to his liking. He was glad when the men concluded they had gone far enough to feel safe from pursuit, and stopped to take him out of the handkerchief and have a look at him. They

soon prepared to go on and were wrapping him in the handkerchief again, when Tom begged them not to do so.

"Please, sir," he said, speaking to the man who held him, "put me on the brim of your hat. It will make a good gallery for me. I can walk about and view the country while you are proceeding on your journey."

They granted his wish and traveled along until it grew dusk, when they paused to rest. Then they took Tom off the hat-brim and set him on the ground. Not far away he spied a mouse-hole, and he made a sudden run and jumped into it.

"Good-by, my masters," he cried, looking out of the hole. "You can go off without me now."

They hurried toward him and he crawled down out of sight. With their canes they poked about in the mouse-hole, but in vain. Tom crept farther and farther in, and, as night was coming on, the men had to make the best of their way home empty-handed.

By and by Tom crept up to the mouth of

the mouse-hole and looked out. All was dark and quiet, but soon he heard the footsteps of three men approaching on the road.

The men were talking, and just as they came opposite him one said to the other, "How can we contrive to get the rich parson's gold and silver from his treasure-room with its iron barred window?"

"I can tell you," Tom called out.

The thieves were frightened and stopped to listen. "I thought I heard somebody speak," one of them said.

Then Tom called out again, saying: "It was I. Take me with you and I will show you how to get that money."

"Where are you?" they asked.

"Look about on the ground and notice where my voice comes from," he responded.

At last they found him and lifted him up. "You little elf!" they said, "how can you help us?"

"Why, I can easily creep between the iron bars of the treasure-room window and hand out to you whatever you would like to have," he replied.

"Very well," they said, "we will see what you can do."

They took him along, and when they came to the parsonage he slipped into the room where the money was kept. Then he shouted with all his might, "Will you have all that is here?"

The thieves were terrified by the noise he made, and they said, "Do speak more softly lest someone be awakened."

But Tom pretended he did not hear them, and he called at the top of his voice, "What shall I hand out first — the spoons or the ladles?"

This time the butler heard him and came downstairs from his chamber to the treasure-room carrying a lantern and his blunderbus. The thieves got away as fast as they could, and when the butler was coming in Tom slipped out of the door without being seen or heard.

After the butler had looked in every nook and corner without finding the least sign of intruders he went back to bed, thinking he had been dreaming.

Tom took himself off to the barn and lay down to sleep on a nice cozy bed of hay, intending to go home to his father and mother as soon as day came. But the maid, whose business it was to take care of the cows, got up at dawn to feed them. She went to the barn and picked Tom up with an armful of hay which she put in one of the mangers.

Tom was so sound asleep that this did not wake him, and he never opened his eyes until he was in the mouth of a cow that had taken him up with some hay. "O dear!" he cried, "how is it that I have gotten into a mill?"

But he was not long in discovering that instead of being in a mill he was in a cow's mouth. He was careful not to get between the creature's teeth. Soon the cow swallowed him, and down he went into her stomach.

"The windows were forgotten when this little room was built," he said. "No sunshine can get in here. I wish I had a candle."

He found his situation in every way unpleasant, and the worst of his troubles was

that more hay was constantly coming in. The space kept filling up, and finally he cried out as loud as he could: "No more hay for me! No more hay for me!"

The maid had begun milking the cow. She heard a voice, but could see no one, and she was so frightened that she fell off the milk-stool and upset the milk-pail. As soon as she could get up she ran to the parson in the house and exclaimed: "Oh, master dear, the red cow talks! She is bewitched."

"You must be crazy," was the parson's comment, and he went to the barn to see what was the matter.

Scarcely had he set foot inside the door when Tom Thumb cried out again: "No more hay for me! No more hay for me!"

Then the parson himself was frightened. He thought an evil spirit must have entered into the cow, and he ordered that she should be killed. This was done, and the hide and the parts that were good for meat were saved, while the stomach and some other portions were thrown out on a refuse heap in the barnyard.

Tom worked as hard as he could to make a hole through the thick wall of his prison. At last he succeeded in getting his head out, and he said, "I shall soon be free now."

But night had come again, and before Tom could escape, a hungry wolf stole into the barnyard. The wolf went straight to the cow's stomach and began eating it. With one of his mouthfuls he gulped Tom down.

Tom did not lose courage, for he thought, "Perhaps this wolf will listen to reason and I can contrive to make him of some use to me."

So he cried out from inside the savage creature, "My dear wolf, I can tell you where to get a splendid meal — much better than you are eating here."

"Where is it to be had?" the wolf asked.

Tom described his father's house, and added: "By creeping through the drain you can get into the storeroom. There you will find cakes, and bacon, and beef — as much as you can eat."

The wolf did not need to be told twice. He ran all the way to the plowman's cottage, squeezed himself through the drain, and feasted on the good things in the storeroom to his heart's content. Not until it began to grow light with the approach of day did he stop eating.

Then the wolf wanted to go to his home in the forest, but he had so stuffed himself that he was too big to creep out the same way he had come in. This was what Tom had reckoned on, and he began to make a terrible din inside of the wolf, screeching and shouting with all his might.

"Do be quiet," the wolf said. "You will wake up the folks."

"Look here," the little fellow responded, "you are very well satisfied with the food that I told you how to get. Now you have had your frolic, and I want to do something for my own enjoyment."

Then he resumed his racket, and presently his father and mother were aroused. They ran to the storeroom door, peeped through a chink, and saw the wolf. It seemed best to

get weapons before they went farther. So the man armed himself with an ax, and the woman secured a scythe.

"Stay behind," he said as they entered the storeroom. "I will give the wolf the first blow. If that does not finish him you strike with your scythe."

Tom Thumb heard his father's voice, and cried, "Dear father, I am here in this wolf!"

"Thank Heaven!" the father exclaimed joyfully. "We have found our child. Wife, don't use your scythe lest you should hurt him with it."

Then he drew near to the wolf and struck him such a blow on the head with his ax that the creature fell down dead. Afterward the man took a knife and quickly released the little lad inside.

"Oh, how worried we have been about you!" the father said.

"We had no idea what had become of you," his mother added.

"Well," Tom said, "it seems very pleasant to breathe fresh air again."

"Where have you been all the time that you have been gone?" his parents asked.

"Oh!" Tom replied, "I have been in a mouse-hole, and in a cow's stomach, and inside of a wolf. Now I think I will stay at home."

"We hope you will," his parents declared, kissing and hugging him.

Afterward they gave him something to eat and drink, and his mother went to work to make him a new suit of clothes.

Several months later his father made him a whip out of a barley straw and had him help drive the cows to pasture. Then he took him to a field where he went to plowing while Tom amused himself to suit his own fancy. Presently, as the lad was trying to climb a furrow's ridge, which to him was a steep hill, he slipped down and lay half stunned.

A crow that happened to be flying over thought he was a frog and picked him up intending to eat him. It carried him to the top of a giant's castle that was on the borders of the sea and there alighted to have a

Tom Thumb is carried off by a crow.

feast. But it did not relish the morsel when it had a good look at Tom. So it flew away and left him.

He was very much distressed, and while he was thinking what to do, old Grumbo, the giant, came up to walk on the parapet. When he saw Tom, he took him up at once and started to swallow him like a pill.

But no sooner had the giant got Tom in his mouth than he began to repent of his intention, for the little fellow kicked and jumped about so much that the giant leaned over the parapet and spat him out into the sea.

The moment Tom splashed into the water a big fish, which mistook him for a shrimp, gulped him down. He was too small to satisfy the creature's appetite, and the fish swam along until it chanced to see a baited hook. The bait was so tempting that the fish bit at it and was caught.

A fisherman pulled the fish out of the water and soon afterward went off with it to market. There it was purchased for the table of King Arthur.

When the servants opened the fish in order

to prepare it for cooking they were greatly astonished to find Tom inside. Never before had they seen a human being so small. They carried him to the king, who took him into his service and sent word to his father and mother that he was safe at the royal castle.

One day the king had Tom accompany him to his treasury where he kept all his money, and said, "You can have as much as you can carry home to your parents."

So the little fellow picked out a silver three-penny piece, and the king had a purse made for it. With some difficulty Tom lifted the burden on to his back and set forward on his journey. He had to rest himself more than a hundred times by the way, but in two days he reached his father's house safely, though almost tired to death with carrying the huge silver piece.

About a week afterward, when he had recovered from his fatigue, he returned to court, where he became a great favorite; for by his tricks and gambols he amused not only the king and queen, but all the knights of the Round Table.

The king often took Tom with him when he rode out on horseback, and if there was a shower Tom would creep into his Majesty's waistcoat pocket and sleep till the rain was over.

So pleased was the king with Tom that at length he knighted him, and the little man was known as Sir Thomas Thumb. Sir Thomas was given a tame mouse, which was fitted with a saddle and bridle and served him for a horse.

Once, as he was riding on his mouse past a farmhouse, a cat suddenly sprang forth from some lurking-place. She seized both rider and steed and ran up a tree with them. Then Tom boldly drew his sword, which had been made for him out of a needle, and assailed the cat so fiercely that she was glad to release her prey and get beyond the reach of the sword-thrusts.

The king and his knights were more fond than ever of Tom after this exploit. But presently the queen became jealous on account of the honor paid to Sir Thomas, and she told the king that he had been saucy to her.

King Arthur sent for Tom in great haste. However, the little man was fully aware of the dangers of royal anger, and he crept into an empty snail shell. There he lay hiding for a long time until he was almost starved.

When at last he ventured to look out, he saw the mouse that he used for a horse running about trying to find him. So he put on its saddle and bridle, jumped on its back, and returned to the court.

Everyone was glad to see him except the queen, who insisted that he must be punished. To please her, the king had him imprisoned in a mouse-trap, where he remained for several days tormented by a cat which thought him some new kind of mouse and spent her time clawing at him through the bars.

When he was released he noticed a fine large butterfly on a dandelion close by, and by making a quick leap he got astride of it. At once the butterfly went off, flitting from tree to tree and from flower to flower.

The royal gardener saw it and gave chase, and soon the nobles and the king joined in

the hunt. Finally the queen forgot her anger and ran hither and thither with the rest. They were almost expiring when Tom, dizzy with so much fluttering and flittering, fell from his seat into a watering-pot. He narrowly escaped drowning, and when he was fished out all agreed that he deserved to be forgiven and taken back into favor.

Tom had not been at liberty long when a large spider attacked him as he was walking in the garden. He fought the creature most valiantly with his sword, yet at last the spider overcame and killed him.

So sorry were the king and his whole court at the loss of their little favorite that they raised over his grave a fine white marble monument on which were engraved these lines:

"Here lies Tom Thumb, King Arthur's knight,
Who died by a spider's cruel bite.
Wipe, wipe your eyes, and shake your head,
And cry, 'Alas! Tom Thumb is dead.'"

XIII

Beauty and the Beast

THERE was once a wealthy merchant who had six children, three of whom were sons and the other three daughters. Although he was rich, he loved his children more than he loved his riches, and he was always trying to make them happy.

The three daughters were very handsome, but the youngest was more attractive than either of the others. While she was little she was called Beauty, and after she grew up people continued to call her by that name. She was as good as she was beautiful, and when not engaged with her books, of which she was very fond, she was busy doing everything she could to make her father's home pleasant for him.

The older sisters were proud of their

riches, and it suited them better to get diversion by driving in the parks and attending balls, operas, and plays, than to read books for entertainment and instruction.

Presently misfortune began to overtake the merchant in his business. Storms at sea destroyed his ships, and fire burned his warehouses. One evening he came home and said to his family: "My riches are gone. I have nothing left that I can call my own except a little farm far off in the country. To that little farm we all must go now and earn our daily living with our hands."

The daughters wept at the idea of leading such a different life. "We will not go!" the older two declared. "We have plenty of friends who will invite us to stay in the city."

But they were mistaken. Their friends, who were numerous when the family was rich, now kept away.

"Of course we are sorry for the merchant and his family," these friends said one to another; "but we have cares of our own, and we really couldn't be expected to help them. If those two older girls are having their

pride humbled, it is no more than they deserve. Let them go and give themselves aristocratic airs milking the cows and working in the dairy, and see how they like it."

As soon as the merchant could settle his affairs, the family went to live on the little farm in the country. He and his sons plowed and sowed the fields, and Beauty rose at five o'clock every morning to get breakfast for them. After the breakfast things were out of the way there was other housework that took her attention, and when nothing else needed doing she would sit at her spinning-wheel, singing as she spun, or perhaps would take a little time for reading. The work was hard at first, yet she soon found it enjoyable and her eyes were brighter and her cheeks more rosy than ever before.

Her sisters did not change their habits so easily, and they were wretched, for they were always thinking of the wealth they had lost. They lay in bed till ten o'clock, and they did very little work after they were up. Most of their time was spent in sauntering around and complaining.

A year passed, and then the merchant received word that a ship of his, which he had believed to be lost, had come safely into port with a rich cargo. This news nearly turned the heads of the two older daughters. They fancied that now it would not be long before they could leave the little farm and return to the gay city. When their father made ready to go to the port to attend to the unloading and sale of the ship's cargo, they begged him to buy them new gowns and hats and all manner of trinkets.

"And what shall I bring you, Beauty?" the merchant asked.

"The only thing I wish for is to see you come safely home," she answered.

"I am pleased that you are so much concerned over my welfare," he said, "but that makes me want all the more to bring you a present from the city. What shall it be?"

"Well, dear father," she responded, "as you insist, I would like to have you bring me a rose, for I have not seen one since we came here."

The good merchant set out on his journey,

but when he reached the port, he found that a former partner had taken charge of the ship's goods and disposed of them. The man insisted on keeping the money he had received, and the merchant was obliged to sue for it in the courts. But, though the case was decided in his favor, what he recovered barely paid the costs.

So, at the end of six months of trouble and expense, he started for his little farm as poor as when he came. He traveled day after day until he was within thirty miles of home. Then, as he was thinking of the pleasure he would have in seeing his children again, he lost his way in a great forest through which he had to pass.

Night came on cold and rainy, and he grew faint with hunger. But presently he saw lights some way off shining through the trees. He turned his horse toward them and soon came into a long avenue of great oaks. This led to a splendid palace that was lighted from top to bottom.

Yet when the merchant rode into the courtyard no one met him, and when he hallooed

he received no answer. His horse kept on toward an open stable door, and the merchant put the creature in a stall where there was a manger full of hay and oats.

Then he went to the palace and entered a large hall. There he found a good fire and a table plentifully set with food, but not a soul did he see.

While he stood by the fire drying himself, he said: "How fortunate I am to find such shelter! I should have perished this stormy night out in the forest! But I can't imagine where the people of this palace can be. I hope its master will excuse the liberty I have taken."

He waited for some time, and the clock struck eleven. No one came, and then, weak for want of food, he sat down at the table and ate heartily. Yet all the while he was fearful that he was trespassing and might be severely dealt with for his presumption.

After he finished eating, he felt less timid, and concluded he would look for a chamber. So he left the hall and passed through sev-

eral splendid rooms till he came to one in which was a comfortable bed. There he spent the night.

On awaking the following morning he was surprised to find a new suit of clothes laid out for him on a chair by the bedside. It was marked with his name, and in each pocket were ten gold pieces. His own clothes, which were much the worse for wear and had been wet through by the storm, had disappeared.

"Surely," he said, "this palace belongs to some kind fairy who has seen and pitied my distress."

In the hall where he had supped the previous night he found his breakfast on the table, and after he had eaten he went out into a great garden full of beautiful flowers and shrubbery. As he walked along he passed under a bower of roses.

"Oh!" he exclaimed, stopping, "I had no money when I left the city to buy the gifts my older daughters asked for, and my mind has been so full of my troubles that I have not thought of the rose which Beauty wanted

until this moment. She shall have one of these."

He reached up and plucked the finest one he could see. No sooner had he done this than a shaggy beast came forth suddenly from a side path, where he had been hidden by a high hedge, and stood before the merchant.

"This place is mine," the beast said in his deep gruff voice. "Why do you pick my flowers?"

"Forgive me, my lord," the merchant begged, dropping on his knees before the beast. "I did not know I was giving offense. It never occurred to me that anyone would object to my taking a single rose where there are so many."

"Excuses are wasted on me," the beast snarled. "Thieving is thieving whether little or much is taken. You shall be punished."

"There seems to be no way to appease your wrath," the merchant responded, "and I have nothing further to say except that I wanted the rose, not for myself, but to carry

home to the youngest of my three daughters."

"You have daughters, have you?" the beast said. "Now listen. This palace is lonely. I want one of your daughters to come here and live."

"Oh, sir!" the merchant cried, "do not ask that."

"Nothing else will satisfy me," the beast declared. "I promise that no harm will be done her. Take home the rose you have picked and tell your daughters what I have said. In case no one of them will come, you must return and stay for the rest of your days in the palace dungeon."

"My lord," the merchant said, "I shall not let a child of mine suffer for me. You may as well lock me up in your dungeon now as later."

"No, you go home and consult your daughters first," the beast ordered.

"I am in your power," the merchant said, "and can only obey you."

Then he went to the stable, mounted his horse, and by night he reached home. His

children ran out to greet him, but instead of receiving their caresses with pleasure, the tears rolled down his cheeks.

He still had the rose he had plucked in the beast's garden, and he handed it to Beauty, saying, " Little do you think how dear that will cost your poor father."

Then he related all the sad adventures that had befallen him. " Tomorrow I shall return to the beast," he announced in closing.

" I can't let you do that, father," Beauty declared. " I shall go in your stead."

" Not so, sister! " the brothers exclaimed. " We will seek out the monster and either kill him or die ourselves."

" You could accomplish nothing," their father affirmed. " The beast dwells in an enchanted palace where he has invisible helpers with whom you could not hope to contend successfully."

" How unfortunate it all is! " the older sisters sighed. " What a pity, Beauty, that you did not do as we did and ask father for something sensible! "

" Well," Beauty said, " who could have

guessed that to ask for a rose would cause so much misery? However, the fault is plainly mine, and I shall have to suffer the consequences."

Her father tried to dissuade her from her purpose, but she insisted. So the next morning he mounted his horse, and, with Beauty seated behind him, started for the beast's palace.

They arrived at the long avenue of oaks late in the afternoon, and rode along it into the silent courtyard. At the door of the stable they dismounted, and after the merchant had seen his horse comfortably housed for the night they went into the palace.

A cheerful fire was blazing in the big hall, and the table was daintily spread with the most delicious food. They sat down to this repast, but were too sad to eat much.

Just as they finished, the beast came in and addressed the merchant. "Honest man," he said, "I am glad that you could be trusted. Yesterday I was rude and threatening toward you, but that seemed necessary in order to get you to do what I wanted done.

In the end I think you will have nothing to regret. Spend the night here, and tomorrow go your way."

"This is my daughter, Beauty," the merchant said.

The beast turned toward her and bowed. "My lady," he said, "make yourself entirely at home here. Whenever there is anything that you want, you need only clap your hands and say the word to have it brought to you. I am grateful for your coming, and I beg you to remember that I am not what I appear to be. But I cannot tell you what I really am, for I am under a spell. This spell I hope you will be able to remove."

So saying, he withdrew and left the merchant and his daughter sitting by the fire. "What the beast means, I do not know," the merchant commented, "but he talks very courteously."

They sat long in silence, and when the hour grew late each sought a chamber to try to sleep.

On the morrow they found breakfast prepared for them in the hall, and they soon ate

what little they felt able to eat. Then the merchant bade his daughter an affectionate farewell and went to the stable for his horse. It was all ready for him to mount, and, to his surprise, the saddlebags were full of gold.

"Ah, well!" he sighed, "here is wealth once more, but it cannot make up for the loss of my dear daughter."

Beauty watched him ride away. As soon as he had passed on out of sight, she threw herself down on a cushioned window-seat and cried till she fell asleep. While she slept she dreamed that she was walking by a brook lamenting her hard fate, when a young prince, handsomer than any man she had ever seen before, came to her.

"My lady," he said, "you are not so unfortunate as you suppose. You will have your reward."

Late in the day she awoke a good deal refreshed and comforted, and concluded that she would walk about and see something of the palace in which she was to live. There was much to admire, and she became more and more interested as she went on. Pres-

ently she came to a door on which were the words

BEAUTY'S ROOM

She went in. It was a splendidly furnished apartment, with comfortable chairs and couches, a piano, and an abundance of books and pictures. She picked up a book that lay on the table, and this is what she found written on the fly-leaf:

"Your wishes and commands shall be obeyed. You are the queen here over everything."

"Alas!" she thought, "my chief wish just at this moment is to see what my poor father is doing."

While she was thinking this she perceived some movement in a mirror on the wall in front of her. She went to the mirror to investigate, and in it saw her father arriving home, and her sisters and brothers meeting him. The vision faded quickly away, but Beauty felt very thankful that she had been allowed such a pleasure.

"This beast shows a great deal of kind-

ness," she said, glancing around the attractive room. "He must be a far better creature than we have imagined."

Beauty did not see the beast until evening. Then he came and asked if he might sup with her. She replied that he could. But she would much rather have eaten alone, for she could not help trembling in his presence. Besides, his gruff voice startled her every time he spoke, though he talked to her with great courtesy and intelligence.

When they had nearly finished eating, he said, "I suppose you think my appearance extremely ugly."

"Yes," Beauty acknowledged, "that is what I think, but I also think you are very good."

"Thank you," the beast said. "You show a most gracious spirit in not judging me wholly by my uncouth exterior. I will do anything I can to make you happy here."

"You are very kind, Beast," she told him. "Indeed, when I think of your good heart, you no longer seem to me so ugly."

In the following days and weeks Beauty saw no one except the beast. Yet there were invisible servants who did everything possible for her comfort and pleasure. She and the beast always had supper together, and as they sat at the table soft beautiful music was played, though whence it came, or who were the musicians she could not discover. His conversation never failed to be entertaining and agreeable so that by degrees she became accustomed to his shaggy ugliness and learned to mind it less, and to think more of his many amiable qualities.

Three months passed, and one day, when Beauty looked in her mirror, she saw a double wedding at her father's cottage. Her sisters were being married to two gentlemen of the region. Not long afterward the mirror showed that her three brothers had enlisted for soldiers, and the father was left alone.

A few days more elapsed, and Beauty saw that her father was sick. The sight made her weep, and in the evening she told the beast what her mirror had revealed to her.

"Now that my father is unwell, I wish I could go and nurse him," she said.

"Will you return at the end of a week, if you go?" the beast asked.

"Yes," she replied.

"I cannot refuse anything you desire," the beast said. "A swift horse will be ready for you at sunrise."

Early the next day Beauty found the swift horse saddled for her in the courtyard, and away she went like the wind through the forest toward her father's cottage. When she arrived, the old merchant was so overjoyed at seeing her that his sickness quickly left him, and the two spent a very happy week together.

As soon as the seven days were past she set forth for the beast's palace, which she reached late in the afternoon. Supper time came and the food was served as usual, but the beast was absent.

Beauty was much alarmed. "Oh! I hope nothing has happened to him," she said — "he is so good and considerate."

After waiting a short time she went to look

Beauty kisses the beast, who has fainted.

for him; and first she hurried through all the apartments of the palace, but the beast was not there. Then she ran out in the twilight to the garden, and by the borders of a fountain found him lying as if dead.

"Dear, dear Beast!" she cried, kneeling beside him, "what has happened?" And she bent down and kissed his hairy cheek.

At once a change came over the beast, and on the grass beside the fountain lay a handsome prince. He opened his eyes and said feebly: "My lady, I thank you. A wicked magician had condemned me to assume the form of an ugly beast until some beautiful maiden liked me well enough to kiss me. I think you are the only maiden in the world kind-hearted enough to have had affection for me in the uncouth form the magician gave me."

"But why are you lying here, and why are you so weak?" Beauty inquired anxiously.

"While you were away," he said, "I was so lonely I could neither eat nor amuse myself. I lost strength, and today, as I was

walking here in the garden, I fell and could not rise."

Then Beauty filled a cup with water from the fountain and lifted him up so he could drink. The water revived him somewhat, and with her aid he rose to his feet. "Call for help," he said.

She called, and several men came and carried the prince indoors. The servants were no longer invisible, for the enchantment had been removed from them as well as from their master.

Warmth, food, and happiness went far toward restoring the prince, and he was up and about the next morning. Without further delay he sent for Beauty's father to come and make his home with them. Not long afterward he and Beauty were married, and they lived with great joy and contentment in their palace for the rest of their days.

XIV

Jack the Giant Killer

WHEN good King Arthur reigned in England, there lived, near Land's End in the county of Cornwall, a farmer who had a son called Jack. The lad was active and very strong and of such a quick wit that nobody could get the better of him.

In those days a huge giant named Cormoran lived on a small island near the Cornish coast. He was fully eighteen feet high and three yards round the waist, and he had a grim fierce face. All the country-side feared him; for as often as he wanted food he waded to the mainland and helped himself to whatever came in his way.

No sooner was the swish-swash of his big

feet heard in the water when he set out to come across to the coast than poor folk and rich folk alike ran out of their houses and hid themselves, leaving him unhindered to seize as many of their cattle as he chose. He made nothing of carrying off half a dozen fat oxen at a time on his back, and would also sometimes tie a score or more of sheep and pigs to his belt. This sort of thing he had done for many years, so that all Cornwall was in despair.

One day Jack went to a public meeting called after some fresh exploit of the giant's to consider what could be done to get rid of the robber. Women were weeping and men were cursing, but not a plan could any of them devise. Jack asked the presiding magistrates what reward would be given to the person who destroyed Cormoran.

"The giant's treasure will be the reward," they replied.

"Then I will undertake the task," Jack said.

That evening he put a shovel, a pickax, and a horn into a little rowboat and crossed

over to the giant's island. There he set to work digging a huge pit not far from the cave in which the giant lived. In a few hours' time he had a hole more than twenty feet deep and nearly that many feet square. He covered it with long sticks, which he overlaid with leafy twigs, and lastly he strewed on earth to make the spot appear like solid ground.

Just at break of day he stationed himself on the side of the pit that was farthest from the giant's lodging and blew his horn, "Toot-toot-toot — toot-toot!"

The noise roused the giant, who looked out of his cave and saw Jack. "You young rascal!" he shouted, "why do you disturb my rest?"

Jack's only reply was to blow his horn again, "Toot-toot-toot — toot-toot!"

"Ha!" the giant cried, "you shall be well punished for your horn-blowing, you little whipper-snapper! I'll teach you to wake a giant! You shall pay dearly for your toot-toot-tooting! I'm going to eat you for my breakfast."

He came running toward Jack, but as he was stretching out his hand to grasp him he stepped on the dirt and sticks that hid the pit, and down he went with such a crash that his neck was broken.

"We shall never have any more trouble from him," Jack said; "and now I'll see what sort of a reward I am to have."

So he went and searched the cave and found as much treasure as he could well carry back in his boat.

When the magistrates heard of what he had done they made a proclamation that henceforth he should be called

JACK THE GIANT KILLER

and presented him with a sword and a belt. On the belt were embroidered in letters of gold these words:

Here's Jack, the valiant Cornishman
Who slew the giant, Cormoran.

The news of Jack's victory spread over all the west of England. Among those who heard it was a giant named Blunderbore,

Jack-the-giant-killer falls asleep.

and he vowed that the lad should be punished.

A few months later Jack was on a journey that took him into Blunderbore's domain, and he stopped on the borders of a lonesome wood to rest. There he lay down beside a cool spring and fell asleep.

In the midst of the wood the giant had his castle, and presently he came to the spring for water. He found Jack lying on the grass and knew who he was by the lines embroidered on his belt. So he picked him up and carried him off to his castle.

Jack was very much frightened to find himself in the giant's clutches. He was still more alarmed on arriving at the castle to see that the courtyard was strewn with human bones.

"Yours will soon be added to them," Blunderbore declared, and took his captive to a chamber just above the castle gateway, locked him in, and went off. After a time Jack heard a sound of women crying in the next room. Then there was a rapping on the wall and a voice said:

"Do what you can to get away,
Or you'll become the giant's prey.
He's gone to fetch his brother, who
Will help him kill and feast on you."

In response, Jack rapped on the wall and said, "I do not know who you are, but I thank you for your kindness, and I hope I may find some way to repay it."

Then he added to himself, "Now I must lose no time in seeing what can be done."

He looked about and discovered a coil of rope in a dark corner. "This may help me to get away," he commented.

The room had a single window that was over the castle entrance. Jack opened it, intending to slide down on the rope to the ground, but saw the giants coming, hurrying along the road, eager for their dinner. "Too late!" he said. "Well, I'll try another trick."

So he made a cunning noose at each end of the rope, and while the giants were unlocking the iron gate he dropped the nooses over their heads. Then he pulled the giants

up from the ground and tied the rope to a beam. That caused the death of both of them.

Jack slid down the rope, took Blunderbore's keys, and went into the castle to seek for the room whence came the crying he had heard. In it were three fair ladies who had been held prisoners and were almost starved to death.

"Sweet ladies," Jack said, "you have no more to fear from Blunderbore or his brother. This castle and everything it contains is now yours. Here are the keys."

Then he returned to the giants, and after dragging their bodies to a ditch and burying them, he continued on his journey. Toward night he lost his way and went many miles without finding any habitation. It had grown so dark he could hardly see when he entered a narrow valley and got into a path that led him to a large rough house. He knocked at the door, and forth came the biggest ugliest giant he had ever seen.

Jack wished himself elsewhere, but he put on a bold front and said, "I am lost, Sir

Giant, and I beg you to give me shelter for the night."

The giant appeared to be friendly, for he let Jack in, gave him something to eat, and showed him to a room, where he left him with kind wishes for a good rest. Jack lay down on the bed, which was very comfortable, though a good deal too large.

But he did not feel safe under the giant's roof, and he stayed awake listening. His host was moving about in the next room muttering something over and over. At length the lad made out that he was saying,

"Though Jack doth lodge with me tonight,
He shall not see the morning light."

"Ah!" Jack thought, "he means me harm, does he?"

Then he got up. Beside the fireplace was a pile of wood. Jack groped his way to this pile, took one of the largest sticks, and put it in his bed. That done, he made himself snug in a corner of the room back of the bed, pretending to snore so as to make the giant think he was asleep.

Sure enough, after a little time, in came the monster carrying a big club. Then —

WHACK! WHACK! WHACK!

The giant was belaboring the stick in the bed. "I must have broken every bone in the fellow's body," he said, and went out, leaving his club on the floor.

Jack picked it up and put it where it would be handy. Then he took the stick of wood from the bed, returned it to the pile, and got into the bed himself. He slept soundly the rest of the night.

In the morning he was up early waiting for a visit from the giant. Presently the door opened and the giant walked in. He could hardly believe his eyes when he saw Jack, and he exclaimed with a gasp of surprise, "What! is that you?"

"Why, of course!" Jack said. "Who else should it be?"

"And how did you rest?" the giant inquired. "Did you feel anything in the night?"

Jack laughed. "Why, now you speak of

it," he said, "I do believe a rat came and gave me two or three flaps with its tail."

"A rat, did you say?" the giant asked, gazing at Jack with open-mouthed wonder.

"Yes," Jack answered.

The giant went to the bed and examined it. Then he stooped down and peered underneath. At that instant Jack seized the giant's club and gave him such a crack on the head that he never got up.

A few days after this adventure Jack arrived late one evening at another giant's castle. It was in a lonely region, and as the giant had no near neighbors Jack saw that he must either get shelter at this castle or sleep in the open air. So he stepped up to the door and rapped.

"Who's there?" the giant roared.

"You may call me your Cousin Jack," was the lad's reply.

"Well, Cousin Jack, what do you want?" the giant inquired.

"I want lodging for the night," Jack said.

Then the giant let him in and put some

food on the table for him. After Jack had eaten a hearty supper, the two sat down by the fireside and the giant asked Jack to tell him the news.

Jack thought he would be more secure if he frightened his host a little, and in answer to the giant's question he said, "I want you to understand that the great King Arthur is coming with two thousand men to destroy you and your castle this very night."

The giant began to shiver and shake. "Ah, Cousin Jack! kind Cousin Jack!" he said, "this is heavy news indeed. I can fight five hundred men easily enough, but not two thousand. What am I to do?"

"Hide in the cellar," crafty Jack replied. "I will lock and bolt and bar you in and keep the key till morning."

Then the giant made haste down to the cellar and Jack locked and bolted and barred him in. Afterward the lad lay down on the giant's bed and slept till daylight. As soon as he had dressed he released the giant, who at once climbed the loftiest tower of his castle and looked north, south, east, and west.

When he failed to discover an army he was somewhat relieved of his fears. He concluded that the enemy had come and gone and that Jack had protected him very effectively. To show his gratitude, he presented a purse of gold to Jack when the lad was departing.

After a while Jack fell in with King Arthur's only son, a valiant prince, who was going to pay court to a beautiful lady in Wales. The prince was riding on one horse and leading a second one laden with baggage; but when he met Jack he took half the baggage on his horse and had Jack mount the other. They went along together until they came to a town where there was a great commotion. A crowd of people had gathered about a poor man whom they were threatening because he did not pay them various sums of money that were their due.

The prince pushed into the midst of the crowd and talked with the persecuted man, who said in closing, "I have nothing with which to satisfy them, and they will kill me."

Then the prince turned on the crowd and

cried: "Let him alone! I will not see him harmed. Come with me, all you whom he owes, and you shall be paid."

He sought an inn, and the rabble followed. By the time he was through with the last of them his money was all gone, and Jack's too, except threepence.

Now Jack and the prince set off again, but as they were leaving the town an old woman ran after them, calling out: "Justice! Justice! that man has owed me threepence these seven years. Pray pay me as you did the rest."

They gave the woman the threepence and rode along over the hills and mountains until the sun hung low in the west. "Jack," the prince said, "since we have no money, where can we lodge this night?"

"Master," Jack responded, "I have heard that not two miles from where we are now a giant lives in an enchanted castle. On the castle door hangs a great golden trumpet, and if any man can succeed in blowing that trumpet the castle doors will fly open and the giant's power will be ended. Many

knights have tried to break the enchantment, but they had not strength to blow the trumpet and all have perished."

"Alas!" the prince said, "then I fear it would be foolish for us to go any nearer that fatal place."

"But I think I can blow any trumpet that ever was made," Jack declared. "So if fortune favors us, we will lodge tonight in the giant's castle."

They kept on and the castle was soon close at hand. No one was on guard, for the giant thought his enchanted dwelling was perfectly safe from all assailants. The golden trumpet hung by a silver chain on the door, and under it was a placard which bore these lines:

Whenever by man this great trumpet is
blown,
The giant, its owner, shall be overthrown;
But whoever fails in the task, let him know,
He never alive from this castle shall go.

Jack read the placard. Then, without hesitation, he drew a full breath, put the trumpet to his lips, and blew a blast that

waked the echoes for ten miles around. The castle trembled to its foundations, the doors swung open, and the giant turned into a great owl which flew away to the forest.

"Well done!" the prince cried, and he and Jack took possession of the castle.

There they remained for some time. While exploring the great building, Jack came to a window barred with iron, and when he looked in beheld many miserable captives.

"Alas! Alack!" they cried. "Are you come to join us in this dreadful prison?"

"Tell me why you are thus held captive," Jack said.

"It is through no fault of ours," they declared. "The cruel giant carried us off, and here we are kept until such time as he desires a feast. Then he chooses the fattest and sups off them."

On hearing this, Jack straightway unlocked the door of the prison and set the poor captives free. Some were peasant folk and some were gentry, and among the latter was a duke's daughter who was so charming that Jack fell in love with her.

He and the prince found plenty of treasure in the giant's castle, and Jack discovered a magic coat that made its wearer invisible, and a magic cap that gave the person who had it on his head knowledge of all that he wished to know, and a pair of shoes that enabled whoever wore them to travel with extraordinary swiftness.

By means of the cap Jack presently learned that a giant named Gloggan had vowed he was going to visit Jack and the prince at their castle very soon. He boasted that he would take dinner with them and that they would be the dinner and he would do the eating.

"If that is the way he feels," Jack said, "we shall have to make ready for him."

The castle was surrounded by a moat thirty feet deep and twenty feet wide. This moat was spanned by a stout drawbridge into which Jack sawed from either side nearly to the middle. Thus the bridge was weakened so that any weight beyond two or three hundred pounds would break it down.

On the day after this job was done the

giant was seen approaching, and Jack marched forth to meet him. Suddenly the giant stopped and began to sniff the air. "Fe, fi, fo, fum!" he exclaimed, "I smell a man!" and he looked all about.

"Here I am!" Jack shouted, but he had on his magic coat and was invisible.

"Are you the villain who has been destroying us giants?" Gloggan demanded, brandishing his club. "If you are, I will grind your bones to powder."

"You will have to catch me first," Jack said.

He approached close enough to prick the giant in the leg with his sword. My goodness! How the monster roared! He began to lay about him with his knotted club, but Jack had jumped back out of the way.

Now the lad threw off his magic coat to allow the giant to see him, and ran with all speed toward the castle. He had no fear that he would be overtaken, for he was wearing his shoes of swiftness, and he easily escaped across the drawbridge.

The giant had followed with steps that

made the earth shake, but when he set foot on the bridge it gave way. Down he went with a tremendous splash into the water, and as he did not know how to swim he was drowned.

A week or two later Jack and the prince journeyed to the house of the beautiful Welsh lady whom the prince wished to marry. They were made very welcome, and presently a splendid banquet was prepared in their honor.

While the repast was being served, the lady held up her handkerchief for the prince to see, and said: "I have a task for you. Show me this handkerchief tomorrow morning and I will marry you. If you are not clever enough to do that you can go your way, for I never shall accept you."

When she left the dining hall she carried the handkerchief with her, and the prince was greatly distressed. He thought he must surely fail and he told Jack how things were. Then Jack put on his cap of knowledge, by means of which he learned that the lady had given the handkerchief to a serving man

with orders to mount a swift horse and start at once for a distant town. There he was to leave the handkerchief in the hollow of an old yew tree, in a churchyard.

So Jack put on his magic coat and shoes, and he followed the man on horseback for hour after hour until he reached the distant town. The man thrust the handkerchief into the hollow yew, but no sooner was his back turned than Jack pulled the handkerchief out, and before daylight the lad had taken it to the prince.

In the morning the prince showed it to the lady. Shortly afterward she married him. As for Jack, he married the duke's daughter whom he had rescued from the enchanted castle, and who, in his opinion, was the most beauteous maiden the sun ever shone on. When the wedding festivities were over, the young men and their wives traveled to the court of King Arthur. The king was rejoiced to see them, and he rewarded Jack for his many great exploits by making him one of the Knights of the Round Table.

XV

The Three Bears

ONCE upon a time there were three bears who lived together in a house of their own in a forest. One of them was a little bear; and one of them was a middle-sized bear, who was the little bear's mother; and one of them was a big bear, who was the little bear's father.

They each had a bowl for their porridge — a little bowl for the little bear, a middle-sized bowl for the middle-sized bear, and a big bowl for the big bear. And they each had a chair to sit in — a little chair for the little bear, a middle-sized chair for the middle-sized bear, and a big chair for the big bear. And they each had a bed to sleep in — a little bed for the little bear, a middle-sized

bed for the middle-sized bear, and a big bed for the big bear.

One day, after they had cooked their porridge for dinner and poured it into their porridge bowls on the table, they went out for a walk to give the porridge time to cool. That same day a little girl called Golden Hair, who lived on the borders of the forest, went into the woodland. She rambled on picking flowers here and there until at last she said to herself: "Now I must go back. I didn't intend to come such a long way, and I'm tired and hungry."

Just then she looked on ahead up the lonely hollow into which she had strayed, and saw among the trees a nice little house.

"I didn't know that anyone lived here in the forest," Golden Hair said. "I will go and find out whose house this is."

She ran to the door and rapped, but got no response. Then she peeped in at the keyhole and afterward she looked in at a window.

"Well," she said, "I don't see anybody, but the people who live here can't be far away, for I saw smoke coming out of the

chimney. I suppose I might step in, if the door isn't locked."

She lifted the latch, and found that the door was not locked. So she went in and looked about, and what pleased her most was to see the porridge on the table.

"I think the people who live in this house have set the table for dinner," she said. "If they were here I'm sure they would invite me to eat with them. Oh! how hungry I am. I don't suppose they would care if I ate some of their porridge without waiting till they came. I will taste it, anyway."

So she went to the table and took a spoonful of porridge from the big bowl. "This is too hot," she said. "I will try the next."

Then she took a spoonful of porridge from the middle-sized bowl. "This is too cold," she said.

Then she took a spoonful of porridge from the little bowl. That was neither too hot nor too cold, but was just right, and she ate the porridge in the little bowl all up.

Along the wall were the bears' three chairs, and each had a cushion in it. She

tried the big chair, but the cushion was too hard for her.

"Dear me!" Golden Hair said, "this chair won't do at all. I will try the next."

Then she sat down in the middle-sized chair. "This cushion is too soft," she said.

Then she tried the little chair, and it suited her to perfection. The cushion in it was neither too hard nor too soft, but was just right. She had settled herself in it to enjoy a good rest, when crack! smash! the chair broke, and Golden Hair tumbled to the floor.

"That was a nice little chair," she said as she got up. "I'm sorry it is broken. How am I to rest now? I don't like the other chairs. I must see where the beds are."

She went into an adjoining room, and there were the beds. First she tried the big bed, but it was too high at the head for her.

Then she tried the middle-sized bed. "This is too high at the foot," she said.

Lastly she tried the little bed. That was neither too high at the head nor too high at the foot, but just suited her. She lay down on it, covered herself up, and fell fast

asleep. Soon afterward the three bears returned from their walk. They looked at their porridge bowls and saw that things were not as they had left them, for the wooden spoons were in the bowls instead of lying on the table beside them.

"SOMEBODY HAS BEEN TASTING MY PORRIDGE!" the big bear growled in his great gruff voice.

"AND SOMEBODY HAS BEEN TASTING MY PORRIDGE!" the middle-sized bear grumbled.

"*And somebody has been tasting my porridge, and eaten it all up!*" the little bear piped.

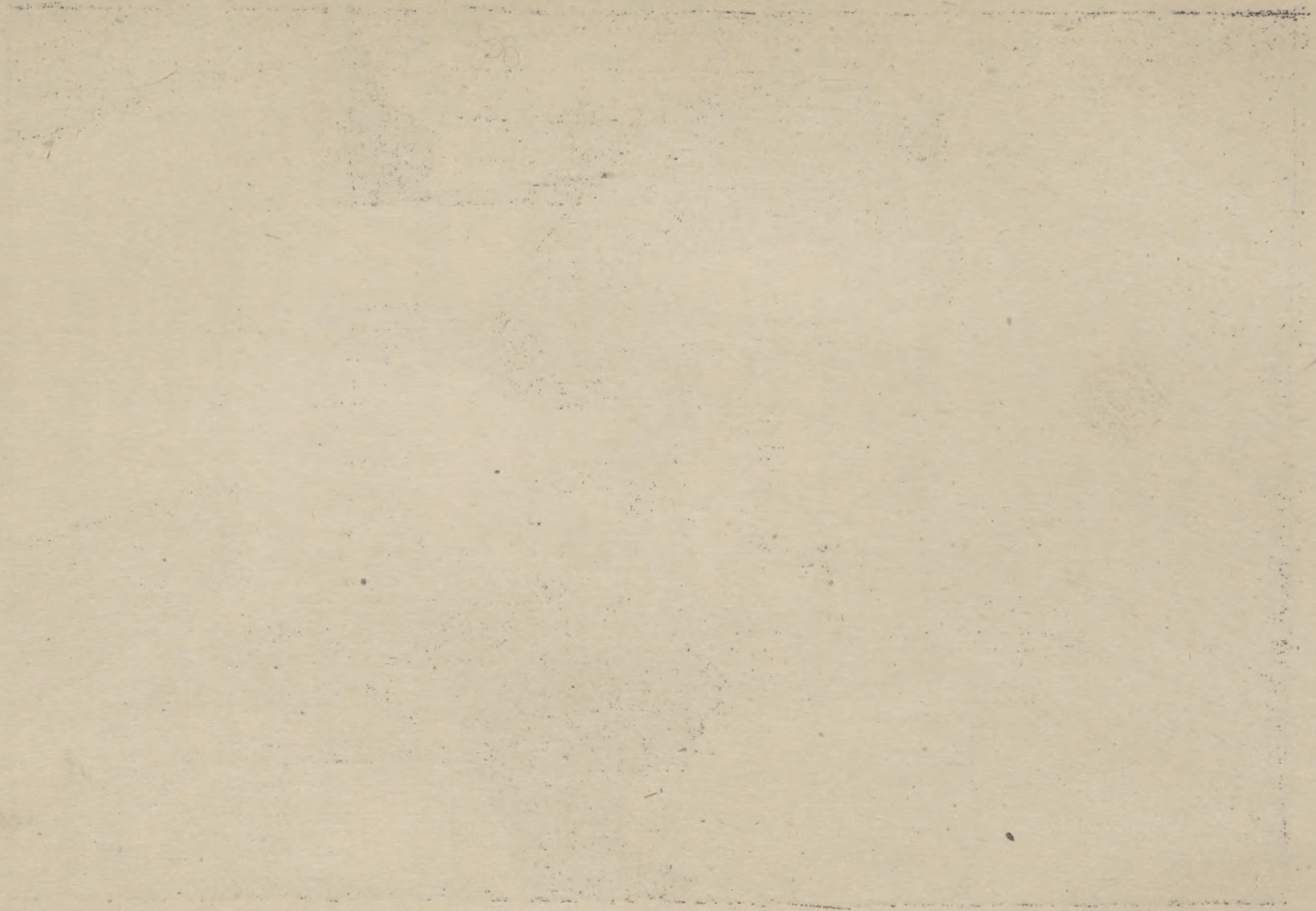
"We will look around," they said, "and see if there has been any more meddling."

They turned to where they kept their chairs ranged along the wall.

"SOMEBODY HAS BEEN SITTING IN MY CHAIR!" the big bear growled in his great gruff voice, for Golden Hair had pushed the hard cushion out of place.

"AND SOMEBODY HAS BEEN SITTING IN MY CHAIR!" the middle-sized bear grum-

Goldenhair is found by the three bears.



bled, for Golden Hair had flattened down the soft cushion.

"*And somebody has been sitting in my chair, and broken it all to pieces!*" the little bear piped.

Then they went into their bedroom.

"SOMEBODY HAS BEEN LYING ON MY BED!" the big bear growled in his great gruff voice.

"AND SOMEBODY HAS BEEN LYING ON MY BED!" the middle-sized bear grumbled.

"*And somebody has been lying on my bed, and here she is!*" the little bear piped.

The voice of the little bear was so sharp and shrill that it awakened Golden Hair at once. She sat bolt upright and stared at the three bears, and they stared at her.

They were standing in a row on one side of the bed, and Golden Hair tumbled herself out on the other side before they could catch her. Luckily the window was open, and out she leaped. Then she ran home as fast as she could go, and she never again went near the place where the three bears lived.

XVI

Bluebeard

ONCE upon a time there was a man who lived in a mansion which was so splendid and richly furnished that even a king might have been proud of it. The dishes were of gold and silver, the chairs and sofas were covered with flowered satin, and the curtains were of the richest silk.

But, alas! the owner of this mansion was so unlucky as to have a blue beard, and the beard made him look so frightfully ugly that the first impulse of every woman and girl he met was to run away from him.

Besides, it was rumored that he had married at various times in distant places and brought home his brides one after another; yet none of his neighbors ever saw or heard

of them afterward. He sometimes courted a local maiden with sufficient success to induce her to suggest to her parents that she marry him and become mistress of his splendid mansion. Their usual response was:

"Oh, no! my daughter; no, not so;
They ne'er return who thither go."

Among those who dwelt in Bluebeard's vicinity was a lady of quality who had two beautiful daughters, and he particularly wished to marry one of them. The lady was a widow with only a small estate, and his wealth and fine mansion made her feel that the match was on the whole very desirable.

He was willing to let her decide which of the daughters he should marry, but neither would have him. They could not bear the thought of having a husband with a blue beard, and their mother sighed to think of her children's obstinacy.

In order to cure their dislike, Bluebeard at length invited them and their mother and some young friends to spend a whole week at his home. They came, and nothing was

thought of but feasting, dancing, and music, and parties for hunting and fishing.

The guests were loaded with costly gifts and were so delightfully entertained that before many days had passed, Fatima, the younger of the two sisters, began to be of the opinion that the gentleman was very civil and obliging, and that his beard, which she had thought was dreadfully ugly, was not so *very* blue after all. By the end of the week the kindness of her host had made such an impression that she concluded it would be a pity to refuse to become his wife on account of the trifling circumstance of his having a blue beard.

So they were married shortly afterward, and at first everything went well. A month passed, and one morning Bluebeard told Fatima that he must go on a journey that would take him away for at least six weeks. He handed her his keys, saying: "I give these into your care. Here are two heavy brass keys in the bunch. They open the two large storerooms. This next one is the key of the great chest in which is kept the finest

tableware that we use when we have company. Here is the key to the strong box where I keep my money. Here is one that opens the casket which contains my jewels. You will find a key for every lock on the place.

"But, my dear, I would have you notice among the keys the small one of polished steel. It unlocks the little room at the end of the long corridor. Go where you will, and amuse yourself in any manner that you please, except for that one room, which I forbid you to enter."

Fatima promised faithfully to obey his orders, and he kissed her affectionately, stepped into his carriage, and drove away, while she stood at the door of the mansion waving her hand.

Lest she should be lonesome during her husband's absence, she invited numerous guests to keep her company. Most of them had not dared to venture into the house while Bluebeard was there, but now they came without any urging or delay, eager to see its splendors.

They ran about upstairs and downstairs, peeping into the closets and wardrobes, admiring the rooms, and exclaiming over the beauties of the tapestries, sofas, cabinets, and tables, and of the mirrors in which they could see themselves from head to foot. With one consent they praised what they saw, and envied the good fortune of their friend, the mistress of all this magnificence.

She went around unlocking the doors for their convenience until the only door that remained untouched was that of the obscure room at the end of the long corridor. She wondered why she had been forbidden to enter that room. What was there in it? Even if she did go in, her husband need never know that she had done so.

The more she thought about it the more curious she became. Finally, without considering that it was very uncivil to leave her guests, she went down a little back staircase so hastily she once or twice came near breaking her neck.

Then she ran along the dark narrow passage that led to the forbidden room. At the

door she hesitated, recalling her husband's command, and fearful of his anger; but the temptation was too strong, and she tremblingly opened the door.

The window shutters were closed and the light was so dim that at first she could see nothing. However, her eyes gradually became used to the dusk and she discovered that on the floor lay the bodies of all the wives Bluebeard had married.

Fatima uttered a cry of horror, her strength left her, and she thought she would die from fear. The key of the room fell from her hand, but she picked it up, hastily retreated to the corridor, and locked the door.

Yet she could not forget what she had seen, and when she returned to her guests her mind was too disturbed for her to attend to their comfort, or to attempt to entertain them. One by one they bade their hostess good-by and went home, until nobody was left with her except her sister Anne.

After all the guests had gone, Fatima noticed a spot of blood on the key of the fatal room. She tried to wipe it off, but the spot

remained. Then she washed the key with soap and scoured it with sand. Her efforts were in vain, for it was a magic key, and only Bluebeard himself had the power to remove the stain. At last she decided not to put it with the other keys, but to hide it, hoping her husband would not miss it.

Bluebeard returned unexpectedly that very evening. He said a horseman had met him on the road and told him that the business which had taken him from home had been satisfactorily settled. So there was no need of his making the long journey.

Fatima tried to welcome her husband with every appearance of pleasure, but all the time she was dreading the moment when he should ask for the keys. This he did not do until the following morning. Then she gave them to him with such a blanched face and shaking hand that he easily guessed what had happened.

"Why have you not brought me the key of the little room?" he asked sternly.

"I must have left it on my table upstairs," she faltered.

"Bring it to me at once," Bluebeard said, and she was forced to go and make a pretense of searching for it.

When she dared delay no longer, she returned to her husband and surrendered the key. He immediately demanded the cause of the stain on it, and she hesitated, at a loss what reply to make.

"But why need I ask?" he shouted. "I know the meaning of it right well. You have disobeyed my commands and have been into the room I ordered you not to enter. Very well, madam, since you are so fond of that room, you shall take your place among the ladies you saw there."

Fatima fell on her knees at his feet weeping and begging for mercy. She looked so very mournful and lovely that she would have melted any heart that was not harder than a rock.

"Since I must die," she said, "at least give me a little time to say my prayers."

"I will give you ten minutes, but not one moment more," Bluebeard responded.

Poor Fatima hastened to a little turret

chamber whither her sister had fled in terror and grief. "Sister Anne!" she cried, "go up to the top of the tower and see if our two brothers are coming. They promised to visit me today. If they are in sight, beckon them to come quickly."

So the sister climbed the narrow staircase that led to the top of the tower. No sooner did she finish the ascent than Fatima called from below, "Anne, Sister Anne, do you see anyone coming?"

Anne replied sadly, "I see nothing but the sun shining and the grass growing tall and green."

Several times Fatima put the same question and received the same answer.

Meanwhile Bluebeard was waiting with a cimiter in one hand and his watch in the other. At length he bawled as loud as he could: "The ten minutes are almost gone. Make an end to your prayers!"

"Anne, Sister Anne!" Fatima called softly, "look again. Is no one on the road?"

"I see a cloud of dust rising in the distance," Anne answered.

Fatima begs Bluebeard to spare her life.

"Perchance it is made by our brothers," Fatima said.

"Alas! no," Anne responded. "The dust has been raised by a flock of sheep."

"Fatima!" Bluebeard roared, "I command you to come down."

"One moment—just one moment more!" the wretched wife sobbed.

Again she called, "Anne, Sister Anne, do you see anyone coming?"

"I see two horsemen riding in this direction," Anne replied, "but they are a great way off."

"They must be our brothers," Fatima said. "Heaven be praised! Oh, sign to them to hasten!"

By this time the enraged Bluebeard was howling so loud for his wife to come down that his voice shook the whole mansion. Fatima dared delay no longer. She descended to the great hall, threw herself at her wicked husband's feet, and once more begged him to spare her life.

"Silence!" Bluebeard cried. "Your entreaties are wasted! You shall die!"

He seized her by the hair and raised his cimiter to strike. At that moment a loud knocking was heard at the gates, and Bluebeard paused with a look of alarm.

Anne had run down to let the brothers in. She flung open the gates and the brothers hurried to the hall with swords ready drawn in their hands. They rushed at Bluebeard, and one rescued his sister from her husband's grasp, while the other gave the wretch a sword-thrust that put an end to his life.

So the wicked Bluebeard perished, and Fatima became mistress of all his riches. Part of her wealth she bestowed on her sister, Anne, and part on her two brothers. The rest she retained herself, and presently she married a man whose kind treatment helped her to forget her unfortunate experience with Bluebeard.

The stories are told — let's shut the door;
But they come from where there are plenty more.