

SAILS OF GOLD



SAILS
OF GOLD



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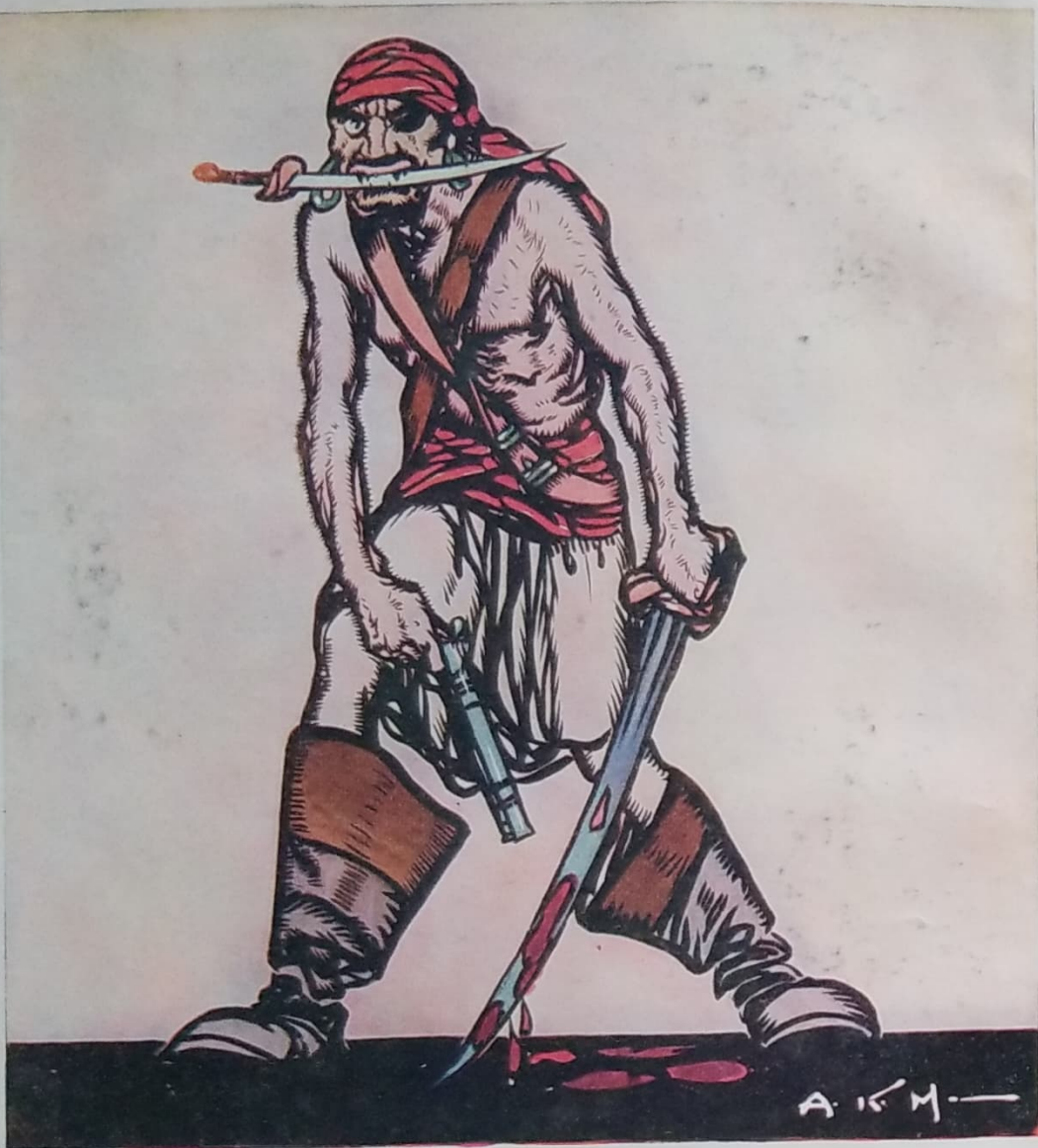
From the Books of
Dr. Harold L. Kearney

Merry Christmas to
Florence

from her
Uncle Francis

James 1927

Sails of Gold



The Individual above
Is not a person you could love
Nor wish to ask to lea.
His manners obviously are
Uncultured and peculiar,
Savouring of the Sea.



DARK deeds of Blood and Derring-Do
He has accomplished not a few
From Frisco to the Lizard.

For something less than half a groat
He'd slit—most cheerfully—your throat,
Or perforate your Gizard.

His language too is somewhat terse,—
Collogical—or even *worse*.
Embarressingly free.

Expressions that you really can't
Repeat before you're Maiden
Aunt—
Like—Blimy! Gash! and Gee!



So be advised my child in time—
(That's why we writ this artless
rhyme)—

And don't repeat his error.
Or you will find in later life
The same opinion will be rife
That *you're* a Holy Terror!



A. K. MACDONALD



Sails of Gold



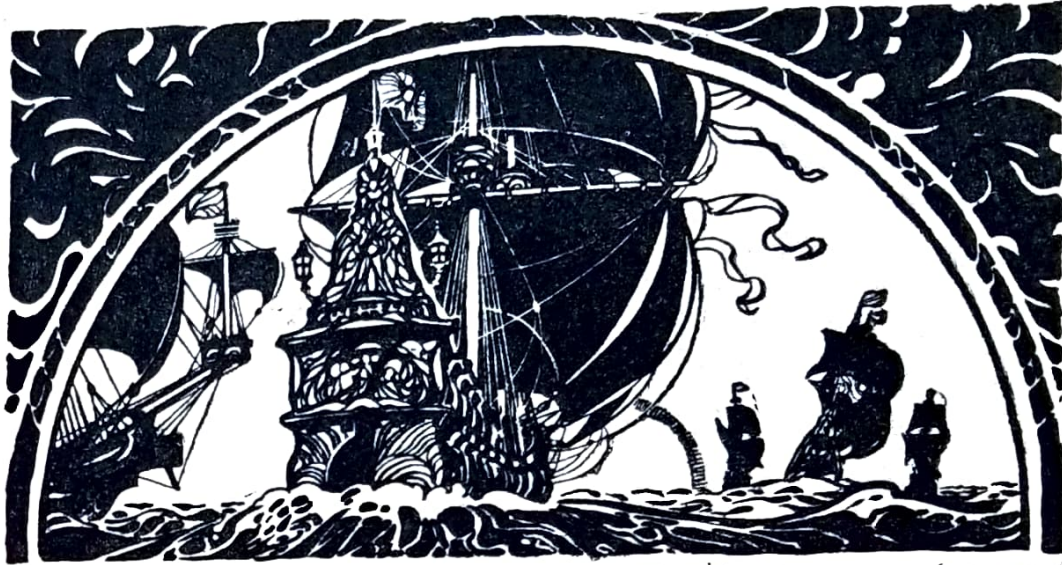
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Sails of Gold

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A Lovely Lady

IANTHE JERROLD

WHAT is your name, my lovely lady,
Blowing up through the lane so shady,
With buttercup hair and speedwell eyes
And gay green gown with its silken ties,
Lovely lady, stranger-lady?

Oh, I am the Queen of Elf-land's daughter,
I am a witch from over the water,
I am a princess under a charm,
I am a milkmaid from Flittermouse Farm!
It's all the same when the sun is shining!

A LOVELY LADY

Where are you going, my lovely lady?
Down in the woods where the boughs are shady,
Or out in the fields where the rabbits run,
And the grass is hot with the big bright sun,
Lovely lady, stranger-lady?

Oh, I am bound for the high glass mountain,
I am away to the magic fountain,
I am a-seeking the rainbow's end,
Or strolling down to the lane's first bend!
It's all the same when the sun is shining!

May I come with you, lovely lady?
Wander down through the lane so shady?
I'll bring my sword and I'll bring my bow,
A handful of cherries, and off we'll go,
Lovely lady, stranger-lady!

IANTHE FERROLD

Yes, you may come, and we'll meet some others,
Hop-o'-my-thumb and his six big brothers,
Beggar in scarlet, knight in mail,
Cowman a-carrying an old tin pail!
It's all the same when the sun is shining!





The Magic Walking Stick.

BY JOHN BUCHAN

WHEN Bill came back for long-leave that autumn half he had before him a complex programme of entertainment. Thomas, the Keeper, whom he revered more than anyone else in the world, was to take him in the afternoon to try for a duck in the big marsh called Alemoor. In the evening Hallowe'en would be celebrated in the nursery with his small brother Peter, and he would be permitted to sit up after dinner till ten o'clock. Next day, which was Sunday, would be devoted to wandering about with Peter, hearing from him all the appetising home news, and pouring into his greedy ears the gossip of the foreign world of school. On Monday morning, after a walk with the dogs, he was to motor to London, lunch with Aunt Alice, go to a conjuring show, and then, after a noble tea, return to school in time for lock-up.

It seemed to Bill all that could be desired in the way of excitement. But he did not know just how exciting that long leave was destined to be.

The first shadow of a cloud appeared after luncheon, when he had changed into knickerbockers, and Peter and the dogs were waiting at the gun-room door. Bill could not find his own proper stick. It was a long hazel staff, given him by the second stalker in a Scotch deer-forest the year before—a staff rather taller than Bill, of glossy hazel, with a shapely polished crook, and without a ferrule, like all stalking sticks. He hunted for it high and low,

but it could not be found. Without it in his hand Bill felt that an expedition lacked something vital, and he was not prepared to take instead one of his father's shooting sticks, as Groves, the butler, recommended. Nor would he accept a knubbly cane proffered by Peter. Feeling a little aggrieved and imperfectly equipped, he rushed out to join Thomas. He would cut himself an ashplant in the first hedge.

But as the two ambled down the lane which led to Alemoor, they came on an old man sitting under a hornbeam. He was a



funny little wizened old man, in a shabby long green overcoat, which had once been black, and he wore on his head the oldest and tallest and greenest bowler hat that ever graced a human head. Thomas walked on as if he did not see him, and Gyp, the spaniel, and Shawn, the Irish setter, at the sight of him dropped their tails between their legs, and remembered an engagement a long way off. But Bill stopped, for he saw that the old man had a bundle under his arm, a bundle of ancient umbrellas and queer ragged sticks.



"ONE FARTHING," SAID THE OLD MAN, AND HIS VOICE SQUEAKED
LIKE A WINTER WIND

The old man smiled at him, and he had very bright eyes. He seemed to know what was wanted, for he at once took from his bundle a stick. You would not have said that it was the kind of stick Bill was looking for. It was short, and heavy, and made of some dark foreign wood, and instead of a crook it had a handle shaped like a crescent, cut out of some white substance which was neither bone nor ivory. Yet Bill, as soon as he saw it, felt that it was the one stick in the world for him.

"How much?" he asked.

"One farthing," said the old man, and his voice squeaked like a winter wind in a chimney.

Now a farthing is not a common coin, but Bill happened to have one—a gift from Peter on his arrival that day, along with a brass cannon, five empty cartridges, a broken microscope, and a badly-printed, brightly-illustrated narrative called "Two Villains Foiled." But a farthing sounded too little, so Bill proffered one of his scanty shillings.

"I said one farthing," said the old man rather snappily.

The small coin changed hands, and the little old wizened face seemed to light up with an elfish glee. "'Tis a fine stick, young sir," he squeaked, "a noble stick, when you gets used to the ways of it."

Bill had to run to catch up Thomas, who was plodding along with the dogs, now returned from their engagement.

"That's a queer chap—the old stick-man, I mean," he said.

"I ain't seen no old man, Maaster Bill," said Thomas. "What be 'ee talkin' about?"

"The fellow back there. I bought this stick of him."

Thomas cast a puzzled glance at the stick. "That be a craafy stick, Maaster Bill——" but he said no more, for Bill had shaken it playfully at the dogs. As soon as they saw it they set off to keep another engagement—this time, apparently, with a hare—and Thomas was yelling and whistling for ten minutes before he brought them to heel.

It was a soft grey afternoon, and Bill was stationed beside one of the deep dykes in the moor, well in cover of a thorn bush, while

THE MAGIC WALKING STICK

Thomas and the dogs went off on a long circuit to show themselves beyond the big mere, so that the duck might move in Bill's direction. It was rather cold, and very wet underfoot, for a lot of rain had fallen in the past week, and the mere, which was usually only a sedgy pond, had now grown to a great expanse of shallow flood-water. Bill began his vigil in high excitement. He drove his new stick into the ground, and used the handle as a seat, while he rested his gun in the orthodox way in the crook of his arm. It was a double-barrelled, sixteen bore, and Bill knew that he would be lucky if he got a duck with it; but a duck was to him a bird of mystery, true wild game, and he preferred the chance of one to the certainty of many rabbits.

The minutes passed, the grey afternoon sky darkened towards twilight, but no duck came. Bill saw a wedge of geese high up in the sky and longed to salute them; also he heard snipe, but could not locate them in the dim weather. Far away he thought he detected the purring noise which Thomas made to stir the duck, but no overhead beat of wings followed. Soon the mood of eager anticipation died away, and he grew bored and rather despondent. He scrambled up the bank of the dyke and strained his eyes over the moor between the bare boughs of the thorn. He thought he saw duck moving—yes, he was certain of it—they were coming from the direction of Thomas and the dogs. It was perfectly clear what was happening. There was far too much water on the moor, and the birds, instead of fighting across the mere to the boundary slopes, were simply settling on the flood. From the misty grey water came the rumour of many wildfowl.

Bill came back to his wet stand grievously disappointed. He did not dare to leave it in case a flight did appear, but he had lost all hope. He tried to warm his feet by moving them up and down in the squelchy turf. His gun was now under his arm, and he was fiddling idly with the handle of the stick which was still embedded in earth. He made it revolve, and as it turned he said aloud: "I wish I was in the middle of the big flood."

Then a remarkable thing happened. Bill was not conscious of any movement, but suddenly his surroundings were completely changed. He had still his gun under his left arm and the stick in his right hand, but instead of standing on wet turf he was up to the waist in water. . . . And all around him were duck—shovellers, pintail, mallard, teal, widgeon, pochard, tufted—and bigger things that might be geese—swimming or diving or just alighting from the air. In a second Bill realised that his wish had been granted. He was in the very middle of the flood-water.

He got a right and left at mallards, missing with his first barrel. Then the birds rose in alarm, and he shoved in fresh cartridges and fired wildly into the brown. His next two shots were at longer range, but he was certain that he had hit something. And then the duck vanished in the brume, and he was left alone with the grey waters running out to the dimness.

He lifted up his voice and shouted wildly for Thomas and the dogs, and looked about him to retrieve what he had shot. He had got two anyhow—a mallard drake and a young teal, and he collected them. Presently he heard whistling and splashing, and Gyp the spaniel appeared half swimming, half wading. Gyp picked up a second mallard, and Bill left it at that. He thought he knew roughly where the deeper mere lay so as to avoid it, and with his three duck he started for where he believed Thomas to be. The water was often up to his armpits and once he was soused over his head, and it was a very wet, breathless and excited boy that presently confronted the astounded keeper.

“Where in goodness ha’ ye been, Maaster Bill? Them ducks was tigglin’ out to the deep water and I was feared ye wouldn’t get a shot. Three on ’em, no less! My word, ye ’ave poonished ’em.”

“I was in the deep water,” said Bill, but he explained no more, for it had just occurred to him that he couldn’t. It was a boy not less puzzled than triumphant that returned to show his bag to his family, and at dinner he was so abstracted that his mother thought he was ill and sent him early to bed. Bill made no complaint, for he wanted to be alone to think things out.

THE MAGIC WALKING STICK

It was plain that a miracle had happened, and it must be connected with the stick. He had wished himself in the middle of the flood-water—he remembered that clearly—and at the time he had been doing something to the stick. What was it? It had been stuck in the ground, and he had been playing with the handle. Yes, he had it. He had been turning it round when he uttered the wish. Bill's mind was better stored with fairy tales than with Latin and Greek, and he remembered many precedents. The stick was in the rack in the hall, and he had half a mind to slip downstairs and see if he could repeat the performance. But he reflected that he might be observed, and that this was a business demanding profound secrecy. So he resolutely composed himself to sleep. He had been allowed for a treat to have his old bed in the night-nursery, next to Peter, and he realised that he must be up bright and early to frustrate that alert young inquirer.

He woke before dawn, and at once put on socks and fives-shoes and a dressing-gown, and tiptoed downstairs. He heard a housemaid moving in the direction of the dining-room, and Groves opening the library shutters, but the hall was deserted. He groped in the rack and found the stick, struggled with the key of the garden door, and emerged into the foggy winter half-light. It was very cold, as he padded down the lawn to a retired half-moon of shrubbery beside the pond, and his shoes were soon soaked with hoar-frost. He shivered and drew his dressing-gown around him, but he had decided what to do. In this kind of weather he wished to be warm. He planted his stick in the turf.

"I want to be on the beach in the Solomon Islands," said Bill, and three times twisted the handle.

In a second his eyes seemed to dazzle with excess of light and something beat on his body like a blast from an open furnace. . . . He was standing on an expanse of blinding white sand at which a lazy blue sea was licking. Behind him at a distance of



DARK-SKINNED MEN ARMED WITH SPEARS

THE MAGIC WALKING STICK

perhaps two hundred yards was a belt of high green forest, out of which stuck a tall crest of palms. A hot wind was blowing and tossing the tree-tops, but it only crisped the sea.

Bill gasped with joy to find his dream realised. He was in the far Pacific where he had always longed to be. . . . But he was very hot, and could not endure the weight of winter pyjamas and winter dressing-gown. Also he longed to bathe in those inviting waters. So he shed everything and hopped gaily down to the tide's edge, leaving the stick still upright in the sand.

The sea was as delicious as it looked, but Bill, though a good swimmer, kept near the edge for fear of sharks. He wallowed and splashed, with the fresh salt smell which he loved in his nostrils. Minutes passed rapidly, and he was just on the point of striking out for a little reef, when he cast a glance towards the shore. . . .

At the edge of the forest stood men—dark-skinned men, armed with spears.

Bill scrambled to his feet with a fluttering heart, and as he rose the men moved forward. He was, perhaps, fifty yards from the stick, which cast its long morning shadow on the sand, and they were two hundred yards on the farther side. At all costs he must get there first. He sprang out of the sea, and as he ran he saw to his horror that the men ran also—ran in great bounds—shouting and brandishing their spears.

Those fifty yards seemed miles, but Bill won the race. No time to put on his clothes. He seized his dressing-gown with one hand and the stick with the other, and as he twirled the handle a spear whizzed by his ear. "I want to be home," he gasped, and the next second he stood naked between the shrubbery and the pond, clutching his dressing-gown. The Solomon Islands had got his fives-shoes and his pyjamas.

The cold of a November morning brought him quickly to his senses. He clothed his shivering body in his dressing-gown and ran by devious paths to the house. Happily the gun-room door was unlocked, and he was able to ascend by way of empty passages

and back-stairs to the nursery floor. He did not, however, escape the eagle eye of Elsie, the nurse, who read a commination service over a boy who went out of doors imperfectly clad on such a morning. She prophesied pneumonia, and plumped him into a hot bath.

Bill applied his tongue to the back of his hand. Yes. It tasted salt, and the salt smell was still in his nose. It had not been a dream. . . . He hugged himself in the bath and made strange gurgling sounds of joy. Life had suddenly opened up for him in dazzling vistas of adventure.

His conduct in church that morning was exemplary, for while Peter at his side had his usual Sunday attack of St. Vitus's Dance, Bill sat motionless as a mummy. On the way home his mother commented on it and observed that Lower Chapel seemed to have taught him how to behave. But his thoughts during the service had not been devotional. The stick lay beside him on the floor, and for a moment he had a wild notion of twisting it during the Litany and disappearing for a few minutes to Kamschatka. Then prudence supervened. He must go very cautiously in this business, and court no questions. That afternoon he and Peter would seek a secluded spot and make experiments. He would take the stick back to school and hide it in his room—he had a qualm when he thought what a "floater" it would be if a lower boy appeared with it in public! For him no more hours of boredom. School would no longer be a place of exile, but a rapturous holiday. He would slip home now and then and see what was happening—he would go often to Glenmore—he would visit any spot in the globe which took his fancy. His imagination reeled at the prospect, and he cloaked his chortles of delight in a fervent Amen.

At luncheon it was decided that Peter and he should go for a walk together, and should join the others at a place called the Roman Camp. "Let the boys have a chance of being alone," his father

THE MAGIC WALKING STICK

had said. This exactly suited Bill's book, and as they left the dining-room he clutched his small brother. "Shrimp," he said in his ear, "You're going to have the afternoon of your life."

It was a mild, grey day, with the leafless woods and the brown ploughlands lit by a pale November sun. Peter, as he trotted beside him, jerked out breathless inquiries about what Bill proposed to do, and was told to wait and see.

Arrived at a clump of beeches which promised privacy, Bill first swore his brother to secrecy by the most awful oaths which he could imagine.

"Put your arm round my waist and hang on to my belt," he told him. "I'm going to take you to have a look at Glenmore."

"Don't be silly," said Peter. "That only happens in Summer, and we haven't packed yet."

"Shut up and hold tight," said Bill as he twirled the stick and spoke the necessary words. . . .

The boys were looking not at the smooth boles of beeches, but at a little coppice of rowans and birches above the narrow glen of the hill burn. It was Glenmore in very truth. There was the strip of mossy lawn, the white-washed gable end of the lodge; there to the left beside the walled garden was the smoking chimney of the keeper's cottage; there beyond the trees was the long lift of brown moorland and the blue top of Stob Ghabhar. To the boys Glenmore was the true home of the soul, but they had seen it only in the glory of late summer and early autumn. In its winter dress it seemed for a moment strange. Then the sight of an old collie waddling across the lawn gave the connecting link.

"There's Wattie," Peter gasped, and lifted up his voice in an excited summons. His brother promptly scragged him.

"Don't be an ass, Shrimp," he said fiercely. "This is a secret, you fathead. This is magic. Nobody must know we are here. Come on and explore."

For an hour—it must have been an hour, Bill calculated afterwards, but it seemed like ten minutes—the two visited their

favourite haunts. They found the robbers' cave in the glen where a raven nested, and the pool where Bill had caught his first pound trout, and the stretch in the river where their father that year had had the thirty pound salmon. There were no blaeberrys or crowberries in the woods, but there were many woodcock, and Bill had a shot with his catapult at a wicked old blackcock on a peat-stack. Also they waylaid Wattie, the collie, and induced him to make a third in the party. All their motions were as stealthy as an Indian's, and the climax of the adventure was reached when they climbed the garden wall and looked in at the window of the keeper's cottage.

Tea was laid before a bright peat fire in the parlour, so Mrs. Macrae must be expecting company. It looked a very good tea, for there were scones and pancakes, and shortbread and currant-loaf and heather honey. Both boys felt suddenly famished at the sight.

"Mrs. Macrae always gives me a scone and honey," Peter bleated. "I'm hungry. I want one."

So did Bill. His soul longed for food, but he kept hold of his prudence.

"We daren't show ourselves," he whispered. "But, perhaps, we might pinch a scone. It wouldn't be stealing, for if Mrs. Macrae saw us she would say 'Come awa in, laddies, and get a jeely piece.' I'll give you a back, Shrimp, and in you get."

The window was open, and Peter was hoisted through, falling with a bang on a patch-work rug. But he never reached the table, for at that moment the parlour door opened and someone entered. After that things happened fast. Peter, urged by Bill's anguished whisper, turned back to the window, and was hauled through by the scruff of the neck. A woman's voice was heard crying, "Mercy on us, it's the bairns," as the culprits darted to the shelter of the gooseberry bushes.

Bill realised that there was no safety in the garden, so he dragged Peter over the wall by the way they had come, thereby

THE MAGIC WALKING STICK

seriously damaging a pear tree. But they had been observed, and as they scrambled out of a rose-bed, they heard cries and saw Mrs. Macrae appearing round the end of the wall, having come through the stable yard. Also a figure, which looked like Angus, the river gillie, was running from the same direction.

There was nothing for it but to go. Bill seized Peter with one hand and the stick with the other, and spoke the words, with Angus not six yards away. . . . As he looked once more at the familiar beech boles, his ears were still full of the cries of an excited woman and the frenzied howling of Wattie, the dog.

The two boys, very warm and flustered and rather scratched about the hands and legs, confronted their father and mother and their sister, Barbara, who was sixteen and very proud.

"Hullo, hullo," they heard their father say. "I thought you'd be hiding somewhere hereabouts. You young rascals know how to take cover, for you seemed to spring out of the ground. You look as if you'd been playing football. Better walk home with us and cool down. . . . Bless my soul, Peter, what's that you've got? It's bog myrtle! Where on earth did you find it? I've never seen it before in Oxfordshire."

Then Barbara raised a ladylike voice. "Oh, Mummy, look at the mess they've made of themselves. They've been among the brambles, for Peter has two holes in his stockings. Just look at Bill's hands!" And she wrinkled her finical nose, and sniffed.

Bill kept a diplomatic silence, and Peter, usually garrulous, did the same, for his small wrist was in his brother's savage clutch.

.

That night, before Peter went to bed, he was compelled once more to swear solemn oaths, and Bill was so abstracted that his mother thought that he was sickening for some fell disease. He lay long awake, planning out the best way to use his marvellous new possession. His thoughts were still on the subject next morning, and to his family's amazement he made no protest when, to suit his

mother's convenience, it was decided to start for London soon after breakfast, and the walk with the dogs was cancelled. He departed in high spirits, most unlike his usual leave-takings, and his last words to Peter were fierce exhortations to secrecy.

All the way to London he was in a happy dream, and at luncheon he was so urbane that Aunt Alice, who had strong and unorthodox views about education, announced that in Bill's case, at any rate, the public school system seemed to answer, and gave him double her customary tip.

Then came the conjuring show at the Grafton Hall. Bill in the past had had an inordinate appetite for such entertainments, and even in his new ecstasy he looked forward to this one. But at the door of the hall he had a shock. Hitherto he had kept close to his stick, but it was now necessary to give it up and receive a metal check for it. To his mother's surprise he protested hotly. "It won't do any harm," he pleaded. "It will stay beside me under the seat." But the rule was inexorable and he had to surrender it. "Don't be afraid, darling," his mother told him. "That funny new stick of yours won't be lost. The check is a receipt for it, and they are very careful."

The show was not up to his expectations. What were all these disappearing donkeys and vanishing ladies compared to the performances he had lately staged? Bill was puffed up with a great pride. With the help of his stick he could make rings round this trumpery cleverness. He was the true magician. . . . He wished that the thing would end that he might feel the precious stick again in his hand.

At the counter there was no sign of the man who had given him the check. Instead there was a youth who seemed to be new to the business, and who was very slow in returning the sticks and umbrellas. When it came to Bill's turn he was extra slow, and presently announced that he could find no Number 229.

Bill's mother, seeing his distress, intervened, and sent the wretched youth to look again, while other people were kept

THE MAGIC WALKING STICK

waiting, but he came back with the same story. There was no duplicate Number 229, or any article to correspond to the check. After that he had to be allowed to attend to the others, and Bill, almost in tears, waited hysterically till the crowd had gone. Then there was a thorough search, and Bill and his mother were allowed to go behind the counter. But no Number 229 could be found, and there were no sticks left, only three umbrellas.

Bill was now patently in tears.

"Never mind, darling," his mother said, "we must be off now, or you will be late for lock-up. I promise that your father will come here to-morrow and clear up the whole business. Never fear—the stick will be found."

But it is still lost.

When Bill's father went there next day, and cross-examined the wretched youth—for he had once been a barrister—he extracted a curious story. If the walking-stick was lost, so also was the keeper of the walking-sticks, for the youth was only an assistant. The keeper—his name was Jukes and he lived in Hammersmith—had not been seen since yesterday afternoon during the performance, and Mrs. Jukes had come round and made a scene last night, and that morning the police had been informed. Mr. Jukes, it appeared, was not a very pleasant character, and he had had too much beer at luncheon. When the audience had all gone in, he had expressed to his assistant his satiety of life. The youth's testimony ran as follows: "Mr. Jukes, 'e was wavin' his arm something chronic and carryin' on about 'ow this was no billet for a man like 'im. He picks up a stick, and I thought he was goin' to 'it me. 'Percy, me lad,' says 'e, 'I'm fed up—fed up to the back teeth.' He starts twisting the stick, and says 'e 'I wish to 'eaven I was out of 'ere.' After that I must 'ave come over faint, for when I looks again, 'e 'ad 'opped it."

Mr. Jukes' case is still a puzzle to Mrs. Jukes and the police, but Bill understands only too clearly what happened. Mr. Jukes

and the stick have gone "out of 'ere," and where that may be neither Bill nor I can guess.

But he still lives in hope, and he wants me to broadcast this story in case the stick may have come back to earth. So let every boy and girl keep a sharp eye on shops where sticks are sold. The magic walking-stick is not quite four feet long, and about one inch and a quarter thick. It is made of a heavy dark-red wood, rather like the West Indian purpleheart. Its handle is in the shape of a crescent with the horns uppermost, made of some white substance which is neither bone nor ivory. If anyone sees such a stick, then Bill will give all his worldly wealth for news of it.

Failing that, he would like information about the man who sold it to him. He is very old, small and wizened, but his eyes are the brightest you ever saw in a human head. He wears a shabby, greeny-black overcoat which reaches down to his heels, and a tall, greeny-black bowler hat. It is possible that the stick may have returned to him. So if you meet anyone like him, look sharply at his bundle, and if it is there and he is willing to sell, *buy it—buy it—buy it*, or you will regret it all your days. For this purpose it is wiser always to have a farthing in your pocket, for he won't give change.



In the Aquarium at the Zoo

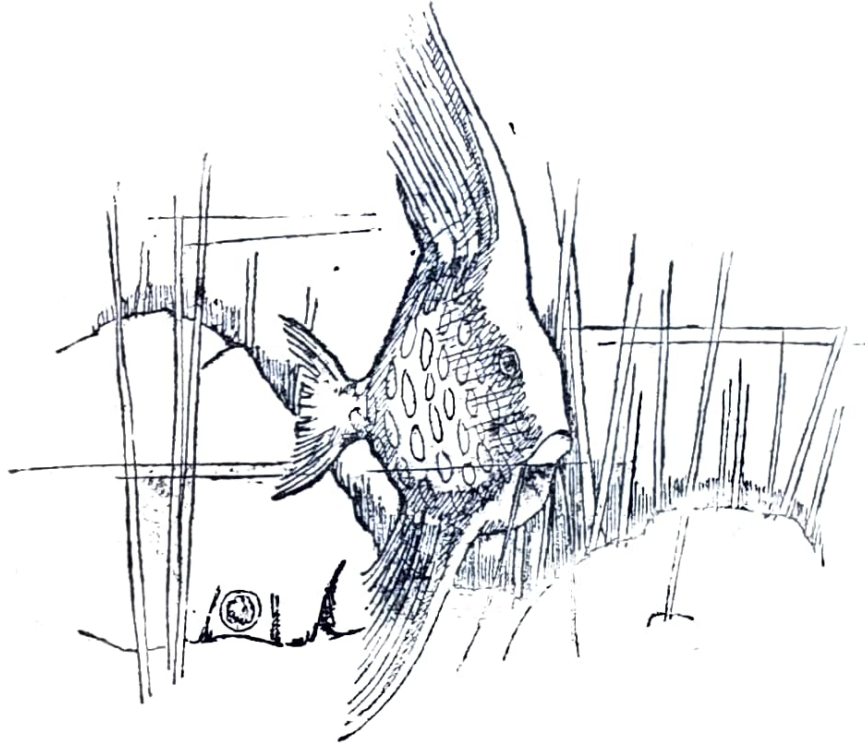
BY LAURENCE BINYON

Look, toward us how the fishes glide
From gloom, and linger, curious-eyed!
Do scaly mermaids, under trees
Of coral, see such sights as these—
Sights customary as to us
A snorting scarlet motor-bus—
When waking from an idle doze?
For some are rosier than a rose,
And others shimmer, all of gold,
And some glow red as when you hold
Your fingers up against the light;
And some are dim, and some are bright,
Some striped with rainbow-coloured bars.
The bubbles rise like little stars
Around them. Here's a new-comer,
With filmy fins like gossamer,
Blue, oh! such blue as never grew
In flowers on earth; a magic blue!
And some go floating to and fro,
Large, like policemen, grand and slow,
While smaller fry with fussy haste,
As if a vanished crumb they chased,
Flit in and out among them, and
Below, as pale as the pale sand
They sleep in, flat and ghost-like things
Release themselves with shudderings
And rise, and coast around, and seem
Astonished, as if in a dream;
But on dark rock the cold eels keep
Their pipy lengths laid out in sleep.

And these, that stay so full in view
With eyes so fixed on me and you,

LAURENCE BINYON

Do they, I wonder, as they gaze
Remark on our queer human ways:
“Why do they cluster round and stare
With so impertinent an air?
Why are they all so much too large
And have such cumbrous limbs in charge?
Why hide themselves in flapping things
That will not even serve for wings?”

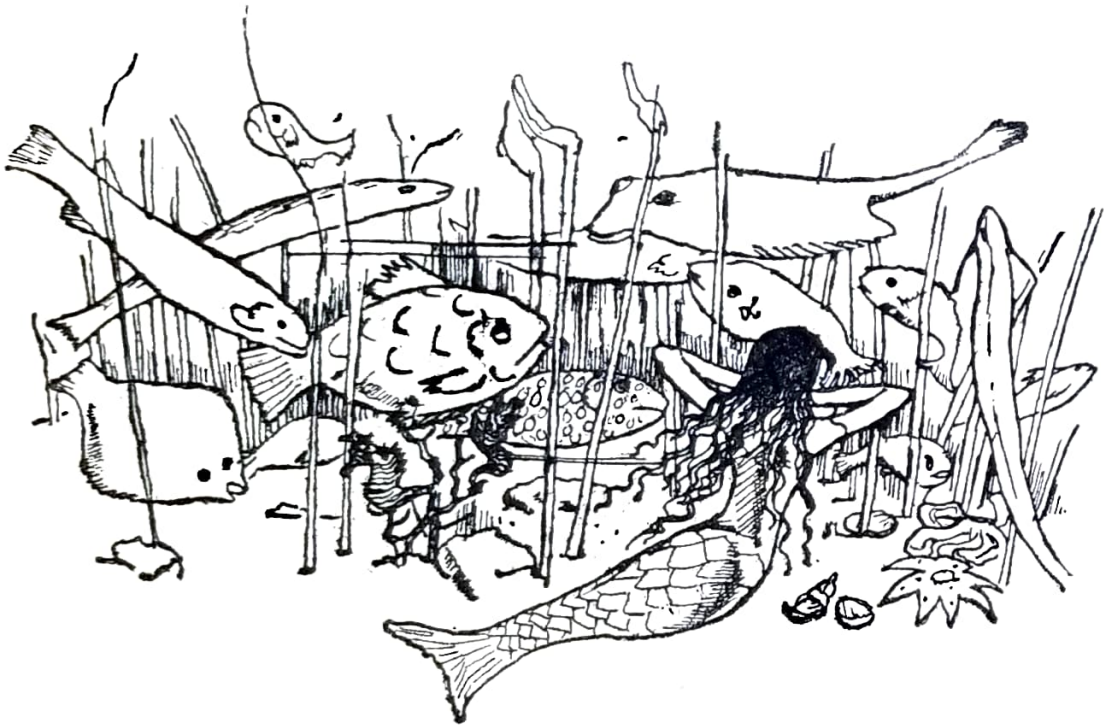


How envious they must feel inside
To see us delicately glide!
Our bodies are one wavy bend
That we can any-whither send.
They cannot get to where they wish
Just in a flicker, like a fish.
Enclosed within ourselves, so neat,
So decent, we've no need of feet
To drag after each other, oh,
How crude, how ponderous, how slow!

IN THE AQUARIUM AT THE ZOO

These legs, these arms, this clumsy gait—
How altogether out-of-date!”

Do they in such superior strain
Convey their thoughts from brain to brain
By their dumb looks? Or when they see
Lips open in a smile of glee,
Are they, too, envious for a while
Because they cannot laugh or smile,



And if they feel inclined to grin
Can only wink a wavy fin?
Sometimes they peer amazed at boys
And girls, who pass with cheerful noise,
Sometimes lie mute beneath the spells
Of pairs of shining spectacles,
And think they're strayed into a den
Of Curious Old Gentlemen;

LAURENCE BINYON

But when the Man of Science comes
With learning in his very thumbs
(So wise in fishes, he is able
To tell them all without a label),
O then a shiver thrills them through,
So awed, they don't know what to do:
They feel that every bone they own
Inside them's counted, named and known;
Transparent and exposed they feel—
They'd kneel to him, if they could kneel—
So dart off in delicious fear
And in an instant disappear,
Just as you might, if on a walk,
Or in the middle of a talk,
You saw severely stare at you
(Strayed from his paddock in the Zoo),
A huge and meditative Gnu.

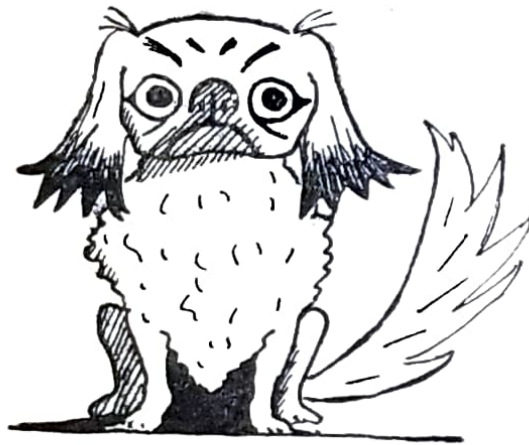


What Happened to Oz

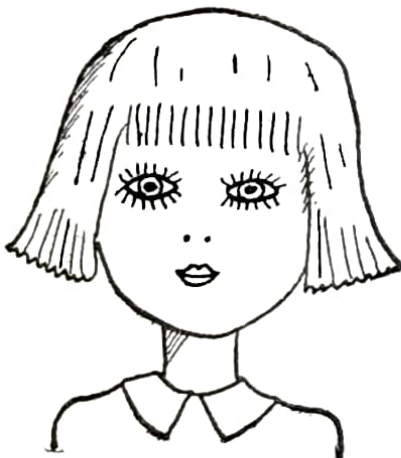
BY DENIS MACKAIL

(With pictures by the same clever gentleman)

ONCE upon a time there was a very proud Pekingese, and his name was Ozymandias the Second, but he was usually called Ozzy for short, or sometimes simply Oz. Here he is:—



He lived with a family consisting of a father and mother, and two little girls whose names I was never told. Here they are:—



DENIS MACKAIL

One day the elder little girl had a birthday. She was six years old, and here is her cake, which was made at home:—

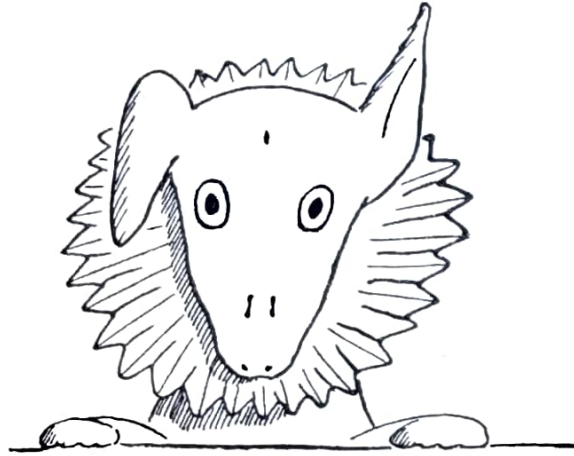


She asked all her friends to a party, and her mother said: "I shall invite Punch and Judy." So she did, and they came. And with them there came kind Mr. Buggins, who helped them to act. Here he is:—

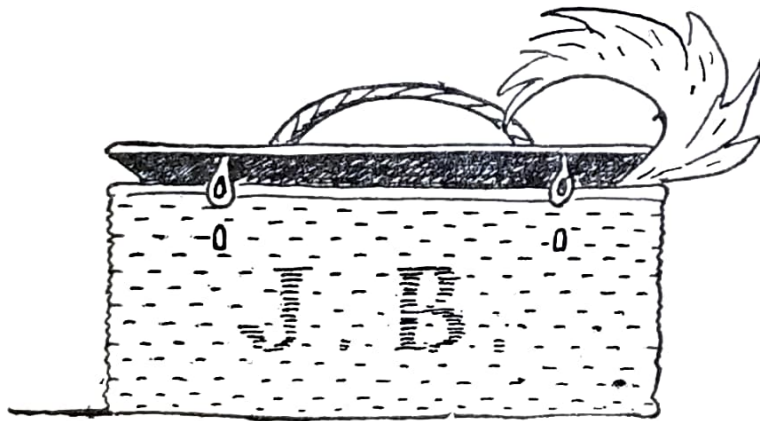


WHAT HAPPENED TO OZ

And there also arrived a very ordinary dog called Toby, who travelled to parties in a small basket, which he always left in the kitchen. This is Toby:—

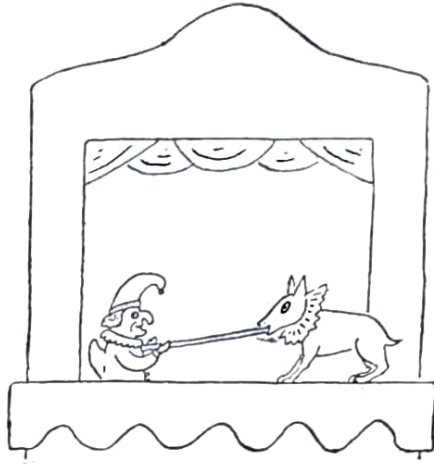


When the two dogs met, Toby wagged his tail, but Ozyman-dias turned up his nose. "I am much too proud," he said, "ever to speak to actors. I am going downstairs to see my friend the cook." And he went downstairs, and the cook gave him a sugar cake, and a saucer of milk; and then he saw Toby's basket, and he sniffed at it, and presently climbed into it, and found it very comfortable, and went to sleep.



DENIS MACKAIL

Meanwhile Punch and Judy acted a very amusing play upstairs, and all the children laughed a great deal; especially when Punch hit the other actors and hurt them. And Toby acted very well, too.



And when it was all over, the little girl's mother said: "Thank you very much, kind Mr. Buggins. Now, won't you go downstairs and have a nice cup of tea?"

"Thank you, lady," said Mr. Buggins; "but I am afraid I have to go on to another party."

"What a hard life you lead," said the little girl's mother. "But at least you will let my cook give your little dog a saucer of milk?"

"Thank you, lady," said Mr. Buggins. "That is indeed good of you."

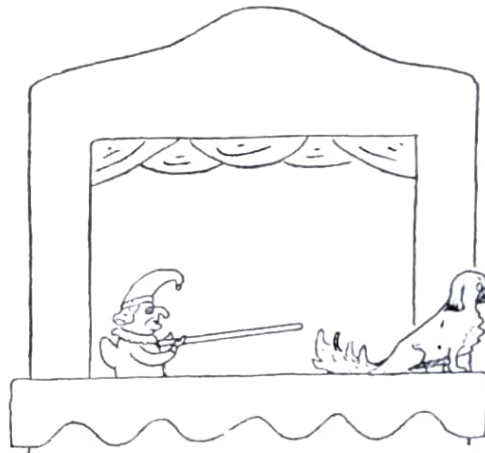
So Toby was taken downstairs, and the cook gave him a saucer of milk and a sugar cake as well; and while his master was packing up the other actors in a box, and talking to the cook, he walked round behind the gas-cooker, and curled himself up, and fell fast asleep. And Mr. Buggins picked up his basket, and it felt heavy

WHAT HAPPENED TO OZ

and full of dog, and he set off for the next party with no idea of what had happened. And Ozymandias dreamt that he was an emperor being carried along by slaves in a golden palanquin.

Well, when kind Mr. Buggins arrived at the second party, and the other children all came trooping into the drawing-room to see the play, he opened the basket, and was exceedingly surprised. And Ozymandias woke up, and was exceedingly surprised also. But he was far, far too proud to say so. He just stared rudely at Mr. Buggins, and the kind showman—who didn't know what else to do—lifted him up on to the shelf of the theatre, and tried to make him act. "For," he said, "whatever accident may have happened, I must never disappoint the little ones."

And Ozymandias acted very badly indeed.



And just as the play was over, there was a loud knock on the front door, and there was Ozymandias's friend the cook, with Toby under her arm; for he, also, had woken up, and had come out from behind the gas-cooker, and she had been exceedingly surprised.

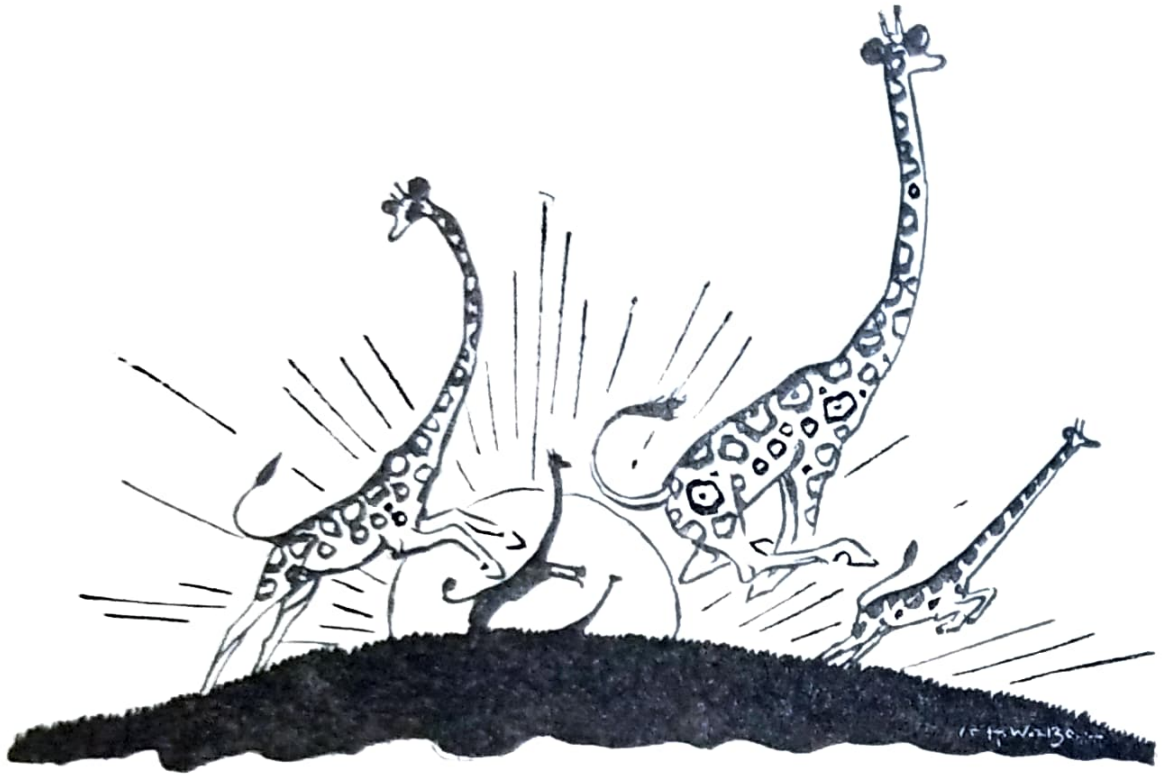
DENIS MACKAIL

So Ozymandias was taken home again, and Toby returned to his old profession. But Ozzy (or Oz) was prouder than ever after his extraordinary adventure.

“Yes,” he would say to his friends, “you may not know it, but I had the chief part in a play once. In fact, I could easily have made a fortune by going on the stage, only I didn’t think my family would care about it.”

And when he is asleep in his own basket, he often dreams that he is acting a part called Hamlet.





The Giraffe

BY GEOFFREY DEARMER

HIDE of a leopard and hide of a deer
And eyes of a baby calf,
Sombre and large and crystal clear,
And a comical back that is almost sheer
Has the absurd giraffe.

A crane all covered with hide and hair
Is the aslant giraffe,
So cleverly mottled with many a square
That even the Jungle is unaware
Whether a pair or a herd are there,
Or possibly one giraffe,
Or possibly only half.



If you saw him stoop astraddle and drink
He would certainly make you laugh,
He would certainly make you laugh, I think,
With his head right down on the water's brink,
Would the invert giraffe,
The comical, knock-kneed, angular, crock-kneed,
Very-jerry-built giraffe.



HE YEARNED FOR THE HIGHER SHOOTS

GEOFFREY DEARMER

There's more than a grain of common sense
And a husky lot of chaff
In the many and various arguments
About the first giraffe,
The first and worst giraffe:
Whether he grew a neck because
He yearned for the higher shoots
Out of the reach of all and each
Of the ruminating brutes;
Or whether he got to the shoots because
His neck was long, if long it was,
Is the cause of many disputes
Over the ladder without any rungs,
The stopper-like mouth and the longest of tongues
Of the rum and dumb giraffe,
The how-did-you-come giraffe,
The brown equatorial, semi-arboreal
Head-in-the-air giraffe.





Agin-court.

BY H. BELLOC

THERE was fought on Friday, the 25th October, 1415, one of the most extraordinary actions in history. It is also one of the most glorious dates for England. It is called the Battle of Agincourt in English, but the true French name of the village after which it takes its name is Azincourt, a little place about thirty miles south of Calais.

This is what led up to the battle.

In 1399, sixteen years before Agincourt was fought, Richard II was King of England. His first cousin, Henry, Duke of Lancaster, though he was not next heir to the throne, had long conspired against him, was exiled, returned, fought against the true king, captured him, made himself king under the title of Henry IV, and secretly murdered Richard. So you see that Henry IV was not secure on the throne, since people hated him for a usurper and a murderer. When rulers are in that situation, they like to make those whom they govern forget their crimes by some patriotic or glorious act, and the best way is successful foreign war. But Henry IV could not make a foreign war himself (though he thought

AGINCOURT

of doing so), for there was too much rebellion against him, and also he fell ill and died prematurely in 1413 (he was always in bad health; but people then put down his nervous illness and death to his wrong-doing). He left a very intelligent and popular son, under the title of Henry V. He was quite a young man, and, though no one knew it at the time, was to turn out a genius at warfare.

This young man, Henry V, had a fine occasion for doing what his father had not been able to do. There had long been a fairly good claim on the part of the Kings of England to hold certain provinces in France under the French King, and get revenue from them. That was why Edward III had fought in France a lifetime before. When young Henry V came to the throne, there was a violent quarrel dividing all France into two camps. The king was a madman, imbecile; his heir was only a young boy, and a very foolish one; and his cousin, the great Duke of Burgundy, who ruled Eastern France like an independent kingdom, was ready for civil war. Very violent quarrels and murders had exasperated all this. Moreover, Christendom itself was divided by a deep religious quarrel, so that people who wanted to make war could be fairly safe from interference. Henry V challenged the French King, demanding the old rights of the English Kings in France, after he had himself been King less than two years. The French Court was frightened, because it was under the threat of the Duke of Burgundy; but it thought it could stand up to Henry V if it came to fighting, because the Duke of Burgundy had just promised not to side with the English. But, unknown to the French Court, the Duke of Burgundy had made a private treaty with the English. He did not appear in the field to help the English, but he prevented his people from joining the rest of the French to defend their country.

Young Henry V set out in the summer of 1415 to invade France.

Now the strange thing is—though the glory of the Battle of

Agincourt has made people forget it—that the campaign was rather badly planned, and looked till the very end like a failure. To begin with, Henry set out too late. It may not have been his fault, for there were conspiracies against him, and the French tried to delay him by negotiation. But his fleet did not sail (from Southampton and Portsmouth) until Sunday, the 11th of August, in the small hours, just before dawn, upon the ebb; and he did not land his troops on the mouth of the Seine (near where Havre is to-day) until the 13th, the Tuesday; so he had not much chance of fine weather before the autumn rains and cold would come on.

Next, he was held up longer than he thought he would be besieging the town of Harfleur. It was important to take this town (which was then the port at the mouth of the Seine—not having yet silted up)—so that he might have a permanent landing-place when he should come again. But though the town had no garrison of soldiers (except 300 odd men thrown in suddenly) Henry had not allowed for the artificial flooding of the fields all around, and he did not take the little place until the 22nd September—very late in the fighting season of those times.

He had a good army, though it was small; plenty of guns, two thousand five hundred mounted men at arms, eight thousand archers, more than half of whom were mounted; and a very large number of gunners and mechanics for his siege train—something like a thousand. Nevertheless, he was later than he thought he would be in taking the place. And when it did surrender he had lost three men out of ten by sickness.

He garrisoned Harfleur, and then there was nothing for it so late in the season but to pelt back as quickly as he could for Calais, which his great-grandfather had conquered, and which was a gate belonging to England opening into France. He might, of course, have sailed straight back from Harfleur, leaving that town held for him till he should come again; but he was afraid this would make him look weak, and his expedition on the whole a failure. It would have been dangerous to suffer this moral loss in the face of the

AGINCOURT

French, who might then pluck up heart, and rally, in spite of their bitter faction-fights between themselves.

He could not set out cross-country for Calais at once, he had to set about the provisioning and ordering of Harfleur and its defences. His little column only marched off eastward on Wednesday, October 9th. The weather had already come on very rainy, and conditions were disheartening; but he had his force well in hand and knew that he could get good work out of it.

It is important to know what this small body was like, for it did great things. In numbers it was about six thousand; rather under a thousand were men at arms, that is fully equipped mounted men in armour; and the rest expert archers, the best troops of their time, and armed with and handling a weapon which, when it could get a chance of being used (and it required special conditions) was the most effective of its day. Still more remarkable than the composition of this small force was its training, as we shall see when we come to the extraordinary rapidity of its march.

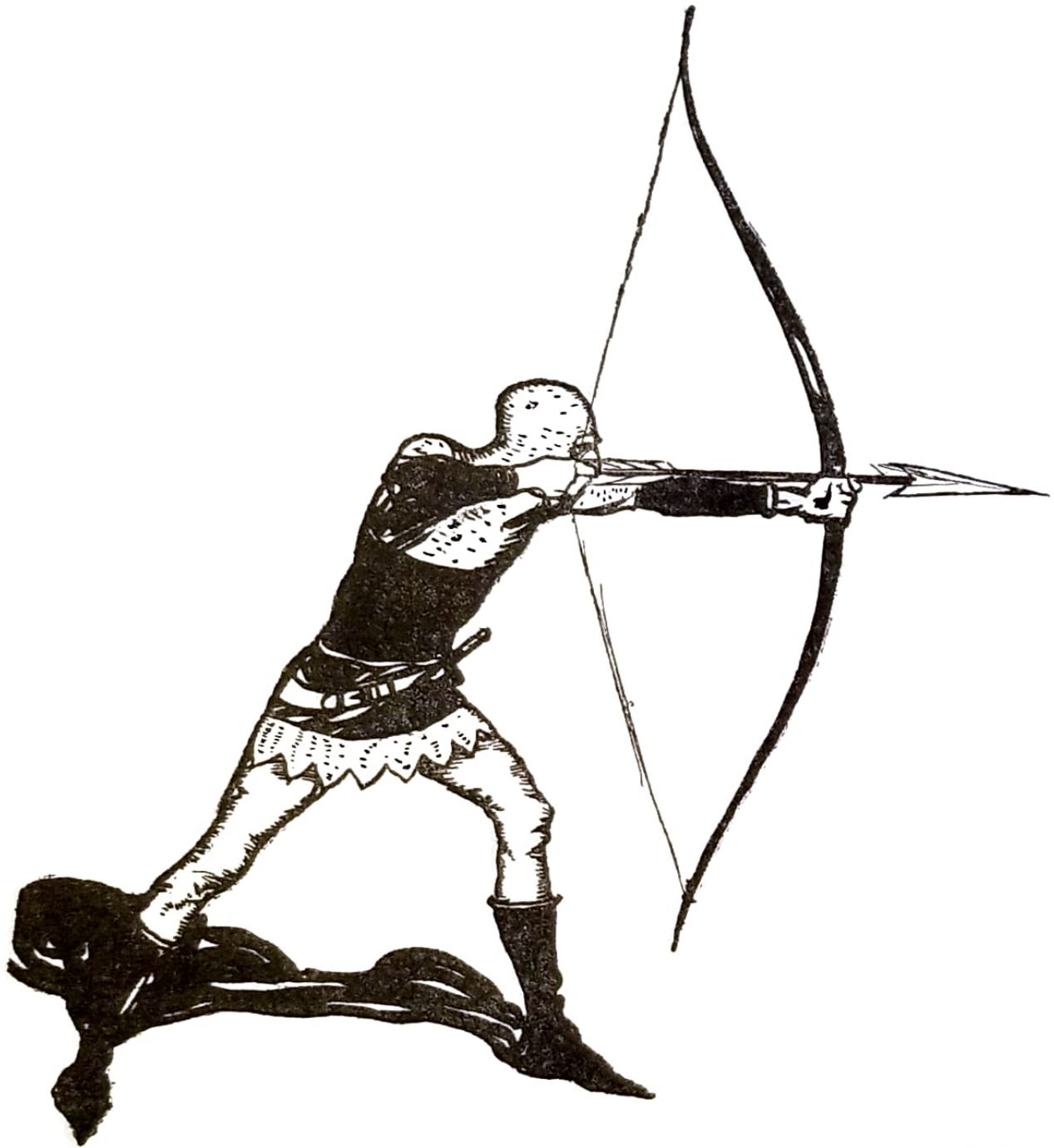
Between the mouth of the Seine at Harfleur, from which Henry started, and Calais, there runs the river Somme. It is a most formidable barrier, for it has a valley full of marshes, and is impossible to cross except by a few artificial causeways. These marshes on either side of the Somme go from the sea right up to the inland country, a hundred miles away. It is this difficulty in crossing the Somme valley which has played so great a part over and over again in warfare. It nearly destroyed Edward III, and it nearly lost us the Great War—when the Germans broke through in front of St. Quentin, in 1918, separated the British Army from the French, and all but drove the Allies back on to this river.

The distance from Harfleur to this first obstacle is just on ninety miles. So excellent was the marching of Henry's six thousand, that they covered it in just over four days. It was one of the most rapid marches in history. But they were, even so, not quick enough. The lowest causeway (a hardened ford on the shortest line to Calais) was held by the French on the far side.

Henry turned up stream, and by a continuation of this wonderfully rapid progress, managed to get across at last; but only after the most dangerous delay. For his troops were marching very light, with only eight days' provisions. All the way up the Somme valley as they hurried on, they found the few crossings held by the enemy. But at last, with their splendid marching, they outran the French effort, and when they got to a little place called Voyennes, on the upper reaches of the Somme, where it is no more than a small stream, though still marshy, they found a causeway unguarded. It is the place where an old Roman road crosses the river, and the hard, artificial surface was still good after all those centuries. These wonderful marchers had not been able to keep it up quite so well in the last days; still they had come the last sixty miles at the rate of fifteen every twenty-four hours, and they had now no natural obstacle between themselves and Calais. They turned north, then, towards that town. But they knew that in front of them a very large French army was waiting to bar their passage.

This army fell back before the advance of the little English column, and it was wise to do so. Its leaders intended to weary out Henry's command (it was already very short of food, and exhausted with a fortnight's exceptional effort). The English got across the little river Ternoise, with no more than thirty miles between them and Calais on Thursday, the 24th October—the sixteenth day of their setting out from Harfleur. It had rained continually, their store of bread had given out, and for three days past they had lived as best they could on a little plunder from villages, on nuts gathered in woods, and on roughly ground corn. It is astonishing that they had the vigour to do what they did the next day.

At the top of the little rise above the Ternoise, where is the small village of Maisoncelles, they first saw the mass of the enemy; a body much more than double their own, perhaps more than three times their own. But the French had no intention of attacking. their plan was to mass their far superior body in a rather narrow gap between two woods, in which gap they would stand a-straddle



THE LONG BOW WAS FAR THE GREATEST WEAPON OF THAT TIME

of the road to Calais, and await the much smaller English body, forcing it to attack.

These two armies, the little English one and the large French one, faced each other across a huge open ploughed field, more than a mile long and three-quarters of a mile across, on the wet evening of that Thursday, October 24th, 1415: the English drawn up just in front of Maisoncelles, the French in a dense mass, about 1,200 yards broad, and very deep between two fairly large woods: the wood of Agincourt (with the spire of the village church showing above it), on the west, that is, the French right (the English left): the wood of Tramecourt on the French left or east. The road to Calais ran between the two woods.

All that night it rained pitilessly, and was very cold; and all those long hours both the French and the English passed in the open as best they could. The armed men already in their steel plates with nothing but the helmets to put on when day should break; and the foot bivouacking as best they could in the mud. But of one thing we may be certain, which is, that the English archers kept their strings dry, whatever else got soaked.

When the Friday dawned (it was the Feast of St. Crispin, the patron saint of the Cobblers' Guild), it was over a dreary, empty, square mile of ploughed land, drenched by rain, and badly cut up as well by the passage and re-passage of the vehicles of the French army, as it had fallen back upon this position. At any rate, in between the woods it was thus cut up, and the whole place had turned into a kind of bog. The French were drawn up twenty deep, in full armour; a very large proportion of those ranks drawn from the squires and nobles, the common hired soldiers with their cross-bows hidden behind the knights. Everyone was on foot except two thin squadrons of horse, with lances, just in front.

On the English side the archers had planted four rows of pointed stakes starting forwards in front of their line to receive cavalry.

AGINCOURT

At first neither party moved. It was obviously to the advantage of each to make the other attack over such abominable ground. At last Henry ordered his line to go forward somewhat, and to refix their stakes, which was done after they had advanced some four hundred yards. The French work was very bad indeed, confused in command, not allowing for the foul state of the ground after days of drenching rain and a particularly wet night; and worst of all, the thin line of cavalry in front of the dismounted knights was not swerved back right and left as it should have been, but was allowed the useless excitement of a charge. In other words, the French did not keep their original and wise intention of leaving it to the English to attack. The few French horse with their lances set, came forward to charge under impossible conditions. You must not imagine by the word "charge" a sweeping gallop, or even a trot. The horses floundered forward as best they could, lurching through soft, clayey mud, and were a slow, inevitable target for the storm of arrows which met them.

I have said that the long bow was far the greatest weapon of the time: unique. It fired farther, faster and more accurately than any musket until the 19th century. But, I have also said, it needed special conditions, which it only very rarely got. For its ammunition was strictly limited, and if it failed in its immediate effect, it failed altogether. The conditions on that morning were perfect for the long bow, plenty of time, a dense, very slow target, and no counterfire. The comparatively small body of French horse, therefore, were pretty well destroyed. They were not only destroyed, as a military force; they also completely cluttered up the front. The fully armed men could not rise from the mud, even when they were not wounded. The horses, which had been the targets of the arrows, lay dead or helplessly wounded all round.

It was over such mud and such a welter of dead, dying, and immovable men and beasts that the mass of the French heavily-armed knights on foot now had to try and make their way. They were hopelessly jammed, progressing far less fast than a man walks

at a normal pace. Only their front rank able to act, and that front line unable to halt on account of the confused pressure from behind; they were shoved on to the English defence, and that defence had them at its mercy. The slowly moving jammed individuals were not met by arrows, but by axe and bill hook and mace, far more effective against plate armour.

The slaughter was great, the number of prisoners made among the felled and wounded greater still, when the cry arose that the English baggage train in the rear by Maisoncelles was being attacked by a separate body of French troops. In the fear that he would thus have to use many of his men elsewhere at a moment's notice, Henry ordered a general massacre of prisoners—a thing which left a bad memory attached to his name, lost his soldiers' great sums in ransoms, and was also, as it turned out, to no purpose; for the raid on the baggage train was nothing more than a plundering expedition undertaken by Isambard, the local squire of Agincourt, with some of his tenants, quick to seize the opportunity (they got away with the Crown and Great Seal of England).

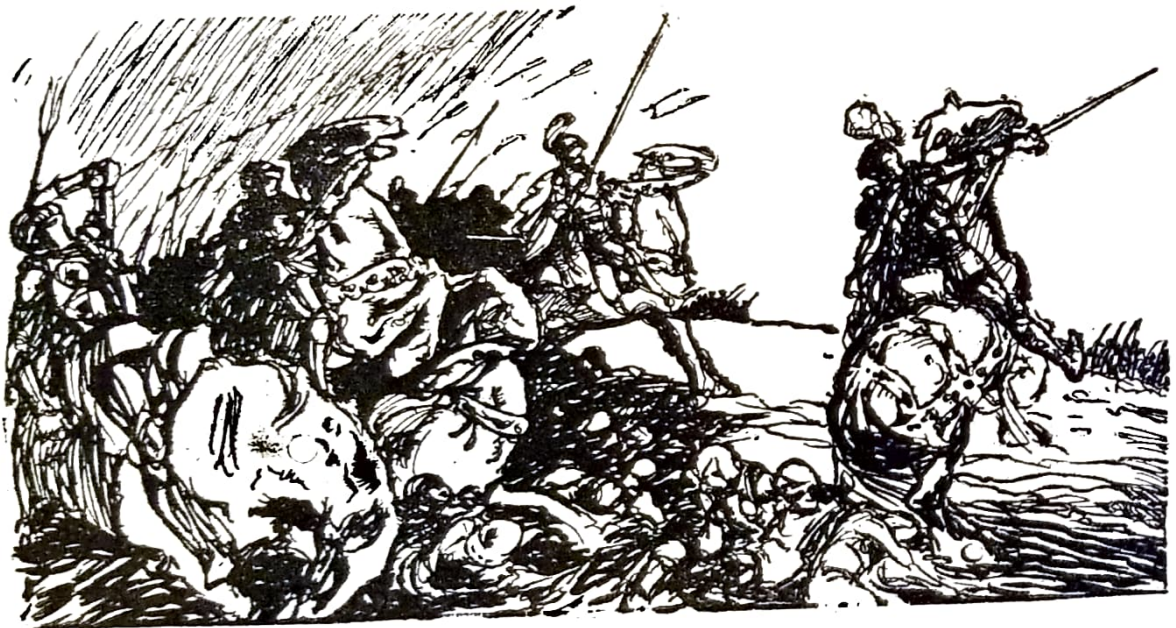
The action was over. It had not taken long, and its death-roll was astonishing. It seems possible that there were not much more than a hundred lost on the English side; even the very highest estimate is little more than a quarter of the total force; while the immensely larger French body had either by flight, dissolution, capture, or death, disappeared. Some six thousand had fallen; three-quarters of them from the greater or lesser nobility of France.

Oddly enough, this crashing victory had no immediate military effect, save the negative one that it prevented the destruction of Henry's small, starved force. That force went on in no great haste to Calais, which it reached on the fourth day, laden with plunder.

The moral effect was very great indeed, though all that followed, including the Regency over France at last exercised by Henry and the crowning of his child as French king, were due much more to Henry's negotiation between the two parties of the French civil

AGINCOURT

war than to arms. That moral effect lasted, in spite of the Wars of the Roses, and the complete loss of France by the English garrison just before them, on for generations; and we all know the way in which it has been blazoned by Shakespeare. For the glory of such things has a value which cannot be measured in exact terms or in political results. They strengthen the soul of a nation.





The Secret Joy

BY MARY WEBB
(MRS. H. B. L. WEBB)

FACE to face with the sunflower,
Cheek to cheek with the rose,
We follow a secret highway
Hardly a traveller knows.

THE SECRET JOY

The gold that lies in the folded bloom
Is all our wealth.
We eat of the heart of the forest
With innocent stealth.
We know the ancient roads
In the leaf of a nettle,
And bathe in the blue profound
Of a speedwell petal.





BY A. A. MILNE

POOH woke up suddenly in the middle of the night and listened. Then he got out of bed, and lit his candle, and stumped across the room to see if anybody was trying to get into his honey-cupboard, and they weren't, so he stumped back again, blew out his candle, and got into bed. Then he heard the noise again.

"Is that you, Piglet?" he said.

But it wasn't.

"Come in, Christopher Robin," he said.

But Christopher Robin didn't.

"Tell me about it to-morrow, Eeyore," said Pooh sleepily.

But the noise went on.

"*Worraworraworraworraworra*," said Whatever-it-was, and Pooh found that he wasn't asleep after all.

"What can it be?" he thought. "There are lots of noises in the Forest, but this is a Different One. It isn't a Growl, and it isn't a Purr, and it isn't a Bark, and it isn't the Noise-you-make-before-beginning-a-piece-of-poetry, but it's a Noise of some kind, made by a Strange Animal. And he's making it outside my door. So I shall get up and ask him not to do it."

He got out of bed and opened his front door.

"Hallo!" said Pooh, in case there was anything outside.

TIGGER COMES TO THE FOREST

"Hallo!" said Whatever-it-was.

"Oh!" said Pooh. "Hallo!"

"Hallo!"

"Oh, *there* you are!" said Pooh. "Hallo!"

"Hallo!" said the Strange Animal, wondering how long this was going on.

Pooh was just going to say "Hallo!" for the fourth time when he thought that he wouldn't, so he said, "Who is it?" instead.

"Me," said a voice.

"Oh!" said Pooh. "Well, come in."

So Whatever-it-was came in, and in the light of the candle he and Pooh looked at each other.

"I'm Pooh," said Pooh.

"I'm Tigger," said Tigger.

"Oh!" said Pooh, for he had never seen an animal like this before. "Does Christopher Robin know about you?"

"Of course he does," said Tigger.

"Well," said Pooh, "it's the middle of the night, which is a Good Time for Going to Sleep. And to-morrow morning we'll have some honey for breakfast. Do Tiggers like honey?"

"They like everything," said Tigger cheerfully.

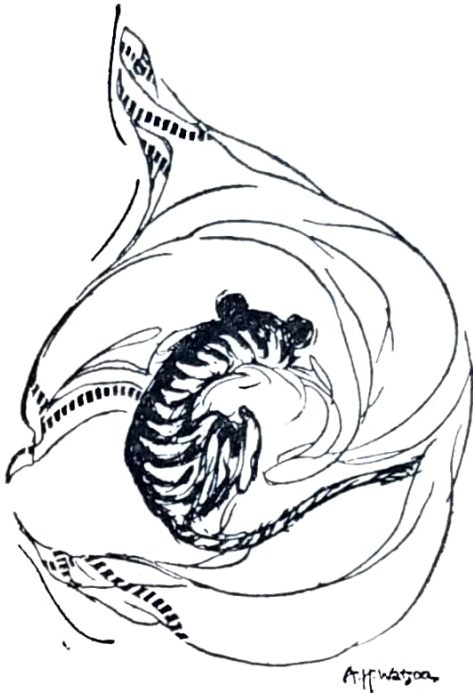
"Then if they like going to sleep on the floor, I'll go back to bed," said Pooh, "and we'll do things in the morning. Good-night." And he got into bed and went fast asleep.

When he awoke in the morning, the first thing he saw was Tigger, sitting in front of the glass and looking at himself.

"Hallo," said Pooh.

"Hallo," said Tigger. "I've found somebody just like me. I thought I was the only one of them."

Pooh began to explain what a looking-glass was; but just as he was getting to the interesting part, Tigger said, "Excuse me a moment, but there's something climbing up your table," and with one loud *Worraworraworraworraworra* he jumped at the end of the tablecloth, pulled it to the ground, wrapped himself



up in it three times, rolled to the other end of the room, and, after a terrible struggle, got his head into the daylight again, and said cheerfully, "Have I won?"

"That's my tablecloth," said Pooh, as he began to unwind Tigger.

"I wondered what it was," said Tigger.

"It goes on the table and you put things on it."

"Then why did it try to bite me when I wasn't looking?"

"I don't *think* it did," said Pooh.

"It tried," said Tigger, "but I was too quick for it."

Pooh put the cloth back on the table, and he put a large honey-pot on the cloth, and they sat down to breakfast. And, as soon as they sat down, Tigger took a large mouthful of honey . . . and he looked up at the ceiling with his head on one side, and made Exploring Noises with his tongue, and Considering Noises, and What-have-we-got-*here* Noises . . . and then he said in a very decided voice:

"Tiggers don't like honey."

"Oh!" said Pooh, and tried to make it sound Sad and Regretful. "I thought they liked everything."

"Everything except honey," said Tigger.

Pooh felt rather pleased about this, and said that as soon as he had finished his own breakfast, he would take Tigger round to





W. Watson

AFTER BREAKFAST THEY WENT ROUND TO SEE PIGLET

A. A. MILNE

Piglet's house, and Tigger could try some of Piglet's hay-corns.

"Thank you, Pooh," said Tigger, "because haycorns is really what Tiggers like best."

So after breakfast they went round to see Piglet, and Pooh explained as they went that Piglet was a Very Small Animal who didn't like Bouncing, and asked Tigger not to be too Bouncy just at first. And Tigger, who had been hiding behind trees and jumping out on Pooh's shadow when it wasn't looking, said that Tiggers were only bouncy before breakfast, and that as soon as they had had a few haycorns they became Quiet and Refined. So by-and-by they knocked at the door of Piglet's house.



TIGGER COMES TO THE FOREST

"Hallo, Pooh," said Piglet.

"Hallo, Piglet. This is Tigger."

"Oh, is it?" said Piglet, and he edged round to the other side of the table. "I thought Tiggers were smaller than that."

"Not the bigger ones," said Tigger.

"They like haycorns," said Pooh, "so that's what we've come for, because poor Tigger hasn't had any breakfast yet."

Piglet pushed the bowl of haycorns towards Tigger, and said "Help yourself," and then he got close up to Pooh, and felt much braver, and said "So you're Tigger? Well, well!" in a careless sort of voice. But Tigger said nothing because his mouth was full of haycorns. . . .

After a long munching noise he said, "Ee-ers o i a-ors." And when Pooh and Piglet said "What?" he said "Skoos ee," and went outside for a moment.

When he came back, he said firmly, "Tiggers don't like haycorns."

"But you said they liked everything except honey," said Pooh.

"Everything except honey and haycorns," explained Tigger.

When he heard this, Pooh said, "Oh, I see," and Piglet, who was rather glad that Tiggers didn't like haycorns, said, "What about thistles?"

"Thistles," said Tigger, "is what Tiggers like best."

"Then let's go along and see Eeyore," said Piglet. So the three of them went; and after they had walked and walked and walked, they came to the part of the Forest where Eeyore was.

"Hallo, Eeyore," said Pooh. "This is Tigger."

"What is?" said Eeyore.

"This," explained Pooh and Piglet together, and Tigger smiled his happiest smile and said nothing.

Eeyore walked all round Tigger one way, and then turned and walked all round him the other way.

"What did you say it was?" he asked.

"Tigger."

"Ah!" said Eeyore.

"He's just come," explained Piglet.

"Ah!" said Eeyore again. He thought for a long time and then said, "When is he going?"

Pooh explained to Eeyore that Tigger was a great friend of Christopher Robin's who had come to stay in the Forest, and Piglet explained to Tigger that he mustn't mind what Eeyore said because he was *always* Gloomy, and Eeyore explained to Piglet that on the contrary he was feeling particularly Cheerful this morning, and Tigger explained to anybody who was listening that he hadn't had any breakfast yet.

"I knew there was something," said Pooh. "Tiggers always eat thistles, so that was why we came to see you, Eeyore."

"Don't mention it, Pooh."

"Oh, Eeyore, I didn't mean that I didn't *want* to see you——"

"Quite, quite. But your new stripy friend—— Naturally. He wants his breakfast. What did you say his name was?"

"Tigger."

"Then come this way, Tigger."

Eeyore led the way to the most thistly-looking patch of thistles that ever was, and waved a hoof at it.

"A little patch I was keeping for my birthday," he said. "But after all, what *are* birthdays? Here to-day and gone to-morrow. Help yourself, Tigger."

Tigger thanked him, and looked a little anxiously at Pooh.

"Are these really thistles?" he whispered.

"Yes," said Pooh.

"What Tiggers like best?"

"That's right," said Pooh.

"I see," said Tigger, and he took a large mouthful, and he gave a large crunch. . . .

"Ow!" said Tigger.

"Oo!" said Tigger.

He sat down and put his paw in his mouth.

TIGGER COMES TO THE FOREST

"What's the matter?" asked Pooh.

"*Hot!*" mumbled Tigger.

"Your friend," said Eeyore, "appears to have bitten on a bee."

Pooh's friend stopped shaking his head to get the prickles out, and explained that Tiggers didn't like thistles.

"Then why bend a perfectly good one?" asked Eeyore.

"But you said," began Pooh, "you *said* that Tiggers liked everything except honey and haycorns!"

"*And* thistles," said Tigger, who was now running round in circles with his tongue hanging out.

Pooh looked at him sadly. "What are we going to do?" he asked Piglet.

Piglet knew the answer to that, and he said at once that they must go and see Christopher Robin.

"You'll find him with Kanga," said Eeyore. "Roo has a cold, and Christopher Robin was going to see how he was." He came close to Pooh and said in a loud whisper, "*Could* you ask your friend to do his exercises somewhere else? I shall be having lunch directly, and don't want it bounced on just before I begin. A trifling matter, and fussy of me, but we all have our little ways."

Pooh nodded solemnly and called to Tigger.

"Come along, and we'll go and see Kanga. She's sure to have lots of breakfast for you."

Tigger finished his last circle, and came up to Pooh and Piglet. "Hot," he explained with a large and friendly smile. "Come on," and he rushed off.

Pooh and Piglet walked slowly after him. And as they walked Piglet said nothing, because he couldn't think of anything, and Pooh said nothing because he was thinking of a poem. And when he had thought of it, he began:

What shall we do about poor little Tigger?

If he never eats nothing he'll never get bigger.

"I don't want him to," said Piglet.

"That doesn't rhyme, Piglet," said Pooh, "so would you mind waiting until I have finished, because then it won't matter?"

"All right," said Piglet, and Pooh went on:

*He doesn't like honey and haycorns and thistles,
Because of the taste and because of the bristles,
And all the good things which an Animal likes
Have the wrong sort of swallow or too many spikes.*

"Now what were you saying, Piglet?"

"He's quite big enough," said Piglet.

"He isn't really very big."

"Well, he seems so."

Pooh was thoughtful when he heard this, and then he murmured to himself:

*But whatever his weight in pounds, shillings and ounces,
He always seems bigger because of his bounces.*

"And that's the whole poem," he said. "Do you like it, Piglet?"

"All except the shillings," said Piglet. "I don't think they ought to be there."

"They wanted to come in after the pounds," explained Pooh, "so I let them. It is the best way to write poetry."

"Oh, I didn't know," said Piglet.

Tigger had been bouncing in front of them all this time, turning round every now and then to ask "Is this the way?"—and now at last they came in sight of Kanga's house, and there was Christopher Robin. Tigger rushed up to him.

"Oh, there you are, Tigger," said Christopher Robin. "I knew you'd be somewhere."

"I've been finding things in the Forest," said Tigger impor-



TIGGER COMES TO THE FOREST

tantly. "I've found a pooh and a piglet and an eeyore, but I can't find any breakfast."

Pooh and Piglet came up and hugged Christopher Robin, and explained what had been happening.

"Don't *you* know what Tiggers like?" asked Pooh.

"I expect if I thought very hard I should," said Christopher Robin, "but I *thought* Tigger knew."

"I do," said Tigger. "Everything there is in the world except honey and haycorns, and—what were those hot things called?"

"Thistles."

"Yes, and those."

"Oh, well, then, Kanga can give you some breakfast."

So they went into Kanga's house, and when Roo had said "Hallo, Pooh," and "Hallo, Piglet" once, and "Hallo, Tigger" twice, because he had never said it before and it sounded funny, they told Kanga what they wanted, and Kanga said very kindly, "Well, look in my cupboard, Tigger dear, and see what you'd like." Because she knew at once that, however big Tigger seemed to be, he wanted as much kindness as Roo.

"Shall I look, too?" said Pooh, who was beginning to feel a little eleven o'clockish. And he found a small tin of condensed milk, and something seemed to tell him that Tiggers didn't like this, so he took it into a corner by itself, and went with it to see that nobody interrupted it.

But the more Tigger put his nose into this and his paw into that, the more things he found which Tiggers *didn't* like. And when he had found everything in the cupboard, and couldn't eat any of it, he said to Kanga, "What happens now?"

But Kanga and Christopher Robin and Piglet were all standing round Roo, watching him have his Extract of Malt. And Roo was saying "Must I?" and Kanga was saying, "Now, Roo dear, you remember what you promised."

"What is it?" whispered Tigger to Piglet.

"His Strengthening Medicine," said Piglet. "He hates it."

So Tigger came closer, and he leant over the back of Roo's chair, and suddenly he put out his tongue and took one large golollop, and with a sudden jump of surprise Kanga said "Oh!" and then clutched at the spoon again just as it was disappearing, and pulled it safely back out of Tigger's mouth. But the Extract of Malt had gone.

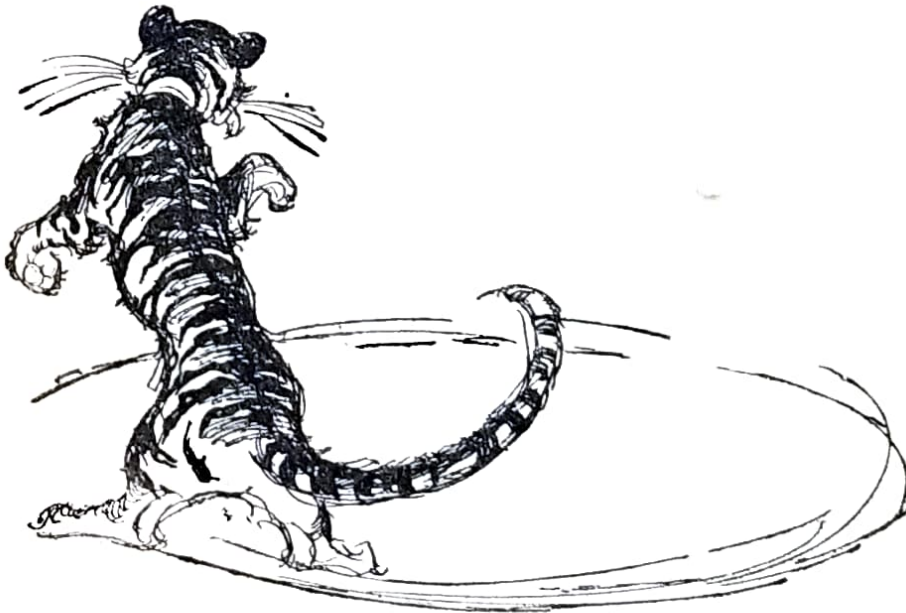
"Tigger *dear!*" said Kanga.

"He's taken my medicine, he's taken my medicine, he's taken my medicine!" sang Roo happily, thinking it was a tremendous joke.

Then Tigger looked up at the ceiling and closed his eyes, and his tongue went round and round his chops, in case he had left any outside, and a peaceful smile came over his face as he said, "So *that's* what Tiggers like!"

Which explains why he always lived at Kanga's house afterwards, and had Extract of Malt for breakfast, dinner and tea, and sometimes, as medicine, when Kanga thought he wanted strengthening, a spoonful or two of Roosbreakfast after meals.

"But *I* think," said Piglet to Pooh, "that he's been strengthened quite enough."





TEDDY BEAR

BY CYNTHIA ASQUITH

PETER was just seven. For the last three months he had lived in a German town where Laura, his elder sister, was learning the violin.

There were many pleasing things in this town; a river, a brass band, three chiming clocks and several wonderfully attractive "tuck-in and blow-out places," as Peter called the tea-shops.

The Germans are very clever at making tempting cakes, it is difficult not to be greedy in these "Conditorei,"—that is the German word for tea-shops and sometimes, when the waiter approached with note-book and pencil and asked how many cakes had been eaten, Peter felt rather shy and had to use the fingers on both his hands before he could give an honest answer.

Then there were shops full of enchanting toys, the sight of which made children flatten their cold noses against the plate-glass windows and ask how soon Christmas was coming.

But in this town there was one attraction so great that it drove 'Conditorei' and toyshops out of Peter's mind.

Driving past the public gardens as he came from the station, Peter had just caught sight through the railing of something small and humped and furry. Could it really be a *bear*? It seemed

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too good to be true. As soon as their things were unpacked, he and his mother rushed round to the gardens and to their delight they found that it *was* a bear and so comically like a nursery Teddy that at first they could scarcely believe he was real. He looked exactly as though he were made of plush, and as for his ears! Surely

they were sewn on—and not very well sewn on!

A printed notice said he was only seven months old, and he seemed very small and lonely to be without either a Mother or a Nannie-bear to look after him.

Unlike the animals at the Zoo, he was not kept in a cage. He just had a collar round his neck by which he was tied to a stake. His chain didn't allow him much liberty. There was a trunk of a tree for him to climb up and two wooden balls to amuse him.

Only a single rail divided him from the public and anyone who cared to risk his already fairly formidable claws, could crawl under it and play with him.

There were several other animals kept in these gardens. But visitors scarcely spared a glance for any of the bedraggled storks, wistful deer or crest-fallen cockatoos, who drooped in dismal captivity, for Teddy, as the gardener had christened him, drew like a magnet. Often there was a crowd two or three deep pressing against his railing.

Not only was he young and a very unusual animal to find in a town, but he was so admirably comic that the mere



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sight of him made even worried and mournful people laugh aloud. You never saw anything quite so rounded and absurd. There wasn't a single corner or sharp angle in the whole of his sloping, shambly body.

Nothing in the world could be funnier than the attitudes he slid into, except perhaps some of the expressions on his snouted face.

His eyes were very small and shy and shifty—by no means trustworthy eyes, and he had no chin—no chin at all.

His appearance gave little reason to suppose that he had either a fine character or a wide mind, but you can't have everything, and he had so much *charm*. He was made of most delicious material; and had such a lovely sheen on his plush-like coat. Besides being so funny, he was also very touching.

With a gasp of delight, Mrs. Bright (Peter's mother) fell in love with him at first sight. She was very indignant with some people who were teasing him by giving him uneatable things to eat. Owing perhaps to his empty days, he had such a passion for food that he would try to crunch and swallow anything he was offered, however unsuitable. Cotton reels, waistcoat buttons, old bootlaces! Nothing was rejected!

Mrs. Bright soon got into the way of visiting her beloved Teddy every single day—usually twice and sometimes three times. She never came empty handed, but always brought some dessert. He was very fond of bananas, but honey was what he liked most of all, so every morning she used to carry some to him in a scooped-out pear.

He soon got to know her by sight or was it by smell? And at her approach would gambol with greed and glee and then shamble back on to his hind quarters and sit up and beg, looking loveably clumsy and wobbly.

Before he had finished the honey, he always began to make mumbly, grumbly noises because soon there would be none of the delicious sweetstuff left.

Mrs. Bright decided his ration must be increased, so in future she took the honey in a saucer which Teddy always tried to swallow. Once Peter was allowed to carry the saucer, but his corduroy trousers suffered so much that afterwards he was only entrusted with Teddy's dessert.



Mrs. Bright became a very well-known figure in the gardens. Because she took so much trouble over a bear, the Germans called her an "original." They even said that she was a "*vorüchte Engländerin*," which means a "mad Englishwoman," but they liked her, and gave kindly smiles when she approached, carefully balancing a dripping saucer of honey while Peter, loaded with bananas, bumped into her from behind.

.....

"Oh dear! oh dear! I can't *bear* to leave my bear!" said Mrs. Bright one morning about a week before the day fixed for their return to England.



"Oh, Mother! What an awful pun!" laughed Peter's sister.

"It's all very well to laugh, Laura," said Mrs. Bright. "But seriously, I

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shall miss him most terribly. I'm very, very fond of him."

"It's hardly necessary to tell us that, Mother, considering you come to see him at least twice every day, and we all have to give up our share of honey for him! You're as proud of him as though you'd made him! I don't know how many people you haven't dragged here to see His Furriness. Why, I'm no better than his secretary! That's what I am—a bear's secretary! I'm always having to arrange appointments for people to be taken by you to see him. He ought to keep an engagement book."

"Oh! What will he do without his honey?" moaned Mrs. Bright. "He's got so accustomed to having it regularly. I'm afraid he'll pine and he won't understand that I've gone away. He'll just think I've forgotten him."

"Why not endow a fund for the perpetual honeying of him?" teased Laura. "I'm sure the Lord Mayor would be delighted to accept the trusteeship."

"I really think I might find someone who would undertake to spend 2/6 a week on him for me," said Mrs. Bright quite seriously. "But oh! how I shall miss him myself! Besides, I'm afraid people may be unkind to him."

Deeply moved, Peter listened to his mother's words. Poor Mother! Why, her eyes were actually glistening! Wouldn't it be possible for them to take the bear home to England with them? They could keep him in the laundry drying ground, and there he could be loose instead of bothered by a horrid chafing collar.

"Why shouldn't we take him home, Mother? Oh *do* let's."

"He doesn't belong to us, darling."

"But who does he belong to? Nobody here seems to love him very much."

"He was presented to the town by a man who caught him in South America."

"Does he belong to *everyone* in the town?"

"Yes, in a sort of a way."

"But would anyone in partickler miss him very much?"

"I don't know, Peter."

"I don't believe they'd miss him as much as you would, Mother."

"I scarcely think they could," said Mrs. Bright. "Now we must go home. I can't bear to see Teddy asking for more when there isn't any more."

All that afternoon, Peter's mind was full of his Mother's sadness at parting with Teddy.

Suddenly, in the middle of his lessons, he shut his book up with a bang and cried: "I've got it!"

"Got what?" asked his governess. "You certainly haven't got your sums right!"

Peter gave no answer, for it was an idea he had got, and not one that it would be wise to share with his governess.

This was his idea.

He would steal Teddy away from the gardens. It would be quite easy to creep under the railing and untie his chain and then he could keep him safely smuggled until it was time to start for England. Fortunately, in his bedroom there was a large cupboard which would make an admirable den.

The journey home might be difficult, but Peter thought that in the bustle of departure it would be possible to stow the little bear away in a huge fur bag that his Mother used as a rug. He could quite easily bore breathing holes through it. He supposed it would be necessary to tell his mother on the way to the station, but if her beloved Teddy was actually part of her luggage, surely she would never have the heart to leave him behind?

Peter knew there were dog tickets, pram tickets, bicycle tickets. Did bears have to have tickets? Probably. But anyhow, Teddy would only need a half ticket, because he was well under twelve years old.

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Peter determined to carry out his plan as quickly as possible. How would he be able to get the bear out of those crowded gardens without someone calling for one of the German policemen, who weren't in the least like proper Bobbies and had such frightening spikes on their helmets? His only chance would be to steal out of the house in the middle of the night. He hoped there was no moon just now. His electric torch would find the way for him, so the darker the better, for someone might be looking out of the window.

Supposing Teddy refused to follow him?

Peter remembered his passion for honey. Of course he would follow a saucer of it anywhere!

"I shall go this very night," Peter said to himself. "Hurrah! What an adventure!"

He was so excited that he fidgeted through lessons and all through meals, and when he and his mother took Teddy his evening banana he found it very difficult not to tell the large audience that to-morrow there would be no bear to tease with indigestible cotton reels. His mother and sister were going to the opera that evening. He would have to wait until long, long after they returned, otherwise people would still be about. He was afraid one o'clock would be the earliest time at which it would be safe to start. Would it be difficult to keep awake?

Just now he was so jumpily excited that he thought he could never feel sleepy again.

The evening seemed very long. For once in his life he longed for bed-time. When at last he was tucked in and his mother came in to say good-night, he very nearly said "You think I shall be asleep when you come home. But I shan't! I shan't! I shan't!" He just restrained himself.

Soon after Mrs. Bright and Laura had left, to Peter's great surprise he began to feel unmistakable signs of sleepiness. He didn't dare risk lying warm and comfortable, so he got out of bed and played ball with himself. It was a bitterly cold night, and

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soon he gave way to temptation and snuggled back under the bedclothes. But, before doing so, he put three pairs of shoes and a pair of boots on his pillow. This, he thought, would keep him too uncomfortable for it to be possible to fall asleep.

Then he said the only poem he knew by heart—the “Burial of Sir John More”—right through forty-six times. But after this he felt even more sleepy. Fortunately the boots and shoes were very hard and made his ears ache.

Suddenly he remembered that he had not provided himself with any honey. Dear! of dear! oh dear! Without a bait, there would be little chance of persuading Teddy to allow himself to be kidnapped. He must at once go down into the kitchen and forage. Slipping into his dressing-gown, he snatched up his electric torch, crept out of his room and fumbled his way downstairs. He had never been into the kitchen in the night before, and it was a great shock to find the sanded floor alive with scuttling black beetles. Peter had learnt:—

“He prayeth best who loveth best
All things both great and small,
For the dear God who loveth us
He made and loveth all.”

But for black beetles he couldn't feel the tiniest feeling of love in his heart. No, he thought them disgusting and unnecessary, and at sight of them in such large quantities he nearly bolted upstairs again, but it was necessary to search the big cupboard right on the other side of the kitchen. So, clenching his fists, he darted across, taking as wide strides as possible. Oh! horror! he trod on one of the beastly beetles and with a sickening pop, it went squash, leaving a horrid stain on the floor.

To his joy he found a large jar of honey in the cupboard. He strode back across the floor and this time his feet successfully avoided the hurrying, shiny black bodies.



OH HORROR! HE TROD ON ONE OF
THE BEASTLY BEETLES

Directly he got upstairs he emptied half the jar of honey into his soap dish and scrambled back into bed. Only just in time! Two minutes later an electric bell pealed through the house. It rang again and again. He heard a door open, some grumbling sounds, a yawn and shuffling footsteps. Then came his mother's voice.

"I'm *so* sorry, Frieda, I forgot the latch key."

Frieda, their German maid, grunted as graciously as she could.

Peter heard his mother and his sister coming up the stairs.

"Hush, Laura," said his mother from the adjoining sitting-room. Mind you don't wake Peter; his door's open. I can't understand about that key. I could have sworn I had put it in my purse."

"Why here it is, Mother!" exclaimed Laura. "Bang in the middle of the mantelpiece."

"How stupid of me!" said Mrs. Bright and she tiptoed into Peter's room. Hearing her approach, he just had time to shove the shoes and boots that were on his pillow under the bed-clothes.

"How beautifully soundly he sleeps," murmured his mother, pushing back his hair and kissing him on the forehead.

"Oh! what an escape!" thought Peter. "I never thought of the key of the front door. How lucky Mother forgot it and I heard what she said. How awful if I'd been shut out in the middle of the night alone with a live bear! What should I have done? I couldn't possibly have rung and let Frieda see Teddy. No! I should have had to take him back, but even then every one would have known I had been out of the house. There would have been a fuss! I *must* get that key off the mantelpiece. I do hope she hasn't taken it away into her bedroom."

As soon as he thought she and Laura had had time enough to get to sleep he stole into the sitting-room. To his intense relief the key was still lying on the mantelpiece. He thrust it

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into his pyjama pockets, replaced the boots and shoes on his pillow and crept back into bed.

It was only eleven o'clock. He must keep awake for another two hours. He said the "Burial of Sir John More" through another twenty-five times, then got up and touched his toes without bending his knees. This he did for about a quarter of an hour, then he washed his teeth, said his prayers and cut his toe nails. He would have liked to gargle but was afraid of making too much noise.

Then he tried to read, but he hadn't got any book about bears and no other subject seemed able to hold his attention.

At last he heard the sitting-room clock strike one.

Time to start!

Feverishly he scrambled into stockings and shoes, put his out-door coat on over his pyjamas, grasped his electric torch in one hand, the soap-dishful of honey in the other and stole from the room. His heart thudded with excitement. Supposing someone were to hear him. He trod as stealthily as he could, but oh! how the boards creaked at every tread! The whole passage seemed to come alive and complain at this disturbance of its night-time's quietness. Once on the stone staircase it was easier to be noiseless. At last he reached the front door. He opened it as silently as possible, but in spite of all his efforts, it closed behind him with a loud click, and he expected horrified heads to pop out of the windows.

There was no moon, nor even the faintest glimmer of starlight. It was one of those velvet black nights when the darkness is so thick that you feel as though the air were something solid and unbreathable.

Without his torch it would have been impossible for Peter to reach the gardens. Even so it was difficult enough, and he had to grope along holding onto the railings.

Fortunately he knew the way by heart. First turn to the right—second to the left, third to the right. In daylight it was

only a five minutes' walk. At blindman's pace it took Peter quite a quarter of an hour. Not one amongst all the houses he passed showed a single light, and no footsteps were to be heard. Peter felt alone in an emptied world, and his heart beat so loud that it seemed to have got right up inside his head.

At last he reaches the gardens. Where is the gate? Here it is. He seizes the handle: it turns in his grasp. Eagerly he pushes. Horrors! The gate resists his strongest shove.

Oh dear! oh dear! the gate is locked—relentlessly locked! Gardens shut for the night just as houses do. Could he possibly climb over? Out of the question. The railings are twice his height and there is no foothold. The disappointment is terrible, and such a lump gathers in Peter's throat that tears of pain are squeezed from his eyes. All his trouble and excitement wasted! No honey for the bear! No bear for Mother! And to-morrow will be just an ordinary day. Through the dark silence Peter now hears a distant, heavy footstep. Panic seizes him and he turns homewards, walking as quickly as is possible in the dense darkness. The footsteps grow louder and Peter, he knows not why, is horribly frightened.

“Like one that on a lonesome road
Doth walk in fear and dread,
And, having once turned round, walks on
And turns no more his head,
Because he knows a frightful fiend
Doth close behind him tread.”

That was how Peter felt, and it was a tremendous relief when at last he reached his own house and the door was safely shut behind him. His electric torch now gave out (thank goodness it had not failed him while he was still in the street) and he crept upstairs in total darkness.

When he turned his bedroom light on, to his dismay he

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found that nearly all the honey had slopped over the soap-dish on to his greatcoat, so before he could get into bed, some strenuous washing was necessary.

Once between the sheets, tiredness defeated disappointment and heavy sleep slid over him.

When he was woken in the morning, just at first he couldn't remember what he had been doing. He wondered why he felt so tired. Then his adventures and disappointment rushed into his mind and he felt very depressed. He was very sleepy. Large purple rings encircled his eyes, and his governess found him so inattentive that, as a punishment, he was not allowed to go with his mother when she took Teddy his morning honey.

After luncheon, clouds gathered and it began to rain with extraordinary violence. Peter had never seen such a heavy down-pour. It fell in torrents and the drumming, hissing sound grew louder and louder.

"May I go out, Miss Bolt?" he asked when he had finished his drowsy lessons.

"Go *out*? I should think not, indeed! Why, no one in their senses would dream of going out on an afternoon like this. I've never seen such rain. It's like a tropical storm."

At these words an idea darted into Peter's brain. "No one in their senses would go out?" If that was true, then now was his chance to go and rescue Teddy. Why not at once slip out of the house and rush to the gardens? Surely there would be quite a good chance of dragging the bear home and hauling him upstairs and into the cupboard without being seen?

With no one about it would be quite easy to get him out of the gardens, and even if some people were about—according to Miss Bolt—they would be "out of their senses" so probably they wouldn't be so very surprised at meeting a boy with a bear.

He determined to attempt it.

Laura was having a violin lesson in the sitting-room. Mother was resting in her bedroom, Frieda was busy in the kitchen and

now—to Peter's delight, his governess said she would avail herself of a wet afternoon and wash her hair.

So that disposed of everyone, and he would be able to slip unseen from the house. He looked out of the window. Thank goodness there was no sign of the rain abating. It was as though millions of silver stair-rods were rushing down from the heavens.

He ran down to fetch a fresh supply of honey (fortunately Frieda was in the scullery) and then he pocketed the latch key, which, to his relief, still lay where he had replaced it on the mantel-piece. Now about clothes? He remembered his mother's mackintosh which he sometimes tried on for fun. The very thing! Finding it hanging up in the cupboard in the passage, he hastily slipped into it. The sleeves fell far below his hands, and when he looked in the long glass he was reminded of the penguins at the Zoo.

He put on his oilskin hat and his stoutest boots. Next he poured the honey into the soap-dish and, remembering how it had slopped over before, he put the lid over it.

Then he ran downstairs and out of the house into the drenching streams. Heavens! what a downpour! Its weight nearly drove Peter to the ground and it seemed to be raining upwards almost as hard as downwards. Water spurted up from the pavements in silver jets.

Bowed and nearly blinded, clasping the soap-dish in both hands, Peter ran as fast as he could. Long before he reached the gardens his boots were loudly squelching and his feet wet to the bones. He found the gate wide open. Looking more dingily depressed than ever, the poor bedraggled storks stood in liquid mud. Teddy had taken refuge in his night-nursery—a large dog kennel, from the shelter of which he looked out in gloomy disgust.

Peter stepped under the railing. How lucky he had the lid on the soap-dish. Otherwise the rain would have washed away all the honey.

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"Come along, Teddy," said Peter, holding out the bait. In spite of the deluge, Teddy detected the approach of his favourite "delicatessen" and with a rumble of rapture, he shuffled out of his shelter.

Peter placed the dish on the top of the kennel, and while Teddy set himself to climb up to it he managed to untie the rope. Only just in time! Teddy had already reached the dish and nozzled off the lid. Peter snatched it away.

"Come along, Teddy! Come along, there's a good bear," he said coaxingly, holding the honey just in front of the eager, snuffing snout. With angry mumbles of baffled greed, Teddy trundled after Peter and allowed himself to be pulled beneath the railing. No doubt he was astonished at this unaccustomed exercise, but his attention was absorbed by the tantalising, receding honey.

Before leaving the gardens, to encourage him, Peter allowed him an actual taste of honey, but immediately snatched the soap-dish away from his thrusting snout. Then, pulling at the chain, he hastened along the glistening pavements past which streams rushed down the gutters.

Teddy began to get seriously annoyed, and in his struggles to reach the dish gave Peter one or two fairly painful taps.

The rain still fell in steady streams, and Miss Bolt had been quite right. Not a single person was about. The return journey took quite twenty-five minutes.

Several times the now furious bear expressed his annoyance by stiffening all four legs and refusing to budge. Peter began to dread a final full stop. However, the cunningly dangled honey always prevailed, and at last they reached the house, but by now the bear's protests had grown so loud that Peter feared everyone would hear his snarls and growls, so, before opening the front door, he allowed him several mouthfuls of honey. He hoped that this might take the edge off his impatience.

This induced comparative silence, but getting him upstairs was a terribly difficult job. Quite unaccustomed to steps he had

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no idea how to mount them. For him to climb a greasy pole would have been a far easier exercise.

His claws made such a scrabbly noise on the stone and he kept slithering down again as fast as he rose.

Peter found the best method was to put the honey right at the very top of the staircase and then step by step to push the ungainly grumbler up from behind. He felt sure someone must hear the scrabbling and mumbling, but to his intense relief, no door opened—no voice called.

At last—to Peter it seemed like a week—a final tremendous shove landed the bewildered bear into the bedroom. Then the soap-dish was put inside the cupboard, Teddy lumbered in after his bait, the door was shut behind him, and the key turned and put back in Peter's pocket.

"Heavens!" thought Peter. "I've forgotten to bore his breathing holes and here am I dripping wet and someone's sure to come in before I've done half the things that must be done. There's the staircase to clean—it's in an awful mess, and my wet clothes to take off and hide."

Poor Peter's brain was in a whirl. There were so many things to think about and all the time the rain was streaming off him and making puddles on the floor.

But the first thing was to arrange for Teddy's breathing, so with his pen-knife he bored five large holes in the freshly painted cupboard. This



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done, he tore off the dripping mackintosh and began to tug at the sodden, knotted laces of his squelching boots. He prayed that Mother was asleep and his governess still busy with the tangles of her hair which fortunately was long and thick. With any luck Laura was deep in a novel. She was a very greedy reader. But now a new horror began. For these first few seconds no sounds had come from the cupboard except muffled satisfied slobberings.

Now the supply of honey must be exhausted for loud deep-chested grumbles were audible and—even worse—the noise of furious clawings at the door of the cupboard.

How awful! Such sounds must be heard even by sleepers and readers. Besides, in spite of his youth, the bear's claws were already well developed and in time he would break through the cupboard. What was Peter to do now? Somehow the awful noise must be stifled. In the meantime at any moment Frieda might come out of the kitchen and see the tell-tale stains on the stairs.

Peter had an inspiration. His gramophone! He would put a tune on it—the loudest and longest he could find. Its strains would drown the noise the bear was making and perhaps give time to wash away the mess. Fortunately the steps were stone.

A second later a record of a brass band in full blast brayed on to the air.

Seizing a face sponge and a towel, Peter dashed from the room and began to wash the stairs.

But what was the use while his oozing boots made new muddy stains faster than he could remove the old ones. Dear, oh dear! How difficult it was to know where to begin! Obviously he must get rid of his wet legs. So he went back to his room and struggled out of his boots.—The knots were so difficult to untie!—Then he peeled off his stockings which clung to his reddened feet. Now, where to put them? The safest hiding place would be inside the locked cupboard, but he didn't dare open it, in case Teddy should

manage to burst out and escape. How about putting them in the oven to dry? With luck Frieda would be in the scullery and he would be able to get in and out of the kitchen unseen and unheard. Yes. That was the best plan. Meantime with horrid splutterings the gramophone died down. After violently winding it, he put on another record—this time a Jazz Band. Mackintosh and boots in hand he dashed downstairs and tiptoed into the kitchen. Was Frieda safe in the scullery? No, she was in an armchair in the kitchen but oh! what luck! She was loud-asleep, her knitting fallen on her lap, her mouth wide open and the next snore following the last before it was quite finished: Peter opened the oven and shoved in the boots and the mackintosh. The door shut with a clank and, terrified, Peter glanced at Frieda. She had jumped but gave a reassuring snore.

Peter darted upstairs and reached his room just as the gramophone was beginning to make horrid, scraping sounds. Hastily he clapped the brass band record on again. Even through the tune he could hear feverish scratchings and snatches of bear-talk, but he didn't think that anyone in another room would be able to do so. Luckily it was a very powerful gramophone.

One thing successfully done. In spite of the stout mackintosh, his suit was very wet in patches, but he hoped no one would notice. Now there was the staircase to wash. Putting on some shoes and stockings he set to work to scrub the steps one by one. Before he had finished three, the gramophone again began to make rasping, quavering sounds of exhaustion, and he had to run back and rewind and start the jazz band record. He had to change the record three times before he had made a satisfactory job of the stairs. When he got back to his room, his back ached and his head felt quite dizzy from so much thinking.

Teddy was now making the most terrible noises. In spite of his sense of triumph, Peter almost wished his treasure safe back in the gardens. Just as he had started the brass band for the fifth time, Laura's rather peevish voice came through the door:

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“Oh Peter! *Do* shut up with that wretched gramophone. I can't attend to my book! It's a horrible din and should never be allowed before teatime.”

“It isn't half as bad as your violining,” said Peter feebly.

“Don't be silly!” snapped Laura. “If you don't stop when this vile tune is finished, I'll come and carry off the beastly thing!”

Laura was a girl of her word. If she came in she must inevitably hear Teddy's scrabbling and growling.

What was Peter to do now?”

He had never dreamt that a baby bear could prove so troublesome a guest. Even if he escaped immediate detection Peter wondered how he could hope to keep him smuggled for several days and besides, what an impossible traveller! If only he would go to sleep!

Suddenly Peter remembered a bottle that always stood on his mother's washing stand. On it SLEEPING was written in large printed letters.

What a good idea! He must give Teddy an enormous dose of the nasty brown mixture. It was the only chance, and perhaps it would solve the difficulty. How could he make him take it? In honey, of course. Oh, dear! that meant yet another visit to the kitchen. Never mind! It must be done, but it would take time and perhaps Laura would be as bad as her word.

“May I have just two more tunes, Laura?” he called out in an anxious voice. “Only two, then I promise you I won't turn it on again until to-morrow.”

“All right,” answered Laura and, much relieved, Peter darted downstairs to find Frieda wide awake and busily rolling pastry. Peter kept his head.

“May I carry up the tea-things?” he asked. “Uncle Max is coming to tea.”

“Sartainlee,” answered Frieda who, except when aroused from slumber, was a very good-tempered girl and often allowed Peter to think he was helping her.

"Where's the honey?" he soon asked.

"Ach heaven!" said Frieda in her funny English. "Vot for a much of honey you are always eating! So great much ze bear from your muzzer is receiving! I believe it still vun pot gives. Also, here is it!"

Peter hastened upstairs with the loaded tray and was just in time to clap on his second and last record. Now for the sleeping draught. He knocked at his mother's door.

"Come in," said her voice.

"Can you tell me what the time is, Mother?"

"A quarter to four. Come and give me a kiss, darling. How hot your face is! Don't forget Uncle Max is coming to tea. I see it has stopped raining. Mind you have clean hands."

"All right, Mother. I'll go and wash them now." On his way out Peter managed surreptitiously to pick up the large bottle.

When he was back in his room, he read the directions. "One teaspoonful on retiring" it said. How much ought he to give Teddy? Supposing to make sure of sleep, he gave him the whole contents at one go; but that might be dangerous. He remembered an aunt who had gone to Heaven on account of an "overdose." It would be too awful if Teddy went to Heaven, because he would be sure to forget his furry body and leave it behind in the cupboard.

Peter decided to give him about a quarter of the bottle. He ladled some honey out into the soapdish, poured the medicine into it and stirred it up with his tooth brush. Preliminary squeaks followed by a wail came from the sitting-room. Hurrah! Laura was playing the violin, and its strains would prevent her hearing whatever noises Teddy might make when the door of his cupboard was opened. Very gingerly he opened the door of the cupboard—only just a little way, but an angry paw was at once thrust through and a blinking, bewildered face peered out. Holding the door back with all his might, Peter managed to slide in the soapdish

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and the prisoner's annoyed grumblings subsided into rapid slobbery sounds. Thank goodness Laura's violin was still wailing away.

Pushing the door to and turning the key, Peter went into the sitting-room and laid the table. Then he returned to his room. Could the sleeping draught have already taken effect? Alas! no. Impatient snarlings were plainly audible. The honey was finished and Teddy quite unsatisfied. However, as long as Laura played her violin there was no fear of her overhearing his grumbles.

Deciding to give the sleeping draught a little time, Peter went to the sitting-room and tried to distract himself with a jig-saw puzzle, but he was too anxious to be able to care what piece fitted into which and every two minutes he flew back into his bedroom. Laura scowled at his fidgetiness, but went on playing.

At his eighth visit Peter was overjoyed to hear that the growlings had given place to sounds of stertorous slumber. The relief was wonderful. Peter would have liked to sing "Hush-a-bye, Teddy," and prayed that his prisoner might sleep all through the night.

Peter settled down to his puzzle. At five o'clock the bell rang and Uncle Max was announced. Uncle Max was a German general who had married a sister of Peter's mother. He was short and very stout, had waxed moustaches that turned straight up at the ends and his eyes looked as though they were trying to escape out of his face.

He produced a parcel of marzipan for Peter, and they all sat down to tea.

"Did you ever so much rain see? I never! I thought there would a second flood be. I have some news for you, Mary," he said, turning to Mrs. Bright. "Your so-beloved bear is from ze gardens disappeared."

"What!" cried Mrs. Bright. "Teddy? Whatever do you mean?"

"Zis," said Uncle Max. "When ze rain off leaves, ze gardener

he is to the gardens returning and ze bear he not zere finds. No, he is away—chain and all. Somevun vill I s'pose him have stolen, perhaps somevun who a, how you say? a circus is keeping."

"Oh, how dreadful!" cried Peter's mother. "What can have happened to the darling! Don't you think he might have got away by himself. Oh dear! Oh dear! I must go and look for him at once."

"Ach, no, he is stolen, of zat I am sure. But he vill be vary difficult for to hide and ze 'sief vill get long—how you say? Festung—prizons. Vot is ze matter viz zat boy? He choke. Not true?"

Poor Peter had a very thin and fair skin and was a blazing blusher. At the very first words about Teddy's disappearance he had felt hot waves spreading all over his face. In dread that someone would notice and question him, he was pretending to choke. Uncle Max banged his back and Laura blew in his ear, but in spite of this disturbance, conversation soon returned to the bear.

"Oh, what can have happened to my beloved Teddy?" said Mrs. Bright. "Perhaps he'll be better off than he was. Only I've a horrid feeling that he may have escaped by himself and be wandering about all alone."

"I do not sink you need fear zat. He would most sartainly be seen before he hungry become. No, it is sure some rascal has him stolen."

"I never thought he was kept in at all a sensible way," went on Mrs. Bright. "I was always afraid he might hang himself on that horrid rope. But aren't there any footprints or any sign of a struggle?"

"I did not sink for to ask, my dear. He is not, as yours, my dearest and nearest. You vill, without doubt all about it in ze evening papers see. Zey are offering a reward of £5. You had better in the search join."

"Five pounds! I shall go at once and offer twenty," said Mrs. Bright, springing to her feet.

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“Ach, but you vill please wait till I go. I can not more zan half an hour be staying. I should a game of Hide Seek vith the childrens like. Vot say you, Peter?”

Peter jumped up eagerly. He saw a chance of listening outside the bear’s sleeping-cupboard.

“All right, Uncle Max. I’ll go and hide at once. Count 150 before you start looking for me.” He hurried to his bedroom. All was well. The same regular fast asleep sounds were audible, but they weren’t very loud. He scarcely thought they would be heard unless you were listening for them. Then he went and hid himself in the big bath, where a few moments later Uncle Max triumphantly discovered him. He dragged his nephew back into the sitting-room and volunteered to be the next to go and hide.

“But you must be counting two hundreds before you looks, for of me there gives very much more to hide.”

Before Laura and Peter had counted 150 they and their mother were startled by fearful screams and gasps. There was a confused banging sound, hurried foorsteps and gurgling and spluttering. In staggered Uncle Max. He looked as though he had an appalling shock and collapsed on to the sofa.

At first he could only find German words and no one could understand the guttural flow that came through his chattering teeth.

At last he stuttered: “Ach Gott—Ach Gott! It is too terrible! I have never been having so a fright. Vot can it be? There is an aliveness in ze cobbard. A *terrible* aliveness. A fury that is furry. Vot do you in your cobbard keep? I know not. I guess not.”

“What do you mean, Max?”

“I creep into ze cobbard for to hide, I feel somesings warm vot moves. Zen there is a great snarling noise zat I hear—gr . . . gr . . . gr . . . I know not—and zen somesings tears my arm—so—you see,” and Uncle Max held out his hand and showed a long angry red scratch. “Zen ze somesing zat warm was, it hold

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of me take, but Heaven me strength gives and I escapes. Ach Gott! Ach Gott!"

"Something *alive* in the cupboard?" said Mrs. Bright. "There *can't* be. You must have scratched your hand on a hook." Laura broke into incredulous giggles, but Peter said nothing. He knew. The worst had happened. When he put in the sleeping draught, he had forgotten to remove the key of the cupboard. How could he have been so silly! Of course Uncle Max had thought the

cupboard a likely hiding place and woken Teddy from his sleep. What was the best thing to do now? Should he confess?

While he was wondering what to do and Uncle Max still moaned and shivered, the door, which had been left ajar, was pushed open and to the amazement of all save Peter—swaying from side to side and emitting faint snarly sounds, a blinking, yawning baby bear padded into the room. There were three shrieks of surprise and, with a German oath, Uncle Max flew to the other door and rushed from the room.

"It's darling Teddy," exclaimed Mrs. B. "He must have smelt his way to me. How sweet of him! He shall have some honey at once."

Characteristically, before going to search for Uncle Max, she rang the bell for some honey. But Teddy had only been temporarily aroused by the clumsy intrusion of Uncle Max and, curling himself up in a thick hearthrug, he subsided into a deep sleep, from which even the honey that Frieda brought was power-

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less to rouse him. Satisfied as to Teddy's comfort, Mrs. B. then went in search of Uncle Max who was found to have dashed back into the cupboard where he was holding the door to and praying aloud. It took a long time to reassure him by describing Teddy's peaceful slumbers. Once coaxed from his stronghold he became a resolute man of action.

"I must at vunce to the Hof Meister telephone, so zat is so dangerous animal is at vunce away fetched."

"Dangerous animal!" laughed Mrs. Bright. "Why, he's only a poor harmless little baby. I do hope you didn't hurt him in that cupboard. You're very heavy."

Uncle Max snorted with indignation and held out his scratched hand.

"Let's see if he's made much of a mess," said Mrs. Bright, reopening the cupboard. At the sight within she gave a cry of dismay. Her three best evening dresses (the wardrobe in her own bedroom was too small) had all been torn down and lay in mud-stained tatters.

"Harmless little baby!" mocked Uncle Max.

"Never mind," said Mrs. Bright. "I only wish I could keep the poor darling. Why shouldn't I? No one would know."

"You will yourself in festung—prison find."

Being assured that the bear was safe behind closed doors, he went to the telephone and half an hour later, enough sturdy men to control a mad elephant arrived with ropes and sticks and poor drugged Teddy was again disturbed and hauled away.

His sleepy grumblings were heard all the way down the stairs, and Mrs. Bright shouted promises of an extra ration of honey after him.

Two minutes later Frieda burst into the room holding up the charred and scarcely recognisable remains of a mackintosh and a pair of boots.

"What is zese, I ask? I have zem in my oven found!"

“What next?” exclaimed Mrs. Bright. “Why ever have you cooked your new boots, Peter?”

Peter was wondering how to begin his confession. Here was his chance.

“I was out in the rain, Mother.”

“Out in that fearful storm!”

Clenching his fists, Peter shut his eyes and, like a horse at a fence, rushed at his story. He wondered how his mother would take it, and hoped she wouldn't be so very angry when she understood that he had done it all for her sake.

The way she did take it surprised him. She went into peals and peals of laughter, laughter so loud that Laura rushed into the room to ask what the joke was.

The relief was so great and Peter so tired by the strain of the last three hours, that he burst into floods of tears, and his mother was obliged to tell him how much she loved him.

“As much as Teddy?”

“Yes, as much as Teddy.” . . .

Two days later Mr. Bright arrived and his wife told him all about the bear.

“I can't understand your passion for a shapeless furry hump with very unpleasant claws, but if you really want him, I don't see why you shouldn't have him. Perhaps I could buy him.”

He made inquiries and found that for a fairly large price the authorities were willing to part with their baby bear. . . .

So after all Teddy did travel home with Peter. He was put into a great crate with holes in it. At the Douane (the place where travellers are bothered about their luggage), the Bright family were asked if they had any wines, tobacco, scent, drugs, or new dresses to declare. But no one asked them if they had any bears. None of the officials thought of unpacking his crate and, as a traveller, Teddy was far less trouble than a dog, or a baby. Directly they reached Dover he was given a supply of penny buns, and when they

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got home he was installed in the laundry yard. I wish I could say "and there he lived happily ever afterwards!" but unfortunately he grew terribly big and took to hugging visitors.

Mr. Bright said: "*This will not do,*" so Teddy was given as a Christmas present to the Zoo.

He has now been there for three years, and Peter and his mother have spent £25 8s. 6d. on buying penny buns for him.



BY MARY WEBB
(MRS. H. B. L. WEBB)

THE dreadful fate of Sam Sinnable came about in this way. First, his uncle went to a bazaar and won an egg-cabinet in a raffle. It was a beautiful cabinet. It had little drawers and big drawers, with divisions in them all, and each drawer and division was labelled with a nice, shiny, printed label, with the name of a bird on it. The people who made the cabinet seemed to think Sam would stroll out before breakfast and rob the nests of the rarest birds, and they provided a large compartment for the eggs of eagles—Sea, Spotted, and Golden.

The cabinet was varnished very plentifully, so that it shone with sticky splendour and showed finger-marks beautifully. Sam and the younger ones, even Baby, could have their thumb and finger-prints taken in the proper way, like criminals, whenever

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Nurse was busy. Before Sam had had it for a week, it was so covered with interesting prints and with the pudgy marks of baby's fat palm, that it seemed quite a nice, friendly piece of furniture. But it was not. It was a Temptation. It had in it two black-birds' eggs, and a sitting of thrushes'. Sam thought with despair that before the great day came when he should be able to open every drawer and find every division full of the right kind of eggs he would be an old, old man, like Rip van Winkle. And he noticed that grandfathers were not really keen about these things, though they pretended they were. It was always like the games people play to amuse the children. Sam hoped very much to get his egg-cabinet full long before his beard was white, and as his age was eleven and he had not yet begun to grow it, he felt that there was still time. All the same, he must miss no chances. This was when Sam began the Downward Career, going from Bad to Worse, trespassing, playing truant, tearing his clothes, quite forgetting the golden rule his mother had taught him—One nest, one egg.

He took them all, even the tiny dozen of the Long-tailed Titmouse. Nests he could not reach he raked down, holding a basket to catch them. The duck pond, the dove-cote, the preserved pheasants in the wood—all these Sam robbed. The Golden Eagle's place was ingloriously filled with pigeons' eggs. But Sam's chief stand-by were the eggs of the commoner small birds, such as sparrows, thrushes, starlings and finches. He took so many of these that the garden and meadow were always full of the sound of the scolding and mourning of the parent birds. This was what, more than anything else, brought about Sam's ruin

Now this is what befell.

On a summer night without any moon, black and muffled and still under the leaves, the Herons came for Sam. They came to his bedside and woke him—two tall policeman herons, in sad-coloured liveries of ash grey and black. They stood there, tall and silent, looking down at Sam as if he were a very small fish, and he

felt as if the long sharp swords of their beaks were already run through him.



THEY PLUNGED THROUGH THE OPEN WINDOW INTO THE STARLESS,
DAMP DARKNESS

Then they spoke in hoarse voices, both together, very solemnly.

THE CUCKOO CLOCK



“Oyez! Oyez! Oyez! Sam Sinnable is summoned to appear at the Birds’ Assizes, on a charge of robbery, wilful cruelty and destruction. You bin a scandal in Birdland, Sam, and therefore a Round Robin was sent, with a petition to the High Judge, the great Eagle of Snowdon, and he has called the birds to the Assizes, and you mun come along of us.”

Poor Sam thought the herons spoke very funnily, like people in a long-ago book. He supposed it was because birds are older than people, and can remember nothing later than Saxon. But he had no time to think of this. He was terrified by the way they eyed him—as if he were very tiny and a long way off, yet not too far for their swords to reach.

“So up you get, and away - to - go!” said the herons, speaking together, as usual.

It was terribly solemn, like the litany.

Sam got up and dressed, tears rolling down his cheeks. No sooner had he fastened his collar and tie, than the herons seized him. Spreading their great, soft, hollow wings, they plunged through the open window into the starless, damp darkness.

They went through the leaves and through the leaves, over the leaves and under the leaves, and at last they came to the Birds' Assize Court.

As the herons put him down Sam took courage to whisper a question which he had been asking himself all the way. "Shall you know the road back?" he asked anxiously. Back to bed and the kitten, and Nursery breakfast, with steaming porridge, and Nurse, cross but safe.

"There be *no* way back," said the herons.

They stood at the entrance to the Assize Court, and in the pale light left from yesterday Sam could see enormous walls of trees standing about a round glade, carpeted with cuckoopint and birds'-foot trefoil. The trees were chestnuts and firs. Every chestnut was set with white, unlit candles of flowers, and every fir was set with white, unlit candles of shoots.

It was all very solemn and still, with all the leaves neat and close on all the other leaves, like feathers, and the candles without flames standing up in the yesterday light. Sam felt as he did when his uncle took him on the scenic railway. He felt sick. He also began to be very cross with his uncle. First taking him on the scenic railway and making him sick. Then giving him the egg-cabinet and getting him into this dreadful trouble. And yet he had had to be ever so grateful for both. And now here he was. Yes, here he was, in the soft, deep, mysterious night, standing in the enormous doorway of the Assize Court!

"There's nobody there!" he whispered. "Please, Mister Herons, can't I go home?"

"There be everybody here," they answered. "A million bird-souls all told."

"But I can't see anybody."



THRONED ON A BLASTED TREE THE GREAT EAGLE FROM SNOWDON

"Folk may be here, there and everywhere, yet be not seen," said the herons.

At this moment there began the strangest, most frightening sound. It was like the rumour in the trees before thunder. It was like the first low scattered groaning or cheering of a great crowd of people. It was like the grumbling and muttering of herds on the mountains, before they break pasture and go down to the sea. Only it was soft as the soft night, muffled as a funeral bell. From every part of the huge amphitheatre the birds spoke.

"Go back? Go back? You'll never go back," cried the Grouse.

"See, see, see, see, see!" whispered the Grasshopper-Warbler, as if he wanted everybody to stare at Sam. The nightingale wept, the lapwing cried, "Eh, me! Eh, me!"

"Wicked, wicked, wicked!" called the thrush, and the owls hooted, "It's you, you, you!"

The wood-pigeons took up the cry.

"We *knew* it was you—we *knew* it was you!" they moaned, till the sound of their soft roaring was like the sound of the sea in a dream.

Swifts screamed high above the topmost outlines of the trees, in the no-coloured sky. Ducks quacked, coots clucked, wild geese gabbled somewhere in the shadows of the heavy roots. The woodpeckers, sitting all together on a long branch, laughed nervously in a conceited manner, for they were the telegraph operators, and had to tap out messages to be sent all over Birdland. Near them were six ravens, the reporters, who kept writing absent-mindedly on their shorthand books the words "Never more."

All the birds who scream, screamed. All the birds who croak, croaked. All the birds who scold, scolded. It was as if every leaf had found a tongue.

But suddenly across the tumult a voice clanged—a wild, mighty voice, harsh, yet with something golden in it. Looking at the place it came from, Sam could dimly see, throned on a blasted tree that shone sad and grey, the great eagle from Snowdon.

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At the first sound of his voice every bird was mute.

"Let the Court of Assizes be pronounced open!" said the old eagle, and the place was immediately filled with the deep, rolling boom of the bitterns sounding their gongs. Six grebes, standing stiffly in their liveries of brown and white satin stepped forward and announced in watery voices:

"Ancient eagle from Snowdon, my lords ladies and gentlemen, the Assize Court is now open!"

A long ray from the low hidden moon, which had only just risen, crept through the glade like a searchlight, streaming across from the ancient eagle to Sam, who stood with the great cliffs of trees on each side of him, seeming much too small for where he was.

The eagle lifted his head and looked full at Sam. His strong hooked face and his terrible blazing, golden eyes, made Sam feel swallowed up.

"Swear in the Jury," said the Judge.

The Clerk, a grey-headed rook, with a worried expression, began fussing about. Sam looked to see where the twelve good men and true were, and saw them very comfortably seated on a big branch, embowered in the leaves of the chestnut. At least, eleven were seated. The twelfth, whose name was Mr. Titmuss, was hanging by his feet doing gymnastics. The clerk noticed him and said:

"Contempt of court, Mr. Titmuss."

Mr. Titmuss came right side up, and explained that it had been the custom of his family from earliest times so to do, and that in no other position could he think.

"You ain't obliged to think, you silly fellow," said the Little Owl, twisting his head round several times, like a screw-top pepper-pot, without disturbing a feather.

"Well, what be I to do, then?" asked Mr. Titmuss.

"Find out what his lordship wants you to say, and say it." But Mr. Titmuss only said, "Fie, fie, fie!" and swung to and

fro with such energy that Mr. Willow, from Africa (one of the numerous Warbler family) was very much annoyed. He weighed so very little that it was as easy to shake him as to shake a leaf.

"By the sun, moon, and stars, what did they put this small fry on the Jury for?" asked the old eagle.

"The robberies, your lordship, were mostly in the homes of such," replied the clerk.

At this a most tremendous twittering began. It was so loud that the frogs, singing sweetly in the swamp, were quite alarmed and sang no more all night.

"Silence in the court!" commanded the Judge, and the twitterings died out like candles on a Christmas tree.

"A strange thing it is," said the eagle, "that I should be fetched away from my cool eyrie, where from dawn to dusk I gaze upon the sun and ponder on Eternity, where nothing troubles, and no sound is but the sound of dew distilling drop by drop and slipping into the dewpond. And behold! here is only an assemblage of wrens, robins, and what-nots. Hasten, then, for at earliest dawn I keep tryst with the sun. Bring the prisoner into the dock."

The herons led Sam to a hollow tree, ringed with dock leaves. They put Sam inside, and the court usher, a magpie in black, slashed with white, hopped forward with a bit of dock in his beak.

"The prisoner is in, my lord, and here is some of the dock," he said. His idea always was to get a bit of a thing in his beak, and things *had* been said—but chiefly by human beings, who didn't count—about petty larceny in the matter of rings and brooches. But he was always so anxious to please that the birds hushed the thing up and hoped for the best.

"Are the plaintiffs all here?" asked the Judge. "How many are there?"

"A thousand, counting the mothers, me lord, all here."

"Divide by five hundred, reduce to decimals, strike an average—in short, do anything you like so long as you get them down to five. I won't hear more than five."

THE CUCKOO CLOCK

So they did all those things to the plaintiffs, and there were left Mr. Twite, Mrs. Dipper, Mr. Butcher-Bird, Miss Linnet (she was Mrs. Linnet really, only being a professional musician it was thought to be the correct thing for her to keep on being Miss, although she was Mrs.) and Mr. Fern Owl.

"Are the witnesses here?"

"Yes, my lord. Everybody living hereabouts is a witness. Everybody saw him."

"Us didna!" said the owls, who have a very countrified way of speaking, because they hang about the barns and stock yards in the evenings. "Us was asleep. Baint witnesses. Us can go to sleep again."

They all went to sleep immediately, snoring loudly, to show how annoyed they were at being hindered in their hunting.

"First plaintiff!" said the Eagle.

During the scuffling that ensued, Sam looked round in the bright moonlight, and was astonished to see, very high up on the tallest tree, a large cuckoo clock. Its round face shone with a dark lustre in the moonshine. Its long, white hands went creeping and creeping, like antennæ, which are insects' feelers, as if they were trying to get hold of poor Sam. Its fir-cone weights swung solemnly to and fro across the moon, which hung just on one side of it like a second clock face. Sam wondered what it could be there for.

The Clerk of the court called out:

"Mr. Twite!"

The court usher fussily brought him in.

"I understand you accuse the prisoner of taking, with evil intent, your whole clutch of eggs," said the Eagle.

"Quite," said Mr. Twite.

"Five, I think?"

"Quite."

"And you think he deserves the extreme penalty?"

"Quite."

"My good sir," said the Judge, "you become monotonous."

"He can't say anything else, my lord," whispered the usher.

"Fetch somebody who can, then."

"Miss Linnet!"

"Married woman?" asked the Eagle, frowning.

In a trilling voice she replied that she was.

"Why Miss, then?"

"A miss is as good as a mile," murmured the little owl, waking for a moment.

Miss Linnet explained about being a singer.

"Silly," said the Eagle, "but now about the prisoner?"

Miss Linnet was looking very nice in a close-fitting brown hat and dress, with touches of cream.

She immediately trilled into song.

*"Six eggs of palest blue
Within the hedge of yew,
Beneath blue sky,
Had I.
Where are they now, ah me?
There is the culprit. See, see, see!"*

"Mrs. Linnet deposes that prisoner took six eggs out of her house with intent to defraud," said the Judge, gruffly. "Next."

"Mr. Butcher-Bird."

Mr. Butcher-Bird said that he had taken a nice house with an excellent larder, and had spent a deal of time and trouble stocking the larder with everything suitable to the children, who were just ready to enter the world when Sam came and took them. So now there was all that good food, and no family to eat it.

Mrs. Butcher-Bird at this point broke down completely, and had to be taken out of court.

"Mrs. Dipper!"

Mrs. Dipper was a stout, countrified lady, very tidy in her dark dress with a white front. She curtsied to the Judge, the Jury,

THE CUCKOO CLOCK

the Clerk, the Usher, and the whole Court. In fact, she kept on curtsying all the time.

She said that she and her husband had built a commodious residence, with a pleasant outlook over the weir pool. They had four eggs in the house. They went out early one morning for their swim, and while they were away Sam came and scooped out all the eggs with his butterfly net.

"Thanks, my good woman," said the Eagle. "Next."

Mrs. Dipper curtsied again, and withdrew.

The last plaintiff was Mr. Fern-Owl.

He said he and his wife believed in the simple life. They were camping in the wood. Late one evening he was helping his wife to churn, when he saw Sam take the eggs. Two, to be exact. And though he fled round and round Sam, and jarred as much as he could, it was of no use.

"Be there witnesses to all these sins?" asked the Judge.

A piercing silver roar of sound answered him. So many birds fluttered down into the open that they were piled up like autumn leaves.

"Gentlemen of the Jury, you have heard the evidence. Retire and consider your verdict."

"Now sirs!" said the usher, resisting the temptation to put the little owl's quill pen into his pocket. "Now sirs!"

He woke the little owl, got Mr. Titmuss right side up, and saw that Mr. Willow was not crushed by the larger birds.

"The Jury has retired, my Lord," he said.

But in less than a minute they were all back again.

"Agreed?" asked the Judge.

"Agreed, my Lord. GUILTY!"

The cheering lasted for several minutes, and poor Sam in his tree began to cry.

"Then I pass the usual sentence," said the Eagle, glad to get through so quickly, for soon now the sun would be climbing the eastern steps of Snowdon.

“Sound the gongs of doom,” said the Eagle.

The sound of the bitterns’ gongs went rolling gloomily out into the forest.

“Nuthatches, do your duty!”

Twenty nuthatches, swarming up, unloosed the pulley and let down the cuckoo clock, which was received by the grey geese.

“Prisoner,” said the Judge, “you have greedily and cruelly robbed the homes of the birds. People who steal from others end by losing themselves. I condemn you to perpetual imprisonment, and as the cuckoo is the only bird who steals other birds’ houses, a cuckoo clock is a suitable prison for a boy who steals eggs. Herons, do your duty!”

Sam had not a moment to think or to try to escape. The herons marched him forward, the magpie officiously held open the door of the clock, the herons pushed Sam in, and shut the door. And there, to this day, poor Sam remains. Dismally, as you pass some clockmaker’s on a winter evening, you may hear him calling for help. Only nobody knows it is a call for help, because all that Sam can say is “Cuckoo!” And nobody knows it is Sam, because he is dressed like a cuckoo. And the only breath of air he ever gets is when the little spring to which he is fastened with birdlime, darts forward at the hours and half hours for him to call the time. You may think how he must enjoy twelve o’clock!

So poor Sam never went home to nursery breakfast, and the kitten and Nurse. His mother called him in the flower garden, and Nurse called him in the kitchen garden. His brothers called him in the orchard, and his father called him in the wood. But all they ever had of Sam was his finger-print on the egg-cabinet. For poor Sam Sinnable was fast in the little square parlour of the cuckoo clock, and there he is to this day.



Aunt Jane.



BY HILAIRE BELLOC

“MAMMA,” said Amanda, “I want to know what
Our relatives mean when they say
That Aunt Jane is a Gorgon who ought to be shot,
Or at any rate taken away.

“Pray what is a Gorgon, and why do you shoot
It? Or are its advances refused?
Or is it perhaps a maleficent Brute?
I protest I am wholly bemused.”

“The term,” said her Mother, “is certain to pain,
And is quite inexcusably rude.
Moreover Aunt Jane, though uncommonly plain,
Is also uncommonly good.”

HILAIRE BELLOC



She provides information without
hesitation,
For people unwilling to learn;
And often bestows good advice upon
those
Who give her no thanks in
return.

“She is down before anyone’s up in the place—
That is, up before anyone’s down.
Her household are awed by the shape of her face,
And tremble with fear at her frown.

“Her visiting list is of Clergymen
who
Have reached a respectable age,
And she pays her companion, MISS
ANGELA DREW,
A sufficient and regular wage.

“Her fortune is large; yet we often
remark
On a modesty rare in the rich,
For her nearest and dearest are quite
in the dark
As to what she will leave, or to
which.



AUNT JANE

“Her conduct has ever been totally free
From censorious whispers of ill.
At any rate, since 1903—
And probably earlier still.

“Your Father’s dear Sister presents, in a word,
A model for all of her sex,
With a firmness of will that is never deterred
And a confidence nothing can vex.

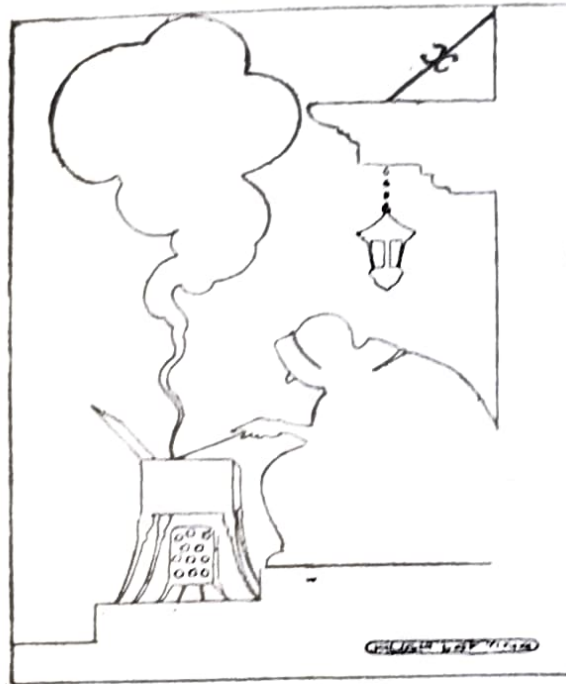


“I can only desire that you too, should aspire
To such earthly reward as appears,
In a high reputation, at present entire,
After Lord knows what number of years.

“So in future remember to turn a deaf ear
To detraction—and now run away
To your brothers and sisters whose laughter I hear
In the garden below us at play.”

“Oh, thank you, Mamma!” said Amanda at that,
And ran off to the innocent band
Who were merrily burying Thomas, the Cat,
Right up to his neck in the sand.





IN THE DOORWAY OF A VACANT
HOUSE SHE USED TO SIT

The Galloping Sleigh

BY HUGH LOFTING

MOTHER KURT, "the Chestnut Woman," was a great favourite with the townspeople for all her ugly looks. In the doorway of a vacant house that faced the Marien Kirche she used to sit, watching the sedan-chairs go by, with a strange, far-away look in her eyes. Spring and Summer, fruits were her wares; and these were carried in a basket slung about her neck as she strolled the streets in search of custom. But in Winter she was always to be found on her doorstep, crouching over the chestnut-oven with its little fire beneath.

Sometimes the folks wondered what Frau Kirt would do if the vacant house were ever occupied and the nook taken from her. She was a landmark; it is probable the natives would have been as much surprised to miss her from her doorstep as they would have been to find the Rote Turm gone from the Market Place.

Many extravagant conjectures were made as to her age. The oldest inhabitant seemed to recollect her as a venerable woman; no one knew anything about her youth or whence she came, and she would never talk about her past. Certain it was, however, that she was a very old woman and that her language and education seemed strangely out of keeping with her trade.

With the children she was particularly popular, not only on account of what she sold, but also for the tales she used to tell them winter nights when the feeble spark of life in her dull, old eyes seemed for a little to rekindle.

This was Christmas Eve; and though the school had been closed some weeks a small knot of youngsters clustered round the little stove and its aged owner. A hundred yards away, a party of Christmas Waits stood shin-deep in the snow, making an ill-tuned effort at a carol under the window of a wealthy merchant.

"A malediction on their dismal dirge!" Mother Kurt was grumbling. "Did mortal ears ever hearken to such wheezy groans? Music! A dying pig could do better! Well, you lads have asked me for a tale, and I'll not be rid of you, I wager, till I tell one. Yon woeful waits (but not, indeed, their music!) recall something to my memory that happened many years ago. Maybe it will please you—for it's a Christmas tale."

On their toy-sleighs, that served as seats, the boys settled themselves expectantly and prepared to listen with attention, while the fire from the brazier threw giant shadows above them on the walls of the empty house.

"Long before any of you manikins were born, aye, and before most of your fathers saw the light of day, there dwelt in this town a young woman of the merchant class. Her husband was dead; and she had an only son. One evil day, when the snow lay high-piled in the streets and the east wind howled about the roofs, the boy (he was then six years old) fell sick. A physician was called in—an old man who, like the woman, had a cherished youngster of

THE GALLOPING SLEIGH

his own. The two lads were about the same age. Over the sick child he worked many nights but the malady grew worse and worse. At last the doctor prevailed upon the mother to allow surgery. This practice was then almost unknown, and men had a wholesome horror of being cut alive. In these days folks think less of it; though for my part, I would sooner die a decent death of the ills God sent me, than let them touch my body with their brutal knives. Well, doubtless this surgeon meant fairly enough but the boy died under the work. Upon that, the young mother, who from the first had been against this butcher-medicine, became for a time crazed with sorrow. And o'er the body of her child she swore that neither meat nor drink should pass her lips ere she took the life of the surgeon's son."

At this point the bulky form of the beadle loomed into the circle of fire-light. He dropt a few groschen into the old woman's palm and took a handful of chestnuts from the oven-top.

"'Tis high time you shavers were abed," he said with gruff kindness to the boys. "What do you—on the streets—at such an hour?"

"Dame Kurt is telling us a story, Master Beadle," said the most courageous of the audience. "But 'twill end soon and we will home to sup."

"A fine night indeed for fairy tales," the man replied. "At Hans' Corner the snow has drift a fathom deep. Well, get done with your story, Dame, and let these jackanapes go home. A merry Yuletide to you all!"

The children chorused in acknowledgment as the beadle moved away; and when the huge figure had grown indistinct in the flying snow, Mother Kurt continued.

"Now this surgeon had great hopes of his heir, who in some ways disappointed him. He intended his son for the law, thus purposing to advance him in the world. But the boy cared naught for the dry affairs of a notary; he was all for music. This the

father did everything in his power to discourage, even keeping him from school, lest his notes be learned together with his alphabet. But when the parents were away one day, some kind hand smuggled into the house a clavichord. It was stowed in an attic, where, when chance offered, the boy taught himself to play. Through closed doors the sounds of a clavichord will penetrate but a little; and when he was sent to bed the lad would steal into the garret and there strum softly in the dark. Like the blood in his veins was the music in his baby fingers, and harmony, for him, was instinct.

“All this the bereaved mother learned from gossip, and one night—a Christmas Eve—the surgeon with his wife and son made merry in the parlour, toasting their guests. While they were thus cheerfully engaged, the woman stole into the house and mounting to the garret, hid herself behind an old settee.

“When the clock struck nine, the boy, packed off to bed, came creeping up the stairs into the room where the woman lurked. It was inky dark, nothing but the feeble light from the stars through the casement-window. But the lad, familiar with the garret, moved without difficulty among the old furniture with which the room was stored.

“Carefully he dragged aside some empty cases that concealed his instrument, and sat him down before the clavichord. For lack of light the woman was frustrated from her deed; so biding her time behind the settee, she planned to smother him when he went to bed. The chamber that he slept in was but across the landing.

“Then he began to play, softly at first, with reverent expectation in his hymn. So, I ween, must St. Cecilia have played on the keyboard of the Angels. Soon with a rippling burst of speed, he made the little brown keys jump and dance and laugh—in an ecstasy of gladness. Now to a thoughtful tone his music turned, as though he told a tale, with simplicity—for the ears of children. A while this narrative continued in its even, kindly melody, broken only once by a clamour, as of a multitude in praise. But presently into the theme he wove a discord of distress—of doubt, dread,

THE GALLOPING SLEIGH

desertion! So it saddened to the very depths of grief, passed, trembling and swaying in lament, through all the dim, grey land of sorrow, and in a deep murmur expired like the distant roll of thunder from an angry sky. Then silence for a space; and the woman found herself praying that he would resume.

“Which anon he did. Again with a tingle of anticipation, but this time so quietly—even as one who dropped his voice lest he disturb a vigil’s solemn hush—that the listener had to strain her ears to catch the lilt. Then suddenly he slipped down from his stool, and, standing, smote the keys with his little hands; and from that puny wooden box of strings the royal chords of Triumph rolled, vibrant with all the glory of a Resurrection.

“Thus he ended. With a sigh he gently closed the clavichord, moved over to the window and flung wide the casement. In swept the bitter cold wind, fit to freeze the marrow of his young bones; but he seemed not to heed it.

“‘Christmas Eve!’ he murmured, then gazed up at Charle’s Wain, hung aslant the sky. ‘The Messiah’s Birthday! . . . What a story to be put in music! Yes; when I grow up—I’ll write it!’

“He looked down at the people passing in the street below.

“‘Ah, wait!’ he cried. ‘Wait till I have written my “Messiah!” Wait till I have set my mighty oratorio ringing through the world—not for an age, but for all time: wait till I may conduct the thronging orchestra and sway the legion chorus!—Then!—Then you will mark them stop upon the street, pointing to my coach, and cry: “See! There he goes!” (the lad pointed through the window in his eagerness, and his little chest swelled like a pouter-pigeon) “See, there he goes!”—The man that wrote the “Messiah”—George Handel, the Composer!’

“As he turned back into the room the dim light lit up his chubby, earnest face. So much did it remind the woman of her son, that all her lust for vengeance fell away, and stifling her sobs she slipped softly from the room.

“But the boy heard her. He ran out onto the landing, and leaning over the balustrade, whispered after her into the darkness of the stair-well: ‘Who is that?’

“The woman fearful lest answering nothing she be followed, whispered back: ‘’Tis I—Santa Claus.’

“But the lad’s unnatural ears heard the tears in her voice.

“‘You are crying! Wherefore do you weep, St. Nicholas—on such a night?’

“‘Because I have no Yuletide gift for thee. My sleigh is empty and my reindeers tired. All my toys I have bestowed upon the other children of the town.’

“At that moment they heard the parlour-door slam below and the noise of someone coming up the stairs.

“‘My parents!’ cried the boy. ‘My Clavichord will be discovered. Stop them, good Santa Claus! My father will be mad with anger if he finds me not undressed. My clavichord will be discovered, smashed and thrown upon the rubbish heap. Nevermore shall I be let to play up here in secret to the stars, to God—and you! Make this thy Christmas gift, St. Nicholas: stop them while I may hide my instrument and doff my clothes—stop them, in heaven’s name!’

“And the woman stood there on the stairs to bar the coming of the surgeon and his wife; while the boy turned back into the garret. Of her own danger she thought, ’tis true, but in that moment the lad’s sincere appeal seemed to her of most account. That such music as his should be forever silenced appeared too dire for contemplation; and so she waited.

“But the surgeon as he mounted the last flight, on which the woman stood, was looking backward o’er his shoulder, talking to his wife behind. Aloft he held the candle in his hand. He did not perceive the woman till, turning, he found himself within arm’s reach of her. But so thickly muffled round the chin was she, the surgeon did not recognise the mother of the boy he had attended. For a moment he gazed into her face; and behold—even while the

THE GALLOPING SLEIGH

woman trembled for the consequences of her rashness—*SOME UNSEEN HAND SNUFFED THE CANDLE DEAD!*

“Then arose a mighty uproar; and while the surgeon and his wife descended for the tinder-box, and shouts of ‘Thieves! Help! The watch!’ rang through the house, the woman crept down and hid herself in a bed-chamber on the floor below.

“Anon up came the parents once again, and with them all their guests. They fell to searching in the garrets, where they found young Master Handel snug abed and sound asleep—or so he did appear.

“With all the household up above the woman took her opportunity; and stealing from the room where she lay hid, sped quietly down the stairs and so into the street.

“Now it’s time for you boys to go back to your mothers, who are blessing me, I’ll warrant, for keeping you abroad so late.”

Frau Kurt rose painfully from the doorstep and pulled her shawl about her, preparing to go home.

“But, Dame Kurt,” asked one of the boys, “whose was the hand that snuffed the candle?”

“Oh, St. Nicholas, my dear—without a doubt! For mark you, when the woman had regained the thoroughfare she looked back, up at the window of the garret, and from the snow-clad roofs came jingling down to her the merry music of a galloping sleigh.”



Humoresque

BY EDEN PHILLPOTTS

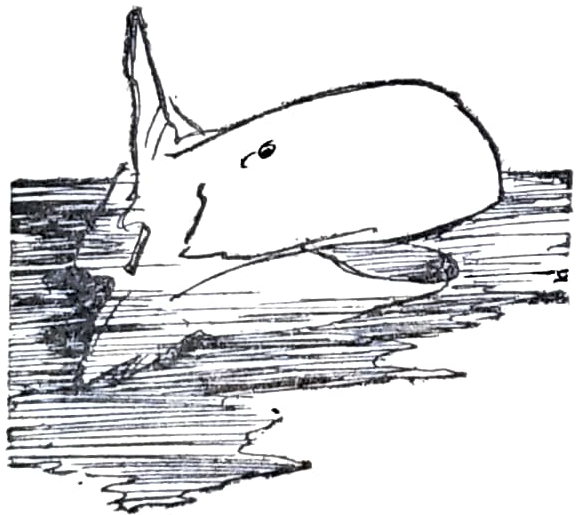
THE wings of dusk are stirring
Above a lonely strand,
Where sleepy waves run purring,
And laugh to stroke the land.
The dimpsy light fades flashing
Upon their tiny splashing,
And splintering and clashing
Along the patient sand.

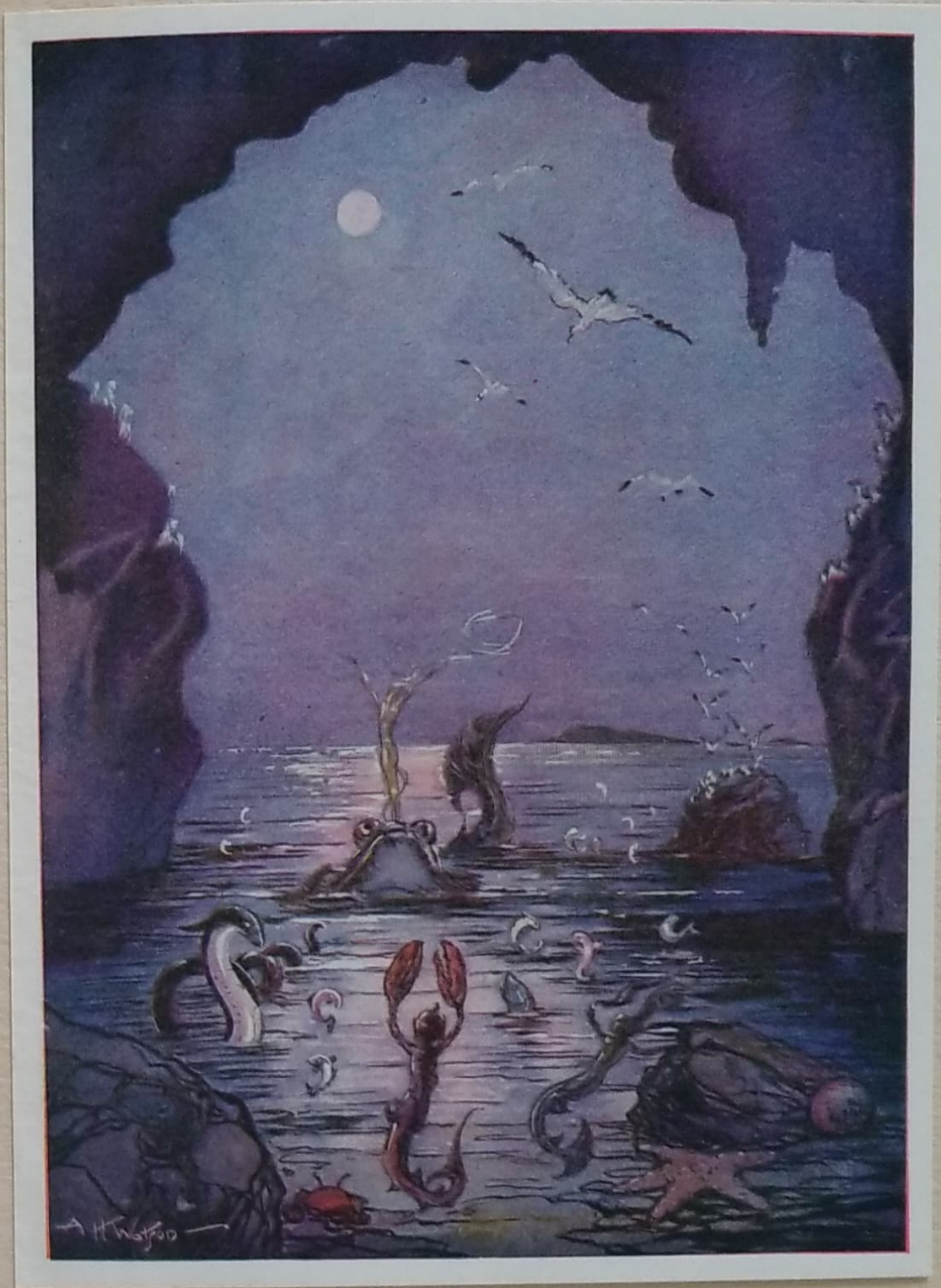
Then sudden shapes come waking
The still and twilit tide,
With silver shoulders breaking
Its shallows far and wide.
Like salmon they are springing,
Like little children singing,
And some sea-shells are bringing,
And some sea-horses ride.

HUMORESQUE



But many a weary cod-fish
Grows very limp and lame,
While squids and other odd fish
Begin to feel the same.
Yet all do as they're bidden
When by mer-boys bestridden,
Or laughing mer-girls ridden,
And try to play the game.





THEY SET THE EBB AFOAMING



They set the ebb afoaming,
Their elfin laughter steals
Afar to where go roaming
Blackdolphins, silky seals.
Who swim to join the frolic
And snort and splash and
rolic,
Till grampus gets a colic
And eats two conger eels.

But when such wild betiding
Lifts to a joyous roar,
One fishing-boat comes glid-
ing
Back to the nightly shore.
Whereon with wild com-
motion,
And sudden, deep emotion,
The sea folk fly to ocean
And all is still once more.





BY ALGERNON BLACKWOOD

THE adventures Peter and Rose had were of a rather unusual kind. Peter was the leader always, and when he was pleased with his sister he called her Rose Maiden, which she liked, for it made her feel proud and happy. Rose was just an ordinary little girl, like any other, but Rose Maiden was someone wonderful. As Rose she adored her brother; as Rose Maiden she worshipped him. Peter was especially marvellous as leader of an adventure. She would have followed him to the stars.

The stars often came into these adventures, because their father went in for astronomy as well as insects. By day he collected beetles and studied wasps and spiders, being a naturalist; but at night, when the sun was gone, he spent hours with his big telescope, staring at the stars. The children were sometimes

allowed a peep down the mighty tube. They had seen the silvery moon with her seas and mountains; they had gazed at Venus and Mars, and once they had stared at mighty Saturn, tremendously distant, with his enormous rings about him.

This was only a few days before the adventure Peter called the Water Performance, took place; and Saturn had seemed to them so wonderful that he was mixed up strangely with the adventure that followed. Saturn influenced the earth in some odd way, their father told them. "Besides," he mentioned in rather a grave voice, "he is just now in conjunction with the moon, and so he is extra powerful, you see."

They didn't see, because, of course, they had no idea what "in conjunction" meant. But it excited their imaginations none the less. Their father said something else as well that excited their imaginations even more: "It was always at this time, when Saturn was in conjunction, and at his strongest," he informed them, "that the old Druids had their great ceremonies, you see."

Here, again, they didn't "see," because they knew nothing about Druids, and still less about old Druids. But Peter looked them up in a book, and told her that they were mighty priests, with long beards, who went in for magical ceremonies at which they used mistletoe and lighted fires on altars inside a ring of big stones. The ring of big stones, he thought, was copied from Saturn's rings. They also made strange sacrifices on their altars, and ate queer food afterwards. They used a wonderful knife. It was called the Sacrificial Knife.

"So we'd better have an Adventure," he then told her. "A Druid one, with Saturn and everything mixed in, you see."

"Rather," agreed Rose with enthusiasm. "I should jolly well think so."

And that was all she said, because Peter, being a man of action and of few words, would make all the arrangements, as he always did. He disliked too much talk, but the Adventures he organised never failed.

THE WATER PERFORMANCE



They told no one about these affairs. Father was too busy to listen, and mother, of course, would not understand. Mother was always thinking about wet feet and draughts, and being warmly dressed. She didn't quite approve of stars and telescopes, because she was afraid her husband would catch cold. Insects, too, she disliked. Beetles, she declared, were nasty, grubby little beasts, wasps were dangerous, and spiders were rather cruel. Had Druids been mentioned, she would probably have called them horrible old men.

The Water Performance, at any rate, whatever mother might have thought of it, was too strange and vivid ever to be forgotten. The day would come when Rose would tell it to children of her own. This, she felt, might be difficult, for, although its circumstances were clear enough, there lurked a queer sense in her that perhaps she and Peter never actually went to the pond at all, but that the whole lovely episode took place—well, not in her imagination exactly, but that it was always *there*, and that they went back to it, much as one turns back the pages of a very wonderful book of pictures. . . .

The old country house lay quite still in the sweet darkness, everybody asleep and motionless, stretched in soft beds on each floor: Father dreaming of stars and insects, crumpled up across the mattress, his mouth wide open probably; mother, delicate as a bit of old perfumed lace, her placid mind not even dreaming, hands folded, the big four-poster protecting her;



while, far away in another wing of the building, Peter and Rose. . . .

It took place when the moon was over the three-quarters, and in conjunction, as they knew, with mighty-ringed old Saturn, who had tilted his huge circular attendants so that their planes were visible in the telescope. Uranus and Neptune, too, were doing something or other interesting at their still vaster distances. But Saturn's was the chief part in the Adventure, and his co-operation lent a magnificent, even a terrific, atmosphere of mysterious wonder to what happened.

Towards midnight there came a stealthy tap at Rose's door in the west wing, and in answer to her "Who's there?" in stole Peter. She had, of course, been waiting for him.

"I thought you were never coming," she whispered with a quiver of suppressed excitement. "The moon's tremendous already." She paused. "I suppose Saturn's at her," she added, a touch of awe in her voice.

Peter did not answer, but the expression in his face confirmed her conjecture about Saturn. He was dressed in a school sweater, cap, and muffler, and wore gymnasium shoes on his feet. He made no noise as he tip-toed in, and softly closed the door behind him. In his hands was a lantern, not yet lit, and a bundle that betrayed signs of bursting, yet did not burst. It might have contained anything from a footstool or potatoes to the bearskin from the hall. It bulged suspiciously. Peter's eyes shone in his dark face. He was very much in earnest, his manner intense and preoccupied.

"Ready, Rose?" he asked in a low voice.

She nodded, unable to trust herself to further words. Peter, she knew, disliked long sentences at times like this.

"Got the stuff?" He glanced swiftly about him, taking in details quickly. He looked her up and down. "You're dressed," he added approvingly. "Ladder's up all right. Good. Come on, then!" And he led the way as though he stepped on glass or thinnest ice, noiseless as a cat.

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They moved to the open window, where the top of a ladder showed its twin noses above the balcony's edge. Peter glanced back into the room as his sister climbed out.

"Got the eggs?" he asked abruptly, and when she nodded, he said "How many?" He meant to make sure of every detail.

"Six," came her whisper, one leg already over the parapet. "I took them myself from under the hens." She waited for a word of praise that did not come.

"Butter?" came instead.

"Bagged it from the Dairy," she whispered proudly, "and here's the cake and ham and cold suet pudding—four thick slices."

"Of which?"

"All three," she told him briefly.

His look of approval this time was a joy to her. The parcel containing the food hung round her neck with string. Her hands already clutched the top of the ladder, and both legs were now across the parapet. She paused a moment. Peter's quick eye, she saw, had noticed something. He pointed interrogatively, saying nothing, to a package in brown paper lying beside her on the coping stone.

"Frying pan," she informed him in her lowest whisper.

"I'd better carry it," he decided. "Take the paper off. It crackles. Here—give it to me," and, divesting the article of its noisy paper, he stuffed the pan up inside the back of his sweater, so that the handle projected a few inches like an iron tail. "That's safer," he commented. "Now, come on! Rose, you're—splendid!"

The unexpected praise tended to upset her balance, but Peter's eye was on her, while his hands held the ladder steady. It was a dizzy business, a perilous descent down rickety steps on to the lawn below, where a gulf of darkness swallowed her. She made it safely, then watched her brother slide down like a monkey on a greasy pole, his iron tail projecting.

"Magnificent, Peter!"



"Easy," was all he said, adding a second afterwards "Basseker," from which she understood that their friend, the Head Gardener, had raised the ladder securely for them the moment darkness fell.

Having dragged it with great effort behind the laurel shrubberies, they crept cautiously past the Lily Garden, the Rockery, and the Conservatory. Past the tennis courts and big rhododendron clumps they stealthily made their way, through the Kitchen Garden next, and then along the cinder path to the high

hedge. Here an iron swinging-gate led into the open fields beyond.

They halted again, like two burglars escaping with bundles of booty, then peered about them cautiously, standing in shadow under the big hedge. Peter stared hard at several things in turn, but said no word, while Rose, panting from her exertions, waited beside him. There was a growing excitement in her, a tremendous wonder as to what was coming, but questions, she well knew, were useless. Peter never explained beforehand.

The night was very still, but she did not feel it empty. The invisible ghost of Saturn, hanging enormous beyond the world, was mysteriously about, making everything look just a little different, a little unusual. Saturn, at any rate, was in her mind. His majesty was present. Gazing about her, she was convinced the Kitchen Garden had a grander look. The silvery earth lay strange, the currant bushes stirred as though life crouched behind them, ready to rush out the instant she turned her

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head. No one could say exactly what Saturn might do, or not do, but the shadows beneath the pear trees lay spread and oddly thick, and no proper pear tree, she thought, looked quite like that in the daytime. The apple trees, too, friendliest in all the garden, had altered. The fruit-nets bulged here and there in unaccustomed fashion. In everything she noticed something just a little different. Then a swift outline flashed suddenly at tremendous speed along the top of the high wall. A loud, clanging noise sounded in her very ears.

Rose just stifled a scream.

"Oh, I say—do shut up!"

It was Peter's voice, but the sound, after so much whispering, hardly sounded normal. With difficulty she stifled another scream.

"Frying pan," he explained calmly. "Beastly handle's got caught."

Rose mentioned the flying shape she had seen on the wall, and the figures crouching beneath the fruit-nets.

"Bosh!" declared Peter with conviction. "Moon's playing tricks. She always does. Thing on the wall that scared you was a cat. Here, give us a hand, will you? Sharp about it!"

She disentangled the lantern and frying-pan handle, which had caught between the bars of the swinging-gate, and the sound of clanking metal that had startled her was not repeated. It was a relief, and yet a disappointment, to know it was not great Saturn "doing something." Squeezing herself and her precious parcels through the narrow space, she stood beside Peter and drew a deep sigh of suppressed excitement. Before them, drenched in the



light of the moon, now riding in a cloudless sky, spread the emptiness of open fields. The air bit keenly at their faces.

"All right, Rose?" her brother enquired in a low voice.

"Rather, Pete."

"Everything?"

"Everything."

"Nothing smashed?"

"Nothing—yet," she told him proudly.

"Grand!" and he led the way across the soaking grass that rose high above their ankles. After that "grand," she would have followed him through water to the neck. Indeed, she almost did so. For the heavy dew splashed like a river, and her stockings and short skirt, even though a track was made for her, grew soaking wet against her steps. They swished along.

The night air, cool and scented, met them in the face. Half a mile away, in a hollow below them, lay a dark-clumped shadow—the Lower Farm buildings. No lights were visible, but the chimneys stood up like pointing fingers, and the stone tiles, covered with dew, glistened like jewels in the moonlight. Behind the silence everywhere was a host of tiny noises, faint, remote, trickling noises, as though the night, like an immense cistern, were slowly filling up. The adventurers went forward without speaking. They made little sound, but the heavy swish of the thick, soaked grass carried better than they knew. For sharp ears were pointed not very far away. Night always sets ears pricking, and all the world, apparently, does not go to sleep at the same time. A dog barked plaintively in the distance. It kept on barking.

"Pete!" exclaimed Rose, "we've been heard!"

Her brother turned his head a moment, listening intently. He formed a quick, decided judgment, as a born leader should:

"At the moon," he announced in a final tone. "Another trick of old Silversides. Saturn's at her, too, remember."

The dog continued barking at intervals, trying, Rose knew, to wake the whole country-side, yet she felt comforted; Peter was

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right; Peter always knew. Behind the barking ran the dull rumble of a train, far, far away, a sound ominous and yet companionable. It showed that people were awake somewhere, doing ordinary things, reminding her of her own rare journeys to London, too. So the world was going on as usual, and it was only she and Peter who were not doing ordinary things. They were doing something that no one else on the whole planet was doing, something secret, wonderful, a little dangerous. The familiar sounds of dog and train made their own adventure stand out more sharply by contrast. A shiver ran through her. Oh, how marvellous life was! Saturn's invisible companionship awed her more and more. There was something almost appalling about it. They were doing something gorgeous and terrible, and the universe was doing it with them. The activities of the night were on their side. Now, in the daytime, of course——”

“Step up, Rose!” whispered Peter sharply. “You’re dawdling. We’re late already.”

“Oh, are we?” she gasped, and stepped up grandly in response, longing to ask “Late for what?” On the wind came the faint clang of distant bells striking midnight. Peter increased his pace.

The Spinney now rose before them, cloaked in mystery, and hardly recognisable as the trees she knew in daylight. Composed of larches, ash and oak, with dense undergrowth below, it contained a pond, and this pond was kept free of weeds and scum by a spring, or, rather, by several springs that bubbled up powerfully through the sandy bottom. These larches stood outlined against the sky, straight and tall, shining in the moonlight like proud, silvery soldiers. There was a purring wind in them, although the boughs seemed motionless. Beneath lay impenetrable blackness. Rose shivered again a little as she saw.

“If an owl hoots,” mentioned Peter, “we’re all right.”

He turned to her with a finger on his screwed-up lips; his ears, she fancied, were a little pointed, like a faun’s; but before

ALGERNON BLACKWOOD

she could ask his meaning, she received a shock that thrilled her to the marrow, for across the silence broke the solemn hooting of that very bird of prey, and so close it seemed just above her head.

"Ah!" exclaimed Peter. "So we're not late, after all! Better hurry, though!"

The hooting was not repeated, but enchantment grew more and more upon her from that moment. They stood side by side now on the edge of the Spinney. Peter turned and faced her.

"Rose," he said in a confident whisper, "I'll be back in a jiffy. Wait here till I come"—and vanished into the blackness. He was gone, perhaps five minutes—to Rose it seemed much longer—and when a figure nearly twice his normal height emerged again at last, the start she gave was more of admiration than of nervousness. For, if marvellously changed, he was also marvellously improved. It was certainly her brother, but her brother singularly, and yet, she felt, appropriately, clothed. The towering head-dress was the item that lent to his ordinary stature so gigantic an appearance. It curved upwards to a pinnacle, with two wings springing out sideways from the temples, and between these wings a point of dazzling brilliance flashed like a jewel in the moonlight, darting rays of fire at her. A robe of purple enveloped him to the feet.

He advanced towards her with a curious swinging dignity that impressed her immensely, so that for a thrilling instant she wondered if it were not colossal Saturn swaying down out of icy space into the little earthly Spinney. Saturn, at any rate, seemed nearer, although the voice she now heard was undoubtedly her brother's:

"*You* now, Rose Maiden!" he announced in solemn tones. He held out a bundle. "Quick! And, remember, to the skin!"

This wonderful figure called her Rose Maiden!

So solemn were his tone and gesture, so compelling, too, the sweet name he used, that she obeyed without a murmur, without a word of enquiry, without a single impulse of refusal. Taking

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the bundle, she entered the thick blackness beneath the trees. It seemed as if huge Saturn, somehow, held her by the hand, the little hand that trembled.

At first she saw nothing; the creepers caught her feet, the branches tickled her face, a twig gave her cheek a little slap that stung; everything tried to stop her. Then, suddenly, she found a patch of moonlight close to some sweet-smelling alders, and, ignoring the buzzing cock-chafers which ordinarily stuck in her hair and made her scream, she began to undress. She opened the bundle and put on the various garments it contained. She changed, as bidden, to the skin.

"Do I look all right, Peter?" she whispered, as she came out again five minutes later, wishing in her inmost heart that she had a pocket mirror.

She certainly *looked* all right. Her thick hair hung down her shoulders, where the leopard skins were fastened with two bows; a golden belt from a ball-dress of her mother's caught them at the waist, making them cling neatly over her little hips; her arms were free, and her long bare legs ended in something half sandal, half Turkish slippers, contrived evidently by her brother's clever hands. Ivy and wild roses twined across her neck and forehead, and a knife, with a sheath of silver, swung from her belt by means of a leather thong. She was a picture for the moon, even for great Saturn, to admire.

Peter gave her a rapid examination from head to foot. "Perfect!" he exclaimed. With dignity he drew the knife out of its sheath and placed it in her hand. "Take this, Rose Maiden," he said gravely, "and follow me. The others await us yonder!"

The reference to "others" seemed wholly credible to her then, nor did it alarm her, for the emotion of awe ate up all lesser dreads. Her brother looked so splendid and mysterious that she felt sure he was protective too. The way he addressed her as "Rose Maiden" was comforting as well as stimulating; she, too, like himself, had become another person. His own name,

moreover, now that she thought about it, suggested power, though this had never occurred to her before: Peter the Great, Peter the Apostle, Peter the Hermit—she knew not which to choose, but her father, she remembered, had once called him Saturn-ine, and the implication of that queer phrase at last was clear. He was in league with the grand divinities of inter-stellar space, and that was what being “in conjunction” meant. Through the moon, he had somehow linked arms with Saturn!

She followed the swaying head-dress and the flowing purple robe with perfect confidence.

In the daytime the Spinney was a deserted, mournful sort of place. The pond was too densely surrounded by underbrush for the cattle to drink there, its water being led off into a lower pond beside the farm. The gardeners rarely visited it, the family never; there were no beetles to attract their father; their mother considered it unhealthy. It lived by itself, unkempt, neglected, lonely. But now, as they entered its depths beneath the moon at midnight, it was a very different place, as though invisible hands had dressed it up. Its desolation became dignity. It seemed alive. It sang and murmured round them, and the blackness strained with movement. Peter's figure became a blur; it was marvellous how he made his way so easily. Heavy smells of leaf and mold rose up to meet them; there was a fragrant dankness; she heard frogs croaking; rustling filled the shadows. Once, a big bird, wakened out of sleep, made a violent commotion overhead as it flapped heavily away through the dense branches. It remained invisible, they only heard it. But nothing obstructed them, and at last they reached a spot where the moonlight pierced the tangle and made a little breathing space about them. There was a small clearing, obviously prepared. She caught the gleam of water.

Here, standing erect in the centre, her brother halted in a listening attitude, and looked about him with an expectant air. There was a subdued and curious sound, a sound of gurgling.

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"The water rises," he muttered, half to himself and half to her. "The springs are working strongly." He seemed satisfied. "This," he said impressively, turning to his companion, "this, Rose Maiden, is the Water Performance. The signs are favourable. Watch! Listen! And obey!"

"I hear," she murmured in reply, her breath catching a little with the wonder in her, and she was on the point of adding "Great Apostle Hermit," when he spoke again:

"*You*," he ordered in the same solemn tones, "remain here. Dance, as you feel, but, also, wave this all the time above your head." He handed her a spray of mistletoe. "And when I call to you across the water, then light the fire and prepare the food." These last seven words he almost chanted, so that they sounded like a line of poetry: "*Light the Fire and prepare the Food.*"

The little clearing lay in full moonlight, a small heap of dry twigs was ready for the match, a kettle stood beside them, and the frying-pan, she saw, had been set down. All this she noted. But she was chiefly conscious of one thing only—that he was going to leave her. She would be alone with the trees, the moonlight, and the gurgling sounds. Saturn, perhaps, would show his great ringed face. This laid an unexpected strain upon her nerves. She clenched her hands and bit her lips; her breath came with difficulty; but, whatever happened, she must not fail him in this splendid moment. Nor would she. Her spirit rose with a great effort to the occasion. She found her voice, after some slight preliminary choking, though she was aware that her choice of words was not entirely happy:

"Right ho! Great Hermit!" she uttered in a scarcely audible whisper. "I understand, I listen, I obey. Go forth!" she added, raising her voice to a louder pitch, "go forth, you vast Apostle!"

Never, in all her young life, had she felt less like dancing, but she did not say so. Yet dancing, it now suddenly came to her, was obviously the proper thing to do. She knew this in her blood. Instinctively she knew it. She longed to do the right thing and

prove herself worthy in every detail. Inspiration might come a little later; meanwhile she waited. She watched him stoop and light the hurricane lantern. In her left hand she clasped the mistletoe tightly, while her right hand clutched the knife. Of this weapon she now of a sudden became dreadfully aware.

"Oh, Peter!" she exclaimed. "And—this?" She thrust its gleaming outline closer to the growing candle flame, so that he could see it clearly.

His face turned graver, his voice more solemn, than before. "The Sacrificial Knife," he told her grimly, yet with a half reverent air. "'Tis for the food. Only that blade may touch the food. It is the Sacrifice of which we both partake—the moment the divine hunger comes. Saturn is near."

His words, his tone, his manner warned her. Her heart began to beat more quickly. The night, it seemed, peeled off another skin; a curtain lifted. An enormous ear lowered itself through empty space to listen. She imagined Saturn stooping above the lonely Spinney, filling the sky with his stupendous bulk. The idea of his glittering, majestic presence rolled like a tide into her very blood. At the same time—a result merely of inexperience perhaps—it was on her lips to say that they could not eat with a knife. The words were not appropriate, she knew; she felt them shameless even; she kept them back at the last moment. The phrase "divine hunger," though she hardly grasped its meaning, proved them unsuitable.

"I obey," she said instead, "I will not fail, Great Peter Hermit," her choice of terms confused a little.

"Farewell, then!" announced Peter in his deepest tone, swinging the lantern three times round his head. "Here, remember, is your appointed place. This lantern will guide your eyes. Farewell, Rose Maiden," he chanted on. "We shall meet again ere long!"

"Farewell, brave Apostle!" she rejoined faintly, using the title that best expressed her sense of his protectiveness—

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then watched him disappear behind the jungle of thick undergrowth.

Her belief in him just then was absolute. His voice, his gestures, his magnificent language, his flowing purple robe and towering head-dress, the air of power he assumed above all, impressed her beyond words. His stature was worthy of gigantic Saturn. It seemed there was nothing that he could not do. Had he walked straight across the water, it would not have surprised her. It was merely because he preferred to do so that he walked round instead.

She followed the flickering light, now visible, now gone again, her eyes watching eagerly for its reappearance, until at length it emerged upon the opposite shore directly facing her, and then halted. The pond was some fifty yards across. She made out his figure dimly. Then she made out—other figures too!

Spell-bound with wonder, motionless, she stared intently. Any touch of alarm she felt was tempered by the knowledge that, had there been no other figures, she must have experienced sharp and bitter disappointment. This disillusionment did not happen. She had expected other figures; they were right; they belonged to the Water Performance, whatever that might prove to be. Peter was leader and Peter knew, and gorgeous, awful Saturn lent his presence.

She stared hard across the pond. A faint smell of burning reached her nostrils now, and she saw pale blue smoke floating and coiling upwards. Had Peter lighted something? And was it smoke she saw? The moving light had become stationary. In front of it, alternately hiding and revealing it, there passed a shadowy throng. The tall outline of her brother scarcely moved, for she caught the gleam of its purple, now visible, now concealed again, as the figures floated round it. To and fro and round about, these forms moved slowly, yet quite distinctly, a grace, a rhythm, a sequence in their movements as though they performed some slow, stately dance. Her brother's voice she also heard from time

to time, and it seemed that the movements obeyed the rising and falling of his voice. A monotonous chanting, the words inaudible, floated across the pond, and mingled with the gurgling of the springs in the middle, where the troubled water danced.

This commotion of the waters now suddenly increased a hundredfold.

It was, perhaps, the movement of the figures obeying the voice, perhaps, also, the stirring of the water, showing a hundred moons in radiating lines of silver, or it was a combination of these two, perhaps, that now suddenly set the muscles of her bare legs twitching. At first she did not understand what was happening to her; she merely watched the lovely spectacle with burning eyes. She gazed intently. The figures, faint as wreathing smoke, she noticed, stood so near the bank that they were reflected in the moonlit pool. She caught gleams of purple that under-shot the silver. It was difficult to see exactly where the water ended and the shore began. The figures thus met their own reflections, increasing their size gigantically. They seemed floating in the air, supported by their watery extensions underneath. Space was alive with them. Their upper portions rose towards the stars. Then—suddenly—her own twitching muscles set her going in a way she could no longer control.

She moved for the first time since Peter had left her—towards the edge of the pond—delicately, softly, on her toes, shooting out a white leg sideways, as in a dance. She advanced to some rhythm the troubled waters wakened in her blood. Then, remembering of a sudden her instructions, she began to wave the mistletoe with breathless energy round her head. At this side the water lay comparatively still, the ripples dying away before they reached the bank; and in the clear depths she saw her own reflection—the leopard's skins about her body, the bare white legs and arms, the shining torrent of loose hair about her shoulders. She saw the gold girdle glimmering in the moonlight. And the sight of it all

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entranced her. This was not Rose at all. It was someone else. It was, of course, Rose Maiden.

Rose Maiden! Delight, wonder, enchantment, surged through her whole body. Saturn—oh, she hoped so—saw her too! She lost her awe of this magnificent Being, since she was positive he now admired her. This glittering monster from outer space looked on. Waving the mistletoe in a spirit of new, wild happiness, she pirouetted on one foot; a slim leg curved, the body bent above it. The desire to dance possessed and overmastered her. Rose Maiden danced beneath the moon. . . .

She had been dancing thus for some minutes, entirely unconscious of herself, blissfully happy, when a call sounded sharp and clear across the pond:

“Now light the Fire and prepare the Food!”

And instantly the sylph-like body stood arrested as though turned into shining marble. It seemed poised thus for a moment, while the rhythm ebbed swiftly from it. Then it relaxed a little. She stood motionless, facing the water, one hand holding the mistletoe above her head, the other pointing downwards and clasping tightly the unsheathed knife. Her hair was tossed forwards across her breast. She stared. It seemed to her at this instant that the figures on the opposite bank went down suddenly in a shining troop to the water's edge and disappeared beneath its silvery surface. There was an odd hissing noise. They merged with the water and were gone. The air was empty of their loveliness. And the ripples ceased; the gurgling and bubbling died away, as though the great springs had resumed their normal volume. The pond lay smooth and still beneath the sky. She saw a single moon reflected.

All happened so swiftly that the sound of her brother's voice still echoed through the trees, no other sound now audible. She answered, though unable to find the words she knew instinctively were right. They struggled to get out, these other words, but failed halfway up her throat. She took what came:

"All right, Peter," she called out—and stooped to find the matches. . . .

Five minutes later, when he emerged with an extinguished lantern from the undergrowth behind her, a fire was already blazing at their feet, a kettle of water stood waiting for the eggs, and a frying-pan, with blobs of melting butter in it, was prepared to receive the slices of cold suet pudding.

"The hunger has come," announced Peter, quietly. "We may eat. It was a success. You, too. I saw you dancing. *All* saw you dancing."

He put his head-dress straight and seated himself on a stump beside the crackling fire. The flames lit up his face. She saw his brilliant eyes. "I'm hungry too," she mentioned, though this was not the chief matter in her mind. A deep delight still pulsed and glowed all through her. She held the frying-pan cleverly above the flames. Peter took the knife and speared the slices, turning them over and over. The kettle sang. What little wind there was had died away, and the night was very still about them.

"Put in the eggs," he said presently. "We'll eat them hard. You were splendid, Rose." His voice was almost normal now; it was Peter, no longer Hermit, or Apostle, who addressed her. Rose Maiden, too, was fading. It was Rose Maiden who had danced. It was Rose who now saw that the suet did not burn.

They made a hearty meal. No further reference to the Performance passed their lips, for Peter said no word, and Rose followed his example. Questions or remarks, she felt instinctively, might spoil a mysterious and very wonderful experience. Peter alone could say something if he wished. He evidently did not wish. It had been a success; he had praised her; and that was sufficient. She left the matter where it was.

"I *was* hungry," was all he offered, with his mouth full; "divinely hungry," he added, as the last morsel of buttery suet disappeared. "Hope you've had enough too?" He looked at

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her carefully, even tenderly, a strange soft light in his bright eyes.

"Oh, heaps," she told him. "It was delicious." She was still chewing and gulping. There was nothing left.

"Good," he replied, and proceeded to collect the various articles in his bundle. He wiped the frying-pan with leaves and sand, then rinsed it. He was quick, efficient, practical. He made sure the fire was safely out, pouring water on its last embers. It made a hissing noise.

"Ready, Rose?" he asked at length.

"Quite ready, Peter dear."

"You're really admirable," he remarked, and led the way out of the Spinney on the homeward journey.

They wore their regalia, tramping through the soaking grass in silence. The moon, now much lower in the sky, threw immense shadows before them as they went. Creeping past the Lily Garden and Conservatory, they reached the ladder in due course. The house on this side lay in darkness. They straightened the ladder with enormous efforts.

It was just before she began to climb that Peter seized her arm, making her turn abruptly. He was gazing down into her face. The jewel gleamed. The head-dress rose like a turret against the sky.

"Rose Maiden," he whispered in his apostolic voice, "well done! Saturn saw you. He saw you dance. It made him happy."

Whether it was the close proximity of his shining face, the sound of his mysterious voice, or the implication of the strange words he used, Rose did not know. Something cleared in her, as though a wind blew layers of thick dust away. She understood her previous inability to speak the right words, she understood her dumbness. She now realised that the things she ought to have said, she had danced instead. Something she knew, something she could not express in words, her dancing had expressed and uttered for her. She felt happy and satisfied.

"Thank you, Peter," she whispered, gazing back into his eyes. There were faint rings of light, she fancied, about his head. The same instant he withdrew his face, the rings faded away; he smiled and held his hand out.

"These are your things," he whispered, giving her an untidy bundle. "Climb up. I'll hold the ladder steady for you. Farewell Rose Maiden. We shall meet again ere long!"

He kissed her, and she climbed up safely without another word, carrying her clothes and the frying-pan in front of her. The iron handle banged noisily once against the stone parapet at the top, but no one came, no door or window opened. Parents, servants, governess, all lay heavily asleep.

She waved her hand. Reaching her room, she undressed quickly, and long before she was ready for bed a scraping sound against the balcony told her that the ladder was being taken away. She turned to see its top dip out of sight. Her last view of Peter was in his robes beneath the slanting ray of moonlight that fell between two chimneys. The jewel in his head-dress flashed as he laboriously dragged the ladder across the lawn, where their friend, the Head Gardener, would find it later and do the rest.

She laid the mistletoe upon her pillow, and fell into a dreamless sleep just as dawn was breaking.



IANTHE JERROLD

You speckled thrushes, whistle clear!
The golden crocuses are here,
And to the golden sun unfold
Their happy hearts of deeper gold!

You gold-billed blackbirds, give a shout!
The golden celandines are out,
And golden sallows down the lane
Shed to the wind their golden rain!

Now all, your most triumphant note!
Diana, in her reefer coat,
Does forth into the garden fare
To sun her golden crown of hair!



BY DALE MARIFORD

THE King of Pomona Land sighed heavily. The Queen of Pomona Land burst into tears while the assembled courtiers groaned so deeply that the sound of it was like the rumbling of thunder and all the towers and turrets of the great castle trembled and shook.

Petsy had triumphed again!

Unhappily it was the King's own fault. It had all come about because he *would* have everything conventionally correct. He was what people call "pernickety" so that when the Princess Sweetlove was born, not only were all the fairies and wizards and witches invited to her christening, but he also scoured the seven kingdoms to find a dragon for her as well.

"For who," said the King of Pomona Land, "ever heard of a beautiful Princess without a dragon for her to be rescued from?"

Now the trouble was that dragons had been so much in demand and the Princes had been so brave and fearless and killed them all off so quickly, that only a very few were left. Try as

THE DRAGON WHO DIDN'T

he would King Puffenuff could not get hold of any dragon except a baby one.

He was very disappointed. Although he had never seen one himself, he had dreamt of a roaring, fiery, scaly, green dragon with plenty of "pep" in it. One who would eat a Prince, sword and all, as soon as look at him.



Alas, all he could procure was an animal the size of a small kitten with a pale green skin on which the scales had not even started to form.

"No doubt it will grow," mused King Puffenuff, and forthwith made a proclamation that whoever should aspire to the hand of his daughter must first slay the dragon that from henceforth should be her guardian.

Now as everyone knows when a proclamation is once made not even the King can alter it. That was the rub. This terrible trouble that had fallen on Pomona Land was King Puffenuff's own silly fault.

He had been quite happy for a year or two. The dragon had a sweet nature and had rapidly become the pet not only of

the Princess but of the entire court. Petsy it was called and a pet it was. Indeed, it was not till Sweetlove was ten years old and the dragon still only the size of a small fox terrier that King Puffenuff began to make serious inquiries.

"It takes one million and twenty-one years for a dragon to attain its full stature, your Majesty," announced the Professor of Dragonology whom he sent for.

"Fool!" snapped King Puffenuff angrily. "Do you think our daughter is going to wait a million and twenty-one years in order to be rescued? Send me the Chief Physician."

So the first Doctor in the Kingdom came and stroked his beard and looked immensely wise. He made the dragon put out its tongue and poked its ribs till Petsy fairly wriggled with delight.

"It *ought* to grow," he observed at last, feeling its tiny calves professionally.

"It *must* grow," returned King Puffenuff crossly. "It *shall* grow. You must *make* it grow."

"Perhaps some Quicklick's Malted Milk or physical exercises," mused the Chief Physician speculatively.

"Anything! Paul's Wine, Bovaltine. I'll spare no expense but grow it must and shall. See to it then or it will be the worse for you," and King Puffenuff rose to signify that the interview was over.

The Chief Physician bowed gravely and backed from the King's presence, nearly tumbling over the dragon, which was lying on its back, its four paws in the air and its little stump of a tail trying hard to wag. Poor man! he did his best, but Petsy, sweet-natured and enchanting in everything else, could not be made to hurry its growth for all the medicines in the Kingdom.

By the time Sweetlove was eighteen a soft down covered its pale green skin and two tiny first teeth had pushed their way through its tender gums. It was perhaps as big as a collie dog and had learned to purr with a hissing sound something between the singing of a kettle and a baby yelling two streets away.



THE DRAGON WHO DIDN'T ALLOW HER-
SELF TO BE SHUT UP IN ONE OF THE
TURRETS

Now eighteen is a great age for a Princess to attain and still remain unwedded. Also Sweetlove had grown as beautiful as even her father could wish. Till then he had given in to her entreaties that Petsy should be allowed to live—the more easily because he realised what a poor chance the dragon stood against the very first Prince who should seek to win her hand. But at last he was forced to turn a deaf ear to her prayers and broadcast through the seven kingdoms the news that Sweetlove was waiting to be won.

The very next day Prince Rustylocks presented himself at the castle.

Poor Sweetlove! She loved the dragon and she did *not* love Prince Rustylocks, whose eyes were dull like a fish and whose nose was more like a scarlet poppy than anything else. However, there was no help for it.

The Princess kissed Petsy good-bye with the tears streaming down her face (indeed the whole court was affected, for the dragon was a universal favourite) and allowed herself to be shut up in one of the turrets while Petsy roamed outside and mewed to be allowed in.





THE DRAGON HAD A SWEET NATURE

Prince Rustylocks buckled on his sword importantly and, attended by the King and a retinue of men-at-arms, strode across the courtyard. The gate was unlocked. He drew his sword and passed inside while the rest remained without.

An hour passed. Two hours. Three. And then King Puffenuff growing impatient ordered the gates to be unlocked without further ado.

"Surely he *must* have killed the animal by this time!" thought the King, but he was wrong.

Prince Rustylocks, his sword flung down and forgotten, was on his hands and knees. He was tickling the dragon's ribs and playing with its tail.

"What does this mean?" roared the King.

Prince Rustylocks scrambled to his feet. He stood first on one leg, then on the other and could find not one word to say.

In the shocked silence that ensued he picked up his fallen sword, looked from its keen blade to Petsy, sighed deeply and shaking his head turned slowly away.

The Princess from her turret window watched him go. As he slunk away she heaved a sigh of relief. Petsy was saved for the present at any rate, and a great roar of laughter rose up from the relieved onlookers. Even King Puffenuff smiled though his smile was rather grim.

It wouldn't do. It really would *not* do. The Princess *must* get married and until the dragon was slain this would be impossible.

"The animal wants training," decided King Puffenuff and forthwith sent for the finest trainers in the Kingdom.

"You must make it fierce," commanded he.

"Impossible, your Majesty," they protested.

"Then you must make it *look* fierce," retorted the King.

They did their best. They could get Petsy to waddle forward on its short, fat legs, but as soon as it reached them it *would* lie down and roll over on its back while its blue eyes beseeched you to tickle it.

THE DRAGON WHO DIDN'T

Two more Princes came with much blaring of trumpets and servants boasting of their brave deeds and undoubted valour. Both left with hanging heads, utterly disgraced.

The King of Pomona Land grew grey with worry. The Queen of Pomona Land, her nerves quite shattered, nagged him unmercifully. There were rumours of another King to be chosen who could disregard the solemn proclamation. And now we have come to the beginning of the story where the groans of King Puffenuff's courtiers are shaking the castle walls.

"How many does that make?" asked the King at last, raising a haggard face to the Herald who had just brought the news of the latest failure.

"Twelve, your Majesty. Twelve Princes from all Kingdoms near and far. All famous for their bravery——"

"Pshaw!" interrupted the King of Pomona Land. "Bravery? Pshaw!"

"Did you follow our instructions?" asked the Queen.

"Your Majesty, the dragon had had no food or drink for seven days. It had been chained to the castle gate because it *would* follow the Princess Sweetlove about and she found it impossible to resist feeding it at table. It seemed restive this morning, it's cutting another tooth, but it emitted a little wisp of smoke which raised our hopes exceedingly. Five minutes before Prince Greenhorn arrived his chain was taken off. Everything was done that could possibly be done to annoy him. Six small boys were employed to pull his tail and tweak his ears, while still more sprinkled the ground with Professor Whiff's Patent, Tasty, Appetite Creator, but all to no purpose. As the Prince approached, the dragon advanced to meet him wearing a broad smile and wagging its tail. Five yards away it sat up and begged in the charming way the Princess taught him when she was a child. As Prince Greenhorn drew his sword, the dragon roiled over on its back with its paws in the air and wriggled with delight.

"The Prince raised his sword above his head, paused, then



HE WOULD LIE DOWN AND ROLL OVER ON HIS BACK

DALE MARIFORD



casting it from him burst into loud crying. He wept bitterly, your Majesty. He said it was *impossible* to kill the animal."

"They all say that," sighed the King sadly. "Not even one bite. Alas! I am undone."

"Alas, alas!" echoed all his courtiers.

Princess Sweetlove alone was pleased. None of the Princes she had yet seen had interested her half so much as her childhood's playmate.

"Nobody would ever have the heart to kill you, Petsy," she crooned over the downy head. The dragon licked her hand and, smiling happily, cuddled its plump body against her skirts.

And then one day, as was bound to happen, there came a Prince at sight of whom Sweetlove's heart seemed to stop. She hung from her turret window drinking in his beauty, loving him utterly even before she knew his name.

That night she was especially sweet to Petsy, for she felt its days were numbered. Prince Charming had raised his face to her window. She had seen his eyes light up like stars.

She loved him, he must, *must* win her and yet—

THE DRAGON WHO DIDN'T

The Princess caught her breath. *Could* she sacrifice Petsy, her darling dragon, even for such a Prince? Her big eyes filled with tears as she hugged the dragon to her.

Meanwhile the King was welcoming Charming.

"You know that many have tried and failed?" he said sadly.

The Prince laughed.

"Have no fear, your Majesty. I have killed more dragons than there are fingers on my hand."

"It isn't an ordinary dragon, you know?" said the King anxiously.

Prince Charming patted his hand.

"Don't you worry, I know every kind there is," he said.

The next morning in a silence that could be felt the gate was opened and the Prince slipped inside. Somehow all knew that this was indeed their last hope, and a great concourse of people had gathered in the courtyard. Sweetlove looked from her window and the tears rained down her cheeks.

Prince Charming, his hand on Petsy's head, laughed up at her.

"Don't—don't kill it," she implored wildly.

"Don't you want to marry me, Sweetlove?" and the music of the Prince's voice was like fairy music, so that Sweetlove, torn between pity for the dragon and love for him, could not reply save by a nod of her golden head.

"Then come down and open the door," commanded Charming.

One hour passed. Two hours. Three. And then King Puffenuff ordered the gates to be unlocked. Charming too must have failed, thought he, or else he would have proclaimed his victory long ago.

As the gate swung open Sweetlove would have drawn apart from the Prince but he, taking her hand, boldly led her to the King.

"Princess Sweetlove has consented to be my bride," he cried loudly.

A great cheer arose from thousands of throats but King Puffenuff had caught sight of something hiding behind his daughter's skirts.

"Petsy! You've not killed Petsy!" he wailed, wringing his hands.

"Why should I?" laughed Charming. "Your proclamation said a dragon. Petsy is not a dragon."

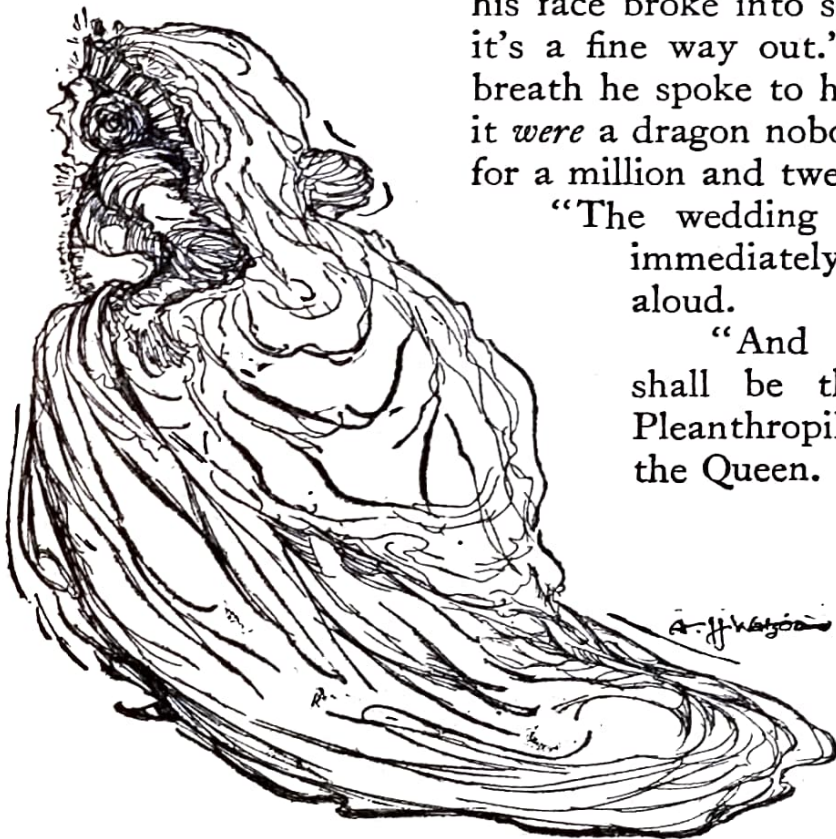
"What!" gasped the King, while a mighty shout of laughter that cracked every pane of glass in the Palace went up from his subjects. "Not a dragon after all?"

"No!" repeated Charming. "Not at all. I can assure you I've killed plenty of dragons, I ought to know. It's a Pleanthropilopolus."

"Oh!" said the King blankly, then his face broke into smiles. "After all it's a fine way out." And under his breath he spoke to himself. "Even if it *were* a dragon nobody could prove it for a million and twenty-one years."

"The wedding shall take place immediately," he proclaimed aloud.

"And the chief guest shall be the Pl—Plean—Pleanthropilopolus," added the Queen.





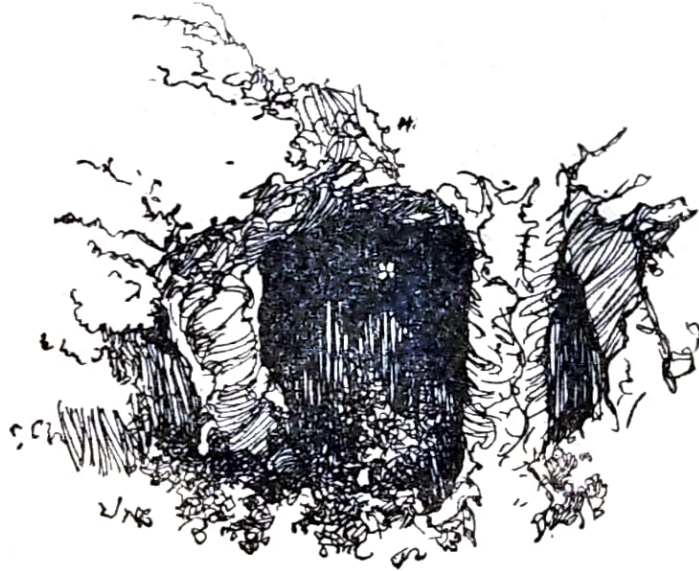
The Fairy House

BY ROSE FYLEMAN

I FOUND it in the forest
Upon a grassy mound;
The elder trees and hazels
Stood very closely round.
There were tiny curtained windows,
And one was open wide—
I climbed the little hillock
And knelt, and peeped
inside.



Teeny, weeny carpets
On shiny polished floors;
Teeny, weeny handles
On little painted doors;
A teeny, weeny table
All delicately spread,
And a teeny, weeny bedroom
With a teeny, weeny bed.



THE FAIRY HOUSE



But no one trod the carpets
Nor danced upon the floors,
No one turned the handles
Of the charming little doors.
No one sat at table,
No one cut the bread,
And nobody was sleeping
Upon the little bed.



I waited until sunset
As quiet as a mouse;
I almost cried to leave it—
My darling fairy house.
But when I reached the meadows,
Behind me, in the dark,
I saw a lighted window
That glimmered like a spark.



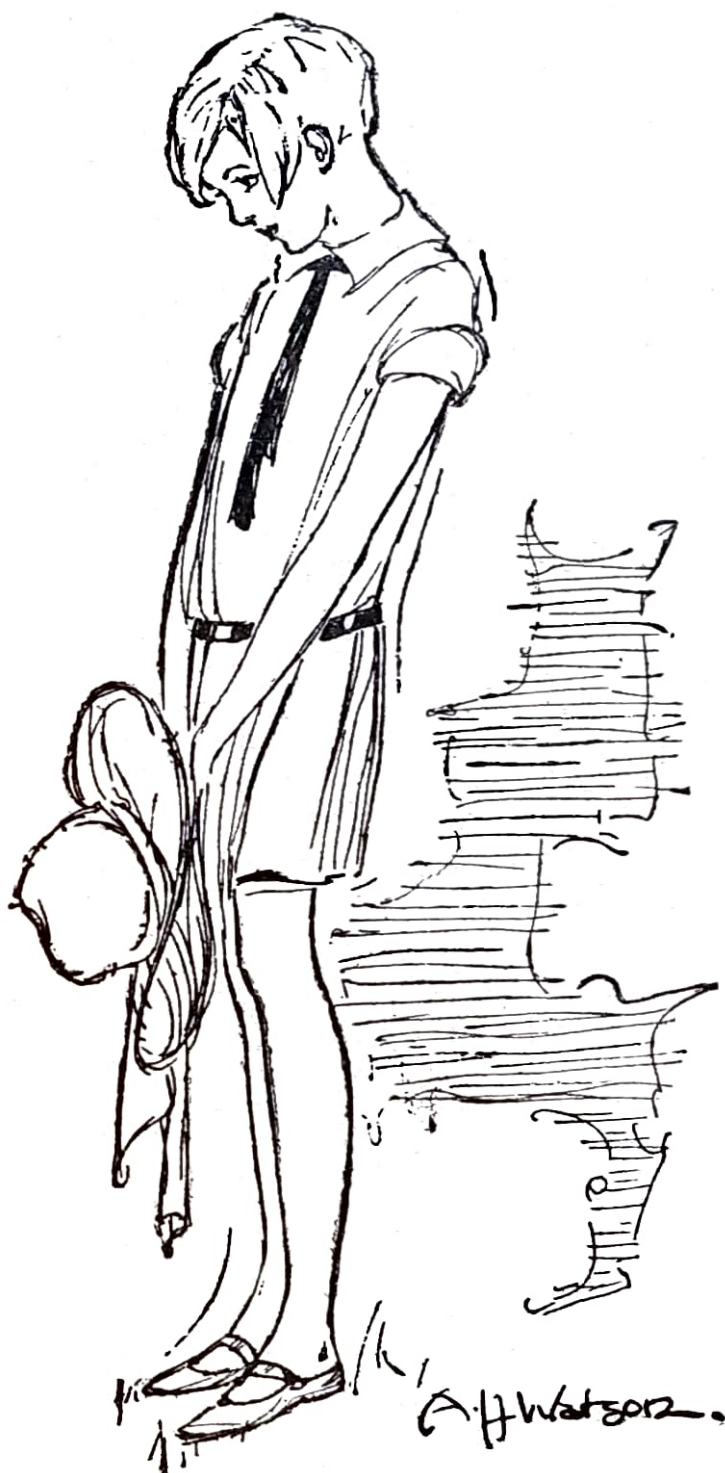


THE KEY & THE CABINET.

BY A. E. PHILLPOTTS

SUSAN MARY, seven years old, lived with her father in a large house in London. Her mother was dead, and she had no brothers or sisters. In the house was a very big drawing-room, filled with beautiful furniture, tapestry, curios, paintings of Victorian ladies, and marble busts. But there was one thing which Susan Mary liked more than all the rest—a rosewood cabinet with glass doors and shelves, the key to which was lost. On the top shelf of this cabinet, at the height of Susan's eyes, imprisoned behind the glass walls, were her great-grandmother's dolls, for ever out of reach, or until the key of the cabinet could be found. But Susan's father said that perhaps it never would be found, so that Susan Mary could never have those dolls to play with. She knew them all very well by sight, and pressed her nose against the glass every day to have a look at them. There was the little old woman in red and blue, with a basket of honey cakes on her shoulder; the sentinel in gold and purple with a grin on his face, who stood by the keyless door; the twin dancing girls in spangles, one toe forever lifted, the other on a tin stand worked by clockwork; and the little wooden Swiss peasants, he with a crook, she with a milk pail.

A. E. PHILLPOTTS



Then there was a painted lead bird playing a 'cello, a frog on a green leaf, and an old man with a brown cap and a red hood with a violin tucked under his chin, and others besides. There they all were, still and silent, and Susan Mary longed for them because they were out of reach. "Why can't I have them to play with?" she asked, and her father answered, "You must find the key of the cabinet first—then you can play with them."

So Susan hunted everywhere for the key—in all the vases and the drawers and the nooks and corners of the wonderful room, but it was not there.

Then one night she had a dream; she dreamed that the little sentinel who stood in the cabinet walked into the nursery, hopped on to her bed, sat there with his chin in his hand, and said: "Susan Mary, I'll tell you a se-

THE KEY AND THE CABINET



cret. The key of the cabinet is *in this room.*”

“Where? Oh, where?” cried Susan, sitting up in the summer moonlight.

“But you must find it; *then* you can come into the cabinet and play with us.”

And Susan dreamt that she sprang out of bed and began hunting for the key, and the little sentinel said: “Cold, colder; warm; warmer; *Hot!*” as she darted about. And when he said “Hot,” she was beside a desk that had always stood in the nursery of that house since her great-grandmother was a child—a little girl’s bureau, where Susan kept her paint box and picture books. Susan began fumbling about in the desk, but she couldn’t find the key; then the sentinel cried: “Very hot!” and she felt under her finger a round knob in the inside corner of the desk. She pressed it, and lo! a tiny panel slid back, a little secret cupboard was revealed, and inside lay the key of the cabinet! Susan was going to pounce on it with a cry of joy when everything vanished, and she woke up in her bed. But she thought she heard the little sentinel crying: “Ha! Ha! Ha!” in the distance.

Jumping up, Susan Mary ran to the desk at once, very quietly so that her nurse should not wake, and felt for the knob, and there it was, but she had always thought before that it was an orna-

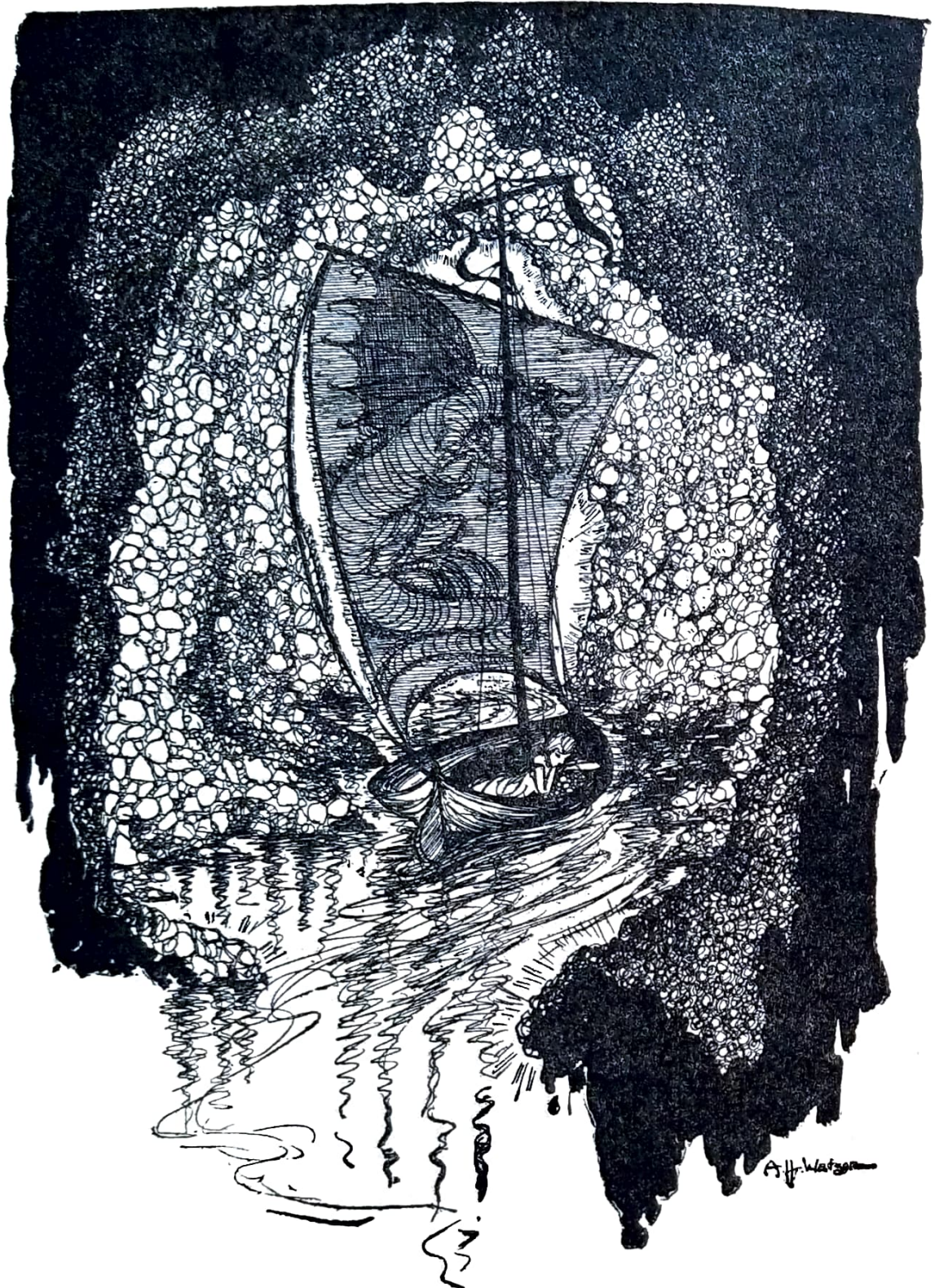
ment. She pressed it, the panel flew back, the cupboard appeared, and sure enough the key lay there, as it had lain in her dream.

Panting with excitement she picked it up, ran downstairs in the dark, opened the door of the drawing-room, and peeped inside. Everything looked mysterious and unfamiliar in the moonlight—the chairs and sofas and pictures were asleep, and the moon had stolen all the colours away. Susan, rather frightened, crept towards the cabinet, stood on tip-toe, and looked in. But imagine her surprise and disappointment to find the shelf was empty, the dolls had disappeared, and even the little sentinel had deserted his post. Yet she still thought she heard his laugh in the distance, and there was a thin line of light at the back of the cabinet. Reaching up she put the key in the lock and opened the door, and a fragrance as of pot-pourri and violets rushed out.

“Oh! If only the dolls were here now I could play with them!” she almost sobbed; and suddenly a ray of moonlight fell on the cabinet, like a silver rope. Stretching up her hands, she tried to clasp it, and behold! it turned into a chain, and, as she touched it, she shrank to the size of the dolls in the cabinet, and in a moment had drawn herself up on to the empty shelf. Then she saw that at the back of the cabinet was a little door, invisible from the outside, and from behind it came the line of light, and the sound of music and laughter. Opening the door gently she looked through, and there, on the other side, was a great saloon, much more glorious than the one on her side of the cabinet, full of glittering silver and crystal, coloured lamps, and a shining floor like gold. And there, dancing and singing, were her great-grandmother’s dolls, all as lively and cheerful as they were still and silent in the day time. Seeing Susan Mary, they flew towards her and fell down on their knees in a ring at her feet, and cried:

“Susan! Susan Mary! You’ve come at last! Who gave you the key?”

And Susan bowed to them very politely, and answered: “I dreamed where it was.”



A BOAT WAS MOORED ON AN UNDERGROUND LAKE

And the little sentinel winked at her, and bowed the lowest of all, for they all bowed and curtsied and greeted her with joy.

Then the little old woman piped: "Eat my honey cakes; they've grown stale waiting for you, my dear." But they were not stale, and as sweet as the honey of heather bees. The spangled dancers kissed Susan Mary, and began to dance to the tune played by the painted bird and the old man in the brown cap; the frog croaked, and the Swiss peasants sang a song about a shepherd and a milk maid. And all the time the little sentinel laughed and winked and bowed to Susan, and offered her his arm for a dance. And they set off dancing on the golden floor, and when they were tired, ate honey cakes, and then danced again.

But at last the little sentinel whispered: "It is time to go back, Susan May. The happiest party comes to an end." So Susan said, "But how shall I go? I must run quickly or the moon will set, and I shan't be able to get out of the cabinet."

Then she found that a dreadful thing had happened—she had lost the key! and she cried out: "Oh dear, oh dear, I've lost the key!"

"The key always goes home by itself," said the sentinel. "You must find it again if you want to come back to us. And now it's time you were in bed. But, when you go to a party, you never go home the same way that you came. Besides, *that* door is locked, too. This is the way you go back."

And he led her to a narrow archway in the wall where a boat was moored on an underground lake, and here all the dolls came to lift her inside, and tuck a soft eiderdown round her, and lay her head on a cushion and say:

"Now good-bye, good-bye, Susan Mary May. Come back again some day!"

And they all began to blow, and as they blew their cheeks swelled, and they blew and blew until the sail of the boat billowed in the wind of their breath, and began to move down the tunnel.

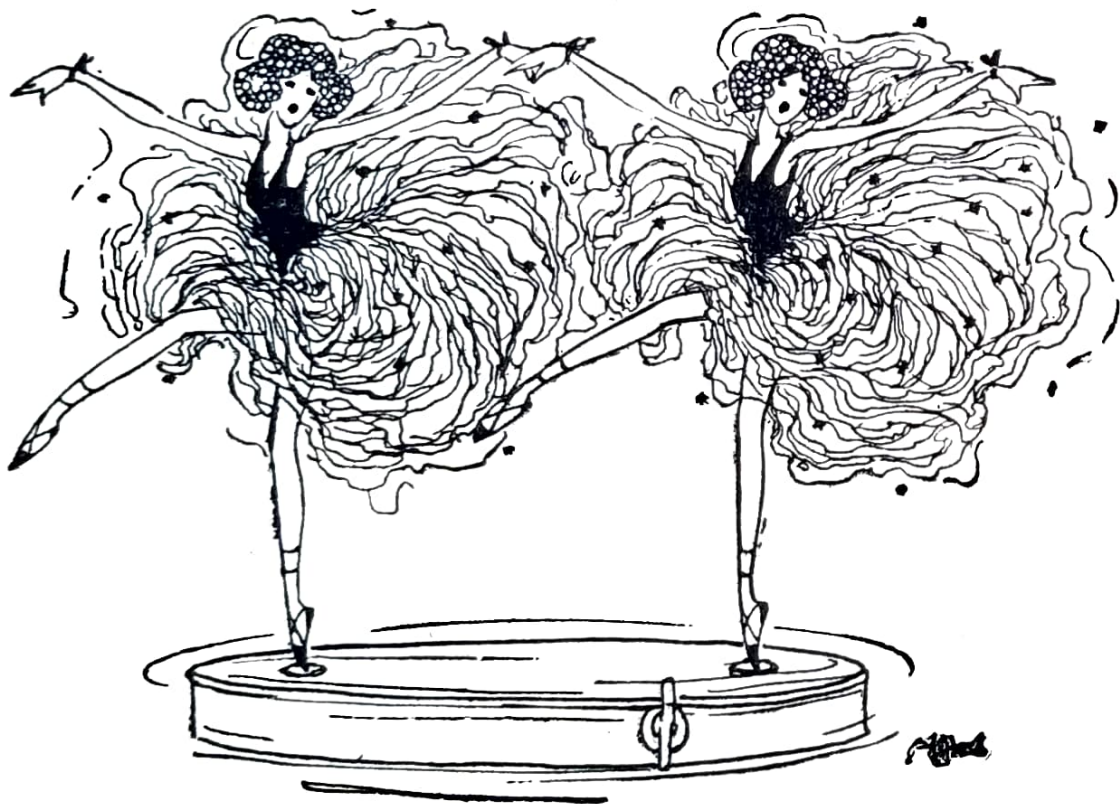
"Good-bye, good-bye!" called the dolls.

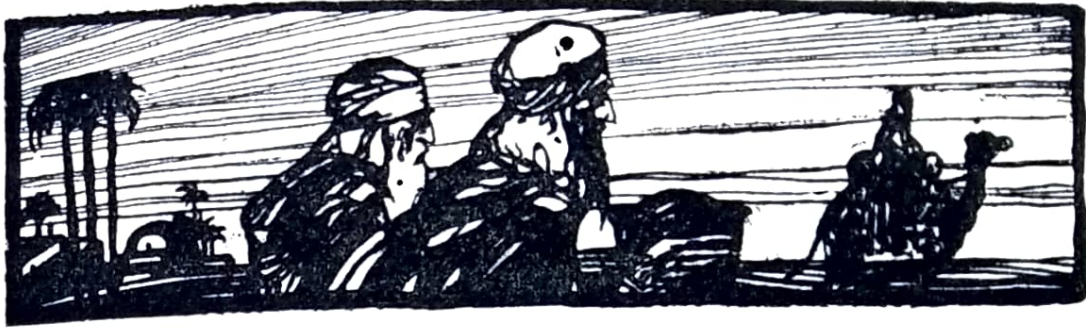
THE KEY AND THE CABINET

And there was Susan lying snug in the boat, gliding through wonderful caves, full of stalactites and precious stones, and lit by lights in the roof. But before the boat reached the fairy door into her nursery—a door which every nursery possesses—she was asleep; and when she woke up she was in bed, and the boat had gone.

Next day the first thing she did, of course, was to run to the desk where she had found the key, press the knob, and look in the secret cupboard to see if it had come back—but the cupboard was empty. Poor Susan Mary was very disappointed, and she went on looking in the desk every day; but the key didn't come back. And when she went to the cabinet and found all the dolls there and said to them: "Oh please tell me where the key is? Please don't forget me," they took no notice whatever, and even the little sentinel said not a word, and did not seem to see Susan at all.

But she is sure that one night she will dream of him again, and he will tell her where the key is hidden this time.





The Star

BY KATHARINE TYNAN

Now listen little children
From near and from afar,
Hear the tale of the three Kings
And how they lost the Star.

They were come from the East
With sendal and with spice;
The Star had shown before them
The way to Paradise.

They had come from the East,
Had travelled many days,
While in the midmost Heaven
There hung the Star a-blaze.

Each said to the other
To-morrow we shall behold
The Star of all the Heavens,
In purple and in gold.

They travelled fast and furious,
The Star went on before.
To-day changed to To-morrow,
There was no open door.

THE STAR

The Three Kings had forgotten
The dumb beast in his need,
The camels hungered and thirsted,
But they took little heed.

What does the fasting matter
For master or for beast?
To-day or else to-morrow
We shall sit to the feast.

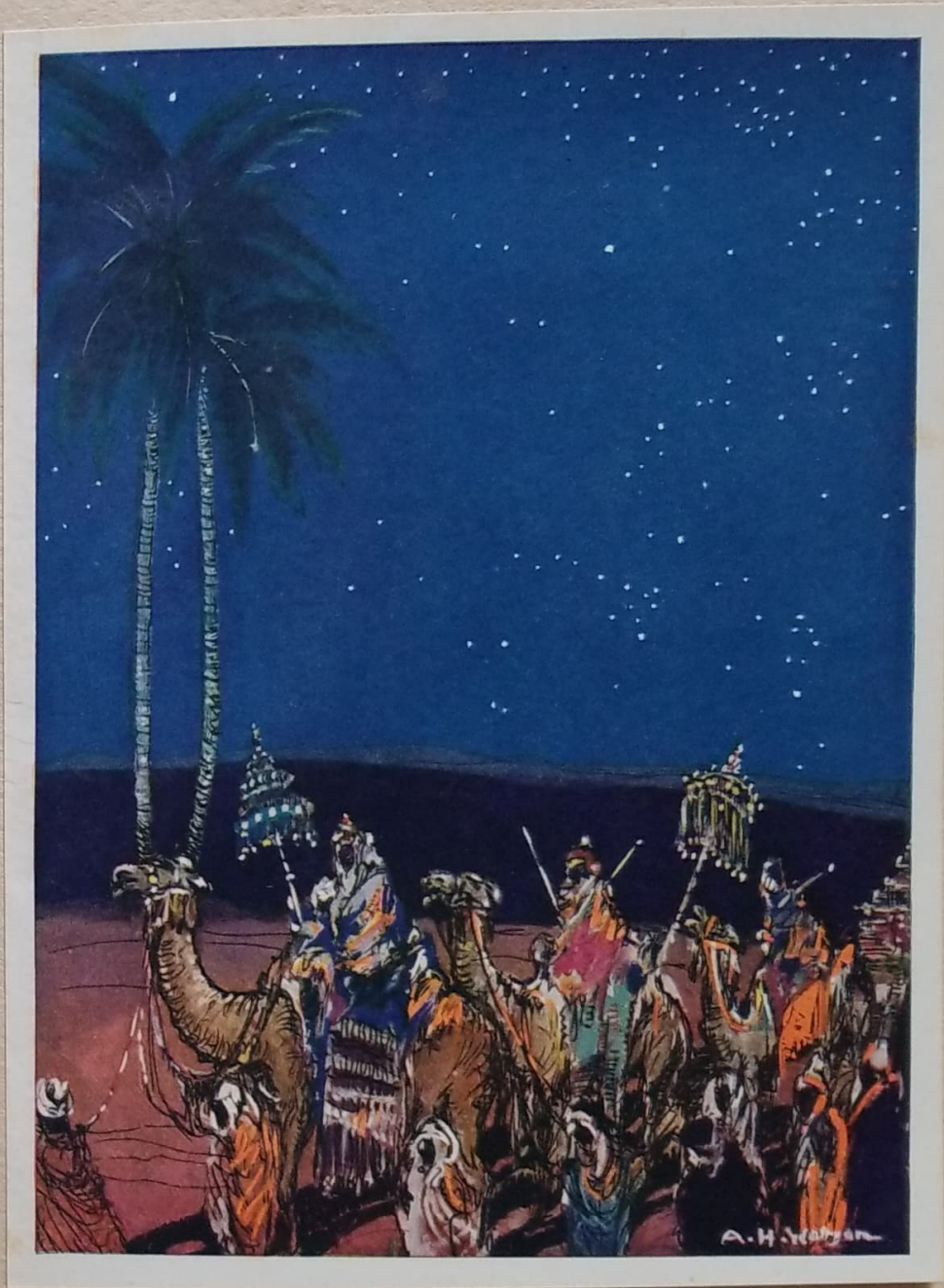
Have patience, ye that murmur,
Ye shall have food enough,
And the King of all the Heavens
Be under the same roof!

Be sure-footed and wary,
And ye shall drink your fill,
And He that made the Heavens
Shall bless your meek good will.

Sudden out of the sky
The Star dropped: it was dark;
Never in all the ages
Such gloom, such lightless mirk.

The Kings lit down from the camels,
No sadder men than they,
The Lord of Heaven is angry,
And we have lost the way.

Said Melchior to Caspar,
Caspar to Balthazar,
We shall not enter Paradise,
He hath withdrawn His Star.



THEY WERE COME FROM THE EAST
WITH SANDAL AND WITH SPICE

KATHARINE TYNAN

There came a little lightning
Out of a mirky sky,
And there they saw clear water,
A grove of palms thereby.

Though we have lost all Heaven,
One to the other said,
The camels shall not suffer,
They shall be watered and fed.

They lifted the heavy saddles,
Upon the clear pool's brink
Give pardon patient brothers.
The camels knelt to drink.

And while they drank full deep,
And trumpeted for praise,—
They shall have food and sleeping
After the bitter ways.

Sudden in the pool's heart
A glory and a flame,
Into the crystal waters
The lost Star came.

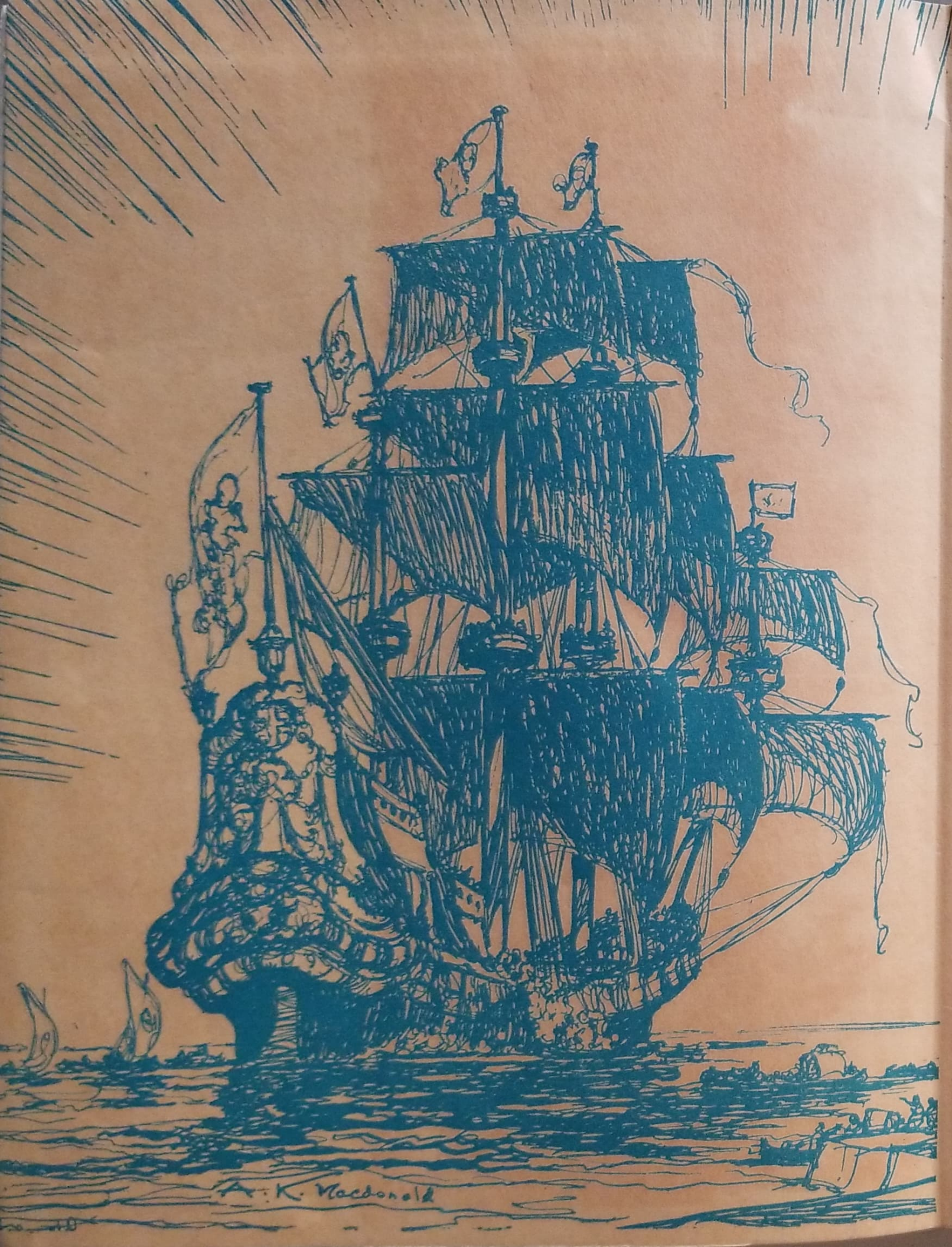
We were ill to the beasts,
Said Caspar to Balthazar,
We had not pity nor honour,
We sinned and lost the Star.

They knelt beside the camels,
Upon the grass-green sod,
They who have honour and pity
Are not forgotten of God.

THE STAR

High in the high Heaven
The Star as heretofore
Shone, that should lead them surely
Unto the stable door.

Unto the stable door
Where Kings kneel by the herds,
And there may troop the little ones
And the kind beasts and birds.



A. K. Macdonald



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