ELIZABETH'S CHARM STRING

CORA · B · FORBES

Elizabeth's Charm-String


OPUS FORTIS MEDICORUM
SPECTATIORUM ET MERITORIORUM MECCATE

Elizabeth's Charm-String

By
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Illustrated from Photographs

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TO

MY SISTER

IN LOVING AND GRATEFUL REMEMBRANCE OF
MANY DELIGHTFUL DAYS SPENT IN
VISITING THE BIRTH-PLACES
OF THESE LEGENDS

PREFACE

FAR cleverer pens than mine have written and rewritten these charming old legends, so that the only claim to originality this volume possesses lies possibly in my arrangement of the stories for juvenile readers; and the pleasure I have given by relating them to my personal circle of young friends is my excuse for offering them to a larger audience.

I have made no attempt whatever to teach History, or rather, —as Mrs. Jameson expresses it, — "to separate Historic Truth and Poetic Fiction." At the same time, I hope that familiarity with these legends will afford both pleasure and profit, since at least a "bowing acquaintance" with legendary lore is necessary before a person can really enjoy the Art Galleries of Europe.

Preface

In preparing the legends, many authorities were consulted and compared. The English translation of Voragine's "Legenda Aurea," Butler's "Lives of the Saints," the publications of the Folk Lore Society, compilations of legends for the use of students or of tourists, Mrs. Jameson's "Sacred and Legendary Art," and, I may add, stories told to me by local guides in various cities of the Old World, were all sources of help.

Occasionally I found several versions — sometimes contradictory — of the same incident: in such cases I usually followed the accounts given by Mrs. Jameson, or by Miss H. A. Güerber, because the versions chosen by these authors "are the ones upon which the Artists of the Middle Ages based their representations of the subjects."

C. B. F.

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A DISAPPOINTING LETTER

NE lovely afternoon in June, Elizabeth Staats and her particular chum, Alma Curtis, were sitting on the honeysuckle-covered porch of Mr. Isaac Staats' pretty summer home. Their heads were bent over a letter bearing a foreign postmark, and its contents did not seem to afford them much pleasure.

"Oh, dear!" exclaimed Elizabeth, "I never was so disappointed in all my life."

"I do not blame you for feeling so," said Alma, soothingly; "we have all got more buttons now than we know what to do with"

"And charm-strings are all out of style anyhow," continued Elizabeth. "Every girl

in school had one before Aunt Belle went to Europe. Really, Alma, I do not understand how Aunty can be so horridly stupid."

Mrs. Staats, coming out on the porch just then, heard this last remark with much surprise, for she knew that "Aunt Belle" was usually an object of adoration to these twelve-year-old girls.

"What is the matter, daughter? What has caused your pet Aunty to moult her angelic wing feathers and develop a cloven foot so suddenly?"

"Mamma, Aunt Belle writes that she will reach America almost as soon as her letter, and —"

"That is a queer reason for such a woful countenance."

"But, mamma, you know Aunty promised to bring me something very nice from Europe. I was hoping for a little watch, and instead of that she is bringing me a whole lot of BUTTONS!"

(Nothing short of capital letters could do

justice to the emphatic utterance of the disappointed little girl.)

"Buttons! Why, my dear child, surely you must be mistaken. Let me see the letter."

"I wish I was mistaken; but just listen mamma," and finding the proper place, Elizabeth read aloud:

"'I did not forget my promise to bring you "something nice." I wanted the gift to be very unique and foreign-looking, and I was almost at my wit's end trying to make a choice.

"'One day while I was in Rome I saw a little American girl with the most fascinating charm-string you ever dreamed of. I remembered, too, that when I left home you and most of your friends were busily collecting all sorts of buttons for charm-strings. I then and there decided to bring you, if possible, just as pretty a collection as this small girl carried.

"'I am quite sure that your new charm-

string will not duplicate any of the buttons on your old one.' "

"There, mamma, Aunt Belle says 'buttons' as plainly as possible;" and two big tears rolled slowly down the little maid's cheeks.

There was a twinkle in Mrs. Staats' eyes not altogether in harmony with this tragic situation, but she comforted her daughter as well as she could, and offered a ray of hope by saying, "Perhaps, dear, they are military buttons. Do you not remember how Aunty used to rave about the grand uniforms of the Italian officers? And I know every one of you girls coveted the United States Army and Navy buttons that Elsie Stone had on *her* charm-string."

All in vain; Elizabeth had so often boasted in school-girl fashion of the fine present she expected to receive from Europe, that the thought of answering "Buttons" when questioned about it was too humiliating.

But partial consolation did come in the

shape of old Caroline, the cook who presided over Mrs. Staats' kitchen.

"Miss Elizabeth! Miss Alma!" she called, "if you don't hurry up and make your cookies and the chocolate fudge, it will be time for Miss Alma to go home before you get through."

Off scampered the children, for "messing" in the kitchen with good-natured Caroline was their greatest delight, and they were soon too absorbed in the mysteries of mixing and baking to think any more that afternoon about Aunt Belle's disappointing letter.

But that same night, before they dropped off to sleep, Alma in her city home, Elizabeth in the country, had any one asked what it was that weighed so heavily on their minds, both little girls would have answered, "Buttons."

CHAPTER II

AN INVITATION TO A GAME OF "BUTTON, BUTTON, WHO'S GOT THE BUTTON?"

MRS. STAATS and Mrs. Curtis had been friends since early childhood, and the warm affection between their little daughters drew them into still closer intimacy.

During the winter months the two families occupied adjoining houses in a bustling Western city.

Early every spring Mr. Staats moved his family to their charming country home, "Shadyside," about ten miles from town; but the Curtis family usually flitted to the seashore.

Every summer the little girls were allowed to exchange visits, and many were the jolly times they had together.

They had discussed the "Button" subject over and over again, but never ceased to wonder "what Aunt Belle could have been thinking about" when she decided to bring such a commonplace, prosaic present all the way from Europe.

They had agreed to say nothing more to the other girls in regard to the expected gift, until they had themselves seen the objectionable charm-string.

A few days before the summer holidays began, Mrs. Curtis received a letter from Shadyside over which she laughed very heartily. When questioned by Alma as to the cause of her merriment, the only reply she vouchsafed was:

"You will find out next week. We are invited to Shadyside for a little visit, to meet Miss Belle Staats and see Elizabeth's present."

A little note from Elizabeth to Alma was enclosed in the letter, but even this did not give any clue to Mrs. Curtis' cause for laughter. It said:

"DEAR ALMA, — Mamma had a letter from Aunt Belle which seemed to be very funny, but she would not let me read it. Aunty wrote to me saying that some of the buttons have lovely legends or funny stories connected with them.

"Mamma said I could invite several girls to spend a few days here, and Aunty is to tell us the stories. You will come, of course, and I have asked Genevieve Lebeau, Marie Gardiner, and Margaret Nelson.

"I told the girls my present was to be some queer buttons for my charm-string. I thought it would be easier to write than to tell it."

A few evenings later a very jolly party was making merry on the lawn at Shadyside. The centre of attraction was of course Miss Belle Staats.

She was a delightfully pretty young lady, about twenty-five years old, and had been spending the past two years travelling leisurely through Europe.

She had a large fortune of her own, artistic and literary tastes, and had devoted much time to the study of history and art; she

possessed a keen sense of humor, told a story admirably, and talked most charmingly about the places and things she had found most interesting, or the adventures she had met with, in her pursuit of pleasure and improvement.

She was particularly fond of her small niece Elizabeth, who in turn adored her pretty Aunt, and indeed Miss Belle was very popular with all Elizabeth's best friends.

During the afternoon she had been showing to the children some of the treasures she had brought home with her, and had let each one choose a little souvenir from among these pretty things; but not a word had been said about the charm-string.

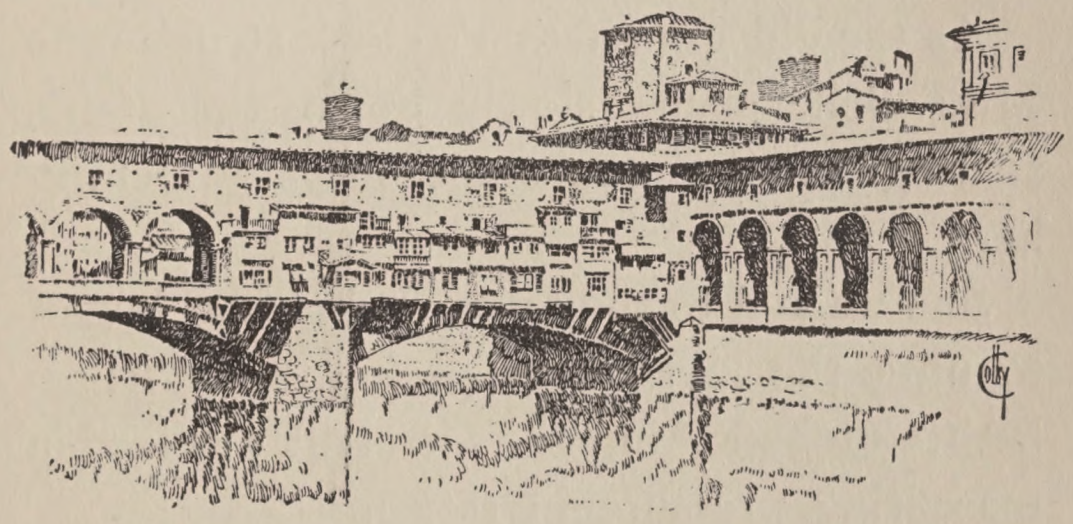
The evening flew along on swift wings until ten o'clock, and then the children were sent to bed. As the little girls gathered about Miss Belle, wishing her "Good-night," she put her arm around Elizabeth and said

laughingly: " Little niece, to-morrow morning at nine o'clock you are all to meet me in the hall, and we will have a game of 'Button, button, who's got the button?'"

CHAPTER III

A MEDICI BUTTON-BOX AND ITS LEGENDS

THE next morning the wind was blowing a gale and the rain falling in torrents; every one was delighted to find a bright fire burning in the big open fireplace.



The five little girls were burning also with curiosity as to the possible contents of a qucer-shaped parcel Miss Belle had placed on the hall table soon after breakfast.

"If that parcel contains your buttons, Elizabeth," said Genevieve Lebeau, "you will not have much of a string."

"Maybe it is the kind of a button the Mikado wears," chimed in Margaret.

"Or one of Queen Victoria's collar buttons!"

"Or the Pope's cuff button!"

And so they all jested and laughed together.

As the old grandfather's clock struck nine Miss Belle came slowly down the stairs, smiling at the expectant faces watching her.

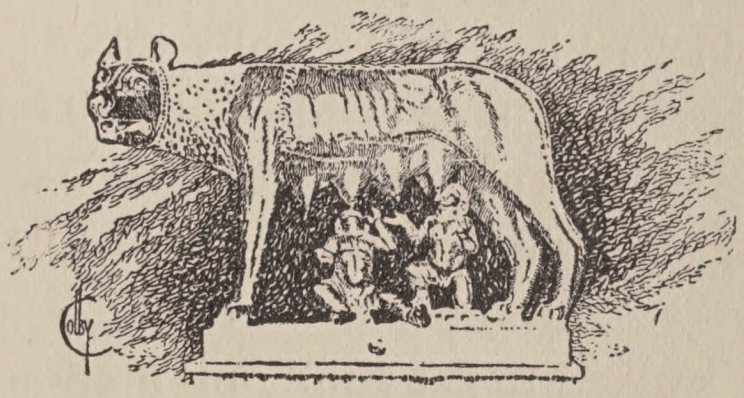
She walked to the table, and as she began to untie the mysterious packet, poor Elizabeth clutched Alma's hand and received a reassuring pressure in return.

There were two boxes in the bundle. One was round and quite small, covered with a peculiar-looking white leather, and its top was decorated with what appeared to be a monogram, colored red and green.

This, after a moment's hesitation, was handed to Mrs. Staats, who made no attempt to open it.

The second box Miss Belle gave to Elizabeth, saying, with a happy laugh: "There, little one, is your charm-string at last."

The box was trunk-shaped, with a curving lid, and was covered with copper beaten into



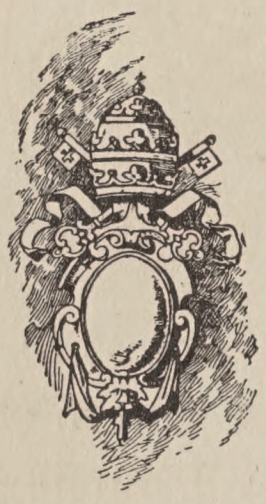
elaborate and intricate designs. Across the front and back ran a complicated pattern of fleurs-de-lis; one end showed a wolf nursing two little children; the other displayed a tiara, or Bishop's mitre, of peculiar shape, and beneath this two keys were crossed; in the centre of the lid was a shield bearing six balls and surmounted by a coronet; the in-

tervening spaces were beaten into dainty scrolls or flowers, and the keyhole was in the mouth of a grinning mask.

"Oh, oh!" exclaimed Marie, "what an odd-looking box!"

"It looks as if it needed a dose of sapolio, though," said Alma, who was nothing if not critical.

"Yes, it does," said Aunt Belle, "but what looks like dirt is really the discoloration of 'Old Father Time.' It is claimed that this box was once the property of Pope Leo X, who belonged to the renowned Medici family of Florence.

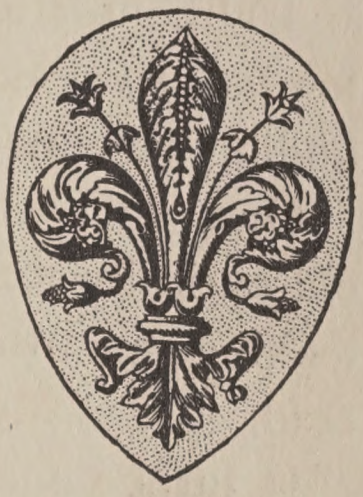


"He was made Pope in the year 1512 A.D., so if the story is true, the box will be four hundred years old by the time Elizabeth has jewels enough to fill it.

"The fleurs-de-lis on the box typify the city of Florence, whose nickname is 'Lily of the Arno.'

"The wolf nursing the two boys is part of the coat of arms of Rome. Surely, you all remember the story of Romulus and Remus, the twin brothers who founded Rome? If you have forgotten it I must tell you about it another time.

"The triple tiara with the crossed keys is the Papal coat of arms; no one but the Pope ever wears that tiara, which represents the Trinity. It is said to be of pure gold and to weigh fifteen pounds.



"There is a very old legend which tells us that Christ made Saint Peter the keeper of the gates of Paradise, and gave him two keys, one of gold for Heaven, and one of silver for Hell; so in the mediæval pictures of Saint Peter he is always shown as carrying these keys, and frequently wearing a tiara, because he was the first 'Universal Bishop' or Pope.

"The shield and coronet on the lid belong to the Medici family. There is a funny little story which tells why they chose the six little balls as the family emblem."

The Medici Emblem

Long, long ago there lived in Florence a man who was of good family, but very poor, and although quite a clever fellow, he was too lazy to work, preferring to use his wits in finding easy methods of earning his living.

One day, while amusing himself in an old curiosity shop, he came across a queer-looking manuscript and took it home to read.

It turned out to have originally belonged to a physician, and, among other things, contained a prescription for compounding a certain kind of medicine, guaranteed to "cure every ill that flesh is heir to."

So this man decided that he too would be a doctor.

Accordingly, he made up a quantity of

these infallible pills, and travelled about the country in a leisurely way, selling the medicine to every one who could be persuaded to buy any of it.

He managed to gain quite a reputation because of the alleged cures made by his pills, and soon people were only too eager to purchase them.

One day there came along a stupid peasant who had lost his donkey.

He asked our doctor if his medicine could find lost animals.

The doctor assured him that these pills could almost perform miracles, and sold six of them to the poor man.

The peasant was directed to swallow the pills, and then wander in and out of the Florentine streets and all around the neighboring country for six days.

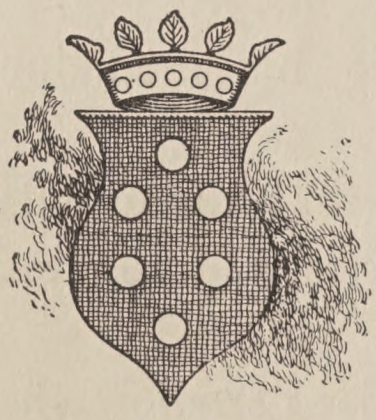
He was to think about his donkey all the time, and as he walked he was to cry aloud:

"My donkey! My donkey! Good people,
Has any one seen my lost donkey?"

Hunted for in this persistent fashion one could discover almost anything; so you will not be surprised to learn that the ass was finally recovered.

The pills, however, received all the credit for this astounding performance and became more popular than ever.

At length the "Doctor" grew so wealthy that he concluded to retire from business; he assumed the name of "Medici," founded a new family, and for his coat of arms adopted a shield bearing six large balls surmounted by a coronet.



By Florentines these balls are commonly known as the Medici "pills."

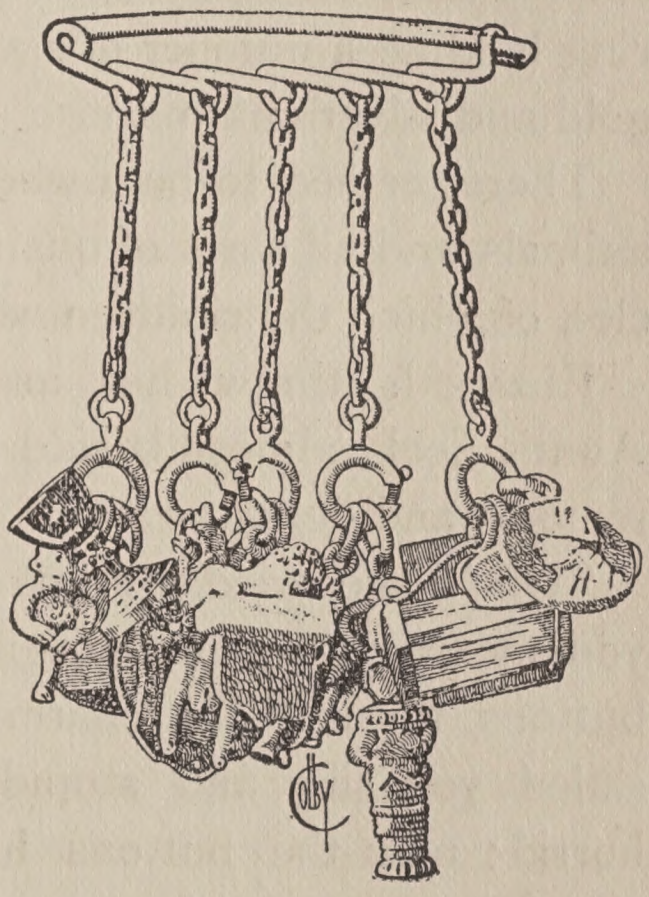
In the midst of the laughter that followed this story, Mrs. Curtis called out:

"My dear Elizabeth, any time you want to exchange that box for the prettiest watch in town, I stand ready to close the bargain."

"Open it, dearie," said Aunt Belle.

Elizabeth turned the key and lifted the lid. Alma was sitting so close to her that she also could see the contents of the box.

Both little girls gave one long glance at the shining object lying on its bed of pink cotton; then looked at each other, and the growing bewilderment in their faces brought a burst of laughter from the older ladies, and a chorus of "What is it?" "Let me see!" from the other girls.



Elizabeth lifted up her new treasure, and no wonder she looked amazed, for the

thought of such a charm-string as this had never crossed her mind.

To begin with, it was not a string at all, but a pin; a slender bar of silver about three inches long, with a very strong clasp. Suspended from this bar were several fine silver chains, each terminating in a ring, and each ring holding a number of marvellously pretty gold and silver charms.

There seemed to be a whole menagerie of animals, and all sorts of quaintly shaped articles, of which the children were ignorant.

Elizabeth threw her arms around her Aunt's neck, almost beside herself between remorse and delight.

"Oh!" she cried, "Alma and I thought you meant you were bringing me a lot of buttons for my old charm-string, and we called you silly and stupid, and were just horrid; now the buttons have turned into all these pretty things, and how can you ever forgive us!"

"Your mother told me of the funny mis-

take you were making, and we thought it would be a good joke to surprise you with the real thing. We have had our laugh at you and Alma for *your* stupidity."

The little girls examined the pretty charms closely, and poured forth so many questions that Miss Belle finally clapped her hands over her ears and cried out:

"Dear me, what a racket! One at a time, please. Suppose we all sit down, and then you girls can take turns choosing charms, and I will tell you the stories about them.

"You see I collected charms instead of souvenir spoons, and I tried always to find something that was directly connected with the place where I bought it.

"Elizabeth, suppose you begin. I 'm sure you must be disappointed at the loss of your expected buttons, so we will soothe your hurt feelings by giving you first choice."

CHAPTER IV

THE WINGED LION OF SAINT MARK

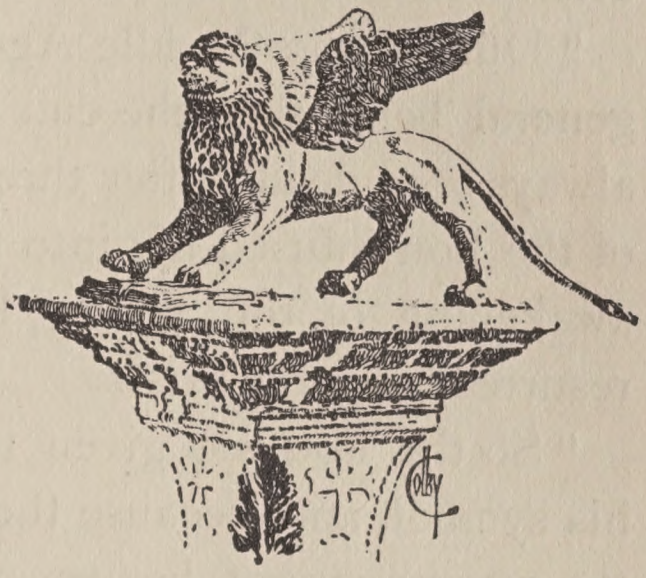
ELIZABETH turned over the little things almost caressingly, and after a minute's hesitation her choice fell on a tiny gold winged lion, standing on a slab of silver. The left fore-paw was raised, and rested on an open book which had some letters cut irregularly on the surface.

"Ah!" said her Aunt, "that has so many stories connected with it I hardly know which one to choose. It came from Venice, and every time you turn around in that fairy tale of a city, you will see 'The Lion of Saint Mark.'

"Saint Mark is the patron saint and protector of Venice, and the winged lion is his symbol. The sentence on that open book is the motto of Venice; it is in Latin, and reads,

'Pax tibi Marce Evangelista Meus,' meaning 'Peace to thee, Mark my Evangelist.'"

"But how very odd it seems for people to choose a lion as a symbol for a saint," said Marie.



"Symbols of some description have been used since the earliest days of Christian art to represent different saints and martyrs. It would take too long to make you understand this fully now, but the symbol used always indicated something connected with the life of that particular individual."

"Did Saint Mark kill a lion, as Hercules did?" asked Alma.

"No; there are several reasons for choosing the lion as the emblem of Saint Mark, but I will tell only the one I like best myself.

"Perhaps you know that each one of the Evangelists emphasizes in his Gospel some particular phase of Christ's life or character, and Saint Mark has often been called 'The Historian of the Resurrection.'

"During the Middle Ages it was quite a general belief that the cub of a lioness was always born dead; after three days the breath of the lion infused life into the cub, and this awakening of the young lion typified the resurrection of Christ.

"So the lion was given to Saint Mark as his symbol, and because the angels, who are the messengers of heaven, are always represented as having wings, this lion is also winged, since he too represents one who brings us good tidings."

"Saint Mark was not an Italian. Why was he chosen as the protector of Venice?" asked Margaret.

"Thereby hangs a pretty tale, but, like so many Italian legends, truth and poetry are so closely interwoven that it is hard to

separate them. I am not telling you the history of Saint Mark, however, simply the circumstances that connect him with Venice."

The Lion of Saint Mark

Saint Mark was a Jew, and was converted to Christianity some time after the Ascension of Christ.

Our story relates that he was of priestly descent, and under the Jewish law no man could be a priest who was deformed or disabled in any way. Accordingly, after his conversion, Saint Mark cut off one of his fingers, so that no matter what happened, his mutilated hand would make it quite impossible for him to ever again serve in any Jewish temple.

Saint Mark was a great favorite of Saint Peter, and was the latter's companion on one of his visits to Rome.

Sailing along the coast of Italy, they stopped at Aquileia (called very often the "Mother City of Venice"), where Saint Peter

founded a church, and made many converts to the Christian religion.

Continuing their journey, the legend says their vessel was stranded on one of the uninhabited islands where Venice now stands, and Saint Mark had a vision of the wonderful city to be built thereon.

Some time later Saint Peter sent Saint Mark back to Egypt, and when the ship passed this island again its speed was suddenly arrested, and an angel appeared to Saint Mark, and told him that some day his body would be brought to the city he had beheld in his former vision, and there placed in a marvellous church erected in his honor.

Saint Mark lived and worked in Egypt many years. He founded the church at Alexandria, which afterwards became one of the most celebrated of the early Christian churches.

Here he performed so many miracles that the Egyptians accused him of being a sorcerer, and on the feast day of their god

Serapis, sixty-eight years after Christ, he was seized and dragged about over the rough streets, until death put an end to his misery.

Saint Mark's fellow Christians gathered up the poor mangled body, and he was buried in the church at Alexandria, where for several hundred years his remains were held in great veneration.

In the meantime, the city of Saint Mark's vision had developed into a beautiful reality.

By the middle of the ninth century the Venetians had become very powerful, especially in the Eastern countries, and when they wanted anything, from a kingdom to the bones of a martyr or saint, they generally contrived to get it.

Relics of all kinds were bought and sold like ordinary merchandise; there was a regular traffic in bodies and bones between Eastern and Western Europe, and, to judge by the number of them to be found in Venice, her citizens were greatly addicted to the collection of saintly bones.

At that time the Mohammedan power was supreme in Alexandria, and the Christians were persecuted in every possible manner.

Their lives were not safe; their churches were destroyed; their houses and properties were confiscated, and their most treasured relics were burned.

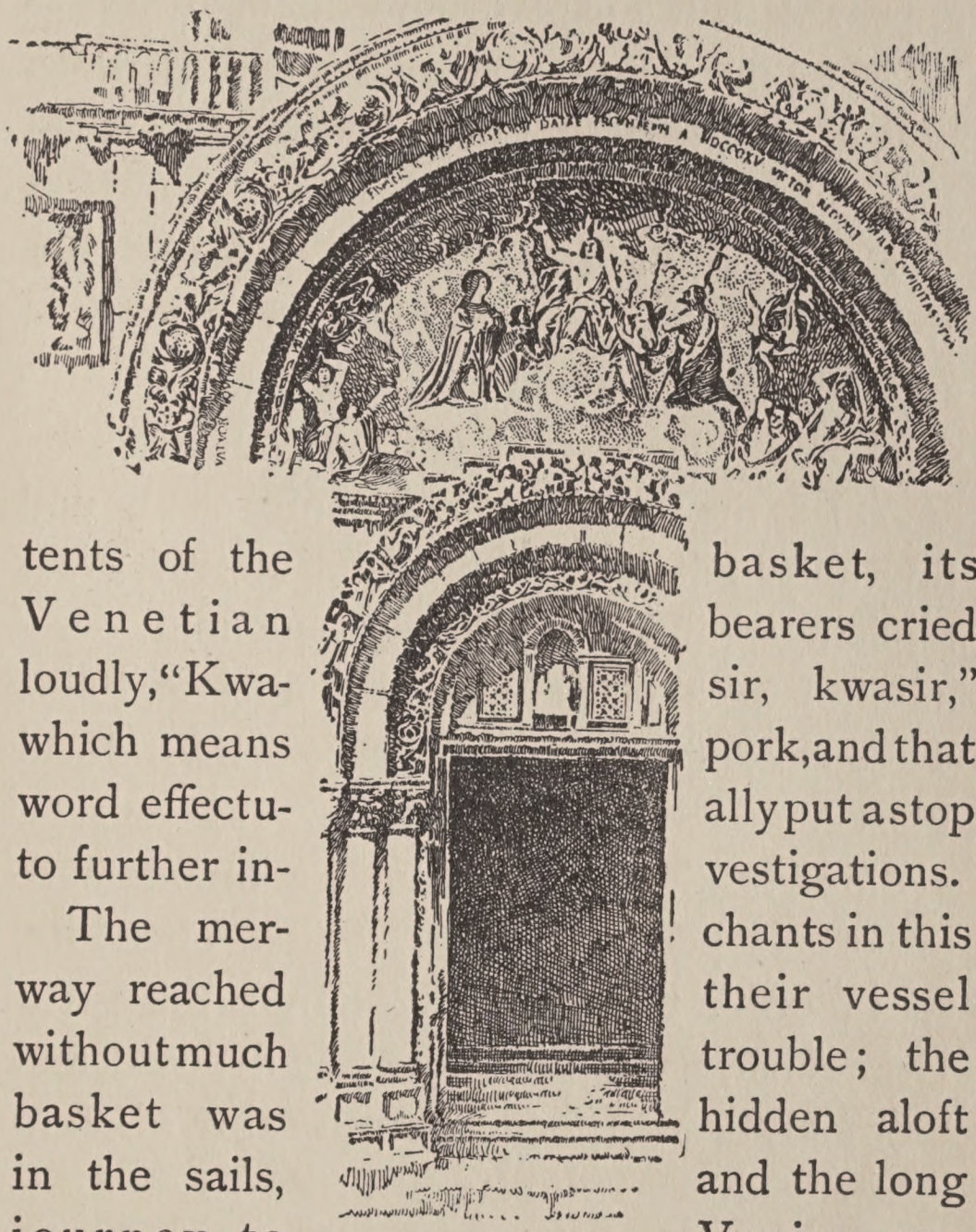
Some Venetian merchants who were trading in Alexandria begged the Christian priests for the body of Saint Mark, in order to save it from desecration.

After much persuasion the priests reluctantly consented to the removal of Saint Mark's remains to Venice.

To get such a treasure as this away from Alexandria was quite a hard task, but the Venetians proved equal to it.

They knew that all Mohammedans have a very great horror of pork, considering it as unclean. Accordingly, they placed the remains of Saint Mark in a large basket, and covered it with swine's flesh.

When any one tried to inspect the con-



tents of the basket, its Venetian bearers cried loudly, "Kwa- sir, kwasir," which means pork, and that word effectu- ally put a stop to further in- vestigations. The mer- chants in this way reached their vessel without much trouble; the basket was hidden aloft in the sails, and the long journey to Venice was begun. A few days later there was a frightful storm at sea, and in the midst of it Saint Mark

appeared to the captain and directed him to lower all the sails and steer in a certain direction, or else the vessel would be driven against some hidden rocks.

The captain did exactly as he was told, and after the storm subsided discovered that the appearance and advice of Saint Mark had indeed saved the vessel from shipwreck.

At last the vessel reached Venice safely, and the holy relics were received amidst great rejoicings, and, with many splendid ceremonies, were placed in the chapel of Saint Theodore, which was part of the Ducal Palace.

Saint Mark was, of course, a much more important personage than Saint Theodore, so in order to sufficiently honor the great Evangelist, Saint Theodore was deposed, and Saint Mark was made patron saint of Venice instead.

This chapel of Saint Theodore was demolished, and a new church, dedicated to Saint Mark, was built in its place. This church

was in turn destroyed by fire, and apparently the body of Saint Mark perished with it.

A grander and far more beautiful church was then erected, and it was consecrated in the year 1085 A.D.

During all these years of building, the place where Saint Mark's body had rested seems to have been forgotten; but the Venetians had never reconciled themselves to the loss of their beloved patron saint, and they determined to pray for a miracle to show where his bones were to be found.

A general fast day was appointed by the Doge, for the 25th of January, in the year 1094, and the people of Venice gathered together in the church and piazza of Saint Mark, and prayed fervently for a sign from God.

Imagine their joy when they beheld a trembling in one of the marble pillars, which presently fell to pieces, and displayed to the faithful petitioners the bronze chest which contained the blessed relics.

Now they repose under the high altar

of the most wonderful church in the world, and among the marvellous mosaics which make this church so famous you will find pictured this legend of Saint Mark.

The body of Saint Mark was received at Venice on January 31 in the year 828 A.D., and for hundreds of years that day was celebrated with a solemn High Mass, which was attended by the Doge and all the Signory, wearing their official robes. Indeed, it is still kept as a feast day, but with little of the magnificent splendor which characterized it during the years when Venice reigned supreme.

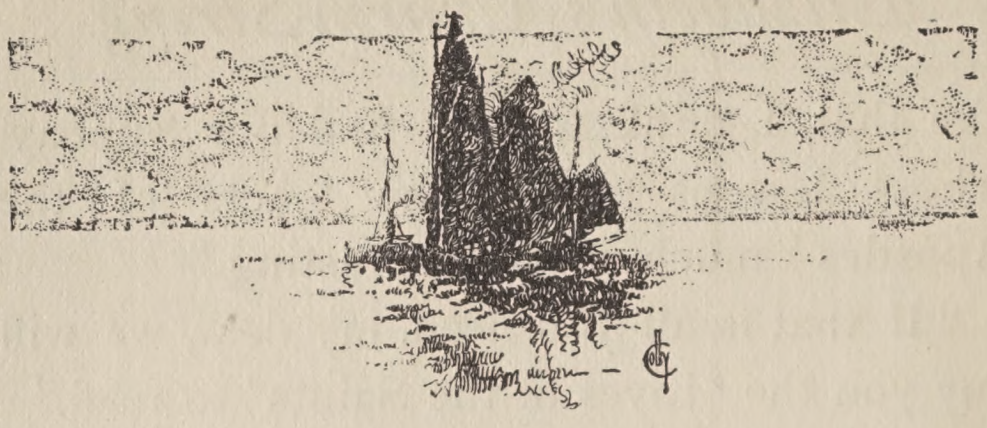
This is the story of the little Winged Lion as I heard it, and you see him so often in Venice that you feel very intimate with him. Indeed, one of my pet treasures is an old brass candlestick, in shape like unto "The Winged Lion of Saint Mark."

"Miss Belle," said Genevieve with a laugh, "if you can tell us many more stories

like that, I think we will find our Sunday-school lessons about the 'Acts of the Apostles' much more interesting."

"If that is all you need, my dear, we will buy you the 'Lives of the Saints' to read."

Every one laughed, for Genevieve's literary tastes ran decidedly toward the "Brothers Grimm."



CHAPTER V

THE LADY'S SAND

"NOW it is your turn, Margaret," said Miss Belle.

"I choose this little grain of wheat, set in silver," replied Margaret. "Wheat is certainly a queer article to find on a charm-string."

"In Holland that grain of wheat would probably be called 'The Lady's Sand,'" began Miss Belle. "Girls, do any of you know where the Zuyder Zee is?"

"Yes, indeed we do," answered Alma. "It is on the coast of Holland, and three or four islands separate it from the North Sea."

"That is quite right, but I dare say that none of you have ever heard that the waters of the Zuyder Zee now roll and toss over what was once cultivated land."

The Lady's Sand

There is a little town called Stavoren on the coast of Holland; it is now little more than a fishing village, but according to the old legends it was once a prosperous and very beautiful city, protected from the ravages of the sea by a splendid system of dikes.

Many of the citizens were so enormously wealthy that they paved the floors of their palaces with gold; their walls were hung with the most expensive tapestries, and their furniture was covered with cloth of gold.

To gratify their own desires no expense was too great, but they paid no attention to the needs of the poorer classes, and treated their dependants like so many dogs.

There was a certain unmarried woman who was probably the richest person in

Stavoren. She owned countless ships and houses; her income was so enormous that she could not possibly spend it all; but it never occurred to her to share this superfluity with the unfortunate people who had little or nothing.

In spite of all this wealth, she was very grasping and avaricious, and was always devising new ways to increase her possessions.

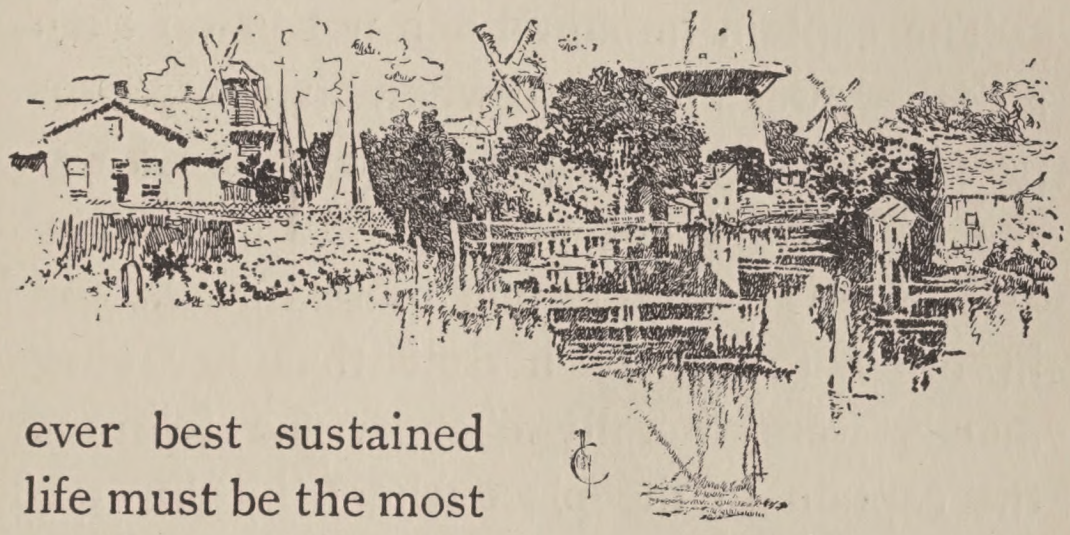
One day a very queer notion entered her head. Sending for her cleverest captain, she ordered him to take the largest ship she owned, sail away from Stavoren, and bring back to her a cargo of the most precious thing to be found in the whole world.

He could go any place he wished, but must return within a year.

This task struck the captain as being a very difficult one, and he endeavored to learn from the lady what she considered to be the most precious thing in the world. She would express no opinion, however, but repeated her instructions most emphatically.

The captain was almost in despair, for he knew that no two people think alike on such a subject, and he had no idea what would please his mistress.

At length he concluded that life itself was our dearest possession, and that whatever best sustained life must be the most precious thing in the world.



So with his mind at rest, he set sail for Dantzic, and quickly returned with a cargo of the very finest wheat that money could buy.

When the lady heard that her vessel was in the harbor, she invited all her richest friends to meet at her house, and learn the result of the voyage.

The captain arrived, and made his report.

When his mistress learned that this long-looked-for, much-talked-about cargo was nothing more wonderful than plain, every-day wheat, she grew almost insane with rage, and ordered the captain to dump the whole load of grain into the sea.

The captain implored her not to do such a wicked, wasteful deed when so many poor people were perishing for lack of the wheat she herself did not want.

The lady only became more furious, and in order to satisfy herself that her commands were literally obeyed, she followed the captain to the place where the ship was anchored.

The kind-hearted captain fell on his knees and begged her again to give the wheat to the poor, but she was merciless, and forced the captain to throw every grain of it into the sea.

Exasperated by this sinful waste, one of the sailors turned to the lady and cried out:

"Just as sure as God is a God of Justice, you will some day beg for bread from the very people to whom you have refused it to-day."

The lady laughed scornfully, and, taking a ring from her finger, threw it into the sea, saying:

"I will expect my punishment when I again see this ring."

Some little time later, the lady was invited to a grand banquet at the house of a very wealthy neighbor. During the meal, the cook placed before the host a golden platter. On this lay a large baked fish, which was carved and served to the guests.

When the lady began to eat her portion, she found in it the ring which she had cast into the sea. It had been swallowed by the fish, and returned to its owner in this curious fashion.

Remembering her own words, the lady was of course very much frightened, and began to think it might be well for her to be less cruel in the future.

But it was too late! The curse of the poor sailor had fallen upon her, and she herself had prophesied the time of her punishment.

One disaster followed another: her money investments turned out badly; fires destroyed her palaces; bad harvests ruined her farms; storms and floods wrecked her vessels, and before many months passed over her head she found herself as badly off as the poorest person to whom she had refused help in the time of her prosperity.

Her former friends turned her from their doors, and when she begged from the poor, they told her to go make bread out of the wheat she had thrown away.

Spurned thus by everybody, starving and homeless, she died unhonored and alone.

But, according to the legends, the evil she had done lived after her.

As time passed on, the sailors and fishermen noticed that the entrance to the harbor of Stavoren was becoming obstructed by a sand-bar. It increased so rapidly that in a

short time it reached the surface of the water, and not even small vessels could cross it.

The sand was covered by a coarse vegetation that looked a little like wheat, and the sailors all declared that this great misfortune had its origin in the drifting of the discarded grain, and called it "The Lady's Sand."

A number of people went to the chief magistrates, and begged that something be done to remove this hindrance to the commerce of Stavoren; since ships could no longer enter the harbor, there was little or no work for the sailors and laborers, and they had no money for the support of their families.

No attention whatever was paid to their entreaties, and the poor people of Stavoren were almost in despair.

Alas! a still greater disaster was to follow.

Through some slight defect in the sea-wall, salt water leaked into the fresh-water

supply of the city, making it, of course, unfit to drink.

Again did the suffering people beg for relief, and again was it refused.

The wealthy citizens had enormous quantities of wine stored away; enough to supply the entire city until the leak could be repaired and the reservoirs purified.

But no! these cruel people, themselves rolling in wealth, dressed in the finest of clothes, drinking the costliest wines, laughed at the distress of their unfortunate fellow citizens, and refused them even the dregs of their wine and beer casks.

Their punishment came quickly, but it was one that fell on the innocent as well as the guilty.

The little leak, being overlooked or neglected, gradually widened, thus weakening the sea-wall. One stormy night the waters of the North Sea broke through the protecting dikes, and overwhelmed the entire city.

Many thousands of people were drowned that dreadful night; those to whom life was a joy, whose position and wealth enabled them to gratify every whim, and those to whom life seemed to promise nothing but poverty and trouble, shared the same fate.

The little kingdom of Holland needs more land than its present area affords, and the Dutch government is talking about draining the Zuyder Zee, and reclaiming all that once fertile land.

So it is possible, girls, that some day we may learn just how much or how little truth there is in this story of the sunken city of Stavoren."

CHAPTER VI

THE DOGE AND THE FISHERMAN

"NOW, Alma, you choose," said Elizabeth.

"You may be sure Alma will hit on a good long story," said Marie, who was inclined to be slangy. "She always manages to get more for her money than all the rest of us put together."

When Alma held up her choice, Miss Belle laughed heartily. "You are surely right this time, Marie. I could make four

stories out of that charm, each with a plentiful sprinkling of saints."

Alma had selected a small signet ring. From it hung four tiny ornaments: a little gold cap, very like the one worn by the Goddess of Liberty; a silver shield engraved with a red cross; a fish, and the fourth looked like three wee balls welded together.

"Before I get to the real story," began Miss Belle, "I must give you a little information, so you will understand it better.

"You all know that Venice is actually founded on a number of small islands; for all practical purposes her streets are the canals which intersect the city in every direction, and the widest, or Grand Canal, winds through the city like a gigantic S.

"Between Venice and the open sea are other islands, which protect her from the ravages of the Adriatic.

"One of them is called the Lido, and on it stands the church of San Niccolo di Lido, where, so the Venetians claim, the

body of Saint Nicholas has been preserved for several hundred years.

"He was the patron saint of poor people, of children, of sailors, in fact of every one in distress, and the protector against thieves or violence.

"Now at the end of the Grand Canal, nearly opposite the Piazzeta of Saint Mark, is the island of San Giorgio Maggiore, with its church of the same name, where the relics of 'Saint George, the Warrior Saint and Martyr,' find their resting-place.

"Keep these things in mind, please, so that you may the better understand this interesting story."

The Doge and the Fisherman

On the 25th of February in the year 1345 (there is, however, some dispute about the exact year) there arose the most awful storm that had ever been known in Venice.

It rained in torrents for several days, and the water in the lagoons rose higher and

higher, threatening to overwhelm Venice in its fury.

While the storm was raging, an old fisherman fastened his boat to the "molo" or quay of Saint Mark, which is only a short distance from the church.

He had been there but a little while when he beheld on the molo an old man, very grave and dignified, who desired to be ferried over to San Giorgio Maggiore.

The fisherman at first refused to cross in such frightful weather, but the old man insisted, promising a liberal payment for the service.

It was hard work to row in such a sea, but at last they got safely over.

The stranger landed, bade the fisherman wait for him, and entered the church. Presently he returned, accompanied by a young man who was evidently a soldier, since he wore a coat of mail.

Both men embarked, and ordered the fisherman to take them to San Niccolo di

Lido. He looked at the tossing waves and declared the task was an impossible one. The men persuaded him to try it by the promise of still greater reward, but it was with the greatest difficulty that he succeeded in reaching the Lido.

Here the two men landed and went into the church, returning quickly and bringing with them "a man of great age, with a face of heavenly sweetness," dressed in the robes of a Bishop.

They then commanded the fisherman to row out between the forts which protected the harbor, into the open sea, assuring him that the task would be made easy for him.

In vain he protested. The three men insisted on going, and, marvellous to relate, as

they progressed the sea about the boat was much calmer than elsewhere.

When they reached the mouth of the harbor "they saw coming towards them, with such speed that it seemed to fly over the water, a tremendous ship manned by devils."

The storm increased its fury, and it seemed as though Venice would be utterly annihilated.

Suddenly the sea grew calm. The three men stood up in their little boat and made the sign of the cross.

Wonder of wonders! the ship with its fiendish crew disappeared and the storm as suddenly ceased.

The strangers then ordered the fisherman to row them back, the aged Bishop to San Niccolo di Lido, the knight to San Giorgio, and the old man to San Marco.

His task finished, the fisherman naturally demanded the promised reward.

"You have earned it well," said the man,

"and the Doge himself will pay you. I am Saint Mark, the protector of Venice; your other passengers were the knight and martyr Saint George, and the blessed Bishop, Saint Nicholas of Bari.

"Go to-morrow to the Doge, and tell him all you have seen and done; and that by your obedience to our orders you enabled us to save Venice from destruction.

"Tell him also that the storm arose because a certain wicked schoolmaster had sold himself to the Devil, and afterwards hanged himself."

But the fisherman claimed his payment, saying, "The Doge will never believe such a wonderful story from a poor man like me."

The saint took a ring from his finger and gave it to the fisherman.

"Take this ring," he said. "Show it to the Doge, and tell him to look for it in the sanctuary where it belongs."

With these words Saint Mark disappeared.

The next morning the fisherman went to

the Doge, told him the marvellous story, and gave him the ring.

The Doge sent for the Procurators (they who have charge of the church and treasury of Saint Mark) and bade them look for the ring, as the stranger had directed.

This ring should have been found in the sanctuary, where it was kept under a triple lock; but although the lock had not been tampered with, the ring was gone from its proper place.

Then the Doge and the Procurators knew that a miracle had taken place, and a solemn High Mass was celebrated in Saint Mark's Church to express their gratitude.

The ring was restored to the sanctuary, and the poor fisherman received a life pension as his reward.

"That is a fine story," said Alma, picking up the little charm again. "I suppose these things represent the ring of Saint Mark

and the four men, but I do not quite understand which is which."

"Why," said Elizabeth, "the ring itself stands for Saint Mark, and the fish for the fisherman; any one could see that much."

"Yes," added Genevieve, "and if the Saint George at Venice is the one who killed a dragon, the little shield belongs to him. Perhaps I do not know much about the Apostles, but I do know the story of that dragon."

"Then do please tell it to us," said Marie.

"All right. Of course I cannot tell it the way Miss Belle would, but I will do my best."

CHAPTER VII

SAINT GEORGE AND THE DRAGON — THE DOGE'S BONNET — SAINT NICHOLAS OF BARI

SAINT GEORGE was the son of Christian parents, and he must have been of noble birth because he was a captain, or tribune, in the Roman army under the Emperor Diocletian. He was very brave, and did as many valiant deeds as any knight of King Arthur's Round Table ever performed.

Once when he was travelling to join his legion, he came to a heathen city called Selene, whose inhabitants were having a dreadful experience with a dragon, that lived in a marshy lake beyond the city.

This dragon roamed around devouring every living thing it met, until the people became so frightened that they shut them-

selves within the city walls, for even the dragon's breath was poisonous.

Before long the horrid beast had eaten up all the sheep and cattle outside the walls, and then began to attack the city.

To save themselves the people sent out two sheep every day for the dragon's dinner. Before long all the sheep were devoured, and they had to send two little children instead.

Of course everybody was very unhappy, for nobody knew whose child would be the next one to go.

The victims were chosen by drawing lots, and one day the choice fell on the King's only daughter, a beautiful little girl, fifteen years old, called Cleodolinda.

The King was almost crazy with grief, and begged the people to let his daughter go free. He offered all his gold, his jewels, and even his kingdom if only Cleodolinda could be saved from the dragon.

But his subjects did not think this would be at all just or fair, since it was by the King's decree that they too must lose their children.

The King continued to beg them to have mercy on his daughter, until the people grew so angry they tried to burn down his palace, so he was obliged to submit.

One morning the little Princess, dressed in her finest clothes, was sent outside to the dragon. She was a brave little thing, and declared that she was more than willing to go, if only she could save the people from this dreadful beast.

The road to the dragon's lake was strewn with bones, and as the little Princess walked along, she cried aloud and

prayed to God to deliver her dear father and all his subjects.

Suddenly she heard the sound of a horse's hoofs, and looking up saw a handsome young man riding swiftly toward her. He had long fair hair, and was dressed in shining armor, and carried a shield decorated with a red cross.

When he saw a charming young girl, very finely dressed, crying as if her heart was broken, he stopped his horse and asked what was the cause of her tears.

The little Princess then told him the whole story.

In return, he told her his name was George, and that he was a soldier. He had never before heard of this terrible dragon, and it was only by chance that he was riding in the direction of the beast's lair.

The Princess then begged Saint George to hurry away before the dragon caught sight of him.

"That I will not do," he cried, "but I will

stay here and fight this monster, in the name of Christ."

Very soon they heard the dragon's roar, and saw it flying toward them.

Saint George turned his horse and rode as fast as he could at the dragon, and after a hard fight, he thrust his lance through the creature and pinned it squirming to the ground. Then he asked Cleodolinda for her girdle, and, tying it about the dragon, gave the Princess the end of the sash. They went back to the city, the dragon crawling after them like a beaten dog.

When the people saw them coming toward the city, they were at first very much frightened. Saint George reassured them, and told them how he had conquered the beast in Christ's name. Then he cut off the dragon's head with his sword.

He told the people all about the Christian religion, and converted the King, the Princess, and a very large number of the people.

The King loaded him with money and jewels, but he refused these things for himself, and had them all distributed among the poor.

"Did he not marry the Princess?" cried Margaret.

No, he did not. He went back to Palestine, and found that the Emperor Diocletian had ordered another persecution of the Christians, and this decree was fastened up in all the public places.

When Saint George read it, he tore it down and trampled upon it.

This act was certain proof that Saint George was a Christian, and because he was a soldier of the Roman army it was also an act of treason.

He was condemned to torture by the Proconsul Dacian, but he bore all his sufferings bravely.

Once they gave him poison to drink, but he made the sign of the cross over it, and

the poison did him no harm. Another time he was bound to a wheel full of sharp blades, but two angels appeared and broke the wheel.

Then they took him to a pagan temple and tried to make him offer up a sacrifice to the pagan deity, but he knelt down and prayed for strength, and in answer to his prayer lightning fell from heaven and destroyed the temple.

Papa says that these miracles are only allegories, meant to express that God will always help us to overcome evil, if we only try hard enough, and have faith in Him.

At last Dacian gave orders that Saint George should be beheaded, and the "Warrior Martyr" knelt down and bent his neck to the sword, meeting death like a brave Christian soldier.

"Genevieve, where did *you* read that story?" inquired Elizabeth.

"Papa told it to me. He has photographs

of two very queer old pictures that he saw in Venice. One of them is taken from a fresco painted on the wall of a church, by a man called Carpaccio; papa calls it a 'story' picture. Saint George is riding the dearest little horse as hard as he can toward the dragon; his hair is floating behind; his lance is all ready to strike. The Princess is under a tree, crying and wringing her hands; the ground is covered with skulls and bones, and away off in the distance you see the city, and the people all watching their little Princess.

"But the picture I like best was painted by an artist named Mantegna. Across the top hangs a garland of fruit and flowers, and below this Saint George is standing alone, with his foot on the dragon's head.

"Papa says this picture really means that Saint George overcame 'the world, the flesh, and the Devil,' which the dragon represents. But he is such a valiant, handsome little warrior, that it is pleasanter to think of

him as going about the world fighting real dragons and helping real people. Do you not think so too, Miss Belle?"

"I often think," Miss Belle answered, "that that version of a picture or story which is the greatest personal help, is the best one to accept."

There was a moment's silence, and then Alma asked, "Miss Belle, is not that little cap the 'bonnet' of the Doge?"

"Yes, dear, and if I remember rightly, the first bonnet used was given to the city of Venice by the nuns of San Zaccaria, a very wealthy convent. It was made of pure gold and gorgeously decorated with jewels. The Doge always wore it on occasions of great ceremony, as the symbol of his sovereignty."

"That leaves the three balls for Saint

Nicholas. Was he a pawnbroker before he was converted?" asked Margaret.

"No, but he was quite as popular with very poor people. He was, and is now, the patron saint and protector of the poor, and particularly of little children. In Russia, in Germany, and in all Catholic countries, children are taught to consider themselves under the especial care of this saint. You American children do him honor, for he is none other than our dear Santa Claus, that name being an abbreviation or corruption of Saint Nicholas.

"You can find a number of stories about those three balls, but the one most frequently told is this."

The Legend of Saint Nicholas

The balls are really three bags of money.

Saint Nicholas was very rich, but he spent all his money doing good.

In the city over which he presided as Bishop lived a certain nobleman who had three very beautiful daughters.

This man, growing poorer day by day, could see no way of providing for his daughters except by selling them into slavery, because he could give them no marriage portions.

At last they had not even bread enough to eat, and the father was in despair.

Saint Nicholas, learning of their distress, passed under the windows of their home one dark night and tossed in a bag of gold. With this the nobleman portioned his oldest daughter.

Again did the good Bishop throw a bag of gold through the window, and with it the second daughter was married off.

But when Saint Nicholas came a third time, the nobleman, who had been watching in hopes of discovering his benefactor, saw him, and, falling at his feet, kissed them gratefully.

Saint Nicholas, however, made the nobleman promise not to tell any one who had helped his daughters, for the Bishop was one of those people "who do good by stealth and blush to find it fame."

CHAPTER VIII

THE IMP OF LINCOLN

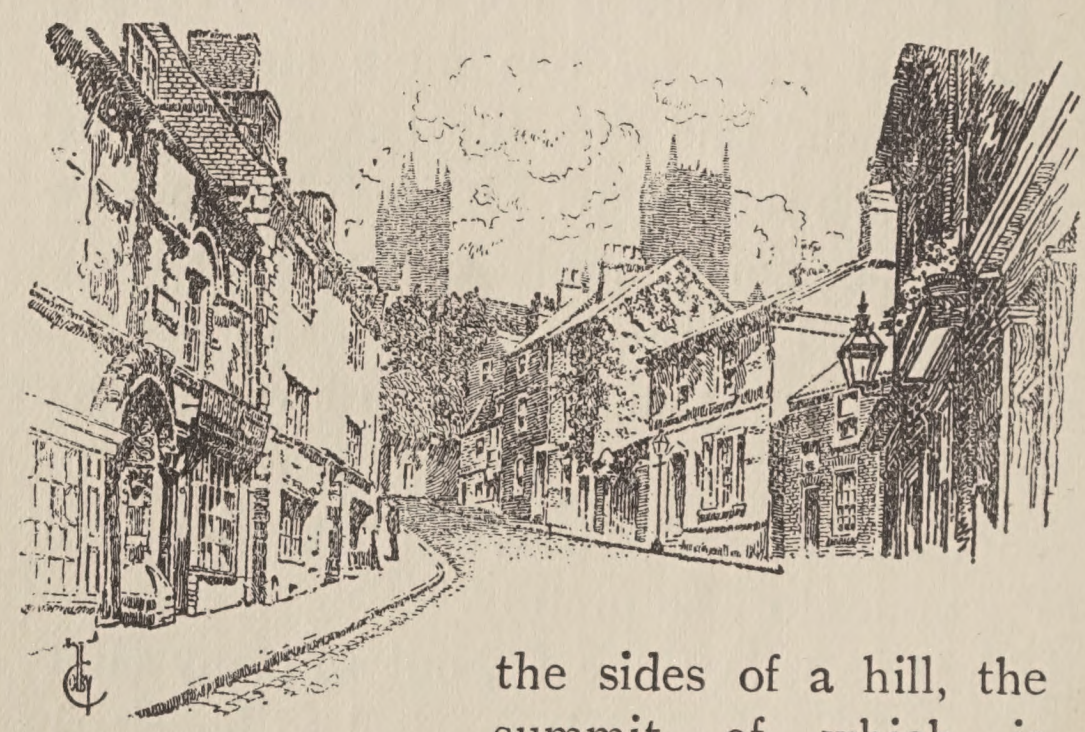
"IF Aunt Belle is not too tired, there is just time for one more story before lunch," said Mrs. Staats. "That must satisfy you for to-day. Indeed, I do not believe your small heads can carry all you have heard this morning."

"I am not at all tired, and I love these old legends as much as the children do. You choose next, Genevieve, as a reward for telling your story so prettily."

"Miss Belle, to hear about so many saints at one time has made me feel so hopelessly naughty," sighed Genevieve, "suppose you tell us next about this jolly-looking little Devil. Maybe that will even things up a little by making me feel that there are worse beings than myself."

"It is rather queer," began Miss Belle, "but the home of that saucy little chap is in a famous cathedral, and we must go all the way to England to learn about him.

"A few hours' ride from London is the old town of Lincoln. It scrambles up and down



the sides of a hill, the summit of which is crowned by one of the grandest cathedrals in the world, and on that hilltop the wind seems never to stop blowing.

"In the old monastic days it is said that each newly appointed Bishop was obliged to

ascend this hill on his knees, but I suppose the glory awaiting him at the end of this penance was compensation for the humiliating method of reaching it.

"In the Lincoln Cathedral, the 'choir' — or place occupied by the priests and choristers while chanting the service — is a wonderful example of pure Gothic architecture, and it is called the 'Angel Choir' because of its many beautifully sculptured angels.

"Seated in the midst of this angelic host you will see that little Imp, his ears cocked up impertinently, and one leg carelessly crossed over the other.

"The old legend I am going to tell you about says that as long as he sits there inside the cathedral the wind must keep on blowing outside.

"Near the cathedral is a little shop where photographs of the church and images of the Imp are sold, and here also you can buy the legend of the Imp quaintly told in rhyme.

"I am going to read this to you, because it tells the story so very much better than I can relate it."

The Legend of the Imp of Lincoln

The Devil was in a good-humor one day,
And let out his sprightly young demons to play.
One dived in the sea, and was not at all wet;
One jumped in a furnace, no scorch did he get;
One rode on a rainbow; one played with the dirt;
One handled forked lightning, nor got any hurt;
One rode on the wind, as he would on a steed,
And thus to "Old Lindum" was carried with speed.
"And now," says the Imp, "take me into the church,
His Lordship of Lindum we 'll knock off his perch.
We 'll blow up the Chapter, and blow up the Dean,
The Canons we 'll cannon right over the screen.
We 'll blow up the singers, bass, tenor, and boy,
And the blower himself shall a blowing enjoy.

The organist, too, shall right speedily find
That I 'll go one better in raising the wind.
We 'll blow out the windows and blow out the lights,
Tear vestments to tatters, put ritual to rights.
Now the wind has his faults, but you 'll find on the whole,
If somewhat uncouth, he 's an orthodox soul;
He would n't blow hard on a Monarch, I ween,
Nor ruffle the robes of a Bishop or Dean.
And if for Dissenters he cares not the least,
You won't catch him blowing up Deacon or Priest.
The man in the street he may rudely unrig,
But he snatches not Judge's or Barrister's wig.
When he enters a church, as the musical know,
'T is only to make the great organ pipes blow.
So in sorrowful anger he said to the elf,
"No! here *I* shall stop, you may go by yourself."
The impudent Imp in derision replied,
"Such half-hearted folks are much better outside.
To force you to enter I cannot, but see,
Till I've finished my fun, you must wait here for me."
Then he entered the porch in an imp-ious way,
Declaring the nave should be spell'd with a *k*.
He roamed through each transept, he stroll'd in each aisle,
Then he thought in the choir he would romp for a while.

As he passed 'neath the rood no obeisance he made,
No rev'rence at all to the altar he paid.
He thumbed both the Priest's and the Chorister's books,
And cast on the saints his most insolent looks.
The chalice and patens were safe in a box;
He was stopp'd in the act of unpicking the locks.
For, seeing some angels, he cried, "Pretty things,
A sackful of feathers I 'll pluck from your wings,
To make me a couch when I'm tired of this joke."
Ah! soon he was sorry that rudely he spoke,
For the tiniest angel in dignified tone
Cried, "Imp-ious Imp, be ye turned into stone!"
As he was, as you 'll see when to Lincoln you stray;
And the wind has been waiting outside till this day.
You can't see the wind, but no matter for that;
Believe! or he 'll rob you of cloak or of hat.

"How do you feel now, Genevieve?" slyly asked Marie.

"Hungry," was the prompt reply, for just then the luncheon bell rang.

CHAPTER IX

THE SANTISSIMO BAMBINO—THE MADONNA OF SAN AGOSTINO

THE next morning dawned with the rain still falling steadily.

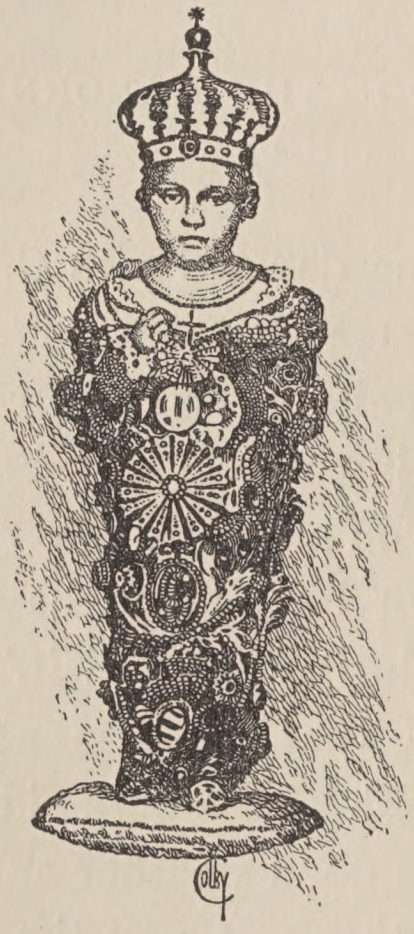
"I am afraid, children," said Mrs. Staats, as she stood looking out of the dining-room window, "that you have struck very bad weather, and will not be able to have much outdoor pleasure during your visit."

"Do not bother about that," said Genevieve, who never would look at the dark side of things. "We can have good weather and tennis and that sort of thing at any time, but Miss Belle and her stories are very scarce articles, so we will take all we can get, and be thankful."

The other girls echoed these sentiments, and before long they were all comfortably

seated in the big hall, waiting for Marie Gardiner to select a charm.

"Here is a little silver baby wrapped up something like an Indian papoose," she finally said, "only this baby wears a crown. Is it a royal baby, Miss Belle?"



"No, indeed! It is a far more important personage. That is the 'Santissimo Bambino,' the 'Holy Baby' of Rome. It is very often called the 'Miraculous Little Doctor of Rome,' because, according to the popular belief, it has effected more wonderful cures and earned more money by its services than all the medical men in Rome put together.

"What does it look like? you ask."

The Santissimo Bambino

The Santissimo Bambino is a large wooden doll, wrapped, as are nearly all Italian babies, in swaddling clothes, and it wears a crown, just as you see it on the charm-string. Baby and crown are covered with a mass of gold and jewelled ornaments, the gifts of people who believe themselves to have been cured by the Bambino's help, and its history, so far as I could learn it, is as wonderful as its cures. Long, long ago there lived in Palestine a Franciscan monk, who desired very much to own an image of the infant Jesus, to hang on the bare walls of his little cell.

He was too poor to buy one, so he cut a piece of wood from a tree that was growing on the Mount of Olives, and out of this carved the figure of a little child.

The monk could carve quite well, but he knew very little about the art of painting, and all his efforts to color the features of his image were very unsatisfactory.

One day, when he felt completely discouraged by his many failures, he happened to remember that Saint Luke, while on earth, had painted several pictures of the Virgin Mary and of Christ.

The pious monk fasted all day, praying earnestly to Saint Luke for help and inspiration, and went to sleep at night feeling sure that his prayers would be answered. While he was sleeping, Saint Luke came down from heaven and finished painting the little image.

Saint Luke was a physician as well as an artist, so perhaps he also gave to the Bambino its miraculous power of healing.

When the monk awoke and saw the sweet face of the child Jesus smiling at him, he was overcome with joy, and, falling on his knees, offered grateful thanks to the kind saint who had given him such great happiness.

It now became the monk's earnest desire to show this wonderful image to the Pope.

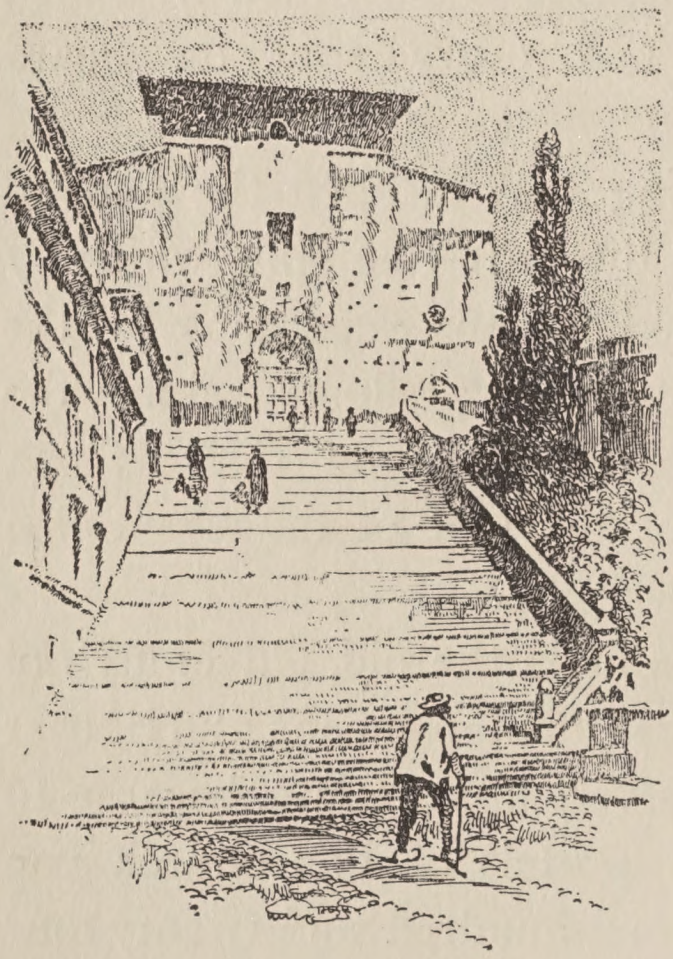
Receiving permission to travel from the Father Superior of his convent, the monk started on his long journey to Rome; but, sad to relate, the vessel on which he sailed was wrecked, and every soul on board perished.

The only thing that escaped the general destruction was the little Bambino, which by some supernatural means — perhaps by the aid of Saint Luke — was floated along the Mediterranean Sea and the river Tiber, until it rested at the foot of the Capitoline Hill at Rome.

On this hill stands the old, old church of Ara Cœli; this name means "Highest Heaven," and is very appropriate, because to reach the front portals of this church you must climb up one hundred and twenty-four steep stone steps.

Nobody seems to know just when or how the monks and priests first discovered the miraculous power of the Santissimo Bambino, but its fame spread abroad very rapidly.

Whenever anybody was seriously ill the Bambino would be sent for, and its mere presence in the sick room apparently worked a cure, or at least gave relief from suffering.



In the old monastic days the Santissimo Bambino always had its own private attendants; carriages and horses were kept for its especial use. When it was sent on its charitable errands it was accompanied by priests and acolytes, carrying lighted candles and burning incense, and as they passed through the streets every person

they met was obliged to bare the head and kneel reverently. Indeed, to a slight extent, I believe this is still the case.

"I will tell you yet another wonderful adventure of this Bambino."

A Second Legend

Once upon a time a certain invalid lady, who had been greatly benefited by a short visit from the Santissimo Bambino, thought it would be a very fine thing if she could have it always with her.

So she had an exact copy of the "Holy Baby" made, and then begged for another visit from the "Miraculous Little Doctor."

After the attendants had gone away, leaving the Bambino alone with the sick lady, she dressed the false baby in the clothes of the real one. So exact was the resemblance that the fraud was not detected when the priests returned to carry the Bambino home.

During the night, which was a very stormy

one, the monks of Ara Cœli were awakened by a loud ringing of bells and heavy knocks on the church doors, mingled with the plaintive cries of a little child.

When they opened the front doors there in the rain stood the poor little Bambino, naked, and shivering with cold.

The monks could scarcely believe their eyes, for they thought that their precious baby was safe and sound in its golden box.

Going to the sacristy, they examined the Bambino they had put away so carefully, and the deception was quickly discovered.

Stripped of its stolen finery, the false baby was returned to the wicked lady who had been guilty of this sacrilege.

The real Bambino was restored to its glory and its home, and from that day to this has never been left alone when sent on its errands of mercy.

In this church of Ara Cœli is a chapel called the "Presepio," or "Manger," which

is opened only between Christmas Eve and the Feast of Epiphany, which falls on the 6th of January.

Here is shown a tableau representing the birth of Christ: in front are the Virgin Mary and Saint Joseph; beside them the manger where the Christ-child lies, and behind stand an ox and an ass; at the sides kneel the wondering shepherds, and the kings from the east with their gifts; above is God the Father and a cloud of the angelic host. The life-sized figures are carved from wood, and so admirably painted and costumed that they look almost like real people.

On Christmas Eve the Santissimo Bambino is taken from the sacristy and carried by the priests of Ara Cœli in a grand procession to this chapel, and placed in the manger to represent the infant Jesus. The old church is dark and gloomy, but the chapel is brilliantly lighted, and the whole effect is very, very beautiful.

Around one of the church pillars at this

time a platform is erected, and here, every afternoon, little children recite and sing in honor of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of their beloved "Bambino Jesu."

The scenes outside the church are quite as interesting as those within, for the long flight of steps is filled with a motley crowd of people. Peddlers with baskets full of Christmas toys, rosaries, medals, and images and pictures of the Bambino cry their wares and urge people to buy. They probably do a thriving business, for I suppose every person in Rome, be he rich or poor, noble or peasant, Roman or foreigner, goes to the Ara Cœli during the twelve days the "Presepio" is open and the Santissimo Bambino is on view.

The Feast of the Epiphany is celebrated in honor of the visit of the "wise men from the east," who went to Bethlehem to worship the young Child.

On that day there is always a very grand vesper service at the Ara Cœli.

The altar is decorated profusely with flow-

ers and ablaze with lights. The priests wear their most gorgeous vestments, and frequently a Cardinal officiates.

After the benediction is pronounced, the priests and acolytes, some swinging the silver incense burners, some carrying lighted candles and gay banners, march from the high altar to the "Manger." The Bambino is lifted from its place by the officiating priest, and the procession makes the circuit of the church, stopping at the front door to show the Bambino to the crowds kneeling outside.

Then the chapel is closed until the next Christmas Eve, and the Santissimo Bambino goes back to rest in the sacristy until there is another request for its presence and help.

"And do the Italians really believe that the Bambino itself works all these miracles?" asked Elizabeth.

It was quite a little while before Miss Belle replied to her niece.

"My dear," she said at last, "I hardly know how to answer you."

The Madonna of Saint Agostino

The Italian peasantry have but little education, and many of them are very, very poor. They are intensely imaginative and deeply religious; all the beauty and poetry in their lives seem to reach them one way or another through the church, and it is not at all astonishing to find that so many of the lower classes believe implicitly in the Santissimo Bambino's power to heal.

A large number of Italian churches contain a miracle-working image or picture, all of which goes to prove that such things have a powerful hold on the imaginations of these simple peasants.

Educated people have, of course, long ago outgrown these mediæval beliefs, but many of them think that an object which has been held in veneration for several hundred years is entitled to respect on that score alone.

I have seen many men and women of refinement and good education kiss the foot of a miracle-working Madonna as humbly as the ragged, ignorant peasant kneeling beside them. Most of these figures and pictures have many touching stories connected with them.

In the great church of Saint Agostino in Rome is a famous Madonna which was sculptured by skilful hands several hundred years ago.

At the end of the church where her chapel stands, the walls are completely covered with the grateful offerings of the people whom she has helped, and the sweet-faced Madonna is herself covered with jewels.

One story as told to me was very sweet and touching. It said that the first prayer for the Madonna's help came from a peasant woman too poor to get medicine for her only son, who lay sick unto death. She implored the Madonna for the sake of the little Jesus to help her.

The pitying "Mother" sadly answered that she would do so gladly, but was herself so poor that she could offer only her prayers for the sick child's recovery.

The good God answered her prayer and the boy was entirely cured of his illness.

The grateful peasant told other women how the Blessed Mother was as poor as they were, and these simple, kindly people began bringing the Madonna their humble offerings, so that never again would she be unable to help those who sought her aid.

"Oh, that is a lovely story, Miss Belle," cried Genevieve, "but why does not somebody put all these stories into a book for us?"

"Plenty of somebodies have done so, my dear, but you have never had your attention drawn to them before."

"I can almost see the dust pile up on the covers of Genevieve's fairy-books now, while

she devours legends of saints and madonnas," said Elizabeth, teasingly.

"If she will only learn the beautiful lessons taught between the lines, she can read nothing better," her Aunt replied gently.

CHAPTER X

THE LEGEND OF SAINT URSULA

"MISS BELLE, here are three silver arrows fastened together, and where they cross each other is a little ruby just like a drop of blood. Are they the symbol of a martyr who was pierced by three arrows?"

"Yes, Alma, an arrow is the symbol of Saint Ursula, the patron saint of maidenhood, who, with her eleven thousand maids of honor, was martyred at Cologne. Her legend is very picturesque, and was always a favorite subject in the art and literature of the Middle Ages.

"All manner of doubt has been cast on its probability, but the most sceptical people admit that it is based on the certain fact that a noble German maiden and a number of her companions were massacred in the near neigh-

borhood of Cologne because of their religion. The exact date of this event is still a matter of dispute, but the legend can be traced back to the year 600 A.D.

"The number of maidens killed was first definitely mentioned about the year 922 A.D. by Herman, Bishop of Cologne. Prosaic people insist that this number is founded on a mistake, made in translating the abbreviation 'XI. M. V.' to read 'eleven thousand virgins' instead of 'eleven martyr virgins.' Still others assert that Saint Ursula had but one attendant.

"However that may have been, it is quite as easy to believe that these remarkable adventures happened to eleven thousand as to eleven virgins, and the larger number certainly makes the story more dramatic and exciting.

"In the art galleries of Europe you will find Saint Ursula's legend frequently pictured. It seems to have been very popular with the artists of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

"There are two famous series of pictures setting forth the history of Saint Ursula, and both were painted towards the end of the fifteenth century.

"One series is the work of Carpaccio, the Italian artist who painted the 'story' picture of Saint George and the dragon that Genevieve told you about. These pictures are now in the Art Academy at Venice, but were originally intended for the chapel in the school of Saint Ursula. This was a school devoted to the free education of young orphan girls, and so was very naturally placed under the protection of Saint Ursula.

"The second series was painted by a German artist, Hans Memling. You will find these pictures in the sleepy old town of Bruges in Belgium. They are the pride of the Hospital of Saint John, and very appropriately decorate a magnificent gold casket, said to contain an arm of Saint Ursula.

"The Memling pictures, being miniatures, are possibly the more interesting of the two

series, and the quaint daintiness of the figures and their exquisite coloring make the memory of these little paintings 'a joy forever.'

"Now for the legend."

The Legend of Saint Ursula

Long, long ago there reigned in Brittany a certain King Theonotus and his Queen, Daria. They were Christians, and had an only child, a beautiful little girl called Ursula. Her education was far superior to that given even to men in those days, and she studied all the "ologies" and "onomies" known to science. One story says that "she had by heart everything that had happened in the world since the time of Adam."

Queen Daria died when her daughter was about fifteen years old. In spite of her

youth, Ursula was so well trained and so capable that she at once took her mother's place at the Court of Brittany.

She was not only perfectly beautiful and learned, but also so pious and kind-hearted that her fame spread all over Europe, and many kings and princes wished to marry her. She refused them all, because she had really made up her mind never to marry, but to devote her life to the cause of Christ and the spread of Christianity.

In those days, England was a pagan country, ruled by the powerful King Agrippinus. He had an only son, whose name was Conon. This Prince was also noted for his beauty of face and figure, his prowess in war, and his enormous strength.

Hearing of Ursula's beauty and wonderful attainments, Conon made up his mind that he would marry her. Accordingly, King Agrippinus sent ambassadors to Brittany to demand the hand of Ursula for his son.

King Theonotus received the ambassadors

very courteously, but was somewhat uncertain what answer to send back to England. He was afraid to offend this English King by refusing his request, and yet he knew that his daughter would refuse to marry Prince Conon; but he had great faith in Ursula's tact and wisdom, and she proved worthy of it, for she settled the matter to the entire satisfaction of all concerned.

A grand entertainment was given in honor of the ambassadors, and Ursula received them in state, arrayed in royal robes, seated on a throne at her father's side.

She told them that she felt highly honored at being asked in marriage by a man of such renown as Prince Conon, son of the mighty King Agrippinus. She reminded them that never before had she given a second thought to other men who had sought her hand; but now she would agree to marry Prince Conon on three conditions.

First, he was to give Ursula as maids of honor the ten virgins of highest rank in his

kingdom, and each one of these maidens must have a thousand maiden attendants; and there must be still another thousand for Ursula's personal service.

Second, Conon was not to claim her as his bride for three years, and during this time she and her eleven thousand virgins were to be allowed to visit the holy shrines, where reposed the relics of the greatest martyrs.

Third, Conon and his Court must be baptized, for she refused to marry any man other than a Christian.

Now the story hints that Ursula hoped that these conditions would prove too hard for Conon to accept; or, if he did agree to them, then at least she would have won all these thousands of souls to Christ.

The ambassadors returned to England, and gave such glowing accounts of Ursula's beauty and cleverness, that Conon agreed at once to all three conditions.

Then King Agrippinus sent heralds to every part of the world over which he

had power, and commanded the maidens of noblest birth and greatest beauty to come to England. When the requisite number were gathered together, they were all sent to Brittany.

Here Ursula welcomed them with joyfulness, and she, by her eloquence and goodness and her knowledge of everything that concerned Christianity, soon converted them all, and they were baptized in a clear stream that flowed through the gardens of King Theonotus.

Then, since Conon had agreed to all her conditions, she invited him to come to Brittany and see her, before she with her eleven thousand attendants set off on their journey to the holy shrines.

So Conon came to visit King Theonotus, and was received with all the honor and splendor due to so great a Prince. He of course fell madly in love with Ursula, and thought no conditions were too hard that could win him such a bride.

Ursula requested Conon to remain in Brittany during her absence, and help King Theonotus with the government of the country; and if it should happen that God did not permit her to return, then Conon was to inherit the kingdom and reign in her stead.

A few days later, Ursula and her eleven thousand virgins embarked on board a fleet of ships especially prepared for their journey. No sailors accompanied them, but these noble maidens were miraculously endowed with the skill and strength necessary to manage the sails, and steer the vessel safely.

They had intended to sail towards the south, but instead, the vessels were all guided by this same mysterious power to the mouth of the Rhine and as far as Cologne. Here Saint Ursula had a vision, in which she was told that she and all her maidens would suffer martyrdom on their return to this city.

They sailed up the river to Basel; here

they left the vessels and crossed the Alps on foot. Six angels guided their footsteps by day. Heaven sent them food, as manna was sent to the Children of Israel; obstacles in their path disappeared as by magic; chasms were bridged as they approached; the waters of mountain torrents parted, and allowed them to pass over dry shod, and at night tents were mysteriously prepared to shelter them.

Day after day this army of Christian maidens marched along, singing hymns of praise and thanksgiving to the God who was protecting them. Saint Ursula had related her vision to them, and one and all rejoiced

to learn that they had been found worthy to die for Christ.

At length they reached the Tiber River, and were soon at Rome, where they were to visit the shrines of Saint Peter and Saint Paul.

At that time Cyriacus was Bishop of Rome, a very holy and very learned man. He had heard nothing concerning the pilgrimage of Ursula and her eleven thousand virgins, and when he learned that all these beautiful, pious maidens had arrived at Rome, he was of course very much astonished, and the tradition says even a little bit frightened. So, attired in his pontifical robes, and accompanied by all the Roman priests and prelates in procession, he went forth to meet Ursula and her attendants.

Ursula knelt before Cyriacus and explained the reasons for this visit to Rome, related the wonderful experiences they had met with on their journey, and implored the blessing of Cyriacus on herself and her companions.

The Bishop not only gave them his blessing, but did all in his power for their honor and entertainment. In order that they might not be interrupted in their devotions, and to save them annoyance from curious people, tents were pitched for them on a great plain, just outside the walls of Rome.

Now, while Ursula and her maidens were receiving the blessing of Cyriacus, who should arrive at Rome but Prince Conon. He had grown weary of waiting for Ursula's return, and alarmed because no word had been sent to Brittany from the pilgrims, and so he set out to search for her himself.

Conon was uncertain how best to begin his quest, but knowing that Ursula intended to visit Rome, he journeyed to that city by a different route, and by a strange coincidence reached Rome on the very same day as Ursula.

Prince Conon knelt beside Ursula to receive the blessing of the good Bishop also, and requested that he might receive baptism

at the hands of Cyriacus. Ursula related to Conon the vision which had prophesied a martyr's death for herself and her eleven thousand virgins; and, inspired by his new

zeal for Christ, Conon prayed to be allowed to share this martyrdom.

After this glorious company of maidens had paid their respects to the shrines of Saint Peter and Saint Paul, they were eager

to start on their return journey. The Bishop of Rome tried to persuade them to stay longer, but they were all too desirous of seeking that "martyr's crown already laid up for them in heaven."

Now it happened that two famous Roman generals, both of them heathens, were visiting Rome at the very time Ursula and her maidens were there. They were amazed at the sight of all these lovely young girls, and appalled at the thought that so many zealous Christians were going together to Cologne. They feared the whole German nation would be converted by means of so much beauty and piety, and made up their minds to ward off such a blow to the pagan power.

Accordingly, they sent a warning to the King of the Huns, who, with his barbarians, was besieging Cologne, and instructed him on no account to permit these eleven thousand virgins to enter that city.

Ursula and her attendants, accompanied

by Prince Conon, Cyriacus, and a number of priests, set sail, and after a long and dangerous voyage reached Cologne and disembarked.

They found the city surrounded by the pagan army, and when these fierce warriors saw a fleet of vessels arrive filled with beautiful virgins, instead of soldiers to reinforce the besieged city, they at first were too surprised to remember the instructions sent by the Roman generals to their King.

Suddenly they rushed upon their victims. Prince Conon was the first to fall; pierced to the heart by an arrow, he died at the feet of his beloved Ursula.

How these brave virgins helped and supported each other! Ursula was here, there, everywhere, with words of love and encouragement, urging her companions not to resist these soldiers, but to suffer martyrdom willingly and gladly for Christ's sake.

After the Huns had killed all the men

they fell upon the maidens, and slaughtered them like sheep. By hundreds they were massacred, until the plains ran with their blood. But these barbarians were afraid of Ursula; they could not understand the power she wielded over her companions. Instead of killing her they carried her to their King.

This pagan ruler had never dreamed of any one so beautiful as this dauntless virgin. He bade her not to weep for her lost maidens, as he intended to spare her life and make her his Queen.

Indignantly Ursula repulsed him with these words: "O thou cruel man! blind and senseless as thou art cruel! Thinkest thou I can weep? Or dost thou hold me so base, so cowardly, that I would consent to survive my dear companions and sisters? Thou art deceived, O son of Satan! for I defy thee and him whom thou servest!"

These scornful words made the King of the Huns so furious that he seized his

bow and shot three arrows into Ursula's heart.

And she fell before him, dead in body, but alive in Christ for evermore.

"And so ends the story of Saint Ursula and her eleven thousand virgins."

CHAPTER XI

THE EVIL EYE AND THE LUCK CHARMS

THERE was a moment's silence, broken by an exclamation from Margaret. She held in her hand a bit of pink coral, sharply pointed and curving like a horn.

"Oh, Miss Belle! I have seen a charm like this one before; the Italian peddler who brings us bananas and oranges every week wears one very much like it. He says it will keep off the 'Evil Eye,' whatever that may be. Will you tell us what it means?"

"Yes, my dear, and you will find several other charms of the same nature. I will tell about all of them, and then you will understand how they fit into each other. All Italians, the Neapolitans in particular, are more or less superstitious, generally more, and

one thing the fear of which seems to pervade all classes is the 'Jettatura' or 'Evil Eye.'"

The Evil Eye

They believe that the eyes of some people throw out hurtful rays, and that the direct glance of such eyes (some authorities say only the first direct glance given in the morning) will bring certain misfortune to the man or beast receiving it. It is almost impossible to trace the first reason why this capacity for evil is ascribed to a certain person; it may arise from some trifling coincidence, or from a word dropped by some spiteful neighbor.

Its owner is probably as innocent of evil intentions as a baby, but whatever the cause, if this reputation is once acquired, the unfortunate possessor seldom gets rid of it, and the simplest actions often seem proof that it is deserved. By way of illustration I will tell you a little anecdote I once heard.

The reign of Pope Pius IX was very stormy and eventful, but in some respects

he was one of the most popular popes who ever ruled at the Vatican.

One day, shortly after his election to the "Chair of Saint Peter," he was driving through the city, and, chancing to look upward, his eyes fell directly on a little baby, held by its nurse near an open window.

At that instant the child gave a sudden start, fell from the woman's arms to the pavement below, and was instantly killed.

Now nobody was silly enough to suppose that this beloved Pope — a very gracious and kind-hearted man — intended to harm this innocent little child, yet to the day of his death Pius IX was accused by his enemies of possessing the "Evil Eye."

The little coral horn is supposed to ward off entirely this baneful influence, just how I cannot say, unless the glances cast by the "Evil Eye" are impaled on its sharp point. At any rate, the charm is worn by nearly everybody in Italy, high and low, educated and ignorant, from the King and Queen to their lowliest subject.

There are many other charms worn to bring good or avert bad luck. Look at that tiny hunchbacked man holding his hat in the act of bowing: to meet and be greeted by a hunchback is believed to bring one a piece of good fortune or a great happiness.

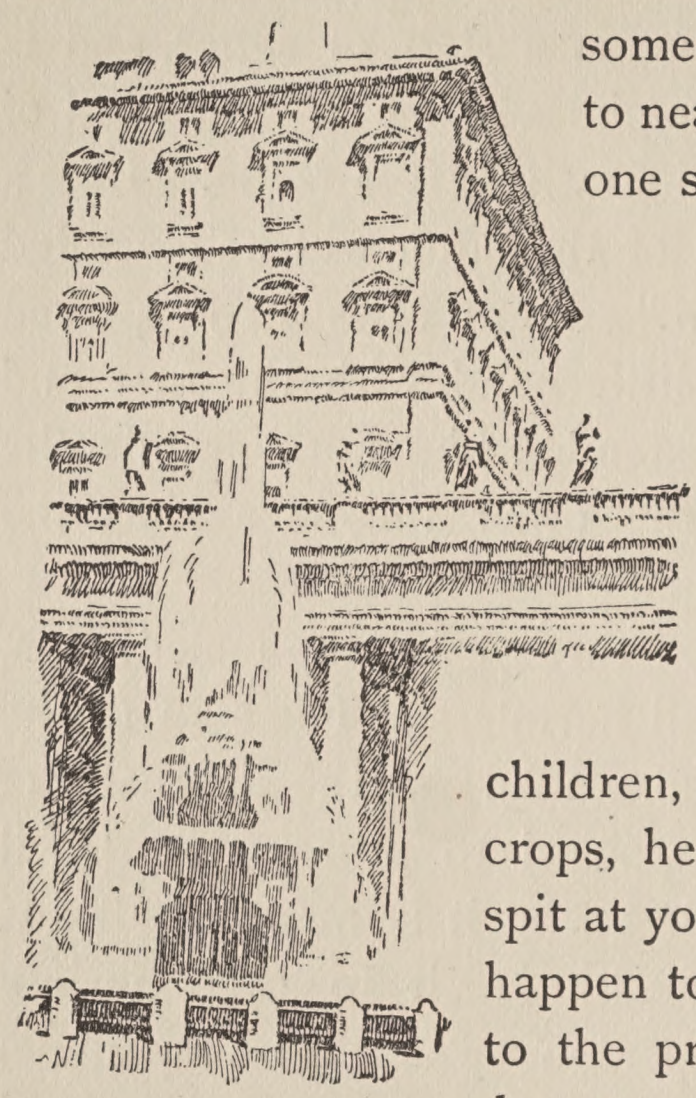
Miss Belle turned over the charms, laughing as she did so.

"In my school days," she continued, "when one little girl became very, very angry with another she would say, 'I cross my fingers on you,' making at the same time a sign something like this." Miss Belle held up a silver hand, with the middle finger crossed over the first one.

"This gesture is a sign of anger, and is supposed to invoke a curse on the head of the person against whom it is made. Like a flash the hand of the latter will be extended in this fashion." Here Miss Belle picked out a second little hand, with the first and little fingers extended like horns, while the thumb held the other fingers against the palm of the hand.

"This charm turns aside the malediction, causing it to fall harmless. The sign of the two horns is also made at the approach of any person supposed to possess the 'Evil Eye,' but in that case it is made stealthily, for it is a deadly insult to even insinuate that any person owns that very undesirable attribute. As I have already told you, such an accusation is always made secretly, and no one ever knows when, where, or how the first suspicion of it is whispered.

"In Naples, where I bought these silver hands, there seems to be a superstition of



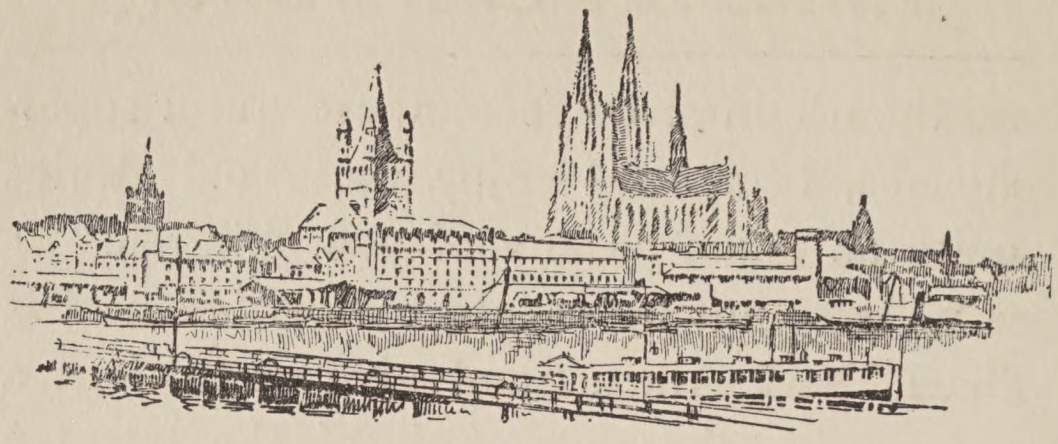
some kind attached to nearly everything one says or does.

"If while talking to a Neapolitan peasant you happen to praise anything belonging to him, his children, his home, his crops, he will probably spit at your feet; if you happen to be posted as to the proper thing to do, you will certainly expectorate in return.

"I used to wonder if this very inelegant practice was not first cousin to the almost universal custom of 'knocking on wood,' when we speak too confidently of present good fortune. Some day I mean to study

up the origin of some of these queer superstitions, because I enjoy these old stories quite as much as any of you children."

"Please put them into a story-book, Miss Belle," said Alma, "and give each of us a copy, with the autograph of the talented compiler on the fly-leaf."



CHAPTER XII

THE LEGEND OF COLOGNE CATHEDRAL

"YOU children are getting too greedy," interrupted Mrs. Staats, laughingly. "Belle, you have given each of the little girls a chance; now will you not allow us grown people to have a turn?

"I am anxious to know why this pretty medal, with the Cathedral of Cologne so finely etched on one side, should have a devil on the other, horns, hoofs, pitchfork, and all."

"It does seem rather contradictory," began Miss Belle, "but somehow or other the Devil seems to have had a finger in that

cathedral's pie from the time it was first designed until it was finished in 1880. Many were the trials, tribulations, and delays the cathedral suffered, and in all of them the Devil seems to have had a share. There are so many legends about the connection of his Satanic Majesty with this church that I may not have pieced them together correctly, but some day you can read them all and judge for yourselves."

Cologne Cathedral

The first church built on this site is said to date back to the time of Charlemagne in the ninth century, but this edifice (or its successor) was destroyed by fire in 1248.

When the good and holy Engelbert was made Bishop of Cologne, he decided that the cathedral must be rebuilt, and made up his mind that the new edifice should be the finest the world had ever seen.

He sent for a young and ambitious architect, and bade him draw the plans for a

cathedral to surpass in grandeur and beauty every other church in the world.

To this the architect modestly agreed, but as he had not seen all the most famous churches, he asked permission to visit those he knew nothing about except from pictures.

The Bishop gave him a year's leave of absence, and supplied him with money for his journey.

The architect made good use of his time, studied diligently, and returned to Cologne prepared, so he thought, to carry out the wishes of Bishop Engelbert.

Full of enthusiasm, he began his task, but his fingers obstinately refused to execute the ideas that filled his brain; no matter how beautiful the drawing might be, it was not equal to the church of his imagination.

Again and again he drew the designs. They never satisfied him, and he was almost in despair, for the time allowed him by the Bishop was nearly expired.

One afternoon he was walking along the

bank of the Rhine, when an inspiration seized him, and with his cane he drew in the hard sand a wonderfully beautiful design.

Heaving a great sigh of relief, he turned homeward with the intention of putting this drawing on paper, and found himself confronted by a little dried-up old man, who, with a jeering laugh, asked why he had drawn the Cathedral of Strassburg on the sand.

To the architect's great disappointment, a little study proved this to be the case.

He tried again, and when he had finished the second tracing, turned to the old man and pointed to this new design.

"What a traveller you must have been," was the sarcastic response. "You have drawn an excellent picture of Canterbury Cathedral."

The exasperated architect made a third attempt, and again his memory played him false, for the little old man with a sneer suggested that the drawing must have been the result of a visit to the Cathedral of Amiens.

"Very well," retorted the architect, "since

you know so much about church architecture, suppose you draw an original design yourself."

The old man laughed in a very irritating manner, and then, seizing the cane, began to draw with incredible rapidity.

Each line shone as if traced with phosphorus, disappearing almost as quickly as it was made, but the architect could see that the design was the very one which had so persistently eluded him, except that it was even more beautiful than his wildest dreams.

Overcome with astonishment, he demanded the strange architect's name.

"I am the Devil," was the startling reply, "and I will give you my design in exchange for your soul."

The architect indignantly refused this offer and made the sign of the cross. Immediately the Devil disappeared.

The architect went home, and tried in vain to reproduce the Devil's drawings.

Day after day passed, and Bishop Engel-

bert began to grow a little impatient at this long delay.

Every time the architect ventured to walk on the river bank, the Devil appeared and renewed his offer, and at last, overcome by his intense desire to possess this grand design, the ambitious architect yielded to the temptation.

The terms of the bargain were arranged, and a time appointed for the delivery of the practical drawings.

Now right here come in two stories regarding the means by which the architect gained possession of the designs. I will tell you both of them.

One relates how the architect's conscience troubled him so much that he told the whole story while talking in his sleep, and was overheard by his mother.

The next morning she repeated to her son what she had heard, and told him he must go to a priest, confess this awful sin, and receive absolution and advice.

The architect obeyed his mother, and told his confessor everything.

Now, for the glory of the church, the priest of course wished to get possession of the Devil's plans, but he was not willing to give a Christian soul in exchange.

He put his wits to work, and devised a plan which promised to be successful.

The priest gave the architect a crucifix containing a small piece of the true cross, and instructed him, on some pretext or other, to get possession of the plans. He was then to touch the Devil with the crucifix, and the power of the cross would overcome the power of evil.

Armed with the crucifix and this advice, the architect went to the place of meeting.

The Devil insisted that the written contract should be signed with the architect's blood, but there was no knife convenient, wherewith to obtain this gruesome kind of ink.

The Devil turned around to look for a sharp stone, and carelessly laid his plans on the ground; they were at once seized by the architect, who retreated backward, holding the cross between himself and the Devil.

The Devil tried very hard to recover his papers, but every time he contrived to reach the architect and grasp them, the touch of the crucifix compelled him to let go his hold.

Beside himself with rage at being thus outwitted, the Devil swore a fearful oath to the effect that the cathedral should never be finished without his consent, and that the architect should never receive any credit for its construction.

When the designs were submitted to Bishop Engelbert for his approval, he was greatly delighted with them.

Work on the new cathedral was begun, according to most authorities, in 1270 A.D., and progressed rapidly for a number of years.

The Bishop insisted that the name of the architect should be cut in huge letters on one of the immense stones intended for the tower, in order that future generations might do honor to the man in whose brain the designs for this stupendous work had been conceived.

One fatal day, however, the architect was standing on the wall of the cathedral, watching this very block being lowered into its place.

Suddenly he heard a muffled laugh, and, turning around, saw the Devil behind him grinning horribly. In his consternation he stepped on the big stone, thereby disturbing its balance. Down went the huge mass, carrying the architect with it, but as he fell he cried to God to have mercy on his soul, and when the Devil heard this prayer he

disappeared with a yell of disappointed rage.

Now, it is a curious fact that while you can see at Cologne the original drawings for its cathedral, the name of the architect is utterly unknown, just as the Devil had sworn should be the case.

The second story is less dramatic. According to this version, the bargain between the architect and the Devil was arranged in a most friendly manner: the former received the designs; when he died the Devil was to claim his soul.

Great praise and many honors were showered on the fortunate architect, and Bishop Engelbert ordered that his name should be engraved on a gold plate, and this was to be fastened up in a conspicuous place.

The architect fell sick, and was nigh unto death. His conscience tormented him night and day, until he could stand it no longer, and, sending for Bishop Engelbert, he confessed his sin.

The Bishop gave him absolution, but as a punishment for his crime the gold plate was taken down, and the Bishop ordered that the architect's name should never again be mentioned, so that in time it was completely forgotten.

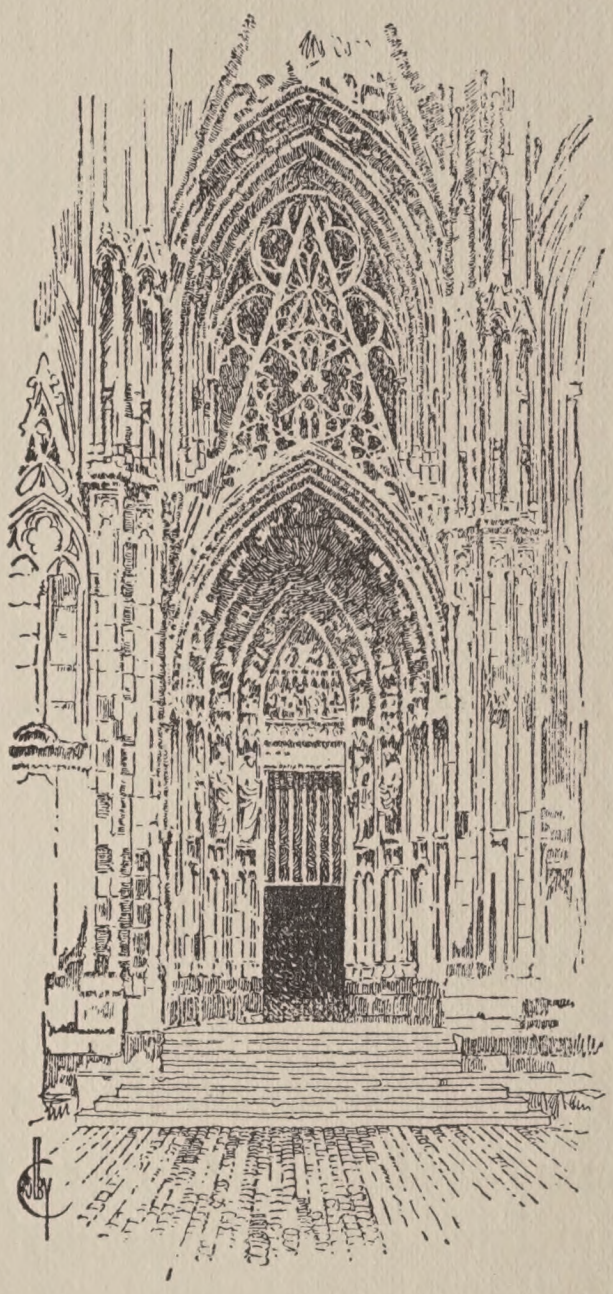
The Devil was furious, and swore that since he had lost the architect's soul, he would claim the soul of the first person to cross the threshold of the church, whenever the first Mass was sung.

The building proceeded in a spasmodic sort of fashion, until the cathedral was far enough advanced to be used for worship; but the people had not forgotten the Devil's oath, and were afraid to enter the church.

At last a certain wicked woman, who had been condemned to death, agreed to be the first to enter, on condition that her life be spared should she succeed in eluding the Devil.

This was agreed to, and on the appointed day she approached the portal on her hands

and knees, holding something in front of her hidden by a cloth.



The Devil was waiting, and just as he was about to seize her, she let loose into his hand a young pig, and herself jumped over the threshold where the Devil could not follow.

Again the Devil swore an oath, vowing that the cathedral should never be finished until he gave his consent.

Whichever story you prefer, the actual history of the cathedral could easily give one

the impression that the Devil tried hard to keep his word.

All work on the cathedral ceased about the year 1509, and for over three hundred years the work was at a complete standstill, and in time, all the space surrounding the church became occupied by houses and shops.

Whether the Devil finally ceased troubling and gave his consent the stories do not say, but in 1823 the work was resumed, and a lottery was established for the purpose of raising the funds necessary for the completion of the cathedral.

It was at last finished, and was dedicated in 1880, some six hundred years after its foundations were laid; and I have sometimes wondered if the Devil of these legends was on hand during the festivities attending the dedication, congratulating himself on his share of the work.

But no matter who the architect may have been, the result is very grand, and the Cathe-

dral of Cologne is considered by many authorities to be the noblest edifice of its kind in the world.

"And have they any precious relics or bodies of saints in that cathedral, Miss Belle?" asked Margaret.

"Oh, yes, indeed! They have quite a number of them, but their chief treasure is older than all the saints in the calendar.

"In the treasury of the cathedral you can see a magnificent gold shrine richly jewelled, and in it repose the 'Skulls of the Magi,' the 'Three Kings from the East' who went to Bethlehem to see and worship Jesus, the 'King of the World.'"

CHAPTER XIII

THE LEGEND OF THE TRUE CROSS

"BELLE, what is a tiny iron nail doing in company with all these dainty gold and silver things?" asked Mrs. Curtis.

"That little nail," replied Belle, "was modelled from one which, according to tradition, was used at the crucifixion of Christ."

Legend of the True Cross

In the various churches of Rome are treasured many precious relics associated with our Saviour. Perhaps the most interesting of these relics are a portion of the true cross, one of the nails with which Christ was fastened to the cross, and the "Threefold Title of Accusation." The latter name is given to the white board on which, by

Pilate's orders, the Jews painted in red letters the mock title, "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews," in Greek, Latin, and Hebrew.

Each step in the legendary history of the true cross is beset with so many traditions that it would be impossible to tell you a quarter of them; but I mean to follow one direct line of events, and so give you, so far as I can, a fairly continuous story. We must go back almost to the beginning of time. You all know the story of Adam and Eve; how they ate of the forbidden fruit, and for their disobedience to God's commands were driven out of the Garden of Eden.

In order to protect the Tree of Life, which grew in the midst of the garden, God placed at the gate a cherubim with a flaming sword that turned in every direction.

The Bible tells us that Adam lived to be nine hundred and thirty years old, but when the time came for him to die he wanted to

live still longer, and sought for some means to prolong his life.

Remembering how happy he had been in the Garden of Eden, Adam bade his son Seth return there, and beg from the guardian angel some fruit from the Tree of Life, or a few drops of the Oil of Mercy which flowed from it.

Seth was to find the way by tracing the footprints made by Adam and Eve when they fled from the garden; these he would find deeply imbedded in the soil.

By this means Seth succeeded in reaching the Garden of Eden, and humbly begged the cherubim to grant Adam's request.

The angel sternly refused, and told Seth that five thousand and five hundred years must pass away before the Oil of Mercy would drop on Adam's head.

Seth was so disappointed that the cherubim felt sorry for him, and, holding back the whirling sword, told Seth to look within the garden.

Seth's longing eyes rested on the Tree of Life, which stood in the very centre of the garden; on its topmost branch stood a beautiful young woman, holding in her arms a smiling baby.

The child held out his little hands invitingly to Seth, and the latter stepped forward as if to enter the garden, but down fell the flaming sword to bar the way.

The cherubim told Seth that some day the little child he had seen would come to save the world from the consequences of Adam's sin.

The angel then gave Seth three seeds from the Tree of Life, saying, "When the time comes for your father to die, put these seeds under his tongue, and bury them with him."

Seth returned to his father, and, when Adam died a short time later, carried out the cherubim's instructions.

From these three seeds there sprang up three slender stems, — a cypress, a cedar, and

a palm. As they grew taller their branches intertwined, and in time formed but one trunk, growing into a tall, stately tree with wide-spreading branches.

The legends associate this tree with many events in the history of the Jews.

The rods of Moses and Aaron were made from it; Abraham rested under its branches; it was the bark from this tree that Moses, under God's directions, cast into the bitter waters of Marah, making them sweet and fit to drink.

When for their sins God punished the Israelites by sending a plague of serpents upon them, it was on a pole cut from this tree that Moses raised the brazen serpent at which the Israelites looked and were cured.

One day King David passed under this tree, and admired it so much that he had it transplanted to the gardens of his palace at Jerusalem.

Here the tree flourished until King David

died, and was succeeded by his son, the wise King Solomon.

When Solomon began to build the famous temple which we know as Solomon's Temple, he told his architect — whose name was Hiram — to cut down the tree and use it for the new building.

It was such a grand piece of wood that Hiram thought it would prove of great service to him, but although he used his utmost skill, the tree was always either too long or too short for his purpose, and he cast it aside as useless.

Here it lay unnoticed for some time, and probably afforded a convenient resting-place for the workmen and passers-by.

Then we hear that a Jewish Prophetess, called Sybilla, sat down to rest on this tree. All at once her clothes caught fire; in her terror she began to prophesy, and declared that the tree possessed some evil power which would certainly prove a curse to the Jewish nation.

After that, the tree was used as a bridge across a marsh, near the brook Cedron.

When the Queen of Sheba came to visit Solomon, in order to judge for herself concerning his wisdom and power, she was obliged to cross this bridge.

As she placed her foot upon it, she had a vision of a man hanging on a cross made from this tree. Rather than pass over such an ill-omened bridge, she waded through the marsh barefooted.

The Queen of Sheba noticed that it was an unusually fine piece of wood, and not knowing that it had already been rejected by Hiram, she ordered her servants to carry it to the King's palace. She there presented it to Solomon, related her vision, and declared that some day a man would be crucified on that tree, whose death would mean the destruction of the Jews. Because of this prophecy, King Solomon had the tree buried deep in the ground.

Another legend states that Solomon had

the log completely covered with plates of gold, and placed it over a door of the Temple, where — so he thought — it could make no more trouble for the Jews. There it remained safe and harmless until Abijah, the grandson of Solomon, came to the throne.

Abijah had it taken down secretly; he stripped off its golden coverings, and to hide the evidence of this crime, the tree was buried.

Some time later the priests needed a convenient place for cleansing the animals which were to be sacrificed in the Temple.

For this purpose the Jews dug a very wide and deep well directly over the hiding-place of the tree, but although the tree was discovered, it was left undisturbed.

This well, or "Piscina," as it was called by the Jews, was the one we now know as the Pool of Bethesda, and, according to the legends, its waters received from the tree the power to cure all manner of disease.

In the time of Christ there were five

porches around the Pool of Bethesda; every day they were occupied by sick and deformed people.

At a certain hour each day an angel came down from heaven and stirred up the waters, and the first person who bathed in the pool after the angelic visitation was entirely cured of his illness.

The tree remained hidden until a few days before the crucifixion; then it rose to the surface of the Pool of Bethesda, was drawn out, and thrown carelessly on the bank.

Here it was found by the men who had been ordered to prepare for the execution of Christ.

An old book, relating the adventures of a knight in the Holy Land, gives a very quaint description of how the cross was constructed from the three kinds of wood united in the one tree.

The Jews thought that the body of Christ would be left hanging on the cross as long as the wood endured.

Accordingly, the portion of the cross intended to go underground was made from the cedar, because that wood never rots in earth or water.

For the upright bar the cypress was used, because it is a sweet-smelling wood, and could overcome any unpleasant odor that might arise from the decay of the body.

The cross-bar to which the hands were nailed was made of the palm wood, because the palm was used as an emblem of victory, and the Jews believed themselves victorious over Christ.

For the mock title "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews," olive wood was chosen, because an olive branch typifies peace, and the Jews thought their nation would have peace when Christ was dead.

The legends state that the cross was raised on the very spot of ground where the three seeds had been planted, and that the executioners, in digging the hole for it, found

Adam's skull and placed it at the foot of the cross.

Some drops of Christ's blood fell on the skull, thus fulfilling the cherubim's prophecy that after five thousand and five hundred years, the Oil of Mercy would fall on Adam's head.

Christ, as you know, was crucified between two thieves. The three crosses were buried on Golgotha, and nothing was heard of them for more than three hundred years. Nearly a hundred years after the crucifixion of Christ, the Emperor Hadrian built a temple to Venus over the place where the crosses had been buried.

About the year 312 A.D. the Emperor Constantine was on his way to fight with the Emperor Maxentius. Suddenly, he and his whole army saw a cross in the sky, and above it the words, "In hoc signo vinces," — meaning, "By this sign conquer."

At that time Constantine was not a Christian, consequently a cross meant nothing to

him, but he was so impressed by his vision that he had a banner made exactly like it.

Constantine's cross was shaped from two Greek letters, X and P, which have the same meaning as our Ch and R, the initial letters of the word "Christus."

This cross was set upon a long spear crossed by another piece of wood, and from this hung a square banner made of purple silk, on which was a likeness of the Emperor. He called this banner "Labarum," and, carrying it at the head of his army, won a glorious victory over Maxentius.

Soon after this battle, Constantine fell ill of leprosy. His pagan priests and physicians told him that he could not hope to be cured unless he bathed in the blood of children, and three thousand little ones were selected for this purpose.

Constantine, however, was neither cruel nor hard-hearted, and he was moved to pity when he saw the tears of the sorrowing mothers, and heard their prayers for mercy.

He told his physicians that he would far rather die himself than be saved by the blood of all these innocent children.

That same night Constantine had a very strange dream. He thought that two noble-looking old men came to his bedside and told him they had been sent by their Master to bring good counsel. They told the Emperor to find Sylvester, the new Bishop of Rome, who was hiding from persecution in a cave on Mount Calvo. Sylvester would then show him a place in which he could bathe three times and be cured of his leprosy.

When Constantine awoke, he sent his soldiers to find this Sylvester. After con-

siderable search he was found and brought before the Emperor.

Sylvester naturally supposed that he was going to be tortured because he was a Christian, but he showed no fear.

Constantine related his dream, and at once Sylvester declared that the visitors must have been Saint Peter and Saint Paul, and when he showed the effigies of these two saints, the Emperor recognized them at once as the men of his dream.

Sylvester explained who was meant by the "Master," converted Constantine to Christianity, and baptized him; and when Constantine came out of the baptismal font he found himself perfectly well; all the signs of leprosy had disappeared.

The Empress Helena, mother of Constantine, had been converted to Judaism. She was greatly displeased with her son for becoming a Christian, and used all her influence to make him follow her example.

At length it was agreed that Helena

should bring the most learned among the Jewish Rabbis to Rome, there to meet Sylvester, discuss the merits of the two religions, and prove to Helena which faith was the true one.

It is said that one hundred and forty-two Rabbis presented their arguments in favor of Judaism, and one after the other were silenced by Sylvester's arguments from the Holy Scriptures.

Then one of the Rabbis, who was also a magician, defied Sylvester to a trial of the power of their respective gods.

A bull so fierce that it took one hundred men to restrain him was brought before the assembly; into its ear the magician uttered a name for the Jewish god, so awful and so powerful, that at the mere whisper of it the bull fell dead at the Rabbi's feet.

The Christian cause seemed lost; even Constantine was filled with doubt and consternation.

But Sylvester calmly arose, and said that

a name which would cause death must be an evil one; the Christian's God did not kill, but brought life to the dead.

He then asked the Rabbi to revive the bull, but this the Jew could not do.

Sylvester made the sign of the cross, and in the name of Jesus Christ commanded the bull to rise and go in peace. The bull arose, quiet, perfectly gentle, and ready to submit to a yoke.

This proof of Christ's power convinced Helena, and soon afterward she too was baptized.

Helena was quite an old woman, but she was so full of zeal for her new God that she went to Jerusalem, and collected many precious mementos of Christ's earthly career; but her dearest wish was to find the true cross.

Its hiding-place was known to a small number of Jews, but so great was the fear of the ancient prophecy which said that the cross would destroy the Jewish nation, that

these men had sworn not to reveal the secret.

The Empress, not being able to find the cross by peaceful means, began to torture the Jews, and at last a man named Judas agreed to show her the hiding-place of the cross, and led her to Golgotha.

After a prolonged search the three crosses were found, but of course Helena did not know which one of them was the cross of Christ.

Just then a funeral train passed along the road.

Helena asked permission to test the three crosses, and laid each one in turn against the dead body. At the touch of the third cross the woman sat up alive and well, and then Helena knew that she had at last found the cross on which the Saviour was crucified.

Then falling on her knees, she prayed fervently for the recovery of the nails, and a little while later all three of them appeared

on the surface of the ground, and near them lay the "Threefold Title of Accusation."

Some legends state that the Empress placed one of the nails in Constantine's helmet, a second in his horse's bit, and threw the third into the Adriatic Sea, where it stilled a very dangerous whirlpool.

Nowadays one of these nails is claimed by the Church of the Holy Cross at Rome; another — presumably the one that was placed in the horse's bit — is supposed to rest in the Cathedral of Milan; and the third one forms part of the "Iron Crown of Lombardy."

This crown is not made of iron, as its name suggests, but is a broad fillet of gold, set with precious stones, and running around inside of it is a narrow band of iron, said to have been hammered out from a nail of the true cross.

Some thirty-four kings and emperors have been crowned with it, among them Charlemagne and Napoleon Bonaparte.

Up to the year 1859, the Iron Crown of Lombardy was kept in the Chapel of the Holy Nail, in Saint John's Cathedral at Monza, Italy; now I think it can be seen in the Belvedere Museum at Vienna, the one now at Monza being only a copy.

Some legends say that Christ was fastened to the cross with four nails, and that four were found by the Empress Helena.

This version was probably accepted by many people, and if I am not mistaken, the possession of this fourth nail is claimed by the city of Trèves in Rhenish Prussia.

The true cross was divided into several pieces, the largest one being left in Jerusalem.

It is supposed that the Empress Helena gave a second piece to her son Constantine, who enclosed it in the head of a statue of himself, and for a long time this statue was regarded as the "Palladium" — or guardian — of the city.

Helena carried the third portion to Rome,

where the Church of the Holy Cross was built expressly for it. The "Title of Accusation," enclosed in a leaden case, was placed in the same church, also the true nail, and there they have remained to this day.

As a matter of fact, there is, of course, no positive proof that the crosses, nails, and title found on Golgotha were actually the ones used at the crucifixion of our Lord.

However that may be, there is little reason to doubt that the relics now shown at Rome are indeed the ones sent there nearly sixteen hundred years ago by the Empress Helena.

"What became of the large piece, Aunt Belle, the one that was left at Jerusalem?" asked Elizabeth.

It was enclosed in a shrine and deposited in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, under the special charge of a Bishop named Macarius.

This piece of the cross met with a great many strange adventures, but I can tell you only a few of them.

Some six hundred years after Christ, the Persian King Chosroes II captured Jerusalem and carried the cross to his own country.

It remained in his possession until the year 629 A.D., when it was recaptured by the Roman Emperor Heraclius and brought back in triumph to Jerusalem.

Heraclius was riding proudly at the head of his army, and just as he was about to enter the city, the gates suddenly closed.

An angel appeared to the Emperor and reminded him that Christ, the King of heaven, had entered these very gates barefooted and riding on an ass.

Heraclius felt the justice of this rebuke. He got down from his horse, took off his crown, cast aside his splendid armor, and lifted the cross to his own shoulders.

The gates at once opened of their own accord, and, walking barefooted, the Emperor

Heraclius entered Jerusalem, and carried the cross back to its place in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

According to some authorities, when the Mohammedans conquered Palestine in the year 637 A.D. the cross was taken to Constantinople for safe keeping, and placed in the Church of Saint Sophia. Others say that the Mohammedans did not molest the Christians or the cross, and that it remained in Jerusalem for nearly four hundred years longer.

A tiny chip from the cross was the reward paid to the pilgrims who made the long, hard journey to Jerusalem just to gaze on this holy relic; but although thousands of these pieces were cut off, the legends say that the cross never grew smaller, but was always miraculously renewed.

It was this portion of the cross that was carried by the Crusaders at the head of their armies, to strengthen their arms and increase their zeal in the Christian cause.

When Saladin, the Sultan of Egypt, defeated the Crusaders at the battle of Hattin, he cut off a piece of the relic as a token of his triumph. The remaining fragment seems to have fallen into the hands of a King of Hungary, who carried it to Poland.

Some time later it was regained by Jean de Brienne,

King of Jerusalem, and his son-in-law Baldwin, the Emperor of Constantinople. Apparently these two sovereigns

were sorely in need of ready money, for they sold the relic to Louis IX, King of France, for a sum equal to six hundred thousand dollars of our money.

About the middle of the thirteenth century this King — known as Saint Louis — carried the fragment of the cross, together with a piece of the crown of thorns and other blessed relics, to Paris, and built the beautiful little Gothic church called the "Saint Chapelle" for their reception.

Here the cross rested, so the story goes, until some time in the seventeenth century, when it mysteriously disappeared, and has never been heard of since.

CHAPTER XIV

THE LEGEND OF THE WOODPECKER—THE OBELISK OF THE VATICAN

MARIE GARDINER had the charm-string in her hand, and was trying to decide which little trinket should be the next to entertain them. Just then a bird's call was heard outside the window, a shrill "Plu-eee, plu-eee," and at the sound Marie commenced to laugh.

"Plu-eee, plu-eee," she echoed. "Oh, Miss Belle, that bird is a woodpecker, crying for rain, and I was just going to ask why you bought a woodpecker for Elizabeth's charm-string."

"The little charm came from Norway," replied Miss Belle, "and when I heard its legend I was reminded of a Grimm fairy-story."

Legend of the Woodpecker

One day our Saviour and Saint Peter were walking through a part of the country they were not familiar with, and lost their way. Tired and hungry, they entered the first house they came to, and begged for something to eat and drink. The owner of the house told them her name was Gertrude. She was a small woman, very neat in appearance, and rapid in her movements. Her dress was dark brown in color, and on her head was a bright red cap. Gertrude had been baking bread on a kind of griddle placed over a wood fire, and several large loaves lay on the table.

Saint Peter asked her to give some of this bread to his Master, but she refused, saying, "My loaves are too large to give away; I cannot spare one."

Then Christ himself asked her, in gentle, persuasive tones, "Will you not bake us a smaller loaf? We have walked all day

without any food, and are tired and very hungry."

Gertrude hesitated a moment, and then, breaking off a small piece of dough, began to bake it. The piece grew larger and larger, until it entirely filled the griddle.

When the woman saw this strange thing and noted the size of the loaf, she looked toward the strangers. As they did not appear to be watching her, she slyly placed the loaf on the table.

She broke off a second and smaller bit of dough, and tossed it on the griddle. When this loaf was baked it was larger than the first one, and the covetous woman could not force herself to part with it.

Gertrude then took a mere pinch of the dough to bake for Christ, and this grew into the largest loaf of all.

Christ then asked her once more, "Will you not give us some water to drink and a loaf of bread for our supper?"

"No, I will not," Gertrude answered. "All

the loaves I have baked are too large and too good to give away to beggars. As for water, I have no more than I want for myself. Go beg elsewhere."

At this fresh proof of the woman's meanness Christ became indignant, and said sternly:

"Gertrude, you are a cruel, miserly woman, and to punish you for refusing bread to the poor I will turn you into a bird. You shall have no food except what you can find between the bark of a tree and its trunk; you shall have no water to drink except the raindrops you can catch as they fall."

At these words the woman turned into a little woodpecker. The bird darted up the chimney, and its brown feathers were

streaked with the soot, but the little red tuft on its head was not soiled.

In Norway the little woodpecker is often called the "Gertrude," or, as the Norwegians pronounce the name, the "Ortrud bird." So now you know the reason why you never hear the woodpecker's "Plu-eee, plu-eee" except when it rains or a storm is approaching; and why, when the rain is falling, the woodpecker never stays snug and warm in its nest, but flies upward, with its long beak wide open.

"Only one more story this morning," spoke up Mrs. Curtis, "and I ask for that. Belle, here is a little charm which reminds me of the Egyptian obelisk called 'Cleopatra's Needle,' in the New York Central Park, except that this tiny shaft has a cross on the top of it."

The Obelisk of the Vatican

The one you hold is the Obelisk of the Vatican; it stands in the centre of the Piazza

of Saint Peter, and, like Cleopatra's Needle, it came from Heliopolis.

This one was brought to Rome by the Emperor Caligula, who began to reign in the thirty-seventh year after Christ. It was used to adorn the Circus of Nero, and was then, and is still considered one of the noblest monuments in Rome.

On the shaft of this obelisk is an inscription to the Emperors Augustus and Tiberius. On the base is an inscription dedicating it to the cross.

The ground, now covered by the Church of Saint Peter and the superbly beautiful square that leads up to it, was once part of Nero's Circus, and it may truly be called "holy ground," since it was consecrated by the blood of so many martyrs, and reverenced as the place where Saint Peter was buried.

This obelisk was moved to its present site in the year 1586 A.D., in the reign of Pope Sixtus V, and our story will tell you how this removal was effected.

The man who accepted the responsibility of this stupendous task was named Domenico Fontana, and to accomplish it he needed the assistance of one hundred and fifty men, eight hundred horses, and forty-six huge cranes.

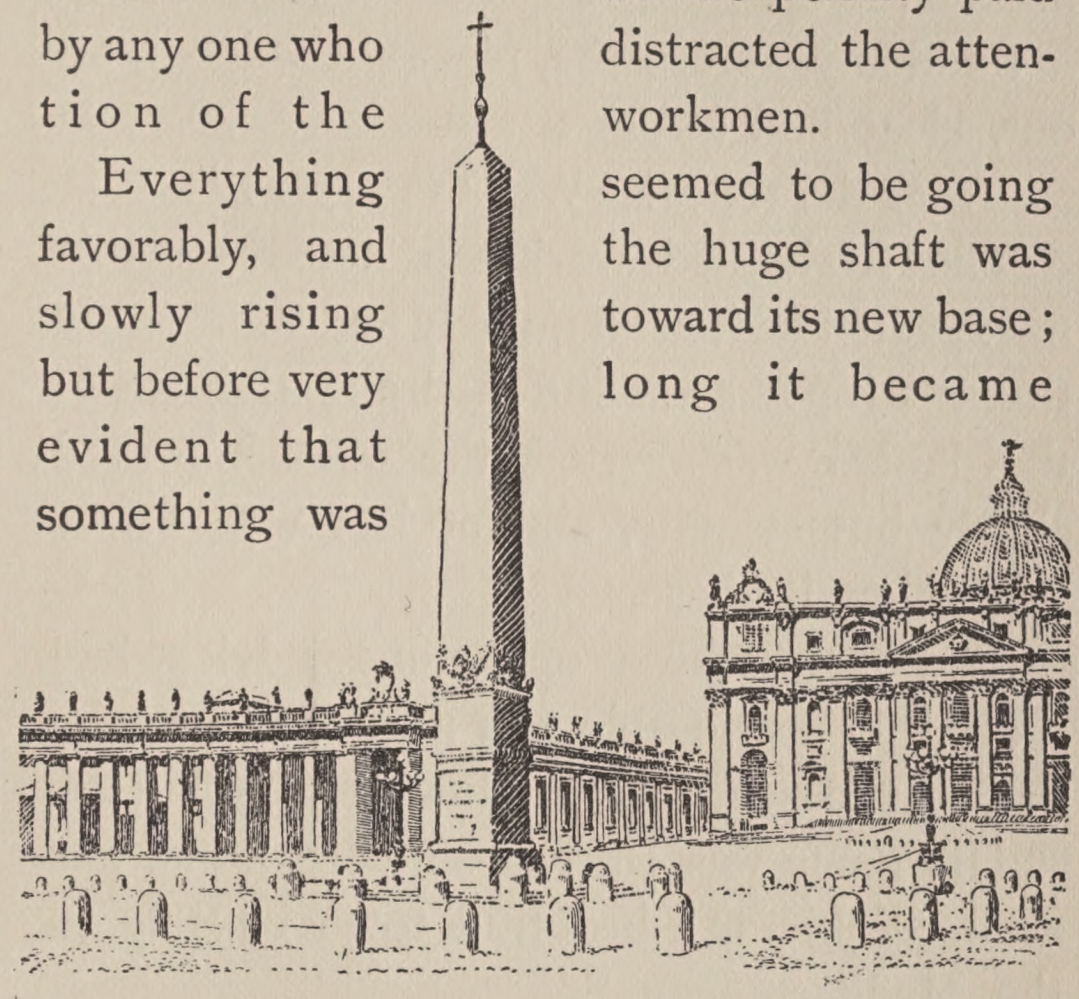
When Fontana had finished all his preparations, the time for the removal of the obelisk was announced. The day was to be a general holiday and festival, and at the appointed hour the Church and Piazza of Saint Peter was thronged with interested spectators.

The obelisk had always been regarded as a pagan object; now it was to be dedicated to the cause of Christ, and a special dedicatory service was arranged in order to exorcise the pagan element. This service was followed by a solemn High Mass in Saint Peter's Church, and the Pope invoked the blessing of heaven upon the efforts of Fontana and his workmen.

Then the trumpets of the Papal Guard were sounded, and a proclamation was issued,

insisting that absolute silence must be maintained while the work was in progress. Death would be the penalty paid by any one who distracted the attention of the workmen.

Everything seemed to be going favorably, and the huge shaft was slowly rising toward its new base; but before very long it became evident that something was



wrong, for the obelisk ceased to move and the ropes slackened perceptibly.

Had there been a mistake in Fontana's calculations? Would the obelisk fall?

The suspense was so terrible, the silence

so intense, it seemed as though that vast multitude of people had ceased even to breathe.

Suddenly across the piazza a voice rang out, clear and strong:

"Wet the ropes! Wet the ropes!"

The frightened workmen acted on this unexpected advice so quickly and thoroughly that the ropes soon stiffened and tightened; the danger was averted, the obelisk moved slowly but steadily, and at last was firmly settled on its base.

The man whose opportune advice had proved so serviceable was a poor sailor who had just returned from a long voyage.

His name was Brescia, and his home was at Bordighiera, a beautiful town in Italy on the Mediterranean Sea.

Although his impulsively spoken words had saved the obelisk, Brescia was afraid of losing his own life because he had disobeyed the Pope's command.

He tried to escape, but was captured by

the Papal Guards and taken into the presence of the Holy Father.

Instead of an angry Pope, Brescia found a very grateful one, who bade the sailor name his own reward for the great service he had rendered to Rome by his sensible advice.

Brescia would not accept either gold or jewels, but requested that his native city should forever after possess the privilege of supplying the Vatican and Saint Peter's Church with the palm branches to be used on Palm Sunday. I need not say that this modest request was quickly granted.

Bordighiera has always been noted for the beauty of its palms, and every year, to this day, a vessel loaded with the finest branches is sent to Rome about a week before Palm Sunday.

These are all prepared and plaited by the nuns in the convent of Saint Antony, and, after being blessed by the Pope, are distributed to the Faithful at the Palm Sunday ceremonies in Saint Peter's Church.

CHAPTER XV

THE LEGEND OF SAINT GENEVIEVE

"OH, dear!" sighed Alma, as the children sat chatting in the hall on the following morning, "this is our last day, and it seems to me there are charms enough to last a month. Have they all got stories, Miss Belle?"

"Each one has some direct connection, either historic or romantic, with the place where it was bought, but if I should tell you too many stories at one time, your poor little heads would not be able to hold them all. You would get them so mixed up that you would have the Bambino saving the people of Venice, while the 'Winged Lion of Saint Mark' flapped and roared in Rome. Some other time perhaps I will tell you many more stories.

"Now, has any one chosen a charm for the first story this morning?"

"Miss Belle," answered Genevieve, "here is a little silver charm with my name and a French motto on it; it looks just like the medals worn by the girls at school who are Roman Catholics."

"That is just what it is, my dear, and probably every little girl in Paris wears or owns a similar one.

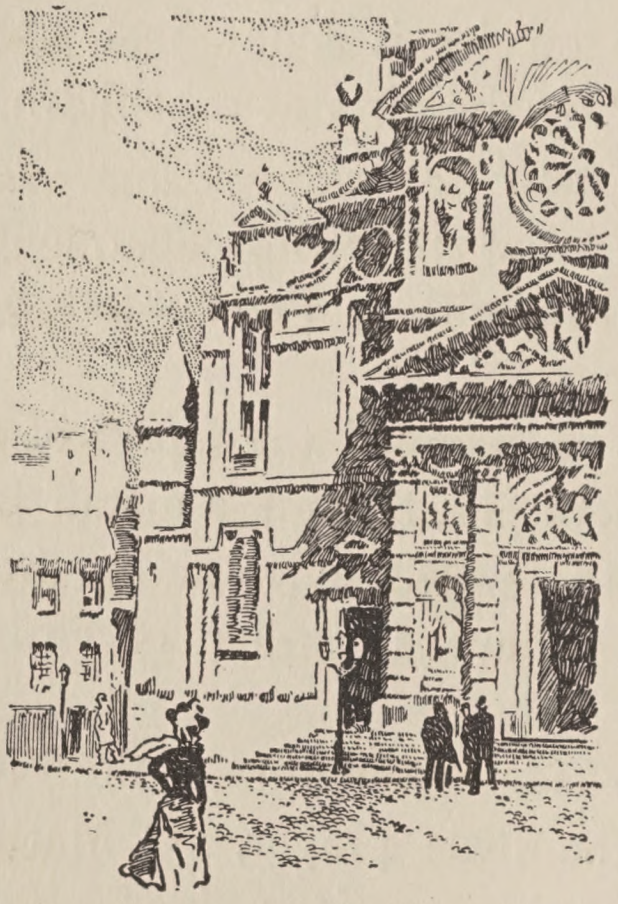
"On one side is stamped the figure of a peasant, a shepherd girl, holding a distaff in her hand, and the words surrounding her mean 'Saint Genevieve, Guardian of Paris, pray for us.'

"On the other side is a picture of the Virgin Mary and the little prayer, 'O Marie, conceived without sin, pray for us.'

"As you may readily guess, Saint Genevieve is the patron or guardian saint of Paris and the Parisians.

"One day while I was in Paris I went to the old Church of Saint Etienne du Mont,

where, in a chapel devoted to Saint Genevieve, is a tomb of solid stone work, said to be the very one in which the saint was originally buried.



"There were so many people kneeling around the tomb that I imagine some special service was being held, and I wish I could paint the picture presented by that scene.

"The chapel itself was dark and gloomy, lighted only by flickering candles. Beside the tomb stood a priest, wearing a scarlet cassock and white lace surplice, and near by was a table where an old woman was selling candles, tapers, and medals.

"Each person on entering the chapel bought a little candle and gave it to the priest, who sprinkled it with holy water; then it was fastened to an iron standard, and the purchaser prayed as long as this taper burned.

"Remembering that my sister's name was also Genevieve, I bought a little medal, had it blessed, and brought it to Elizabeth as a souvenir 'button.'

"It did not take long to learn something of Saint Genevieve's history, for her name is a household word in Paris, although she is not widely known outside of that city."

Legend of Saint Genevieve

She was a peasant girl, born in the town of Nanterre, not very far from Paris, in the year 422 A.D. Her parents were very poor, and she used to earn a little money for them by looking after the sheep and the geese of their neighbors. She studied all the herbs she found in the fields, and became so skilful

in their use that her help and advice were often asked by the peasants when they were ill.

Saint Genevieve was always a very religious little child, and was only seven years old when Saint Germaine, the Bishop of Auxerre, passed through Nanterre, and was impressed by her sweetness and piety.

It is said that he foresaw as in a vision the future greatness of the little girl, and then and there dedicated her to the service of Christ, placing around her neck a copper coin, engraved with the sign of the cross.

Saint Genevieve seems to have possessed miraculous powers, even at that early age, and one story relates that her mother in a fit of rage boxed the child's ears and was punished by blindness.

In front of their home was a well of very pure water. Genevieve took some of this water, over it made the sign of the cross, and then bathed her mother's eyes with it. Immediately the lost sight was restored.

The water from this well, it naturally followed, became very famous, and in times of famine, so the legend says, Saint Genevieve used to make from it very nourishing soup for the starving peasants.

When she grew older, she renewed her vow of devoting herself to Christ's work, but she remained with her parents until they died; then she went to Paris.

Here Saint Genevieve worked unceasingly among the poor and needy, and by her knowledge of herbs and simples was able to cure many sick people and relieve much suffering.

Her piety was so sincere, her charity and benevolence so unfailing, that ere long her praise was heard on all sides, and she was regarded with great love and veneration.

But she had many enemies as well as friends, for Christianity had not yet taken firm hold among the Franks. Many people believed her to be a witch, and by these she was maltreated and slandered; but Saint

Germaine remained her firm friend and kept her under his protection.

Then an event occurred which silenced her enemies and made her an object of popular enthusiasm.

When Attila, the King of the Huns, threatened to invade Paris, the people were so frightened that they wanted to surrender at once to this terrible warrior, or else flee from him.

Saint Genevieve pleaded with them, begging them not to yield to this pagan King, promising that God would succor the Parisians if they would only ask His protection and pray for relief as fervently as she prayed

in their behalf. While the people hesitated, word was brought that for some unknown reason Attila had turned away from Paris, and was marching his barbarians in another direction. The credit for the deliverance of Paris was given to the prayers of Saint Genevieve, and from that time on, her influence over the Parisians was firmly established.

Saint Genevieve lived very humbly, wearing the dress of a nun. She worked night and day to improve the condition of any one who was poor or wretched, and was in reality as well as in name the "Guardian Angel of Paris."

About the year 456 A.D. Childeric came to besiege Paris, and before long famine and fever were playing havoc in the city. Again Saint Genevieve proved herself the friend of her people by organizing a line of boats to run up and down the Seine, to bring help and provisions from Troyes and other towns.

When Paris was at last captured by Chil-

deric, he, although a pagan, treated Saint Genevieve with the greatest respect.

His son Clovis became King of the Franks, and, together with his wife Clotilde, was converted to Christianity by Saint Genevieve, and through her influence the first Christian church in Paris was built, on the present site of Saint Etienne du Mont, the church I have just told you about.

In this church Clovis and Clotilde were buried, and when Saint Genevieve died in the year 511 A.D., at the ripe age of eighty-nine, her body was placed beside theirs.

During the Norman invasion her remains were taken to Draveil for safety, where one of her teeth is still preserved. Again the body was moved and carried to Marizy, and was finally brought back to Paris in the year 855 A.D.

The first church dedicated to Saint Genevieve was built very near Saint Etienne du Mont, and her remains were placed in a magnificent gold shrine. The greatest re-

spect and veneration were paid to them, and in time of trouble the help of Saint Genevieve was always invoked.

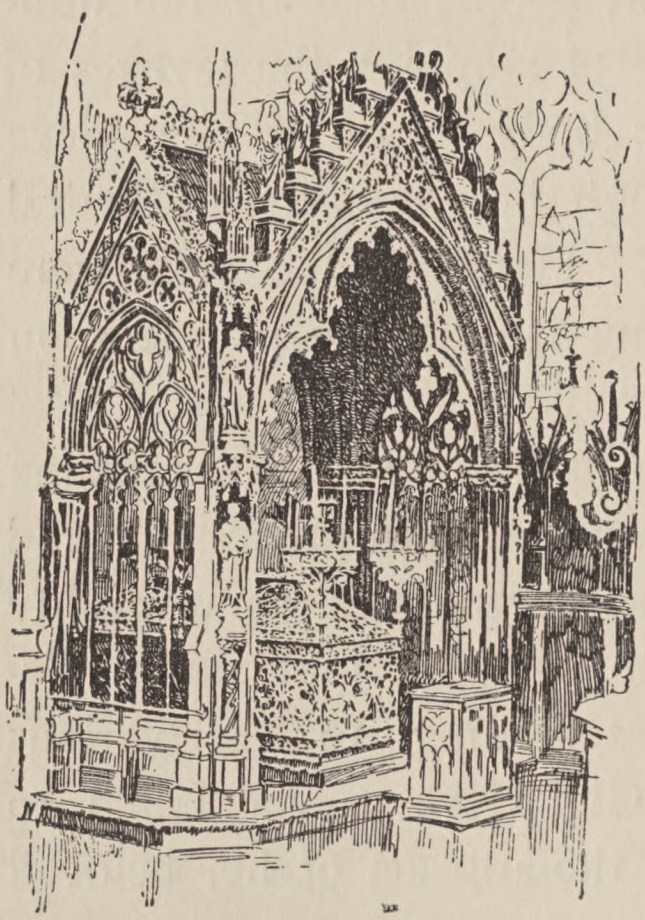
In the year 1129 A.D. a terrible pestilence swept over Paris; people died by the hundreds. In hopes of stopping the ravages of this disease, the body of Saint Genevieve was carried through the city to the Cathedral of Notre Dame. Many of the sick were cured by touching it, and the plague soon disappeared entirely.

During the Middle Ages, the remains were carried around Paris in procession, and with many grand ceremonies some eighty times, in order to ward off impending misfortunes; and, according to the various legends, Saint Genevieve never failed to answer favorably the appeals of her beloved Parisians.

The chapel erected over her tomb in 855 A.D. had been replaced by a much finer church, and in the year 1764 A.D. on the same site Louis XV began to erect the

church now called "The Pantheon," dedicating the building to Saint Genevieve.

Then came the French Revolution, and by a decree of the National Assembly the church was converted into a "Temple of Fame," to be sacred to the memory of the famous men of France.



God and religion were almost forgotten during that awful Reign of Terror, and no respect was paid to many objects previously held in great veneration. The mob seized the gold shrine of Saint Genevieve and sent it to the mint, to be converted into money, while her re-

mains were publicly burned in one of the city squares, called the "Place de Grève."

It is claimed, however, and apparently with some foundation, that some of the faithful and devout people still left in Paris, gathered up the ashes and unconsumed particles of bone and carried them to a safe hiding-place.

When peace was restored to Paris, these ashes were placed, with all due reverence, in the Church of Saint Etienne du Mont.

I was told that even as recently as the Franco-Prussian War, when Paris was besieged by the Germans, and more people were killed by famine than by bullets, the aid of Saint Genevieve was again implored, and throughout Paris was heard this invocation: "Saint Genevieve! thou who by thy prayers didst save Paris from the hordes of Attila, save us now from the hordes of his descendants."

By a strange coincidence news was brought to Paris, on the eve of Saint Genevieve, that the French army had won a great battle, and

if any man refused the credit of this success to Saint Genevieve, he was probably treated quite roughly by the impulsive Parisians.

Her festival falls on the 3d of January and continues a week. Pilgrimages are made to her shrine, and the sick and sorrowful come to her for relief and comfort. The open space in front of the church looks very gay and festive; booths are erected for the sale of candles, flowers, medals, offerings of all kinds, and these things are freely bought by visitors, to be placed on Saint Genevieve's shrine or carried home as mementos.

Candles burn around the shrine, and the priest stands there ready to bless the offerings, just as he was doing when I visited the church. Indeed, I am sure that I shall never see Elizabeth's little medal without a vision of the "Shrine of Saint Genevieve."

"And did Elizabeth's charm actually touch the relics of the saint?" asked Genevieve Lebeau.

"Yes, to the best of my knowledge it did. I first bought the little medal, and the priest sprinkled it with the holy water; then I dropped a piece of money in his charity plate: he opened a little slide in the shrine, touched the medal to the relics, — if such they truly are, — and blessed it with the sign of the cross."

"But you are neither a French woman nor a Roman Catholic, Aunt Belle, so perhaps the touch of the relics cannot help you, or me either for that matter," said Elizabeth.

"Perhaps not," replied her Aunt, "but the blessing of a good man, be his religion what it may, can never do us any harm."

CHAPTER XVI

THE TUN OF HEIDELBERG—PERKEO THE DWARF—THE MOUSE-TOWER

THE children were evidently very much impressed by the story of Saint Genevieve, and the little medal's connection with it, but they also felt that their time for stories was growing short, and before many minutes passed, Alma claimed attention to what she called a baby barrel, adding that under its faucet was engraved a queer little man.

"Indeed, he is funny," began Miss Belle, "and his story is one of the oddest to be met with along the 'many-storied river Rhine.'

"The barrel, as you call it, is a tiny copy of the Great Tun of Heidelberg, a huge reservoir for wine."

The Tun of Heidelberg

During the Middle Ages every peasant in their domains had to pay a heavy tax to the Lords of Heidelberg; if they had no money,

they were allowed to pay in wine, for the vineyards were the chief source of wealth in that part of the world.

The first tun was built in the year 1589 A.D. and held forty-nine thousand gallons of wine, or about five hundred of our largest hogsheads. The one at present shown to the curious visitors at Heidelberg Castle was built in 1751 A.D. It is as high as an ordinary two-story house, and it is encircled by a flight of steps. At the close of the vintage season, when the tun was entirely filled, a platform was always erected across its top, and the peasants celebrated the occasion with a festive dance. This last tun was in use for more than twenty years, and was refilled a number of times.

Near the tun, in the cellar of the ruined castle of Heidelberg, stands the wooden image of a dwarf; he is a jolly-looking chap and rejoices in the name of Perkeo. He is popularly supposed to be the portrait, so to speak, of another Perkeo, who is credited with the herculean task of having swallowed the entire contents of that last tun of wine.

In days of old at the court of every king, queen, and feudal lord there was always one man known as the court jester, or court fool, whose sole occupation in life was to amuse his superiors.

No matter how sad his own heart might be, the jester was expected to be always ready to afford entertainment by means of his witty and amusing stories or comments.

Our friend Perkeo was a dwarf, and he was jester at the court of the Count of Heidelberg.

Now, although he was a very little man, he was "a mighty giant for wine-bibbing," and every time the Great Tun of Heidelberg was filled, his heart swelled with pride at the thought that all this wine belonged to his noble lord and master.

One day, when Perkeo was standing beside the tun, gazing at its huge proportions with respectful and admiring eyes, he said to himself: "What a fine thing it would be if I — Perkeo the dwarf — could drink all that wine myself."

No sooner had this whim entered his head than he determined to gratify it.

You must know that a court jester was usually a privileged person; he could say and do things that would have hanged any other man, and demanded with impunity favors which were nearly always granted.

Those were troublous times, and the man who could amuse the people at court, and by his merry jests and pranks keep "care at bay," was considered worthy of all gratitude.

So Perkeo decided that at the first opportunity he would demand from his master the privilege of being the only person to drink wine from the Great Tun.

About that time the Count of Heidelberg met with a number of misfortunes, and in consequence was always either melancholy and worrying over his troubles, or so irritable that no one dared to approach him.

Perkeo was far too clever to ask favors from a man who was in a bad humor, and he patiently bided his time.

One night, when the Count was feeling unusually sad, he sent for Perkeo, in hopes that the jester could produce in him a more cheerful frame of mind.

"Perkeo," he said, "if you will only make me laugh long enough to enable me to forget my troubles for a short time, I will give you anything you ask for."

Accordingly, Perkeo exerted himself to the utmost, and never had he been so witty, so clever, or so amusing; but his best efforts were all wasted, his master never so much as smiled.

Suddenly a queer idea occurred to the jester; he doffed his cap and knelt humbly before the Count.

"Dear master," he said, "poor Perkeo kneels to ask a great favor from you. The

Great Tun of Heidelberg has just been refilled for the last time; will you not give orders that no one save Perkeo shall touch a drop of that wine?"

The Count was so astonished by this unlooked-for request that he could scarcely believe his ears.

He noted the diminutive stature of the dwarf kneeling before him; he thought of the colossal proportions of the Great Tun, and the contrast they offered was so ridiculous that the Count burst into a very roar of laughter. It seemed to him that he had never heard anything quite so absurd in all his life, and he continued to laugh until he was almost exhausted.

The great tun of wine now belonged to Perkeo. No price was too great to pay for such a good joke!

Time after time, day in and day out, Perkeo went to the tun for a glass of wine; and every day his affection for this enormous barrel grew stronger, until finally he refused

to leave the tun at all, and took up his abode in the cellar.

The legend says that for fifteen years Perkeo remained at the side of his tun.

No one but himself ever turned the faucet or tasted the wine, and when the Count of Heidelberg or his friends wanted to be amused, they had to go to Perkeo.

One sad day, however, he held up his beaker and turned the faucet; not a drop fell out. Perkeo the dwarf had completely emptied the Great Tun of Heidelberg.

No longer having an excuse for remaining in the cellar, and heart-broken at the thought of losing his constant companion of fifteen years, Perkeo laid himself down beside the tun and quietly died; but not until he had asked his master to bury him beneath the faucet, and to have a statue erected to Perkeo close to his old friend, the Great Tun of Heidelberg.

All this was done, just as Perkeo wished, as you children may see for yourselves when you visit Heidelberg.

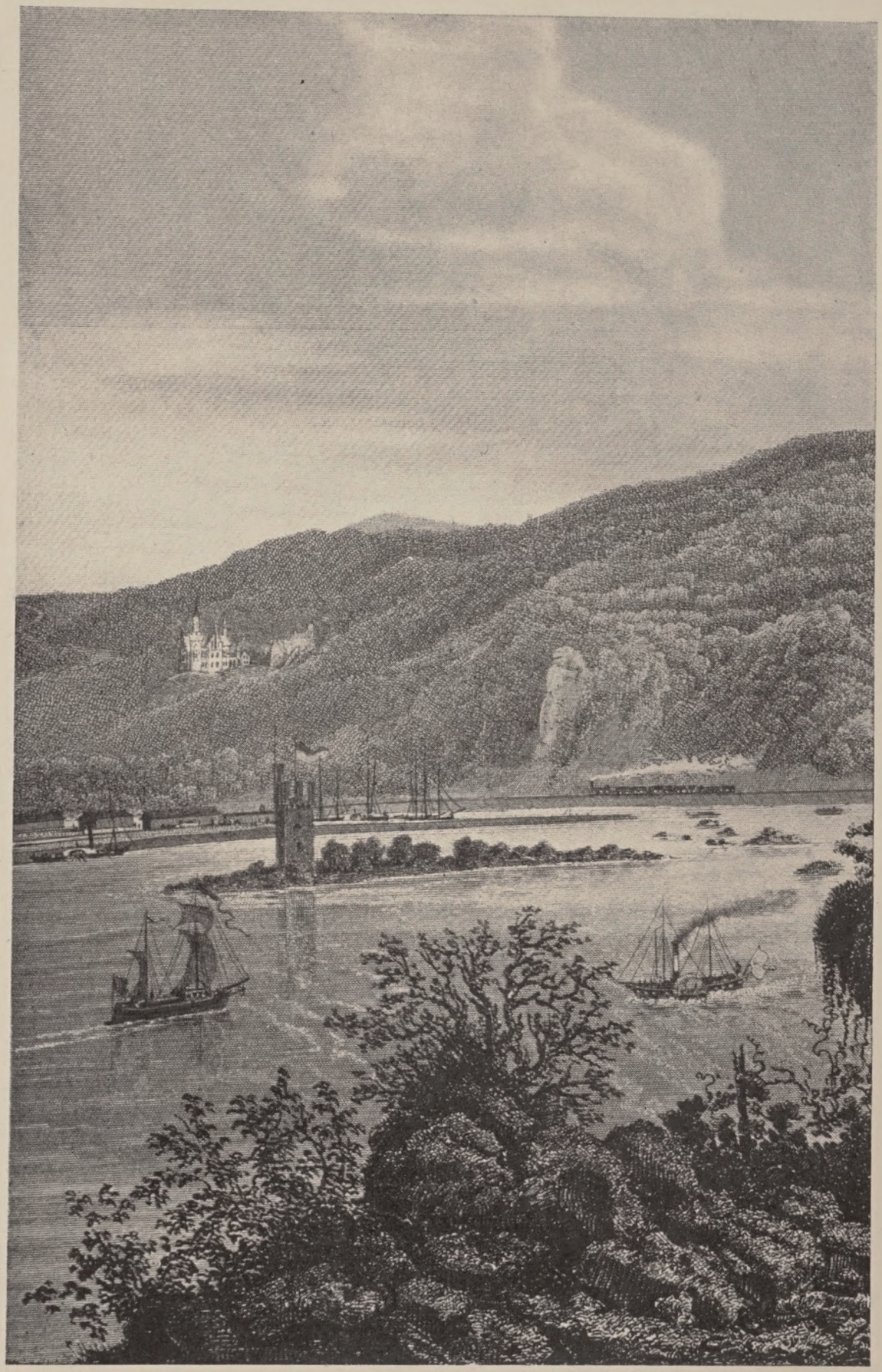
"That reminds me," said Mrs. Staats, "of an anecdote I once read about a man who was so fond of a certain kind of wine that he wished for a throat as long as the Mississippi River, in order that he might longer enjoy the taste of it."

"Oh, girls," exclaimed Margaret Nelson, "do see this queer little house! Miss Belle, it looks as if it might have been the home of a dwarf like Perkeo, it has such small windows."

"No," said Miss Belle, "it is not the house of a dwarf, although it can be found not so very far away from Heidelberg, where our friend Perkeo lived. That little house is a tower, built on a small island almost in the middle of the Rhine, at a point near Bingen, where the river narrows very considerably. It is called the 'Mausthurm,' or 'Mouse-Tower,' and its legend is rather gruesome."

The Mouse Tower

Away back in the tenth century, there lived an Archbishop of Mayence named



Hatto. He was a noted churchman, a very clever statesman, but extremely perfidious and cruel-hearted.

The poor people of his country were dreadfully oppressed by the taxes he imposed on them; he even went so far as to lay a tax on corn, and in consequence was cordially hated by the peasants.

There came a year when all the crops failed, and there was a terrible famine all over the land.

The peasants had no money and no corn, and were almost at the point of starvation.

But the Archbishop cared nothing for their distress; he had huge barns filled to overflowing with the corn he had bought in times of plenty, and hoarded up for his own benefit.

This grain he sold for a high price to the nobles, but he laughed at the miserable peasants, who begged for only enough to keep them alive.

Exasperated by their incessant prayers for

help, Hatto determined to put an end to their importunities.

He notified the peasants that they might all meet together in one of his empty barns, and he would see what he could do for them.

They came in crowds at the appointed time, and soon the building could hold no more. They were overjoyed at the prospect of food in abundance, and in gratitude for the expected assistance almost forgot their hatred of the Archbishop.

But alas for their hopes! Instead of helping them, the wicked Archbishop ordered his servants to close all the doors and windows and set fire to the barn.

"Destroy them all!" he cried, "and get rid of the vermin. They are like rats, good for nothing but to devour the corn."

Then he returned to his palace, where a banquet was being prepared for his sole benefit.

After dinner he retired, and slept soundly until awakened by a noise in the dining-

room below. He paid no attention to it then, but the next morning he found that his own portrait had been gnawed into scraps by mice.

This frightened Hatto, for he was very superstitious, and in those days many people believed that the souls of those who died by violence could return in the bodies of rats and mice, to avenge themselves on their murderers.

While he was breakfasting, a messenger came running in, and told the Archbishop that an army of rats had eaten up all his corn, and was coming towards the palace.

Hatto ran quickly from the room, jumped on his swiftest horse, and rode with all possible speed to the river.

"I will go to my little tower," he thought. "The water is deep, and the tide so strong that the rats cannot reach me; there I shall be perfectly safe."

He reached the river none too soon, for he had barely time to jump into a boat and

pull away from the shore, when the mice and rats fell upon his exhausted horse and began to devour it.

Across the river Hatto rowed with might and main, and took refuge in his little tower. He barred every door and closed every opening, and felt so secure that he lay down to sleep.

Not long did his slumbers last. The infuriated rats had swum across the narrow stream, and, finding no way to enter the tower, were gnawing their way through the walls.

In vain did Hatto try to beat them off as he fled to an upper story; from spot to spot they pursued him, until, overpowered by their numbers, he sank exhausted,

and was devoured by his voracious little enemies.

In this way was the cruel Archbishop Hatto of Mayence punished for his crimes against the poor, and it is this story which gives the tower its name.

Robert Southey, the poet, has put this story into rhyme, and he describes the invasion of the rats and mice in a very vivid way:

"And in at the window, and in at the door,
And through the walls, helter skelter they pour,
And down from the ceiling, and up through the floor,
From the right and the left, from behind and before,
From within and without, from above and below,
And all at once to the Bishop they go.
They have whetted their teeth against the stones,
And now they 've picked the Bishop's bones.
They gnawed the flesh from every limb,
For they were sent to do judgment on him."

"Is any part of that horrid story really true?" asked Elizabeth.

The little girls looked so subdued and awe-struck that Miss Belle had to laugh in spite of herself.

"Well, my dears," she answered, "people who are very particular about dates and facts, and care very little about old legends, insist that this tower was not built until some two hundred years after the time of Archbishop Hatto.

"The wise people claim that it was built by a certain Bishop Siegfried, and was used as a toll-house for collecting duties upon all the goods carried by boats up or down the river; and that its name 'Maus' is merely a corruption of the word 'Maüth,' which means 'toll.'"

"Is it still standing in the middle of the river, Miss Belle?" asked Marie.

"Yes, indeed. I think it is used nowadays as a signal tower. Vessels descending the river are obliged to slacken speed at this point when other vessels are coming up-stream, and all the signals are given from 'The Mouse-Tower.'"

CHAPTER XVII

THE LEGEND OF SAINT CHRISTOPHER

"DO see this little charm, girls!" exclaimed Genevieve. "It looks like one of Grimm's ogres, carrying a Hop-o'-my-thumb on his back."

"I am sure, children," said Miss Belle, "that some of you have been told the history of that particular giant. Put on your thinking caps and try to remember who he is."

The girls all looked puzzled and a trifle embarrassed, but at length Marie Gardiner said shyly: "I think, Miss Belle, that the ogre is Saint Christopher, and the Hop-o'-my-thumb is the infant Jesus."

"You are quite right, Marie. Can you tell us the legend? Will you try?"

"Father told it to me," said Marie, "and I have heard it so often that I believe I can tell it almost as well as he does."

Legend of Saint Christopher

Once upon a time, ever and ever so many hundreds of years ago, there lived in the land of Canaan a man called Offero, which means "a bearer." He is said to have been twelve feet tall, and was stronger than any fifty ordinary men put together.

He was so proud of his strength that he vowed he would never serve any but the most powerful king in the whole world. He journeyed about, until he reached the court of a king who had conquered many countries, and was so rich that he did not know how much gold and silver he owned.

The giant offered his services to this King, who accepted them gladly, for he was quite sure that no such man as this giant had been seen since the days of Goliath.

Offero lived with his master several years and served him faithfully.

One day a famous traveller arrived at the palace; he had come to tell the King about

many wonderful adventures he had met with, and the many curious sights he had seen.

During this man's recital, Offero heard him use the word "Satan" very often. Every time this name was mentioned the King would bow his head and make the sign of the cross on his breast.

This so astonished Offero that he asked the King why he made this gesture so frequently. At first the King refused to answer the giant's question, but finally acknowledged that he was very much afraid of this person called Satan.

"Then I will no longer serve you," cried Offero, "because if you are afraid of Satan, he must be greater than you are, and I have sworn, in the pride of my strength, that I will serve only the man who is the most powerful person to be found."

Offero then left this King's court and travelled far and wide seeking King Satan.

One day, while crossing a desert, he saw

coming toward him a tall, soldierly-looking man, whose face would have been beautiful and pleasing but for the cruel, threatening expression of the eyes.

Behind him marched a vast army of men, women, and even little children. Some of these people looked very prosperous and joyful; others appeared unhappy, ragged, and ignorant.

The leader approached Offero, and with the air of a conqueror demanded who he was, and where he was going.

"I am Offero, the Canaanite, the strongest man in the world," replied the giant, "and I am trying to find the court of King Satan. But who are you, and who are these behind you?"

"I am Satan," the man answered proudly, "and these people who follow me are my slaves, bound to me body and soul."

"If you are indeed Satan, then I have found the master I seek," and, so speaking, Offero knelt and offered his services to

Satan, who graciously accepted them, and placed the giant at his right hand.

Offero lived with Satan many years, and was as faithful to him as he had been to his first master.

They roamed from one country to another. At length in the course of their travels they came to a place where several roads met. By the wayside stood a tall wooden cross.

This cross was merely a sign-post, but when Satan saw it he trembled like a leaf and turned very pale; he was so frightened that rather than pass the cross he marched his followers many miles out of their way.

Offero, on perceiving Satan's terror, cried out, "What is the matter, my master? What is there about that cross to be afraid of? I can see nothing wrong."

Satan hid his face and answered, "Upon that cross the Christ died to save sinners. I may be King of the Earth, but he is the King of Heaven, and has power to destroy me."

"If this Christ is more powerful than you are, I must leave you and go find him. I will no longer serve you since I know there is a King of whom you are afraid," said Offero.

The giant at once set forth in search of the Kingdom of Heaven; he went here, there, and everywhere, but no one could tell him where to find this great King Christ.

One night while walking through a dark, lonely forest he saw a faint light far ahead, and, guiding his footsteps by it, came to a little house.

He knocked on the door, and on entering learned he was in the house of a very wise and holy hermit.

This man explained to Offero all that was known about Christ, and how he had died on the cross for our sins.

He told the giant that the Kingdom of Heaven was on the other side of a river called Death, and that no one could cross this stream until called by Christ himself.

"The best way to find Christ," said the hermit finally, "is to fast and pray and work."

"I will not fast," replied Offero, "because then I should lose some of my strength; and how can I pray to a King I do not know and cannot see? I am quite willing to work, however, in any way you think will please your Master and King."

"Very well," said the hermit, "I will set you a task. Not far from here is a river, wide, deep, and stony; it is often swollen by the heavy rains, and its current is so very swift that many feeble people perish in attempting to cross it.

"Go you and aid them with your strength, and it may be that you will please the Christ by doing this helpful work, and he may show himself to you in some way."

Offero did as the hermit suggested. He built himself a hut on the river-bank, and for a staff he pulled up a young palm-tree.

By day or by night he was always ready

either to help those who needed his assistance, or to carry those who were too weak to even attempt crossing by themselves.

One night, when it was so very dark and stormy that he felt sure no travellers would be abroad, he went to bed early and was soon fast asleep.

He was wakened by the sound of a child's voice, crying "Offero! Offero! come carry me over the river!"

The giant looked outside, but could see no one. Thinking he had dreamed of hearing this call for help, he went back to bed.

Again came the cry, and again he could see nobody; a third time he heard it, "Offero! help me! come quickly!"

Offero seized his lantern, ran out of doors and searched diligently, but apparently he was again mistaken in the sound.

Suddenly out of the darkness appeared a little boy clothed in beautiful white robes, who begged to be carried over the river.

The giant laughed as he lifted the child

and placed him on his own broad back. He was such a wee little fellow that to Offero his weight was less than a feather, and in spite of the storm he thought his task would be a light one.

Alas for Offero's pride! At every step his burden grew heavier and heavier, and his strength began to weaken; even with the aid of his staff he could scarcely make any progress, and when after a frightful struggle he at last reached the opposite shore, he was utterly exhausted.

"Who are you?" he asked faintly, as he lifted the child from his back. "Who are you whose weight has so tired my strength?"

Instead of a child, before him stood a beautiful young man. A bright light shone about his head, and Offero thought that never before had been seen such a gentle, loving face.

"I am the Christ you seek," was the answer, "and it is no wonder you are so tired,

for you have carried not only the world, but all the sins of the world, which I took on my shoulders.

"People call you Offero — the bearer; but hereafter you shall be called Christ-offero — the Christ-bearer.

"You have tried to serve me by aiding the poor and the helpless, and I am pleased with you. To show my pleasure and prove that I am indeed Christ, I bid you plant your staff in the ground, and it shall grow and blossom."

Offero did as he was told, and lo! his old staff flourished at once into a young date palm, and its branches were covered with luscious ripe fruit.

When the giant looked again for the young man, the latter had disappeared.

Offero suddenly realized that he had indeed seen the Christ, and, falling on his knees, found also that he had learned how to pray.

Then the giant went back into the great

world calling himself Christoffero, or Christopher, as he had been told to do.

Always he helped the weak and needy, and told every one he met about the Christ.

At length Christopher reached Samos, a city of Lycia, where the people spoke a language unknown to him. He prayed to Christ for power to speak and understand this strange tongue; his prayer being granted, he sought out the Christians who were then being persecuted because of their religion, and did all he possibly could to help and comfort them.

The King of this country was called Dagnus. When he beheld the gigantic stature and enormous strength of Christopher, he became so frightened that he almost fainted

on his throne, and ordered his soldiers to cast the giant into prison.

The King sent many of his own people to tempt Christopher to deny Christ, or to cause him to fall into sin; but the giant would never yield, because he knew the only way to serve his own King was to do good and be faithful.

Dagnus became very angry with Christopher and, as he was also very much afraid of him, had the poor man horribly tortured, and finally ordered that his head should be cut off.

"I think that is all, Miss Belle," added Marie.

"Well done, Marie, but there is one thing you have forgotten, or perhaps have never heard."

A Second Legend

Just as the soldiers were about to cut off his head, Christopher prayed aloud, asking

that the followers of Christ who saw him — Christopher — on that day should not suffer from tempest or fire or earthquake.

Saint Christopher was, I might say is, regarded as a type of courage and endurance, and it was a firm belief for centuries, that whoever looked at the image of the saint would on that day fail neither in strength nor purpose. For that reason immense pictures or images of him used to be placed on the walls of churches or houses, so that they might be seen from a great distance.

There is a certain mountain in Granada which is the first thing seen by the ships coming from the African coast. This mountain, so I was told, because of the sailors' superstitious belief in the helpfulness of the Christ-bearer, was by them christened "San Cristobal."

CHAPTER XVIII

THE LORELEI LEGEND

"DOES this little gold harp typify Saint Cecelia, Aunt Belle?" asked Elizabeth.

"No indeed, Elizabeth, that harp is the symbol of nothing saintly or angelic; its music always meant mischief, often shipwreck and death.

"Have none of you ever heard the legend of the 'Lorelei,' the siren of the Rhine?"

A chorus of "Noes" was the reply.

"Listen then, and you shall hear two stories about her. The first is the tale of a love that did not run smoothly, and perhaps it had an actual occurrence for its foundation."

Legend of the Lorelei

Several centuries ago there lived in the town of Bacharach, on the Rhine, a man of

humble station, who had a very beautiful daughter named Lorelei.

The father was too poor to give his daughter any marriage portion, but for the sake of her sweet face, her goodness and cleverness, suitors of all degrees, from prince to peasant, sought her hand in marriage.

She refused them one and all, because not a man among them had won her heart.

Many a rejected suitor drowned himself in the Rhine, heart-broken by the coldness of this charming maiden.

Ere long Lorelei began to wish that something would happen to mar her beauty, for she grieved at being the cause of so much unhappiness, and if she was ugly, she would not be bothered with so many unwelcome lovers.

Many of her girl friends, however, who may have been jealous of her beauty and popularity, declared that Lorelei was simply a vain, hard-hearted coquette. They said she was so proud of her lovely face, that she re-

fused all these lovers in order to increase the number of her conquests by her seeming indifference; and they were all quite sure that she would in some way or other be properly punished for her cruelty.

One fine day there came to woo our fair maiden a knight so brave and handsome that Lorelei fell in love with him at first sight, and soon after they were formally betrothed.

There was always more or less fighting going on in those days, and the successful knight vowed that he would go to the wars, and by his valor and courage prove himself worthy of the peerless Lorelei.

His sweetheart entreated him not to leave her, but he was ambitious, and desired to offer his bride a name made famous by deeds of prowess.

So off to the wars went the knight.

Lorelei grieved bitterly for her lover, but the other girls jeered at her distress; indeed, they thought she deserved it.

Many weary months passed, and she had heard nothing whatever from her betrothed; her heart was full of forebodings. Was he dead? Had he ceased to love her?

Many other suitors came to ask the hand of this poor village girl, but her heart was true to her absent lover, and she would not listen to any other man.

At last the other maidens in the town and neighborhood lost all patience, and carried their grievances to the Archbishop of Cologne.

They assured him that this Lorelei, who appeared so sweet and amiable, was at heart both selfish and cruel; not content with being betrothed to the man of her heart, she endeavored to take away from other girls the lovers she did not want herself.

Lorelei was ordered to appear before the Archbishop of Cologne, in order that he might inquire into the truth of these accusations.

The Archbishop had never seen Lorelei,

but he found that Dame Rumor had not exaggerated her beauty or her fascinations. He investigated all complaints, asking Lorelei and her accusers numerous searching questions.

Finally he reached a conclusion, and stated that he had not found a single case wherein Lorelei was at fault or deserving of censure.

Lorelei threw herself at the feet of the Archbishop, and beseeched him to kill her. She said she was so unhappy over her lover's long absence, the jealousy of her neighbors and the trouble caused by her beauty made her so miserable, that she longed to die.

The Archbishop had no right to grant such a request, even if he had been willing to destroy so much loveliness; but he told Lorelei that if she wished to, she might go to some convent, and wait there quietly until she heard from her betrothed.

Travelling alone was not very safe in those days, so the Archbishop directed several of his soldiers to escort Lorelei to her destination.

The party journeyed along the Rhine, until they reached Saint Goar.

Here the river is very narrow and the current is dangerously swift; the cliffs are so high that they almost shut out the sunlight, and one of these rocks juts out sharply into the water.

Lorelei begged permission to climb this rock, and take a farewell view of her beloved river.

As she stood on this height she saw a boat approaching, and standing in the bow was her betrothed. To attract his attention she began to sing a wondrously lovely strain of music.

The knight heard her, and was so fascinated by the melody, and by the sight of his adored Lorelei, that he forgot everything else. His boat, not being properly steered, was caught in the swift current, dashed to pieces against the rocks, and the knight disappeared under the rushing waters.

When Lorelei realized that her lover was

drowning, she threw herself headlong from the rock and shared his sad fate.

From that time this rock has been known as the "Loreleiberg."

So far as this story is concerned the legend is quite plausible, but according to other traditions the Lorelei was not a human being at all, but a water-nymph, a daughter of the Rhine god, and her home was in an enchanted palace at the bottom of the Rhine.

On moonlight nights she would leave her fairy home, and seat herself on this high rock at Saint Goar.

Sometimes she was seen combing her long golden hair with a jewelled comb; sometimes she held a golden harp, and to its accompaniment sang exquisite melodies.

So marvellous was her beauty, and so alluring was the sound of her voice, that when men saw or heard her they straightway forgot everything else.

Many a poor sailor was lured to his death by the Lorelei. Forgetful of his boat, it would be drawn into the whirling eddies at the base of the siren's rock, and dashed to pieces against it.

Strange to say, this lovely water-nymph had chosen for her lover an humble fisherman. She would tell him where to cast his nets, and he was always lucky and found them full of fish.

One night he climbed the Lorelei's rock, but never came back, never again was seen

by mortal man; the Lorelei had carried him down to her enchanted palace under the Rhine.

There was a certain Count Ludwig, the only son of a great feudal lord, who lived in a town called Stahleck.

Ludwig was a handsome man and a valiant soldier. He had heard so much about the Lorelei's beauty that nothing would do but that he must go see her himself, and perhaps bring her back to Stahleck as his bride.

With this hope in view, he fitted out a boat with great splendor, and sailed toward Saint Goar.

As the vessel approached the Lorelei's rock, sweet strains of music were heard, and in the clear moonlight Ludwig caught a glimpse of the Lorelei. She stood on the rock, her harp in her hands; her soft white draperies floated about her like a mist, and jewels shone in her golden hair.

The boat drew nearer, and the vision grew

more distinct. Ludwig, like a man under the spell of an enchantress, was lost to everything but the sight of that marvellous beauty and the sound of that enticing voice.

Alas for the unfortunate knight! His sailors were also spellbound, and the fine vessel of Count Ludwig shared the fate of the humblest fishing boat.

The Lorelei had lured the knight to his death!

But one person on board the vessel escaped, and he carried the sad news back to Stahleck.

The unhappy father swore he would have the Lorelei's life in return for his son's, and sent a number of his bravest warriors to capture the water-nymph.

The soldiers hurried to the rock, crept up stealthily, and surrounded the Lorelei so closely that there seemed no way of escape open, unless she threw herself into the Rhine. Then the soldiers called on her to surrender.

The Lorelei made no reply, but, standing up in the moonlight, she loosened her golden hair, and, waving her arms gracefully, began to dance. Such strange, fantastic dancing as this these hardy soldiers had never seen, and under its spell they were as helpless as a bird charmed by a snake. Little by little she neared the edge of the cliff, and there the dance ended.

The Lorelei took off all her jewels and dropped them into the river; then lifting her harp, she began to sing. The melody was very weird, filling the hearts of the listeners with a vague terror. It may be she was appealing to the Rhine god for help; if so he must have heard her, for the river began to foam and bubble, and the water rose higher and higher, until it reached the summit of the rock where the Lorelei stood.

Up from its green depths there arose a chariot of pink coral, adorned with pearls, and to it four white sea-horses were harnessed. Still singing, the Lorelei stepped

into this fairy-like carriage, and slowly the water sank to its usual level.

When the soldiers, released from the spell of the Lorelei's presence, ran to the edge of the cliff and looked over, nothing unusual was to be seen, but up from the depths of the Rhine came a peal of mocking laughter.

Never again was the beautiful water-nymph seen in the moonlight combing her hair, but sometimes when the moon is full and the night very quiet, the sailors imagine they can hear her singing, and they say to each other, "Listen! the Lorelei is singing to her fisher lover."

CHAPTER XIX

THE DOVES OF VENICE — THE LION OF LUCERNE — THE MONKEY'S TOWER — HILDA'S TOWER — THE DURHAM KNOCKER — THE IRON VIRGIN — THE CROSS OF SAINT BERNARD — MONTE-DI-PIETÁ — THE LITTLE CORPORAL

"BELLE," said Mrs. Staats, "instead of telling another long story, suppose you fill up the half-hour before lunch with what one might call 'general information' about Elizabeth's 'buttons.'"

"That is a very good idea," replied Belle, "and I will commence with this little enamelled bird. Its coloring is almost exactly like that of the 'Pigeons of Saint Mark's,' from which it was modelled."

The Doves of Venice

Hundreds of these pigeons fly unmolested about the Church and Piazza of San Marco

in Venice, and they have possessed this privilege ever since the year 877 A.D.

They are quite tame, and the sight of your hands filled with corn will bring the pretty

creatures flocking around you. They will light on your shoulders and feed from your hands or from your lips, without fear.

One story relates that these birds are held sacred, because a carrier-pigeon brought to a Doge of Venice in ancient days a message that enabled the Venetians to win a glorious victory. But their exemption from the usual fate of pigeons probably originated in one of the holiday games of the Venetians. In the

old and palmy days of the Republic it was customary, after the High Mass on Palm Sunday, for the Sacristan of Saint Mark's to let loose a number of pigeons in the piazza.

The birds were always handicapped in their flight by scraps of paper fastened under their wings.

The Venetians would gather together in the piazza and scramble good-naturedly for these pigeons. No quarrelling or fighting over them was allowed. The captured birds were fattened up for the Easter dinner, and the victors were expected to invite their less fortunate neighbors to share the feast.

The pigeons lucky enough to escape found a veritable "city of refuge" in the roof and niches of the church. These birds were regarded as sacred, and rounded out their little lives in peace and plenty.

Formerly they were fed at the expense of the government, but after Napoleon Bonaparte in 1797 A.D. declared the downfall of the Republic, and transferred all the Vene-

tian territory to Austria, the pigeons were sadly neglected; the stones of Venice do not afford much food for birds, and hundreds of them starved to death.

Now they are provided for by the income from a sum of money bequeathed to the city by some charitable-minded lady, for the special maintenance of the pigeons. Besides this, several peasants are always to be found in the piazza with little packages of corn, which they sell for a penny each.

Very few of the many people who visit Venice pass through the piazza without squandering a few pennies for the pleasure of feeding the pigeons, so the birds are in no present danger of starvation.

"Dear me, Aunt Belle, every time I decide which charm I like best, you tell me something that makes me change my mind."

"Oh!" said Genevieve, "do not bother your head about that. What is the use of

trying to pick out the biggest apple in a barrel, when they are all the same size? Just like *all* the charms the best."

The laughter caused by this characteristic speech was interrupted by Miss Belle calling their attention to a tiny silver bas-relief, which she told the children was called the "Lion of Lucerne."

"The original of this figure," she continued, "was carved out of the solid rock of a mountain-side at Lucerne, by the famous Norwegian sculptor, Thorwaldsen. The huge lion, twenty-eight feet long and fifteen feet high, is dying, pierced by a spear broken short off in his body, and one paw is closed over the 'Lilies of France' as though the lion loved and desired to protect them."

The Lion of Lucerne

The "Lion of Lucerne" was carved as a monument to bravery and loyalty, in memory of twenty-six officers and seven hundred and fifty soldiers of the famous regiment of

Swiss Guards, who lost their lives while defending the Tuileries Palace against the fury of a mob on August 10, 1792 A.D.

On that night thousands of rioters, armed with pikes, attacked the palace. The soldiers of the National Guard were divided between their allegiance to the King, and their sympathy with the common people, and their fidelity wavered. Perhaps they would have remained loyal and joined the soldiers of the Swiss Guard in defending the palace, had not the King decided to leave the Tuileries with his family and take refuge in the building called the "Manege," where the National Assembly — the representatives of the people — held their meetings.

All the soldiers of the National Guard left the Tuileries, but the Swiss Guards and about one hundred and twenty nobles who were loyal to the King refused to surrender the palace. They fired on the rioters, and might easily have dispersed them, but the King sent word to cease firing and surrender.

The rioters renewed the attack, and in a few minutes burst into the palace, killing every soldier they saw, and destroying everything they could lay their hands on. The

Swiss Guards were nearly all killed in the gardens as they retreated, and the few who survived gave up their arms by order of the King.

You understand, then, that these foreign soldiers were far more loyal to the unfortu-

nate King Louis XVI, and the still more unfortunate Queen Marie Antoinette, than were the French soldiers of the National Guard. That is why the monument shows the "Lion of Lucerne" protecting the Bourbon lilies.

Cut in the rock below the lion are the names of these brave officers, and an inscription describing the cause and manner of their death. At the foot of the cliff, just beneath the monument is a little artificial lake, bordered with clusters of water lilies, and floating on its surface are white swans. It is all so quiet and peaceful, that it is hard to realize that the dying lion commemorates a scene of murder and violence.

"Miss Belle," asked Marie, "has every one of these little animals on Elizabeth's charm-string a history?"

"No, my dear, but nearly all of them are typical of street scenes in the cities where they were bought.

"In Florence the people drive the prettiest little donkeys I have ever seen. Early every morning in Naples you will see flocks of goats driven through the streets, and milked at each house door. At Monte Carlo a pig is the proper charm to wear, and at Paris a French poodle.

"That little monkey you have now in your hand came from Rome, and he deserves to be called historical.

"One afternoon I was sauntering along a narrow street in Rome, when most unexpectedly it widened out into a small open space, or piazza. It was not the cleanest place I have ever seen, but it certainly was a very interesting and a very busy little place.

"In the surrounding shops I imagine one could buy anything, from antiquities to freshly roasted chestnuts, from diamonds to postage stamps; there was also a little church near by, and very likely one of the little shops was a lottery office.

"But what most attracted my attention was

a building which perhaps in its best days had been a palace, maybe the home of some great Roman noble. Above the entrance rose a tall square tower; on one angle of its battlements stood a shrine to the Virgin Mary, and before this a light was burning.

"I had seen many similar shrines on the corners and above the doorways of buildings, but never one in such an exalted position as this. I wondered very much why it had been placed so far above all practical purposes, and later on I learned the reason."

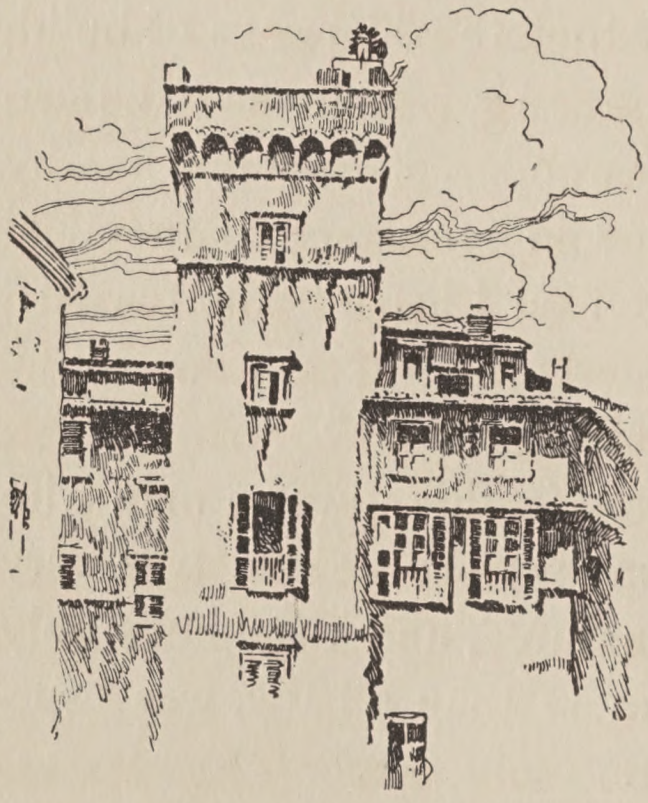
Hilda's Tower

There once lived in this tower a man who owned a pet monkey; the animal was very tame and good-natured, and the man's only son, then little more than a baby, was especially fond of it.

Imagine the horror of the baby's parents when one morning they discovered the monkey climbing up the tower, carrying their little son with him. When the top was reached

the monkey balanced himself on the parapet, and with the child in his arms rocked back and forth on this narrow ledge.

The parents were almost crazy with apprehension, and, falling on their knees, they vowed that if the monkey returned their child to them unharmed, they would build a shrine to the Virgin for this tower, and always keep a light burning before it.



As if in answer to their prayers, the monkey, without losing hold of the child, clambered and slid down the wall, and laid the baby at his mother's feet.

The grateful parents did not forget their

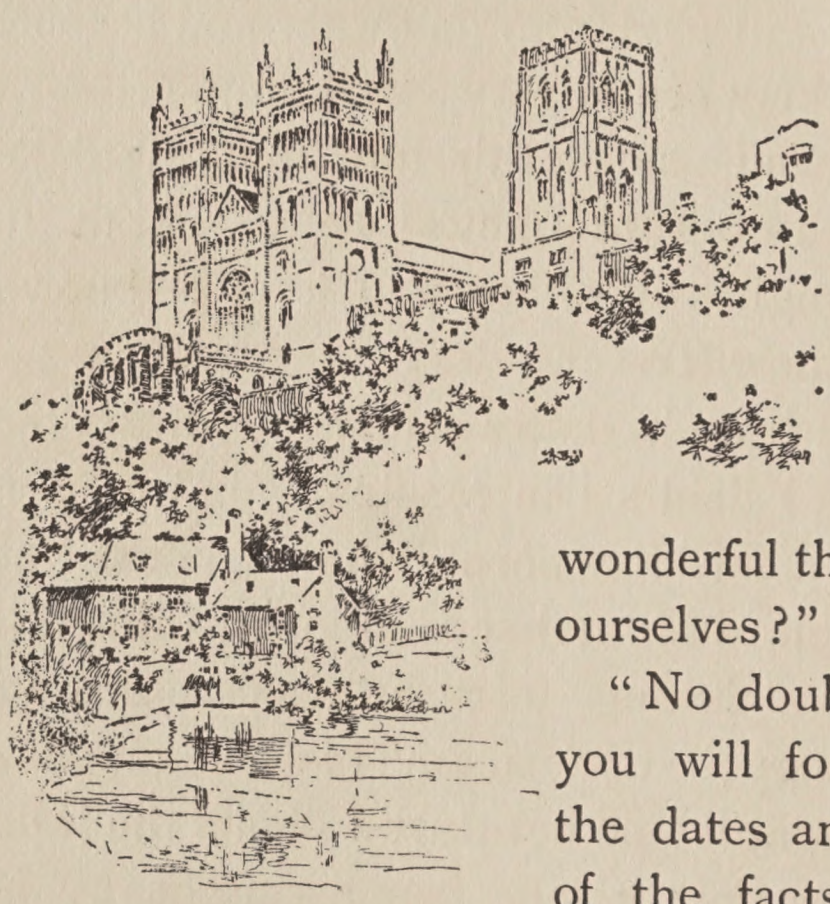
vow, but had an image of the Virgin made, and placed it on the tower. As long as the tower endures, the light before the Madonna must be kept burning, or else tower and building will pass from its owner and become the property of the Roman Church.

The Romans call this tower "Torre della Scimia," — the Monkey's Tower, — but to most English-speaking people it is known as "Hilda's Tower."

There is a charming romance of artist life in Rome called "The Marble Faun," written by Nathaniel Hawthorne. The name of the heroine is Hilda; her studio was in this tower, and because of her lovable character she was appointed custodian of the Madonna's shrine, and it was her duty to keep the light burning before it.

Some day you will read "The Marble Faun," and it may add to your interest in the story if you remember why this particular shrine to the Virgin Mary occupies so elevated a position.

"Do you think," asked Margaret with a very dubious expression on her pretty face, "that we shall be able to remember all these tales until we get a chance to see these



wonderful things for ourselves?"

"No doubt, dear, you will forget all the dates and most of the facts, but I am quite sure you will not forget the 'story' parts.

"Now," continued Miss Belle, "here is another curious charm. It looks like a grotesque mask, with empty eye sockets and

partly opened mouth. Its original is the 'knocker' on the door of the Cathedral of Durham in England."

THE DURHAM KNOCKER

The knocker is very much larger than a man's head, and in the old monastic days its features were lighted up every night by a torch, to show travellers the way to the cathedral and monastery.

It had another interesting use. At this door people who were unjustly accused of any crime, or criminals fleeing from justice, could find "sanctuary;" that is, any real or supposed sinner who could reach and sound the Durham knocker before being caught by his pursuers, was safe for that time at least.

He was taken into the monastery and cared for by the charitable monks, until his case could be investigated. If he was found innocent in their sight, they helped him on

his way to safety, and I imagine that even the guilty ones were not always punished as severely as they deserved.

Miss Belle next picked out a little figure which looked like a fifteenth-century peasant girl in miniature. It had on a long cloak ornamented with rows of tiny buttons. On its head was an oddly shaped cap, and around its neck was a wide plaited ruffle.

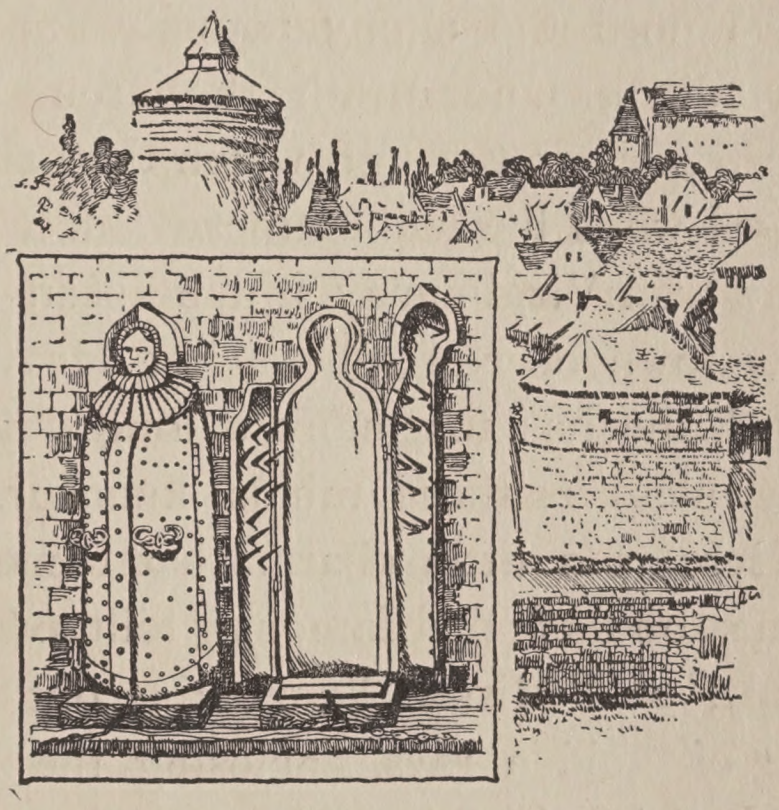
"Now this article," she said, "was also used by priests and monks, but for a very different purpose. This was an instrument of torture during the days of the Inquisition, and it is called the 'Iron Virgin of Nuremberg.'

"Look!" she continued, and then pressed one of the little buttons.

The little image opened down the centre, and the girls saw that the buttons outside were really the heads of tiny spikes driven through the figure.

The Iron Virgin

The victim of this dreadful-looking Virgin was placed inside, and the doors were closed very slowly. The spikes were so arranged



as to pierce only the fleshy and least vital parts of the body. If the sufferer confessed whatever the Inquisitors desired to learn, he or she would be released from the embrace of the Virgin; if not, then the doors would

be tightly closed, and the victim crushed against the cruel points.

So seldom was the heart or brain pierced, that to be "embraced by the Iron Virgin" meant that the sufferer lingered in horrible torture until the agony actually exhausted his vitality. Underneath the Iron Virgin was a trap door, through which the body was dropped when life was extinct.

The Iron Virgin may still be seen in the quaint town of Nuremberg, but, Heaven be praised, she has for many a long day been as harmless as the Durham knocker.

"Here is a little charm that came from Sienna, one of the famous 'hilltop' cities of Italy," said Miss Belle, picking out a little circle of golden rays, enclosing the letters "J. H. S." united in a cross-shaped monogram. "This figure is one you often see in Roman Catholic and Episcopal churches, and the letters are the initials of three Latin words, meaning 'Jesus, Saviour of Man.'"

The Cross of Saint Bernard

It is the emblem of Saint Bernardino, or Saint Bernard as we know him, of Sienna, a famous Franciscan monk.

Some one has aptly described the Franciscans as the Salvation Army of the Middle Ages, and Saint Bernard was one of the most eloquent preachers of this order, and his personal influence led many people to forsake their evil ways. It was frequently his custom, while preaching, to hold in his hand a tablet on which was carved the name of Jesus, or the letters "J. H. S.," surrounded by a circle of gilded rays.

One day a man came to Saint Bernard in great distress and begged him to stop preaching for a time.

"Father," he said, "I earn my living by making cards and dice, but you have persuaded so many people to stop gambling that I no longer have any trade, and am almost penniless."

Saint Bernard showed the man his tablet and suggested that he make others like it and sell them to the people instead of cards.

Because of the love and respect which every one felt for Saint Bernard, the tablets were in great demand, and soon came to be regarded as sacred memorials of this Franciscan monk.

Another emblem of Saint Bernard is a little green hill, made up of three mounds, with a crucifix on the top. This was called in Italy a "Monte-di-Pietá," or "Little Hill of Piety."

Now in those days the people who were obliged to borrow money from Jews or usurers, were compelled to pay an enormous interest on such loans. To help the very poor people, it is said that Saint Bernard founded in every large city that he visited what we now call a loan-office or pawn-shop, but which is still called in Italy a Monte-di-Pietá, and in France a Mont-de-Piété. These institutions were intended to be purely charitable in their aims, and as the interest de-

manded on all kinds of loans was the merest trifle, they proved very helpful. So when you see the three gold balls hanging over the door of a pawn-shop, do not forget that they had their origin in the three little green mounds of Saint Bernard's "Hill of Piety."

Miss Belle then showed the little girls a miniature bust of the Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte. "I bought this," she said, "because of a pretty story concerning the manner in which Napoleon Bonaparte acquired his nickname of 'Le Petit Caporal,' or 'The Little Corporal.'"

The Little Corporal

This fearless man was not in the habit of flying from his enemies, but, according to the story, he had suffered a defeat at the hands of the Russians, and was retreating, closely followed by a band of Cossacks, who were bent on capturing him.

A corporal or sergeant of the Emperor's own regiment was riding with him. Escape

seemed impossible, until this soldier, who was a man of about the same height and build as Napoleon, persuaded the latter to exchange uniforms and horses with him. This done, the Emperor spurred his horse in another direction, while the corporal continued to ride straight ahead along the high-road.

The personal appearance of Napoleon Bonaparte was well known, consequently the Cossacks had no doubt that "the little French officer riding a white horse," who had been seen by the country people of whom they made inquiries, was the man they were trying to capture.

The corporal was overtaken and arrested, but the deception was not detected until he was taken before the Russian general.

Imagine the chagrin of his captors when, instead of the Emperor of France, they discovered that their prisoner was no greater personage than a corporal of the Emperor's Guard. The soldier was sentenced to death, and was shot the next morning.

Napoleon provided liberally for the family of the soldier who had sacrificed his life for his general, and in grateful memory of the deed often appeared in the uniform of a corporal.

This Emperor, who at the height of his power was the terror of every monarch in Europe, was a very small man, and the nickname "Little Corporal," given him by his soldiers, was a very appropriate one, and to Napoleon Bonaparte's credit be it said that the title was always used affectionately, never in derision, for he was ever the idol of the French army.

Just then old Caroline poked her head inside the door and called out, it must be confessed a trifle impatiently:

"Mrs. Staats, if the children don't hurry up the candles will all burn out."

"Candles!" exclaimed every one of the girls except Elizabeth.

"Yes, candles," she cried, her eyes dancing with fun. "It is a grand surprise for you all. To-day is my birthday, and the candles are on my cake. Hurry up, girls!"

CHAPTER XX

THE BIRTHDAY PARTY

OFF the girls scampered into the dining-room, and many "Ohs!" and "Ahs!" were uttered at the sight of the feast spread before them.

In the middle stood the birthday cake, with a lighted candle for each year of Elizabeth's life, and high above these, in the centre of the cake, burned the "life light." Elizabeth herself had to blow this one out, so as to make sure she would live to the next birthday; then with a long breath, a strong breath, and a breath all together, the other girls blew out all the "year" candles, and so they knew that Elizabeth would meet with no misfortunes in the coming year.

Such good things as they had to eat; everything schoolgirls like, from olives to ice-

cream. When the time came to cut the birthday cake, Elizabeth inserted the knife in the portion directly in front of her. For some reason it would not cut, and on investigating the cause, she found that instead of a slice of cake, she was trying to cut a little box which had her own name on it.

She untied the white ribbon fastenings, and lo! and behold! there was the white leather box which her Aunt had given to Mrs. Staats on the first morning of the visit.

On the cover was a dainty monogram — "E. S." — in green and red coloring, and around its edge was a border of little fleurs-de-lis. Inside on a white satin bed lay the prettiest little watch that ever gladdened the eyes of a small girl; and Elizabeth fairly swelled with pride as Aunt Belle fastened to her dress the little fleur-de-lis pin, from which hung the long-desired treasure.

"There you are, my dear. I bought the little watch in Paris, and that is why I chose

this design for its pin. I had the box made in Florence, and that is the reason it too has the fleur-de-lis on it, for the 'giglio,' as the Italians call it, is the symbol of the city of Florence, but in France it is really the emblem only of royalty or nobility. As to the colors on the box, you must know that red, white, and green are the national colors of Italy."

Just how it was all managed only Miss Belle and Caroline could have explained, but each slice of that cake seemed to hold a birthday souvenir, and what was stranger still, each slice reached its proper owner.

There was a little silver medal of Saint Genevieve for her modern namesake; an Imp of Lincoln stickpin for Marie; a dainty "giglio" brooch, enamelled in the Italian colors, for Alma; a little gold gondola for Margaret Nelson; while Mrs. Curtis and Mrs. Staats were each remembered with a coral lucky horn.

"But, Aunt Belle!" exclaimed Elizabeth,

" there does not seem to be anything for you to remember my birthday by."

" Yes, dear," replied her Aunt with a smile, as she glanced at the pretty scene and the happy girls gathered about her, " I have the best souvenir of you all, for I have the memory of your sweet, earnest faces as you listened to my stories about the ' buttons ' on

" ELIZABETH'S CHARM-STRING."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