

UC-NRLF



\$B 663 416

LIBRARY  
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA  
DAVIS

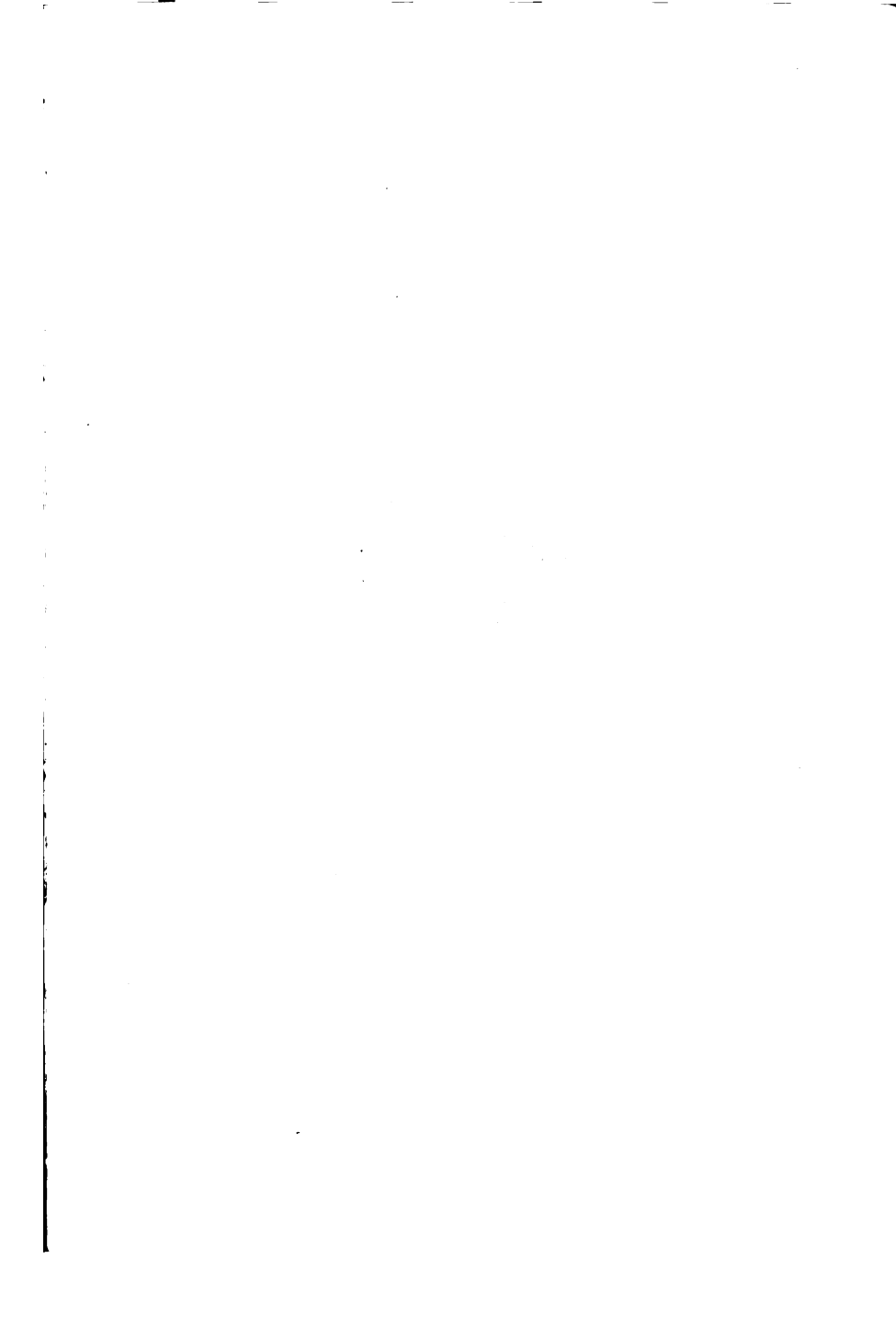


[The main body of the page is extremely faint and illegible. It appears to contain several paragraphs of text, but the characters are too light to be transcribed accurately.]



**THE LAND OF WONDERS.**







"He walked along almost to the end."



# The Land of Wonders

TRANSLATED FROM THE IRISH  
OF PADRAIC Ó CONAIRE

BY

EAMONN O'NEILL, B.A.

EX-EXAMINER IN IRISH, INTERMEDIATE EDUCATION BOARD  
EXAMINER AND INSPECTOR OF IRISH CLASSES UNDER DEPARTMENT OF  
AGRICULTURE, ETC.  
IRISH ADJUDICATOR, OIREACTHAS AND FEIS CEOL.



DUBLIN  
THE TALBOT PRESS LIMITED  
89 TALBOT STREET  
LIBRARY  
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA  
DAVIS

Printed at  
THE TALBOT PRESS, LTD.  
89 Talbot Street  
Dublin



# THE LAND OF WONDERS

[TRANSLATED FROM THE IRISH]

## I.

IN my father's young days an old ship-captain and his wife lived near the City of Galway. His name was Ryan, but he was never called anything but the Hairy Captain. They had two children, Maire Bán and Seán Og, and as the Captain was always voyaging round the world the care and trouble of their upbringing fell to his wife. The youngsters, however, had great fun when their father came home once a year or thereabouts. He would take Maire Bán by the hand and he would take Seán Og, or the Burla, as he was called, by the hand and he would show them the wonders of his ship. He would have a present for Maire and a present for the Burla and a present for their mother. The mother would have a present for him too. He never came home but she would have a nice oat cake ready for him. It was said that the Hairy Captain preferred these little oat cakes and goat's milk, with a drop of rum in it, to any other food that could be placed before him. At all

events the Captain thought that the cakes his wife made for him were delicious.

The Captain's friends were greatly surprised that he had married such a woman, but no less surprised were the woman's friends that she had married such a man. The Captain's folk, or some of them, said that he had married her because of her immense height. Hardly another man, except the Captain, could kiss her without standing on a stool or chair. The woman's folk said, in reply, that it was because of his big hairy head that she married the Captain. She was a little short-sighted and how could she recognise at a distance anyone but the big hairy-headed man!

No one can tell with certainty now which of the two parties was right. We can only venture an opinion. The Captain's wife was a great woman for talk when she was so minded. She talked for seven hours to the Captain the day before they were married and he listened without saying a word. On that day she thought there was no man in the world but he and she made up her mind to marry him whether he liked it or not; and wasn't the Captain lucky that he didn't notice that he was half-asleep for a great part of the time? When the Captain awoke he said to himself that it was a good job for a person like him, who slept indifferently, to have such a wife. A wife who was able to sing

a lullaby for seven hours on end was surely a great possession.

And he married her. If that wasn't the reason for which he married her—that or the nice little oat cakes—it surely wasn't for her comely person that he loved her. She was tall, very tall, lean and spare. Her rough, wrinkled skin was the colour of wet turf-mould. You would imagine that her skin was made for someone else—for someone far stouter than she was. There was a bag of this sallow skin under her chin that made you curious to see how far you could pull her double chin without hurting the poor woman. But that's as far as you'd get. Once she noticed you looking at the double chin you'd know by her that she could be a bit of a tartar with unmannerly people.

She had one illusion, and that was that there didn't exist a finer woman than she, and that there was never seen a man who sailed the seas as fine as her husband, if she was a judge. "If I weren't so handsome," she would say, "do you think such a man would marry me?" The poor woman! She never suspected that the fine lullaby or the oat cakes had anything to do with it.

If the Captain presented you with a gaily-coloured parrot from the Tropics you could not truthfully say he was a handsome man. He had a large aquiline nose and a prominent chin. He

was very near drowning one of his crew one day when he woke and found the poor sailor trying to draw a cord no thicker than a fishing-line between his beak of a nose and his chin. He had lost some teeth as well. His cheek was disfigured by a sword-cut. "By my word often did he terrify me when I was a lad," were the last words of my father when describing him long ago. He need not have been afraid of him, however. He was gentle with children and he would give sweets to the one who did not run away from him.

Perhaps it was because of this gentleness that his wife married him. Perhaps it was because of the fancy he had for her oat cakes. There is no telling now when both of them are dead.

But as for their children they were handsome and brave too—but if you are patient, my friends, you will become well acquainted with these two before I am finished.

## II.

ONE night the Captain and his wife were sitting together by the fireside. He was to depart at three o'clock on the following day. He had eaten the oat cakes and drunk the goat's milk with the drop of rum in it. I should say here that he used to put a good dash of strong rum into the goat's milk but not until he had eaten

the oat cakes. With another drop of rum in the milk and his pipe in his mouth there was nothing to disturb the old couple as Maire Bán and the Burla were asleep.

The Captain blew out a cloud of smoke and took a drink. A feeling of drowsiness came over him. His wife looked at him. "I've been thinking for a long time," said she, "that it would be well for you if there were a woman who could make nice oat cakes for you on board ship, or mix you a drink or wash your shirt—you wouldn't believe the state your clothes were in when you came home this time."

The Captain puffed out another cloud of smoke.

"Put another drop of goat's milk in the tumbler," said he, interrupting her, "I put too much rum in it."

That night it blew a gale. You would think that there was somebody hammering at the window with iron knuckles. It was, however, only the bare branches of the ash tree outside that made the uproar.

"It's a terrible night, God save us," said the woman pouring the goat's milk into the tumbler; "I'm often in misery on a night like this when you are in danger of being drowned in the frozen seas or in danger of being killed on an island in some wild, outlandish place

. . . . ."

"Fill my pipe," said he. She filled it.

"And what I am thinking," said she, "is that I could be a great help to you when you'd want it, that I could keep your clothes in order for you, that I could . . . ."

She glanced at him. His big shaggy head was resting against the back of the chair, his eyes were shut and his feet were up on the mantel-piece. She did not interrupt his thoughts—if thinking he was—as she thought perhaps that he intended giving in to her.

At last he opened his mouth. He closed it again and nose and chin nearly met. Chin and mouth parted slightly—you could just put your little finger in between—and the Captain began to snore.

"It is time for you to go to bed," said his wife.

"I think you're about right," said he, and he went up.

But his wife was able to fool the Captain any time she liked. The greatest deeds are done unknown to the world, she would often say, and when she played her tricks on him, he had no suspicion that she was doing so.

Next morning she got up at eight o'clock. She awakened Maire Bán and the Burla, washed and dressed them, and putting half an oat cake in the hand of each, she told them to be moving.

The Captain's wife was a powerful walker.



She was tall with long, narrow feet, and couldn't she stride along! My father often told me that the boys of the neighbourhood used to measure her stride on the muddy road and that there was none of them except himself who could span it. You'd think by her walk that there was a tremendous shower coming on and that she was bent on reaching shelter before it overtook her.

This morning was rather chilly. The night had been frosty and the air was very cold. The hand in which Seán Og held his oat cake was like a ripe plum. The other hand, which gripped the edge of his mother's faded dolman, was nearly as bad. He had to take ten steps for one of hers, and this warmed him up. He trotted with all his might.

Things weren't quite so bad with Maire Bán. Maire had only nine steps to take for every one step of her mother's. You will gather from this what age Maire and the Burla were. Maire was not more than seven-and-a-half, and the Burla was only five. The poor mite, not knowing why or where he was going!

How should he know, as his mother never opened her lips when she would be tearing ahead in this fashion. Her mouth was tightly shut as she skirted the Strand Road, and still more tightly shut as she crossed the Claddagh bridge. They crossed the Fish Market, went up Quay Street and High Street and never halted until

they reached the Square, while a wisp of her sandy hair, her bonnet-ribbons and her dolman streamed in the wind.

The town-clock struck ten.

The Burla was out of breath when the three of them entered a draper's shop, and, worse again, he had lost his piece of bread after having taken only two bites out of it! The poor Burla felt there was nothing but unfairness in this goodly world when he got a box in the ear as he tried to snatch a piece from his sister.

"I wish," said the Captain's wife to the shop-boy, "to have these children fitted out well, and I want clothes for myself also."

The shop-boy asked particulars.

"I want two suits for the boy and two for the girl and two for myself—one for the cold North and another for the warm countries."

She selected them and paid the bill, and left the shop without much talk or much delay. But she wheeled round and like a flash of lightning was back in the shop again.

"You are not to send the goods to the house," said she to the shop-boy, "but to the ship, my husband's ship that is in dock for the past week."

### III.

THE Captain was seated when she arrived. He was having a meal alone—oat cakes, goat's milk

and rum—what else would he be eating? His wife took off her rusty old dolman and her be-ribboned bonnet.

“Mr. Casey is satisfied to keep the children until we return,” he said.

“Isn’t he the decent man!” said she, but she said no more.

The Captain had a lot to do, as the *Brideog* (that was his ship) was to weigh anchor at three o’clock. Needless to say, his wife had a lot to do. She had to pack and she had to conceal Maire Bán and the Burla in the *Brideog* unknown to their father. The obstinate man! He wouldn’t give in to her in that. He wouldn’t allow the children to come. A father has not the same feelings as a mother, but she was too clever for him; and don’t blame her if she played a trick on him and bribed the cabin-boy to hide them in his own little cubby-hole until they would be well out at sea.

At two o’clock exactly the Captain’s wife left her house on a car. You never saw so many large bags and heavy boxes as were on that car. The poor woman brought with her all the furniture that she could, and if she was so fond of the furniture as all that, wouldn’t it be a queer thing if she were to leave her two pets behind?

The Captain was on the bridge when she reached the dock. He and the crew were working like niggers and swearing. She paid no

attention to them, however, but looked out for the cabin-boy. When he caught sight of her he winked at her. Her mind was relieved.

At last they were safe. They had passed the roadstead and the lighthouse; the big white sails were hoisted and they were sailing out of Galway Bay before a good wind. The wind was north-east and soon they passed the Black Head and early in the night they sped past the Aran Islands and sailed south under white canvas and by the light of a new moon.

And so, my friends, that is how the *Brideog* left Galway Harbour on Friday, the 13th of November, in the year 1851.

#### IV:

WHEN the Captain had seen to everything and given his orders he went asleep. Not so his wife. When she saw that he was asleep, she got up and dashed up the companion-way with the same eager haste as in the morning when she was going to the draper's. She was longing to see the two pets. She did not stop until she reached the ship-boy's cabin. The boy was there, and her little children were there too, fast asleep, with the Burla's little arms around his sister's neck.

She took up the Burla and Maire Bán, carried them to the captain's cabin, and put them into

a little bed by themselves. The Burla murmured "Mammy," but he fell asleep again. Maire Bán never stirred. She was too exhausted after the day.

Then the work began. The big trunks and bags that she had brought had to be opened. She had to tidy and put an appearance on the place. She didn't like the disorder of the captain's cabin—ropes, blocks, fishing-lines and all sorts of things being scattered around. A man isn't much good about a house. She was convinced of this, and if God had not blessed man with a partner he would most certainly have lived in a hole in the earth like the badgers. Would not her husband get a surprise on awakening! The spick-and-span appearance of his cabin! The children to welcome him! And the hot oat cakes ready on the table!

She tacked up four religious pictures from her bedroom at home. She hung a little bottle of holy water over the children's cot. She arranged the delph on the mantel-piece. She placed on the table carefully the old brown mug out of which her husband used to drink the goat's milk. She had much ado to stand upright on account of the motion of the ship, but she set her teeth and went on with her work. She worked with such grim vigour that her double-chin and her narrow neck seemed to grow longer as she moved about on the unstable floor.

Having done everything to her satisfaction, she sat in her husband's chair and began to think of his surprise and delight when he would see the place. You would hardly know it from their own room at home! And surely they would both be very lonely on the high seas away from the Burla and Maire Bán!

## V.

WHILE this work was going on Maire Bán was asleep in her cot dreaming. She thought she heard a bell ringing and perhaps she did, for at that moment the ship's bell rang twice. She thought it was the school bell and that she would be late. Sister Mary Andrew was in charge of the school and you wouldn't wonder at a little girl being afraid of her! Maire jumped out of bed dragging the Burla with her. That young rogue had knotted their two nighties together before they went asleep!

Their mother heard the noise they made when they fell on the floor and she brought them out to see the result of her labours. The Burla had no idea he was on his father's ship.

"The floor is rocking, Mammy," said he, crying.

"And there are people walking on the roof," said Maire, rubbing her eyes.

“ And I’ve got a pain,” said the Burla, growing pale.

“ It’s the sea-sickness, treasure,” said his mother. “ I will give you a drop of milk. Don’t you remember we are aboard the *Brideog* ?”

The Burla had to sit down, and so did Maire. Let us leave them to themselves in the corner until they get over the sea-sickness.

The Captain, on hearing two strokes of the ship’s bell, got up. When he came out to where his wife was he had nothing on but pants, a blue shirt and a red night-cap.

He looked around and saw the holy pictures his wife had hung up.

“ By Gum !” said he, and as he said it you would swear that his nose and chin snapped together.

He saw the black cat asleep in a box.

“ By the backbone of my grandmother !” said he, his night-cap falling off with surprise, and you’d think that no hairier head than the Captain’s ever wore a night-cap.

He saw the bottle of holy water over the children’s bed and the Rosary-beads and the fox’s head that used to be over the door at home.

“ By the wits of the seven wise men who were drowned in a vat of wine long ago !” he exclaimed.

He was about to say a lot more, but he lost his power of speech when he saw the children.

He sat down on a box. He looked hard and searchingly at his wife, who was trying to keep her balance on the floor.

“ You senseless, silly woman,” said he, “ you stupid good-for-nothing!” But as neither Maire Bán nor the Burla could follow the rest of his remarks I cannot record them, for I have no other authority for the story but theirs. We may be sure, however, that the Captain did not express much admiration for womankind when he saw the trick his wife had played on him.

“ I have a nice oat cake and a bottle of the old black goat’s milk for you,” said his wife calmly when he had exhausted his vocabulary.

They all sat down to table.

“ A man must put up with his fate,” said the Captain when he had eaten a goodly portion of the oat cakes, “ but that fox’s head will have to be pitched into the sea before any of the crew see it. A fox’s head in the captain’s cabin!”

He laughed. It was easy to see that he liked oat cakes, and his wife was delighted to see that he found them to his taste so far from home.

## VI.

But they were interrupted before the meal was finished.

Maire Bán saw two large feet on the narrow steps. They bore neither boots nor shoes, but



there were large lumps on them as big as potatoes and they were gnarled and the colour of the roots of an old oak tree.

The owner of the feet came down slowly with his back towards them. Maire Bán was frightened when she saw his knees. She was within a yard of him, and it seemed to her that the knees were bigger than a man's head. He came down another few steps. He wore a short white trousers which did not reach to the knee. Maire Bán thought that the short trousers did not reach to within a foot of his ugly, black knees. This strange spectre stood in their midst. He pulled his forelock and saluted the Captain politely. The little girl was astounded that such a person should be aboard her father's ship.

He had on a red shirt and wore a blue three-cornered cap on his head. But the belt he wore! It was bigger and broader than the saddle-girth of a horse. Maire tried to count the knives that were stuck in it, but she gave it up. There were long knives and short knives, sharp knives and blunt knives, notched knives, and knives as keen as razors. And the variety of daggers that he carried! Maire counted four, but how did she know there were not a couple more behind his back, or maybe three? There were pouches in the belt also, and Maire wondered what was in them. And

the two pistols! And the long broad sword at his side! Maire could not take her eyes from the belt for a long time, but when she did and caught sight of his face she was seized with terror.

A long, black moustache drooped over his mouth like a tree overhanging a brook. He was squint-eyed, and Maire thought he was looking at her when in reality he was looking at the Captain. He had only one ear, but there was an ear-ring in it bigger than a ring for a bull's nose. Maire thought it was the weight of the ring that had wrenched the other ear off him, and that the good ear would in time be torn off in like manner. His skin was the colour of a horse-chestnut in the autumn. She thought that possibly he was the devil himself in the form of a man. She was terrified when she heard her father call him Satan, and no wonder, for she did not yet know that this was his nickname on board the ship.

## VII.

NEITHER he nor the Captain delayed long in the cabin and they climbed the stairs, and Maire Bán heard them pacing the deck.

She was listening attentively and in a state of terror, but she only caught an odd word of what they were saying. She only heard what was

said when they passed the door of the cabin. Soon she understood that it was the big sailor whom her father called Satan who was talking most, and that her father was trying to appease him. Twice or three times she had to put her fingers in her ears to prevent herself from hearing the awful oaths uttered by the sailor. She had often heard Sister Mary Andrew say that it was a great sin to curse, and how did she know that she was not committing sin by listening to them?

They were at the cabin-door.

“A fox’s head! A fox’s head, I say! By all . . . .”

It was the sailor who spoke, and she put her fingers in her ears.

She heard no more of the conversation for some time, and could only hear the noise of their feet overhead and the water lapping against the ship’s side.

“A red-haired woman and children!” said the sailor.

“She is not red-haired,” said the Captain.

That is all Maire heard.

“And the cat! the black cat! By . . . .” said the sailor as they passed the door for the fourth time.

“And how am I to know that they have not a pram to give the children an airing on the deck,” said the sailor, mockingly.

The Captain got angry, and dismissed the sailor—Satan with the wondrous belt.

When the Captain came down he began to talk to his wife, but Maire was sufficiently old to understand that he told her nothing of the big sailor or of his conversation with him. If he had told her all she surely would have regretted having brought her children on the most dangerous voyage ever undertaken by her husband. Nobody except the Captain knew that the crew were a band of ruffians as bad as ever sailed the seas and that Satan might rouse them to strife and mutiny. The Captain knew that he would only want an excuse and such an excuse was ready to hand. He had only to tell the superstitious crew that they had aboard a fox's head, a black cat and a red-haired woman and bad work would begin. He would not need to remind them that they had set sail on a Friday, the 13th of November.

Despite her agitation the child saw with relief that the Burla had fallen asleep and had not seen the hideous sailor.

## VIII.

THE Captain was most uneasy, and anyone could see it. Satan was planning mischief, and when an order was given to any of the crew it was carried out sulkily. The Captain spoke to the

first mate and the carpenter and the cabin-boy, for he knew that in the event of a fight he had only these three to rely on. He distributed amongst these three any firearms or sharp weapons he had. He himself kept two pistols and an old gun of little value, and he gave another pistol to his wife.

He spent most of his time on the bridge, and he could be seen there night and day. His wife brought his meals to him there, and the mate came there to report. Things were going from bad to worse amongst the crew. The Captain was certain that they would attack him and the mate if they thought they had a chance of success.

The Captain remained on the bridge holding the wheel and eagerly scanning the horizon for another ship.

By this time they were very far from Ireland, heading south under full sail. Maire Bán would often come to him on the bridge, and, despite his anxiety, he would put her sitting on a box near by and chat gaily with her. She did not think that any father could be so gentle and kind and no father could be such a good storyteller. He told her fairy-tales that were far better than those in the school-books. When, however, the mate came to speak with him he would cut the story short, and would frown and

send her away. His brow would become furrowed and chin and nose almost met.

On the thirty-third day after leaving Galway the wind dropped and the sails hung idly by the masts. A dead calm prevailed and the sea around them was as smooth as a board. The reflection of the birds overhead could be seen in the water. The sky was cloudless and the big yellow sun beat down on them from early morning.

A week passed. The sun rose and it almost split the planks during the day. It set and the stars came out and were visible glittering and dancing in the depths of the sea. It seemed that one had only to put one's hand into the water to pick up a hundred of them. In the course of the week there was not a single cloud in the sky, nor a breath of wind from any quarter.

The white sails still hung idle. One day a large bird alighted on a corner of the mainsail and his feet went through it as it had rotted from the heat. The planks of the ship began to split with the heat, and when salt water was thrown on them it would dry up in five minutes and leave a white sediment of salt.

Food began to be scarce and the drinking water was almost exhausted. The Captain had to restrict each man to a pint a day, and were it not for the dew that fell during the night they would have died from thirst. Every morning

the men could be seen lapping up the dew with their white dry tongues.

On the fifty-second day at sea Satan throttled the black cat and drank its blood. Unless a shower of rain came on, or they met another vessel death stared them in the face.

On the day on which Satan killed the black cat the Captain observed green seaweed floating on the sea. He made the Sign of the Cross. He knew that the *Brideog* was drifting with a current, that soon they would be in the middle of the Saragossa Sea and that they might as well try to sail a ship through a meadow as steer it through that mass of weeds.

They drifted through it for a week and thought themselves in a field the sea was so green. At the end of the week a sailor sliced the nose off the cook's face to drink his blood and ran through the ship a raving madman.

But the *Brideog* was drifting all the time, and on the fifty-eighth day they left the Saragossa Sea behind.

## IX.

ALTHOUGH they had got clear of the Saragossa Sea, they were hardly out of danger yet. They had little food and hardly any water. The seams of the ship was yawning with the heat of the sun and they were obliged to pump all day. To

crown their misfortune, Satan and his accomplices were keenly on the watch to deal a treacherous blow at the Captain and his family. They intended to kill them and to assume control of the ship themselves.

Despite the extreme scarcity of water, Maire Bán and the Burla were not left thirsty, and their mother was not to be blamed for hiding away for them in the cabin a little keg of water.

One night Maire Bán awoke. She wanted to go and keep her father company at the wheel; but, lest her mother would prevent her, she did not go up the companion-way but let herself down through a large hole until she reached the bottom of the ship. She had gone through the same hole previously on a few occasions, but only in the daylight. There was no light down in the hold and she became terrified. She spent an hour or more crawling about and trying to find a way out. Finally she burst into tears. She was certain that she would die in that horrible place. There was an overpowering odour from the stagnant water in the hold and she almost fainted.

She was for some time crying when she perceived that some living thing was near her. This animal, if it was an animal, was sniffing all around her until its mouth came in contact with her cheek. It was a rat eagerly in search of food. She succeeded in driving it away, but she felt



that there were hundreds more quite near her. She saw hundreds of eyes within a yard of her. They were more like little red stars shining in a dark sky than eyes.

She was afraid of her life, but she did not cry out. She was sure that, if she cried these fierce, hungry little animals would attack her. She did not know what suggested it to her, but she began to sing a gentle soothing little song. It was a kind of lullaby, and she closed her eyes while singing it. When she opened her eyes the little red stars were no longer visible, and to this day she does not know whether the gentle music frightened the rats away, or whether the unusual sweetness of the melody threw them into a deep slumber.

At all events she remained no longer in the place but continued to make her way out.

At last she saw the stars in the sky overhead. She saw what she thought were pitch-black walls all around her. She went over to one of these walls. Fortunately there was a rope hanging down by the wall, and as she was as active and nimble as a boy she succeeded in climbing up, and after much difficulty she found herself between decks.

She had to walk very carefully as there was no light and she did not know where she might put her foot. Ropes, blocks, pieces of old iron and all sorts of miscellaneous objects were

strewn about, and she tripped many times before she finally saw a glimmer of light shining through the chinks and the planks in front of her.

She heard a noise too—men's voices—quite near her. She was at the bow of the ship near where the crew slept. She was seized with fright and she would have preferred to be eaten by the rats than to fall into the hands of Satan and his confederates.

They were talking loudly and some of them were angry. She peeped in to see what was going on and she was astonished at what she saw.

## X.

THERE was only a feeble light from a little hanging lamp, but even a blind man could understand the ugly business of the five men who were present.

Satan was there with his knobby feet, his heavy sweeping moustache, his squint eye and his tanned skin. He had the little white breeches on, the red shirt and the funny ring almost pulling his ear off with its weight, and, of course, the wonderful belt.

Another ruffian was near him. This fellow was called Bel. He was sitting like a tailor on the ground and his only clothing was a little

ragged pants. A great deal of the conversation was being carried on by him, but the designs which were tattooed all over his skin were more remarkable than anything he said. There was hardly an inch of his body that did not show a figure of some sort. On his back was a large palm tree with birds of every colour and species making their nests in the branches. There was a parrot and its plumage was of the seven colours mentioned in the old Chinese books. There was a man in a sailor's dress, sitting at the foot of a tree, and a young woman with luxuriant hair sitting beside him and holding him by the hand. A huge serpent was behind them approaching them unawares and spitting venom.

There were three other men there, but as they were sitting on barrels in the semi-darkness, I can say nothing about them except that their eyes shone like burning coals and that their voices were like the sound that water would make in a half-empty vessel when shaken. Speech seemed to be very difficult for them, they said so little; but when they did speak, they did so altogether, and they were of the same mind about everything.

Satan arose and spoke to this goodly crew.

"My dear brothers and good friends," he said, "we have long been awaiting this night."

"That's true," said the three with one voice.

“ We have condemned the Captain to death,” went on Satan, “ and we have now an opportunity of carrying out our decree. To-morrow morning at daybreak he’ll walk the plank.”

“ He’ll walk the plank,” said the three together.

“ He’ll walk the plank and his ugly carcass will be eaten by the fishes,” said Satan.

“ Let him be seized! Let him be seized at once,” said the three together.

“ Be patient, my hungry brothers!” said Satan; “ we must do the job properly and well.”

He took up a piece of chalk and began writing on the table.

“ The only help we can expect is from nine men,” said he, “ but every one of these nine can fight if necessary. The mate is asleep. Let him be seized without waking him, and let him be bound hand and foot. The Captain is on the bridge. You will have no difficulty, my friends, in catching him unawares and binding him with these stout hempen cords so that he cannot stir. Can you do that much, my brothers?”

“ We can, we can,” said the three with one voice.

“ As for you, Bel, go to the Captain’s cabin,” said Satan. “ And let the cook go too and seize that red-haired woman, who is the cause of all our sufferings, and who is responsible for the loss of the cook’s nose. Seize her children too,

and then . . . . ; but I have no need to tell Bel what to do. He is an expert at his business. And we need not tell the cook what kind of broth we like."

They all laughed.

The cook, who had lost his nose, got up. Bel got up too. He showed his long teeth, a blood-thirsty look came over him and his long, parched tongue was hanging out like that of a dog out of breath.

"I will bite her skinny neck; I will devour the flesh from her bones . . . ."

He was going to say a great deal more, but two things prevented him. The terrible thirst that was tormenting him and Satan made him stop.

"You will do no such thing," said Satan in a tone of authority. "The business must be done properly. It must be done in a proper way or we won't have luck."

Three others entered at this juncture.

"Everything is ready," said Satan; "I have only now to distribute arms lest they should be needed. But let there be no fight if it is possible to avoid it."

He then handed two pistols to each man present. He divided the powder and shot into nine portions. He took the daggers out of his belt and laid them on the table for each man to select one for himself. This was done.

Satan then went down on his knees. All the others did likewise and as he knelt each one of them raised a dagger above his head.

“By the mountains and by the sea!” said Satan in a loud voice.

“By the mountains and by the sea!” repeated the others together.

“By the stars in the sky and by the animals that walk the earth; by all upon the earth and beneath the earth and above the earth; by the God who created all these things, we desire to perform as well as we can this sacred work we have undertaken.”

All the others took this oath earnestly.

Maire Bán resolved to slip away and tell her father all that she had seen and heard, but before she could stir a foot someone came behind her and she remembered no more until she found herself and her relations on the upper deck bound firmly with stiff hempen cords.

## XI.

IN truth there was devilish work afoot on the upper deck of the *Brideog* early next morning.

The ruffians had succeeded in overcoming the Captain and his family, and the poor man and those depending on him, as well as the members of the crew who remained faithful, had

been captured by Satan and his confederates. The Captain was secured by irons on his hands and feet and a stout hempen net was wound about him.

The mutineers had resolved to put the Captain to death, but they conceived the idea of having a mock trial first to make fun of him.

Satan presided over the court. He seated himself on a barrel, rigged out like a judge. He had wrapped himself in a big red cloak trimmed with white fur. This cloak belonged to the Captain's wife; indeed it had been his wedding-gift to her; and she was highly incensed at seeing it donned by such a ruffian. He had put false hair on and wore spectacles. He might have been taken for a real judge were it not for the crooked knobby feet that showed beneath the hem of the cloak and the peculiar way in which he worked his mouth and expectorated between a gap in his teeth.

The whole crew were assembled—true men and traitors.

“A scoundrel stands before you, judge!” said Bel, rising.

“A mighty great scoundrel!” exclaimed the three who always spoke together.

“You must prove to the judge and the jury that he is guilty,” said Satan in a voice of authority. “I am a just judge, and you must

produce your witnesses and prove his crime according to law."

"It shall be done," answered Bel.

He prepared himself to make a statement and all the others kept silence. If a pin fell it could be heard. The big fiery sun was rising out of the sea and spreading a wonderful golden light all over it. No living thing could be seen from the ghost-like ship. The sea lay stretched like a broad golden plain all around, the sky was of an intense blue except for the one quarter in which the rising sun was gilding it, and the *Brideog*, with her sails rotting on the masts and her seams yawning, was as motionless over the calm deep sea as if she were some mighty rock.

"I will make it clear to you, judge, and to the honourable jury who are assisting you to try this case that the prisoner before you is a scoundrel and deserves to die," said Bel. "The first count against him is that he brought a red-haired woman on board. Could we have luck with a red-haired woman on board?"

"We could not! we could not!" shouted all together.

"You wicked wretch!" exclaimed the Captain's wife, with rising anger; "if you call me a red-haired woman . . . ."

She was silenced.

"He brought a red-haired woman on board," went on Bel, "and that was not enough, but he



nailed a fox's head over the cabin-door. Could we have luck with a fox's head on board?"

"No! No!" was the response from all.

"And the black cat!" said Bel. "Where is the man that ever sailed the sea who has not heard true stories of ships having never reached port all because there was a black cat on board? Doesn't everybody know of the close connection between that breed and Old Nick himself? Could we have any luck with such an animal on board?"

"No! No!" answered all.

"Just judge," proceeded Bel, "I need not remind you of all we have suffered from having a captain of that sort among us; I need not speak of the terrible thirst that has tormented us so long, nor of the hunger . . . ."

A bloodthirsty look came into the eyes of the greater number of them.

The judge noticed that the three who always spoke together were looking greedily at his crooked feet, and he hastily withdrew them under the red cloak.

"I need not call to mind the awful hunger we are suffering from, and that is the man who is responsible," continued Bel.

Some of them wanted to devour the Captain alive.

"I am not a man to talk much," said Bel, "but I will recount his crimes, judge! First,

there is the red-haired woman, then the fox's head, then the black cat, and last of all, he made us sail from Galway Bay on Friday, the 13th of the month."

The cook who had lost his nose arose suddenly.

"Friday! Friday! Meat! No meat! My nose was cut off on Friday! He came on me, unawares, my friends, and drove his long black teeth into my flesh . . . ."

The judge silenced the cook. He did not like to look at him and remember the way he himself had lost his ear.

Bel began again: "Judge, I call upon you in the name of the crew of the *Brideog* to condemn this man to death. Unless you do so, I solemnly declare that I will never spit out again."

He stood still on the deck. He spat out twice and then he thrust a quid of tobacco into his mouth and began to chew it.

Satan stood up.

"Has the prisoner anything to say before I pass sentence of death on him?" he said.

The Captain remained silent. As he said nothing, his wife tried to speak on his behalf, but she was refused permission.

"If he has nothing to say," said Satan, "I will deliver judgment."

He put a black cap on his head. He hitched up his wonderful belt, expectorated once or twice and looked fiercely at the Captain. The poor

Burla did not understand the funny way a squint-eyed man looks. He thought that Satan was looking at him and he began to bawl.

“If he has nothing to say,” said Satan, “he is to walk the plank in a quarter of an hour.”

“Let him walk the plank! Let him walk the plank! He deserves death,” shouted all.

The Captain knelt down and said a few prayers in a low voice. He got up and bade good-bye to his wife and children. The plank was fixed in position, its end projecting over the water. He was able to step up on it without assistance, although he was in irons. He walked calmly almost to the end. The other end was tilted up, and he was swallowed up in the water. He disappeared in an instant, leaving no trace save the wavelets on the sea.

## XII.

THE Captain's wife rose up straight before them. She leaped three times on the deck, and a fourth leap would have sent her overboard to fill the same grave as the man she loved if a couple of sailors had not caught her.

When she was powerless to follow her husband to his watery grave, she spoke these words, all the time gazing intently down at the water :—

“You were my hero, my treasure, my spouse! You were the valorous champion who never

quailed! You were my lark for music, and soft sweet speech! You were my sure shield in every danger! You were the best listener that ever lived! Comeliness did not exist before your birth! Bravery there was none till you grew up! Gentleness was wanting till you came into the world!

“ And now he is gone from me. I shall never again see his fine head, his beautiful cheek, his strong shoulders, his sunny countenance, his mouth that never lied, his lips that used to kiss me, his fine noble nose, his chin of goodly size.

“ Am I not to be pitied to-day for the loss of my champion and my hero, of my brave lion who used to lay men low, of my children’s joy, of my gallant, of my treasure who lightened my sorrow!”

While his mother was expressing her passionate grief the Burla was laughing and clapping his hands, for the poor orphan did not understand what was going on, or what had happened to his father. He thought that some sort of game was being played and he was delighted. He caught hold of his mother’s dress and asked her where was his father hiding, or had he gone to the bottom to fish for their dinner; but he got no answer from the distracted creature.

She was continuing to sing her husband’s

praises when Satan interrupted her in a mocking way. She faced him.

“Son of the Evil One!” she shrieked. She attempted to tear him with her nails, but she was held back.

When her attempt was frustrated she fell on her knees and prophesied evil things for the crew of the *Brideog*.

“I see a black ship,” she said with passion. “I see a long, black ship sailing the seas without helm or steersman. Those of her crew, who are alive, are thrown hither and thither, unable to stir a hand by reason of the thirst and the hunger that are tormenting them. I behold a little noseless man standing on the deck of the black ship raving about fat meat and spring-water which he is never to eat or drink. I see him dying of hunger and trying to cast himself into the sea, but unable to do so on account of the heavy chains that bind him to the mast. . . . Look at him! Look at him as his parched tongue hangs out imploring God’s help in vain.”

She looked at the cook who had lost his nose. He quailed before her and began making the Sign of the Cross on his forehead so that the crew thought he was demented.

The woman went on :

“I see a tall, active one-eared man hanging from the cross-bars. From his appearance I know that he has been hanging there for a long time,

for his flesh has been eaten from his bones by the voracious sea-birds. I see his bare ribs. I see the stars shining through his hideous frame——”

“Hit her on the head,” shouted Satan, for he knew that she was referring to him.

She was struck down and her imprecations ceased, but her terrible prognostications frightened the sailors, and one of them said to another that the thought of the bare ribs of the one-eared man would come between him and his night's sleep till the day of his death.

“What an awful thing it is,” said one of them, “for the stars to be seen through your bare ribs!”

“And for the greedy birds to be picking off your flesh!” said another.

### XIII.

THERE is no doubt that they would have there and then killed the woman and children if the look-out man had not shouted, “A ship! a ship! See a ship low down on the horizon to the east!” They seized the telescope and scanned the horizon closely. They saw a small black object far off, but the keenest eye could not discern whether it was a ship or merely a cloud. They were, however, filled with expectation. If it should prove to be a steamer they would be all

right : the time of privation would be at an end ; they all conjured up a picture of fine roast meats and cool strong wines.

The black object on the horizon increased in size, and there was a long trail streaming behind it. What could this be but the smoke from the steamer ?

It was no wonder that they thanked God for His timely aid, and that they agreed with the advice of the cook that they should not kill the children.

“ Let them be spared,” he said. “ Let us not be guilty of their death ! God is powerful, and even now He is relieving us.”

Just then was heard a creaking at the mast-head.

“ See !” exclaimed the cook, “ the top sails are almost filled. Before long we shall have a good wind and the old *Brideog* will be spinning along again. Let us not kill the children ! Let us not kill them !”

Then an idea occurred to him.

“ The woman is dead,” he said, for it was thought that the blow on the head had killed her, and “ and if we place the children in those two barrels over there they will pay for their father’s crimes and at the same time we will not be guilty of their blood. In an hour we shall have left the barrels far behind with the wind that is rising now.”

It was resolved to do as he had suggested.

Maire Bán was put into a large barrel and the poor Burla into another. The near approach of assistance softened their hearts somewhat, with the result that two small loaves and a little vessel of water were put into each barrel. The barrels were then lowered overboard and set floating on the sea.

“If they are to die,” said the cook, “let them die together,” and, so saying, he fastened the two barrels together with a stout hempen net.

The wind rose somewhat. The sails of the *Brideog* filled, at least those that had not been torn, and in a short time they were a mile away from the barrels.

The hopes of the crew were, however, dashed to the ground when they saw that what they thought was a steamer was in reality only a flock of birds. Their bodies were as large as a young ass and their extended wings measured two fathoms. If there was one of them there were three hundred and they spent the day and a great part of the night hovering over the *Brideog*. Not a person could sleep on the ship that night by reason of the tremendous noise from the flapping of their wings. Towards nightfall the wind fell again, but some of the sails filled with the breeze caused by the motion of the birds' wings. At sunrise the birds had disappeared and the *Brideog* lay becalmed.



We will pass over the subsequent happenings on the ill-starred vessel. The doings of ruffians like the *Brideog's* crew are not proper subjects of interest to decent people, and were it not for the cabin-boy, the mate, and the Captain's wife, I should not refer to them again.

#### XIV.

THE flock of birds sped like an arrow over the lonely sea beating the calm air with their long, powerful wings. An onlooker would imagine that he saw two flocks—one up in the air and another reflected in the clear blue water.

When the leading bird spied the two barrels on top of the water, he uttered loud cries calling the attention of his flock to the fact that there was something strange beneath them.

Until they saw the barrels they were all flying in one body, but now they had to break up their formation and take counsel together. One of them thought this and another that. First they all spoke together, then one spoke wisely and in a low voice, but was unheeded by the others, and finally all became silent. In the words of the old saying, they were like a band of tailors about to attack a gander!

In the end the leading bird separated from the flock. He assumed a fighting attitude and put on a fierce look. The other birds had great con-

fidence in him, but they did not think that he was so courageous and foolhardy as to attack the terrible enemy below in the water. Nevertheless he did. He resolved to make an onset on the enemy, but, as the barrels were somewhat apart, he was in doubt, like many other warriors, as to which of them he should attack first. Perhaps it was this hesitation that caused him to lose courage in the end, for he did not attack either, and did nothing more than to swoop down between them and make a tremendous noise with the idea of terrifying them.

If his courage had been of the right quality he would have attacked one of them, but as he did not do so, misfortune befell him, as one of his claws caught in the net that fastened the barrels. The poor fellow was in a fix. He was unable to get his claw free, even though he flapped his wings with great force. All he succeeded in doing was to draw the two barrels near each other and rise a few yards in the air. He did this again and again, finally bringing the barrels together.

On the third occasion on which the barrels were knocked together, the whole flock were on the point of attacking the children, but when they heard the Burla laughing and clapping his hands with joy at the sight of his sister, they were frightened, and, desisting from the attack, held themselves some distance away.

There were now only two things for them to do—to depart, leaving the leader behind, or to stay in the neighbourhood and feed him in the hope that he would escape some time. They decided on the latter course.

The leader, though in a fix, was able to fly, but he could not extricate his claw, and so he dragged the barrels slowly through the water, the flock hovering over him all the time encouraging him and feeding him with little fishes.

They were too much in fear of the supposed enemy to come close to him, and they dropped the food down near him. In this way many a fish fell into the Burla's barrel and into Maire's, and were it not for this they would have died from hunger. When food would fall into Maire's barrel she would utter a joyful cry which would frighten the fettered bird. He would try to escape, but, being unable to do so, the only result was that the barrels were brought in contact. In this manner Maire shared what fell to her with the Burla, and he was able to help her in the same way.

Another danger threatened the orphans. The heat of the mid-day sun was so terrific that they would have died from it only for a stratagem of Maire's. One day when she felt comfortable after a good meal of fish, she began to amuse herself by imitating the cry of the birds. She noticed, when she did this, that they all drew

closer to her to ascertain what was going on. At mid-day, when the sun was hottest, she would imitate the birds' cry and they would come down above them forming an effective shelter from the sun's rays. When the children looked up they saw what looked like large live flakes of snow floating over them and obscuring the sky.

## XV.

BEFORE long a queer thing happened. The youngest and most beautiful of the hen-birds in the flock was attacked by some grave unknown ailment. Her appearance became wretched, and it was thought that she could not recover. All the other birds were sorely grieved. The oldest and wisest birds came to examine her, but, however extensive was their knowledge of bird-ailments, they failed to diagnose her complaint.

One day it became evident to them that she was very much inclined to boast, even though she was ailing, and when a knowing old cock went to talk to her she began to jeer at him and to tell him mockingly that he had no sense or understanding, and that nothing whatever was wrong with her, as she was only going to lay an egg.

A woman thinks very highly of her first-born son, and we may be sure that a hen thinks the

same about her first egg. What could she do, however? If she went off alone she would be sure to lose her way before reaching dry land, and, however fond the other birds were of her, they would not abandon the old leader who had steered them clear of every danger, but who was now tightly entangled between the barrels.

The poor hen! She was compelled to remain with the others whatever the result might be.

If birds could laugh, it is certain that they would have laughed at her. She stayed a little away from them with a proud mien and appeared to think that an egg had never been laid before. She would incline her head disdainfully, and wink in a knowing way, as much as to say, "it won't be long now until you will see me perform a great feat."

She carried on this mystification so long that the other birds began to think that perhaps she was partly right and that she would lay an egg far excelling any egg ever laid before. Would it not be a great misfortune for them to lose that fine egg in the sea! Presently they began to worry as to the best means of saving the egg of the self-important hen. A bird would glide down and discuss ways and means with the old leader in his awkward fix. He would then fly back, and the whole crowd would return to the captive, talking as volubly as a crowd of women and with just as little practical result.

They failed to hit on any expedient for saving the egg. The poor hen would have to lay it in the sea in the end. It would be a great stroke of ill-luck to lose a fine egg like that, and how did they know that the proud young hen would not die without laying another egg, for that species of bird lay only two eggs in their lifetime.

But things fell out differently from what they expected. There came a fine moonlight night on which the children were in a calm sleep. The Burla lay in his own barrel with his shirt open. The young hen came down over him. She looked down upon him for some time, all the others watching her anxiously in the meantime. She alighted on the edge of the barrel, and before the other birds could divine her intention, she deposited the fine egg in the Burla's bosom.

A number of the old hens present said that they had never seen such a shameful trick, and they swore that they would never speak to her again. The shameless hen! Some of the old cocks too said that such a thing had never been done before, and would never be done again, although all present had seen it done. The young hen was, however, held in great respect by the more esteemed members of the flock.

When the Burla felt the warm object in the bosom of his shirt he awoke and took up the egg. He was about to break it, but when he proceeded

to do so the birds raised wild shouts of lamentation and the sea all round was filled with their wailing. When the Burla heard the tremendous hubbub he did not break the egg. He made a toy of it, and at night he kept it warm under his arm and during the day it lay on the bottom of the barrel under the blazing sun.

One fine morning on awakening, the Burla saw a little golden bird running about and leaping on the bottom of the barrel. The Burla and Maire Bán made a great pet of the little chicken, and it gave them unexpected help too for, but for it, they would have died from thirst.

This is how it saved them. Every day the birds came down over the barrels to see the dear little chicken, and as they screamed aloud moisture dropped from their beaks and was caught and drunk by the children.

After they were nineteen days in the barrels, the powerful bird which was entangled in the fastening succeeded in landing them on a great sandy beach, on a lonely island on which human eye had never rested before.

## XVI.

AN old lion lived on this island. It was impossible to say how old he was, for there were no records or oral traditions in his tribe. If, however, a lion's age can be estimated from his

mane or from his colour, this lion was as old as any lion that ever existed. He had a bright, wavy mane which, at times, was like the great waves madly dashing themselves upon the shore and at other times resembled clouds being swept along by the wind at night. It was especially like the clouds when he was angry, and his mane fell down over his fierce glaring eyes.

There was always a gleam in his eyes. Sometimes it appeared to be almost extinguished by old age or weariness of life; at other times it was so bright and menacing that no other animal had courage to look at him.

It is well-nigh impossible to describe his colour. It was a most pronounced yellow, but not a pleasing one. There are many shades of yellow that do not please the eye of man or beast. No other animal in the forest was tanned with the special yellow hue of the old lion. His colour alone was enough to terrify them all, for no animal could be marked by that peculiar yellow colour and not be at the same time powerful.

He had a great name throughout the forest as a fighter, although he had never been seen to fight. In the forest was a raven who had looked down upon the world from the tree-tops for two hundred years. This raven was as keen-witted as a raven usually is. Not only had he his native common-sense, but he had acquired a lot of



wisdom in his youth and had paid dearly for his acquisition. He was so prudent that he hardly spoke a word to friend or foe for many years. On one occasion the raven was asked what sort of fighter was the old lion, and he answered by winking at his questioner and uttering a loud guffaw. After that it was no wonder that the old lion's reputation as a fighter spread far and wide through the forest.

The old lion had peculiar habits. He had never been fond of work, even in his young days. He did not hunt and he did not fight, but neither action was necessary, as he had his family under complete control. His wife hunted for him. His children—sons and daughters—and also his grandchildren did his fighting for him. Perhaps he thought that it would be a disgrace for a respectable old grandfather like him to attack a poor little animal without just cause. At any rate, no living thing in the forest would attack him unless by treachery so great was his reputation.

He was never seen to eat. When his food was brought to him in his cave, the attendants had to withdraw before he began to eat. His appetite was, however, excellent, as was evident from the pile of bones on the floor of his cave.

He left the cave but seldom. When he had taken his siesta, he would come out for an airing, but not unless the weather was propitious. On

these occasions his roar was most frequently heard, and it would terrify a person who might not be frightened by his colour, or his blazing eyes, or his fleecy mane, or his cat-like tread. His voice was far from gentle, and seemed to be a challenge to all and sundry. Every animal in the forest shivered on hearing it. The crocodile sank deeper in his oozy bed when he heard the voice like thunder; and the eagle aloft, the nimble zebra, the tiger in his dark lair, even the elephant were shaken by the mighty sound.

It is no matter for surprise that the old yellow lion with the flowing mane and the deep voice was highly esteemed and respected.

#### XVII.

THIS kingly animal left his cave one night to go walking. He had had a surfeit of the raw flesh of a young wild ass in the morning and he was quite at his ease. He was satisfied with life and under no necessity to hurry. He had no mental anxiety or bodily need, but the customary spark in his eyes was rather obscured from his satiety. He would not have left his cave at all if the night had not been fine. He wanted to exhale the bad air he breathed in the cave. He stretched himself at the mouth of the cave, extending his fore-paws in front and his hind-paws behind, so that his body was almost in contact with the ground. His length was tremendous.

He rubbed his eyes with one paw, and on opening his eyes again he saw a tiny little bird perched on a bush quite near. He had awakened the bird, and he thought he should roar to remind the little wretch that it had no right to look at such a magnificent animal. He did nothing, however, as he was very inert and had consumed a little too much wild ass. Although he did not roar, he shook his mane and his tail impatiently and walked off into the gloom of the forest.

As a rule, he had two styles of walking—a cat-like tread and a kingly gait. On this occasion he adopted the latter. Every step he gave, and every turn of his beautiful body, proclaimed to man and beast that he despised them all. His gait and carriage gave no indication that he wished to fight. He had no desire to fight, but, of course, if he were forced to fight, he would not be found wanting.

He marched through the gloomy forest slowly and majestically without interfering with any living thing. His tread was so light that he almost seemed to regret the necessity of walking on the grass itself, but if any animal or bird happened to come across him in his path it hastened to give him a wide berth.

He encountered a troop of monkeys and it was highly amusing to see how those lively little animals sped off like the wind. The old lion

did not pretend that he saw the ugly little rogues at all, nor did he pretend to see the old ugly blue-nosed one that hung from a branch by his long, stiff wiry tail. The lion passed under the tree with his head bent down as if in thought. Whatever deep secret leonine thoughts were in his mind were suddenly interrupted. The old blue-nosed monkey was suspended by his tail, with his head and arms hanging down, and as the lion went past in his stately way without raising his head, the mischievous monkey hit him in the ear with a cocoa-nut.

It must not be thought, however, that the lion was not a patient animal. He never shook the least bit, but went on until he got clear of the forest and reached the wide plain between the forest and the sea. He stood in the middle of the plain, looked about him and beheld, on the strand, the barrels that had brought Maire Bán and the Burla to land and the birds still screaming around about them.

He uttered a roar which echoed wide through the forest and from the rocks, and put the birds to flight out over the sea.

## XVIII.

MAIRE Bán and the Burla were on the strand, trying with their utmost efforts to loosen the big bird that had saved them from death when they

---

heard the lion's roar. They were seized with terror. Maire Bán fell, but she held on to the net, which in this way became loosened, allowing the bird to escape.

What were the children to do? There was a wild beast making for them, and they had no means of defence. Maire Bán took up a stone to throw at him, but just at the moment she recalled to mind a lesson from the school-books of that period. This was to the effect that few wild animals would attack a person whom they thought to be dead. Maire threw herself on the ground, and she told the Burla to do the same.

The old lion passed by her leaving her untouched. But the poor Burla! He was in great danger. He had not understood Maire's advice. He was so frightened that he could not even cry. He threw himself on his back and then curled himself up as if he were a hedgehog.

The lion came up with his kingly movement. He began sniffing around. What was he going to do? Was he going to devour the Burla alive?

Maire's heart was in her mouth. The Burla was rolled up motionless. The big, cold, moist nose of the lion came in contact with his soft mouth, when suddenly Maire, on opening her eyes, was astonished to see the Burla with his feet around the lion's huge neck gripping him, for dear life, by the fleecy mane.

The lion shook himself, but the Burla held

fast. The lion did not shake himself again, and he made no further effort to shake him off. Perhaps he thought that the Burla would himself fall off, or perchance he did not feel his weight at all, or maybe he thought that he would be a fine plaything for the young cubs. It is difficult to say. At all events, he paid no attention to him until the Burla moved forward on his neck, gripped the mane more firmly, and uttered a cry almost as wonderful as the lion's roar itself. Then the lion trotted off with the Burla riding him. They made off into the forest, with Maire hot-foot after them.

## XIX.

THE lion did not slow down until he came close to the pleasant sunny little wood where the young monkeys were sporting and gambolling. Here there was an immense number of these mischievous little fellows in the wood. They were as numerous as the fairies, and just as merry and bright. There were tiny little ones no stronger than a three-days' old kitten, and there were stout sinewy ones almost as heavy as the old lion himself. There were bald-headed monkeys and hairy monkeys. Purple-nosed ones were there too, and on very friendly terms with little green-eyed ones. Stiff-tailed rascals were there trying to kick up a row. Fellows with

big, long noses were there, as were also their cousins with hardly any noses at all. Their colours were marvellous. Some of them were of brightest crimson, and some were as black as a cock-chaffer. They were yellow, gray, black, white, and purple. It was a pretty sight to see them merry-making in the sunny glade—their extraordinary colours mingling into one great colour scheme according as their movements became vigorous and rapid.

One little band stood apart under a cocoanut-tree. They were back-biting their many-coloured relations. If they had been dipped into the well of colours they were not left long enough in it to acquire any special colour.

The old fellow sitting on his hunkers by himself on the edge of the merry gathering was a sight that would provoke laughter. He had a long, thick bone in his paw, and he put the end of the bone into his mouth every few minutes, twisting and turning his old hairy face in his efforts with the bone. He looked like an unskilful flute-player accompanying the merriment, but the poor fellow was trying to extract marrow and not music!

A majestic mien is the natural inheritance of the lion family. No other animal, and no human being could have moved into the glade in such a stately manner as did the old lion. When the merry-makers observed his presence they stopped

and looked at him impudently, as if they were asking him what had brought him there. They ceased their din and fun-making, but they did not run away. The little ones with the long, stiff tails stood their ground longest. The big, clumsy fellows, who were not agile or good climbers, took to their heels. When, however, they saw the king of the forest was not going to yield an inch, they took to the tree-tops with incredible speed, screeching and screaming all the time. No fairy host ever vanished so quickly at daybreak as did the monkeys on the appearance of the lion.

Even though these ill-mannered, malicious little beasts were not strong or courageous enough, or even foolish enough, to stand their ground they set about insulting the proud, noble animal whom they hated. No sooner was his back turned than they began to throw stones and clay and different kinds of things at him. They struck the Burla in the ear with a lump of earth, a cocoa-nut whizzed by his other ear with **great** force. A big, soft, rotten fruit fell from the top of a high tree on to the lion's head, where it burst and almost blinded the poor beast with the stinking juice that flowed out. Even this occurrence did not disturb his majestic pride. He did not pretend to notice it. If he really did hear the mocking voices of his enemies high up



in the trees, he gave no sign that he did. Nature taught him that a king should be patient and dignified in such circumstances.

## XX.

THEY shortly reached the lions' cave, which was at the foot of a cliff. It was entered by a low, narrow passage. The passage was so low that the old lion had to lower his head when entering. The Burla's head came in contact with the red earth on top a few times before he got to understand how things were. He learned his lesson well, however, and was soon as expert as the lion himself in lowering his head. The red clay left a mark on his fair curling hair.

The lioness and the cubs were at home. They made way for the lion until he occupied his usual position, but when he was lying at his ease in the dry brown ferns they gathered round him to see what kind of toy he had brought to his children.

When he stretched himself in the dry ferns, the Burla fell off his back, but remained quiet, rolled up in the old lion's bed. The cubs gathered round in great surprise. They had never seen such a funny animal in their lives before. They suspected that, from his form and appearance, he belonged to the monkey-tribe, but he had no hairy hide except on the top of his head, where monkeys are usually bald. One of

them who was blind of an eye sniffed at him, but he only got a fragrant smell, quite unlike the odour of a monkey.

A lion cub can eat a bit of meat any time during the day whether he is hungry or not. The plaything which had been brought home to them had a nice sweet smell and they had no doubt that the white flesh would taste well. One of them placed his paw on his head, another seized him by the foot, and a third seemed to think that he had never seen anything so beautiful as his two fists.

They were as frisky as kittens playing with a mouse. One of them pretended that the Burla had bitten him, and he danced around as if in pain. Another assumed a fighting attitude, and seemed to be about to have a fierce set-to with the Burla. A third scratched the Burla's head with his paw.

As I have said before, one of the cubs was blind of an eye—how he lost his eye will be told later on—and since he tried to see as much as the others who had two eyes, he twisted his face into many a funny shape. The poor Burla could do nothing himself, but he had never been excelled in imitating other people. He, therefore imitated the blind-eyed cub and made them all laugh heartily.

They had had a raw young ass for breakfast, but by this time dinner hour was drawing nigh,

and the cubs were hungry. The three of them seized the Burla and were about to tear him to pieces when the old lion raised his head, shook his great mane, stiffened his tail, and uttered a roar that echoed through the cave and terrified his offspring. They left the Burla alone, sought out the darkest and most retired corners and remained there hungry and crestfallen until night.

The old lion was sleepy. Perhaps he was dreaming of his brave fighting days when he roared. He threw himself on his back and put up his four paws as if he were making a petition. He gave himself another turn and put one of his paws round the Burla and drew him in to him, so that the great mane covered him, and the fiery stare burned two holes through the boy's terrified brain, and the nose and huge mouth of the beast came against his cheek. He drew him closer and closer, but in the end the fierce light in his eyes became extinguished, his grip on the boy loosened somewhat, his mouth shut and his gleaming eyes were closed. The great king of the forest and his pet fell asleep!

## XXI.

As for Maire Bán, she almost died when she found that she could not keep up with the lion and his rider. She was thoroughly exhausted by her efforts in trotting after them and calling

to them. When she saw them disappearing under the high trees, she sat down and cried bitterly.

The little girl was in a truly terrible position—alone in the gloomy forest with night approaching and with no hope that she would ever see her darling brother again. She was indeed an orphan—fatherless, motherless, and now deprived of her brother. She was an object of pity as she sat on the ground without food or drink troubled and frightened.

She did not know what wild animals dwelt in the forest, and according as the darkness of night came on she realised the danger she was in. When a fruit fell from a tree she thought she was going to be seized by some horrible beast. Her eyes were sore from crying and peering all around her and it seemed to her that there was something frightful behind every tree. She heard a loud noise in the distance. She imagined it was the loud-tongued lions in search of prey, but it was only the great waves breaking on the sea-shore.

At the foot of a tree close by her was a hole that had been hollowed out by some animal. She stretched herself in it and covered herself with withered leaves. She could not move another step, even if doing so meant a long and happy life for her. She may have slept a little in the hollow, but before long she was startled. Night

had fallen, and there were hundreds of little animals all round her. She uttered a scream, but her own terror was no less than that of the little beasts who heard her cry. They scurried off with all speed. Great as was her fatigue, she was unable to sleep again.

Night could scarcely be distinguished from day in this forest. Often the night was brighter than the day, for there came out innumerable insects each with a sort of little lantern on his back. The light from any one of them was faint and scarcely one of them was bigger than the head of a large pin, but they emitted a very pleasing light, especially when a large number were together. A book with good print could be read without difficulty by a person who would stoop down so that the light would fall upon the page. Not only were they on the ground, but some of them could fly and others could jump twenty feet. The tiny lanterns carried by these insects were not all of the same colour. It seemed that there was no colour ever seen since God gave eyes to man but was there. They were like small, brilliant, many-coloured stars moving at lightning speed. Maire was frightened at first, but soon her fear gave way to pleasure at seeing this truly beautiful sight. Before long the little girl noticed that there were other creatures besides the dragon-flies near her. The little animals that

love the night were beginning their labours. Shy rabbits came out and envious owls and bats and big soft snails and blind moles, and they all gathered round the stranger as butterflies flutter round a candle-flame.

The pretty, many-coloured little things that were flying around her pleased Maire most. She took pity on them when she observed that the bats were chasing them, seeking to swallow them light and all. She picked up a twig and struck at every bat that came near her. She spent some time in this way, striking the bats and frightening them off with her shouts.

Probably this exertion tired her out, for she fell asleep quickly. When she awoke the morning was at hand, and all her companions of the night had departed. They had disappeared so completely that she well might have thought that they had never been there at all. She saw nothing but the huge trees, the foliage of which was so thick that the sun's rays penetrated it only at mid-day. She could not believe that she had not been dreaming, and she began to wonder that the bats succeeded in swallowing all the dragon-flies alive.

## XXII.

MAIRE Bán was tremendously hungry when she awoke. She would rather have a good meal than anything in the world. She would have given her eyes for a plate of meat, and she would readily have eaten even the dragon-flies she saw during the night. She thought of the nice oat cakes her mother used to make at home and of the goat's milk and her eyes filled with tears. If she had even half a cake!

She rose up and went to look for something to eat. She saw extraordinary fruits everywhere. Some of them presented a fine, bright, ripe appearance, but she was afraid to eat them lest they might be poisonous. She went on through the forest picking nuts and plucking and eating a certain soft, sweet fruit that resembled blackberries. This fruit did no more than take the keen edge off her hunger. She spent a couple of hours walking forward in this way until she reached the edge of the forest and saw the sea out in front of her. She directed her steps to a tiny beach, where she found plenty of cockles, edible seaweed and crabs. When she had satisfied her hunger she looked out over the sea and was both surprised and delighted. She could see a shoal of fish flying swiftly over the water

like birds with the sun shining upon them. There were thousands of them. At times she thought that they were only leaping out of the water, but it was not so. They were really flying with bright wings outspread.

She would have remained looking at them all day if only the Burla was with her. She began to cry as she thought of him. The poor creature carried off from her by a fierce lion! She had a long stick in her hand and she stuck it upright in the sand and made believe that it was the Burla. She asked him where he had gone, what had happened to him, why had he gone riding on the lion, why he had not waited for her as she trotted after him, but she got no answer.

“He was never much of a talker,” she said to herself, and indeed this was true.

She was about to question him again when she observed something bright in the sand about twenty yards away. It was an egg—a big egg as heavy as the weight the boys used to throw on Sunday mornings when going to Mass. The size and weight of the egg made her ravenous. She was scarcely able to lift it up, and she had to rest several times before she succeeded in bringing it with her into the wood.

She was about to break the egg with a sharp stone when she saw a big lion with a great mane moving along proudly behind the trees. Probably it was the lion that had carried her brother



off and she began to tremble when she thought that the poor little fellow was inside him and that she would soon join him there.

She slipped behind a bush so that she might not be seen. The lion was passing by without seeming to notice her. In a moment she would have been out of danger, but alas! he stopped suddenly. The little girl's heart almost ceased to beat. She was undone. Had he scented her? He put his nose in the air and shook himself once or twice impatiently. He retraced his steps a few paces and then stretched himself in the long grass, resting his head on his forepaws. His great shaggy mane was somewhat wet and he was so near to Maire that, when he shook it, some drops of moisture fell on her head.

He was evidently waiting for something, and did not know when it would arrive. It seemed to Maire Bán that he remained in that position for an hour, motionless except for the shaking of the wet out of his mane now and again, but Maire only imagined it. She was not a quarter of a minute there in all until she saw her brother who had been carried off coming towards the lion. He was about ten yards away when Maire caught sight of him. The lion had not seen either of them yet. What was she to do? If she called out to warn the Burla of his danger, it was certain that the fierce animal would be

awakened—if, indeed, he was asleep—and that both of them would be killed.

The Burla caught sight of the lion presently, but, instead of being terrified, he exhibited every token of delight and pleasure. In three leaps he was on top of the big, fleecy mane, pulling it and shaking it and making free with the lion in every way. The Burla seemed to have known the old lion all his life, and Daddy-oh (as the Burla called him afterwards) was more than proud at having such a pet.

At last the lion looked in Maire's direction and saw her. His eyes blazed fiercely. He crouched to spring on her, thinking that she was some queer species of monkey, perhaps because of her little brown dress, but, at that moment, the Burla gave his usual three leaps, and, reaching his sister, he hugged and kissed her.

There are many ways of welcoming a person. There are some people, who, if they got a start, would prefer nothing better than to give the person who was in danger a good beating. This is how it was with Maire. She gave him a fine beating by way of welcome. If it were not for the old lion the poor Burla would have been as black as a chafer.

His wife and children thought that the old lion had taken leave of his senses when he brought home another pet. Nobody knew where he would stop, the fool!

## XXIII.

UNLESS one had the eyes of an owl he would not see much in the lion's cave except when the sun was high in the sky. When the sun was in that position one could estimate what the place was like, for the rays of the sun poured down through little holes in the roof.

It would be difficult to discover the cave without a guide. Its mouth was at the bottom of a great rocky cliff, and it was approached by a long, narrow, crooked passage. The sides and roof of this passage were composed of soft red earth, but in the interior of the cave itself, small stones and the roots of trees were mostly seen. There was a soft red earth in the cave too, and after the rainy season large lumps of it used to fall upon the lions.

To all appearance the lions had occupied this cave for a long time. There was a huge pile of bones at the entrance, bleached by sun and rain. These were the bones of the animals that the lions had eaten for a long time past. There was scarcely an animal in the forest the bones of some ancestor of which were not to be seen here on the level place where they fed. There were white back-bones there from which the inmost marrow had been sucked long, long since, and there were others with a little meat still adhering to them.

There were skulls and feet and knees and ankles and shin-bones piled indiscriminately. An ass's head was thrown beside an ox's back-bone, and the legs of a wild horse lay on top of the ribs of the species of goat peculiar to that forest. Maire Bán said that she saw a blackman's skull there. She knew that it was a man by the hair and beard. The lions had a marvellous appetite to have accounted for such a quantity of meat.

The herbage around about this hideous pile grew very thickly. There was grass higher than the Burla, and he often got lost in it and could be heard crying with fright. Even when Maire Bán was there only the top of her head could be seen. There was a great branching tree at the entrance to the cave, and there was no kind of bird that ever lived in the forest but was warbling there at daybreak. One would have to go very far into the cave to sleep if he did not want to be awakened by their music in the morning.

The cave was badly lit except at mid-day. At that time one could see the roots of the trees growing downwards towards him and seeking to catch hold of him, as it were, with long, thin, crooked fingers. Maire's hair often got caught in those roots.

The size of this cave was unknown. Cavities and passages and long crooked little paths ran in underground, but they were so dark and

gloomy that Maire nor the Burla never saw how long they were.

Maire made her home in one of these dark cavities. It appeared that there was some big tree growing overhead, for the roots hung down, and some of them were of great size. The little girl had never seen any tree in Ireland as large as were those roots. She had a comfortable place, for she was not long there until she brought in some grass and made herself a snug little nest.

The Burla spent most of his time with his old friend, the big lion. The lion was fonder of the Burla than he was of his own young ones. Nothing would satisfy him but to draw the Burla in close to him every night on going asleep. The corner which they occupied was not far from Maire's nest, and she often heard the lion snoring at night, or her brother whispering in his sleep. Not a move made by the big wild beast during the night but was heard in Maire's corner, and she was terrified at the thought that the lion was going to devour her brother. There was no danger, however, and they were very fond of each other.

The lioness was not too pleased that he had taken the two children under his protection. Up to that she had quite enough to do waiting on him, but now there were two others in addition, and she said to herself that it was a case of the older one grew the more silly he became.

Before long, however, she had a different tale to tell. The earth in the sides and roof of the cave was becoming wetter and softer, and they would have had to look out for another cave were it not for Maire. The sleeping-place of the lioness was the worst, for every morning she found that a heap of wet clay had fallen on her back, but Maire thought of a way of making the place warm and dry for her. She brought in an armful of the bleached bones from the pile outside, and she thrust them into the earth over the lioness' bed just as little wedges are stuck into mortar. The bones kept the clay in position and it ceased to fall.

This work was a fine pastime for Maire and the Burla, and in a short time they had beautified and ornamented the cave with the bones of extraordinary beasts, so that it was thought that the old lion was as sensible as he was strong. His fame was spreading amongst his people.

#### XXIV.

THE big old lion had, however, a secret which he never disclosed to anyone. The Burla discovered this secret in the following way. He and the lion were asleep together as usual one night in the cave. They had just had a good meal—colt's meat and a little badger meat that had been left over from the morning's meal. It

was evident that they had partaken heartily of both foods, for both their mouths were smeared with blood.

The lion was sleeping quietly with his two fore-paws around the Burla. The Burla was awake, but if he desired to escape from his friend's embrace he could not do so. He was, however, quite contented as he was. A good part of the night had passed, but he was not getting sleepy. It was spring-time and numerous worms emitting light were to be seen all over the ground. It is probable that the poor Burla had eaten too much colt's meat, for his appetite was not up to the mark. He did not sleep a wink, and Maire Bán heard him sighing and groaning all the night.

Towards morning he fell asleep and began to dream. He thought he was at home in his own house in Galway seated beside the turf fire with his father and mother. He was on his father's knee and his father's big, long aquiline nose was against his cheek. His mother was talking at a tremendous rate, while his father listened patiently. He fell into a slumber on his father's knee. He caught hold of his father's hair, as he thought, but in reality it was the old lion's mane that he had gripped.

The lion stirred. He did not like anyone—man or beast—to meddle with his mane. No one had the right to take such a liberty with him.

He snarled. Wasn't the Burla very bold? He would have to teach him manners—the ill-bred little monkey!

The Burla did not awaken, however, and no more did the old lion. He had eaten too much and his digestion was troubling him. He only moved his muzzle a little. He opened his mouth as if to yawn, and he did not fully close it again.

The Burla's fingers were entwined in the big fleecy mane, but he managed to get them free and where did he put one of his fists but into the lion's open mouth!

A worm fell upon the Burla's nose, and he awoke suddenly. It was one of the brightest of the worms and the others which were scattered over the ground gathered around it. The Burla counted ten of them on the lion's nose—each with his little lantern. The light was surprisingly bright when the Burla awoke. He lifted his head from the lion's neck to see the lovely things that were producing the light and he looked into the lion's mouth and down his big red throat.

He received a great surprise. There was not a tooth in the lion's head! He made a closer examination of his friend. He had no talons on his paws either!

The old lion, who had the great reputation as a fighter, had lost both his offensive and defensive weapons. He could not fight even if he wanted



to do so. The smallest animal there could beat him if he only knew how helpless he was.

The Burla pitied his friend. He would not be the person to give away his secret. If it were believed that he could not defend himself, his power would be at an end. His only weapon of defence now was his reputation.

From this it will be gathered why he had not fought for a long time, why he never opened his mouth when others were present, and why he ate and slept by himself in a retired corner of the cave. Let us, along with the Burla, sympathise with the old warrior who had lost his weapons.

## XXV.

AFTER this the children and the lions became exceedingly friendly. The old lion—Daddy-oh as the Burla called him—was never seen anywhere without the Burla trotting after him like a puppy. The Burla was never a good walker, or a good talker, and he had got many a beating from his mother because of his habit of going on all fours. The poor creature! He would have to get up on his two hind legs like an ordinary person, and this was very troublesome, for he was afflicted from his youth with a certain disease of the bones which rendered his legs weak and crooked. When he would be standing

with his back towards you, you would think it was only a trunk with a hoop of flesh under it. The width of this hoop was greater than its height. You would imagine that one of his knees did not agree with the other, and that they were always seeking to move apart from each other!

A favourite sport of the boys at home was to make a little dog owned by one of them jump between the Burla's crooked legs without touching him. The Captain's wife had surprised them one day as the dog was jumping through the hoop of flesh under the Burla's little body. The dog was as clever at jumping through as the women-acrobats one sees jumping through a hoop from a horse's back at a circus; but when the Burla's mother saw them . . . . .!

The Burla's legs were shaped in such a way that it was easier for him to get about like the animals round him and this he did and was but seldom seen standing upright.

He suffered from a stoppage in his speech likewise. He turned the words round in his mouth as if he were eating them, and very often those that escaped could hardly be recognised as words they were so bent and twisted after being chewed by him.

He was bad enough in this respect before he left home, but when he had been some time in the forest among the lions the sounds he uttered were hardly to be distinguished from those made

by the animals with which he dwelt. He could imitate Daddy-oh—his roar, his manner of walking, and his other extraordinary ways. He would squat at the entrance to the cave looking at Daddy-oh, and every change in the big beast's countenance would be reflected in the boy's. If Daddy-oh winked, the Burla winked too. If the lion moved his mouth the Burla would do the same, pretending he was laughing. The insecure hold he originally had on human speech and habits was growing weaker and weaker.

The lions' food did not agree with Maire Bán at first, although she gradually got accustomed to it. As for her brother, it seemed that he had never eaten any meat so tasty as monkey's flesh. If Daddy-oh threw him a wild dog's paw he jumped for joy. He would eat as much as one of the cubs, or nearly as much, and it was a funny sight to see him trying to grab a bone from the one-eyed cub when food was rather scarce.

He was able to attack only the smallest of the animals that lived in the forest. A large number of tiny animals like rabbits lived underground near the lions' cave. They came out only at nightfall. They walked about rapidly, and it would have been difficult for the Burla to catch them by following them. He learned a stratagem, however, from watching the wolves when in search of food. He would remain quiet and motionless in the grass or herbage outside their

holes, and he often succeeded in catching one as it emerged. He would strangle it, smear his mouth and face with its blood, and carry it into the cave in his mouth with the air of having performed a great deed of daring by catching it in that manner.

## XXVI.

ONE night he brought home a little animal of that kind. Daddy-oh was there before him, but he was the only one. The others were roaming the forest in search of food, but Daddy-oh had eaten so much that it seemed he would not require a meal again for three months.

The Burla cast the little animal he had killed at the feet of the old lion. He sniffed at it and no more. He did not taste it, as it was no food for him. The Burla was disgusted that the food he himself had succeeded in bringing home should remain untasted. It was a great insult to him, and he almost wept. He went out lest his perturbation should be observed, and whom should he see sitting at the entrance to the cave but his sister making a daisy-chain by the light from the glow-worms scattered all round.

He sat down beside her, and as he was vexed he was not pleased with what she was doing. He snatched the chain, which was nearly finished, out of her hands and pulled it to pieces. She

gave him a good beating, however, for his roughness.

He became fonder of Maire because of the beating she had given him and the little speech he had left returned to him quite well. He threw his arms round his sister's neck and began to tell her that he did not like the lions, that he hated Daddy-oh, that he was determined to escape from them, that he would return home to his mother, and tell her that Maire was not friendly with him, and then "you will be put into a dark hole," he said, "and will have no food or light for the rest of your life."

The Burla had not said so much together since they left the *Brideog*, and Maire was highly delighted to hear him speak so freely. She had been advised, on their being transferred from the *Brideog* to the barrels to act as a mother towards him, but she had fulfilled her task very badly. It was a good job that he had not lost his speech completely!

She tried to get him to talk more, but she failed. He paid more attention to the glow-worms than to what Maire said. She was unable to get another syllable out of him. His attention was apparently not directed to her, but to the cries of the different wild animals that came to their ears from the depths of the forest—each animal giving tongue after his own peculiar way.

---

Maire became lonely when she had no one to speak to. She had compelled the Burla to speak to her before by giving him a beating.

"I'll beat you again if you don't speak to me," she said.

He remained silent.

She struck him a blow in the ear, saying sharply, "Now, will you speak to me?"

The poor Burla thought that there was nothing but injustice in the world. His thoughts were the same as on that day in Galway long ago when he had been beaten for losing his cake. He could not express his gloomy thoughts in words, but they were reflected on his face by the light of the glow-worms.

His lips moved, his eyes grew moist and filled with tears.

His face was longer than usual, and now and again an almost inaudible sigh escaped him.

Daddy-oh was at the entrance to the cave craning his neck to try to see them. He had never in his life seen man or beast in such a condition. What was the matter at all?

A tear which was trembling on the Burla's eyelid fell out and rolled slowly down his cheek. It was followed by another and another, and still more in a short time, and each one of them glistened.

The old lion was amazed to see his little friend

shedding moist jewels! He returned into the cave and began to think of the occurrence.

As for the poor glow-worms, a lot of them were almost drowned!

When the lioness returned home after hunting all night in the forest, the old lion spent some time with her in her own corner of the cave. The Burla thought that undoubtedly they were discussing the beautiful jewels. The lioness would not credit the story at first, and the lion had to bite her ear before he could persuade her that it was true! After that she would believe anything he would say. The cubs, who were listening to the conversation, thought it would be splendid if they could also drop jewels from their eyes, but of course they could not.

That was the first fit of crying the Burla had in the lions' forest.

## XXVII.

THE Burla had not dried up his tears when he ran away from Maire and went forward until he reached the edge of the wood. He did not feel the thorns or sharp stones so thick and rough was the skin on his hands and knees from his constant creeping about.

There was a beautiful plain at the edge of the forest through which flowed a great slow river. He sat down in a pleasant place beside the river.

The moon was full and the great sea lay stretched before him like a moving sheet of light. He paid no attention, however, to the sea, or to the moon, or the river, for his heart was breaking with sorrow. A terrible fit of loneliness came over him at being so far away from his people. He would have given anything to be home again. He hated the animals, Daddy-oh, and even Maire herself. If he had his own way he would not have left a head on man or beast!

Flints were plentiful on the river bank. He took one of them, fixed it in the ground, and began striking it with another to pass the time. He then pretended to himself that he was striking an enemy's head.

"Now, Daddy-oh, won't you eat the meat I present you with?" said he, striking the two stones together sharply and producing a spark.

This afforded him great satisfaction.

"Naughty Maire, will you make me cry again?" he said, bringing the stone in his hand down heavily on the other stone—Maire's head, by the way.

"You blue-nosed monkey, will you scratch me again?" he exclaimed, drawing more sparks out of the stones.

It was the dry season, and the moss and brush-wood all around were as dry and as inflammable as gunpowder. A spark fell upon the moss and soon it was on fire.



The boy had not seen a fire since he left the *Brideog*, and he was delighted to see the fine flames again. He gathered all the twigs and touchwood near him and made up a great fire.

An east wind blew in from the sea on that night, and soon the smell of the conflagration reached the forest. Within the memory of the oldest animal there that smell had not been noticed before, and they began to make for the place to see what was going on. They were all so surprised that the fierce ones forgot to attack the quieter ones.

The treacherous tiger was there, and along with him came the wild goat that never tasted flesh or blood. The long-necked giraffe was there with his head proudly poised in the air. The elephant was there as big as a small house. Tiny animals seen but seldom were there winking at one another, and the monkeys, of course, looking as solemn as a young hangman. There was a kind of salmon in the river that keep their heads over water during the night and they drew towards the bank to behold the wonder; but they very speedily submerged themselves as a big ugly crocodile came up to have a good look at them!

When he saw the crowd gathered around the fire he opened his big mouth as if he were about to swallow one of them.

There was a little blue monkey there and

nothing would satisfy him but to seize a burning stick and whirl it around rapidly in a fiery circle around his head.

The flames came in contact with the grey beard of an old goat that was near and he rushed off roaring and screeching until he came up to a withered bush, which he set on fire!

The flames grew in size and intensity in no time. Some of them, which rose up in the air like white living tongues, caught the lower branches of the bare trees. Others crept along the ground and made the animals which they reached hop about it as if dancing.

A single idea took possession of the whole animal tribe and they made off at top speed, every one uttering his own special cry. May such a din be never heard again!

The east wind fanned the flames until the whole section of the forest that was south-west of the river was a flaming mass.

The sap was rising in some of the trees and the flames failed to grip them at first. They caught fire in the end, however, and then the living flames shot up in the air above the forest. A flame of a different colour arose from each species of tree, and it seemed that they were striving, by their extraordinary colour effects, to win a prize for beauty.

## XXVIII.

IT was lucky for the Burla that there was not a tree, or a bush, or any brushwood between the fire and the sea. If there had been he was done for.

The heat of the conflagration was so intense that he had to run on to the beach for fear he should be burned alive.

Long before the fire had reached any great dimensions, Maire smelled it. She made off towards it like the animals, but she failed to find the place where it started on account of the heat and smoke.

She swam across the stream and made her way fairly well until she reached a place opposite the fire on the further bank.

The Burla was standing up near the fire facing the wind, and the little monkey with the burning stick was near him. Maire thought at first that it was not the Burla but some young wood imp with skin brightly coloured by the flames. She recognised him, however, by his shape and the crookedness of his legs, for no imp that ever lived in a wood or even in the nether regions could be so crooked and mis-shapen.

She warned him to keep out from the fire, but with no result, as he probably did not hear her.

Perhaps then it was the shout that Maire

uttered to her brother that terrified the animals. Up to that they had been quiet.

As her brother paid no heed to her, she jumped into the river with the intention of swimming across to rescue him, but when she was almost in mid-stream she saw under the opposite bank a huge crocodile with his nose above the water.

She was a good swimmer, but she almost lost the use of her arms with the fright of seeing that monster. She turned on her back and floated down, but, alas! the crocodile was floating down stream too, and one of his little vicious eyes was fixed upon her. Would he not have a nice sweet meal after the night?

She attempted to swim against the stream, but it was heavy work. Despite all her exertions she made but poor progress. She was dead beat. She could not swim another stroke when she saw floating towards her a large tree which had been growing on the bank of the river, but which had been knocked down and set on fire. Some of the branches of this tree were even yet on fire, and smoke and half-extinguished flames and vapour rose up from them. She succeeded in getting up on this tree to the great disgust of the crocodile. When he saw this "steamer" coming near him he opened his terrible jaws to attack it. He did not take into account, however, the tremendous impact, and his huge skull was cleft

in two. It seemed to Maire that she was boating on a river of blood so much did the colour of the water change after the death of the monster.

Maire had now no fear except that she might be swept out to sea. She thought of taking to the water again, but she knew that she could not reach the bank however well she might swim, for there was about a half-mile of soft mud between the river and either bank, and even a rabbit could not walk on that mud.

She lost courage. It seemed that she was to die of hunger out on the sea.

She began to say her prayers very earnestly, and there was no prayer that she had ever heard from her mother at home, or from Sister Mary Andrew in the Convent in Galway that she left unsaid.

However, it is said that God's help is nearer than the door. There was a sort of weir near the mouth of the river with large stones on it. The current was strong and the "steamer" got fastened between two stones.

All was well now. She reached the bank without difficulty, and had only time to thank God for having saved her when she fainted on the grass.

The Burla thought that his dear sister was dead when he saw her lying on the ground and he began to cry.

His wailing awakened her, and she got up and looked into his face and both of them began to laugh.

## XXIX.

AFTER Maire awoke, they both went into a hole under a rock on the strand where they were in no danger from the fire. They drew close to each other affectionately, and neither spoke a word until their first terror began to wear off. Clinging to each other they gazed on the tremendous fire, the flames from which shot up into the sky and they listened to the agonized cries of the animals which were trying to escape.

The poor Burla's eyes were filled with tears, and his head rested on Maire's shoulders. Every now and again he shivered and at every shiver Maire drew him closer to her. There was a good light which came, not from the moon or stars, but from the big trees that were burning all around them. The light varied in colour from time to time. Sometimes when the Burla opened his eyes, Maire's skin appeared to him to be so red that he thought she was bleeding. At other times she appeared to be as white as snow and he thought she was dying. He did not notice that the very same colour appeared on his own face.

Directly opposite them, near the river, was a little grove. There was not a tree or a bush

to be seen there. The only growth was some long withered grass. This grass had caught fire early in the night and before long the grove was laid bare. Some of the animals, in their efforts to escape destruction, made for this grove and they could be seen dancing and leaping in a clumsy way so great was the heat coming up from the hot ground.

Very few of the animals had the intelligence to go against the wind and to escape from the fire in that way. They tried to get clear of the burning smell and the smoke that was smothering them, and as the fire was between them and the wind, those that were unable to move along quickly were unable to save themselves and many of them were burned alive. It was piteous to hear their cries when the flames reached them. When Maire heard these cries of agony she drew her brother close to her and petted him and spoke to him in a motherly way, so that he might not hear them. It was of no avail, however. He heard the heartrending screams and he knew that he himself was to blame for it all.

They could not tell what heavy fragrant odour arose from the fire on the other side of the forest, but in the hollow where they were the children noticed it against the wind and it almost put them to sleep.

There was a large tree burning near them, or fifty yards away, and an animal like a fox with

a big bushy tail was looking at the beautiful sight. By the manner in which his nose was in the air it was evident that he liked the odour. The sparks were rising in the air and falling again in showers. A spark fell upon the back of the fox—if fox it was—and the moment he felt the heat he uttered a terrible cry, rolled himself up in a ball, leaped ten feet in the air, and fell down in a ball of fire.

It was dawn when the boy and girl fell asleep.

When Maire awoke the Burla was not near her and she got a fright. At first she thought he had been burned alive, but she was overjoyed to see him on the strand trying to catch a crab. He did not succeed in catching the crab, but all the same he brought the crab with him to the hollow, for the crab gripped him on the thigh and would not let go until he was killed. The poor Burla was howling all the time. This little crab, no bigger than half-a-crown, made the Burla cry—a thing that neither the wild animals nor the mighty blaze had done. When he saw blood he thought he would never be cured.

They spent three days and three nights in the hollow and around about the strand before they were able, owing to the heat of the ground, to return to the lions' cave.

On their return home they were able to estimate the damage that had been done. The whole place was a desert without herb or plant. The



branches and foliage of the trees were all burned. An odd trunk stood out against the sky here and there as black as coal. The bones of all the little animals which were unable to escape were scattered all around. Some of these animals had not been completely burned and this turned out lucky for the brother and sister. They had many a tasty meal off the half-roasted flesh. Indeed the fire was a great stroke of good luck to anyone who preferred roast meat to raw!

On their way they met a little animal not as big as a rabbit. His footprints were clearly visible in the dust and ashes of the fire. It was evident that he had just arrived as everything all around had been burned. Maire thought to come on him unawares and catch him, but she saw this was not possible, as he was looking straight into her face with a wild appearance. He was so terrified, however, that he did not run away, and when she seized him he died of fright. They ate him and Maire made a sling out of the sinews and a piece of skin, and before they reached the lions' cave she was as skilful as any boy that ever stood upon the Claddagh Bridge in Galway throwing stones at the sea-gulls.

The trail of the conflagration was visible in the savage islands near them, and it was visible from the ships out at sea, and caused wonder to many.

## XXX.

WHEN the children reached the entrance to the lions' cave, they saw the old lion and his young ones standing on the level field in fighting trim. It would be very hard to tell from Daddy-oh's appearance that his teeth and claws were not in good condition. His tail and his big fleecy mane stood erect and a dangerous light shone from his eyes.

The children could see no enemy, but soon they observed two little monkeys, of the blue-nosed variety, high up in the ivy that grew in the crevices of the cliff over the mouth of the cave. They looked vicious, and were trying to loosen and roll down a larger stone on top of the lions.

Maire Bán saw the great danger in which her old friends were—a danger of which they were not conscious, as they were too excited. No sooner did she see it than she gripped her sling. The Burla got a stone for her and she fired it at the monkeys.

The largest of the monkeys hung suspended by his tail from a bush, and was using his utmost exertions to dislodge the big stone. It was not the stone that came tumbling down the slope of the cliff, however, but the monkey himself! When he was hit upon the tail his grip on the bush loosened and he fell down among the lions.

Daddy-oh was thunderstruck when he saw his enemy falling down. He opened his mouth, and if his family had not been behind him and he himself had not been in the forefront, it is certain that they would have discovered his secret. The poor beast! He had not observed Maire or the Burla coming, nor had he seen the shot fired. He thought that what had happened was some monkey-trick and he was half-afraid to approach his old enemy, who now lay at his feet with his back broken. The lioness and the cubs were similarly reluctant to approach. They kept away from the dead monkey and remained gazing at him, ready to pounce on him, however, if he should get up.

Maire Bán and the Burla had no fear. They ran into the group laughing and rejoicing at having been able to save their old friends. Maire took the monkey by the feet and the Burla took him by the head to bring him into the cave. But alas! the Burla was not very strong, and before he reached the mouth of the cave he slipped and fell. The cubs had to come to Maire's assistance, and the Burla was left weeping and wailing at the entrance to the cave.

When inside the monkey got short shrift. The lions were very hungry, as food had been very scarce since the forest fire. He was torn to pieces. One quarter fell to Daddy-oh and the other to Mammy-oh—the lioness. The one-eyed

cub got the back-bone and the rest was divided up among the other cubs with the exception of the "champion's portion"—the soft blue nose, daintiest morsel of all, which was bestowed on Máire.

When the old lion had eaten his portion, he got up and went out to have a chat with his old pet, the Burla. The latter was not there, however, and as Daddy-oh had eaten too much monkey to put himself to much trouble, he merely returned to the cave and sent out Maire to look for her brother.

Her dear little brother was not to be seen anywhere. She called and shouted, but to no avail. She searched every hole and path all round, but without result, and, in the end, she was obliged to return home tired and worn-out.

The Burla had left his friends before, but they thought he would not return on this occasion, and Daddy-oh had neither heart nor appetite to eat his food because he had let his pet go away from him again. He lay in his sleeping-place during the night, and, although he was drowsy, he did not sleep. He could not do so as his dear friend had been carried off. He raised his big heavy head from time to time and looked round expecting him to be there. He sighed when he did not appear. He tried to sleep but failed, and spent a very uneasy night without the Burla.

At daybreak Maire went in to him. As they were both anxious and troubled, she thought that they had better be together.

“My dear, lovely little brother is gone from me,” said Maire to the lion.

“My foster-son! My pet! My treasure,” said the lion after his own manner. You must know, by the way, that lions can talk when they are very excited, but that a person could not understand their dialect unless he had spent a long time among them.

“Don’t be troubled or anxious, Daddy-oh,” said Maire Bán, putting her hand on his big damp nose; “don’t be anxious, for I will go to look for him when the sun is up. I will search the forest and shore and sea, and I will not rest until I find my darling little brother.”

“Good! Good!” answered the old lion in his own speech, and he rubbed his nose against the girl’s ear to show how great was his affection for her.

They agreed on that plan.

When morning came Maire Bán dressed. She put the sling around her neck, took a good stout stick in her right hand, bade good-bye to the lions, and departed in search of the Burla.

They thought things were bad enough when they imagined that the Burla was wandering through the gloomy forest. They would have been utterly miserable had they known that he

had been carried off by nine blue-nosed monkeys who had come on him unawares.

The poor little Burla !

### XXXI.

MAIRE Bán went on through the dark, lonely wood. About noon she reached a shining pool on her way, and as she was getting tired and the sun was very hot she thought it would be a good thing to bathe her feet in the water.

The bank was high and she did not succeed in getting her feet down to cool in the water, but she stretched herself on a rock near the water and thrust her two hands into the bright pool. She saw another girl down below in the water. The form and appearance of this girl pleased her. Her beauty delighted her. She smiled and the girl in the pool smiled likewise. They were becoming very friendly !

Maire did not realise at first that she was looking at her own image, it was so long since she had seen a mirror, but when she did recognise herself and knew that she was pleased with her own form her joy was all the greater, and, to tell the truth, she spent a long time on that rock admiring her own good looks.

Some animal had had a big feast near the pool some time before. The meal must have consisted of gaudy peacocks and brilliant-hued parrots, for feathers were all over the place.

Maire took up a long gray feather and stuck it in her hair, and as she liked its appearance, she gathered up all the brightest and biggest feathers, and twisted them in her hair. She then picked some flowers and wove them into garlands, placing one around her neck and another around her waist. She fixed the longest feathers she had in the two garlands, so that she succeeded in making for herself a beautiful, airy suit out of flowers and feathers!

It was fine to see her dancing on the rock under the sun's rays in that gay attire. Not only did she dance on the rock, but she hopped nimbly from branch to branch, pretending that she was a bird, and that she was able to move through the air on the wing as well as—yes, as well as a wren, anyway!

Gazing at her reflection in the pool, and hopping merrily from branch to branch, she almost forgot the poor Burla.

Pay great attention to me now, for I have something wonderful to say. Anything more wonderful than this never happened in the Land of Wonders, or even in Ireland.

About this time the old raven, who had spent his life in the top of a tree near the lions' cave, had been seized by a desire to see some of the country, and to visit his children and his children's children wherever they were. Where should he be, when Maire had completed her fine

feather suit, but upon a branch close by! He was very tired after his journey, as his wings were rather weak and he fell into a light sleep when he reached the tree.

Maire Bán was humming a tune very like the lark's song and it awoke the raven. He could not believe his eyes. He had never seen such a bird before, and yet he knew every species of bird that ever existed. Maire was some distance from him running from branch to branch rapidly and as the foliage was rather thick he saw her only in glimpses.

“Not only am I losing the strength of my wings, but I am getting blind,” he said in his own mind, when Maire disappeared from sight; “old age is coming upon me. Death is not far off—but I have seen a great deal in my time——”

He saw Maire Bán sitting at the foot of a tree near him. He looked at her sharply with his left eye, and then, turning his head, he looked at her more sharply with the right eye. It was clear to him that he knew her. He was certain that he had seen her before in some place, but where? He began to think in his raven's way, but no light came to him until Maire began to sing. Then he recognised her. The poor raven! He had no idea that she did not belong to his own species. He had never seen feathers on her before. He had always seen her in company with the lions, but he was certain now that she



belonged to the tribes of air and that the lions had in some way bewitched her. He would rescue her. He cawed, but Maire paid no attention. This affected him very much. It was a pity for such a fine creature to be fettered. It would be a great credit to him if he could rescue her from the power of the lions. He was wiser than any other bird in the forest,—or he thought he was, and that is the same thing—but it was clear to him that he would require assistance. If the lions were few they were, at the same time, strong. He would take counsel with his people, and he issued a proclamation calling upon all the birds of the forest to assemble in three days to debate the great question.

### XXXII.

THEY all assembled. Thousands and thousands came from all parts of the forest, and it is certain that there would have been a few present from foreign countries had they been invited. The sun was setting when the business began, as the owl had announced that the sunlight did not suit his eyes.

They held their meeting in a pleasant little wood near the pool, and the raven was chosen as president.

“He has the age if he hasn’t the sense,” said the owl in a low voice, for he thought that he

himself should have been selected to preside. The carrion-crow heard him, and as he was a great friend of the raven's, and hated the owl thoroughly, he cried out, saying :

“ My friends,” said he, “ has any ugly, blind bird here permission to speak ill of our president ?”

“ No! No!” they all answered, unmusically.

The carrion-crow looked in the direction of the owl with contempt.

“ That owl again,” said the wren. “ He would have been ejected were it not for the president himself.”

Then the work of the assembly began.

A semblance of sense came into the owl's eyes. He overbore the assembly. They were not of one mind concerning Maire. Some said that she was a bird, while others held the contrary opinion. The eagle was very angry and bold.

Trying to convince them that it was a real bird, he received much opposition.

“ But look at the wings on her,” said the crow, mockingly.

“ And look at her feet,” said the crane.

“ It is really a bird, is it not ?” said the eagle, catching hold of the crane by the neck.

“ Oh! yes! yes!” exclaimed the crane, as he was being choked.

The eagle treated a number of the others in like manner, until they admitted that it was a bird.

“ Let one of you birds go to the lion,” said the eagle, in a high and mighty tone, “ and tell him that he must release the bird he has in fetters.”

“ You yourself, eagle,” said a little bird that was concealed beneath a dockleaf, “ you are highly esteemed by animals and birds——”

“ I have something else to attend to,” answered the eagle; “ I am getting hungry.”

The little stonechat, who was near him, drew away, for he did not trust the big bird.

“ The owl,” said another bird.

“ I would feel highly honoured to take your message, but, as you know, the sunlight does not suit my eyes. The morning is already at hand,” said the owl, disappearing quickly into a hole in a tree.

“ The corncrake !”

A bird that is not often seen came forward.

“ I would willingly go,” said he, “ but everybody knows that I am not much of a talker. I have only one tune, alas !”

Then it was remembered how fond was the corncrake of foreign climes, and he was expelled.

“ The pelican !”

A big, clumsy bird spoke up. “ My mate has laid only two eggs in ten years,” said he sorrowfully; “ one of the eggs is being hatched now, and we have every hope of a good brood, and, with your leave, I will go home now.”

At last it was decided to draw lots, and the lot fell to the wren.

Then the president delivered a fine address. Such eloquent speech had never been heard for years in the forest. He recommended the wren to be brave and bold; he told him that all the birds of the forest were ready to avenge him on the lions if they injured him. "And be assured," he concluded, "that your mate and young ones will be looked after if anything should happen to you."

The speech was applauded and the wren departed with great courage.

### XXXIII.

THE wren did not reach the entrance to the lions' cave for two days. At sunrise he was perched on top of a branch opposite the cave making as much noise as a sea-gull. He was as proud as a peacock that he had been chosen as the messenger. A little bird like him going as envoy to the mighty king of the forest! It was indeed an honour. He was rather timid, but did not pretend that he was. The king of the forest was a fierce animal, and he was only a miserable little bird. The lion could swallow him alive! He thought of his mate at home in her comfortable nest in the bush; he thought of his young brood and began to shiver. But were not the

denizens of the air bound to avenge his death should the lion kill him? That gave him great courage, and he would remind the lion of it in the beginning. At the same time he would have to be very polite towards the lion. Good manners had never done harm to an envoy. But was he not a long time in coming out considering that he had been calling him for half-an-hour?

As the lion did not come out to him, he began to compose an address suitable to the occasion. The address was not perhaps as strong as it should have been, but delay blunts the edge of enthusiasm.

At last the great proud lion emerged. The poor little wren began to shiver. He tried to speak, but words failed him. He could not remember that he was the envoy of the wide-spread tribes of the air. He was shamed for ever.

He saw the lion coming towards him as he thought. He would have fled if he could, but he could not lift his wings. He was stuck to the branch, held by some magic spell of the lion's. He thought every minute he would see the red throat of the terrible beast and that all would be up with him. A kind of weakness seized him.

When he came to himself, the lion was lying at the foot of the tree. His forepaws were stretched out, his big, noble, hairy head upright, and he had a troubled look. Sorrow could be

seen in the depths of his eyes, in which the wonderful gleam they had of old was somewhat dimmed. Tears might even be expected to fall from these sorrowful eyes.

When the wren saw the condition in which the lion was, he thought that he was afraid of the denizens of the air, and his courage came back to him. He spoke up boldly and strongly. He told him that he should set free the noble bird held in captivity by him. He explained to him how fierce his people could be if driven to it. They had long, hard beaks and strong wings. He threatened him with the eagle in the end, and then waited to hear what the lion had to say.

The lion did not speak, however. To all appearance, he paid no attention to the talk, but continued to sigh and groan after his lost pet.

The lioness came out from the cave with food for him. She brought parrots' eggs and goats' tails, and something must have been seriously wrong with a lion who would not eat such food. Daddy-oh did not touch it, however. He did not want food. He wanted only the Burla, the pet that had been carried off from him.

The lioness returned and she was greatly surprised that he had not eaten the food. She had never met such a lion before! Was she not unfortunate to be bound to him? She went into the cave again, saying to herself that it would

be better to run away from him and seek another mate.

The wren spoke again, and he spoke boldly, but the lion paid no attention to his voice.

He raised his head, uttering a sorrowful moan, and as the wren was getting bolder and was almost under the lion's nose, the lion's heavy breath blew him three fathoms up in the air. When he came down on the branch again, his heart was in his mouth, and he was as terrified as any bird could be. He thought that he had better return home nice and quiet himself.

The road was long, however, and before he reached home, he plucked up courage again. He had been treated shamefully. Even if he were small, he was an envoy from the noble tribes of the air. He would tell them the news. He would explain to them how strong and fearless he had been, even if the lion had paid so little heed to him that he had in an unmannerly way blown him up three fathoms in the air!

When he reached the assembly of birds, he told his tidings to the birds which were gathered there. After much discussion, they decided to declare war on the lions and their friends and to keep the noble bird that was under their magic power as a hostage until peace would be made.

The hostage escaped, however, while they were talking.

It was thought that she had set out for the

lions' cave and the eagle started in pursuit. Daddy-oh was asleep at the mouth of the cave when the eagle arrived. The great bird hovered overhead for a short time, and then swooped down with the speed of lightning and plucked the two eyes out of the old lion's head.

Daddy-oh! Daddy-oh! You are to be pitied now—toothless, clawless, eyeless as you are!

#### XXXIV.

MAIRE Bán escaped unknown to the assembly while this was going on. She was afraid of her life of the birds with their wings and beaks, and she went the roughest and most toilsome paths lest she should meet any of them.

It was night and the forest was very dark and gloomy, and she did not know where she was going. The only light was that which came from the glow-worms which were very numerous in certain parts of the wood. The little girl picked up some of them and fixed them up in her thick, dark, curling hair, so that as she proceeded rapidly on her way bright rays of light came from her. It was a lovely sight to see the little girl dressed in feathers and flowers lighted on her way by the glow-worms she had picked up! There was, alas! no one to feast his eyes on her. The great forest was still and silent. There was



no sound, even from the night birds which inhabited the place, for they were probably at the assembly of the birds.

She heard the corncrake once with his peculiar cry, and she thought that the hosts of the air were all after her. She recollected, however, that the corncrake had been ejected from the meeting because he was too fond of foreign countries, and she plucked up courage again.

Many dangers confronted her on the way, but she did not appear to be aware of them. She aroused a snake twenty feet long and as bulky as a human being. He was probably very angry at having been awakened, for he grasped the nearest tree with his tail and lifted up his head and was about to seize her and squeeze the life out of her on the spot. If Maire had seen this monster with his little vicious eyes she would have died of fright, but she did not see him. Just as the snake was about to twine himself around her she began to sing a pleasant little tune. Probably the music bewitched the monster. At any rate, he let go the tree and crept away under the decaying foliage.

After that Maire went into a place inhabited by a nest of ants and some of them stung her. The insects almost maddened her, but she ran as fast as she could and reaching a big river that was in the neighbourhood, she jumped in to rid herself of the ugly little pests by drowning

them. She was so tormented by the ants that she did not think there was any danger in the river. Even the possible presence of a crocodile did not worry her.

Although she had gone right into the water, the worms that had given her light were not drowned, and before long she began to swim and disport herself in the water. She soon began to sing, and the wild animals about the place came out from every hole and lair and hiding-place on hearing the music. Big and little, they could be seen on the banks of the river craning their necks to hear better. They had never heard human music before, and it pleased them greatly.

This was a quicksilver river, but it had the appearance of a river of ink until the water was stirred. If a stick were dipped in it there could be seen glistening drops falling from the end of the stick, and where Maire was swimming there was a silver circle visible with the girl's black head in the middle. There appeared to be a bright silver shield floating on top of the water with a dear, dark musical head in the centre.

When she got tired of swimming and singing, she landed on the bank and began running up and down in order to dry her beautiful suit. She was like a river goddess running and leaping on the grass with the silver water flying off from her on every side!

After a time, however, she became sad. She felt compunction that she had forgotten the poor Burla, and she began to call him loudly.

“ My little Burla ! My heart’s pet ! You have been carried off in the dark forest,” she said. Apparently she liked the sound of her own voice, for she repeated these words many times during the night.

In the end she made believe, like a child, that she was talking to her brother, that she heard his voice far off, and as she was a child she spent some time with him, but they were not in the forest but at home in their father’s house near the city of Galway. . . . .

As he was not really present the little girl got up and cried.

“ Burla ! Burla !”

She got a start, for she heard something answering her near by.

She called her brother again.

She was answered. She was sure of it, and it was no illusion now. She heard the most sorrowful voice she ever heard close to her. It was not the cry of an animal but a human voice. She was well aware that this was so, for she would have recognised the cry of any animal in the forest.

She called again.

“ Burla ! Burla !” she shouted, as loud as she could.

She heard the voice—the weak, mournful, human voice near her again. She began to call out and to search round, to search round and to call out, until she was exhausted, but as the wood was very dark, her labour was in vain. It appeared to her that the voice was getting weaker, and frequently she did not hear the voice for a long time on end. During these intervals she imagined that the owner of the voice had died, but when she heard it again she was delighted and she began her search again. Oh, how she longed for the dawn! How wretched she was that it was not daylight!

Day dawned at last, and it came suddenly, as is usual in those hot countries.

She found herself near the mouth of the river and the sea lay stretched out before her.

She uttered her old cry and she was answered. She quickly made for the spot, and down in a deep hole she saw a man lying on his back sighing and moaning.

She did not believe her eyes. He wore a red shirt and had a blue three-cornered-cap on his head. And the big, crooked, knobbed feet he had! And the squinting eye! And the big black moustache hanging down over his mouth like a willow over a stream! And the ring in his single ear! And the wonderful belt! But where were the knives and the pistols and the many-shaped daggers you had in the wonderful

belt when you were on board the *Brideog* under the Hairy Captain? Where did you leave them, ill-starred Satan?

## XXXV.

THERE was a large stone beside the hole, and the first thing Maire thought of doing was to roll the stone down on top of the ruffian and kill him at the bottom of the hole. She had hated him bitterly since the first day she saw him on board the *Brideog*. Was he not guilty of her father's death? Was it not he who had set her and the Burla adrift on the sea to die a terrible death from hunger and thirst? Yes, she would roll down the stone. The devil!

But the thought of her mother! Perhaps he could tell her what had happened to her mother, and how did she know that it was not God Who had sent him to rescue her? She threw away the stick that she had put under the stone to move it.

The man stretched on his back at the bottom of the hole sighed.

"Satan! Satan!" cried Maire, "I am here to help you. Speak to me, I say."

The old ruffian opened his eyes and looked up, and when he saw the little girl rigged out as she was he got frightened.

"Who are you? Who are you?" he exclaimed piteously and weakly. "Are you my little

Brigid whom I deserted long ago, or are you an angel from heaven?"

"I am neither," said Maire, as she stood over him, "but I am Maire Bán."

"Maire Bán" murmured the wounded man, and he desired to say much more than he was able to say.

"Yes, Maire Ryan who was once on board the *Brideog*," said Maire, also desiring to say much more than she was able to say.

"Water! I want water!" said the injured man, trying to lift his head.

There was no drinkable water near them, but as Maire knew well all the trees and herbs of the forest, she succeeded in gathering for him small berries like grapes. These berries were fine, soft and ripe, with plenty of juice in them, and she threw down a number of them to him. He failed to catch them, and he was unable to stretch out his hand to where they lay. Maire had to gather another handful for him, and when she threw them down he caught them in his left hand before they touched the earth. They somewhat alleviated the terrible thirst of the poor rascal. Then she threw down some parsnips of a species she called "fairies' parsnips" and his hunger was relieved. The poor fellow was, however, bleeding all the time. The clay all round his head was a wet mass on account of the tremendous quantity of blood he had lost. Despite his

wickedness Maire pitied him. She thought of going down to the bottom of the hole and of washing his big head and applying healing herbs to it. But how could she do it as the hole was so deep? The sides were at least twenty feet deep and the clay was very soft. Anyone who had the misfortune to find himself at the bottom of that hole would have to stay there unless a miracle happened. She observed the marks in the soft clay all around where the wounded man had attempted to climb up, and it was evident that he had suffered much in those attempts.

Satan looked up appealingly at the girl above him.

“Stay quiet,” said Maire. “There is a tree that was blown down by the storm near at hand. Perhaps I could make a ladder of it,” and she disappeared.

She succeeded in letting down a tree that had fallen, and in a short time she was down beside him.

Then the ruffian, Satan of the wondrous belt, recovered his speech. At first Maire hated him—and with good reason, for he was guilty of her father’s death, but when she heard the stream of talk he uttered she brightened up immensely, and she became quite friendly towards him. Wasn’t it delightful to hear human speech again after years, even if it were the voice of a villain! There was music in it beyond that of

any animal in the forest. That talk was sweeter to her than the songs of the birds : it was sweeter than the loving whisperings of the old lion himself !

Let no one be surprised that the villain's talk pleased the little girl so much. The poor attempts at conversation made by the Burla could hardly be called talk. He had very little power of speech when he left Galway, but whatever little he then possessed had left him after the time he spent among the wild animals in the forest. As for Maire herself, she was gradually losing her power of speech unknown to herself, and were it not for singing, she would have been as dumb as the Burla himself.

She wanted information too. If she only had news of the adventures of the *Brideog*, of her mother, of the crew of the ship, and especially of the boy and the mate who had helped her father !

And Satan himself, Satan of the wonderful belt ! What had happened that he was lying sick and wretched at the bottom of a hole in the Land of Wonders ?

The girl wanted to know all this, but she had to be patient.



## XXXVI.

"MAY God forgive me my sins!" were the first words he uttered.

"Amen," said Maire Bán.

"My sins are great and terrible," said Satan of the belt, in a pious tone.

The little girl agreed with him, and he narrated to her the greatest crimes he had committed during his life, but lest they should terrify anyone I will not relate them here. Between every couple of crimes, or rather between the narration of every couple of crimes, Maire Bán had to moisten the villain's tongue, for he was suffering from a terrible thirst.

May you never have to listen, dear reader! to such a confession in such a place!

When his confession was finished, Satan told her about the *Brideog* and what had happened to that good ship from the time when she and the Burla were put into the barrels.

"When you left the *Brideog*," said Satan, "we thought of putting your mother and the boy and the mate who had helped your father into sacks and of dropping them overboard . . . give me a drink, girl," he said, but he did not get it.

"To drown them, that is what we wanted to

do," said Satan again, " but when we saw that what we thought was a steamer coming to our help was only a flock of birds, the cursed superstitious crowd I had with me lost courage and would do nothing for me. Every one of them was terrified when they saw the huge bird coming down from the sky to rescue the two children who were adrift on the sea."

" The hand of God is against us," said one of them.

" Death and eternal damnation are in store for us," said another.

" Another fellow made the Sign of the Cross on his lips, and that was an action that had not been seen on board the *Brideog* for a long time. Everyone was shaking with fear. Two of them went on their knees and then two others. In five minutes you would have thought that you were in a church when you heard the twelve ruffians praying devoutly and earnestly on board the *Brideog*—bare-headed, bare-footed, stark-naked, with the great yellow sun beating down upon them! The old sails were falling to pieces they were so dry, the cook who had lost his nose was like a priest among them and your mother. . . . I myself was standing at the mainmast, and I burst out laughing, but no sooner did I do so than they all jumped upon me and I knew no more until I found myself bound hard and fast on the deck and saw the cursed crew

dancing like madmen all around me and a knife in each man's hand to cut me to pieces. . . ."

"Do not kill him," said your mother in a loud, authoritative voice.

"I looked in her direction and almost lost my sight. There she stood before us with an old suit of the Captain's on her and a pistol in her hand. I thought for a moment that it was the Captain himself who had arisen from the dead. I was never afraid of a living man, but the dead. . . . I suppose the same state of terror seized all the others too. They were all looking at her like a flock of startled sheep. They all lost courage except Bel. He tried to seize her, but no sooner did he make a move than she plucked the glass eye out of her head and struck him in the forehead with it—with the glass eye! All of them were terrified when they saw the big hole where the glass eye had been."

"She had no glass eye," said Maire Bán.

"She had," replied Satan, "and to prove my story true, I'll show you it. Look!"

He put her mother's glass eye into Maire's hand. The little girl began to cry, but Satan dried her tears with his rough palm.

"Mother! Mother! Where are you now?" said Maire.

"Have patience and I will tell you," said Satan, "but first, give me another drink."

She gave him a drink and Satan continued his story.

“ Poor Bel was knocked down by the glass eye, as I have said, or did I say it? Whether I did or not it is true, and when he was knocked down your mother said in a loud manly voice :

“ ‘ I am the Captain from this on.’

“ Nobody opposed her. I don’t know whether they had noticed the wind rising and a coolness in the air.

“ ‘ Boy!’ said she to the little boy, ‘ spread out the oiled sails on deck until we get water to drink.’

“ This was done. A couple of drops of water fell into the sails from the small rain-shower that came down slowly.

“ ‘ Cook!’ she said, ‘ prepare some food for us.’

“ All present looked at her in a frightened way. You know, although you are young, that great shoals of a kind of fish rise up from the sea and fly through the air after the dry season in these warm latitudes. The crew did not think of this, and when they saw a couple of fish falling on the deck, they thought the woman was a magician, and they revered her greatly.

“ ‘ Satan!’ she said, ‘ pass me your belt.’

“ I had to part with my wonderful belt or be killed.

“ Then every sail on the masts swelled, and delicious blessed drops of rain fell down from the heavens and every parched tongue was moistened, every trouble departed, and every one of the crew raised a shout of joy and praise, and, you would hardly believe it, they were all praising your mother. The *Brideog* sailed on over the pleasant waves with her new Captain, and if that Captain did not make the crew and myself work hard, I am not Satan who lost the wonderful belt.”

## XXXVII.

SATAN continued his story :

“ We had a new Captain, as I have said, and we thought that the Captain would have wished to return home. She did not. The woman-captain wanted only one thing—to find her children—and since then we have spent long years in search of you and have had no occupation except travelling to savage lands for wild animals and selling them. There wasn't a man of the crew who did not pray that we might succeed in finding you, for they knew that they would never see their native land again until you would be found. That business did not please me, however. I started to plot. I tried to wrest the captaincy from your mother. There was some dirty work, but I did not succeed. If

I had been successful I would not be here now——”

The poor villain sighed, and Maire gave him another drink.

“She did not cut off my head as I deserved,” said Satan, “but she put me into a little boat without food or drink. I thought it was all over with me when I saw the *Brideog* disappearing from sight. The night fell. I was alone—you yourself spent a night alone on the sea, little girl. Aren’t you called Maire?”

“Yes,” answered Maire.

“Maire,” said he, putting his hand gently on her head, “Maire, I thought my senses were leaving me when I saw the long, red flames rising up from the sea. Such colours you never saw——”

“I did, indeed,” said Maire, “I saw the same flames. The Burla caused them. He set the forest on fire.”

“A slight weakness came over me, and on awakening in the morning, what did I see but the *Brideog* away on the horizon making for the land that was on fire——”

“And how do I know that my darling mother is not here now?” said Maire.

“I should not be surprised if—but give me a drink. I am dying from thirst.”

He seemed to be getting worse and a kind of fever was coming on, due to all he had gone

through. The little girl was sorry for him, sorry for the villain who was guilty of her father's death, but there was no cure for him in this world. She then thought of the prayers she had learned from the nuns in Galway, and she began to say them fervently, and the poor villain who was dying said them after her as well as he could. His voice was, however, getting weak, but Maire's voice was getting stronger, as both of them prayed with all their strength. The night fell. The villain sighed. Death was hovering over the hole.

Then the little girl thought that perhaps he had not been baptized. He said that he never heard whether he had been baptized, or whether he had not. There was some water and Maire gave him lay baptism. Then he closed his eyes, gave another sigh, and his soul had departed.

Maire cried over him, but ere long she heard a great uproar and noise—the sound of which was coming in her direction. She got up and going to the edge of the hole, she saw the wild beasts of the forest rushing past her in great terror. It was day by this time, and she saw what looked like brown snow on the ground on the other side of the river. It was not snow, however, but millions and millions of large brown ants moving over the plain and devouring everything in their way. They destroyed every-

thing leaving neither tree nor shrub, and they did not leave even the bones of any unfortunate animal they came upon asleep.

They reached the river. Maire thought that the water would stop them in their career, but it did not. They simply made a living bridge of themselves and crossed over. Thousands of millions were drowned, but the other swarms succeeded in crossing over their bodies with their black claws locked together lest they might be swept away by the stream.

Maire was terror-stricken when she saw these deadly hosts coming in her direction, and, like the animals, she rushed off, thinking at the same time that it would be well if the last spark of life had departed from Satan before these terrible insects reached him. The poor villain's bones were picked clean!

. . . . .

It was nightfall when she reached the grassy spot near the lions' cave. The old lion was asleep at the mouth of the cave with one paw around the Burla. She was overjoyed at finding her brother again, and she was about to waken him and the lion when she saw someone coming out from the wood and making for the lion with a gun. This fierce person probably had no shot in the gun, for his intention was to crack the lion's skull with the butt-end of the gun. Maire



shouted. The lion awoke, and as he raised his head the blow missed him.

Then a struggle took place. The lion made a rush towards the person who had tried to kill him, and although he had no offensive weapons—being without teeth and claws and eyes—he would have succeeded in overcoming the person who had attacked him were it not that three or four others came on the scene with stout nets. These they threw all round the lion, leaving him stretched on the ground entangled in the nets.

Poor Daddy-oh! He was to be pitied!

But the help of God is nearer than the door. The old lion was a prisoner, but he was a prisoner with friends. It was the Captain's wife dressed in man's clothes who had attacked the lion, and those who came to her assistance were the crew of the *Brideog*!

They spent a joyful night in the lions' cave—Maire Bán and the Burla and their mother and all their friends—man and lion—and at sunrise they embarked on the *Brideog*. They hoisted the big white sails and the little black sails, they faced for the open sea, leaving land behind them and, almost before they knew where they were, they found themselves in fair and lovely Galway Bay.

## L'ENVOI.

I HAVE not much more to tell except that the Hairy Captain's wife bought a good house and a hundred acres of land near the city, but she had to conform to the customs of Galway and wear woman's clothes again. She did not like this costume, as she had masqueraded as a man for so many years in the *Brideog*, and often she was seized with a fit of dissatisfaction and went off alone through the country. No one knew where she spent her time when she went off in this way, but she was often six months away from home, and no one had tale or tidings of her. She is buried in the Old Churchyard. There is a stone over her grave bearing the following inscription :—

MARY O'FLAHERTY  
WHO DIED  
ON THE 3<sup>rd</sup> AUGUST, 1888  
AND HER HUSBAND  
MICHAEL RYAN  
SEA CAPTAIN,  
WHO DIED ABROAD.  
R. I. P.

Maire Bán and the Burla were not long at home until their natural speech returned to

them, but, at times, when you would be speaking to the Burla, you would be frightened at hearing him roar like a lion, or screech like an owl, or utter the cry of some other animal or bird. A tactful person would not pretend that he had heard the unusual sound, and when this was the case, the Burla would resume his ordinary speech.

Many stories and rumours were circulated about Maire, too. At times she would go out to the mountains and the woods, and it is extraordinary what people said about the tricks she practised, but as there was no good authority for these stories, I will say no more about them here.

She married a man of substance from the Co. Mayo—a relative of my own—and reared him a big family, but a couple of years ago she was found dead in the little wood near Maam, and the doctors could not tell what had happened to her.

As for the cook who lost his nose, he became pious towards the end of his life and entered a monastery as a brother, where he still is, unless he died recently.

The Burla is still living. He spent most of his life in the city of Galway—he and the old lion, Daddy-oh, whom he had brought home on the *Brideog*. Sometimes he would frighten the school-children by letting loose Daddy-oh and

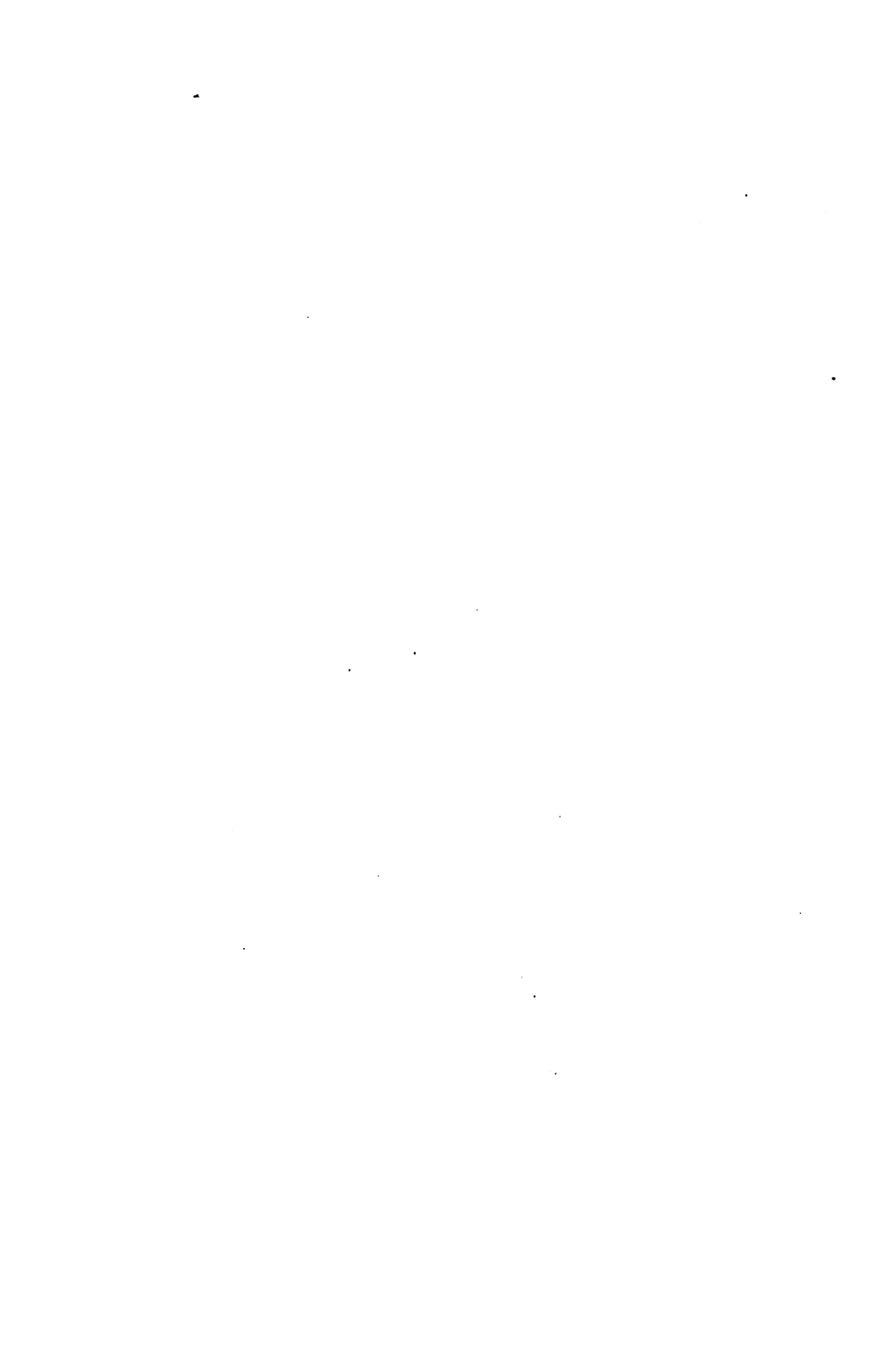
allowing him to follow him like a dog. They need not have feared, however, for Daddy-oh had no teeth, nor claws, nor eyes, and he did not want fight. Daddy-oh and the Burla were great friends until the lion died of old age.

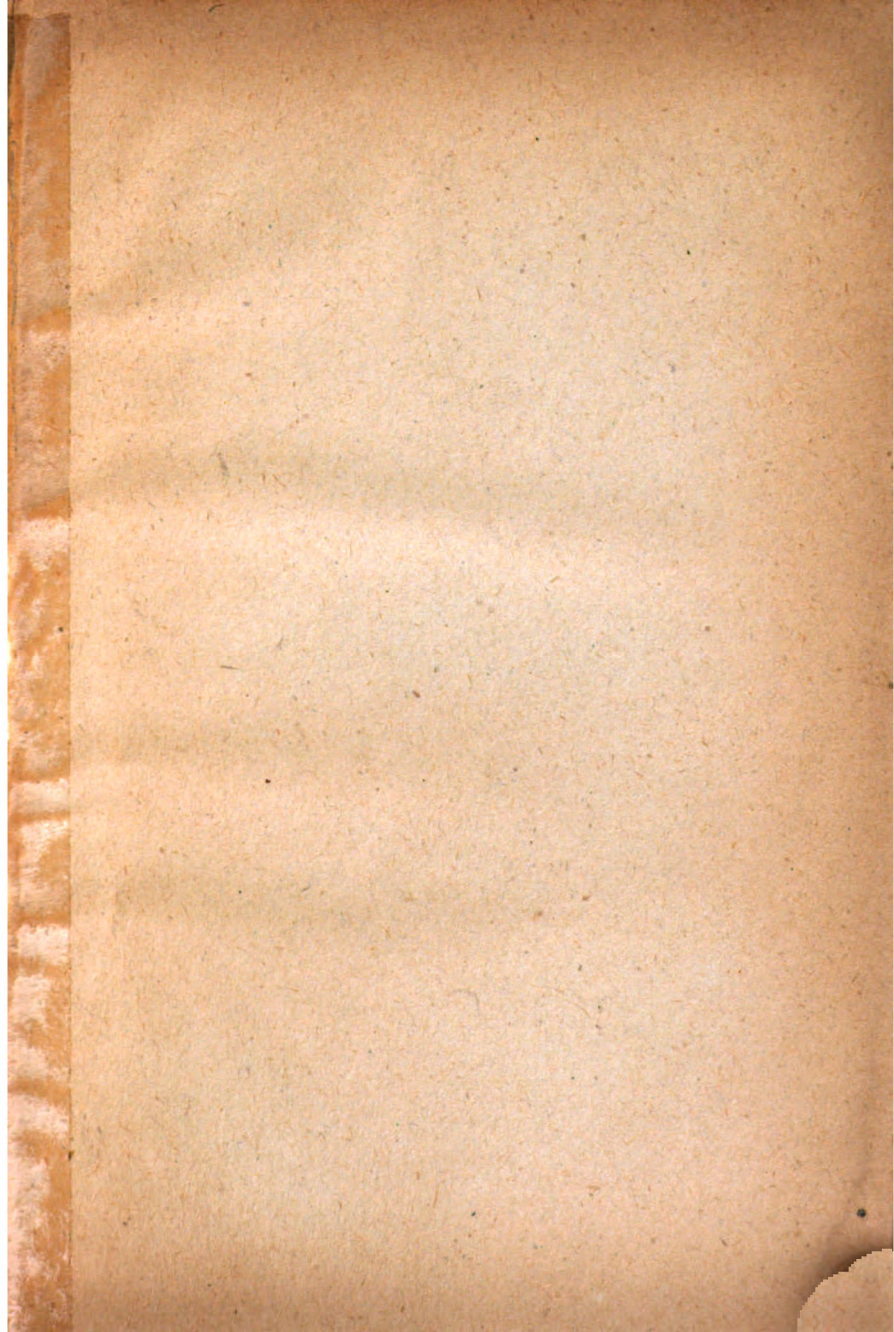
The Burla did not grow very tall, but he had great bulk and tremendous strength. He is now over fifty, but ten or twelve years ago there was not a more powerful man in Galway. There was a strolling showman, nick-named "The Little Yellow Man," who, having failed to buy the old lion to put in his show, thought to steal him. He must not have been a very clever thief, for the Burla caught him, and the thief spent a long month in hospital.

There is not a day in the year that the Burla cannot be seen on the Long Wall in Galway walking in the queerest way. He is very nice to people, and if the weather is fine and his rheumatism not too bad, he will tell you a lot that I have omitted, but for your life don't call him "The Burla," and don't let the word "monkey" cross your lips.









**THIS BOOK IS DUE ON THE LAST DATE  
STAMPED BELOW**

**RENEWED BOOKS ARE SUBJECT TO IMMEDIATE  
RECALL**

**LIBRARY, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, DAVIS**

**Book Slip-55m-10,'68(J4048s8)458—A-31/5**



**Nº 584854**

PB1388

0383

Ó Conaire, P.  
The land of  
wonders.

LIBRARY  
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA  
DAVIS

