THE GOLDEN WINDOWS

Laura E. Richards

THE GOLDEN WINDOWS

The Golden Windows

A Book of Fables For Young & Old

By

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"Captain January," "Joyous Story of Toto," etc.

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To H. R.

Once more I turn to you and give
  Into your hand my little book,
Since through the years and while I live,
  It is to you I still must look
For hand of strength, for heart of cheer,
  For all that 's wise and kind and dear.

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A BOOK OF FABLES

THE GOLDEN WINDOWS

LL day long the little boy worked hard, in field and barn and shed, for his people were poor farmers, and could not pay a workman; but at sunset there came an hour that was all his own, for his father had given it to him. Then the boy would go up to the top of a hill and look across at another hill that rose some miles away. On this far hill stood a house with windows of clear gold and diamonds. They shone and blazed so that it made the boy wink to look at them: but after a while the people in the house put up shutters, as it seemed, and then it looked like any common farm-

house. The boy supposed they did this because it was supper-time; and then he would go into the house and have his supper of bread and milk, and so to bed.

One day the boy's father called him and said: "You have been a good boy, and have earned a holiday. Take this day for your own; but remember that God gave it, and try to learn some good thing."

The boy thanked his father and kissed his mother; then he put a piece of bread in his pocket, and started off to find the house with the golden windows.

It was pleasant walking. His bare feet made marks in the white dust, and when he looked back, the footprints seemed to be following him, and making company for him. His shadow, too, kept beside him, and would dance or run with him as he pleased; so it was very cheerful.

By and by he felt hungry; and he sat down by a brown brook that ran through the alder hedge by the roadside, and ate his bread, and drank the clear water. Then he scattered the crumbs for the birds, as his mother had taught him to do, and went on his way.

After a long time he came to a high green hill; and when he had climbed the hill, there was the house on the top; but it seemed that the shutters were up, for he could not see the golden windows. He came up to the house, and then he could well have wept, for the windows were of clear glass, like any others, and there was no gold anywhere about them.

A woman came to the door, and looked kindly at the boy, and asked him what he wanted.

"I saw the golden windows from our hilltop," he said, "and I came to see them, but now they are only glass."

The woman shook her head and laughed.

"We are poor farming people," she said, "and are not likely to have gold about our windows; but glass is better to see through."

She bade the boy sit down on the broad stone step at the door, and brought him a cup of milk and a cake, and bade him rest; then she called her daughter, a child of his own age, and nodded kindly at the two, and went back to her work.

The little girl was barefooted like himself, and wore a brown cotton gown, but her hair was golden like the windows he had seen, and her eyes were blue like the sky at noon. She led the boy about the farm, and showed him her black calf with the white star on its forehead, and he told her about his own at home, which was red like a chestnut, with four white feet. Then when they had eaten an apple together, and so had become friends, the boy asked her about the golden windows. The little girl nodded, and said she knew all about them, only he had mistaken the house.

"You have come quite the wrong way!" she said. "Come with me, and I will show you the house with the golden windows, and then you will see for yourself."

They went to a knoll that rose behind the farmhouse, and as they went the little girl told him that the golden windows could only be seen at a certain hour, about sunset.

"Yes, I know that!" said the boy.

When they reached the top of the knoll, the girl turned and pointed; and there on

a hill far away stood a house with windows of clear gold and diamond, just as he had seen them. And when they looked again, the boy saw that it was his own home.

Then he told the little girl that he must go; and he gave her his best pebble, the white one with the red band, that he had carried for a year in his pocket; and she gave him three horse-chestnuts, one red like satin, one spotted, and one white like milk. He kissed her, and promised to come again, but he did not tell her what he had learned; and so he went back down the hill, and the little girl stood in the sunset light and watched him.

The way home was long, and it was dark before the boy reached his father's house; but the lamplight and firelight shone through the windows, making them almost as bright as he had seen them from the hilltop; and when he opened the door, his mother came to kiss him, and his little sister ran to throw her arms about his neck, and his father looked up and smiled from his seat by the fire.

"Have you had a good day?" asked his mother.

Yes, the boy had had a very good day.

"And have you learned anything?" asked his father.

"Yes!" said the boy. "I have learned that our house has windows of gold and diamond."

TWO WAYS

WO little weeds grew on a bank by the roadside. All summer they had drunk dew and sunshine, and had been happy; but now autumn was come, with gray skies, and winds that nipped and pinched them.

"We shall die soon!" said one little weed. "I should like to do something pleasant before I die, just to show what a happy time I have had. I think I will turn red, and then people will see how I feel."

"You will be a great fool to waste your strength in any such nonsense!" said the other little weed. "I shall live as long as I can, and hug the brown bank here."

So the first little weed turned bright scarlet, and was so pretty that every one

who passed that way turned to look at it. By and by there came along a most beautiful maiden with her lover; and when the lover saw the scarlet leaves, he plucked them, and set them in his maiden's hair, and they lent her a new grace. This made the little weed so happy that he died for pure joy.

The second little weed lived on, and turned slowly brown, like the bank.

"He was a fool!" he said, speaking of his companion. "He put all his strength into turning red, and so he died."

"I was proud of him!" said the brown bank. "He did what he could, and people observed him."

"Yes, but I am alive, and stay with you!" said the weed.

"Much I care!" said the brown bank.

THE WHEAT-FIELD

OME children were set to reap in a wheat-field. The wheat was yellow as gold, the sun shone gloriously, and the butterflies flew hither and thither. Some of the children worked better, and some worse; but there was one who ran here and there after the butterflies that fluttered about his head, and sang as he ran.

By and by evening came, and the Angel of the wheat-field called to the children and said, "Come now to the gate, and bring your sheaves with you."

So the children came, bringing their sheaves. Some had great piles, laid close and even, so that they might carry more; some had theirs laid large and loose, so that they looked more than they were; but one, the child that had run to and fro after the butterflies, came empty-handed.

The Angel said to this child, "Where are your sheaves?"

The child hung his head. "I do not know!" he said. "I had some, but I have lost them, I know not how."

"None enter here without sheaves," said the Angel.

"I know that," said the child. "But I thought I would like to see the place where the others were going; besides, they would not let me leave them."

Then all the other children cried out together. One said, "Dear Angel, let him in! In the morning I was sick, and this child came and played with me, and showed me the butterflies, and I forgot my pain. Also, he gave me one of his sheaves, and I would give it to him again, but I cannot tell it now from my own."

Another said, "Dear Angel, let him in! At noon the sun beat on my head so fiercely that I fainted and fell down like one dead; and this child came running by, and when he saw me he brought water to revive me, and then he showed me the butterflies, and was so glad and merry that my strength returned; to me also he

gave one of his sheaves, and I would give it to him again, but it is so like my own that I cannot tell it."

And a third said, "Just now, as evening was coming, I was weary and sad, and had so few sheaves that it seemed hardly worth my while to go on working; but this child comforted me, and showed me the butterflies, and gave me of his sheaves. Look! it may be that this was his; and yet I cannot tell, it is so like my own."

And all the children said, "We also had sheaves of him, dear Angel; let him in, we pray you!"

The Angel smiled, and reached his hand inside the gate and brought out a pile of sheaves; it was not large, but the glory of the sun was on it, so that it seemed to lighten the whole field.

"Here are his sheaves!" said the Angel. "They are known and counted, every one." And he said to the child, "Lead the way in!"

TO-MORROW

IN the Land of To-morrow, near the entrance-gate, two newly arrived spirits met, and looked each other in the face. One of them was a strong and beautiful spirit, with shining garments, and a face full of clear light; but the other was little and pinched and gray, and she trembled and cowered as she went.

"What ails you," asked the first spirit, "that you cower thus?"

"I am afraid!" answered the second. "It is all so strange here: I have no home, no friends, and I am alone and frightened."

"That is strange!" said the strong spirit. "I never felt so at home before. Everything is friendly to my eyes; the very trees are as if I had known them always."

"Let me hold your hand!" said the frightened one. "You seem so strong,

and tread so freely, I shall perhaps not be so afraid if I am with you. I was a great lady on the earth. I lived in a fine house, and had servants to run and ride for me, and jewels and rich dresses, and everything that heart could desire; yet I had to leave them all in haste, and come alone to this strange place. It is very terrible! was it so with you?"

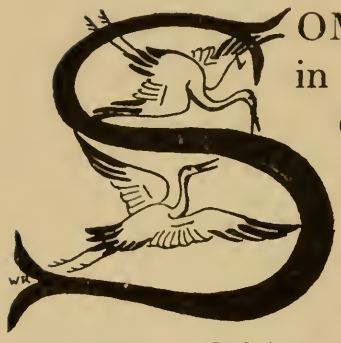
"Nay," said the other; "I came willingly."

The frightened spirit clung to the other, and peered in her face.

"Tell me!" she cried. "Did we ever meet on the earth? your face is not only friendly, it is familiar. It is as if I had seen you often, yet none of the noble ladies I knew had such strength and grace. Who were you, beautiful angel?"

"I was your washerwoman!" said the other.

THE COMING OF THE KING



OME children were at play in their play-ground one day, when a herald rode through the town, blowing a trumpet, and crying aloud, "The King! the King passes by this road to-day. Make ready for the King!"

The children stopped their play, and looked at one another.

"Did you hear that?" they said. "The King is coming. He may look over the wall and see our playground; who knows? We must put it in order."

The playground was sadly dirty, and in the corners were scraps of paper and broken toys, for these were careless children. But now, one brought a hoe, and another a rake, and a third ran to fetch the wheelbarrow from behind the garden gate. They labored hard, till at length all was clean and tidy.

"Now it is clean!" they said; "but we must make it pretty, too, for kings are used to fine things; maybe he would not notice mere cleanness, for he may have it all the time."

Then one brought sweet rushes and strewed them on the ground; and others made garlands of oak leaves and pine tassels and hung them on the walls; and the littlest one pulled marigold buds and threw them all about the playground, "to look like gold," he said.

When all was done the playground was so beautiful that the children stood and looked at it, and clapped their hands with pleasure.

"Let us keep it always like this!" said the littlest one; and the others cried, "Yes! yes! that is what we will do."

They waited all day for the coming of the King, but he never came; only, towards sunset, a man with travel-worn clothes, and a kind, tired face passed along the road, and stopped to look over the wall.

"What a pleasant place!" said the man. "May I come in and rest, dear children?'

The children brought him in gladly, and set him on the seat that they had made out of an old cask. They had covered it with the old red cloak to make it look like a throne, and it made a very good one.

"It is our playground!" they said. "We made it pretty for the King, but he did not come, and now we mean to keep it so for ourselves."

"That is good!" said the man.

"Because we think pretty and clean is nicer than ugly and dirty!" said another.

"That is better!" said the man.

"And for tired people to rest in!" said the littlest one.

"That is best of all!" said the man.

He sat and rested, and looked at the children with such kind eyes that they came about him, and told him all they knew; about the five puppies in the barn, and the thrush's nest with four blue eggs, and the shore where the gold shells grew; and the man nodded and understood all about it.

By and by he asked for a cup of water, and they brought it to him in the best cup, with the gold sprigs on it: then he

thanked the children, and rose and went on his way; but before he went he laid his hand on their heads for a moment, and the touch went warm to their hearts.

The children stood by the wall and watched the man as he went slowly along. The sun was setting, and the light fell in long slanting rays across the road.

"He looks so tired!" said one of the children.

"But he was so kind!" said another.

"See!" said the littlest one. "How the sun shines on his hair! it looks like a crown of gold."

THE TREE IN THE CITY

IN a narrow space between two buildings, in a crowded city, grew a tree. There was no other green thing near it. On one side its leaves touched the blank wall of a warehouse, on the other they swept the window of a poor tenement; the space under it was paved up to its very roots; but still it lived, and put forth its fresh leaves every spring.

"Why do you take so much trouble?" asked the old rat who lived under the roots. "I would not, if I were in your place."

"It is my business!" said the tree. "It is the thing I have to do. All my family do it."

"But there is no one to see you," said the rat, "except me, and I do not care."

"That is not my affair!" said the tree.

But the sick girl in the tenement said, "Mother! mother dear! the tree outside

the window is putting out little new leaves, soft and green. It is spring, even here in the city. I shall grow better now, I am sure."

"Thank God!" said the mother.

Summer came. The leaves of the tree were large and long, and the branches were heavy with them; they quivered and rustled with every breath of wind.

"It does really seem a pity for you to exert yourself so!" said the old rat who lived under the roots. "If you caught beetles, now, or did anything useful, I should feel better about it. *Why* do you take all this trouble?"

"It is the thing I have to do!" said the tree. "All my family do it."

"But if anybody cared," said the rat, "it would be different."

"That is not my affair!" said the tree.

But the sick girl in the tenement said, "Mother, the heat is stifling. I could not bear it if it were not for the shade of this dear tree. The wind rustles the leaves, and I seem to hear coolness in the sound; it tells me that somewhere in the world there are whole forests of trees, rustling

and waving, and green fields with flowers in them, and streams of cool water flowing and falling. The tree makes summer for me."

"Thank God!" said the mother.

By and by it was autumn. The air grew thin and chill; the leaves of the tree turned yellow, and one by one dropped off and fell to the ground. The paved court was covered with them, and they shone like gold.

"Now you see!" said the old rat who lived under the roots. "Now it is over, and what have you for your pains?"

"I have done the thing I had to do;" said the tree. "That is enough for me."

"Poor-spirited vegetable!" said the rat. "If you had borne acorns for people to gnaw, it would at least have been something, but you have nothing to show for your trouble save dead leaves and empty branches."

"That is not my affair!" said the tree.

But the sick girl in the tenement said, "Mother! mother dear, I am tired. Summer is over. Look! the leaves have fallen from my dear tree, and the bare branches

tap against the window like summoning hands. The tree is going to sleep for the winter, and I think that I shall sleep too. Mother dear, when I am asleep, gather the leaves from the ground and strew them over me, for they have been my joy."

And she turned her face to the wall and slept.

"Thank God!" said the mother.

THE HOUSE OF LOVE

MAN and a woman were walking together along the way, when they met a child, who was so beautiful that they stopped to speak to him.

"Who are you, lovely child?" they asked. "What is your name, and whence do you come?"

"My name is Love," said the child. "I live hard by here, in my house. Come and see it, and if it pleases you, you shall live in it with me."

So presently they came to the house; and the child took them by the hands and drew them in.

"Look!" he said. "See what a pleasant house this is of mine! Feel the carpet, how soft it is under our feet! the cushions are soft too. Here are my flowers in the window; did you ever smell sweeter ones?

the whole house is like a garden with them. And feel the sun, how it comes pouring in, warming one through and through! do you like my house? will you stay with me?"

And the man and woman joined hands, and said, "We will stay."

For a time all went well. The child Love sang the sweetest songs, and flitted from room to room; and wherever he came the sun shone brighter.

But one day the man said: "I begin to see things in this house that I did not notice at first. This child has deceived us; now that I look closely, it seems a poor place. This carpet that he boasted of, for example, is nothing but a rag-carpet; the curtains are poor and patched; and it is the same with everything."

"You are right!" said the woman. "How strange that we did not notice this at first!"

They called the child Love, and said to him: "You have deceived us. You are a false child, and this house of yours is nothing but a sham. Shame on you, for cheating folk!"

"Nay!" said Love. "I meant no harm."

"These carpets and cushions," said the man and woman, "are nought but rags and patches, ugly and faded."

"Nay!" said Love. "I only feel them soft."

"These flowers you make such brag of are nothing but common wildings, such as grow in every hedgerow."

"Nay!" said Love. "I only smell them sweet."

"This very sunshine you boast of comes filtered through poor flimsy curtains and discolored glass."

"Nay!" said Love. "I only feel it warm."

"But," said they both, "look! look with your eyes, and see for yourself the truth of all we say."

As they spoke, they looked into the child's eyes; and lo! he was blind.

Then they cried with one voice, "Out upon you, deceiver! we must stay in this wretched place because we have joined hands and given our word, but we will no longer have you about us. Go!"

"But it was my house!" said Love.

"It is yours no longer," they said. "Go!"

Then the child Love went out, weeping bitterly; and the man and woman turned and faced each other in the naked house.

THE GREAT FEAST

ONCE the Play Angel came into a nursery where four little children sat on the floor with sad and troubled faces.

"What is the matter, dears?" asked the Play Angel.

"We wanted to have a grand feast!" said the child whose nursery it was.

"Yes, that would be delightful!" said the Play Angel.

"But there is only one cooky!" said the child whose nursery it was.

"And it is a very small cooky!" said the child who was a cousin, and therefore felt a right to speak.

"Not big enough for myself!" said the child whose nursery it was.

The other two children said nothing, because they were not relations; but they

looked at the cooky with large eyes, and their mouths went up in the middle and down at the sides.

"Well," said the Play Angel, "suppose we have the feast just the same! I think we can manage it."

She broke the cooky into four pieces, and gave one piece to the littlest child.

"See!" she said. "This is a roast chicken, a Brown Bantam. It is just as brown and crispy as it can be, and there is cranberry sauce on one side, and on the other a little mountain of mashed potato; it must be a volcano, it smokes so. Do you see?"

"Yes!" said the littlest one; and his mouth went down in the middle and up at the corners.

The Play Angel gave a piece to the next child.

"Here," she said, "is a little pie! Outside, as you see, it is brown and crusty, with a wreath of pastry leaves round the edge and 'For You' in the middle; but inside it is all chicken and ham and jelly and hard-boiled eggs. Did ever you see such a pie?"

"Never I did!" said the child.

"Now here," said the Angel to the third child, "is a round cake. *Look* at it! the frosting is half an inch thick, with candied rose-leaves and angelica laid on in true-lovers' knots; and inside there are chopped-up almonds, and raisins, and great slices of citron. It is the prettiest cake I ever saw, and the best."

"So it is I did!" said the third child.

Then the Angel gave the last piece to the child whose nursery it was.

"My dear!" she said. "Just look! Here is an ice-cream rabbit. He is snow-white outside, with eyes of red barley sugar; see his ears, and his little snubby tail! but inside, I *think* you will find him pink. Now, when I clap my hands and count one, two, three, you must eat the feast all up. One — two — three!"

So the children ate the feast all up.

"There!" said the Angel. "Did ever you see such a grand feast?"

"No, never we did!" said all the four children together.

"And there are some crumbs left over,"

said the Angel. "Come, and we will give them to the brother birds!"

"But you didn't have any!" said the child whose nursery it was.

"Oh, yes!" said the Angel. "I had it all!"

THE DESERT

NCE a child was sent on a long journey, and midway in the journey he came to a desert. It was a dreadful place. The sand was like grains of fire about his feet; there was no shade, and the sun beat down upon his head; but the worst of all was that there was no water.

"There must be water," said the child, "or I and all that come after me must perish."

So he dug in the burning sand, down and down, with hands that bled and smarted, for he had no tools; and at length he found water. Bubbling up through the sand it came, and the child's heart rejoiced; but when he tasted the water, it was bitter as gall.

"Bitter or sweet, it still is water!" said the child; and he drank, and went on his way.

Again and again, as he toiled across the desert, he was overcome by thirst, and stopped and dug in the sand with his bare hands, and found water, but every time it was bitter.

At last he came to the end of the desert, and lay down to rest, stretching himself at length in the cool grass, and looking back along the way he had come. And as he looked, he saw another child coming across the desert, not slowly and painfully, as he had come, but tripping joyously along, and singing as he came. The first child wondered much at this, and when the other was near enough he called to him, and said, "Have you too come across the desert?"

"Yes!" said the other.

"But how is it that you came so quickly?" asked the first.

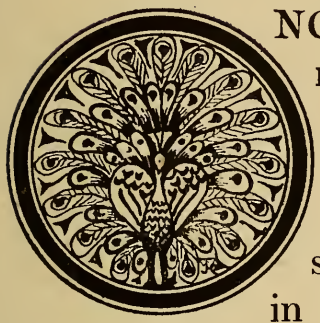
"Oh," said the other, "it was not nearly so bad as people would make it out. Every little way there were springs of water bubbling up; moreover, between

the springs ran a narrow path of green grass, new-sprung, and soft and cool under the feet."

"But was not the water bitter?" asked the first child.

"Never in my life," answered the other, "have I tasted sweeter water."

THE WALLED GARDEN



NCE, on a winter day, a man walked to and fro under his garden wall. "What a glorious day this is!" he said to himself. "The snow sparkles in the sun like pearl and diamond, the air is frosty yet genial, the whole world is full of life and vigor. It is good to be alive on such a day."

Presently he saw his brother passing by on the other side of the road. He looked blue with cold; his teeth chattered, and his head was drawn down between his shoulders as if in the face of something bitter.

When the man saw him, he cried out, "How now, brother? why do you look so ill at ease on a day like this, a day that fills one with the very wine of life?"

"I look ill because I am so!" replied the other. "The cold plucks at my very

heart, and the north wind pinches the marrow in my bones."

"Wind!" said the first man. "I feel no wind."

The other threw him a glance. "No!" he said. "If I were in a walled garden that took the sun, maybe I should not feel it either."

THE PIG BROTHER

HERE was once a child who was untidy. He left his books on the floor, and his muddy shoes on the table; he put his fingers in the jam-pots, and spilled ink on his best pinafore; there was really no end to his untidiness.

One day the Tidy Angel came into his nursery.

"This will never do!" said the Angel. "This is really shocking. You must go out and stay with your brother while I set things to rights here."

"I have no brother!" said the child.

"Yes, you have!" said the Angel. "You may not know him, but he will know you. Go out in the garden and watch for him, and he will soon come."

"I don't know what you mean!" said the child; but he went out into the garden and waited.

Presently a squirrel came along, whisking his tail.

"Are you my brother?" asked the child.

The squirrel looked him over carefully.

"Well, I should hope not!" he said. "My fur is neat and smooth, my nest is handsomely made, and in perfect order, and my young ones are properly brought up. Why do you insult me by asking such a question?"

He whisked off, and the child waited.

Presently a wren came hopping by.

"Are you my brother?" asked the child.

"No indeed!" said the wren. "What impertinence! You will find no tidier person than I in the whole garden. Not a feather is out of place, and my eggs are the wonder of all for smoothness and beauty. Brother, indeed!" He hopped off, ruffling his feathers, and the child waited.

By and by a large Tommy Cat came along.

"Are you my brother?" asked the child.

"Go and look at yourself in the glass," said the Tommy Cat haughtily, "and you will have your answer. I have been washing myself in the sun all the morning, while it is clear that no water has come near you for a long time. There are no such creatures as you in my family, I am humbly thankful to say."

He walked on, waving his tail, and the child waited.

Presently a pig came trotting along.

The child did not wish to ask the pig if he were his brother, but the pig did not wait to be asked.

"Hallo, brother!" he grunted.

"I am not your brother!" said the child.

"Oh, yes, you are!" said the pig. "I confess I am not proud of you, but there is no mistaking the members of our family. Come along, and have a good roll in the barnyard! There is some lovely black mud there."

"I don't like to roll in mud!" said the child.

"Tell that to the hens!" said the pig brother. "Look at your hands, and your shoes, and your pinafore! Come along,

I say! You may have some of the pig-wash for supper, if there is more than I want."

"I don't want pig-wash!" said the child; and he began to cry.

Just then the Tidy Angel came out.

"I have set everything to rights," she said, "and so it must stay. Now, will you go with the Pig Brother, or will you come back with me, and be a tidy child?"

"With you, with you!" cried the child; and he clung to the Angel's dress.

The Pig Brother grunted.

"Small loss!" he said. "There will be all the more wash for me!" and he trotted on.

THE HILL

CANNOT walk up this hill," said the little boy. "I cannot possibly do it. What will become of me? I must stay here all my life, at the foot of the hill: it is too terrible!"

"That is a pity!" said his sister. "But look, little boy! I have found such a pleasant thing to play. Take a step, and see how clear a footprint you can make in the dust. Look at mine! every single line in my foot is printed clear. Now, do you try, and see if you can do as well!"

The little boy took a step.

"Mine is just as clear!" he said.

"Do you think so?" said his sister. "See mine, again here! I tread harder than you, because I am heavier, and so the print is deeper. Try again."

"*Now* mine is just as deep!" cried the little boy. "See! here, and here, and here, they are just as deep as they can be."

"Yes, that is very well," said his sister; "but now it is my turn; let me try again, and we shall see."

They kept on, step by step, matching their footprints, and laughing to see the gray dust puff up between their bare toes.

By and by the little boy looked up.

"Why!" he said, "we are at the top of the hill!"

"Dear me!" said his sister. "So we are!"

ABOUT ANGELS

"MOTHER," said the child; "are there really angels?"

"The Good Book says so," said the mother.

"Yes," said the child; "I have seen the picture. But did you ever see one, mother?"

"I think I have," said the mother; "but she was not dressed like the picture."

"I am going to find one!" said the child. "I am going to run along the road, miles, and miles, and miles, until I find an angel."

"That will be a good plan!" said the mother. "And I will go with you, for you are too little to run far alone."

"I am not little any more!" said the child. "I have trousers; I am big."

"So you are!" said the mother. "I forgot. But it is a fine day, and I should like the walk."

"But you walk so slowly, with your lame foot."

"I can walk faster than you think!" said the mother.

So they started, the child leaping and running, and the mother stepping out so bravely with her lame foot that the child soon forgot about it.

The child danced on ahead, and presently he saw a chariot coming towards him, drawn by prancing white horses. In the chariot sat a splendid lady in velvet and furs, with white plumes waving above her dark hair. As she moved in her seat, she flashed with jewels and gold, but her eyes were brighter than her diamonds.

"Are you an angel?" asked the child, running up beside the chariot.

The lady made no reply, but stared coldly at the child: then she spoke a word to her coachman, and he flicked his whip, and the chariot rolled away swiftly in a cloud of dust, and disappeared.

The dust filled the child's eyes and mouth, and made him choke and sneeze. He gasped for breath, and rubbed his eyes; but presently his mother came up, and wiped away the dust with her blue gingham apron.

"That was not an angel!" said the child.

"No, indeed!" said the mother. "Nothing like one!"

The child danced on again, leaping and running from side to side of the road, and the mother followed as best she might.

By and by the child met a most beautiful maiden, clad in a white dress. Her eyes were like blue stars, and the blushes came and went in her face like roses looking through snow.

"I am sure you must be an angel!" cried the child.

The maiden blushed more sweetly than before. "You dear little child!" she cried. "Some one else said that, only last evening. Do I really look like an angel?"

"You *are* an angel!" said the child.

The maiden took him up in her arms and kissed him, and held him tenderly.

"You are the dearest little thing I ever saw!" she said. "Tell me what makes you think so!" But suddenly her face changed.

"Oh!" she cried. "There he is, coming to meet me! And you have soiled my white dress with your dusty shoes, and pulled my hair all awry. Run away, child, and go home to your mother!"

She set the child down, not unkindly, but so hastily that he stumbled and fell; but she did not see that, for she was hastening forward to meet her lover, who was coming along the road. (Now if the maiden had only known, he thought her twice as lovely with the child in her arms; but she did not know.)

The child lay in the dusty road and sobbed, till his mother came along and picked him up, and wiped away the tears with her blue gingham apron.

"I don't believe that was an angel, after all," he said.

"No!" said the mother. "But she may be one some day. She is young yet."

"I am tired!" said the child. "Will you carry me home, mother?"

"Why, yes!" said the mother. "That is what I came for."

The child put his arms round his mother's neck, and she held him tight and trudged along the road, singing the song he liked best.

Suddenly he looked up in her face.

"Mother," he said; "I don't suppose *you* could be an angel, could you?"

"Oh, what a foolish child!" said the mother. "Who ever heard of an angel in a blue gingham apron?" and she went on singing, and stepped out so bravely on her lame foot that no one would ever have known she was lame.

THE POINT OF VIEW

WO angels sat together, bending over a book that was written full of names.

"I see!" said one. "You have your orders, and of course it is right; but it does seem such a pity. I hoped that this poor old woman might be released; she suffers so much, and there is no cure for her poor body; and she is tired, and longs to go. And the girl is so young and pretty and gay, and looking forward so joyfully; it makes me sad, even though I know sadness is wrong."

"My dear," said the other, "I felt just as you did at first, till I came to look into it. But I found that the old woman could not possibly be spared at present. Why, all the soul-light of the neighborhood, or nearly all, comes from her. Not only her own family, but the doctor, and the wo-

man who nurses her, and all the neighbors, are finding their way by the light she gives, and better still, are getting light of their own. Her old husband used to be a poor creature, with his soul-clothes all black and dirty and ragged, just because she did everything for him; and now he must do for her, and really, you have no idea how much better he is getting to look. I think he may have a very decent little soul if she can only stay a few years longer."

"But the girl?" asked the first angel.

"Oh, the girl!" said the second. "She simply *must* not stay. She started wrong, poor child. Her father is a millionnaire, you know, not one of those who prosper, but really quite destitute; none of her people can do anything for her, for they are starving themselves. I examined her soul-robe yesterday; it is already badly spotted, and some of the spots will be very hard to get out. Now, if she is taken away at once, she can make a new start, and have a better chance, poor lamb! and meanwhile the pain of losing her will be not only medicine, but food and drink, to

her suffering family. I expect it to do wonders for them, I truly do."

"I see!" said the first angel. "How little we know!"

"Yes," said the second; "but at least we do know something. We know that we only know a little; whereas formerly, we knew nothing at all, and thought we knew everything; just like these other people, poor dears!"

"Poor dears!" echoed the other angel, thoughtfully.

THE OPEN DOOR

A MAN who had grown old in prison sat and bewailed his imprisonment.

"Alas!" he said, "what a dreadful place is this in which I must stay! All around me is sighing and sobbing, pale sorrow and black wickedness. The loathly walls hem me in straitly; the window-bars are strong and heavy; there is no escape. Hateful is this prison, hateful the days I pass in it, hateful the faces of men and women, prisoners like myself. Oh, that the door were open, and I a free man!"

By and by came One in white, who set open the door, and beckoned to the man, and said "Come forth!"

But the man crouched down where he sat, and cried out:

"No! no! I am not ready to go yet. After all, the prison is tight and dry, and

not so very cold, save in winter. Outside it is strange and empty, and a wind blows, I know not whither. Moreover, my fellow-prisoners are friendly, even if they are not so very virtuous. Let me stay here, where at least I am dry and warm, and safe from the things that are not known."

And he turned to his fellow-prisoners, and laid hold on their clothes, and cried, "Save me! save me from him in white, and from the open door!"

THE DAY

OME with me," said the Day, "and let us do things together!"

"What kind of things?" asked the man.

"Beautiful things!" said the Day. "Your friend is sick, and a visit from you would give him infinite pleasure. Also, it is long since you saw your sister, who is poor and sorrowful; and on the way, you might get some presents for her children, since they have no father to buy them gifts. Then, suppose we take a walk in those woods, outside the city, where you and your brother used to play! How long is it since you saw them? or saw your brother? He is back again, I hear, and is minded to lead a new life. We might go to him, and take him by the hand, and go a few steps with him. Then we might—"

"What nonsense is all this?" cried the man. "These are things that I should like well enough to do some time, but not with you. I expect to make ten thousand dollars with your aid; sit down with me at the desk, instead of talking idly."

They sat down together, and the hours passed.

By and by it was time for the Day to go.

"Good-bye!" she said.

"Oh, good-bye!" said the man. "Why do you look at me so sadly and strangely? I mean to do all those things that you spoke of; I certainly mean to do them, with one of your sisters."

"I have no more sisters!" said the Day.

And passing through the door, she met the entering Night.

THE BABY

A MAN sat by the door of his house, smoking his pipe; and his neighbor (who was an enemy, though neither of them knew it), sat beside him and tempted him.

"You are poor and out of work," said the neighbor, "and here is a way of bettering yourself. It will be an easy job, and will bring you in money; and it is no more dishonest than many things that are done every day by respectable people. You will be a fool to throw away such a chance as this; come with me, and we will settle the matter."

And the man listened.

Just then his young wife came to the door of the cottage; she was warm and rosy, for she had been washing, and she had the baby in her arms.

"Will you hold Baby for a few minutes, John?" she asked. "He is fretful, and I must hang out the clothes."

The man took the baby and held it on his knees; and as he held it, the child looked up in his face and spoke.

"Flesh of your flesh!" said the baby; "soul of your soul! what you sow I shall reap, and where you lead I shall follow. Lead the way, father, for my feet come after yours."

Then the man said to the neighbor, "Go, and come here no more!"

He rocked the baby on his knees, and whistled a tune; presently his wife came out and took the child.

"Baby, Baby," she said; "how could you cry when father was holding you? such a father as you have, too! mind you grow up as good a man as he is!"

And she went into the house, singing to the child as she went.

THE APRON-STRING

ONCE upon a time a boy played about the house, running by his mother's side; and as he was very little, his mother tied him to the string of her apron.

"Now," she said, "when you stumble, you can pull yourself up by the apron-string, and so you will not fall."

The boy did that, and all went well, and the mother sang at her work.

By and by the boy grew so tall that his head came above the window-sill; and looking through the window, he saw far away green trees waving, and a flowing river that flashed in the sun, and rising above all, blue peaks of mountains.

"Oh, mother," he said; "untie the apron-string and let me go!"

But the mother said, "Not yet, my child! only yesterday you stumbled, and

would have fallen but for the apron-string. Wait yet a little, till you are stronger."

So the boy waited, and all went as before; and the mother sang at her work.

But one day the boy found the door of the house standing open, for it was spring weather; and he stood on the threshold and looked across the valley, and saw the green trees waving, and the swift-flowing river with the sun flashing on it, and the blue mountains rising beyond; and this time he heard the voice of the river calling, and it said "Come!"

Then the boy started forward, and as he started, the string of the apron broke.

"Oh! how weak my mother's apron-string is!" cried the boy; and he ran out into the world, with the broken string hanging beside him.

The mother gathered up the other end of the string and put it in her bosom, and went about her work again; but she sang no more.

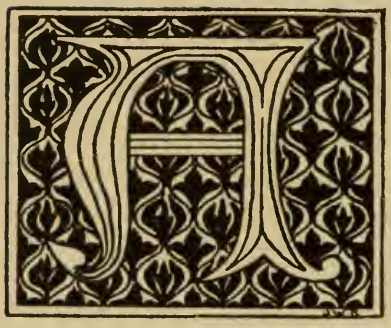
The boy ran on and on, rejoicing in his freedom, and in the fresh air and the morning sun. He crossed the valley, and began to climb the foothills among which

the river flowed swiftly, among rocks and cliffs. Now it was easy climbing, and again it was steep and craggy, but always he looked upward at the blue peaks beyond, and always the voice of the river was in his ears, saying "Come!"

By and by he came to the brink of a precipice, over which the river dashed in a cataract, foaming and flashing, and sending up clouds of silver spray. The spray filled his eyes, so that he did not see his footing clearly; he grew dizzy, stumbled, and fell. But as he fell, something about him caught on a point of rock at the precipice-edge, and held him, so that he hung dangling over the abyss; and when he put up his hand to see what held him, he found that it was the broken string of the apron, which still hung by his side.

"Oh! how strong my mother's apron-string is!" said the boy: and he drew himself up by it, and stood firm on his feet, and went on climbing toward the blue peaks of the mountains.

THE SHADOW



N Angel heard a child crying one day, and came to see what ailed it. He found the little one sitting on the ground, with the sun at its back (for the day was young), looking at its own shadow, which lay on the ground before it, and weeping bitterly.

"What ails you, little one?" asked the Angel.

"The world is so dark!" said the child. "See, it is all dusky gray, and there is no beauty in it. Why must I stay in this sad, gray world?"

"Do you not hear the birds singing, and the other children calling at their play?" asked the Angel.

"Yes," said the child; "I hear them, but I do not know where they are. I cannot see them, I see only the shadow.

Moreover, if they saw it, they would not sing and call, but would weep as I do."

The Angel lifted the child, and set it on its feet, with its face to the early sun.

"Look!" said the Angel.

The child brushed away the tears from its eyes and looked. Before them lay the fields all green and gold, shining with dewdrops, and the other children were running to and fro, laughing and shouting, and crowning one another with blossoms.

"Why, there are the children!" said the little one.

"Yes," said the Angel; "there they are."

"And the sun is shining!" cried the child.

"Yes," said the Angel; "it was shining all the time."

"And the shadow is gone!"

"Oh, no!" said the Angel; "the shadow is behind you, where it belongs. Run, now, and gather flowers for the littlest one, who sits in the grass there!"

THE PROMINENT MAN

ONCE a prominent man was hurrying to his business; and as he hurried along the street, he slipped on a piece of ice, and fell and broke his leg. He was carried home on a stretcher, and lay on his bed in pain of body and distress of mind.

"What will become of everything?" he cried. "By now I should have been at the committee-meeting, where they can do nothing without me. This afternoon there is a directors' meeting, where I was to be chairman, and this evening I am engaged to lecture on a subject of vital importance. This means disaster to the State, and it may be to the whole country. It is terrible!"

Just then came in the Angel-who-attends-to-things.

"How are you feeling?" asked the Angel.

"Oh, I am in a dreadful condition!" said the man. "I slipped on a piece of ice this morning, and broke my leg."

"Yes," said the Angel; "I saw you fall."

"But," said the man, "my pain, which by the way is very severe" (for he did not think the Angel looked sympathetic enough), "is the smallest part of it. I should by now be at a committee-meeting, where they can do nothing without me. This afternoon there is a directors' meeting, where I was to be chairman; and this evening I was engaged to lecture on a subject of vital interest. This means disaster to the State, and it may be to the whole country." And he groaned aloud.

"Oh, well," said the Angel, "I would not worry about all that, if I were you."

"Not worry!" said the prominent man.

"No," said the Angel. "The truth is, I put that piece of ice there myself. I wanted to get rid of you."

"Get rid of—" said the prominent man; and the rest was gasps.

"Yes," said the Angel. "You see, I did n't want you at the committee-meeting. There is a new man ready to come forward who knows much more than you, and if you had been there he would have been too modest to speak. Then, the directors are going to take action this afternoon on that important case, and if you were there they would vote the wrong way. As to the lecture, it would do more harm than good just now; but when the crisis is passed, you may deliver it without doing any serious damage. So you see!"

"Good heavens!" cried the prominent man. "Am I awake, or is this a dream?"

"More or less," said the Angel. "It is what you call Life."

"But — but — but —" cried the man, "this is terrible! You don't know anything about business."

"My dear soul," said the Angel, "what do you take me for?" and he went away, and told the nurse to give her patient a composing draught.

GOOD ADVICE

A YOUNG man came to an old one, and asked his advice on a certain matter.

"You are my friend," he said, "and my father's friend. I think more of your judgment than of almost any one else's, and I shall be largely guided by it. This is a matter which affects my whole life. Shall I do this thing, or shall I not? Give me your honest advice."

The old man gave it; and the young man thanked him and went away. As he went he shook his head and sighed.

"What a pity!" he said. "His judgment, which used to be so clear and vigorous, is now timorous and one-sided. He is not the man he used to be; his mind is failing. What a pity!"

And he went and did the thing.

FOR REMEMBRANCE

MAN sat by the coffin of the one who had been nearest to him, in black and bitter care. And as he sat, he saw passing beyond the coffin a troop of bright and lovely shapes, with clear eyes and faces full of rosy light.

"Who are you, fair creatures?" asked the man. And they answered:

"We are the words you might have spoken to her."

"Oh, stay with me!" cried the man. "Your sweet looks are a knife in my heart, yet still I would keep you, for she is cold and deaf, and I am alone."

But they answered: "Nay; we cannot stay, for we have no being, but are only a light that never shone."

And they passed on and were gone.

And still the man sat in black and bitter care.

And as he sat he saw rising up between him and the coffin a band of pale and terrible forms, with bloodless lips and hollow eyes of fire.

The man shuddered.

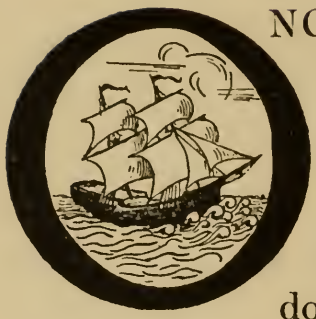
"What are you, dreadful shapes?" he asked; and they answered:

"We are the words she heard."

Then the man cried aloud in anguish: "Depart from me, and leave me with my dead! Better solitude than such company."

But they, sitting down in silence round him, fixed their eyes upon him; and gazing into the hollow eyes of fire, the man saw it was his own soul that looked at him.

THE SAILOR MAN



ONCE upon a time two children came to the house of a sailor man, who lived beside the salt sea; and they found the sailor man sitting in his doorway knotting ropes.

"How do you do?" asked the sailor man.

"We are very well, thank you," said the children, who had learned manners, "and we hope you are the same. We heard that you had a boat, and we thought that perhaps you would take us out in her, and teach us how to sail, for that is what we wish most to know."

"All in good time," said the sailor man. "I am busy now, but by and by, when my work is done, I may perhaps take one of you if you are ready to learn. Meantime here are some ropes that need knotting; you might be doing that, since it has to

be done." And he showed them how the knots should be tied, and went away and left them.

When he was gone the first child ran to the window and looked out.

"There is the sea," he said. "The waves come up on the beach, almost to the door of the house. They run up all white, like prancing horses, and then they go dragging back. Come and look!"

"I cannot," said the second child. "I am tying a knot."

"Oh!" cried the first child, "I see the boat. She is dancing like a lady at a ball; I never saw such a beauty. Come and look!"

"I cannot," said the second child. "I am tying a knot."

"I shall have a delightful sail in that boat," said the first child. "I expect that the sailor man will take me, because I am the eldest and I know more about it. There was no need of my watching when he showed you the knots, because I knew how already."

Just then the sailor man came in.

"Well," he said, "my work is over. What have you been doing in the meantime?"

"I have been looking at the boat," said the first child. "What a beauty she is! I shall have the best time in her that ever I had in my life."

"I have been tying knots," said the second child.

"Come, then," said the sailor man, and he held out his hand to the second child. "I will take you out in the boat, and teach you to sail her."

"But I am the eldest," cried the first child, "and I know a great deal more than she does."

"That may be," said the sailor man; "but a person must learn to tie a knot before he can learn to sail a boat."

"But I have learned to tie a knot," cried the child. "I know all about it!"

"How can I tell that?" asked the sailor man.

THE ROAD

ONCE upon a time a boy was going on a journey to the Great City; and his family gathered at the door to bid him good-bye.

"Be sure you take the right road," said his mother.

"No fear," said his sister. "He is sure to do that."

"There is but one good road," said the old grandfather, who sat in the corner; "that is the straight road that runs up the hill."

The boy laughed, and kissed the grandfather on the forehead.

"You are a dear old grandfather," he said, "but you forget more than you remember. The road that I shall take is the one that goes through the flowering fields and beside the cool river."

He bade them all farewell, and went forth with a light heart, for it was morning, and the sun was shining clear. He took his way through the flowering fields, and it was beautiful there; the air was full of bird-songs, and the grass glittered with blossoms like a king's treasure-chamber; red and blue and purple they were, and the boy gathered one, and threw it away to gather another, and sang as he went.

After a while he felt the ground wet beneath him, and soft; the grass grew long, climbing about his knees and tangling his feet. At every step he sank deeper in mud and slime, and black bog-water bubbled up around him. He perceived that he was in a morass, bottomless and treacherous; moreover, when he looked about him, the morass stretched far ahead and on every side, and there was no path through it.

"It is strange," said the boy, "that I did not see this morass before. I must go back, or I shall lose my way, and perchance my life."

With care and pain he dragged his feet out of the slough, and made his way back to firm land. When he turned his face in

the opposite direction, he saw the great hill rising before him, and over the hill a road ran straight among rocks and brambles.

"That looks like a hard road," said the boy, "but it must be a good one, for it is straight and dry. I will take that next time."

At nightfall the boy reached his home, weary and bedraggled.

"That was a wretched road I took this morning," he said. "To-morrow I shall start again, and take the straight road that runs over the hill, for that is the only good one."

"Is it, truly?" said the old grandfather, who sat in the corner. "That is good to know."

The boy laughed, and kissed him on the forehead.

"You are a dear old grandfather," he said, "but you forget more than you remember."

THE BLIND MOTHER

BLIND woman had a son, who was the joy of her life. Though she had no sight of her eyes, yet she was skilful of her hands; and it was her delight to make pretty clothes for her boy, soft and fine and full of delicate stitches.

By and by the boy came to her and said: "Mother, give me some other clothes to wear. These are too small for me; they pinch and bind me. Moreover, they are baby clothes, and my playfellows mock and laugh at me because of them."

But the mother said: "Nay, my darling; these are by far the best clothes for you. See how soft and warm they are! they are pretty too, I know, although I cannot see them. Be content, for you are my own darling little son, and so you must remain."

When he found he could not persuade her, the boy held his peace; and he went out and looked about him, and found the hide of a wolf and the pelt of a fox, and huddled them round him over his baby frock, and so went among his mates. Only, when he came back to the room where his mother sat, he threw aside the skins, and came to her in his frock; and she kissed him, and felt the frills and the silken stitches, and said rejoicing: "You are my own darling little son, and the light of my life."

By and by again there was a war in that country, and all the young men went out to meet the enemy. Some were clad in armor of proof, others in leathern jacks and doublets; and with them went the son of the blind woman.

Then when the woman knew that her son was gone, she wept and lamented, and ran out into the street. There she met one who was returning from the field of battle, and she asked him how went the fight.

"Bravely," he replied. "Our men did well, all save one, who had no arms, and

whom I saw beaten down and at sore odds with the enemy."

"Oh! stranger," cried the blind woman, "was that one a boy, who had wandered by mistake into that dreadful field, — a sweet child, with the prettiest clothes, all wrought with needlework?"

"Nay," said the stranger. "It was a man, half-naked, huddled in the skins of beasts, with strange rags showing under the skins."

"Oh!" said the woman. "I wonder who that poor soul might be; and I wonder when my little darling son will come home to me again."

And even while she spoke her son lay dead, and huddled round him was the hide of a wolf and the pelt of a fox, with the baby clothes fluttering from under them.

"GO" AND "COME"

LITTLE boy," said the nurse one day, "you would be far better at work. Your garden needs weeding sadly; go now and weed it, like a good child!"

But the little boy did not feel like weeding that day.

"I can't do it," he said.

"Oh! yes, you can," said the nurse.

"Well, I don't want to," said the little boy.

"But you must!" said the nurse. "Don't be naughty, but go at once and do your work as I bid you!"

She went away about her own work, for she was very industrious; but the little boy sat still, and thought himself ill-used.

By and by his mother came into the room and saw him.

"What is the matter, little boy?" she asked; for he looked like a three-days' rain.

"Nurse told me to weed my garden," said the little boy.

"Oh," said his mother, "what fun that will be! I love to weed, and it is such a fine day! May n't I come and help?"

"Why, yes," said the little boy. "You may." And they weeded the garden beautifully, and had a glorious time.

CHILD'S PLAY

NCE a child was sitting on a great log that lay by the roadside, playing; and another child came along, and stopped to speak to him.

"What are you doing?" asked the second child.

"I am sailing to the Southern Seas," replied the first, "to get a cargo of monkeys, and elephant tusks, and crystal balls as large as oranges. Come up here, and you may sail with me if you like."

So the second child climbed upon the log.

"Look!" said the first child. "See how the foam bubbles up before the ship, and trails and floats away behind! Look! the water is so clear that we can see the fishes swimming about, blue and red and

green. There goes a parrot-fish; my father told me about them. I should not wonder if we saw a whale in about a minute."

"What are you talking about?" asked the second child, peevishly. "There is no water here, only grass; and anyhow this is nothing but a log. You cannot get to islands in this way."

"But we *have* got to them," cried the first child. "We are at them now. I see the palm-trees waving, and the white sand glittering. Look! there are the natives gathering to welcome us on the beach. They have feather cloaks, and necklaces, and anklets of copper as red as gold. Oh! and there is an elephant coming straight toward us."

"I should think you would be ashamed," said the second child. "That is Widow Slocum."

"It 's all the same," said the first child.

Presently the second child got down from the log.

"I am going to play stick-knife," he said. "I don't see any sense in this. I think you are pretty dull to play things

that are n't really there." And he walked slowly away.

The first child looked after him a moment.

"I think *you* are pretty dull," he said to himself, "to see nothing but what is under your nose."

But he was too well-mannered to say this aloud; and having taken in his cargo, he sailed for another port.

THE WINDOWS

A MAN who lived alone (for he did not get on well with his family) was sitting in his room one day, thinking gloomy thoughts.

"I cannot see so well as I used," he said to himself. "I can hardly see to do my work. It is evident that my eyes are growing dim. Probably I shall be blind before long, and unable to do any work; and then I must starve to death, or go to the almshouse. Perhaps it will be better for me to go there now, while I can yet see a little."

Just then his neighbor, who was a stirring woman, came in to pass the time of day and ask for his health.

"Why do you sit here," she asked, "looking like beanstalks after frost?"

So the man told her his thoughts: how his eyes were failing, and he could hardly

see to do his work, and he must starve or go to the almshouse; and while he was talking she bustled about the room, drawing water, and rummaging among the clothes in the drawer of the dresser.

When he had finished talking, "Man alive," she said, "your windows are dirty; that is all the matter."

So she washed the windows.

"There!" she said, and went about her business.

"Dear me!" said the man, "how this glare hurts my eyes! They must be weaker than I thought."

A MISUNDERSTANDING

ONCE a child who thought well of herself was walking along the street, and saw another child, who was poorly clad. "How wretched it must be," she said to herself, "to be poor and shabby like that child! How thin she is! and how her patched cloak flutters in the wind; so different from my velvet dress and coat!"

Just then an Angel came along.

"What are you looking at?" asked the Angel.

"I was looking at that girl!" said the child.

"So was I," said the Angel. "How beautifully she is dressed!"

"What do you mean?" said the child. "I mean this one coming towards us. She is in rags, or at least if her clothes

are not ragged, they are wretchedly thin and shabby."

"Oh, no," said the Angel. "How can you say so? She is in sparkling white, as clear as frost. I never saw anything so pretty. But you, you poor little thing, you are indeed miserably clad. Does not the wind blow through and through these flimsy tatters? But at least you could keep them clean, my dear, and mended. You should see to that."

"I don't know what you can mean!" said the child. "That girl is a ragged beggar, and my father is the richest man in town. I have a velvet dress and coat, trimmed with expensive fur. What are you talking about?"

"About the clothes of your soul, of course!" said the Angel, who was young.

"I don't know anything about souls," said the child.

"I should n't think you did!" said the Angel.

FROM A FAR COUNTRY

THERE lived a Spirit once upon a time. I cannot tell the name of the place where he lived, but it was a good place, and there were many other spirits in it, beautiful and bright, and they all wrought together at happy tasks, following the bidding of a heavenly Voice.

But the Spirit of whom I speak was not happy. He knew not what ailed him, but it was a cruel ail, and left him no rest. He saw some spirits who were set at higher tasks than his, and he said: "They are wiser than I; they can tell me what my ail is, and how to cure it."

So he went to those spirits, and looking in their faces, he saw them full of peace and light. And he asked them: "Whence have ye this peace and this light, while I

am empty save of darkness, and cannot rest?"

They looked kindly on him and said: "We have learned the Earth-lesson; now your time is come to learn it, and therefore you cannot rest. Ask of the Voice, and do what it bids you!"

Then the Spirit asked, and the Voice said: "They speak the truth; your time is come. Shall I send you, or will you choose for yourself?"

And he said, "I will choose."

Then the Earth Book was opened before him, and he saw many pictures therein, as it were spirits like himself, clothed in mortal flesh. He saw a beggar in fluttering rags, and a soldier in a red coat; a poet with threadbare cloak, his eyes fixed on the stars, and a prince clad all in gold and silver. And he said, "I will be a prince."

Then sleep fell upon him like a mantle; and the next hour, in a kingly house on the earth, a prince was born.

Every one said that so beautiful a prince had never been seen. Courtiers and ladies bowed around his cradle, and whenever he

opened his baby eyes, he saw smiles and soft faces, and rich colors of gold and gems.

"But why does he cry?" asked the Queen his mother; and that no one, not even the wisest, could tell her.

The prince grew up. All the days of his youth were filled with gay and joyous things, and every hour brought its pleasure; for his parents said: "His life shall be perfect. He shall lack nothing that earth can give."

Yet no one thought the prince a happy youth. True, no one heard an ungentle word from him, and his lips wore a smile, because he was kind at heart; but his eyes were grave, and seemed to be always asking a question that was never answered. Sometimes those who were about him would see him take up a corner of his rich cloak and look at it wonderingly, as if it were strange to him; and when travellers came from foreign countries, the prince would send for them, and look earnestly on them, and ask them searchingly of the lands whence they came.

One day came one in a threadbare cloak, with a lute on his arm, and bright eyes that

were at once sad and joyful. The prince looked on him and trembled, yet could not cease looking.

"Who are you, stranger?" he cried.

The man laughed.

"A stranger indeed," he said; "yet no more strange than you, Brother;" and he touched his lute, and sang a few words in an unknown tongue.

Then the prince came down from his throne, and laid his arm round the stranger's neck, and led him away into his garden. Long they walked and talked together there, this one questioning and the other making answer; and the prince's laughter came ringing through the trees.

"But why does he laugh?" asked the Queen his mother; and that no one, not even the wisest, could tell her.

When the stranger was gone, the prince laughed no more, but he smiled often, with kind lips. He sought no more for pleasures, but set himself to labor for his people, toiling early and late to raise them from poverty and ignorance, and to make them happy. After a time he died, and his people said: "He was a

good prince, but a stranger to us; the others loved festivals and good cheer, and that we could understand, for it is the same with us."

But the free Spirit went back to the good place whence he came, and where the other spirits went to and fro at their happy tasks. They crowded about him with joyful faces, welcoming him home.

"Have you learned your lesson?" they cried.

But he shook his head and answered sadly: "It was not my lesson that I tried to learn, but another's. Pray for me, that I may be suffered to try once more."

Then all the spirits prayed, and he with them; and the Voice said, "Be it so; he shall try once more."

Then again the Earth Book was spread open before him, with the pictures of prince and peasant, gay soldier and learned sage; but he laid his hands over his eyes. "Choose thou!" he said.

And sleep fell upon him like a mantle; and in that hour, in a green place under a blossoming tree, in a humble cottage on the earth, a poet was born.

"He is a healthy child," said the village gossips. "May he have strength to earn his bread!"

"But why does he laugh?" asked the poor mother; and that no one, not even the wisest, could tell her.

A FORTUNE

ONE day a man was walking along the street, and he was sad at heart. Business was dull; he had set his desire upon a horse that cost a thousand dollars, and he had only eight hundred to buy it with. There were other things, to be sure, that might be bought with eight hundred dollars, but he did not want those; so he was sorrowful, and thought the world a bad place.

As he walked, he saw a child running toward him; it was a strange child, but when he looked at it, its face lightened like sunshine, and broke into smiles. The child held out its closed hand.

"Guess what I have!" it cried gleefully.

"Something fine, I am sure!" said the man.

The child nodded and drew nearer; then opened its hand.

"Look!" it said; and the street rang with its happy laughter. The man looked, and in the child's hand lay a penny.

"Hurrah!" said the child.

"Hurrah!" said the man.

Then they parted, and the child went and bought a stick of candy, and saw all the world red and white in stripes.

The man went and put his eight hundred dollars in the savings-bank, all but fifty cents, and with the fifty cents he bought a hobby-horse for his own little boy, and the little boy saw all the world brown, with white spots.

"Is this the horse you wanted so to buy, father?" asked the little boy.

"It is the horse I have bought!" said the man.

"Hurrah!" said the little boy.

"Hurrah!" said the man. And he saw that the world was a good place after all.

THE STARS

A LITTLE dear child lay in its crib and sobbed, because it was afraid of the dark. And its father, in the room below, heard the sobs, and came up, and said, "What ails you, my dearie, and why do you cry?"

And the child said, "Oh, father, I am afraid of the dark. Nurse says I am too big to have a taper; but all the corners are full of dreadful blackness, and I think there are Things in them with eyes, that would look at me if I looked at them; and if they looked at me I should die. Oh, father, why is it dark? why is there such a terrible thing as darkness? why cannot it be always day?"

The father took the child in his arms and carried it downstairs and out into the summer night.

"Look up, dearie!" he said, in his strong, kind voice. "Look up, and see God's little lights!"

The little one looked up, and saw the stars, spangling the blue veil of the sky; bright as candles they burned, and yellow as gold.

"Oh, father," cried the child; "what are those lovely things?"

"Those are stars," said the father. "Those are God's little lights."

"But why have I never seen them before?"

"Because you are a very little child, and have never been out in the night before."

"Can I see the stars only at night, father?"

"Only at night, my child!"

"Do they only come then, father?"

"No; they are always there, but we cannot see them when the sun is shining."

"But, father, the darkness is not terrible here, it is beautiful!"

"Yes, dearie; the darkness is always beautiful, if we will only look up at the stars, instead of into the corners."

THE COOKY

A CHILD quarrelled with his brother one day about a cooky.

"It is my cooky!" said the child.

"No, it is mine!" said his brother.

"You shall not have it!" said the child. "Give it to me this minute!" And he fell upon his brother and beat him.

Just then came by an Angel who knew the child.

"Who is this that you are beating?" asked the Angel.

"It is my brother!" said the child.

"No, but truly," said the Angel; "who is it?"

"It is my brother, I tell you!" said the child.

"Oh, no!" said the Angel. "That cannot be, and it seems a pity for you to tell

an untruth, because that makes spots on your soul. If it were your brother, you would not beat him."

"But he has my cooky!" said the child.

"Oh!" said the Angel. "Now I see my mistake. You mean that the cooky is your brother; and that seems a pity, too, for it does not look like a very good cooky, and besides, it is all crumbled to pieces."

THE STRONG CHILD

HERE was once a child who was so big and strong that he thought he was a man.

"See!" he said to his mother. "I am a man! Give me my father's sword, and I will take care of you."

"That will be beautiful!" said his mother; and she gave him the sword, and sighed and smiled.

The child held the sword lightly, he was so strong, and brandished it about.

"Look!" he said. "I can wield it easily. If we meet a lion or a bear on the road, I will kill it with one blow, thus!"

"That will be glorious!" said the mother; and she sighed and smiled.

But when the child put the sword back in the sheath, it chanced that he caught

his finger on a pin that was about his dress, and tore the flesh.

"Oh, mother!" he cried. "This dreadful pin has scratched my finger. Look! here is a great drop of blood! oh! how it hurts!" and he wept bitterly.

"Thank God!" said the mother. "You are still a child."

And she kissed the finger, and bound it up, and wept too, for joy.

ANYBODY

A MAN knelt at the altar and prayed.

"O God," he said, "I am all evil, without and within. My soul is black with the color of my sin, and my shoulders are bowed with the weight of it. God of all mercies, be merciful to me, the chief of sinners!"

As he went out he met a friend.

"Where have you been?" asked the friend.

"I have been at the altar," said the man, "confessing my sins."

"Speaking of sins," said the friend, "there is a fault that I have often noticed in you."

And he told him of his fault.

"Liar!" said the man, and smote him on the mouth.

THE GIFTIE

MAN was complaining of his neighbors.

"I never saw such a wretched set of people," he said, "as are in this village. They are mean, selfish, greedy of gain, and careless of the needs of others. Worst of all, they are forever speaking evil of one another."

"Is it really so?" asked an Angel who happened to be walking with him.

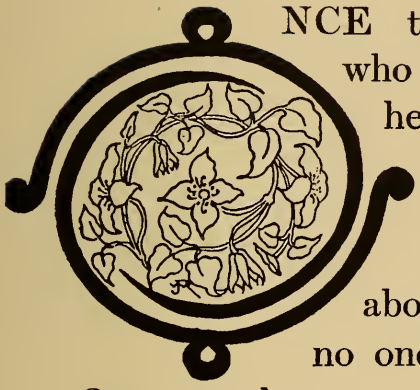
"It is indeed!" said the man. "Why, only look at this fellow coming towards us! I know his face, though I cannot tell you his name. See his little sharp, cruel eyes, darting here and there like a ferret's, and the lines of covetousness about his mouth! The very droop of his shoulders is mean and cringing, and he slinks along instead of walking."

"It is very clever of you to see all this," said the Angel; "but there is one thing that you do not perceive."

"What is that?" asked the man.

"Why, that it is a looking-glass we are approaching!" said the Angel.

THE STAFF



ONCE there was a woman who had a sword in her heart; but because she was a decent body, she covered it with her shawl, and went about her business, and no one knew of it.

Once as she went along the way, she saw another woman, tottering slowly along, groping with her hands, and moaning as she went.

"Why do you grope thus?" asked the first woman, "and why do you moan as you go?"

"I am sick and wounded," said the second woman; "moreover, I am blind, and I am groping for something that may serve as a staff, to stay my steps as far as the end of the way."

The first woman looked about for a tree, but there was none, nor any bush from which she could cut a staff.

Then she drew the sword out from under her shawl, and put it in the blind woman's hand, and said, "Take this, since it is all I have to give."

The blind woman took it, and felt it all over, and leaned on it.

"Oh," she cried joyfully, "here is a good staff; with this I shall do well." And she thanked the other, and blessed her.

And when the first woman looked at that which had been her sword, it was a staff indeed.

THE DOOR

A BOY was running through flower-starred meadows, chasing butterflies and answering the songs of the birds. By and by he came to a wall, and in the wall was set a wide and lofty door; but the door was locked, and guarded by spirits, with names written in their foreheads.

"Shall I knock at the door?" asked the boy.

"Not yet!" said one, rising from the ground where she had been lying. The name on her forehead was Indolence, and she had soft eyes, and a slow, soft smile.

"On the other side is work to do, — work all day long, and no time or chance to play. See the flowers here, and the ripe fruit on the trees, and the soft grass where we may lie at length and look up at the blue sky! Do not knock at the door yet!"

"Not yet!" said another, who wore a green robe. His face was subtle, and the letters on his forehead seemed to shift and blur so that the name was hard to read; but when one looked steadfastly, it was Selfishness.

"On the other side are people who will ask you to do things for them, — poor and sick and suffering people, with doleful tales to tell and ugly scars to show; all troublesome and importunate. Here, on this side of the wall, everything is done for you; on the other side, it is you who must do things for the rest of the world. Stay here as long as you can, in the flowery meadow; do not knock at the door yet!"

"Not yet!" cried two twin spirits in gray, with frightened eyes; the names on their foreheads were Timidity and Ignorance.

"On the other side are two terrible things, hobgoblin shapes of horror and cruelty. One is called Life, the other Death. No sooner will you cross the threshold of the door than they will come ravening at you, and clutch you, and tear you with their dreadful claws, and finally devour you.

Do not knock at the door, we implore you!"

"You interest me extremely," said the boy. "I must look into this!"

He knocked, and Destiny opened the door.

THEOLOGY

OME children were quarrelling one day, and calling one another names.

"You are stupid," said one; "if you were not, you would think as I do."

"If you were not wholly blind," said another, "you would see with my eyes."

"Your ignorance is what troubles me!" said a third.

"Ignorance is not so bad as ill-will!" said a fourth.

Just then came by the Angel-who-understands-things.

"What are you quarrelling about, children?" asked the Angel.

"About our God!" said the children.

"Oh!" said the Angel. "The God of Strife, I presume?"

"No!" cried one. "He is the God of Peace!"

"He is the God of Wisdom!" said another.

"He is the God of Love!" said a third.

"Indeed!" said the Angel. "I never should have thought it."

A MATTER OF IMPORTANCE

IT happened one day that the Angel-who-attends-to-things was hastening along the street, with his wings tucked in and his robes tucked up, for he was in a hurry, when a Duke looked out of his castle window and called to him.

"Stop a moment, please!" said the Duke. "I wish to consult you about the succession to my dukedom. You know my grandfather, the Archduke — "

"I cannot attend to you this morning!" said the Angel. "I am engaged on business of importance; your affair must wait till another time." And he passed on.

"Dear me!" said the Duke. "What can be more important than the succession? I really must follow him, and see what this great matter is."

So he followed the Angel.

The Angel hurried along, and presently he passed by a Bishop's palace, and the Bishop put his head out of the window and called to him.

"Please come in a moment!" said the Bishop. "I wish to consult you about the Great Synod which is to be held —"

The Angel shook his head.

"I am on business of importance," he said. "I cannot attend to trifles this morning." And he passed on.

The Bishop looked after him. "What mighty business can this be," he said, "that makes the Great Synod seem a trifle? I really think I must go and see." And he followed the Angel and the Duke.

Presently the Angel passed by a King's palace, and the King looked out of the window and called to him.

"Please come in here!" said the King. "The enemy's forces have crossed the border, and threaten to besiege the capital. I wish to consult you at once on the steps to be taken."

"By and by!" said the Angel. "I am on business of importance now, and cannot stop for trifles." And he hurried on.

The King looked after him. "It must be something of world-wide importance," he said, "which can make the invasion of my kingdom seem a trifle. I must really go and see what it is." And he followed the Angel and the Duke and the Bishop.

The Angel turned from the wide street, and passed down a narrow lane, and into a dingy court, where poor clothes hung drying. In the middle of the court stood a little child, with its eyes tight shut and its mouth wide open, crying and roaring as if its heart would break.

The Angel ran to the child, and knelt down and took it in his arms.

"Hush! hush!" he cried. "It is all right, dear. You took the wrong turning, that was all. She is just round the corner. Quick, let me wipe the tears away! Look! there she comes this minute."

A woman came flying round the corner, wild-eyed and panting. The Angel put the child into her arms, and the two melted together, and sobbed and laughed themselves away out of sight.

The Angel drew a long breath, and rustled his wings a little, and turned to

go back; and as he turned, he saw the Duke and the Bishop and the King, all out of breath and crimson, and staring with big round eyes.

"Oh! are you there?" said the Angel. "Well, now I can attend to your little matters."

THE SCAR

BROTHER, what is that scar above your heart?"

"Brother, the mark of a sword."

"Of whose sword?"

"Brother, of yours."

"Nay!"

"Even so!"

"Brother of my heart, could I wound you thus, and still forget?"

"Yes, since you bear no scar."

"Brother of my soul, could I wound you thus, and go myself unscarred?"

"Verily, yes; since it is not the hilt that wounds."

THE STRANGER

A GOOD man was worshipping his God in sincerity and in truth; and as he worshipped, a Stranger came by, and stopped to observe him.

"Why do you worship alone, brother?" asked the Stranger.

"Because there is none in this place to worship with me," said the man.

"How is that?" asked the Stranger. "Do I not hear sounds as of worship from yonder open door, as if two or three were gathered together?"

"Oh, yes!" said the good man. "Those people are no doubt worshipping after their manner, but it is not the manner to which I am accustomed."

"But is it the same God whom they worship?" asked the Stranger.

"Oh, yes!" said the good man. "It is the same God, but there is everything in the way in which the thing is done."

"Is there truly?" said the Stranger. And he passed on, and went in at the open door.

The good man looked after him; and just then came by an Angel of his acquaintance.

"Do you know who that was who just spoke to me?" asked the man.

"Do you not know?" said the Angel.

"No!" said the man. "He is a stranger to me."

"Oh!" said the Angel. "If he is a stranger to you, I fear I can do nothing for you." And he followed his Master in at the door.

THE WEDDING GUESTS

OF the guests who were bidden to the Wedding Feast, there were two who started at the same moment; and both were given the same equipment for the journey, namely, a staff in the hand, and a jewel to wear in the breast.

The first one said, "A staff is well enough, but why should I walk, when I might ride? I should soil my wedding garment."

So he got him an easy carriage, and stout and swift horses, and servants to drive him, and clad himself in a rich garment, and started on his journey. As he travelled, the road, which at first was smooth and flowery, grew ever steeper and rougher; and at each steep pitch, he called for more and softer cushions, and for stronger horses;

and he wrapped himself in fold on fold of rich stuffs, lest any whiff of dust or drop of mud should stain his wedding garment; the folds were so thick across his bosom that they hid the jewel he wore, and quenched its light. And as he went, many by the wayside cried to him to stop and help them, for it was a weary way, and full of pitfalls, and of sharp flints that bruised the feet, and sharp thorns that tore the flesh. But he only bade his servants drive on the faster. "These be evil ways and evil days," he said; "I fear for the jewel in my breast, and for my wedding garment; drive on, lest ill befall us!"

The second guest started out staff in hand on his journey, and for a while strode merrily on; but by and by he too came to the rough steep hills, and to the pitfalls, and the sharp flints that bruised the feet, and the sharp thorns that tore the flesh. Then, because he was slender of mould, he many times stumbled and fell, and got up again all bleeding and bemired from the flints and the pitfalls. His staff bent in his hand, and seemed like to break, yet it did not break; and the thorns tore his

clothes to tatters, and the wind whistled through them. These were evil days for the wedding guest. Moreover, the men who were travelling that same road called to him, some praying for help, and others jeering at him, and making mock of his ragged clothing and slender staff. Yet many times, when one cried to him from the depth of a pit, he stopped, and held out his staff to the fallen man, and drew him out; and then the staff seemed stout enough.

Still other men there were who called to him, saying, "Give up the rough road and the weary way, and come and revel here with us!" and laid hold on him; and when he would not, they fell upon him and beat him, and tried to take his jewel from him. But he beat them off with his staff, and again it seemed stout enough for this.

Now the Lord of the Feast waited to receive his guests; and as these two had started at the selfsame moment, even so they came together to the door of the banqueting hall; and the first one entered proudly, but the other stood without at the door.

Then said the Lord to the first guest, "Where is your staff?"

"Lord," said the man, "I had no need of a staff, for I came hither in a carriage, lest I soil my wedding garment."

"And have you your jewel?" asked the Lord.

"Yea, Lord!" said the man. "I have it safe, and so well covered with rich stuffs that nothing could come near it, neither dust nor soil."

As he spoke, he drew back the thick folds from his breast; and there lay the jewel indeed, but it gave no light, and was as a thing dead.

"And you, son," said the Lord of the Feast to the other guest; "why do you stand at the door and lean upon your staff, when the feast is ready?"

And the second answered, "Lord, my garment was poor at the starting, and now it is torn and stained with brambles and dust, so that I am not fit to come in; and as for the staff, I am weary to faintness, and I lean upon it because it holds me well, though it be slender; and indeed it is stouter than it was, I know not how."

"And your jewel?" asked the Lord.

"Alas!" said the man. "I have striven so hard and fallen so often by the way that I many times forgot the jewel, and know not even now whether I have it; and even if I have, it may well be dim with dust, and dead of its light, like this man's."

"Show it me!" said the Lord of the Feast.

Then the man drew aside the ragged cloak that covered him; and the jewel shone out, and lighted the room.

Then said the Lord of the Feast to him, "Come in, and sit with me at my table!"

And as the man crossed the threshold, the tattered clothes fell from him, and he stood robed as it were in a garment of light, and the jewel shining in his breast; and he passed in to the feast.

Now when the other guest saw that, he cried out bitterly, and said, "Lord, does this man pass in, and I stay without?"

And the Lord said, "Nay! come you in also, and serve him and me!"

HOME

ONCE, in these later days, there came to this earth a Child who had been here once before. The day was cold, and late the hour, and the Child wandered far and wide, as if seeking something. As he went, the little foxes peeped from their holes, and said, "Where are you going, little Master?" and the Child answered, "I am seeking something, but I cannot well tell what," and he wandered further.

By and by he came to a great door, from which came sounds of music, sweet and solemn. He pushed the door open and looked in; and there was a great place full of dim, rich light, and the music flowing through it in waves as of a sea.

Here and there men and women were kneeling on the marble floor, looking up at a figure that hung carved upon a cross, fixed as in pain and anguish; and, before this figure men in rich garments passed to and fro, muttering prayers and offering perfumes.

The Child looked at the figure, which hung in unending pain. "That is something that I have known," he said, "but it is not what I am seeking;" and he wandered further.

After a time he came to a tall house, and here again he heard sounds of music, women's voices singing thin and sweet.

He pushed the door open and looked in; and here were many women, robed and veiled in black, kneeling and singing before the picture of a woman with seven swords in her heart; and the women sang:

"For He that is mighty hath done to me great things, and holy is His name."

The Child looked at the picture of the woman, and said, "This, too, is something that I have known, but it is not what I am seeking;" and he wandered further.

And as he went, the little birds peeped from their nests and said, "Where are you going, little Master?"

And the Child answered, "I am seeking something, but I cannot yet tell what."

Now it was growing very late, and the Child was cold and weary; and as he went, he heard yet once more the sound of music, but this time it was one voice that sang, and that a low one; it came from a humble cabin that stood beside the way, and from the cabin window came a gleam of light that lay bright across the bare road.

The Child pushed open the door and looked in. There by a small bright fire sat a woman with a child on her knee, and another leaning beside her, and a third lying in the cradle beyond her; and the woman stirred the fire as she sat, and sang to the babe in her lap. And as she sang, it chanced that she turned her head, and saw the Child standing in the doorway.

"Little one," said the woman, "come in, and let me warm the little cold feet of you by the fire, and the little cold

hands of you in my bosom; and drink warm milk, and then sleep beside the babe in the cradle here."

"Oh! Mary Mother!" said the Child, "now I know: I was seeking where to lay my head."

And he entered in.

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