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LITTLE  
FOLKS  
SHAKSPEARE  
SERIES.

THE **WINTER'S**  
TALE



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PUBLISHER \*  
CINCINNATI, O.



# The Winters Tale:

*By Valentine.*



The sea ran high, the winter wind  
Wailed o'er a desert, rocky shore,  
Up which a grave and stately man  
A little sleeping infant bore.

His brow was sad, his eyes were dim;  
In truth, he had great cause to grieve,  
For he had sworn that hapless babe  
Alone upon the land to leave.

With no one near the child to watch,  
As helpless on the earth it lay,  
Exposed to rain, and wind, and snow,  
And to the savage beasts of prey.

Its father was a cruel King,  
Who, angry with his blameless wife,  
Had sworn that she should surely die,  
Nor would he spare her baby's life.



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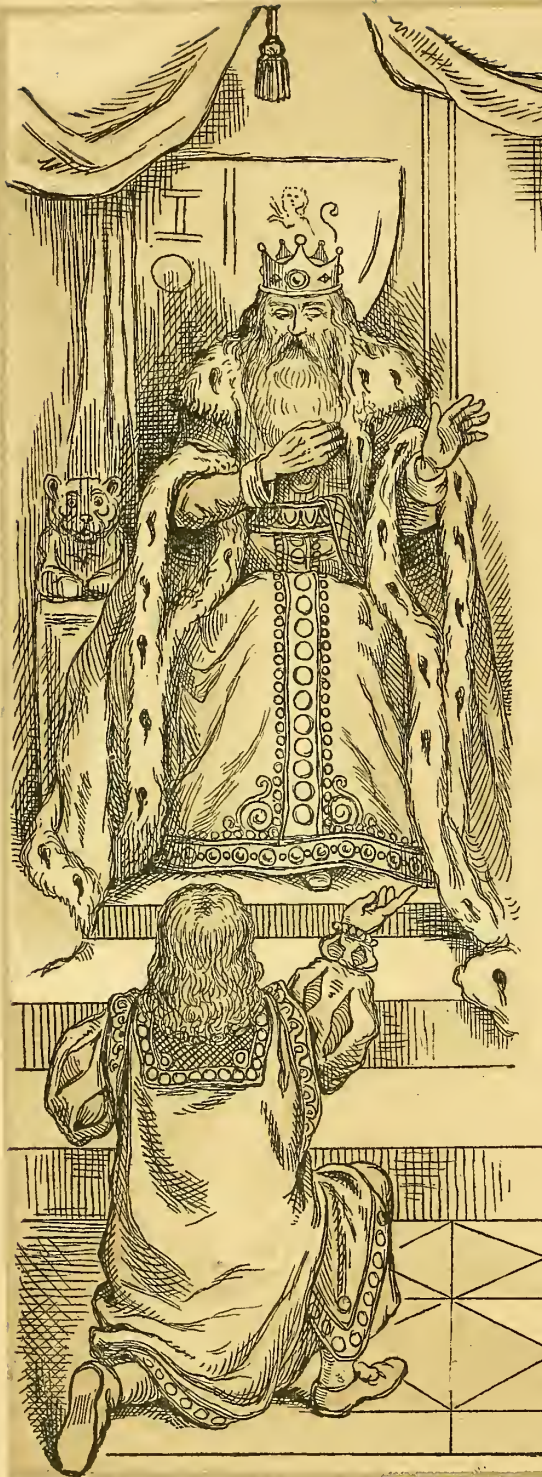
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A ROUGH LULLABY :



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But Lord Antigonus knelt down,  
Mercy for the poor babe to crave,  
And the stern King in anger cried,  
“What will you do its life to save?”

“Whatever you command, my king,”  
He answered then, “I gladly swear  
To do or suffer for its sake,  
If the poor innocent you’ll spare.”

Then the false King this order spoke:  
“The hated infant you must bear  
To a far-off and desert land,  
And leave it to wild Nature’s care.

“Go! bear her hence!”—And, for the sake  
Of that rash oath which he had sworn,  
Poor Lord Antigonus, with grief,  
The little Princess here has borne.



The SHEPHERD'S FORTUNE:





A desolate and dreary spot  
Upon this shore the noble found,  
And, grieving sadly for its fate,  
He laid the infant on the ground.

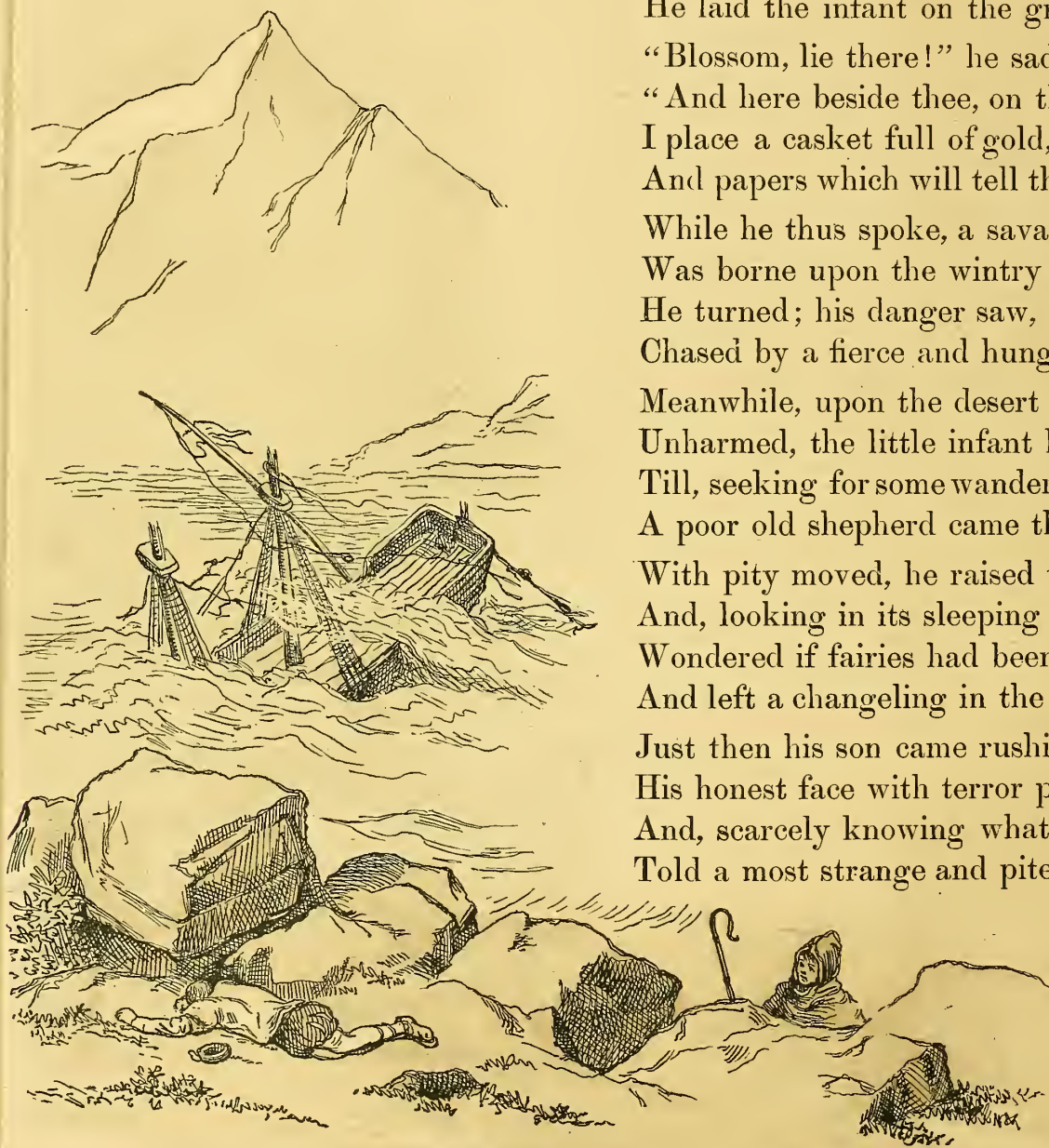
“Blossom, lie there!” he sadly said;  
“And here beside thee, on the earth,  
I place a casket full of gold,  
And papers which will tell thy birth.”

While he thus spoke, a savage growl  
Was borne upon the wintry air;  
He turned; his danger saw, and fled,  
Chased by a fierce and hungry bear.

Meanwhile, upon the desert plain,  
Unharm'd, the little infant lay,  
Till, seeking for some wandering sheep,  
A poor old shepherd came that way.

With pity mov'd, he rais'd the child,  
And, looking in its sleeping face,  
Wonder'd if fairies had been there,  
And left a changeling in the place.

Just then his son came rushing up,  
His honest face with terror pale,  
And, scarcely knowing what he said,  
Told a most strange and piteous tale.



Of how he saw a gallant ship  
Engulfed within the raging sea—  
And how a bear had killed a man  
Who vainly sought from it to flee.

When the Clown's awful tale was o'er,  
The Shepherd his good fortune told—  
How he had found a sleeping babe,  
And casket full of coins of gold.

"'Tis fairy gold," the Shepherd said:  
"We must not of our fortune speak,  
Or it will vanish from our sight,  
Nor may we for the giver seek.

"We'll take this pretty little lass  
To mother, who will love her well,  
And as a daughter in our house  
This tiny Perdita shall dwell."







And well the Shepherd kept his word,  
They reared the child with tender care,  
And, as the years flew by, she grew  
A blooming maiden, good and fair.

The gold had bought the Shepherd land,  
And all with the good man went well,  
When to young Perdita one day

A strange and happy chance befell.

A gallant falcon took its flight  
One morn across her father's ground:

In search of it, its owner came,

And mid'st the flowers the maiden found.

Amidst the lilies there she stood,  
The roses blooming on her cheek,  
And, seeing her, Prince Florizel  
Forgot the bird he came to seek.

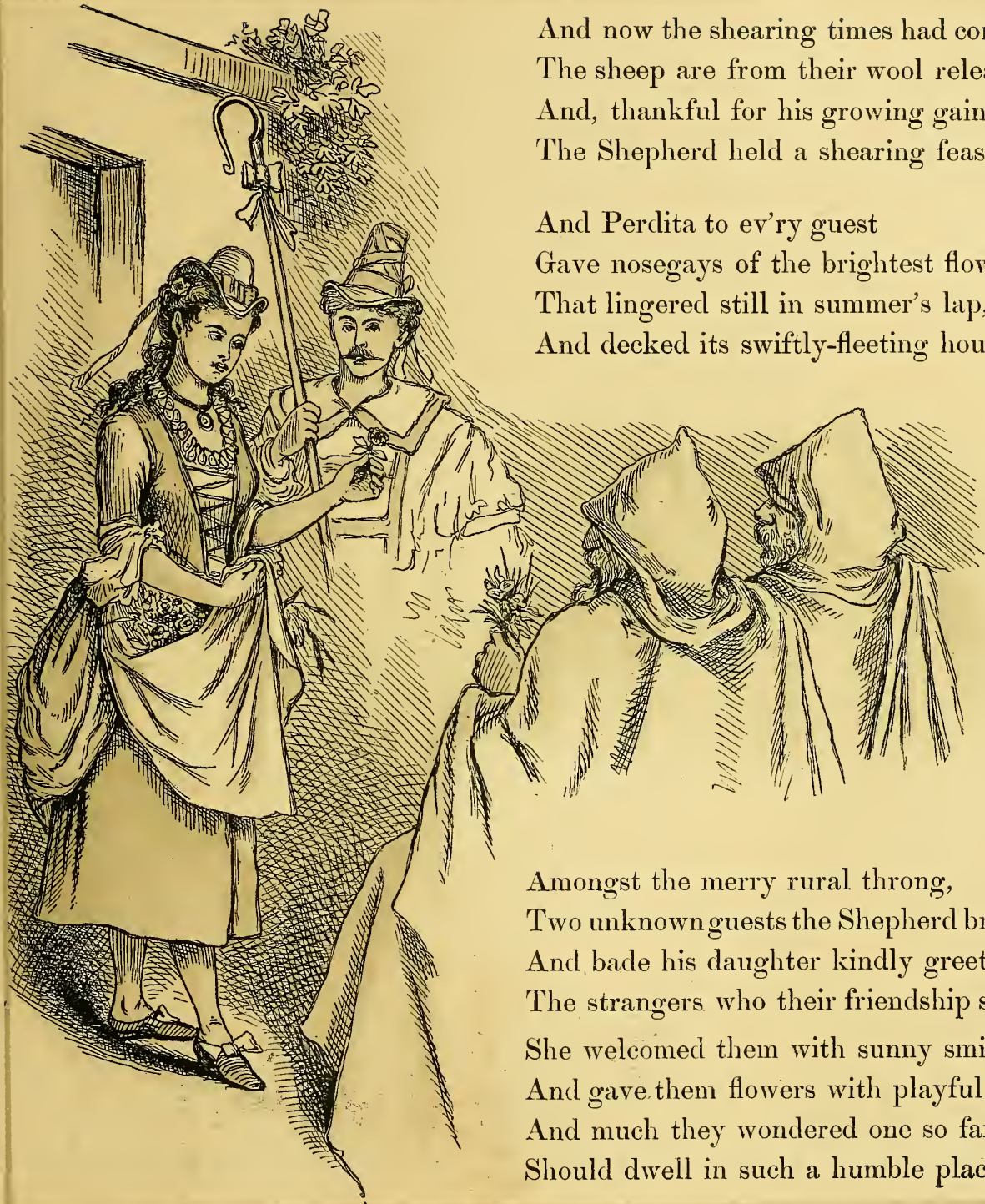
He loved her from that very hour,  
And as a Shepherd clad would come,  
With dog and crook, at evening's close,  
To woo her in her rustic home.



And now the shearing times had come,  
The sheep are from their wool released,  
And, thankful for his growing gains,  
The Shepherd held a shearing feast.

And Perdita to ev'ry guest  
Gave nosegays of the brightest flow'rs,  
That lingered still in summer's lap,  
And decked its swiftly-fleeting hours.

Amongst the merry rural throng,  
Two unknown guests the Shepherd brought,  
And bade his daughter kindly greet  
The strangers who their friendship sought.  
She welcomed them with sunny smiles,  
And gave them flowers with playful grace,  
And much they wondered one so fair  
Should dwell in such a humble place.





# The Shearing Feast:









Beside her stood Prince Florizel,  
Princely in person as in birth,  
Eager to do the maiden's will,  
And share with her the rustic mirth.

He led her forth to join the dance,  
Nor greater than his love would seem—  
The younger stranger smiled and said,  
"This is the queen of curds and cream."

But now a Peddler joined the guests,  
Bearing a basket of gay wares,  
Laces and ribbons, pins and scent,  
And trinkets sold at country fairs.

Around him the glad maidens came,  
To view his ribbons and his lace,  
To buy a brooch or amber pin,  
Or mirror to behold their face.

But when his ballads they would try,  
The Clown the merry party took  
Away from the grave stranger guests,  
Who ill, he thought, their noise would  
brook.





With laughter and gay shouts they went;  
Perdita with the Prince remained,  
Who, leading her before the group  
Of elders, her white hands retained.

And said, "Before you, rev'rend men,  
And you, old father, now I stand,  
To beg for a most precious gift—  
Your lovely daughter's snowy hand.

"Were I the mightiest monarch crowned,  
Or fairest prince that eye had seen,  
Or wisest and most learned known,  
Yet Perdita should be my queen."

The Shepherd said, "And you, my child,  
Love you as well this gentle youth?"—  
She blushed and answered, "In his words  
I pray you read my equal truth."

"A bargain!" the old Shepherd cried;  
"Give me your hands; these friends unknown  
Are witnesses; and I will give  
A dowry equalling your own."

"Oh, that must in her virtue be,"  
The unknown prince, amused, replied;  
"But now before these rev'rend men  
Let our betrothal knot be tied."





# The PEDLAR PRINCE:





Then one of the grave strangers spoke,  
"Have you no father, my good youth,  
Who should be present when you pledge  
The bridal oath of lasting truth?"

"I have a father," said the Prince,  
"But he must not this matter know."  
"Let him, my son," the Shepherd urged,  
"His blessing on the match bestow."

"Nay, he must not," the Prince declared;  
"Now hear me claim my fairest bride,  
And swear to her"—"Nay, pause rash boy!"  
A voice of thunder near him cried.

He turned, and gazed in silent awe,  
For there the King, his father, stood,  
Revealed by casting off his cloak,  
And throwing back the heavy hood.

"No bride of thine," that stern King said,  
"Shall ever from a sheep-cot come:  
Never again this spot approach—  
Or never dare come near thy home.

"For crown of mine shall never rest  
Upon thy most unworthy head!  
For thee—thou fair but low-born maid,  
Who to great wrong thy Prince hast led.

"I'll have thy beauty scratched with briars,  
And made more homely than thy state,  
And, if the Prince thou still should'st seek,  
A cruel death shall be thy fate."





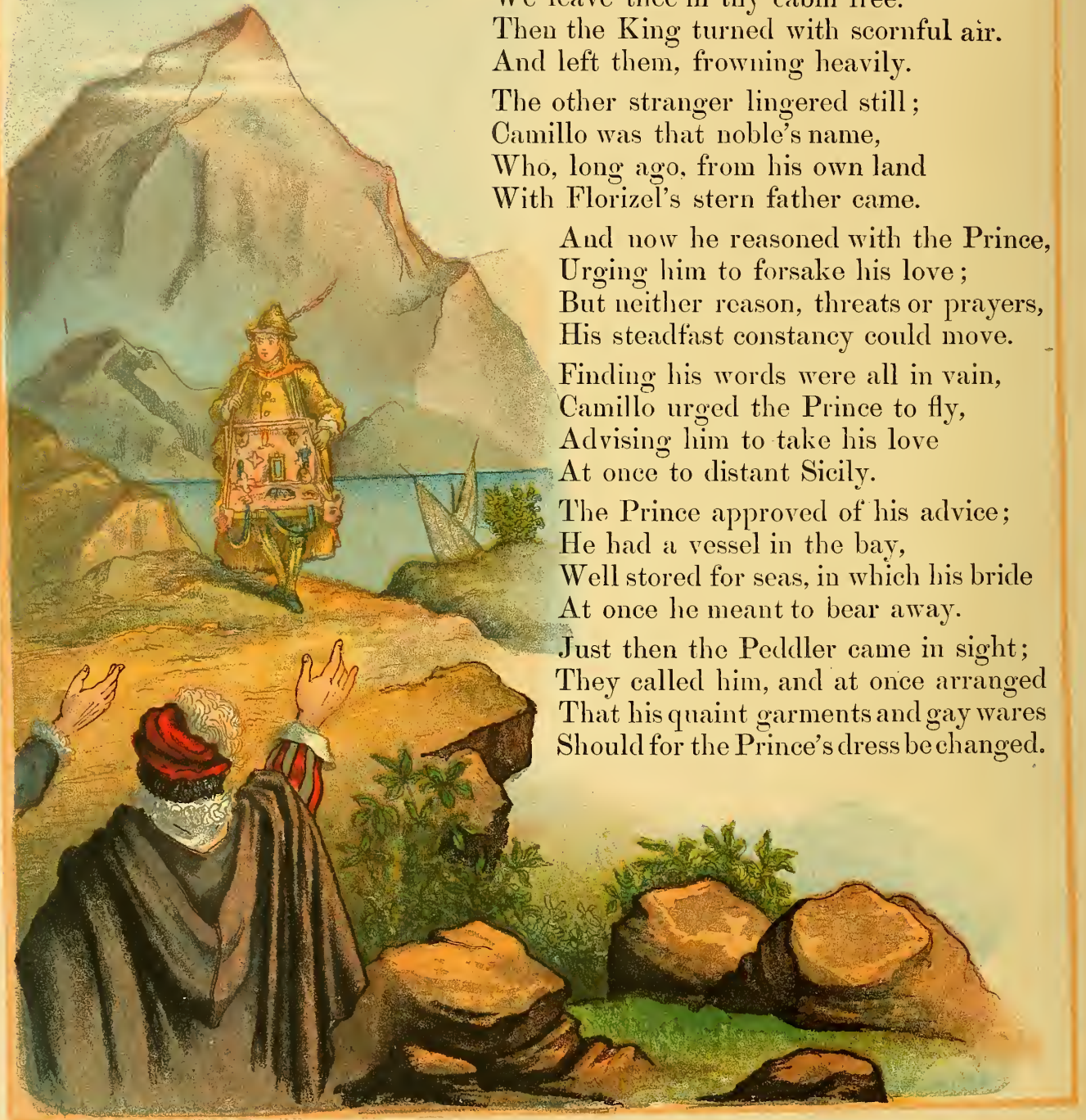
“For thee, old Churl, though much displeas’d,  
We leave thee in thy cabin free.”  
Then the King turned with scornful air,  
And left them, frowning heavily.  
The other stranger lingered still;  
Camillo was that noble’s name,  
Who, long ago, from his own land  
With Florizel’s stern father came.

And now he reasoned with the Prince,  
Urging him to forsake his love;  
But neither reason, threats or prayers,  
His steadfast constancy could move.

Finding his words were all in vain,  
Camillo urged the Prince to fly,  
Advising him to take his love  
At once to distant Sicily.

The Prince approved of his advice;  
He had a vessel in the bay,  
Well stored for seas, in which his bride  
At once he meant to bear away.

Just then the Peddler came in sight;  
They called him, and at once arranged  
That his quaint garments and gay wares  
Should for the Prince’s dress be changed.







Perdita in her lover's cloak  
And hat, Camillo, careful, hides,  
And thus towards the ship they go—  
The Peddler near the cot abides.

So to the ship went the loving pair,  
And thus across the dancing sea  
With Shepherd, Clown, and Perdita  
Were borne away to Sicily.

And there a wonder came to light:  
Hidden within the box of gold,  
A letter from Antigonus  
The little infant's story told.

The King of Sicily then knew  
She was the child whose harmless life  
He had exposed to beasts of prey,  
When angry with his gentle wife.

But long ago he knew the Queen  
Had been much wronged; and for her  
sake,  
With joy, and tenderness, and tears,  
Perdita to his heart could take.



A HAPPY ENDING:





The wife whom he had mourned as dead,  
He found, had secretly survived;  
And, to crown all this sudden joy,  
Camillo and his King arrived.

A joyful bridal then they held,  
The bells rang out o'er hill and dale.  
And the old Shepherd gladly told,  
To all who cared, his Winter's Tale.





