

THE BABES IN THE WOOD

BY CLIFTON JOHNSON



BEDTIME WONDER TALES

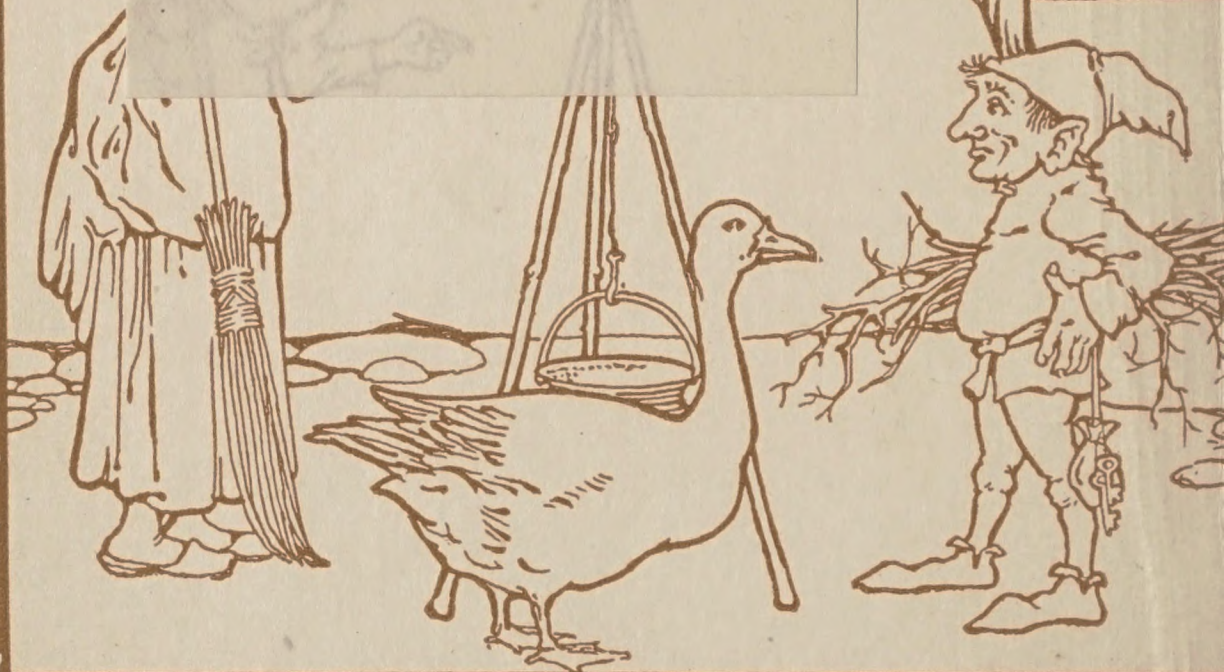


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BEDTIME WONDER TALES

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BY

CLIFTON JOHNSON

HOP-O'-MY-THUMB

THE BABES IN THE WOOD

THE BRAVE TIN SOLDIER

THE FOX AND THE LITTLE RED HEN

GOLDEN HAIR AND THE THREE BEARS

CINDERELLA

PUSS IN BOOTS

JACK AND THE BEANSTALK

LITTLE RED RIDING-HOOD

THE STORY OF CHICKEN-LICKEN

Additional books will be added
to this series from time to time.



Picking flowers in the forest
(Page 16)

BEDTIME WONDER TALES

THE BABES IN
THE WOOD

BY
CLIFTON JOHNSON

ILLUSTRATED BY
HARRY L. SMITH



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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

The books in this series of Bedtime Wonder Tales are made up of favorite stories from the folklore of all nations. Such stories are particularly enjoyed by children from four to twelve years of age. As here told they are free from the savagery, distressing details, and excessive pathos which mar many of the tales in the form that they have come down to us from a barbaric past. But there has been no sacrifice of the simplicity and humor and sweetness that give them perennial charm.

The sources of the stories in this volume are as follows: Page 11, England; 22, Scotland; 26, Ireland; 47, Norway; 71, England; 77, Siam; 83, Russia; 95, Grimm; 110, Japan; 118, Philippines; 120, Ireland; 124, England.

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THE BABES IN THE WOOD

I

THE BABES' UNCLE

A GREAT many years ago there was a brave and kind gentleman who was held in high esteem by all who knew him. His wife was good and beautiful, and they loved each other most tenderly.

They had lived happily together for a number of years when the gentleman fell sick. Day after day he grew worse, and so grieved was his lady by his illness that she became sick too.

No medicines nor anything else gave them

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any relief, and they realized that they had not long to live. What troubled them most, now that their end was near, was the thought that they would be taken away from their two children. One of the children was a fine boy four years old, and the other a pretty little girl not quite three.

The father and mother talked together about the children's future, and decided to give their babes into the care of the gentleman's brother. He was sent for, and when he came, the gentleman said to him: "Ah! brother, you can plainly see that the time of both my wife and myself on earth is short. Our poor babes will soon be left parentless. Brother, they will have no one but you to be kind to them."

"We commend them to your care," the mother said.

"You need have no fear as to my taking good care of them," the brother declared.

“May Heaven never prosper me or mine if I should do them wrong.”

Not long afterward the gentleman and the lady died, and they were buried side by side in the same grave.

The gentleman's will gave his son three hundred pounds a year after he came of age, and the girl was to be paid five hundred pounds in gold on the day that she married. But if the son did not live till he was of age, and if the daughter did not live to be married, all their property was to go to their uncle.

He took them to his own home, and for a time he made much of them and showed them great kindness. At length, however, he began to covet their wealth, and to wish that they were dead so he could possess it. But they continued sturdy and well.

Finally he said to himself: “It would not be very difficult for me to have them killed

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in such a way that my neighbors would never suspect that I was responsible for the act. Then their property would be mine, and that would be the end of the matter.”

With this thought in mind, the cruel uncle soon decided how to dispose of the children. He hired two burly ruffians, who were used to doing desperate deeds, to take the little boy and girl into a thick dark wood, some distance away, and slay them.

He told his wife an artful story of intending to send the children to London, where they could be brought up by one of his friends. The children were in the room and heard what he said.

After explaining his plan to his wife, he turned to the little boy and girl. “Would you not like that, my pretty ones?” he asked. “You will see famous London Town; and you, my lad, can buy a fine wooden horse there, and ride on it all day long,

and you can buy a whip to make your horse gallop, and you can buy a sword to wear by your side. As for your sister, she shall have pretty frocks, and she shall have dolls and other nice playthings.”

“Oh, yes! I will go, uncle,” the little boy said.

“Goody-good!” the little girl exclaimed.
“I will go too.”

II

ALONE IN THE WOOD

EARLY the next day the children's uncle got them ready, just as if they were going on a long journey, and sent them off in a fine coach in charge of the two ruffians he had hired. As the children rode along they prattled pleasantly to the men who intended to be their butchers.

When the coach reached the borders of the dark thick wood, the wretches took out the little boy and girl, and told them they might walk a little way and gather some flowers. The children ran about here and there, getting farther and farther from the coach, and the men began talking together in low tones.

“Truly,” one said, “now that I have seen the babes’ sweet faces and heard their pretty talk, I have no heart to do the will of their villain of an uncle.”

“The thing suits me no better than it does you,” the other declared, “but we have been paid so well for the job that I shall complete my part of the bargain.”

The more kindly disposed ruffian would not agree to such a course, and they argued till they got angry and began to fight. They drew the big knives with which they had planned to kill the babes, and the one who wished to spare the children stabbed his comrade so that the fellow dropped dead in the grass.

The victor knew not what to do with the children now. He wanted to get away to some distant region as quickly as possible. If he was found near the man he had slain he could hardly hope to escape punishment.

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There was no time to take the children back. Besides, they would not be safe in their uncle's power.

He concluded that the best thing he could do would be to leave them in the wood and trust that they would be kindly treated by whoever passed that way and discovered them. So he went to where they had rambled in their flower-picking, and said, "Take my hands, and come with me."

He led them on and on until they began to complain that they were hungry.

"Stay here," he ordered, "and I will go and get you something to eat."

So away he went, and the babes sat there a long time waiting for him to return. "Will the strange man come soon with some cakes for us?" the little girl asked.

"Before long, I think," the boy replied encouragingly.

"I wish I had some cakes," she said.

Then they stood up and looked all about as far as they could see among the trees, but no one was in sight. They listened for approaching footsteps, but heard nothing except the wind fluttering in the foliage above their heads.

“Perhaps we had better go to meet the man,” the boy suggested; and hand in hand they wandered about in the wood.

They found some blackberries, and stained their lips eating them. At last night came, and they sat down and cried themselves to sleep.

When day dawned, again they resumed their wandering, but they could not find their way out of the wood. Nor were they any more successful in the days that followed. Of course they could not live on blackberries, and so they died.

There was no one to bury the pretty babes; but Robin Redbreast saw them lying side

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by side lifeless in the woodland, and he covered them with leaves.

Meanwhile the wicked uncle supposed they had been killed according to his orders, and he let it be understood that they had died in London of the smallpox. He took their fortune to himself, and thought he had provided amply for his comfort and pleasure to the end of his days.

But instead of happiness he experienced only misfortune. He had no peace of mind, because he had an evil conscience, and his thoughts dwelt on the death of the babes. Moreover, his barns burned, his harvests failed, his cattle died in the field, and his two sons, who had gone on a voyage to Portugal, were wrecked and drowned.

At last he was brought to want and misery. He pawned his jewels and mortgaged his land. Not long afterward he was thrown into jail for debt, and there he died.

About that time the ruffian who had left the children in the wood was captured, after committing some crime, and he was sentenced to be hung. When he knew that he must die he sent for the keeper of the prison in which he had been shut up, and confessed all the wicked deeds he had done.

Among other things he told of the two babes whom he and his companion had been hired to kill, and of the dispute that ended in his companion's death, and of how he left the babes in the wood. It was thus that their sad fate was made known.

III

THE CLEVER GOOSE

ONCE there was a goose that lived beside a lake. Sometimes she paddled about on the water. Sometimes she dived down under the surface. Sometimes she waddled along the marshy borders of the lake hunting for frogs.

She found plenty to eat, and she grew fatter every day. But the fatter she became the less inclined she was to exert herself. So she spent much of her time on a sunny slope near the lake asleep, with her head under her wing.

In the woodland, not far away, dwelt a cunning red fox. One day, as he was prowling about, he saw the goose asleep on that

sunny bank which she found so comfortable.

“Ha!” he said, “what a fine fat goose! Here’s a chance for a good supper.”

He crept closer, made a sudden leap, and grasped her with his paws. The goose awoke to find herself held fast by one of her wings. She struggled to get free, and she honked and hissed loudly, but the fox only laughed at her.

“It’s of no use making such a fuss,” he said. “You can’t scare me by your honking and hissing, and you can’t get away. I’m going to eat you right here.”

“Well, if you are going to do that,” the goose said, “I hope you will do it decently and not forget your manners.”

“Forget my manners?” the fox said. “I don’t understand what you mean. Please explain. Now if you had me in your mouth as I have you, tell me what you would do.”

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“Why,” the goose responded, “that is a question very easily answered. I would fold my hands, shut my eyes, and say a grace. Afterward I would eat you. I would be ashamed to gobble you down without saying a grace. Thank goodness! I have been better brought up than to do such a thing as that.”

“You certainly have the right idea of what is proper,” the fox said. “To be sure, I am eager to eat you, for I see plainly that you are both plump and tender; but I quite agree with you that one ought not to neglect one’s manners.”

So he folded his hands, shut his eyes, and with a very demure look on his countenance repeated a pious grace.

But while he expressed his thankfulness for the ample size and toothsome fatness of his captive, and asked a blessing on the bountiful repast of which he was about to

partake, the goose waddled softly away. However, she had gone only a short distance when the fox finished his grace and opened his eyes.

The goose saw that no time was to be lost, and she spread her wings for a flight. "Good-by!" she called back to the fox as she left the ground. "I like your manners. I hope your supper will agree with you."

She flew far out over the lake and let herself splash down on the surface. There she floated and rested after the exertion of her flight and the excitement of her narrow escape.

The fox was left to lick his lips in vain regret. "Ah!" he exclaimed in disgust, "I will learn a lesson from this. Never again in all my life will I say a grace till after I feel the meat warm in my stomach."

IV

A LAD IN A GOATSKIN

LONG ago there was a poor widow who had a son named Tom. She could give him so few clothes that she did not like to have him seen outside the house, and she kept him indoors until he was nineteen years old. By that time he was a big brawny fellow six feet tall.

Then, in some way or other, she contrived to get him a goatskin, which she fastened around his waist. That made him feel quite grand, and he took a walk down the street.

The next morning the widow said to him: "Tom, you rascal, you've never done any work yet. Take the rope that hangs in the shed, and bring me a fagot from the wood."

“All right, mother,” he responded. “Here goes.”

Away he went to the wood, and as soon as he had gathered enough sticks he tied them into a fagot. Then along came a big giant and made a whack at Tom with a club. Tom saved himself by jumping to one side, and at the same time grabbed up a stone that happened to be lying handy. Before the giant could strike again he hurled the stone at his head with such good aim that he laid him full length on the earth.

Tom picked up another stone, and said, “If you know a prayer, now’s your time to say it before I make jelly of you.”

“I have no prayers,” the giant told him, “but if you spare my life, I’ll give you my club. As long as you keep from sin you’ll win every battle you fight with it. Besides, it will do you many another magic service, if you only give it orders.”

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So Tom let the giant go about his business. Then he sat down astride of the fagot, and gave it a tap with his club. "Fagot," he said, "I had great trouble gathering you, and I risked my life for you with the giant. The least you can do is to carry me home."

Sure enough, the fagot went cantering off through the wood, creaking and cracking till it came to the widow's door.

When the sticks were all burned, Tom was sent to get more. Another giant attacked him in the wood and was vanquished. But the giant induced Tom to spare his life by giving him a magic fife. "Nobody can help dancing when that fife is played," the giant said. "Even your bundle of sticks would dance if you wished it to do so."

So Tom mounted the big fagot he had gotten ready, blew on the fife, and made the fagot dance home with him riding on it.

He encountered still another giant later

when he went for a third fagot, knocked him down, and let the fellow go after receiving from him a bottle of green ointment.

“You only need to rub yourself with that magic ointment,” the giant said, “to keep from being burned, scalded, or wounded. There are no more of us giants in the wood, and you can come here in future as much as you please without being disturbed.”

Tom was prouder now than ten peacocks, and he used to go for a walk down street every pleasant evening to give people a chance to see him. But some of the little boys had no more manners than to put out their tongues at Tom’s club and goatskin, and he didn’t like that at all.

Presently there rode through the town a man who carried a bugle and wore a huntsman’s cap and a gay-colored coat. This bugleman proclaimed that the King of Dublin’s daughter was so melancholy she hadn’t

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laughed for seven years, wherefore her father would grant her in marriage to whoever would make her laugh three times.

“That’s the very thing for me to try,” Tom said. So he kissed his mother, shook his fist at the little boys, and set off along the highroad to Dublin.

V

TOM IN DUBLIN

AT last Tom came to the gates of Dublin, but the guards laughed and swore at him instead of letting him through. Tom stood this for a little time till one of them, out of fun, as he said, drove his bayonet half an inch or so into Tom's leg. Then Tom took the guard by the scruff of his neck and the waistband of his trousers, and chucked him into the canal.

Some of his comrades ran to pull him out, and others to teach the vulgarian manners with their swords and daggers. But a tap from Tom's club sent those who attacked him headlong into the water or down on the

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stones, and they were soon begging him to stay his hands.

One of them very humbly showed him the way to the palace yard. There he saw the king and queen and the princess in a gallery looking down at all sorts of wrestling and sword-playing and dancing and acting, intended to please the princess. But not a smile came over her handsome face.

The wrestlers, swordsmen, dancers, and actors all stopped at sight of Tom with his great strong arms and bare legs, and no covering except the goatskin that reached from his waist to his knees. An envious wizened fellow with a red head, who wished to marry the princess, and didn't like the way she opened her eyes at Tom, came forward and very snappishly asked his business.

“My business is to make the beautiful princess—God bless her—laugh three times,” Tom replied.



Tom is halted by the Dublin guards

“Do you see all these merry fellows and skillful swordsmen?” the other said. “They would eat you up with a grain of salt; and yet not a mother’s son of them has been able to get a laugh from the princess for seven years.”

The fellows gathered round Tom, and Redhead aggravated him until the lad cried out: “I don’t care a pinch of snuff for the whole bunch of you. If you want a thrashing, come on, and see what will happen to you.”

The king, who was too far away to hear their words, asked what the stranger wanted.

Redhead replied, “He wants to give your best men a beating.”

“Oho!” the king exclaimed, “if that’s his idea, let one of them step forth and try his mettle.”

So one went forward, with sword and

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shield, and made a cut at Tom. But Tom struck the chap's elbow with his club, and up over their heads flew the sword, and down went the owner of it on the ground from a thump he got on the helmet.

Another took his place with no better luck, and another and another, then half a dozen at once, and Tom sent swords, helmets and shields flying in all directions. The men themselves went rolling over and over and bawling out that they were killed, disabled, and damaged. But they soon sat up to rub their elbows and hips, and finally got on their feet and limped away.

The princess was so amused that she let out a great sweet laugh that was heard all over the yard, and Tom said, "King of Dublin, I've won a third of your daughter."

The king didn't know whether he was glad or sorry. It pleased him to hear the princess laugh, but the prospect of having such a

wild-looking youth for a son-in-law was not altogether agreeable.

As for the princess, when she heard Tom's words, all the blood in her heart ran into her cheeks.

There was no more fighting that day, and Tom was given some fine clothes and invited to dine with the royal family.

Next morning Redhead told Tom of a big wolf that came serenading about the walls of the city and ate people and cattle. "You can be very sure," he said, "that it would give the king great satisfaction to have the brute's marauding stopped."

"Then I will stop it gladly," Tom declared. "Send some one to show me where the creature lives, and we'll see how he behaves to a stranger."

VI

HOW A WOLF DANCED

WHEN Tom told the princess of his intention to seek the savage wolf, she was far from glad; for she had taken a liking to him, and he looked a different person in his fine clothes and a nice green cap on his head.

However, the king gave his consent that Tom should go, and away the lad went with a huntsman to guide him to the mountains where the wolf lived. An hour and a half later the horrible wolf walked into the palace yard, and Tom followed a step or two behind carrying his club on his shoulder, just as a shepherd would walk after a pet lamb.

The king and queen and princess were safe

up in their gallery. But the officers and people of the court, who were strolling about down below, no sooner saw the big beast coming in than they began to make for the doors and gates.

The wolf licked his chops as if he were saying, "Wouldn't I enjoy a breakfast off a couple of you!"

"Tom!" the king shouted, "take away that terrible wolf."

But Tom didn't mind him a bit. He pulled out his fife and began to play with a vengeance. Every man and boy in the yard started jigging heel and toe, and the wolf himself was obliged to rise on his hind legs and dance along with the rest. A good many people got into the palace, and they shut the doors so the shaggy, sharp-toothed wolf wouldn't follow them.

Tom kept playing, and the folks in the yard kept shouting and dancing, and the

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wolf kept hopping around and roaring with the pain his legs were giving him.

All the time the wolf had his eyes on Redhead, who was one of the dancers. Whenever Redhead went the wolf followed, and kept one eye on him and the other on Tom to see if he would let him eat the fellow. But Tom shook his head and never stopped the tune, and Redhead never stopped dancing and bawling, and the wolf never stopped dancing and roaring, and Redhead and the wolf were both ready to drop, they were so tired.

When the princess saw she need not fear that any one would be killed, she was so diverted by the stew Redhead was in that she gave another great laugh.

“King of Dublin,” Tom cried out, “I have won two-thirds of your daughter!”

“Thirds or alls,” the king said, “get rid of that villain of a wolf.”

So Tom put his fife in his pocket, and said to the beast, who was sitting down ready to faint: “Walk off to your mountains, you hairy rogue, and live like a respectable animal. If ever I hear of your coming within seven miles of any town——”

He said no more, but spit in his fists and gave his club a flourish. That was enough for the wolf. He put his tail between his legs and took to his heels, and neither the sun nor the moon and stars ever saw him near Dublin again.

At dinner every one except Redhead had a merry time talking about the dance. He was plotting how he would be revenged on Tom. By and by he said to the king: “Well, to be sure, your Majesty, you are in luck to have at your court such a person as this gentleman who came to us in a goatskin. He can defend your country from the Danes who are murdering so many of your people.

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If only he will get a flail that hangs on the wall just inside the entrance to Hades, he will need no other weapon. No one can stand before it."

"King of Dublin," Tom said, "will you let me have the other third of the princess if I bring that flail?"

Before the king could answer, the princess cried out, "No, no! I'd rather never be your wife than to have you attempt anything so dangerous."

But Redhead nudged Tom, and whispered, "It would be very shabby of you to avoid this adventure just because it is dangerous."

Tom thought so too, and he decided to go.

VII

THE RED-HOT FLAIL

TOM traveled and traveled until he came in sight of the walls of Hades. Before going farther he rubbed himself all over with the green ointment. Soon afterward he knocked at the gates and a hundred little imps popped their heads out through the bars.

“What do you want?” they screeched.

“I want to speak to the big imp of all,” Tom said. “Open the gates.”

It wasn't long till the gates were thrown open, and Old Nick welcomed Tom with bows and scrapes, and asked what business brought him there.

“My business isn't much,” Tom replied. “I only came for the loan of that flail I see

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hanging on the wall. The King of Dublin wants it to use in giving a thrashing to the Danes."

"Well," Old Nick said, "the Danes are much better customers of mine than his people. But since you've come so far for it, I won't refuse."

"Hand that flail to the gentleman," he said to a young imp, and he winked his far-off eye at the same time.

Then, while some of the others were barring the gates, the young imp climbed up and took down the iron flail. It was red hot, and the little vagabond was grinning to think how it would burn the hands off of Tom. But not a burn did it make any more than if it was a flail of wood.

"Thank you," Tom said, "and now, if you will open the gates, I will give you no more trouble."

"Aha! you tramp," Old Nick exclaimed,

“it is easier getting inside those gates than it is getting out.”

“Lads,” he said to the imps, “take that tool from him, and give him a walloping.”

So the nearest imp put out his claws to seize the flail. But Tom gave him such a welt with it on the side of his head that he broke off one of his horns, and made him roar like the demon that he was. Then they all rushed at Tom and he gave them, little and big, such a thrashing as they didn't forget for a while.

At last Old Nick, rubbing his elbows, said, “Let the fool out, and woe to whoever lets him in again.”

Tom marched out, and went off never minding the shouting and cursing they kept up at him from the top of the walls. When he got back to the big yard of the palace, every one ran and raced to see him and the flail. After telling his story, he laid down

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the flail on the stone steps, and gave strict orders that it should not be touched.

The king, queen, and princess came forward to greet Tom. They had made much of him before, but now they made ten times more of him.

While they were talking with him, that mean blackguard, Redhead, sneaked up to the flail, intending to pick it up and make an end of Tom. Scarcely had his fingers touched it when he let out a roar of pain, and jumped and flung his arms about in great distress.

Tom ran to him, caught his hands, gave them a rubbing, and at once the burning pain left them. Then the fellow, between the pain that was just gone and the comfort he was in, had the most comical face you ever saw. The onlookers burst out laughing, and the princess laughed with the rest.

“Now, marm,” Tom said, “if there were

fifty thirds to you, I hope you'd give me all of them."

The princess looked at her father, and, by my word! she came over to Tom, put her two delicate hands into his two rough ones, and I wish it was myself who was in his shoes that day.

Tom would not bring the flail into the palace, and you may be sure that no one else went near it after Redhead's experience. When the early risers were going out next morning they found two long clefts in the stone where it had been left. It had burned an opening for itself downward, nobody could tell how far.

Tom was regretting that it could not be used against the Danes, when a messenger arrived with the news that the Danes had heard of the flail's coming to Dublin, and were so frightened they had gotten into their ships and sailed away.

Before Tom married I suppose he got some one to teach him the principles of politeness, gunnery, fortifications, and decimal fractions so he would be able to keep up a conversation with the royal family. But whether he learned any of those sciences or not, it's as sure as fate that his mother never more saw want to the end of her days.

VIII

A TAME WHITE BEAR

ONE Christmas Day, when the king of Norway was feasting in the great hall of his palace, he proposed that a present should be sent to the king of Denmark as a pledge of his good will. "But what shall it be?" he asked.

In response, Anders, his chief huntsman, said: "Your Majesty, let the present be one of our handsome white bears. They have no such fine creatures in the Danish forests."

"But are you sure that a bear can be sent on so long a journey?" the king inquired. "And is there any certainty that he would behave himself after he reached the Danish court?"

“You need not feel the least anxiety,” Anders replied. “I have a fellow as white as snow that I caught when he was a cub, and I have trained him with the greatest care. He will follow me wherever I go, play with my children, stand on his hind legs, and conduct himself as properly as any gentleman. I will take him to Denmark myself, if you choose.”

The king was much pleased, and he ordered Anders to set off with his snow-white bear as promptly as possible.

So early the next morning Anders roused Bruin, and put round the creature's neck a collar the king had supplied. Then away the two went over rocks and mountains and across valleys and plains, the nearest road to the court of the king of Denmark. It was bright weather, the sun shone and the birds sang, and the huntsman and his bear traveled merrily on day after day.

They had almost reached their journey's end when they came to a gloomy forest through which they tramped all one afternoon. Toward evening the wind began to rustle through the trees, and the clouds gathered, threatening a stormy night.

The road too was very rough, and both Bruin and his master were exceedingly weary. What made matters worse, was the fact that they had found no wayside inn during the day. So they had not been able to buy food, and had eaten nearly all the scanty supply they carried with them.

“This is a pretty affair!” Anders grumbled. “Here I am in a lonely forest with an empty stomach, a bear for my companion, and the prospect of a wet bed.”

The wind increased in violence, the clouds grew darker, and Bruin shook his ears uneasily. Anders was at his wit's end when a woodman came whistling out of a by-path

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walking beside his horse, which dragged a load of fagots.

“My good man,” Anders said, “I suppose you live not far away. Can I get a night’s lodging at your home for myself and my bear?”

The woodman seemed hearty and good-natured enough, and was quite ready to provide shelter for the huntsman, but he had never seen a bear before in his life, and he would have nothing to do with the creature on any terms.

Anders begged hard for his companion, and told how we was bringing him for a present to the king of Denmark, and how the bear was the most good-natured, best-behaved animal in the world.

The woodman, however, was not to be moved. He was sure that his wife would not like such a guest, and who could say what the bear might take it into his head to do?

Moreover, their dog and their cat, their ducks and their geese would all run away for fright, whether the bear was disposed to be friendly with them or not.

“No,” he said in conclusion, “if you and old shaggy-back cannot part, you must spend the night in the forest, and no doubt you will have a sad time of it.”

Then he cracked his whip, clucked to his horse, and set off once more on his way homeward. The huntsman grumbled, and Bruin grunted as they resumed their plodding along the rough road.

IX

THE GOBLIN'S PRANKS

THE man with the horse went in one direction, and Anders with the bear went in the other direction. But they had parted only a few moments when the woodman stopped and called Anders back.

“I think I can tell you a better plan than sleeping under a tree,” he said. “There is a house down the hill yonder which used to be my home. You are quite welcome to the shelter it affords if you will run the risk of getting into trouble with a mischievous goblin who has taken up his abode in it.

“My family lived in the house as recently as last winter. Everything had been going smoothly with us for a long time, but one

unlucky night, when the storm blew as it seems likely to blow tonight, that spiteful imp took it into his head to visit us. Ever since then the house has been in an uproar from midnight till the cock crows in the morning. Clattering footsteps run up and down the stairs, and there are many other strange disturbing noises.

“What the goblin is like no one knows. We have never seen him, nor have we seen anything belonging to him, except a queer little high-heeled shoe that he left one night in the pantry. But though we have not seen him, we know he has a hand as heavy as lead; for when he chooses to thump anybody, down goes that person as if the blacksmith's hammer had hit him.

“There was no end to the goblin's scurvy tricks. If the washing was hung out to dry, he cut the line. If he wanted a cup of ale, he filled a mug from the keg and left the tap

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running. If the fowls were shut up, he let them out. He would drive the cow into the garden, ride on the cows, and turn the horses into the rich-yard. Several times he nearly burned the house down by leaving a lighted candle among the fagots.

“He is astonishingly active and nimble. Sometimes, when he is once in motion, nothing stands still around him. Dishes and plates, pots and pans dance about, making a dreadful sort of music, and breaking each other to pieces. Even the chairs and tables act as if they were alive. They seem to be dancing a hornpipe together or playing some wild game. Nor is there any use of putting things in order; for if you do the imp quickly turns everything upside down again.

“My wife and I bore such a lodger as long as we could, but at length we were fairly beaten. He seemed determined to stay per-

manently in the house, and we thought best to give him full possession.

“The little rascal knew what we were about when we were preparing to move, and seemed to be in a hurry to get rid of us. So he helped us off. When we got up on the morning that we were to start, intending to load the wagon, there the wagon was before the door with the goods on it.

“As we drove away we heard a loud laugh, and a sharp little voice cried out of a window, ‘Good-by, neighbors!’

“Well, he has the old house to himself now, and can play as many pranks as he pleases. We have built a snug cottage for ourselves on the other side of the hill. It is smaller and less comfortable than the old house, but we shall not go back while that goblin is there. However, if you and your comrade choose to run the hazard, you are heartily welcome to the shelter; and it may

be that the imp is not at home tonight.”

“We will try our luck,” Anders said. “Nothing could be worse than sleeping out of doors such a night as this. We may have to fight for our lodging, but never mind—Bruin will take a hand in any quarrel that arises. I’ll warrant you he’ll give the goblin rougher treatment than your house dog could inflict. At any rate, he’ll let the goblin know what a bear’s hug is.”

“I hope the creature will get the punishment he deserves,” the woodman declared. “Well, whether he disturbs you or not, you will be better off for having a fire on the hearth this chilly night. Here, take along one of these fagots from my load; and now I must hurry home.”

Anders, with the fagot on his back, and the bear following at his heels, soon found his way to the deserted house. He went into the kitchen and started a fire.

“Alack-a-day!” he said, as he rose from his knees on the hearth, where he had been puffing the first feeble flames to encourage them, “I forgot one thing. I ought to have asked that woodman for some supper. All I have left is a little dry bread. But I am glad we shall not be obliged to sleep in the woods. We will eat what food we have, warm ourselves, and get to bed as soon as possible.”

So, after eating the few crusts that remained in his pack, and drinking some water from the well in the yard, the huntsman wrapped himself in his cloak and lay down at the back of the kitchen. Bruin curled up in a corner of the wide fireplace, and both he and his master were soon sound asleep.

X

A MIDNIGHT BATTLE

MIDNIGHT came. The fire was out, and everything was quiet in the house, but outside a storm was raging. Presently in popped an ugly little goblin not much more than two feet high, with a humped back, a face like a dried pippin, and a nose like a ripe cranberry. He wore high-heeled shoes and a pointed red cap. On his shoulder he carried a nice fat kid, skinned and ready for roasting.

“A rough night this!” the goblin grumbled. “But thanks to that booby woodman I have a house to myself; and now I’ll prepare a hot supper and have a glass of good ale.”

He got busy at once, and the fire was soon blazing cheerfully. The kid was put on a spit, and the roasting began. When the meat was sufficiently roasted, the goblin transferred it to a covered dish, and set the dish in a nook of the fireplace to keep warm till he had the table ready.

Next he rolled a keg of ale from the closet, and drank a glass. Then, in the joy of his heart, he rubbed his hands, tossed up his red cap, and danced and sang before the hearth.

Meanwhile the huntsman had waked up, and was lying very quiet, looking on from the back of the room. Sometimes he quaked with fear, and sometimes he licked his lips at thought of the savory supper the goblin had prepared. He was half minded to fight for the possession of the food, so keen was his appetite after the scanty fare of the previous day.

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Suddenly the goblin observed Bruin lying fast asleep rolled up like a ball in the chimney-corner. He went closer and looked at the bear very sharply, doubtful what he really was.

“One of the woodman’s family, I suppose,” the goblin said to himself.

Just then Bruin gave his ears a shake, and showed a little of his snout.

“Oho!” the imp exclaimed, “I see what it is. It’s a mouse. But what a large one! Where could he have come from? Shall I let it alone or drive it out? Perhaps it may do me some mischief, but I am not afraid of rats and mice. I have driven every other living thing out of the house, and this brute shall follow them without more delay. So here goes!”

The goblin took up the spit he had used in roasting the kid, and brought it down with a rousing thump on the bear’s head. Bruin

rose slowly to his feet, snorted angrily, and shook himself. Then he walked across the room and back, and grinned at his enemy.

The latter, somewhat alarmed, retreated a few paces. "It's bigger than I thought," he mumbled. "It isn't a mouse. It's a great white cat."

He stood with the spit in his hand prepared for a rough attack, and it soon came. The bear reared up and walked leisurely forward. Then he caught hold of the spit with one of his paws, jerked it from the goblin's hand, and sent it spinning to the other end of the kitchen.

A fierce battle ensued. This way and that flew tables and chairs and pots and pans. The goblin was on the bear's back one moment pulling his ears and pummeling his body with fists and heels. But a moment later the bear had thrown him up in the air,

and when he came down gave him a hug that made him squall.

Afterward the goblin would jump up on one of the beams out of Bruin's reach. There he would watch his chance, and soon leap down astride of the bear's neck.

Meantime Anders had become sadly frightened. Presently he observed that the oven door was open. Then, for the sake of safety, he crept into the oven, and lay anxious and trembling, listening to the fray. The struggle went on for a long time, and it was not at all clear who would be the winner. The whole house rang with the noise of the biting, scratching, snarling, screeching, growling, and pounding, while outside could be heard the wind blowing a gusty gale, and the rain falling in torrents.

At last the goblin seemed to be growing weaker. He sprang aside and paused to get breath. The bear was glad to rest for a few

moments too, but soon prepared to renew the battle. Just then the goblin dashed his red cap right in the bear's eyes, and while Bruin was half-blinded and smarting with the blow, the imp darted to the door and was gone from sight into the night.

“Well done! Bravo, Bruin!” the huntsman cried, as he crawled out of the oven and ran to bolt the door through which the goblin had escaped. “You have combed that fellow's locks finely, though you yourself are likewise rather the worse for the battle. But come, let us make the best of the good cheer our goblin visitor has left us.”

Accordingly they set the overturned table on its legs, put the room somewhat to rights, brought the roasted kid from the nook of the fireplace where it had escaped harm, and enjoyed a hearty feast.

When they finished, the huntsman jovially

wished the goblin a good-night and pleasant dreams. Afterward he lay down and slept till sunrise. Bruin slept also, as well as his aching bones would let him.

In the morning the two made ready to continue on their journey. Scarcely had they set foot on the highway when they met the woodman. He inquired eagerly how they had passed the night.

Anders described the goblin, and told how the bear had vanquished him. Then he said: "I fancy that you are well rid of the gentleman now. He is not likely to come where he thinks he runs the risk of getting any more of Bruin's hugs. If we have driven him away, you are amply rewarded for your entertainment of us. To tell the truth, it was none of the best; for, if your ugly little tenant had not brought his supper with him, we should have empty stomachs this morning."

So saying, the huntsman and Bruin, his

fellow traveler, journeyed on. As to their further adventures I know nothing, but let us hope they reached the King of Denmark safely.

XI

THE WOODMAN'S CAT

AFTER Anders had departed with his white bear, the woodman kept sharp watch of his old house to determine whether the bear had so thoroughly frightened the goblin out of his former haunt that he would not return. Three nights passed, and the house showed no traces of the goblin's having revisited it.

On the fourth day, while at work in the forest, a chilly scud of sleet and rain drove him to seek shelter on the leeward side of a big tree-trunk. As he stood there, leaning against the tree, he heard a little cracked voice singing, or rather croaking, for the singer's tone and the words of the song were equally mournful.

The woodman crept quietly along in the direction whence the sound came from beyond a low clump of bushes. Presently he got to where he could peep over the bushes, and saw, seated on a mossy tussock, the very same little man whom the huntsman had described to him. The goblin had no hat nor cap on his head, his face was woe-begone, and his legs were scratched as if he had been crawling through a bramble thicket. He was evidently sadly in the dumps at the loss of the good cheer and shelter of the old house.

“Sing us another verse,” the woodman said, when the song came to an end.

Instantly the goblin jumped up, stamped his feet with rage, and was out of sight in the twinkling of an eye.

The woodman finished his work, and was going home in the evening, trudging along by his horse, when he saw the little man

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standing on a high bank beside the road, looking as grim and sulky as before.

“Hark ye, bumpkin,” the goblin cried, “is that great cat of yours still alive and at home?”

“My cat?” the woodman said wonderingly.

“Yes, your great white cat!” the little man shouted wrathfully.

Then it occurred to the woodman that the goblin was referring to the bear. “Oh! I understand,” he said. “Certainly, my white cat is alive and well. She would be glad to see you whenever you will do us the favor to call. As you seem to be so fond of her, you may like to know that she had five kittens last night.”

“Five kittens!” the goblin muttered.

“Yes,” the woodman said, “five of the most beautiful kits in the world; and so like the old cat! It would do your heart good

to see them, they have such soft, gentle paws, such delicate whiskers, and such pretty little mouths. Do look in to-night about twelve o'clock—the time, you know, that you used to come to visit us. I can assure you that the old cat will be glad to show you her kittens.”

“I come? Not I, indeed!” the goblin shrieked. “What do I want with the little wretches? Did not I see the mother once? Keep your kittens to yourself. I must be off. This is no place for me. Five kittens! So there are six of the vicious brutes now! Good-by to you. You’ve seen me for the last time. So bad luck to your horrid cats and beggarly house!”

“And bad luck to you, Mr. Crookback!” the woodman called after him as the little man scurried away. Steer clear of my cat if you want to keep a whole skin. The faster and the farther you go the better. Let

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us have no more of your pranks in these parts!"

Now the woodman felt sure that his troublesome guest had gone for good, and he moved back into the comfortable old house with his wife and children, and his white cat and her five kittens. There they lived happily, for the goblin never came to see them any more.

XII

AN OLD WOMAN'S PIG

ONCE an old woman was sweeping her house, and she found a piece of money.

“How lucky!” the old woman said. “I will take this money to market and buy a pig.”

So off she went to market, bought the pig, and started for home. In one hand she held a cord that was hitched to one of the pig's hind legs, and Mr. Piggy walked along in front of her.

It was late in the day when she left the market. Night came soon, and the moon rose. Still she walked on and on. At last she came to a path that branched off from the highway and led to her house. Here was a

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thick hedge along the road, but in a gap of the hedge was a stile with several steps on each side. At the lowest step the pig stopped.

“Go over the stile, pig,” the old woman said.

But the pig said, “I won’t.”

So the old woman looked around, and she saw a dog. “Dog, dog,” she said, “bite pig and make him go over the stile. I see by the moonlight ’tis half-past midnight—time piggy and I were at home an hour ago.”

But the dog said, “No, pig never did me any harm”; and he wouldn’t bite him.

So the old woman looked around, and she saw a stick. “Stick, stick,” she said, “bang dog. Dog won’t bite pig and make him go over the stile. I see by the moonlight ’tis half-past midnight—time piggy and I were at home an hour ago.”



Midnight at the stile

But the stick said, "No, dog never did me any harm"; and it wouldn't bang him.

So the old woman looked around, and she saw a fire. "Fire, fire," she said, "burn stick. Stick won't bang dog, and dog won't bite pig and make him run home. I see by the moonlight 'tis half-past midnight—time piggy and I were at home an hour ago."

But the fire said, "No, stick never did me any harm"; and it wouldn't burn it.

So the old woman looked around, and she saw a puddle of water. "Water, water," she said, "quench fire. Fire won't burn stick, stick won't bang dog, and dog won't bite pig and make him go over the stile. I see by the moonlight 'tis half-past midnight—time piggy and I were at home an hour ago."

But the water said, "No, fire never did me any harm"; and it wouldn't quench it.

So the old woman looked around, and she

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saw an ox. "Ox, ox," she said, drink water. Water won't quench fire, fire won't burn stick, stick won't bang dog, and dog won't bite pig and make him go over the stile. I see by the moonlight 'tis half-past midnight—time piggy and I were at home an hour ago."

But the ox said, "No, water never did me any harm"; and he wouldn't drink it.

So the old woman looked around, and she saw a butcher. "Butcher, butcher," she said, "kill ox. Ox won't drink water, water won't quench fire, fire won't burn stick, stick won't bang dog, and dog won't bite pig and make him go over the stile. I see by the moonlight 'tis half-past midnight—time piggy and I were at home an hour ago."

But the butcher said, "No, ox never did me any harm"; and he wouldn't kill him.

So the old woman looked around, and she saw a rope. "Rope, rope," she said, "hang

butcher. Butcher won't kill ox, ox won't drink water, water won't quench fire, fire won't burn stick, stick won't bang dog, and dog won't bite pig and make him go over the stile. I see by the moonlight 'tis half-past midnight—time piggy and I were at nome an hour ago."

But the rope said, "No, butcher never did me any harm"; and it wouldn't hang him.

So the old woman looked around and she saw a rat. "Rat, rat," she said, "gnaw rope. Rope won't hang butcher, butcher won't kill ox, ox won't drink water, water won't quench fire, fire won't burn stick, stick won't bang dog, and dog won't bite pig and make him go over the stile. I see by the moonlight 'tis half-past midnight—time piggy and I were at home an hour ago."

But the rat said, "No, rope never did me any harm"; and he wouldn't gnaw it.

The old woman was getting tired of that

sort of answer, and she said to the rat, "I'll cut off your tail then."

The rat did not want to lose his tail. So he began to gnaw the rope, and the rope began to hang the butcher, and the butcher began to kill the ox, and the ox began to drink the water, and the water began to quench the fire, and the fire began to burn the stick, and the stick began to bang the dog, and the dog began to bite the pig, and piggy went over the stile crying,

"QUEEK! QUEEK!"

XIII

THE FAITHFUL WIFE

ONCE there was a young prince who went to a wizard and said, "Sir, I would have you tell me what kind of a wife I am going to have."

"When you were coming from the palace to my hut, whom did you see by the way?" the wizard asked.

"No one," the young man replied.

"Nay," the wizard said, "you saw a poor servant girl of your father's cutting grass in a field. She is to be your wife."

So distressed was the young prince at the thought of such a lowly maiden becoming his wife, that he went to another country to prevent such a happening.

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It came to pass soon afterward that the poor girl attracted the attention of the king. He saw that she was kind and wise and beautiful, and he took her into the palace and treated her like a daughter.

Several years passed, and the prince returned. When he saw the beautiful maiden in his father's palace he loved her and asked her to be his wife. So they were married, and then he learned that she was the servant girl whom he had formerly despised. The old feeling returned. He was angry because his wife had been a servant girl, and he begged the king to let him depart on a long journey.

The king gave his consent, though he was much displeased with his son's pride. Then the young man had a boat made ready, and sailed away down a great river which flowed through the royal city. On and on he went, and at last he came to another kingdom and

to another royal city, where he stopped to look about.

While he was absent from his boat, the king of the country happened to learn that a prince had arrived from the neighboring kingdom up the river. He was not on the best of terms with that kingdom, and he determined to get the prince into his power. So he ordered his servants to secrete a little image in the stranger's boat, that he might accuse him of stealing it.

The prince presently appeared, and somewhat later the king's servants pretended to come in great haste from the palace to inquire what was in the boat.

"I have nothing in the boat but my own possessions," the prince replied.

"Not so," the servants said. "You have an image of gold which belongs to our king. If we find it in your boat, what will you do to make amends?"

“I will be your master’s slave,” the prince answered.

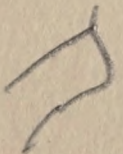
Then the boat was searched, and after a while the image was found. So the prince went to the palace, and the king sent him far away into a wild forest to labor as a woodman.

Time passed along, and one day the wife of the young prince went to the king, his father, and begged permission to voyage down the river to find her husband.

“Go, my child,” the king said. Then he had a boat made ready for her use, and ordered several trusty servants to accompany her.

They sailed down the river to the country where the young prince was working in the forest, and they stopped at the royal city, hoping to learn something of him.

News of the arrival of the princess was soon brought to the palace, and the king de-



terminated to treat her as he had the prince. So he sent a servant secretly to hide a golden image in her boat while she and her servants were looking about in the city.

But when she returned, her sharp eyes detected signs that some one had been disturbing things during her absence. By diligent searching she found the golden image.

“This is here for no good,” she said. So she carried it to the shore and buried it in the sand.

The following day the king himself came to inquire why the princess had stolen his image.

“I am no thief,” she responded indignantly, “and I have not stolen any image.”

“If it is found in your boat, what will you promise?” the king asked.

“I and my servants will be slaves to you,” she answered. “But should the image not be found there, what will you promise?”

“You shall have all my goods and my entire kingdom for your own,” the king responded.

A most careful search failed to discover the image. Then, true to the agreement, the ruler gave his riches and his kingdom to the princess. She decided to celebrate this acquisition of wealth and power with a great feast to which she invited all the people.

The appointed day came, and in the midst of the feasting a man in soiled garments carrying an ax on his shoulder entered the city. Immediately the princess recognized him as her husband, and ran to welcome him.

He forgot his pride and dropped his ax to welcome her with open arms. Henceforth he had no desire to leave her, and they lived happily together as rulers of her kingdom ever after.

XIV

FOREST TROUBLES

THERE was once a rabbit who lived near where a bear and her cubs had their den. When he wanted to entertain himself he often did so by visiting the den while Mrs. Bear was absent, and teasing the young cubs.

“You dear little creatures,” he would say, “let me hear you sing.”

Then he would spit at them and play them all manner of tricks. That made them growl and whine. After the rabbit had gone, and their mother came home, they complained bitterly of how they had been treated.

On hearing their story, Mrs. Bear would

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become very angry, and say: "Just wait a little. I'll catch Mr. Rabbit some day, and when I do I'll fling him into a hole."

One morning Mrs. Bear hid herself back of her den. Along came Mr. Rabbit presently, and began to tease the cubs. No sooner did Mrs. Bear hear him than she sprang forth from her hiding-place to seize him. But Mr. Rabbit dodged as quick as lightning and ran off into the forest undergrowth.

Mrs. Bear followed through brush and briars close at his heels. They had not gone far when they came to a tree that some storm had split in half, but which was still standing. The split extended from the branches clear down to the ground, and the two halves leaned apart so that Mr. Rabbit was able to spring through the cleft without stopping. Mrs. Bear leaped after him, but the crevice was too narrow for her great body. She

stuck fast, and do what she would, she could not free herself.

By and by a man came along with an ax, and she said, "Sir, I beseech you to help me."

"How did you get in such a fix?" the man inquired.

"I was chasing a rabbit who had been pestering my children," Mrs. Bear explained. "He leaped through this cleft, and I followed. I ought to have seen that the cleft was too small for a person of my size, but I was almost within grabbing distance of the rabbit and was in too much of a hurry to realize that he was playing a trick on me."

"Well," the man said, "if I free you, what reward shall I get?"

Mrs. Bear replied: "I know where there is a hollow tree full of honey, and I will guide you to that tree. You can bring a

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great cask, if you choose, and fill it with the honey.”

“Are you telling the honest truth?” the man asked.

“Certainly,” Mrs. Bear assured him. “You can get all the honey of which I have told you. But I require you to promise that you will never tell a living soul how a miserable little rabbit made a fool of a big strong bear. I don’t care to be twitted about that all my days.”

The man promised, and then he began chopping the cloven tree. It soon fell apart, and Mrs. Bear went with the man to where the honey was. After that she trotted off to her den.

“I must go home,” the man said, “and get my oxen and cart and a nice clean cask.”

That was what he did, and returned at once to the honey tree in the forest. There he filled the cask with honey. Night was at

hand when he finished, and it was dark before he got home.

The latter part of the way Mrs. Bear followed noiselessly behind the cart without his knowing that she was there. When he drove into his yard she crept to the rear of the house, and crouched under a kitchen window.

“Now,” she said to herself, “I’ll listen and see whether he keeps the promise he made not to tell how that rabbit tricked me.”

The man brought the cask of honey into the kitchen, and the children crowded around him exclaiming: “Oh, father, what a lot of honey! Where did you get it?”

“I found it in the forest,” he replied.

Then his wife asked, “Did you find it yourself, or did some one tell you where it was?”

“Don’t bother me!” the man responded.

“But why shouldn’t you tell me?” his wife questioned.

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“Well,” he said, “if you must know, it was like this: An old trotter of a bear was chasing a rabbit. They came to a tree that the wind or the lightning had split, and the rabbit was smart enough to trick the bear by jumping through the cleft. He slipped through all right, but when she tried to follow him she got stuck fast. I came along and released her. As a reward she showed me a hollow tree which some bees had made their storehouse. There was so much honey that I came home and got the oxen and the cart and a cask, and went after it.

“I wish you could have seen that bear caught in the split tree. She certainly was in trouble, and it served her right—the lazy fat old tramper! What business had she chasing a rabbit?”

Mrs. Bear, listening outside under the window, did not lose a word of all this. “Just wait, just wait!” she growled to herself.

“I’ll soon get even with you for jeering at me.”

She shambled off to her den, and the man and his family went to bed.

XV

SAVING HIS NOSE

THE next day, after the man had eaten his breakfast, he said to his wife: "I wish you would put up a lunch for me. I shall be gone all day working in that distant field of ours that is on the edge of the forest."

The lunch was soon ready and he set it and the plow in the cart, hitched on the oxen, and went off to the distant field. Just as he was ready to start plowing, Mrs. Bear came along.

"Oho!" she said, "so here you are. I have one or two questions to ask. Didn't you promise not to say a word to any one about my getting caught in that split tree; and didn't you go home last night and tell

the whole story to your wife and children? Hey?"

"What an idea!" the man responded "Why should you accuse me of such a thing? Surely——"

"Silence!" the bear interrupted. "Lying won't help you. I was listening under your window after you brought the honey into your house."

Then the man thought, "Ah! she knows the whole story, and I'm in as much of a pickle as she was in the cleft tree."

"It's all up with you," the bear said.

In a near by thicket a fox was hiding, and he heard the bear's threatening words. The fox fancied he might gain something by helping the man. So he rustled the bushes with his tail, and called out—

"Oh, Mr. Man, why do you stand
Affrighted there with club in hand?"

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For the peasant carried a heavy ox-goad, and yet he stood quaking with terror before the enraged bear. She was telling him what she thought of him, and he was trying to contrive some plan to get out of the scrape he was in.

When the words of the fox reached his ears, he suddenly realized that he was not as helpless as he had imagined. He gripped the ox-goad tighter, watched his chance, and gave the bear a stunning blow on the head. This he followed up with other blows, and soon she lay before him lifeless.

Now the fox came out of the thicket, and asked, "What am I to get, Mr. Man, for the good counsel I have given you?"

"I don't know," the man replied. "What would you like? How would some geese suit you?"

"Not at all," the fox said.

"I have some ducks," the man suggested.

“But I don’t want ducks,” the fox declared.

“Perhaps you would like some hens,” the man said.

“No, I don’t want hens,” was the fox’s response.

“Then what in the mischief do you want?” the man inquired anxiously.

“I want to bite off your nose,” the fox answered.

“Why, how I should look going around without a nose!” the man exclaimed, and the cold sweat broke out all over him.

“Are you ready?” the fox asked.

Instead of replying, the man turned his face toward his house, and shouted: “Stop! Down with you! Be quiet!”

The fox was startled. “What’s all that about?” he questioned.

“Oh! nothing,” the man said, “only I have nine hunting dogs at home, and I forgot to

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feed them this morning. I just heard them making a great racket trying to get out of their kennel, and I'm afraid they'll succeed."

"May the Old Nick take your nose and all the rest of you!" the fox cried. "I ask for nothing except that you will keep those horrid dogs from coming here until I have made my hide safe by getting off out of their way."

Then he sped into the forest and was lost to sight. So the man saved his nose, and when he went home that night he carried along the body of the bear in his cart.

XVI

THE CAPTIVE PRINCE

ONCE upon a time there was a king's son who went out hunting with the royal huntsmen. But he wandered away from his companions and presently saw a fine stag, which he pursued a long way.

At last the stag ran into a little hollow, and changed into a tall thin man. Then he stepped forth from the hollow and confronted the prince. "Now you are in my power and must come with me," he said.

The tall man led the way to a wide lake, made the prince get into a boat, and rowed him across to a handsome palace. They went in, sat down at a table, and ate dinner together.

Afterward the tall man said: "I am the king of this country, and I have three daughters. To-night you must stand on guard just inside the door of the room they occupy from nine o'clock in the evening till morning. Every time the big clock in the neighboring hall strikes the hour I shall come and call to you softly. If you reply, 'All's well,' each time, you shall marry one of the princesses. But if you fail to answer, even once, your life will be the forfeit."

At nine o'clock the prince began his vigil in the chamber of the three sisters. The youngest of the three tried to persuade the others to try to save him from the punishment that their father had threatened, but they would not.

"Then I will do what I can alone," she said, and she went to the prince and greeted him kindly.

Afterward she addressed a great stone

image that was in the room, saying, "Each time that my father comes to the door this night and calls to the prince, you must answer, 'All's well.'"

The stone image, as if assenting to what she required, nodded its head, at first rapidly, then gradually slower until it stopped.

Each hour during the night the king came to the door and called to the prince, and the stone image answered, while the prince lay on the floor sleeping with his head on his arm.

In the morning the king opened the door, and said to the prince: "You have been a faithful guard, but I am not going to let you marry one of my daughters until you have cut down a forest near here. You must finish the task this very day and have the timber all chopped in cordwood length, split, and neatly piled. I will furnish you with

an ax, a wedge, and a mallet. If you fail, off with your head!"

The prince went to the forest and started work, but he soon gave up in despair. "I have no chance at all," he said. "In a few hours I must die." And he sat down and wept.

Toward noon the king said to his daughters, "One of you must take some food to the prince whom I have put to work in the forest."

"Either of the others may, but I will not," the eldest declared.

"Nor will I," the second said.

So the youngest princess carried the food to the prince, and asked him how he was getting along.

"Very badly," the prince replied.

"Here is food for you," the princess told him.

"No, I shall never eat again," he declared.

But she urged him, and at last he ate what she had brought. After he finished, she made him play ball with her, and when they stopped playing, he was so weary that he lay down and fell asleep.

Then she took her handkerchief, tied a knot in the end, and knocked three times on the ground. "Earthmen, come up!" she cried.

Immediately ever so many little dwarfs appeared and asked the princess what she wanted.

"In three hours from this time," she said, "you must have all the trees in this forest cut down, made into cordwood, and piled."

The earthmen set to work. Three hours later they gathered about the princess and reported that the task was done. Then she rapped on the ground, and cried, "Earthmen, go home!"

At once they all disappeared, and she

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awoke the prince. He was overjoyed to see that the work he had been ordered to do was finished.

“The day is nearly at an end,” she said, “and you must start for the palace. I shall go too, but by a different way.”

So they parted. When the prince arrived at the palace, the king summoned him and asked if his task was completed.

“Yes,” the prince answered, “the forest is cleared away in accord with your directions.”

They sat down and ate supper together. Then the king said: “There is still another task to perform before you can have one of my daughters. It is to dig a deep ditch, and fill it with crystal clear water in which all sorts of fish shall be swimming about. I will furnish you with a spade and a pail tomorrow morning. Everything must be done by six o’clock in the evening.”



Early the next day the prince began work, but after digging a little while he concluded that his effort was wasted. He sat down hopeless, and there the youngest princess found him at noonday when she brought him his dinner.

“How are you getting on?” she asked.

“Alas!” he said, hiding his face in his hands, “I can accomplish nothing.”

“Don’t be so down-hearted,” the princess urged. “You will feel better after you have eaten.”

“No, no! my hours are numbered. I do not care to eat,” he told her.

However, she at last persuaded him to refresh himself with the food she had brought. Afterward he lay down and slept. Then the princess knotted her handkerchief, rapped with it on the ground, and called, “Earthmen, come up!”

They appeared at once, and she said, “I

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give you three hours to dig here a long broad ditch, and fill it with crystal clear water, which shall be stocked with all kinds of fish.”

The earthmen did everything promptly, exactly as she had ordered, and she sent them back into the ground. Then she awoke the prince and showed him the ditch full of clear water in which they could plainly see the fishes swimming about.

“I will leave you now,” she said. “Remember that at six o’clock you must be at the palace to report to my father.”

When that hour arrived he appeared before the king and informed him that the ditch, the water, and the fish were ready.

“You have done well,” was the king’s comment.

But he was not satisfied even yet; and after supper he said to the prince: “You must do one more thing before the wedding

takes place. A few miles from here is a hill with some big rough crags on its summit. Those crags must be demolished, and in their place you must build a fine castle, and furnish it with every desirable comfort and convenience. I will supply you with a pickax and auger in the morning, and you are to finish by night. Your reward shall be my youngest daughter for your wife, but if you fail your head shall be taken off."

The prince went vigorously at his task on the morrow, but soon broke his pickax. This misfortune so discouraged him that he sat down to wait for the princess, hoping, if she came as usual, that she would find a way to help him.

When the sun was at its highest, the prince saw her in the distance bringing a basket of food. So he ran to meet her, and told her of his troubles.

She made him eat and go to sleep. Then

she summoned the earthmen. "Remove these crags from the hilltop," she ordered, "and in their stead rear a magnificent castle. The castle must be furnished from its highest chambers to its lowest cellars, and all this must be done in three hours."

The dwarfs fetched their tools, and worked in such numbers and with such energy that the castle was built and furnished in the allotted time. Afterward the princess rapped thrice on the ground with her knotted handkerchief, and cried, "Earthmen, go home!"

Immediately they all disappeared, and she went and awoke the prince. They were as merry as birds in the air over what had been accomplished, and at six o'clock they returned to the palace together.

XVII

A FORGOTTEN PRINCESS

AFTER the king had eaten supper with the prince that night he asked, "Are the crags removed from the hilltop, and is the castle ready?"

"Yes," the prince replied.

"Very good," the king said. "Tomorrow you shall marry my eldest daughter."

"But I don't want her!" the prince exclaimed hastily. "You promised me your youngest daughter."

"Ha, so I did!" his Majesty said, "but you ought to understand that a king is at liberty to change his mind."

However, the prince's mind did not change, and as soon as every one in the

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palace was asleep, he and the youngest princess ran away. They journeyed on and on, and at last came in sight of the castle in which dwelt the parents of the prince.

A little farther along they entered a village, and the prince said to his companion: "Stop here, my dearest, while I go to the castle. I want to bring a carriage and servants to meet you."

When he got to the palace the first thing he did was to tell the men at the stables to hitch horses to a carriage. "In about fifteen minutes I want to drive to yonder village," he said.

There was great rejoicing over his return, and his mother, the queen, was especially happy. But the moment he kissed her a strange thing happened. He forgot all that had occurred while he had been away, and did not even recollect his intention of driving to the village. So the horses were presently

unhitched from the carriage and put back in their stalls.

No one came to fetch the waiting princess, and she loitered until nightfall on a bridge near a mill. Then the miller asked her if she wanted work.

“Yes,” she said.

So she went to live in the miller’s family, and day after day she was kept busy washing linen by the waterside. One time, when the queen was out for an airing, she saw the princess scrubbing on the borders of the stream.

“What a fine girl that is!” the queen exclaimed. “She pleases me well.”

Then the queen went to the miller and got him to allow the girl to come and be one of the servants at the castle. There the prince saw her, but the sight of her did not rouse any recollection of her in his mind.

The very first night that she was in the

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castle she stole to the door of the prince's chamber, and stayed there till morning crouched on the threshold speaking to him. She tried to make him recall how she had saved his life again and again—first by making the stone image speak, then by cutting down the forest, then by digging the ditch, and lastly by replacing the crags on the hilltop with a fine castle.

“All this I have done for you,” she said, “and yet you have forsaken me.”

The prince listened to the voice at his door, and gradually the past came back to his memory. He arose in the morning, and when he saw the maiden, he knew that she was his betrothed whom he had left in the village. That he had neglected her so long distressed him greatly, and he begged her to pardon his forgetfulness.

She had brought a magic nut with her from her former home. This she now



The forgotten princess working for the miller

cracked, and took from it a beautiful dress to wear at her wedding. The wedding was not long delayed. A great many people came to it, and all the boys and girls ran ahead of the bride, and strewed flowers in her path.

So the prince and princess were happily married, and they lived happy ever after.

XVIII

THE MIRROR

LONG ago there lived a man and his wife who had one child, a daughter, and she was the joy of their hearts. One time it happened that the man had to go from the mountains where they dwelt to the city of the king on business.

“The journey is a long one,” his wife said, “and there are many dangers. Please take care of yourself, and return quickly.”

She and the little daughter parted from him at the gate, and stood watching till he disappeared in the distance.

The days passed, and at length the man returned, tanned brown by the wind and sun. He brought a doll for the little girl, who was greatly delighted.

For his wife he brought a small hand mirror. She had never seen a mirror before, and she said: "Somebody is looking at me from this round thing. What is it you have given me?"

"That is a mirror," the husband replied, laughing. "It reflects your face. People seldom have them here in this out-of-the-way region, but they can be bought in all the big towns. Take good care of it."

"Indeed I will," the wife said. "I have a little box that it will fit. I will keep it in that."

The family lived in peace and content until the daughter grew from childhood into a beautiful girl of sixteen. But, alas! You cannot depend on things continuing unchanged in this world. The moon is not always round, flowers bloom and then fade, and happiness does not go on forever.

Sorrow came to this family. The mother

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was taken ill, and as the days passed she gradually grew worse. At last the doctor abandoned hope.

The daughter never left her mother's side. She gave her medicine, and attended to her wants day and night.

One evening the mother called to the girl, and said: "My end is near. I have something that I wish to give you. There is a little box under my pillow. It contains a wonderful present that your father brought me from the city of the king. After my death, if you think longingly of me, take out the thing that you will find inside the box, and look at it. When you do so my spirit will meet yours, and you will be comforted."

The next day the mother died. Father and daughter grieved deeply, and the girl's heart grew no lighter as time went on. The sound of the wind in the trees, the dropping

of the rain—everything reminded her of her mother.

Presently she recollected what her mother had said about the gift in the box. So she opened the box and took out the mirror. She gazed at the mirror in astonishment, for there before her she saw her mother's face, only it was much younger and more beautiful than when they separated. The face smiled, and the lips parted as if about to speak.

“Oh, what joy!” the girl exclaimed. “Now I can always meet her spirit.”

About a year after the death of the mother the father married again. At first there was peace and harmony in the household, but later the new wife did not get on well with the daughter.

One day she went weeping to her husband, and said: “I have come to bid you farewell. I must go away.”

“What do you mean?” her husband asked, much surprised.

“Your daughter dislikes me,” she answered. “For hours at a time she sits in her room and gazes at something in her hand. I am very sure she is plotting to injure me by magic.”

The husband was confident that his wife was mistaken, but he remembered that his daughter did spend much time in her own room. So, with the intent to find out what she did there, he went on tip-toe to her apartment.

The girl had been very unhappy, for she felt that her step-mother had changed toward her. Her only pleasure was to steal away to her own room and look in the mirror.

On this day, as usual, she had taken it out, and was thinking of her happy life with her mother, when some one entered the

room behind her. She hastily slipped the mirror up her sleeve.

“Why are you sitting here alone doing nothing?” her father asked.

She gave no answer.

“What did you hide just now?” he said in a severe tone; but she was too surprised to reply.

“I fear that what my wife tells me is true,” he went on. “You are plotting to injure her by magic arts. What evil spirit has taken possession of you?”

Then the girl spoke. “Do not say such things about me,” she entreated. “I have never wished to injure my stepmother in any way.”

“If that is the case,” he said, “why do you stay here alone, and why did you hide something in your sleeve when I came in?”

As he still mistrusted her, she drew the mirror out of her sleeve, and held it up.

“This is what I have been looking at,” she told him.

“That!” her father said, much astonished. “Why that is the present I brought your mother from the city of the king. Why should you sit gazing at that?”

Then she told her father of her mother’s dying words.

“Do you really think that you can meet your mother’s spirit by looking in that glass?” he said. “Such a thing is impossible.”

“Indeed, I am telling you the truth,” the girl declared. “Look—do you not see my mother’s spirit in this? I can see it always.”

She held the mirror up before her face, and at once he understood. “Ah!” he thought, “what her mother told her was a device to comfort the poor girl. Certainly they were as like each other as the two sides

of an orange; so perhaps it is not wonderful that the girl has been mistaking her own face for her mother's all the time.

Then he said to the girl: "We have been unjust to you. We thought you were going to do evil through magic arts when, as a matter of fact, you were looking at your mother."

The stepmother had entered the room. Now she came forward, knelt in front of the girl, and said: "You must forgive me. When I saw you constantly sitting here, looking at something that you would not show to others, I grew suspicious. But please forgive me. I cannot help admiring your love for your mother."

The father was greatly delighted at this happy ending of their unhappiness, and the three lived pleasantly together ever after.

XIX

THE PASSING OF LOKU

HUNDREDS of years ago there was a very wicked king named Loku. He put to death all his subjects who refused to do his bidding, and he made war on the neighboring kings and conquered every nation that opposed him.

At last he killed so many people that an angel was sent from heaven to order him to cease from warfare and to rule his own land justly. He was in his palace planning a new campaign when a soft light filled the chamber, and the angel appeared and delivered his mandate.

The cruel king gave no heed. He dismissed the holy messenger in scorn, saying:

“I take orders from no one. I am Loku. All know and fear my name. I am the great Loku.”

Hardly had he spoken when the palace shook to its foundations, and a mighty voice thundered: “Is it thus you slight my orders? You are Loku. All shall indeed know your name. Forever you shall cry it in a form that suits your nature.”

Now the courtiers entered the chamber seeking the king, but he was nowhere to be found. The royal robes lay scattered on the floor, and the only living thing to be seen was an ugly lizard that blinked from among the papers on the table.

The lizard was Loku, and he is still heard fulfilling his punishment in crevices and shrubbery calling his name from dark till dawn: Loku! Loku! Loku!

XX

THE LEAKY SAUCEPAN

THERE was once a housewife who was so keen in looking after her own welfare in this world, that what she gave in charity for the good of her soul consisted of things for which she had no use.

One day a little fairy man knocked at her door. The servant girl opened it, and the little man said: "The fairy folk are preparing for a wedding, and we haven't enough dishes to do the cooking. Can you lend us a saucepan?"

The servant girl turned to her mistress who was close at hand, and asked, "Shall I let him have one?"

"Yes, to be sure," the housewife said.

But when the maid was taking a saucepan from the shelf, the woman pinched the girl's arm and whispered sharply: "Not that, you stupid! Get the old one out of the cupboard. It leaks, and the fairy men are so neat and such nimble workers that they are sure to mend it before they send it home. We'll do a good turn to the fairies, and at the same time we'll save sixpence from the tinker."

The maid fetched the saucepan, which had been laid aside awaiting the tinker's next visit, and gave it to the fairy man. Then he thanked her and went away.

The saucepan was soon returned nicely mended and ready for use. At supper time the maid filled the pan with milk and set it on the fire to warm the milk for the children's supper. But in a few minutes the milk was so burned and smoked that no one could bear the taste of it. Nor would the

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pigs drink the swill into which it was thrown.

“Oh! you good-for-nothing sloven,” the housewife exclaimed to the maid, “you would ruin the richest family with your careless ways. There’s a whole quart of good milk spoiled.”

“And that’s two-pence!” a voice cried from the chimney. It was a queer whining voice like that of some old person who was always grumbling.

The housewife now filled the saucepan herself and set it on the fire. But she had not left it there two minutes when the milk was all burned and smoked as before.

“The pan must be dirty,” she said in a rage. “There are two full quarts of milk wasted. They might as well have been thrown to the dogs.”

“And that’s fourpence!” the voice in the chimney whined.

After a thorough scrubbing, the saucepan was once more filled and set on the fire, and once more the milk was burned and smoked. The housewife burst into tears at this waste, and cried out: "Never before has such a thing happened to me in all the years that I have been keeping house! Three quarts of milk have been burned for one meal."

"And that's sixpence!" the voice in the chimney said. "You didn't save what you would have paid the tinker after all."

Then there came tumbling down the chimney onto the hearth the little fairy man. He went off through the door laughing, and from that time the saucepan was as good as any other.

XXI

MOLLY AND THE PIXIES

THERE was once a big old English country mansion where the people of the house kept two servant maids. Every night the maids left a bucket of clean water in the kitchen chimney corner for the pixies.

This favor was very much appreciated by the little fairy folk. In return they never failed to drop some silver money into the water, and the maids would find the silver each morning in the bottom of the bucket.

Once, however, the maids went to bed without remembering the water for the pixies. When the little fellows saw the empty bucket they were greatly disappointed.

“How careless!” they cried. “We will tell those lassies what we think of them.”

So they whisked upstairs to the maids’ bedroom, crawled through the keyhole, and began to exclaim against the laziness and neglect of the damsels.

One of the maids awoke and heard what the pixies had to say. Then she jogged her fellow servant, and whispered: “Molly, rouse up! We forgot the water for the pixies. Here they are in our room telling us we must go down and get it for them.”

Molly was angry because she had been disturbed out of a sound sleep, and she said pettishly, “For my part, I will not stir out of bed for all the pixies in England.”

“Very well,” her companion responded, “then stay where you are. But I shall go down and fill the bucket.”

This she did, and when she came back to the bedroom she found that Molly had turned

over and gone to sleep. The pixies were still there, and they were engaged in a loud and stern debate as to what punishment should be inflicted on the lazy lass who would not stir for their benefit.

Some proposed pinches and blows, others to spoil her new bonnet and ribbons, or to send her the toothache. One suggested giving her a red nose, but that was voted too severe a punishment for a pretty young woman.

Finally they decided she should have a lame foot which could only be cured by a certain moorland herb. The long and learned and difficult name of this herb was pronounced very distinctly by the pixie judge.

It was a name of seven syllables, and the good-natured maid determined to try with all her might and main to remember it. She said it over and over, and she tied a string around her finger to assist her memory. At length she felt that she had the name of the herb as

firmly fixed in her mind as her own name. So she dropped asleep and did not wake till morning.

Whether her head was like a sieve that lets out as fast as it takes in, or whether the over-exertion of her endeavor to remember caused her to forget, certain it is that when she opened her eyes she knew nothing at all of the matter.

There was no doubt as to what had happened, for Molly, who had been perfectly sound in body the day before, was now so lame she could hardly limp around. Her companion did the best she could to recall the strange seven-syllable name of the herb which would effect a cure, but it was hopelessly gone from her mind.

So year after year Molly went lame, until she was out on the moor one day with a rogue of a boy. She kept to a path, but the boy rambled about here and there, and presently

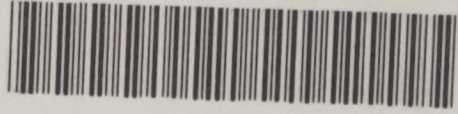
came running to her to show an odd-looking plant he had picked. As he drew near he struck her with it playfully several times, and one blow chanced to hit her lame foot.

The plant must have been the one with the long name, for from that moment Molly's lameness was gone. Indeed, when the next May Day came, and she danced with the other lassies on the village green, she was the most active and graceful of any of them.



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