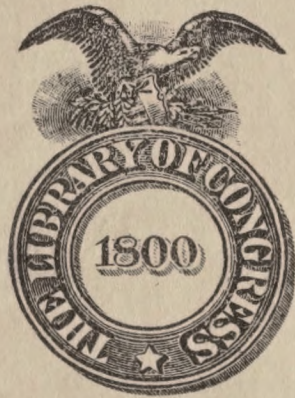


THE
ECHO-MAID
AND
OTHER STORIES
BY
ALICIA ASPINWALL



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THE ECHO-MAID

"SHE HAD BECOME THE SPIRIT OF THE STORM ITSELF." PAGE 23.

Frontispiece.

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THIS BOOK
IS DEDICATED TO
YOU

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ILLUSTRATIONS.

BY F. C. GORDON.

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THE ECHO-MAID.

I.

IN the northern part of Scotland, on the side of a lonely mountain, stood a small, weather-beaten hut. Save for the sweet wild-roses that clambered over it, so gray and low it was, that at a little distance it was difficult to distinguish it from the gray rocks around. Except for this one little house, one could look to the top of the opposite mountain lost in mist, or down to the ravine at its base, and see no other habitation—nothing but the long stretches of purple-gray heather. And but for the tinkling of the sheep-bells, and the occasional wild cry of a bird, no sound could be heard. Down and beyond the mountain at the right, a faint blue line was visible—the sea; and sometimes a low,

The Echo-Maid.

booming sound could be heard—the waves dashing against the rocky coast.

In a field, at some distance above the cottage, sat two children, a boy and a girl, talking earnestly. About them grazed the Laird's sheep, while the faithful collie "Sandy" kept them within bounds. Sandy was kind, but firm, and every sheep there knew that the collie's ideas as to just where they should feed must be respected, or that unpleasant consequences would follow.

"Tell again about the pirates, an' the pot o' gold, Jamie," said the little girl, to her companion.

"Well, ye see, Janet," began Jamie. "It was many years ago, they was pirates, an' they cam' o'er the sea, wi' a pot o' gold. They clomb o'er the rocks an' cam' here wi' it, an' 't was hereabout they do say 't was hid. An' whoever 'll find it 'll be the rich man."

"An' where d' ye think 't was hid, Jamie?"

"I think," said Jamie, looking about in a strictly impartial manner, "they 'll have put it there, on Mount Enochan," and he pointed at the precipitous

frowning mountain opposite. "D' ye see that high rock up there, wi' a clump o' trees?"

The girl nodded.

"An' to the left, d' ye see a big black hole in the rock?"

"I do," said Janet. "'T is the Echo-Maid's Cave, Jamie."

"'T is that, Janet, an' 't is there I do be thinkin' that the gold is hid. I know 't is that's the place. 'T is the Echo-Maid hersel' that's got the pot o' gold, an' Janet, I'll tell ye how I know," and here Jamie's voice sank to an awed whisper. "She's told me so hersel', mony's the time. Hark to it now."

The boy then stood up, and forming a sort of trumpet with his two hands, shouted: "Echo-Maid, have ye the pot o' gold?"

And clear and distinct came the answer, "Pot o' gold."

"Is it still there?"

"Still there," was the answer.

"D' ye hear that, Janet?" said Jamie.

With tightly clasped hands and quickly beating

heart the little girl sat down again upon the rock, and it was some time before she spoke. Then she said :

“Jamie, d’ ye think, if we asked the Echo-Maid, she wad gie us the gold ?”

“Mayhap she wad, but not for ten pots o’ gold wad I go up there,” said Jamie, stoutly.

“It wad make us rich, Jamie, and my poor mither wouldna have to have scanty porritch any more. Last night, d’ ye know, she made me sup all the porritch, an’ said she had no hunger, but well I know why she said that,” and the tender-hearted child wiped her eyes with her apron. Jamie comforted her as well as he could.

It had grown late. The shadows had lengthened on the moorland, and the gray mists were rising from the valley below. The two children rose, and with the help of the dog, rounded the sheep into the rude fold. Then Jamie trudged his way home to the village of Dunarroch, while Janet went into the cottage.

Her mother met her at the door with a wan smile. When Janet looked into her thin, pale face,

she threw her arms about her neck, and said : “ Oh, Mither, Mither, could I but get the pot o’ gold that Jamie was tellin’ me about ! Ye wad be happy then.”

Mrs. McDonald smiled sadly. “ ’T wad tak’ but little gold to mak’ me happy, Janet,” she said. “ But think no more on’t, child. Your face is flushed an’ yer eyes bright. Ye stayed too late on the moor. I hope ye ha’na taken cold. Come sup, the porritch stands waiting.”

“ I dinna want the porritch,” said Janet. “ I canna eat. I have no hunger.”

“ Then go to bed, child. ’T is the best place for ye.”

This Janet did, and her mother, after listening to her simple prayer, covered her warm and snug in her little cot, and said :

“ I have been to Dunarroch to-day, Janet, an’ I heard news. I ’ll tell ye about it in the morn.”

“ Tell it now, Mither,” begged Janet.

“ Not to-night, child. Sleep is the thing for ye now. I hope the dear child is na going to be ill,” she said to herself. “ What wad I do then ? What

wad I do?" and burying her face in her hands, the poor woman cried as if her heart would break. "Ah, well," she said at last, "I 'll wait till I see what the morn 'll bring."

Years ago, Mrs. McDonald had been cook at Castle Dunarroch, and had married Thomas, the groom. The old Laird and his Lady had been very kind to the young couple, and all had at first gone well with them. Then the old Laird died, and his Lady and the young Laird, a mere boy, had left the castle, and lived for years in Edinboro'. A few years later Thomas, too, died, leaving his wife and baby, Janet, alone. With her husband's death the poor woman's troubles began. She had the tiny hut and the little patch of ground rent-free, and with the few potatoes she raised, and the occasional day's work for the minister's and doctor's families in Dunarroch, she barely managed to make a scanty living. When Janet was old enough she helped care for the Laird's sheep up among the hills, and shared with Jamie Burns the few pennies she got for it.

Meanwhile, the young Laird's mother had died,

and he himself had just married, and the news which Mrs. McDonald had heard in Dunarroch that day, was that he with his bride was coming back to his castle the following afternoon. The house, which had been closed for fifteen years, was once more to be opened. And she, Mrs. McDonald, had been bidden there to help the cook. She had been shown a letter from the Laird himself, written to the care-taker at the castle, in which he had said :

“Is Catherine McDonald alive and well? If so, she must be bidden to the castle to help in the cooking. I have never forgotten her scones.”

“The dear lad,” said Mrs. McDonald, wiping her eyes. “Well do I remember his curly head, popped into the kitchen, an’ his ‘*One lill mo’ scone, Cat’rine?*’ ”

Mrs. McDonald was much delighted at the thought of seeing the young Laird again, and his bonnie bride. She felt that her troubles were over.

“He ’ll help me when he sees how ’t is wi’ me. He was fond of my Thamas. ’T was Thamas

that taught him to ride," and comforted by the thought of what the morrow would bring, Mrs. McDonald went to bed, and was soon fast asleep.

Meanwhile Janet, knowing nothing of this, was not asleep, but lay on her cot in the corner, tossing restlessly from side to side. Her little head was filled with thoughts as to how she could help her poor, anxious mother.

"The pot o' gold. If I cud only get the pot o' gold from the Echo-Maid," she said. "Jamie wad-na go wi' me, an' I'm afeared to go alone. But why should I be afeared? I cud tell the Echo-Maid 't was for the mither's sake I cam', and 't was for her I asked the gold, an' I'm sure—I'm sure she 'd gie it me. She canna ha' use for it hersel'." Here Janet thought a while, and at last said resolutely: "*I'll go.* I'll go the morn," and with these words on her lips, she fell asleep.

Before dawn, she rose, and quietly dressed herself. Then she went to the cupboard, which was indeed bare, except for some cold porridge, and a half loaf of coarse bread. Cutting the bread into two pieces, she put one into the pocket of her jacket.

Then the child knelt reverently, and clasping her hands, said :

“ Please God, let me find the gold for the dear mither, an’ please God tak’ care o’ me.”

After this fervent little prayer, and a loving look toward the dark corner, where her mother still slept heavily, Janet stepped cautiously out, closing the cottage door noiselessly behind her.

“ I’ll tak’ good care that the sheep dinna hear me or they’ll bleat; an’ wake the mither,” she said, as she crept by the fold; for the sheep all knew and loved the little maid.

“ Jamie’ll have the care o’ ye the day alone, lammies, for I’ll not be back till night.”

At that moment Janet heard a rustling in the heather and a sound as of something rushing quickly toward her! Then something cold touched her hand! Janet gave a little cry of fear, which ended in a laugh, as she recognized in her pursuer, Sandy, the collie-dog, whose ears had not been deaf to the sound of his little mistress’ footsteps.

“ Ye canna go this time, Sandy. Go, mind the sheep,” she said. At this command, poor Sandy

slunk reluctantly away, stopping occasionally to look back, ready to at once respond, should his mistress change her mind. Janet, the cool morning air fanning her hot cheeks, walked on through the dew-laden grass, till she reached the field where she and Jamie had had their talk the day before. It had now grown a little lighter, and she could see dimly the frowning outlines of Mt. Enochan towering above her, a black spot on its side marking the Echo-Cave.

Then Janet, her heart beating wildly, put both her hands to her mouth, and called loudly into the lonely morning :

“Echo-Maid, tell me true if ye have the pot o’ gold?”

Back came the answer distinct and unmistakable :

“Have the pot o’ gold.”

“An’ will ye gie the gold to Janet McDonald?”

Here the gray mist rolled away from the cave, and louder, clearer than before came the answer :

“Gie the gold to Janet McDonald.”

Again the gray mist-wreaths hid the cave, but

The Echo-Maid.

when Janet shouted, "I'll come for it!" the Echo-Maid's voice, though faint, could yet be plainly heard, as she said:

"Come for it!"

And then for a moment, Janet's heart sank, as she looked at the lonely mountain before her. It was, indeed, a terrible task that the timid little girl had set for herself. No one had ever ventured to go before. The way was well-nigh impassable—no path, nothing to guide one—and then to face the Echo-Maid herself—well, no one as yet had had courage enough to undertake it.

"But I willna turn back now," said Janet "She's told me that she has the gold, an' that she'll gie it me. I must hurry on or the day'll soon be here, an' I must be away from the dear mither's call. I hope she willna worry, but if she worries the day, she'll be glad enough when I come back wi' the pot o' gold."

Janet had first to cross the brook which flowed down through the valley. It was now a shallow, noisy stream, although the little girl had seen it when it ran silently, sullenly along, when no one

could cross it in safety. Now, however, there was not the slightest difficulty in doing so, and Janet stepped lightly from stone to stone, scarcely wetting her little pink toes. On the other side, she stood a moment, looking at the frowning mountain which towered above.

“This ’ll be the best way. Betune them twa high rocks—no, that wouldna do. I canna get over the edge, yonder. My way ’ll be to go first to yon grassy spot, an’ there I ’ll see which way is best.”

The level, grassy spot reached, Janet found she had no choice in the matter. There was but one way up which it was possible for mortal to climb. On every other side rose inaccessible walls of gray rock.

“That ’ll be the way the pirates took, an’ I think I ’ll be able to do it, too,” she said, and after a crumb of the hard bread which, as she had had no breakfast, tasted sweet, she started on her perilous journey. Janet was used to being by herself, but never will she forget the great loneliness of that journey up Mount Enochan. The knowledge that

she was going where no foot had trod for so many years, and to meet—she knew not what, was enough to daunt the stoutest heart.

“It’s for the mither, an’ I asked God to tak’ care o’ me,” she said to herself, and went bravely on.

Often the way was so steep, that she was obliged to pull herself up by the branches of trees. Many times she fell, bruising, but fortunately not injuring herself seriously.

At one time, the path, which was no path, took a sudden turn to the left, bringing her to the edge of a precipice, and she found herself looking down on her home. She could see the familiar gray cottage, and the field where Jamie and Sandy were now minding the sheep—alone.

“How high up I must ha’ come,” she said. “An’ it seems that I canna be verra far frae the Echo-Cave.”

The sun was by this time high over her head, and Janet, feeling tired and dizzy, sat down to rest. It was a beautiful spot, a wild, grand view of moorland, with sea beyond. But the little girl

was too much absorbed in her undertaking to be conscious of anything but its loneliness. Her cheeks and hands were burning, and her head was throbbing with a dull pain. She tried to eat a bit of the bread in her pocket, but could not. She felt a burning thirst, and looked about her for water, but there was none there. Then, leaning her hot head down on a cool stone, she closed her eyes and fell fast asleep.

She was aroused from her heavy sleep by the feeling that she was not alone, that someone was near! Opening her eyes she saw no one, but heard the sound of heavy, regular breathing, and she then became conscious that some animal was lying near her, his body pressed as close to her back as it could possibly be. Her heart beat quickly, while beads of perspiration stood on her forehead. Turning her head cautiously, she caught a glimpse of tawny, yellow fur.

“It ’ll be a lion!” she said, shaking with terror. Janet knew that lions were yellow, but she did not know, poor little soul, that they never roam at large through the Scottish Highlands.

“I dinna want ter be e’t by a lion,” she moaned, her breath coming in gasps. “Oh, God, send him awa’.”

At that moment the supposed lion, finding that the little girl was awake, jumped up, and barked joyously!

“Oh, Sandy, Sandy,” cried Janet. “Ye frightened me sair. An’ ye did n’t do as I bid ye. Ye did n’t go back, an’ mind the sheep,” but in her joy and relief the child put her two soft little arms round the dog’s neck, and kissed him on his disobedient forehead.

“An’ now, Sandy, ye ’ll go home at once,” said Janet, sternly. But Sandy flatly rebelled. He evidently thought that the little girl did not know what she really did want.

“I worked very hard to get up here, and to keep out of sight,” he thought. “It took all my collie-slyness to accomplish it, too. And she was evidently glad—delighted to see me, so I shall stay,” and Sandy lay down again and winked his bright eyes at his mistress while he furtively wagged his tail. But it was of no use. Janet was firm, and

at last poor Sandy had to yield, and started slowly for home, his reproachful eyes fixed upon his little mistress to the last.

Then Janet rose, and although feeling dizzy and far from well, went on, stumbling occasionally from weakness. But she had been cheered by Sandy's coming. Something of the awful loneliness of the journey had been taken away. Another turn brought her opposite the Echo-Cave. Putting her hands to her mouth, Janet called :

“Echo-Maid, am I coming the right way?”

“Swiftly, clearly came the answer, “The right way.”

“The voice sounded kind,” said Janet. “Mayhap the Echo-Maid may be a gentle maid. An' oh, I hope, I hope she 'll be willin' to gie me the gold. But she said she wad, an' when I tell her o' poor mither, I know she 'll do it.”

Up, up, and still up, climbed the child, stopping sometimes for a moment's rest, for she was now so high on the mountain, that she found it hard to breathe. And at last, Janet knew that her journey was ended, for she found herself standing by the

ledge, which she felt sure must form the side wall of the Echo-Cave itself.

“Echo-Maid!” she called softly, but there was no answer. “I suppose she ’ll be inside the cave, an’ I ’ll ha’ to enter it; but how?” For Janet saw no way of entering, save from the front, swinging herself round the wall, and into the cave. But there was scarce foothold there, and brave as she was, she shuddered when she looked down into the horrible, yawning abyss below. She examined the place more carefully.

“Now, if the wall be not too thick,” she said, “I mought hold by yon hanging vine, and swing mesel’ into the cave beyant. The vine is strong enough, I know. An’ if the wall prove thick, mayhap I could swing mesel’ down from the top o’ the cave, into it. But first I ’ll try how thick the wall is.” So, holding the strong vine firmly with her left hand, she stretched her right arm as far as it would reach, and found to her joy, that the wall of rock on that side, was not more than a foot in width. Then ’t would be an easy matter for her to step on a narrow projecting bit of rock and swing

herself into the cave, steadying herself by the vine. This she did, being careful not to look down, lest dizziness should overcome her. And then Janet found herself at last, standing in the cave of the Echo-Maid !

At first she could see nothing, the cave being large and dark. "Echo-Maid," she called, timidly.

"Echo-Maid? Who calls the Echo-Maid?" answered a clear, sweet, low voice, and Janet gazing into the darkness whence the sound had come, saw, gliding towards her—the *Echo-Maid herself!*

And many a time since, but in vain, did Janet try to describe the beauty and witchery of the maid. A tall, slender, graceful figure, clad in floating garments of shadowy gray; long, floating gray-gold hair, and large, wild, dark eyes, tender and innocent, that looked now at Janet, wide open with curiosity and astonishment.

"Oh, Echo-Maid," said little Janet, tremulously. "I'm Janet McDonald. I mind the Laird's sheep, and I live in the bit gray cottage down below. An' I'll tell ye how 't was. Jamie, him that lives in the village of Dunarroch, tol' me, how that long ago

the pirates brought the pot o' gold up o'er the rocks, and left it here in the Cave o' the Echo-Maid—your cave—me Leddy,” and here Janet courtesied low. “An' I thought, ye see, that mayhap you'd be willin' to gie us some o' the gold. I thought you couldna ha' much use for it yersel'. An' mither needs it. Oh, Echo-Maid, an' ye could know how sair the dear mither needs it, ye wad gie some o't to us.” Here Janet's voice broke, and kneeling before the Maid, she stretched out both arms toward her, and said, the tears streaming down her sweet little face, “Dear Echo-Maid, ye will gie us the pot o' gold, won't ye? *Won't ye?*”

The Echo-Maid gave no answer for some time, but stood there still gazing in silent amazement at Janet. At last she spoke, and her voice was like sweet music to the child's ears :

“And you are a little girl,” she said, “the first I have ever seen. I have seen no one for many long years, and glad, glad indeed am I that you have come to me, Janet McDonald. For my life is a lonely one. I hear them calling from below, but I cannot talk with them. I can only repeat

what they say. Only once before has the foot of mortal entered this cave, and that was more than a hundred years ago."

"An' were ye alive then?" interrupted Janet.

"I was then as I am now. We Echo-Maids never change.

"An' are there more of ye, then?" asked Janet.

"I thought there was but one."

"More of us?" laughed the Maid. "Wherever there are rocks and hills, there are Echo-Maids—my sisters. This cave is my home. My care it is to give back the words which are sent up from below, repeating only what I hear."

"But, Echo-Maid," said Janet, "you are talking to me now."

"Ah, yes," said the Maid. "You came to me, entered the cave. I can talk—if one comes to me. But till now, no one has come, that is, not for many years. More than a hundred years ago, on a wild, dark night, some rough men came to my cave." (" 'T was the pirates," whispered Janet.) "They brought with them a vessel filled with round, yellow things," ("The pot o' gold," said Janet.) "and

then they went away. From what they said, I judged that they were coming again to take it away, but all that night the heavy rain fell, and the thunder rolled from crag to crag, till I was hoarse with throwing the sound back from my cave. And the next day the rain fell, and the next, and then from before my very door, earth, rocks, and trees were torn away, leaving me here on the edge of this precipice, and believing that no one could ever again intrude on my solitude. And child, how did you enter the cave? How did you do what I supposed was not possible for mortal to do?"

"D'ye see yon vine hangin' down from the top, an' coverin' the entrance a bit?" asked Janet. "Well, I caught hold o' that to steady mesel' an' stepped on the bit ledge there, then put me arm round the rock, an' drew mesel' in. But Echo-Maid—tell me—the pirates that cam' here. Where did they pit the pot o' gold?" asked Janet.

"There," and the Maid pointed with her shadowy arm.

"May I look?" asked Janet, and walked further into the cave. At first she could see nothing,

but groped blindly on. Then, her eyes having become accustomed to the darkness, she searched eagerly from side to side, but for some time could find nothing. At last, behind a jutting point of rock she stumbled against something. It was an iron kettle which, she could dimly see, was filled with something bright and shining. With great difficulty she dragged this to the mouth of the cave, where in the light she saw—what she had been looking for—*the pot o' gold!*

The Echo-Maid stood near, looking at Janet with interest and amusement.

“Is it not pretty? Would you like to play with it?” she asked.

“Oh, dinna ye mean to *gie* me some o' these?” asked Janet.

“You may have them all,” said the Maid, smiling kindly at the little girl, who thanked her with her heart full of gratitude.

Just then Janet noticed that the cave had become strangely dark, and running to the entrance, she looked out. The sky, so clear and blue but a short time before, was now covered with angry, threaten-

ing clouds, which chased each other madly across it. The sun, a red ball of fire, was sinking in the sea. Then came a blinding flash of lightning, and Janet appalled, retreated to the back of the cave.

“It ’ll be a bad thunder-storm,” she said, “an’ I must wait till it is o’er. It ’ll bring me late home, but I canna help it. Jamie an’ Sandy must drive down the sheep alone. The poor mither ’ll be afeared for me, but she willna mind when she sees the pot o’ gold,” and Janet smiled as she thought of her mother’s surprise and pleasure. Then, sitting down on a rock, the little girl ate her last piece of bread.

Meanwhile, the storm, instead of ceasing, as she hoped, became more violent. The lightning flashed almost without ceasing, while the crashing of the thunder echoing from crag to crag, was deafening. And the gentle Echo-Maid had changed. She had become the Spirit of the Storm itself, and stood there, her figure swaying from side to side, her arms outstretched, calling—calling—calling! Janet trembled as she watched her, fearing—she knew not what.

After a long while, the lightning-flashes grew less, the thunder rolled sullenly, but the rain fell in torrents. Then the Echo-Maid glided to Janet's side, and said in her sweet, low voice :

“ Were you frightened, little one ? ”

“ Yes,” said Janet, “ an' I fear me, I 'll have to stay the night here, as I canna find my way in the dark and the rain.”

“ Oh yes, you will stay,” said the Echo-Maid.

Then, overcome by fatigue, Janet with one arm tightly clasping the pot of gold, leaned her head against the cold rock of the cave, and in spite of the noise made by the rain, which was still coming down in torrents, fell fast asleep. She had slept for several hours, when she was aroused by a strange, hoarse, rumbling noise. She started up in alarm, at first not knowing where she was, and listening in terror to the grinding, tearing sounds which seemed to come from all sides at once. The noise grew louder, and the cave rocked from side to side. Louder, and louder yet, grew the uproar, ending at last in a mighty echoing *crash*, which shook the very earth! Then followed

silence, broken only by the steady downpour of the rain.

“Echo-Maid!” screamed Janet, in terror. “What was that? What has happened?”

“Do not be afraid, little girl,” said the reassuring voice of the Echo-Maid. “The danger is passed—we are safe. The rain has been falling for hours. It has loosened the earth and stones and part of the mountain has fallen. It has been a wild storm. Rest now. In the morning we shall see.”

But Janet had been too thoroughly frightened to rest easily again, and fell into a troubled sleep from which she was aroused by the loud cry of “*Fanet! Fanet!*”

“Yes, I am coming,” she answered, still half asleep, while the Echo-Maid glided quickly past her to the entrance of the cave, and threw back the call, “*Fanet! Fanet!*”

Again came the cry, an agonized cry, from below :

“*Fanet!* Where are ye?”

“Where are ye?” repeated the Echo-Maid.

But Janet, now fully aroused, sprang to her

feet, for she had recognized the voice of her mother. Running to the front of the cave, she was about to call, when the Echo-Maid turned fiercely upon her, and waved her back.

“But, Echo-Maid,” said poor little Janet. “The mither calls. I must answer.”

“No voice, but the voice of the Echo, must answer from this cave,” said the Maid, sternly. And Janet, though longing to respond to her mother’s call, was obliged to obey. The calling ceased, and the Maid, once more her gentle self, turned and smiled at the little girl.

“An’ now, Echo-Maid, I see that the storm is o’er an’ I must go,” said Janet. “I must go at once.”

“Go?” said the Maid, in astonishment. “Are you then going to leave me? I thought you would stay with me forever.”

“Oh, no,” said Janet. “I cam’ here for the pot o’ gold.”

“But I have given you the pot o’ gold, and will you not stay here and play with it and with me?” asked the Maid, sadly.

“Oh, I canna, I canna,” said Janet. “I must go. An’ dear Echo-Maid, from the bottom o’ my heart I thank ye for the gold, an’ for yer kindness.” And Janet dropped a courtesy. “It wad mak’ ye happy, indeed, cud ye but know what the gold ’ll do for us.”

Then Janet tried to lift the pot, but finding it much too heavy to carry, set it down again in perplexity.

“Whatever ’ll I do now?” she said. “I canna carry it down the mountain.”

“Can you not throw the gold over the precipice, as I throw back the words?” suggested the Maid.

“Why yes, so I can,” said Janet, “that ’ll be the way, an’ when I get down I will gather it in my apron.”

Finding the pot too heavy to empty all at once, she knelt beside it, and gathering handful after handful of the glittering gold, threw it down over the cliff, until the pot was quite empty.

“An’ now, dear Echo-Maid, I ’ll bid ye good-bye,” she said. “I ’ll never forget ye. An’ when

I'm below, I'll often call up to ye. An' ye will answer?"

"Will answer," said the Maid sadly.

"Good-bye, good-bye," said Janet, the tears standing in her blue eyes.

"Good-bye," echoed the Maid. Then grasping the vine firmly with her hand, Janet swung herself to the other side of the wall of rock,—only to shrink back into the cave again with a cry of horror!

"*Oh, oh!*" she said, and sinking, a miserable little heap on the floor of the cave, she covered her face with her hands and cried aloud. The sight that Janet had seen was enough to appall the stoutest heart. For the path by which she had come, had disappeared! Instead of the solid earth she expected, she found herself looking into a yawning abyss, a sheer smooth wall of rock, a precipice, down which it would be impossible for any one to climb!

"Why do you weep? What has happened?" asked the Echo-Maid.

"*Oh, oh!*" moaned Janet. "I canna go. I can never go. The mountain has fell away. Whatever shall I do? Whatever shall I do?"

“Do? You will stay with me, little Earth-Child! Stay with me always,” said the Echo-Maid, joyously.

“No, no,” moaned Janet, “if I canna get awa’ I shall die. I canna live in this cave wi’ out food an’ water. An’ I am so thirsty now, so thirsty an’ so hot and burning.”

The Echo-Maid looked at her with troubled eyes, for the necessity of food and drink she could not understand.

“An’ the mither ’ll never know what becam’ o’ me,” moaned Janet. “She’ll never know how I cam’ to get the pot o’ gold, an’ how it ’s lyin’ now for her under the trees. An’ Jamie ’ll ha’ to tend the sheep alone wi’ Sandy. Poor Sandy, I’m sorry I sent him back,” and here the child threw herself down on the floor of the cave, sobbing bitterly.

For hours she lay there on the cold stone, muttering to herself and moaning, but in the late afternoon, when the sun shone slantwise into the cave, the Echo-Maid came joyously to Janet, rousing her with these words :

“Earth-Child, listen. You can escape. There is a way.”

Janet, though weak and ill, started up at the hope conveyed in these words.

“An’ how? How can I escape?” she asked.

“Come,” said the Maid, and Janet followed her to the front of the cave.

“You told me, child, that with the help of this vine, you swung yourself into the cave. Now, can you not in the same way, by the aid of the vine, let yourself down to the earth below?”

“Oh no, I canna,” said Janet. “It wad break, and I should be killed.”

“It cannot break,” said the Echo-Maid. “I have seen trees uprooted by the winter storms, and the vine has swayed and bent, but never broken. I have seen rocks hurled from their places by the weight of snow and ice, but this vine has stood firm. And look above where the gnarled roots have forced their way into the cave itself. No human weight could possibly dislodge them.”

“An’ wad the vine be long enough?” asked Janet, doubtingly.

“As I look down,” answered the Echo-Maid, “I see far below, the swaying vine, till it is lost in a sea of green, for tall trees rise to meet it.”

“An’ ye think I could slide down by the vine, till I met the trees, an’ then let mesel’ to the ground,” said Janet. “Well—I can but try, for I know I canna stay here. An’ I’ll call up to ye, Echo-Maid, when I’m once safe below.”

Then, grasping the stout vine firmly with both little brown hands, Janet slides slowly, carefully, down, down, down. She has reached the trees now, and grasping the top branch of one firmly, and loosening her hold of the vine, which sways back against the rock, she lightly swings herself from branch to branch, and is half way down the tree, her journey almost ended, when the poor little maid who has gone through so much in safety, and with so stout a heart, is suddenly seized with an attack of dizziness. Putting out her hand, she tries in vain, to grasp the branch beside her to steady herself. She misses it, and falls—heavily—to the ground, where she lies unconscious. And many days must pass before she is able to call to the Echo-Maid, as she promised.



II.

ON the morning of the day that Janet left the house to search for the pot of gold, Mrs. McDonald awoke and was surprised to find that it was so late and that Janet had gone to the sheep-fold, without calling her. Opening the cupboard and finding that half the loaf of bread was gone, she said :

“Then Janet canna be ill the morn, as I feared last night, she wad be.” So, with a thankful heart, she warmed the porridge for her own breakfast, and hurried to her day’s work at the castle. Passing the sheep-fold, she noticed that it was empty.

“Jamie and Janet must ha’ driven the sheep to the hill,” she thought.

All day the good woman worked with no idea of the trouble that was awaiting her at home. Late

in the afternoon, the young Laird and his bride arrived at the castle.

On seeing Mrs. McDonald, the Laird said to his wife :

“Geraldine, you have often heard me speak of Thomas McDonald. This is his widow.”

They both spoke many kind words to Mrs. McDonald, and she was greatly pleased when they enquired for Janet, and said that some day they would ride over the hill and see the little cottage.

On her way home, Mrs. McDonald went through the village of Dunarroch, and with the money she had earned that day, bought a few little luxuries for their supper, and a pair of shoes for Janet, “that she may be decent when the Leddy comes,” she said. Then, although tired with her day’s work, she walked briskly home with a light heart. As she came over the hill, she noticed that the sky had become overcast, and that the wind was rising. “There ’ll be a storm the night,” she said, and hurried on.

When she came within sight of the cottage she was surprised to see no light there. She opened

the door. "Janet?" she said. There was no answer. The room was as she had left it in the morning. No light—no fire. Janet had evidently not been there.

At this moment, Sandy came in at the door, whining piteously.

"Sandy," asked Mrs. McDonald, "where is she? where is Janet?" but the dog only answered by another pitiful whine. Mrs. McDonald, now thoroughly alarmed, walked out to the sheep-fold and called loudly:

"Janet! Janet!" but the bleating of the sheep and the sighing of the wind in the trees, was her only answer. Then came a flash of lightning, followed by thunder. The storm was coming.

Into the cottage she went again, and searched everywhere for the child, whom she hoped to find asleep.

"I 'll go ask Jamie. He 'll know," she said at last. So, followed by Sandy, the poor tired woman ran the whole way back to Dunarroch, and burst into the cottage where Jamie sat eating his supper.

"Where 's Janet?" she gasped.

“I dunno,” said Jamie, his mouth full of porridge.

“Was she na wi’ ye the day?”

“No,” said Jamie, “an’ she should ha’ been. She had no right to le’ me to mind the sheep alone, the whole day.”

“She wasna wi’ ye?” cried Mrs. McDonald, seizing him by the arm. “Oh Jamie, Jamie, then she’s lost. Janet’s lost. I’ve searched over all, an’ called till I’m hoarse. Where will she be?”

“*Janet lost?*” cried Jamie, springing to his feet, all thought of supper forgotten. “Not lost. We’ll find her, Mrs. McDonald;” and calling to his father, the three left the cottage. Two or three neighbors joined them on the way, bringing torches. “It’ll be a wild night for a bairn to be out on the moor alone,” said one to another.

Before they reached the McDonald cottage, the storm burst upon them. Flash after flash of blinding lightning followed by peal after peal of echoing thunder. Reaching the cottage, they began their search for Janet. Inside and out, then into

the sheep-fold they went, startling the animals from their slumber. Then up into the grazing-field, where the sheep had been through the day. Here they called, "*Fanet! Fanet!*" but only the echo responded "*Fanet.*"

As they stood there listening, the drenching rain came down upon them, extinguishing their torches, and forcing them to go down again into the cottage for shelter. The men, now thoroughly alarmed for the safety of the child, sat by the fire, whispering together, while two women who had come up from the village forced poor Mrs. McDonald to eat something and lie down, for in such a storm they knew it was impossible to continue the search. The hours dragged slowly on, broken only by the sound of the rain, which fell in torrents. The neighbors who had come, stayed at the cottage through the night, poor Jamie, his head buried in his hands, crying and dozing, alternately. Sandy passed his time in going from one to another, whining pitifully.

Suddenly, every one started to his feet in alarm! What was it? What had happened?

From the opposite mountain was heard a strange, hoarse, rumbling noise which grew louder and louder, ending at last in a mighty *crash*, which shook the little cottage to its foundation!

Then all was still, save for the howling of the wind, and the downpour of the rain.

“It’ll be a landslide on Mount Enochan,” said one of the men.

“A landslide?” cried Mrs. McDonald, “and mayhap my Janet is there an’ buried beneath it,” and the poor woman ran wildly to the door.

“Are ye mad, Mrs. McDonald?” said one of the women, holding her back. “If ye couldna find her in the light, what could ye do in the dark, an’ the pourin’ rain? When the storm is o’er, we’ll all go wi’ ye, but now we can do naught.”

Convinced, poor Mrs. McDonald sat down again and waited, and at last, at daybreak, the rain ceased. Then the women prepared a hurried breakfast, but Mrs. McDonald, unable to eat a mouthful, ran alone to the grazing-field, and called frantically:

“*Fanet! Fanet! Where are ye?*”

From the Echo-Cave above came the answer clearly:

“Janet! Where are ye?” but no other sound was heard. Here, Sandy, who had been for some time acting strangely, began violently tugging at Mrs. McDonald’s apron!

“What is it, Sandy, mon?” she asked. Then an idea suddenly came to her.

“Mayhap Sandy knows where Janet is, and wants me to follow him. Is it Janet, Sandy?” she asked. At this the dog wagged his tail, and barked furiously. Hurrying down toward the cottage, to tell them of the hint which Sandy had given, Mrs. McDonald was met not only by those she had left behind, but by almost the entire village, including the young minister and the schoolmaster, who, hearing of the poor woman’s trouble, had come to offer help.

“Sagacity is given to the brutes. No doubt the beastie knows where the child is. Let us follow him,” said the minister, when Mrs. McDonald had told him of Sandy’s strange behavior.

“Sandy, go find Janet,” commanded Mrs.

McDonald, and the dog, with a joyous bark, led the way down toward the ravine and brook, followed by all. But the brook was not the peaceful stream of yesterday, which the little girl had found so easy to cross by the stepping-stones. Swollen by the recent rains, it was now a brawling, turbulent stream. Although Sandy had no difficulty in crossing it, the others paused to discuss as to whether 't were better to ford it here, or go down a half mile to the bridge. Just then the sound of a quickly galloping horse was heard, and in a few moments the young Laird was among them.

“I have heard of your trouble, Mrs. McDonald,” he said, “and have come to offer help.”

“I thank yer Honor,” said the poor woman. “We 're hopin' we 're on the right track now. We 're follerin' the dog. But the stream is so full wi' the rain, that we canna get easy across.”

The Laird took in the situation at a glance.

“Those of you, who wish, can ford the stream,” he said, “the others can go down to the bridge, but I will take Mrs. McDonald over on my horse.”

This was done, and they were soon safely on

the other side. Sandy darted eagerly on. He fully expected to find his little mistress on the spot high up on the mountain where he had reluctantly parted from her, only the day before. Panting with excitement, he jumped from rock to rock, stopping every now and then to wait for the others. He was nearing the spot, when, judge of the poor faithful creature's surprise and disappointment, when he found the way blocked by a high, impassable wall of earth, rocks, and trees!

One by one the climbers reached the spot and gazed appalled.

"'T is the landslide," they whispered, "an' if the bairn was there last night—" but no one finished the sentence.

"Why should she be on Mount Enochan?" said one. "No one ever comes here, except, perhaps the pirates, long ago."

The pirates! These words had suggested an idea to Jamie, and he cried out:

"The pot o' gold! 'T was the pot o' gold," and then the boy told the story. How, when he and Janet had been minding the sheep, she had

asked him to tell her about the pirates. And when he had told her that he thought the pirates had put the gold into the Echo-Maid's Cave on Mount Enochan, she had begged him to go with her and ask the Echo-Maid for some of it for her mother, who was so very poor. But he had told her he was afraid to go, and Janet had seemed to be afraid, too, "an' I didna think, that she wad dare to go alone. An' now," sobbed Jamie, "I 'm afeared she did go, an' oh, how I wisht I 'd stopped her."

The boy's story and the conduct of the dog, seemed to point to the truth of the idea that poor, brave, little Janet had really gone up Mount Enochan, and made the attempt to get the gold.

Mrs. McDonald accepted this idea as final. She threw herself down on the ground and wept in agony, for she fully believed that her child was lying there, buried under the mass of earth. The faithful dog, crouching by her side, licked her hand in mute sympathy. Occasionally he would look up towards the spot where he had last seen his little mistress, and howl piteously. Woman and dog were mourning their dead.

The Laird, greatly touched, now said :

“My dear Mrs. McDonald, let us not yet give up all hope. If Janet wished to reach the cave, might she not have tried to climb up the precipice at the front?”

“No, yer Honor,” was the answer, “’t is too steep. There wadna be foothold there, even for a goat.”

“But,” said the Laird, “Janet is only a child and without judgment. She might have tried to climb up and have fallen back, and may be lying there now. I will search there, anyway,” So leaving his horse in care of Jamie’s father, and calling to Sandy, he started. And Sandy, hopeless and unwilling, followed.

The others, believing further search to be useless, persuaded Mrs. McDonald to go home. Instead of fording the stream, they all walked slowly down to the bridge which led to Dunarroch, leaving Jamie and his father alone with the Laird’s horse.

The Laird, meanwhile, with Sandy at his heels, walked on, directly toward the precipice

under the cave. As he approached and looked up, he was appalled at its height.

“They were right,” he said. “No one would attempt to scale that wall.”

At this point, Sandy suddenly stopped, and stood as if turned to stone, his head up, his nose sniffing the air! Then with a loud yelp, he bounded forward and disappeared in a clump of trees, at the foot of the precipice. The Laird, led by the joyous barking of the dog, followed quickly, and there—under the trees, with Sandy standing beside her, licking her face—lay poor, little Janet McDonald! Stooping over the unconscious figure, the Laird found that she still breathed. She was not dead. Lifting her up tenderly, and preceded by the now frantically barking Sandy, he carried her to the place where he had left his horse. Jamie and his father, hearing the Laird’s call, and suspecting from Sandy’s joyous bark, what had happened, came eagerly forward to meet them, with Selim—the horse.

“Is she dead?” called Jamie, when he saw Janet lying in the Laird’s arms.

“No, she is still living. Here, Angus,” said the Laird, speaking to Jamie’s father, “hold the child till I mount.”

When the Laird was mounted, Angus placed Janet in his arms, and Selim, who seemed to recognize the necessity for caution, stepped slowly and carefully over the stones. The Laird feared to cross the stream with his burden, though it was a much nearer way.

“I must go down by the bridge,” he said, “but do you ford the stream, Angus, and tell the good news to Mrs. McDonald, and do you, Jamie, run across the short way to Dunarroch, and tell the doctor to come at once to the cottage.”

When the Laird reached the cottage, with the still unconscious Janet in his arms, he was received with shouts of joy by all the village people, and there was not a dry eye among them, when Janet was restored to her mother’s arms.

The doctor, who was already there, now came forward, and ordered them all to go home and leave the house quiet.

“I will give ye the news of her, the night,” he told them.

For several days Janet lay on her little bed, very ill. The Laird and his Lady came every day to enquire for her, but were met always by the same answer, “Still alive, but no better.”

And one day, the village doctor told the Laird that he would like to have one of the great doctors from the city come to see the child, “for I fear,” he said, “that the case is beyond my skill.”

“The brave child shall have the best doctor in Edinboro’,” said the Laird, and he telegraphed to Sir Andrew Anderson, who arrived the next day at Dunarroch Castle. In the afternoon, he, accompanied by Lady Geraldine and the Laird came to the cottage. Sir Andrew, to whom they had told the story of Janet’s search for the pot of gold, was much interested in the brave little girl. The village doctor was at the cottage to meet them, and the two went inside while Lady Geraldine and the Laird waited anxiously for the verdict.

Janet lay in her little white bed, restlessly tossing from side to side. She looked at Sir Andrew

with wide-open, yet unseeing eyes, and stretching out her arms to him, cried piteously :

“ Oh, won't ye gie me the pot o' gold? 'T is for the mither I ask it. She's so poor. Ah, 't was so hard to get to the cave, an' could ye na gie me a little? The mither said 't wad tak' but a little gold to mak' her happy.”

In half an hour, Sir Andrew came out.

“ Well?” said Lady Geraldine, breathlessly.

“ The case is simply this,” said Sir Andrew. “ The child is suffering from a fever, brought on by several causes. In talking with the mother, I find that they have been in actual want, and that for some time past, they have not had sufficient food to eat.”

“ Oh,” groaned the Laird. “ I knew nothing of this. I was away.”

“ Mrs. McDonald says that Janet had not been well for several days,” continued the doctor, “ and these facts and the exposure to the storm on the moor, have brought on this fever.”

“ And do you think,” asked Geraldine, “ that she really did try to climb into the Echo-Cave?”



'Tis the Echo-Maid
hersel'!

Oh, thank ye, thank
ye, Echo-Maid!

“She may have done so, but be that as it may, she probably wandered up and down the mountain for hours, and she must have been lying under the trees for a long time before the Laird discovered her. Judging from her ravings, she thinks that she has been in the cave, seen the Echo-Maid and the gold. Her constant cry is: ‘Gie it to me! Gie me the gold!’”

“Oh, Kenneth,” said Geraldine, “have you not some gold pieces now in your pocket? Here give them to me. I may put them into her hand, Doctor?” and receiving his permission, Geraldine glided to the bed.

“Gie me the gold,” cried Janet.

“Yes, child, here is the gold,” said Geraldine, softly, putting it in her hands.

Then Janet, clasping it tightly, and looking up into the beautiful face bending over her, framed in its golden hair, said joyfully:

“’T is the Echo-Maid hersel’! Oh, thank ye. Thank ye, Echo-Maid!” and almost immediately fell into a quiet sleep, the first she had known since she had been brought home.

“That was an inspiration, Lady Geraldine,” said the doctor, as they drove back to the castle. “I think now, that with the aid of your village doctor, and with Mrs. McDonald’s good nursing (and she is evidently a capital nurse) the child may pull through. Fine mountain and sea air and pure water, what more could one wish? I would send some of my own patients here to get well, were there any good house for them to go to.”

And Janet did recover—recovered rapidly. There was no lack of good food now at the cottage. Lady Geraldine saw to that.

One day, when Janet was able to sit out of doors, she told the whole story of her search for the pot of gold from the beginning to the end to the Laird and Lady Geraldine, who sat near her.

“An’ now, I’m wearyin’ to go an’ pick up the gold I threw down,” she said.

So a few days later, Lady Geraldine, the Laird and Janet went to the precipice, Janet seated on Selim’s back, for she was not yet strong enough to walk so far. Before they reached the place, the Laird said to her :

“Janet, suppose the gold is not there?”

“Ah, but it must be there, yer Honor, for I threw it down,” she said.

“But it may not be there now,” continued the Laird, “and if it be not, do not grieve. When you come back I have something to tell you.”

Then he lifted Janet from Selim’s back, and with quickly beating heart the little girl ran alone to the place where she expected to see the gold.

But when she reached the spot she looked eagerly around to find, alas, that there was no gold there! Search as she would, not a piece could she find. Then Janet sat down, and burying her face in her hands, wept bitterly. And so the Laird and Lady Geraldine (who had walked slowly after) found her.

“Janet,” said the sweet voice of Lady Geraldine. “The Laird has something to say to you, dear,” and the little girl choked back her sobs to listen.

“’T is for the mither I greet,” she said.

“What I wish to say to you, Janet, is this,” said the Laird. “You have not found the gold here, it is true, but—now remember what I say—some

day, I promise that you shall have the pot o' gold, and then you can give it to your mother."

"Then 't was you, yer Honor, that gathered up the gold," said Janet.

"Well," said the Laird, smiling, "That is my secret, little girl."

Then they went home, Janet quite comforted. Mrs. McDonald was needed now every day at the castle, and as she could not leave the little girl alone, it was proposed that she take her with her, and close the cottage. This was done, and Jamie and Sandy tended the sheep alone. Sandy slept in the fold at night, and became sterner than ever with the sheep. Janet was allowed to do no work, but was told to run about and get well as fast as she could. Mrs. McDonald was smilingly mysterious these days, and for some reason Janet was forbidden to go to the cottage.

Then came a wonderful day—the happiest in Janet's life. The day when she was nine years old. Her mother, who had finished her work at the castle, went back to the cottage in the morning, and in the afternoon Janet followed with the

Laird and Lady Geraldine. As they began to ascend the hill, what was the child's amazement, to see in the place of the little gray cottage, a beautiful new house!

"What is that? What does it mean?" gasped Janet, looking from Lady Geraldine to the Laird.

"Tell her," said the Laird.

"It means," said Lady Geraldine, smiling kindly at her, "that the Laird and I have built this house. Sir Andrew Anderson, the great Edinboro' doctor, whom we had up to see you Janet, when you were ill, was charmed with this spot and wanted just such a place for some of his patients to get well in, so we thought we would build this house for that purpose. And as your mother is such a good nurse and cook, she is to have charge of it."

They drove first to the kitchen-door, where Mrs. DeDonald stood smilingly awaiting them, and then the four walked admiringly through the house. Upstairs there were six pretty bedrooms and from the windows a fine view of Mount Enochan, the valley, and sea beyond.

“Oh, Mither, Mither!” cried Janet, throwing her arms round her mother’s neck. “How kind they are! An’ won’t we tak’ fine care o’ their beautiful new house?”

“Come now, all of you,” said the Laird cheerily, as he led the way to the front of the house, and out of the door. “I have something outside to show you, Janet, and something to say to you, too.” So taking the little girl by the hand, and followed by the others, he led her out of the door and on to the grass at the front of the house.

“Janet,” he said. “You remember I told you that some day you should have a ‘pot o’ gold’?”

“Yes,” said Janet.

“Well, look up now, over the door, and read the name of this inn.”

And there, painted in large gold letters, on a bright blue ground, Janet read :

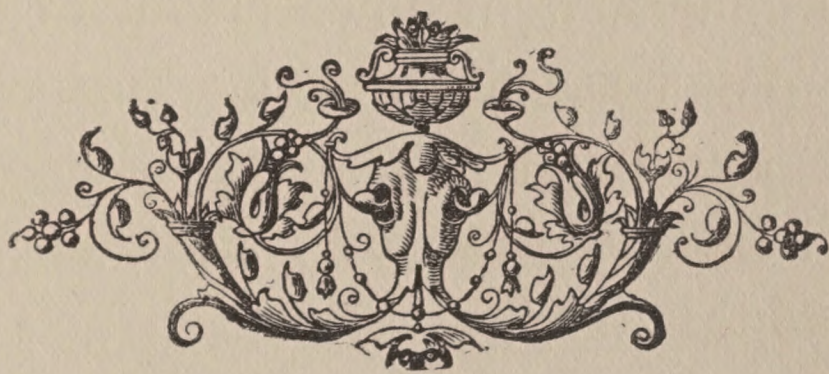
“THE POT O’ GOLD.”

“Yes,” said the Laird, “and *this* pot o’ gold, little girl, is yours—your very own. Lady Ger-

aldine and I give it to you to-day—your ninth birthday.”

“And Janet,” said Lady Geraldine, “what will you do with your pot o’ gold? ’”

“*Give it to the mither!*” cried Janet, running to her mother’s arms!





IN THE LAND OF THE WEE-UNS.

I.

IN the village of Lanwyn, on the coast of Cornwall, lived a boy whose name was Samuel. His father was a miner—an overseer—who each day with other miners, went down into the earth to dig out tin, and as he went to his work almost before the sun began his, he scarcely knew day by sight. But it had not been always so, for, as a lad and young man, Mr. Carroll had been a sailor, and many were the tales of adventure which he told to his boy, Sam. Nor was that all, for the father had in spare moments managed to make a good sailor of the boy, and on his eleventh birthday gave him for his very own, a fine, broad, safe boat. It was not a new one, but after Mr. Carroll had mended,

put in a new bowsprit and painted it, it certainly looked as if it were. The name—Aurora—Sam chose himself, and his father painted it on the stern. The black letters stood out proudly: *A Roarer*, and I think Mr. Carroll, Sam, and all their friends preferred that way of spelling it to any other.

One day early in June, Sam went for an afternoon's sail. He took his supper with him, as he did not intend to return till high tide, at eight. His mother felt no anxiety, for the day was mild, and Sam was a good sailor. He could also swim, and had with him a life-preserver. The boy sailed out of the little land-locked harbor, toward the open ocean beyond. He always felt relieved when his boat shot out between the two high rocks which guarded the narrow entrance, because the mine in which his father worked extended far out under the bay, and it gave him an uncomfortable sensation, to feel that he might be sailing over his father's head!

The *A Roarer* sailed on for an hour or more. Then the wind which had been steady, suddenly died away, the water became like glass, and the

boat lay there peacefully, unworthy her name ; but even *A Roarer* can do nothing in a dead calm. Sam looked about in every direction, but saw no welcome ripple. On the horizon a long, murky line marked the recent passage of an ocean-liner, but no boat save his own was in sight on the empty, glassy sea. It was terribly hot—Sam bathed his face and hands, and then—I regret to say—did what no boy should do when alone in a boat—fell fast asleep, the sheet held tightly in his hand. He slept for more than an hour. The mischievous breeze in the meantime only waiting, apparently, until the boy was sound asleep, sprang up and filled the *A Roarer's* sail. “Ah, ha,” laughed the waves, as they slapped against her sides, and slapped against her sides, and faster and faster the boat flew onward.

Suddenly Sam was aroused from his dangerous sleep, by hearing a shrill cry. In an instant the boy was fully awake, and looking up, found himself within a few feet of a group of pointed jagged rocks toward which he was rapidly sailing! In another moment he would have been dashed

against them, but he succeeded in bringing the boat about just in time.

“A pretty close shave that,” said a wee voice, and then Sam looked up, and saw to his amazement, standing on one of the rocks, a tiny man, not more than ten inches high. Rubbing his eyes, he looked again, for he thought he must be dreaming. No, there stood the little figure, sharply outlined against the sky beyond. Lowering the sail, the boy took his oars, and rowed cautiously near the rock on which the little man was standing.

“Where did you come from?” he asked.

“From my kingdom below,” was the astonishing answer; and the small figure was drawn proudly erect till it was fully ten and a half inches high. “I am a King, and who are you?”

“Just a plain boy,” said Sam. “I came from Lanwyn, the village over there.”

“What village? Over where?” asked the little man.

“There, behind me,” said Sam, and turning, was about to point it out, when he discovered that there was no land in sight!

About him on every side was water, nothing but water. Sam's heart sank, when he realized how far he must be from his home.

"Where am I?" he gasped.

"At the entrance to my kingdom," said His Little Majesty.

"And may I come up on those rocks?" asked Sam, who hoped that from that height he might be better able to see the land. At this, the Little King seemed greatly alarmed, but said politely, "I shall be delighted, Giant. That is, if you are quite sure you are a gentle giant?"

Sam, though much amused at being called a giant, said that he had always been considered very kind and gentle. Then he remembered with remorse that only the day before he had broken his sister's doll. "That is, I mean to be so," he added.

At this, the Little King, who had awaited the answer in anxiety, smiled pleasantly.

"Fasten your ship here," he directed, pointing to a sharp rock which was conveniently near the bow. This Sam did, and was soon upon the ledge

eagerly scanning the horizon. Greatly to his relief he could see land, although he judged it must be some distance away. His Little Majesty begged to be taken up, and was greatly excited on being lifted to Sam's shoulder, where he stood balancing himself, and holding firmly to the boy's ear. After satisfying himself as to the direction in which he was to sail, Sam began to examine the ledge upon which he stood. This he found formed a circle around a black, yawning abyss, into which the boy looked with growing horror!

"My kingdom is down there," said the Little King. "I wish you could visit it, but 't is against the law."

Sam felt relieved to hear of this excellent law, but, of course, he did not say so.

"Do you really live in that hole?" he enquired.

"I do, Giant, but it is not a hole. Sit down and I will tell you about it."

This Sam did, and the Little King, perching himself fearlessly on the boy's knee, said:

"You are now on the top of a hollow mountain, an extinct volcano."

“I remember,” interrupted Sam, “hearing my father say that in this direction, many years ago, rocks were visible for a few hours, but that they have never since been seen.”

“Your father was right,” said the King, “for the mountain top is far under water—usually, but this is an unusual day.

“It is, indeed,” said Sam, heartily.

“Now,” continued the King. “I own this mountain, and am the monarch of a people who live in it—the ‘Wee-uns.’ My kingdom is below, inside the mountain, and bounded by its walls. ’Tis very large, for the mountain is many miles in circumference. We are protected from the ocean above by a heavy glass roof. Once in fifty years, in half-century tide, the water recedes from the abyss, and leaves these rocks standing high and dry for a few hours. We then throw up a rope-ladder, and by its means I climb here and sit awhile. Then when the tide begins to rise, I hurry down the ladder, and go into my kingdom, shutting the door behind me, before the water dashes down upon us. There is no danger of

our being engulfed by it, for our country is, as I said, roofed with glass, formed by the melting of certain rock, while the mountain was burning ages ago. When this cooled it formed a beautiful, thick roof. I wish I could show it to you. But if you look down, I think you may be able to see the lights shining through it." Sam lay flat on his face, and crawling to the edge of the pit looked down, and sure enough, could see far, far below, many twinkling lights. Just then the Little King gave a loud cry, and began to jump up and down with excitement.

"Look, look!" he screamed, and pointed out to sea.

Sam looked, then looked again, and his heart sank like lead, for at some distance from him, and drifting rapidly away, was his boat—*A Roarer!* She was drifting so fast that there was no chance for him to swim to her.

"The water must have begun to rise, and have slipped the rope off the rock," shouted the King. "Poor Giant, poor Giant. You will be drowned! No, you shall not be 'drowned, I will save you!

This time I will break the law. Come with me—down to the land of the Wee-uns.”

“Go with you down there and not come up again for fifty years?” cried the boy. “I can’t. I can’t.”

“You *must*, ’t is your only chance for life. But how can I get you down? Think you the rope-ladder will bear your weight? Come, look at it, and hurry, hurry, there is no time to lose. The waters are rising rapidly, and in a few moments more will be upon us.”

Sam saw that this was so, and that his only chance to escape drowning was as the King had said, to go down with him to his kingdom below. To his surprise, on examining the rope-ladder which was swaying back and forth over the abyss, Sam, who, being a sailor, of course, knew a good deal about ropes, found that it was strong enough to bear his weight. The King descended first, while Sam waited, gazing nervously at the ever-rising water. “My poor mother and father,” he thought, “they will think when *A Roarer* is found, that I am drowned.” Suddenly an idea

came to him. Taking his water bottle from his pocket, he quickly emptied it, tore a scrap of paper from an old letter, and with shaking hand scribbled :

“MR. CARROLL,

“Lanwyn.

“Mother—Father—I ’m not drowned. Am all right. Will return if possible. No time explain.

“SAM.”

And indeed this was so, for when Sam had stuffed the scrap of paper into the bottle, corked it, and thrown it far into the sea, the water was within a few inches of his feet.

Hearing a faint call from the Little King below, he ran quickly to the rope-ladder, and slid gradually down, hand over hand. He could not, of course, use the ladder as a ladder, as the rungs were too near together, but they served as rests for his hands, and prevented them from slipping. So, clasping the rope with hands and legs, he went down, down, down into the inky blackness. He had no time to be afraid; he only remembered that above him was death, while under him lay the one chance of life. It became lighter as he reached

the glass roof, and heard the warning cry of the Little King, "Hurry, hurry. Not a minute to lose."

He realized the truth of this, for just then the first wave dashed over the rocks above, drenching them with salt spray, and almost drowning the poor Little King, who ran wildly toward the roof-door, calling to Sam, "This way. This way. Follow me."

Sam, who had now reached the glass roof, hurried quickly after him, falling once on the wet, slippery surface. Another, and yet another wave dashed over the rocks before Sam reached the door. The King had already gone through, and the instant he saw the boy, shouted, "Come in, head first, Giant. We will pull you through."

Sam did as he was bid, and was relieved to find that though with great difficulty, the little people (and there seemed to the dazed boy to be millions of them) did succeed in pulling him through the round opening, shutting the door with a "bang" behind him. And just in time, too, for crashing, roaring, tumbling, down came the water, shutting out the upper world for fifty years!



II.

SAM'S appearance had caused great excitement in the country, and the little people from far and near, were hastening to get a look at the monster giant, who had come among them. So when Sam had recovered himself somewhat, and looked about, he found himself surrounded by thousands of little people, all of about the same size as the King. None of them spoke, but gazed and gazed at him with white, frightened faces. Then his friend, the King, appeared. He had removed his wet garments, and was arrayed in the tiniest ermine robes of state, while on his head was the wee-est, "royalest" crown imaginable. He was preceded by two boys, dressed in bright scarlet, who walked before him drumming on two wee drums, and shouting in very shrill voices :

“Make way! Make way for the King of the Wee-uns!”

The crowd fell back, and his Little Majesty stalked solemnly on, till he reached Sam.

“Lift me,” he commanded and in such a right royal way, that the boy instantly obeyed, placing the little creature on his knee.

“My people,” said the King. “Be not afraid. This Giant, monster though he is, is my friend, and while he remains with us, is to be treated as such. He is a Giant, that, of course, you see, nor do I attempt to deny it. But I have talked long with him in the upper world, and have found him gentle and kind. Being so much larger, of course, he must contain more gentleness and kindness than one of us.”

“Reasonable, most reasonable, Sire,” murmured the crowd. But one old man objected, saying :

“Kind he may be now, Sire. But is he kind always? that is the question. Is he always kind as we now see him?”

And this was repeated again and again by the



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F. C. GORDON

crowd, who had evidently been talking the matter over among themselves.

“If not,” continued the old man, “may we not be introducing a second Phoe—”

“Ssssh,” said the King, warningly.

Nevertheless, he looked anxiously at Sam, who said, “Little people, I can only say that I was a kind, good boy at home, and I will try to be more than ever so, while I am with you.”

“Hurrah! Hurrah!” shouted all the mites together. When the excitement was over, the King told the story of what had happened to poor Sam. How he had gone away from home, for a pleasant afternoon’s sail, and of his falling asleep, and drifting to the crater-rocks. How he, the King, had told him where to fasten his boat, and having done so, how it had drifted away, leaving him a prisoner. “It was *my* fault. Never forget that,” said the poor Little King. “I have separated the poor boy from his family, who are probably at this very moment searching for him. Now, as the Giant-boy is here, all we can do is to treat him kindly, and to supply, as far as

we are able, all his wants. What say ye, my people?"

"That we will, Sire," shouted the little people, enthusiastically, and to show their willingness and loyalty, they one by one bowed low to Sam.

This ceremony over, Sam thanked the King for his kindness, and was left to himself. Then the poor boy began to think over the situation. His only hope was that he might make a little boat, and, going up with the King the next time he went above, drag it after him and launch it. But he must wait fifty years for this—for fifty years he was banished from the world above. He would, if he lived, be an old man when he again got his liberty. His father and mother would both be dead—he should never see them again. Throwing himself flat on the ground, poor Sam sobbed as if his heart would break.

An hour later darkness fell, and before long silence reigned throughout the kingdom. All the next day the boy thought only of his sad condition, and refusing food, sat upon the ground and wept. The little people were much troubled, and

in the afternoon the King appeared alone, and spoke with the boy.

“I have been talking matters over with my council,” he said, “and this is our decision, Giant. It is but natural that you should weep, but if you weep much more you will become ill. Now, do you think you would want to cry for more than one week?”

Sam could n't help smiling a little as he admitted that one week ought to be enough for almost any grief.

“That 's so. That 's so,” said the Little King. “That being the case, I have appointed a crying-guard for you.”

“A what?” gasped Sam.

“Some men,” explained the King, “whose sole duty it shall be to cry for you. They are good, hard-working, enthusiastic men, too. You see,” and here the King seated himself by the boy, and crossed one little leg over the other, “my idea is to have one man cry for one day, and another for another day, and so on, and, as there are seven of them, that will give you a good solid

week's crying. And Giant, I have given orders to have them do the crying in your presence, so that you shall be quite satisfied. If any man neglects his duty, just let me know."

Then without waiting for Sam's consent, the Little King rose, and full of delighted importance, went away.

Early the next morning a solemn little man made his appearance. He was dressed entirely in black, and carried a large bag. This bag he opened, and from it took a handkerchief, which he placed on the ground before him. Then another and another he took out, till there were several dozen in the pile. Then bowing low to Sam, he seated himself, and said, "Shall I begin, Sir?"

Sam, who, although the tears were scarcely, as yet, dry on his own cheeks, had been watching these elaborate preparations with much amusement, nodded, and the small man began. Oh, how he cried! How the big tears rolled down his cheeks, while heavy sobs convulsed his little frame. Meanwhile, Sam, overcome by his appearance and the absurdity of the whole thing, began

to laugh. Instantly the man stopped his lamentations.

“Why do you laugh, Giant?” he demanded.

“I laugh because I am pleased,” answered Sam.

“Oh,” said the little man, mollified. “Everyone says I am a pleasing Weeper,” and he again lifted up his voice and wept with renewed energy.

In about an hour the Little King appeared.

“How is he getting on?” he whispered.

“Finely,” said Sam. “I don’t believe any one could do better.”

The King seemed gratified. “He is a good man,” he admitted.

“Your Majesty,” said Sam. “I am beginning to be hungry. I should like something to eat and drink. Cannot the man be trusted to go on weeping if we leave him?”

“Oh yes,” whispered the King. “He does n’t need to be watched at all. I only suggested your doing so for your own satisfaction. Perhaps you would like to have him go with us and weep on the way?”

But Sam said he was quite content to leave the

weeper behind. Then he and the Little King walked away, the King very happy at seeing the boy had again begun to take an interest in life. As for Sam, heavy-hearted as he felt, he had made up his mind to keep his grief to himself, and to be as brave and cheerful as possible. When they had walked a sufficient distance from the noisy weeper, the Little King said: "Sit here, Giant, and they shall bring you food. And while you eat I will tell you something of the country of the Wee-uns. It is, as I told you, situated in the inside of this big mountain. Ages and ages ago, it is said that there was a raging fire here. What became of it, I don't know. I suppose it burnt itself out, leaving only a pile of ashes, and the empty shell of the mountain. Within the memory of man, however, this country has always been green and fertile as it is now. You ask what became of the ashes? Ah, Giant, I know, but I will not pain you by telling you now."

At this moment, ten Wee-uns appeared, carrying trays on which were dishes containing food and drink. Sam ate and drank eagerly of the delicious

food, although everything was strange to him. When he had satisfied himself, he said : “ First tell me, your Majesty, how you get light into your kingdom ? In the upper world we get ours from the sun.”

“ And here,” said the King, “ we get ours from the sun-fish ! It is better, too, for when it rains your sun refuses to shine, while our sun-fish does n’t mind the weather—the wetter it is, the better he shines. We have made a contract with a certain company of sun-fishes to supply light to this country for five thousand years ; and so far they have done well. Their light is steady and of good quality. It takes ten fishes to light the whole country.”

“ And at night ? ” asked Sam.

“ At night, of course, we don’t want such a bright light, and so we use star-fishes,” said the King.

“ And what were the twinkling lights I saw when I looked down here from the rocks above ? ”

“ When half-century tide comes, and the water recedes, my people hang up glass globes filled with

water, in each of which is a star-fish, which makes a very satisfactory light, during my absence," explained the King. "We tried once the experiment of lighting our land by electricity. Our plan was, you see, to place a glass tank, filled with electric eels, directly over the roof of our country, and they were to give us electric light. But it failed, I am sorry to say, it failed! You see, the eels positively refused to go into the tanks. But the idea was a good one, and so was the name: 'The Eelectric Eelluminating Co.' The name was my own idea. Neat, was n't it? Neat and 'tasty' as the boy said when he swallowed the mustard-pot. That joke is my own, too—witty, is n't it?" and here the Little King laughed so heartily that his crown fell off. This recalled him to a sense of his dignity, and he hurriedly put it on again, looking around to see if any one had noticed the incident.

The King now proposed a walk through the country, and suggested that he be carried on the boy's shoulder, "for you see," he explained, "it takes me several days to go around my kingdom but you can accomplish it in as many hours."



III.

AS long as Sam lives, he will never forget that first walk through the land of the Weeuns, with his Little Majesty perched upon his shoulder. Over miniature hills and through miniature valleys he strode, by wee gaily painted houses, not bigger than bird-houses, and all imbedded in bright flowers, which filled the air with perfume. The kingdom proved to be much larger than Sam had supposed. Directly in the middle was the King's palace, a beautiful little building of white marble with curved pillars of exquisitely carved walrus tusks. Indeed, the whole structure was one mass of superb carving. Seated at the entrance of the palace were the King's wife and daughter. The Princess was the most exquisite little creature Sam had ever seen. The dearest little hands and feet,

the sweetest little mouth, and two long braids of golden hair, hanging to her dainty little heels. What would he not have given to take this fascinating mite home to his sister for a living doll, to replace the one he had broken ?

After Sam had been presented to the Queen and Princess, the King and he resumed their walk, continuing until they reached the rugged, sloping walls of the mountain itself.

“Put me down here,” commanded his Little Majesty. Sam obeyed and the King, with pride, called the boy’s attention to the band of exquisite carving on the rock, which extended to about two feet above the ground. Sam gazed in astonishment, for the work was really marvellous, looking like a flounce of heavy, gray lace. The Little King was pleased at his evident admiration. “The Wee-uns have always known the art of carving,” he said. “It has been handed down from father to son. This band of carving on the rock which, by the way, extends entirely round the country, except where the Phoe—ahem !” said the King, interrupting himself. “As I was saying, this band

of carving was begun in the reign of my great, great grandfather, and finished in the early part of mine. I have often wished that the band had extended up a bit farther, but it was not considered safe to make the ladders much longer."

"I never saw anything so beautiful," said Sam, "and I am sure no country in the world was ever surrounded by anything of the sort" (which was probably true).

"Indeed?" said the King, who was evidently much pleased.

"Your Majesty," said Sam, "an idea has just come to me. I shall probably live here among you for many years, and of course, I want to work, too. Now, why can't I act as a ladder for your workmen? I will stand near the wall, and they can climb on me, and go on with their carving, bringing up the band as high as you like. And perhaps, if they are willing to teach me, I can do some of the first rough work for them. They used to think at home that I whittled beautifully."

The King clapped his tiny hands in delight, and that evening after the sun-fishes had gone,

and the star-fishes shone softly through the glass roof above, filling the whole place with their mellow light, the King called his subjects together, and from Sam's knee, now his favorite throne, told them of the boy's plan. It was received with wild enthusiasm, and the carpenters were given orders at once, to make two benches which, suspended by a rope, were to hang from the Giant's neck. The carvers did not get to their work for two weeks, as the benches had to be made, and some of their tools for working on the rock, were broken, and had to be mended.

So, in the two weeks, Sam had time to get well acquainted with the Wee-uns and their country. He found the little people fascinating. They were the best tempered, most loving little creatures imaginable, never quarrelling, and always trying to help each other in every way. If Sam had only had his father, mother, and sister with him, he would have been a very happy boy. They were all extremely kind to him, and tried in every way to make him feel that it was a pleasure rather than a burden to them to have him there. This was not only on

account of their king's commands, or because they felt that had it not been for him, the boy would never have come to them, but from real kindness of heart and sympathy with his sad situation.

It was no easy matter to supply the "Giant" with food, but they never let Sam suspect this, and he ate their loaves of bread, each one but a mouthful for him, with calmness of mind. The Wee-uns did not have meat, and so did n't eat any. They had a great many other good things, however, and Sam, who had a fine appetite, enjoyed them all. For drinks they had water, and a most delicious sea gruel—unlike anything that is, or can be made, in the upper world. The Wee-uns women had made for Sam a mattress stuffed with dry grass, so that his nights were more comfortable than they had been at first.

It had been a most difficult matter to find a place in the village, long and level enough for him to lie on in comfort. He was very uncomfortable the first night, and found the next morning that his left leg had been resting on the chimney of the public library! At last with the King's help a suit-

able spot was chosen, but in lying down to try it, it was found that the schoolhouse was in the way.

“Giant,” said the King, “if you can lie bent for a few nights I will have it moved over there.”

“Will your Majesty allow me to move it?” asked Sam, and without more ado, he lifted the little structure, and placed it quickly and firmly on the spot which the King had indicated. The King and the people stood there with mouths wide open from astonishment at the Giant’s strength. But, as it happened, Sam forgot that there might be people in the schoolhouse. There were. It was filled with children, as school was going on at the time, and after the building was set down again, poor little white frightened faces kept appearing at the windows. Sam apologized for his thoughtlessness, but it took hours before they recovered from their fright.

After this incident, if any one in the country wanted to move, he applied to Sam, and in a twinkling, without bother of packing, his residence was placed where he wished to have it. And it really seemed as if every one wanted to move, for

a month later, scarcely a house was to be found in its original position. Not only in this way did Sam make himself useful, but if any one wanted a tree moved, no matter how big it was, he had but to say the word, and up it came, as if the roots had been buttered.

On one of Sam's walks, he almost stepped on a child, not seeing it at all, so after that a little chair was fastened on each boot, in which sat a Wee-un, who accompanied him always, wherever he went. Each Wee-un was provided with a horn on which he blew vigorous, mighty blasts to warn people that the Giant was coming.

During his first week in the country, Sam went each morning to look at the little Weepers, who were still sobbing and shrieking enthusiastically in his behalf. He had told the King, after seeing the first man cry, that he was quite willing to "take the will for the deed" and not trouble the other six to finish out the week; but the King said he could not countermand the order. The others would be greatly offended if he did. "You see," he confessed, "not only are the men themselves extremely

sorry for you, but I am to give a prize to the man who does the best work."

So for seven days the King and Sam watched each morning for an hour, and in the end the prize, a big sea fruit pie, was given to one of the little Weepers. Sam, in addition, gave each a bright colored marble, which he fortunately happened to have in his pocket. This gift pleased them immensely, and people came from far and near to look at the strange glass globes which the Giant had given.





IV.

ONE day Sam was walking with the Little King when he heard a hoarse, roaring noise, which greatly alarmed him.

“What is that, Your Majesty?” he enquired.

The King was much amused at Sam’s evident alarm.

“Don’t be afraid, Giant,” he said. “That is only our air pipe, which we keep stored at one end of the country and once a year put up through the round opening in the roof. First, the bad used-up air escapes through it, and then I push a lever, and down rushes the fresh air which lasts us for twelve months.” (The kind-hearted little King did not tell the boy that he had given orders this year to take in a double quantity, on account of the Giant’s presence.) “We only do this once a year and in

summer, for my subjects prefer the warm, bright, summer air," he added.

Sam, expressing a wish to see the pipe, walked with the Little King till he stood near. The roaring of the air in the pipe had now become deafening, and Sam's two little foot-guards had hard work to make the men who were working on it, hear the warning horn-blasts. His Majesty shrieked into Sam's ear, "Put me down. It is time, I see, for me to push the lever."

The boy lifted him carefully down, and in a most unkingly way his Majesty scampered to the pipe. Sam then knelt down, and saw him push a lever at one side. Instantly the roaring ceased.

"In a moment the fresh air will come rushing in," said the King.

"I don't understand how it is done," said Sam.

"No," said the King, "I fear it is too complicated for any one to understand—unless, indeed, he has royal blood in his veins. Have you royal blood in your veins, Giant?"

"No," confessed the boy.

“Not even one drop?” asked His Little Majesty, anxiously. “Well then, I fear that you will never be able to understand this matter thoroughly in detail. You can, however, understand that the bad air goes, and the fresh air comes and—” Here his Majesty’s voice was drowned by the rush of the oncoming air. “Ooooooh!” how it roared. Sam, looking up through the roof, could see the big pipe, swaying from side to side, in huge coils, like an immense, impossible serpent. He walked on with the King, and when they were far enough from the deafening roar to hear each other speak, he asked how long the pipe was.

“I don’t know exactly,” was the answer. “They used to keep it coiled round the kingdom till we found it interfered with the carvers.”

“Do you ever let it out to its full length?” asked the astonished boy.

“Indeed, we do. I often let it skirt the shores of foreign countries, for I think ’t is a good thing for us all, to occasionally have the benefit of a decided change of air, don’t you?”

“Yes,” answered Sam, absently, for he was

thinking of something. "Your Majesty," he then said, "an idea has suddenly come to me. What you have just told me may explain something that has puzzled men of all countries for years past. Sailors and men on shore have often seen what they took to be a huge snake, writhing and circling in the water. It is so tremendously big, that they fly from it in terror. It is called the 'Sea-Serpent,' and those who have not seen it laugh at those who have, for the stories they tell of the creature's size are so incredible. Now, *I* think that the great Sea-Serpent about which we have heard so much, is neither more nor less than your long black air-pipe!" And Sam laughed heartily, while the Little King almost rolled from the boy's shoulder, so great was his merriment.

The following morning, Sam began his work as a walking ladder. The benches were hung about his neck, and a swarm of Wee-uns crawled up and took their places. Then cautiously the boy walked the few steps to the spot on the wall where the work was to begin, the foot-guards tooting their little horns merrily, and the people on

the ground and the carvers themselves shouting lustily.

Sam stood for an hour while the little men worked, then rested, ate dinner, and stood for another hour in the afternoon. At first it was tiresome, but he soon became accustomed to it, and was glad to think that he was doing anything for this kind, loving, little people. At last, as he suggested, they taught him to do some of the rough, heavy work himself, preparing the way for the exquisite finish, which they added. Their carving was a never-ending wonder and delight to the boy, and his loudly expressed admiration was very pleasing to them.

They had grown extremely fond of him, and he was becoming at least contented, although his heart was heavy indeed when he thought of his dear father and mother, his loved sister and his happy home.

And so days, weeks, and months slipped away. The days busy with work and the evenings spent in pleasant talk together; Sam, hearing the history of the Wee-uns as far back as they knew

it, and the Wee-uns themselves listening open-mouthed to his stories of the upper world. Many things were absolutely strange to them, which he, having seen all his life, took as a matter of course. He taught them much, for they were eager to learn. In after years, Sam often recalled those evenings, and again fancied himself seated there, the King on his knee, and surrounded by the eager little people, who sat in silent, interested rows, listening to his stories, while the star-fishes twinkled softly over their heads.





V.

ONE night, Sam could not sleep, and as he lay there in the stillness, he thought of his father and mother, till one by one the big tears rolled down his cheeks, and he cried as if his heart would break.

Now, the Little King happened to be restless, too, and walking near the boy's bed, heard his sobs. Hastening to him, he climbed up and gently stroked his hand, saying, "Giant, dear Giant, are you grieving for your home?"

The boy said "Yes," but added that no one could be kinder than the dear Wee-uns, and that were it not for his people he should be very happy and contented.

"Well, Giant," said the Little King, wiping the sympathetic tears from his own eyes, "let us

think if something can't be done. You have seen my Seven Wise Men—my council?"

"Yes, Sire, I have," for Sam remembered to have seen seven solemn little men, clad all in gray, and to have been told that they were the King's council—the "Never-Smilers."

"They are very wise," continued the King, "and to-morrow I will order them to put their heads together, and they may be able to think of some way for you to get away."

Sam had no great faith in this, but he would not grieve the Little King by saying so, so thanked him and bade him good-night.

The following morning, in Sam's presence, the King summoned the "Never-Smilers."

"Wise councillors," he said. "Our dear Giant longs to get to his home. Put your heads together for a day, and perhaps you can think of some way to accomplish it."

The little, gray-clad men seated themselves in a circle, and all bent forward till their seven heads touched.

"Why do they do that?" asked Sam.

“ Because I told them to put their heads together,” said the King. “ People can think better in that way, for their ideas pass more quickly from one to another, you know,” and Sam, who did not know, as he had never tried it, was unable to contradict this statement.

At the end of the day, the Never-Smilers announced that they had an idea, so calling all the people together, the King asked what it was.

“ Your Majesty, our idea is that the Giant be put into the air-pipe and sent up to the surface of the water, as we send up the air,” announced the spokesman, proudly.

All the Wee-uns applauded loudly, but Sam’s heart sank as he realized the utter impossibility of such a scheme.

“ Gentlemen,” he said, sadly, “ even were there force enough to push me up through the pipe, which I doubt, what should I do when I got there? I have no boat, and should drown before there would be any chance of a passing boat seeing me.”

The Never-Smilers hung their heads in shame, and all the Wee-uns groaned.

“You will have to put your heads together for another day,” commanded the King, but at the end of that time, they confessed that they had no suggestion to offer, so the Little King told Sam, with tears in his eyes, that he feared it was useless.

“You must stay here, dear Giant,” he said, “and if there is anything that we can do for your happiness that has not been already done, pray let us know.”

At this moment a messenger came hurriedly to them.

“Your Majesty,” he said, “Can I take the keys to the Royal Granery? More corn is needed for the Phoe——”

“Hush,” said the King, who had grown pale. “Here are the keys,” and the messenger hurried away with them.

“Sire,” said Sam. “Several times have your subjects mentioned a ‘Fee’—and each time you have stopped them. May I ask what the ‘Fee’ is?”

The King put his little hand tenderly on Sam’s, and said with a trembling voice, “Dear boy, do not ask me to tell you.”

And days and months passed, till at last it seemed to Sam as if he had always lived among the Wee-uns, and his father, mother, and sister began to seem like memories. He thought he should never see them again, but live and at last die in the hollow mountain under the sea.

One day the Little King asked Sam how long a time people lived in the upper world. The boy told him that they died at all ages, but that few people lived very long after seventy years.

“How very extraordinary,” said the Little King. “Why it is scarcely worth while being born to live so short a time. We Wee-uns, live four hundred years and then we die.”

“Four hundred years?” gasped Sam.

“There has been one sad exception,” said the King. “That of my great grandfather, who went at half-century tide to the rocks above. We know not what happened there, but he never came back! He was at the time only a hundred and fifty years old. Poor man! Sad to be thus cut off in his prime.”

“And of what illness do your people usually die?” asked Sam.

“Illness?” said the King, astonished in his turn. “The Wee-uns are never ill. We simply live four hundred years, then take our finis-fruit and die.”

“‘Finis-fruit’? And what is that?” asked Sam.

“Twenty people are to die to-day,” said the King, gaily. “Perhaps you would like to see them?”

“No,” said Sam firmly.

“It is a very pleasant sight,” said the Little King. “They do enjoy it so much. Come with me, Giant, the procession is forming, I see. I must go.”

Thus urged, Sam followed the King, who headed a procession of twelve women and eight men, all singing joyfully.

In the garden grew a certain tree, the fruit of which the King had strictly forbidden Sam to touch. Towards this tree the procession moved, and formed a circle round it. Then each one reached forward

eagerly and took from it one of the cherry-like fruits, a "finis-fruit" which he put in his mouth.

"Farewell, good King, and all good friends," they cried joyfully. "We have led a happy life among you."

And then, to Sam's utter amazement, he saw that the twenty Wee-uns who had eaten of the fruit were shrinking rapidly! In five minutes they were not more than half their original size—then a quarter—an eighth,—then came twenty little flashes of light, twenty little puffs of smoke, and the twenty little Wee-uns were gone, leaving no trace behind!

And that is the way the people died in Wee-uns land.





VI.

ONE morning, Sam remembered that he had been living in the mountain for just three years. He now knew all the Wee-uns by name, and loved them, and as for them, they worshipped their dear "Giant." The band of carving had with his help been widened, as they had wished to have it. In a short time the work would be done. Sam had himself become what we should call a good carver, although what he did looked very clumsy when compared with the fairy-like work which the Wee-uns turned out.

"Three years ago to-day, Your Majesty, I came here," said Sam, when he saw the Little King that morning.

"And how old are you now?"

"Fourteen," said Sam.

“And do you know, Giant, that you are no taller than you were when you came? I measured your height on the wall. See, there is the mark, and you are no taller now.”

It was indeed as the King had said, although Sam had not noticed it before, as he had been unable to compare his size with that of any other boy.

“What do you think can have caused this, Your Majesty?” he asked.

“Our food, possibly,” suggested the Little King.

“Yes,” said Sam, “I suppose that is the only possible explanation. Well, Sire, I have spent three years with you, and they would have been very happy ones, but for one thing.”

For some time the King sat in silence, his chin resting in his little hand.

“Yes, Giant,” he said at last with a sigh. “You have your one sorrow and—so have we.”

“And what is that sorrow, Your Majesty?” asked Sam.

“I would have told you long ago, Giant, but I have wished to make your life happy here.”

“Is it—is it, Sire, something to do with the ‘Fee—’?”

The King nodded.

“I must insist on sharing your trouble my kind friend, and perhaps I may be able to help you,” said the boy. “Tell me what it is.”

And thus urged, the King spoke.

“Ages ago, when the fire in this mountain had burned itself out, there was nothing left but a heap of gray ashes. Out of the warmth and life that was in these ashes rose—a bird—a bird of huge dimensions—larger than you, Giant. Too large even to escape through the opening at the top of the mountain. It was,” and here the Little King’s voice trembled, “a *Phoenix*!! So runs the legend. I can’t vouch for the truth of it, for we have no written history, but I know that since the memory of man that Phoenix has been here.”

“Here? Why have I not seen him?” asked Sam, and then he remembered that in one part of the country there was a field, with a very high impenetrable hedge growing about it where he had been forbidden to go. The Phoenix was probably there.

“What harm does the Phœnix do?” he asked.

“Harm?” said the Little King, bitterly. “Harm? True, he never attacks us, or he would kill us all in half an hour. He has a beak like iron. He could tear a hole in this mountain side, and could bore a way through it with neatness and despatch, as easily as if the rock were made of cheese. And he is always, always trying to do it, and to let in the ocean, which would drown us all. As for us, we are working day and night, day and night to prevent it.”

“But, Sire, does he not know that if he did that it would drown him, too?”

“Not at all,” said the King dejectedly. “You see, he is an ‘all-round’ Phœnix, with web-feet, and is as much at home in the water as on land! He never attacks *us*. His whole mind is bent upon escape. He is firmly chained to the platform. Probably our ancestors, fearing his power for evil, seized a moment when he was asleep and chained him.”

“I think I know where the Phœnix is,” interrupted Sam. “He is behind the forbidden hedge.”

“He is,” said the King.

“And can I see him?”

“Come with me. I will take you to him now,” said the King, and together they walked to the forbidden place.

On the way, Sam asked why they did not get rid of the Phoenix.

“Ah,” said the Little King, sadly, “that is just what we cannot do. Again and again have my seven wise men put their heads together in vain.”

“Kill him,” said Sam.

“It is forbidden. Come, you shall see for yourself.”

They had now reached the tree hedge, which was so tall that it hid the field beyond, even from Sam. They reached the gate, which was opened by two officers, and entered. The Little King whispered to Sam, “Do not be afraid. Remember it is chained and cannot harm you.”

In spite of this admonition, when Sam stood before the Phoenix, his heart almost stopped beating, so great was his terror. There, chained by his feet to a slowly revolving platform, stood a bird of

gigantic size ! He had web-feet, each as large as an umbrella, huge, strong, yellow legs, his body and enormous wings were of ashen gray, his cruel beak a vivid scarlet, while his eyes glowed like coals as he turned them on Sam, who trembled under their gaze.

On the edge of the platform, which rested on a pivot, were fastened countless little handles. Each handle was grasped by a poor, perspiring Wee-un, and 't was they who pushed, pushed, pushed the Phoenix-platform round and round, day and night, except when the bird was asleep. At one side stood a body of men, and when one of the little pushers became exhausted, another would instantly take his place.

“Why are they doing that?” whispered Sam.

“Because, while we keep the platform moving, the Phoenix is unable to attack the wall,” explained the King. “Watch him when he faces it.”

And Sam saw that each time the revolving platform brought the Phoenix near the wall, the creature stretched out his long neck, till his fiery bill was within a few inches of the stone ; but each

time he was foiled, as the faithful little men pushed the platform steadily round.

“And why can he not be killed?” asked Sam.

The King pointed to an inscription on the mountain wall near the Phoenix, and Sam read :

RIT-RAT-ROT

Death to the Phoenix

By hand of a Wee-un,

Means death to that Wee-un !

Beware !

RIT-RAT-ROT

“And what does ‘rit-rat-rot’ mean?” he inquired.

“Latin,” said the King, in an awe-struck voice.

“Oh,” said Sam. “And why, Sire, did your ancestors put the Phoenix so near the rock?”

“Perhaps he fell asleep there, and they chained him as he lay on the platform. We do not know, nor do we know how the platform happened to be there, nor for what it was originally used,” said the King. “But, you see, Giant, why we can neither



RIT-RAT-ROT

DEATH TO THE PHOENIX
BY THE HAND OF A WEE-UN
MEANS DEATH TO THAT WEE-UN!

BEWARE!

RIT-RAT-ROT

F. C. GORDON

The Phoenix

kill the Phœnix, nor move such a huge, unwieldy creature. And now you know at last the only trouble in this, otherwise, happy land. Think what it is to feel that if anything should happen, if for any reason we could not keep the platform moving, this fiendish bird would in fifteen minutes, we have calculated, tear a hole through the mountain side, and deluge the country!" Here the poor King took out his handkerchief and burying his dear little face in it, sobbed convulsively. Whereat the Phœnix threw back his ugly head, opened his scarlet bill, and laughed derisively, till the whole place echoed with the discordant noise.

"He always does that when he sees me weep," said the Little King, sadly. "Come away. Come away." Across the field they walked, and for a long distance they could hear the steady tramp, tramp, tramp of the patient little pushers, and the occasional harsh cry of the Phœnix.

After a while the King's sobs ceased. Then Sam sat down, placing His Majesty tenderly beside him on the grass. For a few moment there was

silence, and then the boy turned a radiant face to the Little King.

“Sire,” said he. “An idea, a glorious idea, has come to me! I know now, that of course, the Phoenix may not die by the hand of a Wee-un. But—*why may not I kill him?* The inscription says nothing against that.”

For fully a minute the Little King stared at Sam, unable to speak. Then he gave a loud cry of joy, and springing to his feet shouted, “You can! You can!” When he was somewhat calmer, Sam told him how he proposed to do the deed, the King fully approving. Then they decided to wait till night, when they would tell the people of Sam’s intention, and how he proposed to carry it out. The King gave orders that every one should be present. So after the sun-fishes went away, and the star-fishes began to shine, the hills and valleys were black with the crowds of interested Wee-uns, who had been summoned to hear what the Giant had to say. And when Sam told them of his intention, they were wild in their expressions of delight.

There was not much sleep that night, every one waiting eagerly for the day that was to free them from the presence of the hated Phœnix.

The following morning, after a hearty breakfast, Sam, accompanied by the King, went to the finis-fruit tree. Gathering a handful of the ripe fruit, which he put into his pocket, he walked towards the field, followed to the gate by thousands of little people, who, by order of the King, waited outside. Sam and the Little King went in, closing the gate behind them, and went up to the Phœnix on his slowly revolving platform.

“You understand what you are to do, Your Majesty?” asked Sam.

“I do. Shall I begin now?” whispered the Little King, and at a nod from Sam, who had climbed up on a huge stone, which brought him almost on a level with the creature’s head, the King took his handkerchief from his pocket and began to weep. And with the usual result. The Phœnix, throwing back his head, opened his beak wide and laughed derisively. But no sooner had he opened his mouth, than Sam, who had been waiting for

this, threw one of the death-apples down the creature's throat! The Phoenix gave a loud cry of anger, and the King stopped weeping. "Tramp, tramp," round and round went the platform.

"Now, Sire, begin again," cried Sam, as the Phoenix came near; and once more the Little King, taking up his cry at the very point where he had dropped it, wept loudly, while, as before, the Phoenix laughed, and Sam, with accurate aim, threw another death-apple down his throat. Four times was this repeated, and then the King and Sam waited for a moment in breathless suspense to see what would happen. For some time nothing did happen, and then the King said:

"Giant, I may be mistaken, but I think—I think that his feet are not quite as large as they were."

"Your Majesty," said Sam, "I may be mistaken, but I think—I think that his head is growing smaller."

With quickly beating hearts the big and little man stood there, gazing at the Phoenix. There was soon no longer any doubt about it, the huge

bird was *shrinking*, and shrinking rapidly! He was now no larger than an ostrich—and now—a bird no larger than an eagle stood before them! And now it was a hawk—now a pigeon—a canary—a humming-bird—pffffff!!!—and the platform was empty! The place which had known the Phoenix for so many years, should know him no more.

.
Falling on his knees before Sam, the Little King wept tears (real tears this time) of joy. Then the gate was opened, and the Wee-uns trooped in to see the place where their foe had been.

From this time on, the Wee-uns seemed to re-double their kindness to Sam. They felt that they could not do enough for him. Saturday, the day on which he had killed the Phoenix, was in future to be set apart, the King ordered, and observed as a legal holiday. And it was to be called "*Samsday*."



VII.

ONE memorable day, Sam, feeling tired after his morning's work on the rock, threw himself where he was, flat on the ground, at the mountain wall, and was soon fast asleep. He dreamed that he was again at home, with his father, and mother, and sister. He was in his own room, lying on his own bed. Someone downstairs, in the room below, seemed to be making a great noise hammering and pounding. Suddenly, Sam awoke to find that the noise was real and not a dream. He listened intently. Someone was pounding, and yet there was no one near. He jumped up, all sleep gone from him. It seemed to him as if the sound came from the other side of the mountain wall.

“I will get the King,” he said.

When the King appeared, he listened to the tapping noise, but did not appear surprised or alarmed.

“Giant, that sound has often been heard before,” he said.

“But where does it come from? And what is it?” asked Sam.

“It evidently comes from outside the mountain wall,” answered the King, “but what it is, we don’t know. We have always thought it was some monster-fish flapping his tail against the rock.”

“It does not seem like a fish,” said Sam. “It has a familiar sound to me, Where—where have I heard it before? ‘Rat! Tat! Rat-tat-tat!’”

Suddenly the boy gave a loud cry, and sank on his knees beside the Little King, trembling violently.

“Your M-Majesty,” he stammered, “which side of the mountain is nearest the land?”

“This side,” said the King.

Then Sam burst into tears of joy, and the Little King immediately took out his handker-

chief and did the same, although he had n't the faintest idea what he was crying about.

"Oh, Your Majesty," said Sam, when he was able to speak at all. "I will tell you what this sound is—what it means to me."

The Little King listened eagerly.

"You know," said Sam, his voice quivering with excitement, "I told you that in Lanwyn there was a mine—a mine extending far under the ground and out under the bay."

The King nodded.

"I have been down into the mine," continued Sam. "I have seen the miners at work, and the noise they make is—oh, Your Majesty, can't you guess?—is '*Rat! Tat! Rat-tat-tat!*' The noise we hear, now, the other side of the wall."

The Little King grew deadly pale, but said not a word.

"It means," continued Sam, "that my father's mine is at this moment but a few feet away from me! And to dig a hole through to it cannot be a difficult matter."

"It means, Giant," said the Little King, sadly,

“that you are to leave us. I see. I see.” Then walking to Sam, he said, “Put your face down here,” and when he had done so, the King kissed the boy’s cheek. “From the bottom of my heart, I am glad for you,” he whispered, and then walked quickly away. It had been hard for the Little King to bring himself to say this, for he was heartbroken at the thought of the beloved Giant’s going from him.

Sam, however, scarcely noticed that he had gone, but threw himself flat on the ground, listening to the sounds that meant so much to him.

The King, meanwhile, had broken the news to the Wee-uns, and although they were glad for Sam’s sake, yet the thought of his leaving was terrible.

“My people,” said the King, “for the Giant’s sake we are glad, truly glad.”

“We are, Sire,” sobbed the poor little Wee-uns.

“Then our grief is for ourselves, and let us keep it to ourselves. Be brave, Wee-uns!”

So when Sam appeared among them, he was

met by smiling faces and glad words, and indeed so truly sweet-natured were these dear little people, that in seeing how happy Sam was, they became happy, too, almost forgetting their own grief at the separation.

“We will begin at once to make the hole that shall give our dear Giant liberty,” commanded the King, so on the following morning the work was begun. The Wee-uns bored holes while Sam chipped away the rock between.

For a week they worked, and then they knew from the increased loudness of the tapping on the other side, that they must be within a few inches of the mine. Another half hour would surely bring them through. The tunnel started on the ground and went through the mountain wall, sloping slightly downward.

That night, the Little King summoned all the Wee-uns to say good-bye to their dearly loved Giant. It was a terrible ordeal for them and for him. They succeeded indeed, in smiling, but such pitiful, sad little smiles, that Sam's heart ached.

The King made a speech thanking Sam publicly for his kindness.

“He has in every way been a blessing to us, and it was he who delivered us from our great enemy—the Phoenix. We have learned to love—” Here the Little King paused for a moment, and then sat down, quite unable to go on. Then Sam got up, and in a broken voice tried in turn to thank the Wee-uns for what they had done for him.

“I am going,” he said, “to a father, mother, and sister, whom I dearly love, but when I think of all the loved sisters and brothers whom I am to leave behind, my heart is heavy.”

In the morning, the Wee-uns brought farewell gifts to Sam. Exquisitely carved stones of various shapes, bunches of choice flowers, etc.

Then with His Majesty on his shoulder, Sam walked to the tunnel, the last walk he was ever to take with the Little King.

The Wee-uns had noticed that at noon for about an hour, the tapping of the miners on the other side was silent. This was the time Sam chose

to make the final break through the wall, for he knew that if he came through while the miners were at work, they would at once discover the country of the Wee-uns, and their secret be betrayed. "And you know our privacy must be maintained," said the Little King, with much dignity. "You, dear Giant, came at my invitation, but we shall never admit another."

Sam's intention was to crawl into the dark mine, and wait there till someone came. He told the King, however, that the miners would see the hole through which he had crawled.

"Oh, no," said his Majesty. "We will attend to the hole, only you must promise that you will never tell where it was."

Sam promised, and then the King said:

"Here is my gift to you, Giant," and opening a box which a messenger had just put before them, he bade the boy fill his pockets with its contents. The box was filled to the brim with beautiful, glistening stones. Sam took all he could crowd into his pockets, and then the King said brokenly:

"Giant, the hour has come."

Sam listened. The "Rat! Tat! Tat-tat-tat!" which had been going on all the morning, had ceased. Sam cautiously made a small hole in the wall, through which he peeped into the dark mine. Satisfying himself that no one was in sight, the men having probably gone to another part of the mine to eat their dinner, he hastily broke away the slight shell that was left, and crept through. Then turning, and with the tears streaming down his cheeks, he kissed for the last time the hand of the Little King. And the Little King, maintaining to the end a brave smile, firmly grasped the bottom of the hole with both hands, and walked slowly away dragging it up after him, leaving no trace behind!





VIII.

THE mine was dark, and Sam stood where he was, not daring to move. He knew that the men would soon return to their work, and so indeed it proved. For before long, he heard footsteps, and saw lights approaching, and then—he heard and saw no more, for he became unconscious.

The approaching miners, saw, with amazement, the boy lying there. Lifting him tenderly, they put him into the cage, and he was brought to the mouth of the shaft where he quickly recovered consciousness. Not stopping to answer the miners' questions as to where he came from, how he got into the mine, and who he was, (for the men, being strangers, had not recognized him,) he ran as fast as he could to his home.

With quickly beating heart he opened the gate, and walked to the door. The window at one side

was open, and hearing voices he stood near and listened.

His mother was speaking.

“Yes, it is now more than three years,” she said, “since our dear child left us.”

“And we shall never, never see him again,” said his father’s voice.

“We may, John. We may,” but the mother’s voice was broken by sobs. “Remember his message. ‘Am all right. Will return if possible.’” (Then they had found the bottle containing the note.)

“Oh, I know, wife, but think of the boat, the *A Roarer*, dashed up on the beach—without him.”

“Don’t cry, dear Mother,” said a third voice, a sweet voice, which the listening boy recognized as his sister’s. Sam could wait no longer, and rushed into the room.

At first the family were stupefied, and then their delight and amazement knew no bounds. They cried and laughed and asked questions all in one breath. After a while when they grew calmer, Sam noticed that his mother’s hair had turned white,

and that her sweet face looked worn ; that his sister had become a beautiful young girl, while his father who looked weak and ill, was sitting in an easy chair, with his hand bandaged.

“What is the matter with your hand, Father?” he asked.

“I injured it in the mine, my boy. I greatly fear that I shall never be able to use it again, and if I cannot work, what will become of us?”

Then Sam stood up, and said, “Father, I have come back to you, I am fourteen years old, and able to work and support you all.”

His mother pressed his hand. Then Mr. Carroll, looking at the boy said, “But, Sam, I notice that you have not changed at all since you left, three years ago. How does it happen that you are no taller? You don’t seem to have grown an inch. But come, you have as yet answered none of our questions. We have much to hear. Tell us now all your adventures. What have you been doing and where, where have you been all this time?”

“Let the boy have supper first, Father,” said Mrs. Carroll. To this Sam agreed, being very

hungry. After supper, they drew up their chairs, and making the three promise never to reveal what he was about to tell them, Sam told the wonderful story, beginning with the afternoon, in which he set sail in the *A Roarer*. They talked and talked for hours, until the moon rose high in the heavens, and it was time to go to bed. Then the mother said :

“Your room has been ready for you, Sam, for these three years, I hoping each day that you might come.”

Sam bade them good-night, and was about to go, when happening to put his hand in his pocket, he drew out some of the glittering stones which the King had given him.

“What are those, Sam? Diamonds?” asked Mr. Carroll.

“I don’t know, Father. The Little King gave them to me when we parted.”

A candle was brought, and on examination Mr. Carroll said :

“I think those are diamonds, Sam. If so, what you have there means untold wealth! I

found one in Australia, years ago, smaller than any of those. They gave me fifty pounds for it in London, and with the money I bought this house."

It was as Mr. Carroll had said. The stones, on examination, proved to be *diamonds*, and of immense value.

The Carrolls, now rich people, soon left Lanwyn, and for years lived in a beautiful house, in the suburbs of London, Sam, under the influence of food and air in this upper world, growing to be a very tall boy. He was educated and became a great man. It was through his influence that the much-talked-of plan to hunt the Sea-Serpent was abandoned, for he knew what its success meant to his dear little friends.

Soon after the Carrolls left Lanwyn, there was an accident in the mine there, and the sea rushed in, rendering it impossible to work it any more. Sam was glad of this, as he knew that the home of the Wee-uns could now never be found, and that their secret was forever safe.

After this he could speak freely of his adventures there.



IX.

YEARS after, Sam had four little children of his own, and to each one as he grew old enough, he told the marvellous story of his adventures in Wee-uns land, and when the story was done, each child always looked up in his father's face, and asked the same question: "But, Papa, how could that Little King pull the hole up after him?"

And to each he always made the same answer: "That, my dear, is a mystery which I have never been able to solve."





THE BIG LIGHT ON BURNING MOUNTAIN.

I.

A GREAT many years ago, there lived in the quiet little town of Spitzfinkelburg, a boy whose name was Rudolf. His father and mother were dead, and he lived with an aunt who, although kind, was unable to do much for him, as she was very poor. When Rudolf was old enough, he did errands for the peasant farmers, and watched their herds of sheep up among the mountains, which surrounded the village, and the few pfennigs he received for this, he gave to his aunt.

There came once a bad season, when the crops failed, and the peasants were too poor to hire a

herds-boy, and had to run their own errands. So Rudolf and his aunt were poorer than ever. Then the boy made up his mind to go to the village of Tafelsdorf.

“I hear, dear aunt,” he said, “that Herr Schmidt, who lives there, and who has many sheep, is in need of a boy, and I shall go to him, and try to get work.”

The aunt consented, with many tears, for it was their first separation.

“But, Rudolf,” she said, “Tafelsdorf is a day’s journey over a steep untravelled road and through dense woods; canst thou keep to the path, and wilt thou not fear?” Rudolf smiled, for being a woodsboy he knew and loved all the creatures in it.

On the following morning his aunt gave him a long loaf of bread and a little cup, out of which he could drink from the many mountain springs which she knew he would pass on the way. Then she kissed him tenderly, and with many “lebewohls” and “auf wiedersehens” he started, entering the forest almost immediately. He took the steeper path, which although little used, he knew

led more directly to Tafelsdorf, and trudged on till noontime. Then sitting down by a clear, cold spring, which gushed out of a rock at the side of the path, he took a long, refreshing drink, and opening his bag, broke off a piece of the schwarzbrod, which he ate with good appetite. Then he lay down on the grass for a nap, for he was tired.

He had slept for about half an hour when he was aroused by the pitiful whimpering of an animal. Jumping up, he saw crouching near, the strangest looking dog you can imagine. He had brown hair which had exactly the color and appearance of pine needles. He was limping to Rudolf, whining and holding up one of his fore paws. The boy patted the little creature, and on examining the paw, found that it had been torn or cut in some way. Dirt and sticks were in the wound, and the dog seemed to be suffering greatly. Rudolph carried him to the spring and tenderly washed the paw. Then tearing a strip from his handkerchief, he bound it, and the patient seemed to feel much better, for he lay down on the soft pine needles and licked the boy's hand gratefully.



RUDOLF AND THE PINE NEEDLE DOG

Rudolf then noticed how thin he was, and opening the bag, gave the little creature some bread which he ate greedily.

“How hungry you are,” said the boy, and then, patting him, “How strange your coat feels, doggie. It feels and looks exactly like pine needles, Did you know it?” The little dog looked up and winked his bright eyes in answer, but did not contradict this statement.

Rudolf, putting back into the bag what was left of the bread, and picking up his stout stick, started to go on his way. “I wonder if Herr Schmidt would n’t also like a dog to help take care of the sheep,” he said. “Come on, and I will ask him,” but turning to the dog, he found to his amazement that the little creature was n’t there—had disappeared, while in the place where he had been only a moment before, lay a heap of pine needles. Rudolf went to it and felt of it, but found that it was *only* pine needles. He next called and whistled loudly, but as the dog did n’t appear, he walked on without him, feeling much bewildered.

The path had now grown steeper, and the forest

126 Big Light on Burning Mountain.

more dense than ever, so that Rudolf was obliged to go more slowly, and it was quite late in the afternoon before he reached the top of the high hill and in the distance, could see through the trees the church spire and red roofs of Tafelsdorf.

Just then he noticed on the path before him, a very old woman, carrying a bundle on her head. She was lame, and the heavy burden was evidently too much for her. Rudolf, although very tired from his walk, hurried on to offer help. But as he came near, the poor old woman sank on the ground with a groan of distress.

“Can I help you? What is the matter?” asked Rudolph.

“I am weak from hunger. I have eaten nothing since yesterday.”

“Oh,” said Rudolf, “if you are hungry, I can give you bread.”

He was very hungry, too, poor boy, but he was generous as well, and knowing the old woman needed the food more than he did, he gave her the last of his loaf. She took it and, thanking him, ate it ravenously, while he watched her.

“What strange skin you have,” he ventured at last, for her skin was indeed extraordinary, being very rough and corrugated.

“Yes,” she answered, “that is because I have spent my whole long life in the forest among the trees.”

“It looks almost like the bark of a tree,” continued Rudolf; and the old woman, who had now stood up to go, smiled.

“I too, must hurry on,” said the boy, and stooped to pick up his stick. “And as we are going the same way, you will let me carry your bundle into the village,” he added, when turning to take it from her, he found to his utter amazement that the old woman was not there! She too, like the pine-needle dog, had vanished, while in the place where she had been, and right in his path, stood the stump of a tree, which he was quite sure had not been there before!

Rudolf rubbed his eyes, stared at it, and then felt of it, but it had only a common “stumpy” feeling. He was so startled at this that he ran the rest of the way down the hill, for he didn't

like to stay any longer in a forest where such strange things happened.

Soon he came to a house, the first in Tafelsdorf, and asked the woman there if she could tell him where Herr Schmidt lived.

“He lives here,” was the welcome answer, and when Herr Schmidt, who was at home, found what Rudolf wanted, he gladly took him, for he was in great need of a boy to look after his sheep. They knew he was good and trustworthy, for they were friends of his aunt at Spitzfinkelburg.

“What makes it so strangely light here?” asked Rudolf, when he was seated in front of the little house, after a supper of goat’s milk, cheese, and black-bread.

“Why, don’t you know?” said Herr Schmidt. “T is from the big light on Burning Mountain. Come, I’ll show it to you,” and taking the boy behind the house, he pointed to a high, black mountain, several miles away. At it, Rudolf gazed in astonishment, for on its summit he could see a huge ball of fire, from the top of which tongues of flame kept reaching up, up, up.

“What is the light?” he asked.

“Ah,” answered Herr Schmidt, “whoever discovers that will be a great man. I will tell you all that is known of it hereabouts. The light has always been there—no man remembers when it was not. It burns only at night, and its fierce power is so great, that for ten miles all about it nothing can grow, not a spear of grass, no bush, tree, nor any living thing; all is waste. No rain falls there. Up to the ten-mile line, all things thrive well, for the soil is rich and yields, but beyond that everything dies. We call it the ‘death-line.’ During the day a dark cloud rests always on the mountain top, so that nothing can be distinctly seen.”

“But has no one tried to find what this light is and to put it out?” interrupted the boy.

“Many have tried, and have started out full of courage and hope to go to the mountain,” answered Herr Schmidt, “but of all, not one, has ever come back. There is an old legend, Rudolf, which tells us that a boy may perhaps some day free the Fire-Spirit, who is said to dwell there.

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My grandfather, who had it from his grandfather, told it to me. What it all means I don't know, but it runs thus :

On the summit of Brennenberg, rocky and steep,
My death-watch forever, forever, I keep—
As the people about me are resting in sleep,
My death-dealing watch I must keep.

From side to side, restlessly, ever I sway,
But the power enchaining me bids me obey.
So, forever in agony, writhing, I stay.
My death-dealing watch I must keep.

But a boy will deliver me. He will come here,
Curiosity gone from him, kind, without fear,
Generosity strong in him. He will appear !
Until then, my death-watch I 'll keep."

All night these words kept ringing in Rudolf's ears, and in the morning an idea came to him which he at once decided to act upon. It was to make an attempt to reach, *himself*, the Burning Mountain, and try to free the Fire-Spirit, which was confined there !

Frau and Herr Schmidt tried to dissuade him, when he told them of his intention, but the boy was firm.

" Well," said Herr Schmidt at last, " if you are determined to try, I suppose you must."

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Rudolf rested all the morning, and at about five o'clock in the afternoon Frau Schmidt gave him a loaf of bread, a bottle of water, and a heavy blanket to keep him warm during the cold nights.

“For it will probably take you several days to get to the mountain,” she said, “if you ever do, poor boy! You will only be able to go a short distance each day, for the way is very slippery. This we can see, standing at the ‘death-line’ and merely looking at it.” Then kissing him kindly, she parted from him. Herr Schmidt went with him to the line, for it was the boy’s intention to spend the night there, starting at daybreak on his dangerous journey. His heart sank when they came to the place, and he looked at the gray, desolate waste of country, which lay between him and the mysterious mountain. It was as the Schmidts had said. Up to the death-line everything grew in profusion. There all life stopped. Not a tree, shrub, or spear of grass was to be seen. Herr Schmidt left him, after saying “good-bye.”

“Auf wiedersehen, Sir,” said Rudolf, but Herr

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Schmidt only repeated, "good-bye," for he thought he should never see the boy again.

The sun sank behind the hills, and darkness fell upon the earth. But only for a moment, for the light on the Burning Mountain shone forth, at first dimly, then growing brighter and brighter till the whole country was lighted by it. Rudolf looked with interest, and not a little fear, at the big fire-ball, which seemed to rest lightly upon the mountain-top.

"What can it be?" he thought. "How it sways from side to side, and how the tongues of flame shoot up from the top, like great arms. Shall I, I wonder, be the one who will find out about it?" And again the words of the quaint, old legend came to him, "And a *boy* will deliver me." Softly repeating them and with a prayer that he might be the one to free the country from this terrible curse, Rudolf fell fast asleep.

He was awakened by hearing a pleasant voice say, "Good-morning, Rudolf."

Sitting up, he looked about, and at first saw no one in the gray light, for it was barely day, and the

sun had just begun to peep above the horizon, while the light on the mountain shone forth but dimly.

“Good-morning,” repeated the voice, and then the boy, rubbing his eyes, saw standing before him the old woman whom he had helped the day before, while at her side stood the funny little pine-needle dog!

“So you are going to the Burning Mountain,” began the old woman. “And you are to free the country from this great evil?”

Rudolf wondered how she knew about it, but said, “I am going to try.”

“Good,” said the old lady, “I will help you, and my little dog will help you, and perhaps you may succeed.”

She then seated herself on a mossy stone near, and said, “Listen carefully now, to what I tell you. You know that if the country is ever saved, it will be by a boy, and that that boy must be kind-hearted, generous, fearless, and without curiosity. So far, all who have started on the terrible journey have never returned, for they were not fitted to undertake it.”

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“Yes,” said Rudolf, “I have heard all this from Herr Schmidt.”

“Yesterday, in the forest,” continued the old woman, “we applied the usual test and found that you were kind-hearted and generous, for you were kind to the little dog, and you generously parted with your last bit of bread to help us. Now, as you may have guessed, I am a fairy, as is the little brown dog—my son—and we will each do something for you in return. As I have said, to reach successfully the Burning Mountain, one must be kind, generous, fearless, and without curiosity. Kind and generous you are. Fearless I think you are, but curiosity you have, I suppose, as do all mortals. Now, the help which we intend to give is to take from you all curiosity and all fear.”

“Take them from me?” gasped the astonished boy. “But how can you *possibly* do that?”

The fairy smiled as she said, “That very question proves that you have your share of curiosity. I shall remove that myself—my son, the fear. Neither operation will be in the least painful, so

do not be alarmed," and Rudolf after a little hesitation consented to have it done.

"First take off your coat and turn your back to me," the fairy directed, and the boy obeyed. Then she put her hand carefully between the shoulders. "Dear me, dearie me!" she said, in a moment; "I find that you have a great deal of curiosity. It is indeed most fortunate that you happened to meet me." For several minutes more she worked, and then Rudolf could feel her take *something* from him.

"What does curiosity look like? Let me see it," begged the boy.

"Ah, ha," said the fairy; "I am afraid I can't have taken it all out yet, or you would n't have any curiosity to see it," so she searched carefully, and soon drew forth triumphantly a long root, which had escaped her before.

And now Rudolf found to his surprise that he did not care to see it; for as every bit of curiosity had been taken from him, he had no curiosity about it.

"Now we will remove the fear," said the fairy,

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excitedly, for she was delighted at her success. "My son does that, usually, for as other dogs scent birds, he has the power of scenting fear, and allows no bit to escape." So she held up the small dog who evidently found and seized something—which he quickly drew out.

"Is that all?" said the fairy, who seemed surprised. "Well, Rudolf, you have very little fear, but still it was necessary to have even that little removed; and dear me, you had enough curiosity for ten boys, and 't is lucky for you that both things are now gone, for with them you could never have made the journey in safety."

The fairy now gave Rudolf final directions.

"It will take you three days to reach the mountain, for you must only travel during the day. Walk directly toward the mountain, and when the day darkens, the light will begin to shine from the top. The instant it does so—when you first see the faintest red tinge, turn your back to it, and wrapping yourself in your blanket, sleep till daylight. Those who have gone before have

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looked at the light, full of curiosity, and it has meant death to them all," said the fairy, sadly.

"But," interrupted Rudolf, "I looked at the light from Herr Schmidt's house, and it did n't kill me."

"That was from the other side of the line. After crossing it, no one may look at the light and live. *Keep your back toward the light.* You will hear and see horrible things during the two nights you spend on the way, but whatever you hear, whatever you see, do not be tempted to turn. Remember this, and nothing can harm you. Although you will not see us, my son and I will be with you, all the time, and watching over you. On the afternoon of the second day you will reach the top of the mountain, and will then be told what to do. And now go, for the way is slippery and time is precious. First, however, what have you in that bag, and in the big bottle?"

Rudolf told her, and the fairy smiled.

"Here," she said, "take these," and she gave him a small, round biscuit, and a tiny flask filled with water. "I always carry these when I travel," said

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she. "They are light and convenient, the bottle being a self-filler, and the biscuit a self-maker, and so no matter how much you eat and drink, you will always find something left."

Rudolf was at first too astonished to say anything, but at last managed to thank the fairy—both fairies—for their kindness. Then rolling up the heavy blanket, he tucked it under his arm, and saying "Good-bye," started.

"Stop, stop," shouted the fairy, and running after him, she said, "Don't take that heavy robe; here is a better one, my regular travelling blanket," and she gave to Rudolf a thick bit of cloth, about the size of a postage stamp, at which he looked in disgust!

"Is that a blanket?" he asked, turning it over in his hand.

"Yes, by pulling the four corners at night, you can stretch it to any size you desire," she explained, "and in the morning as soon as the sun rises, it shrinks back to its original size. It is a very convenient thing."

Rudolf took it gratefully, and put it in his pocket.

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“Now, one more thing and you may go. After your journey, if all is successful, spend your first night here in the forest, when what has been taken from you shall be restored.”

Rudolf promised, and again saying good-bye, went on. The way was very slippery, and at every step he took, he slid back, which was most discouraging. When noontime came, and the sun was directly over his head, he sat down to rest and eat his dinner. He drank from the tiny flask of water, and when he had done so, found to his delight that it was as full as ever! Then taking the biscuit from his pocket he began to eat, and as soon as he had eaten a mouthful from it the biscuit immediately filled itself up again, and became as before, apparently untouched. After a short rest, and a shuddering glance at the desolate, gray waste about him, he walked steadily on, all the afternoon, till at last night came and the sun sank behind the hill. No sooner had it done so than Rudolf, looking at the top of the cloud-capped mountain, noticed a faint, red glow. Without a moment's hesitation he took the little postage-

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stamp blanket from his pocket, and pulled the four corners as the fairy had directed. To his delight he found that it stretched very easily, and when the blanket was the right size he rolled himself in it, and turning his back to the mountain ate a piece of the wonderful self-making biscuit, took a drink of water and fell fast asleep.

He was aroused by hearing a most ear-piercing yell which came from behind him. Sitting up, he listened intently, but for a moment all was quiet. Then the yell was repeated, and this time quite near. Rudolf was not in the least afraid, for how could he be, when all fear had been taken from him? Nor did he wonder what kind of a creature had given that terrible roar, for as you know, every bit of curiosity had been removed. In a moment he heard an awful voice. It was so near, now, that the boy jumped, being startled, though not, of course, afraid.

“Rudolf,” it roared, “turn to me, that I may look upon your face.”

“Oh, no,” said Rudolf, “I am not going to turn round, Sir.”

“Let me look upon your face,” repeated the voice.

“I shall not turn,” said the boy firmly; “and if you really want to see my face, why it is on this side, and you may come round and look at it.”

At this answer the creature gave such a roar, that the earth trembled.

“Oh, dear,” said Rudolf, “I really wish you would n’t make such a noise. Can’t you manage to roar more gently?”

“Do you know, rash boy, to whom you are speaking?”

“No,” said Rudolf, “nor have I the slightest curiosity to know.”

“Boy,” roared the creature, “I am a lion—but not like the lions of your country. I am twenty feet long, and I have eight feet, two tails, and two heads.”

“Oh,” said the boy, “then no wonder your roar is so loud.”

“My eyes are as big as saucers,” continued the lion, paying no attention to the interruption.

“I wish you would be kind enough to shut those saucers,” suggested the boy.

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“*Ugh!*” snarled the lion, savagely. “Are you not afraid?”

“No,” said Rudolf, “not in the least.”

“You will never return to your home, for I shall eat you as I have the others who came before you. Are you not afraid, *now?*”

“No,” said Rudolf, calmly, “I am sleepy, but I cannot say that I am afraid.”

“Perhaps you think that I am not a real lion? I will come nearer, that I may prove to you that I am.”

“I have not thought about you at all,” said the boy, “but if it pleases you to prove anything, do so by all means.”

With an angry snarl the lion approached. Rudolf could hear the crunch, crunching of the dry earth under the many paws, and thought how awfully afraid he should have been only yesterday, and how fortunate it was that he happened to meet the fairy. Nearer and nearer crept the lion, till he stood almost directly over the boy, who could feel the creature’s hot breath on his cheek.

“Do you own now that I am ‘real’?”

“Certainly,” said Rudolf, politely, “and as I am quite willing to own that you are real, and that you are the biggest and noisiest lion I ever met, I should be most grateful if you would go home, and not stand there boasting about yourself any longer.”

“Grrrrrrrrrr!!” roared the lion, who was as angry as it was possible for an angry lion to be. “Do you feel this?” he continued, and he put one large heavy paw on the boy’s shoulder. “And now, now Rudolf, are you not afraid?”

“No, I am not afraid,” said the boy impatiently. “But, lion, I see what fine, soft fur you have, and if you would only lie down quietly, and let me use you for a pillow, I should be very grateful.”

This was too much for any lion, to say nothing of such a monster lion as this, to bear. With a blood-curdling roar, louder than any he had given before, he went slowly away, and Rudolf could hear him roaring over and over again, “He has no fear, he has no fear.” This cry grew fainter and fainter till at last it died away in the distance altogether, and in the silence that followed, Rudolf heard a triumphant

bark which he at once recognized as that of the small pine-needle dog, the fairy's son, and remembering her words, "We will be near you, although not visible;" he was glad and fell fast asleep, and did not wake till morning. Then, feeling cold, he sat up to find that the day had begun and that the blanket was shrinking rapidly. He waited till it was the proper size, then put it in his pocket away from the light. Eating a piece of the magic biscuit, and taking a long drink from the flask, he put them also into his pocket, the biscuit showing no sign of having just furnished a big breakfast for a hungry boy, and the bottle as full as a bottle could well be.

Then Rudolf again started on his tramp. He felt very tired and his feet began to ache before he stopped for his noon rest, for slipping back half way as he did at every step was most discouraging.

After his dinner and a rest which he greatly needed, he trudged steadily on all the afternoon, and found himself at the foot of Brennenberg, just as the sun sank. There he stood for a moment, looking steadily at the top of the mountain which

towered above him, and where he could now dimly see something big and black. His heart beat quickly, but only from excitement, for of course, he could feel no curiosity as to what that strange black mass might be. He waited till darkness came and he could see a dull, red glow coming from it. Then quickly turning his back to it, he ate his supper, stretched the accommodating blanket to the right size, and rolling himself in it, fell asleep. But alas! for tired Rudolf, he was soon roused by a voice—a pleasant voice this time, saying: “Turn, Rudolf, for directly behind you lies the greatest treasure the world has ever known.”

“Indeed?” said the boy, politely. “Well, I am sorry to refuse, but I am not going to turn that way to-night.”

“Ah, but Rudolf,” begged the voice, “it is so beautiful!”

“I have no doubt of it,” he answered.

“Have you then no wish to see for yourself what it is?”

“No,” said Rudolf.

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“But, boy, it will make you rich—richer than any one has ever been before.”

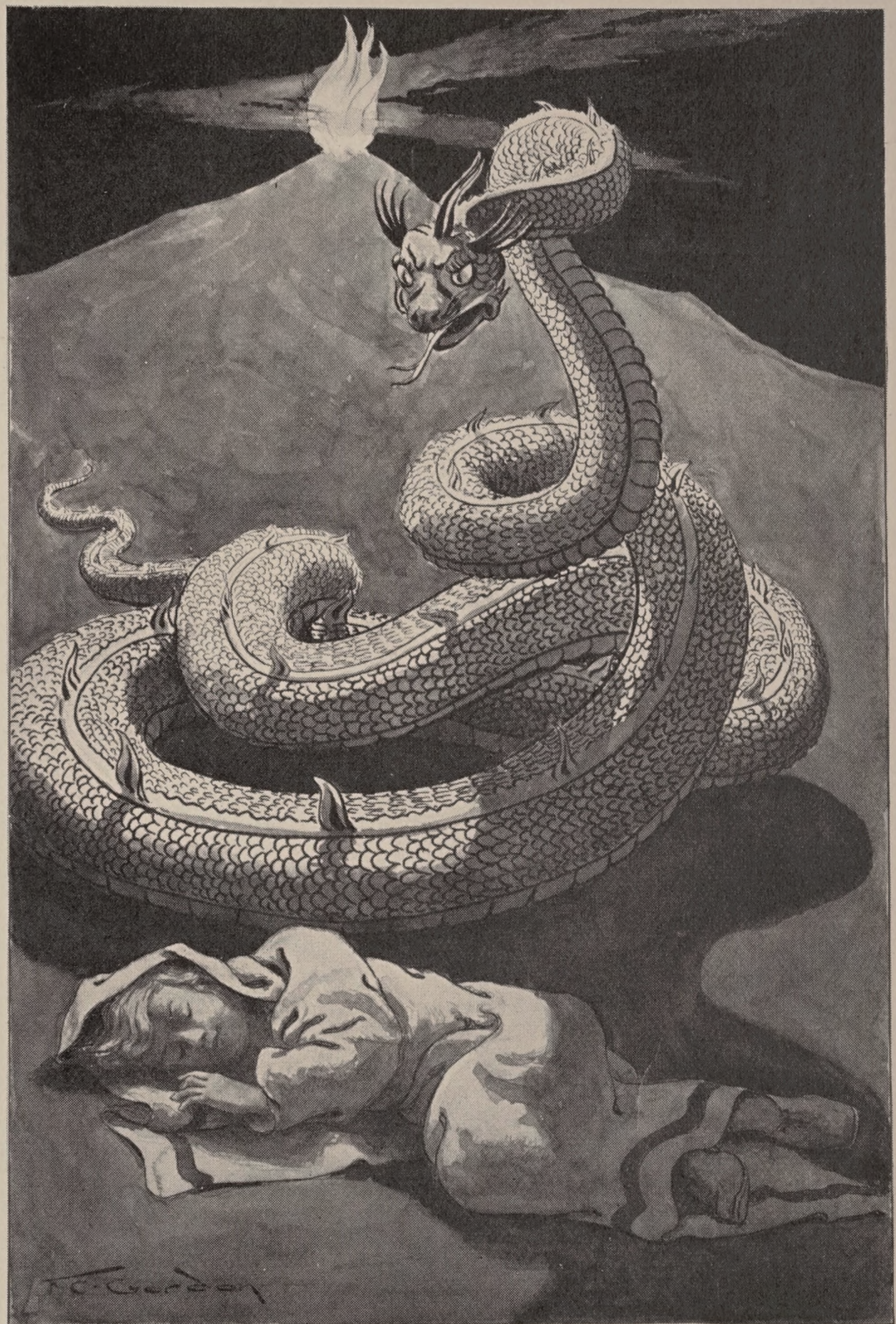
“Indeed?” said he. “Then if you intend to give this gift to me, I am sure I shall be most grateful.”

“And do you not wish to know what it may be? Have you no curiosity about it?”

“Not the slightest,” said Rudolf.

“Oh, oh, oh,” moaned the voice, “he is then *without curiosity!* One has at last come to us who is without curiosity. Alas! Alas!”

This was repeated over and over again, growing fainter and fainter, and finally dying in the distance, with a wailing cry. Then Rudolf fell quickly asleep. But not for long was the poor, tired boy allowed to rest, for in about an hour, he was again aroused by something. At first, he did not know what it was, and lay there listening. Then he heard quite near, a strange, long-drawn “hsssss” followed by silence. If you or I had been there, I am sure we should have almost died of fright unless indeed, we too, had been fortunate enough to meet the kind fairy first. Even Rudolf felt his



Listen and Tremble! I am the King of the Serpents!!

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heart begin to beat quickly from habit, but being so entirely without fear, he only said, "Something else to disturb me. Am I then to have no sleep to-night?"

Once more came the long, low "hsssss," and a voice, a deep, terrible voice said: "Boy, prepare to die! You have indeed escaped the lion, and the temptress, but no one has ever escaped me! That is my proud boast."

"So I hear," said Rudolf, calmly.

This seemed to enrage the creature. "Do you know who I am?" he shrieked.

"No," said Rudolf. "Nor have I the slightest curiosity as to who you may be."

"Then, if you have no curiosity, you shall at least have fear. Listen and tremble! I am the King of the Serpents!"

"Oh," said Rudolf, "are you indeed?"

"Are you trembling?" asked the snake.

"No," said the boy, "but I am glad to meet your Majesty, and hope you will excuse my being obliged to turn my back."

"I will not excuse it," said the snake, angrily.

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“I command you to turn this way, for I am going to kill you, and I never strike an enemy in the back.”

“Quite right,” said the boy, calmly, “but if you strike at all I fear you will have to make an exception in my case, for I am not going to turn my face toward the Burning Mountain.”

“Do you then defy me, rash boy? Turn, turn, turn!” screamed the snake.

“No, no, no!” answered Rudolf, with equal firmness.

“I will give you one chance more,” warned the snake, “for perhaps you think I am not real? To prove that I am, I will let you see my shadow.” And he raised himself so that his body came between Rudolf and the light, which threw his fearful shadow far off on the field, where, without turning, the boy could easily see it. At the huge writhing mass, which coiled and uncoiled itself before his eyes, Rudolf looked with much astonishment and interest.”

“Well,” he said at last, “I congratulate your Majesty, for a king who has a shadow like that, deserves it.”

“I am sixty feet long,” said the snake, proudly.

“Again, I congratulate your Majesty,” was the boy’s answer. “And now, good-night.”

“Rudolf,” said the snake, hissing angrily. “Have you then not heard what I have been saying to you, and do you not understand that I intend to kill you?”

Then the snake crawled up to him. Nearer and nearer he came, till his cold, slimy body touched the boy’s hand.

“Ugh!” exclaimed Rudolf in disgust.

“Ah, ha!” said the snake. “Now you are afraid?”

“No,” said the boy, angrily; “the only thing I am afraid of is that you will stay here all night, chattering. I am very tired, and of course I can’t sleep when bores are talking to me.”

For a moment the snake was too angry to speak. Then:

“I a boa? I a boa?” he hissed, lashing the country about him with his tail. “You have the audacity to speak so to me, the King of Snakes? I see then that you have no fear, or you would

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not dare to insult me in this way. He is without fear! He is without curiosity! Without curiosity—without fear!

And then, much to Rudolf's relief, he could hear the snake crawl slowly off, his huge body scattering stones in all directions while the cry died away in the distance.

Then when all was silent, the boy heard a voice directly overhead, and which he recognized, saying, "Courage, Rudolf, courage, for your trials are nearly over. Good-night."

Knowing that his friend, the fairy, was near, and comforted by the thought, he fell asleep.

When morning came he was again awakened by feeling cold, and found that the sun was shining brightly and had already shrunk the blanket to an alarmingly small size. In fact, if Rudolf had not seized it, and quickly thrust it into his dark pocket away from the sunlight, it would certainly have disappeared altogether!

He ate his breakfast, and then looked at the mountain before him. The top, the cloud resting on it as usual, did not seem to be more than a mile,

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or a mile and a half away, but how high it looked, how inaccessible were its steep slippery sides, unbroken by tree, shrub, or any living thing. However, remembering what he had already gone through, and what the journey meant, if successfully made, he began the climb. Two or three times that morning the boy stopped, almost discouraged, and then bravely went on again, till noon came when, exhausted, he threw himself down in the shade of a big rock, ate his dinner, and rested. Pouring out some water from the wonderful little bottle, his exhaustless spring, he bathed his poor feet, which were badly swollen. Greatly refreshed by this, he went on nearer and nearer the top, which, however, he could not see at all now, for the way had grown so steep that it was almost directly over his head and between him and it were many huge rocks.

Soon he heard a strange, hoarse roaring and rumbling, which ought to have frightened him dreadfully, but, of course, could n't. As he went on farther, this grew louder and louder till the noise was deafening. After a few more struggles he

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came to the largest rock of all, and, dragging himself up laboriously, found that his trials were over at last—he had *reached the top of the Burning Mountain*—the first human being who had been there for many hundred years !

Sitting down, the tired but excited boy gazed with interest at what was before him. In the middle of the level space was what looked like an enormous balloon ! It was as big as a house, and seemed to be covered with thick, black india-rubber. It was firmly fastened to the ground by a stem-like arrangement, and was swaying restlessly from side to side, in a vain attempt to escape, while from it came the strange, roaring noise that Rudolf had heard for the last few hours. Suddenly this ceased, and from the balloon came a loud deep voice—the voice of the Fire Spirit saying :

“ But a boy will deliver me. He will come here,
Curiosity gone from him, kind, without fear.
Generosity strong in him—He will appear !
Until then my death-watch I 'll keep.

“ Art thou my deliverer, boy ? ”

“ I—I—I don't know,” stammered Rudolf, who, although not afraid, was somewhat awe-struck.

“Art thou generous?” asked the deep voice.

“The fairy said I was generous,” answered the boy.

“Art thou kind?”

“She told me that I was kind,” said Rudolf.

“Art thou without fear and without curiosity?”

“The fairies took from me both fear and curiosity, and the lion and the king-snake assured me that I was without curiosity, and that I knew not fear,” answered Rudolf.

“Then thou art he,” said the voice. “Thou art the deliverer of the Fire Spirit, and he is grateful to thee. Cut the cord that binds him to earth and he will away, *away!*”

Rudolf did as he was bid, and approaching the balloon, took out his sharp knife, and with one quick cut freed the poor Fire Spirit! Up, up, up he soared at once with the cloud, which enveloped and rose with him. Up, up, up, higher and higher, Rudolph watching him with much interest. The boy had thrown himself flat on the ground and gazed at the balloon, which was so high in the air, that it looked like a small black speck. As he

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looked, this speck began to grow larger, to spread itself out more and more like a big cloud. Larger and larger yet it grew, while darkness came to the country under it. Yet larger and larger it became, till it had entirely covered the ten miles of gray, desolate waste, where nothing had grown for so many years. Rudolf knew that the Fire Spirit was there above the cloud, for he could see him looking down through the cracks occasionally, his eye gleaming brightly in the darkness, and he could also hear the roaring of the mighty voice.

The people below in all the villages thought this sound was thunder, and that the gleaming eye looking through the black clouds was lightning—but they were only simple peasants.

Again the great Fire Spirit raised his voice, which echoed and echoed among the mountains. Then for a moment came breathless silence, while the black cloud seemed to rest heavily on the earth. Next a soft pattering was heard and then—down, down, came the rain!!! The dear, welcome rain, that had not fallen on that dreary waste within man's memory. How gratefully the parched earth

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welcomed it ! How thirstily she drank it in ! For an hour did this downpour continue, after which the clouds rolled away, and the sun shone again, and then Rudolf gazed about him in amazement, for on all sides, as far as the eye could reach, the earth was covered with a mantle of soft, tender grass ! The Fire Spirit was free—the rain had done its work—and the grass had begun to sprout ! Nor was this all, for as Rudolf gazed, he also noticed little tufts of green appearing in the grass, which he recognized as bushes and trees, which had also immediately begun to grow. Fatigue and all, forgotten, the boy ran like a wild creature down the mountain-side, which he no longer found slippery, for at each step his feet sank in the new-grown grass. Down he flew, and before the afternoon was quite over, he reached what had once been the death-line, but which he could now only find because of the crowd of people from all the villages about, who had come to see the wonder. When they saw him, they shouted, “ Long live Rudolf—King Rudolf, who saved this land. He shall be king over it, and it shall be called

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‘Rudolfsland.’ His castle we will build on Brennenberg, and he shall look over the fertile fields which he saved, and shall be glad.”

Poor Rudolf was so tired and so happy that he burst into tears at these kind words. Then brokenly thanking all the people, he asked them to leave him, as he wished to spend the night alone in the forest, for he remembered his promise to the fairy. And after they had gone he stretched out the magic blanket, and fell fast asleep, turning now any way he pleased, as there was no light on the mountain to be either looked at or avoided. When he opened his eyes early the next morning, the fairy and her son stood by his side.

“Rudolf,” said she, “you have indeed done well.”

“Kind fairy, how could I have failed to succeed, after what you and your son did for me?”

“Ah, well,” answered the fairy, “had you not been such a thoroughly good boy, we should not have helped you. But now, you shall have what we took from you. First we will put back the fear,” and she took from her pocket a lump of—

something. Rudolf saw it, of course, but unfortunately, having no curiosity, looked at it carelessly, This he bitterly regretted afterward, for it was an unusual chance for him to have seen something rare.

Rudolf now turned his back to the fairy, who gave the fear to her pine-needle son. Next she lifted the dog, and in a moment the fear was returned to its rightful owner.

“I bring up my son to always put back in their places things that have been taken out,” she said, and from the severe way in which she spoke, Rudolf suspected that some of the pine-needle sons were not properly brought up by their fairy mammas.

Next the boy's curiosity was returned to him, the fairy pushing it firmly into place.

“Who was in the balloon? How long has he been there? Why was he there? Where has he gone? Why——”

“Stop, stop, Rudolf,” interrupted the fairy, laughing. “One question at a time; although, after all, with such an unusual amount of curiosity, it is not surprising that you do ask questions. I will

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tell you the whole story ; but, first, we must have something to eat.”

So Rudolf produced the servicable biscuit and bottle, and the three ate their breakfast, after which the fairy told the following remarkable story :

“ Hundreds and hundreds of years ago, when the Fire Spirit was quite a young thing, he travelled from country to country, dashing madly through the air, kind-hearted, to be sure, but not to be relied upon in the least. This is often the way with the young, and at first, in his case, it did not matter very much. After a while he grew older and stronger, and the usual gift of land, which all grown Fire Spirits have, was given to him—with the power of sending down rain over it, for, you see, each Fire Spirit has his own ten miles of country, over which he is supposed to watch, and to send down the rain when needed. But although, as I said, the spirit was kind, he did much harm, for he did not realize his power and that whatever he looked at too long, was sure to die. He raced over the country, sending down showers where they were not needed, and leaving the dry and parched

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places, dry and parched. So that instead of a blessing he became a curse to the country about, and people learned to dread his coming.

“ Then one day, he met a soft, dark cloud, and asked her to go with him on his travels. She consented and told him why the people disliked him, and that she would help him and stand between him and them. This she did, and from that time on, the people blessed the Fire Spirit, and were glad of his coming. He could now look at the country through the cloud, seeing with his quick, bright eyes where rain was needed, and sending it down. One day, however, the cloud went away for a moment, and the Fire Spirit took that time, unfortunately, for examining a castle not far from the mountain. Steadily he looked at it, then darted down nearer to get a better view, when suddenly, to his dismay, he saw tongues of fire shooting up from it, and in an instant the whole place was in flames ! Although the cloud rushed to him, and they summoned rain, they were unable to put the fire out, and the castle was burned to the ground. In this house lived, unfortunately, a great

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magician. The peasants called him the 'Man-of-Power.' He swore he would be revenged on the Fire Spirit, who had done him this injury. But though he tried in every way to get at him, he could n't, for the cloud was always with him, and protected him.

"But one day, the Fire Spirit, being very near the earth, stopped on the mountain-top to rest and sleep, the cloud enveloping him as usual, so that he might injure nothing. After he had fallen asleep, the cloud left him, for a moment, and that was the moment for which the Man-of-Power had so long been waiting. Taking a magic blanket, which he had prepared, he quickly threw it over the Spirit, fastening it firmly to the ground. The Fire Spirit awoke, and struggling enraged, succeeded in tearing one little hole in the rubber at the top, through which, however, he was unable to escape.

"'You shall roam about no more,' said the wizard. 'Here you shall remain forever, having the power to burn only at night.'

"'Forever?' moaned the poor Fire Spirit. 'Will no one be permitted to free me?'

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“‘Well,’ said the Man-of-Power, smiling wickedly. ‘I will give you one chance. If a boy should come who is kind and generous, fearless and without curiosity, I will allow him to cut the cord and free you.’

“‘But,’ said the Fire Spirit, ‘there was never a boy in the whole world, who was kind and generous, and also fearless and without curiosity.’

“‘I have certainly never happened to meet one,’ answered the magician.

“And so he left the poor imprisoned Fire Spirit raging and struggling for three hundred years, the poor cloud hovering always over him, and waiting anxiously for his deliverance. For fear one should come to release him, the cruel magician appointed three guardians of the path, who, until now, have killed all who tried to approach. Shining at night, through the hole made so long ago, the Fire Spirit reached ever up, and gazed angrily about him. This fierce gaze and the lack of rain made the country what it was. That is now happily all changed by you, dear boy.

“And now, Rudolf,—King Rudolf,—good-bye.

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You will have a happy life, and you will rule well over your kingdom, 'Rudolfsland.' I shall be often near you, but you will never see me again."

"Good-bye, dear fairy," said the boy, putting his arms about her. Then wiping away the tears that blinded him, he found that the good fairy had vanished, and that he was clasping in his arms only the stump of a tree, while by its side lay a little heap of pine needles !





A LEAP-YEAR BOY.

A FAIRY STORY.

THEODORE was a leap-year boy, and on the 29th of February he was eight years old. He lived with his father and mother "way down South." That is, they lived there during the winter, for Theodore's mother was not very strong, and could not bear the cold. So every January, just when the "rubber boot, snow-ball, and general good-time season" began in the north, the family came to their sunny, southern home. Theodore sometimes felt very badly at leaving the north, but as he loved his mother dearly, he never let her know how it was with him.

To-day, he had gone for a walk in the woods, for it was Saturday—a holiday. His mother gave

him his luncheon, wrapped in a napkin, and with this, his fishing-rod over his shoulder and his small dog, "Imp" at his heels, off he went. A long tramp brought him to a brook, where, for half an hour, he fished—catching nothing. But then, he seldom did catch anything, so that did n't disturb him, and he sat there patiently waiting, waiting.

At last he began to feel hungry, and promptly decided that it was lunch-time. Imp woke up, and seemed to think so, too, for he barked and wagged his tail furiously. Giving the dog his share, Theodore ate his own, and stretching himself out at full length on the soft pine needles, prepared to take a nap. The day was hot, scarcely a breath stirred the tall pine trees. Taking off his jacket the boy rolled it up for a pillow, and bracing it against the trunk of a big tree near, was soon fast asleep. He was aroused by feeling something hard pressing against his head. Sitting up, he looked behind him, and saw, to his amazement, right in the tree, a little *door*! Rubbing his eyes, he looked again. Yes, it was no mistake, there was a door about

two feet high, against the knob of which his head had been pressing. In it was a key. Unlocking the door he opened it, and lying down, looked through it into a lovely garden !

“ Oh, this is just like *Alice in Wonderland*,” he thought, “ only here there are no ‘ drink-me ’ bottles, or ‘ eat-me ’ cakes to make me small, so I shan’t be able to get in. Well,” said he at last, “ if I can’t get in to that lovely garden, then I won’t look at it,” so resolutely shutting and locking the little door, he went down to the brook.

Imp was already there, and had plunged into the cool water, where he seemed to be having a fine time. Theodore stood watching him when he suddenly noticed that the dog’s head looked strangely *small*.

“ Imp,” he called, “ come here, come here,” and the dog obeyed, crawling up on the bank, and shaking himself violently. “ Imp, what has happened to you ? ” screamed Theodore, starting back in astonishment, for the dog who came out of the water was just half the size of the dog who had gone into it ! He had shrunk while taking his

bath. You know how cloth sometimes shrinks when it is put into water? Well, something of the sort had apparently happened to poor Imp.

He evidently felt unlike himself—to realize that he was not as much of a dog as he had been, for he looked sadly at himself, and then barked. It was such a ridiculous little bark, sounding not much louder than the chirp of a wee canary, that Theodore, in spite of his alarm, burst out laughing. Suddenly, an idea came to him. Why, if the water had had such an effect on Imp, should n't he, too, get into it, and be shrunk to the proper size to get through the tree-door!

In a twinkling he decided to do it. So taking off his clothes he stepped cautiously into the brook, then plunging into a deep pool, paddled about for a moment and ran out.

“Hurrah!” he shouted, for, on looking at himself, he saw that he, like Imp, had shrunk, and was much, much smaller.

Running eagerly to the tree-door, he found, however, that he was still too large to go through comfortably.

“One more plunge will bring me to the right size,” he thought, and sure enough, after taking it and going again to the small door, he found he was now just the right height.

In great excitement, he opened the door, and was about to go in, when he remembered that he was entirely without clothes.

“Oh dear, what shall I do?” he said, for his old ones seemed like a giant’s to him. Then he caught sight of the napkin in which his luncheon had been wrapped. With a piece of string which he took from his trousers pocket, he tied the napkin round his waist for a skirt. Then pulling out his handkerchief, he folded it as a shawl, fastening it with a safety-pin with which his luncheon had been pinned. Then calling Imp the two entered the garden, shutting the door behind them.

“Oh, what a beautiful, beautiful garden,” exclaimed the boy, and “bow-wow” said Imp, which probably meant, “that’s so.”

About them grew flowers of all colors, and the air was filled with delicious perfume. Theodore

could also hear birds singing sweetly, but he could not see them.

“How warm it is here,” said he, and he was very glad it was, for napkins and handkerchiefs make rather chilly clothes. “I wonder why it is so warm,” he added.

“Because we always keep a good fire,” answered a Voice.

Theodore looked about, but saw no one. “Who is speaking?” he asked.

“I am,” was the answer; “but you need n’t look for me, for you can’t see me. I am invisible.”

“Oh,” said Theodore, which was perhaps all he could say under the circumstances.

“Yes,” continued the Voice, “we use the best furnace made. ’Tis a fine heater, and has the very largest size perfumery attachment—we are obliged to have the largest size—for you see, there are so many flowers in the garden to be supplied.”

“But do you mean that the furnace gives perfume to the flowers?” asked Theodore.

“Certainly,” was the answer. “Rather a

HOTHOUSE FLOWERS



novel idea, don't you think so? Nor is that all, little boy, for our flowers, in addition to perfume, give out heat as well. That gives them their name 'hot-house' flowers, you know. Examine them yourself."

So Theodore, going to a beautiful big rose near, looked carefully at it, and found right in its heart, a tiny register about half an inch square, through which a stream of hot and deliciously-perfumed air was constantly pouring!

He was next attracted by the loud singing of birds. "I hear birds singing sweetly," he said to the Voice, "but I don't see them."

"Oh, no," it answered, "they, too, are invisible—everyone is, just here. You see, this tree-country is divided into three parts, the Slumber-Room, the Dining-Room (which you will reach very soon) and Invisibility-Court, where you are now, and where everyone is invisible."

"Dear me," said Theodore, who was somewhat alarmed; "then I think, Sir, that Imp and I had better hurry on at once, for I am really afraid that if we stay here, we too, shall become invisible."

“Ha! ha! ha!” laughed the Voice, “that is really a very good joke. You *are* invisible, little boy, both you and your dog. You have been so ever since you came in.”

And Theodore found that the Voice had spoken truly, for although he could hear Imp barking, and knew that he was close at his heels, he was unable to see him, and when he tried to look at himself, he simply was n't there—although he could n't help feeling that he *was*.

“I should like to be myself again,” said he, and “bow-wow,” echoed Imp, heartily.

“Well,” said the Voice, “you will be now, for here we are at the Dining-Room,” and Theodore looking up, saw before them, an arch, and on it, in big letters, made of “hot-house” flowers, the words “DINING-ROOM.” “Here I will leave you.”

“Oh, don't,” begged Theodore, “you have been so kind, Sir. Won't you come with me?” For he had become quite friendly with the Voice and used to speaking into the air at nothing, although, at first, it had been rather a difficult matter.

“I can go no farther,” answered the Voice. “I am forbidden to leave Invisibility-Court. But you will be taken care of. Good-bye.”

“Good-bye,” said the boy, and “bow-wow,” said Imp, who was a thoroughly well-bred dog. Then Theodore and he passed under the arch and into the

DINING-ROOM

—and—

at once became visible again. The boy turned to pat Imp, which he had found it impossible to do when he was only a bark, and as for Imp, he capered about to show his delight at having a real boy, and not merely a voice, for a master.

Just then some one said, “Come in, come in,” and looking up, Theodore saw, sitting before him, a most remarkable man—or was it a man? The boy was so frightened at his strange appearance, that he did n't dare to go on. “What is it, Imp?” he whispered, but the dog, like his little master, stood staring at the amazing figure before them.

It had a body, a head, and two legs, but there its resemblance to anything human ceased, for it

had six arms, two in front, two at the back, and one at each side ! And it had also six eyes, which were set in a circle all round its head, so that it could see in all directions ! As for its mouth, it went completely round its head—one solid, continuous mouth ! Theodore could n't see its nose, for to tell the truth, it did n't have any, breathing through some holes in the top of its head. There was ample room there, too, for breathing purposes, for the creature was perfectly bald, not one single solitary hair did he have.

He was seated at a round table which had a hole cut in the middle : in this hole, on a little stool, he sat and seemed to be busily engaged in eating his dinner. The table was loaded with the most tempting food, and the creature's six hands were as busy as busy could be, feeding his master's wonderful circular mouth.

“Are you the king here ?” Theodore ventured to ask at last, timidly. No answer, and for a few minutes nothing was heard, save the rattling of the knives and forks.

Then the man turned three of his eyes on The-

odore, and said, "I have just finished my eighth dinner, and now, my little boy, I am coming to talk with you. But wait a moment till I screw on my ear."

"Screw on your ear?" gasped Theodore, "oh, what do you mean, Sir?"

But the Eating-Gentleman had evidently not heard him, for he paid no attention. He had jumped out of the hole, and over the table, and now stood before the boy. Next, taking from his pocket a large nickle-plated ear, with a screw at its back, he quickly screwed it into a small hole, which Theodore had already noticed, in one part of his forehead, and then said, calmly, "I never wear my ear when I am eating. It's uncomfortable. But now, I am ready to talk with you. I see there is something which you want to ask."

"There are so many questions I want to ask, that I don't know where to begin," said the boy.

"Then begin in the middle," suggested the Eating-Gentleman. "But first let me tell you something about myself, and the Dining-Room, of which I am the ruler." Here he gave a low bow to Theo-

dore, who politely returned it. "I am the only man here," he continued, "and I have much to do, for I look after the garden, and see that the birds and dogs are fed. I know everything that goes on, for I always 'keep one eye open,' which is, of course, an easy matter, as I have so many. Even during the night, one eye watches for an hour, then another, and so on, each taking its turn. I get up at eight in the morning and go to bed at eight at night, and I dine every hour, making twelve dinners in the day, so you see what a busy life I lead."

"But," interrupted the boy, "I should n't think you would ever feel hungry."

"I never do, till I have had an appetite-nut. You have n't seen them? Let me show them to you," and the strange creature led Theodore, and the now thoroughly frightened Imp, through a second, smaller arch, into a most astonishing garden.

It too, like Invisibility Court, was warmed by "hot-house" flowers, which were all the time giving out perfumed heat. But beside these, there were several odd-looking shrubs, and to one of

them the Eating-Gentleman went. On it grew some nuts, something like walnuts in appearance, only that on each was printed the word "appetite."

"Try one," said the Eating-Man, and Theodore did so, being afraid to disobey.

No sooner had he finished the nut, than he became ravenously hungry, although it was only two hours since he had eaten the big luncheon, which his mother had prepared.

"I am very hungry," he said.

The Eating-Man laughed. "Of course you are, and you are to have your dinner here, and immediately. I will get a table ready. A square one will be better for you, as you have only two arms. You can get the dishes and follow," and he hurried on.

"But where am I to get the dishes?" shouted Theodore.

"Pick them," was the answer.

The boy looked about, completely bewildered, and found that on all the bushes near, different kinds of dishes were growing! One bore plates, another cups, another saucers, others knives and

forks, and so on. The boy picked a plate from the plate-bush, a cup from the cup-bush, and with these, and a knife, fork, and spoon, he followed the Eating-Gentleman, who was standing by a table, waiting for him. Putting the dishes down, Theodore said, "I could n't find a drinking glass."

"Glass department down this way, drinking glasses on fifth bush, right side," directed the man, pointing, and Theodore ran and picked one.

"Now, come with me," said the Eating-Man, "and I will take you to our food-orchard," and opening a gate at one side, he led the astonished little boy through it.

"Oh, what a delicious smell," said he, and indeed there ought to have been, for on every side was the most appetizing food you can imagine. Pies, cakes, custards, chicken, marmalade, tarts, ice-cream, everything you ever heard of, and a great many things you never heard of, were there, and everything was growing on bushes.

"First you will want some soup," said the Eating-Man. "Now, what kind do you prefer?"

THE FOOD GARDEN



“I am very fond of chicken broth,” said Theodore.

“Well, here is the soup-bush,” and the man led the way to a bush on which were many little faucets. On each was the name of some kind of soup; consommé, tomato, mutton, and so on. Soon they found the chicken, and under this Theodore held his cup. Turning the faucet, out came some delicious, rich, chicken broth!

After he had eaten this, he asked for some roast beef and mashed potatoes, and the Eating-Man took him to the roast-beef bush, and the mashed-potato bush, and he helped himself to what he wanted, for everything was ready, being done to a turn. He also passed a currant-jelly bush, and took from it some of the jelly. After he had eaten all these things, he picked some ice-cream from an ice-cream bush, that grew near, and then he let Imp have some meat, first giving him a crumb of the appetite nut, which at once made the little dog very hungry.

“Now, Boy,” said the Eating-Gentleman, “perhaps you would like to see my dogs and birds?”

Theodore said he would like that very much. He had already noticed the many birds flying about, singing sweetly to each other.

The Eating-Man called loudly "Birds!" and the pretty creatures came fluttering down, and placed themselves in a row before him, "chirp-chirp, chirping" loudly.

"Silence!" commanded the Man, and all stopped immediately. "Now, Boy," he continued, "the birds in the world outside do what you call 'sing' but did you ever hear one really sing an air, a song?"

"Certainly not," answered Theodore. "I don't believe it would be possible for any bird to do that."

"Well, my birds can," said the Eating-Man proudly. Holding out his hand, the first in the row, a pretty little bright red thing, flew to it, and perching on it, lifted his small head high in the air. "What do you see there, Boy?" said the man pointing to the little creature's soft throat. Theodore looked and saw, almost hidden by the fluffy red feathers, a tiny, tiny handle—a *crank!* This

the Eating-Man began to turn, and can you believe me when I tell you that the bird opened his mouth and actually sang "Home, Sweet Home" !

When he had finished, his master patted him, and told him to go to the crumb-bush, and take a crumb. He evidently knew where the crumb-bush was, for chirping loudly, he flew joyfully away. The next bird was now called, and sang "The Star Spangled Banner." Then Theodore, who had been listening in great delight, asked if he might turn the crank of the third bird. The man gave him permission, and with much tenderness and feeling, the little fluffy yellow bird sang "Yankee Doodle" to him !

When each of the birds had sung its song, Theodore thanked the Eating-Man, and told him it was the most beautiful and the most wonderful concert he had ever heard.

The man seemed pleased at this praise, and said, "I suppose it does seem wonderful to you, and so, I daresay, will the dogs."

"Oh, let me see the dogs," begged the boy, and Imp who had been evidently thoroughly dis-

gusted by the unnatural birds, pricked up his ears, and wagged his tail at the word "dog." "At last," he thought, "we shall see something sensible, but as for those hand-organ birds, I don't like them at all. No-no! Bow-wow!"

"I will call only one of the dogs," said the Eating-Man. "I have ten, but they are all alike." He then gave a loud whistle, saying at the same time "*walk.*" In a moment, a strange, whirring noise was heard, something came dashing down one of the paths, and an animal stood before them. Poor Imp gave one look at him, moaned, and fell to the ground.

The creature had, like other dogs, a body, head and tail, but he had only *one leg*, on which he stood on a broad, wooden platform—(just like a toy dog, only even they have four legs). He had a remarkable nose, which looked like the trunk of an elephant, and which he could move about freely in any direction. He looked up at them, but made no sound, and did n't move.

"Glad to see me, Tim?" asked his master; "you may wag your tail," and then Theodore

started back in surprise, and like Imp, almost fainted, for the dog turned his head round, and with his trunk pushed away the long, brown hair, disclosing at one side of his body what looked like an electric bell-button. This he pressed, and immediately his tail began to wag stiffly back and forth, back and forth, back and forth, five times—then stopped abruptly.

“You are awfully glad to see me, are n’t you?” said his master, “then you can bark, too.” Round went the dog’s trunk-nose to the other side of his body. Theodore, who wanted to see what would happen now, hurried round, too, and saw him push aside the hair, as before, showing another button. This the dog pressed, and immediately began to bark! But he did n’t do it as dogs usually do—he could n’t, you see, for he was made in such an entirely different way. He barked a *scale*! Beginning at the lowest, he barked his way up the eight notes.

“Now, show our guest how you lie down, Tim,” commanded his master, and the dog immediately rolled over and lay on his back, his one leg

straight up in the air, supporting the platform. "The platform is very convenient when it rains," said the man, "it serves as an umbrella, you see, and as there is no house or other shelter here, it is an excellent thing."

"And what do you do yourself, Sir, when it rains?" asked Theodore.

"Just run into Invisibility-Court, till the storm is over," was the answer.

Theodore again turned to the dog, who stood patiently waiting before them. "How does he manage to walk?" he asked.

"There are wheels on the platform," explained the man, "and I will show you how he moves, for it is now time anyway for him to leave. Good fellow," he said, turning to the dog, "you may go to the bone-bush and get a bone. Walk."

At that word, Tim lifted his trunk and once more pressed a knob. This time it was on his forehead, and the minute it was pressed, off he rolled with a loud, whirring noise! Aroused by it, poor Imp came to himself again and gazed about, with a pitiful, scared look. He was greatly relieved

to find the dog gone, for seeing him had been one of the dreadful experiences of Imp's life.

Theodore lifted the poor little shivering creature, and carried him the rest of the way.

The Eating-Man explained that the dogs never pressed any of the knobs, unless he gave the words of command. "Occasionally a puppy will forget, but as a general thing they are well trained," he said. "I cannot allow them to be running about where there are so many food-bushes, you know." By this time they had reached again the Dining-Room arch.

"Now, Theodore, say good-bye quickly," said the Eating-Man, "for in just one minute I begin my ninth meal and must take off my ear."

So the boy thanked him very much for his kindness, and asked if he might kiss him good-bye.

"Why certainly," said the Eating-Gentleman, evidently pleased at the request.

And then the little boy drew back in embarrassment, for he did n't know which part of the mouth he ought to kiss first. If he took the part toward him, then the rest of it might feel grieved.

“I don't quite know, Sir, where I ought to begin to kiss,” he faltered.

“Begin in the middle,” answered the Eating-Gentleman, “and I'll do the rest.”

Poor Theodore did n't know where the middle was, but he did n't like to say so, so he kissed the part of the mouth that was toward him. No sooner had his lips touched it, than the Eating-Gentleman, balancing on one foot, twirled himself so rapidly about that the whole mouth was kissed! Not a bit of it was left out.

Then unscrewing his ear, which he put in his pocket, he hurried to the dish-bushes, eating on the way an appetite-nut. Picking what dishes he needed, he put them on the table. Next running nimbly to the food-orchard, he picked his dinner, which as he used all his hands, he did in an incredibly short time. Then jumping over the table, he seated himself on the stool, and the last Theodore saw of him, he was eating a big cake, which was baked with a hole in the middle. Through this hole he had thrust his head, and with his six hands holding the cake firmly, was busily eating his way outward, on all sides, at once!

When Theodore passed under the arch, he saw directly before him another one marked "SLUMBER-ROOM," and the poor boy was really glad to see it, for he felt so exhausted by all the wonderful things he had seen that he was only too ready for a nap. So going under the arch, he entered the

3d Garden.

"Sssh, ssssh, sssssh," greeted him from all sides. Who was speaking? Theodore looked about but saw no one.

This garden was smaller than the others, and was densely shaded by trees. These trees were swaying back and forth, back and forth, and in a moment the boy discovered that it was from them the sound came. Except for this gentle murmur "ssssh, ssssh ; ssssh, ssssh," no sound was to be heard. There seemed to be no birds and no dogs here, and apparently no person but himself.

Suddenly he caught sight of a notice, nailed against one of the trees, and going to it, read:

Pillows at right, on 14th tree from entrance.

MAKE NO NOISE.

“Ssssh, sssh, sssh,” murmured the trees.

Walking with the greatest care, Theodore counted till he came to the 14th tree on the right, and sure enough, there stood the pillow tree, and a pretty sight it was, for it was almost buried under the many pretty pink and white pillows it bore. Choosing a particularly luscious, soft-looking one, he picked it and placed it on the ground. Then with Imp curled up under his arm, he stretched himself out on the soft grass.

This garden, like the others, was warm, for there was a stiff row of hot-house flowers planted around it, which gave out ample heat for a sleeping room.

“Ssssh, sssh, sssh,” murmured the trees, then “sssh, sssh,” softer and softer it sounded to the sleepy boy, and at last his eyes closed—Theodore was asleep.

He slept for about an hour, when he thought he heard someone call “Wake up.” Sitting up quickly, he looked about, and saw no one. But directly before him, hanging from a tree, was a big sign, which had certainly not been there before,

and on which were printed the words he had just heard, "Wake up."

While he was looking at it, the sign began to gradually fade away, and before Theodore had quite made up his mind as to whether it had really been there or not it had disappeared. But it had done its work, for the boy was now wide awake. Jumping up, he walked toward the entrance, with little Imp clasped tightly in his arms.

Not a sound was to be heard except the "sssshing" of the trees and the boy's footsteps, which echoed through the lonely garden. Theodore was glad when they reached a door, and passed through it. As for poor Imp, he gave a bark of delight. His master stooped to kiss him, when, to his horror, he found that the dog was n't in his arms at all—had disappeared!

Another look, however, showed him that he himself was missing, and then he knew that they must be once more in Invisibility-Court.

This he found was so, for just then his old friend, the Voice, spoke to him, "Well boy, here you are again; and have you had a pleasant afternoon?"

A Leap-Year Boy.

“Oh, Voice,” said Theodore. “I have seen so many wonderful things. I never knew before that there were so many wonderful things in the world.”

“There are not, in the real world,” was the answer. “And do you know, Theodore, the reason why you were allowed to come here to ours?”

“No,” said he, “why was it?”

“Because this is the 29th of February, your birthday. You are a leap-year boy, you know, and that is the only kind of boy we admit here.”

“And may I come again?” asked Theodore, anxiously.

“Come on your next birthday, in four years from now, in the afternoon,” answered the Voice, “and perhaps we will let you in. But, Theodore, when you go out, be very careful to shut and lock the tree-door. You may take the key, but *don't lose it*. And now, little boy, good-bye.”

“But, Voice,” said the boy, “after we get out into the world, how are we to become big again, Imp and I?”

“Plunge into the brook, and you will both be

yourselves," said the Voice, but Theodore noticed that it had a faint sound, as if it came from a distance. "*Don't lose the key,*" it repeated again, softly, "and good-bye," but the last was almost a whisper.

"Good-bye, dear Voice," said Theodore, "you won't forget me, will you?" There was no answer to this; the Voice had gone.

Giving one long, lingering look at the beautiful garden, the boy opened the little door, and he and Imp went out into the outside world. Ugh! how cold and dark it seemed! He shivered in his handkerchief-napkin suit. Shutting the tree-door, he locked it and put the key in the pocket of his jacket which lay on the ground.

Then, running to the brook, he first threw in Imp, who struggled and did n't seem to relish the idea of a cold bath. Next, he plunged in himself, and as the Voice had said, in a few moments he and Imp were themselves again.

Then, putting on his clothes and picking up his fishing-rod and his empty lunch-basket, he whistled to Imp and went home. Putting the key into a

tin bait-box, he buried it in a corner of the garden, thinking that would be the safest place for it, for he remembered the warning which the friendly Voice had given, "*Don't lose the key!*"

Four years passed, and Theodore's birthday, to which he had been looking forward for so long, had come again. He had been many times to the tree, but never had seen anything about it to show that it was unlike others.

This morning he spent in impatiently waiting for the afternoon to come. The little key had been dug up, and was resting safely in his pocket.

After luncheon he started for the woods, his heart beating quickly with excitement. Imp was with him, as before, but he was not the dog he had been. This was a dignified, stately Imp, who never barked, unless he felt that there was really some occasion for it. When they came near the tree, Theodore took the key from his pocket, holding it ready in his hand, and fairly ran in his impatience, while Imp trotted in a leisurely manner after. But, just as the tree was almost in sight, poor Theodore's foot caught in the root of a

tree, and he fell heavily, at full length on the ground. He was not hurt in the least, but, alas! alas! in falling with such force, the little silver key in his hand was hurled from him, disappearing in the dense shrubbery!

Poor Theodore searched, and searched, and searched but in vain. He at last had to give it up, and sitting down buried his face in his hands, and big boy that he was, cried aloud, for he was bitterly disappointed. Imp moaned sympathetically and licked his master's hands.

Just then a tremendous *crash* shook the earth! The boy started to his feet. It sounded as if a big tree had been blown down quite near. But that could n't be, for there was n't wind enough to blow it down. The day was hot—breathless—scarcely a leaf stirred on any of the trees near.

Wondering what the noise could have been, Theodore hurried in the direction whence the sound had come, and there on the ground, with its branches stretching out on all sides, and its roots reaching far up into the air, lay the beautiful fairy-tree!! With a cry Theodore reached it and running to the

place where the little door had been, examined it carefully ; but no trace of it was to be seen. Next, he looked into the big hole, where the roots had so recently been, but there was nothing there but a hole.

Invisibility-Court and the Voice, the Dining-Room, and the polite Eating-Gentleman, and the Slumber-Room with its "sssh, sssshing" trees were *gone*. Only as Theodore stooped over the hole, he noticed that a faint and very delicious odor came from it, which he recognized as the same that had come from the "hot-house" flowers, but as he stood, even this grew less and less, till at last it disappeared entirely.

THE END



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