The DIAMOND STORY BOOK

PENRHYN W. COUSSENS

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THE DIAMOND STORY BOOK

"I hated history more than all my other lessons"

THE DIAMOND STORY BOOK

SELECTED AND EDITED BY

PENRHYN W. COUSSENS

Editor and compiler of "Poems Children Love," "One Thousand Books For Children," "A Child's Book of Stories," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY

ETHEL GREENE

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TO
MY DEAR CHUMS
MY WIFE AND CHILDREN

M.V.G. 0.15-14.

PREFACE

This collection of stories is intended for those children who, while still of tender years, are sufficiently mature to have read, or listened to, the tales contained in "A Child's Book of Stories."

In the search for material, it has been necessary to consult many tomes, both old and new, of the folk-lore and fairy tales of various countries, with the result that more than twenty nations have contributed to the following pages.

While frequent changes have necessarily been made, the stories still retain the thoughts and ideas set forth in the earlier editions.

In the task of selection, the compiler has had the able assistance of his children, and to them his thanks are due.

P. W. COUSSENS.

Rogers Park, Ills.

CONTENTS

ARRANGED ALPHABETICALLY

	PAGE
A Child's Dream of a Star	202
Aicha's Stratagem	249
Alfred the Great	1
Another Recruit	44
A Pottle O'Brains	366
A Slice of Tongue	252
A Son of Adam	341
Better Than That	261
Blockhead Hans	323
Brother Bernard	258
Catskin	19
Drakestail	240
Fairy Gifts	291
Glob and Alger	124
Habetrot and Scantlie Mab	411
Hermod and Hadvor	328
Hok Lee and the Dwarfs	390
"I Won't"	106
Johnny Gloke	246
King Henry and the Miller	77
King John and the Abbot of Canterbury	384
King Kojata	216
King Robert of Sicily	74
Lionbruno	91
Prince Bull, A Fairy Tale	206
Prince Vivien and the Princess Placida	266
Robin Hood and the Sheriff's Prize	49
Robin Hood Meets Little John	40
Saint Christopher	181
Sigurd	23
Sir Cleges and the Cherries	84
Tamlane	387

The Apples of Venus 172
The Ass That Lays Money 71
The Bar of Gold 192
The Beautiful Palace East of the Sun and North of the Earth 160
The Blue Mountains 312
The Bronze Ring 296
The Buried Moon 343
The Crumb in the Beard 53
The Farmer and the Noses 196
The Fiddler in the Fairy Ring 112
The Frog and the Wild-Hog 122
The Hunter and the Serpent 123
The King of England and His Three Sons 395
The King O' The Cats 382
The Magic Fishbone 228
The Magic Jar 58
The Mouse Tower 263
The Ness King 151
The Nettle Spinner 33
The Pied Piper 308
The Shepherd and the Dragon 187
The Stars in the Sky 407
The Story of Urashima, the Fisher Boy 63
The Tale of a Youth Who Set Out to Learn What Fear Was 372
The Thankful Dead 102
The Tongue-Cut Sparrow 144
The Two Gifts 213
The Werwolf 132
The Wise Old Shfpherd 118
The Wonderful Sheep 348
Tom Hickathrift 335
William Tell and His Great Shot 7
William Tell's Second Shot 15

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

"I hated history more than all my other lessons" ..... *Frontispiece*

PAGE

He noticed a group of children in a state of great excitement..... 64

The fox said, "Ah! Well then, just stay there always"..... 124

The Princess could not believe what they told her, but went to the gate herself 172

"A King called Kojata, whose beard was so long it reached below his knees"..... 216

"While they stared with their twice seventeen are thirty-four, put down four and carry three, eyes". 234

The elders mocked, but the children followed.... 312

And besides that, it was full of lions and wolves 354

THE DIAMOND STORY BOOK

ALFRED THE GREAT

WHEN I was very young, I hated history more than all my other lessons put together, because I had to learn it out of a horrid little book, called somebody's "Outlines of English History"; and it seemed to be all the names of the kings and the dates of battles, and, believing it to be nothing else, I hated it accordingly.

I hope you do not think anything so foolish, because, really, history is a story, a story of things that happened to real live people in England years ago; and the things that are happening here and now, and that are put in the newspapers, will be history for children one of these days.

The people in those old times were the same kind of people who live now. Mothers loved their children then, and fathers worked for them, just as mothers and fathers do now, and children then were good or bad, as the case might be, just as children are now. And the people you read about in history were real live people, who were good and bad, and glad and sorry, just as people are now-a-days.

You know that if you were to set out on a journey now from one end of England to another, wherever you went, through fields and woods and lanes, you would still be in the kingdom of George V. But once upon a time, hundreds of years ago, if one had set out to ride, he might have begun his ride in the morning in one kingdom, and finished it in the evening in another, because England was not one great kingdom then as it is now, but was divided up into seven pieces, with a king to look after each, and these seven kings

were always quarrelling with each other and trying to take each other's kingdom away, just as you might see seven naughty children, each with a plot of garden, trying to take each other's gardens and spoiling each other's flowers in their wicked quarrels. But presently there came one King, named Egbert, who was stronger than all the others; so he managed to put himself at the head of all the kingdoms, and he was the first King of *all* England. But though he had got the other kings to give in to him, he did not have at all a peaceful time. There were some very fierce, wild pirates, called Danes, who used to come sailing across the North Sea in ships with carved swans' heads at the prow, and hundreds of fighting men aboard. Their own country was bleak and desolate, and they were greedy and wanted the pleasant English land. So they used to come and land in all sorts of places along the sea-shore, and then they would march across the fields and kill the peaceful farmers, and set fire to their houses, and take their sheep and cows. Or sometimes they would drive them out, and live in the farm houses themselves. Of course, the English people were not going to stand this; so they were always fighting to drive the Danes away when they came there.

Egbert's son allowed the Danes to grow very strong in England, and when he died he left several sons, the eldest of whom was made King, but he could not beat the Danes, and then the second one was made King, but he could not beat the Danes either. In fairy tales, it is always the youngest prince who has all the good fortune, and in this story the same thing happened. This prince did what none of his brothers could do. He drove out the Danes from England, and gave his people a chance of being quiet and happy and good. His name was Alfred.

Like most great men, this King Alfred had a good mother. She used to read to him, when he was little, out

of a great book with gold and precious stones on the cover, and inside beautiful songs and poetry, and one day she said to the young princes, who were all very fond of being read to out of this splendid book —

"Since you like the book so much, I will give it to the one who is first able to read it, and to say all the poetry in it by heart."

The eldest prince tried to learn it, but I suppose he did not try hard enough; and the other princes tried, but I fear they were too lazy. But you may be quite sure the youngest prince did the right thing. He learned to read, and then he set to work to learn the poems by heart; and it was a proud day for him and for the Queen when he was able to say all the beautiful poetry to her. She put the book into his hands for his very own, and they kissed each other with tears of pride and pleasure.

You must not suppose that King Alfred drove out the Danes without much trouble, much thought, and much hard work. Trouble, thought, and hard work are the only three spells the fairies have left us, so of course he had to use them. He was made King just after the Danes had gained a great victory, and for the first eight years of his reign he was fighting them continually. At one time they had conquered almost the whole of England, and they would have killed Alfred if they could have found him.

You know, a wise prince always disguises himself when danger becomes very great. So Alfred disguised himself as a farm labourer, and went to live with a farmer, who used to make him feed the beasts and help about the farm, and had no idea that this labourer was the great King himself.

One day the farmer's wife went out — perhaps she went out to milk the cows; at any rate it was some important business — and she had made some cakes for supper, and she saw Alfred sitting idle in the kitchen, so she asked

him to look after the cakes, to see that they did not burn. Alfred said he would. But he had just received some news about the Danes, and he was thinking and thinking over this, and he forgot all about the cakes, and when the farmer's wife came in she found them burned black as coal.

"Oh, you silly, greedy fellow," she said, "you can eat cakes fast enough; but you can't even take the trouble to bake them when other people take the trouble to make them for you."

And I have heard that she even slapped his face. He bore it all very patiently.

"I am very sorry," he said, "but I was thinking of other things."

Just at that moment her husband came in followed by several strangers, and, to the good woman's astonishment, they all fell on their knees and greeted her husband's labourer as their King.

"We have beaten the Danes," they said, "and every one is asking where is King Alfred? You must come back with us."

"Forgive me," cried the woman. "I didn't think of your being the King."

"Forgive me," said Alfred, kindly. "I didn't think of your cakes being burned."

The Danes had many more fighting men than Alfred; so he was obliged to be very cautious and wise, or he could never have beaten them at all. In those days very few people could read; and the evenings used to seem very long sometimes, so that anybody who could tell a story or sing a song was made much of, and some people made it their trade to go about singing songs and telling stories and making jokes to amuse people who could not sing songs or tell stories or make jokes themselves. These were called gleemen, and wherever they went they were always

welcomed and put at a good place at table, and treated with respect and kindness; and in time of war no one ever killed a gleeman, so they could always feel quite safe whatever was going on.

Now Alfred once wanted to know how many Danes there were in a certain camp, and whether they were too strong for him to beat. So he disguised himself as a gleeman and took a harp, for his mother had taught him how to sing and play very prettily, and he went and sang songs to the Danes and told stories to them. But all the time he kept his eyes open, and found out all he wanted to know. He saw that the Danes were not expecting to be attacked, so that, instead of keeping watch, they were feasting and drinking and playing all the time. Then he went back to his own soldiers, and they crept up to the Danish camp and fell upon it while the Danes were feasting and making merry, and as the Danes were not expecting a fight, the English were easily able to get much the best of it.

At last, after many fights, King Alfred managed to make peace with his enemies, and then he settled down to see what he could do for his own people. He saw that if he was to keep out the Danes he must be able to fight them on sea as well as on land. So he learned how to build ships and taught his people how to build them, and that was the beginning of the great English navy, which to this day is still the greatest in the world. Alfred was wise enough to see that knowledge is power, and, as he wanted his people to be strong, he tried to make them learned. He built schools, and at University College, Oxford, there are people who will tell you that that college was founded by Alfred the Great.

He used to divide his time very carefully, giving part to study and part to settling disputes among his people, and part to his shipbuilding and his other duties. They

had no clocks and watches in those days, and he used sometimes to get so interested in his work as to forget that it was time to leave it and go on to something else, just as you do sometimes when you get so interested in a game that you forget that it is time to go on with your lessons. The idea of a clock never entered into Alfred's head, at least not a clock with wheels, and hands on its face, but he was so clever that he made a clock out of a candle. He painted rings of different colours round the candle, and when it had burned down to the first ring it was half an hour gone, and when it was burned to the next ring it was another half-hour, and so on. So he could tell exactly how the time went.

He was called Alfred the Great, and no king has better deserved such a title.

"So long as I have lived," he said, "I have striven to live worthily." And he longed, above all things, to leave "to those that came after a remembrance of him in good works."

He did many good and wise things, but the best and wisest thing he ever did was to begin to write the History of England. There had been English poems before this, but no English stories that were not written in poetry. So that Alfred's book was the first of all the thousands and thousands of English books. His book is generally called the Saxon Chronicle, and was added to by other people after his death.

He made a number of wise laws. It is believed that it was he who first ordained that an Englishman should be tried not only by a judge but also by a jury of people like himself.

Though he had fought bravely when fighting was needed to defend his kingdom, yet he loved peace and all the arts of peace. He loved justice and kindness, and all folk loved and wept for him when he died, because he was a

good king who had always striven to live worthily, that is to say, he had always tried to be good.

His last words to his son, just before he died, were these —"It is just that the English people should be as free as their own thoughts."

You must not think that this means that the English people should be free to do as they like. What it means is, that an Englishman should be as free to do good deeds as he is to think good thoughts.

WILLIAM TELL AND HIS GREAT SHOT

William Tell lived in the village of Bürglen, near the town of Altorf. His wife, who was called Hedwig, was Walter Furst's daughter. Tell and Hedwig had two sons, William and Walter. Walter, the younger, was about six years old.

William Tell loved his wife and children very much, and they all lived together very happily in a pretty little cottage.

"Hedwig," said Tell one morning, "I am going into Altorf to see your father."

Hedwig looked troubled. "Do be careful, William," said she. "Must you really go? You know the Governor is there just now, and he hates you."

"Oh, I have done nothing for which he could punish me," said Tell, "but I will keep out of his way," and he lifted his cross-bow and prepared to go.

"Do not take your bow," said Hedwig, still feeling uneasy. "Leave it here."

"Why, Hedwig, how you trouble yourself for nothing," said Tell, smiling at her. "Why should I leave my bow behind? I feel lost without it."

"O father, where are you going?" said Walter, running into the room at this moment.

"I am going to Altorf to see your grandfather. Would you like to come?"

"Oh, may I? May I, mother?"

"Yes, dear, if you like," said Hedwig. "And you will be careful, won't you?" she added, turning to Tell.

"Yes, I will," he replied, and Walter, throwing his arms round her neck, said, "It's all right, mother, I will take care of father." Then they set off merrily together.

It was a great thing to go to Altorf with father, and Walter was so happy that he chattered all the way, asking questions about everything.

"How far can you shoot, father?"

"Oh, a good long way."

"As high as the sun?" asked Walter, looking up at it.

"Oh, dear no, not nearly so high as that."

"Well, how high? As high as the snow mountains?"

"Oh, no."

Walter went on asking questions about one thing after another, until his father was quite tired of answering them.

Now some time before this, Gessler, the Governor, had set his hat upon a pole in the market-place, and ordered that all the people should bow to it, and this Tell had sworn not to do. Walter, however, was chattering so much, that instead of going round by another way in order to avoid it, as he had meant to do, he went straight through the market-place to reach the house of Walter Furst, his father-in-law.

"Look, father," said Walter, "look, how funny! there is a hat stuck up on a pole. What is it for?"

"Don't look, Walter," said Tell, "the hat has nothing to do with us, don't look at it." And taking Walter by the hand, he led him away.

But it was too late. The soldier Heinz, who stood be-

side the pole to guard it and see that people bowed in passing, pointed his spear at Tell and bade him stop. "Stand, in the Emperor's name," he cried.

"Let be, friend," said Tell, "let me pass."

"Not until you obey the Emperor's command. You must bow to the hat."

"It is no command of the Emperor," said Tell. "It is Gessler's folly and tyranny. Let me go."

"Nay, but you must not speak of my lord the Governor in such terms. You shall not go past until you bow to the cap, and if you bow not, to prison I will lead you. Such is my lord's command."

"Why should I bow to a cap?" said Tell, his voice shaking with rage. "Were the Emperor himself here, then would I bend the knee and bow my head to him with all reverence. But to a hat! Never!" and he tried to force his way past the soldier. But he would not let him pass, and kept his spear pointed at Tell.

Hearing loud and angry voices, many people gathered to see what the cause might be. Soon there was quite a crowd around the two. Every one talked at once, and the noise and confusion were great. Heinz tried to take Tell prisoner, and the people tried to take him away. "Help! help!" shouted Heinz, hoping that some of his fellow-soldiers would hear him and come to his aid,—"Help! help! treason!"

Then over all the noise of the shouting there sounded the tramp of horses' hoofs and the clang and jangle of swords and armour.

"Room for the Governor. Room, I say," cried a herald.

The shouting ceased and the crowd silently parted, as Gessler, richly dressed, haughty and gloomy, rode through it, followed by a gay company of his friends and soldiers. He checked his horse, and, gazing round at the crowd, said, "What is this rioting?"

"My lord," said Heinz, stepping forward, "this scoundrel here will not bow to the cap, according to your lordship's command."

"Eh, what?" said Gessler, his dark face growing more dark and angry still. "Who dares to disobey my orders?"

"'Tis William Tell of Bürglen, my lord."

"Tell," said Gessler, turning in his saddle and looking at Tell as he stood among the people, holding little Walter by the hand.

There was silence for a few minutes while Gessler gazed at Tell in anger.

"I hear you are a great shot, Tell," said Gessler at last, laughing scornfully, "they say you never miss."

"That is quite true," said little Walter eagerly, for he was proud of his father's shooting. "He can hit an apple on a tree a hundred yards off."

"Is that your boy?" said Gessler, looking at him with an ugly smile.

"Yes, my lord."

"Have you other children?"

"Another boy, my lord."

"You are very fond of your children, Tell?"

"Yes, my lord."

"Which of them do you love best?"

Tell hesitated. He looked down at little Walter with his rosy cheeks and curly hair. Then he thought of William at home with his pretty loving ways. "I love them both alike, my lord," he said at last.

"Ah," said Gessler, and thought a minute. "Well, Tell," he said after a pause. "I have heard so much of this boast of yours about hitting apples, that I should like to see something of it. You shall shoot an apple off your boy's head at a hundred yards' distance. That will be easier than shooting off a tree."

"My lord," said Tell, turning pale, "you do not mean

that? It is horrible. I will do anything rather than that."

"You will shoot an apple off your boy's head," repeated Gessler in a slow and scornful voice. "I want to see your wonderful skill, and I command you to do it at once. You have your cross-bow there. Do it."

"I will die first," said Tell.

"Very well," said Gessler, "but you need not think in that way to save your boy. He shall die with you. Shoot, or die both of you. And, mark you, Tell, see that you aim well, for if you miss you will pay for it with your life."

Tell turned pale. His voice trembled as he replied, "My lord, it was but thoughtlessness. Forgive me this once, and I will always bow to the cap in future." Proud although he was, Tell could not bear the thought that he might kill his own child.

"Have done with this delay," said Gessler, growing yet more angry. "You break the laws, and when, instead of punishing you as you deserve, I give you a chance of escape, you grumble and think yourself hardly used. Were peasants ever more unruly and discontented? Have done, I say. Heinz, bring me an apple."

The soldier hurried away.

"Bind the boy to that tree," said Gessler, pointing to a tall lime-tree near by.

Two soldiers seized Walter and bound him fast to the tree. He was not in the least afraid, but stood up against the trunk straight and quiet. Then, when the apple was brought, Gessler, rode up to him and, bending from the saddle, himself placed the apple upon his head.

All this time the people crowded round silent and wondering, and Tell stood among them as if in a dream, watching everything with a look of horror in his eyes.

"Clear a path there," shouted Gessler, and the soldiers

charged among the people, scattering them right and left.

When a path had been cleared, two soldiers, starting from the tree to which Walter was bound, marching over the ground measured one hundred paces, and halted. "One hundred paces, my lord," they said, turning to Gessler.

Gessler rode to the spot, calling out, "Come, Tell, from here you shall shoot."

Tell took his place. He drew an arrow from his quiver, examined it carefully, and then, instead of fitting it to his bow, he stuck it in his belt. Then, still carefully, he chose another arrow and fitted it to his bow.

A deep silence fell upon every one as Tell took one step forward. He raised his bow. A mist was before his eyes, his arm trembled, his bow dropped from his hand. He could not shoot. The fear that he might kill his boy took away all his skill and courage.

A groan broke from the people as they watched. Then from far away under the lime-tree came Walter's voice, "Shoot, father, I am not afraid. You cannot miss."

Once more Tell raised his bow. The silence seemed deeper than ever. The people of Altorf knew and loved Tell, and Furst, and little Walter. And so they watched and waited with heavy hearts and anxious faces.

"Ping!" went the bowstring. The arrow seemed to sing through the frosty air, and, a second later, the silence was broken by cheer after cheer. The apple lay upon the ground pierced right through the centre.

One man sprang forward and cut the rope with which Walter was bound to the tree; another picked up the arrow and ran with it to Gessler. But Tell stood still, his bow clutched, his body bent forward, his eyes wild and staring, as if he were trying to follow the flight of the arrow. Yet he saw nothing, heard nothing.

"He has really done it!" exclaimed Gessler in astonishment, as he turned the apple round and round in his hand. "Who would have thought it? Right in the centre too."

Little Walter, quite delighted, came running to his father. "Father," he cried, "I knew you could do it. I knew you could do it, and I was not a bit afraid. Was it not splendid?" and he laughed and pressed his curly hair against his father.

Then suddenly Tell seemed to wake out of his dream, and taking Walter in his arms he held him close, kissing him again and again. "You are safe, my boy. You are safe," was all he said. But strong man though he was, his eyes were full of tears, and he was saying to himself, "I might have killed him. I might have killed my own boy."

Meanwhile Gessler sat upon his horse watching them with a cruel smile upon his wicked face. "Tell," he said at last, "that was a fine shot, but for what was the other arrow?"

Tell put Walter down and, holding his hand, turned to Gessler, "It is always an archer's custom, my lord, to have a second arrow ready," he said.

"Nay, nay," said Gessler, "that answer will not do, Tell. Speak the truth."

Tell was silent.

"Speak, man," said Gessler, "and if you tell the truth, whatever it may be, I promise you your life."

"Then," said Tell, throwing his shoulders back and looking straight at Gessler, "since you promise me my life, hear the truth. If that arrow had struck my child, the second one was meant for you, and be sure I had not missed my mark a second time."

Gessler's face grew dark with rage. For a moment or two he could not speak. When at last he did speak, his

voice was low and terrible, "You dare tell me this," he said. "I promised you your life, and that you shall have, but you shall pass it in a dark and lonely prison, where neither sun nor moon shall send the least glimmer of light. There you shall lie, so that I may be safe from you. Ah, my fine archer, your bows and arrows will be of little use to you henceforth. Seize him, men, and bind him, lest he do murder even now."

In a moment the soldiers sprang forward, and Tell was seized and bound.

As Gessler sat watching them, he looked round at all the angry faces of the crowd. "Tell has too many friends here," he said to himself. "If I imprison him in the Curb of Uri, they may find some way to help him escape. I will take him with me in my boat to Küssnacht. There he can have no friends. There he will be quite safe." Then aloud he said, "Follow me, my men. Bring him to the boat."

As he said these words, there was a loud murmur from the crowd. "That is against the law," cried many voices.

"Law, law?" growled Gessler. "Who makes the law, you or I?"

Walter Furst had been standing among the crowd, silent and anxious. Now he stepped forward and spoke boldly. "My lord," he said, "it has ever been a law among the Swiss that no one shall be imprisoned out of his own canton. If my son-in-law, William Tell, has done wrong, let him be tried here, in Uri, in Altorf. If you do otherwise you wrong our ancient freedom and rights."

"Your freedom! your rights!" said Gessler roughly. "I tell you, you are here to obey the laws, not to teach me how to rule." Then turning his horse and calling out, "On men, to the boat with him," he rode towards the lake, where, at a little place called Fluelen, his boat was waiting for him.

But Walter clung to his father, crying bitterly. Tell could not take him in his arms and comfort him, for his hands were tied. But he bent over to kiss him, saying, "Little Walter, little Walter, be brave. Go with thy grandfather and comfort thy mother."

So Tell was led to Gessler's boat, followed by the sorrowing people. Their hearts were full of hot anger against the tyrant. Yet what could they do? He was too strong for them.

Tell was roughly pushed into the boat, where he sat closely guarded on either side by soldiers. His bow and arrows which had been taken from him were thrown upon a bench beside the steersman.

Gessler took his seat. The boat started, and was soon out upon the blue water of the lake. As the people of Altorf watched Tell go, their hearts sank. They had not known, until they saw him bound and a prisoner how much they had loved and trusted him.

WILLIAM TELL'S SECOND SHOT

As soon as Gessler landed, he called for his horse, and silent and gloomy, his heart full of bitter hate against Tell and all the Swiss, he mounted and rode towards his castle at Küssnacht.

But Tell's heart, too, was full of hate and anger. That morning he had been a gentle, peace loving man. Now all was changed. Gessler's cruel jest had made him hard and angry. He could not forget that he might have killed his own boy. He seemed to see always before him Walter bound to the tree with the apple on his head. Tell made up his mind that Gessler should never make any one

else suffer so much. There was only one thing to do. That was to kill Gessler, and that he meant to do.

If Gessler escaped from the storm, Tell was sure that he could go straight to his castle at Küssnacht. There was only one road which led from the lake to the castle, and at a place called the Hollow Way it became very narrow, and the banks rose steep and rugged on either side. There Tell made up his mind to wait for Gessler. There he meant to free his country from the cruel tyrant.

Without stopping for food or rest, Tell hurried through the woods until he came to the Hollow Way. There he waited and watched. Many people passed along the road. There were herds with flocks, and travellers of all kinds, among them a poor woman whose husband had been put in prison by Gessler, so that now she had no home, and had to wander about with her children, begging. She stopped and spoke to Tell and the story she told of Gessler's cruelty made Tell's heart burn with anger, and made him more sure than ever that the deed he meant to do was just and right.

The day went on, and still Gessler did not come, and still Tell waited. At last he heard the distant tramp of feet and the sound of voices. Surely he had come at last. But as the sounds came nearer, Tell knew that it could not be Gessler, for he heard music and laughter, and through the Hollow Way came a gaily dressed clown. It was a wedding-party. Laughing and merry, the bride and bridegroom with their friends passed along. When they were out of sight the wind brought back the sound of their merry voices to Tell, as he waited upon the bank. They, at least, had for a time forgotten Gessler.

At last, as the sun was setting, Tell heard the tramp of horses, and a herald dashed along the road, shouting, "Room for the Governor. Room."

As Gessler came slowly on behind, Tell could hear him

talking in a loud and angry voice to a friend. "Obedience I will have," he was saying. "I have been far too mild a ruler over this people. They grow too proud. But I will break their pride. Let them prate of freedom, indeed. I will crush —" The sentence was never finished. An arrow whizzed through the air, and with a groan Gessler fell, dead.

Tell's second arrow had found its mark.

Immediately everything was in confusion. Gessler's soldiers crowded round, trying to do something for their master. But it was useless. He was dead. Tell's aim was true.

"Who has done this foul murder?" cried one of Gessler's friends, looking round.

"The shot was mine," answered Tell, from where he stood on the high bank. "But no murder have I done. I have but freed an unoffending people from a base and cowardly tyrant. My cause is just, let God be the judge."

At the sound of his voice every one turned to look at Tell, as he stood above them calm and unafraid.

"Seize him!" cried the man who had already spoken, as soon as he recovered from his astonishment. "Seize him, it is Tell the archer."

Five or six men scrambled up the steep bank as fast as they could. But Tell slipped quietly through the bushes, and when they reached the top he was nowhere to be found.

The short winter's day was closing in fast, and Tell found it easy to escape in the darkness from Gessler's soldiers. They soon gave up the chase, and, returning to the road, took up their master's dead body and carried it to his castle at Küssnacht. There was little sorrow for him, for he had been a hard master. The Austrian soldiers did not grieve, and the Swiss, wherever they heard the news, rejoiced.

As soon as he was free of the soldiers, Tell turned and

made for Stauffacher's house. All through the night he walked, until he came to the pretty house with its red roofs and many windows which had made Gessler so angry.

Now there was no light in any of the windows, and all was still and quiet. But Tell knew in which of the rooms Stauffacher slept, and he knocked softly upon the window until he had aroused his friend.

"William Tell!" said Stauffacher in astonishment. "I heard from Walter Furst that you were a prisoner. Thank Heaven that you are free again."

"I am free," said Tell; "you too, are free. Gessler is dead."

"Gessler dead!" exclaimed Stauffacher. "Now indeed have we cause for thankfulness. Tell me, how did it happen?" and he drew William Tell into the house.

Tell soon told his story. Then Stauffacher, seeing how weary he was, gave him food and made him rest.

That night Tell slept well. All next day he remained hidden in Stauffacher's house. "You must not go," said his friend, "Gessler's soldiers will be searching for you." But when evening came Tell crept out into the dark again, and kind friends rowed him across the lake back to Fluelen. There, where a few days before he had been a prisoner, he landed, now free.

Tell went at once to Walter Furst's house, and soon messengers were hurrying all through the land to gather together again the Confederates, as those who had met on the Rütli were called.

This time they gathered with less fear and less secrecy, for was not the dreaded Governor dead? Not one but was glad, yet some of the Confederates blamed Tell, for they had all promised to wait until the first of January before doing anything. "I know," said Tell, "but he drove me to it." And every man there who had left a

little boy at home felt that he too might have done the same thing.

Now that Tell had struck the first blow, some of the Confederates wished to rise at once. But others said, "No, it is only a few weeks now until New Year's day. Let us wait."

So they waited, and everything seemed quiet and peaceful in the land, for the Emperor sent no Governor to take Gessler's place, as he was far away in Austria, too busy fighting and quarrelling there to think of Switzerland in the meantime. "When I have finished this war," he said, "it will be time enough to crush these Swiss rebels."

CATSKIN

THERE was once a wealthy gentleman who lived in great state at his country seat. Possessing great riches, he ardently desired a son to inherit them, but, as yet, he and his wife were blessed with daughters only.

In course of time another child was born, but again it was a beautiful daughter. When the squire was told that it was a girl, he became very angry, and ordered that the child be sent away to be nursed, and he even refused to see it, despite his wife's tears.

So the sweet little girl was sent away to be brought up by a friend. Her father, although he was very bitter against her for not being a son, saw that she received an excellent education, and had everything that she could desire except his love.

In due time she grew up to be a very beautiful young lady; she had a very determined spirit, and resolved that rather than live any longer under her father's displeasure,

she would earn her own living, so, making herself a curious catskin robe, and tying up her grand clothes and jewels into a bundle, she set forth on her travels.

After a long day's walk she reached a town, and being tired, cold, and hungry, she knocked at the door of a castle, and asked for food and a night's lodging.

The lady of the castle, seeing the beautiful maiden in so strange a dress, asked her into the kitchen, and told her to warm herself by the fire. She gave her some food, and allowed her to make up a bed in the stable. In the morning, having hidden her bundle of rich clothes and jewels, she again went into the kitchen, where the cook told her she was to be her scullion, and do her bidding. She accepted the position, but led a life that was not pleasant, because the cook was unkind to her, and often struck her with a ladle. Owing to the strange robe she wore, she was nicknamed "Catskin."

One evening there was a grand ball to be held close by, and a great longing came over Catskin to taste again the life she was formerly used to. She wished greatly to attend the ball, and asked the cook's permission.

"You impudent baggage!" said the cook, "you would cut a fine figure among the ladies and lords." And with this she took a basin of water and dashed it in poor Catskin's face.

Catskin was very indignant at this rough treatment, and, going to the stable she washed herself clean, put on one of her beautiful dresses, and hastened away to the ball. Here her beauty attracted the attention of every one, and particularly that of her young master, the son of the lady of the castle. He at once fell in love with her beauty and grace, and would dance with no other lady. When the dancing was over, he said to her: "Fair maiden, pray tell me where you live."

Now in those days, houses were not numbered, but were

known by a painted sign, so she answered the young lord's question with this rhyme,—

"Kind Sir, if the truth I must tell,
At the sign of the Basin of Water I dwell."

Then she hastened away from the ball-room, put on her catskin robe again, went back to the kitchen, and none of them knew where she had been.

The next day the young man told his mother about the beautiful maiden, and declared that he would not rest until he had discovered who she was.

Soon after this, there was another grand ball, and again Catskin asked the cook's permission to attend it. The cook in a rage broke the ladle over poor Catskin's head, and called her an impudent slut.

Angry at this harsh treatment, Catskin hurried to the stable, dressed herself in her rich garments, and hurried away to the ball. Here her young master was anxiously waiting to see if she were coming, and he hoped to be able to find out where she dwelt.

As before, he would dance with no one else, and when the parting-time arrived, he again begged her to tell him where she lived.

For answer, she replied with the rhyme,—

"Kind Sir, if the truth I must tell,
At the sign of the Broken-Ladle I dwell."

Then she hurried away in the dark, and was soon dressed again in her catskins and back to the kitchen, and no one had any idea where she had been.

The next day the young lord told his mother that he would never be happy again until he had found out who the fair charmer was.

Another grand ball was to be held, and once more Catskin asked the cook if she might go. As before the cook

reviled her, and in a fury broke the skimmer over poor Catskin's head. Catskin ran away, dressed herself in her rich attire, and went to the ball. Her young master was awaiting her; he longed for nothing so much as to see her again. They enjoyed many dances together, and at the end he begged her to tell him from whence she came. But she would give him no other answer than this rhyme,—

"Kind Sir, if the truth I must tell,
At the sign of the Broken-Skimmer I dwell."

Then she flew away from the ball, donned her catskin cloak again, and slipped into the kitchen unseen by the cook, who little dreamed where she had been.

But the young lord was this time resolved to find out where she went, and had followed her quickly. He saw her creep into the stable, and come out again, dressed in her catskin robe.

The next day he was ill, and the doctor was sent for, and him he begged to allow no other than Catskin to nurse him. When she came, he told her how he loved her, and asked her to be his wife. At his request the kindly doctor promised to speak to his proud mother of his love for the cook's scullion. This he did, and at last pride gave way to her love for her son, and in order to save his life, she consented to their marriage.

Then the young man quickly recovered, and the wedding took place. Catskin, in her beautiful robe and jewels, looked like a goddess, and all the guests said that they had never seen so fair a maiden. The marriage festivities lasted several days, and there were great rejoicings.

But still the young lord's mother was not reconciled to her daughter-in-law, and so Catskin asked her husband to go with her to her father's house, and see if his heart had softened towards her. So together they travelled in their own coach to the great house where she was born.

There they found the old gentleman in lonely state. His wife and Catskin's sisters were dead, and too late he repented his pride and cruelty, and was now without comfort.

The young lord sat by his side, and said feelingly: "Have you not a daughter, sir, that you would wish to see and own?"

The old man cried aloud: "I have sinned greatly towards my youngest child, and now would give all that I own if I could only see her before I die."

Then the young man brought his wife to her father, who embraced her tenderly and begged her forgiveness for his cruelty towards her. He then fell down on his knees, and returned thanks to God for his mercy and grace. The bells in the tower rang out joyfully, and they all lived together happily.

SIGURD

THIS is a very old story: the Danes who used to fight with the English in King Alfred's time knew this story. They have carved on the rocks pictures of the things that happen in the tale, and those carvings may still be seen. Because it is so odd and so beautiful the story is told here again, but it has a sad ending — indeed it is all sad, and all about killing and fighting, as might be expected from the Danes. Once upon a time there was a king in the north who had won many wars, but now he was old. Yet he took a new wife, and then another prince who wanted to have married her came up against him with a great army. The old king went out and fought bravely, but at last his sword broke, and he was wounded and his men fled. But in the night, when the battle was over, his

young wife came out and searched for him among the slain, and at last she found him, and asked whether he might be healed. But he said "No," his luck was gone, his sword was broken, and he must die. And he told her that she would have a son, and that son would be a great warrior, and would avenge him on the other king, his enemy. And he bade her keep the broken pieces of the sword, to make a new sword for her son, and that blade should be called Gram.

Then he died. And his wife called her maid to her and said: "Let us change clothes, and you shall be called my name, and I by yours, lest the enemy should find us."

So this was done, and they hid in a wood, but there some strangers met them and carried them off in a ship to Denmark. And when they were brought before the king, he thought the maid looked like a queen and the queen like a maid. So he asked the queen: "How do you know in the dark of night whether the hours of night are wearing to the morning?"

"I know because, when I was younger, I used to have to rise and light the fires, and still I waken at the same time."

"A strange queen to light the fires," thought the king.

Then he asked the queen, who was dressed like a maid: "How do you know in the dark of night whether the hours are wearing near the dawn?"

"My father gave me a gold ring," said she, "and always, ere the dawning, it grows cold on my finger."

"A rich house where the maids wore gold," said the king. "Truly you are no maid but a king's daughter."

So he treated her royally, and as time went on she had a son called Sïgurd, beautiful and very strong. He had a tutor to be with him, and once the tutor bade him go to the king and ask for a horse.

"Choose a horse for yourself," said the king; and

Sigurd went to wood, and there he met an old man with a white beard, and said, "Come! help me choose a horse."

Then the old man said: "Drive all the horses into the river, and choose the one that swims across."

So Sigurd drove them, and only one swam across. Sigurd chose him; his name was Grani, and he came of Sleipnir's breed, and was the best horse in the world. For Sleipnir was the horse of Odin, the God of the north, and as swift as the wind.

But a day or two later his tutor said to Sigurd: "There is a great treasure of gold hidden not far from here, and it would become you to win it."

But Sigurd answered: "I have heard stories of that treasure, and I know that the dragon Fafnir guards it, and he is so huge and wicked that no man dares to go near him."

"He is no bigger than other dragons," said the tutor, "and if you were as grave as your father you would not fear him."

"I am no coward," says Sigurd; "why do you want me to fight the dragon?"

Then his tutor, whose name was Regin, told him that all this great hoard of gold had once belonged to his own father. And his father had three sons — the first was Fafnir, the dragon; the next was Otter, who could put on the shape of an Otter when he liked; and he was a great smith and maker of swords.

Now there was at that time a dwarf called Andvari, who lived in a pool beneath a waterfall, and there he had hidden a great hoard of gold. And one day Otter had been fishing there, and had killed a salmon and had eaten it, and was sleeping like an otter, on a stone. Then some one came by and threw a stone at the otter and killed it, and flayed off the skin, and took it to the house of Otter's father. Then he knew his son was dead, and to punish

the person who had killed him he must have the otter's skin filled with gold, and covered all over with red gold, or it should go worse with him. Then the person who had killed Otter went down and caught the dwarf who owned all the treasure and took it from him.

Only one ring was left, which the dwarf wore, and even that was taken from him.

Then the poor dwarf was very angry, and he prayed that the gold might never bring any but bad luck to all the men who owned it, forever.

Then the otter skin was filled with gold and covered with gold, all but one hair, and that was covered with the poor dwarf's last ring. But it brought good luck to nobody. First Fafnir, the dragon, killed his own father, and then he went and wallowed on the gold, and would let his brother have none, and no man dared go near it.

When Sigurd heard the story he said to Regin:

"Make me a good sword that I may kill this dragon."

So Regin made a sword, and Sigurd tried it with a blow on a lump of iron, and the sword broke.

Another sword he made, and Sigurd broke that too.

Then Sigurd went to his mother, and asked for the broken pieces of his father's blade, and gave them to Regin. And he hammered and wrought them into a new sword, so sharp that fire seemed to burn along its edges.

Sigurd tried this blade on the lump of iron, and it did not break, but split the iron in two. Then he threw a lock of wool into the river, and when it floated down against the sword it was cut into two pieces. So Sigurd said that sword would do. But before he went against the dragon he led an army to fight the men who had killed his father, and he slew their king, and took all his wealth, and went home.

When he had been at home a few days, he rode out with Regin one morning to the heath where the dragon used to

lie. Then he saw the track which the dragon made when he went to a cliff to drink, and the track was as if a great river had rolled along and left a deep valley.

Then Sigurd went down into that deep place, and dug many pits in it, and in one of the pits he lay hidden with his sword drawn. There he waited, and presently the earth began to shake with the weight of the dragon as he crawled to the water. And a cloud of venom flew before him as he snorted and roared, so that it would have been death to stand before him.

But Sigurd waited till half of him had crawled over the pit, and then he thrust the sword Gram right into his very heart.

Then the dragon lashed with his tail till stones broke and trees crashed about him.

Then he spoke, as he died, and said:

"Whoever thou art that has slain me, this gold shall be thy ruin, and the ruin of all who own it."

Sigurd said:

"I would touch none of it if by losing it I should never die. But all men die, and no brave man lets death frighten him from his desire. Die thou, Fafnir," and then Fafnir died. And after that Sigurd was called Fafnir's Bane, and Dragon-slayer.

Then Sigurd rode back, and met Regin, and Regin asked him to roast Fafnir's heart and let him taste of it.

So Sigurd put the heart of Fafnir on a stake, and roasted it. But it chanced he touched it with his finger, and it burned him. Then he put his finger in his mouth, and so tasted the heart of Fafnir.

Then immediately he understood the language of birds, and he heard the woodpeckers say:

"There is Sigurd roasting Fafnir's heart for another, when he should taste of it himself and learn all wisdom."

The next bird said:

"There lies Regin, ready to betray Sigurd, who trusts him."

The third bird said:

"Let him cut off Regin's head, and keep all the gold to himself."

The fourth said:

"That let him do, and then ride over Hindfell, to the place where Brynhild sleeps."

When Sigurd heard all this, and how Regin was plotting to betray him, he cut off Regin's head with one blow of the sword Gram.

Then all the birds broke out singing:

"We know a fair maid,
A fair maiden sleeping;
Sigurd, be not afraid;
Sigurd, win thou the maid
Fortune is keeping.

"High over Hindfell
Red fire is flaming,
There doth the maiden dwell,
She that should love thee well,
Meet for thy taming.

"There must she sleep till thou
Comest for her waking,
Rise up and ride, for now
Sure she will swear the vow
Fearless of breaking."

Then Sigurd remembered how the story went that somewhere, far away, there was a beautiful lady enchanted. She was under a spell, so that she must always sleep in a castle surrounded by flaming fire; there she must sleep forever till there came a knight who would ride through the fire and waken her. There he determined to go, but first he rode right down the horrible trail of Fafnir. And

Fafnir had lived in a cave with iron doors, a cave dug deep down in the earth, and full of gold bracelets, and crowns, and rings; and there, too, Sigurd found the helm of dread, a golden helmet, and whoever wears it is invisible. All these he piled on the back of the good horse Grani, and then he rode south to Hindfell.

Now it was night, and on the crest of the hill Sigurd saw a red fire blazing up into the sky, and within the flame a castle, and a banner on the topmost tower. Then he set the horse Grani at the fire, and he leaped through it lightly, as if it had been through the heather. So Sigurd went within the castle door, and there he saw some one sleeping, clad all in armour. Then he took the helmet off the head of the sleeper, and behold she was a most beautiful lady. And she wakened and said: "Ah! is it Sigurd, Sigmund's son, who has broken the curse, and comes here to waken me at last?"

This curse came upon her when the thorn of the tree of sleep ran into her hand long ago as a punishment because she had displeased Odin the God. Long ago, too, she had vowed never to marry a man who knew fear, and dared not ride through the fence of fire. For she was a warrior maid herself, and went armed into the battle like a man. But now she and Sigurd loved each other and promised to be true to each other, and he gave her a ring, and it was the last ring taken from the dwarf Andvari. Then Sigurd rode away, and he came to the house of a king who had a fair daughter. Her name was Gudrun, and her mother was a witch. Now Gudrun fell in love with Sigurd, but he was always talking of Brynhild, how beautiful she was and how dear. So one day Gudrun's witch mother put poppy and forgetful drugs in a magical cup, and bade Sigurd drink to her health, and he drank, and instantly he forgot poor Brynhild and he loved Gudrun, and they were married with great rejoicings.

Now the witch, the mother of Gudrun, wanted her son Gunnar to marry Brynhild, and she bade him ride out with Sigurd and go and woo her. So forth they rode to her father's house, for Brynhild had quite gone out of Sigurd's mind by reason of the witch's wine, but she remembered him and loved him still. Then Brynhild's father told Gunnar that she would marry none but him who could ride the flame in front of her enchanted tower, and thither they rode, and Gunnar set his horse at the flame, but he would not face it. Then Gunnar tried Sigurd's horse Grani, but he would not move with Gunnar on his back. Then Gunnar remembered witchcraft that his mother had taught him, and by his magic he made Sigurd look exactly like himself, and he looked exactly like Gunnar. Then Sigurd, in the shape of Gunnar and in his mail, mounted on Grani, and Grani leaped the fence of fire, and Sigurd went in and found Brynhild, but he did not remember her yet, because of the forgetful medicine in the cup of the witch's wine.

Now Brynhild had no help but to promise she would be his wife, the wife of Gunnar as she supposed, for Sigurd wore Gunnar's shape and she had sworn to wed whoever should ride the flames. And he gave her a ring, and she gave him back the ring he had given her before in his own shape as Sigurd, and it was the last ring of that poor dwarf Andvari. Then he rode out again, and he and Gunnar changed shapes, and each was himself again, and they went home to the witch queen's, and Sigurd gave the dwarf's ring to his wife, Gudrun. And Brynhild went to her father, and said that a king had come called Gunnar, and had ridden the fire, and she must marry him. "Yet I thought," she said, "that no man could have done this deed but Sigurd, Fafnir's bane, who was my true love. But he has forgotten me, and my promise I must keep."

So Gunnar and Brynhild were married, though it was

not Gunnar, but Sigurd in Gunnar's shape, that had ridden the fire.

And when the wedding was over and all the feast, then the magic of the witch's wine went out of Sigurd's brain, and he remembered all. He remembered how he had freed Brynhild from the spell, and how she was his own true love, and how he had forgotten and had married another woman, and won Brynhild to be the wife of another man.

But he was brave, and he spoke not a word of it to the others to make them unhappy. Still he could not keep away the curse which was to come on every one who owned the treasure of the dwarf Andvari, and his fatal golden ring.

And the curse soon came upon all of them. For one day, when Brynhild and Gudrun were bathing, Brynhild waded furthest out into the river, and said she did that to show she was Gudrun's superior. For her husband, she said, had ridden through the flame when no other man had dared face it.

Then Gudrun was very angry, and said that it was Sigurd, not Gunnar, who had ridden the flame, and had received from Brynhild that fatal ring, the ring of the dwarf Andvari.

Then Brynhild saw the ring which Sigurd had given to Gudrun, and she knew it and knew all, and she turned as pale as a dead woman, and went home. All that evening she never spoke. Next day she told Gunnar, her husband, that he was a coward and a liar, for he had never ridden the flame, but had sent Sigurd to do it for him, and pretended he had done it himself. And she said he would never see her glad in his hall, never drinking wine, never playing chess, never embroidering with the golden thread, never speaking words of kindness. Then she rent all her needlework asunder and wept aloud, so that every one in the house heard her. For her heart

was broken, and her pride was broken in the same hour. She had lost her true love, Sigurd, the slayer of Fafnir, and she was married to a man who was a liar.

Then Sigurd came and tried to comfort her, but she would not listen, and said she wished the sword stood fast in his heart.

"Not long to wait," he said, "till the bitter sword stands fast in my heart, and thou wilt not live long when I am dead. But, dear Brynhild, live and be comforted, and love Gunnar thy husband, and I will give thee all the gold, the treasure of the dragon Fafnir."

Brynhild said:

"It is too late."

Then Sigurd was so grieved and his heart so swelled in his breast that it burst the steel rings of his shirt of mail.

Sigurd went out and Brynhild determined to slay him. She mixed serpent's venom and wolf's flesh, and gave them in one dish to her husband's younger brother, and when he had tasted them he was mad, and he went into Sigurd's chamber while he slept and pinned him to the bed with a sword. But Sigurd woke, and caught the sword Gram in his hand, and threw it at the man as he fled, and the sword cut him in twain. Thus died Sigurd, Fafnir's bane, whom no ten men could have slain in fair fight. Then Gudrun wakened and saw him dead, and she moaned aloud, and Brynhild heard her and laughed; but the kind horse Grani lay down and died of very grief. And then Brynhild fell a-weeping till her heart broke. So they attired Sigurd in all his golden armour, and built a great pile of wood on board his ship, and at night laid on it the dead Sigurd and the dead Brynhild, and the good horse Grani, and set fire to it, and launched the ship. And the wind bore it blazing out to sea, flaming into the dark. So there were Sigurd and Brynhild burned together, and the curse of the dwarf Andvari was fulfilled.

THE NETTLE SPINNER

ONCE upon a time there lived at Quesnoy, in Flanders, a great lord whose name was Burchard, but whom the country people called Burchard the Wolf. Now Burchard had such a wicked, cruel heart, that it was whispered how he used to harness his peasants to the plough, and force them by blows from his whip to till his land with naked feet.

His wife, on the other hand was always tender and pitiful to the poor and miserable.

Every time that she heard of another misdeed of her husband's she secretly went to repair the evil, which caused her name to be blessed throughout the whole country side. The countess was adored as much as the count was hated.

One beautiful day when the count was out hunting he passed through a forest, and at the door of a beautiful cottage he saw a beautiful girl spinning hemp.

"What is your name?" he asked her.

"Renelde, my lord."

"You must get tired of staying in such a lonely place?"

"I am accustomed to it, my lord, and I never get tired of it."

"That may be so; but come to the castle, and I will make you lady's-maid to the countess."

"I cannot do that, my lord. I have to look after my grandmother, who is very helpless."

"Come to the castle, I tell you. I shall expect you this evening," and he went on his way.

But Renelde, who was betrothed to a young wood-cutter called Guilbert, had no intention of obeying the count, and she had, besides, to take care of her grandmother.

Three days later the count passed by.

"Why didn't you come?" he asked the pretty spinner.

"I told you, my lord, that I have to look after my grandmother."

"Come to-morrow, and I will make you lady-in-waiting to the countess," and he went on his way.

This offer produced no more effect than the other, and Renelde did not go to the castle.

"If you will only come," said the count to her when next he rode by, "I will send away the countess, and will marry you."

But two years before, when Renelde's mother was dying of a long illness, the countess had not forgotten them, but had given help when they sorely needed it. So even if the count had really wished to marry Renelde, she would always have refused.

Some weeks passed before Burchard appeared again.

Renelde hoped she had got rid of him, when one day he stopped at the door, his duck-gun under his arm and his game-bag on his shoulder. This time Renelde was spinning not hemp, but flax.

"What are you spinning?" he asked in a rough voice.

"My wedding-shift, my lord."

"You are going to be married, then?"

"Yes, my lord, by your leave."

For at that time no peasant could marry without the leave of his master.

"I will give you leave on one condition. Do you see those tall nettles that grow on the tomb in the churchyard? Go gather them and spin them into two fine shifts. One shall be your bridal shift, and the other shall be my shroud. For you shall be married the day that I am laid in my grave." And the count turned away with a mocking laugh.

Renelde trembled. Never in all Locquignol had such a thing been heard of as the spinning of nettles.

And besides, the count seemed made of iron and was very proud of his strength, often boasting that he should live to be a hundred.

Every evening, when his work was done, Guilbert came to visit his future bride. This evening he came as usual, and Renelde told him what Burchard had said.

"Would you like me to watch for the Wolf, and split his skull with a blow from my axe?"

"No," replied Renelde, "there must be no blood on my bridal bouquet. And then we must not hurt the count. Remember how good the countess was to my mother."

An old, old woman now spoke: she was the mother of Renelde's grandmother, and was more than ninety years old. All day long she sat in her chair, nodding her head and never saying a word.

"My children," she said, "all the years that I have lived in the world, I have never heard of a shift spun from nettles. But what God commands, man can do. Why should not Renelde try it?"

Renelde did try, and to her great surprise the nettles, when crushed and prepared, gave a good thread, soft and light and firm. Very soon she had spun the first shift, which was for her own wedding. She wove and cut it out at once, hoping that the count would not force her to begin the other. Just as she had finished sewing it, Burchard the Wolf passed by.

"Well," said he, "how are the shifts getting on?"

"Here, my lord, is my wedding-garment," answered Renelde, showing him the shift, which was the finest and whitest ever seen.

The count grew pale, but he replied roughly: "Very good. Now begin the other."

The spinner set to work. As the count returned to the castle a cold shiver passed over him, and he felt, as the saying is, that somebody was walking over his grave. He

tried to eat his supper, but could not; he went to bed shaking with fever. But he did not sleep, and in the morning could not manage to rise.

This sudden illness, which every instant became worse, made him very uneasy. No doubt Renelde's spinning-wheel knew all about it. Was it not necessary that his body, as well as his shroud, should be ready for his burial?

The first thing Burchard did was to send to Renelde and to stop her wheel.

Renelde obeyed, and that evening Guilbert asked her:

"Has the count given his consent to our marriage?"

"No," said Renelde.

"Continue your work, sweetheart. It is the only way of gaining it. You know he told you so himself."

The following morning as soon as she had put the house in order, the girl sat down to spin. Two hours after there arrived some soldiers, and when they saw her spinning they seized her, tied her arms and legs, and carried her to the bank of the river, which was swollen by the late rains.

When they reached the bank they flung her in, and watched her sink, after which they left her. But Renelde rose to the surface, and though she could not swim she struggled to land.

Directly she got home she sat down to spin.

Again came the two soldiers to the cottage and seized the girl, carried her to the river bank, tied a stone to her neck, and flung her into the river.

The moment their backs were turned the stone untied itself. Renelde waded the ford, returned to the hut, and sat down to spin.

This time the count resolved to go to Locquignol himself; but, as he was very weak and unable to walk, he had himself borne in a litter. And still the spinner spun.

When he saw her he fired a shot at her, as he would

have fired at a wild beast. The bullet rebounded without harming the spinner, who still spun on.

Burchard fell into such a violent rage that it nearly killed him. He broke the wheel into a thousand pieces, and then fell fainting on the ground. He was carried back to the castle, unconscious.

The next day the wheel was mended, and the spinner sat down to spin. Feeling that while she was spinning he was dying, the count ordered that her hands should be tied, and that they should not lose sight of her one instant.

But the guards fell asleep, the bonds loosed themselves, and the spinner spun on.

Burchard had every nettle rooted up for three leagues round. Scarcely had they been torn from the soil when they sowed themselves afresh, and grew as you were looking at them.

They sprang up even in the well-trodden floor of the cottage, and as fast as they were uprooted the distaff gathered to itself a supply of nettles, crushed, prepared, and ready for spinning.

And every day Burchard grew worse, and watched his end approaching.

Moved by pity for her husband, the countess at last found out the cause of his illness, and entreated him to allow himself to be cured. But the count in his pride refused more than ever to give his consent to the marriage.

So the lady resolved to go without his knowledge to pray for mercy from the spinner, and in the name of Renelde's dead mother, she besought her to spin no more. Renelde gave her promise, but in the evening Guilbert arrived at the cottage. Seeing that the cloth was no further advanced than it was the evening before, he inquired the reason. Renelde confessed that the countess had prayed her not to let her husband die.

"Will he consent to our marriage?"

"No."

"Let him die, then."

"But what will the countess say?"

"The countess will understand that it is not your fault; the count alone is guilty of his own death."

"Let us wait a little. Perhaps his heart may be softened."

So they waited for one month, for two, for six, for a year. The spinner spun no more. The count had ceased to persecute her, but he still refused his consent to the marriage. Guilbert became impatient.

The poor girl loved him with her whole soul, and she was more unhappy than she had been before, when Burchard was only tormenting her body.

"Let us have done with it," said Guilbert.

"Wait a little still," pleaded Renelde.

But the young man grew weary. He came more rarely to Locquignol, and very soon he did not come at all. Renelde felt as if her heart would break, but she held firm.

One day she met the count. She clasped her hands as if in prayer and cried:

"My lord, have mercy!"

Burchard the Wolf turned away his head and passed on.

She might have humbled his pride had she gone to her spinning-wheel again, but she did nothing of the sort.

Not long after this she learned that Guilbert had left the country. He did not even come to say good-bye to her, but, all the same, she knew the day and hour of his departure, and hid herself on the road to see him once more.

When she came in she put her silent wheel into a corner and cried for three days and three nights.

So another year went by. Then the count fell ill, and the countess supposed that Renelde, weary of waiting, had begun her spinning anew; but when she came to the cottage to see, she found the wheel silent.

However, the count grew worse and worse till he was given up by the doctors. The passing bell was rung, and he lay expecting death to come for him. But death was not so near as the doctors thought, and still he lingered.

He seemed in a desperate condition, but he got neither better nor worse. He could neither live nor die; he suffered horribly, and called loudly on death to put an end to his pains.

In this extremity he remembered what he had told the little spinner long ago. If death was so slow in coming, it was because he was not ready to follow him, having no shroud for his burial.

He sent to fetch Renelde, placed her by his bedside, and ordered her at once to go on spinning his shroud.

Hardly had the spinner begun to work when the count began to feel his pains grow less.

Then at last his heart melted; he was sorry for all the evil he had done out of pride, and implored Renelde to forgive him. So Renelde forgave him, and went on spinning night and day.

When the thread of the nettles was spun she wove it with her shuttle, and then she cut the shroud and began to sew it.

And as before, when she sewed the count felt his pains grow less, and the life sinking within him, and when the needle made the last stitch he gave his last sigh.

At the same hour Guilbert returned to the country, and, as he had never ceased to love Renelde, he married her eight days later.

He had lost two years of happiness, but comforted himself with thinking that his wife was a clever spinner, and what was much more rare, a brave and good woman.

ROBIN HOOD MEETS LITTLE JOHN

ONE day Robin Hood took a number of his men, and went out through the greenwood in search of adventure. On reaching the border of the forest they looked out across the open country.

Robin Hood said to his men, "Stay here in the shadow of the trees, while I go forward alone. Perhaps some rich knight or abbot may be on the road, and allow us to lighten his purse of its load. If I need you, I will sound my horn."

So his followers stayed in the shade of the forest, while Robin went on alone. He strolled along the high road and soon came to a place where a brook ran across the road. Here there was a narrow bridge, without a hand-rail, and on this he stepped to walk across. At this moment a huge fellow stepped on the farther end, and each walked forward briskly, so that they met in the middle of the bridge.

Robin said to himself, "Here is a yeoman I would like to have in my band. I will try him out and see if his courage is equal to his stature."

The stranger was head and shoulders taller than Robin, very broad, and apparently of remarkable strength. He had a pleasant face, and his bearing showed resolution which hinted that he would be a very awkward person to cross. Robin resolved to put him to the test.

"My man," said he, "what do you mean by stepping on the bridge when you saw that I was about to cross? You know that there is not room enough for two."

The stranger leaned quietly upon his one weapon, a huge quarter-staff fully seven feet long, and very thick.

Truly a dangerous-looking cudgel. He smiled as he replied, "Why should I stand aside for you. I have never done so yet for any man, and see no reason why I should now."

"Do not bandy words with me," said Robin; "big as you are, I will show you some real Nottingham play."

With this Robin Hood put an arrow to his bow, which he drew to his ear. "Now," he said, "back with you, your life is in my hands. I could slay you with this shaft before you could fetch a blow at me with your staff."

This was merely bravado on Robin's part to see if the stranger would show fear, but the tall man just took it as though he had been asked how he was feeling.

"That would be a coward's trick," said he. "Here I am with but a staff in my hand, and you threaten me with your bow and arrow. A coward's trick."

"I scorn the name of a coward," said Robin, "therefore I will lay aside my long bow and take a staff, just to see what you are made of."

Thereupon Robin laid aside his great bow and his quiver of arrows, and ran to a tree beside the stream, and cut himself a stout staff. Then he came back to the stranger, who was still standing in the middle of the bridge, leaning on his quarter-staff.

"We met here and here we will fight," said Robin Hood, "and he who knocks the other into the stream is the victor."

"Very good," cried the big stranger, and the two faced each other, making as firm as possible their uncertain foothold, and carefully getting into position for the assault.

They whirled their sticks about, striking and parrying, each striving to get under the other's guard. Robin got in the first blow. Pretending to strike his opponent's head, he swiftly changed the direction of his blow, and caught the stranger a tremendous thwack across the ribs.

But the stranger replied with such a terrific cut that it was impossible to stand before it. Robin dodged it nimbly, but did not altogether escape, receiving a cut on the head which caused the blood to run down his face, and this made him so full of wrath that he dealt a shower of blows at his opponent so swiftly that the big man was kept altogether on the defensive, being forced to parry all the time.

Robin's staff got home on the tall man's body with great frequency, but he gave way not an inch. Suddenly he brought his staff with all his power on Robin Hood's stick, which it broke in two, and while the force of the blow was somewhat broken, it was still sufficient to hurl him headlong into the brook.

The water beneath was deep, and Robin went in head over ears. Soon he came up spluttering and gasping for breath.

The stranger laughed gleefully, and merrily chaffed his opponent, asking him how he felt now.

"You have fairly won," said Robin, "and I must pay tribute to your bravery." Wading to the side, he climbed on to the bank, and putting his horn to his lips, gave his own bugle call.

Immediately his followers were seen running in their eagerness to reach their leader, and, seeing him in such sorry plight, all wet and dripping, asked him if he had been in the brook.

"Ay, that I have," said Robin Hood, "and there stands the man who put me there."

"Then he must have the same treatment," cried they; "we must not let him go free after using our master in this fashion. Let us duck him in the stream."

The gigantic stranger made ready to defend himself, but strong though he was, he would have had no chance against the crowd of archers. But Robin Hood ordered them to leave him alone.

"This man has beaten me in fair fight," he said; "he has a stout heart and I would fain be friends with him." And turning to his late adversary said, "We can use your strong arm and stout heart; will you become a member of our band?"

"Who are you?" asked the stranger. "There is one man only under whom I will serve, Robin Hood, and he I am now seeking. I am on my way to Sherwood Forest to offer him my services, and hope to join his goodly company."

"Then we are well-met, friend, for I am Robin Hood and these are of my company. I receive you gladly, and consider myself fortunate in having a recruit so proven. We bid you welcome. And now, what is your name?"

"My name is John Little," replied the stranger, "and I'll serve you with my whole heart."

When the archers heard the name, they began to laugh, and Will Stutely cried, "Now that he is a member of our band, he must be re-christened, and seeing that he is so small a child we will call him Little John instead of John Little."

The jest was received with laughter and cheers, and the giant was accordingly renamed Little John, and in order to properly celebrate the christening of their new companion, Robin Hood decreed that a feast should be held in honour of the event.

They therefore returned to the forest, where a great fire was soon built and venison roasted, and the rich meat was washed down with great draughts of nut-brown ale. After the feast there was singing and dancing, and among the merriest was Little John, great both in heart and stature, whose true soul and strong arm made him a fit lieutenant to his renowned leader.

ANOTHER RECRUIT

One day, soon after Little John had joined the band, he and his master, Robin Hood, took their bows and went in search of a fat buck, for the hollow oak which was their larder was empty.

About midday the two outlaws saw a fine herd of deer before them at the far side of an open grassy space in the forest.

"Yonder is the luck we want, Little John," said Robin Hood.

He pointed to a noble stag, feeding quietly at a short distance from the herd, of which he was the lord and master.

"Then this is the best way to take him," said Little John. "The wind is blowing from the herd towards us. I will work round till the great hart can scent me on the breeze. He will rush in this direction, and you will then have an easy shot."

They agreed upon this plan, and Little John was just about to move away when he stopped short, and pointed but said nothing. Robin Hood looked and saw a young man step into the open space from the forest. The stranger wore a gay dress of scarlet, and carried a long-bow, while a stout broadsword hung at his side. No sooner had he left the narrow path than his glance fell upon the herd of deer, and the great stag, which now raised its head and tossed its antlers at the sight of the scarlet-clad figure, stamped on the earth.

"Who can this gay spark be?" said Robin Hood.

"I do not know him," replied Little John, in low tones. "He is not of the forest."

"By my faith, I should say not," returned the leader;

"yonder suit of scarlet shines like a fire among the trees. It were better for him to wear a dress of good Lincoln green if he wishes to walk in the forest. 'Tis some fop out of the town come to walk in the greenwood."

But just at this moment the two watchers saw a feat which brought a murmur of admiration to their lips.

The stranger had strung his bow, snatched an arrow from his quiver, and laid it on the string. The movement had startled the stag, and he had given the alarm, and the whole herd was fleeing silently and swiftly. Several hinds had gathered around the mighty hart as if to protect their lord, and it seemed hopeless to think of getting a shot at him. But just on the edge of the trees the stag bounded out and headed the herd for a moment. That moment was enough. The string twanged, the arrow flew, and the stag pitched forward headlong, and lay still. The shaft had done its work.

"A noble shot, and by no fop from the town, Little John," said Robin Hood. "Wait here, while I go to speak with him."

So Little John remained hidden in the thicket, while Robin Hood walked up to the stranger, who now stood beside the great deer which he had slain.

"A fine shot!" said Robin, as he walked up to the place. "Your shaft was loosed in the very nick of time, stranger."

The young man in scarlet looked coolly at Robin, but made no reply.

"I love a bold archer," went on Robin Hood, "and draw to me all I can. Will you become a yeoman of mine, stranger?"

"And pray who are you?" said the young man in scarlet in a rather scornful tone, "and why should I become thy yeoman? Are you some kind of Forester in the King's service?"

"Truly I am — for the King of Sherwood!" chuckled Robin.

"Whether you are King of England or King of Sherwood is nothing to me," drawled the gallant; "go your own way, and trouble me not. I wish to have nothing to do with you."

"And what if I do not leave you alone?" said Robin.

"Why," returned the other, "you will remain at the peril of a beating."

"This seems a cool fellow," said Robin to himself; "I will make a trial of him and see if his courage is as great as it seems."

So while the young man in scarlet began to examine the horns of the deer he had shot, as calmly as though no one were within a mile of him, Robin secretly slipped an arrow on the string. Then he cried "Ha!" and stamped his foot. The young man turned, and saw Robin's bow bent, and an arrow laid full upon his heart. He did not flinch, but merely said in a vexed tone, "Get thee gone, Forester! What means this foolish play?"

"Do you call an arrow between your ribs foolish play?" growled Robin Hood. "I am the enemy of all such foolish sprigs as you; throw down your purse, and quickly, lest I loose the string."

"Well, well," said the young man, "there is strong argument in a grey goose shaft," and he made as though to take his purse from his girdle.

But instead of unloosing the purse he clapped an arrow to his own bow, and bent the latter with wonderful speed; so there they stood, each ready to shoot, and Robin, who had never dreamed of letting his arrow fly, saw that he was likely to be paid back in his own coin.

"Stay your hand!" cried Robin; "there is no use in our slaying each other."

The stranger replied, as coolly as ever, "None at all

that I can see, but the game was of your beginning, not mine."

Robin Hood took his arrow from the string, and said, "Then I end it." The stranger did the same and waited to see what the outlaw would do next.

"Each of us has sword and buckler," said Robin, "and it were a shame for us to part without seeing who is the better man."

The stranger agreed, and so each arranged his buckler on his left arm, and took his sword in his right hand. Then clash! clang! they were cutting, parrying, thrusting. But so skilful were they and so evenly matched, that they fought for an hour without either having given way an inch before the other.

At length the stranger made a lucky stroke, and the point of his sword touched Robin's head, causing the blood to flow into his eyes, so that he could not see; and at this Little John ran from his hiding-place.

"Give me your sword!" he cried to Robin Hood, "and he shall try a bout with me, master. I can play at this game too."

"Not so, Little John!" cried Robin Hood, wiping the blood from his eyes; "this man has fought long, fairly, and honestly, and 'twere a shame to set a fresh man against him."

"I like it not that this gay fellow may brag to his friends that he drew blood from Robin Hood, and went free."

At this the gallant showed much interest. "Have I met and fought with Robin Hood, and yet not known him?" he cried. "Rob, have you forgotten Will Gamewell?"

"Forgotten my cousin, whom I first taught to draw a bow?" said Robin. "But can you be he? Ha! now I know your smile and your voice; and to think we should have fought each other."

The cousins shook hands heartily, and then Little John took Gamewell's hand in turn.

"But what are you doing here, Will?" asked Robin Hood.

"I was looking for you, Rob," was the answer. "Unwillingly I have shed a man's blood, and am now an outlaw too. I was out hunting with old Grimm, the steward, and while waiting for a deer to pass, I turned and found him bending his bow, with the arrow laid upon me. I at once loosed a shaft at him, and we shot together. His arrow went through my doublet, but mine went through his body, and in five minutes he was a dead man. But before he died, he confessed that he had agreed to slay me for a great reward."

"Foul treachery!" cried Robin Hood. "And what happened to you then, cousin?"

"Why, as ill-luck would have it, the manner of the steward's death came at once to the ears of the man who had hired him to kill me, and he set the sheriff speedily upon my track. To have me hanged for murder would serve his purpose just as well."

"That is easy to see," replied Robin Hood. "And now, welcome to Sherwood and to our company. This is Little John, the biggest of us all."

Will Gamewell and Little John again shook hands, and Robin continued, "It will be wise to drop your old name now that you are an outlaw, and as you are dressed in scarlet, Scarlet you shall be called. I christen you Will Scarlet, and with a new name you shall be a new man, and free of the forest."

So Will Scarlet joined Robin Hood's company and swore to be true to his laws; and he presented to his fellow members the great stag for a feast of friendship.

ROBIN HOOD AND THE SHERIFF'S PRIZE

THE Bishop was in a very bad humour, because Robin Hood had compelled him, much against his will, to marry Allan-a-Dale and his true love. He went to the Sheriff of Nottingham to make complaint, and talked to him in such fashion that the latter became very uneasy lest the Bishop tell the King that his representative was unable to maintain law and order in the county. So he thought the best thing he could do was to see the King himself, and tell him how difficult it was to catch Robin Hood, who had so bold and strong a company of outlaws, devoted to their leader.

"I cannot help you," said the King, when the matter was laid before him. "It is your business to uphold the law and to get these offenders into your power, and if you fail, it will be the worse for you."

The King was angry, so the Sheriff went hastily from his presence, and during the long ride back to Nottingham, he cudgelled his brains trying to think of a plot whereby he could capture Robin Hood and his followers.

At last an idea came to him, and he said to his Chief Forester, who was with him, "I have thought of a plan which will surely draw these rogues into Nottingham town. All know that Robin Hood and his men boast of their skill as archers, and if I proclaim a great shooting match to be held at Nottingham, the chief prize to be an arrow with golden feathers and silver shaft, and the winner to be known as the champion of all archers, the bait will be one they cannot resist."

"Splendid!" cried the Chief Forester, "it is bound to bring them to your hand."

"They will never submit to see that title won by any

other without some of them making an effort to win it, and I will have men who know them ready to seize them," said the Sheriff.

The great shooting match was duly proclaimed, and the news spread far and wide. The outlaws heard that famous archers from all over the country would contest for the prize and title.

Robin said to his men, "We count ourselves good bowmen, and must not allow the title to be won by another without making an effort to gain it."

"Have a care, master!" said one of his followers; "I have heard that this is merely a trick to draw us into the town."

"We are not cowards," said Robin Hood; "trick or no, I'll try my skill."

"I have a plan which will take us there in safety," said Little John. "We'll dress ourselves like countryfolk going to the match, and leave at home our cloaks and doublets of Lincoln green. One shall wear white, another red, another blue, and so attend the exercises in disguise. The Sheriff's men will not know us."

"Very good, Little John," cried the leader; "we will follow your plan."

When the day of the great match arrived, Robin Hood with his most skilled archers set out for Nottingham. They went singly, and in twos and threes, so that they should not attract attention, and they scattered themselves among the throng which had come to witness the sport. Robin Hood went alone, and he wore a ragged red coat and hood, and carried his bow over his shoulder. He passed straight through the gate, beside which stood some of the Sheriff's men, who were watching carefully to see if they could recognise any of the outlaws.

The Sheriff sat on horseback at the place where the butts were set up for the match. He was surrounded by

a strong body of soldiers, and looked on every hand for some sign of Robin Hood and his followers, but saw no sign of any man belonging to the band he sought to capture.

The shooting began, and soon the rivalry was narrowed down to a famous archer called William of York, and a number of country fellows poorly dressed in jackets of various colours.

At last it became a match between William of York and the man in the ragged red jacket, and so evenly were they shooting, that it was decided to put up a fresh butt at a much greater distance, so far, in fact, that the people doubted whether the arrows would even reach the mark. The crowd waited in silence to see which of the two should be the victor.

"We have seen such remarkable archery," said the Chief Forester to the Sheriff, "that even Robin Hood himself could not have bettered."

"I was sure he would have been here," said the Sheriff, "but even he is not bold enough to put in an appearance now."

And almost at his side stood the archer in the ragged red coat, looking like an awkward country bumpkin, hearing all that the Sheriff said.

William of York had the first trial at the new butt, and put two arrows in the very centre of the target, while the third stuck in one of the outer rings. As there were to be only three arrows used, it looked as though he had won the prize.

"Better save your strength, Red Jacket!" shouted William's friends. "Give up, you cannot beat that shooting!"

But Red Jacket said, "I'll do my best though," and added, to himself, "for the honour of Sherwood and Robin Hood."

Then he took three shafts in hand and discharged them so rapidly that they were flying through the air almost at the same time. To the wonderment of the amazed spectators the two arrows which William of York had placed in the centre were struck out by the first and second, while the third reached the exact centre.

The multitude roared, "Here is the prince of archers; such shooting has never before been seen. Red Jacket has won the prize."

The Sheriff presented the coveted gold and silver arrow to the victor, and begged him to join his band of Foresters.

But Robin said "No," and that he must go home to his master.

And so, in twos and threes, as they had come, the outlaws returned in safety to the greenwood, where they jested merrily over the day's sport.

But the winner himself was not quite satisfied, and Little John asked him why he did not seem so happy as the others after having tricked the Sheriff.

"There is the point," replied Robin Hood. "He does not know that I have carried off the prize."

"Leave that to me," said Little John. "You write a letter to him, and I'll stick it on my arrow head, and shoot it into the town, and it will be delivered to him."

Robin wrote the letter, and Little John returned to the town, still wearing his blue jacket. The Sheriff lived in a large house near the wall and Little John noticed that a window of the great hall was standing open, so fixing the letter to the head of a shaft, he drew his bow and sent the arrow clean through the opening. Then he returned to the forest.

It so happened that the Sheriff was sitting down to supper, and as he was raising a horn of ale to his lips, the shaft, with the billet at its head, came through the open window, and stuck into the table right before him.

He unrolled the paper from the shaft, read what was written there, and to the surprise of the company dashed down the horn of ale upon the table with such force that the horn was broken into pieces.

The Sheriff shook with rage. "To think," he roared, "that the outlaw Robin Hood was by my very side all day, and has slipped through my fingers; and he none other than Red Jacket."

"Sheriff," said one of his friends, "we ought to have known that none but Robin Hood could shoot as that man did."

His anger was not at all appeased by his friend's words, and he vowed that on the morrow he would lead an army against his enemy, dust his red jacket for him, and then hang him on the spot before he had a chance to escape him again.

THE CRUMB IN THE BEARD

THERE was once a king who had a daughter named Stella. She was indescribably beautiful, but was so whimsical and hard to please, that she drove her father nearly to despair. There had been princes and kings who had sought her in marriage, but she found defects in them all, and would have none of them.

She kept advancing in years, and her father began to despair of knowing to whom he should leave his crown. So he summoned his council, and discussed the matter. They advised him to give a great banquet, to which he should invite all the princes and kings of the surrounding countries, for, as they said, among so many there cannot fail to be some one who should please the princess, who was to hide behind the door, so that she could examine them all as she pleased.

When the king heard this advice, he gave the orders necessary for the banquet, and then called his daughter, and said: "Listen, my little Stella, I am growing old, and must have some one to leave my crown to. To this end I have invited many princes and kings to a banquet, and from among them you must select a husband."

Stella bowed her head, saying that she would do his bidding.

In due time the guests arrived, and when it was time for the banquet, they all seated themselves at the table. It was a very grand affair, and in each corner of the hall was a fountain which continually sent forth wine and the most exquisite perfumes. While the gentlemen were eating, Stella was behind a door and one of her maids pointed out to her now this one, and now that.

But to each of them Stella had some objection. This one had too large a nose; that one had too large a mouth; another one's eyes were like saucers. In short she found fault with all but one, who, she said, pleased her, but even he, she said, must be a dirty fellow, because he had a crumb on his beard after eating.

The youth heard her say this, and vowed to be revenged. He was a very handsome young man, and the son of the King of Green Hill.

When the banquet was finished, and the guests had departed, the king asked Stella if she had made her choice. She replied that the only one who pleased her was the one with the crumb in his beard, but that she believed he was a dirty fellow, and did not want him.

"Take care, my daughter, you will repent it," said her father as he turned away angrily.

Now Stella's chamber overlooked a court-yard into which opened the shop of a baker. One night, while she was preparing to retire, she heard, in the room where they sifted the meal, some one singing with so much grace that

it went to her heart. She ran to the window and listened until he finished. Then she asked her maid who the man with the beautiful voice could be, and asked her to find out.

"Very well," said the maid, "I will inform you to-morrow."

Early the next day she learned that he who sang was the sifter, and in the evening Stella heard him sing again, and stood by the window until everything had become quiet. But the voice had so touched her heart, that she told her maid she would try and see the singer.

In the morning she placed herself by the window, and saw the youth come forth. She was enchanted by his beauty, and fell desperately in love with him.

You must know that this young man was none other than the prince whom Stella had called "dirty" at the banquet. He had disguised himself, and was preparing his revenge. After he had seen her once or twice he began to take off his hat and salute her. She smiled at him, and soon they began to exchange words. In the evening he sang under her window, and they began to make love in earnest. He learned that she was free, and asked her to marry him. He said that he earned barely enough to support himself, but Stella encouraged him, saying that she would give him all the money he could wish for.

Now Stella's father and the prince's father knew all about this love affair, but agreed between them to punish her for her pride, and therefore let her carry away from the palace whatever she wished. She made great bundles of clothes, and silver and gold, and at night, when the disguised prince came under the balcony, she threw them down to him.

Things went on in this manner until finally he said the time had come for her to elope.

Stella waited impatiently until the following night, when she quietly tied a cord about her, and let herself down from the window. The prince helped her to the ground, took her arm, and they hastened away, and were married.

They walked a long way to another city, and when they came to a certain house, the prince opened the door, led her down a long passage at the end of which they came to a mean room which had only one window. The furniture consisted of a straw bed, a bench, and a dirty table.

You can imagine that when Stella found herself in this place, she thought she would die. The prince asked her what the matter was. He said he had told her how poor he was, and that he had not deceived her.

Stella asked him what he had done with all the things she had given him, and he replied that he had sold them in order to pay many debts that he owed. And also that she must make up her mind to work as well as he.

"You must know," said he, "that I am a porter of the king of this city, and often work at the palace. Tomorrow the washing there is to be done, so you must rise early and go with me there. I will set you to work with the other women, and when it is time for them to go home to dinner, you will say that you are not hungry, and while you are alone, steal two shirts, conceal them under your dress, and carry them home to me."

Poor Stella wept bitterly, saying it was impossible for her to do that, but her husband replied: "Do what I say, or I shall beat you."

The next morning her husband arose at dawn, and made her get up, too. He had bought her a striped skirt, and a pair of coarse shoes, which he made her put on, and then took her to the palace with him, conducted her to the laundry and left her, after having introduced her as his wife. Then the prince ran and dressed himself like

a king, and waited at the gate of the palace until it was time for her to leave.

Meanwhile poor Stella did as her husband had commanded, and stole the shirts. As she was leaving the palace, she met the king, who said: "Pretty girl, you are our porter's wife, are you not?" Then he asked her what she had under her skirt, and shook her until the shirts dropped out and the king cried: "See! the porter's wife is a thief; she has stolen some shirts." Stella ran home, crying bitterly, and her husband followed her when he had put on his disguise again.

As soon as he reached home, Stella told him all that had happened, and begged him not to send her to the palace again; but he told her that the next day they were to bake, and that she must go into the kitchen and help, and steal some dough.

Everything happened as on the previous day. Stella's theft was discovered, and when her husband returned home, he found her bathed in tears, and saying that she would rather be killed than go to the palace again.

He told her, however, that the king's son was to be married the next day, and that there was to be a great banquet, and she must go into the kitchen and wash the dishes. He added that when she had the chance, she must steal a pot of broth and hide it about her so that no one should see it.

She had to do as she was told, and had scarcely concealed the pot when the king's son came into the kitchen and told his wife she must come to the ball that followed the banquet. She did not wish to go, but he took her by the arm and led her into the midst of the festival.

Imagine how the poor woman felt at that ball, dressed as she was, and with the pot of broth! The king began to poke his sword at her in jest, until he hit the pot, and all the broth ran on the floor. They all began to jeer

her and laugh, until poor Stella fainted away from shame, and they had to go and get some vinegar to revive her.

At last the king's mother came forward and said: "Enough, you have revenged yourself sufficiently." Then turning to Stella, she said: "Know that this is your mother, and that he has done this to correct your pride and to be avenged on you for calling him dirty."

Then she took her by the arm and led her to another room, where her maids dressed her as a queen. Her father and mother then appeared and kissed and embraced her. Her husband begged her pardon for what he had done, and they made peace and always lived together in harmony.

From that day she was never haughty, and had learned to her cost that pride is the greatest fault.

THE MAGIC JAR

THERE was once a young fellow whom fortune had blessed with a good mother, a clever head, and a strong body. But beyond this she had not much favoured him; and though able and willing to work, he had often little to do, and less to eat. But his mother had taught him to be contented with his own lot, and to feel for others. Moreover, from her he inherited a great love for flowers.

One day, when his pockets were emptiest, a fair was held in the neighbouring town, and he must needs go as well as the rest, though he had no money to spend. But he stuck a buttercup in his cap, for which he had nothing to pay, and strode along as merrily as the most.

Towards evening some of the merrymakers became riotous; and a party of them fell upon an old Jew who was keeping a stall of glass and china, and would smash his

stock. Now as the Jew stood before his booth beseeching them to spare his property, up came the strong young man, with the flower still unwithered in his cap, and he took the old Jew's part and defended him. For from childhood his mother had taught him to feel for others.

So those who would have ill-treated the old Jew now moved off, and the young man stayed with him till he had packed up his wares.

Then the Jew turned towards him and said, "My son, he who delivers the oppressed, and has respect unto the aged, has need of no reward, for the blessing of Him that blesseth is about him. Nevertheless, that I may not seem ungrateful, choose, I pray thee, one of these china jars; and take it to thee for thine own. If thou shalt choose well, it may be of more use to thee than presently appears."

Thereupon the young man examined the jars, which were highly ornamented with many figures and devices; but he chose one that was comparatively plain; only it had a bunch of flowers painted on the front, round which was a pretty device in spots or circles of gold.

Then said the Jew, "My son, why have you chosen this jar, when there are others so much finer?"

The young man said, "Because the flowers please me, and I have a love for flowers."

Then said the Jew, "Happy is he whose tastes are simple! Moreover, herein is a rare wisdom, and thou hast gained that which is the most valuable of my possessions. This jar has properties which I will further explain to thee. It was given to me by a wise woman, subject to this condition, that I must expose it for sale from sunrise to sunset at the yearly fair. When I understood this I took counsel with myself how I should preserve it; and I bought other china jars of more apparent value, and I marked them all with the same price. For I said within

myself, 'There is no man who does not desire to get as much as he can for his money, therefore from its contrast with the others, my jar is safe.' And it was even so; for truly, many have desired to buy the jar because of the delicate beauty of the flowers, if I would have sold it for less than others which seemed more valuable."

"Many times it has been almost gone, but when I have shown the others at the same price, my customers have reviled me, saying, 'Dog of a Jew, dost thou ask as much for this as for these others which are manifestly worth double?' and they have either departed, taking nothing, or they have bought one of the more richly decorated jars at the same price. For verily in most men the spirit of covetousness is stronger than the love of beauty, and they rather desire to get much for their money, than to obtain that which is suitable and convenient."

"But in thee, oh, young man! I have beheld a rare wisdom. To choose that which is good in thine eyes, and suitable to thy needs, rather than that which satisfieth the lust of over-reaching; and lo! what I have so long kept from thousands, has become thine!"

Then the young man wished to restore to the Jew the jar he valued so highly, and to choose another.

But the Jew refused, saying, "A gift cannot be recalled. Moreover I will now explain to thee its uses. Within the jar lies a toad, whose spit is poison. But it will never spit at its master. Every evening thou must feed it with bread and milk, when it will fall asleep; and at sunrise in the morning it will awake and breathe heavily against the side of the jar, which will thus become warm. As it warms the flowers will blossom out, and become real, and full of perfume, and thou wilt be able to pluck them without diminishing their number. Moreover, these twelve round spots of gold will drop off, and become twelve gold pieces, which will be thine. And

thus it will be every day. Only thou must rise thyself with the sun, and gather the flowers and the gold with thine own hands. Furthermore, when the jar cools, the flowers' gilding will be as before. Fare thee well."

And even as he spoke the Jew lifted the huge crate of china on to his back, and disappeared among the crowd.

All came about as the Jew had promised. As he had twelve gold pieces a day, the young man now wanted for nothing, besides which he had fresh flowers on his table all the year round.

Now it is well said, "Thy business is my business, and the business of all beside;" for every man's affairs are his neighbours' property. Thus it came about that all those who lived near the young man were perplexed that he had such beautiful flowers in all seasons; and esteemed it as an injury to themselves that he should have them and give no explanation as to whence they came.

At last it came to the ears of the king, and he also was disturbed. For he was curious, and fond of prying into small matters; a taste which ill becomes those of high position. But the king had no child to succeed him; and he was always suspecting those about him of plotting to obtain the crown, and thus he came to be for ever prying into the affairs of his subjects.

Now when he heard of the young man who had flowers on his table all the year round, he desired one of his officers to go and question him as to how he obtained them. But the young man contrived to evade his questions, and the matter rested for a while.

Then the king sent another messenger, with orders to press the young man more closely; and because the young man disdained to tell a lie, he said, "I get the flowers from yon china jar."

Then the messenger returned, and said to the king,

"The young man says he gets the flowers from a certain china jar which stands in his room."

Then said the king, "Bring the contents of the jar hither to me." And the messenger returned and brought the toad.

But when the king laid hold upon the toad, it spat in his face; and he was poisoned and died.

Then the toad sat upon the king's mouth, and would not be enticed away. And every one feared to touch it because it spat poison. And they called the wise men of the council; and they performed certain rites to charm away the toad, and yet it would not go.

But after three days, the master of the toad came to the palace, and without saying who he was, he desired to be permitted to try and get the toad from the corpse of the king.

And when he was taken into the king's chamber, he stood and beckoned to the toad, saying, "The person of the king, and the bodies of the dead are sacred, therefore come away."

And the toad crawled from the king's face and came to him, and did not spit at him; and he put it back into the jar.

Then the wise men said, "There is no one so fit to succeed to the kingdom as this man is; both for wisdom of speech and for the power of command."

And what they said pleased the people; and the young man was made king. And in due time he married an amiable and talented princess, and had children. And he ruled the kingdom well and wisely, and was beloved till his death.

Now when, after the lapse of many years, he died, there was great grief among the people, and his body was laid out in his own room, and the people were permitted to come and look upon his face for the last time.

And among the crowd there appeared an aged Jew. And he did not weep as did the others; but he came and stood by the bier, and gazed upon the face of the dead king in silence. And after a while he exclaimed,

"Oh, wonderful spectacle! A man and not covetous. A ruler, and not oppressive. Contented in poverty, and moderate in wealth. Elect of the people, and beloved to the end!"

And when he had said this, he again became silent and stood as one astonished.

And no one knew when he came in, nor perceived when he departed.

But when they came to search for the china jar, it was gone, and could never afterwards be found.

THE STORY OF URASHIMA, THE FISHER BOY

MANY, many years ago, in the days when Japan was young, there lived in a small fishing village, far away in the province of Tango, a young fisher boy named Urashima Taro. He was the most skilful fisher in all that part of the country, and each evening as he trudged wearily yet happily backwards from the seashore to his little home, he might have been seen carrying on his back a huge basket full of "bonite" and "tai." People said Urashima could catch more fish in a day than other people could catch in a week. Every one loved Urashima, for not only was he a skilful fisher of the sea, but he had also a kind and good heart.

Time went quickly by, and now Urashima, the fisher boy, had become a young man; but he had still the same loving and gentle manner as he had when he was younger.

One beautiful summer evening he was returning as usual to his little home, when he noticed a group of children in a state of great excitement over something which they seemed to have caught.

"Let me thrash him with my stick," shouted one boy. "No! let me pelt these stones and try to break his hard shell," said another. Coming up to the children, Urashima noticed they were ill-treating a poor tortoise, so he at once made up his mind to try and save it. "Stop, stop, boys!" he called out very loudly, "how cruel it is of you to hurt a poor dumb animal like that!"

"Who are you?" answered one of the boys. "We found this tortoise, and we will do what we want with it. Go on, boys, and take no notice of this interfering fellow." But Urashima felt very sorry to see them teasing the poor tortoise, so he cried out again, "Look, boys, I know you are not really bad boys, so please let me buy the tortoise from you. Here is the money"— and he held up a long string of coins.

Now the boys were won with his gentle words and his pleasant face, so they accepted the money and gave Urashima the poor frightened tortoise, scampering away as soon as they had done so. As soon as the kind-hearted Urashima got the tortoise, he folded it in his arms, and patted its head, saying, "You poor old thing, how sorry I am for you; but you soon will be all right now, for I shall take you back to the big blue sea. My father tells me that the Japanese people say a tortoise lives for ten thousand years, so how glad I was to come just in time to save this long life of yours," saying which Urashima again stroked and patted the animal's head. He soon reached a rocky ledge jutting out into the sea, and the kind fisherman, after saying "Sayonara" several times to his strange friend, put it into the water and watched it disappear. Urashima, being now very tired after his long

"He noticed a group of children in a state of great excitement"

day's toil out at sea, turned himself homewards, for the evening hour was getting late, as the sun had long since set. Next morning broke beautiful and fresh; the soft summer winds were blowing out upon the waters, which seemed so calm and blue that summer morning. Everything seemed happy, and as Urashima pushed his boat out from the shore, he too, felt unusually happy and bright this morning. Far out upon the blue sea his boat lay, and as he sat surveying the peaceful scene around, with his lines let down in the water beside him, he imagined he heard a voice calling him.

Putting his hand to his ear, he listened attentively. Yes, sure enough some one was calling his name. "Urashima, Urashima!" floated his name over the summer sea. "Urashima, Urashima!" it sounded again, like the music of distant waters. Urashima stood up, and gazed in every direction, but over the wide expanse of water nothing could he see. Hearing at last the gentle ripple of a wave alongside his boat, he turned, and saw, to his great surprise, that it was the very same tortoise he had saved the day before.

"Oh, my dear Mr. Tortoise," said Urashima, "how delighted I am to see you again. Was that your sweet voice calling my name?"

"Yes, it was I. Yesterday my life would have gone to the Eternal Ocean in Nirvana but for your great kindness, and as you so bravely saved my life, I have come to thank you."

"Please condescend to come into my boat," said Urashima. So the tortoise climbed up into the fisherman's boat, and began to chat freely to his kind-hearted friend.

"Have you ever seen the palace of the great Dragon King of the Sea, my dear Urashima?" "No, I am sorry to say I haven't," replied Urashima. "I have heard it is a most lovely place, far more beautiful than Nikko, or

Miyajama; and that it is the most wonderful sight to be seen in all the Sea Kingdom." "That is it," said the tortoise; "its loveliness cannot be expressed. But if you would like to go there, I shall very gladly act as your guide, for I am sorry to think you should miss such a fine sight."

"Thank you very much, my dear friend," said Urashima, "but you see I do not live in the sea like you, and therefore would not be able to swim such a long way." "Never trouble," quickly replied the tortoise; "just jump on my back and off we shall go at once." So Urashima got on the back of his strange water-steed, and in a few moments they were both down far, far below the sparkling blue waters. On they went, the tortoise swimming deeper and deeper and Urashima sitting quite steady on its back. Now they passed a big shark, but it did not attempt to bite Urashima. Now they approached a long-armed octopus, but it also did the strange companions no harm. Urashima was charmed and delighted with everything he saw, and just as he was telling the tortoise so, he spied in the distance the shining gate of a large building.

"Mr. Tortoise! what place is that?" said Urashima, pointing in the direction of the shining gate.

"That is the beautiful gate of the Dragon King's palace, and behind it you may notice the golden roof of the palace." "Oh, yes!" cried Urashima, with great joy, "I notice it now. So this is where the great Dragon King of the Sea lives?" "That is so," replied the tortoise, and as he spoke the great shining gate was flung open, and a tall sentinel, which was a sword-fish, stepped out and demanded their business.

"This is Urashima Taro, from the country of Japan. I have brought him to visit the palace," said the tortoise very humbly.

"Enter!" said the sword-fish, "but please write your name in the visitors' book first."

So after Urashima had written his name, another servant of the Dragon King, who was also a fish, came forward and led them into the waiting hall.

Soon, a great number of the officers of His Sea Majesty's household came out from an inner room, and welcomed Urashima in the name of the Dragon King, saying: "Hail! Urashima Taro, from the Land of the Rising Sun! Happy and glad are we to see you! We welcome you in the King's name! Hail! Hail! Hail!"

Now Urashima was not used to such a kingly welcome, and he felt a little troubled in not knowing how to answer this splendid reception of the Dragon King's. So he bowed to the floor, touching his head on the shiny mats as he did so, and said very humbly, "Arigato! Arigato!" which is to say, "Thank you." Oh! how insignificant he thought himself before this glorious array of shining officers, each dressed in scarlet and gold lace! But they treated him very kindly, and told him to make himself quite at home. Then they led him away to an inner part of the palace. Here the Dragon King's daughter came out to welcome him. She was the most beautiful human being Urashima had ever seen. Her flowing kimono was of scarlet and purple silk; her over-dress was interwoven with gold and silver thread; and her mass of rich black hair hung loosely over her shoulders, among which were interlaced strings of sea-corals and pearls. The Princess said she was very glad to receive so great a guest as Urashima, and, after conducting him to the place of honour, told him something which filled him with the greatest surprise. "My dear Urashima," said the Princess in a wonderfully sweet voice, "I want to thank you very much for saving my life yesterday."

"What!" replied Urashima, "I saved your life! When?"

"Yesterday," continued the Princess, "you saved the life of a poor tortoise, and I was that tortoise; so receive my thousand thanks." On hearing these words, Urashima was too overjoyed to speak. He looked at the lovely face of the Princess; then looked round at the beautiful room, and thought he must be dreaming. Fishes, red, blue, white, and black, all dressed in the richest garments, walked silently about from room to room of the palace, and whenever they passed by the Princess and Urashima they bowed with their faces to the floor. Everything shone with dazzling splendour, so that Urashima told the Princess it was the most wonderful place he had ever seen. After a week had passed, the Dragon King was pleased to give his daughter in marriage to Urashima. So after a few days more they became husband and wife, and loved each other very much, for the Princess was beautiful and good, and Urashima had a brave and kind heart.

Now while Urashima was enjoying himself in this splendid palace under the sea, the days and months were going quickly by, until one day he suddenly remembered he had not told his poor father and mother where he was going, and how they would doubtless be grieving for him; so he went to his beautiful wife, the Princess, and told her that he was very sorry, but he must go back to his aged parents whom he had left on earth. Oh, how the beautiful Princess did weep! The fish servants brought her handkerchief after handkerchief until every handkerchief in the palace was wet with tears.

"Then," said the troubled Princess, "I will not keep you from your loving parents, but will let you go; only, my dear Urashima, sometimes think of me here longing and waiting for you. Won't you? Promise me this, that you will never forget me. Take this," continued the sad

Princess, "as a remembrance of our love." And she gave him a beautiful red lacquered box, tied about with many silken cords. "I give you this only to remind you of me. This box must not be opened; if you open it, something dreadful will happen to you. Now, Sayonara, my love! My joys go with thee! Sayonara! Sayonara!" And saying this, the Princess again wept bitterly.

After Urashima had also said "Sayonara," he found the tortoise all ready waiting for him, so, quickly mounting upon its back, he was carried up, higher and higher through the shining sea, until at last, when they had reached the surface, Urashima saw his native blue hills stretching away in the distance.

Soon the friendly tortoise brought him to the shore of the little blue bay of his own town, and, saying a long and low "Sayonara," he left Urashima and journeyed back to the Dragon King's palace.

When Urashima found himself alone, he looked around him, but everything seemed changed and altered. The people he met were entire strangers to him. Not a soul did he seem to know.

Seeing a man staring at him, Urashima said: "Excuse me, but I have been absent for the past few months from this, my native town, and, now I have returned, everything and everybody seem strange to me. My name is Urashima Taro. Will you please tell me the reason of this strangeness?"

"What? You, Urashima Taro?" cried the man eagerly. "Yes," said the fisherman, "I am Urashima Taro." "Ha, ha, ha! this is a great joke. Come, people!" cried the man, "here is this person who says he is Urashima Taro. Why, Urashima Taro lived in this village over four hundred years ago, as our old stories tell us; and now you say," said the man, pointing to Urashima, "that you are Urashima Taro. Ha, ha, ha! A great

joke indeed!"—at which all the other people laughed too.

Urashima got very angry indeed, and said, "What nonsense you do speak! Why, I have only been away a few months, and certainly not four hundred years. I am, indeed, Urashima Taro. Why do you mock and annoy me?" "Well," answered the man, "you may or may not be Urashima Taro; but all I know is that this Urashima lived four hundred years ago, as all the old stories tell us. They say that one day he suddenly disappeared, leaving behind him his aged parents, who died shortly afterwards, and that he was never heard of again."

Urashima was terribly puzzled. The few months he had spent at the Dragon King's palace beneath the sea had not been months at all—they had been hundreds of years; and all that the man had told him was quite true. Urashima had been away for four hundred years.

Walking back to the beach, Urashima's heart was very sad and lonely, when suddenly he remembered the red lacquered box which the Princess had given him. "The Princess told me not to open it," he said; "but surely this box contains something that will help me, so I will open it and look in!" So his heart consented to this act of disobedience; and, very carefully taking off the many silken cords, he lifted the red lacquered lid, when, behold! a thin cloud of bluish smoke rose out of the box and floated off over the sea.

Urashima, after watching the bluish cloud float away, suddenly felt his strength and vigour leaving him, and in a very short time he turned into an old and decrepit man. His face became lined with wrinkles and furrows of great age, his hair turned snowy white, and his whole body began to shiver and shake.

"Alas! Alas!" murmured Urashima, "what have I done? I have been punished for my own disobedient and

foolish act, as I had promised the beautiful Princess never to open this box. Alas! Alas! Urashima has been punished! Sayonara, beautiful things of Nature! Sayonara! I'm going, I'm going!" And waving his hands towards the silvery sea, poor Urashima fell down dead upon the beach.

THE ASS THAT LAYS MONEY

THERE was once a poor widow with an only son, and whose brother-in-law was a steward. One day she said to her child: "Go to your uncle and ask him to give you something to keep us from starving." The boy went to the farm and asked his uncle to help him a little. "We are dying of hunger, uncle. My mother earns a little by weaving, and I am too small to find anything. Be charitable to us for we are your relatives." The steward answered: "You should have come before so that I could have helped you the sooner. But now I will give you something that will support you always, without need of anything more. I will give you this little ass that lays money. You have only to lay a cloth, and he will fill it for you with money. But take care! Mention it to no one, and do not leave the animal with any one."

The youth departed joyfully, and after travelling some distance, he stopped at an inn to sleep. He asked the landlord for a room for himself and his ass. "What!" said the landlord, "you cannot have that ass in the room with you." But the youth insisted, and finally the landlord consented. It seemed so strange to him, however, that after the boy and his beast were shut in the room, he looked through the keyhole, and saw that the wonderful ass had laid money in abundance.

"Bless me!" cried the host, "this is a piece of good

fortune that I must not allow to escape me." So he secured another ass of the same colour and size, and while the boy was asleep, he exchanged them.

In the morning the boy paid his bill and departed, but on the way the ass laid no money. The child was perplexed, and on examining the animal closely, saw that it was not his, and at once returned and made complaint to the innkeeper.

The landlord cried out: "We are all honest people here, and steal nothing; go away, or you will get something to remember."

The poor boy wept, and could do nothing but return to his uncle's farm, and related what had befallen him. The uncle said, "this is most unfortunate, but, however, I have another present for you and your mother. Mention it to no one, and take good care of it. Here is a tablecloth, and whenever you say: 'TABLECLOTH, MAKE READY,' after having spread it out, you will see a fine repast at your pleasure."

The youth took the tablecloth, thanked his uncle, and departed; but very foolishly, he stopped at the same inn again. He said to the landlord, "Give me a room and you need not prepare anything to eat; I have all I want with me."

When the lad was in his room the crafty innkeeper looked through the key-hole, and saw the tablecloth preparing supper. He exclaimed: "What good luck for my inn! I must secure it." So he looked for another tablecloth with similar embroidery and fringe, and while the boy was asleep, exchanged it for the magic one, so that in the morning the lad did not notice the difference. After walking some distance he became hungry, so he spread out the tablecloth and said: "TABLECLOTH, MAKE READY." But it was not the same one, and made nothing ready for him. In despair he went back to the

innkeeper to complain, and the landlord would have thrashed him if he had not run away, and he ran until he reached his uncle's. His uncle said, "What is the matter now?" and the boy replied that the innkeeper had changed the tablecloth. The uncle was on the point of giving him a good thrashing, but seeing how young he was, he restrained himself, and said: "I understand; but I will give you something with which you can get back everything from that thief of a landlord. Here it is! It is a stick. Hide it under your pillow, and if any one comes to rob you of it, say to it in a low voice: 'BEAT, BEAT!' and it will continue to do so until you say 'STOP.'"

The boy joyfully took the stick, which was a very handsome one, with a gold handle. He thanked his uncle, and journeyed on until he came to the same inn. He said: "Landlord, I wish to lodge here to-night." The landlord at once drew his conclusions about the stick, which the boy carried openly in his hand, and at night when the lad appeared to be sound asleep, he felt softly under the pillow and drew out the stick. But the boy was ready, and said in a low voice: "BEAT, BEAT, BEAT!" Suddenly blows were rained down without mercy; everything in the room was smashed to pieces, and the landlord beaten nearly to death. He screamed: "Save me, save me, boy, or I shall be killed."

The boy answered: "I will not deliver you unless you give me back my property,— the ass that lays gold, and the tablecloth that prepares dinner." And to save his life, the landlord had to consent to the boy's wishes.

When he had his things back, the boy went home to his mother and told her all that had happened to him, and then said: "Now we need nothing more. I have an ass that lays money, a tablecloth that prepares food at will, and a stick to defend me from whoever assaults me."

The woman and her son, who had now risen from want

to riches, wished to invite their relatives to a banquet. On the appointed day the guests arrived, but at the dinner hour there is no fire in the kitchen, and no provisions are in sight, and the visitors think a joke is being played upon them. But the lad, spreading the cloth on the table, said: "TABLECLOTH, TABLECLOTH, PREPARE A GRAND BANQUET." And they all had a fine dinner, after which their friends departed, laden with presents of money.

KING ROBERT OF SICILY

KING ROBERT of Sicily was a great and powerful ruler. His brothers were the Pope Urbane, and Valmond, the Emperor of Germany. He was apparelled in magnificent attire, and was always attended by many courtiers and a great retinue of knights and squires. All these people so fawned upon him and flattered him, that he became too much filled with pride, and really thought he was the greatest king the world had seen.

Now on St. John's eve he attended service at church, and while thinking of his own greatness, he heard the priest chant the Magnificat. The words, "He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble and meek," seemed to him to be a personal affront.

"What meaneth the priest by these words?" asked he of a learned clerk.

"Your Majesty, the meaning is that God can, in the twinkling of an eye, make those of high degree fall into low estate, and put those who are lowly into the highest places."

"But there is no power," said the king, "that can possibly bring to common degree one so highly placed and great as myself. All bow to my will."

And even as he spoke he became drowsy, and soon fell into a deep sleep. The service came to an end, and all but the king left the church. His people were not aware that he had not come with them, for an angel, wearing the King's robes, had taken his place, and returned to the palace with them.

When he awoke it was night; the church was empty and it was dark, save where a few lamps glimmered faintly before the image of some saint. He cried again and again for his serving men, but received no answer; he found his way to the door, but it was locked; he knocked and knocked, and at last the sexton opened it. Finding a man in the church, he angrily accused him of being a thief.

"I am the King and no thief!" said King Robert fiercely. He rushed by the sexton, and went through the courtyard of the palace, and up the stair leading to the banquet-room, thrusting roughly aside all who came in his way. The banquet-room was blazing with light, and on the throne sat another man, wearing his robes, his crown, and his ring. In features, form, and height he was King Robert's self.

He gazed at the Angel sitting in his seat in speechless amazement; the new King asked who he was and what he was doing there, to which he replied: "I am the King, and you are an impostor who usurp my throne."

At these audacious words the angry guests sprang up and drew their swords. The Angel answered: "Not the King, but the King's Jester thou shalt be, and henceforth wear the bells and scalloped cape, and for a companion thou shalt lead an ape; when my servants call, thou shalt wait upon them."

Then, amid the laughter of a group of pages, he was thrust from the hall and down the stairs, and the men-at-arms loudly mocked him, shouting "Long live the King."

When he awoke the next morning he said to himself:

"It was a dream!" But as he turned his head the straw rustled, and beside his lowly bed were the cap and bells, and near by sat a wretched ape.

And so the great King, for his pride, was put below the meanest scullion, and was forced to sleep in a stable. Dressed in the Jester's garb, close shaven above the ears, mocked by all, he yielded sullenly to his fate. His only friend was the ape, and his food that which was left from the servants' table. But though he was brought to such depths, he was still unsubdued, and when the Angel asked him if he were still the King, he haughtily replied: "I am the King."

Under the wise and just rule of the Angel, King Robert's kingdom prospered, and there were peace and plenty in the land.

At the end of three years there came an embassy from Valmond, Emperor of Germany, saying that their brother, the Pope Urbane, had proposed that they visit him together in his city of Rome on the next Holy Thursday. The Angel received the guests joyfully, showered them with presents, and departed with them for the city of Rome. In his train, clad in a fool's motley, rode Robert of Sicily, and behind him, on his piebald steed, sat his grinning ape, making great merriment in the country towns through which they passed.

They were welcomed by the Pope with great pomp and rejoicings. At their meeting King Robert burst through the crowd, rushed into their presence, and cried loudly: "I am King Robert! Do you not recognise me? This man is not the King, but is an imposter in a king's disguise. Do you not know me, your brother Robert?"

But the Pope and the Emperor looked at the Angel and said: "It is strange sport for you to have a madman as Jester at thy court." And so the poor baffled King was hustled back among the populace in disgrace.

Holy Week was passed in solemn state, and the presence of the Angel seemed to fill the hearts of all with a new fervour. Even the Jester began to feel true penitence in his heart. He knelt humbly and prayed for guidance. He thought of how he had said in the church, "that no power could possibly bring to common degree one so highly placed and great as himself," and he thought of the state to which his pride had brought him.

Their visit ended, and they journeyed homeward. Seated on the throne the Angel beckoned Robert to him, and requested the rest to retire. Then the Angel said: "Art thou the King?"

Crossing his hands on his breast, King Robert answered: "Thou knowest that my sins are as scarlet; let me do penitence until my guilty soul be shriven!"

The Angel smiled, and through the open windows they heard the monks chanting: "He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted them of low degree!"

Suddenly King Robert raised his eyes, and lo! he was alone! His courtiers came and found him there, apparelled as of old in rich clothing. He was kneeling upon the floor, absorbed in prayer, asking help from Him who was mightier than kings.

KING HENRY AND THE MILLER

All day long King Henry rode with his princes and nobles, chasing the deer, till at last the dusk of evening forced them to turn homewards. Then, presently, the King found that, riding quickly, he had left all his lords behind. It was late at night, and he was lost in the wood.

Wandering thus wearily alone, up and down, he happened

at last to meet with a rustic miller, and of him he asked the nearest way to Nottingham.

"Sir," quoth the miller, "I do not mean to jest, but I think what I think. You do not ride out of your way for nothing."

"Why, what do you think of me, passing judgment so hastily?" asked the King merrily.

"Good faith," said the miller, "I do not mean to flatter you. I guess you are but some gentleman thief. Stand back in the dark; do not alight, lest I instantly crack your knave's crown."

"You greatly wrong me," said the King. "I am a gentleman, and I lack lodging!"

"You have not a groat in your purse," retorted the miller. "All your inheritance is on your back."

"I have gold to pay for everything I order," said the King. "If it be forty pence, I can pay it all."

"If you are really a true man, I will lodge you for the night," said the miller.

"I was ever that," said the King. "Here is my hand."

"Nay, soft," quoth the miller; "you may be a sprite. I will know you better before we shake hands. With none but honest men will I shake hands."

So they went along to the miller's house, where there were puddings bubbling and steaming on the fire. The miller went in first, and after him went the King. He had never been in so smoky a house.

"Now," said the miller, "let me see here what you are."

"Look your fill; do not spare," answered the King.

"I like your countenance well; you have an honest face. You shall have my son Richard's bed to-night."

"By my troth, it is a handsome youth," said the miller's wife. "Yet it is best, husband, to deal warily. Are you no runaway, prithee, youth? Show me your passport, and all will be well."

The King making a low bow, with his hat in his hand, answered at once he had no passport. He had never been a servitor. He was a poor courtier, who had ridden out of his way. For the kindness they offered him he would requite them.

Then the miller's wife whispered secretly to her husband:

"It seems this youth is of good kin, both by his apparel and his good manners. It would be very wrong to turn him out."

"Yes," agreed the miller; "you may see he has some good in him by the way he speaks to his betters."

"Well, young man," said the miller's wife, "you are welcome here, and though I say it, you shall be well lodged. I will have some fresh straw laid on your bed, and good brown hempen sheets."

"Ay," put in the miller, "and when that is done you shall be with no worse than our own son."

But before Richard, the son, would agree to this, he carefully inquired if the guest were sure he was quite clean and well. For, he said, unless this were so, he certainly should not sleep with him. This caused the King to laugh so heartily that the tears ran down his cheeks.

Then they sat down to supper, with hot bag-puddings and good apple-pies, and nappy old ale in a brown bowl, and they were all very merry, and drank to each other's health.

"Wife, fetch me forth 'Light-foot' and we'll taste a little of his sweetness," said the miller presently. Whereupon the good dame quickly brought out a fine venison pasty. "Eat, sir," said the miller, "but waste none of it. Here's dainty 'Light-foot'!"

"Faith," said King Henry, "I never ate before so dainty a thing!"

"Why, I trow it is no dainty at all," said Richard, "for we eat it every day."

"In what place may it be bought like this?" asked the king.

"We never pay a penny for it," answered Richard. "From merry Sherwood we fetch it home. Now and then we make bold with the king's deer."

"Then I think," said the king, "that this is venison?"

"Every fool may know that full well," quoth Richard. "We are never without two or three in this roof, very well fleshed and excellent fat. But, prithee thee, say nothing wherever you go. We would not, for twopence, that the king should know of it."

"Doubt not my secrecy," said King Henry. "I promise you the king shall never know of it from me."

So they feasted right merrily, and after drinking the king's health in a cup of lamb's-wool (ale and roasted apples), they went to bed.

The next morning King Henry's nobles rode up and down, seeking their master in every town and village, and at last they came to the miller's cot. At the very moment they came up, the King was just mounting his horse, and down they went on their knees to salute him.

The miller was quite terrified to discover who his guest really was; his heart sank, and he began to quake and tremble, thinking he would certainly be hanged. The King seeing this drew out his sword and said nothing. Then the miller fell down, crying before them all, expecting the King to cut off his head. But King Henry, to requite his kindness, dubbed him a knight, and gave him a handsome reward.

When the King had left Nottingham, and was home again with his nobles at Westminster, in talking over all the sports and pastimes they had had in their late ex-

pedition, he protested that, of all his adventures, great and small, the sport he had had with the Miller of Mansfield had pleased him the best.

"And now, my lords," quoth the King, "I am determined that at the next sumptuous feast of St. George, this old miller, our newly-made knight, with his son Richard, shall here be my guests. For at this festival it is my wish to talk with the jolly knight and the young squire."

The noble lords were much pleased with the King's gracious words; a pursuivant, who had often been in those parts, was immediately despatched on the business. Entering the place where the miller and his family dwelt, he delivered his message in proper form.

"God save your worship," said the messenger, "and grant your lady her own heart's desire! And to your son Richard, that gentle and gallant young squire, good fortune and happiness! Our King greets you well, and thus he says: 'You must come to the court on St. George's Day.' Therefore do not fail to be in place."

The miller was more troubled than pleased at this invitation.

"I think this is an odd jest," he said uneasily. "What should we do at court? Faith, I am half afraid."

"I expect to be hanged, at least," said Richard.

"Nay, you mistake," said the messenger. "The King is providing a great feast for you."

"By my troth, messenger, thou hast contended my worship right well," said the miller in a lordly way. "Hold, here are three farthings, to reward thy courtesy for the good tidings thou hast brought. Listen! Tell the King we will in everything wait on his mastership."

The pursuivant smiled at their simplicity, and making many bows accepted their reward. Then taking his leave with great humility, he went back to court, show-

ing the King merrily the knight's liberal gift and bounty.

No sooner had he gone than the miller began to fuss about in great excitement.

"Here, indeed, come expenses and charges!" he exclaimed. "Now we must needs be fine, even if we spend all we have, for we are greatly in want of new garments. We must have good store of horses and serving-man, with saddles and bridles and twenty other things."

"Tush, Sir John," said his wife, "why should you fret? You shall never be put to any charges for me, for I will turn and trim up my old russet gown, with everything else as fine as possible. And we will ride on our good mill-horses, with pillows and panniers."

In this stately fashion they rode to court. First of all went their handsome son, Richard. For good luck he had set a cock's feather in his cap, and thus they strutted down to the King's hall, the merry old miller with his hand on his hip, and his wife mincing along with short steps beside him.

The King and his nobles heard of their coming and went forward to meet them, and gave them a kind and hearty greeting.

"Welcome, Sir Knight, with your fair lady!" quoth the King. "Good Sir John Cockle, welcome again!"

And he took them both by the hand, while the miller's wife dropped a milkmaid's curtsey at every word.

Then down sat all the folk at table and feasted right merrily. When they had all eaten, the King began to jest, and drank the guests' healths in a bowl of wine.

"Here's to you both!" he cried, "and thank you heartily for the good cheer you gave me that night in the forest. That puts me in mind of something," he added slyly. "I would we had here some of your famous 'Light-foot,' Sir John!"

"Hullo," said Richard, "I must say it is knavery to eat it, and then to betray it!"

"Why are you angry?" said King Henry merrily. "In faith, I take it very unkind of you. I thought you would pledge me heartily in ale and wine."

"You will have to wait until I have dined," returned Richard bluntly. "You feed us with such small twaddling dishes. A good black pudding is better than all of them."

"Ay, marry," said the King, "that were a dainty dish if a man could but get one here to eat."

With that Dick straightway rose, and pulled one out of his pocket, which had got somewhat greasy and battered from the long journey. The King pretended to snatch it away, telling him it was "meat for his master," and so with much good humour and merriment the meal went on.

After dinner the ladies prepared to dance, and the King immediately made old Sir John Cockle and Richard take their places, where they performed such funny antics that the nobles laughed till their sides ached. By and by the King asked Richard if he would not like to marry, and if so, which one among the ladies pleased him the best. But Richard answered him that "Jugg Grumball with the red head," who lived near the mill, was the only one he loved, and she was the one he would marry.

Finally, King Henry called the miller to him, and made him overseer of Sherwood Forest, and said he should have three hundred pounds yearly.

"Take heed, now, you steal no more of my deer," ended the King. "And once a quarter let us see you here at court. And now, Sir John Cockle, I bid you adieu."

SIR CLEGES AND THE CHERRIES

In the time of King Uther, father of the great King Arthur, there lived a knight by the name of Sir Cleges; no doughtier man was there at the Round Table than he, and none of greater might or fairer looks.

He was so gentle and open of hand that he gave freely to all wandering men who had fallen on evil days. The poor he succoured, and he did no man harm. Any man might come to eat at his board, where always plenteous meat and drink stood ready.

This knight had a gentle wife, the best of her day. Dame Clarys was her name. She was ever of good cheer and merry, bountiful to the poor, true in all her dealing.

Every year at Christmas Sir Cleges would hold a great feast, in honour of the season, providing as royally in all things as if he had been a king. Rich and poor in the country round came to his feast, and there were minstrelsy and mirth, and rich gifts of robes and jewels, horses, gold and silver, for the guests when they departed.

For ten years did Sir Cleges hold his feast for charity's sake. But at the last his goods began to fail, so that he had little wealth left. But he would not give up the feast for many years more, until at length all his money was spent, and he had no more, save barely enough for himself and Dame Clarys and their two children to live upon. His proud friends and servants began to fall away from him on every side; none would dwell with him in his poverty.

It befell that one Christmas, when Sir Cleges was in this sorry case, the King, dwelling at Kardyf, made a feast. As it drew toward noon of the appointed day, Sir Cleges,

who formerly had sat at the King's table, but now was forgotten as if he had been dead, chanced to fall athinking on his lost fortunes; he remembered, how, with a free hand, he had wasted his rents and sold his manors, and great sorrow came upon him. He wrung his hands and wept, and all his pride was humbled. As he paced to and fro he heard the voices at the King's feast; the sound of singing and carolling, and dancing, of pipes, trumpets, harps, psalteries, and lutes; and at that his heart was utterly cast down.

"Lord Jesus, King of Heaven," he prayed in his humility, "Thou hast made all things of nought: I thank thee for the sound of this mirth. Even as now the King does, so did I formerly feast slave and freeman alike at thy season. All who come to me in Thy name wanted for nothing, were it rich meats or goodly drinks, and never did I lend for usury."

As he stood mourning, his good wife came to him and caught him in her arms. "My lord and true lover," she said, "I heard your words. It avails nought to make this lament; I pray you cease, and thank God for all that he hath sent. On this Christ's day put aside your sorrow. Go we to our meal now, and make blithe and merry as best we may."

"Yes," said Sir Cleges, and went in with her, and somewhat abated his grief. Yet his heart was still sore till Dame Clarys comforted him again. Then he began to wax blithe, and wiped away his tears. They washed and went to eat of such victuals as they had, and made merry together. They drove the day away as best they might, and played with their children, and after supper went to bed in due time.

On the morrow they went to church, and there Sir Cleges kneeled down and prayed that no harm or strife might come upon them; and his wife prayed the like, and for Sir

Cleges also, that God would keep him safely. Then they went home comforted, and put away sad thoughts from them.

But when Sir Cleges had come home, with his sorrow lessened, he sent his wife and children apart, and himself went into his garden, and there knelt down, and thanked God for the content that had come into his heart instead of sadness, and for the poverty that had been sent him.

As he knelt thus and prayed under a tree, he felt a bough upon his head. He rose up, and laid his hand upon the bough, and behold, a marvel was before him. Green leaves he found upon the bough, and round cherries (for it was a cherry tree) in plenty.

"Dear God," quoth he, "what manner of berry may this be that grows at this time of the year? At this season I know not that any tree should bear fruit."

He thought to taste the fruit, and put it in his mouth, and eat plenteously. It tasted like a cherry, the best that ever he had eaten. Thereat he cut off a little bough to show his wife, and took it into the house. "Lo, dame!" said he, "here is a new thing. On a cherry tree in our garden I found this fruit. I trow this is a great marvel; I fear it is a token of more harm that is to come to us. Yet whether we have more or less let us always thank God: that is best in truth."

Then said Dame Clarys with gladness, "Let us fill a basketful of the gift that God hath sent. To-morrow at daybreak you shall go to Kardyf and give the cherries to the King for a present. You may have from such a gift that we may fare well all this year. I tell you truth."

Sir Cleges agreed. "To-morrow night to Kardyf I will go, according to your counsel."

On the morrow, when it was light, Dame Clarys made a basket ready. She called her eldest son. "Take up this

fair basket," said she, "and bear it to Kardyf with your father."

Sir Cleges took a staff: he had no horse (so says the story) to ride, neither steed nor palfrey; only a staff was his horse, as is the lot of a man in poverty. Together he and his set out on foot on the road to Kardyf.

In time they came to the Castle, where the King lay, about the hour when men sat down to feast; and Sir Cleges thought to enter at the great gate. But he was clad in simple and poor raiment, and the porter barred the way.

"Churl," said the man, "withdraw, I bid you, right speedily, or I will break your head. Go stand with the beggars. If you come further in, I will smite you a buffet that you will rue."

"Good sir," said Sir Cleges, "I pray you let me go in. I have a gift for the King from Him who made all things out of nought. Behold what I bring."

The porter went to the basket, and lifted the lid, and beheld the cherries. Well he knew that for such a gift he who brought it would have a great reward.

"You come not into this place," he said, "unless you promise me the third part of whatsoever the King grants you. Whether it be silver or gold."

Sir Cleges said, "I agree." The porter gave him leave to enter, and in he went without more ado.

But at the hall stood an usher with a staff, ready to smite him if he entered unbidden.

"Go back, churl," he cried. "Haste and tarry not. I will beat every bone in your body, without stint, if you press further."

"Good sir, for the love of Him who made man," said Sir Cleges, "cease your angry mood. I have here a present from Him who made all things out of nought and died on the Cross. Last night in my garden it grew: behold whether it be true or false."

The usher lifted the lid of the basket, and saw the cherries in very truth, and marvelled thereat.

"You come not in yet, churl," he answered, "until you grant me the third part of whatever you are given for these cherries."

Sir Cleges saw no other way, and granted what the usher asked. Then with sadder heart he led his son with the basket into the King's hall.

The King's steward walked to and fro in the hall among the lords and knights. To Sir Cleges he came straightway and said, "Who made you so bold as to come here? Get hence with your rags, and that speedily."

"I have brought a present for the King from our Lord who bought us on the Cross," answered Sir Cleges.

The steward took the basket, and opened it. "Never saw I such fruit at this season of the year," he cried, "No, not since I was born. You shall not come nigh the King unless you grant me this — the third part of whatsoever the King gives you. This I will have, or no further do you go."

"My reward is all swallowed up by these three men," thought Sir Cleges, "and I shall have nothing. I shall get nought for all my labour in coming hither unless it be but a meal."

"Have you no tongue, rogue?" cried the steward, since Sir Cleges did not answer. "Speak to me, and delay no longer: grant what I ask, or I will rouse you with a staff, so that your ribs rattle, and you shall be cast out headlong."

Sir Cleges saw nothing for it but to agree, and he answered with a sigh, "Whatsoever the King grants me, you shall have a third part, be it less or more."

Up to the dais Sir Cleges went, and full soberly and with good intent knelt before the King. He uncovered

the basket and showed the cherries, and said, "Our Saviour hath sent these to the King."

The King saw the fresh cherries. "This is a fair gift," said he, and bade Sir Cleges sit down to feast, meaning to speak with him thereafter. The cherries he sent in part to a fair lady in Cornwall, and in part divided them among his guests there in the hall.

When the feast was done, the King bade a squire, "Call now before me the poor man that brought these cherries."

Sir Cleges came, and tarried not, and fell on his knees before the King and his nobles. "Lord King, what is your will?" he asked. "I am your man freeborn."

"I thank you heartily," said the King, "for this your gift. You have honoured my feast and my guests, young and old, and you have honoured me also. Whatsoever you will have, I will grant you."

"Gramercy, liege King," said Sir Cleges; "this is good tidings to me. I tell you truly, to have land and other riches would be too much for me. But since I may choose for myself, I pray you grant me twelve strokes, to deal out as I please, and give to my adversary with my staff even in this hall."

Then answered Uther the King, "I repent the boon that I have granted you. It were better that you had gold or reward: you have more need of it."

"Sire, what I ask is your gift. I am fain to have it."

The King was sad and sorry at this reward, but nevertheless he granted the reward. Sir Cleges took his staff and went into the hall among the lords and knights, without more words. He sought the proud steward, and found him speedily; and he gave him such a stroke that he fell down like a log before them all; and then Sir Cleges dealt him other three strokes, so that he cried out, "Sir, for your courtesy, smite me no more."

Out of the hall Sir Cleges went to pay his other debts, and no man hindered him. He went to the usher, and, "Take your strokes," he said when he met him; and he dealt him that which would make him forbid no man the way to the King for many a day afterwards, so grimly did Sir Cleges greet him. "You have there the third part of my reward," quoth Sir Cleges.

Sir Cleges went to the porter and gave him four strokes also. The first broke his shoulder blade and his arm, and he gave him three more for his full share, so that he would stop no more entering for many a day. "You have the third part of my reward," quoth Sir Cleges, "according to our covenant."

The King was in his chamber filled with mirth and humour. Thither came Sir Cleges to thank King Uther again; and it chanced that a harper sang to the King the former deeds of a certain knight, even of Sir Cleges himself.

"Where is Sir Cleges?" asked the King. "You have wandered wide, Harper; tell me truth, if you can. Know you of the man?"

"Yes," answered the harper. "Aforetime I knew him. He was a true knight, and a comely. We minstrels miss him in sooth, since he went out of this land."

"I trow Sir Cleges is dead," said the King. "I loved him well. Would that he were alive! would that he were alive than any other five, for he was strong and valiant."

Sir Cleges kneeled before the king and thanked him for his boon. But the king asked him why he had paid the twelve strokes to the three servants, the steward, the usher, and the porter.

"Sire, I might not enter into your presence until I had granted each one of these three the third part of whosoever you granted me. With that I should have nought my-

self, wherefore I gave them twelve strokes; I thought that best."

The lords both old and young, and all that were with the King, made merry thereat, and the King could scarce withhold his laughter.

"This is a noble wight," quoth he, and sent for his steward. "Have you your reward?" he asked.

But the steward only reviled Sir Cleges with a surly look.

Then said the King to Sir Cleges, "What is your name, good man? Tell me truly."

"I am Sir Cleges," he answered. "I was your own knight, King Uther."

"Are you Sir Cleges who served me, and were so generous and free, and so stout in the fight?"

"Even so, lord King; so was I, until God visited me thus in poverty."

Thereupon the King bestowed upon Sir Cleges all that belonged of right to a knight, to befit his rank; he gave him also the castle of Kardyf, with many other gifts, that he might live with mirth and joy. And Sir Cleges rode home to Dame Clarys, his wife, and told her all that had been given him; and they lived thereafter in happiness to the end of their days.

LIONBRUNO

THERE was once a man who supported his wife and four children by following the vocation of fisherman, but for some time there had been a dearth of fish, so that he had not been able to catch anything at all, and little by little he had been obliged to sell all he possessed in order to live, and he was reduced almost to beggary. One day as he was

fishing with his usual ill-luck, a certain person (it was the Enemy) rose in the midst of the sea before his boat. He spoke to the poor fisherman about his bad luck, and then said: "Listen, if you will agree to give me the son that may come to you in the next thirteen years, from now until that time I will cause you to catch so much fish that you will become a very rich man." Then the fisherman knew that this was the Evil One, but he said to himself: "My wife and I are now old, and there will be no more children given to us." Then turning to the Enemy he said: "As you desire this contract, let us make it. But, remember, you must make me rich."

"Never fear," replied the Enemy; "we will make the agreement and you leave the matter to me." And so they settled everything at once, and the Enemy disappeared. The mariner began to draw in his nets, and they were full to overflowing of all kinds of fish, and from that day he became richer and richer.

Now some time after this a very handsome boy came to the fisherman and his wife, and they named him Lionbruno. The Enemy suddenly appeared to the mariner. "How can I serve you?" asked the poor man, trembling.

"Remember the promise," said the Enemy; "Lionbruno is mine."

"But you must obey the contract, which is thirteen years," replied the fisherman.

"That is true," said the Enemy; "farewell for thirteen years." Then he vanished.

Meanwhile Lionbruno grew day by day, and became constantly handsomer, and his parents sent him to school. But time passes, and the end of the thirteen years draws near. On the day before the time agreed upon, the Enemy appeared. "Mariner! Mariner!" he called.

"Oh, poor me!" said the wretched man, who recognised him by his horrid voice. But what could he do? The

contract was clear, and the poor fisherman was obliged to promise to send the boy alone the next day to the sea.

The following day the mother sent her son, when he returned from school, to carry his father's lunch to him. But the unhappy father had gone far out to sea, so that the boy could not find him. The poor boy sat down on the beach, and to pass away the time, made little crosses out of pieces of wood, and stuck them in the sand around him, so that he was surrounded with them, and one he held in his hand.

Then the Enemy came to take him, and said to him: "What are you doing, boy?" "I am waiting for my father," he replied.

The Enemy looked and saw that he could not take him, because he was seated in the midst of all those little crosses, and moreover had one in his hand. He regarded the boy with an ugly look, and cried: "Destroy those crosses at once!" "I will not," said the boy. Then the Enemy threatened him and frightened him so that he destroyed all the crosses except the one he held in his hand.

"Destroy that one quickly," cried the Enemy, very much enraged.

"No, No!" said the poor child, all in tears; "I will not destroy this cross."

The Enemy threatened him again and terrified him, but the child was firm and then a bright shining light appeared in the air. The fairy Colina, queen of the fairies, came down and took the boy by the hand, and delivered him from the Enemy, who shot fire from his eyes, nose, mouth, everywhere. But it was all to no purpose, for the fairy carried the boy away to her splendid palace. There Lionbruno grew up in the midst of the fairies, increasing in strength and beauty, and he lacked nothing.

Some years passed, and one day Lionbruno said to the fairy Colina: "I should like to see my father and mother, and hope you will not refuse me permission."

"No," said the fairy, "I will not refuse you. I will give you twenty days to go and see your family, but do not stay away any longer. Remember that I have saved you from the Enemy, and have brought you up in the midst of wealth, which we are to enjoy together, for you are to be my husband."

The youth replied: "I will do your will in all things."

Then the fairy said: "My Lionbruno, take this ruby; all that you ask of it you shall have." He took the ruby, and all the fairies gave him in turn some token, which he took, and thanked them all. Then he embraced his bride and departed. He was splendidly dressed, and rode on a superb horse, with guards before him. He arrived at his town, and was surrounded by a crowd of curious people. He visited his parents, but did not say who he was, and asked them for a lodging that night. At midnight, Lionbruno, by virtue of his ruby, changed their house into a magnificent palace, and the next day he changed himself into the thirteen-year-old Lionbruno and revealed himself to his parents, telling them how the fairy Colina had saved him from the Enemy, brought him up, and made him her husband. "For this reason, dear father and mother, I cannot stay with you, but before I go, I will make you rich." And with this they had to be content.

One morning, Lionbruno, by an order to his ruby, brought together a great mass of riches, and then called to his parents and said: "I leave you this wealth and this palace. Now give me your blessing, for I have to depart." He received their blessing and left them.

He arrived at Naples and lodged at the finest inn. Then he went out to walk and heard a proclamation which

declared: "Whatever prince or knight, on horse, with spear in hand, shall pierce and carry away a gold star, shall marry the king's daughter." Lionbruno, more for braggadocio than for anything else, said to himself: "I will carry away the golden star;" and he commanded the ruby that it should be so. The princes and knights assembled to try their skill, but none was successful until Lionbruno came, and with a master-stroke carried off the star. Then he escaped to the inn, so that no one should see him. The king was ill-humoured at not being able to find the winner, and issued a proclamation again for the next day, when the same thing occurred. Lionbruno duped them a second time, and the king was very angry. He issued a third proclamation, and posted a large number of soldiers at all places where one could escape. As usual Lionbruno carried off the prize, but the soldiers, quicker than he, seized him, and carried him to the king, who asked him why, not satisfied with duping him twice, he had wished to do it a third time; and that, having won the star, he must become his daughter's husband. And Lionbruno, against his will, was obliged to promise to marry the princess. There was a magnificent feast, and Lionbruno before marrying the princess said to the king: "Your Majesty, it is true that your daughter is very beautiful, but I had a bride by whose side she could not stand for beauty or grace."

At this affront the poor princess became as red as fire, and the king said: "If this is so, we wish to see your wife."

Poor Lionbruno was in a tight place, and had recourse to the ruby. "Ruby mine, make fairy Colina come here." But this time he was mistaken. The ruby could not compel the fairy to come, for it was she who had given it its magic power. But the summons reached the fairy, who said she would treat him as he deserved, and so made the

lowest of her servants appear suddenly in the great hall of the king, where all the guests were assembled for the wedding. As soon as they saw her they all said, "How beautiful she is! Is this then your first bride?"

"No," answered Lionbruno, "this is the lowest servant of my first bride."

"Gracious!" exclaimed the noblemen; "If this is the lowest of the servants and is so beautiful, what must the mistress be like!" Then said the king, "If this is not your first bride, I wish you to make her come herself."

Poor Lionbruno! He was obliged to have recourse to the ring again. But this time also the fairy did not go, but sent her second servant. Scarcely had they seen her than they all said: "This one is really beautiful! This must be your first bride, Lionbruno."

"No, no!" said he; "my first bride is a marvel of beauty. This is only her second servant."

Then said the king threateningly: "Lionbruno, let us put an end to this; I command you to cause your first wife to come here instantly."

The matter was growing serious. Poor Lionbruno had recourse a third time to the ruby, and said: "Ruby mine, if you really wish to help me, cause the fairy Colina herself to come here." The summons reached her at once, and this time she went. When the great lords and the king and his daughter saw that marvel of beauty, they became as so many statues. But the fairy Colina approached Lionbruno, pretended to take his hand, and drew off his ring, saying: "Traitor! you cannot find me until you have worn out seven pairs of iron shoes." Then she vanished. The king in fury said to Lionbruno: "I understand. The power of carrying off the star was not yours, but your ruby's. Leave my palace!" He had him well beaten and sent him away.

And so poor Lionbruno was left without the fairy Colina

or the king's daughter, and departed sorrowfully from the city. He went to a blacksmith's and ordered seven pairs of iron shoes, put on one pair, placed the rest in his travelling sack, and set out. After walking until night, he arrived at a forest. All at once three robbers came there; they asked Lionbruno how he happened to be there, and he told them he was a poor pilgrim who had stopped to rest. He asked them who they were, and was told that they were travellers. They remained together for the night, and in the morning Lionbruno took leave of them and departed. He had just started when he heard them quarrelling. Now these robbers had stolen three objects of considerable value, and were disputing as to their division. One of them said: "Let us call back the pilgrim, and have him decide." They called him and said that they had three objects of great value to divide, and wished him to be the judge, and give one to each of them. There were a pair of boots, a purse, and a cloak. The boots had the virtue of enabling he who wore them to outrun the wind. The purse on being requested to open and shut gave at once a hundred ducats. And he who wore the cloak and buttoned it up could see and yet be himself unseen. Lionbruno said that to act as judge, he must first carefully examine each object, and so he put on the boots, tried to run, and went marvellously. Then he took the purse and said: "Open and shut," and at once there came forth a hundred silver ducats. At last he put on the coat and began to button it up. While he was doing so he asked the robbers if they saw him. They answered "Yes." He kept on buttoning it and asked again if they saw him, and they said "Yes." At last he reached the final button. "Now do you see me?" he inquired. The robbers replied, "No." Lionbruno said: "If you don't see me now, you never will see me again." He threw aside the iron shoes, and went away, faster than

the wind. The robbers were in a terrible rage when they saw how they had been duped, and the one who had suggested calling Lionbruno back was soundly thrashed by the others.

Lionbruno continued on his way, and after a long journey, he arrived in the midst of a forest. He saw at a distance a slight smoke, and among frightful rocks, a little old hovel surrounded by dense wild shrubs, with a little door entirely covered with ivy, so that it could scarcely be seen. Approaching the door, he knocked softly. "Who is knocking?" asked an old woman's voice. "I am a poor Christian," replied Lionbruno; "night has overtaken me, and I am seeking a lodging." The door opened and Lionbruno entered.

"Oh, poor youth! How have you been tempted to come and ruin yourself in this remote place?" demanded in great wonder the old woman who was within, and who was Borea, the mother of the winds.

"Oh, dear little lady," replied Lionbruno, "I am lost in this great forest, for I have been travelling a long time in search of my dear bride, the fairy Colina, and I have not yet been able to find any trace of her."

"My son," said she, "you have made a great mistake! What shall we do now that my sons are coming home? Perhaps they will want to eat you."

"Oh, wretched me!" cried Lionbruno, trembling; "who are these sons of yours who devour Christians?"

"My son," replied Borea, "you do not know where you are. This house in the midst of these precipices is the house of the winds, and I am Borea, the mother of all the winds."

"Oh, my dear old lady," said Lionbruno, "will you help me, and save me from your sons?"

She finally concealed him in a chest, telling him not to make the slightest noise when her sons returned.

Soon a loud noise was heard at a distance: it was the winds returning home. The nearer they approached the louder the noise grew, and a sound of branches and trees broken off was heard. At last the winds arrived, pushed open the door, and entered. "Good evening, mother!" they said; and "Welcome, my sons!" replied she, smiling. And so one after the other all the winds entered, and the last to enter was Sirocco, for you must know that Sirocco is the youngest of Borea's sons. Scarcely had they entered when they began to say: "What smell of human flesh is here?"

"How foolish you are," said their mother; "who do you think would risk his life by coming here?"

But they would not be convinced, especially that obstinate Sirocco. Lionbruno thought his end was near, but Borea finally satisfied her sons, and made them happy by placing a fine meal before them.

The next day Borea said: "My sons, when you came home last night, you said you smelled human flesh. Tell me, should you really see a man now, what would you do to him?"

"We would do nothing to him now," they replied, "but last night we would have torn him in pieces."

Having again given their promise that they would now do no harm to a man if he were there, Borea opened the chest and made Lionbruno come forth. If you had heard the winds then! They puffed and blew around him, and asked him first of all how he had come to that place, where no living soul had ever penetrated.

Lionbruno said: "I would that my journey ended here! I must go to the palace of the Fairy Colina; perhaps you can tell me where it is?"

Then Borea asked her sons one by one, and each replied that he knew nothing about it, until she questioned Sirocco, and he said, "Should I not know something

about it? I am not like my brothers who can never find a hiding-place. The fairy Colina is love-sick. She says her lover has betrayed her, and continually weeps, and is so reduced by grief that she can live but little longer. And I am ashamed of myself, for I have seen her in this condition, and have amused myself by making a noise about her palace, and more than once I burst open windows and turned things upside down, even the bed she was resting on."

"Oh, my dear Sirocco, you must aid me!" said Lionbruno. "Since you have given me news of her, you must also do me the favour to show me the way to my bride's palace. I, my dear Sirocco, am the betrothed of the fairy Colina, and it is not true that I have betrayed her; on the contrary, if I do not find her, I shall die of grief."

"My son," said Sirocco, "listen; for my part I would take you there with all my heart, but I should have to carry you around my neck, and the trouble is that I am wind and air, and you would fall off. Were you like me, it would be very simple."

"Don't worry about that," said Lionbruno, "show me the way, and I will not lag behind."

"He is crazy," said Sirocco to himself; then he said to Lionbruno: "Very well, since you feel so strong, to-morrow we will make the trial. Meanwhile let us go to bed, for it is late, and to-morrow, God willing, we will rise early!" And all went to sleep.

In the morning early Sirocco arose and cried: "Lionbruno! Lionbruno! get up quickly!" And Lionbruno put on his boots in a hurry, seized his purse, fixed his cloak carefully, and left the house with Sirocco. "There," said Sirocco, "is the way we must take. Be careful! Don't let me out of your sight, and leave the rest to me. If a few hours after sunset to-night I

don't make you find your beauty, you may call me an ass."

They started, and ran like the wind. Every little while Sirocco called out: "Lionbruno!" and he, who was ahead, answered at once: "Oh! don't think I am going to lag behind!" About two hours after sunset they reached the palace of the fairy Colina, and Sirocco said, "Here is your fair one's balcony! See how I am going to blow open the window for you. As soon as it is open, you give a spring and jump in."

And so he did. Before the servants could run and shut the window, Lionbruno was already under the fairy Colina's bed. Afterwards one of the maids said to the fairy: "My mistress, how do you feel now? Do you not feel a little better?"

"Better? I am half dead," said the fairy. "That wind has nearly killed me."

"Take a little coffee, or chocolate, or broth;" said the maid. "If you do not, you will not rest to-night, you have eaten nothing for three or four days. Really you must take something." And the servant insisted so, that to get rid of her the fairy said: "Well, bring something; if I want it, I will take it."

The servant brought a little coffee, and left it beside the bed, and Lionbruno, in his invisible cloak, drank the coffee himself. The servant, believing her mistress had drunk it, brought the chocolate too, and Lionbruno drank that as before. Then the servant brought the fairy some broth and a pigeon. "Mistress," said she, "since you have taken the coffee and chocolate, take this broth and a bit of pigeon, so that you may gain strength and be better to-morrow."

On hearing this, the mistress thought that the servant was making fun of her. "Oh, stupid blockhead!" she

said; what are you saying? I have touched nothing. The cups are still here with the coffee and chocolate."

The servant thought the fairy was out of her mind. Then Lionbruno took off his cloak, and said: "My bride, do you not know me?"

"Lionbruno mine, is it indeed you?" And she rose from the bed and embraced him. "Then it is not true that you have forgotten me. Now you see that I am cured only because I have seen you."

Then they summoned the servants and made a great festival. The next day they were married with great splendour, and in the evening they gave a grand ball and a great banquet, and every one was happy.

THE THANKFUL DEAD

THE son of a retired merchant, having passed through school, was informed by his father that it was time he made a start in life; that he would receive a vessel and six thousand scudi, with which he might voyage, and buy and sell merchandise. Having received these, together with his father's blessing, he started on his travels.

On his journey, without having yet purchased anything, he arrived at a town, and on the sea-shore he saw a bier and noticed that many of those who passed by bestowed alms on the corpse. The traveller asked why the body was kept there instead of being lowered into a grave, and was told that the dead man owed many debts, and it was their custom to bury no one until his debts were paid, therefore this man would have to remain unburied until enough money had been received through charity to pay the amount he had owed.

"What is the use of keeping him here?" said the young

man. "Let it be known that all those to whom he owed money may come to me and be paid."

The proclamation was issued, and he paid the debts, and then had not a penny left of the capital which his father had given him. So he returned home.

"What news, son?" asked his father. "Why do you return so soon?"

He replied: "While crossing the sea, we encountered pirates; they have robbed me of all my capital."

His father said: "Never mind, son; be thankful your life is spared. I will give you more money, but you must not go in that direction again." He then gave him another six thousand scudi.

The son thanked his father, said he would change his course, and again began his journey.

When well out to sea, he observed a Turkish vessel, and said to himself: "Now it is better for me to summon them on board than for them to summon us." They came on board, and he said to them: "Whence do you come?" They answered: "We come from the Levant." He asked them what cargo they had, and they replied: "Nothing but a very beautiful girl whom we have stolen from the Sultan, and we wish to sell her."

He desired to see this girl, and when they brought her, he was so much struck with her beauty that he paid the six thousand scudi they demanded for her, and carried her away in his ship. He had her become a Christian, and they were married.

He returned to his father's house. His father welcomed him, and asked for an account of his trading. When he learned that his son had brought a wife, the daughter of the Sultan of Turkey, he was very angry, and drove them both from his house.

The poor unfortunates did not know where to find shelter. They went away, and hired a poor room at a

short distance from their town. There they talked over what they should do. The young man had learned no business or profession, but his wife said she could paint beautiful pictures, which he could sell, but that he must tell no one that she painted them.

In the meantime the Sultan had sent out many ships in search of his daughter, and one of these arrived at the town where they were, and many of the sailors went on shore.

The husband said to his wife: "Make many pictures, for to-day we shall sell them!" She made them, and told him to sell them for twenty scudi each. He took them to the public square where many of the Turkish sailors came. These men at once recognised the work of the Sultan's daughter, for she had been renowned for her beautiful paintings, so they bought all he had, and said they wanted more. He told them to come to his house, and his wife would do as many as they wished.

They accompanied him there, and when they saw the Sultan's daughter, they seized and bound her, and carried her away to Turkey.

The husband, then, was indeed unhappy. He had lost his wife; he was alone, and knew no trade. What could he do?

Every day he walked along the beach seeking a ship that would take him on board, but he found none. One day he saw an old man fishing in a little boat, and he cried: "Old man, how much better off you are than I!"

The old man asked: "Why, my son?"

The young man related his circumstances, and asked if he might get in the boat and fish with him.

"Yes, my son," said he; "if you wish to come with me in this boat, I will take you. I will sell the fish we catch, and we shall live together."

They ate, and went to sleep, and during the night a severe storm arose, and they were carried by it to the coast of Turkey. The Turks, seeing the boat, went on board, seized them, and sold them as slaves to the Sultan, who put them both to work in the garden, the old man as gardener, while the young man had to carry flowers to the Sultan's daughter, who with her maids was shut up in a high tower.

They were very comfortable there, and made friends with the other gardeners. They were both fond of music, and the old man made several instruments — guitars, flutes, violins, and piccolos — which the young man played beautifully when he had time. He also sang well, and his playing and singing attracted the attention of the Sultan's daughter.

One day his wife, who was in the tower, heard him singing a song of which her husband had been very fond, so she went out on the balcony and saw him in the garden. Then she said to one of those who filled the basket with flowers: "Put the young man who sings into the basket, and cover him with flowers." This was done, and the maids drew him up. He came out of the basket, and beheld his wife. They were both overjoyed, and immediately laid plans for their escape.

The Princess told her damsels that she wished to depart without any one knowing it, so they caused a ship to be loaded with gold and jewels. When all was ready, they let down the young man first, then his wife, and finally the damsels, and they embarked and departed.

But when they were out at sea, the husband remembered the old man who had been left behind, and said to his wife: "Even though I lose my life, I must turn back for my friend." So they put back and saw the old man, whom they took with them, and went out to sea again.

When they were near home, the old man said. "Now, my son, it were fitting for us to settle our accounts."

The young man replied, "Good old man, all the wealth that I have belongs half to you and half to me."

"Your wife, too, does she belong half to me?" said the old man.

The young man answered: "I will give you three quarters, and take one quarter only for myself, but let me have my wife. Do you want me to divide her in two?"

Then the old man said: "I am the soul of him whose debts you paid, and whom you had buried, and all this good fortune has come to you because you did that good action, and also converted your wife." Then he gave him his blessing, and disappeared.

When they reached his city, the young man told his father all that had happened to them. They were received with open arms, and lived together very happily.

"I WON'T"

"DON'T CARE"— so they say — fell into a goosepond; and "I won't" is apt to come to no better end. At least, my grandmother tells me that was how the miller had to quit his native town, and leave the tip of his nose behind him.

It all came of his being allowed to say "I won't" when he was quite a little boy. His mother thought he looked pretty when he was pouting, and that wilfulness gave him an air which distinguished him from other people's children. And when she found out that his lower lip was becoming so big that it spoiled his beauty, and that

his wilfulness gained his way twice and stood in his way eight times out of ten, it was too late to alter him.

Then she said, "Dearest Abinadab, do be more obliging!"

And he replied (as she had taught him), "I won't."

He always took what he could get, and would neither give nor give up to other people. This, he thought was the way to get more out of life than one's neighbours.

Amongst other things, he made a point of taking the middle of the footpath.

"Will you allow me to pass you, sir?"—"I'm in a hurry," said a voice behind him one day.

"I won't," said Abinadab: on which a poor washerwoman, with her basket, scrambled down into the road, and Abinadab chuckled.

Next day he was walking as before.

"Will you allow me to pass you, sir?—I am in a hurry," said a voice behind him.

"I won't," said Abinadab. On which he was knocked into the ditch; and the Baron walked on, and left him to get out of the mud on which ever side he liked.

He quarrelled with his friends till he had none left, and he quarrelled with the tradesmen of the town till there was only one who would serve him, and this man offended him at last.

"I'll show you who's master!" said the miller. "I won't pay a penny of your bill—not a penny."

"Sir," said the tradesman, "my giving you offence now is no just reason why you should refuse to pay for what you have had and been satisfied with. I must beg you to pay me at once."

"I won't," said the miller, "and what I say I mean. I won't; I tell you, I won't."

So the tradesman summoned him before the Justice,

and the Justice condemned him to pay the bill and the costs of the suit.

"I won't," said the miller.

So they put him in prison, and in prison he would have remained if his mother had not paid the money to obtain his release. By and by she died, and left him her blessing and some very good advice, which (as is sometimes the case with bequests) would have been more useful if it had come earlier.

The miller's mother had taken a great deal of trouble off his hands which now fell into them. She took in all the small bags of grist which the country-folks brought in to be ground, and kept account of them, and spoke civilly to the customers, big and little. But these small matters irritated the miller.

"I may be the slave of all the old women in the country side;" said he, "but I won't — they shall see that I won't."

So he put up a notice to say that he would only receive grist at a certain hour on certain days. Now, but a third of the old women could read the notice, and they did not attend to it. People came as before; but the miller locked the door of the mill and sat in the counting-house and chuckled.

"My good friend," said his neighbours, "you can't do business in this way. If a man lives by trade, he must serve his customers. And a miller must take in grist when it comes to the mill."

"Others may if they please," said the miller; "but I won't. When I make a rule, I stick to it."

"Take advice, man, or you'll be ruined," said his friends.

"I won't," said the miller.

In a few weeks all the country-folk turned their donkeys' heads towards the windmill on the heath. It was

a little farther to go, but the windmiller took custom when it came to him, gave honest measure, and added civil words gratis.

The other miller was ruined.

"All you can do now is to leave the mill while you can pay the rent, and try another trade," said his friends.

"I won't," said the miller. "Shall I be turned out of the house where I was born, because the country-folk are fools?"

However, he could not pay the rent, and the landlord found another tenant.

"You must quit," said he to the miller.

"That I won't," said the miller, "not for fifty new tenants."

So the landlord sent for the constables, and he was carried out, which is not a dignified way of changing one's residence. But then it is not easy to be obstinate and dignified at the same time.

His wrath against the landlord knew no bounds.

"Was there ever such a brute?" he cried. "Would any man of spirit hold his home at the whim of a landlord? I'll never rent another house as long as I live."

"But you must live somewhere," said his friends.

"I won't," said the miller.

He was no longer a young man, and the new tenant pitied him.

"The poor fellow is out of his senses," he said. And he let him sleep in one of his barns. One of the mill cats found out there was a new warm bed in this barn, and she came and lived there too, and kept away the mice.

One night, however, Mrs. Pussy disturbed the miller's rest. She was in and out of the window constantly, and meowed horribly into the bargain.

"It seems a man can't even sleep in peace," said the

miller. "If this happens again, you'll go into the mill-race to sing to the fishes."

The next night the cat was still on the alert, and the following morning the miller tied a stone round her neck, and threw her into the water.

"Oh, spare the poor thing, there's a good soul," said a bystander.

"I won't," said the miller. "I told her what would happen."

When his back was turned, however, the bystander got Pussy out, and took her home with him.

Now the cat was away, the mice could play; and they played hide-and-seek over the miller's nightcap.

It had come to such a pass that there was no rest to be had.

"I won't go to bed, I declare I won't," said the miller. So he sat up all night in an armchair, and threw everything he could lay hands on at the corners where he heard the mice scuffling, till the place was topsy-turvy.

Towards morning he lit a candle and dressed himself. He was in a terrible humour, and when he began to shave, his hand shook and he cut himself. The draughts made the flame of the candle unsteady too, and the shadow of the miller's nose (which was a large one) fell in uncertain shapes upon his cheeks, and interfered with the progress of the razor. At first he thought he would wait till daylight. Then his temper got the better of him.

"I won't," he said, "I won't; why should I?"

So he began again. He held on by his nose to steady his cheeks, and gave it such a spiteful pinch that the tears came into his eyes.

"Matters have come to a pretty pass, when a man's own nose is to stand in his light," said he.

By and by a gust of wind came through the window. Up flared the candle, and the shadow of the miller's nose

danced half over his face, and the razor gashed his chin.

Transported with fury, he struck at it before he could think what he was doing. The razor was very sharp, and the tip of the miller's nose came off as clean as his whiskers.

When daylight came, and he saw himself in the glass, he resolved to leave the place.

"I won't stay here to be a laughing-stock," said he.

As he trudged out on to the highway, with his bundle on his back, the Baron met him and pitied him. He dismounted from his horse, and leading it up to the miller, he said,—

"Friend, you are elderly to be going far afoot, I will lend you my mare to take you to your destination. When you are there, knot the reins and throw them on her shoulder, saying, 'Home!' She will then return to me. But mark one thing,—she is not used to whip or spur. Humour her, and she will carry you safely and well."

The miller mounted willingly enough, and set forward. At first the mare was a little restive. The miller had no spurs on, but in spite of the Baron's warning, he kicked her with his heels. On this, she danced till the miller's hat and bundle flew right and left, and he was very near to following them.

"Ah, you vixen!" he cried. "You think I'll humour you as the Baron does. But I won't — no, you shall see that I won't!" And gripping his walking-stick firmly in his hand, he belaboured the Baron's mare as if it had been a donkey.

On which she sent the miller clean over her head, and cantered back to the castle; and wherever it was that he went to, he had to walk.

He never returned to his native village, and everybody was glad to be rid of him. One must bear and forbear

with his neighbours, if he hopes to be regretted when he departs.

But my grandmother says that long after the mill had fallen into ruin, the story was told as a warning to wilful children of the miller who cut off his nose to spite his own face.

THE FIDDLER IN THE FAIRY RING

GENERATIONS ago, there once lived a farmer's son, who had no great harm in him, and no great good either. He always meant well, but he had a poor spirit, and was too fond of idle company.

One day his father sent him to market with some sheep for sale, and when business was over for the day, the rest of the country folk made ready to go home, and more than one of them offered the lad a lift in his cart.

"Thank you kindly, all the same," said he, "but I am going back across the downs with Limping Tom."

Then out spoke a steady old farmer and bade the lad go home with the rest, and by the main road. For Limping Tom was an idle, graceless kind of fellow, who fiddled for his livelihood, but what else he did to earn the money he squandered, no one knew. And as to the sheep path over the downs, it stands to reason that the highway is better travelling after sunset, for the other is no such very short cut; and has a big fairy ring so near it, that a butter woman might brush it with the edge of her market cloak, as she turned the brow of the hill.

But the farmer's son would go his own way, and that was with Limping Tom, and across the downs.

So they started, and the fiddler had the fiddle in his hands, and a bundle of marketings under his arm, and

he sang snatches of strange songs, the like of which the lad had never heard before. And the moon drew out their shadows over the short grass till they were as long as the great stones of Stonehenge.

At last they turned the hill, and the fairy ring looked dark under the moon, and the farmer's son blessed himself that they were passing it so quietly, when Limping Tom suddenly pulled his cloak from his back and handing it to his companion, cried, "Hold this for a moment, will you? I'm wanted. They're calling for me."

"I hear nothing," said the farmer's son. But before he had got the words out of his mouth, the fiddler had completely disappeared. He shouted aloud, but in vain, and had begun to think of proceeding on his way, when the fiddler's voice cried, "Catch!" and there came flying at him from the direction of the fairy ring, the bundle of marketings which the fiddler had been carrying.

"It's in my way," he then heard the fiddler cry. "Ah, this is dancing! Come in, my lad, come in!"

But the farmer's son was not totally without prudence, and he took good care to keep at a safe distance from the fairy ring.

"Come back, Tom! Come back!" he shouted, and, receiving no answer, he adjured his friends to break the bonds that withheld him, and return to the right way, as wisely as one man can counsel another.

After talking for some time to no purpose, he again heard his friend's voice, crying, "Take care of it for me! The money dances out of my pocket." And therewith the fiddler's purse was hurled to his feet, where it fell with a heavy clinking of gold within.

He picked it up, and renewed his warnings and entreaties, but in vain; and, after waiting for a long time, he made the best of his way home alone, hoping that the fiddler would follow, and come to reclaim his property.

The fiddler never came. And when at last there was a fuss about his disappearance, the farmer's son, who had but a poor spirit, began to be afraid to tell the truth of the matter. "Who knows but they may accuse me of theft?" said he. So he hid the cloak, and the bundle, and the money-bag in the garden.

But when three months passed, and still the fiddler did not return, it was whispered that the farmer's son was his last companion; and the place was searched, and they found the cloak, and the bundle, and the money-bag, and the lad was taken to prison.

Now, when it was too late, he plucked up spirit, and told the truth; but no one believed him, and it was said that he had murdered the fiddler for the sake of his money and goods. And he was taken before the judge, found guilty, and sentenced to death.

Fortunately, his mother was a wise woman. And when she heard that he was condemned, she said, "Only follow my directions, and we may save you yet, for I guess how it is."

So she went to the judge, and begged for her son three favours before his death.

"I will grant them," said the judge, "if you do not ask for his life."

"The first," said the old woman, "is, that he may choose the place where the gallows shall be erected; the second, that he may fix the hour of his execution; and the third favour is, that you will not fail to be present."

"I grant all three," said the judge. But when he learned that the criminal had chosen a certain hill on the downs for the place of execution, and an hour before midnight for the time, he sent to beg the sheriff to bear him company on this important occasion.

The sheriff placed himself at the judge's disposal, but he commanded the attendance of the gaoler as some sort

of protection; and the gaoler, for his part, implored his reverence the chaplain to be of the party, as the hill was not in good spiritual repute. So, when the time came, the four started together, and the hangman and the farmer's son went before them to the foot of the gallows.

Just as the rope was being prepared, the farmer's son called to the judge, and said, "If your Honour will walk twenty paces down the hill, to where you will see a bit of paper, you will learn the fate of the fiddler."

"That is, no doubt, a copy of the poor man's last confession," thought the judge.

"Murder will out, Mr. Sheriff," said he; and in the interests of truth and justice he hastened to pick up the paper.

But, the farmer's son had dropped it as he came along, by his mother's direction, in such a place that the judge could not pick it up without putting his foot in the fairy ring. No sooner had he done so than he perceived an innumerable company of little people dressed in green cloaks and hoods, who were dancing round in a circle as wide as the ring itself.

They were all about two feet high, and had aged faces, brown and withered, like the knots on gnarled trees in hedge bottoms, and they squinted horribly; but, in spite of their seeming age, they flew round and round like children.

"Mr. Sheriff! Mr. Sheriff!" cried the judge, "come and see the dancing. And hear the music, too, which is so lively that it makes the soles of my feet tickle."

"There is no music, my Lord Judge," said the sheriff, running down the hill. "It is the wind whistling over the grass that your lordship hears."

But when the sheriff had put his foot by the judge's foot, he saw and heard the same, and he cried out, "Quick, Gaoler, and come down! I should like you to be a wit-

ness to this matter. And you may take my arm, Gaoler, for this music makes me feel unsteady."

"There is no music, sir," said the gaoler; "but your worship doubtless hears the creaking of the gallows."

But no sooner had the gaoler's feet touched the fairy ring, than he saw and heard like the rest, and he called lustily to the chaplain to come and stop the unhallowed measure.

"It is a delusion of the Evil One," said the parson; "there is not a sound in the air but the distant croaking of some frogs." But when he too touched the ring, he perceived his mistake.

At this moment the moon shone out, and in the middle of the ring they saw Limping Tom the fiddler, playing till great drops stood out on his forehead, and dancing as madly as he played.

"Ah, you rascal!" cried the judge. "Is this where you've been all this time, and a better man than you as good as hanged for you? But you shall come home now."

Saying which, he ran in, and seized the fiddler by the arm, but Limping Tom resisted so stoutly that the sheriff had to go to the judge's assistance, and even then the fairies so pinched and hindered them that the sheriff was obliged to call upon the gaoler to put his arms about his waist, who persuaded the chaplain to add his strength to the string. But as ill luck would have it, just as they were getting off, one of the fairies picked up Limping Tom's fiddle, which had fallen in the scuffle, and began to play. And as he began to play, every one began to dance — the fiddler, and the judge, and the sheriff, and the gaoler, and even the chaplain.

"Hangman! hangman!" screamed the judge, as he lifted first one leg and then the other to the tune, "come down and catch hold of his reverence the chaplain. The prisoner is pardoned, and he can lay hold too."

The hangman knew the judge's voice, and ran towards it; but as they were now quite within the ring he could see nothing, either of him or his companions.

The farmer's son followed, and warning the hangman not to touch the ring, he directed him to stretch his hands forward in hopes of catching hold of some one. In a few minutes the wind blew the chaplain's cassock against the hangman's fingers, and he caught the parson round the waist. The farmer's son then seized him in like fashion, and each holding firmly by the other, the fiddler, the judge, the sheriff, the gaoler, the parson, the hangman, and the farmer's son all got safely out of the charmed circle.

"Oh, you scoundrel!" cried the judge to the fiddler; "I have a very good mind to hang you upon the gallows without further ado."

But the fiddler only looked like one possessed, and upbraided the farmer's son for not having the patience to wait three minutes for him.

"Three minutes!" cried he; "why you've been here three months and a day."

This the fiddler would not believe, and as he seemed in every way beside himself, they led him home, still upbraiding his companion, and crying continually for his fiddle.

His neighbours watched him closely, but one day he escaped from their care and wandered away over the hills to seek his fiddle, and came back no more.

His dead body was found upon the downs, face downwards, with the fiddle in his arms. Some said he had really found the fiddle where he had left it, and had been lost in a mist, and died of exposure. But others held that he had perished differently, and laid his death at the door of the fairy dancers.

As to the farmer's son, it is said that thenceforward he

went home from market by the highroad, and spoke the truth straight out, and was more careful of his company.

THE WISE OLD SHEPHERD

ONCE upon a time, a snake went out of his hole to take an airing. He crawled about, greatly enjoying the scenery and the fresh whiff of the breeze, until, seeing an open door, he went in. Now this door was the door of the palace of the King, and inside was the King himself, with all his courtiers.

Imagine their horror at seeing a huge snake crawling in at the door. They all ran away except the King, who felt that his rank forbade him to be a coward, and the King's son. The King called out for somebody to come and kill the snake; but this horrified them still more, because in that country the people believed it to be wicked to kill any living thing, even snakes, and scorpions, and wasps. So the courtiers did nothing, but the young prince obeyed his father, and killed the snake with his stick.

After a while the Snake's wife became anxious, and set out in search of her husband. She too saw the open door of the palace, and in she went. O horror! there on the floor lay the body of her husband, all covered with blood, and quite dead. No one saw the Snake's wife crawl in; she inquired from a white ant what had happened, and when she found that the young Prince had killed her husband, she made a vow, that as he had made her a widow, so she would make his wife a widow.

That night, while all the world was asleep, the snake crept into the Prince's bedroom, and coiled around his neck. The Prince slept on, and when he awoke in the morning, he was surprised to find his neck encircled with

the coils of a Snake. He was afraid to stir, so there he remained, until the Prince's mother became anxious, and went to see what was the matter.

When she entered his room, and saw him in this plight, she gave a loud shriek, and ran off to tell the King.

"Call the archers," said the King. The archers came, and the King told them to go to the Prince's room, and shoot the snake that was coiled around his neck. They were so clever, that they could easily do this without hurting the Prince at all.

In came the archers in a row, fitted the arrows to the bows, the bows were raised and ready to shoot, when, on a sudden, from the snake there issued a voice, which spoke as follows: —

"O archers! wait, and hear me before you shoot. It is not fair to carry out the sentence before you have heard the case. Is not this good law, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth? Is it not so, O King?"

"Yes," replied the King, "that is our law."

"Then," said the Snake, "I plead the law. Your son has made me a widow, so it is fair and right that I should make his wife a widow."

"That sounds right enough," said the King, "but right and law are not always the same thing. We had better ask some one who knows."

They asked all the judges, but none of them could tell the law of the matter. They shook their heads, and said they would look up all their law-books, and see whether anything of the sort had ever happened before, and if so, how it had been decided. That is the way judges used to decide cases in that country, though I daresay it sounds to you a very funny way. It looked as if they had not so much sense in their own heads, and perhaps that was true. The upshot of all was, that not a judge would give an opinion; so the King sent messengers all over the

country-side, to see if they could find somebody somewhere who knew something.

One of these messengers found a party of five Shepherds, who were sitting upon a hill and trying to decide a quarrel of their own. They gave their opinions so freely, and in language so strong, that the King's messenger said to himself, "Here are the men for us. Here are five men, each with an opinion of his own, and all different." Post-haste he scurried back to the King, and told him he had found at last some one ready to judge the knotty point.

So the King and Queen, and the Prince and Princess, and all the courtiers, got on horseback, and away they galloped to the hill where the five Shepherds were sitting, and the snake too went with them, coiled around the neck of the Prince.

When they got to the Shepherds' hill, the Shepherds were dreadfully frightened. At first they thought that the strangers were a gang of robbers; and when they saw that it was the King, their next thought was that one of their misdeeds had been found out, and each of them began thinking what was the last thing he had done, and wondering was it that? But the King and his court got off their horses, and said good-day in the most civil way. So the Shepherds felt their minds set at ease again. Then the King said —

"Worthy Shepherds, we have a question to put to you, which not all the judges in all the courts of my city have been able to solve. Here is my son, and here, as you see, is a snake coiled round his neck. Now, the husband of this snake came creeping into my palace hall, and my son the Prince killed him; so this snake, who is the wife of the other, says that as my son has made her a widow, so she has a right to make my son's wife a widow. What do you think about it?"

The first Shepherd said, "I think she is quite right,

my lord King. If any one made my wife a widow, I would pretty soon do the same to him."

This was brave language, and the other Shepherds shook their heads and looked fierce. But the King was puzzled, and could not quite understand it. You see in the first place if the man's wife were a widow, the man would be dead; and then it is hard to see how he could do anything. So to make sure, the King asked the second Shepherd whether that was his opinion too?

"Yes," said the second Shepherd; "now the Prince has killed the snake, the snake has the right to kill the Prince, if he can."

But that was not of much use either, as the Snake was dead as a door-nail. So the King passed on to the third.

"I agree with my mates," said the third Shepherd, "because, you see a Prince is a Prince, and a Snake is a Snake."

That was quite true, they all admitted; but it did not seem to help the matter much. Then the King asked the fourth Shepherd to say what he thought.

The fourth Shepherd said, "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth; so I think a widow should be a widow, if she don't marry again."

By this time the poor King was so puzzled that he hardly knew whether he stood on his head or his heels. But there was still a fifth Shepherd left, the oldest and wisest of them all; and the fifth Shepherd said —

"O King, I should like to ask two questions."

"Ask twenty if you like," said the King. He did not promise to answer them, so he could afford to be generous.

"First I ask the Princess how many sons she has?"

"Four," said the Princess.

"And how many sons has the Mistress Snake here?"

"Seven," said the Snake.

"Then," said the old Shepherd, "it will be quite fair

for Mistress Snake to kill his highness the Prince, when her Highness the Princess has had three more sons."

"I never thought of that," said the Snake. "Good-bye, King, and all you good people. Send a message when the Princess has had three more sons, and you may count upon me — I will not fail you." So saying she uncoiled herself from the Prince's neck and slid away among the grass.

The King and the Prince and everybody shook hands with the wise old Shepherd, and went home again. And as the Princess never had any more sons at all, she and the Prince lived happily for many years more.

THE FROG AND THE WILD-HOG

A WILD-HOG was boasting to a frog about his skill in running, and the frog challenged him to race to the top of a hill. Just as the hog commenced to run, the frog leaped upon his back, and the hog knew nothing about it, because his skin was so thick that he did not feel the extra weight at all. So the wild-hog raced and galloped, and as he arrived at the goal, the frog jumped off without letting the hog see him do so.

The latter was greatly surprised, and then proposed that they should see which could leap the farthest. "Just as you please," said the frog, "but you will have to do your best to beat me."

So the two came to the water-side, and as the hog was about to leap, the frog jumped upon his back as before, and again the stupid fellow did not know it, his hide being so thick. And so, when they were just at the goal, the frog leaped off again, and he was first.

The wild-hog of course was very angry, but was so

astonished to see the frog take it so easily, that he said, "I think you are a rascal, but there is no getting the better of you."

THE HUNTER AND THE SERPENT

ONCE a hunter passed by a quarry and found a serpent under a stone. The reptile asked the hunter to release him, and he answered, "I will not extricate you, for you will eat me." The serpent replied, "Please deliver me; I will not eat you."

But when the hunter had drawn away the stone from above him, the serpent sought to eat him, and the hunter said, "Did you not promise that you would not eat me?"

The serpent answered him, "I am so hungry that I cannot keep that bargain."

"But," replied the hunter, "if you are not right in eating me, will you still do so?"

The serpent said, "No," so the hunter then said, "Come let us seek three persons' opinions."

So they went into a thicket, where they found a greyhound: they questioned him, and he said, "I was once with a master, and I caught hares, and when I brought them to his house he could not find meat good enough for me to eat. But now, when I cannot even catch tortoises, because I am so old, he wishes to kill me. Therefore I condemn thee to be eaten by the serpent."

"Do you hear?" said the serpent to the hunter; "we have a judge."

They went farther, and met with a horse. They questioned him, and he also replied that the serpent would be right in eating the hunter. "For," said he, "I had a master, who gave me food so long as I could work hard

for him. I am too old to do so now, and he wishes to kill me."

Then said the serpent to the hunter, "We have two judges."

They went on, and found a fox, to whom the hunter said, "Dear Reynard, you must come to my aid. Listen: I was passing a quarry, and under a great stone I found this serpent almost dead. He asked me to help him, so I took him out, and now he wants to eat me."

The fox replied, "Must I be the judge? Let us go then to the quarry, and see how you found the serpent."

So they went thither, and placed the stone upon the serpent, and the fox then asked him, "Is that how you were?"

The serpent said, "Yes." And the fox said, "Ah, well, then just stay there always."

GLOB AND ALGER

Before Jutland was united under one sovereign there were many petty kings there, each of whom had his portion of land to rule over, who were almost always engaged in quarrels and warfare with one another. One of these kings was named Alger; he ruled over Sallingland. His neighbour was Glob of Fuur, an isle also in the Limfiord, about a mile from Salling. Glob had come from* Thy with a great army, and warred with the king of Fuurland, until he at length slew him, drove away his son, and made himself king over the people of Fuur. Alger was thus king in Salling, and Glob in Fuur.

The fugitive prince fled from place to place, without

* Also in the Limfiord.

"The fox said, 'Ah! Well then, just stay there always'"

having any fixed abode; for Glob had declared him an outlaw, and set a price upon his head. At the time these events took place, he lived in a small dwelling in the neighbourhood of Alger's castle at Salling. When Glob had gained a firm footing in Fuurland he resolved on extending his power, and trying whether he could not also become King over Salling. For this purpose he assembled a large army and crossed the "fiord;" but his attempt ended by his being driven back with great loss, and it subsequently appeared that he had given up all hostile designs against Alger. In the meantime Alger, placing but little reliance on Glob's pacific policy, entered into a secret alliance with some of his neighbours, by which they bound themselves to come to his aid with all the force they could bring, as soon as Alger should light the beacons outside his castle, as a sign that the enemy was in the neighbourhood.

When Glob made his attack on Salling, it happened, that one of his courtiers, named Birke, saw Alger's daughter Helvig, and became enamoured of her. When the two kings had settled their quarrel, Birke crossed over to Salling and visited Alger. Glob saw this with pleasure, because, when he asked permission of the king to go, he promised to avail himself of the opportunity to spy out all he could. Alger, on his part, was also glad to see Birke, knowing how high he stood in Glob's favour, and that no one could give better information of the king's intentions and feeling than he.

But it was impossible for Birke to preserve the favour of both princes. When he had been for sometime at Alger's, and had nearly obtained the promise of Helvig's hand, his love triumphed, and made him a traitor to Glob, so that he revealed to Alger all the king's plans, imforming him that he only waited for an opportunity to make an attack on Salling. This soon reached the ear

of Glob, who was bitterly enraged at the conduct of his emissary.

He immediately sent a messenger over to Alger, demanding that he should give the traitor Birke, also the fugitive prince Eiler, who had found shelter in his land. Alger refused to comply with either of these demands, and laughed at the threats by the king's messenger.

With regard to Alger's daughter, Helvig, her beauty had already called forth a host of suitors who, to gain her favour, vied with each other in knightly games and song, long before Glob came to Fuurland. But Helvig was indifferent to them all; she had secretly engaged herself to the fugitive Eiler, who lived in the neighbourhood of Alger's castle, and was their daily guest. At first she only viewed with pity the unfortunate prince; but this feeling soon turned to fervent love, and Helvig called Heaven to witness that she would rather sing into the grave than choose any other for her husband.

Alger was attached to Eiler, but his interest bade him favour Birke; he therefore commanded Helvig to give her promise to Birke and forget Eiler. But the maiden was not to be persuaded.

Two years had nearly passed, and Glob had taken no hostile steps against Alger. The latter had sent many spies over to Fuur, in order to find out whether Glob had any warlike intentions against him; but the king seemed occupied only in chivalrous games and the chase. Heaven once sent a messenger over to Sallingland to invite Alger to visit him. Birke advised the king not to go, adding, that he knew Glob too well not to feel certain that it was only a stratagem to get him into his power. Alger followed his counsel and remained at home.

It was in the winter just before Yule, that this invitation was sent from Fuurland to the king. A few days after Alger had a great banquet, and drank Yule-ale with

his guests. Birke in the meanwhile was growing impatient at the long procrastination of his wishes and obtained Alger's promise that he should have his daughter's consent before the New Year's festivities were over.

In the evening when all the guests were assembled at the castle, and just as the mirth was at its height, the watchman's horn sounded from the tower. At the same moment a retainer rushed into the hall, announcing that he had seen a number of boats from Fuurland coming in the direction of Salling. Immediately after, another messenger arrived, who related that King Glob had landed with his men, and was burning and destroying everything as he advanced. The guests were paralysed at these unlooked-for tidings. Alger alone retained his self-possession.

"I thought rightly enough," said he, "that Glob would invite himself to our festivity, since I refused to go over to him. It concerns all when the wolf is at the door. Our business is now to receive him in a fitting manner, and that that may take place, I beseech you, my friends, to lend me your aid."

The guests were silent, and looked at each other: they had assembled at the castle to drink Yule-ale, but not to fight, and Alger plainly saw that their silence signified no less than a refusal. His embarrassment was the greater, as, in consequence of the mildness of the winter, many of his men were gone to sea, to plunder along the coast of Norway.

Before Alger's guests had come to any determination, Helvig entered the hall, and thus addressed them: "Be it known to all here assembled that I am the betrothed of Eiler, the son of the late king of Fuurland, and that I would rather endure the greatest sufferings than break my word, were not my father's life and fortune now threatened; but as I see among his guests men who have

been suitors for my hand, I say to them, that to him who is able to free us from this danger, I will give myself and be his dutiful wife, so may God help me, as I will keep my promise."

These words had a powerful effect on all. The young were inflamed to daring deeds in the hope of possessing the lovely Helvig, the older were moved by her devotion to her father; and thus they left the castle, firmly resolved to exert all their power to save Alger, and drive Glob from Salling.

The same night, some hours after the guests had departed, while Glob was making preparations to invest the castle on the following day, Helvig left her chamber and, accompanied by an attendant, glided silently through a secret passage that led into a copse, at the opposite side of which Eiler abode. He was greatly surprised at seeing them enter his dwelling.

"Rise, Eiler," said Helvig, "it is not fitting that thou shouldst sleep when Alger's enemies are awake." She now related to the prince the promise that, urged by necessity, she had been obliged to make to her father's guests, and prayed of him to devise some means of anticipating the others. "Take thy sword," added she, "for to-night thy part will be to save thyself, my father, and our youthful love." She then took leave of him, and the two females returned alone.

But Eiler remained mute and motionless long after Helvig's departure. He felt how much depended on immediate action, he wished so heartily to save Alger; but he seemed destitute of all the means necessary to that object. After reflecting sometime he rose, threw a dark cloak over his weapons, and stole into the thicket, towards the spot where Glob had pitched his camp.

There all was life and activity; for the king had re-

solved on attempting a storm as soon as daylight appeared, fearing, if he delayed longer, he should be attacked by Alger's friends.

Eiler crept as near as he could to the camp, so that he heard the enemy's men conversing together; but he was concealed from their sight, by the rushes on the bank of a deep ditch, which conveyed the water from the Limfiord into the fosses surrounding Alger's castle. Towards morning, Glob had completed his preparations. He had caused a small hut to be raised for himself of turf and hides, in which he hoped to take some rest before the dawn gave the signal for the attack.

All was quiet in the camp.

When the men had lain down to sleep where they best could, Eiler approached softly, and crept along the edge of the ditch, concealed among the rushes, until he had passed the watch. He then walked fearlessly forward. The camp-fires were nearly burned out, and the darkness veiled his features, so that those of the enemy, who were not yet asleep, took him for one of their comrades, and let him pass where he pleased.

When he came to the spot where Glob slept, he gently raised the hide which hung before the entrance, and crept into the hut.

The king lay on a bench, wrapped in his scarlet cloak. A torch was burning on a sod which threw a red glare over the sleeper's countenance. Eiler drew a dagger from his belt, held his breath, and glided noiselessly as a snake towards the bench.

He thought of his father, whom Glob had dethroned and slain; he thought of the injury he himself had suffered, how his youth had been passed amid dangers and want, during the many years Glob had hunted him as an outlaw from place to place; he thought also that Glob's

death would free Alger from a powerful foe, and gain for him Helvig, the dear object of all his thoughts; but yet he hesitated to plunge the dagger into Glob's breast.

The king lay still and motionless in a deep sleep, his hands folded, as if he had fallen asleep repeating his evening prayer. The longer Eiler looked on him, the more incapable he became of killing the unarmed. He fixed the dagger into the couch close to the king's head; then left the hut, and stole softly out of the camp, as unobserved and silently as he had entered it.

When he had reached the copse, he continued along the secret path that led up to Alger's castle. He went to the king, informed him of what he had overheard in the enemy's camp, and what he had done. Alger praised Eiler's daring, and, although he might have been freed from a dangerous enemy, who threatened him with destruction, he could not withhold his admiration of the youth's exploit, and would rather live and die with honour than owe his deliverance to treachery and crime. Eiler remained in the castle, resolved to meet his death with the rest of the warriors.

As the morning sun rose over the wood, the horns were sounded in Glob's camp, and the king moved forward towards the castle with all his men, and the strife began. All went as Alger had predicted; his force was too weak and small to prevent his enemy from ascending the ramparts, and when the bells over in Fuur sounded for matins, Glob was master of the castle. Alger ordered his men to lay down their arms, and no longer fight against such overwhelming numbers. He then descended into the court-yard, took the royal crown from his head, and laid it at the feet of Glob.

"God's peace, and a kindly greeting to you, my brother," cried Fuurland's king to him, at the same time smilingly lifting off his helmet and wiping his forehead. "You see

how anxious I am to enjoy your company by coming to invite you myself, although you refused to be my guest. But why take off your crown? I think such greeting too lowly."

"I give you my crown," answered Alger, "that you may take it as you have taken my castle and my kingdom."

"Take back your crown, brother," replied Glob, "it is shaped to your head, and is much better there than at my feet. And know that I am come to-day with the intention of giving and not of taking." In saying these words he drew from his belt the dagger which Eiler the previous night had stuck in his couch.

"Look here," said he, "I bring you a knife which one of your people, whoever he may be, left behind him in my tent last night; and we have been obliged to creep over the wall to get in, as you have barred your gates against us. Let me now have a few words with the man who owns this knife."

"The knife is mine," said Eiler, advancing towards the king; "God delivered thy life into my hands, and I spared it, although I have suffered wrongs and bitter misery at thy hands."

"And was my life really in thy hand, Eiler?" answered Glob. "Then, as thou hast spared me, I will reward thee in the best way I can; and if I have not enough to give Alger shall help me. What thinkest thou, my brother? If thou wilt give Eiler thy daughter, I will give them their outfit. I think that my kingdom of Fuurland will suffice for them. I am an old and childless man, and if Eiler will take reparation for blood, he and Helvig shall be my children."

Alger could hardly believe what he heard, so great was his surprise. He shed tears for joy, as he threw his arms round Glob and pressed him to his breast; and as the horn in the morning sounded for battle, so did the music

in the evening resound to the dance; for that same night the marriage of Helvig and Eiler was celebrated.

All Helvig's suitors, who had promised to help Alger against his enemy, arrived at the castle just in time to be present at the wedding.

THE WERWOLF

THERE was once a king, who ruled over a large kingdom. He was married to a beautiful queen, and they had only one child, a daughter. Hence it naturally followed that the little one was to her parents as the apple of their eye, and was dear to them beyond all other things, so that they thought of nothing with such delight as of the pleasure they should have in her when she grew up. But much falls out contrary to expectation; for before the princess was out of her childhood, the queen, her mother, fell sick and died. Now, it is easy to imagine that there was sadness not only in the royal court, but over the whole kingdom, for the queen was greatly beloved by all. The king himself was so deeply afflicted that he resolved never to marry again, but placed all his comfort and joy in the little princess.

In this manner a considerable time passed by; the young princess grew from day to day taller and fairer, and everything she at any time desired was by her father immediately granted her; many attendants being placed about her, for the sole purpose of being at hand to execute all her commands. Among these there was a woman who had been previously married, and had two daughters. She was an agreeable person, and had a persuasive tongue, so that she well knew how to put her words together; added to all which she was as soft and pliant as silk; but her heart was

full of artifices and all kinds of falsehood. No sooner was the queen dead than she began to devise plans how she might become consort to the king, and her daughters become honoured as kings' daughters. With this object she began by winning the affection of the young princess, praised beyond measure all that she said or did, and all her talk ended in declaring how happy they would be if the king would take to himself a new wife. On this subject the conversation often turned both early and late, till at length the princess could not believe otherwise than that all the woman said was true. She therefore asked her what description of wife it were most desirable that the king should select. The woman, in many words, all sweet as honey, answered, "Ill would it become me to give an opinion in such a case, hoping only he may choose for his queen one who will be kind to my little princess. But this I know, that were I so fortunate as to be the object of his choice, I should think only of what might please the princess; and if she wished to wash her hands, one of my daughters should hold the basin, and the other hand her the towel." This and much more she said to the princess who believed her, as children readily believe all that is told them is true.

Not a day now passed in which the king was free from the solicitations of his daughter, who incessantly besought him to marry the handsome waiting-woman; but he would not. Nevertheless, the princess would not desist from her entreaties, but spoke incessantly precisely as she had been taught by the false waiting-woman. One day, when she was talking in the same strain, the king broke forth: "I see very well that it must at length be as you have resolved, greatly as it is against my wish; but it shall be only on one condition." "What is the condition?" asked the princess, overjoyed. "It is," said the king, "that, as it is for your sake if I marry again, you shall promise me

that if at any future time you shall be discontented with your stepmother or your stepsisters, I shall not be troubled with your complaints and grievances." The princess made the promise, and it was settled that the king should marry the waiting-woman, and make her queen over all his realm.

As time passed on the king's daughter grew up to be the fairest maid in all the land; while the queen's daughters were as ugly in person as in disposition, so that no one had a good word for them. There could not, therefore, fail of being a number of young princes and knights, from both east and west, coming to demand the young princess; while not one vouchsafed to woo either of the queen's daughters. At this the stepmother was sorely vexed at heart, however she might conceal her feelings, being, to all outward appearance, as smooth and humble as before. Among the suitors there was a king's son from a far distant country, who was both young and valorous, and as he passionately loved the princess, she listened to his addresses, and plighted her faith to him in return. The queen observed all this with a jaundiced eye; for she would fain have had the prince marry one of her own daughters, and, therefore, resolved that the young couple should never be united with each other. From that moment her thoughts were solely bent on the destruction both of them and their love.

An opportunity soon offered itself to her; for just at that time intelligence was received that an enemy had invaded the country, so that the king was obliged to take the field. The princess was now soon made to learn what kind of a stepmother she had got; for hardly had the king departed before the queen began to show her true disposition, so that she now was as cruel and malignant as she had previously appeared to be friendly and obliging. Not a day passed on which the princess did not hear maledic-

tions and hard words; nor did the queen's daughters yield to their mother in wickedness. But a lot still more cruel awaited the young prince, the lover of the princess. While engaged in the chase he had lost his way, and was separated from his companions. Availing herself of the opportunity, the queen practised on him her wicked arts, and transformed him into a werwolf, so that for the remainder of his days he should be a prowler of the forest. When evening drew on, and the prince did not appear, his men returned home; and the sorrow may be easily imagined with which the princess was overwhelmed when she was informed how the chase had terminated. She wept and mourned day and night, and would not be comforted. But the queen laughed at her afflictions, and rejoiced in her false heart that everything had turned out so agreeably to her wishes.

As the princess was one day sitting alone in her maiden-bower, it entered her mind that she would visit the forest in which the young prince had disappeared. She went, therefore, to her stepmother, and asked permission to go to the wood, that she might for a little while forget her heavy affliction. To her request the queen would hardly give her consent, as she was always more inclined to say no than yes; but the princess besought her so earnestly that at last her stepmother could no longer withhold her permission, only ordering one of her daughters to accompany and keep watch over her. A long dispute now arose between mother and daughters, neither of the stepsisters being willing to go with her, but excusing themselves, and asking what pleasure they could have in following one who did nothing but weep. The matter ended by the queen insisting that one of her daughters should go with the princess, however much it might be against her will. The maidens then strolled away from the palace and reached the forest, where the princess amused herself by wander-

ing among the trees, and listening to the song of the birds, and thinking on the friend she loved so dearly, and whom she now had lost; the queen's daughter following all the while, with a heart full of rancorous feeling for the princess and her grief.

After having wandered about for some time they came to a small cottage that stood far in the dark forest. At the same moment the princess was seized with a burning thirst, and entreated her stepsister to accompany her to the cottage, that she might get a draught of water. At this the queen's daughter became only more ill-humoured, and said, "Is it not enough that I follow you up and down in the wild wood? Now, because you are a princess, you require me to go into such a filthy nest. No, my foot shall never enter it. If you will go, go alone." The princess took no long time to consider, but did as her stepsister said, and entered the cabin. In the little apartment she saw an aged woman sitting on a bench, who appeared so stricken with years that her head shook. The princess saluted her, as was her wont, in a friendly tone, with "Good evening, good mother! may I ask you for a little drink of water?" "Yes, and right welcome," answered the old woman. "Who are you that come under my humble roof with so kind a greeting?" The princess told her that she was the king's daughter, and had come out to divert herself, with the hope, in some degree, of forgetting her heavy affliction. "What affliction have you, then?" asked the old woman. "Well may I grieve," answered the princess, "and never more feel joyful. I have lost my only friend, and God alone knows whether we shall ever meet again." She then related to the old woman all that had taken place, while the tears flowed from her eyes in such torrents that no one could have refrained from pitying her. When she had concluded, the old woman said, "It is well that you have made your grief known to me; I

have experienced much, and can, perhaps, give you some advice. When you go from hence you will see a lily growing in the field. This lily is not like other lilies, but has many wonderful properties. Hasten therefore to pluck it. If you can do so, all will be well; for then there will come one who will tell you what you are to do." Then they parted; the princess having thanked her, continued her walk, and the old woman remained sitting on her bench and shaking her head. But the queen's daughter had been standing during the whole time outside the door, murmuring and fretting that the princess stayed so long.

When she came out she had to hear much chiding from her stepsister, as was to be expected; but to this she gave very little heed, thinking only of how she should find the flower of which the old woman had spoken. She therefore proceeded further into the forest, and in the selfsame moment her eye fell on a spot where there stood a beautiful white lily in full bloom before her. On seeing it she was so glad, so glad, and instantly ran to gather it, but it vanished suddenly and appeared again at some distance. The princess was now eager beyond measure, and no longer gave heed to the voice of her stepsister, but continued running; though every time she put forth her hand to take the flower it was already away, and immediately reappeared at a short distance farther off. Thus it continued for a considerable time, and the princess penetrated further and further into the dense forest, the lily all the while appearing and vanishing, and again showing itself, and every time looking taller and more beautiful than before. In this manner the princess came to a high mountain, when on casting her eyes up to the summit, there stood the flower on the very edge, as brilliant and fair as the brightest star. She now began to climb up the mountain, caring for neither the stocks nor stones that lay in the way, so great was her ardour. When she at length

gained the mountain's top, lo! the lily no longer moved, but continued stationary. The princess then stooped and plucked it, and placed it in her bosom, and was so overjoyed that she forgot both stepsister and everything in the world besides.

For a long time the princess could not sufficiently feast her eyes with the sight of the beautiful flower. It then on a sudden entered her mind what her stepmother would say when she returned home for having stayed out so long. She looked about her before returning to the palace, but on casting a glance behind her she saw that the sun had gone down, and that only a strip of day yet tarried on the mountain's summit; while down before her the forest appeared so dark and gloomy, that she did not trust herself to find the way through it. She was now exceedingly weary and exhausted, and saw no alternative but that she must remain for the night where she was. Sitting then down on the rock, she placed her hand under her cheek and wept, and thought of her wicked stepmother and stepsisters, and all the bitter words she must hear when she returned home, and of the king, her father, who was absent, and of the beloved of her heart, whom she should never see again; but abundantly as her tears flowed she noticed them not, so absorbing was her affliction. Night now drew on, all was shrouded in darkness, the stars rose and set, but the princess still continued sitting on the same spot, weeping without intermission. While thus sitting, lost in thought, she heard a voice greeting her with "Good evening, fair maiden! Why do you sit here so lonely and sorrowful?" She started and was greatly surprised, as may be easily imagined; and on looking back there stood a little, little old man, who nodded and looked so truly benevolent. She answered, "I may well be sorrowful, and never more be glad. I have lost my best beloved, and have, moreover, missed my path in the forest,

so that I am fearful of being devoured by the wild beasts." "Oh," said the old man, "don't be disheartened for that. If you will obey me in all that I say, I will help you." To this the princess readily assented, seeing herself forsaken by the whole world besides. The old man then drew forth a flint and steel, and said, "Fair maiden! now, in the first place, you shall kindle a fire." The king's daughter did as she was desired, gathered moss, twigs, and dry wood, and kindled a fire on the mountain's brow. When she had done this the old man said to her, "Go now further on the mountain, and you will find a pot full of tar: bring it hither." The princess did so. The old man continued: "Now set the pot on the fire." The princess did so. "When, now, the tar begins to boil," said the old man, "cast your white lily into the pot." This seemed to the princess a very hard command, and she prayed earnestly that she might retain her lily; but the old man said: "Have you not promised to obey me in all that I desire? Do as I tell you; you will not repent." The princess then, with eyes averted, cast the lily into the boiling pot, although it grieved her to the heart so dear to her was the beautiful flower.

At the same instant a hollow roaring was heard from the forest, like the cry of a wild beast, which came nearer and nearer, and passed into a hideous howl, so that the mountain re-echoed on every side. At the same time was heard a cracking and rustling among the trees, the bushes gave way, and the princess beheld a huge grey wolf come rushing out of the forest just opposite to the spot where they were sitting. In her terror she would gladly have fled from it; but the old man said, "Make haste, run to the brow of the mountain, and the moment the wolf comes before you, empty the tar-pot over him." The princess, although so terrified that she was hardly conscious of what she did, nevertheless followed the old man's direction,

and poured the tar over the wolf, just as he came running towards her. But now a wonderful event took place, for scarcely had she done so when the wolf changed his covering, the great grey skin started off from him, and, instead of a ravenous wild beast, there stood a comely youth with eyes directed towards the brow of the mountain; and when the princess had so far recovered from her fright that she could look on him, whom did she behold before her but her own best beloved, who had been transformed into a werwolf!

Now let any one, who can, imagine what the feelings of the princess were at this moment. She stretched out her arms towards him, but could neither speak nor answer, so great were her surprise and joy. But the prince ran up the mountain and embraced her with all the ardour of the truest affection, and thanked her for having restored him. Nor did he forget the little old man, but thanked him in many kind words for his powerful aid. They then sat down on the mountain-top and conversed lovingly with each other. The prince related how he had been changed into a wolf, and all the privations he had suffered while he had to range about the forest; and the princess recounted to him her sorrow and all the tears she had shed during his absence. Thus they sat throughout the night, heedless of the passing hours, until the stars began gradually to retire before the daylight, so that the surrounding objects were visible. When the sun had risen they perceived that a wide road ran from the foot of the hill quite up to the royal palace. Then said the old man, "Fair maiden, turn about. Do you see anything yonder?" "Yes," answered the princess, "I see a horseman on a foaming horse; he rides along the road at full speed." "That," said the old man, "is a messenger from the king, your father. He will follow forthwith with his whole army." Now was the princess glad beyond measure,

and wished instantly to descend to meet her father; but the old man held her back, saying, "Wait: it is yet too soon. Let us first see how things will turn out."

After some time the sun shone bright, so that its rays fell upon the palace down before them. Then said the old man, "Fair maiden, turn about. Do you see anything yonder?" "Yes," answered the princess, "I see many persons coming out of my father's palace, some of whom proceed along the road, while others hasten towards the forest." The old man said, "They are your stepmother's servants. She has sent one party to meet the king and bid him welcome; but the other is going to the forest in search of you." At hearing this the princess was troubled, and was with difficulty induced to remain, but wished to go down to the queen's people; but the old man held her back, saying, "Wait yet a little while; we will first see how things turn out."

For some time the princess continued with her looks directed towards the road by which the king was to come. Then said the old man again, "Fair maiden, turn about. Do you observe anything yonder?" "Yes," answered the princess, "there is a great stir in my father's palace; and see! now they are busy in hanging the whole palace with black." The old man said, "That is your stepmother and her servants. They wish to make your father believe that you are dead." At this the princess was filled with anxiety, and prayed fervently, saying, "Let me go, let me go, that I may spare my father so great an affliction." But the old man detained her, saying, "No, wait. It is still too soon. We will first see how things turn out."

Another interval passed, the sun rose high in the heaven, and the air breathed warm over field and forest; but the royal children and the little old man continued sitting on the mountain where we left them. They now observed a small cloud slowly rising in the horizon, which

grew larger and larger, and came nearer and nearer along the road; and as it moved they saw that it glittered with weapons, and perceived helmets nodding and banners waving, heard the clanking of swords and the neighing of horses, and at length recognised the royal standard. Now it is easy to imagine that the joy of the princess exceeded all bounds, and that she only longed to go and meet her father. But the old man held her back, saying, "Turn about, fair maiden, do you see nothing at the king's palace?" "Yes," answered the princess, "I see my stepmother and my stepsisters coming out clad in deep mourning, and holding white handkerchiefs to their faces, and weeping bitterly." The old man said, "They are now pretending to mourn for your death; but wait awhile, we have yet to see how things turn out."

Some time after, the old man asked again, "Fair maiden, turn about. Do you observe anything yonder?" "Yes," answered the princess, "I see them come bearing a black coffin. Now my father orders it to be opened. And see! the queen and her daughters fall on their knees, and my father threatens them with his sword." The old man said, "The king desired to see your corpse, and so your wicked stepmother has been forced to confess the truth." On hearing this, the princess entreated fervently: "Let me go, let me go, that I may console my father in his great affliction." But the old man still detained her, saying, "Attend to my counsel, and stay here a little while. We have not seen how everything will terminate."

Another interval passed, and the princess, and the prince, and the little old man, still continued sitting on the mountain. Then said the old man, "Turn about, fair maiden. Do you see anything yonder?" "Yes," answered the princess, "I see my father, and my stepmother, and my stepsisters, coming this way with all their

attendants." The old man continued, "They have now set out in search of you. Go down now, and bring the wolfskin which is lying below." The king's daughter did so, and the old man then said, "Place yourself on the brink of the mountain." The princess did so, and at the same moment perceived the queen and her daughters coming along the road just beneath the mountain where they were sitting. "Now," said the old man, "cast the wolfskin straight down." The princess obeyed, and cast the wolfskin as the old man had directed. It fell directly over the wicked queen and her two daughters. But now a wonderful event took place, for hardly had the skin touched the three women than they changed their guise, gave a howl, and were transformed into three fierce werwolves, which at full speed rushed into the wild forest.

Scarcely had this taken place before the king himself with all his men came to the foot of the mountain. When he looked up and beheld the princess, he could not at first believe his eyes but stood immovable, thinking it was a spectre. The old man then cried, "Fair maiden, hasten now down and gladden the heart of your father." The princess did not wait to be told a second time, but, taking her lover by the hand, was in an instant at the mountain's foot. When they reached the spot where the king was standing, the princess fell on her father's breast and wept for joy; the young prince also wept; even the king himself shed tears, and to every one present their meeting was a delightful spectacle. Great joy was there and many embracings, and the princess related all her sufferings at the hands of her stepmother and stepsisters, and all about her beloved prince, and the little old man who had so kindly assisted them. But when the king turned to thank him he had already vanished, and no one could ever say either who he was or whither he went.

The king and all his suite now returned to the palace,

on their way towards which much was said both about the little old man and what the princess had undergone. On reaching home the king ordered a sumptuous banquet to be prepared, to which he invited all the most distinguished and exalted persons of his kingdom, and bestowed his daughter on the young prince; and their nuptials were celebrated with games and rejoicings for many days. And I, too, was at the feastings; and as I rode through the forest I was met by a wolf with two young ones; they were ravenous, and seemed to suffer much. I have since learned that they were no other than the wicked step-mother and her two daughters.

THE TONGUE-CUT SPARROW.

Long, long ago in a beautiful part of western Japan, there dwelt an old man and his wife.

They were both hard-working people, but the old woman had one great fault. She was a regular cross-patch, and did nothing else besides her daily toil but grumble from morn till night.

Now these old people had no little children of their own, and so the poor old man, who grew tired of hearing his wife scold so much, kept a little brown sparrow which he loved very much. When evening came, and he returned home from working in the rice fields, he would take his little pet from its wooden cage, and let it fly about the room. Sometimes he would whistle and talk to it, and let it feed out of his hand. The old man loved his little brown friend!

One day, when the husband was out in the rice fields as usual, his wife, who intended to wash some clothes, went to get her bowl of rice starch which she had got ready

the night before, when, to her astonishment, the bowl was empty. The old woman at once blamed the cat and was going to cut a long thick stick to beat it for its theft, when the little truthful bird flew down to her and said, "Do not beat the poor cat, for it was I who took the starch. I did not intend to steal it, as I thought it was food put out for me to eat. I am very sorry indeed!"

"Bah!" growled the old woman. "It was you, was it? You greedy, good-for-nothing little brown wretch!"

Now the old woman had never loved the sparrow, and she was glad to have some cause of complaint against the little helpless thing.

"I'll pay you out for taking my starch," she cried. "It was that tongue of yours, I suppose, that licked it up, so I will cut it off."

Saying this she quickly seized the poor trembling little bird, and with her long sharp scissors cut off its little tongue.

"There now," she said, "how do you like that? It serves you right, you greedy thing!"—and taking it to the window she drove the tiny tongue-cut sparrow away.

That evening when the tired old man came home from his hard daily toil, he looked in every room for his little pet, and was very much troubled at not finding her.

"Where is my little Suzume san?" (Miss Sparrow) he asked his wife.

The evil old woman at first would not tell him, but at last she told her husband how the sparrow had eaten the rice starch, and how in her great anger she had taken her sharp scissors, and cut out its tongue and finally driven it away.

"Oh! my poor little pet! My poor little sparrow! My poor helpless little thing!" were the only words the kind old man could utter. "Never again will she be able to sing to me. Never again shall I hear her sweet voice.

Ah! how cruel and unkind it was to hurt my little pet like that," and the old man wept bitterly.

Late that night, when his wife was fast asleep, the old man decided to go and seek for his little tongue-cut friend; so rising early next morning he set out through the woods in search of the sparrow.

When mid-day came, the old man stopped to rest under a shady clump of pine trees, and as he was resting, to his greatest joy he saw his own darling sparrow suddenly fly down from a tall pine tree in front of him. Oh how glad he was! He caressed his little friend again and again, and at last asked about its "honourable" tongue. The old man told the little sparrow how very sorry he was to learn of his wife's cruelty, and hoped that the sparrow would soon forgive his wife.

"See here!" said the sparrow after a short time, "I have another tongue." On hearing his little tongue-cut friend speak, the old man's joy knew no bounds. Old as he was, he jumped and danced with joy, until the sparrow had to laugh heartily. He forgot all his troubles, and said that the bird must be indeed a fairy, to have grown another tongue in so short a time. "Now," said the sparrow, speaking more sweetly than ever, "let me take you to my house in that grove of pine trees yonder." "Thank you," replied the man, "I should like very much to go," and away they both went. On reaching the grove the old man was amazed to see the outside of a small, neatly built house, and upon entering inside his heart was filled with ecstasy. On the floor, which was built of satinwood, were cream-coloured "tatami" (mats), and the "zabuton," or the small cushions for sitting upon, as Japanese houses have no chairs, were of rich plum-coloured silk. Beautiful "kakemonos" hung from the walls, and vases and ornaments adorned many a cosy nook and corner. The sparrow, after leading the kind old man to

the place of honour, the "tokonoma," and thanking him for the many kindnesses which he had given her, introduced all her family. There were the young and graceful Misses Sparrow, and the two young and clever Masters Sparrow. After a happy talk all together, the Misses Sparrow played the "samisen," and sang, while the two clever Masters Sparrow told stories of famous warriors of long ago. When dinner was over, they went outside on the verandah and drank their little cups of green tea. Now as darkness was fast setting in, and the old man had a long way to go before reaching his home, he rose to depart, after thanking his kind hostess and her daughter and sons for the very happy welcome they had given him. They were very sorry to lose the kind old man, and asked him to stay a few days longer with them, but he excused himself by saying he would come again to see them. Still they insisted on his staying, but he said he must return to his old wife, who would be wondering where he had got to; and also there was much to be done in the fields, so he would ask them again to excuse him.

"Very well, my dear friend," said the mother sparrow, "we shall not keep you; only come again as often as you can." Ringing a bell, she told the servant to bring in the two boxes standing outside. One was large, and one was small. The mother sparrow placed them both before the old man, and told him to choose one as a present from herself and family.

The old man chose the smaller box, saying, "I thank you very much, but I shall gladly take the smaller one, as it will be easier for me to carry. I give you a thousand thanks for your kindness. Sayonara! Sayonara!"

After they had all said "Sayonara," the old man shouldered his box and trudged joyfully homeward.

When he reached his home, he found his wife angrier than ever. She began to scold him dreadfully, saying,

"You lazy old thing, wherever have you been? How is it you are so late? Here I have been waiting for you ever so long! A kind husband you are, to be sure!"

The old man took all her angry remarks without saying a word; but at last he said, "Wife, look here! I have something in this box. Let me tell you where it came from." So he told his cross old wife how he had met the little sparrow, and how he had been entertained at her house. The old woman was greatly surprised, but when she and her husband came to open the box, she was still more surprised. To their great joy they found it full of gold and silver coins, and as they emptied them out upon the mats, they found many precious stones glittering at the bottom of the box. There lay the great shining heap upon the floor, and both the old man and his wife feasted their eyes upon it.

"You kind little bird," the old man said many times, "how good you are; now I shall not have to work so hard." But as the eyes of the greedy old woman fell upon the heap of precious things, she began to reproach and scold the old man for not having brought the larger box. "You old stupid!" she sneered, "why didn't you bring the larger box? We might have had twice as much money as this. What a great stupid you are, to be sure!" And she went to bed angrier than ever.

The poor old man now wished he had said nothing about the larger box; but, alas! it was too late.

The following day was very sunshiny, so the old woman, who had made up her mind to go and get the larger box, asked her husband to tell her the way to the sparrow's house.

"My dear," said the old man, "let us be contented. This is plenty for us to live upon until we die. Pray do not go, but let us be content."

"Contented!" shrieked his wife; "indeed, if you are,

I am not, and so I am going." The greed of the cross old woman even made her forget her cruel deed in cutting off the little sparrow's tongue. While the old woman was on the way, she thought of nothing else but the big box and the stacks of money which it contained. At last she arrived at the sparrow's house. "Is this the tongue-cut sparrow's house?" she snappishly asked one of the daughters who came to the door.

"I do not understand you," replied the daughter, "I shall call my mother." So she called the little mother sparrow, whose tongue had been cut, who came out to greet the old woman.

The "tongue-cut" sparrow was very polite to the old woman, but the latter cut the sparrow's politeness short by saying, "you need not trouble to give me any tea or cakes, for I'm not coming into your house; all I came for is to get that larger box which my foolish husband left behind. Had I been offered two boxes, I should have taken both. Please give me the larger box at once."

"Very well," replied the little mother sparrow, "just wait a moment;" so she told the servants to bring out the larger box.

The greedy, cruel old woman, as soon as she saw the big box, seized it, and without even pausing to thank the Sparrow family for it, went rapidly away. The box was exceedingly heavy, and, as the old woman needed rest, she had often to sit down by the roadside and wait a little.

"How lovely this box full of money will be," said the selfish old woman to herself. "I shall have it all for myself. My husband shall not get a sen of it. But I am longing to open it, and I think I'll just put it down under those pine trees yonder and open it. Yes! I will do that."

So the greedy old woman carried the box to the clump of trees and opened it. Oh, what did she see? Money?

No. Precious stones? No. Beautiful clothes? No. What she saw nearly frightened her to death; for as soon as she lifted the lid, a number of awfully ugly and horrible-looking demons jumped out of the box with eyes of fire and fingers with long claws. Snakes coiled and hissed about her, and black lizards poked their long blue tongues at her. The demons yelled and jumped around her, and made dreadful faces.

The old woman fell senseless to the ground, and after a time, when she gained consciousness, ran home as fast as her trembling legs could carry her. Arriving at her house, she fell in a faint on the floor, and lay there as if dead for many hours. At last, when she opened her eyes, she found her kind old husband sitting beside her and fanning her.

She told the old man all that had happened to her, and how she had been punished for her greediness. "Yes!" replied the old man, "you have brought all this on yourself by your cruel and selfish ways. I do sincerely trust that you will turn over a new leaf and repent of all your folly."

"Yes," said the old woman, "I see I have been a cross-patch, a cruel and selfish woman, and I will henceforth try and live a better life."

From that day forward the old man and his wife lived peaceably together. They had plenty to live on from the treasures which the mother sparrow had given them. Their days were long and happy, and when the winter evenings came, the contented old couple would sit around the fire-box and talk about the days gone by, and their little brown friend, the tongue-cut sparrow.

Borre, the knight of Egeskov, desiring to see his daughter Mette settled in life, determined to give a Brudeskue, a fête at which nobles, knights and esquires assembled, tilted with each other, rode at the ring, and paid court to the daughter of the house with costly presents.

Now Mette was beautiful and possessed an amiable character, and for several days previous to the festivities the castle was crowded with guests, while fresh ones continued to arrive, so that Borre knew not where to find room for all the visitors.

The last day, just before the running at the ring commenced, a young knight with a numerous retinue arrived at Egeskov. He was splendidly armed, and bore himself so proudly and arrogantly, that he looked with scorn on all those who were riding to the castle at the same time. Among these was an esquire named Ebbe, whose poverty was well known. He was mounted on a horse which had been a noble animal, but was now old and worn out. His armour, kirtle, and mantle had also seen better days, and were worn and mended. When Ebbe and Sir Olaf, the haughty knight, met, the latter jeered at and taunted the other; and when they arrived at the castle gate, Ebbe fell back while Sir Olaf and his retinue pressed forward in order to enter first.

They rode at once to the race-course, where the eyes of all the dames and damsels were directed to Olaf, on account of his handsome figure and costly equipment. Ebbe excited no notice, and remained a little behind the others, as though he disliked to expose his poverty. But when it came to running at the ring, he took three rings to Sir

Olaf's one, and was the foremost of all. After this they tried their skill at tilting, at which Ebbe was for a long time the most successful candidate, and he challenged Olaf, who had already unhorsed many knights; but at length he began to tire, and his worn-out horse tottered under him. Olaf, on the contrary, rode a noble steed, and had moreover changed his horse after riding at the ring. Ebbe fought bravely as long as he was able, but he was overpowered, and fell, and Olaf received the prize from the hand of Mette.

In the evening all the guests assembled in the knights' hall, where the different suitors entered, according to their rank and condition, bringing with them presents to Mette. The greater number brought costly gifts; but here also Olaf surpassed all others. Besides the splendid present he brought for Mette, he gave to the Knight Borre two small castles of embossed gold, saying: "These two castles, of which you see a representation, belong to me, and I will share them with your daughter, if you will bestow her upon me."

Last of all came Ebbe. The knights smiled on seeing him, poor and meanly clad, without a gift, appear before Borre. Ebbe deigned not to notice their contempt, but bent his knee before Mette, and said in a loud and audible voice: "I approach you last, as is befitting a poor man, who is so far beneath the other suitors in condition and wealth. I here lay at your feet the most precious thing I own." With these words he placed his sword on the ground before Mette.

"That's no great thing to give away," observed Olaf contemptuously, "seeing that you have been so recently overpowered while you bore this sword in your hand."

"I hope, Sir Olaf," said Ebbe, "that Mette may receive my poor gift as surely as you would have suffered

defeat under this sword had our conditions been more evenly matched."

Several of the guests here interfered between the two rivals in order to make peace, and it was agreed among those assembled that Mette should have a month for consideration before making her choice.

The following day there was a great hunt, and here, as at the tilting, every one was eager to show his skill. The ladies joined in the chase, and followed the deer with as much ardour as the men. Sir Olaf was foremost among the riders, and received many friendly looks from Mette. Ebbe was last of all. His horse had not yet recovered from the labours of the preceding day, and he would not force it; besides he did not mind being left behind the others. The hunt took its course farther and farther towards Trelde, when Ebbe, just as he was turning his horse into a cross path, saw Mette returning and coming towards him. After riding together a short way, Mette said: "I am tired of the pursuit, and will accompany you among these green trees. Why are you so far behind the others? Are you not fond of hunting?" "Yes, I am," said Ebbe, "but my poor horse is old and tired, and I must spare him."

"I should think it would be better to part with him," said Mette, "than to be the last in jousts and other sports."

"That I would not do willingly," answered Ebbe; "this horse is all my father had to leave me; many years it carried him, and has done good service in its better days; in reward for which I will cherish him out of my slender means, now that he is old."

"Do you know what I am thinking of, Ebbe?" said Mette. "I will make an exchange with you. Give me your horse, and you shall have mine instead; it is young and strong, and then you need no longer remain in the

background, when there is a striving who shall be foremost."

"That bargain," replied Ebbe, "you would hardly stand to, and my horse must be where I am; he is my greatest treasure."

"Then," said Mette, "your words yesterday were but empty sounds, when you told me, you gave me the most valuable thing you owned."

Before Ebbe had time to answer, Mette urged on her horse, and rode from him into the wood. The following day all the knights took their departure from Egeskov, and were invited to return when a month had elapsed, in order that they might know whose gift Mette preferred, and, consequently, whom she chose for her husband. Mette stood on the balcony, and courteously greeted them as they passed; but when Ebbe, the last of all, rode through the gate, she turned her head away and would not greet him. Dejected at the unlucky result of his visit, he took the rode back to Nebbegaard. When he reached the part of the wood where the shepherd from Egeskov was sitting tending his flock, he called him and said: "Go and greet the fair Mette from Ebbe, and tell her, that when she offered to exchange horses with him yesterday, he refused, because he would not barter his steed; but that she may know he spoke only the truth, when he said he offered her the best thing he possessed, relate what thou hast seen him do." Ebbe caressed his horse, and when the animal bent down his head on his master's shoulder and neighed with joy, he exclaimed: "I offer thee to Mette's beauty." At the same moment he drew his sword and killed the horse. Thus closed the "Brudeskue" at Egeskov.

Almost all the knights that had been present felt convinced that Olaf would be the fortunate suitor with Mette and her father, on account of his youth, beauty, and manly accomplishments, and also because he was related to a

man of whom Borre would not willingly make an enemy.

On the point of Trelde, surrounded and concealed by a thick forest, there was at that time a castle belonging to a rich and powerful Ness king (or sea king), named Trolle. His reputation was so great and widespread, that there was not a tract of land in the whole country where he was not known, at least by name. From the beginning of spring until late in the winter he sailed along the coasts of Jutland, Fuen, and Seeland, with his well-manned vessels, in order to plunder all the merchantmen he found; and not unfrequently landed on the coasts, wherever he saw there was an opportunity of carrying off any booty. Trolle was a man of such great strength and courage, that he had no need to rely on the number of his companions. He had frequently engaged single-handed against four, and always came off victorious. Although the Danish kings, even at that early period, sought to check these lawless men, who disturbed the peaceable inhabitants of the kingdom, and destroyed all confidence in commerce; yet there was no one bold enough to encounter Trolle. He laughed at the king's laws, and cared but little for being proclaimed an outlaw. On the ocean he was master wherever his vessels appeared, and his castle at the Ness of Trelde was so well fortified and guarded that he never feared a surprise.

The knight Borre, who was Trolle's nearest neighbour, was not well pleased with this proximity, especially as he was often aggrieved by the many annoyances he had to submit to during the winter months, at which time the Ness king remained at his castle of Trelde. After enduring many vexations, he resolved on forming a plan to rid himself of his adversary, and just before Christmas sent a secret message to all his neighbours. They came, and it was settled among them that each should quietly

assemble as many of his followers as possible, and attack Trolle on the following New Year's eve. When this was arranged, as well as the best method they could adopt for making the attack, they separated, and each returned home.

But the evening after, when all the confederates were assembled at a Yule festivity in the neighbourhood, the Ness king and his men suddenly burst into the apartment, extinguished the lights, made prisoners of five of the knights, and bore them off to Trelde, where they were kept in durance, until they paid a very large ransom. No one could imagine how Trolle became acquainted with their plan; but certain it is, that from that time none of his neighbours thought any more of attacking him, considering it more prudent to bear patiently with the annoyances to which he subjected them.

Ebbe's father had been one of the confederates, and his poverty was partly in consequence of the heavy ransom he had been obliged to pay for the recovery of his liberty. One day, just before the festivities took place at Egeskov, Borre went out to hunt, and returned towards evening loaded with game. On coming to the boundary between Egeskov and Trelde, he met Trolle, who also had been out hunting on that day. "Thanks for the past, Sir Borre," said Trolle with a scornful laugh. "You ride about here killing game in our woods, so that at last I must put a stop to it." "I have not been hunting on your domain, Trolle," answered Borre; "and the right of hunting here belongs to me." "It matters little to whom the right of hunting belongs," answered Trolle; "for when you have destroyed all the game in your own woods, the deer will go from mine over to yours; but I think I shall be able to find a remedy for that, when I am so inclined. 'Those that stretch out furthest can embrace the most,' says an old proverb; but this time I

will not be so particular, as I hear that Olaf looks with a favourable eye on your daughter." With these words the Ness king rode back to Trelde. Olaf was the son of the Ness king.

To resume our story. After slaying his horse, Ebbe returned home to Nebbegaard.

A week after this event, his servant came early one morning to tell him that a beautiful horse, ready saddled, stood fastened at the castle-gate, and no one knew to whom it belonged. Greatly surprised, Ebbe went out to look at the horse, which stood proudly and impatiently stamping on the ground. The rein was of crimson silk, on which was embroidered the old proverb: —"A straightforward difference is easiest settled."— No sooner had Ebbe read these words than he understood their meaning, and felt pleased and happy in the thought that the horse came from Mette, and in the hope that her present raised in him. He led the horse into the castle, and passed the remainder of the time that Mette had required in riding and exercising it.

At the expiration of the month, the knights again assembled at Egeskov to learn their fate. They were received with equal kindness by Borre and his daughter; and after their repast, the old knight conducted them into the great hall, where all the presents which they had brought on their former visits were displayed on a table. Mette walked at her father's side into the apartment. To the surprise of all, she took up the sword of the poor esquire, kissed the hilt, and said: "As Ebbe has given me all that he owned, I will return gift for gift, and call him my husband." No one present expected this. Ebbe fell on his knee before Mette, kissed her hand, and said: "May heaven bless you, Mette, and grant that you may never repent those words, or of the happiness you bestow on so poor a man."

Olaf could hardly control his anger at finding himself supplanted by an obscure esquire. Borre then came forward, and said to Mette: "My daughter, as thou hast chosen him thou thinkest best of, I will now say a word which shall be carried into effect. The last time we were all assembled here, Ebbe had but little luck either in the tournament or the chase; to-morrow, therefore, at break of day, we will meet in the forest, and afford him an opportunity of proving his manhood."

"'Tis well," said Ebbe, "be it as you say; and when the chase is over, I will challenge each of Mette's suitors to single combat with sharp or blunt lances, or with any weapon they may choose."

"That challenge I accept," answered Olaf angrily. "To-morrow we shall hunt, but the day after you shall do battle with me for life or death; and I will advise the Lady Mette, while we are away, to pray that heaven may grant her betrothed better luck than he had the last time our swords met."

"Good luck will come when I stand in need of it," answered Ebbe, "and Mette can spare her prayers until she knows which of us two most requires them."

The next morning at sunrise, all the knights rode out into the forest, to strive which could bring home the largest quantity of game. This time Mette and the other ladies at the castle did not join in the hunt. Towards evening they came back, one after another, and showed Borre the result of their day's sport. They had all assembled, with the exception of Olaf and Ebbe. Mette began to be very uneasy; she wished most anxiously that Ebbe might bring the greatest share, and could not imagine what detained him so long. At length she began to fear that he and Olaf had met each other in the forest, and had fought; but her father calmed her by saying that before they left in the morning for the chase, each had

pledged his word that they would not engage in combat at the hunt.

At length, just as it was growing late, Olaf returned, and that day, as on the former occasion, his success had been greater than that of the others, and every one was now anxious to see what Ebbe would bring home with him. But the hours passed, and there were no tidings of him, and Borre gave the signal for the guests to go to the table. At the same moment the watchman's horn was heard, and Ebbe came riding into the castle-yard, and greeted the company. "Well, Sir Ebbe," cried Olaf, in a sarcastic tone, "where is your booty? It appears that you have been as fortunate this time as you were at the last hunt." "Much game I certainly do not bring," answered Ebbe coolly, "and what I have was hardly worth the trouble of bringing home; but at the chase, things go by chance, and one must take what one can get."

"Well! but let us see what you bring," cried Borre, impatiently. "Here it is," said Ebbe, throwing aside his cloak, and casting a human head across the table to Olaf. "Do you know that head? The crows in the forest are feeding on the carcase."

A cry of surprise was uttered by all the knights present, for in the distorted features each recognised the formidable sea-robber, the Ness king Trolle, Olaf's father. Before the knights had recovered from their astonishment, Ebbe continued: "I have slain that lawless man, Sir Borre, in order to rid you of a troublesome neighbour, and in retribution for the wrong he did my father. To-morrow I will defend my deed against the knight Olaf, in whatever way he chooses."

But no combat took place between Ebbe and Olaf; for with the father's death, the son's courage departed, and he thought it not advisable to meet an adversary who had prevailed over the far-dreaded Ness king.

Olaf immediately departed from Egeskov and returned to Trelde. The following day he, together with all Trolle's men, left their castle, and from that time were never seen or heard of more. Some said that Olaf had gone northward, and settled in Sallingland with his followers, while others thought he had quitted Denmark altogether.

Ebbe's valour gained him great consideration in Borre's family; he and Mette lived happily together for many years.

THE BEAUTIFUL PALACE EAST OF THE SUN AND NORTH OF THE EARTH

THERE was once a man who dwelt in a forest. Near to his habitation there was a meadow of the finest grass. The man set a high value on this fertile meadow, regarding it as of greater worth than most of his other property. But in the summer mornings, at sunrise, it was often observed that the beautiful grass was trodden down, and in the dew there appeared marks like human footsteps. At this the man was sorely vexed, and most desirous to find out who it was that trampled down his grass during the night.

The peasant now considered with himself as to the course he should adopt, in order to get at the knowledge he desired to obtain, and resolved on sending his eldest son to keep watch in the meadow; but somehow or other he had not watched long before he felt very drowsy, and just as midnight drew nigh, he was wrapped in a deep sleep, from which he did not wake until the sun was standing high in the heavens. He then bent his steps toward home, after a fruitless errand; but the grass was trampled down as before.

The following night it was resolved that the peasant's second son should go and keep watch in the meadow. He was not lacking in big words, and promised to bring back a big account. But, nevertheless, it fared with him as with his brother, for before he had watched for any length of time, he also felt drowsy and slept, and did not wake before bright daylight. Thus, after a fruitless errand, he likewise returned home, and the grass was trampled down as before.

Seeing that these attempts had, contrary to expectation, proved so vain, the peasant resolved on taking no further steps in the matter, when his youngest son came to him and begged to be allowed to go to the meadow and keep watch. The father answered: "It is not worth the trouble to let thee go who art so young; for it is not very probable that thou wilt watch better than thy brother." But the youth said he would try his luck, and so his request was granted. He then proceeded to the meadow, although his father and brothers fancied they could pretty well foresee how his enterprise would terminate.

After lying along on the watch, the lad could see nothing before the hour of matins, when the sun was just about rising. Then he heard on a sudden a noise in the air, as of birds flying, and three doves drew near and descended on the green meadow. After a while the doves laid aside their plumage and became three fair damsels, who immediately began dancing on the verdant field, and danced so delightfully that their feet seemed hardly to touch the grass. The youth was now at no loss to know who it was that trampled on his father's meadow; though he scarcely knew what to think of the young maidens. But among them there was one who appeared to him more beautiful than all the other females, and it entered his mind that he would rather possess her than any other in

the world. After having for a while thus lain and amused himself with their dancing, he rose and stole away their plumages; then lay down again on the watch to see how the adventure would terminate.

Early in the morning, soon after the sun had risen, the maidens finished their dance, and were preparing to depart; but they could not find their plumages. At this they were seriously alarmed and ran to and fro on the meadow, until they came to the spot where the youth was lying. They asked whether he had taken their plumages, giving him fair words to induce him to deliver them up. The youth answered: "Yes, I have taken them, but I will not restore them except on two conditions." Seeing that their entreaties availed them nothing, the maidens asked what the conditions were, promising to fulfil them. The youth then said: "My first condition is that ye tell me who you are and whence you come." One of them answered, "I am a king's daughter, and these are my court-attendants. We are from the Palace which lies east of the Sun and North of the Earth, whither nothing human may come." The youth continued: "My second condition is, that the king's daughter plights me for honour and faith, and fixes a day for our marriage; for her or no other in the wide world will I possess." As the day was now advancing, and the sun already shining on the tops of the trees, the maiden was compelled to submit to this condition. The youth then plighted his troth to the young princess, and they promised to be always faithful to each other. He then gave back the three plumages, and bade his beloved farewell, who with her companions, soared aloft in the air, and pursued their course homewards.

When it was full day, the youth proceeded towards home, where he had to hear a multitude of questions respecting the wonderful things he might have seen or heard during the night. But he spoke very little, saying only that he

had fallen asleep, without having discovered anything. For this he was jeered by his brothers, who made a joke of him for having fancied that he could succeed better than they, who were in every respect his superiors.

Some time had now passed, and the day arrived, which the king's daughter had fixed for the marriage. The youth then went to his father, and requested him to make preparations for a feast, and to invite all their friends and relations. The father allowed his son to manage all as he thought proper; and so a grand feast was prepared with no lack of good cheer. When the hour of midnight drew nigh and the guests were beginning to be merry, a loud noise was heard on a sudden without the apartment in which they were assembled, and a magnificent chariot approached, drawn by mettlesome horses. In the chariot sat the fair princess clad as a bride, attended by her two courtmaidens. Now there was great wondering among all the guests, as may easily be imagined. But the young man received his bride with joy, and related to the guests his adventure during the night when he was watching his father's meadow. Thereupon the healths of bride and bridegroom were drunk with pleasure and gaiety, and all who saw the young bride pronounced the youth fortunate in having made such a marriage.

Early in the morning, and before dawn, the princess said that she must depart. At this the bridegroom was grieved, and asked her why she could not grant him yet one short hour of delight. The princess answered: "My father, who ruled over the beautiful palace that lies east of the sun and north of the earth, was slain by a Troll, by whom I am held in strict captivity, so that I cannot enjoy any liberty, save for a short time at midnight. If I am not back before sunrise, my life is at stake." When the youth had heard this, he would no longer detain his bride, but bade her farewell, adding fervent wishes for

her happiness. At her departure the princess gave him a gold ring as a remembrance, and the court-damsels gave him each a gold apple. They then mounted their gilded chariot and drove away with all speed.

From that day the youth enjoyed no rest, he was constantly thinking how he could reach the beautiful palace that lay east of the sun and north of the earth. In this state of mind he went one day to his father, and prayed to be allowed to travel in search of his bride. The old man told him he might follow his own inclinations; though his journey could hardly be attended with success. The youth then took leave of his relations and departed from home alone.

He journeyed now over mountains and through verdant valleys, over many extensive kingdoms, but could get no tidings of the beautiful palace. One day he came to a very large forest, in which he heard a loud noise, and on drawing near to the spot whence it proceeded, he saw two giants, who were engaged in a violent quarrel. He said to them: "Why do you, two giants, stand here quarrelling with each other?" One of them answered: "Our father is dead, and we have divided the inheritance between us; but here is a pair of boots, which we cannot agree which of us shall have." The youth said: "I will settle your dispute. If you cannot agree, give the boots to me. I am a traveller, and have a long way to go." The giant answered: "All that thou sayest may be true; but these are no common boots; for whoever has them on can go a hundred miles at one step." When the youth heard this, he was eager to possess such valuable boots, and told the giants it would be much better to make him a present of them, and then they would have nothing to quarrel about. In short, he put his words so well together that the giants thought his advice was good, and gave him the boots. The young man then drew on the

boots, with which he could go a hundred miles at every step, and travelled further, far away into many strange lands.

After having thus journeyed for some time, he came to another forest, in which he heard another noise and uproar. On advancing, he again saw two giants engaged in a violent altercation. He said: "Why do you, two giants, stand here wrangling with each other?" One of them answered: "Our father is dead, and we are dividing his property, but we cannot agree which of us shall have this cloak." The youth said: "I will settle your dispute. If you cannot agree, give me the cloak. I am a traveller, and have a long way to go." The giant answered: "What thou sayest may be very true; but this cloak is not like other cloaks; for whoever puts it on becomes invisible." On hearing this the youth was seized with a strong desire to possess so precious a cloak, and said that the giants could not do better than give it to him; for then they would have nothing to quarrel about. This the giants thought excellent advice, and they gave him the cloak. So the youth got the cloak which rendered him invisible, and pursued his journey far far away into foreign lands.

When he had travelled a considerable time, he came again to a vast forest, in which he heard a great noise and uproar. On advancing, he again saw two giants engaged in a violent dispute. On inquiring why they stood there wrangling, one of them said: "Our father is dead, and we have been dividing the inheritance. But we cannot settle to which of us this sword shall belong." The youth said: "I will settle your difference. If you cannot agree, make me a present of the sword. I am a traveller, and have a long way to go." The giant answered: "What thou sayest may be quite true; but this sword is not like other swords; whoever is touched with its point dies in-

stantly; but if he is touched by the hilt, he immediately returns to life." When the youth heard this, he was seized with a most vehement desire to possess so precious a sword, and told the giants, that if they were wise they would give it to him; for then they would have nothing to quarrel about. This he expressed to such purpose that the giants thought it excellent advice and gave him the sword. The youth then hung the precious sword by his side, drew the hundred-mile boots on his legs, put the wonderful cloak about his shoulders, and seemed to be well equipped for his journey.

One evening, after dark, he found himself in a vast desert, that seemed to have no end. Casting his eyes on every side to discover a lodging for the night, he descried a little light glimmering among the trees. On approaching it, he found it proceeded from a little cot, in which dwelt a very very old woman who seemed to have seen as many ages of man as others see years.

The youth entered, greeted her courteously, and asked whether he could have a shelter for the night. When the old woman heard him speak, she said: "Who art thou that comest and greetest me so kindly? Here have I dwelt while twelve oak forests have grown up and twelve oak forests have withered; but until now no one has ever come who greeted me so kindly." The youth answered: "I am a poor traveller, who am in search of the beautiful palace east of the sun and north of the earth. You can probably direct me to it, dear Mother." "No," said she, "that I cannot, but I rule over the beasts of the field; there may perchance be among them one or other that may put thee in the right way." The youth thanked her for her kindness, and stayed the night over.

Early in the morning, as the sun was just rising, the old woman summoned her subjects to assemble. Then

came running out of the forest all kinds of beasts, bears, wolves and foxes, inquiring what their queen's pleasure might be. The old woman said that she wished to know whether there were any among them who knew the way to the beautiful palace east of the sun and north of the earth. Hereupon the beasts held a long consultation, but not one could give any information about the beautiful palace. The old dame then said to the youth: "I can give thee no further aid; but many thousand miles from here my sister dwells, who rules over the fishes in the sea; she can, perhaps, give thee the desired information." The youth then bade the old woman farewell, thanked her for her good counsel, and proceeded on his journey.

After travelling a very long way, he again found himself late one evening in a vast desert. On looking about for a shelter, he perceived a light glimmering among the trees. On approaching it, he found that it issued from a small and very ruinous cottage standing on the sea-shore, in which sat a very very old woman, who appeared to have lived as many ages of man as others live changes of the moon. The youth stepped in, greeted the old dame from her sister, and asked whether he might stay there that night. When the old woman had heard him speak, she said: "Who art thou that comest hither and greetest me so courteously? I have seen four-and-twenty oak woods grow up, and four and twenty wither, but until now no one has ever come hither who has greeted me so kindly." The youth answered: "I am a poor traveller in search of the beautiful palace east and north of the earth, whither no human being may come. You, dear mother, can perhaps, direct me in the way." "No," said the old woman, "that I cannot; but I rule over the fishes in the sea, and among them there may probably be one or other that can give thee the information thou de-

sirest." The young man thanked her for her kindness and stayed the night over.

Early in the morning as soon as it was light, the old dame summoned a meeting of her subjects. Thither come all the fishes of the sea, whales, pike, salmon, and flounders, and asked what might be their queen's commands. The old woman said, she wished to ascertain whether any among them knew the way to the beautiful palace east of the sun and north of the earth, whither no one may go. The fishes then held a long consultation, the result of which not one of them could give any information about the beautiful palace. Thereupon the old dame said to the youth: "Thou seest that I can give thee no further help; but I have another sister, who dwells many thousand miles from here, and rules over the fowls of the air. Go to her; if she cannot direct thee, there is no one who can." The youth then bade the old woman farewell, and resumed his journey.

When he had travelled a very long way further many many thousand miles, he found himself late one evening, in a vast desert, that seemed to be boundless. On looking around for a lodging, he perceived a little light glimmering among the trees. On approaching it, he found it proceeded from a small ruiness cottage on a mountain, in which there dwelt a very very old woman, who seemed to have lived as many ages of man as others live days. The youth entered, greeted the old dame from her sisters, and asked whether he could have a lodging for the night. When the old dame heard him speak, she said: "Who art thou that comest hither with so kind a greeting? Here have I seen eight-and-forty oak forests grow up, and eight-and-forty wither, but until now no one has ever come who greeted me so kindly." The youth then said: "I am a poor traveller, in search of the beautiful palace east of the sun and north of the earth, whither no human

being may come. You, dear mother, can perhaps direct me thither." "No," said the old woman, "that I cannot, but as I rule over the birds of the air, perhaps there is one or other among them that can give thee the desired information." The youth thanked the old woman for her kindness, and stayed there the night over.

Early in the morning, before the cock had crowed, the old woman summoned her subjects to an assembly. Then came flying all the fowls of heaven, eagles, swans and hawks, and asked what might be their queen's commands. The old woman told them that she had summoned them to assemble, because she wished to learn whether any one among them knew the way to the beautiful palace east of the sun and north of the earth. The birds thereupon held a long consultation, the result of which was, that not one could give any information about the beautiful palace. The old dame then appeared vexed, and said: "Are ye all assembled? I do not see the phœnix." She received for answer, that the phoenix was not yet come. After waiting for some time, they saw the beautiful bird come flying through the air, but so fatigued that it could hardly move its wings, and sank down on the earth. Now there was joy throughout the assembly that the phœnix had arrived; but the old dame was very angry and demanded to know why it had kept them so long waiting. It was some time before the poor bird could recover itself, and then, in a humble tone, it said: "Be not angry that I have tarried so long; but I have flown a very long way. I have been in a far distant land in a beautiful palace, which lies east of the sun and north of the earth." On hearing this the queen was quite appeased, and said: "This must be thy punishment, that thou once again go to the beautiful palace, and take this youth with thee on the journey." The bird thought that this was rather a hard condition; but it had no alternative. The youth

then bade the old dame farewell, and seated himself on the bird's back, which then soared aloft, flying over mountains and valleys, over the blue sea and the green forests.

When they had thus journeyed a considerable time the bird said: "Young man, seest thou anything?" "Yes," answered the youth, "I think I perceive a blue cloud far away in the horizon." "That is the country to which we are going," said the bird. They had now travelled a very long way, and evening was coming on, when the phœnix again said: "Young man, seest thou anything?" "Yes," answered the youth, "I see a speck in the blue cloud which glitters brightly like the sun itself." The bird said: "That is the palace to which we are proceeding." They still continued journeying on, and night was drawing near, when the phœnix said a third time: "Young man, seest thou anything?" "Yes," said the youth, "I see a vast palace resplendent all over with gold and silver." "Now we are arrived," said the bird, descending near the beautiful structure, and setting the youth down on the earth. The youth thanked the bird for his great trouble, and the phœnix then returned through the air to the place whence it had come.

At midnight, when all the Trolls lay in deep sleep, the youth went to the palace gate and knocked; whereupon the princess sent her attendant to inquire who it was that came so late. When the damsel came to the gate, the youth threw to her a golden apple, and prayed for admission. The damsel instantly recognised the apple, and at once knew who had knocked at the gate. She thereupon hastened to her mistress with these glad tidings. But the princess would not believe that her story was true.

The king's daughter now sent her other attendant, and when she came to the gate, the youth threw to her the

other golden apple. She also immediately knew her apple again, and full of joy hastened to tell her mistress who it was outside the gate. Still the princess would not believe what they had told her, but went to the gate herself, and asked who it was that had knocked. The youth then handed to her the ring which she had given him. Now she knew that her bridegroom had come; she therefore opened the gate and received him with great love and delight, as every one may easily imagine.

The youth then placing himself by the side of his fair bride, they chatted together all night. At the approach of morning, the king's daughter appeared in deep affliction and said: "We must part. For the sake of all that is dear to thee, hasten hence before the Trolls wake; else thy life is at stake." Bride and bridegroom then took leave of each other, and the princess let fall many tears. The youth, however, would not flee, but put on his cloak, drew on his hundred-mile boots, girded his precious sword by his side and prepared him for a contest with the Trolls.

Early in the morning there was great life and bustle in all the palace. The gates were opened, and the Trolls entered one after another. But the youth stood in the entrance with drawn sword, so that when the Trolls approached he was quite ready for them, and struck off their heads before they were aware of him. There was, consequently, a bloody game, which was not concluded until every Troll had found his death. When the day was advanced, the king's daughter sent her maidens to get tidings how the contest had ended. They returned with the information that the youth was alive, but that all the Trolls were slain. At this news the fair princess was overjoyed; for it now appeared to her that she had overcome all her sorrows.

When the first joy was over, the princess said: "Now

our happiness is so great that it can hardly be greater; if only I could get back my relatives." The youth answered: "Show me where they lie buried, and I will see whether I cannot help them." They thereupon went to the spot where the father of the princess and her other relations were laid; when the youth touching each with the hilt of his sword, they were all quickened one after another. When they had thus come again to life, there were great rejoicings in the palace, and all thanked the youth for having restored them. The relations of the princess then took the youth for their king, and the fair maiden was his queen. The youth ruled his realm prosperously, and lived to a good old age surrounded by his friends. His queen bore him brave sons and fair daughters, and thus they lived in peace and happiness all their days.

Here ends the tale of the beautiful palace east of the sun and north of the earth, from which may be learned the truth of the old adage, that true love overcomes everything.

THE APPLES OF VENUS

Long, long ago there lived in the sunny land of Greece a beautiful maiden named Atalanta. Her face was very fair, but perhaps her greatest beauty lay in the grace and agility of her form, and she was so fleet of foot that it was impossible to find any one who could run so fast as she.

Atalanta was a princess, and her father was a king named Schoeneus, but she had a strange, uncared-for childhood, and in consequence grew up with a hard, unloving nature. She was cruel because it never occurred to her to be otherwise, and because as yet nothing had ever touched her heart.

When she was born, her father, King Schoeneus, was not

"The Princess could not believe what they told her, but went to the gate herself"

pleased, because he had wished that all his children should be boys, and his own nature was so cruel and evil that he ordered the baby girl to be taken out into the forest, and to be left exposed to the weather and the wild beasts. No more was heard of the baby for many a day, but she did not perish, as it was expected she would. A mother bear found her lying there helpless and alone, and having a kinder heart than that of Atalanta's own father, she nursed the child along with her own cubs.

For a time Atalanta was brought up by this rough nurse and among these strange play-fellows; then while she was still an infant, some peasants who lived near the wood killed the bear, and finding the baby girl among the cubs, took her home with them. So Atalanta grew up as a wild creature of the woods, ready to slay animals with her bow and arrow, very fleet of foot and agile of form, as has been said, and of great loveliness, but cruel and merciless in character.

One day, when she was a full-grown maiden, some sudden impulse led her to make her way to the royal city where King Schoeneus dwelt. There the king chanced to see her, and was much struck with her beauty. Thereupon he had her brought into his presence, and caused full inquiries to be made as to her birth and parentage. The result was that he discovered her to be his own daughter who was said to have perished so many years ago. Now that she was full grown and, moreover, of so favourable an appearance, the king repented of his former evil design, and acknowledged her as his daughter; and he thought that she might make a great marriage, and thus, after all, increase the power and prosperity of his house quite as much as if she had been the heir to his throne.

So Atalanta exchanged her wild woodland life for the splendour of her father's palace, but her untamed, savage nature was not changed. Before long, rumours of her

surpassing loveliness spread to surrounding lands, and from far and wide suitors came who wished to marry her, partly because of the reports of her beauty, and partly because she was the daughter of a king; and when they saw her for themselves they wished to marry her more than ever. But Atalanta laughed them all to scorn, and would not hear of marriage. Then, when her father spoke to her in wrath, and told her that she might choose which of the suitors she would wed, but that one or other of them must be her husband, she declared that if this must be so, she should at least have the right to put their love to a test of her own choosing. To this Schoeneus consented, and with a mocking smile upon her face, Atalanta described what the test was to be.

"The man who wishes to wed me must first run a race with me," she said. "If he outstrip me, then will I marry him; but if, on the other hand, he is beaten, he must pay the penalty with his death."

As Atalanta had fully expected, the last part of these conditions caused the number of her suitors to decrease very rapidly, but at the same time there were still many youths so much struck by her beauty as to be willing to risk even their lives to win her. One after another entered the race, but each time Atalanta reached the winning-post first, and with cruel indifference watched the death of the vanquished suitor.

One day a certain prince, named Milanion, came by chance to the city where Atalanta dwelt. His father was king of a state situated at some distance from that of King Schoeneus, and he did not happen to have heard of Atalanta and the cruel test to which she put her suitors. He had set out on a hunting expedition, which led him far from home, into the heart of a great forest, and where he had lost his way, and had come out at last on a side of the forest which overlooked the royal city of King Schoeneus.

When Milanion saw its towers and pinnacles gleam beneath him in the light of the afternoon sun he decided to seek shelter there for the night.

Everything seemed to speak of cheerful prosperity as he wended his way through the fields and lanes near to the city. It was springtime, and in the fields rustic labourers were busy tending the blossoming vines or ploughing the brown earth ready for the seed. Above him the air was filled with the song of many birds, and by the wayside bloomed many a fresh and fragrant flower. When he reached the city itself, he found the great gates thrown wide open, and he was allowed to enter the streets, stranger as he was, without being stopped to answer any inquiry as to his name and country; so evidently the city was, as he thought, enjoying peace, and he would run no danger in seeking the hospitality of its citizens.

Milanion had not gone far down the quiet streets before he came to a crowd of people all hurrying in one direction; and his curiosity being excited by this, he fell in with them and followed where they led.

Soon he came to an open space where a strange sight met his gaze. At one end of it sat King Schoeneus himself on a very fine throne, and in gorgeous array, surrounded by his councillors. Beneath the throne were two statues, one of gold representing Apollo, the god of the sun, and one of silver representing his sister Diana, goddess of the moon and of the chase. Beneath these again was an altar, from which rose a thin, blue flame, and at a little space from the altar stood two men. One was a herald clothed in gorgeous attire holding his horn in his hand ready to blow a blast upon it. The office of the other was less easy to discover. He was a man of great size and in his hand he held a sword the blade of which was intwined with yellow flowers.

When Milanion turned his wondering eyes from this

spectacle, he saw that a race was about to be run; for at what seemed to be the starting-point stood two figures evidently waiting for the signal to begin. One of these was a girl, and it was upon her that Milanion's eyes rested. She stood with her eyes fixed on the winning-point, and her whole demeanour was one of absolute composure, in marked contrast, as Milanion noticed, to the anxious, eager expression of her rival. As he looked at her, Milanion thought that never before had he seen any one so beautiful.

But Atalanta did not even see him as he stood watching her. She had apparently no thought for anything but the race she was about to run, and the next minute there rang out a blast from the trumpet, and she and the young man started. For the first part of the race they kept so closely together that none could say who the winner would be, but as they passed the post which marked half the course a cry of joy arose from the surrounding crowd as the youth gained on the maiden. Louder grew the shouts, for now the winning-post was almost reached and still Atalanta was behind; but when the youth, already feeling the joy of victory in his heart, turning for one moment to see how far behind he had left his opponent, she made a sudden bound forward, and laid her hand on the winning-point before he could reach it.

The race was over, and Milanion expected to see nothing more, yet he could not but wonder at the anguish in the pale face of the youth, who, it would seem, was taking his defeat very sorely to heart. And now the duty of the man with the sword was to be revealed to him.

Its blade was quickly stripped of its flowers, and with one last despairing glance at Atalanta the youth knelt down before the swordsman. The next moment the sharp blade had descended, and his brave young life was ended. But Atalanta moved calmly away, untouched apparently by this sad spectacle.

The crowd now began to disperse or break up into little knots, discussing all that had taken place; and Milanion mixed with the people until he had heard all the story, and understood the objects and conditions of the race he had just seen.

But all that he had heard did not quench the strong desire which had now taken possession of Milanion's heart that this cruel maiden should be won by himself, and become his wife.

He left the city and wandered far away, and did many great deeds, and won renown and wealth. Then he returned and presented himself to the King as a suitor for Atalanta's hand. But so brave, and strong, and handsome did he appear that Schoeneus himself was touched at the thought of him being sacrificed. Little hope indeed was there of any other fate for him should he enter the race against Atalanta; for she still out-distanced all competitors, and since the race which Milanion had witnessed, many other brave youths had fallen as victims to her cruel vow.

Schoeneus told all this to Milanion, and advised him to leave the city forthwith and choose some other maiden for his wife, though had the fates willed it, the King would gladly have welcomed so brave and handsome a prince as his son-in-law. It was impossible, however, to turn Milanion from his purpose, and the only condition to which he would consent was that another month should elapse before he entered for the race, and he said that the time would be spent by him in supplicating the gods for victory. So once more Milanion set out on his wanderings; for though Schoeneus had urged him to remain as his guest, he felt too restless to pass the month of waiting in idleness and fruitless repose.

In the course of his travels it happened that he came one day to a certain temple dedicated to Venus, the god-

dess of love, which stood amid myrtle trees on a lonely stretch of coast. When he saw it, Milanion thought that if he prayed to Venus there, she would help him, since she of all the gods and goddesses was the one to whom his sad plight would surely make the most direct appeal. He accordingly landed and found his way to the temple, where he first represented costly gifts to the priests who guarded it, and then entered the building itself, where an altar burned before a white marble image of the goddess. Here Milanion appealed to the goddess, saying that if she would but give him victory in the coming contest, he would ask for nothing more, for he loved the maiden with all his heart, and it was not for the wealth that she would bring him that he sought her. If he might but win her he would gladly forego all other delights and worldly advantages for her sake.

Now it pleased Venus to find one who worshipped her in so true and acceptable a spirit, and she determined to help Milanion to gain the reward he sought. But she did not tell him so. She knew that it would be well for him to learn a lesson of patience, and she wished also to test him and to see how long he would continue to worship her without a sign.

All through that day Milanion knelt in the temple, nor when night came did he leave it. The slow hours passed by, but he still implored Venus for help, and at the dawn he sank on the floor in a sleep of utter exhaustion. This did not last long, however, for a sudden light awoke him, and when he turned his eyes in its direction, a great joy and hope came into his heart; for the light was from neither sun nor moon. It seemed more like a very bright cloud which drew near to him across the sea, and the nearer it came the greater became Milanion's feeling of elation, until at last his happy eyes beheld the picture of Venus herself before him.

"Do not fear, Milanion," she said softly.

"It is possible that you may win this maid whose heart seems dead, if you will do as I tell you. Look at my feet and you will see that I have dropped three golden apples. These are fruit of my own growing and nurture, and they have this power, that those who once see them care for them more than for anything else they have possessed before. For they are love's own gifts. Now take these with you hidden on your person, and when the race has begun, drop one near to Atalanta. She will pause to seize it, and thus you will have a moment's advantage and gain on her. And if needs be, drop the other two each in like fashion, and take advantage of what may happen. Now farewell, and when the happy hour of your triumph comes, spare a thought for her who helped you win it."

With these last words the goddess vanished, and Milanion would have thought the whole thing a dream, but on the white steps of the temple there gleamed the three golden apples of which she had spoken. He picked them up with eager, trembling fingers, and tied them in his tunic. Then with joy and hope in his heart he turned his steps once more to the city of King Schoeneus.

The month of waiting had gone by, and Milanion stood side by side with Atalanta on the race-course waiting for the signal to begin, while an anxious crowd stood round, eager yet fearful to see the result; for none wished the brave young stranger to perish like the rest. Only Atalanta was calm and unmoved. But just before the start a slight change might have been seen to come over her countenance. She had turned to look at the man at her side, and something she saw of confidence in his face caused an unusual tremor to pass over her. Milanion returned her glance, and a strange feeling took possession of Atalanta as she read in his face an expression of mastery mixed with a certain triumphant happiness, and with

a tender admiration for herself. She was startled to feel sorrow for his approaching death, for never before had pity for one of her suitors touched her heart, and she asked herself impatiently what it meant.

But now the blast of the horn was heard and the race had begun. There was no longer time for Atalanta to think of anything but victory, and alert, eager, and agile, she sprang forward, leaving Milanion behind. Then without slackening his pace Milanion placed his hand in his tunic and drew out of it one of the golden apples, which he rolled along the course in front of Atalanta. Its bright, shining surface at once attracted her attention, and it seemed to her as it rolled before her that some god or goddess must have flung it as a gift at her feet. Springing out of the course after it, she stooped, grasped it eagerly, and placed it in her bosom.

While she did this, Milanion had sprung ahead, and again mindful of the race she pressed on swifter than before. Just as the turning-post was reached she overtook him. But once more at her feet there rolled a golden apple, and Atalanta again, unable to resist the temptation, paused to place it beside the first in her bosom. Now when she saw Milanion again well in front of her, her glance became troubled, but the winning-post was still some distance away, and by putting on extra speed she again overtook him.

The end of the course was almost reached, when Milanion threw down his last golden apple, and as Atalanta once more paused to seize it the race was lost for her. A strange, unwonted sense of fatigue oppressed her as she strove to cover the last few yards, her eyes grew dim, tremors seized her limbs, and now she was surely about to fall. But she did not fall; as she tottered to the goal a pair of strong arms received her, and a pair of warm lips were pressed upon her own.

"You are conquered at last, cruel Atalanta," said a strong voice.

And the maiden answered in a low voice,—

"Surely never was conquest so sweet as this defeat!"

So the altar was pulled down, the sword which had done so much cruel work was broken, and preparations were made for a joyful marriage. But of all the changes the greatest was that in Atalanta herself, for the golden gift from Venus had completely transformed her from a cruel, heartless maiden into a true and loving woman.

SAINT CHRISTOPHER

THERE was once a man named Offero, so tall and strong that he stood among his fellows as a sturdy oak in a grove of saplings. His eyes were keen and clear as some great eagle's, his lips spoke nothing but gentle words, and his heart was gentle and pure as a little child's. His spirit was brave and fearless, and while he was yet in the prime of his strength he resolved to devote it to some good purpose.

"My friends," he said, when he had called together his companions, "I must leave you now, for something within me whispers that I was born to serve a king so great that fear is unknown to him; a king to whom all men bow."

Then he strode away into the forest, and was seen by them no more.

For many a day he traversed valley and mountain, inquiring of all he met who was the greatest king. At last he came to a splendid country, where reigned a monarch of high renown. His armies were vast and powerful, and his fleet of warships was like a flock of birds bearing death on their grim brown wings. When he was told that Offero

desired to serve him, he welcomed him gladly, and liked the young man so well that he soon made him his trusted counsellor and friend.

It was Offero's pride to see how all men trembled at his master's frown, and he could not believe that there lived a greater monarch than he. One day, however, when the king was present, a courtier made some remark about the "Evil One"; his Majesty's august brow grew pale, and Offero could have sworn he saw his stern lips quiver. Pained and surprised, he humbly asked the king why he trembled.

"I am afraid of the Devil," said that monarch, "although I fear no mortal man. He is the King of Hades, and more powerful than I."

"Then I must leave you, O King!" cried Offero with haste, "since I have vowed to serve none other than the most powerful monarch in existence." And sorrowfully he turned away.

"Where is the Devil?" he asked the first man he met.

"He is everywhere," returned the traveller, looking around uneasily; and this was the usual answer that Offero received to his enquiry. Wherever he went men looked uneasy at the Devil's name, but would not say where Offero was likely to meet with him.

He found him at last among a group of idle men and maidens on the village green, and hailed him as his master. The Devil was glad to have so strong a follower, and amused himself by showing the astonished giant his power over rich and poor. There seemed to be no limit to his might; he swayed the nobles in their velvet robes, and the peasants in their tattered garments.

"He is indeed the master of the world," sighed Offero, and though he liked not the Devil's ways, he stifled his distaste that he might keep his word.

One day his master led him through the outskirts of the town into the open country.

"We are going to visit a hermit," he said with a burst of laughter. "He has left the town to be quit of me, but he will find me in his cave!"

Before Offero could ask him what he meant to do with the good hermit, they came to a turn where four roads met. A rough wind swayed the branches of the trees, and a peal of thunder echoed among the lofty hills. It was neither wind nor thunder, however, that made the Devil tremble, but the sight of a wooden cross which some pious folk had erected here. With gaunt arms pointing east and west it stood immovable; the rain beat down on it unmercifully, as if to cleanse it from the roadside dust; and turning his head away that he might not see it, the Devil hastened past. Not until it was far behind them had Offero an opportunity of asking why he had trembled.

"I was afraid," answered his grim companion, with another shudder.

"Afraid?" repeated Offero in puzzled tones. "Why, what was there to be afraid of?"

"Did you not see the crucifix?" cried the Devil impatiently. "The figure on it is that of the Christ, and that is why I trembled."

The giant had never heard that Holy name before, and felt more perplexed than ever as he demanded: "Who is this Christ whom you so fear?"

"He is the King of Heaven," was the reluctant reply.

"Is he more powerful, then than you?" persisted Offero, planting himself in the centre of the pathway so that his master could not pass on.

"He is more powerful even than I!" admitted the Devil, his eyes becoming points of fire.

"Then I shall serve HIM, and Him only," the giant

cried, and, turning on his heel, he left the Devil to go on his way alone.

When Offero reached the cross once more, a man was kneeling before it in prayer. As he rose from his knees, Offero asked him the way to Heaven.

"I cannot tell you," said the man. "The way is long, and hard to find. 'Tis well that Christ is merciful."

Offero met with like answers from many wayfarers whom he questioned, but at last came one who advised him to consult the hermit.

"He is a holy man," he assured him earnestly, "and has retired from the world that he may give his time to prayer and fasting. He thinks he can serve Christ this way better than any other."

So Offero sought the hermit, and learned from him many things. He heard of the grandeur and goodness of Christ, and of the greatness of His Kingdom. All that he said made Offero more eager to serve Him than ever, and when the hermit explained that no one could enter the Heavenly Kingdom until he was summoned there by Christ Himself, he bowed his head in disappointment.

"How then can I serve this new Master," he said, "unless I can see Him and learn His commands?"

"Do as I do," replied the hermit. "Give up the world, and fast and pray."

"If I were to fast," said Offero shrewdly, "I should lose my strength, and then, when He called me to work for Him, I should be useless." And although the hermit tried to persuade him, he would not stay, but set off again on his journey, determined to find the way to Heaven.

Presently he met a company of pilgrims. They were dusty and travel-stained, and very footsore, but their faces shone with joy. There were men and women and little children; some came from distant lands, and some from near, but one and all they were filled with a deep content.

"Who are you, and whence do you travel?" Offero asked them wonderingly. "We are the servants of Christ," they answered, "and we are marching towards Heaven. The path is rough, and the way is long, but His many mansions await us."

"I will come with you, and be His servant too!" said Offero, and they welcomed him gladly.

The way was long, as they had said, but to the giant the days passed quickly. He was learning so much that he could scarcely sleep for the wonder of it, and his face also shone with happiness. He grew very grave when he heard of the swift-flowing river that all must cross before they could hope to reach the Kingdom of Heaven.

"There is no bridge to span it," said an aged pilgrim, whose tottering limbs were now so feeble that but for Offero's support they would hardly have borne him along. "The trembling woman, the little child, must cross it alone in the gloom and darkness, for though they call, no friendly boatman appears in sight. When Christ has need of us, His messenger will appear; he is clothed in raiment white as snow, and although his voice is always gentle, it is as clearly heard in the rush and roar of the tempest as on a summer's day."

At length the pilgrims came to the river-bank, and as the giant gazed at the foaming current, and saw the waves dashing against the shore, he marvelled greatly at what he had been told. Surely, he thought, no feeble woman or little child could breast its waters and reach the other side.

Even as he mused on this the white-robed messenger called to an ailing girl who was almost too weak to move. Her Master had need of her, he said, and in the fair courts of Heaven she would be strong again.

What joy was hers when she heard his voice! But alas! when she crept to the edge of the bank, and saw the river which swept beneath it, her heart grew sick with fear.

She quivered and shook from head to foot, and moaned that she dare not venture. And exceeding pity moved Offero to go to her help.

"Do not weep," he said, "but trust to me." And taking her tenderly in his arms, he lifted her on to his shoulder, and bore her tenderly across. In spite of all his strength, the pitiless current nearly swept him off his feet, and he fought with the icy waters as he had fought no mortal foe. The girl tried in vain to thank him as he placed her on the bank in safety; he would not let her speak.

"Tell Christ," he said, "that I am His servant, and that until He shall summon me to His side I will help His pilgrims to cross the river of Death."

From henceforth this was his work. He had no time to wonder when his own call would come, for day and night there arrived at the river banks pilgrims from every clime, and, since few had courage to face the dark waters alone, he crossed and recrossed it continually. In order that he might be always at hand, he built himself a rough log-hut by the water-side, and here he made his home.

One night when the waves rolled fiercely and the wind blew high, Offero laid him down to sleep. Surely, he thought, no one would dare to cross in such a storm. His eyes had scarcely closed, however, when he heard a knocking at the door.

"Who are you?" he cried as he threw it open. There was no answer, and by the light of his lantern he saw a wistful child on the river-bank. He was staring down at the rushing waters with piteous dread, but the tone of his voice was clear and firm as he turned and spoke to Offero.

"I must cross to-night," he said. Offero looked at him with deep compassion.

"Poor child!" he murmured, "I am glad I heard

you. With a tide like this it will be difficult even for me, giant as I am, but you would be swept away."

With gentle hands he placed the boy on his shoulder, and bidding him not to fear, set out for the opposite shore.

He had not over-estimated the difficulties he had to face. Time after time he was beaten backward, and the icy waters nearly engulfed them both. It took all his strength to bear up against them, and the weight of the child seemed greater than that of the heaviest man he had ever borne. When at last he climbed the steep, high bank, he was bruised as well as breathless, for the hidden rocks had worked him grievous harm.

"Tell Christ—" he panted. And then he saw that the figure beside him was not that of a little child, but of a radiant Being of kingly mien, with a crown of glory on His brow. The giant knelt before Him, and the vision smiled.

"I am the Christ," He said, "whom thou hast served so long. This night thou hast borne Me across the river of Death. . . . Thou didst find Me a heavy burden, for I bore the sins of the world."

Then he named the Giant Offero "Christopher," meaning "He who carried Christ," and took him to dwell with Him in His Heavenly Kingdom.

THE SHEPHERD AND THE DRAGON

On a lofty mountain in Servia, surrounded by his flock, sat a humble shepherd. The valley beneath him was veiled by a thin white haze, through which he could just see the tips of the stately beeches, on which the frost had already laid his crimson touch. Only the contented munching of the sheep on the close-cropped grass, and

the trilling sweetness of a lark's song high up in the blue, broke the placid stillness of the scene.

The shepherd stretched himself, yawning, and gazed at the sea and sky. He had nothing to do just then, and little to think of, for his life flowed on in an even course, and though he often wished that something would happen, he had never been disturbed. He was gazing dreamily at the cottage beyond the sheep-pens, where his wife was busy preparing his dinner, when he saw a dark form gliding stealthily through the grass towards a big bare rock. It was followed by another, and yet another. They were finely-marked serpents with glistening scales, and each bore in its mouth a curious root, with which it touched the rock. More serpents still approached, and did the same, until suddenly the rock fell asunder, showing a long passage in the ground, into which the serpents glided, one by one. In his eagerness to see what they were after, the shepherd forgot his shuddering dislike of the venomous creatures, and pressed boldly into the rocky gallery. Soon he found himself in a large grotto lit by the gleam of the many precious gems that lined its wall. In its centre stood a magnificent throne of gold, set with emeralds and sapphires, and coiled upon this was an enormous serpent with gleaming eyes. The other serpents gathered around in complete silence; as the shepherd gazed in open-mouthed wonder, the great reptile closed his eyes, and immediately all were asleep.

The shepherd seized the opportunity to wander round the grotto, examining the jewels with which it was so richly encrusted, and wishing that he could carry away some in his pocket. Finding it impossible to detach them, he thought he had better depart before the serpents awoke, and so he made his way back through the passage; but the entrance was closed, and he could not get out. Oddly enough, he felt no alarm, and returning once more to the

grotto, laid himself down beside the serpents, and fell into a deep slumber.

He was roused by the consciousness that the serpents were stirring. Opening his eyes, he saw that all were gazing with heads erect at their grim monarch.

"Is it time, O King, is it time?" they cried.

"It is time," he answered after a long pause, and gliding down from his throne, led them through the grotto back to the rock. It opened as he touched it, and every serpent passed slowly out before him. The shepherd would have followed, but the Snake King barred his way with an angry hiss.

"Let me through, I entreat you, O gracious King!" begged the shepherd. "I shall lose my flock if I leave it longer, and my wife will be waiting for me at home."

"You entered our sleeping-place without an invitation, and now you must stay," replied the King; but the shepherd pleaded so earnestly for his release that he was moved to clemency.

"I will let you go this time," he said, "if you will give your solemn promise that you will reveal our hiding-place to no one."

The shepherd was quite ready to do this, and three times in succession he repeated to the Serpent King the words of a solemn oath. This done, he was allowed to pass out of the rock.

The chestnut-trees in the fertile valley were now a mass of star-white blossom, and the bleating of the lambs told him that spring had come. Greatly bewildered, he hurried towards his home, rather doubtful as to what reception his wife would give him. As he approached the cottage, he saw a stranger standing by the door, and stepped into the shadow of a bush that he might wait unseen until he had gone.

"Is your husband at home?" inquired the man, as the

shepherd's wife, looking pale and thin, answered his loud knock.

"Alas! no," was her mournful reply. "I have not seen him since last autumn, when he left me to tend his flock on the mountain-side. I fear the wolves must have devoured him." And covering her head with her apron, she burst into tears. Touched by her distress, the shepherd now came forward.

"I am here, dear wife," he told her joyfully. The woman immediately stopped her weeping, and instead of bidding him welcome, began to scold him.

"Where have you been to, you lazy fellow?" she demanded. "It was just like you to leave me to get through the winter as best I could. Answer me at once!"

The shepherd could not do this without breaking his oath, and there was something so strange in his manner as he tried to parry her questions that the curiosity of the stranger was aroused.

"Come, come, my good man," he said, "tell your wife the truth, and I will reward you with a piece of gold. Where did you sleep through the winter nights, and what have you been doing?"

"I slept in the sheep-pen," began the shepherd, and the stranger burst into a scornful laugh.

"You need not fancy we are foolish enough to believe that," he said. "Out with it, man! We can see you are hiding something."

Thus pressed, the shepherd reluctantly confessed the existence of the grotto, and the stranger, who happened to be a magician in disguise, forced him not only to guide him hither, but to reveal the manner of entrance. A root that a serpent had discarded lay at their feet, and on touching the rock with this, it opened immediately, and let them through.

The magician coveted the splendid jewels that lined the

walls of the grotto as much as the shepherd had done, and conned through the book of spells that he drew from the folds of his garment to see if it would tell him how to gain possession of the rich store.

"I have it!" he exclaimed. "I shall now be rich as the heart of man can desire, and you, good shepherd, shall share my wealth."

Replacing his book, he was about to set fire to a small pellet which he took from his pocket, when he was interrupted by a terrible hiss. Unseen by the intruders, the King of the Serpents had followed in the form of a Green Dragon, and now reproached the shepherd with much violence for having broken his oath. His rage was so great that the shepherd thought his end had come.

"Throw this over his head," muttered the magician in his ear, handing him a rope.

Despite the trembling of his hand, the shepherd made a cast which was successful, and as the loop encircled the neck of the King, the rock burst asunder with a report which echoed from hill to hill. The next moment the shepherd found himself flying through space on the back of the Green Dragon. Such was the speed at which the wings of the fiery creature clove the air that the rushing of the wind in his rider's face was painful to endure.

They went over mountains and over seas, over desert lands where sand-storms raged and vultures lay in wait for the fainting camels, until at last they came to a wide plain watered by many rivers. The Dragon flew higher and higher, until the shepherd grew dizzy and lost his breath. His eyes were closed, but in the blue sky above him he could hear the sweet clear notes of a soaring lark.

"Dear bird," he cried, "thou art precious to our Master, who loves us all. Fly up to Him, I pray thee, and beg Him to send me help in my sorry plight."

The lark flew up to Heaven as he had bidden her, and

returned with a green leaf from a tree in Paradise in her tiny beak. Gladly she dropped this on the Dragon's head, and as it touched him he fell to the ground and became once more a crawling serpent.

When the shepherd regained consciousness, he was on the mountain-side, with his flocks around him, and his faithful dog at his feet. The forest was still in its autumn glory of yellow and gold, and in the distance he could see his wife beckoning to him from his cottage door.

"I must have been dreaming," he said, as with thankful heart he went home to his dinner. He lived to a ripe old age in peace and quietness, and never again did he wish that something strange would happen.

THE BAR OF GOLD

Long years ago there lived a poor labouring man who never knew what it was to sleep in peace. Whether the times were good or bad, he was haunted by fears for the morrow, and this constant worrying caused him to look so thin and worn that the neighbouring farmers hesitated to give him work. He was steady and frugal, and had never been known to waste his time in the village inn, or indulge in foolish pleasures — in fact, a worthier man could not be found, and his friends agreed in saying that he certainly deserved success, though this never came his way.

One day as he sat by the roadside with his head on his hands, a kindly and charitable doctor from the town close by stopped his carriage to ask him what was the matter.

"You seem in trouble, my good man," he said. "Tell me what I can do to help you."

Encouraged by the sympathy in his voice, "Weeping

John," as he was called, poured out his woes, to which the doctor listened with much attention.

"If I should fall sick," the poor man finished by saying, "what would happen to my little children, and the wife whom I love more dearly than life itself? They would surely starve, for even as it is they often go hungry to bed. Surely a more unfortunate man has never been born — I toil early and late, and this is my reward." And once more he buried his face in his hands, while bitter sobs shook his ill-clad shoulders.

"Come, come!" said the doctor briskly. "Get up at once, man, and I will do my best for you. I can see that if you do not kill worry, worry will kill you." Helping the poor fellow into his carriage, he told the coachman to drive straight home, and when they arrived at his comfortable mansion, he led him into his surgery.

"See here," he cried, pointing to a shining bar in a glass case, "that bar of gold was bequeathed to me by my father, who was once as poor as you are now. By means of the strictest economy, and hard work, he managed to save sufficient money to purchase this safeguard against want. When it came to me, I too was poor, but by following his example, and keeping a brave heart, in cloud and storm as well as sunshine, I have now amassed a fortune that is more than sufficient for my needs. Therefore, I will now hand over to you the bar of gold, since I no longer require it. Its possession will give you confidence for the future. Do not break into it if you can avoid it, and remember that sighing and weeping should be left to weak women and girls."

The labourer thanked him with much fervour and hiding the bar of gold beneath his coat, sped joyfully homeward.

As he and his wife sat over the fire, which they now were no longer afraid to replenish, he told her all that the

good doctor had said, and they agreed that unless the worst came to the worst, they would never touch the bar of gold.

"The knowledge that we have it, safely hidden in the cellar," said his wife, "will keep from us all anxiety. And now, John, you must do your best to make a fortune, so that we may be able to hand it on to our dear children."

From that day John was a changed man. He sang and whistled merrily as he went about his work, and bore himself like a prosperous citizen. His cheeks filled out, and his eye grew bright; no longer did he waste his leisure in lamentations, but dug and planted his little garden until it yielded him richly of the fruits of the earth, and the proceeds helped to swell the silver coins in his good wife's stocking. The farmer who had before employed him when short of hands, was so impressed with his altered looks that he took him permanently into his service, and with regular food and sufficient clothing John's delicate children grew strong and hardy.

"The bar of gold has brought us luck," he would sometimes say blithely to his wife, who held her tongue like a wise woman, although she was tempted to remind him that "luck" had come since he had given up weeping and lamentations concerning the future.

One summer's evening, long afterwards, as they sat in the wide porch, while their grandchildren played in the meadow beyond, and the lowing of the cows on their peaceful farm mingled with the little people's merry shouts, a stranger came up the pathway and begged for alms. Though torn and tattered, and gaunt with hunger, he had an air of gentleness and refinement, and, full of compassion, the worthy couple invited him to rest. They set before him the best they had, and when he tried to express his gratitude, John laid his hand on his shoulder.

"My friend," he said, "Providence has been good to

us, and blessed the labour of our hands. In times gone by, however, I was as wretched as you appeared to be when you crossed the road, and it is owing to a stranger's kindness that I am in my present position." He went on to tell him of the bar of gold, and, after a long look at his wife, who nodded her head as if well pleased, he went and fetched it from the cellar, where it had lain hidden all these years.

"There!" he exclaimed. "I am going to give it to you. I shall not want it now, and my children are all settled. It is fitting that you should have it since your need is very great."

Now the stranger understood the science of metals, for he was a learned man who had fallen on evil times. As he took the gleaming bar in his hands, while murmuring his astonished thanks, he knew by its weight that it was not gold.

"You have made a mistake, my friends," he cried. "This bar is not what you think it, though I own that most men would be deceived."

Greatly surprised, the old woman took it from him, and polished it with her apron in order to show him how brightly it gleamed. As she did so, an inscription appeared, which neither she nor her husband had noticed before. Both listened with great interest as the stranger read it out for them.

"It is less a matter of actual want," it ran, "than the fear of what the morrow will bring, which causes the unhappiness of the poor. Then tread the path of life with courage, for it is clear that at last you will reach the end of your journey."

When the stranger paused there was a dead silence, for the old man and woman were thinking many things, and words do not come quickly when one is deeply moved. At last John offered the stranger a tremulous apology for the

disappointment he must now be suffering through their innocent mistake.

"On the contrary," he replied warmly, "the lesson that bar has taught me is worth far more than any money you could give me. I shall make a new start in life, and, remembering that we fail through fear, will henceforth bear myself as a brave man should."

So saying, he bade them adieu, and passed out into the fragrant twilight.

THE FARMER AND THE NOSES

In the neighbourhood of the city of Prague there once lived a very eccentric farmer, who was reputed to be extremely wealthy. He had a remarkably handsome daughter, with a pair of fine dark eyes, who was a great favourite with many students at a neighbouring University. She would often chat with these when they passed her home in their country rambles, but she never showed more encouragement to one than to the other.

So charming was Theresa, and so rich her father, that the name of her suitors was legion. Theresa knew her own value well, and was not a ripe cherry ready to drop off the branch at a moment's touch. This only enhanced her attraction to her lovers, and several of them agreed upon the ingenious plan of entering her father's service during their vacation as ordinary farm-hands, so that one of their number might thus find an opportunity of winning her maidenly heart.

The farmer was a shrewd old man, and soon discovered their wily plot. For the future, he declared, he would only take servants who agreed to remain in his employ-

ment for at least a year, and permit him to cut off the tips of their noses if they became discontented. He, for his part, would agree that he should forfeit the tip of his own nose if he lost his temper with them. Notwithstanding this extraordinary condition, so fascinating was Theresa, and the reputation of his wealth, that several of the University students entered his service.

It was fine sport for the farmer, for he had the youths in the hollow of his hand. By putting upon them unexpected hardships, he surprised them into betraying discontent. He then demanded that they should pay the penalty, and ignominiously dismissed them, minus the tips of their noses.

At length, however, a young student named Coranda arrived on the scene, determined to win the farmer's daughter. The conditions were fully explained to him, so that he might have no just cause of complaint if he did not comply with them.

"Remember," said the farmer, "that if you come you must stay until the cuckoo returns in the spring, and if, in the meantime, you show any signs of discontent, you too will forfeit the tip of your nose."

"Very well," said the student calmly, and with an affectionate glance at Theresa took off his coat and prepared to work.

The farmer began his usual tactics. At dinner and supper he offered the young man nothing to eat, yet smilingly inquired from time to time if he had had enough. Coranda replied with gay good-humour that he was perfectly satisfied, but having no intention of starving, he coolly helped himself to a piece of bread and a thick slice of meat. The farmer turned pale with anger, and asked him how he dared to take such a liberty.

"I was hungry," Coranda replied, "for I had not tasted food all day. However," he added, "since you are

not satisfied, and I have made you angry, I will leave at once, after having sliced off the tip of your nose."

The farmer saw that he was fairly caught in his own trap, and as he had no desire to be disfigured, he declared that he too was satisfied. After this he took good care that Coranda should have his share at meal times.

When Sunday morning came the farmer made another attempt to put him in the wrong.

"I am going to church with my wife and daughter," he said. "You must prepare the soup during my absence. Here are meat, carrots, onions, and the pot. You will find parsley in the garden. See that your soup is good, or you will rue it. Don't forget the herbs," he added; "I like my broth well seasoned."

Shortly after they had gone Coranda began his soup-making. He threw the meat and vegetables into the pot, filled it with water, and then went off into the garden for the parsley. He found other green things in plenty, but no parsley, though he searched under rose-bushes and round the borders, and made himself very hot and uncomfortable in the process. The farmer's small dog frisked round him all the time, apparently delighted by his non-success. It refused to be driven away, and yelped and barked without ceasing. Suddenly Coranda remembered that for some absurd reason or other they had named the little brute "Parsley."

"Aho," he said, "I have it now!" And without more ado he killed the dog, and added it to the contents of the pot.

In due time the farmer came back from church, looking very well pleased. Theresa had on a new frock trimmed with blue ribbons, and he chuckled with glee at the temerity of the rash student who thought to woo her.

"He's a handsome fellow," he said to himself, "but it

will spoil his beauty when I snip off his nose." He at once proceeded to make matters uncomfortable for the young man.

"I hope your soup is good," he said, as his wife ladled him out a steaming plateful. It tasted abominable, and was swimming with fat, but a gleam in the student's eye reminded him in time that if he gave way to his own temper his own nose would suffer. So he swallowed his own anger, though not the soup.

"Parsley!" he cried, looking round for his dog, "come here! this soup is fit for you, and you shall have it."

"It is parsley which gives my soup its excellent flavour," remarked the student, with a roguish glance at Theresa, who demurely cast down her eyes. "I could find none save the dog, and so I put him in the pot."

On hearing this the farmer began to scold violently.

"I did merely what you told me," said the youth, "but if you are angry I am ready to go, taking with me the tip of your nose."

"Oh, no, I am not angry," replied the farmer, with a deep sigh. His face was distorted with rage, and the other servants had much to do to keep from laughing.

Next morning the farmer went to market. He would not leave either his wife or daughter at home, for he suspected them of favouring the handsome student. Before he set out he gave them his orders for the day, and in such a rude tone of voice that the young man flushed with anger. He was only to do what he saw others doing? he was told, and the farmer added a slighting remark as to his general incapacity.

Coranda sauntered around the farm with his hands in his pockets on the lookout for an opportunity to get even with his employer. By-and-by he noticed some workmen placing a ladder against an old barn, and waited to see

what they were going to do. One after another they climbed to the roof, and began to take off the tiles as a preliminary to pulling down the building.

Coranda lost no time in following their example. He fetched another ladder, and mounting the roof of the farmer's house, set to work to demolish this. When the farmer returned he was horrified to see that most of it was uncovered. Naturally indignant, he attacked the young man bitterly, to be met with the same good-humour, and an offer to leave his service on the conditions agreed upon. The farmer once more could not find a word to say, and stalked away in gloomy anger.

This sort of thing went on for some weeks. Try as he might, he could not get the better of the quick-witted student, who scrupled at nothing to win Theresa for his bride. It was she whom the father at last consulted, for life was becoming a burden to him, and he was anxious to get rid of Coranda at any cost.

Theresa considered awhile, and there was an odd expression on her pretty lips when at last she spoke.

"Well," she said to him, "you told him that he could not leave until he heard the cuckoo's call. Take him into the meadow behind the orchard. I will hide in the boughs of an apple-tree, and imitate the cuckoo's voice."

"You are as clever as you are handsome," cried her father with delight, and pretending to desire a private conversation with the student, he took him into the meadow. Theresa, of course, was safely ensconced by this time in the spreading boughs of an apple-tree.

"CUCKOO! CUCKOO!" she cried, so naturally that a robin on a neighbouring bush was nearly startled out of his feathers. As the sound reached his ears, the farmer promptly gave the young man notice.

"Very good, master," replied Coranda, "but this cuckoo's an early bird. I must have a look at her."

Before the farmer could stop him he ran to the orchard, and catching a glimpse of Theresa's frock through the gnarled brown boughs, he vigorously shook the apple-tree. Down came the girl, falling into his arms, and he held her there tightly, in spite of her mild struggles to escape.

"Wretch!" cried the farmer. "Be off at once before I put an end to you."

"Why should I be off?" inquired Coranda, trying to look at Theresa's face, which was certainly pink enough for an apple-blossom. "Are you angry? It's a lovely cuckoo."

"Begone!" shouted the farmer. "Set my daughter free, and away with you!"

"Then allow me to cut off the tip of your nose," was the reply, and now Theresa succeeded in escaping from the arms that held her. The farmer stood aghast.

"No, no," he exclaimed in distressful tones, "I cannot have that, but you must leave us. If you go at once I will give you ten sheep."

"That's not enough," replied the student, shaking his head.

"Then ten cows," said the farmer hastily.

"No, I would rather keep to our agreement," replied Coranda, whipping out of his pocket a very large penknife and opening one blade. Theresa sprang forward with a cry of horror. Once more the student caught her in his arms.

"SSH! Your father shall keep his nose, but he must give you to me for my wife." And he kissed her so ardently that if Theresa had any objection to make, it was not heard.

The farmer now forgot everything in his rage at the young man's boldness, but in the midst of his storming the fair Theresa threw her arms around his neck and implored him not to sacrifice his nose, since she was quite

willing to marry this lover. The situation was not an easy one for the poor man, and at length he allowed himself to be appeased, and admitted that Coranda had the best of the argument. There was no denying this, and as the young man would not relinquish his advantage, the farmer was forced to give a favourable answer to his suit.

The wedding of the young people was celebrated soon afterward, and Coranda invited his fellow-students, who came with a good grace. The farmer soon became reconciled to his son-in-law, and in due course was a great favourite with his grandchildren. If they were naughty, or appeared discontented, their father would threaten to cut off the tips of their noses, and then the old man might be seen tenderly rubbing his own.

A CHILD'S DREAM OF A STAR

THERE was once a child, and he strolled about a good deal, and thought of a good number of things. He had a sister, who was a child too, and his constant companion. These two used to wonder all day long. They wondered at the beauty of the flowers; they wondered at the height and blueness of the sky; they wondered at the depth of the bright water; they wondered at the goodness and the power of God who made the lovely world.

They used to say to one another, sometimes, supposing all the children upon earth were to die, would the flowers and the water and the sky be sorry? They believed they would be sorry. For, said they, the buds are the children of the flowers, and the little playful streams that gambol down the hill-sides are the children of the water; and the smallest bright specks playing at hide and seek in the sky all night must surely be the children of the stars; and

they would all be grieved to see their playmates, the children of men, no more.

There was one clear shining star that used to come out in the sky before the rest, near the church spire, above the graves. It was larger and more beautiful, they thought, than all the others, and every night they watched for it, standing hand in hand at a window. Whoever saw it first cried out, "I see the star!" And often they cried out both together, knowing so well when it would rise, and where. So they grew to be such friends with it, that, before lying down in their beds, they always looked out once again, to bid it good night; and when they were turning round to sleep, they used to say "God bless the star!"

But while she was still very young, oh very very young, the sister drooped, and came to be so weak that she could no longer stand in the window at night; and then the child looked sadly out by himself, and when he saw the star turned round and said to the patient pale face on the bed, "I see the star!" and then a smile would come upon the face, and then a little weak voice used to say, "God bless my brother and the star!"

And so the time came all too soon! when the child looked out alone, and when there was no face on the bed; and when there was a little grave among the graves, not there before; and when the star made long rays down towards him, as he saw it through his tears.

Now, these rays were so bright, and they seemed to make such a shining way from earth to heaven, that when the child went to his solitary bed, he dreamed about the star; and dreamed that, lying where he was, he saw a train of people taken up that sparkling road by angels. And the star, opening, showed him a great world of light, where many more such angels waited to receive them.

All these angels, who were waiting, turned their beam-

ing eyes upon the people who were carried up into the star; and some came out from the long rows in which they stood, and fell upon the people's necks, and kissed them tenderly, and went away with them down avenues of light, and were so happy in their company, that lying in his bed he wept for joy.

But there were many angels who did not go with them, and among them one he knew. The patient face that once had lain upon the bed was glorified and radiant, but his heart found out his sister among all the host.

His sister's angel lingered near the entrance of the star, and said to the leader among those who had brought the people thither,

"Is my brother come?"

And he said "No."

She was turning hopefully away, when the child stretched out his arms, and cried, "O, sister, I am here! Take me!" and then she turned her beaming eyes upon him, and it was night; and the star was shining into the room, making long rays down towards him as he saw it through his tears.

From that hour forth, the child looked out upon the star as on the home he was to go to, when his time should come; and he thought that he did not belong to the earth alone, but to the star too, because of his sister's angel gone before.

There was a baby born to be a brother to the child; and while he was so little that he never yet had spoken word, he stretched his tiny form out on his bed, and died.

Again the child dreamed of the open star, and of the company of angels, and the train of people, and the rows of angels with their beaming eyes all turned upon those people's faces.

Said his sister's angel to the leader:

"Is my brother come?"

And he said, "Not that one but another."

As the child beheld his brother's angel in her arms, he cried, "O, sister, I am here! Take me!" And she turned and smiled upon him, and the star was shining.

He grew to be a young man, and was busy at his books when an old servant came to him and said:

"Thy mother is no more. I bring her blessings on her darling son!"

Again at night he saw the star, and all that former company. Said his sister's angel to the leader:

"Is my brother come?"

And he said, "Thy mother!"

A mighty cry of joy went forth through all the star, because the mother was re-united to her two children. And he stretched out his arms and cried, "O, mother, sister, and brother, I am here! Take me!" And they answered him, "Not yet," and the star was shining.

He grew to be a man, whose hair was turning grey, and he was sitting in his chair by the fireside, heavy with grief, and his face bedewed with tears, when the star opened once again.

Said his sister's angel to the leader: "Is my brother come?"

And he said, "Nay, but his maiden daughter."

And the man who had been the child saw his daughter, newly lost to him, a celestial creature among those three, and he said, "My daughter's head is on my sister's bosom, and her arm is around my mother's neck, and at her feet there is the baby of old time, and I can bear the parting from her, God be praised!"

And the star was shining.

Thus the child came to be an old man, and his once smooth face was wrinkled, and his steps were slow and

feeble, and his back was bent. And one night as he lay upon his bed, his children standing round, he cried, as he had cried so long ago:

"I see the star!"

They whispered to one another, "He is dying."

And he said, "I am. My age is falling from me like a garment, and I move towards the star as a child. And O, my Father, now I thank thee that it has so often opened, to receive those dear ones who await me!"

And the star was shining; and it shines upon his grave.

PRINCE BULL, A FAIRY TALE

ONCE upon a time, and of course it was in the Golden Age, and I hope you may know when that was, for I am sure I don't, though I have tried hard to find out, there lived in a rich and fertile country, a powerful Prince whose name was *Bull*. He had gone through a great deal of fighting, in his time, about all sorts of things, including nothing; but had gradually settled down to be a steady, peaceable, good-natured, corpulent, rather sleepy Prince.

This Puissant Prince was married to a lovely Princess whose name was Fair Freedom. She had brought him a large fortune, and had borne him an immense number of children, and had set them to spinning, and farming, and engineering, and soldiering, and sailoring, and doctoring, and lawyering, and preaching, and all kinds of trades. The coffers of Prince Bull were full of treasure, his cellars were crammed with delicious wines from all parts of the world, the richest gold and silver plate that ever was seen adorned his sideboards, his sons were strong, his daughters were handsome, and in short you might have supposed

that if there ever lived upon earth a fortunate and happy Prince, the name of that Prince, take him for all in all, was assuredly Prince Bull.

But appearances, as we all know, are not always to be trusted — far from it; and if they had led you to this conclusion respecting Prince Bull, they would have led you wrong as they often have led me.

For this good Prince had two sharp thorns in his pillow, two hard knobs in his crown, two heavy loads on his mind, two unbridled nightmares in his sleep, two rocks ahead in his course. He could not by any means get servants to suit him, and he had a tyrannical old godmother, whose name was Tape.

She was a fairy, this Tape, and was a bright red all over. She was disgustingly prim and formal, and could never bend herself a hair's breadth this way or that way, out of her naturally crooked shape. But she was very potent in her wicked art. She could stop the fastest thing in the world, change the strongest thing into the weakest, and the most useful into the most useless. To do this she had only to put her cold hand upon it, and repeat her own name, Tape. Then it withered away.

At the court of Prince Bull — at least I don't mean literally at his court, because he was a very genteel Prince, and readily yielded to his godmother when she always reserved that for his hereditary Lords and Ladies — in the dominions of Prince Bull, among the great mass of the community who were called in the language of that polite country the Mobs and the Snobs, were a number of very ingenious men, who were always busy with some invention or other, for promoting the prosperity of the Prince's subjects, and augmenting the Prince's power. But, whenever they submitted their models for the Prince's approval, his godmother stepped forward, laid her hand upon them, and said "Tape." Hence it came to pass,

that when any particularly good discovery was made, the discoverer usually carried it off to some other Prince, in foreign parts, who had no old godmother who said "Tape." This was not on the whole an advantageous state of things for Prince Bull, to the best of my understanding.

The worst of it was, that Prince Bull had in course of years lapsed into such a state of subjection to this unlucky godmother, that he never made any serious effort to rid himself of her tyranny. I have said this was the worst of it, but there I was wrong, because there is a worse consequence still, behind. The Prince's numerous family became so downright sick and tired of Tape, that when they should have helped the Prince out of the difficulties into which that evil creature led him, they fell into a dangerous habit of moodily keeping away from him in an impassive and indifferent manner, as though they had quite forgotten that no harm could happen to the Prince their father, without its inevitably affecting themselves.

Such was the aspect of affairs at the court of Prince Bull, when this great Prince found it necessary to go to war with Prince Bear. He had been for some time very doubtful of his servants, who, besides being indolent and addicted to enriching their families at his expense, domineered over him dreadfully; threatening to discharge themselves if they were found the least fault with, pretending that they had done nothing, making the most unmeaning speeches that ever were heard in the Prince's name, and uniformly showing themselves to be very inefficient indeed. Though, that some of them had excellent characters from previous situations is not to be denied. Well, Prince Bull called his servants together, and said to them one and all, "Send out my army against Prince Bear. Clothe it, arm it, feed it, provide it with all necessaries and contingencies, and I will pay the piper! Do

your duty by my grave troops," said the Prince, "and do it well, and I will pour my treasure out like water, to defray the cost. Who ever heard *me* complain of money well laid out!" Which indeed he had reason for saying, inasmuch as he was well known to be a truly generous and munificent Prince.

When the servants heard those words, they sent out the army against Prince Bear, and they set the army tailors to work, and the army provision merchants, and the makers of guns both great and small, and the gunpowder makers, and the makers of ball, shell, and shot; and they bought up all manner of stores and ships, without troubling their heads about the price, and appeared to be so busy that the good Prince rubbed his hands and (using a favourite expression of his) said, "It's all right!" But while they were thus employed, the Prince's godmother, who was a great favourite with those servants, looked in upon them continually all day long, and whenever she popped in her head at the door said, "How do you do, my children? What are you doing here?" "Official business, godmother." "O ho!" says this wicked fairy. "—Tape!" And then the business all went wrong, whatever it was, and the servants' heads became so addled and muddled that they thought they were doing wonders.

Now, this was very bad conduct on the part of the vicious old nuisance, and she ought to have been strangled, even if she had stopped here; but she didn't stop here, as you shall learn. For a number of the Prince's subjects, being very fond of the Prince's army who were the bravest of men, assembled together and provided all manner of eatables and drinkables, and books to read, and clothes to wear, and tobacco to smoke, and candles to burn, and nailed them up in great packing-cases, and put them aboard a great many ships, to be carried out to that brave army in the cold and inclement country where they were

fighting Prince Bear. Then up comes this wicked fairy as the ships were weighing anchor, and says, "How do you do, my children? What are you doing here?" "We are going with all these comforts to the army, godmother." "Oho!" says she. "A pleasant voyage, my darlings.—Tape!" And from that time forth, those enchanted ships went sailing, against wind and tide and rhyme and reason, round and round the world, and whenever they touched at any port were ordered off immediately, and could never deliver their cargoes anywhere.

This, again, was very bad conduct on the part of the vicious old nuisance, and she ought to have been strangled for it if she had done nothing worse; but she did something worse still, as you shall learn. For she got astride of an official broomstick, and muttered as a spell these two sentences, "On Her Majesty's service," and "I have the honour to be, sir, your most obedient servant," and presently alighted in the cold and inclement country where the army of Prince Bull were encamped to fight the army of Prince Bear. On the sea-shore of that country, she found piled together a number of houses for the army to live in, and a quantity of provisions for the army to live upon, and a quantity of clothes for the army to wear: while, sitting in the mud gazing at them, were a group of officers as red to look at as the wicked old woman herself. So, she said to one of them, "Who are you, my darling, and how do you do?" "I am the Quarter-master General's Department, godmother, and I am pretty well." Then she said to another, "Who are *you,* my darling, and how do *you* do?" "I am the Commissariat Department, godmother, and *I* am pretty well." Then she said to some gentlemen scented with lavender, who kept themselves at a great distance from the rest, "And who are *you,* my pretty pets, and how do *you* do?" And they answered, "We-aw-are-the-aw-Staff-aw-Department, godmother, and

we are very well indeed." "I am delighted to see you all, my beauties," says this wicked old Fairy,—"Tape!" Upon that, the houses, the clothes, and provisions, all mouldered away; and the soldiers who were sound, fell sick; and the soldiers who were sick, died miserably: and the noble army of Prince Bull perished.

When the dismal news of his great loss was carried to the Prince, he suspected his godmother very much indeed; but he knew that his servants must have kept company with the malicious beldame, and must have given way to her, and therefore he resolved to turn those servants out of their places. So he called to him a Roebuck who had the gift of speech, and he said, "Good Roebuck, tell them they must go." So the good Roebuck delivered his message, so like a man that you might have supposed him to be nothing but a man, and they were turned out — but not without warning, for that they had had a long time.

And now comes the most extraordinary part of the history of this Prince. When he had turned out those servants, of course he wanted others. What was his astonishment to find that in all his dominions, which contained no less than twenty-seven millions of people, there were not above five-and-twenty servants all together! They were so lofty about it, too, that instead of discussing whether they should hire themselves as servants to Prince Bull, they turned things topsy-turvy, and considered whether as a favour they should hire Prince Bull to be their master! While they were arguing this point among themselves quite at their leisure, the wicked old red Fairy was incessantly going up and down, knocking at the doors of twelve of the oldest of the five-and-twenty, who were the oldest inhabitants in all that country, and whose united ages amounted to one thousand, saying, "Will *you* hire Prince Bull for your master? — Will *you* hire Prince Bull for your master?" To which one answered, "I will if next

door will;" and another, "I won't if over the way does;" and another, "I can't if he, she, or they, might, could, would, or should." And all this time Prince Bull's affairs were going to rack and ruin.

At last, Prince Bull in the height of his perplexity assumed a thoughtful face, as if he were struck by an entirely new idea. The wicked old Fairy, seeing this, was at his elbow directly, and said, "How do you do, my Prince, and what are you thinking of?" "I am thinking, godmother," says he, "that among all the seven-and-twenty millions of my subjects who have never been in service, there are men of intellect and business who have made me very famous both among my friends and enemies." "Ay, truly?" says the Fairy. "Ay, truly," says the Prince. "And what then?" says the Fairy. "Why then," he says, "since the regular old class of servants do so ill, are so hard to get, and carry it with so high a hand, perhaps I might try to make good servants of some of these." The words had no sooner passed his lips than she returned, chuckling, "You think so, do you? Indeed, my Prince? — Tape!" Thereupon he directly forgot what he was thinking of, and cried out lamentably to the old servants, "O, do come and hire your poor old master! Pray do! On any terms!"

And this, for the present, finishes the story of Prince Bull. I wish I could wind it up by saying that he lived happy ever afterwards, but I cannot in my conscience do so; for, with Tape at his elbow, and his estranged children fatally repelled by her from coming near him, I do not, to tell you the plain truth, believe in the possibility of such an end to it.

THE TWO GIFTS

A HEAVY snow-storm was raging, and great soft flakes fell through the air like feathers shaken from the wings of an innumerable host of angels. By the side of the roadway sat a poor old woman, her scanty clothing forming but a poor protection from the icy blast of the wind. She was very hungry, for she had tasted no food that day, but her faded eyes were calm and patient, telling of an unwavering trust in Providence. Perhaps, she thought, some traveller might come that way who would have compassion on her, and give her alms; then she could return to the garret that she called "home," with bread to eat, and fuel to kindle a fire.

The day drew in, and still she sat and waited. At last a traveller approached. The thick snow muffled every sound and she was not aware of his coming until his burly figure loomed before her. Her plaintive voice made him turn with a start.

"Poor woman," he cried, pausing to look at her very pityingly. "It is hard for you to be out in such weather as this." Then he passed on, without giving her anything; his conscience told him that he ought to have relieved her, but he did not feel inclined to take off his thick gloves in that bitter cold, and without doing this he could not have found a coin.

The poor woman was naturally disappointed, but she was grateful for his kind words. By-and-by another traveller appeared. This one was driving in a splendid carriage, warmly wrapped in a great fur cloak. As he caught sight of the poor creature by the roadside, he felt vaguely touched by the contrast of his own comfort with her mis-

ery. Obeying a sudden impulse, with one hand he let down the carriage window and signed to his coachman to stop, and with the other felt in his pocket. The poor woman hurried up to the carriage, a thrill of hope bringing a tinge of colour to her pale and withered cheeks.

"How terribly cold it is!" exclaimed the rich man, and as he took his hand from his pocket, and held out a coin to her, he noticed that instead of silver he was about to give her a piece of gold.

"Dear me! That is far too much," he cried, but before he could return it to his pocket, the coin slipped through his fingers, and fell into the snow. A rough blast of wind made his teeth chatter, and pulling up the window in a great hurry, with a little shiver he drew the fur rug around him.

"It certainly was too much," he murmured philosophically, as the carriage rolled on, "but then I am very rich, and can afford to do a generous action now and then."

When his comfortable dinner was over, and he was sitting in front of a blazing fire, he thought once more of the poor old woman.

"It is not nearly so cold as I thought," he remarked as he settled himself more comfortably in his deep arm-chair. "I certainly gave that old creature too much. However, what's done, is done, and I hope she will make good use of it. I was generous, very generous indeed, and no doubt God will reward me."

Meanwhile the other traveller had also reached his journey's end; and he too had found a blazing fire and a good dinner awaiting him. He could not enjoy it, however, for he was haunted by the remembrance of that bent and shrunken figure in the waste of snow, and felt very remorseful for not having stopped to help her. At last he could bear it no longer.

"Bring another plate," he said, calling the servant to

him. "There will be two to dine instead of one. I shall be back soon."

Saying this he hurried through the darkness to the spot where he had left the old woman; she was still there, feebly searching amongst the snow.

"What are you looking for?" he asked.

"I am trying to find a piece of money which a gentleman threw me from his carriage window," she told him falteringly, scarcely able to speak from cold and hunger. It was no wonder, he thought, that she had not found it, for her hands were numbed and half-frozen, and she was not only old, but nearly blind.

"I am afraid you will never find it now," he said. "But come with me," he added consolingly. "I will take you to my inn, where there is a bright fire and a good dinner waiting for both of us. You shall be my guest, and I will see that you have a comfortable night's lodging."

The poor woman could scarcely believe her good fortune, as she tremblingly prepared to follow her new friend. Noticing that she was lame as well as nearly blind, he took her arm, and with slow and patient steps led her to the hotel.

When the recording angel wrote that night in the Book of Heaven, he made no mention of the piece of gold which the wealthy traveller had given by mistake, for only a worthy motive gains credit in that Book; but amidst the good deeds that had been wrought that day, he gave a foremost place to that of a man who had repented of his hardness, and faced once more the bitter cold that he might share his comforts with a fellow-creature so much less fortunate than himself.

KING KOJATA

THERE was once upon a time a king called Kojata, whose beard was so long that it reached below his knees. Three years had passed since his marriage, and he lived very happily with his wife, but Heaven granted him no heir, which grieved the king greatly. One day he set forth from his capital, in order to make a journey through his kingdom. He travelled for nearly a year through the different parts of his territory, and then having seen all there was to be seen, he set forth on his homeward way. As the day was very hot and sultry he commanded his servants to pitch tents in the open field and there await the cool of the evening. Suddenly a frightful thirst seized the king, and as he saw no water near, he mounted his horse and rode through the neighbourhood looking for a spring. Before long he came to a well filled to the brim with water as clear as crystal and on the bosom of which a golden jug was floating. King Kojata at once tried to seize the vessel, but though he endeavoured to grasp it with his right hand, and then with his left, the wretched thing always eluded his efforts and refused to let itself be caught. First with one hand, and then with two, did the king try to seize it, but like a fish the goblet always slipped through his fingers and bobbed to the ground, only to reappear at some other place and mock the king.

"Plague on you!" said King Kojata. "I can quench my thirst without you." And bending over the well he lapped up the water so greedily that he plunged his face, beard, and all, right into the crystal mirror. But when he had satisfied his thirst and wished to raise himself up he couldn't lift his head, because some one held his beard fast in the water. "Who's there? Let me go!" cried

"A King called Kojata, whose beard was so long it reached below his knees"

King Kojata, but there was no answer. Only an awful face looked up from the bottom of the well with two great green eyes, glowing like emeralds, and a wide mouth reaching from ear to ear, showing two rows of gleaming white teeth, and the king's beard was held, not by mortal hands, but by two claws. At last a hoarse voice sounded from the depths. "Your trouble is all in vain, King Kojata. I will only let you go on condition that you give me something you know nothing about and which you will find on your return home."

The king didn't pause to ponder long. "For what," thought he, "could be in my palace without my knowing about it? The thing is absurd." Se he answered quickly: "Yes, I promise that you shall have it."

The voice replied: "Very well; but it will go ill with you if you fail to keep your promise." Then the claws relaxed their hold and the face disappeared in the depths. The king drew his chin out of the water and shook himself like a dog; then he mounted his horse and rode thoughtfully home with his retinue. When they approached the capital all the people came out to meet them with joy and acclamation, and when the king reached his palace the queen met him on the threshold. Beside her stood the prime minister, holding a little cradle in his hands, in which lay a newborn child as beautiful as the day. Then the whole thing dawned on the king, and groaning deeply he muttered to himself, "So this is what I did not know about," and the tears rolled down his cheeks. All the courtiers standing round were much amazed at the king's grief, but no one dared to ask him the cause of it. He took the child in his arms and kissed it tenderly; then laying it in its cradle, he determined to control his emotion and began to reign again as before.

The secret of the king remained a secret, though his grave, care-worn expression escaped no one's notice. In

the constant dread that his child would be taken from him, poor Kojata knew no rest night or day. However, time went on and nothing happened. Days and months and years passed, and the prince grew up into a beautiful youth, and at last the king himself forgot all about the incident that had happened so long ago.

One day the prince went out hunting, and going in pursuit of a wild boar he soon lost the other huntsmen, and found himself quite alone in the middle of a dark wood. The trees grew so thick and near together that it was almost impossible to see through them, only straight in front of him lay a little patch of meadowland, overgrown with thistles and rank weeds, in the centre of which a leafy lime-tree reared itself. Suddenly a rustling sound was heard in the hollow of the tree, and an extraordinary old man with green eyes and chin crept out of it.

"A fine day, Prince Milan," he said. "You've kept me waiting a good number of years. It was high time for you to come and visit."

"Who are you in the way of wonder?" demanded the astonished prince.

"You'll find out soon enough, but in the meantime do as I bid you. Greet your father King Kojata from me, and don't forget to remind him of his debt. The time has long passed since it was due, but now he will have to pay it. Farewell for the present. We shall meet again."

With these words the old man disappeared into the tree, and the prince returned home rather startled and told his father all that he had seen and heard.

The king grew as white as a sheet when he heard the prince's story and said: "Woe is me, my son! The time has come when we must part." And with a heavy heart he told the prince what had happened at the time of his birth.

"Don't worry or distress yourself, dear father," answered Prince Milan. "Things are never as bad as they

look. Only give me a horse for my journey, and I'll wager you'll soon see me back again."

The king gave him a beautiful charger, with golden stirrups and a sword. The queen hung a little cross around his neck, and after much weeping and lamentation the prince bade them all farewell and set forth on his journey.

He rode straight on for two days, and on the third day he came to a lake as smooth as glass and as clear as crystal. Not a breath of wind moved, not a leaf stirred. All was as silent as the grave; only on the still bosom of the lake thirty ducks, with brilliant plumage, swam about in the water. Not far from the shore Prince Milan noticed thirty little white garments lying on the grass, and dismounting from his horse he crept down under the high bulrushes, took one of the garments, and hid himself with it behind the bushes which grew round the lake. The ducks swam all over the place, dived down into the depths and rose again, and glided through the waves. At last tired of disporting themselves, they swam to the shore, and twenty-nine of them put on their little white garments and instantly turned into so many maidens. Then they finished dressing and disappeared. Only the thirtieth little duck couldn't come to the land. It swam close about the shore, and giving out a piercing cry it stretched its neck up timidly, gazed wildly around, and then dived under again. Prince Milan's heart was so moved with pity for the poor little creature that he came out from behind the bulrushes, to see if he could be of any help. As soon as the duck perceived him it cried in a human voice: "Oh, dear Prince Milan, for the love of Heaven give me back my garment, and I will be so grateful to you." The prince laid the little garment on the bank beside her and stepped back into the bushes. In a few seconds a beautiful girl in a white robe stood before him, so fair and sweet and young

that no pen could describe her. She gave the prince her hand and spoke.

"Many thanks, Prince Milan, for your courtesy. I am the daughter of a wicked magician and my name is Hyacinthia. My father has thirty young daughters and is a mighty ruler in the under world, with many castles and great riches. He has been expecting you for ages, but you need have no fear if you will only follow my advice. As soon as you come into the presence of my father, throw yourself at once on the ground and approach him on your knees. Don't mind if he stamps furiously with his feet and curses and swears. I'll attend to the rest, and in the meantime we had better be off."

With these words the beautiful Hyacinthia stamped on the ground with her little foot, and the earth opened and they both sank down into the lower world.

The palace of the magician was all hewn out of a single carbuncle, lighting up the whole surrounding region, and Prince Milan walked into it gaily.

The magician sat on a throne, a sparkling crown on his head; his eyes blazed like a green fire, and instead of hands he had claws. As soon as Prince Milan entered he flung himself on his knees. The magician stamped loudly with his feet, glared frightfully out of his green eyes, and cursed so loudly that the whole under world shook. But the prince, mindful of the counsel he had been given, wasn't the least afraid, and approached the throne still on his knees. At last the magician laughed aloud and said: "You rogue, you have been well advised to make me laugh. I won't be your enemy any more. Welcome to the underworld! All the same, for your delay in coming here we must demand three services from you. For to-day you may go, but to-morrow I shall have something more to say to you."

Then two servants led Prince Milan to a beautiful

apartment, and he lay down fearlessly on the soft bed that had been prepared for him and was soon fast asleep.

Early the next morning the magician sent for him and said: "Let's see now what you've learned. In the first place, you must build me a palace to-night, the roof of purest gold, the walls of marble, and the windows of crystal; all round you must lay out a beautiful garden, with fish-ponds and artistic waterfalls. If you do all this I will reward you richly; but if you don't you shall lose your head."

"Oh, you wicked monster!" thought Prince Milan, "you might as well have put me to death at once." Sadly he returned to his room, and with bent head sat brooding over his cruel fate till evening. When it grew dark a little bee flew by, and knocking at the window it said: "Open and let me in."

Milan opened the window quickly, and as soon as the bee had entered it changed to the beautiful Hyacinthia.

"Good-evening, Prince Milan. Why are you so sad?"

"How can I help being sad? Your father threatens me with death, and I see myself already without a head."

"And what have you made up your mind to do?"

"There's nothing to be done, and after all I suppose one can only die once."

"Now, don't be so foolish, my dear prince, but keep up your spirits, for there is no need to despair. Go to bed, and when you wake up to-morrow morning the palace will be finished. Then you must go all round it, giving a tap here and there on the walls to look as if you had just finished it."

And so it all turned out just as she had said. As soon as it was daylight Prince Milan stepped out of his room and found a palace which was quite a work of art down to the very smallest detail. The magician himself was not a little astonished at its beauty and could hardly believe his eyes.

"Well, you certainly are a splendid workman," he said

to the prince. "I see you are very clever with your hands. Now I must see if you are equally accomplished with your head. I have thirty daughters in my house, all beautiful princesses. To-morrow I will place the whole thirty in a row. You must walk past them three times, and the third time you must show me which is my youngest daughter Hyacinthia. If you don't guess rightly, you shall lose your head."

"This time you've made a mistake," thought Prince Milan, and going to his room he sat down at the window. "Just fancy my not recognising the beautiful Hyacinthia! Why, that's the easiest thing in the world."

"Not so easy as you think," cried the little bee, who was flying past. "If I weren't to help you you'd never guess. We are thirty sisters so exactly alike that our own father can hardly distinguish us apart."

"Then what am I to do?" asked Prince Milan.

"Listen," answered Hyacinthia. "You will recognise me by a tiny fly I shall have on my left cheek, but be careful, for you might easily make a mistake."

The next day the magician again commanded Prince Milan to be led before him. His daughters were all arranged in a straight row in front of him, dressed exactly alike, and with their eyes bent on the ground.

"Now, you genius," said the magician, "look at these beauties three times, and then tell us which is the Princess Hyacinthia."

Prince Milan went past them and looked at them closely. But they were all so precisely alike that they looked like one face reflected in thirty mirrors, and the fly was nowhere to be seen; the second time he passed them he still saw nothing; but the third time he perceived a little fly stealing down one cheek, causing it to blush a faint pink. Then the prince seized the girl's hand and cried out. "This is the Princess Hyacinthia!"

"You're right again," said the magician in amazement; "but I've still another task for you to do. Before this candle, which I shall light, burns to the socket, you must have made me a pair of boots reaching to my knees. If they aren't finished in that time, off comes your head."

The prince returned to his room in despair. Then the princess Hyacinthia came to him, once more changed into the likeness of a bee, and asked him: "Why so sad, Prince Milan?"

"How can I help being sad? Your father has set me this time an impossible task. Before a candle which he has lit burns to the socket I am to make a pair of boots. But what does a prince know of shoemaking? If I can't do it I lose my head."

"And what do you mean to do?" asked Hyacinthia.

"Well, what is there to be done? What he demands I can't and won't do, so he must just make an end of me."

"Not so, dearest. I love you dearly and you shall marry me, and I'll either save your life or die with you. We must fly now as quickly as we can, for there is no other way of escape."

With these words she breathed on the window, and her breath froze on the pane. Then she led Milan out of the room with her, shut the door, and threw the key away. Hand in hand they hurried to the spot where they had descended into the lower world, and at last reached the banks of the lake. Prince Milan's charger was still grazing on the grass which grew near the water. The horse no sooner recognised its master than it neighed loudly with joy, and springing toward him it stood as if rooted to the ground, while Prince Milan and Hyacinthia jumped on its back. Then it sped onward like an arrow from a bow.

In the meantime the magician was waiting impatiently for the prince. Enraged by the delay, he sent his servants to fetch him, for the appointed time was past.

The servants came to the door, and finding it locked they knocked; but the frozen breath on the window replied in Prince Milan's voice: "I am coming directly." With this answer they returned to the magician. But when the prince did not appear, after a time he sent his servants a second time to bring him. The frozen breath always gave the same answer, but the prince never came. At last the magician lost all patience and commanded the door to be burst open. But when the servants did so they found the room empty, and the frozen breath laughed aloud. Out of his mind with rage, the magician ordered the prince to be pursued.

Then a wild chase began. "I hear horses' hoofs behind us," said Hyacinthia to the prince. Milan sprang from the saddle, put his ear to the ground, and listened. "Yes," he answered, "they are pursuing us and are quite close." "Then no time must be lost," said Hyacinthia, and she immediately turned herself into a river, Prince Milan into an iron bridge, and the charger into a blackbird. Behind the bridge the road branched off into three ways.

The magician's servants hurried after the fresh tracks, but when they came to the bridge they stood, not knowing which way to take, as the footprints stopped suddenly and there were three paths for them to choose from. In fear and trembling they returned to tell the magician what had happened. He flew into a dreadful rage when he saw them and screamed out: "Oh, you fools! Go and bring them back to me at once, or it will be the worse for you."

Then the pursuit began afresh. "I hear horses' hoofs," sighed Hyacinthia. The prince dismounted and put his ear to the ground. "They are hurrying after us and are already quite near." In a moment Princess Hyacinthia had changed herself, the prince, and his charger into a thick wood where a thousand paths and roads crossed each other. Their pursuers entered the forest, but searched in vain for

Prince Milan and his bride. At last they found themselves back at the same spot they had started from, and in despair they returned once more with empty hands to the magician.

"Then I'll go after the wretches myself," he shouted. "Bring a horse at once. They shan't escape me."

Once more the beautiful Hyacinthia murmured: "I hear horses' hoofs quite near." And the prince answered: "They are pursuing us hotly and are quite close."

"We are lost now, for it is my father himself. But at the first church he comes to his power ceases. He may chase us no further. Hand me your cross."

Prince Milan loosened from his neck the little gold cross his mother had given him and as soon as Hyacinthia grasped it she had changed herself into a church, Milan into a monk, and the horse into a belfry. They had hardly done this when the magician and his servants rode up.

"Did you see no one pass by on horseback, reverend father?" he asked the monk.

"Prince Milan and Princess Hyacinthia have just gone on this minute. They stopped for a few minutes in the church to say their prayers, and bade me light this wax candle for you and give you their love."

"I'd like to wring their necks," said the magician, and made all haste home, where he had every one of his servants beaten to within an inch of their lives.

Prince Milan rode on slowly with his bride without fearing any further pursuit. The sun was just setting, and its last rays lit up a large city they were approaching. Prince Milan was suddenly seized with an ardent desire to enter the town.

"Oh, my beloved," implored Hyacinthia, "please don't go; for I am frightful and fear some evil."

"What are you afraid of?" asked the prince. "We'll only go and look at what's to be seen in the town for about

an hour, and then we'll continue our journey to my father's kingdom."

"The town is easy to get into, but more difficult to get out of," sighed Hyacinthia. "But let it be as you wish. Go, and I will await you here, but I will first change myself into a white mile-stone; only I pray you be very careful. The king and queen of the town will come out to meet you, leading a little child with them. Whatever you do, don't kiss the child, or you will forget me and all that has happened to us. I will wait for you here for three days."

The prince hurried to the town, but Hyacinthia remained behind disguised as a white mile-stone on the road. The first day passed, and then the second, and at last the third also, but Prince Milan did not return, for he had not taken Hyacinthia's advice. The king and queen came out to meet him as she had said, leading with them a lovely fair-haired little girl whose eyes shone like two clear stars. The child at once caressed the prince, who, carried away by its beauty, bent down and kissed it on the cheek. From that moment his memory became a blank and he forgot all about the beautiful Hyacinthia.

When the prince did not return poor Hyacinthia wept bitterly, and changing herself from a mile-stone into a little blue field flower, she said: "I will grow here on the road-side till some passer-by tramples me under foot." And one of her tears remained as a dew-drop and sparkled on the little blue flower.

Now, it happened shortly after this that an old man passed by, and seeing the flower he was delighted with its beauty. He pulled it up carefully by the roots and carried it home. Here he planted it in a pot and watered and tended it carefully. And now the most extraordinary thing happened, for from this moment everything in the old man's house was changed. When he awoke in the morning he always found his room tidied and put into such beautiful

order that not a speck of dust was to be found anywhere. When he came home at midday he found a table laid out with the most dainty food, and he had only to sit down and enjoy himself to his heart's content. At first he was so surprised he didn't know what to think, but after a time he grew a little uncomfortable and went to an old witch to ask for advice.

The witch said: "Get up before the cock crows and watch carefully till you see something move and then throw this cloth quickly over it, and you'll see what will happen."

All night the old man never closed an eye. When the first ray of light entered the room he noticed that the little blue flower began to tremble, and at last it rose out of the pot and flew about the room, put everything in order, swept away the dust, and lit the fire. In great haste the old man sprang from his bed and covered the flower with the cloth the old witch had given him, and in a moment the beautiful Princess Hyacinthia stood before him.

"What have you done?" she cried. "Why have you called me back to life? For I have no desire to live since my bridegroom, the beautiful Prince Milan, has deserted me."

"Prince Milan is just going to be married," replied the old man. "Everything is being got ready for the feast, and all the invited guests are flocking to the palace from all sides."

The beautiful Hyacinthia cried bitterly when she heard this; then she dried her tears and went into the town dressed as a peasant-woman. She went straight to the king's kitchen, where the white-aproned cooks were running about in great confusion. The princess went up to the head cook and said: "Dear cook, please listen to my request, and let me make a wedding-cake for Prince Milan."

The busy cook was just going to refuse her demand and order her out of the kitchen, but the words died on his lips

when he turned and beheld the beautiful Hyacinthia, and he answered politely: "You have just come in the nick of time, fair maiden. Bake your cake, and I myself will lay it before Prince Milan."

The cake was soon made. The invited guests were already thronging round the table, when the head cook entered the room, bearing a beautiful wedding-cake on a silver dish, and laid it before Prince Milan. The guests were all lost in admiration, for the cake was quite a work of art. Prince Milan at once proceeded to cut it open, when to his surprise two white doves sprang out of it, and one of them said to the other: "My dear mate, do not fly away and leave me and forget me as Prince Milan forgot his beloved Hyacinthia."

Milan sighed deeply when he heard what the little dove said. Then he jumped up suddenly from the table and ran to the door, where he found the beautiful Hyacinthia waiting for him. Outside stood his faithful charger, pawing the ground. Without pausing for a moment, Milan and Hyacinthia mounted him and galloped as fast as they could into the country of King Kojata. The king and queen received them with such joy and gladness as had never been heard of before and they all lived happily for the rest of their lives.

* THE MAGIC FISHBONE

THERE was once a king, and he had a queen; and he was the manliest of his sex, and she was the loveliest of hers. The King was, in his private profession, Under Govern-

* This is one of five stories originally published in a child's magazine in America for which Charles Dickens received one thousand pounds.

ment. The Queen's father had been a medical man out of town.

They had nineteen children, and were always having more. Seventeen of these children took care of the baby; and Alicia, the eldest, took care of them all. Their ages varied from seven years to seven months.

Let us now resume our story.

One day the king was going to the office, when he stopped at the fishmonger's to buy a pound and a half of salmon not too near the tail, which the Queen (who was a careful housekeeper) had requested him to send home. Mr. Pickles, the fishmonger, said, "Certainly, sir, is there any other article? Good-morning."

The King went on towards the office in a melancholy mood, for quarterday was such a long way off, and several of the dear children were growing out of their clothes. He had not proceeded far, when Mr. Pickles' errand-boy came running after him, and said, "Sir, you didn't notice the old lady in our shop."

"What old lady?" enquired the King. "I saw none."

Now, the King had not seen any old lady, because this old lady had been invisible to him, though visible to Mr. Pickles' boy. Probably because he messed and splashed the water about to that degree, and flopped the pair of soles down in that violent manner, that, if she had not been visible to him, he would have spoilt her clothes.

Just then the old lady came trotting up. She was dressed in shot-silk of the richest quality, smelling of dried lavender.

"King Watkins the First, I believe?" said the old lady.

"Watkins is my name," replied the King.

"Papa, if I am not mistaken, of the beautiful Princess Alicia?" said the old lady.

"And of eighteen other darlings," replied the King.

"Listen. You are going to the office," said the old lady.

It instantly flashed upon the King that she must be a Fairy, or how could she know that?

"You are right," said the old lady, answering his thoughts, "I am the Good Fairy Grandmarina. Attend. When you return home to dinner, politely invite the Princess to have some of the salmon you bought just now."

"It may disagree with her," said the King.

The old lady became so very angry at this absurd idea, that the King was quite alarmed, and humbly begged her pardon.

"We hear too much about this thing disagreeing," said the old lady, with the greatest contempt it was possible to imagine. "Don't be greedy. I think you want it all yourself."

The King hung his head under this reproof, and said he wouldn't talk about things disagreeing any more.

"Be good, then," said the Fairy Grandmarina, "and don't! When the beautiful Princess consents to partake of the salmon — as I think she will — you will find she will leave a fish-bone on her plate. Tell her to dry it, and to rub it, and to polish it till it shines like mother-of-pearl, and to take care of it as a present from me."

"Is that all?" asked the King.

"Don't be impatient, sir," returned the Fairy Godmarina, scolding him severely. "Don't catch people short, before they have done speaking. Just the way with you grown-up persons. You are always doing it."

The King again hung his head, and said he wouldn't do so any more.

"Be good then," said the Fairy Godmarina, "and don't! Tell the Princess Alicia, with my love, that the fish-bone is a magic present which can only be used once; but that it will bring her, that once, whatever she wishes for, PROVIDE SHE WISHES FOR IT AT THE RIGHT TIME. That is the message. Take care of it."

The King was beginning, "Might I ask the reason —?" when the Fairy became absolutely furious.

"Will you be good, sir?" she exclaimed, stamping her foot on the ground. "The reason for this, and the reason for that, indeed! You are always wanting the reason. No reason. There! Hoity toity me! I am sick of your grown-up reasons."

The King was extremely frightened by the old lady's flying into such a passion, and said he was very sorry to have offended her, and he wouldn't ask for reasons any more.

"Be good, then, and don't," said the old lady.

With these words, Grandmarina vanished, and the King went on and on, till he came to the office. There he wrote and wrote and wrote, till it was time to go home again. Then he politely invited the Princess Alicia, as the Fairy had directed him, to partake of the salmon. And when she had enjoyed it very much, he saw the fish-bone on her plate, as the Fairy had told him he would, and he delivered the Fairy's message, and the Princess Alicia took care to dry the bone, and to rub it, and to polish it till it shone like mother-of-pearl.

And so when the Queen was going to get up in the morning, she said, "Oh, dear me, dear me; my head, my head!" and then she fainted away.

The Princess Alicia, who happened to be looking in at the chamber-door, asking about breakfast, was very much alarmed when she saw her Royal Mamma in this state, and she rang the bell for Peggy, which was the name of the Lord Chamberlain. But remembering where the smelling-bottle was, she climbed on a chair and got it, and after that she climbed on another chair by the bedside and held the smelling-bottle to the Queen's nose, and after that she jumped down and got some water, and after that she jumped up again and wetted the Queen's forehead, and, in

short, when the Lord Chamberlain came in, that dear old woman said to the little Princess, "What a Trot you are! I couldn't have done it better myself!"

But that was not the worst of the good Queen's illness. O, no! She was very ill indeed, for a long time. The Princess Alicia kept the seventeen young Princes and Princesses quiet, and dressed and undressed the baby, and made the kettle boil, and heated the soup, and swept the hearth, and poured out the medicine, and nursed the Queen, and did all that she ever could, and was as busy, busy, as busy could be. For there were not many servants at the Palace, for three reasons; because the King was short of money, because a rise in his office never seemed to come, and because quarter-day was so far off that it looked almost as far off and as little as one of the stars.

But on the morning when the Queen fainted away, where was the magic fish-bone? Why, there it was in the Princess Alicia's pocket. She had almost taken it out to bring the Queen to life again, when she put it back, and looked for the smelling-bottle. After the Queen had come out of her swoon that morning, and was dozing, the Princess Alicia hurried up-stairs to tell a most particular secret to a most particularly confidential friend of hers, who was a Duchess. People did suppose her to be a Doll; but she was really a Duchess, though nobody knew it except the Princess.

This most particular secret was a secret about the magic fish-bone, the history of which was well known to the Duchess, because the Princess told her everything. The Princess kneeled down by the bed on which the Duchess was lying, full-dressed and wide awake, and whispered the secret to her. The Duchess smiled and nodded. People might have supposed that she never smiled and nodded, but she often did, though nobody knew it except the Princess.

Then, the Princess Alicia hurried downstairs again, to keep watch in the Queen's room. She often kept watch by herself in the Queen's room; but every evening, while the illness lasted, she sat there watching with the King. And every evening the King sat looking at her with a cross look, wondering why she never brought out the magic fish-bone. As often as she noticed this, she ran upstairs, whispered the secret to the Duchess again, and said to the Duchess besides, "They think we children never have a reason or a meaning!" And the Duchess, though the most fashionable Duchess that ever was heard of, winked her eye.

"Alicia," said the King, one evening when she wished him good-night.

"Yes, Papa."

"What is become of the magic fish-bone?"

"In my pocket, Papa."

"I thought you had lost it?"

"O, no, Papa."

"Or forgotten it?"

"No, indeed, Papa."

And so another time the dreadful little snapping pug-dog next door made a rush at one of the young Princes as he stood on the steps coming home from school, and terrified him out of his wits and he put his hand through a pane of glass, and bled, bled, bled. When the seventeen other young Princes and Princesses saw him bleed, bleed, bleed, they were terrified out of their wits too, and screamed themselves black in their seventeen faces all at once. But the Princess Alicia put her hands all over their seventeen mouths, one after another, and persuaded them to be quiet because of the sick Queen. And then she put the wounded Princes' hand in a basin of fresh cold water, while they stared with their twice seventeen are thirty-four, put down four and carry three eyes, and then she looked in the hand for bits of glass, and there were fortunately no bits

of glass there. And then she said to two chubby-legged Princes who were sturdy though small, "Bring me in the Royal rag-bag; I must snip and stitch and cut and contrive." So those two young Princes tugged at the Royal rag-bag and lugged it in, and the Princess Alicia sat down on the floor with a large pair of scissors and a needle and thread, and snipped and stitched and cut and contrived, and made a bandage and put it on, and it fitted beautifully, and so when it was done she saw the King, her Papa looking on by the door.

"Alicia."

"Yes, Papa."

"What have you been doing?"

"Snipping, stitching, cutting and contriving, Papa."

"Where is the magic fish-bone?"

"In my pocket, Papa."

"I thought you had lost it?"

"O, no, Papa."

"Or forgotten it?"

"No, indeed, Papa."

After that, she ran up-stairs to the Duchess and told her what had passed, and told her the secret over again, and the Duchess shook her flaxen curls and laughed with her rosy lips.

Well! and so another time the baby fell under the grate. The seventeen young Princes and Princesses were used to it, for they were almost always falling under the grate or down the stairs, but the baby was not used to it yet, and it gave him a swelled face and black eye. The way the poor little darling came to tumble was, that he slid out of the Princess Alicia's lap just as she was sitting in a great coarse apron that quite smothered her, in front of the kitchen-fire, beginning to peel the turnips for the broth for dinner; and the way she came to be doing that was, that the King's cook had run away that morning with her own

"While they stared with their twice seventeen are thirty-four, put down four and carry three, eyes"

true love who was a very tall but very tipsy soldier. Then, the seventeen young Princes and Princesses, who cried at everything that happened, cried and roared. But the Princess Alicia (who couldn't help crying a little herself)—quietly called to them to be still, on account of not throwing back the Queen upstairs, who was fast getting well, and said, "Hold your tongues, you wicked little monkeys, every one of you, while I examine baby!" Then she examined baby, and found that he hadn't broken anything, and she held a cold iron to his poor dear eye, and smoothed his poor dear face, and he presently fell asleep in her arms. Then, she said to the seventeen Princes and Princesses, "I am afraid to lay him down yet, lest he should wake and feel pain, be good, and you shall all be cooks." They jumped for joy when they heard that, and began making themselves cooks' caps out of old newspapers. So to one she gave the salt-box, and to one she gave the barley, and to one she gave the herbs, and to one she gave the turnips, and to one she gave the carrots, and to one she gave the onions, and to one she gave the spice-box, till they were all cooks, and all running about at work, she sitting in the middle smothered in the great coarse apron, nursing baby. By and by the broth was done, and the baby woke up smiling like an angel, and was trusted to the sedatest Princess to hold, while the other Princes and Princesses were squeezed into a far-off corner to look at the Princess Alicia, turning out the sauce — full of broth, for fear (as they were always getting into trouble) they should get splashed and scalded. When the broth came tumbling out, steaming beautifully, and smelling like a nosegay good to eat, they clapped their hands. That made the baby clap his hands; and that, and his looking as if he had a comic toothache, made all the Princes and Princesses laugh. So the Princess Alicia said, "Laugh and be good, and after dinner we will make him a nest on the floor in a corner, and

he shall sit in his nest and see a dance of eighteen cooks." That delighted the young Princes and Princesses, and they ate up all the broth, and washed up all the plates and dishes, and cleared away, and pushed the table into a corner, and they in their cooks' caps, and the Princess Alicia in the smothering coarse apron that belonged to the cook that had run away with her own true love that was the very tall but very tipsy soldier, danced a dance of eighteen cooks before the angelic baby, who forgot his swelled face and black eye, and crowed with joy.

And so then, once more the Princess Alicia saw King Watkins, the First, her father, standing in the doorway looking on, and he said: "What have you been doing, Alicia?"

"Cooking and contriving, Papa."

"What else have you been doing, Alicia?"

"Keeping the children light-hearted, Papa."

"Where is the magic fish-bone, Alicia?"

"In my pocket, Papa."

"I thought you had lost it?"

"O, no, Papa."

"Or forgotten it?"

"No, indeed, Papa."

The King then sighed so heavily, and seemed so low-spirited, and sat down so miserably, leaning his head upon his hand, and his elbow upon the kitchen table pushed away in the corner, that the seventeen Princes and Princesses crept softly out of the kitchen, and left him alone with the Princess Alicia and the angelic baby.

"What is the matter, Papa?"

"I am dreadfully poor, my child."

"Have you no money at all, Papa?"

"None, my child."

"Is there no way left of getting any, Papa?"

"No way," said the King. "I have tried very hard,

and I have tried all ways." When she heard those last words, the Princess Alicia began to put her hand into the pocket where she kept the magic fish-bone.

"Papa," said she, "when we have tried very hard, and tried all ways, we must have done our very best."

"No doubt, Alicia."

"When we have done our very best, Papa, and that is not enough, then I think the right time must have come for asking help of others." This was the very secret connected with the magic fish-bone, which she had found out for herself from the good fairy Grandmarina's words, and which she had so often whispered to her beautiful and fashionable friend the Duchess. She took out of her pocket the magic fish-bone that had been dried and rubbed and polished till it shone like mother-of-pearl; and she gave it one little kiss and wished it was quarter day. And immediately it WAS quarter day; and the King's quarter's salary came rattling down the chimney, and bounced into the middle of the floor.

But this is not half of what happened, no not a quarter, for immediately afterwards the good fairy Godmarina came riding in, in a carriage and four (Peacocks), with Mr. Pickles' boy up behind, dressed in silver and gold, with a cocked hat, powdered hair, pink silk stockings, a jewelled cane, and a nosegay. Down jumped Mr. Pickles' boy with his cocked hat in his hand and handed Grandmarina out, and there she stood with her rich shot silk smelling of dried lavender, fanning herself with a sparkling fan.

"Alicia, my dear," said this charming old Fairy, "how do you do, I hope I see you pretty well, give me a kiss."

The Princess Alicia embraced her, and then Grandmarina turned to the King, and said rather sharply:—

"Are you good?"

The King said he hoped so.

"I suppose you know the reason, NOW, why my god-

Daughter here," kissing the Princess again, "did not apply to the fish-bone sooner?" said the Fairy.

The King made her a shy bow.

"Ah! but you didn't then!" said the Fairy.

The King made her a shyer bow.

"Any more reasons to ask for?" said the Fairy.

The King said no, and he was very sorry. "Be good then," said the Fairy, "and live happy ever afterwards."

Then, Grandmarina waved her fan, and the Queen came in most splendidly dressed, and the seventeen young Princes and Princesses, no longer grown out of their clothes, came in newly fitted out from top to toe, with tucks in everything to admit of its being let out. After that, the Fairy tapped the Princess with her fan, and the smothering coarse apron flew away, and she appeared exquisitely dressed, like a little bride, with a wreath of orange-flowers and a silver veil. After that, the kitchen dresser changed itself into a wardrobe, made of beautiful woods and gold and looking-glass, which was full of dresses of all sorts, all for her and all exactly fitting her. After that, the angelic baby came in, running alone, with his face and eye not a bit the worse but much the better. Then, Grandmarina begged to be introduced to the Duchess, and, when the Duchess was brought down many compliments passed between them.

A little whispering took place between the Fairy and the Duchess, and then the Fairy said out loud, "Yes, I thought she would have told you." Grandmarina then turned to the King and Queen, and said, "We are going in search of Prince Certainpersonio. The pleasure of your company is requested at church in half an hour precisely." So she and the Princess Alicia got into the carriage, and Mr. Pickles' boy handed in the Duchess who sat by herself on the opposite seat, and then Mr. Pickles' boy put up the

steps and got up behind, and the Peacocks flew away with their tails spread.

Prince Certainpersonio was sitting by himself, eating barley-sugar and waiting to be ninety. When he saw the Peacocks followed by the carriage, coming in at the window, it immediately occurred to him that something uncommon was going to happen.

"Prince," said Grandmarina, "I bring you your bride."

The moment the Fairy said these words, Prince Certainpersonio's face left off being sticky, and his jacket and corduroys changed to a peach-bloom velvet, and his hair curled, and a cap and feather flew in like a bird and settled on his head. He got into the carriage by the Fairy's invitation, and there he renewed his acquaintance with the Duchess, whom he had seen before.

In the church were the Prince's relations and friends, and the Princess Alicia's relations and friends, and the seventeen Princes and Princesses, and the baby, and a crowd of the neighbours. The marriage was beautiful beyond expression. The Duchess was bridesmaid, and beheld the ceremony from the pulpit where she was supported by the cushion of the desk.

Grandmarina gave a magnificent wedding feast afterwards, in which there was everything and more to eat, and everything and more to drink. The wedding cake was delicately ornamented with white satin ribbons, frosted silver and white lilies, and was forty-two yards round.

When Grandmarina had drunk her love to the young couple, and Prince Certainpersonio had made a speech, and everybody had cried Hip, hip, hip, hurrah! Grandmarina announced to the King and Queen that in future there would be eight quarter days in every year, except in leap year, when there would be ten. She then turnd to Certainpersonio and Alicia, and said, "My dears, you will have thirty-five children, and they will all be good and beautiful.

Seventeen of your children will be boys, and eighteen will be girls. The hair of the whole of your children will curl naturally. They will never have the measles, and will have recovered from the whooping-cough before being born."

On hearing such good news, everybody cried out, "Hip, hip, hip, hurrah!" again.

"It only remains," said Grandmarina in conclusion, "to make an end of the fish-bone."

So she took it from the hand of the Princess Alicia, and it instantly flew down the throat of the dreadful little snapping pug-dog next door and choked him, and he expired in convulsions.

DRAKESTAIL

DRAKESTAIL was very little, that is why he was called Drakestail, but tiny as he was he had brains, and he knew what he was about, for having begun with nothing he ended by amassing a hundred crowns. Now the king of the country, who was very extravagant and never kept any money, having heard that Drakestail had some, went one day in his own person to borrow his hoard, and, my word, in those days Drakestail was not a little proud of having loaned money to the king. But after the first and the second year, seeing that they never dreamed of paying even the interest, he became uneasy, so much so that he resolved to go and see his majesty himself, and get repaid. So one fine morning Drakestail, very spruce and fresh, takes the road, singing: "Quack, quack, quack, when shall I get my money back?"

He had not gone far when he met friend Fox, on his rounds that way.

"Good-morning, neighbour," says the friend; "where are you off to so early?"

"I am going to the king for what he owes me."

"Oh! take me with you!"

Drakestail said to himself: "One can't have too many friends." Aloud says he, "I will, but going on all fours you will soon be tired. Make yourself quite small, get into my throat, and I will carry you."

"Happy thought!" says friend Fox.

He takes bag and baggage, and, presto! is gone like a letter into the post.

And Drakestail is off again, all spruce and fresh, still singing: "Quack, quack, quack, when shall I have my money back?"

He had not gone far when he met his lady friend, Ladder, leaning on her wall.

"Good-morning, my duckling," says the lady friend, "whither away so bold?"

"I am going to the king for what he owes me."

"Oh! take me with thee!"

Drakestail said to himself: "One can't have too many friends." Aloud says he: "I will, but then with your wooden legs you will soon be tired. Make yourself quite small, get into my throat — go into my gizzard and I will carry you."

"Happy thought!" says my friend, Ladder, and nimble, bag and baggage, goes to keep company with friend Fox.

And "Quack, quack quack," Drakestail is off again, singing and spruce as before. A little further he meets his sweetheart, my friend River, wandering quietly in the sunshine.

"Thou, my cherub," says she, "whither so lonesome, with arching tail, on this muddy road?"

"I am going to the king, you know, for what he owes me."

"Oh! take me with thee!"

Drakestail said to himself: "We can't have too many

friends." Aloud says he: "I will, but you who sleep while you walk will soon get tired. Make yourself quite small, get into my throat — go into my gizzard and I will carry you."

"Ah! happy thought!" says my friend River.

She takes bag and baggage, and glou, glou, glou she takes her place between friend Fox and my friend Ladder.

And "Quack, quack, quack," Drakestail is off again singing.

A little further on he meets comrade Wasp's-nest, manœuvring his wasps.

"Well, good-morning, friend Drakestail," said comrade Wasp's-nest, "where are we bound for, so spruce and fresh?"

"I am going to the king for what he owes me."

"Oh! take me with thee!"

Drakestail said to himself, "One can't have too many friends." Aloud says he: "I will, but then with your battalion to drag along, you will soon be tired. Make yourself quite small, go into my throat — get into my gizzard and I will carry you."

"By Jove! that's a good idea!" says comrade Wasp's-nest.

And left file! he takes the same road to join the others with all his party. There was not much room, but by closing up a bit they managed. And Drakestail is off again singing.

He arrived thus at the capital, and threaded his way straight up the High Street, still running and singing, "Quack, quack, quack, when shall I get my money back?" to the great astonishment of the good folks, till he came to the king's palace.

He strikes with the knocker: "Toc! toc!"

"Who is there?" asks the porter, putting his head out of the wicket.

"'Tis I, Drakestail. I wish to speak to the king."

"Speak to the king. That's easily said. The king is dining, and will not be disturbed."

"Tell him that it is I, and I have come he well knows why."

The porter shuts his wicket and goes up to say it to the king, who was just sitting down to dinner with a napkin round his neck, and all his ministers.

"Good, good!" said the king, laughing. "I know what it is! Make him come in, and put him with the turkeys and chickens."

The porter descends.

"Have the goodness to enter."

"Good!" says Drakestail to himself, "I shall now see how they eat at court."

"This way, this way," says the porter. "One step further. There, there you are."

"How? what? in the poultry-yard?"

Fancy how vexed Drakestail was!

"Ah! so that's it," says he. "Wait! I will compel you to receive me. Quack, quack, quack, when shall I get my money back?" But turkeys and chickens are creatures who don't like people that are not as themselves. When they saw the new-comer and how he was made, and when they heard him crying too, they began to look black at him.

"What is it? what does he want?"

Finally they rushed at him altogether, to overwhelm him with pecks.

"I am lost!" said Drakestail to himself, when by good luck he remembers his comrade friend Fox, and he cries:

"Reynard, Reynard, come out of your earth,
Or Drakestail's life is of little worth."

Then friend Fox, who was only waiting for these words, hastens out, throws himself on the wicked fowls, and

quick! quack! he tears them to pieces; so much so that at the end of five minutes there was not one of them left alive. And Drakestail, quite content, began to sing again, "Quack, quack, quack, when shall I get my money back?"

When the king, who was still at table, heard this refrain, and the poultry woman came to tell him what had been going on in the yard, he was terribly annoyed.

He ordered them to throw this tail of a drake into the well, to make an end of him.

And it was done as he commanded. Drakestail was in despair of getting himself out of such a deep hole, when he remembered his friend Ladder.

"Ladder, Ladder, come out of thy hold,
Or Drakestail's days will soon be told."

My friend Ladder, who was only waiting for these words, hastens out, leans her two arms on the edge of the well, then Drakestail climbs nimbly on her back, and hop! he is in the yard, where he begins to sing louder than ever.

When the king who was still at table and laughing at the good trick he had played on his creditor, heard him again claiming his money, he became livid with rage.

He commanded that the furnace should be heated, and this tail of a drake thrown into it, because he must be a sorcerer.

The furnace was soon hot, but this time Drakestail was not so afraid; he counted on his sweetheart, my friend River.

"River, River, outward flow,
Or to death Drakestail must go."

My friend River hastens out, and errouf! throws herself into the furnace, which she floods, with all the people who had lighted it; after which she flowed growling into the hall of the palace to the height of more than four feet.

And Drakestail, quite content, begins to swim, singing

deafeningly, "Quack, quack, quack, when shall I get my money back?"

The king was still at table, and thought himself quite sure of his game; but when he heard Drakestail singing again, and when they told him all that had passed, he became furious and got up from the table brandishing his fists.

"Bring him here, and I'll cut his throat! Bring him here quick!" cried he.

And quickly two footmen ran to fetch Drakestail.

"At last," said the poor chap, going up the great stairs, "they have decided to receive me."

Imagine his terror when on entering he sees the king as red as a turkey cock, and all his ministers attending him standing sword in hand. He thought this time it was all up with him. Happily he remembered that there was still one remaining friend, and he cried with dying accents:

"Wasp's nest, Wasp's nest, make a sally,
Or Drakestail nevermore may rally."

Hereupon the scene changes.

"Bs, bs, bayonet them!" The brave Wasp's-nest rushes out with all his wasps. They threw themselves on the infuriated king and his ministers, and stung them so fiercely in the face that they lost their heads, and not knowing where to hide themselves they all jumped pell-mell from the window and broke their necks on the pavement.

Behold Drakestail much astonished, all alone in the big saloon and master of the field. He could not get over it.

Nevertheless, he remembered shortly what he had come for to the palace, and improving the occasion, he set to work to hunt for his dear money. But in vain he rummaged in all the drawers; he found nothing; all had been spent.

And ferreting thus from room to room he came at last to the one with the throne in it, and feeling fatigued, he sat himself down on it to think over his adventure. In the meanwhile the people had found their king and his ministers with their feet in the air on the pavement, and they had gone into the palace to know how it had occurred. On entering the throne-room, when the crowd saw that there was already some one on the royal seat, they broke out in cries of surprise and joy:

"The King is dead, long live the King!
Heaven has sent us down this thing."

Drakestail, who was no longer surprised at anything, received the acclamations of the people as if he had never done anything else all his life.

A few of them certainly murmured that a Drakestail would make a fine king; those who knew him replied that a knowing Drakestail was a more worthy king than a spendthrift like him who was lying on the pavement. In short, they ran and took the crown off the head of the deceased, and placed it on that of Drakestail, whom it fitted like wax.

Thus he became king.

"And now," said he after the ceremony, "ladies and gentlemen, let's go to supper. I am so hungry!"

JOHNNY GLOKE

JOHNNY GLOKE was a tailor by trade, but like a man of spirit he grew tired of his tailoring, and wished to follow some other path that would lead to honour and fame. But he did not know what to do at first to gain fame and fortune, so for a time he was fonder of basking idly in

the sun than in plying the needle and scissors. One warm day as he was enjoying his ease, he was annoyed by alightening on his bare ankles. He brought his hand down on them with force and killed a goodly number of them, on counting the victims of his valour, he was overjoyed at his success; his heart rose to the doing of great deeds, and he gave vent to his feelings in the saying:

"Well done! Johnny Gloke,
Kilt fifty flies at one stroke."

His resolution was now taken to cut out his path to fortune and honour. So he took down from its resting-place a rusty old sword that had belonged to some of his forebears, and set out in search of adventures. After travelling a long way, he came to a country that was much troubled by two giants whom no one was bold enough to meet, and strong enough to overcome. He was soon told of the giants, and learned that the king of the country had offered a great reward and the hand of his daughter in marriage to the man who should rid his land of this scourge. John's heart rose to the deed, and he offered himself for the service. The great haunt of the giants was a wood, and John set out with his old sword to perform his task. When he reached the wood, he laid himself down to think what course he would follow, for he knew how weak he was compared to those he had undertaken to kill. He had not waited long, when he saw them coming with a wagon to fetch fuel. My! they were big ones, with huge heads and long tusks for teeth. Johnny hid himself in the hollow of a tree, thinking only of his own safety. Feeling himself safe, he peeped out of his hiding-place, and watched the two at work. Thus watching he formed his plan of action. He picked up a pebble, threw it with force at one of them, and struck him a sharp blow on the head. The giant in his pain turned at once

on his companion and blamed him in strong words for hitting him. The other denied in anger that he had thrown the pebble. John now saw himself on the highway to gain his reward and the hand of the King's daughter. He kept still, and carefully watched for an opportunity of striking another blow. He soon found it, and right against the giant's head went another pebble. The injured giant fell upon his companion in fury; and the two belaboured each other till they were utterly tired out. They sat down on a log to breathe, rest, and recover themselves.

While sitting, one of them said, "Well, all the King's army was not able to take us, but I fear an old woman with rope's end would be too much for us now."

"If that be so," said Johnny Gloke, as he sprang, bold as a lion, from his hiding-place, "what do you say to Johnny Gloke with his old roosty sword?" So saying he fell upon them, cut off their heads, and returned in triumph. He received the King's daughter in marriage and for a time lived in peace and happiness. He never told the mode he followed in his dealing with the giants.

Some time after a rebellion broke out among the subjects of his father-in-law. John, on the strength of his former valiant deed, was chosen to quell the rebellion. His heart sank within him, but he could not refuse, and so lose his great name. He was mounted on the fiercest horse that ever saw sun or wind, and set out on his desperate task. He was not accustomed to ride on horseback, and he soon lost all control of his steed. It galloped off at full speed, in the direction of the rebel army. In its wild career it passed under the gallows that stood by the wayside. The gallows was somewhat old and frail, and down it fell on the horse's neck. Still the horse made no stop, but always forward at furious speed towards the rebels. On seeing this strange sight approaching towards

them at such a speed they were seized with terror, and cried out to one another, "There comes Johnny Gloke that killed the two giants with the gallows on his horse's neck to hang us all." They broke their ranks, fled in dismay, and never stopped till they reached their homes. Thus was Johnny Gloke a second time victorious. So in due time he came to the throne and lived a long, happy, and good life as King.

AICHA'S STRATAGEM

THE town of Tlemcen, in Algeria, was under siege, and its ill-starred inhabitants were now on the point of starvation. Daily provisions became more scarce; meat and bread fetched unheard-of prices, and in the poorer quarters many of the weaker folk had already perished from hunger. The hospitals were crowded with sick; wherever one turned there were scenes of misery and destitution, and even the bravest men seemed to have lost all hope. It was Tlemcen's darkest hour.

In desperation the Mayor summoned a meeting of the citizens.

"My friends," he said, "there is nothing for it but to surrender the town. . . . We have come to the end of our resources, and starvation stares us in the face."

The men met this announcement in heartbroken silence, and the sound of bitter weeping came from the spot where wives and mothers clung together in their despair. After a moment's pause a very old woman detached herself from her companions. Her name was Aïcha, and from her wrinkled face looked out a pair of bright keen eyes that were far-seeing as an eagle's. As she came forward they flashed with scorn, and her shrunken figure straightened itself and grew tall again.

"No, no," she cried, "we will not give in yet. I have a plan by which we can save the town. Our prophet Mahomet will help us, if you will but do as I say; the enemy will retreat, and we shall be spared the shame of a surrender."

So impressed was the Mayor with the earnestness of her speech that a glimmer of hope came back to his gloomy mind; he motioned the old woman to come nearer.

"Tell me your plan, good Aïcha," he commanded. "Speak loudly that all may hear."

Raising her voice until it was borne to the farthest extremity of the marketplace, Aïcha said briefly: "First you must find me a calf!"

"A calf?" cried the Mayor in amazement. "Why, the last was killed long ago. It would be impossible to obtain one now for its weight in gold."

But Aïcha persisted that a calf should be found and her friends and neighbours scattered far and wide to search for one. They were presently rewarded by the discovery of a beautiful milk-white little animal that had been hidden away in the cow-shed of an old miser, who had thought to fetch a great price for it later on. In spite of his protestations it was carried off in triumph, and when Aïcha saw it her thin lips smiled.

"Now bring me some grain," she cried; and at this there was a dismayed outcry.

"There is none to be had, woman, as you should know," said the Mayor indignantly, afraid that the hope with which she had inspired him was but a will-o'-the-wisp.

"Search from house to house," she urged the people, and though they shook their heads, they did her bidding, with the result that after some hours' work they brought her enough corn to fill a measure. Aïcha moistened it to increase its bulk, and at once began to feed the hungry calf. The Mayor was horrified.

"What terrible waste!" he exclaimed. "Don't you know that even the children are starving, and that the sick in the hospitals are without food? How dare you squander thus that precious grain?"

Aïcha went on feeding the calf as if she had not heard, until the threatening mien of the Mayor compelled her to speak.

"Give me my way," she pleaded eagerly, "and the enemy will retreat." So he shrugged his shoulders and let her be.

When the calf had emptied the measure, Aïcha led it to the gates of the city, and, followed by a wondering crowd, she commanded the sentry to open the gates for her. This he very properly refused to do until the Mayor had come in person to enforce the order. When the gates were at last unlocked, Aïcha pushed out the calf, which at once began to browse on the short grass outside the ramparts. The enemy scarcely allowed it to enjoy a mouthful, however, for it was at once seized by a posse of soldiers, who carried it to their camp rejoicing. The King and his generals stared as though they could hardly believe the evidence of their eyes.

"I thought that the town was starving," exclaimed His Majesty, looking much perturbed, "but if this were the case the citizens would most certainly have killed this beautiful calf."

"It is rather lean," remarked one of the nobles. "Still Your Majesty is right. They must be better provisioned than we ourselves or they would have killed and eaten it long before now."

The troops were naturally greatly discouraged by this new aspect of affairs, and, in order to please them, the King decreed that as it was some time since they had eaten fresh meat, they should have the calf for their own use, and make a feast of it. They killed it joyfully, for they

too were on short commons, and when they found inside it undigested corn, they were more surprised than ever at the resources of Tlemcen. The King grew very grave when this was reported to him, and at once summoned his Generals.

"If the townspeople have grain to spare for their cattle," he pointed out, "it is we, and not they, who will perish with hunger, if the siege be not soon raised."

The Generals sadly agreed; already discontent was brooding amidst the soldiers and their officers knew there was danger of mutiny.

"There is nothing for it but to retreat," they sighed, and the news ran like wildfire through the camp.

That night, as Aïcha had prophesied, the enemy disappeared, and when morning came the plains were empty. Thanks to her stratagem, the town was saved. The grateful citizens carried her on their shoulders through all the principal streets, amidst loud acclamations from the populace, and the Mayor himself took steps to ensure that the rest of her life should be spent in comfort.

A SLICE OF TONGUE

Omer was a lazy fellow. There could be no doubt of this, since year after year he refused to bestir himself, and still lived on with his parents. His sunny temper and merry ways made them forget his many faults, and though his father often reproached him for not making a home for himself, as other young men were doing, he only laughed good-humouredly, and kissed his mother.

"Why should I make a home for myself," he asked, "when I am far happier here than I could be elsewhere?"

His mother smiled, well satisfied, for her handsome boy was the very apple of her eye.

The years went on, and the time came when the two old folk slept side by side beneath the grass. Omer was left alone, and for the first time in his life knew what it was to be really miserable. His honest grief became him so well that every one was sorry for him, and many a neighbour offered him bite and sup, and strove to comfort him with homely sayings.

It was late now for Omer to remember his father's advice, but still he did so. The first step to take, it seemed to him, was to get married, and accordingly, when the violence of his grief had somewhat worn off, he considered the various maidens of the village. There was Rosalie, who sang like a bird, and Greta, who danced divinely, and was so fair of face that the roses in her window blushed with envy. Neither Rosalie nor Greta, however, particularly attracted him, and his fancy fell on Fatima, who was somewhat shy, and of a beauty less pronounced than that of her rivals. But Fatima's eyes were the very colour of his dear mother's, and he fancied he saw in them the same sweet gleam of affection that had made his home a haven of joy.

Fatima, for her part, had long loved him in secret, but she wisely determined not to accept his suit until he could provide for her.

"It is time you began to work, dear Omer," she said, repeating his father's words. "I will gladly be your wife when you can bring me thirty purses of gold, but not before. We cannot live on air, and it would not be fitting that your wife should work for you."

Poor Omer shrugged his shoulders. What was he to do? His well-shaped hands had learned no craft, and without capital it was impossible to start a business. In

his perplexity he thought of a rich Jew who often made loans to worthy tradesmen who found themselves in difficulties, and accordingly he repaired to this good man.

Issachar eyed him shrewdly. "You say you will pay me," he remarked, "but when? I know you well, young Omer. You are your father's son, but he was industrious, and you are idle. How can I be certain that you intend to work?"

Omer assured him that once he was married to Fatima he would leave no stone unturned to win a fortune.

"Lend me those thirty purses of gold," he urged, "and you shall see."

The Jew had no love for him in his heart, since he himself had looked upon Fatima with envious eyes, but at last he agreed to advance the money.

"Before I do so," he said, "you must sign this." And he laid before him a document to the effect that if he, Omer, did not repay Issachar the thirty purses of gold within seven years, the Jew should cut off a slice of his tongue to the weight of a drachm.

Light-hearted Omer signed the bond without the least demur. With Fatima for his wife, he thought to himself joyfully, he could do anything, and long before the seven years were expired would be in a position to repay twice thirty purses of gold. He set about his arrangements for the wedding in the highest of spirits, and spent so much in Fatima's honour that before he knew it, half the money the Jew had lent him had disappeared.

"Never mind," he thought to himself, "I shall soon make more." When the honeymoon was over, he opened a shop for such necessities as brooms, tobacco, salt, and cheese, since he knew that, whatever his neighbours could do without, they must have these.

Greatly to every one's surprise, for Omer's laziness was proverbial, the shop did well. Fatima loved her husband

dearly, and though she found it impossible to keep him up to her own high standard of industry, she managed to induce him to give the shop at least a certain amount of attention, and when he slunk off to lie on his back in some green meadow and look at the sky and dream great dreams, she took his place, and proved so willing and accommodating a saleswoman that customers often chose the hour for shopping when they knew that Omer would be away. In the long knitted purse hidden under her mattress was a shining store of silver pieces, and but for Omer's extravagance, there would have been many more.

It was well for the little household that Fatima was so clever a manager. Towards the end of the seventh year bad times came to the village, and no one had any money to spend. With a sudden shock Omer realised that it would be impossible for him to pay back Issachar, and the thought plunged him into the deepest gloom. He could not sleep for thinking what it would feel like to have a slice cut off his tongue, and, hearing him sigh so frequently, Fatima insisted on his telling her what was wrong.

"If I had only known," she cried, "how you obtained those thirty purses of gold, I would never have allowed you to touch them."

This was all she said by way of reproach, and Omer had never loved her more than he did in the dark days that followed, when both went silently about their work with down-bent heads and sombre eyes.

One evening at sunset Fatima thought of a plan. Dividing her poor little savings into three portions, she wrapped one of these in a silken square, and called at the Cadi's house. Making a deep obeisance, she laid the money at his feet, and left without a word. This she did on the second and the third night also, and as she was leaving for the last time the Cadi stopped her.

"What would you have of me?" he asked her kindly.

"O Cadi," she responded, "grant me but this one boon. Let me just for an hour sit in your robes on the judgment seat on Friday, and I will bless you for the rest of my life."

The Cadi would have refused outright, but Fatima was still a handsome woman, and the beautiful eyes that were raised to his so pleadingly were soft as velvet.

"It shall be as you wish," he said at last, "but I shall stand behind the screen and listen to all you say. If during that hour your judgments are not just ones, I shall reverse them, and turn you out of the court as an impostor."

Fatima thanked him with all her heart, and the following Friday saw her adorned in the Cadi's robes, and sitting in his place.

The first case to be brought forward was that of Issachar and Omer. The shrunken face of the Jew was alight with malicious triumph. Now, at last, he would be avenged for the slight that the fair Fatima had put upon him in days gone by. Grinning with delight, he listened to Omer's confession that he could not produce the gold, and hastened to demand that he should pay the penalty.

"You say well," said Fatima. "He cannot pay you, and you are therefore entitled to a slice of his tongue. Have you a razor, Issachar?"

The Jew produced one eagerly, and Omer's brow grew pale as death as he saw him feeling the sharp edge, and noted his fiendish glee. He bore himself bravely, nevertheless, and Fatima felt proud of her husband as he quietly advanced to await the Jew's pleasure.

"Be careful!" she cautioned Issachar, "that you do not draw a drop of blood, for this the bond does not entitle you to do. If you cut off either more or less than

one single drachm, you will be punished with the utmost rigour of the law."

It was now for Issachar to turn pale and tremble. There was such decision in the Cadi's voice that he knew it would be useless to appeal, and, making a great show of magnanimity, he declared that in consideration of kindness shown him by Omer's father in the past he would forgive the debt of his son.

"The matter cannot end this way!" replied the Cadi sternly. "You must keep to the bond. Cut off immediately one drachm of Omer's tongue, neither more nor less."

Issachar, now thoroughly alarmed, and fearful of his own life, fell on his knees, and offered a ransom of thirty purses of gold that he might go free without attempting so impossible a task. As the Cadi still preserved a significant silence, he added that he would make no further claim upon Omer for the debt he had incurred.

"It is well," said the Cadi, and this declaration was promptly entered in the books.

The true Cadi was greatly amused at Fatima's stratagem, and refused to touch the thirty purses of gold that Issachar had paid into the court.

"They are yours, O wise woman!" he said with a gracious smile, and Fatima hastened home in her own attire.

Shortly afterwards her husband appeared, looking very subdued after the ordeal through which he had passed, and eager to tell her what had happened. He lost no time in describing the scene in court.

"That Cadi is not only a clever judge," he said, "but a handsome fellow to boot. You should have seen the way that his eyes sparkled when Issachar paid him the gold."

"Was he as handsome as I am?" laughed Fatima

softly, and to Omer's amazement she showed him the thirty purses forfeited by his enemy. He wept with joy when he heard how she had saved him by her woman's wit, and from that day forward he became so industrious that fathers held him up as an example to their sons.

BROTHER BERNARD

On the banks of the Rhine stood a large monastery, where dwelt a company of monks. These holy men were not only distinguished for sanctity, but also for their wisdom and learning, and one of the foremost was Brother Bernard, whom all reverenced for his piety. From far and near students came to consult him, and his words were quoted as if he were an oracle.

In spite of his holiness, however, Brother Bernard had serious misgivings as to the state of his own soul. He could not imagine himself living in Paradise for ever without becoming weary of it.

"Alas!" he cried, "we tire of everything upon this earth, and I fear that even an eternity of bliss would at last become monotonous. The vesper hymn is very sweet, but I should not care for it unceasingly."

He was so tormented by this thought that he could neither read nor pray. At the foot of the mountain upon which the monastery was built stood a great forest, and here he wandered for hours in the shade of the giant trees, so absorbed in his reflections that he paid no heed to where he trod. At last he prayed that God would work some miracle that he might know that life in Heaven would neither be dull nor dreary.

After a while he grew fatigued by his long ramble, and looked around to see whence he had come. To his sur-

prise he found himself in an unknown part of the forest, and on reaching a clearing where the sunlight streamed on the fallen needles of the pines, he threw himself into the midst of their fragrance to rest awhile. Just then a little bird, with plumage the colour of the sky itself, alighted on the branch above him, and began to sing. So pure and exquisite were its notes that Brother Bernard listened in ecstasy until the sweet song ceased. As the bird vanished, the monk rose from his seat. "Dear me," he cried, "how stiff I am. I must have walked much further than I thought."

In stooping to brush the pine-needles from his robe he noticed that his beard was snowy white, and that his hands were wrinkled, like those of an old man. Even the forest itself looked changed to him, for the trees were larger, and the bushes had disappeared. He wondered if he could be dreaming, for otherwise, he thought, his senses must be deceiving him. With great difficulty he found his way back to the village, where he was surprised to meet unfamiliar faces. He rubbed his eyes again and again, feeling greatly disturbed.

"I thought that I knew every one," he muttered to himself, "but here are people whom I never met before. Who are they, and why do they stare at me as if I were some wild man of the woods, instead of hastening to kiss my hand and receive my benediction?"

He was too weary to question them, however, and made his way to the monastery. His astonishment increased when he found a stranger in charge of the gate instead of good Brother Antoine, who had held the office for more than fifty years.

"Where is the porter?" he asked him falteringly, "and what has happened to cause the changes which I see around me?"

The Brother looked at him curiously.

"I do not know what you mean," he said, "for I have been porter here for thirty years, and I can assure you that there have been no changes in my time."

"Then what can have happened to me?" exclaimed the bewildered monk. "I went out this morning to walk in the forest, and on my return I find no trace of my old comrades."

"Do you not recognise me?" he asked. "Is there no one here who knows Brother Bernard?"

"'Brother Bernard'?" said the oldest reflectively. "We have no Brother of that name in the monastery now, but I remember having read of him in our chronicles. He was a most holy man, with the simple faith of a child. One morning, they say, he quitted the monastery and went into the forest that he might meditate and pray with nothing between him and the floor of Heaven. He never returned, and though a diligent search was made, no trace of him could be found. It was thought that he had been carried up to the skies, like the prophet Elijah, in a chariot of fire: a fitting end to his life of sanctity."

"How long ago was this?" asked Brother Bernard tremblingly.

"A thousand years," said the old monk. "You may see by our books that this is so."

On hearing this Brother Bernard fell on his knees.

"God heard my prayer, and worked a miracle," he cried, "that I might have faith. He sent His Bird of Paradise to sing to me, and, while I listened, a thousand years passed by. Now indeed I believe, and would fain enter His Holy Kingdom."

He bowed his head in silence, and when they spoke to him again they found that his spirit had passed away. The smile on his lips was so full of sweetness that the monks marvelled greatly, and they noted with awe that his wrinkled face had grown smooth again.

"God is good to His Saints," murmured one monk. "Amen," returned the others solemnly.

BETTER THAN THAT

JOSEPH was one of Austria's greatest Emperors, and many trembled at his frown. The monarchs of other lands paid court to him, and he was the envied of all; but he often grew weary of the cares of State, and longed for a more simple life than he could live in his palace. His greatest pleasure at such times was to leave his nobles, and wander unattended, so plainly dressed that he might have been one of his poorer subjects, through the streets of his grand capital. Sometimes he would go for a ramble in the surrounding country, finding in the company of the wood-folk, and the rustling of the forest leaves, far more delight than in the gorgeous functions of the palace.

One Sunday in autumn, when the trees had donned their richest garb of red and orange, he determined to go for a long drive, and taking an unpretentious buggy and one of the fleetest horses in his stable, he set off by himself.

Though the sky had been cloudless when he started, and the people he met were dressed in their best, as if bad weather were out of the question, the wind blew up from the rainy quarter, and before long a sharp shower made him raise the hood of his buggy. The citizens now were hurrying to shelter, and he too thought it well to return. He had not driven far upon the homeward road when a soldier accosted him, little guessing to whom he spoke.

"I beg your pardon, sir," he said, "but I thought that perhaps you would give me a lift, as I should not inconvenience you. My uniform is a new one, and I don't want to get it spoiled."

He was a fine, handsome young fellow, with a frank and

open face. The Emperor was much taken by his appearance, and invited him to jump in. In a few minutes they were chatting together as if they were well acquainted, and the soldier treated his new friend to a glowing account of a pleasant day he had lately spent with an old comrade.

"He gave me a famous dinner, I can tell you," he concluded, and the Emperor, much amused, inquired of what this had consisted.

"Guess," cried the soldier, chuckling with delight at the recollection of his feast.

"Cabbage soup, perhaps?" questioned His Majesty with an indulgent smile.

"'Soup,' indeed!" the soldier exclaimed with much contempt. "Better than that; you must guess again."

"A calf's head, then?" said the Emperor.

"Better than that, even!" was the laughing answer, and the same reply was given when the Emperor suggested a big slice of ham.

"Much better than that!" cried the soldier triumphantly. "I had a roast pheasant, and one that I shot myself on His Majesty's estate, for my friend is now one of the Emperor's game-keepers. It was delicious, and no mistake."

His companion made no reply, but the soldier chatted away quite at his ease, telling him of the aged parents who were so proud of him, and the dear little "Greta" who would one day become his wife.

"Where do you live?" inquired His Majesty as they neared the city. "The rain had ceased, but I should like to drive you home."

Much gratified by this further kindness, the soldier thanked him warmly, and begged that he would tell him his name.

"Ah! it is your turn to guess now," remarked the Emperor. "Who do you think I am?"

"Perhaps you also have something to do with the army," hazarded the soldier with a searching look. The Emperor nodded.

"You are a private soldier?" was the next guess.

"Better than that," the Emperor smilingly returned.

"A Lieutenant, then?"

"Better than that!"

"A Colonel?" stammered the soldier, beginning to feel alarmed.

"Better than that, I assure you."

"Perhaps, then, you are a General?" the man said timidly, and then, in desperation, as the Emperor shook his head, he suggested "a Field-Marshal?"

"Better than that!" said the Emperor once more, and the soldier turned pale with terror.

"Then you must be His Majesty himself!" he gasped, and would have sprung from the buggy if the Emperor had not prevented him.

"We will keep to our bargain," he said, and insisted upon driving him right up to his home. On the way he gave the young man some good advice that he never forgot, and ended by saying, with a kindly twinkle in his deep-set eyes: "And be careful in future not to kill pheasants before first obtaining the owner's permission, or to tell tales of your friends to the first stranger who comes your way.

THE MOUSE TOWER

HATTO, Bishop of Mayence, was rich and avaricious. Instead of devoting himself to prayer and almsgiving, he thought only of increasing his great wealth, and at a time when numbers of his people could not obtain enough food his money-chests were laden with gold. His farms

were the most productive in the whole country, and whatever might happen to other folk, he did not seem to suffer.

One spring the river overflowed, and the low-lying land was flooded. The harvest failed, and famine was imminent. Finding themselves on the point of starvation, the villagers went to implore his aid.

"Take pity, good Bishop, on our hungry wives and suffering children," they entreated. "They die with hunger while your granaries are full of wheat."

But Bishop Hatto only laughed.

"I cannot help that," he said. "You must look after yourselves." And day after day he made them the same answer.

"My wheat is far too precious," he said at last, "for me to bestow it on hungry rats!"

Even this, however, would not drive them off, for they were desperate, and, wearied at length by their importunities, Hatto bade them go to one of his largest granaries, which happened to be empty, saying that there he would meet them and satisfy their demands.

Now at last there was joy among the starving creatures. Their dim eyes brightened, and strength came back to their shrunken limbs as they dragged themselves to the granary, in which there was soon a large assembly.

"You shall have bread to-night," they told their little ones, and the children ceased their wailings.

At the appointed hour Bishop Hatto made his appearance, accompanied by a number of his servants. His cruel lips were pressed tightly together and the fires of hatred burned in his deep-set eyes as he surveyed the hungry crew through the open doors of the great granary. Instead of entering it, he told his servants to pull-to the doors, and bar them firmly. When this was done, he commanded that the building should be set on fire.

Meanwhile the hungry men and women were thanking

God for having softened his heart, and calling down blessings on his name. Every moment they expected to see him enter, but the minutes wore on, and he did not come. One of their number threw open a window that they might have more air, and as he did so, the Bishop's rage found vent in words.

"You have pestered me like rats," he said, "and now you shall die like rats!"

As he spoke, the crackling of the flaming walls that hemmed them in made his meaning clear. Despite their shrieks and appeals for mercy, they were burned alive, and though his servants were pale with horror, the Bishop calmly surveyed the scene. When the granary was but a mass of cinders, he went back to his palace with an easy mind to enjoy his luxurious dinner.

That night his sleep was broken by queer little sounds, as if rats and mice were scampering over the floor, and nibbling at something they had found. Next morning he was annoyed to find that the splendid portrait of himself in his Bishop's robes, which had been painted by a famous artist at great expense, was lying on the ground, gnawed to shreds. He could see the marks of the rat's sharp teeth on that part of the canvas where his face had been, and in spite of himself he shuddered at the sight.

A few minutes later one of his servants burst in to tell him that a vast number of mice and rats were approaching his palace from the ruins of the granary.

"They are coming in this direction with all speed, my lord!" he said with bated breath, and a panic of terror seized the man who had committed so great a crime. Mounting his horse, he went off at great speed; but though the brute was fleet, and he spurred him on unmercifully, the Bishop found that the army of rats was gaining upon him. Wild with terror, he hurried down to the riverside, and jumping into a little boat, he rowed with all his

might towards a tall stone tower built on a rock in the middle of the stream. Entering this with what haste he could, he quickly barred the door, and crouched down in a dusty corner. He was safe, he thought, for a time at least.

What was his horror presently, on peering through a narrow slit in the stone walls, to see that the rats and mice had devoured his horse, and were now swimming across the river. The current was swift and strong, but they gained the tower, and though he had barred the window he could hear them climbing up the rough stone wall in all directions. He heard them gnawing at the doors and windows; and the poor starved people whom he had caused to perish did not suffer half what he suffered then.

They were in at last, and sprang at him fiercely. He beat them off by the score; he trampled them under his feet; he tore at them savagely with his hands — all to no purpose; he might just as well have tried to beat back the ocean. The rats surged against him like waves breaking on a cliff, and very soon the Bishop was overwhelmed in the horrid flood. Little was left to tell the tragedy when his servants plucked up courage to enter the building some days later.

This is the story of the Mouse Tower near Bingen-on-the-Rhine, which is still pointed out to strangers as the place where Bishop Hatto met his death.

PRINCE VIVIEN AND THE PRINCESS PLACIDA

Once upon a time there lived a king and queen who loved one another dearly. Indeed, the queen, whose name was Santorina, was so pretty and so kind-hearted that it would have been a wonder if her husband had not been fond of

her, while King Gridelin himself was a perfect bundle of good qualities, for the fairy who presided at his christening had summoned the shades of all his ancestors and taken something good from each of them to form his character. Unfortunately, though, she had given him rather too much kindness of heart, which is a thing that generally gets its possessor into trouble, but so far all things had prospered with King Gridelin. However, it was not to be expected such good fortune could last, and before very long the queen had a lovely little daughter who was named Placida.

Now, the king, who thought that if she resembled her mother in face and mind she would need no other gift, never troubled to ask any of the fairies to her christening, and this offended them mortally, so that they resolved to punish him severely for thus depriving them of their rights. So, to the despair of King Gridelin, the queen first of all became very ill, and then disappeared altogether. If it had not been for the little princess there is no saying what would have become of him, he was so miserable, but there she was to be brought up, and luckily the good fairy Lolotte, in spite of all that had passed, was willing to come and take charge of her and her little cousin Prince Vivien, who was an orphan and had been placed under the care of his uncle, King Gridelin, when he was quite a baby.

Although she neglected nothing that could possibly have been done for them, their characters, as they grew up, plainly proved that education only softens down natural defects, but cannot entirely do away with them; for Placida, who was perfectly lovely and with a capacity and intelligence which enabled her to learn and understand anything that presented itself, was at the same time as lazy and indifferent as it is possible for any one to be, while Vivien, on the contrary, was only too lively, and was forever

taking up some new thing and as promptly tiring of it, and flying off to something else which held his fickle fancy an equally short time.

As these two children would possibly inherit the kingdom, it was natural that their people should take a great interest in them, and it fell out that all the tranquil and peace-loving citizens desired that Placida should one day be their queen, while the rash and quarrelsome hoped great things for Vivien. Such a division of ideas seemed to promise civil wars and all kinds of troubles to the state, and even in the palace the two parties frequently came into collision. As for the children themselves, though they were too well brought up to quarrel, still, the difference in all their tastes and feelings made it impossible for them to like one another, so there seemed no chance of their ever consenting to be married, which was a pity, since that was the only thing that would have satisfied both parties.

Prince Vivien was fully aware of the feeling in his favour, but being too honourable to wish to injure his pretty cousin, and perhaps too impatient and volatile to care to think seriously about anything, he suddenly took it into his head that he would go off by himself in search of adventure. Luckily this idea occurred to him when he was on horseback for he would certainly have set out on foot rather than lose an instant. As it was, he simply turned his horse's head without another thought than that of getting out of the kingdom as soon as possible.

This abrupt departure was a great blow to the state, specially as no one had any idea what had become of the prince. Even King Gridelin, who had never cared for anything since the disappearance of Queen Santorina, was aroused by this loss, and though he could not so much as look at the Princess Placida without shedding floods of tears, he resolved to see for himself what talents and capabilities she showed. He soon found out that in addition

to her natural indolence, she was being as much indulged and spoiled day by day as if the fairy had been her godmother, and was obliged to remonstrate very serious upon the subject. Lolotte took his reproaches meekly, and promised faithfully that she would not encourage the princess in her idleness and indifference any more.

From this moment poor Placida's troubles began! She was actually expected to choose her own dresses, to take care of her jewels, and to find her own amusements, but rather than take so much trouble she wore the same old frock from morning till night, and never appeared in public if she could possibly avoid it. However, this was not all. King Gridelin insisted that the affairs of the Kingdom should be explained to her, and that she should attend all the councils and give her opinion upon the matter in hand whenever it was asked of her and this made her life such a burden to her that she implored Lolette to take her away from a country where too much was required of an unhappy princess.

The fairy refused at first with a great show of firmness, but who could resist the tears and entreaties of any one so pretty as Placida? It came to this in the end, that she transported the princess just as she was, cosily tucked up upon her favourite couch, to her own grotto, and this new disappearance left all the people in despair, and Gridelin went about looking more distracted than ever. But now let us return to Prince Vivien and see what his restless spirit has brought him to. Though Placida's kingdom was a large one, his horse had carried him gallantly to the limit of it, but it could go no further, and the prince was obliged to dismount and continue his journey on foot, though this slow mode of progress tried his patience severely.

After what seemed to him a very long time, he found himself all alone in a vast forest, so dark and gloomy that he secretly shuddered. However he chose the most promis-

ing-looking path he could find and marched along it courageously at his best speed, but in spite of all his efforts night fell before he reached the edge of the wood.

For some time he stumbled along, keeping to the path as well as he could in the darkness, and just as he was almost wearied out he saw before him a gleam of light.

This sight revived his drooping spirits and he made sure that he was now close to the shelter and supper he needed so much, but the more he walked toward the light the further away it seemed. Sometimes he even lost sight of it altogether, and you may imagine how provoked and impatient he was by the time he finally arrived at the miserable cottage from which the light proceeded.

He gave a loud knock at the door and an old woman's voice answered from within, but as she did not seem to be hurrying herself to open it he redoubled his blows and demanded to be let in imperiously, quite forgetting that he was no longer in his own kingdom. But all this had no effect upon the old woman, who only noticed all the uproar he was making by saying gently:

"You must have patience."

He could hear that she really was coming to open the door to him only she was so very long about it. First she chased away her cat lest it should run away when the door was opened, then he heard her talking to herself and made out that her lamp wanted trimming, that she might see better who it was that knocked, and then that it lacked fresh oil, and she must refill it. So that with one thing and another she was an immense time trotting to and fro, and all the while she now and again bade the prince have patience. When at last he stood within the little hut he saw with despair it was a picture of poverty, and that not a crumb of anything eatable was to be seen, and when he explained to the old woman that he was dying of hunger and fatigue she only answered tranquilly that he must

have patience. However, she presently showed him a bundle of straw on which he could sleep.

"But what can I have to eat?" cried Prince Vivien sharply.

"Wait a little, wait a little," she replied. "If you will only have patience I am just out into the garden to gather some peas. We will shell them at our leisure, then I will light a fire and cook them, and when they are thoroughly done we can enjoy them peaceably. There is no hurry."

"I shall have died of starvation by the time all that is done," said the prince ruefully.

"Patience, patience," said the old woman, looking at him with her slow gentle smile. "I can't be hurried. 'All things come at last to him who waits.' You must have heard that often."

Prince Vivien was wild with aggravation, but there was nothing to be done.

"Come, then," said the old woman. "You shall hold the lamp to light me while I pick the peas."

The prince in haste snatched it up so quickly that it went out, and it took him a long time to light it again with two bits of glowing charcoal which he had to dig out from the pile of ashes upon the hearth. At last the peas were gathered and shelled and the fire lighted, and then they had to be carefully counted, since the old woman declared that she would cook fifty-four, and no more. In vain did the prince represent to her that he was famished — that fifty-four peas would go no way toward satisfying his hunger — that a few peas, more or less, surely could not matter. It was quite useless. In the end he had to count out the fifty-four, and worse than that, because he dropped one or two in his hurry he had to begin again from the very first, to be sure the number was complete. As soon as they were cooked the old dame took a pair of scales and a morsel of bread from the cupboard and was just about

to divide it, when Prince Vivien, who could wait no longer, seized the whole piece and ate it up, saying in his turn, "Patience."

"You mean that for a joke," said the old woman as gently as ever, "but that is really my name, and some day you will know more about me."

Then they each ate their twenty-seven peas, and the prince was surprised to find that he wanted nothing more, and he slept as sweetly upon his bed of straw as he had ever done in his palace.

In the morning the old woman gave him milk and bread for his breakfast which he ate contentedly, rejoicing that there was nothing to be gathered or counted or cooked, and when he had finished he begged her to tell him who she was.

"That I will, with pleasure," she replied. "But it will be a long story."

"Oh! if it's long I can't listen," cried the prince.

"But," said she, "at your age you should attend to what old people say and learn to have patience."

"But, but," said the prince in his most impatient tone, "old people should not be so long-winded! Tell me what country I have got into, and nothing else."

"With all my heart," said she. "You are in the forest of the blackbird. It is here that he utters his oracles."

"An oracle!" cried the prince. "Oh! I must go and consult him."

Thereupon he drew a handful of gold from his pocket and offered it to the old woman and when she would not take it, he threw it down upon the table and was off like a flash of lightning, without even staying to ask the way. He took the first path that presented itself and followed it at the top of his speed, often losing his way, or stumbling over some stone, or running up against a tree, and leaving behind him without regret the cottage which had been as little to his taste as the character of its possessor. After

some time he saw in the distance a huge black castle which commanded a view of the whole forest. The prince felt certain that this must be the abode of the oracle, and just as the sun was setting he reached its outermost gates. The whole castle was surrounded by a deep moat, and the drawbridge and the gates, and even the water in the moat were all of the same sombre hue as the walls and towers. Upon the gate hung a huge bell, upon which was written in red letters:

"Mortal, if thou art curious to know thy fate, strike this bell and submit to what shall befall thee."

The prince without the slightest hesitation, snatched up a great stone and hammered vigorously upon the bell, which gave forth a deep and terrible sound, the gate flew open and closed again with a thundering clang the moment the prince had passed through it, while from every tower and battlement rose a wheeling, screaming crowd of bats which darkened the whole sky with their multitudes. Any one but Prince Vivien would have been terrified by such an uncanny sight, but he strode stoutly forward till he reached the second gate, which was opened to him by sixty black slaves covered from head to foot in long mantles.

He wished to speak to them, but soon discovered that they spoke an utterly unknown language and did not seem to understand a word he said. This was a great aggravation to the prince who was not accustomed to keep his ideas to himself, and he positively found himself wishing for his old friend Patience. He had to follow his guides in silence, and they led him into a magnificent hall. The floor was of ebony, the walls of jet, and all the hangings were of black velvet, but the prince looked around it in vain for something to eat, and then made signs that he was hungry. In the same manner he was respectfully given to understand that he must wait, and after several

hours the sixty hooded and shrouded figures reappeared and conducted him with great ceremony, and also very, very slowly, to a banqueting hall, where they all placed themselves at a long table. The dishes were arranged down the centre of it, and with his usual impetuosity the prince seized the one that stood in front of him to draw it nearer but soon found that it was firmly fixed in its place. Then he looked at his solemn and lugubrious neighbours, and saw that each one was supplied with a long hollow reed through which he slowly sucked up his portion and the prince was obliged to do the same, though he found it a frightfully tedious process. After supper they returned as they had come to the ebony room where he was compelled to look on while his companions played interminable games of chess and not until he was nearly dying of weariness did they, slowly and ceremoniously as before, conduct him to his sleeping apartment.

The hope of consulting the oracle woke him very early the next morning, and his first demand was to be allowed to present himself before it, but without replying his attendants conducted him to a huge marble bath, very shallow at one end and quite deep at the other, and gave him to understand that he was to go into it. The prince, nothing loath, was for springing at once into deep water, but he was gently but forcibly held back and only allowed to stand where it was about an inch deep, and he was nearly wild with impatience when he found that this process was to be repeated every day in spite of all he could say or do, the water rising higher and higher by inches, so that for sixty days he had to live in perpetual silence, ceremoniously conducted to and fro, supping all his meals through the long reed and looking on at innumerable games of chess, the game of all others which he detested most.

But at last the water rose as high as his chin, and his bath was complete. And that day the slaves in their black

robes, and each having a large bat perched upon his head, marched in slow procession with the prince in their midst, chanting a melancholy song, to the iron gate that led into a kind of temple. At the sound of their chanting another band of slaves appeared and took possession of the unhappy Vivien.

They looked to him exactly like the ones he had left, except that they moved more slowly still, and each one held a raven upon his wrist, and their harsh croakings re-echoed through the dismal place. Holding the prince by the arms, not so much to do him honour as to restrain his impatience, they proceeded by slow degrees up the steps of the temple, and when they at last reached the top he thought his long waiting must be at an end. But, on the contrary, after slowly enshrouding him in a long black robe like their own, they led him into the temple itself, where he was forced to witness numbers of lengthy rites and ceremonies.

By this time Vivien's active impatience had subsided into passive weariness and his yawns were continual and scandalous, but nobody heeded him. He stared hopelessly at the thick black curtains which hung down straight in front of him, and could hardly believe his eyes when it presently began to slide back and he saw before him the blackbird. It was of enormous size and was perched upon a thick bar of iron which ran across from one side of the temple to the other. At the sight of it all the slaves fell upon their knees and hid their faces, and when it had three times flapped its mighty wings it uttered distinctly in Prince Vivien's own language the words:

"Prince, your only chance of happiness depends upon that which is most opposed to your own nature."

Then the curtain fell before it once more, and the prince, after many ceremonies, was presented with a raven, which perched upon his wrist, and was conducted slowly back to the iron gate. Here the raven left him and he was

handed once more to the care of the first band of slaves, while a large bat flickered down and settled upon his head of its own accord, and so he was taken back to the marble bath and had to go through the whole process again, only this time he began in deep water, which receded daily inch by inch.

When this was over the slaves escorted him to the outer gate and took leave of him with every mark of esteem and politeness, to which it is to be feared he responded but indifferently since the gate was no sooner opened than he took to his heels and fled away with all his might, his one idea being to put as much space as possible between himself and the dreary place into which he had ventured so rashly, just to consult a tedious oracle who, after all, had told him nothing. He actually reflected for about five seconds on his folly, and came to the conclusion that it might sometimes be advisable to think before one acted.

After wandering about for several days until he was weary and hungry, he at last succeeded in finding a way out of the forest, and soon came to a wide and rapid river, which he followed, hoping to find some means of crossing it, and it happened that as the sun rose the next morning he saw something of a dazzling whiteness moored out in the middle of the stream. Upon looking more attentively at it he found that it was one of the prettiest little ships he had ever seen, and the boat that belonged to it was made fast to the bank quite close to him.

The prince was immediately seized with the most ardent desire to go on board the ship, and shouted loudly to attract the notice of her crew, but no one answered. Soon he sprang into the little boat and rowed away without finding it at all hard work, for the boat was made all of white paper and was as light as a rose-leaf. The ship was made of white paper too, as the prince presently discovered when he reached it. He found not a soul on board, but there

was a very cosy little bed in the cabin, and an ample supply of good things to eat and drink, which he made up his mind to enjoy until something new happened. Having been thoroughly well brought up at the court of King Gridelin, of course he understood the art of navigation, but when once he had started the current carried the vessel down at such a pace that before he knew where he was the prince found himself out at sea and the wind springing up behind him just at this moment soon drove him out of sight of land.

By this time he was somewhat alarmed and did his best to put his ship about and get back to the river, but wind and tide were too strong for him, and he began to think of the number of times, from his childhood up, that he had been warned not to meddle with water. But it was too late now to do anything but wish vainly that he had stayed on shore and to grow heartily weary of the boat and the sea most thoroughly. To put the finishing touch to his misfortunes, he presently found himself becalmed in mid-ocean, a state of affairs which would be considered trying by the most patient of men, so you may imagine how it effected Prince Vivien! He even came to wishing himself back at the castle of the blackbird, for there at least he saw living beings, whereas on board the white paper ship he was absolutely alone, and could not imagine how he was ever to get away from his wearisome prison.

However after a long time he did see land, and his impatience to be on shore was so great that he at once flung himself over the ship's side that he might reach it sooner by swimming. But this was quite useless for spring as far as he might from the vessel, it was always under his feet again before he reached the water, and he had to resign himself to his fate and wait with what patience he could muster until the winds and waves carried the ship into a kind of natural harbour which ran far into the land.

After his long imprisonment at sea the prince was delighted with the sight of the great trees which grew down to the very edge of the water, and leaping lightly on shore he speedily lost himself in the thick forest. When he had wandered a long way he stopped to rest beside a clear spring of water but scarcely had he thrown himself down upon the mossy bank when there was a great rustling in the bushes close by and out sprang a pretty little gazelle, panting and exhausted, and fell at his feet gasping out:

"Oh! Vivien, save me!"

The prince in great astonishment leaped to his feet, and had just time to draw his sword before he found himself face to face with a large green lion which had been hotly pursuing the poor little gazelle. Prince Vivien attacked it gallantly and a fierce combat ensued, which ended before long in the prince's dealing his adversary a terrific blow which felled him to the earth. As he fell he whistled loudly three times with such force that the forest rang again, and the sound must have been heard for more than two leagues round, after which, having apparently nothing more to do in this world, he rolled over on his side and died. The prince, without paying any further heed to him or to his whistling, returned to the pretty gazelle, saying:

"Well! are you satisfied now? Since you can talk, pray tell me instantly what all this is about and how you happened to know my name."

"Oh, I must rest for a long time before I can talk," she replied, "and besides, I very much doubt if you will have leisure to listen, for the affair is by no means finished. In fact," she continued in the same languid tone, "you had better look behind you now."

The prince turned sharply round and to his horror saw a huge giant approaching with mighty strides, crying fiercely:

"Who is it that has made my lion whistle, I should like to know?"

"I have," replied Prince Vivien boldly, "but I can answer for it that he will not do it again!"

At these words the giant began to howl and lament.

"Alas, my poor Tiny, my sweet little pet," he cried. "But at least I can avenge thy death."

Thereupon he rushed at the prince, brandishing an immense serpent which was coiled about his wrist. Vivien, without losing his coolness, aimed a terrific blow at it with his sword, but no sooner did he touch the snake than it changed into a giant and the giant into a snake, with such rapidity that the prince felt perfectly giddy, and this happened at least half a dozen times, until at last with a fortunate stroke he cut the serpent in halves, and picking up one morsel flung it with all his force at the nose of the giant, who fell insensible on top of the lion, and in an instant a thick black cloud rolled up which hid them from view, and when it cleared away they had all disappeared.

Then the prince, without even waiting to sheathe his sword, rushed back to the gazelle crying:

"Now you have had plenty of time to recover your wits, and you have nothing more to fear, so tell me who you are and what this horrible giant, with his lion and his serpent, have to do with you, and for pity's sake be quick about it."

"I will tell you with pleasure," she answered, "but where is the hurry? I want you to come back with me to the green castle, but I don't want to walk there, it is so far, and walking is so fatiguing."

"Let us set out at once, then," replied the prince severely, "or else really I shall have to leave you where you are. Surely a young and active gazelle like you ought to be ashamed of not being able to walk a few steps. The further off this castle is the faster we ought to walk; but

as you don't appear to enjoy that, I will promise that we will go gently, and we can talk by the way."

"It would be better still if you would carry me," said she sweetly; "but as I don't like to see people giving themselves trouble, you may carry me and make that snail carry you." So saying, she pointed languidly with one tiny foot at what the prince had taken for a block of stone, but now he saw that it was a huge snail.

"What! I ride a snail!" cried the prince. "You are laughing at me; and besides, we should not get there for a year."

"Oh! well, then, don't do it," replied the gazelle. "I am quite willing to stay here. The grass is green and the water clear. But if I were you I should take the advice that was given me and ride the snail."

So, though it did not please him at all, the prince took the gazelle in his arms and mounted upon the back of the snail, which glided along very peaceably, entirely declining to be hurried by frequent blows from the prince's heels. In vain did the gazelle represent to him that she was enjoying herself very much and that this was the easiest mode of conveyance she had ever discovered. Prince Vivien was wild with impatience and thought that the green castle would never be reached. At last they did get there, and every one who was in it ran to see the prince dismount from his singular steed.

But what was his surprise when, having at her request set the gazelle gently down upon the steps which led up to the castle, he saw her suddenly change into a charming princess and recognised in her his pretty Cousin Placida, who greeted him with her usual tranquil sweetness. His delight knew no bounds, and he followed her eagerly up into the castle, impatient to know what strange events had brought her there. But after all he had to wait for the princess' story, for the inhabitants of the Green Lands,

hearing that the giant was dead, ran to offer the kingdom to his vanquisher, and Prince Vivien had to listen to various complimentary harangues, which took a great deal of time, though he cut them as short as politeness allowed — if not shorter. But at last he was free to join Placida, who at once began the stories of her adventures.

"After you had gone away," said she, "they tried to make me learn how to govern the kingdom, which wearied me to death, so that I begged and prayed Lolette to take me away with her and this she presently did, but very reluctantly. However, having been transported to her grotto upon my favourite couch I spent several delicious days soothed by the soft green light, which was like a beech wood in the spring, and by the murmuring of bees and the tinkling of falling water. But, alas, Lolette was forced to go away to a general assembly of the fairies, and she came back in great dismay, telling that her indulgence to me had cost her dear, for she had been severely reprimanded and ordered to hand me over to the fairy Mirlifiche who was already taking charge of you and who had been much commended for her management of you."

"Fine management, indeed," interrupted the Prince, "if it is to her I owe all the adventures I have met with! But go on with your story, my cousin. I can tell you all about my doings afterward, and then you can judge for yourself."

"At first I was grieved to see Lolette cry," resumed the princess, "but I soon found that grieving was very troublesome, so I thought it better to be calm, and very soon afterward I saw the fairy Mirlifiche arrive, mounted upon her great unicorn. She stopped before the grotto and bade Lolette bring me out to her, at which she cried worse than ever and kissed me a dozen times, but she dared not refuse. I was lifted up on to the unicorn, behind Mirlifiche, who said to me:

"'Hold on tight, little girl, if you don't want to break your neck.'

"And indeed I had to hold on with all my might, for her horrible steed trotted so violently that it positively took my breath away. At last we stopped at a large farm, and the farmer and his wife ran out as soon as they saw the fairy and helped us to dismount.

"I knew that they were really a king and queen, whom the fairies were punishing for their ignorance and idleness. You may imagine that I was by this time half dead with fatigue, but Mirlifiche insisted upon my feeding her unicorn before I did anything else. To accomplish this I had to climb up a long ladder into the hay-loft and bring down, one after another, twenty-four handfuls of hay. Never, never before did I have such a wearisome task! It makes me shudder to think of it now and that was not all. In the same way I had to carry the twenty-four handfuls of hay to the stable, and then it was supper-time, and I had to wait upon all the others. After that I really thought I should be allowed to go peaceably to my little bed, but, oh, dear, no! First of all I had to make it, for it was all in confusion, and then I had to make one for the fairy, and tuck her in, and draw the curtains round her, besides rendering her a dozen little services which I was not accustomed to. Finally when I was perfectly exhausted by all this toil, I was free to go to bed myself, but as I had never before undressed myself and really did not know how to begin, I lay down as I was. Unfortunately the fairy found this out, and just as I was falling into a sweet slumber she made me get up once more, but even then I managed to escape her vigilance and only took off my upper robe. Indeed, I may tell you in confidence that I always find disobedience answer very well. One is often scolded, it is true, but then one has been saved some trouble.

"At the earliest dawn of day Mirlifiche woke me and

made me take many journeys to the stable to bring her word how her unicorn had slept and how much hay he had eaten, and then to find out what time it was and if it was a fine day. I was so slow and did my errands so badly that before she left she called the king and queen and said to them:

"'I am much more pleased with you this year. Continue to make the best of your farm if you wish to get back to your kingdom, and also take care of this little princess for me and teach her to be useful, that when I come I may find her cured of her faults. If she is not —'

"Here she broke off with a significant look, and mounting my enemy the unicorn, speedily disappeared.

"Then the king and queen, turning to me, asked me what I could do.

"'Nothing at all, I assure you,' I replied in a tone which really ought to have convinced them, but they went on to describe various employments and tried to discover which of them would be most to my taste. At last I persuaded them that to do nothing whatever would be the only thing that would suit me, and that if they really wanted to be kind to me they would let me go to bed and to sleep, and not to tease me about doing anything. To my great joy they not only permitted this, but actually, when they had their own meals, the queen brought my portion up to me. But early the next morning she appeared at my bedside, saying with an apologetic air:

"'My pretty child, I am afraid you must really make up your mind to get up to-day. I know quite well how delightful it is to be thoroughly idle, for when my husband and I were king and queen we did nothing at all from morning to night, and I sincerely hope it will not be long before those happy days will come again for us. But at present we have not reached them, nor have you, and you know from what the fairy said that perhaps worse things may

happen to us if she is not obeyed. Make haste, I beg of you, and come down to breakfast, for I have put by some delicious cream for you.'

"It was really very tiresome, but as there was no help for it I went down.

"But the instant breakfast was over they began their cuckoo-cry of 'What will you do?' In vain did I answer:

"'Nothing at all, if it please you, madam.'

"The queen at last gave me a spindle and about four pounds of hemp upon a distaff and sent me out to keep the sheep, assuring me that there could not be a pleasanter occupation and that I could take my ease as much as I pleased. I was forced to set out, very unwillingly, as you may imagine, but I had not walked far before I came to a shady bank in what seemed to me a charming place. I stretched myself cosily upon the grass and with the bundle of hemp for a pillow slept as tranquilly as if there were no such things as sheep in the world, while they for their part wandered hither and thither at their own sweet will, as if there were no such thing as a shepherdess, invading every field and browsing upon every kind of forbidden dainty, until the peasants, alarmed by the havoc they were making, raised a clamour, which at last reached the ears of the king and queen, who ran out, and seeing the cause of the commotion hastily collected their flock. And indeed the sooner the better, since they had to pay for all the damage they had done. As for me I lay still and watched them run, for I was very comfortable, and there I might be still if they had not come up, all panting and breathless, and compelled me to get up and follow them; they also reproached me bitterly, but I need not tell you they did not again intrust me with the flock.

"But whatever they found for me to do it was always the same thing — I spoiled and mismanaged it all, and was so successful in provoking even the most patient people

that one day I ran away from the farm for I was really afraid the queen would be obliged to beat me. When I came to the little river in which the king used to fish I found the boat tied to a tree, and stepping in I unfastened it and floated gently down with the current. The gliding of the boat was so soothing that I did not trouble myself in the least, when the queen caught sight of me and ran along the bank, crying: 'My boat! my boat! Husband, come and catch the little princess who is running away with my boat!'

"The current soon carried me out of hearing of her cries, and I dreamed to the song of the ripples and the whispering of the trees until the boat suddenly stopped, and I found it was stuck fast beside a fresh green meadow and that the sun was rising. In the distance I saw some little houses which seemed to be built in a most singular fashion but as I was by this time very hungry I set out toward them, but before I had walked many steps I saw that the air was full of shining objects which seemed to be fixed, and yet I could not see what they hung from.

"I went nearer and saw a silken cord hanging down to the ground, and pulled it just because it was so close to my hand. Instantly the whole meadow resounded to the melodious chiming of a peal of silver bells, and they sounded so pretty that I sat down to listen and to watch them as they swung shining in the sunbeams. Before they ceased to sound came a great flight of birds, and each one perching upon a bell added its charming song to the concert. As they ended, I looked up and saw a tall and stately dame advancing toward me, surrounded and followed by a vast flock of every kind of bird.

"'Who are you, little girl,' said she, 'who dares to come where I allow no mortal to live, less my birds should be disturbed? Still, if you are clever at anything,' she added, 'I might be able to put up with your presence.'

"'Madam,' I answered, rising, 'you may be sure that I will do nothing to alarm your birds. I only beg you, for pity's sake, to give me something to eat.'

"'I will do that,' she replied, 'before I send you where you deserve to go.'

"And thereupon she despatched six jays, who were her pages, to fetch me all sorts of biscuits, while some of the other birds brought ripe fruits. In fact I had a delicious breakfast, though I do not like to be waited upon so quickly. It is so disagreeable to be hurried. I began to think I should like very well to stay in this pleasant country, and I said so to the stately lady, but she answered with the greatest disdain:

"'Do you think I would keep you here? You! Why, what do you suppose would be the good of you in this country, where everybody is wide awake and busy? No, no, I have shown you all the hospitality you will get from me.'

"With these words she turned and gave a vigorous pull to the silken rope which I mentioned before, but instead of a melodious chime there arose a hideous clanging which quite terrified me, and in an instant a huge blackbird appeared, which alighted at the fairy's feet, saying in a frightful voice:

"'What do you want of me, my sister?'

"'I wish you to take this little princess to my cousin, the giant of the green castle, at once,' she replied, 'and beg him from me to make her work day and night upon his beautiful tapestry.'

"At these words the great bird snatched me up, regardless of my cries, and flew off at a terrific pace —"

"Oh! you are joking, cousin," interrupted Prince Vivien; "you mean as slowly as possible. I know that horrible blackbird and the lengthiness of all his proceedings and surroundings."

"Have it your own way," replied Placida tranquilly.

"I cannot bear arguing. Perhaps this was not even the same bird. At this rate, he carried me off at a prodigious speed and set me gently down in this very castle of which you are now the master. We entered by one of the windows, and when the bird had handed me over to the giant from whom you have been good enough to deliver me and given the fairy's message it departed.

"Then the giant turned to me, saying:

"'So you are an idler! Ah! well, we must teach you to work. You won't be the first we have cured of laziness. See how busy all my guests are.'

"I looked up as he spoke, and saw that an immense gallery ran all around the hall, in which were tapestry frames, spindles, skeins of wool, patterns, and all necessary things. Before each frame about a dozen people were sitting hard at work, at which terrible sight I fainted away, and as soon as I recovered they began to ask me what I could do.

"It was in vain that I replied as before, and with the strongest desire to be taken at my word: 'Nothing at all.'

"The giant only said:

"'Then you must learn to do something. In this world there is enough work for everybody.'

"It appeared that they were working into the tapestry all the stories the fairies liked best, and they began to try and teach me to help them, but from the first class, where they tried me to begin with, I sank lower and lower, and not even the most simple stitches could I learn.

"In vain they punished me by all the usual methods. In vain the giant showed me his large menagerie, which was entirely composed of children who would not work! Nothing did me any good, and I was reduced to drawing water for the dyeing of the wools, and I was so slow that this morning the giant flew into a rage and changed me into a gazelle. He was just putting me into the menagerie, when I happened to catch sight of a dog and was seized

with such terror that I fled away at my utmost speed and escaped through the outer court of the castle. The giant, fearing that I should be lost altogether, sent his green lion after me, with orders to bring me back, cost what it might, and I should certainly let myself be caught, or eaten up, or anything, rather than run any further, if I had not luckily met you by the fountain. And oh!" continued the princess, "how delightful it is once more to be able to sit still in peace. I was so tired of trying to learn things."

Prince Vivien said that for his part he had been kept a great deal too still and had not found it at all amusing, and then he recounted all his adventures with breathless rapidity. How he had taken shelter with Dame Patience, and consulted the oracle, and voyaged in the paper ship. Then they went hand in hand to release all the prisoners in the castle and all the princes and princesses who were in cages in the menagerie, for the instant the green giant was dead they had resumed their natural forms. As you may imagine, they were all very grateful and Princess Placida entreated them never, never to do another stitch of work so long as they lived, and they promptly made a great bonfire in the courtyard and solemnly burned all the embroidery frames and spinning-wheels. Then the princess gave them splendid presents, or rather sat by while Prince Vivien gave them, and there were great rejoicings in the green castle, and every one did his best to please the prince and princess.

But with all their good intentions they often made mistakes for Vivien and Placida were never of one mind about their plans, so it was very confusing, and they frequently found themselves obeying the prince's orders, very, very slowly, and rushing off with lightning speed to do something that the princess did not wish to have done at all, until by and by the two cousins took to consulting with and consoling one another in all these little vexations, and

at last came to be so fond of each other that for Placida's sake Vivien became quite patient, and for Vivien's sake Placida made the most unheard of exertions.

But now the fairies who had been watching all these proceedings with interest, thought it was time to interfere and ascertain by further trials if this improvement was likely to continue, and if they really loved one another so they caused Placida to seem to have a violent fever and Vivien to languish and grow dull, and made each of them very uneasy about the other, and then, finding a moment when they were apart, the fairy Mirlifiche suddenly appeared to Placida and said:

"I have just seen Prince Vivien, and he seemed to be very ill."

"Alas! yes madam," she answered, "and if you will but cure him you may take me back to the farm or bring the green giant to life again, and you shall see how obedient I will be."

"If you really wish him to recover," said the fairy, "you have only to catch the trotting mouse and the chaffinch-on-the-wing and bring them to me. Only remember that time presses!"

She had hardly finished speaking before the princess was rushing headlong out of the castle gate, and the fairy, after watching her till she was lost to sight, gave a little chuckle and went in search of the prince, who begged her earnestly to send him back to the black castle or to the paper boat if she would but save Placida's life. The fairy shook her head and looked very grave. She quite agreed with him, the princess was in a bad way. "But," said she, "if you can find the rosy mole and give him to her she will recover." So now it was the prince's turn to set off in a vast hurry, only as soon as he left the castle he happened in exactly the opposite direction to the one Placida had taken.

Now you can imagine these two devoted lovers hunting night and day. The princess in the woods, always running, always listening, pursuing hotly after two creatures which seemed to her very hard to catch, which she yet never ceased from pursuing. The prince, on the other hand, wandering continually across the meadows, his eyes fixed upon the ground, attentive to every movement among the moles. He was forced to walk slowly — slowly upon tip-toe, hardly venturing to breathe. Often he stood for hours motionless as a statue and if the desire to succeed could have helped him he would soon have possessed the rosy mole. But, alas! all that caught were black and ordinary, though strange to say he never grew impatient, but always seemed ready to begin the tedious hunt again.

But this changing of character is one of the most ordinary miracles which love works. Neither the prince nor the princess gave a thought to anything but their quest. It never even occurred to them to wonder what country they had reached. So you may guess how astonished they were one day when, having and weary chase, they cried aloud at the same instant, "At last I have saved my beloved," and then, recognising each other's voice, looked up and rushed to meet one another with the wildest joy.

Surprise kept them silent while for one delicious moment they gazed into each other's eyes, and just then who should come up but King Gridelin, for it was into his kingdom they had accidentally strayed. He recognised them in his turn and greeted them joyfully but when they turned afterward to look for the rosy mole, the chaffinch, and the trotting mouse, they had vanished, and in their places stood a lovely lady whom they did not know, the blackbird, and the green giant. King Gridelin had no sooner set eyes upon the lady than with a cry of joy he clasped her in his arms for it was no other than his long-

lost wife Santorina, about whose imprisonment in fairy-land you may perhaps read some day.

Then the blackbird and the green giant resumed their natural form, for they were enchanters, and up flew Lolotte and Mirlifiche in their chariots, and then there was a great kissing and congratulating, for everybody had regained some one he loved, including the enchanters, who loved their natural forms dearly. After this they repaired to the palace, and the wedding of Prince Vivien and Princess Placida was held at once with all the splendour imaginable. King Gridelin and Queen Santorina, after all their experiences, had no further desire to reign, so they retired happily to a peaceful place, leaving their kingdom to the prince and princess, who were beloved by all their subjects and found their greatest happiness all their lives in making other people happy.

FAIRY GIFTS

It generally happens that people's surroundings reflect more or less accurately their minds and dispositions, so perhaps that is why the Flower Fairy lived in a lovely palace, with the most delightful garden you can imagine, full of flowers and trees, and fountains, and fish-ponds, and everything nice. For the fairy herself was so kind and charming that everybody loved her, and all the young princes and princesses who formed her court were as happy as the day was long, simply because they were near her. They came to her when they were quite tiny, and never left her until they were grown up and to go away into the great world; and when that time came she gave to each whatever gift he asked of her. But it is chiefly of the Princess Sylvia that you are going to hear now. The

fairy loved her with all her heart, for she was at once original and gentle, and she had nearly reached the age at which the gifts were generally bestowed. However, the fairy had a great wish to know how the other princesses who had grown up and left her were prospering, and before the time came for Sylvia to go herself she resolved to send her to some of them. So one day her chariot, drawn by butterflies, was made ready, and the fairy said: "Sylvia, I am going to send you to the court of Iris; she will receive you with pleasure for my sake as well as your own. In two months you may come back to me again, and I will expect you to tell me what you think of her."

Sylvia was very unwilling to go away, but as the fairy wished it she said nothing — only when the two months were over she stepped joyfully into the butterfly chariot, and could not get back quickly enough to the Flower Fairy, who, for her part, was equally delighted to see her again.

"Now, child," said she, "tell me what impression you have received."

"You sent me, madam," answered Sylvia, "to the court of Iris, on whom you had bestowed the gift of beauty. She never tells any one, however, that it was your gift, though she often speaks of your kindness in general. It seemed to me that her loveliness, which fairly dazzled me at first, had absolutely deprived her of the use of any of her other gifts or graces. In allowing herself to be seen, she appeared to think that she was doing all that could possibly be required of her. But, unfortunately, while I was still with her she became seriously ill, and though she presently recovered, her beauty is entirely gone, so that she hates the very sight of herself, and is in despair. She entreated me to tell you what had happened, and to beg you, in pity, to give her beauty back to her. And, indeed, she does need it terribly, for all the things in her that

were tolerable, and even agreeable, when she was so pretty, seem quite different now she is ugly, and it is so long since she thought of using her mind or her natural cleverness, that I really don't think she has any left now. She is quite aware of all this herself, so you may imagine how unhappy she is, and how earnestly she begs for your aid."

"You have told me what I wanted to know," cried the fairy, "but alas! I cannot help her; my gifts can be given but once."

Some time passed in all the usual delights of the Flower-Fairy's palace, and then she sent for Sylvia again, and told her she was to stay for a little while with the Princess Daphne, and accordingly the butterflies whisked her off, and set her down in quite a strange kingdom. But she had only been there a very little time before a wandering butterfly brought a message from her to the fairy, begging that she might be sent for as soon as possible, and before very long she was allowed to return.

"Ah, madam!" cried she, "what a place you sent me to this time!"

"Why, what was the matter?" asked the Fairy. "Daphne was one of the princesses who asked for the gift of eloquence, if I remember rightly."

"And very ill the gift of eloquence becomes a woman," replied Sylvia, with an air of conviction. "It is true that she speaks well, and her expressions are well chosen; but then she never leaves off talking, and though at first one may be amused, one ends by being wearied to death. Above all things she loves any assembly for settling the affairs of her kingdom, for on those occasions she can talk and talk without fear of interruption; but, even then, the moment it is over she is ready to begin again about anything or nothing, as the case may be. Oh! how glad I was to come away I cannot tell you."

The fairy smiled at Sylvia's unfeigned disgust at her

late experience; but after allowing her a little time to recover she sent her to the Court of the Princess Cynthia, where she left her for three months. At the end of that time Sylvia came back to her with all the joy and contentment that one feels at being once more beside a dear friend. The fairy, as usual, was anxious to hear what she thought of Cynthia, who had always been amiable, and to whom she had given the gift of pleasing.

"I thought at first," said Sylvia, "that she must be the happiest princess in the world; she had a thousand lovers who vied with one another in their efforts to please and gratify her. Indeed, I had nearly decided that I would ask a similar gift."

"Have you altered your mind, then?" interrupted the fairy.

"Yes, indeed, madam," replied Sylvia; "and I will tell you why. The longer I stayed the more I saw that Cynthia was not really happy. In her desire to please every one she ceased to be sincere, and degenerated into a mere coquette; and even her lovers felt that the charms and fascinations which were exercised upon all who approached her without distinction were valueless, so that in the end they ceased to care for them, and went away disdainfully."

"I am pleased with you, child," said the fairy; "enjoy yourself here for awhile and presently you shall go to Phyllida."

Sylvia was glad to have leisure to think, for she could not make up her mind at all what she should ask for herself, and the time was drawing very near. However, before very long the fairy sent her to Phyllida, and waited for her report with unabated interest.

"I reached her court safely," said Sylvia, "and she received me with much kindness, and immediately began to exercise upon me that brilliant wit which you had bestowed upon her. I confess that I was fascinated by it,

and for a week thought that nothing could be more desirable; the time passed like magic, so great was the charm of her society. But I ended by ceasing to covet that gift more than any of the others I have seen, for, like the gift of pleasing, it cannot really give satisfaction. By degrees I wearied of what had so delighted me at first, especially as I perceived more and more plainly that it is impossible to be constantly smart and amusing without being frequently ill-natured, and too apt to turn all things, even the most serious, into mere occasions for a brilliant jest."

The fairy in her heart agreed with Sylvia's conclusions, and felt pleased with herself for having brought her up so well.

But now the time was come for Sylvia to receive her gift, and all her companions were assembled; the fairy stood in the midst and in the usual manner asked what she would take with her into the great world.

Sylvia paused for a moment, and then answered: "A quiet spirit." And the fairy granted her request.

This lovely gift makes life a constant happiness to its possessor, and to all who are brought into contact with her. She has all the beauty of gentleness and contentment in her sweet face; and if at times it seems less lovely through some chance grief or disquietude, the hardest thing that one ever hears said is:

"Sylvia's dear face is pale to-day. It grieves one to see her so."

And when, on the contrary, she is gay and joyful, the sunshine of her presence rejoices all who have the happiness of being near her.

THE BRONZE RING

ONCE upon a time in a certain country there lived a king whose palace was surrounded by a spacious garden. But though the gardeners were many and the soil was good, this garden yielded neither flowers nor fruit, not even grass or shady trees.

The king was in despair about it, when a wise old man said to him:

"Your gardeners do not understand their business: but what can you expect of men whose fathers were cobblers and carpenters? How should they have learned to cultivate your garden?"

"You are quite right," cried the king.

"Therefore," continued the old man, "you should send for a gardener whose father and grandfather have been gardeners before him, and very soon your garden will be full of green grass and gay flowers and you will enjoy its delicious fruit."

So the king sent messengers to every town, village, and hamlet in his dominions to look for a gardener whose forefathers had been gardeners also, and after forty days one was found.

"Come with us and be gardener to the king," they said to him.

"How can I go to the king," said the gardener, "a poor wretch like me?"

"That is of no consequence," they answered. "Here are new clothes for you and your family."

"But I owe money to several people."

"We will pay your debts," they said.

So the gardener allowed himself to be persuaded, and went away with the messengers, taking his wife and his

son with him; and the king, delighted to have found a real gardener, intrusted him with the care of his garden. The man found no difficulty in making the royal garden produce flowers and fruit, and at the end of a year the park was not like the same place and the king showered gifts upon his new servant.

The gardener, as you have heard already, had a son who was a very handsome young man, with most agreeable manners, and every day he carried the best fruit of the garden to the king and all the prettiest flowers to his daughter. Now, this princess was wonderfully pretty and was just sixteen years old, and the king was beginning to think it was time that she should be married.

"My dear child," said he, "you are of an age to take a husband, therefore I am thinking of marrying you to the son of my prime minister."

"Father," replied the princess, "I will never marry the son of the minister."

"Why not?" asked the king.

"Because I love the gardener's son," answered the princess.

On hearing this the king was at first very angry and then he wept and sighed, and declared that such a husband was not worthy of his daughter. But the young princess was not to be turned from her resolution to marry the gardener's son.

Then the king consulted his ministers. "This is what you must do," they said. "To get rid of the gardener you must send both suitors to a very distant country, and the one who returns first shall marry your daughter."

The king followed this advice and the minister's son was presented with a splendid horse and a purseful of gold-pieces, while the gardener's son had only an old lame horse and a purseful of copper money, and every one thought he would never come back from his journey.

The day before they started the princess met her lover and said to him:

"Be brave and remember always that I love you. Take this purseful of jewels and make the best use you can of them for love of me, and come back quickly and demand my hand."

The two suitors left the town together, but the minister's son went off at a gallop on his good horse and very soon was lost to sight behind the most distant hills. He travelled on for some days, and presently reached a fountain beside which an old woman all in rags sat upon a stone.

"Good-day to you, young traveller," said she.

But the minister's son made no reply.

"Have pity upon me, traveller," she said again. "I am dying of hunger, as you see, and three days have I been here and no one has given me anything."

"Let me alone, old witch," cried the young man; "I can do nothing for you," and so saying he went on his way.

That same evening the gardener's son rode up to the fountain upon his lame grey horse.

"Good-day to you young traveller," said the beggar-woman.

"Good-day, good woman," answered he.

"Young traveller, have pity upon me."

"Take my purse, good woman," said he, "and mount behind me, for your legs can't be very strong."

The old woman didn't wait to be asked twice, but mounted behind him, and in this style they reached the chief city of a powerful kingdom. The minister's son was lodged in a grand inn; the gardener's son and the old woman dismounted at the inn for beggars.

The next day the gardener's son heard a great noise in

the street and the king's heralds passed, blowing all kinds of instruments and crying:

"The king, our master, is old and infirm. He will give a great reward to whoever will cure him and give him back the strength of his youth."

Then the old beggar-woman said to her benefactor:

"This is what you must do to obtain the reward which the king promises. Go out of the town by the south gate and there you will find three little dogs of different colours; the first will be white, the second black, the third red. You must kill them and then burn them separately and gather up the ashes. Put the ashes of each dog into a bag of its own colour, then go before the door of the palace and cry out: 'A celebrated physician has come from Janina in Albania. He alone can cure the king and give him back the strength of his youth.' The king's physicians will say, 'This is an impostor and not a learned man,' and they will make all sorts of difficulties, but you will overcome them all at last and will present yourself before the sick king. You must then demand as much wood as three mules can carry and a great caldron, and must shut yourself up in a room with the sultan, and when the caldron boils you must throw him into it, and there leave him until his flesh is completely separated from his bones. Then arrange the bones in their proper places and throw over them the ashes out of the three bags. The king will come back to life and will be just as he was when he was twenty years old. For your reward you must demand the bronze ring which has the power to grant you everything you desire. Go, my son, and do not forget any of my instructions."

The young man followed the old beggar-woman's directions. On going out of the town he found the white, red, and black dogs, and killed and burned them, gathering

the ashes into three bags. Then he ran to the palace and cried:

"A celebrated physician has just come from Janina in Albania. He alone can cure the king and give him back the strength of his youth."

The king's physicians at first laughed at the unknown wayfarer, but the sultan ordered that the stranger should be admitted. They brought the caldron and the loads of wood and very soon the king was boiling away. Toward mid-day the gardener's son arranged the bones in their places, and he had hardly scattered the ashes over them before the old king revived, to find himself once more young and hearty.

"How can I reward you, my benefactor?" he cried. "Will you take half my treasures?"

"No," said the gardener's son.

"My daughter's hand?"

"No."

"Take half my kingdom?"

"No. Give me only the bronze ring which can instantly grant me anything I wish for."

"Alas!" said the king, "I set great store by that marvellous ring; nevertheless, you shall have it." And he gave it to him.

The gardener's son went back to say good-bye to the old beggar-woman; then he said to the bronze ring:

"Prepare a splendid ship in which I may continue my journey. Let the hull be of fine gold, the masts of silver, the sails of brocade; let the crew consist of twelve young men of noble appearance dressed like kings. St. Nicholas will be at the helm. As to the cargo, let it be diamonds, rubies, emeralds, and carbuncles."

And immediately a ship appeared upon the sea which resembled in every particular the description given by the

gardener's son, and stepping on board he continued his journey. Presently he arrived at a great town and established himself in a wonderful palace. After several days he met his rival, the minister's son, who had spent all his money and reduced to the disagreeable employment of a carrier of dust and rubbish. The gardener's son said to him:

"What is your name, what is your family, and from what country do you come?"

"I am the son of the prime minister of a great nation, and yet see what a degrading occupation I am reduced to."

"Listen to me: though I don't know anything more about you, I am willing to help you. I will give you a ship to take you back to your own country upon one condition."

"Whatever it may be, I accept it willingly."

"Follow me to my palace."

The minister's son followed the rich stranger, whom he had not recognised. When they reached the palace the gardener's son made a sign to his slaves, who completely undressed the new-comer.

"Make this ring red-hot," commanded the master, "and mark the man with it upon his back."

The slaves obeyed him.

"Now, young man," said the rich stranger, "I am going to give you a vessel which will take you back to your own country."

And going out he took the bronze ring and said:

"Bronze ring, obey thy master. Prepare me a ship of which the half-rotten timbers shall be painted black, let the sails be in rags, and the sailors infirm and sickly. One shall have lost a leg, another an arm, the third shall be a hunchback, another lame or club-footed or blind,

and most of them shall be ugly and covered with scars. Go, and let my orders be executed."

The minister's son embarked in this old vessel and, thanks to favourable winds, at length reached his own country. In spite of the pitiable condition in which he returned they received him joyfully.

"I am the first to come back," said he to the king; "now fulfil your promise and give me the princess in marriage."

So they at once began to prepare for the wedding festivities. As to the poor princess, she was sorrowful and angry enough about it.

The next morning at daybreak a wonderful ship with every sail set came to anchor before the town. The king happened at that moment to be at the palace window.

"What strange ship is this," he cried, "that has a golden hull, silver masts, and silken sails, and who are the young men like princes who man it? And do I not see St. Nicholas at the helm? Go at once and invite the captain of the ship to come to the palace."

His servants obeyed him, and very soon in came an enchantly handsome young prince, dressed in rich silk ornamented with pearls and diamonds.

"Young man," said the king, "you are welcome, whoever you may be. Do me the favour to be my guest as long as you remain in my capital."

"Many thanks, sire," replied the captain. "I accept your offer."

"My daughter is about to be married," said the king. "Will you give her away?"

"I shall be charmed, sire."

Soon after came the princess and her betrothed.

"Why, how is this?" cried the young captain. "Would you marry this charming princess to such a man as that?"

"But he is my prime minister's son."

"What does that matter? I cannot give your daughter away. The man she is betrothed to is one of my servants."

"Your servant?"

"With a doubt. I met him in a distant town reduced to carrying away dust and rubbish from the houses. I had pity on him and engaged him as one of my servants."

"It is impossible!" cried the king.

"Do you wish me to prove what I say? This young man returned in a vessel which I fitted out for him, an unseaworthy ship with a battered hull, and the sailors were infirm and crippled."

"It is quite true," said the king.

"It is false," cried the minister's son. "I do not know this man."

"Sire," said the young captain, "order your daughter's betrothed to be stripped and see if the mark of my ring is not branded upon his back."

The king was about to give this order, when the minister's son, to save himself from such an indignity, admitted that the story was true.

"And now, sire," said the young captain, "do not you recognise me?"

"I recognise you," said the princess; "you are the gardener's son whom I have always loved, and it is you I wish to marry."

"Young man, you shall be my son-in-law," cried the king. "The marriage festivities are already begun, so you shall marry my daughter this very day."

And so that very day the gardener's son married the beautiful princess.

Several months passed. The young couple were as happy as the day was long, and the king was more and

more pleased with himself for having secured such a son-in-law.

But presently the captain of the golden ship found it necessary to take a long voyage, and after embracing his wife tenderly he embarked.

Now, in the outskirts of the capital there lived a Jew who had spent his life in studying black arts — alchemy, astrology, magic, and enchantment. This man found out that the gardener's son had only succeeded in marrying the princess by the help of the genii who obeyed the bronze ring.

"I will have that ring," said he to himself. So he went down to the sea-shore and caught some little red fishes. Really they were quite wonderfully pretty. Then he came back, and passing before the princess' window he began to cry out:

"Who wants some pretty little red fishes?"

The princess heard him and sent out one of her slaves, who said to the old Jew:

"What will you take for your fish?"

"A bronze ring."

"A bronze ring, old simpleton! And where shall I find one?"

"Under the cushion in the princess' room."

The slave went back to her mistress.

"The old madman will take neither gold nor silver," said she.

"What does he want, then?"

"A bronze ring that is hidden under a cushion."

"Find the ring and give it to him," said the princess.

And at last the slave found the bronze ring which the captain of the golden ship had accidentally left behind, and carried it to the Jew, who made off with it instantly.

Hardly had he reached his own house when, taking the ring, he said: "Bronze ring, obey thy master. I desire

that the golden ship shall turn to black wood and the crew to hideous negroes; that St. Nicholas shall leave the helm, and that the only cargo shall be black cats."

And the genii of the bronze ring obeyed him.

Finding himself upon the sea in this miserable condition, the young captain understood that some one must have stolen the bronze ring from him, and he lamented his fortune loudly; but that did him no good.

"Alas!" he said to himself, "whoever has taken my ring has probably taken my dear wife also. What good will it do me to go back to my own country?" And he sailed about from island to island and from shore to shore, believing that wherever he went everybody was laughing at him, and very soon his poverty was so great that he and his crew and the poor black cats had nothing to eat but herbs and roots. After wandering about a long time he reached an island inhabited by mice. The captain landed upon the shore and began to explore the country. There were mice everywhere and nothing but mice. Some of the black cats had followed him, and not having been fed for many days, they were fearfully hungry and made terrible havoc among the mice.

Then the queen of the mice held a council.

"These cats will eat every one of us," she said, "if the captain of the ship does not shut the ferocious animals up. Let us send a deputation to him of the bravest among us."

Several mice offered themselves for this mission and set out to find the young captain.

"Captain," said they, "go away quickly from our island or we will perish, every mouse of us."

"Willingly," replied the young captain, "upon one condition. That is that you shall first bring me back a bronze ring which some clever magician has stolen from me. If you do not do this I will land all my cats upon your island and you shall be exterminated."

The mice withdrew in great dismay. "What is to be done?" said the queen. "How can we find this bronze ring?" She held a new council calling in mice from every quarter of the globe, but nobody knew where the bronze ring was. Suddenly three mice arrived from a very distant country. One was blind, the second lame, and the third had her ears cropped.

"Ho! ho! ho!" said the new comers. "We come from a far distant country."

"Do you know where the bronze ring is which the genii obey?"

"Ho! ho! ho! We know; a wicked Jew has taken possession of it and now he keeps it in his pocket by day and in his mouth by night."

"Go and take it from him and come back as soon as possible."

So the three mice made themselves a boat and set sail for the Jew's country. When they reached the capital they landed and ran to the palace, leaving only the blind mouse on the shore to take care of the boat. Then they waited till it was night. The Jew lay down in bed and put the bronze ring into his mouth and very soon he was asleep.

"Now what shall we do?" said the two little animals to each other.

The mouse with the cropped ears found a lamp full of oil and a bottle full of pepper. So she dipped her tail first in the oil and then in the pepper and held it to the Jew's nose.

"Atisha! atisha!" sneezed the Jew, but he did not wake, and the shock made the bronze ring jump out of his mouth. Quick as thought the lame mouse snatched up the precious talisman and carried it off to the boat.

Imagine the despair of the magician when he awoke and the bronze ring was nowhere to be found!

But by that time our three mice had set sail with their prize. A favouring breeze was carrying them toward the island where the queen of the mice was awaiting them. Naturally they began to talk about the bronze ring.

"Which of us deserves the most credit?" they cried all at once.

"I do," said the blind mouse, "for without my watchfulness our boat would have drifted away to the open sea."

"No, indeed," cried the mouse with the cropped ears; "the credit is mine. Did I not cause the ring to jump out of the Jew's mouth?"

"No, it is mine," cried the lame one, "for I ran off with the ring."

And from high words they soon came to blows, and, alas! when the quarrel was fiercest the bronze ring fell into the sea.

"How are we to face our queen," said the three mice, "when by our folly we have lost the talisman and condemned our people to be utterly exterminated? We cannot go back to our country; let us land on this desert island and there end our miserable lives." No sooner said than done. The boat reached the island and the mice landed.

The blind mouse was speedily deserted by her two sisters, who went off to hunt flies, but as she wandered sadly along the shore she found a dead fish and was eating it, when she felt something very hard. At her cries the other two mice ran up.

"It is the bronze ring! It is the talisman!" they cried joyfully, and getting into their boat again they soon reached the mouse island. It was time they did, for the captain was just going to land his cargo of cats, when a deputation of mice brought him the precious bronze ring.

"Bronze ring," commanded the young man, "obey thy master. Let my ship appear as it was before."

Immediately the genii of the ring set to work and the old black vessel became once more the wonderful golden ship with sails of brocade; the handsome sailors ran to the silver masts and the silken ropes, and very soon they set sail for the capital.

Ah! how merrily the sailors sang as they flew over the glassy sea!

At last the port was reached.

The captain landed and ran to the palace, where he found the Jew asleep. The princess clasped her husband in a long embrace. The magician tried to escape, but he was seized and bound with strong cords.

The next day the Jew, tied to the tail of a savage mule loaded with nuts, was broken into many pieces as there were nuts upon the mule's back.

* THE PIED PIPER

NEWTOWN, or Franchville, as't was called of old, is a sleepy little town, as you all may know, upon the Solent shore. Sleepy as it is now, it was once noisy enough, and what made the noise was — rats. The place was so infested with them as to be scarce worth living in. There wasn't a barn or a corn-rick, a store-room or a cupboard, but they ate their way into it. Not a cheese but they gnawed it hollow, not a sugar puncheon but they cleared out. Why, the very mead and beer in the barrels was not safe from them. They'd gnaw a hole in the top of the tun, and down would go one master rat's tail, and when he brought it up round would crowd all the friends and cousins, and each would have a suck at the tail.

* A legend of the Isle of Wight.

Had they stopped here it might have been borne. But the squeaking and shrieking, the hurrying and scurrying, so that you could neither hear yourself speak nor get a wink of good honest sleep the livelong night! Not to mention that, Mamma must needs sit up, and keep watch and ward over baby's cradle, or there'd have been a big ugly rat running across the poor little fellow's face, and doing who knows what mischief.

Why didn't the good people of the town have cats? Well, they did, and there was a fair stand-up fight, but in the end the rats were too many, and the pussies were regularly driven from the field. Poison, I hear you say? Why, they poisoned so many that it fairly bred a plague. Ratcatchers! Why, there wasn't a ratcatcher from John O'Groat's house to the Land's End that hadn't tried his luck. But do what they might, cats or poison, terrier or traps, there seemed to be more rats than ever, and every day a fresh rat was cocking his tail or pricking his whiskers.

The Mayor and the town council were at their wit's end. As they were sitting one day in the town hall racking their poor brains, and bewailing their hard fate, who should run in but the town beadle. "Please your Honour," says he, "here is a very queer fellow come to town. I don't know rightly what to make of him." "Show him in," said the Mayor, and in he stepped. A queer fellow, truly. For there wasn't a colour of the rainbow but you might find it in some corner of his dress, and he was tall and thin, and had keen piercing eyes.

"I'm called the Pied Piper," he began. "And pray what might you be willing to pay me, if I rid you of every single rat in Franchville?"

Well, much as they feared the rats, they feared parting with their money, and fain would they have higgled and haggled. But the Piper was not a man to stand nonsense,

and the upshot was that fifty pounds were promised him (and it meant a lot of money in those days) as soon as not a rat was left to squeak or scurry in Franchville.

Out of the hall stepped the Piper, and as he stepped he laid his pipe to his lips and a shrill keen tune sounded through street and house. And as each note pierced the air you might have seen a strange sight. For out of every hole the rats came tumbling. There were none too old and none too young, none too big and none too little to crowd at the Piper's heels and with eager feet and upturned noses to patter after him as he paced the streets. Nor was the Piper unmindful of the little toddling ones, for every fifty yards he'd stop and give an extra flourish on his pipe just to give them time to keep up with the older and stronger of the band.

Up Silver Street he went, and down Gold Street, and at the end of Gold Street is the harbour and the broad Solent beyond. And as he paced along, slowly and gravely, the townsfolk flocked to door and window and many a blessing they called down upon his head.

As for getting near him there were too many rats. And now that he was at the water's edge he stepped into a boat, and not a rat, as he shoved off into deep water, piping shrilly all the while, but followed him, splashing, paddling, and wagging their tails with delight. On and on he played and played until the tide went down, and each master rat sank deeper and deeper in the slimy ooze of the harbour, until every mother's son of them was dead and smothered.

The tide rose again, and the Piper stepped on shore, but never a rat followed. You may fancy the townsfolk had been throwing up their caps and hurrahing and stopping up rat holes and setting the church bells a-ringing. But when the Piper stepped ashore, and not so much as a single squeak was to be heard, the Mayor and the Council,

and the townsfolk generally began to hum and to ha and to shake their heads.

For the town money chest had been sadly emptied of late, and where was the fifty pounds to come from? Such an easy job, too! Just getting into a boat and playing a pipe! Why, the Mayor himself could have done that if only he had thought of it.

So he hummed and ha'ad and at last, "Come, my good man," said he, "you see what poor folk we are; how can we manage to pay you fifty pounds? Will you not take twenty? When all is said and done 'twill be good pay for the trouble you've taken."

"Fifty pounds was what I bargained for," said the Piper shortly; "and if I were you I'd pay it quickly. For I can pipe many kinds of tunes, as folk sometimes find to their cost."

"Would you threaten us, you strolling vagabond?" shrieked the Mayor, and at the same time he winked to the Council; "the rats are all dead and drowned," muttered he; "and so you may do your worst, my good man," and with that he turned short upon his heel.

"Very well," said the Piper, and he smiled a quiet smile. With that he laid his pipe to his lips afresh, but now there came forth no shrill notes, as it were of scraping and gnawing, and squeaking and scurrying, but the tune was joyous and resonant, full of happy laughter and merry play. And as he paced down the street the elders mocked, but from school-room and play-room, from nursery and workshop, not a child but ran out with eager glee and shout following gaily at the Piper's call. Dancing, laughing, joining hands and tripping feet, the bright throng moved along up Gold Street and down Silver Street and beyond Silver Street lay the cool green forests full of old oaks and wide spreading beeches. In and out among the oak trees you might catch glimpses of the Piper's many

coloured coat. You might hear the laughter of the children break and fade and die away as deeper into the lone green wood the stranger went and the children followed.

All the while the elders watched and waited. They mocked no longer now. And watch and wait as they might, never did they set their eyes again upon the Piper in his parti-coloured coat. Never were their hearts gladdened by the song and dance of the children issuing forth from amongst the ancient oaks of the forests.

THE BLUE MOUNTAINS

THERE were once a Scotsman and an Englishman and an Irishman serving in the army together, who took it into their heads to run away on the first opportunity they could get. The chance came, and they took it. They went on travelling for two days through a great forest without food or drink and without coming across a single house, and every night they had to climb up into the trees through fear of the wild beasts that were in the wood. On the second morning the Scotsman saw from the top of his tree a great castle far away. He said to himself that he would certainly die if he stayed in the forest without anything to eat but the roots of grass, which would not keep him alive very long. As soon, then, as he got down out of the tree he set off toward the castle, without so much as telling his companions that he had seen it at all. Perhaps the hunger and want they had suffered had changed their nature so much that the one did not care what became of the other if he could save himself. He travelled on most of the day, so that it was quite late when he reached the castle and to his great disappointment, found nothing but closed doors and no smoke rising from the chimneys. He thought

"The elders mocked, but the children followed"

there was nothing for it but to die, after all, and had lain down beside the wall, when he heard a window being opened high above him. At this he looked up and saw the most beautiful woman he had ever set eyes on.

"Oh, it is fortune that has sent you to me!" he said.

"It is, indeed," said she. "What are you in need of, or what has sent you here?"

"Necessity," said he. "I am dying for want of food and drink."

"Come inside, then," she said. "There is plenty of both here."

Accordingly, he went in to where she was, and she opened a large room for him, where he saw a number of men lying asleep. She then set food before him and after that showed him to the room where the others were. He lay down on one of the beds and fell asleep. And now we must go back to the two that he left behind him in the wood.

When nightfall and the time of the wild beasts came upon these, the Englishman happened to climb up into the very same tree on which the Scotsman was when he got sight of the castle; and as soon as the day began to dawn and the Englishman looked to the four quarters of heaven, what did he see but the castle too! Off he went without saying a word to the Irishman, and everything happened to him just as it had done to the Scotchman.

The poor Irishman was now left all alone, and did not know where the others had gone to, so he just stayed where he was, very sad and miserable. When night came he climbed up into the same tree as the Englishman had done on the night before. As soon as day came he also saw the castle and set out toward it; but when he reached it he could see no signs of fire or living being about it.

Before long, however, he heard the window opened above his head, looked up, and beheld the most beautiful he had ever seen. He asked if she would give him food and drink, and she answered kindly and heartily that she would if he would only come inside. This he did very willingly, and she set before him food and drink that he had never seen the like of before. In the room there was a bed, with diamond rings hanging at every loop of the curtains, and everything that was in the room besides astonished him so much that he actually forgot that he was hungry. When she saw that he was not eating at all she asked him what he wanted yet, to which he replied that he would neither eat nor drink until he knew who she was, or where she came from, or who had put her there.

"I shall tell you that," said she. "I am an enchanted princess, and my father has promised that the man who releases me from the spell shall have the third of his kingdom while he is alive and the whole of it after he is dead, and marry me as well. If ever I saw a man who looked likely to do this, you are the one. I have been here for sixteen years now, and no one who ever came to the castle has asked me who I was except yourself. Every other man that has come, so long as I have been here, lies asleep in the big room down there."

"Tell me, then," said the Irishman, "what is the spell that has been laid on you and how you can be freed from it."

"There is a little room there," said the princess, "and if I could get a man to stay in it from ten o'clock till midnight for three nights on end I should be freed from the spell."

"I am the man for you, then," said he. "I will take on hand to do it."

Thereupon she brought him a pipe and tobacco, and he went into the room; but before long he heard a hammering

and knocking on the outside of the door and was told to open it.

"I won't," he said.

The next moment the door came flying in, and those outside along with it. They knocked him down, and kicked him, and knelt on his body till it came to midnight; but as soon as the cock crew they all disappeared. The Irishman was little more than alive by this time. As soon as daylight appeared the princess came and found him lying full length on the floor, unable to speak a word. She took a bottle, rubbed him from head to foot with something from it, and thereupon he was as sound as ever; but after what he had got that night he was very unwilling to try it a second time. The princess, however, entreated him to stay, saying that the next night would not be so bad, and in the end he gave in and stayed.

When it was getting near midnight he heard them ordering him to open the door, and there were three of them for every one that there had been the previous evening. He did not make the slightest movement to go out to them or to open the door, but before long they broke it up and were in on top of him. They laid hold of him and kept throwing him between them up to the ceiling or jumping above him until the cock crew, when they all disappeared. When day came the princess went to the room to see if he was still alive, and taking the bottle put it to his nostrils, which soon brought him to himself. The first thing he said then was that he was a fool to go on getting himself killed for any one he ever saw, and was determined to be off and stay there no longer. When the princess learned his intentions she entreated him to stay, reminding him that another night would free her from the spell. "Besides," she said, "if there is a single spark of life in you when the day comes, the stuff that is in this bottle will make you as sound as ever you were."

With all this the Irishman decided to stay; but that night there were three at him for every one that was there the two nights before, and it looked very unlikely that he would be alive in the morning after all that he got. When morning dawned and the princess came to see if he was still alive, she found him lying on the floor as if dead. She tried to see if there was breath in him, but could not quite make it out. Then she put her hand on his pulse and found a faint movement in it. Accordingly, she poured what was in the bottle on him, and before long he rose up on his feet and was as well as ever he was. So that business was finished and the princess was freed from the spell.

The princess then told the Irishman that she must go away for the present, but would return for him in a few days in a carriage drawn by four grey horses. He told her to "be aisy" and not speak like that to him. "I have paid dear for you for the last three nights," he said, "if I have to part with you now"; but in the twinkling of an eye she had disappeared. He did not know what to do with himself when he saw that she was gone, but before she went she had given him a little rod, with which he could, when he pleased, waken the men who had been sleeping there, some of them for sixteen years.

After being thus left alone, he went in and stretched himself on three chairs that were in the room, when what does he see coming in at the door but a little fair-haired lad!

"Where did you come from, my lad?" said the Irishman.

"I came to make ready your food for you," said he.

"Who told you to do that?" said the Irishman.

"My mistress," answered the lad—"the princess that was under the spell and is now free."

By this the Irishman knew that she had sent the lad to wait on him. The lad also told him that his mistress

wished him to be ready next morning at nine o'clock, when she would come for him with the carriage, as she had promised. He was greatly pleased at this, and next morning, when the time was drawing near, went out into the garden; but the little fair-headed lad took a big pin out of his pocket and stuck it into the back of the Irishman's coat without his noticing it, whereupon he fell sound asleep.

Before long the princess came with the carriage and four horses and asked the lad whether his master was awake. He said that he wasn't. "It is bad for him," said she, "when the night is not long enough for him to sleep. Tell him if he doesn't meet me this time to-morrow it is not likely that he will ever see me again all his life."

As soon as she was gone the fair-haired lad took the pin out of his master's coat, who instantly awoke. The first word he said to the lad was: "Have you seen her?"

"Yes," said he, "and she bade me tell you that if you don't meet her at nine o'clock to-morrow you will never see her again."

He was very sorry when he heard this, and could not understand why the sleep should have fallen upon him just when she was coming. He decided, however, to go early to bed that night, in order to rise in time next morning, and so he did. When it was getting near nine o'clock he went out to the garden to wait till she came, and the fair-haired lad along with him, but as soon as the lad got a chance he stuck the pin into his master's coat again, and he fell asleep as before. Precisely at nine o'clock came the princess in her carriage with four horses and asked the lad if his master had got up yet; but he said: "No, he is asleep, just as he was the day before."

"Dear! dear!" said the princess. "I am sorry for him. Was the sleep he had last night not long enough for him? Tell him that he will never see me here again; and

here is a sword that you will give him in my name, and my blessing along with it."

With this she went off, and as soon as she had gone the lad took the pin out of the master's coat. He awoke instantly, and the first word he said was: "Have you seen her?" The lad said that he had, and there was the sword she had left for him. The Irishman was ready to kill the lad out of sheer vexation, but when he gave a glance over his shoulder not a trace of the fair-haired lad was left.

Being thus left all alone, he thought of going into the room where all the men were lying asleep, and there among the rest he found his two comrades who had deserted along with him. Then he remembered what the princess had told him — that he had only to touch them with the rod she had given him and they would all awake; and the first he touched were his own comrades. They started to their feet at once, and he gave them as much silver and gold as they could carry when they went away. There was plenty to do before he got all the others wakened, for the two doors of the castle were crowded with them all the day long.

The loss of the princess kept rankling in his mind day and night, till finally he thought he would go about the world to see if he could find any one to give him news of her. So he took the best horse in the stable and set out. Three years he spent travelling through forests and wildernesses; but could find no one able to tell him anything of the princess. At last he fell into so great despair that he thought he would put an end to his own life, and for this purpose laid hold of the sword that she had given him by the hands of the fair-haired lad; but on drawing it from its sheath he noticed that there was some writing on one side of the blade. He looked at this, and read there: "You will find me in the Blue Mountains." This made him take heart again, and he gave up the idea of killing

himself, thinking that he would go on in hope of meeting some one who could tell him where the Blue Mountains were. After he had gone a long way, without thinking where he was going, he saw at last a light far away and made straight for it. On reaching it he found it came from a little house, and as soon as the man inside heard the noise of the horse's feet he came out to see who was there. Seeing a stranger on horseback, he asked what brought him there and where he was going.

"I have lived here," said he, "for three hundred years, and all that time I have not seen a single human being but yourself."

"I have been going about for the last three years," said the Irishman, "to see if I could find any one who can tell me where the Blue Mountains are."

"Come in," said the old man, "and stay with me all night. I have a book which contains the history of the world, which I shall go through to-night, and if there is such a place as the Blue Mountains in it we shall find it out."

The Irishman stayed there all night, and as soon as morning came rose to go. The old man said he had not gone to sleep all night for going through the book, but there was not a word about the Blue Mountains in it. "But I'll tell you what," said he: "if there is such a place on earth at all, I have a brother who lives nine hundred miles from here, and he is sure to know where they are if any one in this world does." The Irishman answered that he never could go those nine hundred miles, for his horse was giving in already. "That doesn't matter," said the old man. "I can do better than that. I have only to blow my whistle and you will be at my brother's house before nightfall."

So he blew his whistle, and the Irishman did not know where on earth he was until he found himself at the other

old man's door, who also told him it was three hundred years since he had seen any one and asked him where he was going.

"I am going to see if I can find any one that can tell me where the Blue Mountains are," he said.

"If you will stay with me to-night," said the old man, "I have a book of the history of the world, and I shall know where they are before daylight if there is such a place in it at all."

He stayed there all night, but there was not a word in the book about the Blue Mountains. Seeing that he was rather cast down, the old man told him that he had a brother nine hundred miles away, and that if information could be got about them from any one, it would be from him; "and I will enable you," he said, "to reach the place where he lives before night." So he blew his whistle, and the Irishman landed at the brother's house before nightfall. When the old man saw him he said he had not seen a single man for three hundred years, and was very much surprised to see any one come to him now.

"Where are you going to?" he said.

"I am going about asking for the Blue Mountains," said the Irishman.

"The Blue Mountains?" said the old man.

"Yes," said the Irishman.

"I never heard the name before; but if they do exist I shall find them out. I am master of all the birds in the world, and have only to blow my whistle and every one will come to me. I shall then ask each of them to tell where it came from, and if there is any way of finding out the Blue Mountains that is it."

So he blew his whistle, and when he blew it all the birds of the world began to gather. The old man questioned each of them as to where they had come from, but there was not one of them that had come from the Blue Moun-

tains. After he had run over them all, however, he missed a big eagle that was wanting, and wondered that it had not come. Soon afterward he saw something big coming toward him, darkening the sky. It kept coming nearer and growing bigger, and what was this, after all, but the eagle! When she arrived the old man scolded her and asked what had kept her so long behind.

"I couldn't help it," she said. "I had more than twenty times further to come than any bird that has come here to-day."

"Where have you come from, then?" said the old man.

"From the Blue Mountains," said she.

"Indeed!" said the old man; "and what are they doing there?"

"They are making ready this very day," said the eagle, "for the marriage of the daughter of the King of the Blue Mountains. For three years now she has refused to marry any one whatsoever, until she should give up all hope of the coming of the man who released her from the spell. Now she can wait no longer, for three years is the time that she agreed with her father to remain without marrying."

The Irishman knew that it was for himself she had been waiting so long, but he was unable to make any better of it, for he had no hope of reaching the Blue Mountains all his life. The old man noticed how sad he grew, and asked the eagle what she would take for carrying this man on her back to the Blue Mountains.

"I must have threescore cattle killed," said she, "and cut up into quarters, and every time I look over my shoulder he must throw one of them into my mouth."

As soon as the Irishman and the old man heard her demand they went out hunting, and before evening they had killed three score cattle. They made quarters of them as the eagle told them, and then the old man asked

her to lie down till they would get it all heaped up on her back. First of all, though, they had to get a ladder of fourteen steps to enable them to get on to the eagle's back, and there they piled up the meat as well as they could. Then the old man told the Irishman to mount, and to remember to throw a quarter of beef to her every time she looked round. He went up, and the old man gave the eagle the word to be off, which she instantly obeyed; and every time she turned her head the Irishman threw a quarter of beef into her mouth.

As they came near the borders of the kingdom of the Blue Mountains, however, the beef was done, and when the eagle looked over her shoulder what was the Irishman at but throwing the stone between her tail and her neck! At this she turned a complete somersault and threw the Irishman off into the sea, where he fell into the bay that was right in front of the king's palace. Fortunately the points of his toes just touched the bottom, and he managed to get ashore.

When he went up into the town all the streets were gleaming with light and the wedding of the princess was just about to begin. He went into the first house he came to, and this happened to be the house of the king's hen-wife. He asked the old woman what was causing all the noise and light in the town.

"The princess," said she, "is going to be married to-night against her will, for she has been expecting every day that the man who freed her from the spell would come."

"There's a guinea for you," said he. "Go and bring her here."

The old woman went, and soon returned along with the princess. She and the Irishman recognised each other, and were married, and had a great wedding that lasted for a year and a day.

BLOCKHEAD HANS

Far away in the country lay an old manor-house where lived an old squire who had two sons. They thought themselves so clever that, if they had known only half what they thought they knew, it would have been enough. They both wanted to marry the king's daughter, for she had proclaimed that she would have for her husband the man who knew best how to choose his words.

Both prepared for the wooing a whole week, which was the longest time allowed them; but, after all, it was quite long enough, for they both had preparatory knowledge, and every one knows how useful that is. One knew the whole Latin dictionary and also three years' issue of the daily paper of the town off by heart, so that he could repeat it all backward or forward, as you pleased. The other had worked at the laws of the corporation and knew by heart what every member of the corporation ought to know, so that he thought he could quite speak on state matters and give his opinion. He understood, besides this, how to embroider with roses and other flowers and scrolls, for he was very ready with his fingers.

"I shall win the king's daughter!" they both cried.

Their old father gave each of them a fine horse; the one who knew the dictionary and the daily paper by heart had a black horse, while the other who was so clever at corporation law had a milk-white one. Then they oiled the corners of their mouths so that they might be able to speak more fluently. All the servants stood in the courtyard and saw them mount their steeds, and here by chance came the third brother; for the squire had three sons, but nobody counted him with his brothers, for he was not so

learned as they were, and he was generally called Blockhead Hans.

"Oh! oh!" said Blockhead Hans. "Where are you off to? You are in your Sunday-best clothes!"

"We are going to court to woo the princess! Don't you know what is known throughout all the countryside?" And they told him all about it.

"Hurrah! I'll go too!" cried Blockhead Hans; and the brothers laughed at him and rode off.

"Dear father!" cried Blockhead Hans, "I must have a horse too. What a desire for marriage has seized me! If she will have me she will have me, and if she won't have me I will have her."

"Stop that nonsense!" said the old man. "I will not give you a horse. You can't speak; you don't know how to choose your words. Your brothers. Ah! they are very different lads!"

"Well," said Blockhead Hans, "if I can't have a horse I will take a goat which is mine. He can carry me!"

And he did so. He sat astride on the goat, struck his heels into his side, and went rattling down the highroad like a hurricane.

Hoppetty-hop! what a ride! "Here I come!" shouted Blockhead Hans, singing so that the echoes were roused far and near. But his brothers were riding slowly in front. They were not speaking, but they were thinking over all the good things they were going to say, for everything had to be thought out.

"Hullo!" bawled Blockhead Hans; "here I am! Just look what I found on the road!" And he showed them a dead crow which he had picked up.

"Blockhead!" said his brothers, "what are you going to do with it?"

"With the crow? I shall give it to the princess!"

"Do so, certainly!" they said, laughing loudly and riding on.

"Slap! bang! here I am again! Look what I have just found! You don't find such things every day on the road!"

And the brothers looked round to see what in the world he could have found.

"Blockhead!" said they, "that is an old wooden shoe without the top! Are you going to send that, too, to the princess?"

"Of course I shall!" returned Blockhead Hans; and the brothers laughed and rode on a good way.

"Slap! bang! here I am!" cried Blockhead Hans; "better and better — it is really famous!"

"What have you found now?" asked the brothers.

"Oh," said Blockhead Hans, "it is really too good! How pleased the princess will be!"

"Why!" said the brothers, "this is pure mud, straight from the ditch."

"Of course it is!" said Blockhead Hans, "and it is the best kind! Look how it runs through one's fingers!" And so saying he filled his pockets with the mud.

But the brothers rode on so fast that dust and sparks flew all around, and they reached the gate of the town a good hour before Blockhead Hans. Here came the suitors, numbered according to their arrival, and they were ranged in rows, six in each row, and they were so tightly packed that they could not move their arms. This was a very good thing, for otherwise they would have torn each other in pieces, merely because one was in front of the other.

All the country people were standing round the king's throne, and were crowded together in thick masses almost out of the windows to see the princess receive the suitors; and as each one came into the room all his fine phrases went out like a candle!

"It doesn't matter!" said the princess. "Away! out with him!"

At last she came to the row in which the brother who knew the dictionary by heart was, but he did not know it any longer; he had quite forgotten it in the rank and file. And the floor creaked and the ceiling was all made of glass mirrors, so that he saw himself standing on his head, and by each window were standing three reporters and an editor; and each of them was writing down what was said, to publish it in the paper that came out and was sold at the street corners for a penny. It was fearful, and they had made up the fire so hot that it was grilling.

"It is hot in here, isn't it?" said the suitor.

"Of course it is! My father is roasting young chickens to-day!" said the princess.

"Ahem!" There he stood like an idiot. He was not prepared for such a speech; he did not know what to say, although he wanted to say something witty. "Ahem!"

"It doesn't matter!" said the princess. "Take him out!" and out he had to go.

Now the other brother entered.

"How hot it is!" he said.

"Of course! We are roasting young chickens to-day!" remarked the princess.

"How do you — um!" he said, and the reporters wrote down, "How do you — um."

"It doesn't matter!" said the princess. "Take him out!"

Now Blockhead Hans came in. He rode his goat right into the hall.

"I say! How roasting hot it is here!" said he.

"Of course! I am roasting young chickens to-day!" said the princess.

"That's good!" replied Blockhead Hans. "Then, can I roast a crow with them?"

"With the greatest of pleasure!" said the princess; "but have you anything you can roast it in? I have neither pot nor saucepan."

"Oh, rather!" said Blockhead Hans. "Here is a cooking implement with tin rings," and he drew out the old wooden shoe and laid the crow in it.

"That is quite a meal!" said the princess; "but where shall we get the soup from?"

"I've got that in my pocket!" said Blockhead Hans. "I have so much that I can quite well throw some away!" and he poured some mud out of his pocket.

"I like you!" said the princess. "You can answer and you can speak, and I will marry you. But do you know that every word which we are saying and have said has been taken down and will be in the paper to-morrow? By each window, do you see, there are standing three reporters and an old editor, and this old editor is the worst, for he doesn't understand anything!" But she only said this to tease Blockhead Hans. And the reporters giggled and each dropped a drop of ink on the floor.

"Ah! are those the great people?" said Blockhead Hans. "Then I will give the editor the best!" So saying, he turned his pockets inside out and threw the mud right in his face.

"That was neatly done!" said the princess. "I couldn't have done it, but I will soon learn how to!"

Blockhead Hans became king, got a wife and a crown, and sat on the throne; and this we have still damp from the newspaper of the editor and the reporters — and they are not to be believed for a moment.

HERMOD AND HADVOR

Once upon a time there was a king and a queen who had an only daughter, called Hadvor, who was fair and beautiful, and being an only child was heir to the kingdom. The king and queen had also a foster-son, named Hermod, who was just about the same age as Hadvor and was good-looking, as well as clever at most things. Hermod and Hadvor often played together while they were children, and liked each other so much that while they were still young they secretly plighted their troth to each other.

As time went on the queen fell sick, and, suspecting that it was her last illness, sent for the king to come to her. When he came she told him that she had no long time to live and therefore wished to ask one thing of him, which was that, if he married another wife, he should promise to take no other one than the Queen of Hetland the Good. The king gave the promise, and thereafter the queen died.

Time went past, and the king, growing tired of living alone, fitted out his ship and sailed out to sea. As he sailed there came upon him so thick a mist that he altogether lost his bearings, but after long trouble he found land. There he laid his ship to and went on shore all alone. After walking for some time he came to a forest, into which he went a little way and stopped. Then he heard sweet music from a harp, and went in the direction of the sound until he came to a clearing, and there he saw three women, one of whom sat on a golden chair and was beautiful and grandly dressed; she held a harp in her hands and was very sorrowful. The second was also finely dressed, but younger in appearance, and also sat on a chair, but it was not so grand as the first one's. The

third stood beside them, and was very pretty to look at; she had a green cloak over her other clothes, and it was easy to see that she was maid to the other two.

After the king had looked at them for a little he went forward and saluted them. The one that sat on the golden chair asked him who he was and where he was going; and he told her all the story — how he was king and had lost his queen, and was now on his way to Hetland the Good to ask the queen of that country in marriage. She answered that fortune had contrived this wonderfully, for pirates had plundered Hetland and killed the king, and she had fled from the land in terror and had come hither after great trouble, and she was the very person he was looking for, and the others were her daughter and maid. The king immediately asked her hand; she gladly received his proposal and accepted him at once. Thereafter they all set out and made their way to the ship, and after that nothing is told of their voyage until the king reached his own country. There he made a great feast and celebrated his marriage with this woman, and after that things are quiet for a time.

Hermod and Hadvor took but little notice of the queen and her daughter, but, on the other hand, Hadvor and the queen's maid, whose name was Olof, were very friendly, and Olof came often to visit Hadvor in her castle. Before long the king went out to war, and no sooner was he away than the queen came to talk with Hermod, and said that she wanted him to marry her daughter. Hermod told her straight and plain that he would not do so, at which the queen grew terribly angry, and said that in that case neither should he have Hadvor, for she would now lay this spell on him, that he should go to a desert island and there be a lion by day and a man by night. He should also think always of Hadvor, which would cause him all the more sorrow, and from this spell he should never be freed

until Hadvor burned the lion's skin, and that would not happen very soon.

As soon as the queen had finished her speech Hermod replied that he also laid a spell on her, and that was that as soon as he was freed from her enchantments she should become a rat and her daughter a mouse, and fight with each other in the hall until he killed them with his sword.

After this Hermod disappeared, and no one knew what had become of him; the queen caused search to be made for him, but he could nowhere be found. One time, when Olof was in the castle beside Hadvor, she asked the princess if she knew where Hermod had gone to. At this Hadvor became very sad and said that she did not.

"I shall tell you, then," said Olof, "for I know all about it. Hermod has disappeared through the wicked devices of the queen, for she is a witch and so is her daughter, though they have put on these beautiful forms. Because Hermod would not fall in with the queen's plans and marry her daughter she has laid a spell on him, to go on an island and be a lion by day and a man by night, and never be freed from this until you burn the lion's skin. Besides," said Olof, "she has looked out a match for you. She has a brother in the underworld, a three-headed giant, whom she means to turn into a beautiful prince and get him married to you. This is no new thing for the queen. She took me away from my parents' house and compelled me to serve her, but she has never done me any harm, for the green cloak I wear protects me against all mischief."

Hadvor now became still sadder than before at the thought of the marriage destined for her, and entreated Olof to think of some plan to save her.

"I think," said Olof, "that your wooer will come up through the floor of the castle to you, and so you must be prepared when you hear the noise of his coming and the floor begins to open, and have at hand blazing pitch and

pour plenty of it into the opening. That will prove too much for him."

About this time the king came home from his expedition, and thought it a great blow that no one knew what had become of Hermod; but the queen consoled him as best she could, and after a time the king thought less about his disappearance.

Hadvor remained in her castle and had made preparations to receive her wooer when he came. One night, not long after, a loud noise and rumbling was heard under the castle. Hadvor at once guessed what it was and told her maids to be ready to help her. The noise and thundering grew louder and louder, until the floor began to open, whereupon Hadvor made them take the caldron of pitch, and pour plenty of it into the opening. With that the noises grew fainter and fainter, till at last they ceased altogether.

Next morning the queen rose early and went out to the palace gate, and there she found her brother the giant lying dead. She went up to him, and said: "I pronounce this spell, that you become a beautiful prince, and that Hadvor shall be unable to say anything against the charges that I shall bring against her."

The body of the dead giant now became that of a beautiful prince and the queen went in again.

"I don't think," said she to the king, "that your daughter is as good as she is said to be. My brother came and asked her hand, and she has had him put to death. I have just found his dead body lying at the palace gate."

The king went along with the queen to see his body and thought all very strange; so beautiful a youth, he said, would have been a worthy match for Hadvor, and he would readily have agreed to their marriage. The queen asked leave to decide what Hadvor's punishment should be, which the king was very willing to allow, so as to escape from

punishing his own daughter. The queen's decision was that the king should make a big grave-mound for her brother and put Hadvor into it beside him.

Olof knew all the plans of the queen and went to tell the princess what had been done, whereupon Hadvor earnestly entreated her to tell her what to do.

"First and foremost," said Olof, "you must get a wide cloak to wear over your other clothes when you are put into the mound. The giant's ghost will walk after you are both left together in there, and he will have two dogs along with him. He will ask you to cut pieces out of his legs to give to the dogs, but that you must not promise to do unless he tells you where Hermod has gone to and tells you how to find him. He will then let you stand on his shoulders, so as to get out of the mound; but he means to cheat you, all the same; and will catch you by the cloak to pull you back again; but you must take care to have the cloak loose on your shoulders, so that he will only get hold of that."

The mound was all ready now and the giant laid in it, and into it Hadvor also had to go without being allowed to make any defence. After they were both left there everything happened just as Olof had said. The prince became a giant again and asked Hadvor to cut the pieces out of his legs for the dogs; but she refused until he told her that Hermod was in a desert island, which she could not reach unless she took the skin off the soles of his feet and made shoes out of that; with these shoes she could travel both on land and sea. This Hadvor now did, and the giant then let her get up on his shoulders to get out of the mound. As she sprang out he caught hold of her cloak, but she had taken care to let it lie loose on her shoulders, and so escaped.

She now made her way down to the sea, to where she knew there was the shortest distance over to the island in which

Hermod was. This strait was easily crossed, for the shoes kept her up. On reaching the island she found a sandy beach all along by the sea and high cliffs above. Nor could she see any way to get up these, and so, being both sad at heart and tired with the long journey, she lay down and fell asleep. As she slept she dreamed that a tall woman came to her and said:

"I know that you are Princess Hadvor and are searching for Hermod. He is on this island, but it will be hard for you to get to him if you have no one to help you, for you cannot climb the cliffs by your own strength. I have therefore let down a rope, by which you will be able to climb up; and as the island is so large that you might not find Hermod's dwelling-place so easily, I lay down this clue beside you. You need only hold the end of the thread, and the clue will run on before and show you the way. I also lay this belt beside you, to put on when you awaken; it will keep you from growing faint with hunger.

The woman now disappeared, and Hadvor woke and saw that all her dream had been true. The rope hung down from the cliff and the clue and belt lay beside her. The belt she put on, the rope enabled her to climb up the cliff, and the clue led her on till she came to the mouth of a cave which was not very big. She went into the cave and saw there a low couch, under which she crept and lay down.

When evening came she heard the noise of footsteps outside, and became aware that the lion had come to the mouth of the cave and shook itself there, after which she heard a man coming toward the couch. She was sure this was Hermod, because she heard him speaking to himself about his own condition and calling to mind Hadvor and other things in the old days. Hadvor made no sign, but waited till he had fallen asleep, and then crept out and burned the lion's skin, which he had left outside. Then

she went back into the cave and wakened Hermod, and they had a most joyful meeting.

In the morning they talked over their plans, and were most at a loss to know how to get out of the island. Hadvor told Hermod her dream, and said she suspected there was some one in the island who would be able to help them. Hermod said he knew of a witch there who was very ready to help any one, and that the only plan was to go to her. So they went to the witch's cave and found her there with her fifteen young sons, and asked her to help them to get to the mainland.

"There are other things easier than that," said she, "for the giant that was buried will be waiting for you and will attack you on the way, as he has turned himself into a big whale. I shall lend you a boat, however, and if you meet the whale and think your lives are in danger, then you can name me by name."

They thanked her greatly for her help and advice and set out from the island, but on the way they saw a huge fish coming toward them with great splashing and dashing of waves. They were sure of what it was, and thought they had as good reason as ever they would have to call on the witch, and so they did. The next minute they saw coming after them another huge whale, followed by fifteen smaller ones. All of these swam past the boat and went on to meet the whale. There was a fierce battle then, and the sea became so stormy that it was not very easy to keep the boat from being filled by the waves. After this fight had gone on for some time they saw that the sea was dyed with blood; the big whale and the fifteen smaller ones disappeared, and they got to the land safe and sound.

Now the story goes back to the king's hall, where strange things had happened in the meantime. The queen and her daughter had disappeared, but a rat and a mouse were always fighting with each other there. Ever so many people

had tried to drive them away, but no one could manage it. Thus some time went on, while the king was almost beside himself with sorrow and care for the loss of his queen, and because these monsters destroyed all mirth in the hall.

One evening, while they all sat dull and downhearted, in came Hermod with a sword by his side and saluted the king, who received him with the greatest joy, as if he had come back from the dead. Before Hermod sat down he went to where the rat and the mouse were fighting and cut them in two with his sword. All were astonished then by seeing two witches lying dead on the floor of the hall.

Hermod now told the whole story to the king, who was very glad to be rid of such vile creatures. Next he asked for the hand of Hadvor, which the king readily gave him, and, being now an old man, gave the kingdom to him as well; and so Hermod became king.

Olof married a good-looking nobleman, and that is the end of the story.

TOM HICKATHRIFT

BEFORE the days of William the Conqueror there dwelt a man in the marsh of the Isle of Ely whose name was Thomas Hickathrift, a poor day labourer, but so strong that he could do two days' work in one. His one son he called by his own name, Thomas Hickathrift, and he put him to good learning, but the lad was none of the wisest, and indeed seemed to be somewhat soft, so he got no good at all from his teaching.

Tom's father died, and his mother being tender of him, kept him as well as she could. The slothful would do nothing but sit in the chimney-corner, and eat as much at a time as would serve four or five ordinary men, and so much did he grow that when but ten years old he was

already eight feet high, and his hand like a shoulder of mutton.

One day his mother went to a rich farmer's house to beg a bottle of straw for herself and Tom. "Take what you will," said the farmer, an honest charitable man. So when she got home she told Tom to fetch the straw, but he wouldn't till she borrowed for him a cart rope. So off he went, and when he came to the farmer's, master and men were thrashing in the barn.

"I'm come for the straw," said Tom.

"Take as much as you can carry," said the farmer.

So Tom laid down his rope and began to make his bottle.

"Your rope is too short," said the farmer by way of a joke; but the joke was on Tom's side, for when he had made up his load there was some two tons of straw, and though they called him a fool for thinking he could carry a tithe of it, he flung it over his shoulder as if it had been a hundred weight, to the great admiration of master and men.

Tom's strength being thus made known there was no longer any basking by the fire for him; every one would be hiring him to work, and telling him it was a shame to live such a lazy life. So Tom seeing them wait on him as they did, went to work first with one, then with another. And one day a woodman desired his help to bring home a tree. Off went Tom and four men besides, and when they came to the tree they began to draw it into the cart with pulleys. At last Tom, seeing them unable to lift it, said: "Stand away, you fools," and taking the tree, set it on one end and laid it in the cart. "Now," said he, "see what a man can do." "Marry, 'tis true," said they, and the woodman asked what reward he'd take. "Oh, a stick for my mother's fire," said Tom; and espying a tree bigger than was in the cart, he laid it on his shoulders and went home with it as fast as the cart and six horses could draw it.

Tom now saw that he had more strength than twenty men, and began to be very merry, taking delight in company, in going to fairs and meetings, in seeing sports and pastimes. And at cudgels, wrestling, or throwing the hammer, not a man could stand against him, so that at last none durst go into the to wrestle with him, and his fame was spread more and more in the country.

Far and near he would go to any meetings, as football play or the like. And one day in a part of the country where he was a stranger, and none knew him, he stopped to watch the company at football play; rare sport it was; but Tom spoiled it all, for meeting the ball he gave it such a kick that away it flew none could tell whither. They were angry with Tom as you may fancy, but got nothing by that as Tom took hold of a big spar, and laid about with a will, so that though the whole countryside was up in arms against him, he cleared his way wherever he came.

It was late in the evening ere he could turn homeward, and on the road there met him four lusty rogues that had been robbing passengers all day. They thought they had a good prize in Tom, who was all alone, and made cocksure of his money.

"Stand and deliver," said they.

"What should I deliver?" said Tom.

"Your money, sirrah," said they.

"You shall give me better words for it first," said Tom.

"Come, come, no more prating; money we want, and money we'll have before you stir."

"Is that so?" said Tom, "nay, then come and take it."

The long and short of it was that Tom killed two of the rogues and grievously wounded the other two, and took all their money, which was as much as two hundred pounds. And when he came home he made his old mother laugh with the story of how he served the football players and the four thieves.

But you shall see that Tom sometimes met his match. In wandering one day in the forest he met a lusty tinker that had a good staff on his shoulder, and a great dog to carry his bag and tools.

"Whence came you and whither are you going?" said Tom. "This is no highway."

"What's that to you?" said the tinker; "fools must needs be meddling."

"I'll make you know," said Tom, "before you and I part, what it is to me."

"Well," said the tinker, "I'm ready for a bout with any man, and I hear there is one Tom Hickathrift in the country of whom great things are told. I'd fain see him to have a turn with him."

"Ay," said Tom, "methinks he might be master with you. Anyway I am the man; what have you to say to me?"

"Why, verily, I'm glad we are so happily met."

"Sure, you do but jest," said Tom.

"Marry, I'm in earnest," said the tinker. "A match?" "'Tis done." "Let me first get a twig," said Tom. "Ay," said the tinker, "hang him that would fight a man unarmed."

So Tom took a gate-rail for his staff, and at it they fell, the tinker at Tom and Tom at the tinker, like two giants they laid on at each other. The tinker had a leather coat on, and at every blow Tom gave the tinker his coat roared again, yet the tinker did not give way one inch. At last Tom gave him a blow on the side of his head which felled him.

"Now, tinker, where are you?" said Tom.

But the tinker being a nimble fellow, leapt up again, gave Tom a blow that made him reel again, and followed his blow with one on the other side that made Tom's neck crack again. So Tom flung down his weapon and yielded

the tinker the better on it, took him home to his house, where they nursed their bruises, and from that day forth there was no stauncher pair of friends than they two.

Tom's fame was thus spread abroad till at length a brewer at Lynn, wanting a good lusty man to carry his beer to Wisbeach went to hire Tom, and promised him a new suit of clothes from top to toe, and that he should eat and drink of the best. So Tom yielded to be his man and his master told him what way he should go, for you must understand there was a monstrous giant who kept part of the marsh-land, so that none durst go that way.

So Tom went every day to Wisbeach, a good twenty miles by the road. 'Twas a wearisome journey, thought Tom, and he soon found that the way kept by the giant was nearer by half. Now Tom had got more strength than ever, being well kept as he was and drinking so much strong ale as he did. One day, then, as he was going to Wisbeach, without saying anything to his master or any of his fellow servants, he resolved to take the nearest road or lose his life; as they say, to win horse or lose saddle. Thus resolved, he took the near road, flinging open the gates for his cart and horses to go through. At last the giant spied him, and came up speedily, intending to take his beer for a prize.

He met Tom like a lion as though he would have swallowed him. "Who gave you authority to come this way?" roared he. "I'll make you an example for all rogues under the sun. See how many heads hang on yonder tree. Yours shall hang higher than any of the rest for a warning."

But Tom made him answer, "A fig in your teeth, you shall not find me like one of them, traitorly rogue that you are."

The giant took these words in high disdain, and ran

into his cave to fetch his great club, intending to dash out Tom's brains at the first blow.

Tom knew not what to do for a weapon; his whip would be but little good against a monstrous beast twelve foot in length and six foot about the waist. But whilst the giant went for his club, bethinking him of a very good weapon, he made no more ado, but took his cart, turned it upside down, and took axle-tree and wheel for shield and buckler. And very good weapons they were found!

Out came the giant and began to stare at Tom. "You are like to do great service with those weapons," roared he. "I have here a twig that will beat you and your wheel to the ground." Now this twig was as thick as some mile-posts are, but Tom was not daunted for all that, though the giant made at him with such force that the wheel cracked again. But Tom gave as good as he got, taking the giant such a blow on the side of his head that he reeled again. "What," said Tom, "are you drunk with my strong beer already?"

So at it they went, Tom laying such huge blows at the giant, down whose face sweat and blood ran together, so that, being fat and foggy and tired with the long fighting, he asked Tom would he let him drink a little? "Nay, nay," said Tom, "my mother did not teach me such wit; who'd be a fool then?" and seeing the giant beginning to weary and fail in his blows, Tom thought best to make hay whilst the sun shone, and, laying on as fast as though he had been mad, he brought the giant to the ground. In vain were the giant's roars and prayers and promises to yield himself and be Tom's servant. Tom laid at him till he was dead, and then, cutting off his head, he went into the cave, and found a great store of silver and gold, which made his heart to leap. So he loaded his cart, and after delivering his beer at Wisbeach he came home and told his master

what had befallen him. And on the morrow he and his master and more of the townsfolk of Lynn set out for the giant's cave. Tom showed them the head, and what silver and gold there was in the cave, and not a man but leapt for joy, for the giant was a great enemy to all the country.

The news was spread all up and down the country-side how Tom Hickathrift had killed the giant. And well was he that could run to see the cave; all the folk made bonfires for joy, and if Tom was respected before, he was much more so now. With common consent he took possession of the cave and every one said, had it been twice as much, he would have deserved it. So Tom pulled down the cave and built himself a brave house. The ground that the giant kept by force for himself Tom gave part to the poor for their common land, and part he turned into good wheat-land to keep himself and his old mother, Jane Hickathrift. And now he was become the chiefest man in the country-side; 'twas no longer plain Tom, but Mr. Hickathrift, and he was held in due respect I promise you. He kept men and maids and lived most bravely; made him a park to keep deer, and time passed with him happily in his great house till the end of his days.

A SON OF ADAM

A MAN was one day working. It was very hot, and he was digging. By-and-by he stopped to rest and wipe his face; and he was angry to think he had to work so hard only because of Adam's sin. So he complained bitterly, and said some very hard words about Adam.

It happened that his master heard him, and he asked,

"Why do you blame Adam? You'd ha' done just like Adam, if you'd a-been in his place."

"No, I shouldn't," said the man; "I should have known better."

"Well, I'll try you," says his master; "come to me at dinner-time."

So come dinner-time, the man came, and the master took him into a room where the table was a-set with good things of all sorts. And he said, "Now, you can eat as much as you like from any of the dishes on the table; but don't touch the covered dish in the middle till I come back." And with that the master went out of the room and left the man there all by himself.

So the man sat down and helped himself, and eat some of this dish and some of that, and enjoyed himself finely. But after awhile, as his master didn't come back, he began to look at the covered dish, and to wonder whatever was in it. And he wondered more and more, and he says to himself, "It must be something very nice. Why shouldn't I just look at it. There can't be any harm in peeping." So at last he could hold back no longer, and he lifted up the cover a tiny bit; but he couldn't see anything. Then he lifted it up a bit more, and out popped a mouse. The man tried to catch it; but it ran away and jumped off the table and he ran after it. It ran first into one corner, and then, just as he thought he'd got it, into another, and under the table, and all about the room. And the man made such a clatter, jumping and banging and running round after the mouse, a-trying to catch it, that at last his master came in.

"Ah!" he said; "never you blame Adam again, my man!"

THE BURIED MOON

Long ago, in my grandmother's time, the Carland was all in bogs, great pools of black water, and creeping trickles of green water, and squishy mools which squirted when you stepped on them.

Well, granny used to say how long before her time the Moon herself was once dead and buried in the marshes, and she used to tell me, I'll tell you all about it.

The Moon up yonder shone and shone, just as she does now, and when she shone she lighted up the bog-pools, so that one could walk about almost as safe as in the day.

But when she didn't shine, out came the Things that dwelt in the darkness and went about seeking to do evil and harm; Bogles and Crawling Horrors, all came out when the Moon didn't shine.

Well, the Moon heard of this, and being kind and good — as she surely is, shining for us in the night instead of taking her natural rest — she was main troubled. "I'll see for myself, I will," said she, "maybe it's not so bad as folks make out."

Sure enough, at the month's end down she stepped, wrapped up in a black cloak, and a black hood over her yellow shining hair. Straight she went to the bog edge and looked about her. Water here and water there; waving tussocks and trembling mools, and great black snags all twisted and bent. Before her all was dark — dark but for the glimmer of the stars in the pools, and the light that came from her own white feet, stealing out of her black cloak.

The Moon drew her cloak faster about and trembled, but she wouldn't go back with seeing all there was to be seen;

so on she went, stepping as light as the wind in summer from tuft to tuft between the greedy gurgling water holes. Just as she came near a big black pool her foot slipped and she was nigh tumbling in. She grabbed with both hands at a snag near by to steady herself with, but as she touched it, it twined itself round her wrists, like a pair of handcuffs, and gripped so that she couldn't move. She pulled and twisted and fought, but it was no good. She was fast, and must stay fast.

Presently, as she stood trembling in the dark, wondering if help would come, she heard something calling in the distance, calling, calling, and dying away with a sob, till the marshes were full of this pitiful crying aloud; then she heard steps floundering along, squishing in the mud and slipping on the tufts, and through the darkness she saw a white face with great feared eyes.

"'Twas a man strayed in the bogs. Mazed with fear he struggled on toward the flickering light that looked like help and safety. And when the poor Moon saw that he was coming nigher and nigher to the deep hole, further and further from the path, she was so mad and so sorry that she struggled and fought and pulled harder than ever. And though she couldn't get loose, she twisted and turned, till her black hood fell off her shining yellow hair, and the beautiful light that came from it drove away the darkness.

Oh, but the man cried with joy to see the light again. And at once all evil things fled back into the dark corners, for they cannot abide the light. So he could see where he was, and where the path was, and how he could get out of the marsh. And he was in such haste to get away from the Quicks, and Bogles, and Things that dwelt there, that he scarce looked at the brave light that came from the beautiful shining hair, streaming out over the black cloak and falling to the water at his feet. And the Moon herself was so taken up with saving him, and with rejoicing that

he was back on the right path, that she clean forgot that she needed help herself, and that she was held fast by the Black Snag.

So off he went; spent and gasping, and stumbling and sobbing with joy, flying for his life out of the terrible bogs. Then it came over the Moon, she would main like to go with him. So she pulled and fought as if she were mad, till she fell on her knees, spent with tugging, at the foot of the snag. And as she lay there, gasping for breath, the black hood fell forward over her head. So out went the blessed light and back came the darkness, with all its Evil Things, with a screech and a howl. They came crowding around her, mocking and snatching and beating; shrieking with rage and spite, and swearing and snarling, for they knew her for their old enemy, that drove them back into the corners, and kept them from working their wicked wills.

"Drat thee!" yelled the witch-bodies; "thou'st spoiled our spells this year agone!"

"And thou sent'st us to brood in the corners!" howled the Bogles.

And all the Things joined in with a great "Ho, ho!" till the very tussocks shook and the water gurgled. And they began again.

"We'll poison her — poison her!" shrieked the witches.

And "Ho, ho!" howled the Things again.

"We'll smother her — smother her!" whispered the Crawling Horrors, and twined themselves round her knees.

And "Ho, ho!" mocked the rest of them.

And again they all shouted with spite and ill-will. And the poor Moon crouched down, and wished she was dead and done with.

And they fought and squabbled what they should do with her, till a pale grey light began to come in the sky; and it drew nigh the dawning. And when they saw that, they

were feared lest they shouldn't have time to work their will; and they caught hold of her, with horrid bony fingers, and laid her deep in the water at the foot of the snag. And the Bogles fetched a strange big stone and rolled it on top of her, to keep her from rising. And they told two of the Will-o-the-wykes to take turns in watching on the black snag, to see that she lay safe and still, and couldn't get out to spoil their sport.

And there lay the poor Moon, dead and buried in the bog, till some one would set her loose; and who'd know where to look for her.

Well, the days passed, and 'twas time for the new moon's coming, and the folk put pennies in their pockets and straws in their caps so as to be ready for her, and looked about, for the Moon was a good friend to the marsh folk, and they were main glad when the dark time was gone, and the paths were safe again, and the Evil Things were driven back by the blessed Light into the darkness and the water-holes.

But days and days passed, and the new Moon never came, and the nights were aye dark, and the Evil Things were worse than ever. And still the days went on, and the new Moon never came. Naturally the poor folk were strangely feared and mazed, and a lot of them went to the Wise Woman who dwelt in the old mill, and asked if so be she could find out where the Moon was gone.

"Well," said she, after looking in the brewpot, and in the mirror, and in the Book, "it be main queer, but I can't rightly tell ye what's happened to her. If ye hear of aught, come and tell me."

So they went their ways; and as days went by, and never a Moon came, naturally they talked — my word! I reckon they DID talk! their tongues wagged at home, and at the inn, and in the garth. But so came one day, as they sat on the great settle in the Inn, a man from the far end of

the bog lands was smoking and listening, when all at once he sat up and slapped his knee. "My faicks!" says he, "I'd clean forgot, but I reckon I kens where the Moon be!" and he told them of how he was lost in the bogs, and how, when he was nigh dead with fright, the light shone out, and he found the path and got home safe.

So off they all went to the Wise Woman, and told her about it, and she looked long in the pot and the Book again, and then she nodded her head.

"It's dark still, childer, dark!" says she; "and I can't rightly see, but do as I tell ye, and ye'll find out for yourselves. Go all of ye, just afore the night gathers, put a stone in your mouth, and take a hazel-twig in your hands, and say never a word till you're safe home again. Then walk on and fear not, far into the midst of the marsh, till ye find a coffin, a candle, and a cross. Then ye'll not be far from your Moon; look, and m'appen ye'll find her."

So came the next night in the darklings, out they went all together, every man with a stone in his mouth, and a hazel-twig in his hand, and feeling, thou may'st reckon, main feared and creepy. And they stumbled and tottered along the paths into the midst of the bogs; they saw nought, though they heard sighings and flutterings in their ears, and felt cold wet fingers touching them; but all at once, looking around for the coffin, the candle, and the cross, while they came nigh to the pool beside the great snag, where the Moon lay buried. And all at once they stopped, quaking and mazed and skeery, for there was the great stone, half in, half out of the water, for all the world like a strange big coffin; and at the head was the black snag stretching out its two arms in a dark gruesome cross, and on it a tiddy light flickered, like a dying candle. And they all knelt down in the mud, and said, "Our Lord, first forward, because of the cross, and then backward, to keep off the Bogles; but without speaking out, for they knew that

the Evil Things would catch them, if they didn't do as the Wise Woman told them.

Then they went nigher, and took hold of the big stone, and shoved it up, and afterwards they said that for one tiddy moment they saw a strange and beautiful face looking up at them glad-like out of the black water; but the light came so quick and so white and shining, that they stepped back mazed with it, and the very next minute, when they could see again, there was the full Moon in the sky, bright and beautiful and kind as ever, shining and smiling down at them, and making the bogs and the paths as clear as day, and stealing into the very corners, as though she'd have driven the darkness and the Bogles clean away if she could.

THE WONDERFUL SHEEP

Once upon a time — in the days when the fairies lived — there was a king who had three daughters, who were all young, and clever, and beautiful; but the youngest of the three, who was called Miranda, was the prettiest and the most beloved.

The king, her father, gave her more dresses and jewels in a month than he gave the others in a year; but she was so generous that she shared everything with her sisters, and they were all as happy and as fond of one another as they could be.

Now, the king had some quarrelsome neighbours who, tired of leaving him in peace, began to make war upon him so fiercely that he feared he would be altogether beaten if he did not make an effort to defend himself. So he collected a great army and set off to fight them, leaving the princesses with their governess in a castle where news

of the war was brought every day — sometimes that the king had taken a town or won a battle, and at last that he had altogether overcome his enemies and chased them out of his kingdom, and was coming back to the castle as quickly as possible, to see his dear little Miranda, whom he loved so much.

The three princesses put on dresses of satin, which they had had made on purpose for this great occasion, one green, one blue, and the third white; their jewels were the same colours. The eldest wore emerald, the second turquoises, and the youngest diamonds, and thus adorned they went to meet the king, singing verses which they had composed about his victories.

When he saw them all so beautiful and so gay he embraced them tenderly, but gave Miranda more kisses than either of the others.

Presently a splendid banquet was served, and the king and his daughters sat down to it, and as he always thought that there was some special meaning in everything he said to the eldest:

"Tell me why you have chosen a green dress."

"Sire," she answered, "having heard of your victories, I thought that green would signify my joy and the hope of your speedy return."

"That is a very good answer," said the king; "and you, my daughter," he continued, "why did you take a blue dress?"

"Sire," said the princess, "to show that we constantly hoped for your success, and that the sight of you is as welcome to me as the sky with its most beautiful stars."

"Why," said the king, "your wise answers astonish me. And you, Miranda: what made you dress yourself all in white?"

"Because, sire," she answered, "white suits me better than anything else."

"What!" said the king angrily, "was that all you thought of, vain child?"

"I thought you would be pleased with me," said the princess; "that was all."

The king, who loved her, was satisfied with this, and even pretended to be pleased that she had not told him all her reasons at first.

"And now," said he, "as I have supped well and it is not time yet to go to bed, tell me what you dreamed last night."

The eldest said she had dreamed that he brought her a dress, and the precious stones and gold embroidery on it were brighter than the sun.

The dream of the second was that the king had brought her a spinning-wheel and a distaff, that she might spin him some shirts.

But the youngest said: "I dreamed that my second sister was to be married, and on her wedding-day, you, father, held a golden ewer and said: 'Come, Miranda, and I will hold the water that you may dip your hands in it.'"

The king was very angry indeed when he heard this dream, and frowned horribly; indeed, he made such an ugly face that every one knew how angry he was, and he got up and went off to bed in a great hurry; but he could not forget his daughter's dream. "Does the proud girl wish to make me her slave?" he said to himself. "I am not surprised at her choosing to dress herself in white satin without a thought of me. She does not think me worthy of her consideration! But I will soon put an end to her pretensions!"

He rose in a fury, and although it was not yet daylight, he sent for the captain of his body-guard and said to him:

"You have heard the Princess Miranda's dream? I consider that it means strange things against me, therefore I order you to take her away into the forest and kill

her, and that I may be sure it is done, you must bring me her heart and her tongue. If you attempt to deceive me you shall be put to death!"

The captain of the guard was very much astonished when he heard this barbarous order, but he did not dare to contradict the king for fear of making him still more angry or causing him to send some one else, so he answered that he would fetch the princess and do as the king had said. When he went to her room they would hardly let him in, it was still so early, but he said that the king had sent for Miranda, and she got up quickly and came out; a little black girl called Patypata held up her train, and her pet monkey and her little dog ran after her. The monkey was called Grabugeon and the little dog Tintin.

The captain of the guard begged Miranda to come down into the garden, where the king was enjoying the fresh air, and when they got there he pretended to search for him, but as he was not to be found he said:

"No doubt his Majesty has strolled into the forest," and he opened the little door that led to it and they went through.

By this time the daylight had begun to appear, and the princess, looking at her conductor, saw that he had tears in his eyes and seemed too sad to speak.

"What is the matter?" she said in the kindest way. "You seem very sorrowful."

"Alas! princess," he answered, "who would not be sorrowful who was ordered to do such a terrible thing as I am? The king has ordered me to kill you here and carry your heart and your tongue to him, and if I disobey I shall lose my life."

The poor princess was terrified, she grew very pale and began to cry softly.

Looking up at the captain of the guard with her beautiful eyes, she said gently:

"Will you really have the heart to kill me? I have never done you any harm and have always spoken well of you to the king. If I had deserved my father's anger I would suffer without a murmur, but, alas! he is unjust to complain of me, when I have always treated him with love and respect."

"Fear nothing, princess," said the captain of the guard. "I would far rather die myself than hurt you; but even if I am killed you are not safe; we must find some way of making the king believe that you are dead."

"What can we do?" said Miranda; "unless you take him my heart and my tongue he will never believe you."

The princess and the captain of the guard were talking so earnestly that they did not think of Patypata, but she had overheard all they said, and now came and threw herself at Miranda's feet.

"Madam," she said, "I offer you my life; let me be killed. I shall be only too happy to die for such a kind mistress."

"Why, Patypata," cried the princess, kissing her, "that would never do; your life is as precious to me as my own, especially after such a proof of your affection as you have just given me."

"You are right, princess," said Grabugeon, coming forward, "to love such a faithful slave as Patypata; she is of more use to you than I am. I offer you my tongue and my heart most willingly, especially as I wish to make a great name for myself in Goblin Land."

"No, no, my little Grabugeon," replied Miranda; "I cannot bear the thought of taking your life."

"Such a good little dog as I am," cried Tintin, "could not think of letting either of you die for his mistress. If any one is to die for her it must be me."

And then began a great dispute between Patypata, Grabugeon, and Tintin, and they came to high words,

until at last Grabugeon, who was quicker than the others, ran up to the very top of the nearest tree and let herself fall, head first, to the ground, and there she lay — quite dead!

The princess was very sorry, but as Grabugeon was really dead, she allowed the captain of the guard to take her tongue; but, alas! it was such a little one — not bigger than the princess' thumb — that they decided sorrowfully that it was no use at all: the king would not have been taken in by it for a moment!

"Alas! my little monkey," cried the princess, "I have lost you, and yet I am no better off than I was before."

"The honour of saving your life is to be mine," interrupted Patypata, and before they could prevent her she had picked up a knife and cut her head off in an instant.

But when the captain of the guard would have taken her tongue it turned out to be quite black, so that would not have deceived the king either.

"Am I not unlucky?" cried the poor princess. "I lose every thing I love and am none the better for it."

"If you had accepted my offer," said Tintin, "you would only have had me to regret, and I should have had all your gratitude."

Miranda kissed her little dog, crying so bitterly that at last she could bear it no longer, and turned away into the forest. When she looked back the captain of the guard was gone, and she was alone, except for Patypata, Grabugeon, and Tintin, who lay upon the ground. She could not leave the place until she had buried them in a pretty little mossy grave at the foot of a tree, and she wrote their names upon the bark of the tree, and how they had all died to save her life. And then she began to think where she could go for safety — for this forest was so close to her father's castle that she might be seen and recognised by the first passer-by, and besides that, it was full

of lions and wolves, who would have snapped up a princess just as soon as a stray chicken. So she began to walk as fast as she could, but the forest was so large and the sun was so hot that she nearly died of heat and terror and fatigue. Look which way she would there seemed to be no end to the forest, and she was so frightened that she fancied every minute that she heard the king running after her to kill her. You may imagine how miserable she was, and how she cried as she went on, not knowing which path to follow, and with the thorny bushes scratching her dreadfully and tearing her pretty frock to pieces.

At last she heard the bleating of a sheep, and said to herself:

"No doubt there are shepherds here with their flocks; they will show me the way to the village where I can live disguised as a peasant-girl. Alas! it is not always kings and princes who are happiest people in the world. Who could have believed that I should ever be obliged to run away and hide because the king, for no reason at all, wishes to kill me?"

So saying she advanced toward the place where she heard the bleating, but what was her surprise when, in a lovely little glade quite surrounded by trees, she saw a large sheep; its wool was as white as snow and its horns shone like gold; it had a garland of flowers round its neck and strings of great pearls about its legs, and a collar of diamonds; it lay upon a bank of orange-flowers, under a canopy of cloth-of-gold which protected it from the heat of the sun. Nearly a hundred other sheep were scattered about, not eating the grass, but some drinking coffee, lemonade, or sherbet, others eating ices, strawberries and cream, or sweetmeats, while others, again, were playing games. Many of them wore golden collars with jewels, flowers, and ribbons.

Miranda stopped short in amazement at this unexpected

"And besides that, it was full of lions and wolves"

sight, and was looking in all directions for the shepherd of this surprising flock, when the beautiful sheep came bounding toward her.

"Approach, lovely princess," he cried; "have no fear of such gentle and peaceable animals as we are."

"What a marvel!" cried the princess, starting back a little. "Here is a sheep who can talk."

"Your monkey and your dog could talk, madam," said he. "Are you more astonished at us than at them?"

"A fairy gave them the power to speak," replied Miranda, "so I was used to them."

"Perhaps the same thing has happened to us," he said, smiling sheepishly. "But, princess, what can have led you here?"

"A thousand misfortunes, Sir Sheep," she answered. "I am the unhappiest princess in the world, and I am seeking a shelter against my father's anger."

"Come with me, madam," said the sheep. "I offer you a hiding-place which you only will know of and where you will be mistress of everything you see."

"I really cannot follow you," said Miranda, "for I am too tired to walk another step."

The sheep with the golden horns ordered that his chariot should be fetched, and a moment after appeared six goats, harnessed to a pumpkin, which was so big that two people could quite well sit in it, and was all lined with cushions of velvet and down. The princess stepped into it, much amused at such a new kind of carriage, the king of the sheep took his place beside her, and the goats ran away with them at full speed, and only stopped when they reached a cavern, the entrance to which was blocked by a great stone. This the king touched with his foot, and immediately it fell down, and he invited the princess to enter without fear. Now, if she had not been so alarmed by everything that had happened, nothing could

have induced her to go into this frightful cave, but she was so afraid of what might be behind her that she would have thrown herself even down a wall at this moment. So, without hesitation, she followed the sheep, who went before her, down, down, down, until she thought they must come out at the other side of the world — indeed, she was not sure that he wasn't leading her into Fairy-land. At last she saw before her a great plain, quite covered with all sorts of flowers, the scent of which seemed to her nicer than anything she had ever smelled before; a broad river of orange-flower water flowed round it, and fountains of wine of every kind ran in all directions and made the prettiest little cascades and brooks. The plain was covered with the strangest trees; there were whole avenues where partridges, ready roasted, hung from every branch, or, if you preferred pheasants, quails, turkeys, or rabbits, you had only to turn to the right hand or to the left and you were sure to find them. In places the air was darkened by showers of lobster-patties, white puddings, sausages, tarts, and all sorts of sweetmeats, or with pieces of gold and silver, diamonds and pearls. This unusual kind of rain and the pleasantness of the whole place would no doubt have attracted numbers of people to it if the king of the sheep had been of a more sociable disposition, but from all accounts it is evident that he was as grave as a judge.

As it was quite the nicest time of the year when Miranda arrived in this delightful land, the only palace she saw was a long row of orange-trees, jasmines, honeysuckles and musk-roses, and their interlacing branches made the prettiest rooms possible, which were hung with gold and silver gauze, and had great mirrors and candlesticks and most beautiful pictures. The wonderful sheep begged that the princess would consider herself queen over all that she saw, and assured her that though for some

years he had been very sad and in great trouble, she had it in her power to make him forget all his grief.

"You are so kind and generous, noble sheep," said the princess, "that I cannot thank you enough, but I must confess that all I see here seems to me so extraordinary that I don't know what to think of it."

As she spoke a band of lovely fairies came up and offered her amber baskets full of fruit, but when she held out her hands to them they glided away, and she could feel nothing when she tried to touch them.

"Oh!" she cried, "what can they be? Whom am I with?" And she began to cry.

At this instant the king of the sheep came back to her, and was so distracted to find her in tears that he could have torn his wool.

"What is the matter, lovely princess?" he cried. "Has any one failed to treat you with due respect?"

"Oh! no," said Miranda; "only I am not used to living with sprites and with sheep that talk, and everything here frightens me. It was very kind of you to bring me to this place, but I shall be even more grateful to you if you will take me up into the world again."

"Do not be afraid," said the wonderful sheep; "I entreat you to have patience and listen to the story of my misfortunes. I was once a king, and my kingdom was the most splendid in the world. My subjects loved me, my neighbours envied and feared me. I was respected by every one, and it was said that no king ever deserved it more.

"I was very fond of hunting, and one day, while chasing a stag, I left my attendants far behind; suddenly I saw the animal leap into a pool of water, and I rashly urged my horse to follow it, but before we had gone many steps I felt an extraordinary heat, instead of the coolness of the water; the pond dried up, a great gulf opened be-

fore me, out of which flames of fire shot up, and I fell helplessly to the bottom of a precipice.

"I gave myself up for lost, but presently a voice said: 'Ungrateful prince, even this fire is hardly enough to warm your cold heart!'

"'Who complains of my coldness in this dismal place?' I cried.

"An unhappy being who loves you hopelessly," replied the voice, and at the same moment the flames began to flicker and cease to burn, and I saw a fairy, whom I had known as long as I could remember, and whose ugliness had always horrified me. She was leaning upon the arm of a most beautiful young girl, who wore chains of gold on her wrists and was evidently her slave.

"'Why, Ragotte,' I said, for that was the fairy's name, 'what is the meaning of all this? Is it by your orders that I am here?'

"'And whose fault is it,' she answered, 'that you have never understood me until now? Must a powerful fairy like myself condescend to explain her doings to you who are no better than an ant by comparison, though you think yourself a great king?'

"'Call me what you like,' I said impatiently; 'but what is it that you want — my crown, or my cities, or my treasures?'

"'Treasures!' said the fairy disdainfully. 'If I choose I could make any one of my scullions richer and more powerful than you. I do not want your treasures, but,' she added softly, 'if you will give me your heart — if you will marry me — I will add twenty kingdoms to the one you have already; you shall have a hundred castles full of gold and five hundred full of silver, and, in short, anything you like to ask me for.'

"'Madam Ragotte,' said I, 'when one is at the bottom of a pit where one has fully expected to be roasted alive,

it is impossible to think of asking such a charming person as you are to marry one! I beg that you will set me at liberty, and then I shall hope to answer you fittingly.'

"'Ah!' said she, 'if you loved me really you would not care where you were — a cave, a wood, a fox-hole, a desert would please you equally well. Do not think that you can deceive me; you fancy you are going to escape, but I assure you that you are going to stay here, and the first thing I shall give you to do will be to keep my sheep — they are very good company and speak quite as well as you do.'

"As she spoke she advanced and led me to this plain where we now stand, and showed me her flock, but I paid little attention to it or to her; to tell the truth, I was so lost in admiration of her beautiful slave that I forgot everything else, and the cruel Ragotte, perceiving this, turned upon her so furious and terrible a look that she fell lifeless to the ground.

"At this dreadful sight I drew my sword and rushed at Ragotte, and should certainly have cut off her head had she not by her magic arts chained me to the spot on which I stood; all my efforts to move were useless, and at last, when I threw myself down on the ground in despair, she said to me, with a scornful smile:

"'I intend to make you feel my power. It seems that you are a lion at present. I mean you to be a sheep.'

"So saying, she touched me with her wand and I became what you see. I did not lose the power of speech or of feeling the misery of my present state.

"'For five years,' she said, 'you shall be a sheep and lord of this pleasant land, while I, no longer able to see your face, which I loved so much, shall be better able to hate you as you deserve to be hated.'

"She disappeared as she finished speaking, and if I had

not been too happy to care about anything I should have been glad that she was gone.

"The talking sheep received me as their king and told me that they, too, were unfortunate princes who had, in different ways, offended the revengeful fairy and had been added to her flock for a certain number of years; some more, some less. From time to time, indeed, one regains his own proper form and goes back again to his place in the upper world; but the other beings whom you saw are the rivals or the enemies of Ragotte, whom she has imprisoned for a hundred years or so; though even they will go back at last. The young slave of whom I told you is one of these; I have seen her often, and it has been a great pleasure to me. She never speaks to me, and if I went nearer to her I know I should find her only a shadow, which would be very annoying. However, I noticed that one of my companions in misfortune was also very attentive to this little sprite, and I found out that he has been her lover, whom the cruel Ragotte has taken away from her long before; since then I have cared for and thought of nothing but how I might regain my freedom. I have often been into the forest; that is where I have seen you, lovely princess, sometimes driving your chariot, which you did with all the grace and skill in the world; sometimes riding to the chase on so spirited a horse that it seemed as if no one but yourself could have managed it, and sometimes running races on the plain with the princesses of your court — running so lightly that it was you always who won the prize. Oh! princess, I have loved you so long, and yet how dare I tell you of my love — what hope can there be for an unhappy sheep like myself?"

Miranda was so surprised and confused by all that she had heard that she hardly knew what answer to give to the king of the sheep, but she managed to make some kind of little speech, which certainly did not forbid him to

hope, and said that she should not be afraid of the shadows now she knew that they would some day come to life again. "Alas!" she continued, "if my poor Patypata, my dear Grabugeon, and pretty little Tintin, who all died for my sake, were equally well off, I should have nothing else to wish for here!"

Prisoner though he was, the king of the sheep had still some powers and privileges.

"Go," said he to his master of the horse, "go and seek the shadows of the little black girl, the monkey, and the dog: they will amuse our princess."

And an instant afterward Miranda saw them coming toward her, and their presence gave her the greatest pleasure, though they did not come near enough for her to touch them.

The king of the sheep was so kind and amusing and loved Miranda so dearly that at last she began to love him too. Such a handsome sheep, who was so polite and considerate, could hardly fail to please, especially if one knew that he was really a king and that his strange imprisonment would soon come to an end. So the princess' days passed very gaily while she waited for the happy time to come. The king of the sheep, with the help of all the flock, got up balls, concerts, and hunting parties, and even the shadows joined in all the fun, and came, making believe to be their own real selves.

One evening, when the couriers arrived (for the king sent most carefully for news — and they always brought the very best kinds), it was announced that the sister of the Princess Miranda was going to be married to a great prince, and that nothing could be more splendid than all the preparations for the wedding.

"Ah!" cried the young princess, "how unlucky I am to miss the sight of so many pretty things! Here am I prisoned under the earth, with no company but sheep and

shadows, while my sister is to be adorned like a queen and surrounded by all who love and admire her, and every one but myself can go to wish her joy!"

"Why do you complain, princess?" said the king of the sheep. "Did I say that you were not to go to the wedding? Set out as soon as you please; only promise me that you will come back, for I love you too much to be able to live without you."

Miranda was very grateful to him, and promised faithfully that nothing in the world should keep her from coming back. The king caused an escort suitable to her rank to be got ready for her, and she dressed herself splendidly, not forgetting anything that could make her more beautiful. Her chariot was of mother-of-pearl, drawn by six dun-coloured griffins just brought from the other side of the world, and she was attended by a number of guards in splendid uniforms who were all at least eight feet high and had come from far and near to ride in the princess' train.

Miranda reached her father's palace just as the wedding ceremony began, and every one as soon as she came in was struck with surprise at her beauty and the splendour of her jewels. She heard exclamations of admiration on all sides, and the king her father looked at her so intently that she was afraid he must recognise her; but he was so sure that she was dead that the idea never occurred to him.

However, the fear of not getting away made her leave before the marriage was over. She went out hastily, leaving behind her a little coral casket set with emeralds. On it was written in diamond letters, "Jewels for the Bride," and when they opened it, which they did as soon as it was found, there seemed to be no end to the pretty things it contained. The king, who had hoped to join the unknown princess and find out who she was, was

dreadfully disappointed when she disappeared so suddenly, and gave orders that if she ever came back again the doors were to be shut that she might not get away so easily. Short as Miranda's absence had been, it had seemed like a hundred years to the king of the sheep. He was waiting for her by a fountain in the thickest part of the forest, and the ground was strewn with splendid presents which he had prepared for her to show his joy and gratitude at her coming back.

As soon as she was in sight he rushed to meet her, leaping and bounding like a real sheep. He caressed her tenderly, throwing himself at her feet and kissing her hands, and told her how uneasy he had been in her absence, and how impatient for her return, with an eloquence which charmed her.

After some time came the news that the king's second daughter was going to be married. When Miranda heard it she begged the king of the sheep to allow her to go and see the wedding as before. This request made him feel very sad, as if some misfortune must surely come of it, but his love for the princess being stronger than anything else he did not like to refuse her.

"You wish to leave me, princess," said he; "it is my unhappy fate — you are not to blame. I consent to your going, but believe me, I can give you no stronger proof of my love than by so doing."

The princess assured him that she would only stay a very short time, as she had done before, and begged him not to be uneasy, as she would be quite as much grieved if anything detained her as he could possibly be.

So with the same escort she set out, and reached the palace as the marriage ceremony began. Everybody was delighted to see her; she was so pretty that they thought she must be some fairy princess, and the princes who were there could not take their eyes off her.

The king was more glad than any one else that she had come again, and gave orders that the doors should all be shut and bolted that very minute. When the wedding was all but over the princess got up quickly, hoping to slip away unnoticed among the crowd, but to her great dismay she found every door fastened.

She felt more at ease when the king came up to her and with the greatest respect begged her not to run away so soon, but at least to honour him by staying for the splendid feast which was prepared for the princes and princesses. He led her into a magnificent hall, where all the court was assembled, and himself taking up the golden bowl full of water, he offered it to her that she might dip her pretty fingers into it.

At this the princess could no longer contain herself; throwing herself at the king's feet she cried out:

"My dream has come true, after all — you have offered me water to wash my hands on my sister's wedding-day and it has not vexed you to do it."

The king recognised her at once — indeed he had already thought several times how much like his poor little Miranda she was.

"Oh! my dear daughter," he cried, kissing her, "can you ever forgive my cruelty? I ordered you to be put to death because I thought your dream portended the loss of my crown. And so it did," he added, "for now your sisters are both married and have kingdoms of their own — and mine shall be for you." So saying he put his crown on the princess' head and cried:

"Long live Queen Miranda!"

All the court cried "Long live Queen Miranda!" after him, and the young queen's two sisters came running up, and threw their arms round her neck, and kissing her a thousand times, and then there was such a laughing and

crying, talking and kissing, all at once, and Miranda thanked her father and began to ask every one — particularly the captain of the guard, to whom she owed so much; but to her great sorrow she heard that he was dead. Presently they sat down to the banquet, and the king asked Miranda to tell them all that had happened to her since the terrible morning when he had sent the captain of the guard to fetch her. This she did with so much spirit that all the guests listened with breathless interest. But while she was thus enjoying himself with the king and her sisters, the king of the sheep was waiting impatiently for the time of her return, and when it came and went and no princess appeared, his anxiety became so great that he could bear it no longer.

"She is not coming back any more," he cried. "My miserable sheep's face displeases her, and without Miranda what is left to me, wretched creature that I am! Oh! cruel Ragotte; my punishment is complete."

For a long time he bewailed his sad fate like this, and then, seeing that it was growing dark, and that still there was no sign of the princess, he set out as fast as he could in the direction of the town. When he reached the palace he asked for Miranda, but by this time every one had heard the story of her adventures, and did not want her to go back again to the king of the sheep, so they refused sternly to let him see her. In vain he begged and prayed them to let him in; though his entreaties might have melted hearts of stone they did not move the guards of the palace, and at last, quite broken-hearted, he fell dead at their feet.

In the meantime the king, who had not the least idea of the sad thing that was happening outside the gate of his palace, proposed to Miranda that she should be driven in her chariot all round the town, which was to be illuminated with thousands and thousands of torches placed

in windows and balconies and in all the grand squares. But what a sight met her eyes at the very entrance of the palace! There lay her dear, kind sheep, silent and motionless upon the pavement!

She threw herself out of the chariot and ran to him, crying bitterly, for she realised that her broken promise had cost him his life, and for a long, long time she was so unhappy that they thought she would have died too.

So you see that even a princess is not always happy — especially if she forgets to keep her word; and the greatest misfortunes often happen to people just as they think they have obtained their heart's desires!

A POTTLE O' BRAINS

Once in these parts, and not so long gone neither, there was a fool that wanted to buy a pottle o' brains, for he was ever getting into scrapes through his foolishness, and being laughed at by every one. Folk told him that he could get everything he liked from the wise woman that lived on top o' the hill, and dealt in potions and herbs and spells and things, and could tell thee all as'd come to thee or thy folk. So he told his mother, and asked her if he could seek the wise woman and buy a pottle o' brains.

"That ye should," says she; "thou'st sore need o' them, my son: and if I should die, who'd take care o' such a poor fool as thou, no more fit to look after thyself than an unborn baby? But mind thy manners, and speak her pretty, my lad; for they wise folk are gey and easily mispleased."

So off he went after his tea, and there she was, sitting by the fire, and stirring a big pot.

"Good e'en, missis," says he, "it's a fine night."

"Ay," says she, and went on stirring.

"It'll maybe rain," says he and fidgeted from one foot to t'other.

"Maybe," says she.

"And m'appen it won't," says he, and looked out o' the window.

"M'appen," says she.

And he scratched his head and twisted his hat.

"Well," says he, "I can't mind nothing else about the weather, but let me see; the crops are getting on fine."

"Fine," says she.

"And — and — the beasts is fattening," says he.

"They are," says she.

"And — and —" says he, and comes to a stop — "I reckon we'll tackle business now, having done the polite like. Have you any brains for to sell?"

"That depends," says she, "if thou wants king's brains, or soldier's brains, or schoolmaster's brains, I dinna keep them."

"Hout no," says he, "jist ordinary brains — fit for any fool — same as any one has about here; something clean common-like."

"Ay so," says the wise woman, "I might manage that, if so be thou'lt help thyself."

"How's that for, missis?" says he.

"Jest so," says she, looking in the pot; "bring me the heart of the thing thou likest best of all, and I'll tell thee where to get thy pottle o' brains."

"But," says he, scratching his head, "how can I do that?"

"That's no for me to say," says she, "find out for thyself, my lad, if thou doesn't want to be a fool all thy days. But thou'll have to read me a riddle so as I can see thou'st brought me the right thing, and if thy brains is about thee. And I've something else to see to," says she, "so

good e'en to thee," and she carried the pot away with her into the back place.

So off went the fool to his mother, and told her what the wise woman said.

"And I reckon I'll have to kill that pig," says he, "for I like that fat bacon better than anything."

"Then do it, my lad," says his mother, "for certain 'twill be a strange and good thing for thee, if thou canst buy a pottle o' brains, and be able to look after thyself."

So he killed the pig, and next day off he went to the wise woman's cottage, and there she sat, reading in a great book.

"Good e'en, missis," says he, "I've brought thee the heart o' the thing I like the best of all; and I put it hapt in paper on the table."

"Ay so?" says she, and looked at him through her spectacles. "Tell me this then, what runs without feet?"

He scratched his head, and thought, and thought, but he couldn't tell.

"Go thy ways," says she, "thou'st not fetched me the right thing yet. I've no brains for thee to-day." And she clapped the book together, and turned her back.

So off the fool went to tell his mother.

But as he goy nigh the house, out came folk to tell him his mother was dying.

And when he goy in, his mother only looked at him and smiled as if to say she could leave him with a quiet mind since he had goy brains enough now to look after himself — and then she died.

So down he sat and the more he thought about it the badder he felt. He minded how she nursed him when he was a tiddy brat, and helped him with his lessons, and cooked his dinners, and mended his clouts, and bore with his foolishness; and he felt sorrier and sorrier, while he began to sob and greet.

"Oh, mother, mother!" says he, "who'll take care of me now? Thou shouldn't have left me alone, for I liked me better than everything!"

And as he said that, he thought of the words of the wise woman. "Hi, yi!" says he, "must I take mother's heart to her?"

"No! I can't do that," says he. "What'll I do now? what'll I do to get that pottle o' brains, now I'm alone in the world?" So he thought and thought and thought, and next day he went and borrowed a sack, and bundled his mother in, and carried it on his shoulder up to the wise woman's cottage.

"Good e'en, missis," says he, "I reckon I've fetched thee the right thing this time, surely," and he plumped the sack down kerflap! in the doorsill.

"Maybe," says the wise woman, "but read me this, now, what's yellow and shining but isn't gold?"

And he scratched his head, and thought and thought, but he couldn't tell.

"Thou'st not hit the right thing yet, my lad," says she. "I doubt thou'rt a bigger fool than I thought!" and shut the door in his face.

"See there!" says he, and set down by the roadside and greets.

"I've lost the only two things I cared for, and what else can I find to buy a pottle o' brains with!" and he fair howled, till the tears ran down into his mouth. And up came a lass that lived near at hand, and looked up at him.

"What's up with thee, fool?" says she.

"Oo, I've killed my pig, and lost my mother and I'm nobbut a fool myself," says he, sobbing.

"That's bad," says she; "and haven't thee anybody to look after thee?"

"No," says he, "and I cannot buy my pottle o' brains, for there's nothing I like best left."

"What art talking about?" says she.

And down she sets by him, and he told her all about the wise woman and the pig, and his mother and the riddles, and that he was alone in the world.

"Well," says she, "I wouldn't mind looking after thee myself."

"Could thee do it?" says he.

"Ou, ay!" says she; "folks say as fools make good husbands, and I reckon I'll have thee, if thou'rt willing."

"Can'st cook?" says he.

"Ay, I can," says she.

"And scrub?" says he.

"Surely," says she.

"And mend my clouts?" says he.

"I can that," says she.

"I reckon thou'lt do as well as anybody," says he; "but what'll I do about this wise woman?"

"Oh, wait a bit," says she, "something may turn up, and it'll not matter if thou'rt a fool, so long'st thou'st goy me to look after thee."

"That's true," says he, and off they went and got married. And she kept his house so clean and neat, and cooked his dinner so fine, that one night he says to her: "Lass, I'm thinking I like thee best of everything after all."

"That's good hearing," says she, "and what then?"

"Have I got to kill thee, dost think, and take thy heart up to the wise woman for that pottle o' brains?"

"Law, no!" says she, looking skeered, "I winna have that. But see here; thou didn't cut out thy mother's heart, did thou?"

"No; but if I had, maybe I'd have got my pottle o' brains," says he.

"Not a bit of it," says she; "just thou take me as I be, heart and all, and I'll wager I'll help thee read the riddles."

"Can thee so?" says he, doubtful like; "I reckon they're too hard for women folk."

"Well," says she, "let's see now. Tell me the first."

"What runs without feet?" says he.

"Why, water!" says she.

"It do," says he, and scratched his head.

"And what's yellow and shining but isn't gold?"

"Why, the sun!" says she.

"Faith, it be!" says he. "Come, we'll go up to the wise woman at once," and off they went. And as they came up the pad, she was sitting at the door, twining straws.

"Good e'en, missis," says he.

"Good e'en, fool," says she.

"I reckon I've fetched thee the right thing at last," says he.

The wise woman looked at them both, and wiped her spectacles.

"Canst tell me what that is as has first no legs, and then two legs, and ends with four legs?"

And the fool scratched his head and thought and thought, but he couldn't tell.

And the lass whispered in his ear:

"It's a tadpole."

"M'appen," says he then, "it may be a tadpole, missis."

The wise woman nodded her head.

"That's right," says she, "and thou'st got thy pottle o' brains already."

"Where be they?" says he, looking about and feeling in his pockets.

"In thy wife's head," says she. "The only cure for a fool is a good wife to look after him, and that thou'st got, so good e'en to thee!" And with that she nodded to them, and up and into the house.

So they went home together, and he never wanted to buy a pottle o' brains again, for his wife had enough for both.

THE TALE OF A YOUTH WHO SET OUT TO LEARN WHAT FEAR WAS

A FATHER had two sons, of whom the eldest was clever and bright and always knew what he was about, but the youngest was stupid and couldn't learn anything; so much so that those who saw him exclaimed: "What a burden he'll be to his father!" Now, when there was anything to be done the eldest had always to do it; but if something was required late or in the night-time, and the way led through the churchyard or some such ghostly place, he always replied, "Oh! no, father. Nothing will induce me to go there — it makes me shudder!" for he was afraid. Or when they sat of an evening round the fire telling stories which made one's flesh creep and the listeners sometimes said, "Oh! it makes one shudder," the youngest sat in a corner, heard the exclamation, and could not understand what it meant. "They are always saying it makes one shudder! it makes one shudder! Nothing makes me shudder. It's probably an art quite beyond me."

Now it happened that his father said to him one day: "Hearken, you there in the corner: you are growing big and strong and you must learn to earn your own bread. Look at your brother, what pains he takes; but all the money I've spent on your education is thrown away."

"My dear father," he replied, "I will gladly learn — in fact, if it were possible I should like to learn to shudder. I don't understand that a bit yet." The eldest

laughed when he heard this and thought to himself, "Good heavens! what a ninny my brother is! He'll never come to any good. As the twig is bent, so is the tree inclined." The father sighed and answered him: "You'll soon learn to shudder; but that won't help you to make a living."

Shortly after this, when the sexton came to pay them a visit, the father broke out to him and told him what a bad hand his youngest son was at everything: he knew nothing and learned nothing. "Only think! when I asked him how he purposed gaining a livelihood, he actually asked to be taught to shudder." "If that's all he wants," said the sexton, "I can teach him that. Just you send him to me — I'll soon polish him up." The father was quite pleased with the proposal, because he thought, "It will be a good discipline for the youth." And so the sexton took him into his house, and his duty was to toll the bell. After a few days he woke him at midnight and bade him rise up and climb into the tower and toll. "Now, my friend, I'll teach you to shudder," thought he.

He stole forth secretly in front, and when the youth was up above and had turned round to grasp the bell-rope, he saw, standing opposite the hole of the belfry, a white figure. "Who's there?" he called out, but the figure gave no answer and neither stirred nor moved. "Answer," cried the youth, "or begone. You have no business here at this hour of the night." But the sexton remained motionless, so that the youth might think it was a ghost. The youth called out the second time: "What do you want here? Speak if you are an honest fellow, or I'll knock you down the stairs." The sexton thought, "He can't mean that in earnest," so gave forth no sound and stood as though he were made of stone. Then the youth shouted out to him the third time, and as that too had no effect he made a dash at the spectre and knocked it down the stairs, so that it fell about ten steps and re-

mained lying in a corner. Thereupon he tolled the bell, went home to bed without saying a word, and fell asleep.

The sexton's wife waited a long time for her husband, but he never appeared. At last she became anxious and woke the youth and asked: "Don't you know where my husband is? He went up to the tower in front of you." "No," answered the youth; "but some one stood on the stairs up there just opposite the trap-door in the belfry, and because he wouldn't answer me or go away I took him for a rogue and knocked him down. You'd better go and see if it was he. I should be much distressed if it were." The wife ran and found her husband, who was lying groaning in a corner, with his leg broken.

She carried him down and then hurried with loud protestations to the youth's father. "Your son has been the cause of a pretty misfortune," she cried. "He threw my husband downstairs so that he broke his leg. Take the good-for-nothing wretch out of our house." The father was horrified, hurried to the youth, and gave him a scolding.

"What unholy pranks are these? The evil one must have put them into your head." "Father," he replied, "only listen to me. I am quite guiltless. He stood there in the night, like one who meant harm. I didn't know who it was, and warned him three times to speak or begone." "Oh!" groaned the father, "you'll bring me nothing but misfortune. Get out of my sight. I won't have anything more to do with you." "Yes, father, willingly. Only wait till daylight, then I'll set out and learn to shudder, and in that way I shall be master of an art which will gain me a living." "Learn what you will," said the father, "it's all one to me. Here are $50 for you. Set forth into the wide world with them; but see and tell no one where you come from or who your father is, for I am ashamed of you." "Yes, father, whatever

you wish; and if that's all you ask, I can easily keep it in mind."

When day broke the youth put the $50 into his pocket, set out on the hard high-road, and kept muttering to himself: "If I could only shudder! if I could only shudder!" Just at this moment a man came by who heard the youth speaking to himself, and when they had gone on a bit and were in sight of the gallows the man said to him: "Look! there is the tree where seven people have been hanged and are now learning to fly. Sit down under it and wait till nightfall, and then you'll pretty soon learn to shudder." "If that's all I have to do," answered the youth, "it's easily done; but if I learn to shudder so quickly, then you shall have my $50. Just come back to me to-morrow morning early." Then the youth went to the gallows-tree and sat down underneath it and waited for the evening, and because he felt cold he lit himself a fire. But at midnight it got so chill that in spite of the fire he couldn't keep warm.

As the wind blew the corpses one against the other, tossing them to and fro, he thought to himself, "If you are perishing down here by the fire, how those poor things up there must be shaking and shivering!" And because he had a tender heart, he put up a ladder, which he climbed, unhooked one body after the other, and took down all the seven. Then he stirred the fire, blew it up, and placed them all round in a circle, that they might warm themselves. But they sat there and did not move, and the fire caught their clothes. Then he spoke: "Take care, or I'll hang you up again." But the dead men did not hear and let their rags go on burning. Then he got angry and said: "If you aren't careful yourselves, then I can't help you, and I don't mean to burn with you." And he hung them up again in a row. Then he sat down at his fire and fell asleep.

On the following morning the man came to him and, wishing to get his $50, said: "Now you know what it is to shudder." "No," he answered, "how should I? Those fellows up there never opened their mouths, and were so stupid that they let those few old tatters they have on their own bodies burn." Then the man saw he wouldn't get his $50 that day, and went off saying: "Well, I'm blessed if I ever met such a person in my life before."

The youth too went on his way, and began to murmur to himself: "Oh! if I could only shudder! if I could only shudder!" A carrier who was walking behind him heard these words and asked him: "Who are you?" "I don't know," said the youth. "Where do you hail from?" "I don't know." "Who's your father?" "I mayn't say." "What are you constantly muttering to yourself?" "Oh!" said the youth, "I would give worlds to shudder, but no one can teach me." "Stuff and nonsense!" spoke the carrier. "Come along with me and I'll soon put that right." The youth went with the carrier, and in the evening they reached an inn, where they were to spend the night. Then just as he was entering the room, he said again quite loud: "Oh! if I could only shudder!" The landlord, who heard this, laughed and said: "If that's what you're sighing for you shall be given every opportunity here." "Oh! hold your tongue!" said the landlord's wife. "So many people have paid for their curiosity with their lives, it were a thousand pities if those beautiful eyes were never again to behold daylight." But the youth said: "No matter how difficult, I insist on learning it. Why, that's what I've set out to do."

He left the landlord no peace till he told him that in the neighbourhood stood a haunted castle, where one could easily learn to shudder if one only kept watch in it for three nights. The king had promised the man who dared to do this thing his daughter as wife, and she was the most

beautiful maiden under the sun. There was also much treasure hid in the castle, guarded by evil spirits, which would then be free, and would be sufficient to make a poor man more than rich. Many had gone in, but so far none had ever come out again. So the youth went to the king and spoke: "If I were allowed, I should much like to watch for three nights in the castle." The king looked at him, and because he pleased him he said: "You can ask for three things, none of them living, and those you may take with you into the castle." Then he answered: "Well, I shall beg for a fire, a turning lathe, and a carving bench with the knife attached."

On the following day the king had everything put into the castle, and when night drew on the youth took up his position there, lit a bright fire in one of the rooms, placed the carving bench with the knife close to it, and sat himself down on the turning lathe. "Oh! if I could only shudder!" he said; "but I shan't learn it here either." Toward midnight he wanted to make up the fire, and as he was blowing up a blaze he heard a shriek from a corner. "Ou, meow! how cold we are!" "You fools!" he cried; "why do you scream? If you are cold, come and sit at the fire and warm yourselves." And as he spoke two huge black cats sprang fiercely forward and sat down, one on each side of him, and gazed wildly at him with their fiery eyes.

After a time, when they had warmed themselves, they said: "Friend, shall we play a little game of cards?" "Why not?" he replied. "But first let me see your paws." Then they stretched out their claws. "Ha!" said he; "what long nails you've got! Wait a minute. I must first cut them off." Thereupon he seized them by the scruff of their necks, lifted them on to the carving bench, and screwed down their paws firmly. "After watching you narrowly," said he, "I no longer feel any desire to

play cards with you." And with these words he struck them dead and threw them out into the water. But when he had thus sent the two of them to their final rest and was again about to sit down at the fire, out of every nook and corner came forth black cats and black dogs with fiery chains in such swarms that he couldn't possibly get away from them. They yelled in the most ghastly manner, jumped upon his fire, scattered it all, and tried to put it out. He looked on quietly for a time, but when it got beyond a joke he seized his carving-knife and called out, "Be off, you rabble rout!" and let fly at them. Some of them fled away, and the others he struck dead and threw them out into the pond below.

When he returned he blew up the sparks of the fire once more and warmed himself. And as he sat thus his eyes refused to keep open any longer, and a desire to sleep stole over him. Then he looked around him and beheld in the corner a large bed. "The very thing," he said, and laid himself down in it. But when he wished to close his eyes the bed began to move by itself and ran all round the castle. "Capital," he said, "only a little quicker." Then the bed sped on as if drawn by six horses, over thresholds and stairs, up this way and down that. All of a sudden — crash! crash! with a bound it turned over, upside down, and lay like a mountain on top of him. But he tossed the blankets and pillows into the air, emerged from underneath, and saying "Now any one who has a fancy for it may go a drive," lay down at his fire and slept till daybreak.

In the morning the king came, and when he beheld him lying on the ground he imagined the ghosts had been too much for him and that he was dead. Then he said: "What a pity! and such a fine fellow as he was." The youth heard this, got up, and said: "It's not come to that yet." Then the king was astonished, but very glad, and

asked how it had fared with him. "First-rate," he answered; "and now I've survived the one night, I shall get through the other two also." The landlord, when he went to him, opened his eyes wide and said: "Well, I never thought to see you alive again. Have you learned now what shuddering is?" "No," he replied, "it's quite hopeless. If some one could only tell me how to!"

The second night he went up again to the old castle, sat down at the fire, and began his old refrain: "If I could only shudder!" As midnight approached a noise and din broke out, at first gently, but gradually increasing; then all was quiet for a minute, and at length, with a loud scream, half of a man dropped down the chimney and fell before him. "Hi, up there!" shouted he. "There's another half wanted down here — that's not enough." Then the din commenced once more, there was a shrieking and a yelling, and then the other half fell down. "Wait a bit," he said. "I'll stir up the fire for you." When he had done this and again looked round the two pieces had united, and a horrible-looking man sat on his seat. "Come," said the youth, "I didn't bargain for that — the seat is mine." The man tried to shove him away, but the youth wouldn't allow it for a moment, and pushing him off by force sat down in his place again.

Then more men dropped down, one after the other, who, fetching nine skeleton legs and two skulls, put them up and played ninepins with them. The youth thought he would like to play too and said: "Look here; do you mind my joining the game?" "No, not if you have money." "I've money enough," he replied, "but your balls aren't very round." Then he took the skulls, placed them on his lathe, and turned them till they were round. "Now they'll roll along better," said he, "and houp-la! now the fun begins." He played with them and lost some of his money, but when twelve struck everything

vanished before his eyes. He lay down and slept peacefully. The next morning the king came, anxious for news. "How have you got on this time?" he asked. "I played ninepins," he answered, "and lost a few pence." "Didn't you shudder then?" "No such luck," said he. "I made myself merry. Oh! if I only knew what it was to shudder!"

On the third night he sat down again on his bench and said, in the most desponding way: "If I could only shudder!" When it got late, six big men came in carrying a coffin. Then he cried: "Ha! ha! that's most likely my little cousin who died only a few days ago;" and beckoning with his finger he called out: "Come, my small cousin, come." They placed the coffin on the ground, and he approached it, and took off the cover. In it lay a dead man. He felt his face, and it was cold as ice. "Wait," he said, "I'll heat you up a bit," went to the fire, warmed his hand, and laid it on the man's face, but the dead remained cold. Then he lifted him out, sat down at the fire, laid him on his knee, and rubbed his arms that the blood should circulate again.

When that too had no effect, it occurred to him that if two people lay together in bed they warmed each other; so he put him into the bed, covered him up, and lay down beside him. After a time the corpse became warm and began to move. Then the youth said: "Now, my little cousin, what would have happened if I hadn't warmed you?" But the dead man rose up and cried out: "Now I will strangle you." "What!" said he, "is that all the thanks I get? You shall be put straight back into your coffin," lifted him up, threw him in, and closed the lid. Then the six men came and carried him out again. "I simply can't shudder," he said, "and it's clear I shan't learn it in a lifetime here."

Then a man entered, of more than ordinary size and of

a very fearful appearance; but he was old and had a white beard. "Oh! you miserable creature, now you will soon know what it is to shudder," he cried, "for you must die." "Not so quickly," answered the youth. "If I am to die, you must catch me first." "I shall soon lay hold of you," spoke the monster. "Gently, gently; don't boast too much. I'm as strong as you, and stronger too." "We'll soon see," said the old man. "If you are stronger than I, then I'll let you off. Come, let's have a try."

Then he led him through some dark passages to a forge, and grasping an axe he drove one of the anvils with a blow into the earth. "I can do better than that," cried the youth, and went to the other anvil. The old man drew near him in order to watch closely, and his white beard hung right down. Then the youth seized the axe, cleft the anvil open, and jammed in the old man's beard. "Now I have you," said the youth; "this time it's your turn to die." Then he seized an iron rod and belaboured the old man till he, whimpering, begged him to leave off, and he would give him great riches. The youth drew out the axe and let him go.

The old man led him back to the castle and showed him in a cellar three chests of gold. "One of these," he said, "belongs to the poor, one to the king, and the third is yours." At that moment twelve struck, and the spirit vanished, leaving the youth alone in the dark. "I'll surely be able to find a way out," said he, and groping about he at length found his way back to the room and fell asleep at his fire. The next morning the king came and said: "Well, now you've surely learned to shudder?" "No," he answered. "What can it be? My dead cousin was there, and an old bearded man came who showed me heaps of money down below there, but what shuddering is no one has told me." Then the king spoke: "You have freed the castle from its curse and you shall marry

my daughter." "That's all charming," he said; "but I still don't know what it is to shudder."

Then the gold was brought up and the weddinig was celebrated, but the young king, though he loved his wife dearly and though he was very happy, still kept on saying: "If I could only shudder! if I could only shudder!" At last he reduced her to despair. Then her maid said: "I'll help you. We'll soon make him shudder." So she went out to the stream that flowed through the garden and had a pailful of little gudgeons brought to her. At night, when the young king was asleep, his wife had to pull the clothes off him and pour the pailful of little gudgeons over him, so that the little fish swam all about him. Then he awoke and cried out: "Oh! how I shudder, how I shudder, dear wife! Yes, now I know what shuddering is."

THE KING O' THE CATS

One winter's evening the sexton's wife was sitting by the fireside with her big black cat, Old Tom, on the other side, both half asleep and waiting for the master to come home. They waited and they waited, but still he didn't come, till at last he came rushing in, calling out, "Who's Tommy Tildrum?" in such a wild way that both his wife and his cat stared at him to know what was the matter.

"Why, what's the matter?" said his wife, "and why do you want to know who Tommy Tildrum is?"

"Oh, I've had such an adventure. I was digging away at old Mr. Fordyce's grave when I suppose I must have dropped to sleep, and only woke up by hearing a cat's *Miaou!*"

"*Miaou!*" said Old Tom in answer.

"Yes, just like that! So I looked over the edge of the grave, and what do you think I saw?"

"Now, how can I tell?" said the sexton's wife.

"Why, nine black cats all like our friend Tom here, all with a white spot on their chestesses. And what do you think they were carrying? Why, a small coffin covered with a black velvet pall, and on the pall was a small coronet all of gold, and at every third step they took they cried all together, *Miaou—*"

"*Miaou!*" said Old Tom again.

"Yes, just like that!" said the sexton; "and as they came nearer and nearer to me I could see them more distinctly, because their eyes shone out with a sort of green light. Well, they all came towards me, eight of them carrying the coffin, and the biggest cat of all walking in front for all the world like — but look at our Tom, how he's looking at me. You'd think he knew all I was saying."

"Go on, go on," said his wife; "never mind Old Tom."

"Well, as I was saying, they came towards me slowly and solemnly, and at every third step crying all together, *Miaou—*"

"*Miaou!*" said Old Tom again.

"Yes, just like that, till they came and stood right opposite Mr. Fordyce's grave, where I was, when they all stood still and looked straight at me. I did feel queer, that I did! But look at old Tom; he's looking at me just as they did."

"Go on, go on," said his wife; "never mind Old Tom."

"Where was I? Oh, they all stood still looking at me, when the one that wasn't carrying the coffin came forward and, staring at me, said to me — yes, I tell 'ee, said to me, with a squeaky voice, 'Tell Tom Tildrum that Tim Toldrum's dead,' and that's why I asked you if you knew who Tom Tildrum was, for how can I tell Tom Tildrum Tim

Toldrum's dead if I don't know who Tom Tildrum is?"

"Look at Old Tom, look at Old Tom!" screamed his wife.

And well might he look, for Tom was swelling and Tom was staring, and at last Tom shrieked out, "What — Old Tim dead! then I'm the King o' the Cats!" and rushed up the chimney and was never more seen.

KING JOHN AND THE ABBOT OF CANTERBURY

In the reign of King John there lived an Abbot of Canterbury who kept up grand state in his Abbey. A hundred of the Abbot's men dined each day with him in his refectory, and fifty knights in velvet coats and gold chains waited upon him daily. Well, King John, as you know, was a very bad king, and he couldn't brook the idea of any one in his kingdom, however holy he might be, being honoured more than he. So he summoned the Abbot of Canterbury to his presence.

The Abbot came with a goodly retinue, with his fifty knights-at-arms in velvet cloaks and gold chains. The King went to meet him, "How now, Father Abbot? I hear of thee, thou keepest far greater state than I. This becomes not our royal dignity, and savours of treason in thee."

"My liege," quoth the Abbot, bending low, "I beg to say that all I spend has been given to the Abbey out of the piety of the folk. I trust your Grace will not take it ill that I spend for the Abbey's sake what is the Abbey's."

"Nay, proud prelate," answered the King, "all that is in this fair realm of England is our own, and thou hast

no right to put me to shame by holding such state. However, of my clemency I will spare thee thy life and thy property if you can but answer me three questions."

"I will do so, my liege," said the Abbot, "so far as my poor wit can extend."

"Well then," said the King, "tell me where is the centre of all the world round; then let me know how soon I can ride the whole world about; and lastly, tell me what I think."

"Your Majesty jesteth," stammered the Abbot.

"Thou wilt find it no jest," said the King. "Unless thon canst answer me these questions three before a week is out, thy head will leave thy body;" and he turned away.

Well, the Abbot rode away in fear and trembling, and first he went to Oxford to see if any learned doctor could tell him the answer to those questions three; but none could help him, and he took his way to Canterbury, sad and sorrowful, to take leave of his monks. But on his way he met his shepherd as he was going to the fold.

"Welcome home, Lord Abbot," quoth the shepherd; "what news from good King John?"

"Sad news, sad news, my shepherd," said the Abbot, and told him all that had happened.

"Now cheer up, Sir Abbot," said the shepherd. "A fool may perhaps answer what a wise man knows not. I will go to London in your stead; grant me only your apparel and your retinue of knights. At the least I can die in your place."

"Nay, shepherd, not so," said the Abbot; "I must meet the danger in my own person. And to that, thou canst not pass for me."

"But I can and I will, Sir Abbot. In a cowl, who will know me for what I am?"

So at last the Abbot consented, and sent him to London in his most splendid array, and he approached King

John with all his retinue as before, but dressed in his simple monk's dress and his cowl over his face.

"Now welcome, Sir Abbot," said King John; "thou art prepared for thy doom, I see."

"I am ready to answer your Majesty," said he.

"Well, then, question first — where is the centre of the round earth?" said the King.

"Here," said the shepherd Abbot, planting his crozier in the ground; "an' your Majesty believe me not, go measure it and see."

"By St. Botolph," said the King, "a merry answer and a shrewd; so to question the second. How soon may I ride this round world about?"

"If your Majesty will graciously rise with the sun, and ride along with him until the next morning he rise, your Grace will surely have ridden it round."

"By St. John," laughed King John, "I did not think it could be done so soon. But let that pass, and tell me question third and last, and that is — What do I think?"

"That is easy, your Grace," said he. "Your Majesty thinks I am my lord the Abbot of Canterbury; but you may see," and here he raised his cowl, "I am but his poor shepherd, that am come to ask your pardon for him and me."

Loud laughed the King. "Well caught. Thou hast more wit than thy lord, and thou shalt be Abbot in his place."

"Nay, that cannot be," quoth the shepherd; "I know not to write nor to read."

"Well, then, four nobles a week thou shalt have for the ready wit. And tell the Abbot from me that he has my pardon." And with that King John sent away the shepherd with a right royal present, besides his pension.

TAMLANE

YOUNG TAMLANE was son of Earl Murray, and Burd Janet was daughter of Dunbar, Earl of March. And when they were young they loved one another and plighted their troth. But when the time came near for their marrying, Tamlane disappeared, and none knew what had become of him.

Many, many days after he had disappeared, Burd Janet was wandering in Carterhaugh Wood, though she had been warned not to go there. And as she wandered she plucked the flowers from the bushes. She came at last to a bush of broom and began plucking it. She had not taken more than three flowerets when by her side up started young Tamlane.

"Where do you come from, Tamlane, Tamlane?" Burd Janet said; "and why have you been away so long?"

"From Elfland I come," said young Tamlane. "The Queen of Elfland has made me her knight."

"But how did you get there, Tamlane?" said Burd Janet.

"I was hunting one day, and as I rode widershins round yon hill, a deep drowsiness fell upon me, and when I awoke, behold I was in Elfland. Fair is that land and gay, and fain would I stop but for thee and one other thing. Every seven years the Elves pay their tithe to the nether world, and for all the Queen makes much of me, I fear that it is myself that will be the tithe."

"Oh, can you not be saved? Tell me if aught I can do will save you, Tamlane?"

"One thing only is there for my safety. To-morrow night is Hallowe'en, and the fairy court will then ride

through England and Scotland, and if you would borrow me from Elfland you must take your stand by Miles Cross between twelve and one o' the night, and with holy water in your hand you must cast a compass all around you."

"But how shall I know you, Tamlane?" quoth Burd Janet, "amid so many knights I've ne'er seen before?"

"The first court of Elves that come by let pass. The next court you shall pay reverence to, but do naught nor say aught. But the third court that comes by is the chief court of them all, and at the head rides the Queen of all Elfland. And I shall ride by her side upon a milk-white steed with a star in my crown; they give me this honour as being a christened knight. Watch my hands, Janet, the right one will be gloved but the left one will be bare, and by that token you will know me."

"But how to save you, Tamlane?" quoth Burd Janet.

"You must spring upon me suddenly, and I will fall to the ground. Then seize me quick, and whatever change befall me, for they will exercise all their magic on me, cling hold to me till they turn me into a red-hot iron. Then cast me into this pool and I will be turned back into a mother-naked man. Cast then your green mantle over me, and I shall be yours, and be of the world again."

So Burd Janet promised to do all for Tamlane, and next night at midnight she took her stand at Miles Cross and cast a compass round her with holy water.

Soon there came riding by the Elfin court, first over the mound went a troop of black steeds, and then another troop on brown. But in the third court, all on milk-white steeds, she saw the Queen of Elfland, and by her side a knight with a star in his crown, with right hand gloved and the left bare. Then she knew this was her own Tamlane, and springing forward she seized the

bridle of the milk-white steed and pulled its rider down. And as soon as he had touched the ground she let go the bridle and seized him in her arms.

"He's won, he's won amongst us all," shrieked out the eldritch crew, and all came around her and tried their spells on young Tamlane.

First they turned him in Janet's arms like frozen ice, then into a huge flame of roaring fire. Then, again, the fire vanished and an adder was skipping through her arms, but still she held on. Then suddenly a dove was struggling in her arms, and almost flew away. Then they turned him into a swan, but all was in vain, till at last he was turned into a red-hot glaive, and this she cast into a well of water and then he turned back into a mother-naked man. She quickly cast her green mantle over him, and young Tamlane was Burd Janet's forever.

Then sang the Queen of Elfland as the court turned away and began to resume its march:

"She that has borrowed young Tamlane
Has gotten a stately groom,
She's taken away my bonniest knight,
Left nothing in his room.

"But had I known, Tamlane, Tamlane,
A lady would borrow thee,
I'd hae ta'en out thy two grey eyne,
Put in two eyne of tree.

"Had I but known, Tamlane, Tamlane,
Before we came from home,
I'd hae ta'en out thy heart o' flesh,
Put in a heart of stone.

"Had I but had the wit yestreen
That I have got to-day,
I'd paid the Fiend seven times his teind
Ere you'd been won away."

And then the Elfin court rode away, and Burd Janet and young Tamlane went their way homewards and were soon married after young Tamlane had again been sained by the holy water and made Christian once more.

HOK LEE AND THE DWARFS

THERE once lived in a small town in China a man named Hok Lee. He was a steady, industrious man, who not only worked hard at his trade, but did all his own housework as well, for he had no wife to do it for him. "What an excellent, industrious man is this Hok Lee!" said his neighbours. "How hard he works! he never leaves his house to amuse himself or to take a holiday as others do!"

But Hok Lee was by no means the virtuous person his neighbours thought him. True, he worked hard enough by day, but at night, when all respectable folk were fast asleep, he used to steal out and join a dangerous band of robbers, who broke into rich people's houses and carried off all they could lay hands on.

This state of things went on for some time, and though a thief was caught now and then and punished, no suspicion ever fell on Hok Lee, he was such a very respectable, hard-working man.

Hok Lee had already amassed a good store of money as his share of the proceeds of these robberies, when it happened one morning on going to market that a neighbour said to him:

"Why, Hok Lee, what is the matter with your face? One side of it is all swelled up."

True enough, Hok Lee's right cheek was twice the size of his left, and it soon began to feel very uncomfortable.

"I will bind up my face," said Hok Lee. "Doubtless the warmth will cure the swelling." But no such thing. Next day it was worse, and day by day it grew bigger and bigger till it was nearly as large as his head and became very painful.

Hok Lee was at his wits' ends what to do. Not only was his cheek unsightly and painful, but his neighbours began to jeer and make fun of him, which hurt his feelings very much indeed.

One day, as luck would have it, a travelling doctor came to the town. He sold not only all kinds of medicine, but also dealt in many strange charms against witches and evil spirits.

Hok Lee determined to consult him and asked him into his house. After the doctor had examined him carefully he spoke thus:

"This, O Hok Lee, is no ordinary swelled face. I strongly suspect you have been doing some wrong deed which has called down the anger of the spirits on you. None of my drugs will avail to cure you, but if you are willing to pay me handsomely I can tell you how you may be cured."

Then Hok Lee and the doctor began to bargain together, and it was a long time before they could come to terms. However, the doctor got the better of it in the end, for he was determined not to part with the secret under a certain price, and Hok Lee had no mind to carry his huge cheek about with him to the end of his days. So he was obliged to part with the greater portion of his ill-gotten gains.

When the doctor had pocketed the money he told Hok Lee to go on the first night of the full moon to a certain wood and there to watch by a particular tree. After a time he would see the dwarfs and little sprites who live underground come out to dance. "And mind you dance

your very best," said the doctor. "If you dance well and please them they will grant you a petition and you can then beg to be cured; but if you dance badly they will most likely do you a mischief out of spite." With that he took leave and departed.

Happily the first night of the full moon was near, and at the proper time Hok Lee set out for the wood. With a little trouble he found the tree the doctor had described, and feeling nervous he climbed up into it.

He had hardly settled himself on a branch when he saw the little dwarfs assembling in the moonlight. They came from all sides, till at length there appeared to be hundreds of them. They seemed in high glee and danced and skipped and capered about, while Hok Lee grew so eager watching them that he crept further and further along his branch till at length it gave a loud crack. All the dwarfs stood still, and Hok Lee felt as if his heart stood still also.

Then one of the dwarfs called out: "Some one is up in that tree. Come down at once, whoever you are, or we must come and fetch you."

In great terror Hok Lee proceeded to come down; but he was so nervous that he tripped near the ground and came rolling down in the most absurd manner. When he had picked himself up he came forward with a low bow, and the dwarf who had first spoken and who appeared to be the leader said: "Now, then, who art thou and what brings you here?"

So Hok Lee told them the sad story of his swelled cheek, and how he had been advised to come to the forest and beg the dwarfs to cure him.

"It is well," replied the dwarf. "We will see about that. First, however, thou must dance before us. Should thy dancing please us, perhaps we may be able to do some-

thing; but shouldst thou dance badly we shall assuredly punish thee, so now take warning and dance away."

With that, he and all the other dwarfs sat down in a large ring, leaving Hok Lee to dance alone in the middle. He felt half-frightened to death, and besides was a good deal shaken by his fall from the tree and did not feel at all inclined to dance. But the dwarfs were not to be trifled with.

"Begin!" cried the leader, and "Begin!" shouted the rest in chorus.

So in despair Hok Lee began. First he hopped on one foot and then on the other, but he was so stiff and so nervous that he made but a poor attempt, and after a time sank down on the ground and vowed he could dance no more.

The dwarfs were very angry. They crowded round Hok Lee and abused him. "Thou to come here to be cured, indeed!" they cried. "Thou hast brought one big cheek with thee, but thou shalt take away two." And with that they ran off and disappeared, leaving Hok Lee to find his way home as best he might.

He hobbled away weary and depressed, and not a little anxious on account of the dwarfs' threat.

Nor were his fears unfounded, for when he rose next morning his left cheek was swelled up as big as his right, and he could hardly see out of his eyes. Hok Lee felt in despair, and his neighbours jeered at him more than ever. The doctor, too, had disappeared, so there was nothing for it but to try the dwarfs once more.

He waited a month till the first night of the full moon came round again, and then he trudged back to the forest and sat down under the tree from which he had fallen. He had not long to wait. Ere long the dwarfs came trooping out till all were assembled.

"I don't feel quite easy," said one. "I feel as if some horrid human being were near us."

When Hok Lee heard this he came forward and bent down to the ground before the dwarfs, who came crowding round and laughed heartily at his comical appearance with his two big cheeks.

"What dost thou want?" they asked; and Hok Lee proceeded to tell them of his fresh misfortunes, and begged so hard to be allowed one more trial at dancing that the dwarfs consented, for there is nothing they love so much as being amused.

Now, Hok Lee knew how much depended on his dancing well, so he plucked up a good spirit and began, first quite slowly and faster by degrees, and he danced so well and gracefully, and made such new and wonderful steps, that the dwarfs were quite delighted with him.

They clapped their hands and shouted: "Well done, Hok Lee, well done. Go on — dance more, for we are pleased."

And Hok Lee danced on and on, till he really could dance no more and was obliged to stop.

Then the leader of the dwarfs said: "We are pleased, Hok Lee, and as a recompense for thy dancing thy face shall be cured. Farewell."

With these words he and the other dwarfs vanished, and Hok Lee, putting his hands to his face, found to his great joy that his cheeks were reduced to their natural size. The way home seemed short and easy to him, and he went to bed happy and resolved never to go out robbing again.

Next day the whole town was full of the news of Hok's sudden cure. His neighbours questioned him, but could get nothing from him except the fact that he had discovered a wonderful cure for all kinds of diseases.

After a time a rich neighbour, who had been ill for some years, came and offered to give Hok Lee a large sum

of money if he would tell him how he might get cured. Hok Lee consented on condition that he swore to keep the secret. He did so, and Hok Lee told him of the dwarfs and their dances.

The neighbour went off, carefully obeyed Hok Lee's directions, and was duly cured by the dwarfs. Then another and another came to Hok Lee to beg his secret, and from each he extracted a vow of secrecy and a large sum of money. This went on for years, so that at length Hok Lee became a very wealthy man and ended his days in peace and prosperity.

THE KING OF ENGLAND AND HIS THREE SONS

Once upon a time there was an old king who had three sons; and the old king fell very sick one time and there was nothing at all could make him well but some golden apples from a far country. So the three brothers went on horseback to look for some of these apples. They set off together, and when they came to a cross-roads they halted and refreshed themselves a bit; and then they agreed to meet on a certain time, and not one to go home before the other. So Valentine took the right, and Oliver went straight on, and poor Jack took the left.

To make my long story short, I shall follow poor Jack, and let the other two take their chance, for I don't think there was much good in them. Off poor Jack rides over hills, dales, valleys, and mountains, through woolly woods and sheepwalks, where the old chap never sounded his hollow bugle-horn, further than I can tell you to-night or ever intend to tell you.

At last he came to an old house, near a great forest,

and there was an old man sitting out by the door, and his look was enough to frighten you or any one else; and the old man said to him:

"Good morning, my king's son."

"Good morning to you, old gentleman," was the young prince's answer; frightened out of his wits though he was he didn't like to give in.

The old gentleman told him to dismount and to go in to have some refreshments and to put his horse in the stable, such as it was. Jack soon felt much better after having something to eat, and began to ask the old gentleman, how he knew he was a king's son.

"Oh dear!" said the old man, "I knew that you were a king's son, and I know what is your business better than what you do yourself. So you will have to stay here to-night; and when you are in bed you mustn't be frightened, whatever you hear. There will come all manner of frogs and snakes, and some will try to get into your eyes and mouth, but mind, don't stir the least bit or you will turn into one of those things yourself."

Poor Jack didn't know what to make of this, but, however, he ventured to go to bed. Just as he thought to have a bit of sleep, round and over and under him they came, but he never stirred an inch all night.

"Well, my young son, how are you this morning?"

"Oh, I am very well, thank you, but I didn't have much rest."

"Well, never mind that; you have got on very well so far, but you have a great deal to go through before you can have the golden apples to go to your father. You'd better come and have some breakfast before you start on your way to my other brother's house. You will have to leave your own horse here with me until you come back again, and tell me everything about how you get on."

After that out came a fresh horse for the young prince,

and the old man gave him a ball of yarn, and he flung it between the horse's two ears.

Off he went as fast as the wind, which the wind behind could not catch the wind before, until he came to the second oldest brother's house. When he rode up to the door he had the same salute as from the first old man, but this was even uglier than the first one. He had long grey hair, and his teeth were curling out of his mouth, and his finger- and toenails had not been cut for many thousand years. He put the horse into a much better stable, and called Jack in, and gave him plenty to eat and drink, and they had a bit of chat before they went to bed.

"Well, my son," said the old man, "I suppose you are one of the king's children come to look for the golden apples to bring him back to health."

"Yes, I am the youngest of three brothers, and I should like to get them to go back with."

"Well, don't mind, my young son. Before you go to bed to-night I will send to my eldest brother, and will tell him what you want, and he won't have much trouble in sending you on to the place where you must get the apples. But mind not to stir to-night no matter how you get bitten and stung, or else you will work great mischief to yourself."

The young man went to bed and bore all, as he did the first night, and got up the next morning well and hearty. After a good breakfast out comes a fresh horse, and a ball of yarn to throw between his ears. The old man told him to jump up quick, and said that he had made it all right with his eldest brother, not to delay for anything whatever, "For," said he, "you have a good deal to go through with in a very short and quick time."

He flung the ball, and off he goes as quick as lightning, and comes to the eldest brother's house. The old man

received him very kindly and told him he long wished to see him, and that he would go through his work like a man and come back safe and sound. "To-night," said he, "I will give you rest; there shall nothing come to disturb you, so that you may not feel sleepy for to-morrow. And you must mind to get up middling early, for you've got to go and come all in the same day; there will be no place for you to rest within thousands of miles of that place; and if there was, you would stand in great danger never to come from there in your own form. Now, my young prince, mind what I tell you. To-morrow, when you come in sight of a very large castle, which will be surrounded with black water, the first thing you will do you will tie your horse to a tree, and you will see three beautiful swans in sight, and you will say, 'Swan, swan, carry me over in the name of the Griffin of the Greenwood,' and the swans will swim you over to the earth. There will be three great entrances, the first guarded by four giants with drawn swords in their hands, the second by lions, the other by fiery serpents and dragons. You will have to be there exactly at one o'clock; and mind and leave there precisely at two, and not a moment later. When the swans carry you over to the castle, you will pass all these things, all fast asleep, but you must not notice any of them.

"When you go in, you will turn up to the right; you will see some grand rooms, then you will go downstairs through the cooking kitchen, and through a door on your left you go into a garden, where you will find the apples you want for your father to get well. After you fill your wallet, you make all speed you possibly can, and call out for the swans to carry you over the same as before. After you get on your horse, should you hear anything shouting or making any noise after you, be sure not to look back, as they will follow you for thousands of miles; but when

the time is up and you get near my place, it will be all over. Well now, my young man, I have told you all you have to do to-morrow; and mind, whatever you do, don't look about you when you see all those frightful things asleep. Keep a good heart, and make haste from there, and come back to me with all the speed you can. I should like to know how my two brothers were when you left them, and what they said to you about me."

"Well, to tell the truth, before I left London my father was sick, and said I was to come here to look for the golden apples, for they were the only things that would do him good; and when I came to your youngest brother, he told me many things I had to do before I came here. And I thought once that your youngest brother put me in the wrong bed, when he put all those snakes to bite me all night long, until your second brother told me 'So it was to be,' and said 'it is the same here,' but said you had none in your beds."

"Well, let's go to bed. You need not fear. There are no snakes here."

The young man went to bed, and had a good night's rest, and got up the next morning as fresh as newly caught trout. Breakfast being over, out comes the other horse, and, while saddling and fretting, the old man began to laugh, and told the young gentleman that if he saw a pretty young lady, not to stay with her too long, because she might waken, and then he would have to stay with her or to be turned into one of those unearthly monsters, like those he would have to pass by going into the castle.

"Ha! ha! ha! you make me laugh so that I can scarcely buckle the saddle-straps. I think I shall make it all right, my uncle, if I see a young lady there, you may depend."

"Well, my boy, I shall see how you get on."

So he mounts his Arab steed, and off he goes like a

shot out of a gun. At last he comes in sight of the castle. He ties his horse safe to a tree, and pulls out his watch. It was then a quarter to one when he called out, "Swan, swan, carry me over, for the name of the old Griffin of the Greenwood." No sooner said than done. A swan under each side, and one in front, took him over in a trice. He got on his legs, and walked quietly by all those dragons, giants, fiery serpents, and all manner of other frightful things too numerous to mention, while they were fast asleep, and that only for the space of one hour, when into the castle he goes neck or nothing. Turning to the right, upstairs he runs, and enters into a very grand bedroom, and sees a very beautiful princess lying full stretch on a gold bedstead, fast asleep. He gazed on her beautiful form with admiration, and takes her garter off, and buckles it on his own leg, and he buckles his on hers; he also takes his gold watch and pocket handkerchief, and exchanges his for hers; after that he ventures to give her a kiss, when she very nearly opened her eyes. Seeing the time short, off he runs downstairs, and passing through the kitchen to go into the garden for the apples, he could see the cook on all-fours on her back on the middle of the floor, with the knife in one hand and the fork in the other. He found the apples, and filled the wallet; and on passing through the kitchen the cook near wakened, but he was obliged to make all the speed he possibly could, as the time was nearly up. He called out for the swans, and they managed to take him over; but they found that he was a little heavier than before. No sooner than he had mounted his horse he could hear a tremendous noise, the enchantment was broken, and they tried to follow him, but all to no purpose. He was not long before he came to the older brother's house; and glad enough he was to see it, for the sight and the noise of all those things that were after him nearly frightened him to death.

"Welcome, my boy; I am proud to see you. Dismount and put the horse into the stable, and come in and have some refreshments; I know you are hungry after all you have gone through in that castle. And tell me all you did, and all you saw there. Other kings' sons went by here to go there, but they never came back alive, and you are the only one that ever broke the spell. And now you must come with me, with a sword in your hand, and must cut my head off, and must throw it into that well."

The young prince dismounts, and puts his horse in the stable, and they go in to have some refreshments, for I can assure you that he wanted some; and after telling everything that passed, which the old gentleman was very pleased to hear, they both went for a walk together, the young prince looking around and seeing the place looking dreadful, as did the old man. He could scarcely walk from his toe-nails curling up like ram's horns that had not been cut for many hundred years, and big long hair. They came to a well, and the old man gives the prince a sword, and tells him to cut his head off, and throw it in that well. The young man has to do it against his wish, but has to do it.

No sooner has he flung the head into the well, than up springs one of the finest young gentlemen you would wish to see; and instead of the old house and the frightful-looking place, it was changed into a beautiful hall and grounds. And they went back and enjoyed themselves well, and had a good laugh about the castle.

The young prince leaves this young gentleman in all his glory, and he tells the young prince before leaving that he will see him again before long. They have a jolly shake-hands, and off he goes to the next oldest brother; and, to make my long story short, he has to serve the other two brothers the same as the first.

Now the youngest brother began to ask him how things went on. "Did you see my two brothers?"

"Yes."

"How did they look?"

"Oh! they looked very well. I liked them much. They told me many things to do."

"Well, did you go to the castle?"

"Yes, my uncle."

"And will you tell me what you saw in there? Did you see the young lady?"

"Yes, I saw her, and plenty of other frightful things."

"Did you hear any snake biting you in my oldest brother's bed?"

"No, there were none there; I slept well."

"You won't have to sleep in the same bed to-night. You will have to cut my head off in the morning."

The young prince had a good night's rest, and changed all the appearance of the place by cutting his friend's head off before he started in the morning. A jolly shake-hands, and the uncle tells him it's very probable he shall see him again soon when he is not aware of it. This one's mansion was very pretty, and the country around it beautiful, after his head was cut off. Off Jack goes, over hills, dales, valleys, and mountains, and very near losing his apples again.

At last he arrives at the cross-roads, where he has to meet his brothers on the very day appointed. Coming up to the place, he sees no tracks of horses, and, being very tired, he lays himself down to sleep, by tying the horse to his leg, and putting the apples under his head.

Presently up came the other brothers the same time to the minute, and found him fast asleep; and they would not waken him, but said one to the other, "Let us see what sort of apples he has under his head." So they took and tasted them, and found they were different to theirs,

They took and changed his apples for theirs, and off to London as fast as they could, and left the poor fellow sleeping.

After awhile he awoke, and, seeing the tracks of other horses, he mounted and off with him, not thinking anything about the apples being changed. He had still a long way to go, and by the time he got near London he could hear all the bells in the town ringing, but he did not know what was the matter till he rode up to the palace, when he came to know that his father was recovered by his brothers' apples. When he got there his brothers were off to some sports for awhile; and the king was very glad to see his youngest son, and very anxious to taste his apples. But when he found out that they were not good, and thought that they were more for poisoning him, he sent immediately for the headsman to behead his youngest son, who was taken away there and then in a carriage. But instead of the headsman taking his head off, he took him to a forest not far from the town, because he had pity on him, and there left him to take his chance, when presently up comes a big hairy bear, limping on three legs. The prince, poor fellow, climbed up a tree, frightened of him, but the bear told him to come down, that it was no use of him to stop there. With hard persuasion poor Jack comes down, and the bear speaks to him and bids him "Come here to me; I will not do you any harm. It's better for you to come with me and have some refreshments; I know that you are hungry all this time."

The poor young prince says, "No, I am not hungry; but I was very frightened when I saw you coming to me first, as I had no place to run away from you."

The bear said, "I was also afraid of you when I saw that gentleman setting you down from the carriage. I thought you would have guns with you, and that you would not mind killing me if you saw me; but when I

saw the gentleman going away with the carriage, and leaving you behind by yourself, I made bold to come to you, and now I know who you are very well. Are you not the king's youngest son? I have seen you and your brothers and lots of other gentlemen in this wood many times. Now before we go from here, I must tell you that I am in disguise; and I shall take you to where we are stopping."

The young prince tells him everything from first to last, how he started in search of the apples, and about the three old men, and about the castle, and how he was served at last by his father after he came home; and instead of the headsman taking his head off, he was kind enough to leave him with his life, "and here I am now, under your protection."

The bear tells him, "Come on, my brother; there shall no harm come to you as long as you are with me."

So he takes him up to the tents; and when they see them coming, the girls begin to laugh, and say, "Here is our Jubal coming with a young gentleman." When he advanced nearer the tents, they all knew he was the young prince that had passed by that way many times before; and when Jubal went to change himself, he called most of them together into one tent, and told them all about him, and to be kind to him. And so they were, for there was nothing that he desired but what he had, the same as if he were in the palace with his father and mother. Jubal, after he pulled off his hairy coat, was one of the finest young men amongst them, and he was the young prince's closest companion. The young prince was always very sociable and merry, only when he thought of the gold watch he had from the young princess in the castle, and which he had lost he knew not where.

He passed many happy days in the forest; but one day he and poor Jubal were strolling through the trees, when

they came to the very spot where they first met, and accidentally looking up, he could see his watch hanging in the tree which he had to climb when he first saw poor Jubal coming to him in the form of a bear; and he cries out, "Jubal, Jubal, I can see my watch up in that tree."

"Well, I am sure, how lucky!" exclaimed poor Jubal; "shall I go and get it down?"

"No, I'd rather go myself," said the young prince.

Now whilst all this was going on the young princess in that castle, seeing that one of the king of England's sons had been there by the changing of the watch and other things, got herself ready with a large army, and sailed off for England. She left her army a little way out of the town, and she went with her guards straight up to the palace to see the king, and also demanded to see his sons. They had a long conversation together about different things. At last she demanded one of the sons to come before her; and the oldest one comes, when she asks him, "Have you ever been at the Castle of Melvales?" and he answers, "Yes." So she throws down a pocket handkerchief and bids him to walk over it without stumbling. He goes to walk over it, and no sooner did he put his foot on it, than he fell down and broke his leg. He was taken off immediately and made a prisoner of by her own guards. The other was called upon, and was asked the same questions, and had to go through the same performance, and he also was made a prisoner of. Now she says, "Have you not another son?" when the king began so to shiver and shake and knock his two knees together that he could scarcely stand upon his legs, and did not know what to say to her, he was so much frightened. At last a thought came to him to send for his headsman, and inquire of him particularly. "Did he behead his son, or was he alive?"

"He is saved, O king."

"Then bring him here immediately, or else I shall be done for."

Two of the fastest horses they had were put in the carriage, to go and look for the poor prince; and when they got to the very spot where they left him, it was the time when the Prince was up in the tree, getting his watch down, and poor Jubal standing a distance off. They cried out to him, Had he seen another young man in this wood? Jubal, seeing such a nice carriage, thought something, and did not like to say no, and said yes, and pointed up the tree; and they told him to come down immediately, as there was a young lady in search of him.

"Ha! ha! ha! Jubal, did you ever hear such a thing in all your life, my brother?"

"Do you call him your brother?"

"Well, he has been better to me than my brothers."

"Well, for his kindness he shall accompany you to the palace, and see how things turn out."

After they go to the palace, the prince has a good wash, and appears before the princess, when she asks him if he had ever been at the Castle of Melvales? With a smile on his face, he gives a graceful bow. And says my lady, "Walk over that handkerchief without stumbling." He walks over it many times, and dances upon it, and nothing happened to him. She said, with a proud and smiling air, "That is the young man;" and out come the objects exchanged by both of them. Presently she orders a very large box to be brought in and to be opened, and out come some of the most costly uniforms that were ever worn on an emperor's back; and when he dressed himself up, the king could scarcely look upon him from the dazzling of the gold and diamonds on his coat. He orders his two brothers to be in confinement for a period of time; and before the princess asks him to go with her to her own

country, she pays a visit to the bear's camp, and she makes some very handsome presents for their kindness to the young prince. And she gives Jubal an invitation to go with them, which he accepts; wishes them a hearty farewell for awhile, promising to see them all again in some little time.

They go back to the king, and bid farewell, and tell him not to be so hasty another time to order people to be beheaded before having a proper cause for it. Off they go with all their army; but while the soldiers were striking their tents, the prince bethought himself of his Welsh harp, and had it sent for immediately to take with him in a beautiful wooden case. They called to see each of those three brothers whom the prince had to stay with when he was on his way to the Castle of Melvales; and I can assure you, when they all got together, they had a very merry time of it. And there we will leave them.

THE STARS IN THE SKY

Once upon a time and twice on a time, and all times together that I ever heard tell of, there was a tiny lassie who would weep all day to have the stars in the sky to play with; she wouldn't have this, and she wouldn't have that, but it was always the stars she would have. So one fine day off she went to find them. And she walked, and walked, and walked, till by-and-by she came to a mill-dam.

"Goode'en to ye, Brooklet, Brooklet," says she; "I'm seeking the stars in the sky to play with. Have you seen any?"

"Oh, yes, my bonnie lassie," said the mill-dam. "They shine in my own face o' nights till I can't sleep for them. Jump in and perhaps you'll find one."

So she jumped in, and swam about and swam about and swam about, but ne'er a one could she see. So she went on till she came to a brooklet.

"Goode'en to ye, Brooklet, Brooklet," says she; "I'm seeking the stars in the sky to play with. Have you seen any?"

"Yes, indeed, my bonny lassie," said the Brooklet. "They glint on my banks at night. Paddle about, and maybe you'll find one."

So she paddled, and she paddled, and she paddled, but ne'er a one did she find. So she went on till she came to the Good Folk.

"Goode'en to ye, Good Folk," says she; "I'm looking for the stars in the sky to play with. Have vou seen e'er a one?"

"Why, yes, my bonny lassie," said the Good Folk. "They shine on the grass here o' night. Dance with us, and maybe you'll find one."

And she danced, and she danced, and she danced, but ne'er a one did she see. So she sat down; I suppose she wept.

"Oh dearie me, oh dearie me," says she, "I've swam, and I've paddled, and I've danced, and if ye'll not help me I shall never find the stars in the sky to play with."

But the Good Folk whispered together, and one of them came up to her, and took her by the hand and said, "If you won't go home to your mother, go forward, go forward; mind you take the right road. Ask Four Feet to carry you to No Feet at all, and tell No Feet at all to carry you to the stairs without steps, and if you can climb that—"

"Oh, shall I be among the stars in the sky then?" cried the lassie.

"If you'll not be, then you'll be elsewhere," said the Good Folk, and set to dancing again.

So on she went again with a light heart, and by-and-by she came to a saddled horse, tied to a tree.

"Goode'en to ye, Beast," said she; "I'm seeking the stars in the sky to play with. Will you give me a lift, for all my bones are an-aching."

"Nay," said the horse, "I know naught of the stars in the sky, and I'm here to do the bidding of the Good Folk, and not my own will."

"Well," says she, "it's from the Good Folk I come, and they bade me tell Four Feet to carry me to No Feet at all."

"That's another story," said he; "jump up and ride with me."

So they rode, and they rode, and they rode, till they got out of the forest and found themselves at the edge of the sea. And on the water in front of them was a wide glistening path running straight out towards a beautiful thing that rose out of the water and went up into the sky, and was all the colours in the world, blue and red and green, and wonderful to look at.

"Now get you down," said the horse; "I've brought ye to the end of the land, and that's as much as Four Feet can do. I must away home to my own folk."

"But," said the lassie, "where's No Feet at all, and where's the stair without steps?"

"I know not," said the horse, "it's none of my business either. So goode'en to ye, my bonny lassie;" and off he went.

So the lassie stood still and looked at the water, till a strange kind of fish came swimming up to her feet.

"Goode'en to ye, big Fish," says she, "I'm looking for the stars in the sky, and for the stairs that climb up to them. Will ye show me the way?"

"Nay," said the Fish, "I can't unless you bring me word from the Good Folk."

"Yes, indeed," said she. "They said Four Feet would

bring me to No Feet at all, and No Feet at all would carry me to the stairs without steps."

"Ah, well," said the Fish; "that's all right then. Get on my back and hold fast."

And off he went — Kerplash! — into the water, along the silver path, towards the bright arch. And the nearer they came the brighter the sheen of it, till she had to shade her eyes from the light of it.

And as they came to the foot of it, she saw it was a broad bright road, sloping up and away into the sky, and at the far, far end of it she could see wee shining things dancing about.

"Now," said the Fish, "here you are, and yon's the stair; climb up if you can, but hold on fast. I'll warrant you find the stair easier at home than by such a way; 'twas ne'er meant for lassies' feet to travel;" and off he splashed through the water.

So she clomb, and she clomb, and she clomb, but ne'er a step higher did she get: the light was before her and around her, and the water behind her, and the more she struggled the more she was forced down into the dark and the cold, and the more she clomb the deeper she fell.

But she clomb and she clomb, till she got dizzy in the light and shivered with the cold, and dazed with fear; but still she clomb; till at last, quite dazed and silly-like, she let clean go, and sank down — down — down.

And bang she came on to the hard boards, and found herself sitting, weeping and wailing, by the bedside at home all alone.

HABETROT AND SCANTLIE MAB

A WOMAN had one fair daughter, who loved play better than work, wandering in the meadows and lanes better than the spinning-wheel and distaff. The mother was heartily vexed at this, for in those days no lassie had any chance of a good husband unless she was an industrious spinster. So she coaxed, threatened, even beat her daughter, but all to no purpose; the girl remained what her mother called her, "an idle cuttie."

At last, one spring morning, the gudewife gave her seven heads of lint, saying she would take no excuse; they must be returned in three days spun into yarn. The girl saw her mother was in earnest, so she plied her distaff as well as she could; but her hands were all untaught, and by evening of the second day only a very small part of her task was done. She cried herself to sleep that night, and in the morning, throwing aside her work in despair, she strolled out into the fields, all sparkling with dew. At last she reached a knoll, at whose feet ran a little burn, shaded with woodbine and wild roses; and there she sat down, burying her face in her hands. When she looked up, she was surprised to see by the margin of the stream an old woman, quite unknown to her, drawing out the thread as she basked in the sun. There was nothing remarkable in her appearance, except the length and thickness of her lips, only she was seated on a self-bored stone. The girl rose, went to the good dame, and gave her a friendly greeting, but she could not help inquiring "What makes you so long lipped?"

"Spinning thread, my hinnie," said the old woman, pleased with her. "I wet my fingers with my lips, as I draw the thread from the distaff."

"Ah!" said the girl, "I should be spinning too, but it's all to no purpose. I shall ne'er do my task:" on which the old woman proposed to do it for her. Overjoyed, the maiden ran to fetch her lint, and placed it in her new friend's hand, asking where she should call for the yarn in the evening; but she received no reply; the old woman passed away from her among the trees and bushes. The girl, much bewildered, wandered about a little, sat down to rest, and finally fell asleep by the little knoll.

When she awoke she was surprised to find it was evening. Causleen, the evening star, was beaming with silvery light, soon to be lost in the moon's splendour. While watching these changes, the maiden was startled by the sound of an uncouth voice, which seemed to issue from below the self-bored stone and heard the words: "Hurry up, Scantlie Mab, for I've promised the yarn and Habetrot always keeps her word." Then looking down the hole saw her friend, the old dame, walking backwards and forwards in a deep cavern among a group of spinsters all seated on colludie stones, and busy with distaff and spindle. An ugly company they were, with lips more or less disfigured, like old Habetrot's. Another of the sisterhood, who sat in a distant corner reeling the yarn, was marked, in addition, by grey eyes, which seemed starting from her head, and a long hooked nose.

While the girl was still watching, she heard Habetrot address this dame by the name of Scantlie Mab, and say, "Bundle up the yarn, it is time the young lassie should give it to her mother." Delighted to hear this, the girl got up and returned homewards. Habetrot soon overtook her, and placed the yarn in her hands. "Oh, what can I do for you in return?" exclaimed she, in delight. "Nothing — nothing," replied the dame; "but dinna tell your mother who spun the yarn."

Scarcely believing her eyes, the girl went home, where she found her mother had been busy making sausters, and hanging them in the chimney to dry, and then, tired out, had retired to rest. Finding herself very hungry after her long day on the knoll, the girl took down pudding after pudding, fried and ate them, and at last went to bed too. The mother was up first the next morning, and when she came into the kitchen and found her sausters all gone, and the seven hanks of yarn lying beautifully smooth and bright upon the table, she ran out of the house wildly, crying out —

"My daughter's spun seven, seven, seven,
My daughter's eaten seven, seven, seven,
And all before daylight."

A laird who chanced to be riding by, heard the exclamation, but could not understand it; so he rode up and asked the gudewife what was the matter, on which she broke out again —

"My daughter's spun seven, seven, seven,
My daughter's eaten seven, seven, seven.

before daylight; and if ye dinna believe me, why come in and see it." The laird, he alighted and went into the cottage, where he saw the yarn and admired it so much he begged to see the spinner.

The mother dragged in her girl. He vowed he was lonely without a wife, and had long been in search of one who was a good spinner. So their troth was plighted, and the wedding took place soon afterwards, though the bride was in great fear that she should not prove so clever at her spinning-wheel as he expected. But old Dame Habetrot came to her aid. "Bring your bonny bridegroom to my cell," said she to the young bride soon after

her marriage; "he shall see what comes o' spinning, and never will he tie you to the spinning-wheel."

Accordingly the bride led her husband the next day to the flowery knoll, and bade him look through the self-bored stone. Great was his surprise to see Habetrot dancing and jumping over her rock, singing all the time this ditty to her sisterhood, while they kept time with their spindles: —

"We who live in dreary den,
Are both rank and foul to see;
Hidden from the glorious sun,
That teems the fair earth's canopie:
Ever must our evenings lone
Be spent on the colludie stone.

"Cheerless is the evening grey
When * Causleen hath died away,
But ever bright and ever fair
Are they who breath this evening air,
And lean upon the self-bored stone
Unseen by all but me alone."

The song ended, Scantlie Mab asked Habetrot what she meant by the last line, "Unseen by all but me alone."

"There is one," replied Habetrot, "whom I bid to come here at this hour, and he has heard my song through the self-bored stone." So saying she rose, opened another door, which was concealed by the roots of an old tree, and invited the pair to come in and see her family.

The laird was astonished at the weird-looking company, as he well might be, and inquired of one after another the cause of their strange lips. In a different tone of voice, and with a different twist of the mouth, each answered that it was caused by spinning. At least they tried to say so, but one grunted out "Nakasind,"

* The evening star.

and another "Owkassand," while a third murmured "O-a-a-send." All, however, made the bridegroom understand what was the cause of their ugliness; while Habetrot slyly hinted that if his wife were allowed to spin, her pretty lips would grow out of shape too, and her pretty face get an ugsome look. So before he left the cave he vowed that his little wife should never touch a spinning-wheel, and he kept his word. She used to wander in the meadows by his side, or ride behind him over the hills, but all the flax grown on his land was sent to old Habetrot to be converted into yarn.

THE END

Source of the Tales

Author.	*Title.*	*Page.*
Adapted	Alfred the Great	1
Adapted	Another Recruit	44
Adapted	Robin Hood and the Sheriff's Prize	49
Adapted	Robin Hood Meets Little John	40
Adapted	William Tell and His Great Shot	7
Adapted	William Tell's Second Shot	15
Albania	The Hunter and the Serpent	123
Arabia	Aicha's Stratagem	249
Arabia	A Slice of Tongue	252
Austria	Better Than That	261
Bohemia	The Farmer and the Noses	196
Celtic	The Blue Mountains	312
China	Hok Lee and the Dwarfs	390
Darton, F. J. H., Ed. by	Sir Cleges and the Cherries	84
D'Aulnoy, Madame	The Wonderful Sheep	348
Denmark	Glob and Alger	124
Denmark	The Ness King	151
Deulin, Charles	The Nettle Spinner	33
Dickens, Charles	A Child's Dream of a Star	202
Dickens, Charles	Prince Bull	206
Dickens, Charles	The Magic Fishbone	228
England	A Pottle O' Brains	366
England	Habetrot and Scantlie Mab.	411
England	King John and the Abbot of Canterbury	384
England	The King of England and His Three Sons	385
England	The King O' the Cats	382
England	The Tale of a Youth Who Set Out to Learn What Fear Was	372
England	Tom Hickathrift	335
Ewing, Mrs. J. H.	"I Won't"	106
Ewing, Mrs. J. H.	The Fiddler and the Fairy Ring	112
Ewing, Mrs. J. H.	The Magic Jar	58
France	Fairy Gifts	291

Author.	*Title.*	*Page.*
France	Prince Vivien and the Princess Placida . .	266
Germany	Blockhead Hans . . .	323
Germany	The Mouse Tower . . .	263
Germany	The Two Gifts	213
Halliwell, J. O., Nursery Rhymes, Adapted from .	Catskin	19
Hartland, E. S. . .	A Son of Adam . . .	341
Iceland	Hermod and Hadvor . .	328
India	The Wise Old Shepherd . .	118
Isle of Wight . .	The Pied Piper	308
Italy	Lionbruno	91
Italy	The Crumb in the Beard .	53
Italy	The Thankful Dead . . .	102
Japan	The Story of Urashima, the Fisher Boy . . .	63
Japan	The Tongue-Cut Sparrow .	144
Lincolnshire Legend .	The Buried Moon . . .	343
Longfellow, Adapted from	King Robert of Sicily . .	74
Macleod, Mary, Ed. by .	King Henry and the Miller .	77
Madagascar . . .	The Frog and the Wild Hog .	122
Marelles, Charles . .	Drakestail	240
Morris, William, Retold from "The Earthly Paradise" of . .	The Apples of Venus . .	172
Norway	The Beautiful Palace East of the Sun, and North of the Earth	160
Roman Catholic Legend	Saint Christopher . . .	181
Russia	King Kojata	216
Scotland	Johnny Gloke	246
Scotland	Tamlane	387
Scotland	The Stars in the Sky . .	407
Servia	The Shepherd and the Dragon	187
Sicily	The Ass that Lays Money .	71
Sweden	Brother Bernard . . .	258
Sweden	The Werwolf	132
Traditions populaire de l' Asie Mineure	The Bronze Ring . . .	296
Volsunga Saga . .	Sigurd	23
Wales	The Bar of Gold . . .	192

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